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GOVINDA DEEKSHITA

The minister of the Tanjore Nayak Kings

By N. K. VENKATESAM M. A., L. T.

About four miles to the south-west of Kumbakonam, is a village known as Patteeswaram or Dhēnupuram. It is a renowned place of pilgrimage, situated on the northern bank of the river Tirumalairajan, a branch of the Cauvery. The region in which the shrine is situated is known as the Sakti Vana, and tradition says that, when in this Vana or forest, Ambika or Parvathi was performing her *tapas* (meditation) in order to become one with Paramasiva, *Patti*, 'one of the four Kanyakas or maidens sent by Kamadhēnu for doing service to Parameswari, made a *Linga* of sand and was worshipping it day after day in her own private *Puja*. The *Linga* that was worshipped by *Patti* is known as *Patteeswara* and the place where it was worshipped came to be known as *Patteeswaram*. In Samskrita, the names of the place and of the *Linga* are Dhēnupuri and Dhēnupureeswara. The Goddess is called Gnānāmbika—the Goddess of Divine Wisdom. In the yard, just in front of the Garbha—Gṛha (the Holy of Holies) of Sri Gnānāmbika, stands the majestic figure of one whose name is ever closely associated with Patteeswaram and also that of his Dharma-Patni. The oriental minister of the Tanjore Nayak Kings of the sixteenth century stands there in his quaint oriental state-garb, with the long robe and with the curious head-dress of the day, the Devotee of Gnānāmbika, and he has beside him his accomplished and true Patni, the devotee of the simple Brahmana, Govinda Deekshita. To the generation that is slowly passing away just now, the name of Govinda Deekshita is a house-hold name in the part of the country, known as the Chola Dēsa, and traditions concerning him have therefore become many and interesting. His active and exemplary life as a true Brahmin at home and as a great statesman and minister at the court of the Tanjore Nayak Kings during a period of nearly three-quarters of a century has naturally made his name permanent and his fame eternal.

Govinda Deekshita was a karnataka Brahmin of the Āsvatayana Sutra of the Rīgveda and his wife's name is ascertained to be Nagamba. Tradition has assigned to Tirunāgēsawaram, a sacred shrine about 4 miles to the South-east of Kumbakonam, and to Patteeswaram, the honour of having been the place where the minister lived and spent his private life. But the fact that the images of Govinda Deekshita and his wife are in the temple at Patteeswaram and that the ruins of his house are still pointed out at Patteeswaram,

combined with the fact, which is very important indeed considering the age in which he lived, that the river Tirumalairajan, a branch of the Cauvery, which runs beside the village of Patteeswaram maintains somehow an almost perennial supply of water, even in the summer season, when the Cauvery itself is dry in the Tanjore District—a very important requisite for a Brahmin of the type of Govinda Deekshita, may go to show that Patteeswaram was the place selected by Govinda Deekshita for his private residence, rather than Tirunāgēswarem which has not these traditions or facilities for residence. A place called Tiruppālatturai, near Pāpanasam, in the Tanjore District, is also mentioned as the place where Govinda Deekshita lived. But, as has been said above, the name of Govinda Deekshita is closely associated with Patteeswaram and so we may quite fairly hold that the minister lived with his family in his house at Patteeswaram, on the bank of the river, where the ruins of a Pushya-Mantapa or bathing-ghat and the ruins of a portion of a wall of his house and of four pillars, said to have been at the entrance to his house, mark the site of his residence, according to tradition.

It is said that he left his mortal body in the Sannidhi of Sri Gnanambika at Patteeswaram, where the images of the Deekshita and his wife are at present. It is also stated that he left his body in the Sannidhi of Sri Mangalambika at Kumbakonam. Life-like images of Govinda Deekshita and of his wife are now worshipped at Patteeswaram, while *Lingas* known as “Govinda Deekshita Linga” are worshipped in the temple of Kumbheswara at Kumbhakonam and in the temple of Panchanadeesa at Tiruvadi, a famous shrine seven miles to the north of Tanjore and known as Dakshina Kailasa. Thus, Govinda Deekshita has passed from the category of men and even of great hero-souls, and has been deified and is worshipped as a saint in at least three famous temples in southern India. This is sufficient testimony to his true greatness.

Although it is certain that Govinda Deekshita spent the best years of his life in the Chola country, as the minister of the Tanjore Nayak Kings, yet it seems to be clear that he was originally a native of the kingdom of Vijayanagara. From what has been related by Brama-sri Narasimha sastri garu, the late Dharmādhikāri of the Mysore palace, himself closely related to the family of Govinda Deekshita, it appears that Govinda Deekshita was a native of the Vijayanagara kingdom, and that at a very early age, he acquired fame for his learning in the sacred lore of the Hindus. He appears to have been also an accomplished astrologer. He is said to have been a very pious Brahmin, strict in the performance of his daily duties, as became the order of his birth or Varnāśrama.

The way in which the young, learned and pious Brahmin, Govinda Deekshita found his way into the Chola Desa, as the minister

of the Nayak Kings of Tanjore is thus stated by tradition. Govinda Deekshita used to perform Agni-Hotra every day, in accordance with the injunctions of the Hindu Shastras. He had a Nayak servant by name *Chavappa*, whose duty was to tend the cows, maintained in the Deekshita's house for the Agnihotra. One evening, seeing that the Nayak lad, who had gone out with the cows for grazing them, did not arrive at the usual time, and seeing that the cows were not ready for yielding milk for Agni-hotra, the pious and kind-hearted Deekshita started to find out the lad. On his way he saw, to his intense astonishment, the lad fast asleep under the shady branches of a tree, and the shining hood of a holy Cobra waving gently to and fro over the head of the sleeping lad, as if holding the Svātacchatra or the white umbrella over the head of the future king. Seeing this, the Deekshita felt at once that the lad was born to be a king at some time, and returned home with the lad and the cows with immense satisfaction. The lad in due course entered the service of the king, and worked out his way to king-ship ultimately. The story is also more simply related in another way. Govinda Deekshita, himself a good astrologer, examining the palm of the lad who was his servant found that the lad Chavappa was destined to become a king one day in his life. The prophesy was fulfilled when Chavappa did rise to the position of a king in due course.

Chevappa or I am Sevvappa:—Apart from tradition, it is a historical fact that in the middle of the sixteenth century, once Chevappa Nayak ruled at Tanjore, over the tract of country known as the Chōla-Dēsa. This tract seems to have covered roughly, the present District of Tanjore and parts of the present Districts of Trichinopoly and Madura, as well as of south Arcot, North Arcot and Chingleput. This portion of the country was then under the rule of the kings of Vijayanagara, and the story is that Chavappa married Murthimamba, the sister of the queen Tirumalamma, wife of king Achuta-Devaraja and obtained the southern kingdom as his dowry. Tradition says that when the lad Chavappa married the royal maid, Govinda Deekshita, then at the court of Vijayanagara, was deputed by the king to visit the vast regions which were under the sway of the king of Vijayanagara at that time, and find out a suitable tract for being given as dowry to Chavappa Nayak, that Govinda Deekshita accordingly travelled about and found that the Chōla Dēsa, especially in the Deltaic portion of the cawvery, was the most fertile tract and as such worthy of being given as dowry to Chavappa. The special interest taken by Govinda Deekshita in this matter is explained not merely by his attachment to the court of Vijayanagara, but also by the fact that Chavappa, had been his own servant, before he entered the service of the king, and had the fortune of marrying the Queen's sister. Tradition says that Chavappa had been a very intelligent lad

from his early years and that Govinda Deekshita introduced him into the palace. Ever since his introduction into the palace, Chavappa exhibited his extra-ordinary intelligence in various ways, and soon rose higher and higher in the king's esteem. A story about Chavappa handed down by tradition is interesting in this connection. Once when a certain letter of state received by the king, and just over-heard by the servant boy Chavappa, while being read in court, had to be reproduced in the absence of the original, mislaid somewhere, the boy Chavappa repeated the whole letter word for word. He thus showed his genius, which roused the admiration of the king. It is no wonder that such a lad became the royal son-in-law and a ruling prince also.

When Chavappa was thus presented with the Tanjore Principality and sent out to bear independent rule over the Province, he took with him, it is needless to say, his master, his best friend and well-wisher—Govinda Deekshita. Tradition goes so far as to say that Chavappa, instead of accepting the kingdom for himself, requested Govinda Deekshita to rule the kingdom himself, that Govinda Deekshita refused to accept the gift, as he—a Brahmana—was debarred from ruling a kingdom, but agreed to be Chavappa's minister. It is said that Govinda Deekshita then crowned Chavappa as the King of Tanjore and he himself became his minister. Govinda Deekshita, who must have been then in the prime of his life, was a learned man, well-versed in Vedic and Shastraic lore, well-versed also in astrology and Music. He was besides a pious Brahmin, scrupulous in the discharge of his public duties, as the minister of Chavappa Nayak.

II

The history of the Nayak race at Tanjore was all too brief, for the race began with Chavappa in the middle of the sixteenth century, and ended with the fourth king Vijayaraghava Nayak in the middle of the seventeenth century. Govinda Deekshita began his career as a minister under the first king Chavappa, continued as the minister of the second king Achutappa, and seems to have been helping in the administration of the third king Raghunatha Nayak, for a few years in the beginning of his rule.¹ The statement in the District manual that Govinda Deekshita was minister under the fourth king is obviously based on the mistaken identity of the second king Achutappa with the fourth king Vijayaraghava, known as Achutanayak and also as Achuta Vijayaraghava Nayak. This

1 Chavappa Nayak. (1549) to (1572) (?)

Achutappa Nayak. (1577) to (1614)

Raghunatha Nayak. (1614) to (?)

Vijayaraghava Nayak. (?) to (1662)

conclusion seems to be incredible, when we see that between the first king and the fourth king there is an interval of nearly a century, so much so, that, even if Govinda Deekshita, like the illustrious unbearded English Minister Pitt, be considered as having become the minister of Chavappa as early as, say, his twentieth year, when Vijayaraghava ascended the throne about the middle of the seventeenth century, he must have been more than a hundred years old. There is no tradition that Govinda Deekshita lived to such an advanced age and we have also no record of his work under the fourth Nayak king. From references which will be given later on, it will be seen that Govinda Deekshita was minister under the first Nayak king and so it seems to be unlikely that he was also minister under the fourth king. It seems to be clear, therefore, that Govinda Deekshita's career as minister came to an end in the first part of Raghunatha Nayak's reign.

An inscription in Tamil of 1549 A.D., refers to "Chavappa Nayakar" and "ayyan"¹

The word "Ayyan", a derivation of "Arya" meaning noble, was generally used for Govinda Deekshita, out of respect. In the reports of the archaeological survey, he is referred to as Deekshitar "Ayyan" "Chavappa Nayakar ayyan" occurs also in an inscription of 1577.²

These two inscriptions show not only that Govinda Deekshita was the minister of the first Nayak king Chavappa, but also that he was so closely associated with the administration that his name was mentioned with the king's name in the inscriptions of the time. This

1. The inscription runs as follows: Sriman-mahā-mandaleswara rajādhi-raja rāja-Parameswara Sri veerapratāpa sri Veera achuta-Deva-raja Mahārājan Prithivi Rājan Panni Arulāninra sakabdam 1654 idanmēl sellaninra Nandana Samvatsaram Karkata-nayittu purva-pakshattu saptamiyum sōma-vāsa-ramum petra hastā-nakshatrattu nal vāhalamallappa Nāyakkar puttiran dādappa Nāyakkar Tanjāvūr pilliār Alagēsvara pilliārāna Toppāram ketta pilliaruppu tiruppani perumāl nayinārku Tiruppanikkū Kodutto dharma Sāsana-pattayappadi innoyinārku tiruppani parama devadānamāha koduthu solamandalam Tiruchinapalli usāvam Tanjāvūr sirmai Kāveri-yātru terku-karai Nityavinodha-vala-nādu milattu-ayiva-singam-rajan-pāttai keerummatātta Palakkar sinnappa nāyakkar avargaludiya punniyamahavenum enru koduttha Tanjainagara.

Karkataka nāyutru pārva-pakshattu Saptamiyil sōmavāsāramum petra.

2. Subhamasthu: Swasti Sri Sakabdam 1499.—idanmēl sellaninra vehudānya-varusham āni-māsam 12-tēdi sōma-vārum prathama Kāluttu Sēvappanayakar-ayyan-achuthanāyakkar-ayyan Tanjāvūr-tatārukku kodutha dharma-sāsana patta-yam Kandanolu narayakka gurunāthan singappalli Nāghāpatta sēsā satiriyum solla tangalirai Kali-(卐)ppittapadiyātē chandiraditta varaiyum sarvamā-nyamāha nadakkavum inda darumatthukk, ahiidam panninavan Gangaikkaraiyile Kām-rāmpasuvaikkonra pāvattile pōhakkadavārā-havenu. Inda darumatthai ahidam panninavan āyiram lingattai-pidungina doshattile pōhakkadavan.

fact also confirms the feeling of respect which Chavappa always had for his benefactor and counsellor, Govinda Deekshita. A Tamil stanza in the Tamil version of the *Sthala Māhāthmya* of Tiruvadi (Stanza 18)¹ of 1605 refers to Govinda Deekshita as the inspirer of the Tamil rendering of the Purana, which was in Sanskrit. The year 1605 takes us to the latter part of the reign of the second Nayak king Achutappa (1577-1614). Yagna Narayana 'Deekshita, in his drama entitled *Raghunatha Vilasa*, says that when the play was acted, the king Raghunatha and the minister Govinda Deekshita were seated on the same simhasana or Royal throne, the minister sitting close to the king.² This shows that in the reign of the third Nayak king, Raghunatha also Govinda Deekshita continued to enjoy the full confidence of the king, and the author of *Sāhitya Ratnākara* says also that Govinda Deekshita taught politics to Raghunātha Nayak. It appears, however, that Govinda Deekshita did not live beyond this reign, for except the reference in the District Manual, dealt with already, there seems to be no other evidence to show that Govinda Deekshita was minister to the fourth king also. The scene of the coronation of Raghunatha Nayak in 1614 is described in beautiful and flowing verses by Yagna Narayana Deekshita in his "*sāhitya Ratnākara*." It appears that his work was written prior to the play "*Raghunatha Vilasa*." In the poem, Yagna Narayana Deekshita gives a fine description of the state of the Chola Desa in his day and refers to a war between Raghunatha Nayak and the then Pandyan king, in which the Nayak king defeated the Pandyan king and married his daughter. To honour the victorious king in verse, Yagna Narayana Deekshita wrote his play entitled "*Raghunāthā Vilāsa*", in which he speaks of the glory of the king and the reputation of his father, Govinda Deekshita. All these circumstances go to show that Govinda Dhekshita must have been the prime minister of Raghunatha Nayak for at least a few years in his reign. If we grant that he was

1. "மலிபுனல் சூழ்சோனாடு தஞ்சையிற் காத்திருமாசர் மதியமைச்ச
னெலிமறைதேர் கோலிந்த தீட்சதராயன் திருவாக்குடைமையாலே
கலியுகத்துச் சகனாண்டு மூவைஞ்ஞாற்றிருபதின் மேற்காணுமேழாய்ப்
பொலிவருடத்தை பேரற்றுப்புராண வடமொழி தமிழார் புகலுற்றேன்".

2. "Raghunatha Vilasa," Scene I.

अस्य श्रीरघुनाथ भूवलरिपोर ध्यासि ताधोसनः

प्रज्ञा वैभवखगिडतप्रतिवदत्पाषण्डषण्डमयः

कुर्वन्त्याक्रिययानिविश्रुततरं कौमारिलं दर्शनं

गोसा नित्यगवीरसै विजयते गोविन्दयज्वा अणीः ॥

at the Nayak court, till, say, 1620, then Govinda Deekshita must have occupied the ministerial chair for nearly three quarters of a century.

That Govinda Deekshita could have been the minister of the Nayak kings for such a long period appears quite likely, considering the enormous change that was effected in the Chola Desa during that period. The description of the country given by Yagna Narayana Deekshita certainly makes us think that all that tract must have been turned into a veritable Paradise in South India, the position which it holds even to-day, by the efforts of the Nayak kings and their able minister, Govinda Deekshita. The first king, Chavappa, is said to have been very charitably disposed. He is said to have given grants of lands to persons and institutions, as is seen from the inscriptions referred to already. It was also under Chavappa's direction that the temple and the gopura at Tiruvannāmalai in the present North Arcot district were rebuilt. An inscription in the temple and the existence of an "ayyan" Kulam (tank) and "Ayyan" street in Tiruvannāmalai go to show that Chavappa and Govinda Deekshita must have adopted an extensive plan of charitable works in order to beautify and improve the territories which were under their sway. The canal known as Chavappan Eri, near Tanjore, owes its origin to the effort of Chavappa Nayak undoubtedly.¹ Further it is stated that the present port at Tanjore was built when Chavappa began his rule there, in accordance with the plan of Govinda Deekshita who designed the fort and had it built in the form of what is known as Garuda Vyūha, so that the fort when looked at from a height, presents the appearance of a Garuda (the Vāhana of Māhā Vishnu).

The scheme of public works started by Chavappa seems to have been continued during the following reigns also, because the state had the great advantage of a continuous policy under the guidance of Govinda Deekshita. The second Nayak king Achutappa, known also as Chinna Chavappa, esteemed Govinda Deekshita, as much as Chavappa had done, for he is said to have looked upon him as "Kulakootastha purohit"—the counsellor of the originator of the Dynasty, and also as "Kulamanthri"—the minister of the Dynasty. From a reference in the Sahitya Ratnakara, we see that as the consequence of a Karnataka war, Achutappa, the second King, had to give up the throne which was ascended by Raghunadha Nayak. A whole canto treats of mantralochana (secret counsel) of King Achutappa with his minister Govinda Deekshita and his son. The same honour seems also to have been shown to him by the third king, Raghunadha Nayak

1. Tradition has it that Brahmachari (Kannodian) who dug the canal from the Tambraparni, known as the Kannadian Kal was the servant of Govinda Deekshita (vide—the story of the canal in the Annual Report of the Madras Archæological survey for 1903-04—P. 84-85).

as has already been said. Yagna Narayana Deekshita says that Govinda Deekshita placed the sacred ashes (Vibhuti) on the fore-head of Raghunadha Nayak in the place of the usual *Pattam* or the gold plate—the mark of Royal authority customarily placed on the fore-head of the king at his coronation or *Pattābhisheka*.

Pattābhisheka is the act of sprinkling water on the *Patta* (which has been affixed to the fore-head) and thereby consecrating it, as is done at the installation of a King or Guru, formal inauguration or coronation, when all persons present throw flowers, akshata etc. on the person crowned.

Glossary I—P. 28. Report of the Madras archaeological survey 1903—03.

This is particularly note-worthy as showing the tolerance of the king who was by faith a vaishnavite and his regard for the sage-like minister Govinda Deekshita.

It is no wonder then that for a period of nearly seventy years, the Chola country had the rare opportunity of being improved steadily, in the peaceful reigns of the first three Nayak kings and under the able guidance of the state by a genius like Govinda Deekshita. It was in the reign of the third Nayak king that troubles seem to have slowly invaded the peaceful palace of the Nayak kings, and it was exactly then that the master-hand of Govinda Deekshita was removed from the helm of the state by providence. It is with great pity that we must now look upon the all too brief story of the Nayak race at Tanjore, after the figure of the Govinda Deekshita was removed from the state. For we learn that the next Nayak king, Vijaya Raghava was not only the next in succession to Raghunadha, but was also the last of the race at Tanjore, the rule of the kingdom then passing on to the sturdy Maharashtra kings. A small tradition in this connection is somewhat interesting to recount. Although the Nayak kings were Vaishnavites by faith and Govinda Deekshita was an advaitic Brahmin of the saivite persuasion, yet during the rule of the Nayak kings at Tanjore, both Siva and Vishnu temples were equally well attended to by the state and the Brahmins were always treated with the respect due to them in accordance with the Shastras. The temples at Chidambaram, Kalahasti, and Tirupati seem to have been renovated in the reign of the second King, Achutappa Nayak. It is said that Raghunadha Nayak and Govinda Deekshita renovated the Ramaswami temple at Kumbhakonam and had the whole of the Ramayana pictorially represented on the inner walls of the temple. There are to be seen even to-day, several of the representations in every bad state of disrepair, calling for immediate attention. The Vishnu temple of Sri Mushnum in the South Arcot District, the temple at Rameswaram etc., seem to have been renovated by Raghunadha Nayak and Govinda Deekshita. It is worthy of note that an inscription of the reign of

Chavappa, relating to a grant of land to the Fakirs at Tanjore, places a heavy moral penalty on those Mohammadans that chose in any way to interfere with the right vested in the Fakirs. This exhibits the extra-ordinary tolerance of the Hindu kings for the followers of alien faiths. While the first three Nayak kings held the balance between rival faiths in the state, the fourth king, Vijayaraghava Nayak, grew some-how to be a rank Vaishnavite, and tradition says that this was the reason why the Nayak rule came to an end with him, because he left off the evenness of temper so essential for a king, and became a partisan in his religious faith and hence in his public conduct as king.

III

It is now time to turn to some of the work of charity with which the name of Govinda Deekshita is closely associated. It has been said before that Govinda Deekshita and his wife are worshipped in the form of a life-size images in the temple at Patteeswaram, while Lingas known as "Govinda Deekshita", are worshipped in the temples at Tiruvadi and Kumbakonam. Generally in Siva temples, only the Saivite saints are worshipped, and it is only in one Siva temple that the image of Sri Sankaracharya is placed and worshipped, viz., at Conjeevaram. It is not usual to have images of *Smarthas* (the saivites who follow smritis) in temples for worship; while so, Govinda Deekshita and his wife alone have had this unique honour. To have had such Divine worship granted to them in this age, Govinda Deekshita must have done something which could be expected only from the Divine Being. When we examine the traditions, we have no doubt that Govinda Deekshita was a typical Brahmin in his private life, and did his work always as a servant of God. It has been said before how, when Chavappa offered the crown to him, Govinda Deekshita not only refused to accept it, true Brahmin as he was, prevented as such by the Shastras from being a ruler, but he also agreed to be Chavappa's counsellor instead, in accordance with the injunction of the Dharma Shashtra—that it is the Brahmin's fundamental duty to advise the ruler and always work for the good of the state and of the happiness of the people by means of Tapas, yagna, counsel etc. To us now it may sound rather fanciful if I should speak of Govinda Deekshita as the truest type of the Brahmin contemplated in the Hindu Shastras. He was minister of such a glorious type for a long period. His life was almost co-eval with the rule of the Nayak kings at Tanjore in the sixteenth century. He led a true Brahmin life at house. It is said that he never was without "*Agnihotra*" at home. It is said that he would perform his *agnihotra* at the exact times at the 2 twilights (*sandhyas*) and proceed from his residence at Patteeswaram in his palanquin to Tanjore

during the day to perform his ministerial functions, at the fixed hours of the day. It is said that in his house there always glowed the "Tretāgni" (the three Fires-gārhapatya, Ahavaniya and Dakshināgni—to be tended in every Brahmin's house incessantly, his own, the eight fires of his eight sons and that of his one son-in-law). Is a house of that type to be called the abode of Gods or of men? No wonder Govinda Deekshita had not merely the grace of the Divine Being, but himself became Divine in his own life. He preformed the various yagnas (sacrifices) laid down in the Veda and distributed charities widely and brought into existence many permanent institutions known by his name to this day—It is said that he gave the sixteen mahādānas (great gifts) ordained in the smritis, and known as "Shodasa mahādāna" and that the sixteen Lingas around the Mahamakha tank at Kumbhakonam were established there by Govinda Deekshita to mark this great event and to invoke the grace of Isvara for the good of the world. Again it is said that he gave one Agrahāram in the name of each Tithi (day of lunar month) and that the village now known as Ichangudi (ஈச்சங்குடி) in the Tanjore Distrect is still called the Ekadasi Agraharam. It is said also that in commemoration of the completion of all the Yagnas by Govinda Deekshita, after he performed the Yaga known as Sarvatomukha, he set up four grand pillars. This incident is referred to by Yagna Narayana Deekshita in his "Raghunadha Vilasa"¹ None of these pillars is, however, to be traced now. In several villages *Sambhavanas* are made in the name of Govinda Deekshita on important days, even to this day. It is also said that the third King Raghunatha was blessed with the throne for helping Govinda Deekshita in the performance of the Yāga known as Vājapeya, in which the king himself held the umbrella over the head of Govinda Deekshita². All this is confirmed by the titles used in referring to the Deekshita. In Tantrasikhamani

1 चत्वारः कृतसर्वतोमुखमहासत्रेण गाढं शिला-

धूपायेन निरवानिनाः प्रतिदिशं युक्तं चिरावस्थितेः

सौराज्यं रघुनाथभूमिपतिना संप्रापिते क्षमातले

पारेसङ्ख्यसुतं वृषेण वसता पादा इव स्थापिताः ॥

2 रंथ्यावास्तिकधैनुका श्वगजतामुरव्यानाहदक्षिणं

वर्षादाप्ता पदोत्तरं क्रतुवरं तंवाजपेयभिधम् ॥

मेनाहार्यकिमप्यहार्यविभवंसाम्राज्य लक्ष्मीपदं

संप्राप्तो रघुनाथम् शतमरवो जेजीयतेसाम्प्रतं ॥

(तन्त्रशिरवामणिः) a commentary on the Miniamsa sutras of Jaimini by Sir Rajachudamani Deekshita, Govinda Deekshita is referred to in these terms:—

श्रीमद्वैतविद्याचार्यसर्वतन्त्रस्वतन्त्रसागित्तच

त्यसर्वतोमुखसाग्नित्याप्तवाजपीयया

जिश्रो गोविन्ददीक्षितवरसुनीः

1

These go to show not merely the god-like life led by Govinda Deekshita, but also the vast learning of the Deekshita, to which we shall refer presently.

To speak about a few things in which we have his name even to-day, the Ayyan Kulam (tank) and the Ayyan Kadai (Bazaar) in Tanjore, Ayyanpet, a village between Tanjore and Kumbakonam, on the South Indian Railway, Ayyan Vaikal (canal)—an irrigation channel north of the Coleroon, starting from the Akhanda Cauvery, the Ayyan theru (street) in Tiruvannamalai, already referred to, are some in which we have the name of Govinda Deekshita to this day. Again the Yāgasāla street and the Yāgasāla Mantapa at Kumbakonam are said to mark the place where Govinda Deekshita performed his Yagas on the banks of the Cauvery. A house in the West Ayyan street at Kumbakonam used till recently to be pointed to as his house at Kumbakonam and it is said that all the members of his class used till recently to perform marriages etc., in that ancient family house. It is said that he built the temples at Kuttālaun, Tirupalathurai and several other ancient shrines in South India. It is said that the celebrated Mahamakham tank at Kumbakonam owes its present condition to Govinda Deekshita. In connection with this, a story is told, that, when the Nayak king doubted the sacredness of the mahamakham tank, Govinda Deekshita, by his Pūja to Gangā Devi, made the Goddess stretch her hands above the water and receive his oblations, thus proving to the Nayak king the sacredness of the tank, which attracts millions of pilgrims to this day. It is said that on seeing this wonder, the king gave gold equal to his weight for the renovation of the sacred Mahamakham tank. A work of sculpture in the Mantapa on the bund illustrates this tradition. Govinda Deekshita provided the tank with an extensive flight of steps all around the tank, no where else so constructed, and also erected mantapas and gopuras for the sixteen Lingas all round the bund of the tank. These are some of the items in which we still see historical evidence of his unbounded charities. It is said that on one occasion when Govinda Deekshita was proceeding in his palanquin to the mouth of the

Cauveri for a cold bath, his palanquin happened to pass a street in Mayavaram. It is said that an old Brahmin did not get up as he should have done out of respect for the great minister who was proceeding in his palanquin, in accordance with the immemorial custom of the Hindus, but instead asked if the minister had any extra-ordinary power and if he could turn that old street which ran east to west into a street running north to south. This flouting challenge reached the ears of the minister, who, at once ordered that before his return from the bath, the street should be razed and a new street running from south to north should be laid immediately, leading straight to the bank of the Cauvery and that the best house in it should be provided for the old man who thus flouted him. It was done accordingly before his return from the bath. Govinda Deekshata also formed streets known as Mahādhāna streets in important shrines, on this plan, as for instance at Madyārjunam (Tiruvīdai Maruthur on the S. I. Ry.) and Swētāranyam or Tiruvangādu. It is said that Govinda Deekshita constructed also bathing ghats, pushya-mantapas in various places such as Tiruvadi, Kumbakonam, Patteeswaram, Madyārjunam, Tiruvalanjuzhi, Vriddhachalam etc. The village known as Deekshita Samudram (or Mullakudi in the Tanjore Dt.) and Venkata Samudram (or Varahur, near Tirukkattippalli in the Tanjore Dt.) seem to be connected with Govinda Deekshita and his son Venkata Makhi.

Above all, Govinda Deekshita seems to have done much for the temple at Patteeswaram, his own favourite place. In the temple there is an image of Ganapati in the front court-yard first opposite to the small tank, concerning which there is an interesting tradition. The Ganapathi is called Āgjña (order or command) Ganapati. It is said that originally there was a fine big Mantapam in this first yard of the temples and that, when the Nayak king ordered the materials of the Mantapa to be removed for the use of some other temple, Govinda Deekshita sent word to the king that it was the command of the Ganapati that those materials should not be removed. The king, being a Vishnavite by faith, wanted a sign of the power of the Ganapati; and asked if the water poured over the image of Ganapati would flow down as milk. Govinda Deekshita said, "yes". The king at once tested this, and found that the word of the Deekshita was true. The king then rescinded his order to remove those materials from the temple and even gave a separate grant of land for the worship of that Ganapati, apart from the general temple funds. This continues to this day. In connection with the temple at Patteeswaram, there is another interesting tradition which is worth recording. It is said that, when Govinda Deekshita was residing at Patteeswaram, following his rigorous orthodox life at home and doing wonderful work as minister at the Nayak Court at Tanjore, always

utilising the public funds for the public weal, by daily doing some charitable work or other, and thus endeavouring to make life healthy and happy—the true end of a well-organised state—, one day it happened that he saw before his house an old faithful servant of his then gone to the regions of the dead a few years. He was a chandala and for his faithful service to his master, he had been, according to his rank in the social scale, made a messenger of Yamadharmaraja the virtuous God of Death. He had that day gone thither to take away the life of a well-skilled mason, who had just then been engaged in the renovation of the southern Gopura of the temple, under the supervision of Govinda Deekshita. Worshipping his old master, the messenger of Yama, told Govinda Deekshita that he was then employed in the kingdom of Yama by the blessing of the holy Deekshita, that he had gone over to him to tell him what he had seen, and heard in heaven, that, while his name was extolled in heaven for all his glorious acts on earth, there was yet one item of charity to which he had not turned his attention, viz., the establishment of Nandavanas, public flower-gardens for purposes of Puja. To show that he was speaking truth and that he was in fact the messenger of Yama, he said that he was, under the orders of Yama, gone thither then to take away, at a mentioned hour, the life of the skilled mason who was working in the temple at that time. Govinda Deekshita, desiring at once to save his trusted mason from death, attempted to evade the dictates of Providence, and bringing the mason down from the Gopura, locked him up in a room in his house and had the key safely with himself. But as fate would have it always, the Deekshita afterwards forgot all about it and when, just before that fatal hour, his service was most required for placing a huge stone in position at the top of the Gopura, some one asked Govinda Deekshita for the mason's service; and all forgetfully he allowed the mason to go and do the work in which the Deekshita had all his interest engrossed. The mason went, placed the stone in position, but received a hit from his own tool, lost his position, fell headlong from the height and expired at the exact moment fixed for his death by the ruler of destiny. The Deekshita learnt the news and then consoled himself with the thought that his effort to save the mason was an act opposed to the law of Gods; and taking hint from the incident, he thought of the information given to him by the messenger of Yama regarding himself and proceeded at once to establish Nandavanas in different parts of the country. A stone image of a man in lying position outside the temple at the entrance to the southern Gopura of the temple at Patteeswaram is shown to this day as marking the place where that illfated mason met his death.

This tradition is interesting as showing us two things, that Govinda Deekshita made extensive repairs and thoroughly renovated

the temple at Patteeswaram and that at a certain period of his life, he set about establishing Nandavanas far and wide in the Chola Desa. In many places people point to such Nandavanas as having been established by Govinda Deekshita. In imitation of those nandavanas evidently, the institution of Nandavanas in all villages has become an ordinary feature in the Chola Desa. The place called Govindapuram to the east of Madhyārjuna, is said to have been the site of one such Nandavana, and the name of the village suggests its connection with Govinda Deekshita.

We have thus reason to think, both from traditional accounts and existing institutions, that the scheme of public works and charities planned and executed by Govinda Deekshita must have been a grand and an extensive one. It is no wonder that a tract of country, which Govinda Deekshita by his reforms and works with the willing co-operation of the Nayak kings, turned into such a fertile and beautiful tract, now has no parallel in south India, with its net work of temples, gardens, bathing ghats, Pushyamantapas, irrigation-channels etc. Yegnanarayana Deekshita's description of the Chola Desa, referred to before, cannot be considered to be mere poetic imagination, when we realise the work done by the state in this tract of country, during the later part of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth century. An inscription at Patteeswaram on the northern wall of the inner eastern Gopura of the temple, shows that Govinda Deekshita sacrificed his self for the state, using every part of the state's wealth for works of charity, for the good of the people, and never showed the least self-interest in his actions¹.

We shall now turn to that item of his work, which has been most enduring and which shows the true genius of Govinda Deekshita. He was himself a very learned Brahmin and he realised the importance of culture in the life of a state. It was really with the eye of a true genius that he realised the importance of a far-seeing educational policy in the state, and established in the Chola Desa, which was under his ministerial jurisdiction, a net-work of Pātasalas for the teaching of the Vedas, Vedangas, Vedantha and the Shastras of the Hindus. The Raja Patasala at Kumbhakonam, which traces its origin to the days of Govinda Deekshita, is still a centre of learning. Similar Patasalas are still seen in different parts of the Chola Desa. These Patasalas took the places of the ancient Gurukulas and really were educational centres of great importance and are still so to a certain extent. Hundreds of scholars in that part of the country, owe their learning to this Patasala system inaugurated by Govinda Deekshita in the sixteenth century. The Patasala system has not

1. The inscription is in a mutilated condition. It runs thus:— चर्माभि.....

lost its vitality even now and the value of the system is still recognised far and wide. It will be quite easy, I venture to think, for our Matāthipathis and truly public spirited Hindus who have hearts for the maintenance of Dharma and culture in the pure Hindu form in Aryavarta, to establish a regular university on truly Hindu lines, having these Patasalas as the nuclei. There is good scope for organised practical work in this direction in the Chola Desa.

IV

Thus far I have dealt with the life of Govinda Deekshita as the minister of the Nayak kings of Tanjore. I have traced the origin of the Nayak rule at Tanjore in the middle of the sixteenth century, briefly related the chief features of the Nayak rule in the Chola country, the connection of Govinda Deekshita with the state, and the public works he did as the minister of the Nayak kings, almost throughout their career at Tanjore. It is now time to turn to the man Govinda Deekshita and record what is known about him and say a few words about his family and private life. Govinda Deekshita was first a man and then a minister. He owes his greatness as much to the purity and dignity of his private life as to his multifarious activities as the minister of the Nayak court. He discharged his ministerial functions as conscientiously and as perfectly as he could. In his *pravritti* or "going forth" as a minister, he never allowed himself to forget that the true end for a Brahmin was *nivritti* or "drawing in". I have already related how every day from his earliest years, he would regularly and punctually perform his Agnihotra enjoined on every true Brahmin as Nithyakarma. I have also related how he, in his life, performed all the yajnas which have to be performed by every true Brahmin and how he directed several of his charities along lines which would make life worth-living for people in the Chola Desa. The benefits of these works carried out by Govinda Deekshita are still enjoyed by the Hindus in Southern India, while Govinda Deekshita thus led a perfect life at home as a true brahmin, and while in the state he was so active and so beneficent in everything he did, he was also a very learned man. This has special significance in these days when most of our educated men think that eastern culture saps the roots of progress, instead of watering them. The value of the life of a man like Govinda Deekshita, who, perfectly steeped in eastern culture, was not dreaming in the wilderness and wasting away his life in the mere search after Brahman, as eastern culture is supposed ignorantly by many to lead to, but mixed so actively in public life, while he did not swerve an inch from the path of karma laid down in the Veda, is really inestimable, especially in the modern age, when we are living amidst "dilettantism and mammonism" to use the expression of Carlyle. Here was a person, in this

very Kaliyuga, the age of Thamas or Inertia, the age of growing vice, hardly 300 years ago, who was a learned brahmin, who led a truly brahmine life, and who did in the state, work which several generations of ministers and statesmen have not been able to do and cannot hope to do in much longer time than was available to Govinda Deekshita. There is proof that god was in him, in and out.

Govinda Deekshita is always referred to as "*advaita Vidya-charya*" (the master of "advaita" or "monistic" knowledge) by Sri Raja Chūdamani Deekshita in his Tantrasikhamani, referred to already. Govinda Deekshita's son, yagna Narayana Deekshita, refers to him as Sri Pada Vākya¹ Pramāna Pārāvāra Pārīna srimad advaita Vidyāchārya. Yagna Narayana Deekshita, in his "*Sahitya-ratnakara*"¹ and in his "*Raghunadha Vilasa*"² says that Govinda Deekshita had "*advaita vidya*" as his special study, that he churned the ocean of the six systems of Philosophy (*shad-darsana*) and gave the Amrita so churned to all learned men. This reference shows that Govinda Deekshita was not merely a learned man, but also engaged his leisure hours in imparting his learning to others. Venkata Makhi, another son of Govinda Deekshita, in one of his songs says that his father taught and thus firmly established the faith of Sri Sankaracharya—viz. *advaita*.³ It is said that, while Govinda Deekshita was one day engaged in expounding to his disciples the commentary of the "*Brahma Sutras*," known as "*kalpa Taru*" of Bhamati, a gloss on the Sutra Bhashya of Sri Sankaracharya, the great Appiah Deekshita, (born 1554) whose name is held in high esteem to this day in Southern India, then a young man, visited Govinda Deekshita. The two great Deekshitas had been brought together for the first time on the occasion of Govinda Deekshita's performing the Yajna known as *Sarvathomukha* at *Madyarjunam*.

- 1 అద్వైతవిद्याవి భవావలంబాన్గోవింద్యజ్వేంద్రగురునుపాసే ।
నిర్మత్య షడదర్శనతొరధోమ్యే ధియేవ సారం దదతే కుభేభ్యః ॥
- 2 షడదర్శనాభిగవధుగ్ధసర్వరీగయో నిర్మత్య యత్రరహితం నిజయా ధియేవ ।
విశ్రాణ్యన్ననుదిన్విబుధాల్లీ నామేతద్రసం మురర్పిం భువి యోఽతిశేతే ॥
3. కుంభగోణమధురీ నిత్యనివాసురే బరి
య్యాప్తసారం పాణీరే ।
శంకరముని మత ప్రతిష్ఠాపన కోవిదు
గోవిందాధ్వరి నాగాంబిక మత
వెంకటముఖిచంద్రు పరిచిన్ను లే
కైవర ప్ర బంధ మవిధరయ.

Appiah Deekshita originally belonged to a village known as Adayapalam near Arni in the present North Arcot Dt., and his descendants are still living in the Tanjore Dt. On this occasion of their second meeting, Govinda Deekshita asked the young Appiah Deekshita to give him an idea of his learning. when Appiah Deekshita very modestly expressed himself and said that he knew no Vedas or Shastras, but that he was an ardent devotee of Iswara who had Chandra Kala (चन्द्रकला) on his head and who destroyed Tripura.¹ The acquaintance between the great men developed soon and Appiah Deekshita stayed away with Govinda Deekshita, collaborating with him in the noble task of imparting Brahma Vidya to their disciples. Govinda Deekshita struck with the learned and apt explanations given by Appiah Deekshita, admired him for his genius and asked him to write a commentary on "Kalpa Taru", saying in a humourous way that the Kalpa Taru which would give all to humanity needed the benevolence of Appiah Deekshita's expression for its showing its inherent power.² It appears that Govinda Deekshita himself wrote a concise treatise on the shad-darsana, which he taught to his disciples. He is also reputed to be the author of a special commentary on Kumārila Darsana, a mimamsa work. Appiah Deekshita quotes from this work "Siddhanta Lesa Sangraha," he refers to Govinda Deekshita as "Advaita Vidyacharya."

Venkata Makhi, otherwise known as Venkateswara Deekshita, says in his *Chaturdandi Prakasika* that his father Govinda Deekshita wrote also a work on music known as *Sangeeta Sudhanidhi*.³

1. नाहमधीतवेदे नचपठितोयत्रकुत्रचित्छास्त्रे ।
किन्तुधरेन्दुवतंसिनि पुरहिंसिनि भूमसिर्भाक्ः ॥
2. अप्पदीक्षित किमित्यतिस्तुतिं
वर्णयामि भवतो वदान्यताम् ।
सोऽपि कल्पतर्गुर्थसिद्धये
त्वद्रिरामवसरं प्रतीक्षते ॥

Taru = tree; refers also to the commentary known as "Kalpa Taru".

Vāk = word—refers to his power of exposition and to the inherent power of helping mankind (by its power to give all—as the tree—and to help all to knowledge—as the commentary).

3. ततो नुरुधुनाथेन्द्रमेलविणा निरूप्यते ।
तल्लक्षणं नु संगीतसुधानिधिरिति श्रुते ॥
चेव्वमाच्युतभूपालरधुनाथ नृपाङ्गिते ।
अस्मत्तातकृते ग्रन्थे प्रोक्ताश्लोकांलिखामितान् ॥

It appears also that Govinda Deekshita wrote a work of Jyōtisha (astrology), as is seen from the reference made by the author of the Tamil work known as "*Thandava-malai*".¹ It also appeared that Govinda Deekshita wrote a commentary on the Sundara Kānda, of the "Ramayana." It is a pity, however, that none of these works are extant, but we hope to get one or more of these works in course of time. In the absence of any of his works in original, we are unable to form a correct estimate of his erudition and style. There is a sloka, however, which refers to his vast learning by saying that Achyuta and Govinda, the first and the last of the three holy names of God, Achuta, Anantha, and Govinda, were king and minister respectively and that they were respectively master of Astra (weapons) and Sāstra (holy texts) and were skilled respectively in war and sacrifices (Yajnas).²

Govinda Deekshita's wife's name is given as Nāgāmbika or Nāgamāmba by Venkata Makhi. It appears that Govinda Deekshita had 8 sons and daughter. There is a tradition that his daughter died of Rājadrishti (the look of the king). One day, when the king paid a visit to the Great Minister at his residence, Govinda Deekshita's accomplished daughter took the harathi to the king, as is the custom on such an occasion. The king naturally was pleased with the accomplished lady, but unfortunately she died. It is said, afterwards by the evil effect of the look of the king, as is believed in by the Hindus. It is said also that one of his sons, an expert player on the *Vina* met with early death, as is believed, in consequence of the admiration of the king. The king, it is stated gave away all his royal ornaments to the young son of Govinda Deekshita, but that in a few hours afterwards, he died of the effect of *Rajadrishti*. Tradition says that it was then that Govinda Deekshita

1. (1) இன்னூலென்னூலின் வழித்தெனின், "மாவிந்தை சோதான் மலாடி வணங்குங், கோவிந்த தீட்சித்யத்தின் வழித்து" எனக்கொள்க.

(2) கோவிந்த தீட்சிதர் தங்கொள்கையினுற் கூறுகின்ற

மாவிந்த நூலின் வழக்கறிந்து தேவின்

திசர்போற்றும் பிண்டியஞ் செல்வன் சீர்கூறி

வருவணப்பாவையன்வந்து. P. 261, 262, Report of skt. and Tamil manuscripts for 1896-97, Madras.

2. He refers to himself as the third son of Govinda Deekshita and Nagamba in his Chatur Dandi Prakasika

इति श्रीमद्वैतविद्याचार्य.... श्रीगोविन्ददीक्षित नागाम्बावरतृतीयनन्दनस्य समिचि त्य सर्वकृतयाजियज्ञनारायणदीक्षिताव्यव हितानुजस्य, अच्युतविजयराघव भूपाल प्रेरितस्य वेङ्कटेश्वरदीक्षितस्य कृतौ चतुर्दण्डप्रकाशिकायां.....

pronounced a curse on his clan, that wealth and beauty should not adorn his child at any time and the members of the Deekshita's clan still believe in the curse.

Of his other sons, we know prominently of two, viz., Yajnanarayana Deekshita and Venkateswara Deekshita, known as Venkatamakhi. Yajnanarayana Deekshita was a friend of the Nayak king Raghunatha, in whose praise however he wrote the play known as "*Raghunatha Vilasa*", already referred to. His master-piece "*Sahitya Ratnakara*" has also been referred to. He wrote also a Champukavya known as "*Raghunatha Bhupa Vijaya*." Besides being a great poet, he appears to have mastered Vyakarna (Grammar), Tharka (logic), Mimamsa (the science of interpretation) and Advaita Vedanta.¹ Although we do not hear of any separate work on music as written by Yajnanarayana Deekshita, we still see that he had cultured taste in music, as well as in the science of dancing or Bharatha Sāstra, from the references found in his work. A whole canto, the 8th in his *Sahitya Ratnakara* gives a detailed description of the technicalities of the science of music. His son Venkatesa Deekshita was a scholar in Jyotisha (astrology) and his work "*Jathaka Chandrika*" has been translated into English by Mr. B. Suryanarayana Rao. Chokkanātha Deekshita, the guru of Rajachūdāmani Deekshita, in the preface to his "*Bhashya Ratnavali*" says that he was induced by Venkatesa Deekshita to write that work. Venkatesa Deekshita or Venkata Makhi, the brother of Yajnanarayana Deekshita, is a familiar figure in the world of music. His treatise "*Chaturdandi Prakasika*" marked a turning point in the history of South Indian music. Mr. Subbarama Deekshita in the preface to his "*Sangita Sampradhaya Pradarsini*" published under the patronage of the Raja of Ettayapuram, says that Venkata Makhi wrote his "*Chaturdandi Prakasika*" under the patronage of the 4th Nayak king Vijaya Raghava and that it is still a standard work in the science of music. It was he that rendered the old 22 Swaras to 12 and designed the present Vina adopted to the 12 swaras. It appears also that Venkata Makhi was the author of the Melakartha as is in vogue at present in southern India. The Hindus believe that through any form of knowledge, one could realise Brahman and obtain spiritual force power. Venkatamakhi is believed to have had such realisation by the science of music. Tradition says that when the 4th king Vijayaraghava Nayak became an aggressive Vaishnavaita and compelled his subjects to put on the *Sankha* and *Chakra Mudras*, Venkatamakhi went to Madhyārjuna and praised the Deity in the

1. पातञ्जलं भाट्टमतं च तर्कभट्टैतराद्धान्तमवैमिकीर्तैः प्रबन्धसंदर्भभरैः कवित्वविद्यामिदानीं विशदीकरोमि ॥ *Sahitya Ratnakara* I-51.

temple in a melodious song¹ and prayed for the freedom of the subjects from their religious suffering that was inflicted on them by the king. The king, it is said, who was suffering from a terrible form of stomach-ache hastened to issue a proclamation allowing freedom of religious faith and practice to all his subjects in accordance with the eternal custom of kings in India and was then freed from his stomach-ache. Venkata Makhi composed several songs and they are given in the "*Sangeeta Sampradaya Pradarsini*." In his songs, he refers to his learned father Govinda Deekshita, his mother Nagamba and his talented brother Narayana Makhi and his maternal grand-father. He takes pride in referring to himself always as the son of Govinda Adhvani and represents his parents as the incarnations of Parvati and Sankara.² It is needless to quote his songs in large numbers for our present purpose.

It appears also that Venkata Makhi wrote two other treatises *Karmāntha Mimamsa*, a work on the mimamsa Sastra, and *Vārthikābharanam* also a work on the same Sastra.³ He says he learnt Mimamsa from his brother Yagna Narayana Deekshita, whose disciple he was. Venkata Makhi's disciple was Neelakantha Deekshita the author of *Siva Leelarnava*, which describes the Leelas of Sri Minakshi Sundareswara of Madura (published at the Vani Vilas Press, Srirangam). Neelakantha Deekshita was the grandson of Appiah Deekshita's brother and it is said that Appiah Deekshita asked his grand-nephew to stay with Venkata Makhi and learn the sastras at his feet. The beginning of his work in which he speaks of the nature of poetry and the characteristics of a poet is couched in a style which discloses much resemblance to the style of Yagna Narayana Deekshita. An image of Neelakantha Deekshita, as seated on horse-back, is placed in the Sannidhi of Sri Minakshi amman at Madura.

1. శంఖచక్రంత వత్సచరేత్.

2. ఆరుంధతీ కిరియం బుధితే నిరుంధతియరేరే సర్వతోముఖ ముఖ్య క్రతుపవితరి నాగయాంబారే । పదనారాయణ మఖప్రలేయ చలప సంకుంజత చిన్నవస్పార్వతీదేవి శంకర ఆవతార గోవిందాద్వరజై నాగయాంబారే ॥

3. In the *Gangavatharana Kāvya*, Sri Neelakantha Deekshita says that he was the disciple of Venkata Makhi, the author of *Vārthikābharanam*, that Venkata Makhi was of the Vashista Vamsa and that his father was Govinda Deekshita, and that he (Govinda Deekshita) wrote a commentary on Kumārila Darsana, a Mimamsa work.

वार्तिकाभरणग्रन्थनिर्माणव्यक्तनैपुणः ।

श्रीवेङ्कटेश्वरमखीशिष्ये मरयनुकम्पते ॥

Sri Raja Chudamani Deekshita, the author of "Tantrasikhamani", a commentary on the Mimamsa Sūtras of Jaimini says that he was induced by Venkatesa Deekshita to write his work. The terms in which he refers to Venkatesa Deekshita show that Venkatesa Deekshita also performed several Yagas, (sacrifices) and was a learned scholar.¹

V

In drawing this short and imperfect account of the great sage and minister, Govinda Deekshita, I have no hesitation in asserting that the study of the life and work of this great personage of modern times is sure to be a source of great inspiration in this age to all those of us who have a love of our country, her glorious past, her inimitable culture and her grand institutions, social, religious and political, which still have that vitality in them which was imparted to them by the ancient Rishis of Aryavarta. The life of one like Govinda Deekshita, who lived and worked among us only 300 years ago is bound to strike our imagination and to appeal to our sentiments more even than the lives of those ancient Rishis and statesmen of whom we read in our puranas and Itihasas. Here was one who was perfect as a statesman and as a man, who ever walked in the path of God. His work in the state converted the whole Chola Desa into a veritable Earthly paradise. His religious devotion has left several institutions in the land which are bound to keep his fame and name green in our memories for ages to come. One story is enough to show how Govinda Deekshita was ever ready to help all to the best of his ability—one day while he was taking a walk he saw a young man uttering a sloka and ardently praying to the Sun for his grace. The Deekshita approached the young man and heard him uttering a sringāra sloka (a piece of poetry containing sringāra rasa or element of love) and not a song of devotion as he thought it was. On asking the young man, the Deekshita was told that the young man, desiring to be married and well established in life, had appraised a guru of his desire, that that Guru had given him that sloka for prayer to the sun, and that he had since then been continually praying to the sun with that sloka, not knowing anything as to what it meant. The Deekshita heard him and was amused. Seeing the young man's ardent devotion

1. श्रीमद्वैतविद्याचार्यसर्वतन्त्रस्वसाग्निचित्याप्रवाज

पेययाजि श्रीवेङ्कटेश्वरदीक्षितनियोगानुभवसमुन्मि

षितमनीषाविशेषम्.....

and sincerity, the Deekshita took the young man with him and got him married and well-established in life.

In social matters, Govinda Deekshita appears to have been a permanent court of arbitration. One description at Patteeswaram shows how the class of weavers, known as *Patnālkars* always went to him to settle all family disputes among them. Even now, when difficulties arise among this class of people, they go to Patteeswaram and in the presence of the image of Govinda Deekshita, settle their differences. Govinda Deekshita was an authority in Dharma Sastra. He was a true Brahmin and performed all the sacrifices enjoined in the Vedas. He was a master of politics and he steered the ship of state very successfully and gloriously for nearly three quarters of a century. At the end, he gave up all his estate, palace etc., to God and resigned all Karma-phala (the fruit of his actions) and had for his Vibhava or wealth only his Advaita Vidya and realised his Atman. He gave up all and in the last days of his life, he retired and spent his time in Thapas in the Saunadhi of Mangalambika at Kumbakonam, as is popularly believed, and left the mortal coil to evolve from the prison house of mortal life and join the great Rishis of Aryavarta, in the regions of immortality.

Thus passed out of sight this illustrious sage of the sixteenth century. Govinda Deekshita was a true hero while he lived and became a God after his death. As has been said at the out-set, Govinda Deekshita is now worshipped as a God in the form of Linga at Kumbakonam and at Tiruvadi and as an image at Patteeswaram. He has beside him at Patteeswaram his consort, his Dharma Patni, Nagāmba, the two standing there to-day as if to illustrate the famous line of Milton, "*He for god only, she for god in him.*"
