

MADARA CHENNA

(Chenna, the Untouchable)

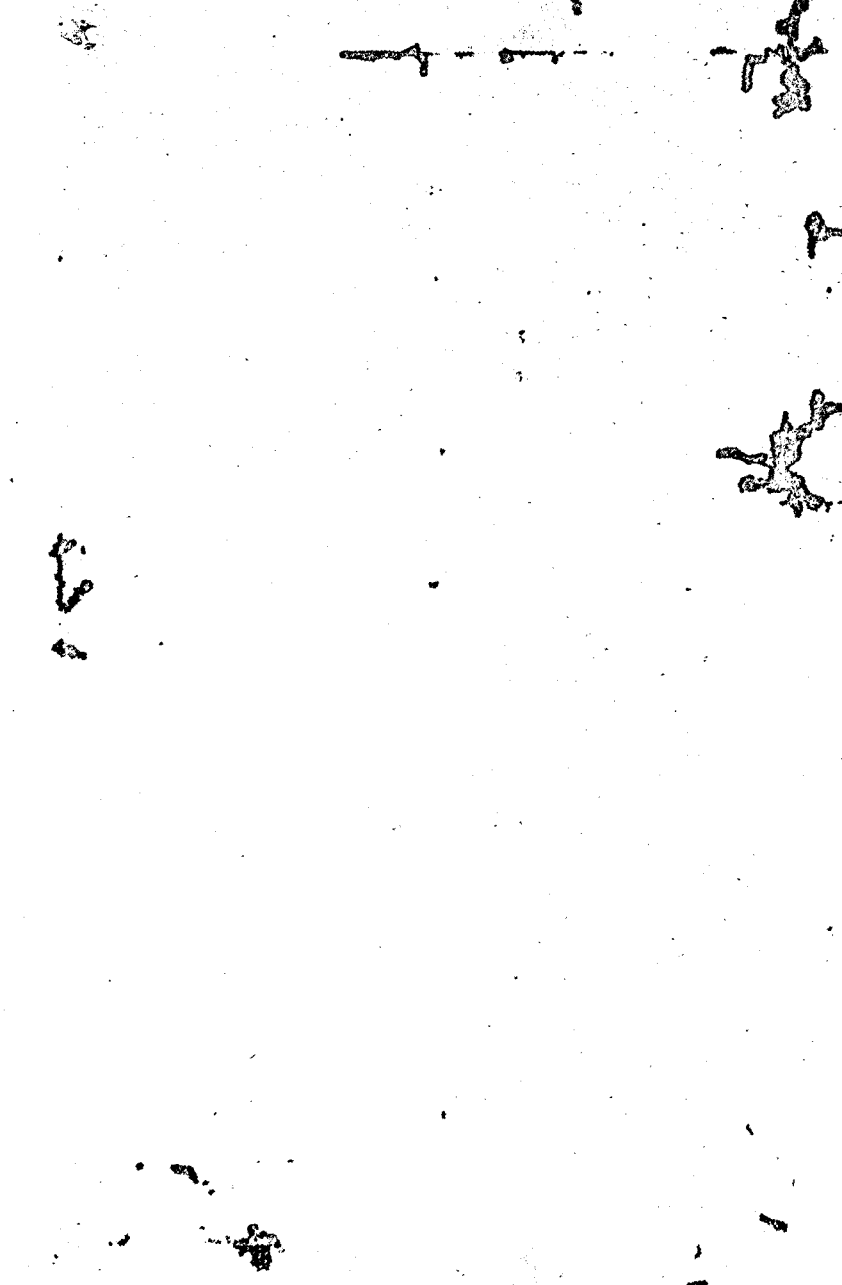
SWAMI MAHAMANE

Translated by

M. YAMUNACHARYA

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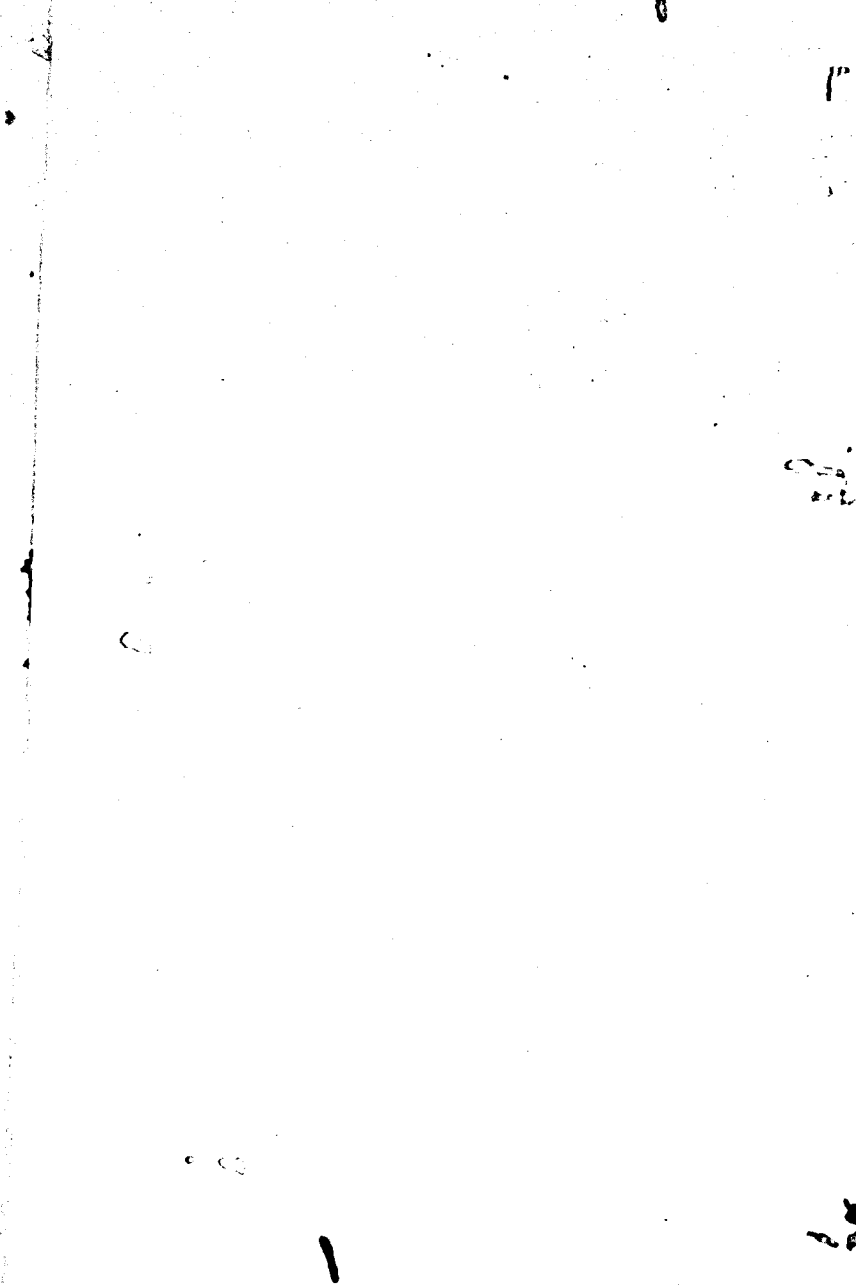
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with kind regards
to Shri M. Yammacharya
Swamiji Maharaj.

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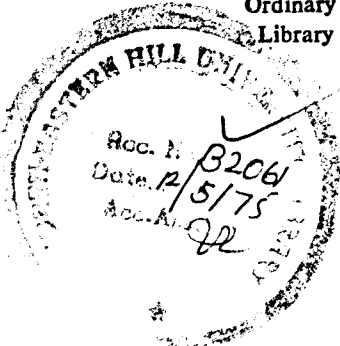
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DEDICATION

AT THE SACRED FEET OF
SRI SIVARATRI RAJENDRA MAHASWAMIGALAVARU
the Junior Pontiff of
Suttur Veera Simhasana Pattadamatha

PROBATION

AT THE COURT OF

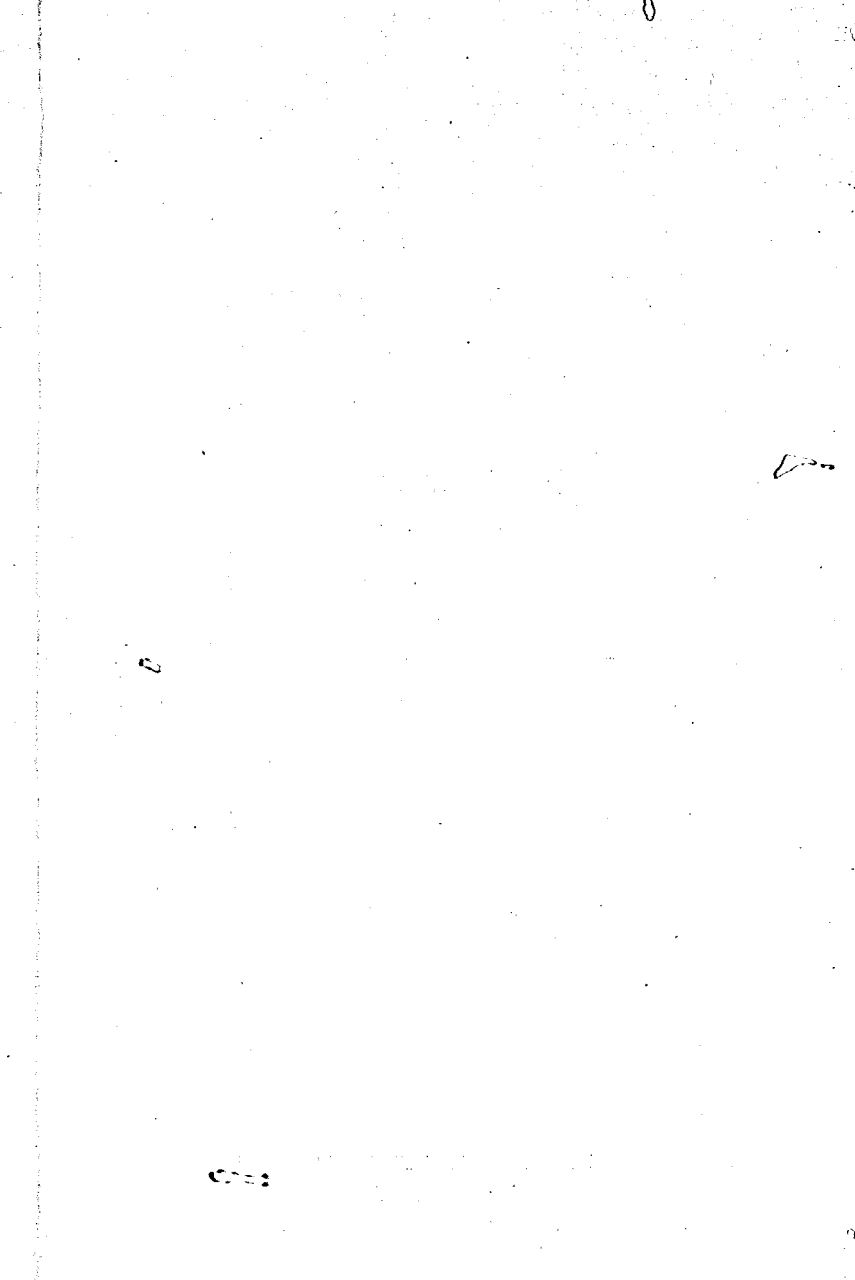
THE DISTRICT COURT OF

THE DISTRICT OF

THE DISTRICT OF



SRI SIVARATRI RAJENDRA MAHASWAMIGALAYARU
the Junior Pontiff of
Suttur Veera Simhasana Pattadamatha



Nine miles to the East of Nanjangud, Mysore District, on the banks of the Kapini, there lies the village of Suttur. In that village is situated a Veerasaiva monastery of hoary antiquity and of great sanctity. This is the seat of Suttur Veera Simhasana Matha which follows the sacred tradition established by Revanna Sidda. The original teacher of this monastery is the well-famed Sivaratri Sivacharya. The second teacher of this monastery Esana Isvara Wodeyaru was the Rajaguru of King Rajendra Chola* of Kanchi. From that day to this, this seat has been sanctified by twenty one preceptors who have contributed to the continuation of this glorious tradition. The present pontiff of this seat is Sivaratri Mahaswamigalu. In his time the monastery has registered remarkable progress. His great presence is characterized by the inscribing of the holy Six syllabled mantra of Siva (*Om Namah Sivaya*). Sri Sivaratri

* King Rajendra Chola is a character in the cast of Madara Chenna play.

Rajendra Mahaswamigalavaru, the product of the great grace of the senior teacher, has, due to his blessing, organized many educational institutions and Hostels which are working with great efficiency. He has been striving his utmost selflessly and tirelessly to promote human welfare. To this junior swamin, Sri Sivaratri Rajendra Mahaswamin, I dedicate this work and lay this work at his lotus feet full of devotion and sincerity.

CONCERNING THIS BOOK

In the 12th Century A.D. Lord Basava and other progenitors of the faith appeared on earth. They heralded a revolution which was simultaneously political, economic, religious, social and literary. They illuminated every aspect of life. They proclaimed the equality of all men, and the brotherhood of all lovers of God be they of the highest or the lowest caste. They not only proclaimed this but set an example to others by their conduct in accordance with the highest principles they enunciated. They were philosophers who were characterized by great wisdom and ennobling action. The words they spoke were not merely the conventional ones, not a mere repetition of what was oft spoken. They were words of dedication to the Highest. The principles that they practiced related to the communion of the individual soul with the Supreme Being. The conduct of life that they followed, the religion that they practiced was the religion of man. Kindliness or compassion was the root of this religion. In this religion

of those who surrendered themselves to God, the only aim was to seek the welfare of all things that live. Where was room here for untouchability? These servants of the Lord condemned untouchability in no uncertain terms.

The body of the devotee of God is the living temple of God. It is as holy as a temple. In this holy atmosphere there is no high nor low. To speak of one as high or as low was the most heinous sin. So in this religion of Siva there can be no room for untouchability. So they repudiated untouchability and lived in accordance with their convictions. In the then society vitiated by the practice of untouchability certain great souls were born and received respect from Basava. Of them the most important are Kakkayya, Sivanagamayya, Haralayya. They were incorporated into the Sivanubhavamantapa, an institution of Veerasaiva Mystics. These untouchable saints who were admitted into this holy mystic brotherhood were regarded as in no way inferior to others of this fraternity. The others could dine with them, mix with them freely, marry with them and have all kinds

of social relationships with them. All this they did without qualms of conscience.

Madhuvarasa was by birth a Brahmana and Haralayya was by birth an untouchable. Both had embraced the Veera Saiva religion. The community of the Veera Saiva saints who disregarded caste distinctions brought about a marriage of the daughter of Madhuvarasa with the son of Haralayya. The high caste men of Kalyan carried a complaint of this to King Bijjala. The king who paid heed to this complaint ordered both Madhuvarasa and Haralayya to be executed. This brought about a revolution in the city. The devotees of Siva were scattered. Bijjala had to pay the penalty for this by his own murder. Basaveswara repaired to Kappadi Sangameswara and became one with the Lord there.

This revolution that happened at Kalyan was not for women, wealth or territory. This was intended to wipe off casteism and establish the equality of man. This revolution, was thus unique in the world.

Svapachayya, Chenniah were untouchable Saiva saints who preceded Basava. To Basava, the veritable treasure of devotion, these were great honoured souls. He has unbounded praise to Madara Chennayya which he has uttered in many of his sayings.

“Like an illegitimate child I cannot call on any one as my father. But Chenna is my father. I am the son of Chenna”

If these are the words spoken by Basava about Chenniah one can imagine the depths of the personality of Chenniah.

Madara Chenniah is the author of many sayings. The refrain of his sayings is ‘know thou thy truest self’ (ARI NIJATMA RAMANA). Of these sayings only seven are extant. One of them is cited at the end of this book.

Of the devotees mentioned in the play Dasayya, Siriyala, Sindhu Ballala, Bana, Kakkayya, and Nimbavva preceded Basava. Machayya was contemporary of Basava.

This little play is based on the great devotee Madara Chenniah's life and the philosophy on which it was based. This is also in consonance with the philosophy of new India. This author's only wish is that this literary composition should redound to the credit of this holy land.

This drama was written in 1950. It was broadcast from Akasha Vani, Bangalore on 10-3-1956, on the occasion of the great Siva Ratri day. The Central Government awarded a prize for this in the Eighth prize competition for the best books for Neo-Literates on 31-12-1961. Of the four books selected as the best and top ranking of all the prize winning books in all the Indian Languages in the competition, 'Madara Chenna' was one and won the additional award on 27-6-1963. Thus this work won the opportunity of being translated into the other languages of India.

'Madara Chenna' will soon be published in all the languages of India as well as in the Russian language. The English translation of this Kannada play was done by Sri M. Yamunacharya, Retired Professor of

Philosophy of the Mysore University. I am grateful to him and render my profound thanks to him for this labour of love and for the competence with which he has done the translation.

I am grateful to Akasha Vani, Bangalore for broadcasting this and to the Central Government for their award and additional award.

I offer my devout obeisance to those pontiffs of the several monasteries who blessed me on the occasion of my receiving the reward.

My thanks are due to Vidya Printery, 100 Ft. Road, Mysore, for beautifully printing this work.

I dedicate this work and lay this as a devout offering at the lotus feet of His Holiness, Sivaratri Rajendra Mahaswamigalu, the Junior Pontiff of Suttur Veerasimhasana pattadamatha, whom I look upon as the vicegerent of Siva himself on earth.

2526, Chamundipuram,

MYSORE,

15th September '64.

SWAMI MAHAMANE.

FOREWORD

THIS playlet 'Madara Chenna', an untouchable Veera Saiva Saint has a universal message and a particular message for modern India. Such Saints as these are the salt of the earth. In the presence of these, all theological controversy is hushed and one is brought into a spirit of mutual harmony or concord in the name of the Supreme Spirit that resides in the heart of every man, whether he be of the East or the West.

M. YAMUNACHARYA.

MADARA CHENNA

Cast

BASAVANNA

PARAMESWARA

PARVATI

CHENNA

THE KING

THE QUEEN

MADARA CHENNA

(CHENNA, THE UNTOUCHABLE)

Proem

Chenna, the untouchable, preceded Basava of Kalyan as one of the ancients who revelled in God's love. He went from Karnataka and settled down at Kanchi. His story is presented here as propounded by Basava in his great abode 'Mahamane'.

Basavanna propounds

Kudala Sanga has his "devotee's body as His body". He does not sit aloof in Kailasa, His holy abode, but longs to live in company with His lovers. He is pledged to protect them in all possible ways. The Lord once asked thus His spouse Parvati in His peregrinations over the world.

Parameswara

Oh, the daughter of the Mountains, tell me which country this is.

If one's truth of life is good conduct and
good words – then is he well born.

If one's words are good but conduct is bad
then is he low born.

Good conduct is being well born,
bad conduct is to be low born.

One who knows the two must live in
consonance with it.

Our own hands are our chisel and our sword.

Do not fall low to be trampled by others.

Know thy true self (ari Nijatma Ramana).

'MADARA CHENNA'

Forthcoming books by the same author :

★ Ratna Hara

★ Guru Karuna

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★ Viragini

