

17. Bhiknur — Situated at a distance of four furlongs from Bhiknur Railway Station on Kacheguda—Mamam line of South Central Railway.

The total population of the village is 5,751 and is made up of several Hindu communities; Scheduled Castes (913)—Mala and Madiga. The chief means of their livelihood is agriculture and other traditional occupations.

The temples of Siddhi Rameswaraswamy with residential quarters for devotees, Bhuvaneswari, Santareya, Bhairavaswamy, Kumaraswamy, Omkarneswar and Anjaneya are the places of worship in the village.

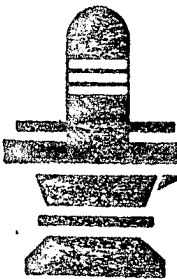
A legend relating to the origin of the temple runs thus—Once there lived two saints named Siddagiri and Ramgiri in this place. They were doing penance for obtaining supernatural powers from Lord Siva. One day they found very near to their place, a cow standing on an anthill and pouring milk within it. They were surprised at that incident.

With their Yogic power they visualised the underlying Sivalingam in the anthill and wanted to build a temple on that spot. Lord Siva gave his darshan to Siddagiriswamy. It is also said that Lord Siva gave a sacred book of verses written on palmyra leaves which gave the clue about the exact location of the place where there was a hidden treasure. They wanted to unearth the treasure and build a temple with it. One day when they were going to a village at noon they found a male child sleeping under a tree and a cobra covering him with its hood from the rays of the sun. They approached the boy's parents who are working in the adjacent field and narrated the incident they have witnessed about their son and requested them to give that boy to them. The parents reluctantly agreed as the Rishis were asking for their son and gave him to them. They brought him up and when he came to the age of 20 years or so they made him in charge of certain villages and so gave him huge amount. He lived in a village called Damakonda. Envied by his riches and popularity the local people wanted to kill the Rishis who were instrumental for his superior position. Then they dug a deep well in a village called Bhiknur and kept good number of swords, etc. at the bottom and covered its mouth with

a blanket. Then they approached the Rishis and stated that they had the instruction of Lord Siddeswara to construct a temple for him at that place and requested them to grace the occasion. When they came there they were seated on the blanket spread on the well and after a few minutes they have dragged the blanket which made the Rishis to fall in the well which had swords, etc. at its bottom. After falling in the well the Rishis cursed them that the hidden treasure when touched by them will turn into ash and sand and their families will be ruined. When the boy in Damakonda came to know of this he went to the well and removed the bodies of the Rishis and constructed tombs for them. He also built the temple. Strictly in accordance with the instruction of the Siddagiriswamy only one among his disciples will remain as ascetic while the rest lead a married life. And even today the same principle is being maintained. Raja Malla Reddy got the *mantapam* constructed while local devotees liberally contributed for the construction of the compound wall and well. All the construction took place some 400 years ago.

Sri Siddi Rameswaraswamy rathothsavam is celebrated on the immediate Monday after *Phalguna Purnima* (February - March). The day, i.e., Monday, is the criteria but not the *tithi* or *nakshtra* for celebration of the *uthsavam*.

All communities including Muslims take part in the *uthsavam*. Devotees from Maharashtra State



round the village by *pothurajus* to the beat of drums from the presence of the deity. This is called *Bhethala*. This latter part of the festival commences from 4 P. M. and continues upto 6 P. M. The dancing girls sing and dance, entertain the people and collect money. Afterwards devotees fulfil their vows. *Jatti kumbham* (cooked rice) is offered to the deity. Next *Gavu* succeeds this function. One of the Pothuraju decorates a goat with *pasupu*, *kunkuma* and neem leaves. He dances in front of the deity for a while and then bites its throat with his teeth till it bleeds to death, with which the festival concludes. Participation is limited to the people of the village.

SOURCE : *Sri G. Gangaram, Headmaster, Panchayat Samithi School, Lachan*

8. Peddagholla — Situated at a distance of about 11 miles from Madnur and 29 miles from Bodhan Railway Station.

The total population of the village is 1,540 and it is made up of the following communities: Caste Hindus — Brahmin, Vaisya, Banj (Lingayat), Maratha, Vadla, Mangali, etc.; Scheduled Castes (83); and Muslims. The chief means of livelihood of the people are agriculture, agricultural labour and other traditional occupations.

Hanuman temple and Manik Prabhu *mandir* with the golden image are the places of worship here. Before the golden image, there are the gold plated feet of the Lord kept on a stone.

Manik Prabhu uthsavam is an annual celebration here. He was born in Umnabad, now in Mysore State. His devotees believe him to be the incarnation of Dathatreya. Dathatreya is Trinity in one. Saraswathi, Lakshmi and Parvathi grew envious of the popularity of Anasuya as a *pathivratha* and compelled their reluctant husbands Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara respectively to force her to appear before them naked. The three went to Anasuya in the absence of her husband and begged for food. When she was about to serve them food, they threatened her that they would go away with empty stomachs unless she served them food naked. She did serve them food naked, only after transforming them into three babies with the power of her *pathivrathyom*. The three Goddesses had to beg Anasuya to restore their husbands to

themselves. She restored their original forms. They later blessed her with a son. He came to be known as the Trinity in one, namely, the three faced Dathatreya.

Manohara and Bayadevi of Kalyani, 36 miles from Gulbarga, got a son by the grace of Lord Siva. The boy was dumb till his *upanayanam* and suddenly began to speak soon after *upanayanam*. They prayed Lord Dathatreya who appeared in their dream and blessed them with another son who would bring them fame. The pregnant Bayadevi attracted hundreds of ladies of all communities including untouchables (of those days), Arabs and Muslims with costly presents. Bayadevi gave birth to a son and he was looked on very well by her disciples. This boy showed many super-human qualities. There was no explanation for the superhuman talents of Dathatreya except the blind belief that he was *Dathatreyamasa Sambhutha* (incarnation of Lord Dathatreya). The Nawab of Kalyani with all his retinue paid a visit to see the boy and kept him under constant police guard. His *upanayanam* in the seventh year was on a princely scale, during which he amazed the *purohits* by chanting *mantras*. After his eighth year, he disappeared by entering into the nearby forest and returned after two or three days. The police and the people searched for him in vain. Umnabad where the *samadhi* of the Lord now stands is 40 miles away from Kalyani amidst a thick forest and is now in Mysore State. In the centre of the forest, there is a sacred pond called Ambilakundam, with the tomb of a great saint on its bank. The *karnam* of Mantala, a forest-village, was surprised to see a ten-year old boy bathing in the pond and doing *pradakshinam* to the *samadhi*, unmindful of his enquiry about him. After finishing *pradakshinam* he began to walk away. The *karnam* followed him for some distance and had to return home as the boy changed into a tiger. He had known Bayadevi and heard about her great son believed to be Manikya Prabhu. The Prabhu soon appeared in the *karnam's* house to bless the latter's wife with safe delivery. He was aged ten at that time, his elder brother Dara Saheb was sixteen and the younger brother Tathya Saheb was four. He visited some sacred places, spent years in penance, showed numerous miracles, gave relief to the suffering devotees, guided several disciples in the path of religion and renounced the remaining 35 years of his life. The following are a few of his miracles.

Abanayab, one of his disciples at Umnabad was caught in a current which he thoughtlessly attempted to cross without minding the rising level of the water in it and his end was imminent. He prayed to the lord. A strong man appeared from somewhere with a bamboo stick and helped him out of the current. Prabhu warned him not to repeat such reckless ventures.

In the village Rajuri, Prabhu asked the people who are carrying the corpse of a woman to the cremation ground whether they would burn in their village living persons. When the bier was put down, the woman got up alive.

Vittalrao, a disciple once came for the permission of the Prabhu to attend a marriage at Hyderabad. He asked him to return immediately. But Vittalrao prolonged his stay at Hyderabad and the result was that his step-mother administered to him a deadly poison. He and his desperate family prayed Prabhu to save them. A *byragi* gave Vittalrao an antidote with which he was saved from the poison. When he returned to Prabhu, Prabhu found him suffering from the effects of the poison.

When his Muslim disciples served Him and His disciples with meat and liquor, He asked the containers to be covered with cloth and changed them into fruits and milk to the great amazement and solace of His disciples. It is said that there were several instances when he gave relief to the persons suffering from physical and mental ailments.

Venkamma, a close disciple desired that Manik Prabhu should perform her *samadhi*. Sri *Daththaguruswamy Jayanti uthsavam* commenced on *Margasira Suddha Vidiya* and concluded on *Dasami*. Venkamma uttered on *Dasami* morning "Om Namo Manikyaya" keeping her head on the feet of the Prabhu, never to rise. Prabhu himself attended to her *samadhi*. Prabhu's parents and brothers also died during His lifetime.

Sri Daththaguru jayanthyuthsavam commences on *Margasira Suddha Vidiya* and concludes on *Purnima*. Manikya Prabhu confided in Bapa Charyulu, Narayanadeekshithulu and two others and told that the earthly connection between them and Himself would cease on *Ekadasi*. He desired that they four alone should prepare His *samadhi* during nights and close it after He entered it on *Ekadasi*. He warned

them that if the fact was known to others before the conclusion of the *jayanthi* on *Purnima*, the consequences would be serious. According to His wishes, *samadhi* was ready and Prabhu entered into it. Before entering, one Appa Saheb, another disciple who succeeded him worshipped Him and received from Him a garland from His neck. The Lord controlled all the nine orifices of the body and the doors of the *samadhi* were closed. The fame and influence of Manikya Prabhu spread in Maharashtra, Karnataka and districts Telangana of Andhra Pradesh and temples and *mandirs* in His name were constructed. The *uthsavam* is held on a very large scale at Umnabad. Manikya Prabhu *uthsavam* is celebrated for 5 days from *Margasira Suddha Ekadasi* to *Purnima* (November-December). This festival was introduced by Avadutha Maharaj, a native of Karnatak State and was a great saint who used to change water into ghee and *vice versa*. His tomb as constructed by raising subscriptions. This is being celebrated for the past 100 years. Marathas are the chief patrons. Local devotees irrespective of caste or creed participate. *Pujari* is a Maratha bachelor. Free freeing facilities are arranged for a day.

SOURCE : *An Enumerator*

9. **Chinna Devada**—Situated at a distance of 13 miles from Madnur Railway Station and 45 miles from Bodhan.

The total population of the village is 537 and it is made up of the following communities: Caste Hindus—Kurama, Atkara, Lingayat, Munnuru Kapu, Tenugu; Scheduled Castes (125)—Mala, Madiga. The chief means of their livelihood are agriculture and agricultural labour.

Lord Venkateswara is worshipped in the form of a stone image under a *ravi* tree in human form. The image is left in the open without any cover or temple.

Lord Venkateswara festival is celebrated for 2 days from *Chaitra Suddha Purnima* (March-April). The chief patrons are Avusulas. 600 devotees, local and from the neighbouring villages of all communities participate. There is free feeding.

A few shops are opened in the fair that is held during the festival. Wrestling competitions are conducted and prizes are awarded to the winners.