



**THE UNDERSTANDING OF  
GURUPARAMPARE OF ADHI  
CHUNCHANAGIRI MATHA: AN  
HISTORICAL STUDY**

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**Introduction:**

The historical investigation into the past reveals that India, a country of rich heritage had its roots in ancient teachings. The importance of a teacher was at most important and honour. The legacy continued and the richness was empowered.

The present piece of research work focuses on how the Matha of Adhi Chunchanagiri was set up and grew into the present position and the role of gurus in bringing the Matha to the present stage. The only selected gurus were taken into consideration and their contribution in terms of social emancipation is analyzed.

**Objectives:**

- To understand the history of Adhi Chunchanagir Matha.
- To analyze the role of Gurus in social emancipation.

**Hypothesis:**

- The Mathas are essential in bringing social development.
- Guru Parampare is essential in continuation of past legacy.

**Methodology:**

The present research work on 'The understanding of Guru parampare of Adhi Chunchanagiri: An Historical Perspective' is relied on both primary and secondary data. The collected data is segmented and analyzed as per the requirement of the objectives of the present study.

## The Guru Parampare

It is evident through the guru tradition of Sree Adhi Chunchanagir Matha that it has emerged as an ideal Matha as per the features of Shaiva tradition of ancient Karnataka.

The triplet of Sarvajna,

“Relatives are by the guru, gods are by the guru,  
Fortune to the world is by guru- a guru  
Finds salvation through his guru, Sarvajna”

Celebrates the supremacy of the guru. Natha cult upholds this supremacy of the guru. The guru purifies the mind of all for the blessings of the Almighty. The guru, who enlightens us, is greater than any relative and god. The guru who spreads the light of humanity removing ignorance and inequality is light to the entire world and that is why he is called Jagadguru.

It is a significant thing that the guru heritage of Sree Adhi Chunchanagir Matha is noble as it has dedicated itself for the welfare of the world. As per the available documents in the form of inscriptions, this guru heritage has been serving the mankind since 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Among these gurus, the names of sixty six gurus have been found in ‘Adhi Chunchanagiri Sthala Mahathmya’ (Significance of Adhi Chunchanagiri) and the details of the 71<sup>st</sup> guru Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji have been cited.

Sixty-Six monks who served as the pontiff of Adhi Chunchanagiri are –

1. Aadhirudra, 2. Sree Karmanatha 3. Sree Siddayogyavathara 4. Sree Shivanatha 5. Sree Harinatha 6. Sree Brahmanatha 7. Sree Girijanatha 8. Sree Lakshminatha 9. Sree vaninatha 10. Sree Somanatha 11. Sree Chamanatha 12. Sree Sowmyanatha 13. Sree Gurunatha 14. Sree Bharvaganatha 15. Sree Mandanatha 16. Sree Thamonatha 17. Sree Kethunatha 18. Sree Vajranatha 19. Sree Ajneyanatha 20. Sree Kalanatha 21. Sree Niruthanatha 22. Sree Sindhunatha 23. Sree Pavanatha 24. Sree Kuberanatha 25. Sree Eeshanatha 26. Sree Saraninatha 27. Sree Meghanatha 28. Sree Kailasanatha 29. Sree Ksheerabdhinatha 30. Sree Sathyalokanatha 31. Sree Vishwanatha 32. Sree Kashinatha 33. Sree Ganganatha 34. Sree Kalyananatha 35. Sree Shankaranatha 36. Sree Premanatha 37. Sree Pampanatha 38. Sree Virupakshanatha 39. Sree Harinatha 40. Sree Ramanatha 41. Sree Ranganatha 42. Sree Gurujinatha 43. Sree Siddhanatha 44. Sree Bhajananatha 45. Sree Shanthinatha 46. Sree Somanatha 47. Sree Shivanatha 48. Sree Vasanthanatha 49. Sree Meharanatha 50. Sree ganeshanatha 51. Sree Pashwanatha 52. Sree Dharmanatha 53. Sree Bhyravanatha 54. Sree Vadinatha 55. Sree Sampanatha 56. Sree Teekanatha 57. Sree Ganganatha 58. Sree Thavarathanatha 59. Sree Shivanatha 60. Sree Kurukshrethranatha 61. Sree basavanatha 62. Sree Sayaranatha 63. Sree Premanatha 64. Sree Dheerajanatha 65. Sree Sundaranatha 66. Sree Adithyanatha 67. Sree Tejanatha.

Once Sree Tejanatha who was the 67<sup>th</sup> guru of Sree Matha had rested at a devotee by name Mahalingappa’s house during his visit to Krishnarajapete. He was unwell then and had no hopes of improvement. The worried devotees asked him about the future of the Matha and then he replied, “It’s Vokkaligas’ Matha. We had somehow got it and ran it for some time. Since vokkaligas are the rightful heirs, let them run the Matha.” He passed away on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1924.

Some people who had witnessed this are still seen K.R. Pete. The house in which Sree Tejanath had resided can be seen on Nagamangala road in K.R. Pete even now.

Even though there is a rule that only vokkaligas should be the pontiff of the Matha, there are instances of others taking charge of the Matha.

The famous social servant K.H. Ramaiah, in order to select an eminent pontiff to the Matha, with other well-wishers and important personalities, advertised on news papers and invited all devotees of the Matha for a meeting.

## **Sree Bhakthanatha Swamiji**

Adhi Adhi Chunchanagir Matha, though belongs to vokkaligas, welcomes people of all castes. The public meeting which was held to select an eminent person as the 68<sup>th</sup> pontiff to the Matha on democratic lines unanimously selected a person by name Gururamaiah who hailed from Dasaraguppe near Kunthibetta of Pandavapura.

Ramaiah, who hailed from a pious vokkaliga family which had strong faith in god, helpfulness and charity, was interested in worshipping the god, kindness, obedience to seers and elders and social service. Once when Sree Shankaranandabharathi Swamiji had come to Dasaraguppe, Ramaiah had followed him to Hirode, became his pupil, returned to his village and preached mysticism. When he lost his wife after two years, he abandoned his family and became a monk. Since then, the people started addressing him as Gururamaiah adding the adjective 'Guru' to his name. He went on a pilgrimage across India with his guru. Gururamaiah, who dedicated his life for social service, settled down at Melukote and built choultry and dug wells for drinking water to public and made arrangements for free food. He organized communal marriages. He founded 'Sree GururamaSeva Samiti' at Chunchanakatte and set up schools and orphanages under its aegis. When such a selfless seer was selected as the pontiff of AreeAdhi Adhi Chunchanagir Matha, even the Muslims were very happy and expressed their tribute to him.

The Mysore Maharaj consented to the decision taken in the meeting of the devotees. A coronation programme was organized. Gururamaiah was renamed 'Bhakthanathaswami' as per the requirements of Sanyasashrama. His name was symbolic as he was selected by the devotees. It was customary practice that the pontiff of Adhi Adhi Chunchanagir Matha was preaching 'Nathaorder' to his successor as the Matha belonged to Gorakhanatha tradition. But it was not possible to the 67<sup>th</sup> pontiff Sree Tejanatha as he died before his heir was selected. So, Sree Bhakthanatha was given order by Gorakhanath of Nasik inevitably, in order not to break the tradition. Then onwards, the practice of the pontiff of AadiChunchanagiriMatha giving order has been resumed. His coronation celebration took place on Thursday, 23-02-1928 from 8am to 9am with the support of the devotees and government.

Sree Bhakthanatha Swamiji, after becoming the pontiff of Sree Adhi Adhi Chunchanagir Matha which has no room for casteism, gave importance to proactive works like agriculture, animal husbandry, etc and discipline among the staff. The problem at the Matha gradually came to an end as the discipline and production at the Matha revived. Dishonest monks were fired out and real brahmacharya was supported. So, good environment was created at the Matha. The Matha, which had struggled in the hands of many, now started to grow. Bhakthanatha Swamiji gave importance to renovation of buildings, three times worship, food and lodging for the devotees and thus developed the Matha. Swamiji rendered his service for 40 years and passed away in the beginning of 1967.

## **Sree Chandrashekharanatha Swamiji**

Sree Chandrashekharanatha Swamiji, who was selected into the order by Sree Bhakthanatha Swamiji became the pontiff of the Matha in 1967. His previous name was Muniswamappa. He was from Alasuru of Bangalore which was famous at the times of Kempegowda itself. Chandrashekharanatha Swamiji hailed from a cultured and agricultural family and he was a science graduate, polyMatha, intelligent and was interested in literature. He has written some books on the Matha and mysticism in a simple diction so that even common folk can easily understand. He established a sophisticated and useful library in Chunchanagiri. All these are the evident that prove that he was devoted to knowledge.

'Shivarathri', 'Shiva', 'Prarthanayoga', 'Pranavopasane', 'Athmadarshanayoga', 'Sree Kalabhairava Leela Mahime', 'Poojavidhi', etc. are the books he has to his credit.

Swamiji had interest in the development of Sree Adhi Chunchanagiri and started a primary school and free hostels. He himself taught English, Science and Sanskrit to students.

Swamiji wanted to make the villagers free of the financial burden. So, he convinced them to go for simple communal marriages. He himself took charge of priesthood many times. The villagers realized the importance of simple communal marriages and it became revolutionary then.

Chandrashekharanatha Swamiji, who preferred education as the utmost requirement, visited neighbouring villages and created awareness among the parents to educate their children. He was of the strong belief "Monkhood should emerge in the heart. Saffron dress is just a symbol." He, who had a strong physique, made yoga education mandatory to all students of the Matha having realized that practice of yoga helps have good physique and mental stability. He started a high school with the support of the government.

He had planned many developmental projects for the improvement of the Matha, but he could not implement them because of his demise. He passed away after eleven months of service as the Matha'spontiff.

## **Sree Ramanandanatha Swamiji**

The leadership of an eminent pontiff was required to complete the projects that were stopped after the death of Chandrashekharanatha Swami. Some well recognized personalities like M.C. Lingegowda, Smt. Yashodharamma, Dasappa and others started to search for a suitable seer.

The previous name Sree Ramanandanatha was 'Narasappa' and he was from a vokkaliga family of PaduvalaPattana near Nagamangala. He was a teacher by profession and interested in mysticism. He resigned to his job, took sanyasaorder and was renamed as 'Ramanandanatha'.

Bhakthanatha Swamiji had entrusted him the responsibility of supervising the Matha'schoultry and hostels at Melukote. He was very kind, soft spoken and meditative by nature. That's why the devotees of the Matha requested him to take the charge of the Matha. As a result, he became the pontiff of the Matha in old age.

Since he was unable to take care of the Matha's works, because of his old age, he selected two suitable pupils. 'Kalabhairaveshwara Sanskrit Pathashala' came into existence as result of his efforts to fulfill the projects of the former pontiff. He opened a hostel in Mysore. He purchased a site in Vijayanagar of Bangalore to start a branch in of Mathathere.

He wanted to develop the Matha, but ill health troubled him. As a result, he breathed his last in 1974.

He had selected an eminent person as his successor in his will as if it was the testimonial of his fore thought. Between his two pupils, he had considered Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji as the suitable person to be the pontiff of the Matha as the latter was very efficient, service minded, soft natured, mystic, good at organizing and selfless.

Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji became the 71<sup>st</sup> pontiff of the Matha, as per the wish of his guru, on 24-09-1974. The Matha witnessed considerable change then after.

## **Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji's important role in the development of Sri Adhi Chunchanagiri.**

The devotees who have witnessed the service of Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji often agree that Kuvempu's words "The real guru is the representative of the Almighty. There is no fortune without the guru's blessings. A guru may appear in any form to those who have good culture. Guru's light enlightens the pupil's inner side" are much suited to the Swamiji. Swamiji has fulfilled the call of humanity in the Matha and has removed the barriers of caste and creed in the Matha. He has preached that all religions are the forms of god and all are one.

The society respects a person very much if he has a selfless behaviour and serve the society with rare humanitarian qualities of confidence, courage to achieve, pure character and humanity. The people believe that he is the incarnation of the god. Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji has emerged as a great seer as a result of his renunciation, good conduct and service. The reign of Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji is considered the golden period of the Matha. Swamiji, who came from a village, strongly believed that the development of India is possible only with the development of the villages. As he gave utmost importance to the development of villages, he preferred education, health, sanitation and eradication superstitious beliefs. His humanitarian activities include his simple life style, responding to the problems of others, taking part in communal dining, and rising was when the interest of all is questioned. Swamiji lead a culture blended life.

Swamiji hailed from Bananduru which located amid the lush green of farms three kms away from Bidadi on Bengaluru-Mysore highway. The village is surrounded by famous Narayanaswamy Hill, Savanadurga, Kadiredevarakallu, Bhyradevara Betta. The village is rendered a divine look by these hills.

Gangadharaiah is the third child of Chikkalingappa and Boramma of Subedar family which had supporting the religious deeds of the Matha and was in charge of thirty-three villages' administration. 'Gangadharaiah' was the previous name of Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji. He was deeply inspired by his grandfather Anche Thimmai, after he inherited the qualities of helping nature, generosity, devotion to god, patience, selflessness from his parents.

Swamiji was very fond to worship the idol of Bhyrava, which was in the family's yard and is their family deity, since his childhood. He was always contemplative, silent and hardworking. Gangadharaiah ho was born on 18-01-1945 completed his primary education at Bananduru and high school at Bidadi. He stayed at his teacher Marirangappa's house and a veerashaiva by caste during his studies in Bidadi. Marirangappa had much affection towards his student as the latter was very polite and good at studies. After completing his education at the high school in Ramanagara, he joined Govt. Arts and Science College in Bangalore and got graduation.

He had stayed at Chidgaganandashranma at present Sampangiramanagar during his studies in Bangalore. His contact with the monks there and the divine environment of the house inspired him to develop interest

in sainthood. It is not a wonder that he was interested in spiritual attainment for he was the son of Boramma who had visited Adhi Chunchanagiri from Bananduru on walking pilgrimage four times as a part of vow even though vehicles facility was available. Magekere of Bananduru with mahua trees on its bank and the silent environment of that place served as the platform for Swamiji's self-realization.

Once, when he had been to Lal Bagh for a morning walk, a tree had fallen down where he had sat and he was saved miraculously. Then, he decided to dedicate his life for good, selfless accomplishments.

The heart which was uninterested in worldly pursuits wished to abandon all worldly pleasures. He rejected to marry, sought his parent's consent and submitted himself to the service of Ramanandanatha Swami, the then pontiff of the Matha. He expressed his interest in sanyasashrama and social service.

12-02-1968 is an immemorable day in Gangasharaiah's life. The pontiff of the Matha Sree Ramanandanatha, gave him sanyasadeeksha and renamed him 'Balagangadharanatha Swami'.

Swamiji joined Jayachamarajendra Sanskrit Mahapathashala to study the Upanishads and Sanskrit which a monk should master and started studying Advaita principle. He had stayed at Kailasashrama. His interest in spiritualism was much provoked thanks to his contact with Sree Tiruchiswami. But Balagangadharanatha Swami had to discontinue his studies as Ramanandanathaswami was admitted to hospital in Mysore due to ill health and he had to rush to his service. Ramanandanatha Swami breathed his last after many days of hospitalization. Balagangadharanatha Swami took charge of the Matha's pontiff as per the wish of the devotees and will of his guru on 24-09-1974.

The Matha was undergoing a financial crisis when Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji took charge of the Matha. Debts, empty ware house, land barren due to no rain, weak administration, dilapidated building of the Matha- the Swamiji had to face many problems like these. The Swamiji was not afraid of these and faced them courageously. He brought some cattle and built a goshala to meet the necessities of farming, fertilizer and milk. He himself worked on farms with the staff preferring agricultural activities. He built dining halls and rooms for the visitors. Choulashala (Shaving house) and toilets were built and the tar roads were prepared. The old building of the Matha was renovated. Schools were started in many backward villages which lacked minimum facilities. 250 educational institutions, including colleges, engineering colleges and medical college and hospital, were started under 'Adhi Chunchanagiri Education Trust. Orphanage, Blinds schools, Old Age houses and Abalashrama (House for downtrodden women) are started.

Swamiji has made arrangements for the free education and medical aid to poor children. 'AnnadaniBhryava Bhavana' and 'Annapoorneshwari Nilaya' dining halls are built for the dining facilities to the devotees. Thousands of students and devotees have food here every day. Swamiji arranged Sanskrit convention, all religions conference, free eye treatment camps, youth awareness programmes, women awareness programmes, communal marriages, children conventions, priests conference, etc. programmes which help religious, social sectors of the society. Swamiji uniquely celebrated the anniversary of his coronation as 'JanapadaSammelana' (Folklore Conference). He put his efforts to protect folk culture in this manner. He adopted some educational institution which had financial crisis and supported many families which depended on those institutions. He started residential schools for the rich in cities and used that profit for the education of the poor in villages; he thus balanced the inequality.

Swamiji, who believed that 'Service is Worship', was invited to World Religions Congress that was held in Chicago on 31-08-1993 as part of centenary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago address and spoke on the greatness of 'Human Service'. He is called 'Abhivana Vivekananda of Adhi Chunchanagiri'.

Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji won hearts of the devotees through his soft words and motherly love; got their support in all his accomplishments. Sree Kalabhyrava temple which is built in Dravidian style with five towers is a mile stone of his goals. He, a follower of natha cult and who did not believe in separation of people on the basis of caste, had strong faith in humanity. Swamiji has been conferred with many awards for his selfless service. He has been honoured with 'National Unity Award' and the blind school at Ramanagara has got state award given for rendering service to the blinds. Education and social service have been the main responsibilities of Mathas since the ancient times in Karnataka. Swamiji lead the Matha in the same path. Swamiji breathed his last on 13-01-2013 and entrusted Dr. Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji to be the next pontiff of the Matha through his will.

## **Dr. Sree Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji**

Dr. Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji became the 72<sup>nd</sup> head of Sree Adhi Adhi Chunchanagir Matha as per the will of Sree Balanangadharanatha Swamiji. He has been following the footprints of his guru and is fulfilling his dreams. Swamiji was born on 20-07-1969 to agricultural vokkaligacouple Narasegowda and Nanjamma of Cheeranahalli in Gubbi Taluk of Tumakuru district. Swamiji's childhood name was Nagaraja. He did his diploma at Govt. Polytechnic in Tumkur and B.E. in Civil Engineering at National Institute of Engineering in Mysuru and M.Tech in Structural Engineering at Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. He was also selected as a scientist at Central Water and Power Research Station, Poona. He, instead, volunteered to teach at the blind school of the Matha at Ramanagara. He renounced worldly life and was initiated into sanyasa order in 1998 and was renamed Sree Nirmalanandanatha Swami. His guru, Sree Balagangadharanatha Swamiji, appointed him as the Head of Adhi Adhi Chunchanagir Matha's branch at Chikkaballapura. Sree Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji has been continuing the works that were started by his guru. He has visited several countries, on spiritual mission, such as USA, UK, Cambodia, Israel, Sri Lanka and Thailand. He has been the society in social, educational, intellectual and spiritual domains.

## **Conclusion:**

The present piece of research work reveals that a guru holds highest and importance in imparting the past legacy into the present and also, they are the bringing elements in the history of the country. The establishment of Mathas have proved that they play a vital role in uplifting the society irrespective of their social background. the society needs more of such social initiatives to make better life for better tomorrow.

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