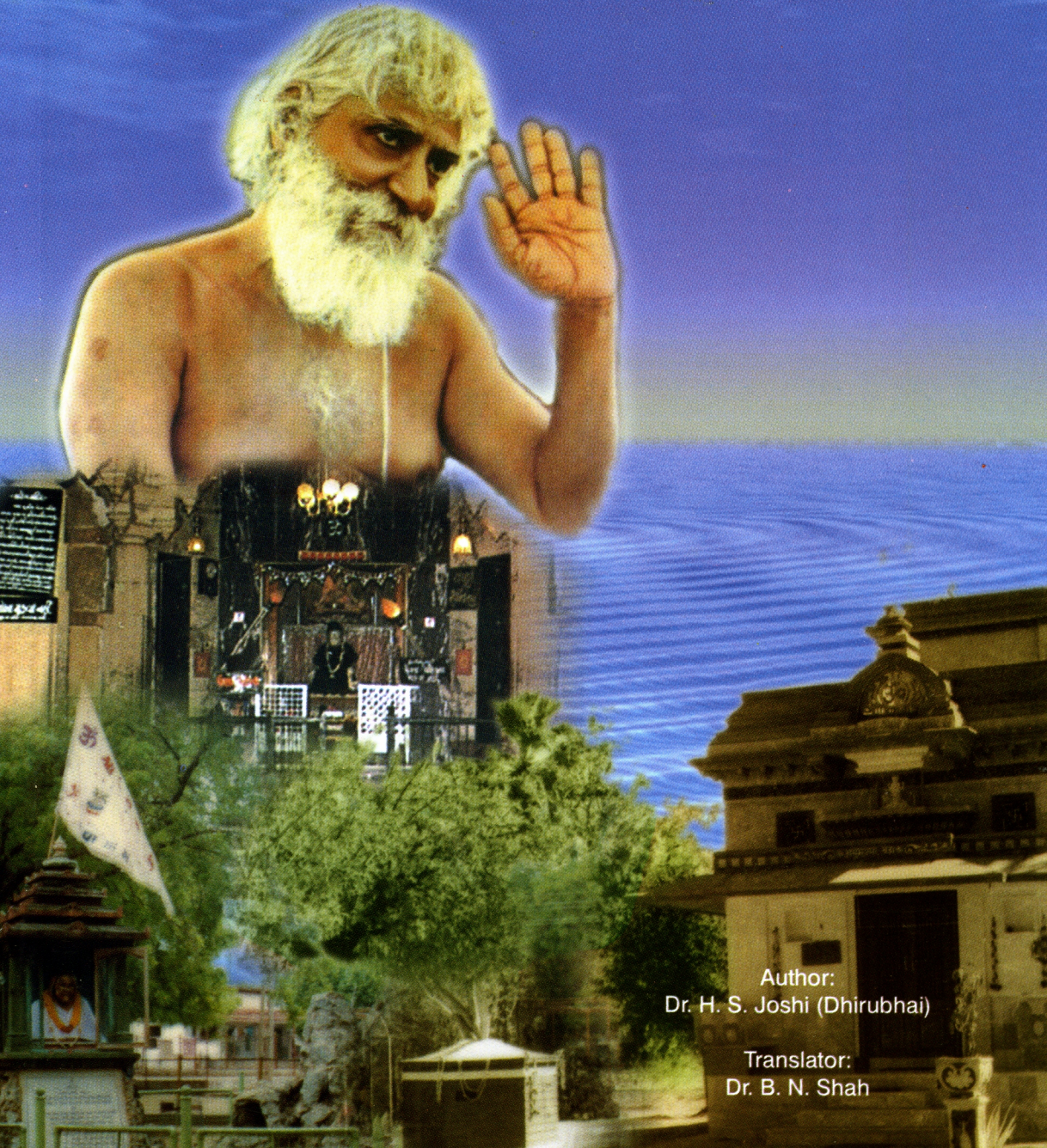


# Raṅga Avadhūta

The Saint of Nāreśvara



Author:  
Dr. H. S. Joshi (Dhirubhai)

Translator:  
Dr. B. N. Shah

# TWENTY FOUR PRECEPTORS OF LORD DATTATREYA.



- |                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. EARTH        | 13. ELEPHANT            |
| 2. AIR          | 14. HONEY- EXTRACTOR    |
| 3. SKY          | 15. DEER                |
| 4. WATER        | 16. FISH                |
| 5. FIRE         | 17. HARLOT              |
| 6. MOON         | 18. LAP'WING            |
| 7. SUN          | 19. CHILD               |
| 8. PEGION       | 20. BANGLES OF A MAIDEN |
| 9. PYTHON       | 21. SNAKE               |
| 10. SEA         | 22. ARROW-SHAPER        |
| 11. BUTTERFLY   | 23. WASP                |
| 12. BUMBLE- BEE | 24. SPIDER              |

One more preceptor added by Rev. Śrī  
Rāṅga Avadhūtājī is one's own body itself

# **Raṅga Avadhūta**

## **The Saint Of Nāreśvara**

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# Raṅga Avadhūta

## The Saint Of Nāreśvara

### AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It was the birth centenary year of Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī. Shri Jayantilal Acharya, Dr. Devdatta Joshi, Dr. Subhash Dave and myself approached to Shri Ambubhai Patel, president Gujarat Pustakālaya Maṇḍala, Gujarat state with a proposal to prescribe a biographical study of Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī for the Gujarātī Śiṣṭa Vācana Parīkṣā being conducted every year by the Maṇḍala. He gladly accepted the proposal and invited me to write the biography and asked to submit the book at the earliest. This happening inspired me to write the biography. It is the divine grace of Pūjyaśrī, I firmly believe, that the task undertaken saw a success.

While drafting I have kept in mind the young generation which needs great life-models before them to lead their lives towards the pathway to God. It is a matter of great satisfaction that this booklet in Gujarātī language is received by the students community so well that more than 45,000 copies are sold.

Again, it gives me great pleasure that Dr. B.N. Shah, a retired professor of English, M. S. University of Baroda has translated the booklet in English language. His services are offered as a devotion towards our Master,

Rev. Raṅga Avadhūta. I am really proud of his noble jesture of friendship towards me and express my regards for him.

Śrī Prem Avadhūtājī, popularly referred as an ‘Elder Brother’ in “Raṅga Avadhūta Parivāra” came to know about this English version and expressed a desire to get it published by Shri Anilbhai N. Shroff (Bombay) and Dr. Dilip Bhatt (U.S.A.), both being always ready to offer services for the noble cause in the interest of the devotees of Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī and Rev. Prem Avadhūtājī, here and abroad. I express my gratitude towards all the three.

I pray my sadguru Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī to bless all who have become an instrument in bringing out this English version.

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**Dr. H. S. Joshi**  
(Dhirubhai)



# Raṅga Avadhūta

## The Saint Of Nāreśvara

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### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

I have been asked to write a brief note or statement about the work I did. I avoided it as politely as I could, the reason being frankly speaking, I still can't much understand Raṅga Avadhūtājī of Nāreśvara, nor can I ever go and touch even a fringe of his spirituality. Raṅga Avadhūtājī was a living image of spirituality to me; he is still there in me. I like to say, "Others abide our questions, thou art free." His image was imprinted in me much before I visited Nāreśvara or came to know Dr. H. S. Joshi.

The seeds were sown in Ankleshwar, and remained dormant for many, many years. My mind is not "quick"; it receives but with experience, it changes sides. Whatever happened, the center remained. The image of this "living spirituality", "life divine" survives in me. This is why I undertook the translation of Dr.Joshi's book.

The translation was an education to me. I could go back to my image and clarify it; Raṅga Avadhūtājī is a growing tree to me. Dr.Joshi's book is a little gem of art; it has a sense of moments, is meticulously structured, is lucidly written. It moves like a serial of scenes; it is not a documentary record, it is selective.

Dr. Joshi and I have been good neighbours in Baroda, both were University teachers now living a retired life. I must add, however, that Dr. Joshi is much more learned and religious than I can ever be.

It has been my good luck that the work of translating fell to my lot. I deeply thank Dr. Joshi, Prem Avadhūtājī, Dr. Dave and all others who helped the publication of this English version.

This translation is offered in spirit of a leaf, a flower, a fruit, a spoon of water at the sacred feet of Raṅga Avadhūtājī.

‘Ishavasyam’

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**Dr. B. N. Shah**



# Raṅga Avadhūta

## The Saint Of Nāreśvara

### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Pūjyaśrī Prem Avadhūtājī who is the closest votary of Rev. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūtājī, the Saint of Nāreśvara during his early visits to USA and CANADA had inspired and initiated many Indians and citizens of the Western countries, settled over there. He now visits the West every year to bless them.

His mission is simply to expound and explain (not to covert ofcourse) the vision and the way of Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī's thinking. He is especially concerned to make it easily accessible to the youth less familiar with Gujarātī language and he does it with love and devotion.

To educate such a new generation in the West, at the instance of Śrī Prem Avadhūtājī and with his blessings ofcourse, we published a few books in English, covering Morning Prayers; Evening Prayers; Dattabāvanī, a Divine Hymn with anotations; Rev. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūtājī's birthday messages to the world and Removal of Tension. These books have raised tremendous curiocity in the West as to Who was this

Raṅga Avadhūta, What was his early life; His educational Background, What were his-thoughts on various subjects and most importantly why did lakhs and lakhs of people flock around him day in and day out. And if he always kept himself away from Wealth, Name and Fame, Publicity, Prestige, Public addresses, Discourses, Press announcements etc. why do lakhs and lakhs of people worship him today like God?

All these questions and many more have been aptly answered in this book. Both Dr. Dhirubhai Joshi and Dr. B. N. Shah have done a wonderful job and prepared this biographical report in simple English.

We are indeed grateful to the author as well as the translator and we also cannot forget Dr. Subhash Dave who not only corrected the proofs but brought the entire presentation in such a good shape.

We also thank the Avadhūta Sāhitya Prakāśana Trusta for granting unconditional permission to publish this book. May God bless all the devotees who have directly or indirectly extended a helping hand to us in bringing out this publication.

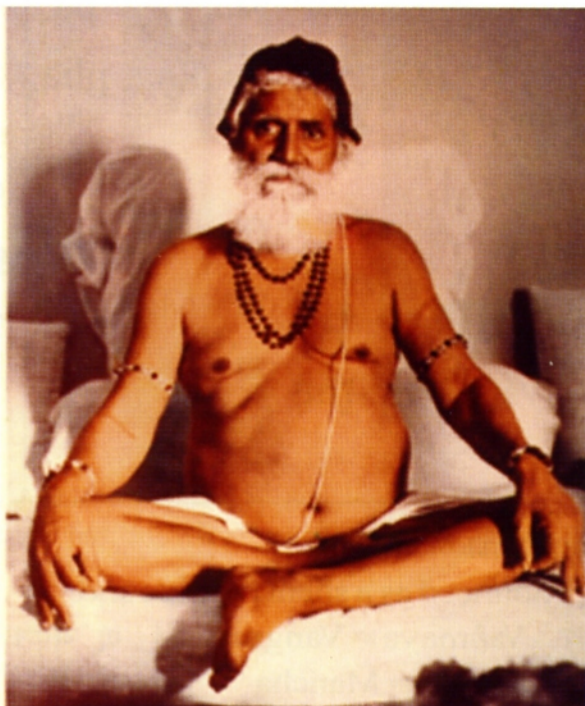
We are indeed glad to put this book at the hands of the non-Gujarātī speaking readers in India and abroad, who, we believe will get Spiritual Insight, Divine Tranquility and Eternal Bliss.

With a respectful prostrate bow at the lotus feet of my Lord and Master Bhagawāna Śrī Raṅga Avadhūtajī and Pūjyaśrī Prem Avadhūtajī without whose blessings this publication would not have been possible, I remain,

June 27, 2006

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**ANIL N SHROFF**



# DIACRITICAL MARKINGS OF VOWELS AND CONSONANTS AND THEIR PRONOUNCIATIONS CHART-I

अ	A, a	क	Ka, ka	ड	Ḍa, ḍa	र	Ra, ra
आ	Ā, ā	ख	K, k	ढ	Ḍha, ḍha	ॠ	Ṛ, ṛ (Mild as in Karyo)
इ	I, i	ग	Kha, kha	ण	Ṇa, ṇa	ॡ	La, la
ई	Ī, ī	घ	Ga, ga	त	Ta, ta	व	Va, va (Wa) (wa)
उ	U, u	ङ	Gha, gha	थ	Tha, tha	श	Śa, śa
ऊ	Ū, ū	च	Ca, ca (Cha), (cha)	द	Da, da	ष	Ṣa, ṣa
ऋ	R, r	छ	C'a, c'a (Chha), (chha)	ध	Dha, dha	स	Sa, sa
ॠ	E, e	ज	Ja, ja	न	Na, na	ह	Ha, ha
ॡ	Ai, ai	झ	Jha, jha (Za) (za)	प	Pa, pa	॥	ḥ (mild as in kaḥyu)
ओ	O, o	ञ	ñ (yn)	फ	Pha, pha (Fa) (fa)	ल	La, la
औ	Au, au	ट	Ṭa, ṭa	ब	Ba, ba	क्ष	Kṣa, kṣa
अं	Am, am	ठ	Ṭha, ṭha	भ	Bha, bha	ज्ञ	Gña, gña
अः	Aḥ, aḥ	ड	Ḍa, ḍa	य	Ya, ya	ॴ	Lṛ, lṛ
						श्री	Śrī, śrī
						त्र	Tra, tra
						:	(विसर्ग) h
						ऽ	(अपव्रह)'
							(*sign indicating the elision of A/a)

Nasal conjunct consonant

‘m̐’ to be pronounced as a silent nasal sound.

इ वाङ्मय Vaṅmaya = Vangmaya

उ मंय Mañca = Mancha

ए मण्डल Maṇḍala

न मन्त्रा Mantraṅā

म् पम्पा Pampā

## CHART-II

### PHONETIC PRONUNCIATIONS OF VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

#### VOWELS : TO BE PRONOUNCED AS

a	(अ)	as	'a'	in	away / normal
ā	(आ)	as	'aa'	in	cār / fāther / fārm
i	(इ)	as	'i'	in	pin / pick / ink
ī	(ई)	as	'ee'	in	feel / peel
u	(उ)	as	'u'	in	put
ū	(ऊ)	as	'oo'	in	pool / foot
ṛ	(ऋ)	as	'rhu'	in	rhubarb (an eatable plant)/ rhuṣhi (ऋषि)
e	(ए)	as	'e'	in	they / then
ai	(ऐ)	as	'ai'	in	snail
o	(ओ)	as	'o'	in	go
au	(औ)	as	'aw'	in	how / owl
am	(अं)	as	'am'	in	amber
ah	(अः)	as	'aha'	in	aha !

#### GUTTURAL CONSONANTS :

ka	(क)	as	'ka'	in	Karate
kha	(ख)	Aspirated 'ka'	as in	Khākī	(Army uniform)/ Khādī (Gandhian dress)
ga	(ग)	as	'ga'	in	gum / gun / guts
gha	(घ)	Aspirated 'ga'	as in	aghaṣṭ	/ ghost
ṇ	(ण)	as	'ṇ'	in	sing/ring/Raṅga Avadhūta

## PALATAL CONSONANTS :

ca	(च)	as	‘cha’ in church / charm
c’a	(छ)	Aspirated ‘ca’ i.e. ‘chha’ in	chhatri (an umbrella) / Chhāyā (a shadow)
ja	(ज)	as	‘ja’ in jungle / judge
jha	(झ)	Aspirated ‘ja’ as in	jhoḷī / hedgehog
ñ	(ञ)	as	‘nya’ in canyon

## RETROFLEX CONSONANTS

(Pronounced with the tongue against the palate) :

ṭa	(ट)	as	‘ṭa’ in ṭub / ṭaṭoo / spirit
ṭha	(ठ)	Aspirated ‘ṭa’ as in	ṭhug (a rouge) / Thākora (a surname)
ḍa	(ड)	as	‘ḍa’ in ḍump / ḍug
ḍha	(ढ)	Aspirated ‘ḍa’ as in	ḍholaka (a small drum)
ṇa	(ण)	(Prepare to say ‘ra’ and say ‘na’) as	in Nārāyaṇa a (a name of God) / śaraṇa a (surrender)

## DENTAL CONSONANTS

(Pronounced with a tongue against the teeth) :

ta	(त)	as	‘ta’ in Tandūra (तंदूर) / Datta
tha	(थ)	Aspirated ‘ta’ as in	Thailand/thunder
da	(द)	as	‘da’ in Dilip / Datta
dha	(ध)	Aspirated ‘da’ as in	dharma (religion)/ Dhobī (a washerman)
na	(न)	as	‘na’ in nut / number / nurse

## BILABIAL CONSONANTS :

pa	(प)	as	'pa'	in	pun / pump / puff
pha	(फ)	Aspirated	'pa' or 'fa'	as in	Pharmacy / fun
ba	(ब)	as	'ba'	in	banana / bump / bee
bha	(भ)	Aspirated	'ba'	in	Bhūmī (earth) / bhaya (fear)
ma	(म)	as	'ma'	in	mother / mud / mind

## OTHER CONSONANTS :

ya	(य)	A Palatal consonant	as in	young / Yogī
ra	(र)	A Retroflex consonant (a rolled 'r')	as in	run
la	(ल)	A Dental consonant,	as in	love / lunch
va	(व)	A Labio dental consonant-	as in	verb/vessel
śa	(श)	A Palatal consonant	as in	shut / shade
ṣa	(ष)	A Retroflex consonant similar to 'sh'	but with folded tongue as in	auśadha (Medicine)
sa	(स)	A Retroflex consonant	as in	sun
ha	(ह)	A Glottal consonant	as in	hut
ḷa	(ळ)	A Retroflex consonant with the tongue at the back of the palate as in	dayāḷa (दयाळ) / haḷa (हळ)	
kṣa	(क्ष)	A compound consonant	as in	rickshaw (रिक्षा) / kṣatriya (क्षत्रिय) (a caste)
jña	(ज्ञ)	A compound consonant	as in	āgnyā (आज्ञा) (order) / gnyāna (ज्ञान) (knowledge)
Śrī	(श्री)	as 'Shree' (a mark of respect)As 'Shree' in	Śrīmāna / Pūjyaśrī	
tra	(त्र)	as	'tra'	in trishūḷa (त्रिशूल=Trident)



# Raṅga Avadhūta

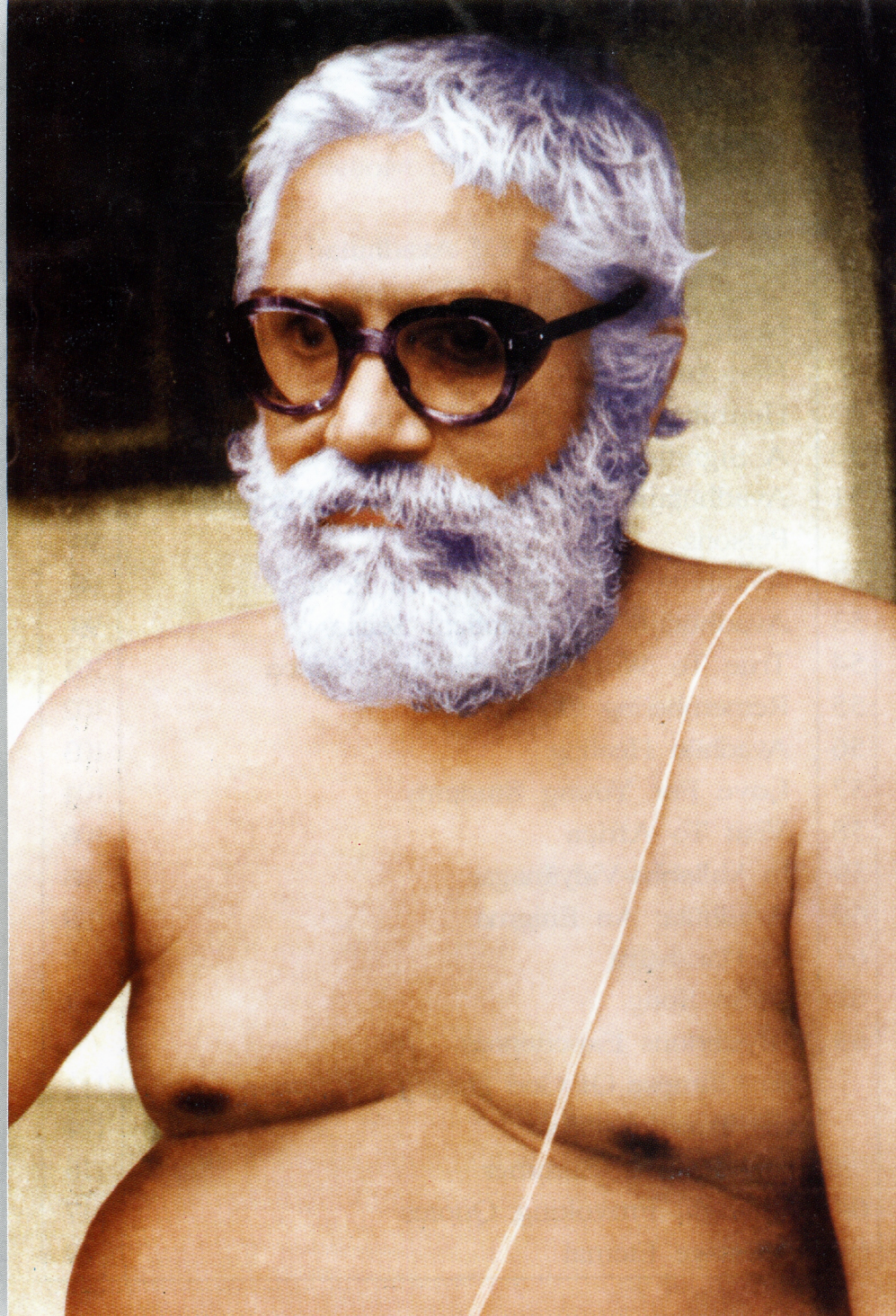
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# Raṅga Avadhūta

## The Saint Of Nāreśvara

### 1. I WANT TO BE BORN IN YOUR FAMILY

Bhārat (India) is a land of saints and sages. God himself loves to be born again and again in various forms in this country. Among all other places in this nation, the state of Maharashtra has earned a distinction of being the loved homeland of Indian Saints.

In the state of Maharashtra, in the district of Ratnāgiri is situated a taluka town called Sangameshvar. Devalēm is an ordinary obscure village in this district. A Brahmin family belonging to the Atri gotra (lineage) lived there. Śrī Jayaram Bhatt who was the head of the family, had four sons. The third son named Viṭṭhala, in the early days of his life showed signs of detachment and a lack of interest in worldly affairs. However, his family was very respectable, and as was the common practice, Viṭṭhalapanta's marriage, was arranged at a very young age.

But, as luck would have it, Viṭṭhalapanta's wife died at a very young age. Now, the seeds of asceticism and renunciation planted early in life began to sprout and grow. He made up his mind to go to Paṇḍharpura and spend the rest of his life in the service of Lord Viṭhobā.

Paṇḍharpura, a centre dedicated to the worship of Viṭhobā (a form of Lord Viṣṇu) is situated on the banks of the river Candrabhāgā. It is a highly religious and holy town frequented for pilgrimage by devotees of Lord Viṣṇu called Vaiṣṇavas. Even today, thousands of devotees carrying flags pay a visit to this temple, especially on the Āṣāḍhī and Kārtikī Ekādaśī days.

As the story goes, a young man named Puṇḍalīka, highly devoted to his parents, was busy serving his parents, washing their feet in worship etc, when Lord Viṣṇu, pleased with his devotion, appeared to bless him with a boon. But Puṇḍalīka was so much engrossed in the service that he threw a brick at the Lord and asked him to wait on it till he finished serving his parents. Lord Viṣṇu did wait on the brick till Puṇḍalīka was free to see him. The Lord then asked him to seek a boon of his choice, whereupon, Puṇḍalīka asked the Lord to remain there- standing on the brick- all the time and fulfill the aspirations of all His devotees and alleviate them from the miseries of life. God was pleased to grant that boon to Puṇḍalīka and it is believed that the Lord is still standing on the brick at Paṇḍharpura looking after His devotees.

Even today you can see Lord Paṇḍharīnātha Viṭṭhala standing on the brick. 'Viṭ', in Marāṭhī, means a brick. God standing on a brick is called Viṭṭhala.

Viṭṭhalapanta came to such a religious and pious place to settle down. He stayed there for sometime and

his ascetic nature was nourished. He got a dream one night in which Viṭhobā himself appeared and ordered Viṭṭhalapanta to return home. "I want to be born in your family" Viṭhobā told him. At first Viṭṭhalapanta could not understand and believe what he heard in the dream but once again the same message was heard. When Viṭṭhalapanta ignored both the dream messages, God appeared in front of him in the dream and scolded him, "Why don't you understand? Go back home and marry again. There is a maiden girl in Moṅghe family in Pālī waiting for you. Marry her. I want to take birth in your family." After that, Viṭṭhalapanta returned home and conveyed Lord's message to his family. Jayarāma Bhatt was naturally very happy to learn as to why he had come back home. On making enquiries he found the girl named Kāśī in the Moṅghe family at Pālī. The dream was true and Viṭṭhalapanta married Kāśī. After marriage, as it is the custom in southern families, Kāśī was renamed Rukmīṇī.

## **2. VIṬṬHALAPANTA IN GODHARĀ**

Śrī Jayarāma Bhatt had a friend named Sakhārāma Sarpotdar who lived in Godharā in the state of Gujarat. There was a temple in his house dedicated to the worship of Lord Viṭṭhala. He was looking for a priest for this temple to perform the daily rituals. When Sakhārāma visited Devalerṇ, he came to know the story of Viṭṭhalapanta, and he requested his old friend Jayarāma

Bhatt to send Viṭṭhalapanta and his wife Rukmīṇī with him to Godharā and serve and look after the Viṭṭhala temple. “Let this couple come to Godharā. I very much need Viṭṭhalapanta’s service in the temple as he is well versed in the performance of daily rituals and sacrifices to the holy fire. He is also conversant with the scriptures too.”

Jayarāma Bhatt was not quite willing to heed to this proposal and his heart resisted it, but Viṭṭhalapanta himself said, “Dear father, let me go to Godharā; I shall get a chance to worship Viṭhobā and it will give me immense pleasure. Jayarāma Bhatt agreed and thus Viṭṭhalapanta and Rukmīṇī came to live in Godharā and here they started their family life. As Viṭṭhalapanta was a priest of Vedic learning he became well-known and popular in the Pañcamahāla district and the surrounding area. He was an expert in performing yagnas, rites of sacrifices to holy Fire. He was not a greedy Brahmin or a Priest; he led a simple life of strict piety. He earned his livelihood in a very righteous way and this helped him win the respect and love of people of Godharā, especially the devotees of Lord Viṭṭhala.

Rukmīṇī was an ideal Hindu wife; She was devoted and loyal. Above all she was a contented wife who found her joy of life in the happiness of her husband. She observed all religious festivals, kept pledges and fasts. She was very austere in life. She never failed to take

rounds of the Tulsi plant as a daily ritual. She also helped Sakhārāma Sarpotdar's wife in the household work. Her routine was quite demanding. She herself drew water from the well every day and used the same water for cooking and drinking and other household work. Even in cooking food the same holiness was strictly maintained. She even prevented any body else touching the food that she was cooking. She would not transgress any rule of pious conduct. All others respected her punctiliousness- religious formalities.

As days passed by Rukmīṇī conceived and everyone at the temple and those who knew the family were overjoyed at the good news.

### **3. PĀṆḌURAṅGA IS BORN**

Ekādaśī, the eleventh day of the month of Kārtik is a very special sacred day for the devotees of Lord Viṭṭhala. Every year a big fair is held in Paṇḍharpura and there are many festivities. You will hear the chants of "Viṭṭhala, Viṭṭhala" in the whole country and abroad, wherever there is a Viṭṭhala temple. This festival is celebrated with gaiety and fervour. All around devotees sing devotional songs and chant hymns in chorus.

Rukmīṇī was in the last month of her pregnancy. There was an atmosphere of piety all around; everyone was chanting the name of God and suddenly a fierce fire broke out in the neighbourhood. Everyone rushed with their pots and buckets filled with water to quench the

fire as there were no firebrigades in those days. People were busy drawing water from near-by wells to extinguish the huge flames of fire. Rukmīṇī was so kind-hearted and selfless that ignoring her own condition, she joined others in their efforts to fetch water. Her exemplary spirit and determination impressed all. The fire was extinguished with the help of the people and soon thereafter Rukmīṇī began to feel labour pains. The day was Gopa Aṣṭamī- Cowherd's day. The eighth and ninth day of Kārtika month fell on the sameday i.e. they overlapped, and on such an auspicious day a baby boy was born to Rukmīṇī. There was abundant joy everywhere. According to the English calender, it was 21st November, 1898 and as the Hindu calender goes it was 9th day of the month Kārtika, Vikram Samvat 1955. It is known as Kuṣmāṇḍa Navamī. That marks a beginning of a new age (i.e. Satyuga). Sweets were distributed in and around the temple. Appropriate rites were performed after the birth. Everyone was happy. The boy was named Pāṇḍuraṅga. But fondly everyone called him Bābu.

It seems Lord Viṭṭhala of Paṇḍharpura took birth as promised to Sri Viṭṭhalapanta through the medium of oft repeated dreams and before his appearance in this world, the fire in Godharā got extinguished.

#### 4. PĀṆDURĀṅGA BEGINS TO SPEAK

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Bābu started speaking when he was almost one and a half years old. Not only that but even at that tender age, he showed signs of thinking for himself which is evident in the following incident.

There was an epidemic of plague in Godharā. Many people died everyday and funeral processions passed by the home of little Bābu. Such a procession was carrying a corpse one day.

Bābu, a little child of one and half years age, sitting by the side of his father asked the father: “What are they carrying tied up in knots? Why are they crying?”

The father replied, “The person being carried is dead and the corpse is being taken to a cemetery on a pier to be burnt.”

Immediatly another question followed: “Will he have no burns on his body when put on fire?” The father remarked, “After death no one feels burns”. The questions stopped here but, on the following day, seeing another corpse, the little boy continued his questions: “Will you too die? What about my mother? Will you two be also burnt?” The father wanted to stop further questions, so he said in one word, “Yes”.

However the child came out with a new question: “What happens after death?”

The father said, “There is re-birth”.

The child further questioned, “Will he not have to die once again?” The question was not answered by his

father. Soon after, the child himself raised a new question, “Is there a way to stop this chain of birth and death and re-birth?”

The father’s reply was, “If you continuously chant the name of God Rāma, this doesn’t occur; it ends.”

The answer appealed to the child and he was satisfied. He received a graduation message -a gospel of “Rāma-Raṭaṇa” recital of Rāma’s name from the father and, whenever the child was alone by himself, he was heard repeating Rāma’s name.

## **5. DEATH OF THE FATHER**

When Pāṇḍuraṅga was three years old Viṭṭhalapanta-Rukmīṇī were blessed with another son who was named Nārāyaṇa. When Nārāyaṇa was a year and a half old father Viṭṭhalapanta fell prey to the epidemic of plague in Godharā.

The disease proved fatal and when Pāṇḍuraṅga was five years old and Nārāyaṇa was hardly one and a half years, their father passed away. Their mother was now helpless and could see no way to support the family. She had two little sons and was living in an alien district.

She could look upon the Sarpotdāra family as her relatives but Sakhārāma, unfortunately, died of shock after the death of his friend’s son, Viṭṭhalapanta. Even then, the mother Rukmīṇī proved to be very courageous. She ignored her own miseries and problems and devoted

her energies to the upbringing of her two sons and some how she didn't want the two sons to feel the absence of their father.

The sons were equally sensible and co-operative; they made no demands on the mother and they were neither obstinate nor adamant at all. The family lived together affectionately and contentedly.

One day, the little boy Pāṇḍuraṅga was playing in the street, barely covered with clothes. He was wearing only a loin cloth on his body. The mother said, "Bābu, go and put on your clothes. The district collector is passing through our street today" The boy returned, "If the collector feels ashamed he himself will cover me with clothes".

Once, the family had no vegetables to cook for the evening meal. A woman in the neighbourhood had bought some brinjals, so she gave some to Rukmīṇī. When Pāṇḍuraṅga came to know about this he told his mother, "Mother, we can do without vegetables but please do not borrow anything from anyone hereafter; Remember, you are the mother of a Lion".



## 6. PĀṆḌURAṅGA'S SACRED THREAD CEREMONY AND HIS INITIATION IN NARASOBĀ WĀḌĪ

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The two boys, Pāṇḍuraṅga and Nārāyaṇa were growing up fast and the time came to arrange their sacred thread ceremony. So the mother left for Devaḷeṁ with her sons and the rites of initiation to learning were performed.

While they were returning from Devaḷeṁ they paid a visit to Narasobāwāḍī to offer their homage to the footprints of Nṛsiṁha Sarasvatī Swāmī Mahārāja and obtain the blessings of the Deity. This wāḍī is the very place where Śrī Nṛsiṁha Sarasvatī, believed to be the incarnation of Lord Dattātreya, performed his countless miracles and acts of Divine play i.e. “Līlā”. It is situated near Sāṅgalī in Mahārāṣṭra. Even today one can visit the temple, feel the Bliss and Tranquility and experience relief from tension and miseries of life. Thousands of devotees visit every year to glimpse the Lord's foot-prints i.e. Pādukā. There is no idol to worship at Wāḍī.

Rev. Śrī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī Swāmī Mahārāja, the saint of Māṇagāmva, who attained samādhi (i.e. relinquished his physical body) at Garuḍeśvara in Gujarat on the banks of the holy river Narmadā, was spending his days at Wāḍī at the time when Pāṇḍuraṅga and Nārāyaṇa visited the place after their sacred thread

ceremony. As good luck would have it, the family could go there and see the saint and pay their respects to him. It was a day of joy to the family as they felt blessed.

The little boy Pāṇḍuraṅga, on seeing the great saint, ran towards him, but his aunt stopped him and said: “you can’t touch the saint wearing these clothes. You can touch his feet from a distance.” However, the Swāmijī immediately said: “Oh! this child is ours. Dear child! To whom do you belong?”

The boy answered. “to you only”.

After this incident Śrī Raṅga Avadhūtājī (as Pāṇḍuraṅga would later be referred to) used to say quite often, “Since that very moment at Wāḍī I had laid my head at my master’s feet; I haven’t taken it away from him even today. Avadhūta is thus headless”.

Thus Pāṇḍuraṅga met his spiritual guide and Master at the age of eight; soon after his sacred thread ceremony. The moment marks a spiritual awakening and initiation in young Pāṇḍuraṅga.

## 7. AT SCHOOL

Pāṇḍuraṅga received his elementary education at schools in Godharā. He was his teachers’ favourite. He maintained first or second rank in his studies; He was generally a quiet boy. He played pranks, though not quite often, but his image as a sober and a disciplined student, remained with all. He made it a practice to make small pieces of paper, write on them

the message of his father and put them at God Hanumāna's feet. He reflected deeply upon what he had read.

Once it so happened that his friend Hariprasāda was threatened by a bully who asked for an encounter with him on the banks of the river where he would break his bones to pieces. The ruffian was a rich man's son and was popular with such bullies.

Hariprasāda related his story to Pāṇḍuraṅga who could not tolerate such oppression. He asked his friend, "Do you have a sword or a club that looks like a sword?" "Yes, said Hariprasāda. I have a wooden sword." Pāṇḍuraṅga said, "Bring it along with you."

The rich boy, with many of his friends who were equally unruly and wild, reached the spot on the appointed day and time. There were only Hariprasāda and Pāṇḍuraṅga- to confront them. But as soon as they reached the bank of the river, Pāṇḍuraṅga roared, "Come on; who is there to beat Hariprasāda? I shall destroy them all with this sword." So saying, he began to whirl his sword around. The leader of the bullies was impressed by this prowess of Pāṇḍuraṅga and felt that he should rather make such courageous friends than cowards who happen to be wealthy. The tables were turned and the bully had to run away, not Hariprasāda.

## **8. EXAMINATION - ORAL**

There used to be held in those days, a school final examination and successful candidates got jobs easily. Many students used to appear for this examination. The oral test was difficult because the examiner was a British official.

Pāṇḍuraṅga appeared for this test. The examiner was Principal Robertson who was well known for his strict nature. Pāṇḍuraṅga's friends had cautioned him that, if he didn't use proper words, he would fail. So, they said, "Control your tendency and habit of teasing." The reply came: "Time will take care of itself." As soon as Pāṇḍuraṅga stood in front of Mr. Robertson, his dress, his shaven head and his appearance in general was noticed by the Britisher who smiled to himself at the appearance of the boy. This was noted by the student also at first sight.

The first question Robertson asked Pāṇḍuraṅga was: "What is all this funny odd dress and appearance?" Pāṇḍuraṅga replied, "There are two ways to answer your question- one is a simple straightforward answer to your question and the other is by asking a counter question to you. Which one would you prefer? I will answer accordingly".

Robertson soon sensed that the student had a quick mind and said with a smile: "As you please".

Pāṇḍuraṅga then answered, “Sir, beauty depends upon a beholder’s eyes. You may dislike what I like. My dress appears strange and funny to you where as (pointing at the neck-tie, he said, “the tie...to me) the tie you wear is equally odd to me.

Robertson said that it is a religious symbol. “So are these threads of my religion: my shaven head, my mark on the forehead”, Pāṇḍuraṅga rejoined. Robertson then asked, “Do you cease to be a Hindu without them?” Pāṇḍuraṅga: “If you don’t wear a tie, do you cease to be a Christian?”

Robertson replied: “No, no. By wearing it I remind myself that I should be a good christian.”

Pāṇḍuraṅga: “So it is with us”.

Robertson remarked that it was very odd to shave your head.

Pāṇḍuraṅga politely replied that India is a poor country. “We have to spend four annas (one fourth of a Rupee) to get our hair cut. If you go for a clean-shaven head like mine, you pay only a paise (One sixty fourth of a Rupee). Besides it keeps my head cool and open for new ideas.” Robertson: “Oh! is it so?”

Pāṇḍuraṅga said, “Please try it for yourself. You may fail me if you don’t find it so.”

And Robertson laughed. He was greatly pleased with the student’s clarity of words and thoughts and the courageous manner in which he answered the questions.

He said to Pāṇḍuraṅga: “Go, you are awarded the first rank”.

## 9. POWER OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

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Once Pāṇḍuraṅga was to take his intermediate examination. He fell ill before the examination and grew very weak. To make matters worse, one Sanyāsī who visited him predicted that his stars were unfavourable and that he might fail. He suggested to him to miss the test and save reputation; as the excuse of ill health was readily available.

In spite of this prediction, Pāṇḍuraṅga was full of great self-confidence. He had worked hard through out the year; he, of course, couldn't read much at the last moment due to illness. He would take medicines but would certainly take the examination! He might not get first class, he said to himself, but was sufficiently prepared for a second class.

He appeared for the examination despite the discouragement of many well-wishers. As he was weak, he had to ask for a writer but when the result was declared, he had passed the exam in second class.

Then he teased that Sanyāsī and jokingly (in good humour) said, "Swāmījī, you may now tear off your astrology book. I have passed the examination." Swāmījī replied, "This is the age of Kali." Did the Kali age disappear while you were reading the horoscope?" the young boy asked.

## 10. UNFLINCHING FAITH IN GOD

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Pāṇḍuraṅga was a young student at Baroda college. He had to pay examination fees for the second semester and he had no money. He was against borrowing money or begging from anyone. Some of his friends were discussing amongst themselves as to how this problem could be solved but Pāṇḍuraṅga wasn't at all upset and said, "If God has willed for me to study further, he shall make some arrangements for the payment of fees. No sooner had he said this than a voice was heard, "Who is P. V. Valāme amongst you?" Pāṇḍuraṅga Viṭthalapanta Valāme was his full name.

Someone said, "There, he is." He was then given nearly two hundred and fifty rupees by the caller who said "Please, accept this amount and relieve me of my obligation and debt."

Valāme said, "Sir, I do not know you. Nor have I lent any money to anyone, I don't remember to have done any way. So how can I accept this amount?"

The caller then narrated the whole story to Pāṇḍuraṅga. "My father had borrowed money from your father long ago at the time of some crisis. Since he couldn't repay the amount, he asked me, to repay the sum to his descendant whenever I could. To keep his word I have come looking for you." Pāṇḍuraṅga and his friends were happy that they had money to pay the exam fees. His faith in God grew stronger and it is further confirmed in his future life.

## **11. BEHIND THE SCENES**

Once some students were playing cricket on the college ground. A large crowd of students, professors and the local residents had gathered there and the game was getting very exciting.

At that time a high ranking Military Officer of the Gaekwara Government passed by the place, whirling around his cane baton which hurt some students around him. The students were annoyed and enraged and they surrounded him. With this the military official got angry and more aggressive and beat a few students violently. So they held a meeting of the students and professors. It was unanimously agreed that something must be done about it but couldn't decide the course of action. So they approached Pāṇḍuraṅga Valāme who advised them to go on a peaceful sit down strike. There should be absolutely no violence but classes should not be attended. they shouldn't collect in a crowd and under no circumstances there should be any destructive activities.

Notices were circulated amongst the students the same night and a call for strike was made public. In the whole city there was an atmosphere of resentment against that official. At that time the Principal of the college, who was out of town when the incident occurred, returned from the trip. He was informed of the incident. He understood the situation and counselled the students to remain calm and peaceful. He also advised them, call off the strike and be patient till he came back from Bombay.

The students heeded the advice of the Principal. The Principal, on his return, wrote a note to the government and to the surprise of all there was an apology letter from the same officer on the college notice-board. This proved that Vaḷāme was a clever and a brave leader and they all began to talk about his leadership qualities, his wisdom and judgement. But Pāṇḍuraṅga never sought publicity or applause. He always preferred to work behind the scene.

## **12. IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE**

Lokamānya Tilak passed away in 1921. The students held a condolence meeting in the Baroda Jubilee garden. Pāṇḍuraṅga, who had high regards for Tilak, also participated in the tributes paid to the great leader. He spoke very movingly. One or two of his subsequent letters exhibited as to how deeply he felt sorry and sad at the demise of the freedom fighter. How deeply he took it to his heart and how much he respected the departed leader. “Lokamānya is dead and the whole India cried. So did we all.”

Pāṇḍuraṅga loved his country and his patriotism was evident since his college days. Gandhiji was then taking up leadership of the freedom struggle. Gandhiji’s call to the students was: “Serve your country and that is your tryst with destiny.

Pāṇḍuraṅga wrote on the notice-board “I am giving up studies for the freedom of our country; one who

desires to follow me may do so.” In fact only the last term was left when he left his studies. At home the family was waiting for him to complete his studies and start earning their livelihood. Pāṇḍuraṅga was not unaware of the situation and the poverty in the family. But freedom of the motherland was on the top of his mind and could not care for anything else. He sacrificed his bright future for India’s freedom.

### **13. FOLLOWING GANDHIJI**

Pāṇḍuraṅga attended one of the Congress conventions before he left his studies. He introduced himself as a representative of Baroda College, and Gandhiji asked him: “Where do you come from?”

Valāme replied: From Baroda College as a representative of the students.

Gandhiji asked: “What is the guarantee that you are a representative?”

Pat came the reply from Valāme: “That question might arise if someone challenges. Who appoints lion as the king of the forest?”

Gandhiji stared admirably at this student, radiant with self-confidence, courage, ready wittedness and couldn’t help saying, “India’s independence is at hand if I get a hundred such students.”

Pāṇḍuraṅga came back to Ahmedabad and started writing in dailies and weeklies. He stayed at Swarāja Āśrama (Hostel) for sometime. At that time he was writing