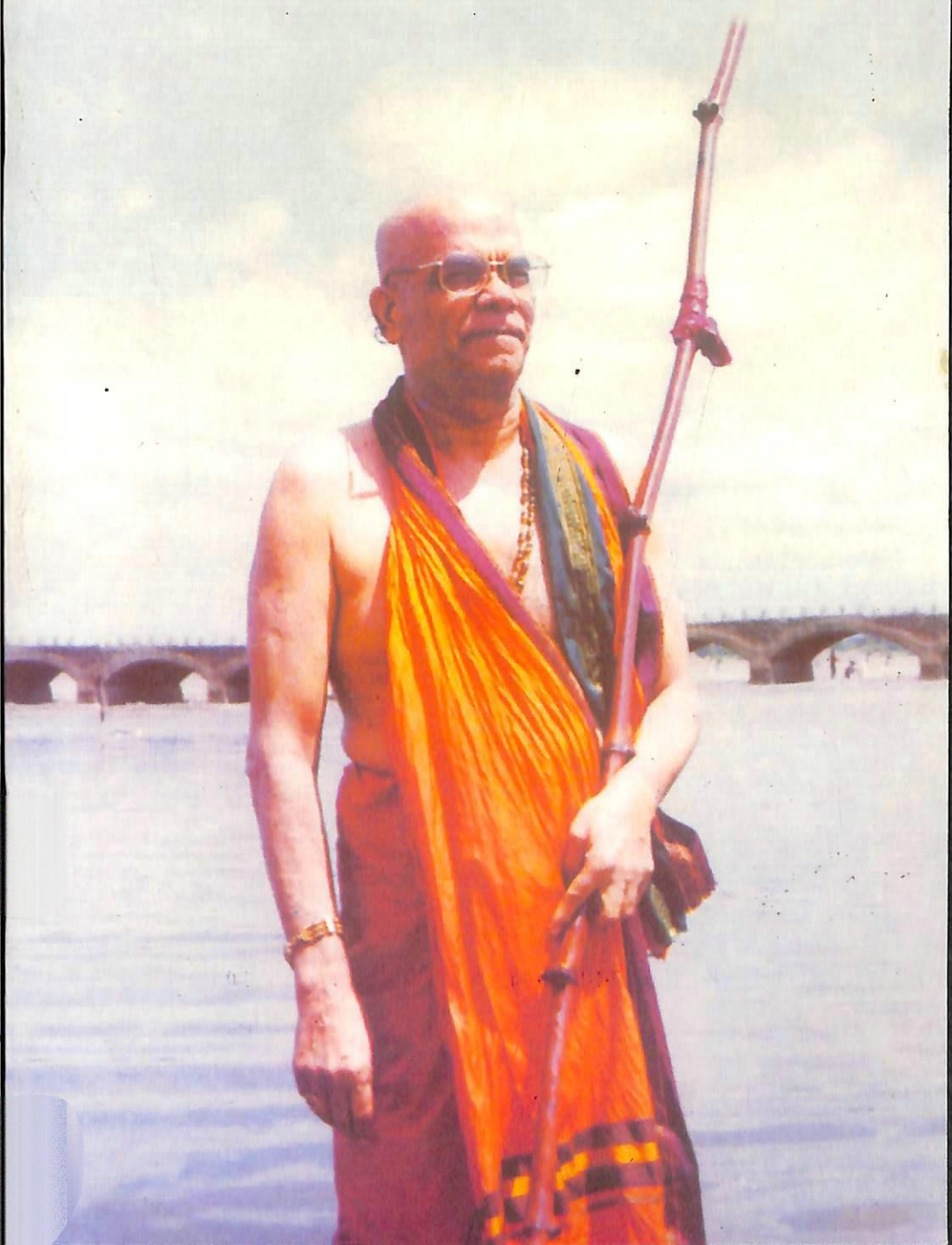


A HOLY PEREGRINATION





प. पू. श्री विद्याधिराजतीर्थ श्रीपाद वडेर स्वामी
श्री. अनंत नरसिंह नायक हांकां आशिर्वाद दिता आसतना

A HOLY PEREGRINATION

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Margao

A Holy Peregrination
(A Biographical sketch of H. H. Shree Vidhadhiraj Teerth Swamiji

by Chandrakant S. Keni



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मानवंदना

श्रीसंस्थान गोकर्ण पतंगाली जीवोत्तम मठाधीश प.पू. श्री विद्याधिराज तीर्थ श्रीपाद वडेर स्वाम्यांची षष्ठ्यब्दी मनोवपाखातीर लागशिल्ल्या आनी पयसुल्ल्या गांवानी रावतल्या सारस्वत समाजाच्या प्रतिनिधीनी पू. स्वाम्यांक आमंत्रण दिवन आपल्या गांवांनी व्हेले आनी आनंदोत्सव मनयलो. श्रावण शुध्द चतुर्दश ही तांगेली जल्मतीथ. ही तीथ चार्तुमास काळांत येता आशिल्ल्यान ज्या गावांत पूज्य स्वाम्याचे चातुर्मास व्रताचरण चालू आसता थंयचो समाज हो दीस श्रीगुरू अभिवंदन दीस म्हणून मनयत आयला.

अंदू १९२७ शतकांतलो हो षष्ठ्यब्दपूर्ति वर्साचो चातुर्मास, पुण्यभूमि गोमंतकांतल्या श्रीरामनाथ देवस्थानात २५ जुलै २००५ दिसा सुरू जावपाचो आसा. पतंगाली सावन रामनाथी वता आसतना प. पू. स्वाम्यांनी दोन दीस मठग्राम मठ संकुलात वास्तव्य करून मठग्रामस्थांची सेवा स्वीकारची अशी आमी विनंती केली. ती मान्य करून पू. श्री स्वाम्यांनी आमकां कृतार्थ केल्यात. आमकां ह्या इतिहासीक प्रसंगाची याद म्हणून आमी ही एक ल्हानशी स्मरणिका उजवाडायल्या. पू. श्रीविद्याधिराज तीर्थाच्या जीवन आनी कार्याच्या कांय पैलूंचे दर्शन ती घडयता.

श्री. चंद्रकांत केणी हांणी मूळ मजकूर इंग्रजीत बरयला. आमी मठग्राम मठ संकुलाच्या उद्घाटनावेळार म्हळ्यार १९ नोव्हेंबर १९९३ दिसा आमचे ती. पप्पा (वै. अनंत नरसिंह नायक) हाणी भाशण केल्लें तें जोडलां. त्या भाशणावयल्यान मठ संकुलाची पूर्वकथा वाचप्यांक समजतली.

आज ल्हानशे पुस्तिकेचें मठग्राम मठ संकुलांत मठानुयायी वर्गाचे उपस्थितींत. प.पू. श्री विद्याधिराज तीर्थ श्रीपाद वडेर स्वाम्यांच्या हातान प्रकाशन जाता हे आमचें भाग्य. अशे भाग्याचे खीण प.पू. श्री. स्वाम्याच्या आशिर्वादान वयलेवयर येवचे अशी प्रार्थना करून हांव ही पुस्तिका प.पू. स्वाम्याल्या पवित्र चरण कमलांकडेन अर्पण करतां.

पांडुरंग (भाई) अनंत नायक

अध्यक्ष

मठग्राम

दि. २४ जुलै २००५

मठग्राम मठ संकुल समिती



मठग्राम मठ संकुलाचे अध्यक्ष श्री. पांडुरंग (भाई) अनंत नायक हांकां आशिर्वाद दिता आसतना पुत्र्य श्री स्वामीजी.

The Gangotri of Partagal Mutt

People of India through ages believe that the Himalayas is the abode of the God. This snow-capped mountain range has been a source of inspiration to our poets and saints, the spiritual and social leaders. The range is venerated not only because of its height but also because of the existence of several holy places and sacred rivers. Ganga being the most esteemed among them. Ganga, for long, has been a mother to the Indian citizen irrespective of his religion. It originates from Gomukh, a glacier of enormous dimensions. Interestingly in spite of being the highest mountain range and named Emperor of Mountains (Nagaa dhiraj), experts say that, the Sahyadri range is much older and has richer resources in the form of vegetation, minerals and water resources. We in Goa adore Himalayas and draw our strength from the Sahyadri. The Western coast is located on the slopes of Sahyadri range. The Saraswats in Goa have age-old association with both these great mountains of the country from whichever place they might have migrated to the reclaimed land on the Western coast. The original settlements were undoubtedly on the banks of Vedic River Saraswati at the feet of Himalayas.

The Saraswats migrated from the banks of Saraswati to the Gomant Pradesh for two specific reasons. One reason was to settle in the land, which was fertile and had plenty of water resources to live a peaceful stable life as the conditions prevailing in the North were unpredictable. In the North much depended on the rainfall, which invariably failed creating long periods of draught, which some times extended from ten to twelve years at a stretch. And when the rains came, they came in plenty leading to deluge, forcing the people to leave their hearths and homes to safer places.

There was no way to end their misery except by opting to migrate to better places to escape vagaries of monsoon. Their

new homes soon came to be recognized as lands of prosperity and plenty of peace and tranquility; of clean environment, abundant water, peaceful social life with rich cultural traditions. The other reason for the migration was to explore new avenues and better opportunities for their talent. They excelled in the Vedas and Shastras, Art and Music, Literature, Yoga and Ayurveda. They had mastery over art of agriculture and horticulture as well. All these qualifications provided them with a rare opportunity to work in darbars of kingdoms located throughout the country. Now monarchy has become a rare commodity.

The people of Goa long to undertake the pilgrimage to the Himalayas at least once during their lifetime. It is always a pleasant thing to do in spite of the hurdles and hardships that they may encounter or revive the bitter memories of the history of their ancestors. Many of them are keen to know more about their relationship and attachment to the Himalayas while most of the followers go as pilgrims to hilly places in order to do away with their sins that they might have accumulated during their lifetime or in their earlier life. Very few go to see wonders of the nature, which are rarely visible elsewhere. The changing colours of the snow capped mountains, the game of hide and seek that the clouds play with them, the rich flora and fauna, amazingly rich divergent variety of flowers of every colour one can imagine and more so the cool breeze, which unburdens the mind and body of their fatigue accumulated over the years.

A trip to the Himalayas will be rewarding for those interested in the mythological, historic or religious background of the places they will come across. They will also be interested in scenic beauty and changing moods of the nature. Every third house on the way as one climbs up happens to be an abode of some God or the other. And most of these abodes are associated with the personalities from mythological stories. You can see the mountains of salt and areas covered by sand. In times immemorial, the Himalayas did not exist until an earthquake pushed the sub-continent northwards and the sea-covered areas were raised to higher heights and settled. Parts of the subcontinent that strayed is known as Sri Lanka, Australia, New

Zealand, Madagascar and Mauritius. I do not know how far this theory is true, but I know that people of India, whichever part of the country they may belong to, consider it their holy duty to take a vessel full of water from the River Ganga to Rameshwaram in the South in Tamil Nadu and offer it to the sea and vice-versa. It is not a religious feat but a formula worked out by our spiritual and cultural leaders to strengthen the cultural and religious integration of the people living in different regions, speaking divergent languages. The practice still persists and needs to be encouraged in the wake of new influences that are engulfing us.

From the snow clad peaks to the seacoast by the side of Sahyadri was a long journey undertaken by the Saraswats thousands of years ago. Have they maintained any link with their place of origin?

Bonds with Badrinath

It was in Badrinath, a very popular pilgrimage centre located on the banks of the river Alaknanda that the seeds of Partagal Mutt were sown. As one alights from the bus on the main bus stand, many Pandas approach inquisitively wanting to know from where you have come. If you mention Goa, they will point out a signboard on the top of the modest looking cottage. It displays the name ôJeevottam Muttö. It has self-contained rooms and being right on the bus stand in front of the market, and Shree Laxmi Narayan Temple, tourists and pilgrims, especially the Saraswats from Goa and Karnataka prefer to stay there. Government run hotel is undoubtedly a more cozy and comfortable place, but pilgrims love to stay in the Mutt to revive and strengthen an invisible bond. His Holiness Shree Vidyadhiraj Teerth Swamiji observed the annual Chaturmas at Badrinath in the year 1986 and laid the foundation stone of the modest building before the conclusion of the Vrata. Located some 10,250 feet above the sea level in the vicinity of snow covered peaks, the Mutt building was formally inaugurated by His Holiness on 28th June 1989. The Mutt provides accommodation and guidance to pilgrims who opt to stay there.

On going through some historical books and documents I came to know that the origin of Gokarn Mutt lies in the Himalayas at Badrinath, but precise details were obscure due to non-availability of relevant data. I took upon myself the task of uncovering and unknown aspects of the history of the Mutt.

HH Shree Vidyadhiraj Teerth Shreepad Vader Swamiji turns 60 on Shravan Sukla 14, of Saka 1927 (18th August 2005), while observing Chaturmas Vrata in Goa in the precincts of the Shree Ramnath Temple (the dates of Chaturmas Vrata vary from year to year according to the Gregorian calendar). It was on 29th August last year that the Swamiji entered the 60th year, while observing Chaturmas at Pandharpur. Devotees and followers of the Mutt from all over had congregated at Pandharpur in the precincts of Shree Vithoba Temple to celebrate the historic event. Celebrations continued throughout the year in almost all parts of the country from Mumbai in Maharashtra to Mangalore in Karnataka. Goa had the benefit of celebrating this landmark event in its own significant manner.

Celebrations in Goa started on the eve of the Ramnathi Chaturmas which commenced on 25th July. His Holiness left Partagali Mutt on the 22nd July in a car procession to Margao with a brief stop over en route at Canacona to receive adoration from the local followers.

At Margao Shree Swamiji was received by the leaders of the community and a large number of followers. The procession proceeded to Shree Damodar Saal where traditional Padya Pooja was performed on behalf of the citizens of Margao. The procession culminated into a public meeting at Mathagram Mutt Sankul, the prestigious Mutt complex built by the present Swamiji. A congregation was held at the spacious Vidyadhiraj Bhavan where Mathagram Mutt Sankul Samiti welcomed the Swamiji followed by Padya Pooja and a public meeting was held where the Swamiji blessed the audience.

I have been a witness to various celebrations associated with the life and achievement of the Swamiji since 1973. This association has helped me to have a glimpse of the religious, spiritual and cultural history of the community, which has changed my life and style considerably. I have also earned the

goodwill in abundance from the followers of the Swamiji scattered all over the world. As I am on the verge of withdrawal from all regular activities, it may be proper to express my adoration to Revered Swamiji and the glorious Mutt hierarchy. All this has inspired me to go deeper into the records and other data available to compile for the benefit of posterity.

The Concept of Gurupeetha

As the community settled down and the glory of Mahasaptam (the biggest of the seven Konkans, reclaimed from the sea by Parshuram) began spreading far and wide as heaven on earth, new ordeals and challenges and unknown conflicts started raising their heads. It is human weakness that creates dissent and discord in the society, which can be termed as natural. The system provided installation of an authority to resolve such disputes. Ten elders (dha-zan) of the village would receive the complaints from individual citizens or families and give a patient hearing to the complaints in front of the gramsabha. The residents of the village were free to express their opinion or put forward their evidence in support or against the complaint since the hearing was within the precincts of the temple and rarely anyone dared to speak the untruth.

It was again human weakness that motivated the aggrieved party to challenge the neutrality of dha-zan. Although the authority was rich in age and experience, it could not be always impartial since it was part of the same society. It was at that stage that the need was felt for a neutral sage, a judicious savor, a socio ethical authority to steer the society in the moments of conflicts and crisis. The impartiality of such an authority should remain undisputed and it should snap all its bonds of attachment to the society or mundane gains.

How to evolve such an authority? One thing was clear that it could not be imported from outside the community. The learned elders made an arrangement that will be acceptable to the norms of theology and would strengthen belief in divine. An appropriate batu (aspirant to aesthetic life) would be selected and after suitable initiation into sanyasa, he could be imparted

adequate training in essential branches of knowledge including dharmashastra, rites and rituals and Holy Scriptures. Moreover being a sanyasi, he was expected to be constantly on some pilgrimage or the other in order to enrich his knowledge and widen his experience in the open university of life.

A glance at the history of the community will reveal the ordeals of sacrifices and devotion, faith and adoration within the tradition of the Mutt by the successive Swamijis, who while retaining the hoary traditions in tact, did not hesitate to make necessary changes to keep abreast with the changing times. As a result, the Saraswat community, which was caught in the vortex of alien invasions and migrations could salvage its identity and self-respect. That is why the community could strengthen its faith in the Divine and devotion to the Guru.

Mutt: A Lighthouse

After going on a peregrination of the history of the Saraswat community of the last five centuries, I have come to the conclusion that the Mutt and the Swamijis have played the role of a lighthouse during the dark nights of the despair and frustration. Otherwise, those who migrated (rather fled) from Goa, not knowing their destination, would not be able to continue to live a dignified life by preserving their language, culture and religion. Their position was like passengers sitting in a vehicle without a driver. Today the community, wherever it may be, lives a respectful life, devoid of external disturbances and has retained its cultural and religious traditions.

My association with the Mutt started on the fateful day on which the 22nd Pontiff, His Holiness Shree Dwarkanath Teerth left for his heavenly abode (23rd March 1973) in the precincts of Ankola Mutt while preparing to leave for Partagal. It must be early afternoon when the end came and within minutes, faster than the wild fire, the news spread throughout the western coast and beyond, thanks to the telecommunication network that has been developed over the years. In good old days special messengers had to be sent to different places to convey the news. In matters of hours, the followers of the Mutt and devotees

from every direction descended on Ankola and it was decided that the mundane remains should be laid at rest at Partagali amidst the galaxy of Vrindhavanas of some of the most eminent Gurus of the Mutt.

Then there was Sunrise. Golden rays from beyond the Sahyadri range brightened the dome over Partagali Mutt. The Disciple took control of the situation in right earnest and acted like a matured Guru in spite of his indifferent health.

(In those days as the Pooja was performed lying down, the pain was visible on his face but he refused to take any medication which violated the minute sensitivities of a SwamijiÆs Sanyas Dharma).

Shree Guru Peetha Rohan

Then came the historic event when Swamiji ascending Shree Gurupeeth, which had been earlier occupied by the 22 Pontiffs of great eminence whose devotion, intelligence, knowledge and above all the integrity had taken the Gurupeeth to the highest pinnacle of glory. Shree Gurupith-rohan was a solemn ceremony, which was performed with prescribed religious rites and rituals and with the adoration by the community of its Guru. It was the first ever congregation of devotees of this magnitude, from far and near, held in the history of the Mutt. They numbered in thousands, which the old premises of the Mutt could hardly accommodate. A spacious pandal was erected in front of the Mutt along the Rathabidi. The devotees included the then Chief Minister of Goa, late Shri Dayanand Bandodkar and his wife Sunandabai. I had the privilege to comper the entire programme and subsequently attend a few meetings convened by the Swamiji. Each meeting was like a revelation to me and I realized limitations of my knowledge about the history, traditions and activities of the Mutt or the Swamiji, socio-religious contacts and impacts. I also knew nothing about the temples and their history, and about their role in enriching and nurturing the social and cultural development of the community.

At one such meetings H.H. Swamiji brought to the notice

of his disciples that the day he ascended Shree Gurupeetha, coincided with the 500th anniversary (Pancha Shatabdi) of the foundation of the Mutt itself. The founder of the Mutt, H.H.Shree Narayan Teerth was initiated into Sanyas on Chaitra Shukla 2 of Saka 1397 at Badrinath in the Himalayas.

Since then the community had passed through many a trouble and turbulence. Now that the history is changing its course, the process of re-integration after a long phase of fragmentation, had to be set in motion. H.H. proposed that the Mutt should celebrate the Pancha Shatabdi of its foundation in a befitting manner and herald the dawn of the new phase in the history of the Saraswat community.

The process of disintegration of the Saraswat community had started at the time when the Mutt was being established and it was reversed only after the liberation of Goa in December, 1961 A.D.. The Mutt has played a vital role during these five hundred and more years in retaining and strengthening the identity of the Saraswat community by maintaining direct interaction with the followers and helped in the revival of their faith in family deities. The Pancha Satabdi celebration was a grand event. A five-day function was organized and representatives of the Saraswat community spread all over the globe came together. I had the good fortune of associating with this historic occasion, which then brought me in close contact with the representatives of the community settled in various parts of the country and abroad. Its grand success strengthened my convictions that it is leading to a new era in the history of the community.

I decided to contribute my little mite in the task that the Swamiji and the Mutt had undertaken; but could not have been effective unless I knew more about the working of the Mutt and the mind of the Swamiji. As a journalist I decided to have a free and frank discussion with His Holiness but how to put up the proposal before H.H.? The only way was to seek an interview for my newspaper. I was greatly relieved when the Swamiji fixed up the appointment.

A media person has the liberty to ask any question without any hesitation or risk of being misunderstood. But it was a

very difficult assignment to interview the Swamiji who had voluntarily opted to an unattached life dedicated to the service of God and the society. Moreover I knew very little about the domain of the Mutt but had a first hand knowledge that Swamiji was busy in finalising the programmes.

Sanyas Deeksha

H.H. Shree Vidyadhiraj Teerth Shreepad Vader Swamiji is the 23rd Pontiff in the Mutt tradition. His strict adherence to the code of conduct as applicable to the Sanyasi, is really admirable. But at the same time his approach to the emerging challenges of the developing world has helped the community considerably to keep in step with the changing times. Our discussion was held in a free and transparent atmosphere. I was not aware of the protocol that was to be observed while having an audience with a religious head and hesitantly explained my limitation to the Swamiji with a request that there should be no misunderstanding if I falter or should not be taken as offense if I utter a wrong word inadvertently. Swamiji with a broad smile on his face brightened the atmosphere considerably. I was admiring the broad forehead, straight nose, bright eyes and saffron wears indicating the detachment of a sanyasi. I had to wait for a moment before asking any question as the Swamiji mentioned that he will like to lie down on the cot as he could not sit for long due to some injury to the back bone. I had to begin somewhere and asked the Swamiji about his childhood and the reaction of his mind when he was initiated into Sanyas. His years under the guidance of a Guru Shree Dwarkanath Teerth and his feeling after taking over the reigns of the Mutt.

I was surprised to find that the Swamiji spoke with all transparency and in most informal way. Prompt came the reply to every question that was asked.

As a child Shree Vidyadhiraj Teerth did not have any direct contact with the Mutt even though the 22nd Pontiff was born in his Senapur Acharya family. He remembered having seen the Swamiji on a couple of occasions and had the good fortune to perform the Seva to the best of his ability. Never a thought

crept into his mind that a day would come when he would be himself chosen to be the successor of Shree Guru as Swamiji of Shree Gokarn Partagali Jeevottam Mutt.

As a student he had taken a different direction. Born in a family of Acharyas, known for their authority on the dharm shastra and related matters he was studying in Commerce college at Kundapur when the message from His Holiness Shree Dwarkanath Teerth was conveyed to him that he has been chosen as successor to the Swamiji. What was his immediate reaction? As far as the parents were concerned, it was a mixture of delight and disheartenment. They were looking forward to their son to pursue higher studies with distinction and to bring glory to the family. Moreover once he becomes a Sanyasi, he will be lost forever to the family. This thought pained them the most. At the same time traditional devotion and reverence to Swamiji would not allow them to decline to the wishes expressed by the Swamiji. Eminent personalities from the community living far and near the Gangoli town were in constant touch with the family not only to congratulate the parents but also to express their happiness and the honour that has been bestowed upon the family by the Mutt.

It was on 26th February 1967 that the course of life of this young student took a diametrically opposite direction. What was the state of mind of Shree Swamiji on that day? "I had no clear idea of the life and duties of a Swamiji as the initial 20 years of my life were spent with the family and in schools and the college imparting English medium education. However I had appreciation and faint idea of the rigours of a sanyasi. I had never thought that one day I will have to take sanyas. But when the rayasm came I was not at all disturbed nor had any regrets. If the Swamiji desires that I should serve the society in a different manner, I should react favourably, was the thought that came to my mind on that day".

Achievements

After initiation into Sanyas the lifestyle changed considerably. It was a period of orientation and learning in

order to take over the reigns of Gurupeetha. The process of learning does not stop even after ascending the throne. Everyday a new realization, new awareness poses a new challenge, which has to be met in consistent with the traditions of the Mutt and the needs of the changing times. It was a different thing to handle problems while the revered Guru was present. There was no tension and each problem brought new revelation. Situation changed overnight after the departure of revered Guru on 25-03-1973. Shree Vidyadhiraj Teerth ascended the Gurupeetha on 05-04-1973 and became the spiritual leader of the followers of the Mutt scattered all over India and abroad. The Mathadhish has to look after the management of the Mutt and its branches as well as the temples and the institutions functioning in various parts of the country under the aegis of the Mutt. He is expected to consolidate the unity of the scattered community, reviving and restoring their faith on the Gurupeetha and Kuldevatas. We have seen how Shree Swamiji has carried on the responsibility with ability and given a new direction, consistent with the changing times to the Mutt and the community, without disturbing the tradition. Although the Mutt belongs to a community, it cannot afford to overlook other communities and sects, which co-exist in the society. The basic necessity for peace, harmony and development, both material and spiritual, was to forge unity among the diverse sections of the society, which were segregated by centuries and miles. That necessitated frequent travels from North to South and to all major metropolis. His travels far and wide, took him to various centres of pilgrimage from snow-capped Himalayas to Rameshwaram and Kanya Kumari on the seashore. Pilgrimage is an essential part of the life of a Sanyasi who has to be constantly on the move.

During the span of last two-year the Swamiji has undertaken pilgrimage of Ashta Maha Khetra, Chaturdham, Shatapuri, Varanasi, Kaipavasgat Prayas etc. But nothing is greater than Gandaki Yatra. It was an outstanding feat to complete a pilgrimage to Gandaki located in the Himalayan range amidst snow-covered peaks, some 23,000 feet above the sea level. There is mention of this area in Puranas that the Damodar

Kund is located somewhere between the borders of Tibet and Nepal in no-man's land where the Shaligrams are found. A reference to Gandaki and minute description of the place is found in ancient scriptures. But experts differed whether such a place really existed.

The third Pontiff of the Mutt, Shree Jeevottam Teerth had undertaken this pilgrimage on foot about 500 years back and has recorded the description of the place in his poem ôTeerthavalö. This poem gave an inspiration to Shree Vidyahiraj Teerth to go on pilgrimage to this remote area. Starting from Pokhra on 11th September 1998, on foot, the entourage of H.H. reached Yan on 24th September and entered the no-man's land. That reassured them that they were on the right track and in the vicinity of Damodar Kund. They left Gimu on the same day and the next halt was Damodar Kund. Gimu is about 5916 metres above the sea level and one has to cross a Pass to reach Damodar Kund, which is over 4680 metres above the sea level. It was a hazardous journey. The weather was hostile and every member of the party was reluctant to proceed further. Damodar Kund was just about a kilometer away but the Sun was nowhere. A snow storm had made the nature very unkind. They decided to camp at Gimu and raised their tents but the atmosphere was still hostile. The snowfall was followed by heavy rains. The guides and Sherpas accompanying the entourage warned of serious consequences if they prolonged their stay. They advised that it would be better to start the return journey before it was too late.

Every member of the entourage except Shridhar Acharya were eager to return. Swamiji said those who want to go back can also take the Sherpa with them and without waiting for the weather to clear, proceeded in the direction of the Damodar Kund. All of a sudden a miracle took place, the dark clouds in the sky withered away and the Sunlight brightened the horizons. The snowfall became thinner and the snow flakes showered from the heavens looked like petals. The pilgrims were thrilled. It was a historic feat. It was a home coming for Shree Veer Vitthal, the Deity of the Swamiji, after five centuries. H.H. performed the abhishek and pooja.

Achievement of Shree Vidyadhiraj Teerth Swamiji since he assumed the seat of Holy Gurupeeth are multitude in number and diverse in quality and nature. A glance over the developments within the sphere of the Mutt and the community at large during the last 32 years reveals some of the astonishing facts unparalleled in the history of the community. Almost every Mutt under its aegis has either been renovated or reconstructed or additional facilities like Kulyan Mandapas and Athiti Grihas have been provided. Moreover several new Mutts in the fast developing industrial urban centres in various states, wherever the members of the community had settled in substantial number were constructed.

One of the major achievements is the renovation and expansion of the grand premises of the central Mutt at Partagali. The renovation work, which began in 1977, was completed in a phased way in three stages. The renovated premises were inaugurated on Chaitra Shukla 2 of Saka 1921 (19th March 1999 A.D.). What has been accomplished during the last 32 years of the tenure of H.H. Shree Vidyadhiraj Teerth is much more than what had been achieved during the earlier 500 years.

His decisions looked fanciful and his ideas impractical. But society at large was stunned to see that the apparently difficult projects were completed in a time-bound way satisfactorily and smoothly without much effort. Disciples have experienced that his utterances have the magic and power of Mantras, which rarely go unrealized. Renovation and reconstruction of the temples falling within the jurisdiction of the Mutt, installation of new idols wherever necessary, revival and rejuvenation of the traditional feasts and festivals were undertaken. Yagyas, anushtanas were performed to strengthen the faith of common man and to infuse devotion to family Deities and Gurupeethas. Observing Chaturmas Vrata at far and near places, accessible to the followers settled in remote areas and spending the entire period with them was another annual activity.

It is significant that all these activities were conducted by motivating active local participation, without disturbing Swamiji's observance of the sanyas dharma. He nurtured his personal spiritual sadhana scrupulously upholding all the

rigours and restraints of the life of the renunciation and constantly renewed it, enriching and updating his own knowledge to self-learning and meditation.

History will certainly record the tasks he accomplished by working as a bond and buffer between the two centuries without causing any rift or break in the age-old tradition of the holy Mutt. The quantum of socio cultural as also the religious activities has been on the rise ever since he took over the charge of the Mutt. In spite of his growing occupations, the Swamiji has maintained his own Swadhyaya unhindered. One of the sweet fruits of the Sadhana was the successful completion of Shreeman Nyaya Sudhapath, which was successfully completed at Kalyanpur in Karnataka.

His interest in pursuing the study of Sanskrit and Shastras and insistence in giving due status to the Sanskrit language and teaching of the Vedas, has led to the upgradation of the Jeevottam Sanskrit Patashala through the introduction of new courses. He personally supervises the working of the Patashala. Over fifty students pass from the Pathshala after completing five-year course of study. To reach out to the society and to alleviate their grief and grievances the Swamiji has established Charitable Trusts apart from Trusts setup by individual temples numbering about 1,000 and the 31 Mutt branches to extend the much needed assistance to the needy in the field of education, health, social awakening etc.

It is always not an easy task to describe diverse reflections of a multifaceted personality. Sometimes words are inadequate to give an expression to an experience, which makes the heart full and words become sparse. The only option before a devotee like me remains to go in reverence at the Holy feet and leave the rest to the heart and mind.

मठग्राम मटसंकुलाची पूर्वकथा

मठग्राम हें नांव खूब पुर्विल्ल्या काळार सावन घोळणुकेंत आसा. महाभारतांत ह्या गांवाचो उल्लेख येता. परशुरामान शूर्पारक प्रांतांत जंय जंय सारस्वतांच्यो आद्य वसणुको स्थापन केल्यो, त्या गांवांचीं नांवां दिवपी एक श्लोक आसा आनी त्या गांवांच्या नांवांमदीं मठग्राम अशेंय एक नांव आसा.

सह्याद्री खंडाच्या उत्तरार्धांत पयल्याच अध्यायांत परशुरामान ज्या अष्टग्रामांत सारस्वतांच्यो वसणुको स्थापल्यो, तांचीं नांवां अशीं दिल्यांत.

मठग्राम (मडगांव) वरेण्य (वेर्णे) कुडतरी, बाणावली, शंखावली (सांकवाळ) रायचुरी (रायतूर) लोटली आनी नागवें (मठग्रामे वरेण्यंच लोटलीच कुडस्थली...)

जेन्ना गोमंत प्रांतांतल्या सारस्वत समाजाचें विघटन जालें आनी तो जळामळाक शिंपडलो, तेन्ना एका अज्ञात ग्रंथकारान 'कोंकणाख्यान' नांवाचो एक ल्हानसो, पूण माहितीपूर्ण ग्रंथ बरयलो. इतिहासीक कारणां खातीर समाजाच्या घटकांचें वेगळ्या वेगळ्या वाठारांनी स्थलांतर जातकच, तांचे मदीं भुगोलीक अंतर आयलें आनी संपर्क तुटिल्ल्यान भेद-भाव वाडलो. अशा समाजाक तांच्या निजाची वळख करून दिवन एकचार वाडोवचेखातीर हें आख्यान लेखकान रचिल्लें आसूंक जाय.

*‘जनासि कळवाची पूर्व स्थिती । जनवतचि स्वधर्मपति ।
ऐसी अहोरात्र होतां खंती । तो उन्मेष चितीं पै झाला ॥
उन्मेष उठतां जाण । हृदयीं स्फूर्ति झाली निर्माण ।
संभवोनि हृदयस्थ । कोंकणाख्यान ग्रंथ निर्मिला ॥’*

सारस्वत एकतेचो पुरस्कार करपी हो ग्रंथकार सरळ भाशेंत सांगता:

*‘सारस्वत ऐसें ज्या अभिधान । त्या ब्राह्मणांसि भेद नव्हता जाण ।
अवघयांचे एकचि आचरण । क्रियाकर्म धर्म एकचि ॥
सासप्टीं देशीं प्रथम राहिले । त्यांस सासप्टीकर म्हणितले ।
तैसे बारदेशी नाम पावले । आणि पेडणे कुडवाळ देशिक ॥*

ग्रामदेशांचीं नामें बोलती । परि अवघियाचि एकचि ज्ञाति ।
भेदाची कांहीं नव्हती भ्रांती । ऐशी पूर्वस्थिती पै आहे ॥'

अशा उतरांनी ह्या कोंकणाख्यानाच्या दुसऱ्या अध्यायांत सासष्टीचो महिमा गायला.
त्या अध्यायांत मठग्राम हें नांव आमकां वाचूंक मेळटा. कवि म्हण्टा:

'सासष्ट देशीं मुख्य सदर । जोहार ग्राम महाथोर ।
तेथें देव श्रीदामोदर । महिमा अपार तयाचा ॥
पंच गोत्रीचे तें ब्राह्मण । त्यांसी श्रीदामोदर भजन ।
कौशिक भारद्वाज गोत्री जाण । आणिक असती त्रिगोत्रीचे ॥
गीर्वाणभाषीं मठग्राम । देशभाषीं म्हाडग्राम ।
त्या क्षेत्राची महिमा उत्तम । वर्णिली आहे ॥'

अशे तरेन मठग्राम वा मडगांव हें शार कितलें पुर्विल्लें आनी सारस्वतांच्या इतिहासांत
ह्या शाराचें स्थान कितलें आगळें-वेगळें हाचो अदमास आमच्यांनी करूं येता.

इतिहासांत मठग्राम हें नांव द्वैत संप्रदायाचे प्रवर्तक महामुनी श्रीमध्वाचार्य हांच्या
चरित्रांतय वाचूंक मेळटा.

श्रीमध्वाचार्य गोमंत प्रदेशांत धर्मप्रसार कार्याच्या निमित्तान पावले (१२२९) तेन्ना
बाणावलेच्या राजान तांकां मानाचो येवकार दिवन मठग्रामांतल्या मठांत तांच्या रावपाची
वेवस्था केली अशीं नोंद आसा.

श्रीदामोदर हें ह्या शाराचें मुख्य दैवत. आज जरी मुख्य देऊळ जांबावले व्हेल्लें
आसलें, तरी ह्या शारांत आजून श्रीदामोदराची अधिसत्ता चलता, अशें मडगांवकार
श्रध्देन मानतात आनी दर सोमाराक तीन कातरीच्या वेळार ग्रामदेव श्रीदामोदर आपलो
राखणेचो आशिर्वाद घेवन मठग्रामस्थांच्या दारांत येता, हे भावनेन शारांतल्या आद्य
घरांनी आजूनय सोमाराक तीनसांजची पांच वातींची दिवली पेटोवन फुडल्या दारांत
दवरतात.

अशा देवाचे सासायेन आनी सारस्वत समाजाच्या पुरुषार्थान घडिल्ल्या ह्या मठग्रामांत
पुर्विल्ल्या काळार सारस्वतांचें एक वा अदीक गुरुपीठ मठ आसले. इतिहासांत तेराव्या
शेंकड्याच्या शेवटाक आनी उपरान्त सोळाव्या शेंकड्याच्या मध्याक साश्टीचेर दोन

खेपे परचक्रां आयलीं आनी त्यावेळार परकी आक्रमकांनी धर्म-संस्कृती हुमदून उडोवपाच्या यत्नांत हांगासल्लें एकूण एक देऊळ आनी सगळे मठ भूंयसपाट केले. त्या काळार आमचे म्हालगडे भौतीक सुखां आनी धन हांचेर उदक सोडून धर्म-संस्कृतीची राखण करचेखातीर देशोधडीक लागले आनी पुर्विल्ल्या वैभवाच्या गोबरांतल्यान ताणी धर्म-संस्कृतीची आनी सारस्वत समाजाची नव्यान उभारणी केली. चडावत सगल्या कुलदैवतांचीं देवळां नव्यान बांदून धर्मगुरूंचे आज्ञेन आनी मार्गदर्शनान तांचे कारभार पूर्वापार पद्दतीन जथापथ सुरू केले आनी ह्या भारतवर्षांत सारस्वत हो धर्मनिष्ठ, सारवंत, तत्त्वनिष्ठ, पुरुषार्थी, बुध्दिवंत, असो समाज म्हणून नांवलौकीक जोडलो. आपल्या ह्या पुनरुत्थानाचें श्रेय हो समाज आयजय आपल्या कुलदैवताक आनी गुरुपिठांक दिता आनी तितलेच भक्तीन तांची सेवा-पूजा करता.

मडगांवांत आनीक एक सारस्वत मठ आशिल्लो असो उल्लेख “भारताचा धार्मिक इतिहास” ह्या पुस्तकांत (पान १५२) मेळटा. १६४८ वर्साचें सुरवेक ताव्हेर्निये नांवाचो एक फ्रेंच प्रवासी गोंयांत आयिल्लो. ताणे त्या अदमासाक “गोंयांत साष्टींत मठग्रामांत एक मठ आसा, त्या मठांत रामभक्ताची एक समाधी आसली, ती पुर्तुगेजांनी उध्वस्त केली, अशें बरोवन दवर्ल्लां. (Travels in India - Vol. I, page 57) ह्या मठाच्या जाग्यार एक मारुतीची मूर्त मेळिल्ली.

मडगांवांत एकच न्हय, तर खूबशे मठ आशिल्ले अशें ह्या पोरन्या नोंदींवेल्यान दिसता.

मठ आनी देवळां उध्वस्त जालीं तेन्ना चडशे हिंदू गांव सोडून गेले. जेन्ना ते परत आयले, तेन्ना ताणी ग्रामदेव श्री दामोदराची सासाय म्हणून मडगांवां नायक शंखवाळकार हांच्या घराच्या मुख्य सालांत श्रीदामोदराची प्रतिष्ठापना करून लोकाक एक श्रध्दास्थान तयार करून दिलें आनी पूर्वापार चलत आयिल्ल्यो धा-जाणाच्यो बसका त्या सालांत जावंक लागल्यो. आयजय त्या सालाक दामोदराचें साल म्हणून वळखतात आनी थंय लोक व्हडा श्रध्देन आनी भक्तीन देव दर्शनाक आनी पूजा-प्रार्थना करूंक वतात. वै. नरसिंह दामोदर नायक हांच्या घरांतलें हें श्री दामोदराचें साल हें मडगांवकारांचे नदरेन ग्रामदेवाचे सासायेचें केंद्र जावन बसलां.

ह्याच घराण्यांतले श्री सुब्राव लक्ष्मण नायक ऊर्फ ब्रह्मीभूत श्रीसुब्रह्मण्यानंदतीर्थ यतिमहाराज हाणी मजगतच्या काळांत हिंदू-धर्म-संस्कृती रक्षणाचो मोलादीक वावर केलो. शास्त्रग्रंथांचो ताणी अभ्यास केल्लो आनी देशांतल्या व्हड व्हड विद्वान पंडितांकडेन

कामाक लागले.

स्वाम्याचे पुण्यायेची आनी तांच्या उतरांत आशिल्ले दैवी शक्तीची जाणीव म्हाका ह्या मठाच्या निमित्त्यान जितली जाली, तितली ह्याआदीं चुकून केन्ना जाल्ली आसतली. हांव कांय करिना; खंयची तरी अदृश्य शक्त म्हजेकडल्यान काम करून घेता, अशें म्हाका सदांच दिसत रावलें.

देणग्यांखातीर लोकांच्या दारांत वचप हें एक मोटें दिव्य आसता. पूण सगळ्यांत पयलीं हांव श्री. वसंतबाब धेंपे हांच्या दारांत गेलों आनी त्या लक्ष्मीपुत्रान एक गडगंज 'आशिर्वाद' दिलो. उमेद वाडली आनी मागीर खरेल्या अर्थान देणग्यांचो पावस पडत रावलो. जंय जंय आमी गेले; थंय अपेक्षेपरसय चड दान मेळ्ळें आनी खूबशा जाणांनी आपूण जावन आपले सेवेचें फूल धाडून दिलें.

एक अणभव हांवें घेतलो. दान आमी फकत सारस्वतांकडल्यानच घेतलें; ते मागीर खंयच्याय संप्रदायाचे आसूं. स्मार्त, वैष्णव असो भेद आमी केलो ना. आनी ताणी केन्ना त्या भेदाचो चुकून लेगीत उगडास काडलो ना. सारस्वत समाजाच्या भवितव्याचे नदरेन हें एक शुभचिन्न म्हणूं येत.

पूण हांवें एक पळयलें कीं खूबशा लोकांक मठ म्हळ्यार कितें हें खबरच ना. गुरुपिठाचें कार्य ते नकळत. हें अज्ञान आमी कुशीन काडूंक जाय, आनी हें मठसंकुल म्हळ्यार सारस्वत एकता, धर्म आनी संस्कृती हांचे जतनायेचें, आनी समाजीक उदरगतीचें केंद्र करूंक जाय. हे संबंदान आमकां सगळ्यांचेंच मार्गदर्शन जाय. भोव करून नवे पिळगेन मुखार सरून नवे उमेदीन हें कार्य फुडें व्हरूंक जाय.

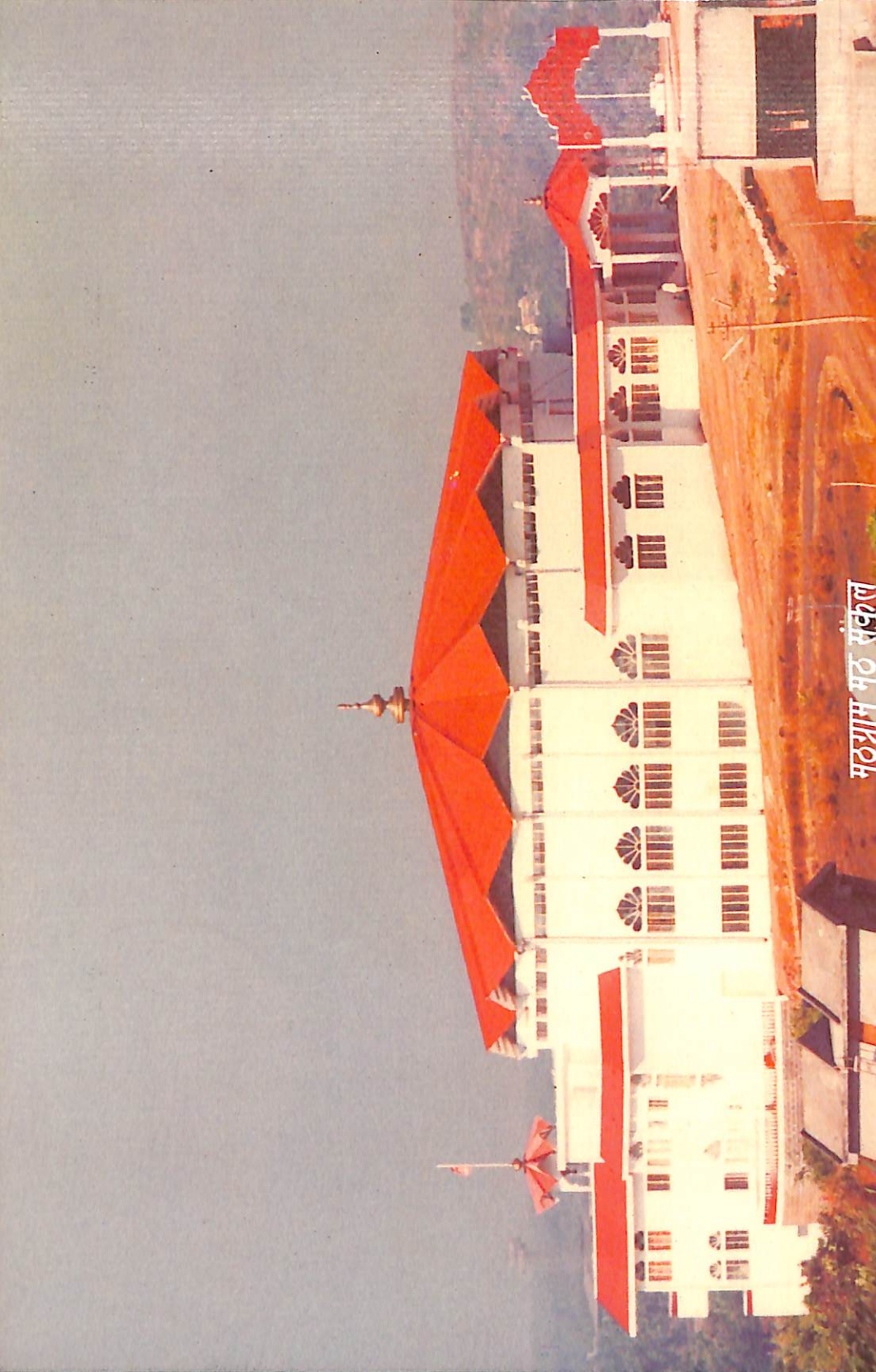
- अनंत नरसिंह नायक

अध्यक्ष, मठग्राम मठ संकुल समिती

मडगांव,

कार्तिक शु. ६, शक १९१५

शुक्रार, ता. १९ नोव्हेंबर, १९९३



मठश्रीम मठ संकाल