

Om

Kind, benevolent, meditative seer
Sri Vishwottama Theertha

Translated by G.Vijaya kumar

**vyAsAya BhavanAshAya srishAya gunarAashinE
hridayAya shuDhavidyAya madhvAya cha namO namah**

**kAmaDhEnuryathApUrvam sarvABhishta PhalapradAyinE
thaThA kalau vAdirAjasripAdhOBhEshThadah sathAm**

**BhUtharAja namasthuBhyam vAdirAjugurupriya
vidrAvya sarvaBhAdAm nah sadhA thvam rakshanam kuru**

**kOlavyAsahayagrIvapadakanjamaDhuvratam
SrivishvathamayOgindram vandEham vAdirAt priyam**

Our Bharat is holy and revered land of karma. It is the land of sAdana. It is also the land where the Lord himself incarnates to punish the evil and protect the righteous. This is also the land hallowed by incarnations of several gods in the form of saints and seers showing the path of the righteous – all by the grace and bidding of the Lord himself. As in several other ages, vAyudEvaru (wind god), several Rujus have graced the land with their presence in this kaliyuga too and worked for the benefit and upliftment of the people and land. As per an ancient edict “thvam maDhvam mArutham sarvE parivArathayA sadhA | samsEvitham sadhA BhUmaU avathErurithi sPutham|” Sri vAyudevaru incarnated as Sri Madhva established his siDhAnta and clearly enunciated the righteous and pious way of living. Following this, several gods have come down to earth to set the tone of righteousness.

Many of these went on to become seers and heads of the several mutts which were set up by Acharya Sri Madhva. They successfully propagated the madhva precepts embodying righteous and dharmic living among the good people by their own exemplary lives. They planted the seeds of the right dharmic way of living and touched the hearts of the people. One of such paramparas founded by Acharya Sri Madhva, the ‘vedAntagurusOdara’ of Sri VishnutheerthachArya’s lineage is famous. BhAvisamIra Sri vAdirAja, Sri VrindAvanAcharya who was qualified to be Indra and such other illustrious seers were jewels in this

parampara. Sri Visvothama Teertha was the head of this mutt during the second half of the last century and until recently into this century.

Sri Vishvothama Teertha was an exemplary seer and disciplined practitioner of the sanyasi's ways of life. He was a soldier in following the precepts of the siDhAnta of the founder of his lineage, a meditative and thoughtful soul. By the grace of the Lord Sri Vishvatham Teertha was the repository of enormous wisdom, an awareness of the ways and precepts of righteous living in all its details and displayed a very disciplined and exemplary life of his status as a yati. A height in keeping with his build, a pleasant and ever lasting smile on his face, eyes direct and reflecting his innate kindness, listening patiently and with understanding to the woes of devotees and responding to them with a prayer and softly suggesting remedies – these were the characteristics of Sri VishvothamaTeertha who graced the seat once hallowed by BhAvisamIra Sri vAdirAja.

The revered seer was born in the year 1934 in the pushya year, bahula thrayOdashi day. Udyavara near Udupi was the place of his birth. Beloved son of Srimati Krishnaveni and Sri Krishnacharya, he was named Madhava. After naming ceremony followed by other rituals at birth and upanayana, the boy drew the attention of the then head of mutt, Sri Vishvendra Theertha swamiji. The swamiji wished to ordain Madhava into sanyasa and appoint him as his successor. The parents were very reluctant when first approached. Following indications received in their dreams, the parents relented and handed over their beloved son into the service of Madhava. In the year 1943 – in the year of svabhanu, Bhadrapada shuDha chatruthi, Sri Vishvendra Theertha ordained Madhavacharya into sanyasa, named him Sri Vishvothama Teertha and accepted him as his pupil. The day being Sri Vigneshwara chaturthi, indications were that the new swamiji would face no obstacles in his new life. Accepting his new Ashram made his character bloom like smoldering gold. The guru passed away soon after. The new swamiji continued his education in vEdAnata and other scriptures under the tutelage of the eminent scholar and great monk of Sri KAniyUr mutt Sri VidyAsamudra Theertha. The guru was greatly pleased with the progress made by his pupil, his intelligence, grasping power, his incessant, intense and thoughtful application of mind to his studies.

Adept in his grasp and knowledge of the shastras, Sri Visvothama Theertha later on became the tutor and guru of Sri VidyAsAgara Teertha of Sri KrishnApur mutt among others. His style of tutoring was brilliant, incomparable, He was adept at explaining each word of the shastras with their hidden meanings. He was also adept and versatile in quoting extensively the precepts in the shastras in support of his lessons.

Born in the lineage of Sri Vishnu Theertha, a brother of Sri Acharya Madhva, Sri Vishvatham Theertha was a confluence of renunciation, meditation and knowledge. With full blessings from BhAvisamIra Sri vAdirAja, he himself readily blessed the devotees. The grand rituals prescribed from Sri vAdiraja, followed diligently by Sri vEdavEdya Theertha and others reached its grandiose zenith during the time of Sri Vishvatham Theertha. Repository of vast knowledge, special intellectual endowments, given to deep meditation, he never hankered after publicity, fame or awards. He firmly believed that a yati should be akin to a fruit concealed by leaves. He loved being alone and pursued all practices, rituals, meditation and studies natural to his ashrama. This he believed was natural, pleasant, pleasing to the Lord and good for the world.

His humble and gracious approach to parampara and accepted practices was exemplary. His belief and adherence to the precepts of Sri Acharya Madhva too was exemplary. He felt very conscious and conducted himself responsibly towards the status of Sri vAdirAja as ruju and the wonder of Sri Bhootaraja. He never decried other's beliefs or seers and ancient followers of other beliefs. He respected and accepted with humility the parampara of his lineage and the divine presence in Sode. He was always pleased with the haridasas and displayed great respect and regard for them.

He held the haridasAs in high esteem and displayed reverence towards them. Conscious of their significance, he respected and paid obeisance to PurandaradAsa and others of the dAsa parampara. He also held in high esteem and paid obeisance to Sri Vishnu Theertha of Madanur, Sri RAghavendra Swamy of Mantralaya, Sri Raghuprema Theertha of Adoni, VyAsatathvagna of Venisomapura, Sri Vijayindra of Kumbhakona, Sri Raghothama Theertha of Tirukoyalur, Sri Sathyabodha of Savanur.

His way of treating strangers too as known persons was exemplary. Those on whom he used to bestow his kind look would undoubtedly become free of their unpious deeds. His unceasing meditation, darshana and teachings were of special benefit. The seer loved his solitary, contemplative times. These were the times he used for in depth study of scriptures that would bestow the Lord's grace. He was fond of relentless study and contemplation of writings of sidhanta. He had great interest in collection and preservation of manuscripts. His memory and instant recall of lines from SuthrabhAshya, Yuktimallika and numerous other tomes were remarkable. His style of teaching along with discussions was unique and encouraged the power of analysis and thinking in his pupils. The seer brought to light the writings of Sri vAdirAja and other thinkers and published them. In June 2006 he established "Sri BhAvisamIra Gurukula" in

Sode with the noble purpose of teaching the shastras. His interest in creating a large pool of vidwans with clear understanding of Sri vAdirAja as a ruju was immense. In accordance with his wishes, construction of a building and facilities for the gurukula is in progress.

The revered seer was always of tranquil mind. His dictionary did not have the word anger. The recent unseemly questioning of the rujutva of Sri vAdirAja was treated by the seer with great patience and no protest. "Ishwarsveyva sankalpo yathashakhti tathabhaveth" proclaimed the seer. The seer never considered the rujutva of Sri vAdirAja as a property of the mutt but deemed it as a clearly stated precept. He therefore did not deem it necessary to oppose those who questioned the precept. He was content of the correctness of his knowledge in the matter. The seer was without enemies and was always full of kindness. He had the ability to consider deeply and patiently. His words were as if touched with the nectar of life, were pleasant, were soothing with a healing touch, dispelled worries and tranquil and effective. He was free of desires, had very little desire to travel, never undertook travel for collection of money. His travels were limited to contact and extension of kindness to his devotees. He shunned publicity of all kinds. All his actions were with as prayers to Sri vAdirAja and Sri Bhootaraja. He therefore had divine help and guidance in all his endeavours. His aims were noble. His achievements were mountainous.

"VinayOthi hi BhUshayathi sarvarasam" - The seer's humble and pleasant behaviour towards one and all were beyond description. This characteristic of his lead him to numerous miraculous events through the Lord's grace. The appearance of Bhageerathi in Holehonnur at the site hallowed by Sri Sathyadharma Theertha, darshan of the Lord in the form of a Brahmin at Srikoorma, the events at Gandaki and obtaining of a saligrama from a brilliant young Brahmin named Sri VEdanidhi, appearance in dream of Sri Gopaladasa while at Uttanur, vision of Sri Vishnu Theertha's brindavan in Madanur as large as himalaya, darshan of Manvi's famous haridasa while in Manvi, signs of presence of Sri vAdirAja and Sri Bhootaraja at dedication of stone inscription of Sri swApanavrindAvanAKyAna at Sode - these are but a few illustrious examples of miracles by the grace of the Lord on the seer. Hundreds of other such events can be enumerated.

The revered sage has completed four paryayas in worship of Lord Krishna at Udupi and thus gained the honorific of 'yadukulathilaka'. He has constructed a special structure incorporating inscription of swapnavrindavanAkhyana in front of the panchavrindavans in Sode and dedicated the same to Lord Hayagriva. During his third paryaya (1980), he celebrated grandly the five hundredth birth anniversary of Sri vAdirAja.. In the year 2000 he has conducted the four hundredth aradhana of Sri vAdirAja. He continued the traditional and

meaningful annual celebration for Sri RamAtrivikrama as also aradhana of Sri vAdiraja in a grand manner. The revered seer had visited numerous pilgrim centres described by Sri vAdirAja in his treatise -Theerthaprabhanda- starting from Udupi covering Rameshwara, Badari and Shambala where the Lord is said to incarnate in kaliyuga as Kalki. He had visited various holy rivers in India commencing from mishratheertha in north India and assimilated an enormous amount of punya. He also undertook renovation and reconstruction of several facilities belonging to his mutt. The renovation of all buildings in Sode is of historical significance. Facilities and buildings in Bilagi, KenchagAru, nArala, NaDenthAyi, KumBhasi and HUvinakere were successfully carried out in his time. He also set up a shelter for cows in HUvinakere. The educational institutions in INanje were also developed well under his guidance.

Sode was the most favourite place of the revered seer. It was here that he spent most time - particularly his chAturmAsa days and other eventful periods every year. No wonder he was showered with blessings from Sri vAdirAja and Sri BhootarAja.

Favoured by the Lord, the revered seer's sense of time and punctuality were worthy of praise and emulation. In 73 years of his life span, 64 years were spent as a renunciate and monk. His predecessor passed away within a short time after ordaining him into sanyAsa - a month and five days. The very young successor carried out his duties including daily worship without aid for 63 years. All this with his legendary punctuality. Never did he deviate in this or his meditations and cause inconvenience to devotees. Even after accepting and ordaining his successor, the seer continued diligently in his duties. On the day of his passing away too, the seer was in sode observing chatrurmasa. The daily dharmic activities continued. Sri Vishvavallabha Theertha the new initiate remained in Udupi assisting the paryaya swamiji of KrishnApur mutt in his puja and other activities.

The day was shravana shukla panchami (the year was 2007). As was his regular practice, the revered swamiji finished his morning ablutions and bath before dawn. He performed with diligence his regular worship of the deities of the mutt, at Sri vAdirAja's panchabrindavans and at Sri BhootarAja's shrine. He dispensed theertha (holy water) to over 400 devotees present. To the chanting of vedic verses, he lighted a lamp and inaugurated the aradhana celebrations of late Sri Gurugovindadasa. He spoke of the exemplary service rendered by Guru Govindadasa in elucidating the rujutva of Sri vAdirAja. He implored the gathered devotees and scholars to continue to elucidate and educate others of the rujutva of Sri vAdiraja. This alas proved to be his last and lasting wish. He patiently heard the inaugural address by Vidwan Sri Pushkaraprasadacharya in support of the rujutva precept. Closeby a havan for swapnavrindavankhyana

was in progress. After partaking his meal, he listened to the large gathering of devotees and as usual bestowed his blessings and good wishes on them along with phalamantrakshathe. Gurugovindadasa's disciple Sri VarAhaarivittala of Mandya presented the swamiji a copy of his mentor's manuscript a rendering in part of Yukhtimallika of Sri vAdirAja. The seer glanced at the manuscript, handed it back, suggested that it be shown to Sri Nippani Acharya before publication and blessed the venture with phalamanthrakshathe.

Immediately following the above incident, in the presence of the large gathering, the revered sage raised his hands heavenwards, uttered the words "rAmA, rAmA, rAmA" and passed away from this world – with no distortion in his physical features but with a face indicating supreme tranquility. Later on too this pleasant expression continued as if he was merely in a meditative trance.

The large number of people gathered that day rushed in for a darshan of the great sage, shed their tears and praised the character of the sage. His pupil and successor Sri Vishvavallabha Teertha came rushing from Udupi with other devotees of the mutt and the pontiff of Shirur mutt. The pupil's sense of loss was awesome. With chantings and a band playing, the body was taken in a procession to dhavaltheertha. After the ritual bath, the body was taken to the presence of rAmathrivikrama, Sri Bhootaraja and Sri vAdirAja's panchavrindavans. The body adorned with holy beads and to the accompaniment of vedic chants and due heraldry was taken to the site of nine vrindavans (of earlier heads of the mutt). Next to the vrindavan of Sri Varaha Teertha, the sage's body was committed to earth.

Sri Vishvotham Theerthas seventythree years on this earth was meaningful and satisfactory. His conduct and character were exemplary. His ideals were free of any ego. He did not differentiate his pupils on the basis of their geographical origin. All those who believed in the rujutva of Sri vAdirAja he broadmindedly considered his own and sought to alleviate their sufferings and lead them gently into righteous ways as a gentle mentor. Sri Vishvotham Theertha was by the grace of the Lord and his own studious ways, adept and was a scholarly repository of in depth knowledge in Vedanta, literature, music, Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Allopathy, Sculpture, Yoga, Dharmashasthras among others.

A soothing moon of a sage has set. A brilliant and knowledgable sun has set. A soldier of ruju Sri vAdirAja is no more visible. An embodiment of cultured behaviour has vanished. A practitioner of righteous and pious ways is no more. Those devotees who arrived late could only lament and pay obeisance at place of his internment. The sage is no longer physically present – he is present as a brilliant memory, he is present in his brilliant effulgence, he is present as a source of spiritual power, He remains in the minds of his ardent devotees.

That Sri Vishvathamana Theertha was a being blessed by Sri vAdirAja is not in doubt. Through Sri Vishvathamana Theertha, Sri vAdirAja had the swapnavrindavanAkhyana inscribed on stone and offered it to Lord Hayagriva thus blessing his favoured descendent. “imam krithim shilAyAm thu IEkhaiyithva mamAgrathah| sThApayEdathra thAm dhriSTvA santhah santhOSha mApnuyuh| |” (Sriswapnavrindavnakhyana X-73). In accordance with Sri vAdirAja’s orders, as a Brahmin Sri VrindAvanAcharya received the akhyana in his dream and transcribed the same and seems to have lent his presence and inspired Sri Vishvathamana Theertha in having his transcription etched in stone. This task had not been attended to by anyone else. The revered seer is the one who has rendered a very pleasing service to Sri vAdirAja. Such a one is a gem among the gurus of the mutt, deserving of immense respect and is memorable.

May our memories of such a great sage become our breath and lead us to praise his achievements daily. May our wish for his presence give us strength in our lives. May memory of his effulgent presence and teachings lead us to contemplate on the importance of his teachings. May the phalamanthrakshathe he gave us bless our beings.

May his pupil and successor Sri Sri Visvavallabha Theertha be an inspiration and a source of blessing for us all. May he carry on and disseminate Sri vAdirAja’s rujukta widely and effectively. May he carry forward his mentor’s grand plans for the ‘gurukula’.

Let us all feel the presence of Sri Vishvathamana Theertha in his pupil and successor.

The repository of knowledge, the kind and benevolent, meditative seer Sri Vishvathamana Theertha – please accept our respectful and lasting obeisance.

|| Preestosthu Krishna prabhu ||