CHAPTER SIX

WELFARE IN ACTION

This Chapter is entitled 'Welfare in Action' just to distinguish the spontaneous welfare activities undertaken by the Math without the aid of specific institutional means which is true of the activities discussed in the previous Chapter. The Jagadguru Gangadharaswamy of the Math speaks of the primary goal of the Math as the accomplishment of the general well-being of all human beings. This, perhaps, pinpoints the social responsibility of a religious organization under the present circumstances, when the stresses and strains of a developing society claim the attention of all major organizations, including the religious. The Math seems to be endeavouring to respond to such of the demands of the contemporary society which can be met with the resources that it possesses, and which fits into the framework of its activity as a religious organization. In pursuance of this line of action, the Math is trying to evolve something like a working plan which is in consonance with the current demands and expectations of a rapidly changing society. The Jagadguru of the Math is certainly not aware of the prerequisites of professional social work in regard to
the evolving of a working plan of welfare activity.
But he shows a keen awareness of the situations which are likely to develop into a problem area, and identifies such of those problem areas where the Math could intervene. He is not single-handed in such ventures. He draws on the resources of the community, takes the people into confidence, imparts a sense of urgency to the situation, and thus the community moves with him in ventures of great magnitude. This is exemplified in the many ventures which this Chapter deals with.

For purposes of present analysis, a break-up of the welfare activities discussed in this Chapter is made along the following lines:

(i) Community welfare, which involves activities undertaken for the general well-being of a community;

(ii) Family welfare, which pertains to the specific welfare needs of individual families.

Since family is the basic unit of community organization, one can very well realise that every aspect of community welfare has its own implications
for the family and, similarly, every aspect of family welfare has its own implications for community life. Keeping this in mind, the above distinction is made purely for analytical purposes.

Firstly, the efforts made by the Math in the direction of helping a community to reorganize itself will be taken up.

A. Community Welfare:

As an aspect of community welfare, the famine relief work taken up by the Math is considered here. It is rather unusual for a religious organization to take up such a task when the entire government machinery and its enormous resources could be harnessed for relief work. It is also unusual particularly when the religious organization had no organisational resources to take up such a gigantic task, and the Jagadguru decided to take up the task almost with a religious zeal.

An important factor which impelled the Jagadguru into this task was that community life in the drought-affected villages of North Karnataka were almost on the verge of being completely disrupted. The way in which community life was threatened and the enormous
effort of both the government and the voluntary agencies to rescue the communities from sure disaster is taken up in the following discussion.

Since this Chapter is concerned with the discussion of welfare activity of the Math, the task undertaken by the Math is highlighted.

1. Famine Relief Work:

Late in the year 1972, certain talukas in the five districts of North Karnataka, namely, Bijapur, Gulbarga, Bidar, Belgaum and Raichur, were subject to severe drought conditions. The drought conditions had set in much earlier in the districts of Bijapur, Gulbarga, Bidar and Raichur due to successive failure of monsoons for almost three years. The drought conditions took a severe turn towards the end of 1972 and the early part of 1973. It is stated that such drought conditions were never experienced in these parts in the recent past.

The State Government, on its part, took up famine relief works in the affected areas to provide ready employment income in cash or kinds to the distressed population under the scheme of 'food for work'. The State Government also assisted the gruel centres opened
by voluntary agencies to the extent of fifty per cent of the total expenses, when the government was satisfied that the accounts of expenditure maintained by the gruel centres were satisfactory. The government share of fifty per cent was normally given in the form of food grains. The gruel centres opened by the voluntary agencies had to get the formal approval of the Deputy Commissioner of the concerned district.

In spite of the enormous money being spent by the State Government on relief works, and the consistent efforts of the voluntary agencies to open gruel centres, the problem remained acute with the passing of time. The major reason for this growing acute conditions was that while the able-bodied men and women moved out of the villages to take advantage of the relief works, undertaken by the government, often migrating to distant places.* In the absence of the production-oriented and active population in the villages, the very old and the very young section of the population, along with the chronically diseased and disabled, were subject to

* This migration of active population in search of seasonal employment in distant places is quite common in the districts of Bijapur, Gulbarga and Bidar. This type of seasonal migration is known locally as "Gule."
severe hardship and they were almost on the verge of starvation. The gruel centres were principally meant to save this section of the population from actual starvation. With limited resources, the voluntary agencies which had opened gruel centres in the affected areas, could not adequately meet the heavy demands of this non-working population.

The age-distribution of those who were helped by a gruel centre run by the Math in Ron taluka of Dharwad district is given in Table 12 in order to stress the point that in the absence of gruel centres, the dependent population in the villages would have been exposed to extreme distress.
Table No. 12: Age Distribution of Persons who Received help from a gruel centre in Ron Taluka.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 60</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 70</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 - 80</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 104 100.0

The Jagadguru had a personal experience of the extreme distress conditions of the dependent population in the villages in January 1973, when he had an occasion to visit some villages in Afzalpur taluka in Gulbarga district, while he was on his way to a place near Afzalpur to fulfil some engagement. He was so moved by the helpless condition of the people there that he cut short his visit and hurriedly returned to Hubli with a determination to rescue the people from extreme distress conditions.
Soon after his return from Afzalpur, he convened a meeting of well-wishers and city-elders on the evening of 26th January 1973 in the premises of the Math in order to chalk out a programme of relief activities and also to devise ways and means of collecting funds for such activities. The meeting was presided over by the Jagadguru and was attended by twenty people from all walks of life. The persons assembled enthusiastically supported the idea of the Jagadguru to take up famine relief work in a large scale. Two important resolutions were adopted unanimously by the persons present at the meeting. They are:

1. that the Jagadguru should undertake a Pādayātra from Monday, the 29th January 1973 to 5th February 1973 in Hubli city and the nearby villages accompanied by all the persons present at the meeting, the Śadākās of Shri Kumāreshwara Shivayogi Sangha, Mayor and Corporators of the Hubli-Dharwad City Corporation, local M.L.As (Members of State Legislative Assembly), businessmen and agriculturists, in order to collect enough funds, food grains and other articles in the form of public donation. It was also decided to commence the Pādayātra on each of the above days at 8 o'clock in the morning;
(ii) that a Famine Relief Committee be constituted in order to work out a detailed programme of fund collection and also to maintain proper accounts of the various forms of donations received from the public.

This decision taken at the meeting on 26th January 1973 was given wide publicity through the press and through the distribution of printed appeals to the public. The printed appeals were sent in advance to all the areas meant to be covered by the Pādayātra. This appeal was sent on behalf of the Pādayātra Samītī, Hubli.

The Pādayātra was highly successful in eliciting the response of the people. It was extended by a day upto the 6th February 1973. The contributions to the Famine Relief Fund was received not only from the citizens of Hubli and the villagers nearby, but was also received from other places in the State as also outside the State.

The Famine Relief Fund swelled to ₹1,46,294.55*

* As per the accounts maintained by the Famine Relief Fund Committee.
by the end of February 1973. Further donations were received in the following months and by June 1973, the amount at the disposal of the Famine Relief Committee stood at Rs. 1,59,638.54.*

In the meantime, the Famine Relief Samiti, at the instance of the Jagadguru had addressed letters to the Deputy Commissioners of Bijapur, Gulbarga, Bidar, Raichur and Belgaum districts, and also to the Tahasildares of various taluks in these districts requesting them to provide information about the worst-affected villages in their own respective administrative jurisdiction so that speedy steps could be taken to open gruel centres wherever they did not exist, and to provide money and food-grains to gruel centres which were already existing. Thus the Famine Relief Committee of the Math tried to reinforce the existing facilities of famine relief through proper assessment of the needs of the various communities.

This was followed up by a personal visit by the Jagadguru in March 1973 to some main rural centres

* In addition to the cash donations received, donations in the form of food-grains and other food articles, and clothing were also received.
in the affected districts. This visit was meant to make a personal assessment of the needs of the affected population in the various rural areas.

**Gruel Centres:**

The first step taken in the direction of utilising the relief fund was to open gruel centres. The first gruel centre was opened in Sindgi on 8th March 1973. By early April there were thirty gruel centres opened by the Pādayātra Samithi. The running of gruel centres was mostly entrusted to some local organisations like the citizens' committees, the local maths or the relief committees which were found to be capable of undertaken such a task. Besides, certain local committees of prominent persons were established to supervise the working of the gruel centres. By April, about 6000 people were fed daily at the gruel centres. This increased to 10000 in the coming months, and the number of gruel centres increased from 30 to 54. Food at these gruel centres were distributed once every day.

Besides the gruel centres opened by the Pādayātra Samithi of the Math, assistance was given
to seven other voluntary agencies which were also running gruel centres.

Fodder Centres:

The drought conditions prevailing in these five districts created great hardship not only to the dependent population in the villages, but also to the cattle. The cattle had no fodder, and were being left on their own, or sold to slaughter houses for a meagre sum. Under such conditions the cattle had to be protected. The Pādayātra Samithi, accordingly, opened two Gōrakshana Kandrās (i.e., Cow Protecting Centres) or Fodder Centres, one at Shivayoga Mandira in Badami Taluk, and another at Bhendwad in Raibag Taluk. The cattle brought to these centres were fed and cared after.
Relief Work at a Glance:

Table No. 13: Distribution of Drought Affected Districts, Gorakshana Kendras and Voluntary Organizations by Monetary and Food-grains Assistance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Monetary Assistance (Rs.)</th>
<th>Assistance in kind (Food grains)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Gruel Centres:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Bijapur</td>
<td></td>
<td>18,234</td>
<td>105 bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gulbarga</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,512</td>
<td>125 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bidar</td>
<td></td>
<td>21,012</td>
<td>90 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Belgaum</td>
<td></td>
<td>28,512</td>
<td>105 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dharwad</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,604</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Raichur</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,101</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sholapur (Dudhani gruel centre)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,502</td>
<td>10 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Gorakshana Kendras (Fodder Centres):

1. Shivayogi Mandira (Bijapur Dist.); and
   2. Bendiwad (Belgaum Dist.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. Gorakshana Kendras (Fodder Centres):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Shivayogi Mandira (Bijapur Dist.);</td>
<td>11,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bendiwad (Belgaum Dist.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Assistance to Voluntary Organizations: 3,602

Total: Rs. 1,18,230 435 bags
The famine relief work was continued by the Secretary of the Famine Relief Fund Collection Samithi, on behalf of the Jagadguru, addressed a letter to the Chief Minister of Karnataka stating that with the limited funds and resources available to the Samithi, it could run the gruel centres in the affected areas till the end of June 1973 and appeals to the Government to assist the gruel centres for the last two months under the existing relief provisions of the Government. Of the total amount collected for the Relief Fund a balance of Rs. 21,160.01 was left over and this balance as decided at a General Body Meeting of the Famine Relief Fund Collection Committee, was given over to the Jagadguru to be used in whatever manner he desired.

2. *Tribal Community Welfare in the Urban Setting*:

Within the city limits of Hubli, there exists an area known as the Settlement Area.* This Settlement Area is inhabited by a number of Denotified Tribes. The particular tribes represented in this Settlement include Harinashikari, Girani Waddar, Bestar, Korava, Beda and Jungle Murudi. Taken together, the Settlement has a

* It was during the British Rule that certain steps were taken to rehabilitate or 'settle' the tribals then known as criminal tribes now known as ex-criminal or denotified tribes, in certain areas within or near urban communities. Hubli Settlement was such an area.
population of about ten thousand. The Harinashikaris, a dominant tribe of the Settlement, followed till recently some of their own tribal customs which were somewhat repugnant to the rest of the city population. They still continue their criminal activities in and around the city. They are often successful in evading and/or violating the law, as they are not easily apprehended by the police. The Settlement and the people inhabiting it constitute a threat to community health, and a problem to the city administration.

One of the leaders of the Koravas was somewhat different from the rest of the Settlement population in his approach to life. He had respect for religion and for religious leaders. He was himself a devotee of Sri Sai Baba. He saw in religion a way of transforming the life of the Settlement. He was a frequent visitor to the Math. On one of such visits, the Jagadguru of the Math suggested to him to build a temple in the Settlement. He worked out this suggestion into a firm proposal and pleaded with the people of the Settlement for acceptance. A suitable plot for the construction of the temple was selected and this was the very spot where the Panchas, or the Community elders used to meet for the settlement of community affairs. This spot used to be known as Panchakatti, meaning the raised platform on which the Panchas held their deliberations. This Panchakatti was built under a Banyan tree.

* Sai Baba known also as Satya Sai Baba is an Indian saint who has been looked upon by his large devotees all over the larger part of the world as a God on the earth, and who is known for his miracles.
When once the site for the proposed temple was agreed upon, the Korava leader undertook the construction of the temple with his own personal funds. His family is one of the rich families in the Settlement, and he was able to complete the construction of the temple without taking any outside help. This was done in 1973, and the temple was dedicated to Lord Hanuman.

As the temple replaced the Panchakatti, it was decided by the Community elders that they would henceforth meet in the temple itself for deliberations concerning the community affairs. But here they made a distinction. Only matters pertaining to the promotion of a good life will be considered in the temple, and all other matters which had no such relevance would be considered elsewhere in the Settlement.

Having built the temple, the Korava leader had to find somebody to preside over the formal dedication ceremony. He thought of the Jagadguru of the Math for this task and accordingly, he approached the Jagadguru
who readily accepted his invitation. On the appointed day, the Jagadguru was received in the house of the Korava leader who arranged for an elaborate Pāda Pooja for the Jagadguru before the actual dedication ceremony of the temple. On this occasion, the Jagadguru speaking to the people of the Settlement expressed his desire that they would take positive steps to transform their lives leading to the amelioration of the entire community life. He expressed his satisfaction that the building of the temple was a step in the right direction.

The Korava leader wanted to commemorate this occasion by naming the Settlement after the Jagadguru as Jagadguru Gangādhara Nagar. He had this idea in his mind even before he approached the Jagadguru to grace the dedication ceremony. When he placed the matter before the other elders, they apprehended that by naming the Settlement as proposed, they would lose all the special treatment given to them by the City Corporation in terms of added facilities as a Settlement Area. But the Korava leader was able to convince them that it was to their own advantage if they took steps to improve the physical setting of the Settlement as it would
encourage the Corporation officials to visit the Settlement more frequently.

The Hanuman temple is regularly frequented by the inhabitants of the Jagadguru Gangadhara Nagara. They have set up a Bhajan Mandal connected with the temple to arrange for regular group prayers. Marriages are solemnised in the temple. The temple is also used on other auspicious occasions.

The Jagadguru has maintained constant contact with the people of the Jagadguru Gangadhara Nagara. These people visit the Math frequently. The role of the Jagadguru in bringing about a marked change in the life and attitudes of these people can be estimated from the fact that these people warmly responded to the call of the Jagadguru to contribute liberally to assist the drought-stricken people of Bijapur and other districts. This was in 1973, the year when the Hanuman temple was dedicated by the Jagadguru.

In connection with the role played by the Jagadguru vis-a-vis the Settlement population, one is inclined to recall the assertion of Reinhold Niebuhr who stated that religion provides the resources not only
B. Family Welfare:

Family, as a social institution, takes a leading position in the social milieu of Vīrāsaivism. Members of a family are united by a common faith, common affiliations and a common ritual tradition. Whatever the occupational pursuits may be, the Vīrāsaiva families owe allegiance to the local math, wherever a math is situated in the same village, or in close vicinity. Families living in Hubli and the nearby villages owe allegiance to the Math at Hubli. There is, however, no bar, ritual or otherwise, for a non-Vīrāsaiva family to owe allegiance to the Math, or the maths in the countryside. For instance, as noted earlier, there are a few non-Vīrāsaiva families who have subscribed the prescribed amount for offering daily Pooja to the Gaddige at the Math on a yearly rotation basis. The Jagadguru has a personal knowledge of the families which visit the Math on important occasions. Whenever the

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heads of such families have an audience with the Jagadguru, the latter enquires about the welfare of the family, and if they have problems, the same are conveyed to the Jagadguru who suggests a way out of such situations.

In this discussion, family implies more than mere conjugal unit, and it includes all close relatives comprising the kindred. Such a family unit is locally known as Mane tana, and each Mane tana approximates the clan. The bond of kinship is strong among the Virasaivas, and though the members of the kinship unit may be living in separate households, they join together on auspicious occasions. A close relationship exists between family and religion in Virasaivism. Religious beliefs suffuse the life of the Virasaiva family, and it is often very difficult to make a clear cut distinction between the sacred and the secular in family activities. As Van Gennep points out, the sacred is not something absolute and that it depends on particular situations.² For instance, agriculture is a secular activity; but, when the agricultural family invites a priest to the

harvesting ceremony to bless the year's harvest, the attributes of the sacred is added to a secular activity. Thus, in family life, the sacred and the secular are interwoven. The influence of religion in imparting a distinct quality to social arrangements, especially family life, receives affirmation in the following words of Niebuhr. He states:

The sanifying influence of the religious spirit in communal life is nowhere more apparent than in family life. Religion operates best in intimate communities, because the impulses of religion lose some of their virtue when they cannot find a direct and immediate application; ... ... Where religion encourages attitudes of mutual forbearance and forgiveness, and where it emphasizes the sacramental character of the family union, thereby assuming its permanence, an atmosphere is created in which difficulties are resolved much more easily than in a purely secular atmosphere.  

The Jagadguru does not keep himself aloof from the families owing allegiance to the Math. On invitation, he visits the families on certain occasions like marriage, house-warming ceremony and the like. The Jagadguru is invited to families on certain festive occasions, or on occasions of importance to the family, when the devotees arrange for the *Pāda Pūja.* On their part, the members of such families seek audience with the Jagadguru in the Math whenever they have problems.

The Math is a Virakta Math in the sense of being a centre of monastic life. But the Math is not completely shorn of social affiliations. The strands of social relationship bind the Math with other groups and sub-groups in the community. In this sense, the Math does not exist in a social vacuum. The Math maintains effective relationships with the various groups and sub-groups, of which family constitutes a distinct unit of group life. Thus, the Math maintains relationships with the rich and the poor, with the businessmen and peasants, with the students and the workers, the high and the low. The Math responds to this wide variety of social differentiation with a sense of equanimity.

* This is a ritual worship of the feet of the Jagadguru. The feet are cleansed with water, and the water so used is said to be sanctified.
born of non-partisanship. Norms of group and family life which cut across group boundaries are brought to the attention of all concerned. Effective participation in group life is the essence of social health, and this is brought to the attention of those who try to wreck group life. Individuals are asked to eschew personal ambitions and personal rivalries wherever group interests are involved. In this sense, the integrative influence of religion in matters of group life, including family, needs special emphasis. The problem of group disorganization, and the role of religion in identifying the sources of such disorganization seems to be of utmost importance in the context of family life. The sources of family disorganization are many, and the role of religion is equally diverse in resolving the stresses and strains of family life as the following instances will amply prove.

Many family disputes, especially pertaining to the immovable property, are brought to the Math for settlement. In such cases, the Gaddige, the holy shrine, at the Math becomes the centre-piece on such occasions. An instance of such a dispute which was actually settled at the holy shrine is recounted below:
Four brothers belonging to a peasant family coming from a village in Hubli Taluk had a dispute about a piece of agricultural land in the village. The dispute was actually pending in a court of law. Three of the brothers comprised the plaintiff side, and the other lone brother was the defendant. The contention of the former was that all the four brothers had a share of the land, while the latter contended that he was entitled to the exclusive use of the land. Even as the matter was pending in the court of law, the brothers decided to come to the Math for settlement. The understanding was that if the lone brother could declare in the presence of the Gaddige that he is entitled to the exclusive enjoyment of the property, then the other three brothers would relinquish their claims over the land. A commission was appointed by the court to assist the parties to a settlement outside the court and to report the same to the court.

In conformity with the current practice, the defendant had a purificatory bath in the Math and came before the Gaddige, where the other three brothers, the counsel of both the parties as members of the Commission appointed by the court, and the authorities of the Math were present. The defendant was induced
to present his claims whereupon he tried to speak out. But he could not utter anything, and he was sweating profusely. Finally, he relented. He approached the Jagadguru and prostrated before him. In his presence, he stated that he had no such interest in the land and that he was putting forth a false claim. The dispute was settled in favour of the three other brothers. This was recorded by the Commission in their Minutes and the same was submitted to the court. The court gave its final verdict on the basis of this settlement.*

Instances of marital discord exist, where the husband is addicted to certain vices and he is not able to devote sufficient attention to the well-being of the family. An instance of this kind was brought to the attention of the predecessor of the present Swamiji. The details of the case are given below:

A Lingayat couple were married for quite some years. The husband was a school master. They had six children, two sons and four daughters. The school master gradually became addicted to alcohol and also

* The details of the above account were obtained through personal interviews with the authorities of the Math and one of the lawyers who handled the case.
took to gambling. With his meagre salary, perhaps, he could meet even the normal demands of a large family. He tried to drown his worries in alcoholic drinks and forget his domestic worries in gambling. This was an intolerable situation for the wife. All her efforts to dissuade him from such fast living only made him more confirmed in his habits. Added to this, he began to ill-treat her. Finally, she came to the Math and approached the then Jagadguru with a request to save the family from utter destitution. The Jagadguru found out that the school teacher could not be saved from his deviant ways. Therefore, he decided to save the woman and her children. They were sheltered in the Math. She was assigned certain tasks in the boarding home. The two sons, who were still young and of school-going age, were put in the schools managed by the Math. The first son could finish the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination. He was employed as a clerk in the Office of the Women's College run by the Math. The second son had completed some years of secondary school education when he took up a job outside.

Of the four daughters, three are married. The marriage expenses were met by the Math. The youngest daughter is yet to be married.
In the meantime, the eldest son also got married, and it is he who supports the family now. The second son also contributes to the family purse. Thus, a family which was on the brink of sure disaster was helped in order to save the woman and her children. *

There are families which are already disrupted, and before the process of disruption reaches its climax leaving behind disastrous consequences in society, the soothing effect of religion may win back certain gains to society. An instance of this kind is narrated here:

A widower, aged 60, was living with his only son who was still teen-aged. They were living together in a relative's house. This teen-aged son was a problem to the widower as he was constantly seeking to defy the authority of the father. There were frequent quarrels between them, and the father realised that the parting of ways between the son and himself was imminent.

The widower was a practicing Ayurvedic doctor, and he decided to part with his son as well as his professional practice. With this intent, he came to

* The above account is based on personal interviews with the authorities of the Math and the eldest son.
the Math and sought refuge there. He intended to spend his old age in peace. He was given refuge in the Math, and he could be useful to the Math with his knowledge of Ayurveda. This case was brought before the immediate predecessor of the present Jagadguru.

While providing refuge to the widower, the then Jagadguru was equally keen to help the son to turn a new leaf in his life. With such tact did the then Jagadguru handle the boy that he could not only finish his school education, but became anxious to enter the college. In the meantime, the widower, who was 75 years of age at the time, expired. At the time of death, he donated his entire property consisting of two houses and a plot of land, located at Hubli, to the Math.

The boy could finish his college education and become a graduate. His college expenses were met by the Math. The then Jagadguru helped him in getting a job and he settled down in Bangalore. His marriage was celebrated in the Math and he was given the plot of land which his father had donated, as a wedding gift. Thus, the life of a boy which was almost given up as lost was redeemed under the spell of religious
Poverty has dire consequences to family life, and it takes in the rural setting. Land is an important economic resource which could sustain the family season after season, and in its absence, family life is in complete disarray. When this occurs, it has serious implications for family and community life. Two representative cases are presented here to show how the Math helped in rescuing two families in similar circumstances, but in different contexts, from reaching the point of no return due to lack of necessary economic resources. In the first case, the results were not as spectacular as in the second case. The one with spectacular results indicate the far-reaching and vivid effects of 'religious impulses'.

The two cases are narrated here:

A landless Kuruba family consisting of four members, husband, wife and two sons aged 13 and 10, resided in a village very near to Hubli. They were in economic distress as they had no means to ward off the

* The above account is based on the information furnished by the authorities of the Math.
threat of destitution. They were almost on the verge of being starved when they thought of seeking the help of the Math. They came to Hubli and sought the help of the Math to tide over the terrible crisis which was facing them. Seeing their absolutely helpless condition, with the man already being in his mid-forties, and with children still in a dependent condition, the Swamiji agreed to give them shelter in the Math.

The man is employed to collect the Pasagi, the daily collection of vegetables from the vegetable market for the boarding home, and his eldest son, who is in his early teens, is to assist his father in his task. The woman is assigned certain tasks in the kitchen of the boarding home. The younger son attends the school in the Math and the expenses are borne by the Math. The family is given living quarters in the Math and the members of the family are supplied with food at no cost to the family. The different family members are helping the Math in different capacities, and in the process, they are helping themselves. Perhaps, the future of the family depends upon the boy who is still going to school. The hopes of a bright future are not completely dried up for the family.
The second case pertains to a landless family of a person who lived in a village on the outskirts of Hubli. The account that follows occurred in the 1930's when the predecessor of the present Swamiji came to know this family. The person concerned was a landless labourer who used to work on the agricultural fields belonging to the Math. On one of the visits of the then Swamiji to supervise the work in the fields, this labourer took an opportunity to meet the Swamiji. He requested the Swamiji to help him by leasing him some land so that he could work as a tenant cultivator. Accordingly, the Swamiji allowed him to cultivate thirteen acres of the Math's land. He was a hard-working tenant, and in due course of time, he could purchase sixty acres of land with his savings. He was the type of tenant the Swamiji was looking for in getting good yields from the Math's land. The Swamiji was pleased with his performance, and in 1950, he gave him another forty acres of the Math's land to cultivate on lease. The tenant agreed to pay an annual rent of four thousand rupees for the leased land.

By the time the present Swamiji assumed the high office of the Jagadguru of the Math in 1958, this tenant had grown in stature as a progressive farmer.
His gratitude to the Swamiji and the Math has been enormous. The entire family is dedicated to the Math and the family members volunteer to work in the Math on festive occasions when a lot of tasks will have to be accomplished as part of the festivities. The family supplies all the cattle fodder which the Math needs for its herd of cattle. Also, the family supplies about twenty-five bags of jowar to the Math every year without cost. This has induced other families in the village to supply jowar to the Math according to their capacity, once again without any cost to the Math. The family visits the Math on all Mondays as a sort of a ritual. Recently, a Kalyāṇa Mantapa* was built in the Math at a cost of sixty-five thousand rupees and the entire cost was met by the family. The family has also contributed big sum towards the construction of the main entrance of the Math.

The landless labourer who built up all this fortune in the course of about a generation has now grown quite old,** and all his three-sons are looking

* A hall for the celebration of marriages.

** It is learnt from the local news-papers that he died recently.
after the lands. The family could purchase a tractor in 1960 and it was brought to the Math to obtain the blessings of the Swamiji.*

Thus, the career of a landless labourer and the life of his family was completely transformed by the timely assistance given to the family by the then Swamiji.

The relationship between religion and family is reinforced by life-cycle ritual. These rites correspond to the passage of an individual from one stage of life to another. Each of these stages through which the individual passes has significance for the family and society.

In all these ceremonies, the concerned rites are performed by a Vīrasaiva priest who is specially invited for the purpose. The priests play an important role in the life-process of an individual and consequently the processes of societal life. Without the services of the priest, the transition from one stage of life to another lacks all ritual and hence

* This account is based on the information provided by the authorities of the Math and the eldest son of the farmer.
social sanction. In order to make this point explicit, an outline of the life-cycle ritual and the role of the priest in this regard is given below:

Life-Cycle Ritual:

Even as a child is born in a Viṣṇua family, religion enters its life. The Ishtalinga, an emblem of the Supreme Power, Siva, and an object of daily worship, is tied to the cradle. The actual initiation ceremony, Dīkṣa, takes place much later in one's life, normally at the age of eight, when the child is able to worship the Ishtalinga regularly. But the tying of the Linga* to the cradle which is known as Lingadārana, establishes the authority of religion over individual life. Authority always involves responsibility and this is nowhere more vivid than in the relationship between religion and family.

Family is the centre for the various rites of passage characterizing the passage of an individual from one stage of life to another. Among them, the

* A simplified usage of the term, Ishtalinga, which should always be worn on the body of a Viṣṇua by means of a thread and a receptacle made of silver or wood; it can also be tied in a piece of cloth which is tied round the neck or on arm.
rites pertaining to Dīkṣa or initiation, Vivāha or marriage, and Antyeshti or funeral, are important. 4

The rites connected with Dīkṣa should ideally take place along with Lingadhārana, soon after the birth of a child. But, in normal practice, the two ceremonies are separated, the Lingadhārana is performed soon after birth; the Dīkṣa is performed in the eighth year of one's life. A Virasaiva priest officiates over the rites connected with Dīkṣa.

The priest is considered as Guru, the preceptor. The Guru imparts a knowledge about the essence of good life to the novice who sits facing the Guru. The Guru takes from the novice a solemn vow of dedication to a virtuous and pious life. 5 The novice then worships the feet of the Guru and receives Pāḍōdaka from the Guru. He also receives from the Guru, Prasāda, the consecrated food, and Vibhūti, the sacred ash, which is applied to the forehead of the novice. A Linga is worshipped by the Guru and handed over to the novice; the Panchākshari

4. A detailed description of the rites connected with these ceremonies is given in S.C. Nandimath, op. cit., pp. 67-73.

5. Ibid., p. 72.
Mantra, "Namas Sivāya", meaning obeisance to Siva, is whispered into the ears of the novice.

The Linga, the Pūḍādaka, the Prasāda and Vibhūti have a ritual and social significance as well, as they bear significance to one's life as he progresses from one stage of life to another.

The rites connected with marriage and funeral also emphasize the religious element. A Viśvaśaiva priest officiates at both these ceremonies.

Elaborate rites are connected with the marriage ceremony. Without going into the particulars of these rites, it is sufficient for our purpose to understand the important role of the priest in marriage ceremony. Before the wedding actually takes place, a ritual known as Lagnāda Akki, is performed, generally, at the groom's house by a Viśvaśaiva priest in the presence of community elders and kin members. The Lagnāda Akki comprises two bundles ("Gantu") the contents of each of which include five measures of rice and five numbers of each of the

* Said to represent the five great Acharyas of the five Viśvaśaiva Pithas located in different parts of the country.
following:

Turmeric root, date, dried coconut, betel leaf and nut. These are tied in a bundle in a piece of new cloth. The settlement of marriage written down on a sheet of paper (if it is already printed, five copies) is tied to each of the above bundles. The bundles are duly worshipped by the priest. One of the bundles is retained in the groom's house and the other one is sent to the bride's house.

The ritual signifies the settlement of marriage and without the Lagnada Akki which is ritually done by the priest, the marriage cannot take place. It is only after this ritual that formal preparations for marriage are undertaken by both the parties.

The priest also officiates at the actual wedding ceremony known as Dhāremahūrta. The priest receives Dakshina* after the wedding ceremony is over.

In the performance of funeral rites, the services of a priest is also necessary. The relationship

* Token payment for ceremonial service.
between the priest and the family which the priest serves on ritual occasions is a matter of considerable importance in the performance of funeral rites. The funeral rites, according to Van Gennep's classification represent 'rites of separation.' In his view, the three types of rites which he mentions "are not always equally important or equally elaborated" under all circumstances. As rites of separation, the funeral rites assume certain significance under specific circumstances. For instance, there is difference between inviting a priest who resides in the same village, and inviting a priest who belongs to another village. However, this should not mean that there is a specific commitment between a particular priest and a particular family.

The funeral rites officiated by the priest are performed in the house where death has occurred. After the body is bathed and dressed, it is placed in a sitting posture in the verandah, or in one of the


* Rites of separation, transition rites (as in betrothal and initiation), and rites of incorporation (as in marriage).

7. Ibid., p. 11.
outer rooms. The priest offers worship to the body, followed by the close relatives of the dead person. There are certain grave-side rites which may not be always officiated by a priest. When he participates, he stands on the grave and his feet are washed and worshipped.

Some clarification about the Vīrāsaiva priests who officiate at the life-cycle ritual will be given here. These priests are essentially, what may be termed, domestic priests. They have families, and they live in communities where lay Vīrāsaivas live. They are not Vīraktas. The difference between a Vīrakta and the domestic priest is that the Vīrakta lives a celibate life and is almost completely devoid of kin affiliations. He wears saffron robes indicating his membership of the ascetic order. On the other hand, the domestic priest is dressed like laymen and mingle freely with laymen. But he assumes social importance and ritual precedence when he officiates at domestic rituals.

The Vīrakta and Pattada swamis, on the other hand, are the proponents of scholarly tradition. They do not fervently uphold the ritual tradition of
Virasaivism as the domestic priests do. Consequently, the former will have to be distinguished from the rest of the priestly order. A swami is not really a wandering mendicant, as he belongs to a particular religious sect and seeks the patronage of its members. In this way, a swami has his moorings in society and he has a strong sense of social affiliation, which a wandering mendicant lacks. A Virakta swami dedicates himself to ascetic life quite early in life without going through the experiences of a householder, while a wandering mendicant might have taken up ascetic life after going through the experience of a householder.*

In terms of organisational affiliation, a Virakta swami has definite affiliations to a math, either as the Chief Priest, or as one who is lower down in the inner hierarchy of the religious organization, fulfilling various functions connected with the organization under the guidance of the Chief Priest.

* This clarification was necessary to establish a distinction between the domestic priest and the swami, on the one hand, and between a swami and a wandering mendicant, on the other. Sannyasa, as practiced by a wandering mendicant is different from the Virasaiva conception of ascetic life.
These lower-order priests may also fulfill the role of a domestic priest, when the services of a domestic priest is not readily available. The priests from a math provide a useful link between the math and the client-families.

This link between a math and the lay families is most effectively established by the domestic priest. The domestic priest, as has been stated earlier, lives among laymen, and builds up his affiliations with the families of lay Virasaivas. The domestic priest, on his part, is associated with a math, and his relationship with a math is important in two respects. From the viewpoint of community organisation, the vital link between the religious organisation and family is made possible through the role played by the domestic priest; on the ritual side, the domestic priest draws the necessary support and guidance from the religious organisation.

Further, a Swami from a math may also be invited by a family to grace the occasion of a domestic ritual. On such visits of the swamis to the families, the domestic priest is invariably present.
The ritual connected with initiation, at which the domestic priest, or a Swami from a math officiates, represents the important process of socialisation and personality development. The other life-cycle rituals are equally important as occasions.

When the officiating priest will have an opportunity to settle such of the problems of family which have eluded settlement. The effective fulfilment of this task of family counselling by the officiating priest depends, however, on the type of bond that exists between the priest and his client-family.

With the foregoing discussion of the life-cycle ritual, and the role played by the domestic priest and the religious organisation, their implications are somewhat apparent for students of social work, viz., that the association that exists between religion and family is one of the means by which certain problems of family life, which do not get publicized, find resolution. Another implication is the solidary effect which the religious organisation could impart to community life.