

## Illustrated Palmleaves from the Śūnya Sampādane - An Early Sketch of Vīraśaiva Śāranas

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### Introduction

The period from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries CE not only saw the gradual growth and dominance of Islamic political power in the Deccan but also spirited resistance from the Vijayanagara empire and consequently the resurgence of several local cultural and religious traditions. The Saṅgamas who founded the empire over the vestiges of a crumbling Hoysala dynastic edifice in the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE, were not only staunch Śaivites who patronized the Virupākṣa temple at Hampi but also benevolent rulers who tolerated other religious sects in equal measure and more importantly provided the cultural foci for the development of various religious, social and cultural movements. It was in such a historical background that the *Śūnya Sampādane* and other similar Vīraśaiva literature were composed.<sup>1</sup>

The Vīraśaiva cults in South India were harbingers of a long awaited social movement that aimed at not only equality of man but also a society informed by ethical values and compassion towards all. While the cult was philosophically influenced and informed by the theistic monism of Śaṅkara's *Advaita* as also the qualified non-dualism of Ramanujacharya's *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and the religious precepts of Śaivism (*Śatsthala*), it challenged the existing Brahmanical caste hierarchy and laid greater emphasis on the social, cultural and ethical aspects of religion. Greater importance was given to the individual seeker's spiritual quest and salvation than strict adherence to Brahmanical religious institutions, scriptures and rituals. At its peak, it produced a tremendous corpus of literature, art and other cultural artifacts. No study of Vīraśaivism or Liṅgāyatism can be

complete without the documentation and critical appraisal of these evidences from the past.

The *Vacanā Sāhitya* or *Vacanā*<sup>2</sup> literature of the Vīraśaivas can be defined to mean the collection of short pithy verses or prose-poems in Kannada narrating the primacy of Śiva iconised as the *iṣṭaliṅga*. The verses encapsulate the spiritual experience and journey of the *Vīraśaivaśaranās*,<sup>3</sup> further expounding on ethics, philosophy, religion, metaphysics, etc. Most of them are written in simple, contemporary day-to-day Kannada, and have an immediacy and emotional urgency that appeal to basic humanness of man. The *Vacanās* are usually chanted or sung and usually end with one of the several locally popular and worshipped names of Śiva.<sup>4</sup>

### The Three Palmleaves

*Śūnya Sampādane* (Kannada; hereinafter referred as SS) means 'the acquisition of nothing'. In Vīraśaiva religious terminology it also means 'the exposition of the nothingness.'<sup>5</sup> The SS presents a reinterpretation of classical *Vacanā* literature, adapted to new historical circumstances. It is a compendium of a considerable number of original 12<sup>th</sup> century *Vacanās*, included in a narrative by the 15<sup>th</sup> century authors,<sup>6</sup> in the form of dialogues or debates between Allama Prabhu who chaired the *Anubhava Maṇḍapa*,<sup>7</sup> seated on his *Śūnya-Simhāsana* and the other *Śaranās*, viz. Basavanna, Mukṭayakka, Siddharama, Maralu Shankaradeva, Chennabasava, Madivala Machayya, Aydakki Marayya, Moligeya Marayya, Nuliya Chandayya, Ghattivalayya, Akka Mahādevī, etc. The debates range over diverse topics such as the nature of mystical attainment, the devices for achieving spiritual perfection, the role of human assistants in the quest for that perfection, the requirement for membership in the company of Vīraśaivas and the proper rituals for a member of that company.<sup>8</sup>

Four different versions of the SS, compiled by four different editors are known. The first version is believed to have been compiled by Shivagana Prasadi Mahadevayya around CE 1420. The second version may have been compiled probably around CE 1495, either by Haligeya Deva, or his student Kenchavirannodeyaru, adding a new section on Siddharama's initiation by Chennabasava. A third version was produced around CE 1500 by

Gummalapurada Siddhalingayati, who added *Vacanās* to each of the sections, as well as new episodes. The fourth and last known version of the *SS* was edited by Goolur Siddhaveera, and is very well-known and published. This version was edited and printed by P.G. Halakatti in 1930 and republished by S.S. Bhoosanurmata in 1958 with some revisions. *Anubhava*, or collection of experiences, is the foundation of *SS* and earning the 'nothing' is its goal. Here 'nothing' denotes the spiritual void or *śūnya* or *mukti* - unity with Śiva.

In *SS*, Allama Prabhu, who presided over discussions at the *Anubhava Maṇḍapa*, is the protagonist in debates focused on *Śatsthala* philosophy.<sup>9</sup> There are twenty-one lessons (*sampāadhanegalu*) in the Gūlur Siddhavīra version, containing 1543 *vacanās*. Each lesson (*sampāadhane*) contains a maieutic episode in the life of a *Śaranā*, presenting the *Vacanās* in a question and answer form leading to a spiritual/philosophical synthesis.

The early texts of the *SS* were written and possibly illustrated on palm-leaves. The Vīraśaiva drawings and paintings of this period have seldom been studied as religiously related and philosophically unified artistic products. Needless to say, many of them have been lost to the ravages of time, weather and the indifference of man. A few, however, survive with Vīraśaiva and Liṅgāyat *maṭhas*, old households and a few collectors of curiosities in South India and Deccan.

This article is about the fortuitous discovery of such a set of three palm-leaf sketches which might have been part of a *SS* palm-leaf manuscript. The leaves were discovered by Śrī Mahantpur of Karimnagar, Telengana state from a garbage dump and handed over to Śrī Vijay Hagargundgi, Gulbarga. Apparently the other palm-leaves containing similar material could not be recovered despite further efforts.

The leaves measure about 38.5 x 5 cms. Apparently, a sharp stylus was used to incise very fine, confident lines into the palm-leaf. A black dye, possibly lamp black, was then rubbed into the incisions to contrast the lines against the brown palm-leaf. The sketches of Vīraśaiva *Śaranās* are in two-dimension and have been deftly executed by an expert hand with minimal effort to suggest volume. Some of the garments, particularly *dhotī* and sashes (*aṅgavastram*) are hatched to contrast

with the rest of the body and relieve the tedium of plain brown. Main characters are identified by old Kannada captions with their names above them, along the top edge of the palm-leaf. Some of these captions have broken away from the brittle palm-leaf.

The dried palm-leaf is not as uniform and easy a medium to work with, as say paper or canvas. Incised lines cannot be erased and are difficult to correct. In spite of such technical difficulties the artist has managed to precisely evoke the essence of the SS in the few leaves that are available to us. The economy in line and detail echoes the austere spirit that pulsates throughout early *Śaranā* literature. Unnecessary details have been eschewed and each *Śaranā* is specifically invested with the optimum attributes to effectively flesh out his individual secular and spiritual character.

The frontispiece palm-leaf is a *tour-de-force*, direct depiction of a panel of Vīraśaiva *Śaranās* arrayed in an imaginary recreation of the *Anubhava Maṇḍapa*, encapsulating the main narrative of SS, and can easily be understood by the lay devotee. In contrast, the other two palm-leaves are invested with greater abstraction but are as interesting as the first in the spiritual-aesthetic they convey. The master artist has adroitly utilized abstract geometric shapes nested within each other to convey the esoteric philosophic content of the Vīraśaiva spiritual quest as seen in the *Vacanās* in SS. The sketches in their simplicity and economy evoke an austere aesthetic, in line with the Vīraśaiva philosophy of equality of man and the importance of the spiritual quest enunciated in SS and stand testimony to the spiritual acumen, religious fervor and simple artistry of its times.

**Leaf-1 (from left to right; Fig.1):**

Hadapada Appanna, aide and bodyguard of Basavanna, is depicted dressed like an official in a turban and *jāmā* and carrying a sword (*talavāra*).

Nuliya Chandayya, a rope-maker by profession (*kayaka*) is depicted with a prominent topknot and holding some fibre/yarn to be spun into a rope.

Molige Marayya, a wood-cutter from Kashmir, is shown carrying a bundle of logs and an axe slung on his right shoulder. He also appears to be wearing a rough cape over his head, possibly as a protection against sun and rain.





Fig.1 : Leaf-1

Madivala Machadeva, an untouchable washer-man and warrior, is shown carrying a large bundle of clothes to be washed. He is seen striding energetically while carrying a sword in his right hand and a gong in his left to announce his presence to higher castes.

Kinnari Brahmayya, identified by a caption '*Kinnariya Brahmadevayyagalu*' in the leaf, was a wandering minstrel *Śaranā*. He is shown carrying a musical instrument (*kinnari*) in his left hand and a curved dagger (*chilanum*) in his right. A patterned shawl is slung about his right shoulder and he is accompanied by his ram marked with a *liṅga* symbol on its rear haunch.

The elderly Siddarameśvara is identified by the caption '*Siddarameśvaradevaru*' above him. He is portrayed as a portly man wearing a turban and a knotted beard and is seen carrying a staff with what appears to be a fly-whisk tied to the top-end<sup>10</sup> in his right hand and an ewer in his left.

A crowned and youthful Channa Basavanna, with his name captioned above, is seen holding a palimpsest with the words '*Śūnyasampādane-odhuthiddare*' in Kannada.

Basavanna, turbaned and dressed like the high ranking official he was, is drawn standing with folded hands. He is identified by the incomplete caption '*Basaveśvarade(varu)*'. A parrot<sup>11</sup> is seen between Basavanna and Chenna Basavanna. Despite popular perception of his role as the founder and *numero-uno* of the Liṅgāyat philosophy, it is amply clear who the protagonist is in this palm-leaf sketch.

The deceased Ajaganna with his dreadlocks spread out in a yogic halo is seen propped into the squatting position with hands folded in *Añjali-mudrā* and legs tied with a patterned *yogapaṭṭa*. Flowers have been tied into a *gopura*-shaped garland above his head.<sup>12</sup>



Allama Prabhudeva is shown seated on *Śatsthalasimhāsana* represented by six daggers (each dagger representing a *sthala*) on a seat, in the *Anubhava Maṇḍapa* while leading the proceedings. He holds his *iṣṭaliṅga* in one hand while he holds the *sin mudrā* with a *bilva*<sup>13</sup> leaflet in the other hand. In contrast to all the other men, Prabhu wears nothing, not even the *liṅga* around his neck, but only a waist-cloth.

Akkamahādevī is shown, without any of the modern pretensions of modesty, in the nude. She, however, wears a beaded *rudrākṣa* necklace and appears to be holding the *iṣṭaliṅga* in her left hand.

Mukhtayakka wears a simple waist cloth and stands in a posture similar to Akkamahādevī.

Nīlāmbikā, the wife of Basavanna, in contrast to the other two women, is shown dressed in a richly patterned *sārī* and bedecked with jewellery befitting her high social status.

Each character is loosely demarcated by a floral *toraṇa*. All *Śaranās* are shown wearing their *liṅga* around their necks, but for Allama Prabhu, Akkamahādevī and Mukhtayakka.

### Leaves - 2 & 3:

The sketches in these leaves (Figs.2 & 3) are an artistic feat of genius in conveying the abstraction of the Vīraśaiva *Śatsthala* philosophy. Leaf-2 shows Allama Prabhu seated on the *Śūnya Simhāsana* and



Fig.2 : Leaf-2



Fig.3 : Leaf-3



expounding away a series of geometrically intricate circular *maṇḍalas* reminiscent of the Vīraśaiva *Uddharanecitra* paintings. Leaf 3 is a continuation of another series of *maṇḍalas*. The artist-author, finally tired of wordy explanations of Allama's teachings resorts to the brilliant *maṇḍalas* to create an abstract rendition of mystic emanations from the Guru.

The palm-leaf sketches, though technically limited by their format are brilliant in their artistic economy and mystic expression. In Leaf-1, the principal characters are serially arrayed, each suspended in its own time and space conveying its individual chronicle and yet combining with the rest to form a visually rich and spiritually vibrant narrative. Whether it is the purposefully striding Madivala Machaiah or the beatific Allama Prabhu or the humbly suppliant Basavanna, each character singly or in assemblage evokes several layers of meanings that would have been immediately apparent and moving to the faithful reader.

Early Indian paintings record the entire pictorial narrative as one large painting, devoid of artistic elements segregating the narrative in time and space. The garlands are a clever, early artistic device interspersed to provide vague and unobtrusive borders, allowing the viewer to imagine each character singly or as a part of the whole narrative of SS. In later-day paintings niches, arches, pillars, curtains, etcetera are used for the same purpose.

The meticulously rendered weapons provide us with very important clues in dating the palm-leaves. A stone sculpture (Fig.4) of a devout Raghunātha Nāyaka of Thanjavur (r.1600-34) with his queen in the Rāmāswāmy temple at

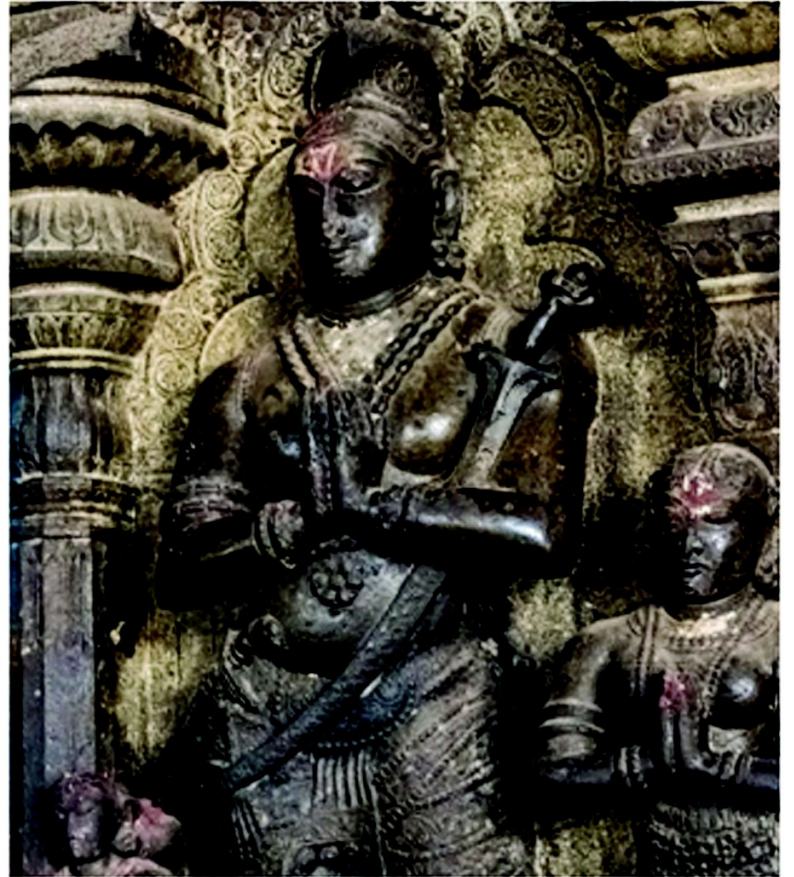


Fig.4 : Raghunātha Nāyaka of Thanjavur (r.1600-1634) with his queen in the Rāmāswāmy temple at Kumbakonam, c.1610



Kumbakonam (built c.1610) is seen holding a curved sword with a knuckle-guard less hilt having three lotus buds on the pommel that bears striking resemblance to the sword carried by Hadapada Appanna.<sup>14</sup> Such knuckle-guard less swords with Hindu iconographic elements are early examples of Indian arms minimally affected and influenced by later-day Islamic styles.

The sword held by Madivala Machaiya is again very similar to the sword seen in the Vijayanagara *rājalāñchana* seen here on a stone sculpture (c.15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century CE) exhibited in the Madras Museum<sup>15</sup> (Fig.5). The other weapons such as the dagger carried by Kinnari Brahmayya<sup>16</sup> and the daggers on the *Śūnya Sirīhāsana* can also be safely dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE and no later than the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Similarly, the ewer with a serpentine spout, arched handle and pedestal-foot carried by Siddarāmeśvara is a ritual vessel symbolizing his yogic prowess and bears strong affinity to early ewers from Deccan, still unalloyed by the Islamic influence that would colour later day ritual vessels.<sup>17</sup>

Another sculpture of Tirumalai Nāyak (r.1623-59) and his consorts in Madurai (front & side views) shows him dressed in garments and bedecked with ornaments very similar to what we see in the palm-leaf (Fig.6). Same is the case in



Fig.5 : Vijayanagara *rājalāñchana* on a stone sculpture, c.15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century CE, Madras Museum



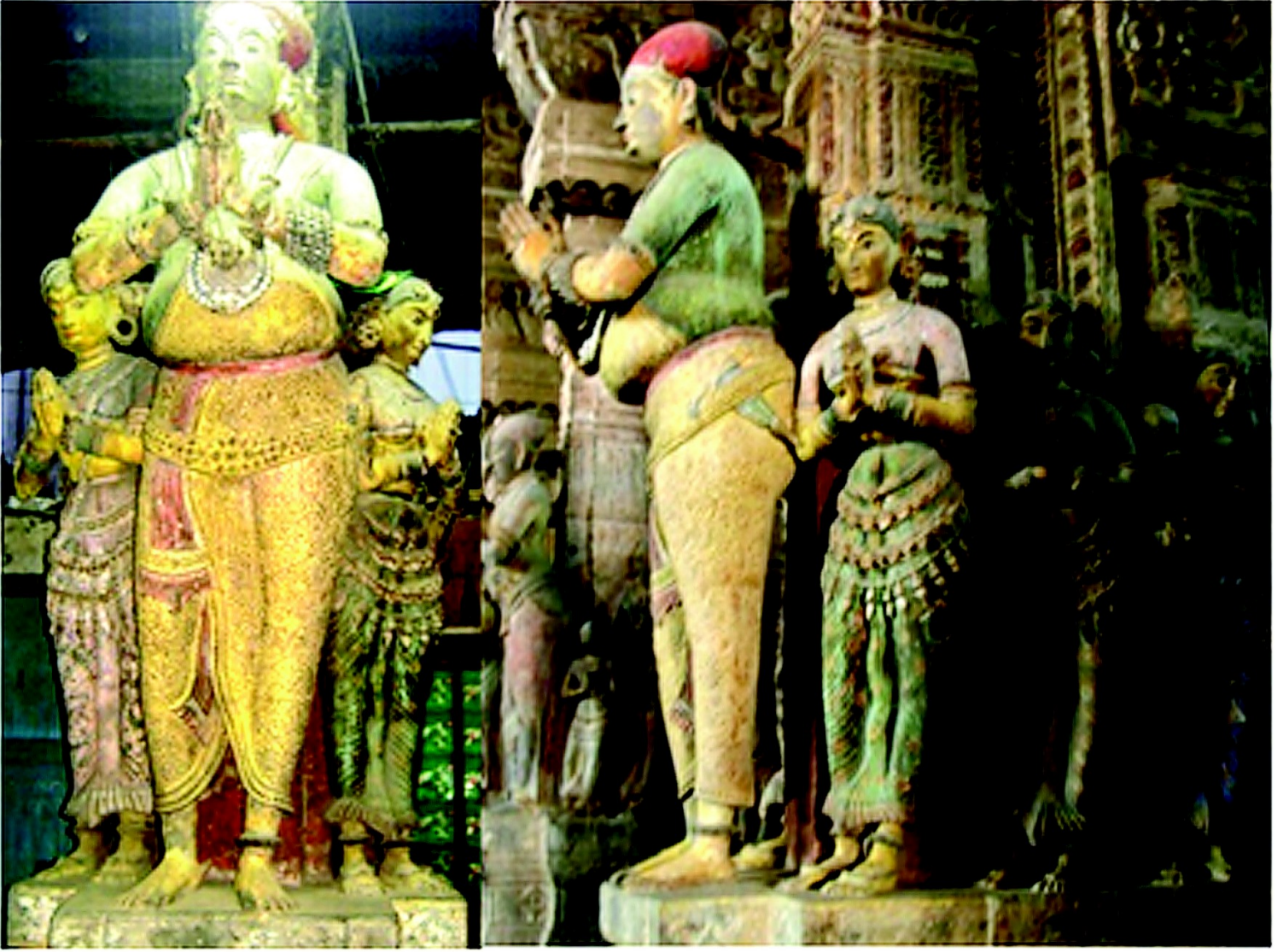


Fig.6 : Tirumalai Nāyak (r.1623-59) and his consorts in Madurai (front & side views)

Raghunātha Nāyaka's sculpture illustrated above. The head-dress and hairstyles of both Nāyakas are similar to that of Nuliya Chandayya, Molige Marayya & Kinnari Brahmayya. The folds and styling of the *sārī* worn by Nīlāmbikā compares favourably with *sārīs* worn by the consorts of Thirumalai Nāyaka. These hairstyles and garments though seen on early 17<sup>th</sup> century CE royalty is possibly a continuation of fashions current during the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE.

It is also pertinent to mention here that the drawing compares favourably with the murals from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century CE in Lepākṣī and elsewhere in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu states. The Kannada script used in the captions also shows a degree of evolution conforming to the script of other Late Vijayanagara documents of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>18</sup> The general shape of various letters, orientation of the *bindu*, orientation of diacritical marks all tend to support this dating, which is further supported by the disposition of



the script in the fragmentary sentence 'śūnyasampādaneoduthiddare' in the hands of Channa Basavanna. All the facts elucidated above point incontrovertibly towards a late 16<sup>th</sup> century to early 17<sup>th</sup> century CE date for the illustrations on the palm-leaf *Śūnya Sampādane* manuscript.

### Conclusion:

The three palm-leaf manuscripts in the collection of Sri Vijay Hagargundgi, Kalburgi illustrate the prominent 12<sup>th</sup> century *Śaranās*, namely, Hadapada Appanna, Nuliya Chandayya, Molige Marayya, Madivala Machadeva, Kinnari Brahmayya, Siddarāmeśvara, Channa Basavanna, Ajaganna, Allama Prabhudeva, Akkamahādevī, Mukhtayakka, Nīlāmbikā from the 15<sup>th</sup> century *Vīraśaivavacanā* compendium of *Śūnya Sampādane*. A comparison of the palm-leaf sketches with contemporary sculptures, murals, weapons, manuscripts and other artifacts points to a late 16<sup>th</sup> century to early 17<sup>th</sup> century dating for the palm-leaves. This also means that this is possibly the earliest artistic rendition of Basavanna and other *Śaranās* of 12<sup>th</sup> century. While the depictions are not meant to be realistic they are no doubt based on oral traditions and popular religious perceptions of *Vīraśaivas*, and therefore, gain immense importance in *Vīraśaiva* cultural treasury.

Aesthetically, the drawings reveal a precise rendition of character, economy of line & detail and a confident mastery of the subject. The palm-leaf imposes several serious technical limitations on the artist and these have been handled with an ease that is the hallmark of a practiced artistic hand. The esoteric *maṇḍalas* spewing forth from the mystic philosopher Allama Prabhu are further samples of precise craftsmanship and artistic explorations of the mystic-abstract from the master-hand of an unknown 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century artist and remind us of the tantric symbolism that one encounters in the *Uddharane* paintings of the *Vīraśaivas*.

### Annexure

The various lessons of the *SS* can be summarized as follows:

**Lesson 1 (*Prathamopadeśa*):** This introductory lesson expounds on the intent of the text, which is to record the teachings of Allama Prabhu. Here, Allama Prabhu

triumphantly records his victory over ignorance and delusion and sets forth the fruits of his self realization. A wandering mystic, Allama completes his spiritual quest and attains self realization in the dramatic setting of his guru, the silent saint-*yogi* Animisa's cave. From being seeker to the sought, Allama henceforth instructs and initiates other seekers on the Path.

**Lesson 2 (*Muktayakkagala Sampādane*):** Mukhtayakka inconsolable over the death of her beloved brother and spiritual companion Ajaganna, is one of the first persons to be instructed by Prabhu. Ajaganna had practiced a severe yogic vow in which he held suspended a *liṅga* halfway down his throat always while he mentally chanted a sacred Vīraśaivite *mantra*. Unfortunately, after years of conscientious silent practice, Ajaganna by accident chants the *mantra* aloud and chokes to death on the *liṅga*. Prabhu explains the impermanence of life to Mukhtayakka who is initially doubtful of his spiritual merit but subsequently understands the importance of continuing her spiritual quest even amidst the painful grief over her brother's death.

**Lesson 3 (*Siddharamayyagala Sampādane*):** Siddharama, engaged in building temples, canals and water tanks in Sonnaligi, is spiritually enlightened by Prabhu, and they go to Kalyāṇa.

**Lesson 4 (*Basaveśa Chennabasaveśamganugrahamādidā Sampādane*):** Basavanna gives spiritual instructions to his nephew, Chennabasava and initiates him into the Path of the *Śaranā* by taking Chennabasava's *Iṣṭaliṅga* into his own palm, expounding on this symbol of ultimate reality, and returning it to Chennabasava's palm.

**Lesson 5 (*Prabhu Kalyāṇakkebandha Sampādane*):** Prabhu and Siddharāma come to Kalyāṇa and are received after a delay by a contrite Basavanna and the rest of the *Śaranās* who all participate in a spiritual discussion.

**Lesson 6 (*Marulu Śaṅkaradevara Sampādane*):** Prabhu recognizes the simpleton, Marula Śaṅkara's philosophical eminence, and reveals it to the other *Śaranās*.

**Lesson 7 (*Basaveśavarana Sampādane*):** Prabhu tells Basavanna and the other *Śaranās* the importance of a non-dualist philosophical interpretation of spiritual practice.

**Lesson 8 (*Chennabasaveśavarana Sampādane*):** Prabhu explains to Chennabasava the essence of *bhakti* after his spirited challenge to both Prabhu and Basava.

**Lesson 9 (*Madivalayyagala Sampādane*):** Prabhu explains to Madivala Machayya, ever bristly washer-man, the meaning of Guru, *Liṅga* and Jaṅgama, the nature of right knowledge and Union with *Liṅga*.

**Lesson 10 (*Siddarāmeśvarana Gurukaruna*):** Guru bestows grace on Siddharāma. Chennabasavanna initiates Siddharāma and invests him with an *Iṣṭaliṅga*.

**Lesson 11 (*Prabhudevvara Pūjāstuti*):** Prabhu is praised and worshipped by other *Śaranās*.

**Lesson 12 (*Aydakki Marayyagala Sampādane*):** Aydakki Marayya, the gleaner of rice fields who lives a humble life on a handful of rice with his wife Lakṣmmā, expounds on the Vīraśaiva dictum '*kayakavekailasa*' and is instructed by Prabhu on self-realization.

**Lesson 13 (*Moligeyyagala Sampādane*):** Moligeyya Marayya, an erstwhile Kashmiri king who renounced his kingdom to come to Kalyāṇa to become a woodcutter and his wife Mahādevīyammā teach Basavanna a lesson about true dedication to ones' vocation.

**Lesson 14 (*Nuliya Chandayyagala Sampādane*):** Nuliya Chandayya, a rope maker, loses his *iṣṭaliṅga* and later regains it. In the process he establishes the supremacy of the Jaṅgama over even the *liṅga*.

**Lesson 15 (*Ghattivalayyana Sampādane*):** Ghattivalaya, the entertainer's heated dispute with other *Śaranās* leads to a discussion on the true nature of a Jaṅgama, *Liṅga*, individual and society.

**Lesson 16 (*Mahādevī Akkagala Sampādane*):** Discussion between the great *Śaranā* and Prabhu.

**Lesson 17 (*Prabhu Deśāntarāpogibanda Sampādane*):** Prabhu's tour and return.

**Lesson 18 (*Prabhudevvaru Śūnyasiṃhāsanaverida Sampādane*):** Prabhu's ascension to the throne assembly, *Anubhava Maṇḍapa*.

**Lesson 19 (*Prabhudevvara Ārogane*):** Prabhu's strange coronation feast.

**Lesson 20 (*Śaranāra Vasāna Parāmarike*):** The prophecy of *Śaranās*' end Prabhu has the clear understanding of things to come.

**Lesson 21 (*Gorakṣaṇa Sampādanemathu Yellaganamgala Aikya*):** Prabhu bids farewell to the *Śaranās* and goes to Śrīśaila where he meets Gorakṣanātha to

whom he explains the futility of his pride in yogic mastery, initiates him in the true knowledge and continues his journey. Basavanna goes to Kudala Saṅgama. Akka Mahādevī goes to Śrīśaila. Akka Nagamma and Chennabasavanna go towards Ulvi, where all these Śaranās merge their souls in the Ultimate soul.<sup>19</sup>

## References & Notes

1. Refer *The Origins of Vīraśaiva Sects: A Typological Analysis of Ritual and Associational Patterns in the Śūnyasampādane* by R. Blake Michael published by Motilal Banarasidas publishers, 1992, Chap.2, pp.25-27 for a discussion on the historical, sociological and religious background of the Śūnya Sampādane.
2. *Vacanā* (Kannada) = that which is said; in contrast to *Kāvya*, *Kavitā* = poetry.
3. *Śaranā* (Kannada) = surrender, essentially it means one who has surrendered (to Śiva).
4. This also identifies the author of the *Vacanā*. Example: Basaveśvara invokes Kudala Saṅgama Deva, while Allama Prabhu invokes Guheśvara, Akkamahādevī invokes Channa Mallikārjuna, etc.
5. See <http://www.virashaiva.com/shunya-sampadane/> and 'Shunya Sampadane' an essay from H.H. Mahatapasvi Shri Kumarswamiji's book, *Prophets of Veerashaivism*. To quote a passage from the book - Allama Prabhu who gives a graphic account of Śūnya or the Absolute in positive as well as negative terms. What is Śūnya? It is a *Bindu*, it is a point without one or rather it is a centre which cannot be represented even by the number one. It is neither one nor many; it is altogether beyond the reach of human intellect and the best way of designating is to name it a *Bindu*, the centre. *Shunya* also means cipher; the Absolute is represented by zero because all attempts of the human mind to define it end in a zero. It is the absence of all predicates, for anything said about it is insufficient or too much.  
"onduilladabinduva,  
tandeilladakandana,  
mate illadajatana,  
gamanavilladagamyana,  
muvarariyadamugdhana  
thavatorisaGuheswaralingadalli  
Sanganabasavanna".  
"Show me Oh! Sanganabasavanna,  
The abode of the "Absolute" in Guheśvaraliṅga  
The Absolute which is a point without one,  
A child without parents,  
The knowable without the norms,  
The silence beyond the ken of the Three".
6. The narrative is not just a figment of the 15<sup>th</sup> century compilers' imagination but most probably based on oral religious traditions and earlier literary sources. See *Revolution of the*

*Mystics: On the Social Aspects of Vīraśaivism* by Jan Peter Schouten, published by Kok Pharos publishing house, the Netherlands, available at Motilal Banarasidas, 1995, pp.13-14, for a brief introduction on the *Śūnya Sampādane* and later (pp.63-70) a more detailed discussion comparing the 12<sup>th</sup> century *Vacanās* and the 15<sup>th</sup> century narrative.

7. The 12<sup>th</sup> century CE Spiritual assembly of the *Śaranās* in Kalyana (present day Basava Kalyana). The Kannada term *Anubhava Maṇṭapa* means the 'Tower of (spiritual) Experience'.
8. Michael, Chap.2, p.25.
9. The *Śatsthala* (*Śat* + *sthala* = six stages through which the seeker progresses in the ultimate union with the divine) comprises the *Bhakta Sthala*, *Maheśvara Sthala*, *Prasādi Sthala*, *Prāṇalingī Sthala*, *Śaranā Sthala* and the *Aikya Sthala*. *Bhakta Sthala* is the first *Sthala*, where the soul conceives the *Guru*, *Jaṅgama* and *Liṅga* as separate entities and begins worship in order of precedence. In the *Maheśvara Sthala*, the seeker worships *Guru*, *Liṅga* and *Jaṅgama*. In *Prasādi Sthala*, the seeker considers all creation as the gift of God, and therefore, endeavours to return what he/she has received back to Him through *Jaṅgama*. The soul that has reached this stage is known as *Prasādi*. In the *Prāṇalingī Sthala*, the soul sees *Liṅga* in everything and everything in *Liṅga*. At this stage, the soul is called *Śaranā*. *Aikya Sthala* is the last stage, where the soul merges with Śiva.
10. Siddaramēśvara and his *Vacanās* figure prominently in several inscriptions of the Seuna period. It is possible that owing to his philanthropic work he was granted the fly-whisk which was one of the symbols associated with royalty.
11. The parrot is a common artistic device to indicate a Brahmin household, where it would have parroted Vedic *ślokas* chanted by its keepers. Here we may presume that this would be a *Vacanā* chanting parrot!
12. This is in keeping with the Vīraśaiva dictum '*marañavemahanavamī* = death is the great festival'. Such *gopura* shaped flower arrangements (*maupe*) are also commonly seen in North Karnataka during important festivals.
13. The *bilva* (*Aegle marmelos* L.) commonly known as *bela* or *vilva* is considered auspicious for the worship of Śiva.
14. See *Hindu Arms and Ritual, Arms and Armour from India 1400-1865* by Robert Elgood, Mapin publishers, 2004, Figs.11.18 & 11.19, pp.122-124 for a detailed discussion on the sword and the tri-budded hilt. The Raghunātha Nāyaka sculpture is also illustrated in the book. The three buds symbolize the *trimūrti* comprising Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. Similar pommels can be seen in the western India post-1439 *Laur-Chandā* manuscript and maybe even earlier.
15. *Ibid.*, Figs.8.7, 8.24-8.35, pp.87-89, where Elgood illustrates varieties of the Vijayanagara sword of the 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.
16. *Ibid.*, Figs.16.3-16.7, pp.164.165.
17. See *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India* by Mark Zebrowski, Alexandria Press, pl.167, pp.137-138 illustrating, in the author's words, '*a double-bellied Hindu ewer. . . discovered at Kollur in the Bijapur district of the Deccan.*' Except for the 'double' belly the Kollur ewer dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century is an exact copy of the ewer in the palm-leaf.
18. For the information on the epigraphy the author is grateful to Sri S. Karthik, Researcher, The Mythic society, Bengaluru.



19. The Annexure is based on *Prabhudevvara Śūnya Sampādane* by Prof. S.S. Bhoosanurmata, published by Mathadhipathigalu Shri Siddalingeshwara Samstanamatha & Kallumatha Mandagiri, 1999 and *The Origins of Vīraśaiva Sects: A Typological Analysis of Ritual and Associational Patterns in the Śūnyasampādane* by R. Blake Michael published by Motilal Banarasidas publishers, 1992.

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