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**Narrating Devotion:  
Representation and Prescriptions of the Early Kannada *Śivabhakti* Tradition  
according to Harihara's *Śivaśaraṇara Ragaḷēgaḷu***

By

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Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion  
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By

Gil Ben-Herut

B.A., Tel Aviv University, 2004

M.A., Tel Aviv University, 2007

Advisor: Laurie L. Patton, Ph.D.

An abstract of

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University  
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in the Graduate Division of Religion

West and South Asian Religions

2013

## Abstract

### Narrating Devotion: Representation and Prescriptions of the Early Kannada *Śivabhakti* Tradition according to Harihara's *Śivaśaraṇara Ragaḷēgaḷu*

By  
Gil Ben-Herut

In this dissertation, I reconstruct the early cultural history of what is known today as Vīraśaivism or Liṅgāyatism by reading the *Śivaśaraṇara Ragaḷēgaḷu*, a collection of hagiographies composed in the Kannada language in the early thirteenth century. This vast collection of short to middle length poems, each dedicated to the fantastic life of a Śiva devotee, produces the first narrative account about the *śaiva* devotional tradition from the Kannada-speaking regions. Despite its significant role in shaping medieval Kannada literary practices and later representations of this religious movement, this text was never previously studied by Western academia.

By analyzing literary and religious aspects of the *Śivaśaraṇara Ragaḷēgaḷu*, I examine the function of narrative for an emerging religious movement. I argue that this text should be understood in its context, as part of a rich oral culture collectively performed by devotees. Focusing on the first literary moment of a religious tradition's narrativization, I offer new perspectives for understanding representations of sainthood as a tool for inculcating communal practices and communicating nascent forms of theology, social and political attitudes, and devotional prescriptions. Contrary to dominant conceptions, I claim that this religious tradition, during its early phases, was highly inclusive in terms of worship practices and social appeal, as attested by the absence of confining linguistic signifiers such as *vīraśaiva* or *liṅgāyata* from this text.

There are two parts to this dissertation. In the first part, dedicated to the literary context of the *Śivaśaraṇara Ragaḷēgaḷu*, I look at this text's unconventional literary form as central to its meaning. In the second part of the dissertation, I explore various religious attitudes prescribed in the *Śivaśaraṇara Ragaḷēgaḷu*, with relation to the devotee's relationship with the god, fellow devotees, and religious "others" of various orders: the king, the Brahmin priest, and the Jain opponent. My dissertation employs various strategies in order to provide new models for understanding the relationship between literary representation and the nascent religious community in which it is produced.

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“Can one deny the existence of the child  
simply because it assumes transformed features as an adult?”

Desai (1968: 272)

“Reading is like a bet. You bet that you will be faithful to the suggestions of a  
voice that is not saying explicitly what it is suggesting.”

Eco (1994: 112)

## Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the many people who supported me on the labyrinthine path of doctoral studies. My advisor Laurie Patton has been a teacher, guide, and mentor for the last six years, influencing my thinking and inspiring me on many levels, and I am indebted to her for her foresight that guided this project from its earliest stages. I am also fortunate to have had on my dissertation committee Velcheru Narayana Rao, an authority of rare magnitude on pre-modern South India. His sharp insights greatly contributed to my work. Sara McClintock has been a tremendous supporter of my project and a highly sensitive reader of the dissertation. It is difficult to exaggerate the contribution of R. V. S. Sundaram, the fourth member of my dissertation committee, on my study of the Kannada language and on this dissertation. In addition to teaching me pre-modern forms of the Kannada language, R. V. S. Sundaram gave me access to treasures of medieval Kannada literature, and I am deeply grateful for his continual and gracious cooperation.

My journey into the world of Kannada began nine years ago, when I traveled to Mysore in order to read Sanskrit texts with H. V. Nagaraja Rao. Although he does not consider himself a Kannada scholar, Nagaraja Rao was the first and primary inspiration for me in taking this linguistic path, and I consider myself fortunate to have known and worked with him. Any reference to Kannada culture in Western scholarship is incomplete without mentioning the magisterial oeuvre of A. K. Ramanujan, whose insights continue to pave the way for anyone interested in this world. At the Central Institute for Indian Languages (CIIL) in Mysore, under the benevolent guidance of the late Lingadevaru Halemane, I was introduced for the first time to the basics of the Kannada language. Like in the case of Ramanujan, Halemane's premature passing is a

great loss for any lover of Kannada culture. I am grateful to my other teachers at the CIIL: the late Talwar, Vijaya Lakshmi, Shishira, and Jyothi Shankar.

By good fortune or perhaps in reward for benevolent past deeds, I studied under Jyothi two years later during the Advance Kannada Academic Year program of the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS), also held in Mysore. I will never forget the many hours I spent with Jyothi reading Harihara's texts. She has been a wonderful companion on this demanding path. I also wish to thank the rest of the teachers of that unforgettable year: Akka Mahadevi, Shubha Chandra, and Poornima. The AIIS has made an invaluable contribution to my development in Kannada and to my research project. I thank Philip Lutgendorf, Martha Selby, and Elise Auerbach for their continual support and responsiveness. Equally cooperative were the people of the Delhi branch of the AIIS, headed by Purnima Mehta. I also thank Purushotham Bilimale for his help.

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Mysore: Rajalakshmi, Kuttu and Angeela Cariappa, John Gilbert, Flora Brajot, Suddha, Bharat Shetty, Ben and Rita, Anand, and Shrinivasa, for helping me whenever a need arose. I cannot think of a better place to do research than the small heaven called Mysore.

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could not have happened without you.

For my wife,  
Snait

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## Notes on Writing Practices

As a general practice, I follow in this dissertation Kannada spelling for Sanskrit words if they are written differently. For example, I write Pārvati rather than Pārvatī and Kālidāsa rather than Kālīdāsa. I mark short *e* and short *o* with breve (*ě* and *ō*) and do not use macron for long *e* and *o* (*ē* and *ō*). For example, I write *dīkṣě* and not *dīkṣe*, and *yoga* and not *yōga*.

All non-English words are lowercase and italicized (*bhakti*, *śaiva*, *jaina*, and so on), except for the following cases, for which I use roman and uppercase the initial letter:

1. A proper name for a literary genre (Ragaḷēs, Purāṇas, Vacanas).
2. Specific and general names and appellations of people (Bhakta, Śaiva).
3. Anglicized forms of Sanskrit/Kannada terms, in which case I do preserve the diacritical conventions (Śaivism, Jain).

Accordingly, I write *śaiva* and *jaina* in case of the predicate and Śaiva and Jain in case of the people who practice the respective faith. I write Ragaḷě to designate a composition written in the specific genre and *ragaḷě* to indicate the specific meter.

Since some scholars cited in this dissertation write both in English and in Kannada, I refer to them according to the bibliographical transliteration of each case. For example, for his writings in Kannada I refer to the following scholar as Ĕm. Cidānandamūrti and for his writings in English as M. Chidananda Murthy. To indicate a citation of secondary Kannada writing, I add “Knn” to the citation. For example: Cidānandamūrti (2007: 82, Knn). Consecutive citations are in the descending order according to year of publication (the most recent publication first).

## Abbreviations of Texts Used in this Dissertation<sup>1</sup>

<i>Ādayyana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Āda Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Ekāntarāmitandēya Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Rāma Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Keśirāja Daṇṇāyakara Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Keśirāja Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Kovūra Bōmmitandēya Ragaḷe</i>	<i>KBōmma Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Guṇḍayyana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Guṇḍa Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Tēlugu Jōmmyana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Jōmma Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Nimbiyakkana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Nimbi Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Prabhudevara Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Prabhu Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Basavarājadevara Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Basava Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Bāhūra Bōmmitandēya Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Bōmma Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Bhogaṇṇana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Bhoga Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Mahādevi Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Musutēya Cauḍayya Ragaḷe</i>	<i>MCauḍa Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Vaijakavvēya Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Vaija Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Śaṅkaradāsimayyana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Śaṅkara Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Śivaśaraṇara Ragaḷegaḷu</i>	<i>Ragaḷegaḷu</i>
<i>Surigēya Cauḍayyana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Cauḍa Ragaḷe</i>
<i>Hāvinahāḷa Kallayyana Ragaḷe</i>	<i>Kalla Ragaḷe</i>

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<sup>1</sup> The entries in the tables are sorted according to the Kannada alphabet.

Table 1: Key to Ragaḷēs' Summaries in this Study

Title	Śaraṇa's Name	Length (verses/chapters)	Locations of Summaries
<i>Ādayyana Ragaḷē</i>	Ādayya	3 chapters	9.2.2
<i>Ekāntarāmitandēya Ragaḷē</i>	Rāmayya	450 verses	9.2.1
<i>Keśirāja Daṇṇāyakara Ragaḷē</i>	Keśirāja	3 chapters	5.2.2; 8.1.1
<i>Kovūra Bōmmitandēya Ragaḷē</i>	(Kovūra) Bōmmayya	3 chapters	9.1
<i>Guṇḍayyana Ragaḷē</i>	Guṇḍayya	278 verses	3.2.1; 3.3.2; 6.3; 7.2.1
<i>Tēḷugu Jōmmayyana Ragaḷē</i>	Jōmmayya	3 chapters	6.5.1; 8.1.2
<i>Nimbiyakkana Ragaḷē</i>	Nimbiyavvē	254 verses	6.1.3
<i>Prabhudevvara Ragaḷē</i>	Allama	446 verses	7.2.4
<i>Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē</i>	Basavaṇṇa	26 chapters (13 extant)	5.2.2; 5.2.3; 6.intro; 6.4; 6.6.1; 7.1.2; 7.4.1; 8.1.3;
<i>Bāhūra Bōmmitandēya Ragaḷē</i>	(Bāhūra) Bōmmayya	3 chapters	8.intro
<i>Bhogaṇṇana Ragaḷē</i>	Bhogaṇṇa	236 verses	7.2.3
<i>Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷē</i>	Mahādeviyakka	7 chapters	6.1.1
<i>Muṣṭēya Cauḍayya Ragaḷē</i>	(Muṣṭēya) Cauḍayya	178 verses	7.1.1
<i>Vaijakavvēya Ragaḷē</i>	Vaijakavvē	338 verses	6.1.2; 9.3.2
<i>Śaṅkaradāsīmāyana Ragaḷē</i>	Śaṅkaradāsīmāyya	3 chapters	6.6.2; 7.3; 8.2.1
<i>Surigēya Cauḍayyana Ragaḷē</i>	(Surigēya) Cauḍayya	188 verses	5.1.1
<i>Hāvinahāḷa Kallayyana Ragaḷē</i>	Kallayya	458 verses	5.1.2; 8.2.2

**Table 2: Chronology of Early-Millennium Texts from South India that are Central for the Kannada *śivabhakti* Tradition**

Title	Author	Content	Language	Date
<i>Śīlamahatvada Kanda</i> ; <i>Ṣaḍakṣara Kanda</i> (aka <i>Mantramahatvada Kanda</i> and <i>Ṣaḍakṣaramantramahimē</i> )	Koṇḍaguḷi Keśirāja Daṇṇāyaka	Devotional Poetry	Kannada	ca. 1110 CE
<i>Pēriya Purāṇam</i> (formal title: <i>Tiruttonṭar</i> <i>Purāṇam</i> )	Cekkiḷār	Narrative	Tamil	12 <sup>th</sup> cen.
<i>Śivatattvasāramu</i>	Mallikārjuna Paṇḍitārādhyā	Doctrinal	Telugu	ca. 1160 CE
<i>Śivaśaraṇara Raḡaḷēḡaḷu</i>	Hampēya Harihara	Narrative	Kannada	ca. 1225 CE
<i>Dikṣābodhē</i>	Kēryya Padmarasa	Doctrinal	Kannada	ca. 1225 CE
<i>Siddharāma Cāritra</i>	Rāghavāṅka	Narrative	Kannada	ca. 1250 CE
<i>Basava Purāṇamu</i>	Pāḷkuriki Somanātha	Narrative	Telugu	ca. 1275 CE
<i>Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritra</i>	Pāḷkuriki Somanātha	Narrative	Telugu	ca. 1275 CE
<i>Basava Purāṇa</i>	Bhīmakavi	Narrative	Kannada	1368 CE
<i>Siddhāntaśikhāmaṇi</i>	Śivayogi Śivācārya	Doctrinal	Kananda	14 <sup>th</sup> cen.
<i>Padmarāja Purāṇa</i>	Padmaṇāṅka	Narrative	Kannada	1420 CE
<i>Śūnyasampādanē</i>	(4 authors) <sup>1</sup>	Narrative and Vacanas	Kannada	1420- 1510 CE
<i>Prabhuliṅgalilē</i>	Cāmarasa	Narrative	Kannada	1430 CE
<i>Rāghavāṅka Caritē</i>	Siddhanaṅjeśa	Narrative	Kannada	ca. 1650 CE

<sup>1</sup> See description of the different renditions and their authors in Michael (1992: 27-30).

## Introduction

### Chief Minister Keśirāja Worships Śiva

Since this study is dedicated to stories about Śiva's devotees from the Kannada-speaking regions, it is fitting to open it with a story. This story is about Keśirāja, a Brahmin who is a devotee of Śiva but also the chief minister of King Pērmāḍi, described in the text as the ruler of Kalyāṇa, a city in today's Bidar District, north Karnataka, during the early twelfth century. We join the story after Keśirāja was made chief minister by the king:

One day, Keśirāja starts a Śiva assembly (*śivagoṣṭhi*) with fellow devotees. The group sings songs about ancient devotees (Purātanas) and become completely immersed in this activity. They worship the wandering mendicants (Jaṅgamas) and recite poems about Śiva, overflowing with happiness. Their hair bristles and they cry with blissful, growing joy. They disregard hunger, thirst, or fatigue. They become senseless to speech, sight, directions, wind, the sky, and the earth. They forget the king, his court, and his politics. Time, whatever precedes and whatever proceeds, seconds, minutes, the watches of the day, day and night, inside and out, here and there—all has disappeared, for in the companionship of devotees nothing else matters. Then, the king's servants appear at the assembly and tell Keśirāja that the king is looking for him. At first, Keśirāja tries to ignore them, but they refuse to leave without him and persistently demand that he accompany them. The Śiva assembly is spoilt. Keśirāja, deeply disturbed, declares to all present at the assembly: "Wealth is the enemy of the community of Śiva's devotees, and the company of worldly people stabs me in the heart! Śiva, you are the only god of Kalyāṇa, and its entire people will love you!"

The story obviously does not end at this tense moment; Keśirāja, fuming, will go to the king's hall to challenge the king, and the basic conflict laid down between the collective devotional experience and courtly life will get unraveled in the story's denouement, as Keśirāja will completely retire from politics and dedicate the rest of his

life to worship Śiva as a simple, wondering renouncer.

The above vignette about Keśirāja and his fellows is instructive, despite its disconnection from the rest of the story, for introducing several major themes of this devotional (*bhakti*) tradition from south India, a tradition whose members are known today as Vīraśaivas (“Heroic Devotees of Śiva”) or Liṅgāyatas (“Carriers of the *Liṅga*,” which is Śiva’s emblem). First, we can note the intense, mystical experience of collective worship of Śiva. Devotees gather into one place, a public sacred space which is markedly not the temple, and engage in two central activities: worship and storytelling. These activities, taking place outside the temple, set apart this community from its orthodox environment and, through public performance, delineate it from the rest of society.

The second theme to mention here is the intensity of the collective experience at the assembly: the immersion of the members in the assembly is total and consuming, and the poet makes effort to communicate the gripping experience of collective worship to the audience of the text using elaborate apathetic descriptions of the devotees’ epistemological disconnect from anything mundane. It is clear that this tradition is invested not only in intense devotional experience but also in its representation through language, particularly stories. This is evident from the storytelling by the devotees within the story as well as from the extrinsic context of communicating this story to its immediate audience. In light of the author’s investment in representing religious experience, the absence of the god himself from the scene is telling: in all the stories discussed in this study, the god Śiva makes only few “guest appearances,” while the devotee and the fellowship of Bhaktas around him or her are the protagonists. Thus, this tradition is not only anthropomorphic in its

representational strategies, expressing itself using themes and symbols taken primarily from the human world, but also anthropocentric in its theological focus, placing the human—rather than the god—at the center of its representational world.

The third theme evinced by this episode that I wish to present as a prelude to this study is the sharp contrast between the assembly at the first part of the episode and the external forces that threaten and finally also succeed to desecrate it in the second part. The conflict between devotion and the mundane is presented through the character of Keśirāja, who is both a religious leader and the kingdom’s chief administrator. As this brief vignette demonstrates, this literary tradition does not celebrate its renunciatory vision away from the world, but is in fact highly occupied by and invested in it.<sup>1</sup> Here, the same intensity that instructs the devotee’s worship of Śiva also controls his or her interactions with other agents of society, such as kings and members of other religious communities, as we shall observe throughout this study.

The fourth and last theme I present here pertains to the broader context of Keśirāja’s story. As mentioned earlier, Keśirāja is a political and spiritual leader of the community of śaiva devotees in early twelfth-century Kalyāṇa. According to this tradition, about fifty years later, in the same city, a charismatic leader named Basavaṇṇa will famously establish the community out of which the *vīraśaiva* movement developed. While Basavaṇṇa’s story is celebrated by later traditions and also recognized and discussed in scholarship, no one outside a few specialists is even aware of the literary figure called Keśirāja. How does the tradition consider the similarities between these two figures and reconcile Basavaṇṇa’s hegemonic role in forming the

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<sup>1</sup> The expected allusion to Weber’s *innerweltliche* or inner-worldly renunciation is analytically applicable to some extent in the case of the Vīraśaivas, as demonstrated by the studies of R. Blake Michael (1982, 1992).

*vīraśaiva* movement with Keśirāja's preceding leadership at Kalyāṇa? I do not offer a direct answer to this specific question in this study but, rather, by raising it, wish to bring to the fore the limited acquaintance of contemporary scholarship of the rich literary cadre of the twelfth-century devotees, a cadre that is considerably larger than the specific community led by Basavaṇṇa and stretches over areas outside of Kalyāṇa and periods before and after Basavaṇṇa's time. One of the primary motivations of this study, then, is to enrich our acquaintance and understanding of the early *śivabhakti* tradition of the Kannada-speaking region by engaging with stories that are usually obscured by the single, grand narrative about Basavaṇṇa and his Kalyāṇa community.

### **Historicizing Early *Vīraśaiva* Materials**

It is not difficult to explain the scholarly fascination with *Vīraśaivism*. Consisting of over twelve million people (about twenty percent of the population of Karnataka State today) and visible in other regions in the South-Asian peninsula as well, *Vīraśaivas* constitute an active religious community with a distinct social and political voice.<sup>2</sup> Among the *bhakti* traditions of South Asia, *Vīraśaivism* is renowned for its overt rejection of and active resistance to Brahmanical values such as purity determined by birth and excluding practices based on caste discrimination. This resistance is expressed in the tradition's social structures and in its cultural products. At least in its purest form, the *vīraśaiva* thought-system does not adhere to the hierarchical structures of the Brahmanical-centered society and does not acknowledge the priestly status of Brahmins.<sup>3</sup> (There are central strands within *Vīraśaivism* today

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<sup>2</sup> See Chandra Shobhi (2005: 24-89).

<sup>3</sup> Despite their overt rejection of caste system, the structure of the *vīraśaiva* society today is multilayered and hierarchical (Ripepi 2007). See also anthropological survey in Singh (2003). Some have conceptualized the *vīraśaiva* social structure as a "super-caste," consisting of many sub-castes within it



that argue for this tradition's status as a separate religion that is completely independent from Hinduism).<sup>4</sup> In addition to their rejection of orthodox Hindu views and values, the Vīraśaivas practice a unique set of rituals, such as carrying a personal *liṅga* on their body and worshipping it individually (as well as in group), burying and not cremating their dead, allowing widows' remarriage, observing a distinct form of vegetarianism (different than the *jaina* and Brahmanical one), and the list goes on.<sup>5</sup>

The *vīraśaiva* tradition has also produced during the last eight centuries a unique literary body, composed mostly in Kannada, a Dravidian language from south India, as well as in Sanskrit and Telugu. The most conspicuous *vīraśaiva* literary works are, beyond doubt, the Vacanas. These short poems received (and still receive) public and scholarly attention due to their exceptionally humanistic, protestive, and experiential themes, as well as due to their effective, condensed format. Here, the compelling translation masterwork to English of popular Vacanas by A.K. Ramanujan from four decades ago remains till this day a hallmark of a liberal and humane religious and literary vision.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the Vacanas, the authors of this tradition produced throughout history a huge body of narrative literature in Kannada (as well as in Telugu, to a lesser degree), generally called the Vīraśaiva Purāṇas, as well as theological and doctrinal treatises in both Sanskrit and Kannada. But these bodies of literature remain largely overlooked by Western scholarship, except for one text from the sixteenth century (the fourth edition of the *Śūnyasampādanē*) that was translated to English

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(McCormack 1973: 169, Zydenbos: 530).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Gunjal (2002: 39). The question of the relation of Vīraśaivism to Hinduism is steeped in modern discourse epistemology with regard to both terms, and lies outside the purview of this study.

<sup>5</sup> See discussion in McCormack (1973).

<sup>6</sup> Ramanujan (1973).

almost half a century ago.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the *Basava Purāṇamu*, a highly influencing Telugu text from the late thirteenth century was translated to English by Velcheru Narayana Rao in 1990.<sup>8</sup> Each of these two translations was followed by one academic study.<sup>9</sup>

#### SCHOLARSHIP ABOUT EARLY VĪRĀŚAIVISM

Despite the abovementioned features of the *vīrāśaiva* tradition, scholarship in the West about this tradition is frustratingly scant and even problematic from a critical point of view. First, as a result of the general and chronic lacuna of training in the Kannada language in Western academia, there is a considerable dearth in studies about this tradition. In addition, most of the existing studies in English about Vīrāśaivism—produced over large temporal gaps in the last five decades—are limited in scope and in sources and do not generate together a coherent body of scholarship. The earliest significant work in English about early Vīrāśaivism is P. B. Desai’s *Basaveśvara and his Times*.<sup>10</sup> In this detailed monograph on Basavaṇṇa’s relationship with Kalyāṇa’s ruler King Bijjala, Desai attempts to historically reconstruct Basavaṇṇa’s life according to various literary sources and epigraphy.<sup>11</sup> This work is rich with critical data and insightful remarks, but its narrowly historical approach, based in large on literary sources, is problematic. About five years later, Ramanujan published his English translations of *Vacanas*. While his success in communicating the personal vision of the

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<sup>7</sup> This translation appears in five volumes and was reprinted in 2007. See Gūḷūra et al. (2007 [1965]-a).

<sup>8</sup> Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990).

<sup>9</sup> The *Śūnyasampādanē* was studied by Michael (1992) and the *Basava Purāṇamu* by Shulman (1993b).

<sup>10</sup> Desai (1968).

<sup>11</sup> One of the sources utilized by Desai is the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē*, a central poem in the corpus discussed in this study. Desai is among the few who write in English about this poem.

early Vacana poets (called Vacanakāras) remains largely undisputed,<sup>12</sup> there are historical obscurities found in Ramanujan’s introduction of the *vīraśaiva* tradition in this book, such as the fact that he dates the earliest Vacanakāra Devara Dāsimayya in the tenth century and all the rest of the Vacanakāras in the twelfth century without considering this gap of about two hundred years,<sup>13</sup> or the fact that he temporally locates the poet Harihara in the fifteenth century, roughly two centuries after what all other scholars (both Kannaḍiga and Western) do.<sup>14</sup> These specific inaccuracies are minute in themselves and certainly do not undermine Ramanujan’s prodigious contribution in his work to the study of Vīraśaivism and to the study of South-Asian *bhakti* more broadly. However, these inaccuracies are emblematic of a larger deficiency with regard to our scholarly knowledge about the cultural origins of Vīraśaivism. R. Blake Michael’s study from 1992 of a sixteenth-century hagiography about the early *vīraśaiva* saints is one of the more detailed studies about Vīraśaivism done in the last twenty-odd years.<sup>15</sup> But despite its depth of erudition, this study does not account for the three hundred years and more that stand between the time this hagiography was composed and the purported events it narrates, events situated in the twelfth century.<sup>16</sup>

A book review by Robert Zydenbos from 1997 is the first to point to the chronic

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<sup>12</sup> Some Kannaḍiga scholars criticize Ramanujan’s translation of the Vacanas, usually around linguistic and semiotical issues (personal communications). The term “Kannaḍiga” designates a native speaker of the Kannada language (Kittel 1982: 361 s.v. *kannaḍiga*).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp. 11, 91-94. See section 1.1.2 below.

<sup>14</sup> Ramanujan (1973: 143). Ramanujan repeats this misdate in a later article (Ramanujan, Dharwadker, and Blackburn 1999: 286). It is possible that Ramanujan conflates the thirteenth-century poet Hampēya Harihara with the fifteenth-century founder of the Vijayanagara, also called Harihara and who is also beguilingly situated in Hampi. On the latter, see Michael (1992: 26).

<sup>15</sup> Michael (1992).

<sup>16</sup> On p. 30, Michael briefly acknowledges the possibility for the sixteenth-century influence on the representation of twelfth century in the text but does not furthers this theme. See section 1.2.1 below.

lacuna of historicity in the academic study of Vīraśaivism,<sup>17</sup> but it is the dissertation by Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi from 2005 that introduces to the field new historical sensibilities.<sup>18</sup> In the dissertation, Chandra Shobhi argues for the considerable influence of the Viraktas, the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *vīraśaiva* reformers at the Vijayanagara court, on contemporaneous and later representations of early Vīraśaivism, including modern ones. Chandra Shobhi cogently argues for the prolepsis involved in identifying the twelfth-century Kannaḍiga Śivabhaktas as constituting a unified and cohesion tradition called Vīraśaivism (or Liṅgāyatism). According to Chandra Shobhi, this consolidation started to occur only in the fifteenth century by the Viraktas of the Vijayanagara court. Chandra Shobhi's work brings forth the depth and richness of pre-modern *vīraśaiva* literary output, considered within a historically-informed framework. It engages with a historical moment during the Vijayanagara Empire as its central focal point and considers its effect on our understanding of this tradition's nascent phase of the twelfth century. In addition, Chandra Shobhi casts in his dissertation a methodological doubt on the historicity of the Vacanas by tracing their earliest written transmission to the fifteenth century, roughly three centuries after the earliest purported date for their creation.<sup>19</sup> Considered as a whole, the critical sensibilities introduced by Chandra Shobhi to the historical value of *vīraśaiva* texts mark a significant step forward in the study of this tradition.

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<sup>17</sup> Zydenbos (1997).

<sup>18</sup> Chandra Shobhi (2005).

<sup>19</sup> Chandra Shobhi writes: "The *virakta* ascetics from 15th century Vijayanagara produced the authoritative accounts of the Kalyāṇa of the 1160s, which form the basis of our historical consciousness of the movement. Since these ascetics were instrumental in collecting and interpreting *vacanas*, their accounts have come to be considered the contexts in which *vacanas* were uttered" (p. 86). See *ibid*, pp. 101-16 for a discussion about the convoluted process of editing, arranging, and publishing Vacanas in modern printed editions and compare with Ramanujan's mentioning of the organization of the Vacanas according to the *ṣaṣṭhala* scheme (1973: 65). See also section 4.1.2 below.

### INTRODUCING HARIHARA'S RAGAḶĒGAḶU

In this dissertation, I recover the cultural history of the *śivabhakti* movement in the Kannada-speaking regions at the earliest moment of self representation in writing, during the early thirteenth century. Thus, my dissertation picks up the historical lacuna singled out by Chandra Shobhi, between the twelfth-century Kannaḍiga Śivabhaktas and their later representations of the fifteenth century onward, and attempts to fill this gap with a reading of previously unexplored primary materials.

In the early thirteenth century, just half a century after what is usually perceived as the inception of this movement, a poet named Hampēya Harihara composes an exceptional literary work. The corpus, called *Śivaśaraṇara RagaḶēgaḶu* (“Poems in the *ragaḶē* meter for Śiva’s Saints,” henceforth *RagaḶēgaḶu*),<sup>20</sup> celebrates the miraculous deeds of Śivabhaktas from the Kannada regions of the twelfth century as well as elsewhere. In sharp contrast to previous literary works in Kannada, the protagonists described in this corpus come from all strands of society, and the narratives about them introduce the life of common people from the margins of society as well as those from courts and temples, producing a rich panoply of devotional life. Its themes are equally groundbreaking: although it follows existing literary practices, the *RagaḶēgaḶu* also introduces dramatic new ways of expression to the contemporary world of written Kannada literature. But beyond its progressive poetic texture, the *RagaḶēgaḶu* is a religious text that constructs a new devotional community around it and, as such, is controlled by a new set of values that was never before articulated in

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<sup>20</sup> “*RagaḶē*” is the name of the meter in which this text was composed, and “*gaḶu*” is the plural suffix in Kannada. Because this work is a collection of disparate poems, it has no fixed title in its original form. The title *Śivaśaraṇara RagaḶēgaḶu* is one among several used in modern scholarship, and others include *Śivagaṇada RagaḶēgaḶu* (“*RagaḶēs* for Śiva’s attendants”) or, simply, *Hariharana RagaḶēgaḶu* (“Harihara’s *RagaḶēs*”). See section 1.3 below.

Kannada writings. This dissertation is dedicated to a literary and religious analysis of this text with the premise that this work marks a distinct and meaningful moment in the development of the *śivabhakti* tradition in this region.

Critical access to the earliest narrative text about Kannada *śivabhakti*, previously unavailable to (and also almost completely overlooked by) Western scholarship, with enhanced attention to its historical and cultural relations to other works produced within this literary culture and outside it, allows us to further our understanding of this tradition in its nascent form. The most immediate fact to be mentioned in this context is that the terms “*vīraśaiva*” and “*liṅgāyata*” (or its near equivalent “*liṅgavanta*”) are conspicuously absent from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, a fact that raises questions regarding the applicability of these terms in relation to this tradition during the early years of its formation.<sup>21</sup> A context-specific and informed reading of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* invites additional questions, such as: what constitutes, for this text, the communal identity of Kannada *śivabhakti*? And what are the personal and collective practices that distinguish this tradition from other religious forms, primarily Brahminism, during this early stage and according to these hagiographies? What is the relation of the early saints, as represented in the early thirteenth-century hagiographies, to temple worship and to other religious practices identified with orthodox Brahminism? What are the author’s general attitudes and prescriptions with regard to worship of and faith in the god Śiva? What are his attitudes toward different members of the emerging *śivabhakti* community? And what are his attitudes toward non-members, such as Brahmins and Jains? Is there a qualitative difference between the two “religious others” (the Brahmins and Jains) at this early phase and, if so, how might this difference inform our

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<sup>21</sup> I discuss the possible implications of this absence in detail in section 1.2.1 below.

historical understanding about the growing sectarianism of the early second millennia?

In addition to these subject-matter questions, this study is motivated by a wider set of questions pertaining to the study of the history of religions. The underlying and central question in this regard is how does an emerging religious community represent itself in the written medium? This broad question induces more specific questions, such as: what is the role the text designates to the saints with regard to the wider community of devotees and other social agents outside the community? How does the hagiographer negotiate between different dispositions, social backgrounds, and practices of the community's members? What is the significance and function of the hagiographies, as a literary text, for the community's effort to carve itself a new space within orthodox-based society? What are the performative contexts for the hagiographical text and how do these inform its form and meaning? What are the relations between the hagiographical text and other contemporaneous cultural artifacts (such as epigraphy)? What are the relations in this text between description (such as oblique references to daily life in different social spheres) and prescription (agenda-driven claims)? And what are our literary strategies to distinguish between the former and the later? Throughout the dissertation, I seek answers to the abovementioned questions in the stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as a way to think about the impact of the written text on the religious landscape of early-medieval south India and, more broadly, on our understanding of the religious phenomenon.

## **Theoretical Reflections and Approaches**

### **STRATEGIES FOR READING HAGIOGRAPHIES**

My premise in this study for reading hagiography is that hagiography is a subset

of myth, in the sense that it exercises a naturalizing force of a specific agenda on specific audience.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the most immediate application of the theorizing framework of myth is that this text makes claims against a broader set of contemporaneous cultural attitudes.<sup>23</sup> Put differently, my premise in this dissertation is that Harihara, the author of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, rearranges an existing system of cultural symbols and metaphors—an imaginaire<sup>24</sup>—in order to carve a new social space or legitimacy for the newly-formed *śivabhakti* community within existing society. This premise allows speculating on the possible agendas that led to these cultural reconfigurations. For example, in the case of the episode about Keśirāja summarized above, the protagonist’s proclamation at the end of the passage that “wealth is the enemy of the community of Śiva’s devotees, and the company of worldly people stabs me in the heart!” can be read as prescription to the text’s audience as well as an argument made against the general, coeval culture of the author. Similarly, the following proclamation by Keśirāja: “Śiva, you are the only god of Kalyāṇa and its entire people will love you!” betrays the author’s missionary impulse.

But can the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* be regarded as a hagiography? Hagiography (literally, “writing about saints”) is a Western term originally used to describe narrations about early Christian martyrs. Nevertheless, if we take “hagiography” to imply a narration dedicated to the life of a particular character whose qualities and biography in the text are permeated with the fantastic and whose exceptionality is explained by a direct and intimate connection with the divine, then the stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* correspond well to the definition. Keśirāja, for example, performs miracles, argues for the superiority of

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<sup>22</sup> Lincoln (1999), Barthes (1972).

<sup>23</sup> Patton and Śaunaka (1996).

<sup>24</sup> Laurie Patton defines the term “imaginaire” as “a series of tropes and figures about which the public has general knowledge, and would have basic associations” (2008: 54). See also Collins (1998).



the *śaiva* faith, and leads a community of devotees. By the end of his life story, Keśirāja is united with Śiva in heaven, and the god is described as proud of the saint's activities on earth.<sup>25</sup>

The term “saint,” is, again, Western and not South-Asian.<sup>26</sup> As just noted, I apply this term in the dissertation in the sense of a literary representation of a human figure that embodies divine qualities. The saintly protagonist of the hagiographical text is inherently Janus-faced: he or she simultaneously embodies non-earthly or divine qualities while operating within the human world, in a mundane environment and among fellow humans. There are several implications to the saint's double gaze, an inherent tension between the saint's earthly commitments and his engagement with the divine, that often defines the saint's interiority. But what is perhaps more significant about “sainthood” for the sake of this study is the effect the literary representation of the saint has over the text's immediate audience. As argued with regard to saintly traditions in Abrahamic traditions as well as other South-Asian *bhakti* traditions,<sup>27</sup> the figure of the saint in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is used by the author to communicate his prescriptions for the immediate audience. This means that the figure of the saint is a supple from the point of view of his representations in later texts; the saint's life is continually rewritten throughout the cultural history in order to reclaim its appeal to the changing needs of the developing community.<sup>28</sup> In the context of the Kannada

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<sup>25</sup> See summary and discussion of the concluding episode in the life story of Keśirāja in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in section 5.2.2 below.

<sup>26</sup> Although there is room to question the applicability of the term “saint” for pre-modern South Asia, it is significant to note that there is a Sanskrit-based cognate to this term, which is *santa/sant*, derived from the root verb *as* (“exist, present,” Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 117), and this semantic correspondence points to an epistemological affinity.

<sup>27</sup> Hawley (2005), Cornell (1998), Brown (1981).

<sup>28</sup> The most definite work to argue this in the context of sainthood in South Asia is Rinehart (1999).

*śivabhakti* literary tradition, this figurative pliability is manifested in the reconfigured presentations of its founding figures, such as Basavaṅṅa, Allama Prabhu, and Mahādeviyakka. As Chandra Shobhi shows, some of these figures were deeply reconfigured during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in comparison to earlier representations in order to adjust them to contemporaneous communal, social, and political requirements.<sup>29</sup> Following the same logic, my premise in this dissertation is that the act of narrating the saints' lives communicates contemporaneous devotional attitudes of the nascent *śivabhakti* tradition of the thirteenth-century Kannada-speaking regions. For example, earlier I attributed to the thirteenth-century author of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* a missionary impulse because of the manner with which he represents the twelfth-century Keśirāja. Thus, the figure of Keśirāja in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, as well as all others, should be read as deeply connected to the attitudes, demands, and anxieties of the early thirteenth-century audience of this text, which I term in the dissertation as the text's "immediate audience." I refer to this interdependence between representation and community through the term "literary culture," which designates the relationship between a set of foundational texts as part of a larger cultural system of a particular community (in this case, a religious community).<sup>30</sup>

#### NARRATING DEVOTION

The representation of saints in the hagiographical text is communicated through narrative, and the act of narration serves as a means of representing religious

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<sup>29</sup> Chandra Shobhi (2005: 188-89, 198-207).

<sup>30</sup> Anne Monius identifies an elitist component to this relationship (2001: 9-10). My usage of the term "literary culture" in this study expands its purview to include a non-elite community which is, nevertheless, highly invested in the written medium. Admittedly, in non-elite literary cultures, we must consider also the performative dimension of the written text and oral forms of transmission, as in the case of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and the nascent *vīraśaiva* community. See chapter three below.

experience to the immediate audience of the text.<sup>31</sup> By describing model devotees, their biographies, and their religious practices, the hagiographical text inculcates religious experience in its immediate audience. The most immediate example for this inculcation in the above summary about Keśirāja is the collective mystical experience at the Śiva assembly: the narrative—with its descriptions of ritual actions, of public storytelling, and the resulting felicitous disengagement from epistemological constraints such as time and place—prescribes these practices as well as the devotional experience they produce to its audience.

In addition, the act of narration allows the author to indirectly communicate an organized set of doctrinal dispositions—a nascent form of theology—through a set of narrative developments. Although discursive theology never takes over the narrative in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*, the stories are infused with theological concepts, metaphysical and theological dispositions, and even theological arguments.<sup>32</sup> For example, during their collective worship, Keśirāja and his fellows are described as reaching “*paramānanda*,”<sup>33</sup> which literally means “ultimate bliss.” But, in the later doctrinal texts, *ānanda* is used to designate much more specific and technical meanings, such as describing the adept’s progression on his devotional path.<sup>34</sup> The two significations of *ānanda*—in the earlier narrative and in the later theological texts—are directly linked through the narration of a collective devotional practice. The theological aspect of this hagiography becomes significant in the historical context of the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* when we consider that this text was composed at an early stage of the tradition, before it articulated a developed theology in abstract terms through philosophical discourse.

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<sup>31</sup> Doniger (1998).

<sup>32</sup> For a similar approach in early Buddhist narratives, see Collins (1998).

<sup>33</sup> *Keśirāja Daṇḍāyaka Ragaḷe* 1.88 in Harihara (1999: 240).

<sup>34</sup> Vidyāśankara (2000: 80-81, Knn).

The Kannada *śivabhakti* literary culture started with personal poems (the *Vacanas*), followed by hagiographies about the poets who composed these poems (starting with the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*), then followed by more abstract and doctrinal texts. This genealogy of religious representation is also applicable in the case of the literary culture of the Tamil *śivabhakti* tradition of the *Nāyaṅārs*, with very similar generational progressions in its literary produce, and possibly in other South-Asian devotional traditions as well. I stress the historical location of hagiography in the broader development of the Kannada *śivabhakti* literary culture because it marks a significant moment in the development of this religious tradition, a moment in which the tradition starts to narrate to itself (and others) its own history.<sup>35</sup> The second, narrativization phase of Kannada *śivabhakti*—starting with the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—arrives very shortly after the inauguration of this tradition by the *bhakti* poets, and this temporal proximity, of about half a century, provide us with a cultural snapshot which is very close to this tradition’s inception. It is a dramatic moment, filled with rich possibilities for prescribing devotional attitudes, for communicating personal and communal identities, for reaching new potential crowds, for establishing and unifying religious practices, for delineating a geographical network of sacred locales, and for constituting or redescribing political relations as well as arguing for a new position in the greater society. In all these projects, narrativization opens new possibilities for making claims, and Harihara, the author of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, makes full use of them. Accordingly, I pay attention in this dissertation to the different arenas in which the hagiographical narratives make claims and consider them within a wider context: historical, cultural, religious, literary, social, and political. Rather than reading the narrative as a history of

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<sup>35</sup> Karen Pechilis pays notice to two such moments in the Tamil *śaiva* tradition (2012: 82-105, 2001).

the twelfth century, I read it a cultural history of the early thirteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

One indication for the inherent role of narrativization for the development of this *bhakti* tradition is the perpetual retrospective gaze by the authors of this tradition: later *vīraśaiva* authors narrate Harihara's life; Harihara narrates the lives of the Vacanakāras; the Vacanakāras relate in their poems to previous famous Bhaktas from other parts of the peninsula. Furthermore, within Harihara's stories, including the above episode about Keśirāja, whenever two (or more) Śivabhaktas meet, one of their first interpersonal communicational forms, second only to worship, is telling stories about other Bhaktas. Sometimes, this is also the case when a Bhakta meets his or her paradigmatic nemeses—Vaiṣṇava Brahmins and Jains. (In fact, it is at these moments that the argumentative efficacy of myth-telling comes to the narrative fore in its most concrete manner).<sup>37</sup> In conclusion, the prevalence of the activity of storytelling within the *śivabhakti* stories from south India suggests that this activity was regarded by its authors as central for constituting the collective identity of this tradition. I present this inferential move here as an example for how a narrative element can inform our understanding about the devotional culture in which the narrative was produced.

#### INDIGENOUS TERMS, INDIGENOUS SCHOLARS

Up to this point I used the terms *bhakti* and devotionalism interchangeably to designate the emerging religious tradition in the Kannada-speaking regions as well as to relate to a broader religious phenomenon in second-millennium South Asia, but did so without explicating my analytical framework for using these terms. *Bhakti* is a religious phenomenon that developed during the first millennium CE in South Asia and

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<sup>36</sup> See Lindquist (2011), especially pp. 72 and 80, for a similar reading of an Upaniṣadic text. See also Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam (2007: 411).

<sup>37</sup> I write about this aspect of the early Kannada *śivabhakti* imaginaire in Ben-Herut (2012: 136-41).

gained huge popularity during the second millennium CE. The term “*bhakti*” is usually translated by scholars as “devotionalism,” signifying a personal, usually emotionally-intensive connection or even interpersonal relationship between the devotee and a particular god. In recent decades, efforts are made by various scholars to expand our understanding of the term “*bhakti*” and what it signifies to include broader socio-historical aspects, such as *bhakti* as a cultural indexical system of public memory and *bhakti* as anthropomorphism of the divine.<sup>38</sup> In this study, I am not claiming to redescribe or further our understanding of “*bhakti*” as an analytical term. Rather, I employ at different moments in the dissertation the broad gamut of approaches to this concept—from a personal, metaphysical mechanism, through a medium to communicate divinity using the arena of human experience, and culminating in a cultural articulation of public memory—under the premise that these different approaches do not exclude each other but actually support one another in our pursuit to encompass this incredibly varied and rich phenomenon.

Related to the issue of using *bhakti* as an analytical term is the broader application of indigenous terms as analytical categories for understanding the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition. Recent theoreticians of religion have introduced different approaches to the issue of using indigenous terms as analytical categories.<sup>39</sup> In this dissertation, I invoke emic terms in many occasions for communicating and explicating particular features of the tradition. As the Kannada scholar Ām. Ām. Kalaburgi states, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* introduces for the first time many key terms that carry specific meanings

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<sup>38</sup> See Novetzke (2008), Pechilis (1999) respectively.

<sup>39</sup> Talal Asad, for example, legitimizes the usage of indigenous terminology (1993: 171-91), while Russell T. McCutcheon disputes it (2001: 78-99).

for this tradition as well as redescribes existing ones.<sup>40</sup> Taking notice of this statement, I invoke indigenous terminology throughout my discussions of the text. In most cases, I first present an etymological and semantic inquiry of the term in order to establish its range of meanings in English while trying to locate a specific meaning that maintains the original designation in its specific usage. Then, I consider the analytical value of using the term in its original language (Kannada and Sanskrit in this case). Finally, I invoke the indigenous term as an analytical tool, based on the indexical signification I established for it earlier. While this approach is not free of further complications, it does allow a discourse that is simultaneously culturally sensitive and analytically efficacious.

My above reference to Kalaburgi, a leading Kannada scholar of pre-modern Kannada literature and epigraphy, funnels this discussion to the issue of incorporating indigenous scholarship into the study. The almost complete absence of an established scholarship about Kannada culture in Western academia rendered the usage of secondary scholarship in Kannada in my study as essential and compulsory. There is an interesting, thick, and largely untold history of the contact between indigenous South-Asian scholarship and Western.<sup>41</sup> In the process of researching and writing my dissertation, it became apparent that I needed to establish a strategy for incorporating secondary scholarship in Kannada, which I understand as a necessary component of any study that wishes to make claims about a pre-modern Kannada tradition.<sup>42</sup> This

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<sup>40</sup> Kalaburgi (2010 [1998]-a: 144, Knn).

<sup>41</sup> Bruce Lincoln effectively describes one of the earliest moments of this intellectual contact and its inherent, mutual misunderstandings, in his monograph on the Aryan myth (1999: 195-96). Laurie Patton has directly related to this issue as well (1994). Jack Hawley has paid attention to this issue with regard to the notion of “*bhakti* movement” (forthcoming-b, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Sheldon Pollock seems to be concerned by similar issues when he writes at the beginning of an article about Kannada poetics and grammar that “[m]odern scholarship written in Kannada itself is stunning”

necessity partly stems from the abovementioned lacuna in Kannada scholarship outside of India, but also, in a more fundamental way, from inevitable global dynamics in which cultural boundaries become increasingly blurred. This trend forces Western scholars to rethink how to define, approach, and appropriate indigenous knowledge agents traditionally regarded as “others.” Thus, beyond simply trying to single out some meaningful or central signposts in contemporary Kannada scholarship, I attempt in this dissertation to establish a systematic way to critically appreciate what we might generally term as “vernacular scholarship,” (in contrast to English scholarship produced by Indian writers). First, I explicitly cite contemporary Kannada scholars, under the premise that information, in most cases, is seldom anonymous or universal but has a specific and identifiable source. Second, this citation policy implies the need of critical application. Thus, I make effort to frame each scholar I cite within contemporary scholarly discourse in Kannada. In addition, I critically consider claims made by indigenous scholars by reframing these claims within a Western critical discourse. This relational process is evidently a complex one but seems necessary to the author of this study.

### **Dissertation Chapters and Structure**

This dissertation consists of two parts: a study of the literary history of the *Ragalēgaḷu* and a study of the religious themes in the *Ragalēgaḷu* stories. In a way, this division embodies a deeper forking of South-Asian scholarship in the West into regional

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(2004: 389). He continues to mention specific scholars which “are the equal of any known to me from elsewhere, scholars endowed with authentic philological sensibilities, deep historical understanding, and keen critical intelligence. But almost nothing on the subject [of the history of Kannada philology] has been written outside of Kannada” (ibid). My own humble experience coheres to the highest degree with this important diagnosis.



departments on the one hand and departments of religious studies on the other. But the disciplinary split is not merely instinctive in this dissertation. I approach the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in this dissertation from two different angles (the literary and the religious) because the paucity of attention given to this tradition's literary materials (other than the *Vacanas*) and, more broadly, to pre-modern Kannada literature in English scholarship requires establishing the significance of this text in its wider literary context, and I do this in the first part of the dissertation. Despite the deliberate bifurcation in this study between the literary and religious analyses, I do not claim for an inherent disconnect between the two worlds. On the contrary, the separate attention I give to the literary aspect of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and its religious aspect points, in fact, to the usefulness of using each of these approaches to enhance our understanding about the other. Like other scholars of the recent decades,<sup>43</sup> I maintain that the consideration of religious studies (with its different sub-disciplines) and literary criticism can be highly efficacious for studying the cultural history of pre-modern South Asia, at least at particular moments, including twelfth-century Karnataka.

Part one of the dissertation consists of four chapters. In the first chapter, I introduce the literary culture in which the devotional tradition of the Kannada-speaking regions developed. This culture is not limited to the Kannada-speaking regions or to the Kannada language; on the contrary, I argue in this chapter that Kannada *śivabhakti* was directly influenced by previous and contemporaneous devotional strands from other regions in south India and from other parts of the sub-continent. I further claim in the first chapter that this cross-regional connection was maintained by an oral culture of storytelling that travelled with *śaiva* devotees between

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<sup>43</sup> Such as David Shulman, Laurie Patton, Anne Monius, Jack Hawley, and Steven Collins.

different pilgrimage sites across regions and languages. Later in the chapter, I introduce emic terminology used in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, pointing to the fact that the terms “*vīraśaiva*” and “*liṅgāyata*” do not appear in this text or in others Kannada texts until the fourteenth century. Lastly, I introduce the internal structure of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* corpus.

The second chapter is dedicated to the author of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* Hampēya Harihara as he is remembered by the later *vīraśaiva* tradition. The main thread that runs through this chapter is that narratives about Harihara and about the circumstances in which he composed the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* directly correspond to themes found in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories themselves. This correspondence, in turn, points to deeper themes shared by different authors at different phases of this tradition, and I introduce these as a prelude to the remainder of the study.

In the third chapter, I discuss the poetics of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, a poetics that follows certain literary practices found in previous Kannada literature but also introduces groundbreaking innovations. The underlying argument in this chapter is that the exceptional form of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* informs its devotional content. Put differently, the experience of devotion that permeates the stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is communicated through its unorthodox poetics using daily language, simple meter choices, aural poetic devices, and a specific imaginaire which is multilayered and syncretic.

The fourth chapter completes the first part of the dissertation by arguing for the significant place of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in the history of medieval Kannada literature. Succinctly put, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* changed literary production in the Kannada language by breaking away from the general trend of mixing different and complex meters in one narrative composition, thus paving the way for a literary expressional form that also

appealed to non-elite audiences. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is the first narrative composition in Kannada to celebrate the lives of daily people and to bring to the fore non-elite cultures, and almost all the proceeding authors that follow these practices acknowledge the primacy and contribution of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* for this new expressive mode, despite specific problems that this corpus generates for the future *vīraśaiva* authors.

In the fifth chapter, which opens the second part of this study, I explicate the inner mechanisms of devotion to the god Śiva as communicated through the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first presents *niṣṭhē* (determination) as a principle that guides the devotee's actions in the stories. The second section discusses the relationship between the devotee and the god as evinced in the stories.

In the sixth chapter I take on the issue of *samaśīla* (equality) in the saints' stories of this corpus. Here, I examine Harihara's presentation of *samaśīla* in a series of contested spheres: gender, caste, occupational background, untouchability, commensality, and material wealth.

The seventh chapter is dedicated to an examination of personal and communal religious practices described by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. In the chapter, I use two analytical terms—orthodoxy and omnipraxy—in order to explain the complex negotiations within this tradition between existing, Brahmin-based practices and new and antinomian ones. I argue in this chapter that the rejection of temple worship that is attributed to early *Vīraśaivism* by A. K. Ramanujan, as well as others, does not cohere with the complex landscape of religious practices described in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. In this chapter, I also focus on initiation and assemblies as two idiomatic forms of religious practice central to this tradition.

In chapter eight I step out of the communal boundaries of the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition in order to examine the interactions between the devotees and two external agents: the king and the Vaiṣṇava Brahmins. The figure of the king indexes in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories material support of the devotional community but also worldly existence to be resisted. The Vaiṣṇava Brahmins are depicted in the stories as political rivals at the court, a “religious other” to be challenged through debates and miracles.

The ninth chapter is dedicated to a different “religious other,” the Jains. The stories about conflicts between Śaivas and Jains in this corpus are distinguished from others by their hyperbolic descriptions of violence exercised against *jaina* communities. In these stories, temples are converted, whole communities are expelled, and many *jaina* organs are hacked. At the same time, the Jains in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* always share with the Śaivas intimate spaces such as cohabitated homes and practices such as daily commensality. Harihara’s complex attitude toward the Jains, I argue in this chapter, can be explained by the author’s need to construct a communal identity of an emerging movement as well as by the competition with Jains over similar social, economic, political, and religious resources

Despite its centrality for later reconstructions and retellings about the twelfth-century *śaiva* saints from the Kannada-speaking regions, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* corpus is almost completely missing from Western scholarship. Keeping in mind this lacuna, I have embedded in each chapter summaries of relevant *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories. These summaries are inevitably a reduction of the original; they lack its intense expressiveness, unique texture, and level of detail. Still, stories (even in summarized form) are complex creatures: while easily giving themselves to interpretation, they at the same time remain impervious to a singular reading and transcendent to a specific line of

argument, and I hope that they might be inductive for other studies as well. Ultimately, this study is an invitation to explore stories about devotion from a rich, complex, and exciting South-Asian tradition.

**PART I: LITERARY CONTEXT**

## 1 Narrative *Śivabhakti* Traditions in the Early Second-Millennium Kannada-Speaking Regions

In its nascent phase during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the *śivabhakti* tradition of the Kannada-speaking regions, recognized today as “Vīraśaivism” or “Līṅgāyatism,” did not have firm sectarian boundaries as we tend to think today. Its attitude to Brahmanical culture was not antinomian and its approach to temple worship was not denunciatory. Its affiliation with other *bhakti* traditions, foremost of these the Tamil *śivabhakti*, was direct and explicit more than contemporary scholarship recognizes. Furthermore, the Vacanas, which receive most of the attention given to this tradition’s early literary output, were not the only significant literary product to carry the *bhakti* voice and vision within the literary culture of the Kannada language.

There is little doubt that the most significant scholarly gateway to this tradition is A.K. Ramanujan’s *Speaking of Śiva*. Published in 1973 under the Penguin Classics series, this book introduced to English-speaking audiences the universal appeal of *bhakti* as it is expressed in the Vacanas—short, non-metrical poems of personal devotion—in Ramanujan’s brilliantly crafted introduction and translations. As much as it is difficult to overestimate this book’s contribution to the study of Vīraśaivism (and more broadly, the study of South-Asian *bhakti*) in the West, its non-historical approach and its single focus on the Vacanas obscure the surprisingly rich literary materials from the early period of this tradition which are not Vacanas.

Harihara’s *Raḡalēgaḷu* was the first *bhakti* text in narrative form that was written in the Kannada language, at the early thirteenth century, purportedly just few decades after the era it captures in writing. Yet, few have even noticed, not to mention reflected

on, its distinctiveness and significance in the context of its time. This study, which is divided into two parts, is dedicated to the reconstruction of the religious history of the early *śivabhakti* tradition in the Kannada-speaking regions according to this text.

The need to understand the cultural and literary context for its creation is no less acute than understanding the cultural world this text describes. Hence, the first part of this study is dedicated to frame this text and its significance for the literary culture of its time. In the first chapter I begin this task by delineating the *bhakti* world in which the creation of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* was facilitated. The boundaries of this world lie outside the Kannada-speaking regions, well into the Tamil- and Telugu-speaking areas of the early second millennium. While it would be incorrect to consider the *śivabhakti* traditions operating in this spatial and temporal framework as one unified or cohesive cultural body, there is an acute scholarly need for considering cross-regional influences in the project of placing each *bhakti* tradition operating within this framework in its locality. Accordingly, I intend to show in this chapter that, right from its inception, the Kannada *śivabhakti* narrative tradition was deeply engaged with other *śivabhakti* traditions, particularly regarding issues of textual self-representation and communal identity. I start the chapter by surveying the genealogy of *śivabhakti* texts in this era in Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada, showing the thematic threads that run through all these works. In the second section I introduce the terminology used in the early *śivabhakti* literary tradition in Kannada to represent itself. By historically contextualizing the emic nomenclature of Kannada *śivabhakti*, I argue in this section that we should reconsider this early tradition's social and religious agendas. The complex relations between the Kannada *bhakti* culture and other *bhakti* traditions is further demonstrated in the third section of this chapter by introducing the porous boundaries of the corpus



at hand, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

### 1.1 *Śivabhakti* Narrative Traditions in Early Second-Millennium South India

Although producing Sanskrit works at particular moments (usually to engage with audiences outside its immediate ones), the literary cultures of early south-Indian *śivabhakti* express themselves mainly in the vernacular languages. The central languages in this context during the first centuries of the second millennium are Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada, and the relationships among the *bhakti* texts composed in these languages are as symbiotic as these languages themselves. Thus, a discussion about early Kannada *śivabhakti* narrative literature, which started to be produced about a century after the first Tamil hagiography appeared in the eleventh century, requires a supra-regional examination of what constituted a *bhakti* text in the Kannada literary culture, with specific attention to the neighboring Tamil and Telugu cultures.

#### 1.1.1 THE NARRATIVE TURN

When examining the forms of early poetical expression in the vernacular *bhakti* literatures of south India during the early centuries of the second millennium CE, it is easy to recognize a literary turn occurring during the twelfth century. This turn introduced a new literary medium into this world—the medium of narrative. Until that moment, the only *bhakti* literature to be captured in writing is devotional songs that communicated personal experience.<sup>1</sup> The first *bhakti* text that was markedly narrative is the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam* (“The Great Story”<sup>2</sup>), dated from the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup> The creation of the *Pēriya Purāṇam* was not *ex nihilo*, of course; it is very likely that it rested

<sup>1</sup> I am referring here to the Tamil Tirumuṛai (Peterson 1989: 15).

<sup>2</sup> The fuller name of this text is the *Tiruttoṇṭar Purāṇam* (“The Ancient Story of the Holy Servants”) (Monius 2004a: 113).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

on a long oral tradition of storytelling about saintly Bhaktas. Notwithstanding, the period of the twelfth century, in which these stories were collected, organized, systematized, and represented in written form, indicates a moment of consolidation of a religious community around a text, a moment in time which we can recognize as the creation of a literary culture. In the Tamil case, this moment is even acknowledged as such by the later tradition, which re-imagines the “narrative turn” of the *Pēriya Purāṇam*, in narrative form, of course.<sup>4</sup>

As we shall see throughout this chapter (and more broadly, throughout this study), the *śivabhakti* traditions in the Tamil-, Telugu-, and Kannada-speaking regions are intricately interwoven into each other, and a moment similar to the twelfth-century Tamil case just described occurred during the early thirteenth century in the Kannada-speaking regions. Hampēya Harihara, who, according to later literary accounts, was an accountant at the Hōysaḷa court, decided at one point of his courtly career to quit his job and dedicate his life to composing literature about Śiva and his human agents, the Bhakta saints.<sup>5</sup> The *Raḡaḷēḡaḷu*, which narrates the lives of famous devotees from different regions, is considered as Harihara’s *magnum opus*.<sup>6</sup> This was roughly a century after the Vacanas started to be composed<sup>7</sup> and about four decades after the collective trauma in the public memory of all Kannaḍigas, the demise of the *śivabhakti* community at the city of Kalyāṇa.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Pechilis Prentiss (2001).

<sup>5</sup> I examine Harihara’s traditional life story in chapter two below.

<sup>6</sup> In his remaining works, Harihara follows previous literary practices but still applies in them poetic and thematic ingenuity (section 4.1.3 below).

<sup>7</sup> See section 4.1.2 below for a discussion about the dating of the earliest Vacanas.

<sup>8</sup> See section 8.1.4 below.

### 1.1.2 BEYOND KALYĀṆA, BEYOND THE VACANAS

The Kalyāṇa community of Śivabhaktas also came to be identified with time as the central locus for the production of Vacanas and more generally as the geographical center of *śivabhakti* in the Kannada-speaking regions. The early sixteenth-century rendition of the *Śūnyasampādanē*, for example, describes a communal space at Kalyāṇa called *anubhava maṅṭapa* (“Hall of Experience”), in which Śivabhaktas from different places met, discussed their beliefs, and communicated their religious experiences through recitations of Vacanas.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the focus of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries *vīraśaiva* authors on Kalyāṇa as the epicenter for *śaiva* activity in the Kannada-speaking regions, Harihara describes in his *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* a much more diverse and widespread geographical map of *śaiva* centers.<sup>10</sup> According to Harihara, twelfth-century *bhakti* activities occurred at different places and by different agents, who did not always belong to the same communal background. For example, Mahādeviyakka, one of the most popular *śivabhakti* figures of the twelfth century, famed for her poignant Vacanas,<sup>11</sup> enters into *Śūnyasampādanē* story only after she leaves her abusing non-Śaiva husband and arrives in Kalyāṇa to meet Allama and Basavaṅṅa, two famous Śivabhaktas and Vacana composers.<sup>12</sup> Thus, for the *Śūnyasampādanē* authors,<sup>13</sup> the devotional significance of Mahādeviyakka can only be accessed in the setting of the *anubhava maṅṭapa*, when she is surrounded by other famous Vacana composers.

<sup>9</sup> It is the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries texts that inform A.K. Ramanujan’s description of the Kalyāṇa community, including the *anubhava maṅṭapa* (1973: 64, 144-45). See also section 7.4 below.

<sup>10</sup> See example for this diversity in the pilgrimage to local *śaiva* centers in the *Ekāntarāmitandēya Ragaḷē* in Ben-Herut (2012: 167).

<sup>11</sup> See translations in Ramanujan (1973: 111-142).

<sup>12</sup> See synopses and original in Gūḷūra et al. (2007 [1965]-b: 279-396), Michael (1992: 50-52).

<sup>13</sup> I use the plural since there are four different renditions for the *Śūnyasampādanē*, composed over a period of about a century, from the early fifteenth to the early sixteenth, when the last version is considered the most elaborate. See Michael (1992: 27-30).

Harihara's narration of Mahādeviyakka's life story in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is considerably different. The most glaring difference is that here she never arrives in Kalyāṇa, nor does she meet Allama and Basavaṇṇa. In fact, the central theme in the *Ragaḷē* dedicated to Mahādeviyakka is her frustrating relationship with her non-Śaiva husband, a theme which is only referred to in hindsight in the *Śūnyasampādanē*.<sup>14</sup>

The thematic differences between the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and later *vīraśaiva* texts can be explained by the different ideological perspectives that shape these texts. Harihara's interest, as the first author to narrate the Bhaktas' story only few decades after the purported events took place, is to construct a literary culture around the nascent *śivabhakti* movement. Accordingly, he structures the saintly characters in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* based on a single narrative principle: their intense experience of devotion, represented through their remarkable lives.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, there is a certain leniency in Harihara's plotting of the Bhaktas' stories. They have different identity markers, such as different geographical connections, different sectarian affiliation, different eating practices, and so on. Even ethical codes are not unified in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. Thus, the cadre of Bhaktas that populate the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* narratives consists of people from different areas in south India (as well as few from other parts of the peninsula) and, more significantly, people who worship Śiva in varied ways that are not always commensurate with each other.<sup>16</sup> In addition to this leniency, Harihara shows little interest in the particular sectarian or

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<sup>14</sup> A similar discrepancy exists with regard to the literary figure of Allama, whose deeds in Kalyāṇa take up the bulk of the *Śūnyasampādanē* but are very minor in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* (*Prabhudevvara Ragaḷē* vv. 373-74 in Harihara 1999: 304). See the thematic comparison between Allama in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and that of the later texts in Chandra Shobhi (2005: 195-207) and in section 7.2.4 below.

<sup>15</sup> I discuss the Śivabhaktas' interiority according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in chapter five below and their practices in chapter seven.

<sup>16</sup> See sections 6.5, 6.6, 7.1, and 7.2 below for discussions about conflictual ethics and practices among different Śivabhaktas in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

cultic affiliation of his Śivabhaktas. We know from contemporaneous epigraphy that many different sects operated in this period, often in competition with each other (including within the *śaiva* faith).<sup>17</sup> In light of this plurality, Harihara's silence regarding inter-*śaiva* affiliations might be indicative of his wish to establish a narrative ethos that appeals to a variety of audiences, as long as they accept the supremacy of Śiva devotion over non-Śaiva traditions, of course. The *vīraśaiva* authors of the later period are motivated in their writings by more specific goals that reflect a more mature phase of the Kannada *śivabhakti* movement. For example, the sectarian discourse at the Vijayanagara court demanded clear social and religious demarcations and the ability to express the movement's communal identity against other sects, *śaiva* as well as others.<sup>18</sup>

Another explanation for the disparity between Harihara's narratives and later ones is formalistic and literary in nature. The genre of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is unique, and it shapes Harihara's distinct plot strategies. In contrast to coeval *śivabhakti* hagiographies in Tamil and Telugu, and in Kannada in later periods as well, Harihara writes *Ragaḷēs*, disparate narrative units without any overarching thematic principle.<sup>19</sup> Whereas the fragmented structure of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, explained below,<sup>20</sup> allows a multiplicity of locations, practices, and dispositions, without any apparent organizing principle (theological or other), the later narratives, such as the *Śūnyasampādanē* and the *Prabhuliṅgalilē*, are much more univocal and monolithic, and their narratives are

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<sup>17</sup> See section 1.2 below.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion about the *Vīraśaivas* at the Vijayanagara court of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Chandra Shobhi (2005: 320-344).

<sup>19</sup> See chapter three below. The hagiographies I allude to here are the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam* and the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* (section 1.1.3 below).

<sup>20</sup> See section 1.3 below.

organized according to specific geographical locations (such as Kalyāṇa), specific figures, and specific agendas.<sup>21</sup>

### 1.1.3 EARLY MEDIEVAL ŚIVABHAKTI TEXTS IN TAMIL, TELUGU, AND KANNADA

As mentioned earlier, Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* contains stories about Bhaktas from different regions in south India as well as from other parts of the peninsula, and many of the Bhaktas narrated in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are also found in other texts. While the Bhaktas from the Kannada-speaking regions appear in writing for the first time in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, other figures, such as the Tamil Nāyaṇārs, appears in earlier texts as well. In Table 2 (p. 4), I list texts produced in different languages in south India during the first centuries of the second millennium that are thematically connected to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. Though partial,<sup>22</sup> this list is instrumental for illustrating the cross-regional and cross-lingual connections between the śaiva text produced in this era at the southern part of the peninsula.

Even without a thorough acquaintance with these texts (some of them are completely undocumented in Western scholarship), this list is instructive for delineating a rich and vibrant literary culture at a very early stage of this śivabhakti tradition. In the context of this study, some of these texts merit specific attention: the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*, considered by scholars to have been composed during the twelfth century, is the first text in the second millennium to narrate at length the miraculous deeds by Śivabhaktas.<sup>23</sup> The Telugu *Śivatattvasāramu*, also composed around the middle

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<sup>21</sup> This principle is at work as early as in the late thirteenth-century, in Pāḷkuriki Somanātha's *Basava Purāṇamu*.

<sup>22</sup> There are many other texts that are central to the śaiva tradition of the Kannada-speaking regions. The texts I included here are directly referred to in this study. For a fuller table of texts in Kannada during this period (with some chronological discrepancies), see Mugaḷi (2010 [1953]: 135-38, Knn).

<sup>23</sup> The *Pēriya Purāṇam* is part of larger Tamil corpus called the *Tevāram*. See Peterson (1989: 3-50).

of the twelfth century by a central *śaiva* leader from Śrīśailam called Mallikārjuna Paṇḍitārādhyā, briefly refers to several Śivabhaktas from different regions, including those appearing in the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam* and those described later by the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as operating in the Kannada-speaking regions.<sup>24</sup> The next text to narrate the lives of Śivabhaktas in this chronology is Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, composed during the early decades of the thirteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Harihara's contemporary, Kēṛēya Padmarasa, composes a doctrinal text about Kannada *śivabhakti* titled the *Dikṣābodhē*. Harihara's nephew Rāghavāṅka, directly influenced by the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, composes shortly after two significant works—*Somanātha Cāritra* and *Siddharāma Cāritra*. In these texts, Rāghavāṅka picks up specific stories that are found in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and develops them into full blown and elaborate poetic compositions.<sup>26</sup> A few decades later appears the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, composed by the polyglot Pāḷkuriki Somanātha, who narrates stories about the south-Indian Śivabhaktas. Here, the cadre of Bhaktas is very similar to those found in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, though their stories differ significantly.<sup>27</sup> Another text by Pāḷkuriki Somanātha called the *Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritramu*, which is dedicated to the life of the Telugu-speaking *śaiva* leader Mallikārjuna Paṇḍitārādhyā (mentioned above as the author of the *Śivatattvasāramu*), also narrates the lives of twelfth-century and earlier

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<sup>24</sup> This text is fundamentally non-narrative. However, few verses list of Bhaktas that also appear in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

<sup>25</sup> See section 2.1.1 below for dating this text.

<sup>26</sup> The *Somanātha Cāritra*, which narrates the conversion of the Somanātha temple in Puligēṛē by a Bhakta named Ādayya, is a direct adaptation of Harihara's *Ādayyana Ragaḷē*, with some thematic modifications and developments. The *Siddharāma Cāritra* tells the life story of Siddharāma, a central Bhakta leader operating in Sonnaligē (located in today's south Maharashtra) and a contemporary of Basavaṅṅa. Siddharāma is mentioned in two of Harihara's *Ragaḷēs*, and it is possible that Harihara also dedicated a complete *Ragaḷē* to this Bhakta, though such a text is not extant today (Narasimhācār 2005 [1971]-b:102-103, Knn).

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed comparison of the story about Ekānta Rāmayya as it appears in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and the *Basava Purāṇamu*, see Ben-Herut (2012).

south-Indian Bhaktas, partially overlapping with the *Basava Purāṇamu*. About a century after the composition of the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, a Kannada poet named Bhīmakavi translates this text to Kannada.<sup>28</sup> This work marks a significant moment in the development of what can be termed as the *vīraśaiva* literary culture; from the early fifteenth century onward, many additional narrative works in the Kannada language start to appear.<sup>29</sup> Significantly, since the appearance of the Kannada *Basava Purāṇa* in the late fourteenth century, this Kannada literary culture is explicitly self-identified as “*vīraśaiva*” and is collectively referred to in scholarship as the *Vīraśaiva Purāṇas*.<sup>30</sup>

From this textual genealogy we note Harihara’s significant role as the first to write in Kannada about Śivabhaktas and the first ever to narrate the lives of Bhaktas from the Kannada-speaking regions. As discussed below, Harihara’s influence on the later *vīraśaiva* writers is decisive, both in terms of content and form.<sup>31</sup> Even today, reconstructions by Kannadigas of the lives of the twelfth century Bhaktas involve a thorough analysis of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, in recognition of it being the first textual source to account for these saints’ lives, its impact on the pre-modern retellings, and in appreciation of the temporal proximity between the composition of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* to the purported events it narrates. The short time span (of about half a century) between the purported saints’ lives and their literary representations in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is exceptionally short in comparison to other South-Asian hagiographic traditions. For the sake of comparison, the Tamil author Cekkīlār wrote his hagiographies as late as six

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<sup>28</sup> Though similar to the Telugu original, the Kannada version is not a direct translation but contains additional stories from Somanātha’s *Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritramu*.

<sup>29</sup> Mugaḷi (2010 [1953]: 277-312, Knn).

<sup>30</sup> The emic term used to describe this literary renaissance is *kāḷajñāna*. See brief discussion in Desai (1968: 279-83).

<sup>31</sup> See chapters three and four below.



centuries after the purported date of the first Nāyaṇār, Kāraikkāl Ammaiṅār.<sup>32</sup> While the temporal proximity of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* to the events it narrates does not imply historical veracity, it is safe to assume that the cultural snapshot of its period (the early thirteenth century) must resemble to a significant degree to that of the middle of the twelfth century.

More broadly, the above genealogy indicates that the flourishing narrative tradition about Śivabhaktas during the twelfth- to thirteenth-century south India developed across different locales and languages. However, it is difficult to determine whether the Kannaḍiga Harihara actually read the Tamil hagiographies by Cekkīḷār,<sup>33</sup> or whether the Telugu-speaking Somanātha have read the previous Tamil and Kannada texts—the *Pēriya Purāṇam* and the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—before composing his own take on the Bhaktas’ lives,<sup>34</sup> and we cannot automatically assume such direct borrowings.<sup>35</sup> However, the shared themes between texts from different languages and regions—particularly the shared narrative body about the same cadre of saints—serves as strong indication of intense cultural exchanges across different regions in south India during this period.

#### 1.1.4 ORAL BHAKTI TRADITIONS AND THEIR LOCALES

When studying early south-Indian *bhakti* texts it is necessary to consider their

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<sup>32</sup> Pechilis (2012: 1).

<sup>33</sup> Several Kannaḍiga scholars have asked this question in light of the *Ragaḷēs* dedicated to the Tamil Nāyaṅārs. Ā. Ē. Narasiṃhācār thinks that, in light of the Tamil vocabulary Harihara utilizes in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, it is possible that he knew Tamil. But he also adds that the stories told in the *Pēriya Purāṇam* and in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are considerably different from each other (2008: 149-52, Knn).

<sup>34</sup> It is clear from Somanātha’s writings that he knew Kannada and Tamil (in addition to Sanskrit and Marathi), but he never directly refers to these texts.

<sup>35</sup> Wendy Doniger comments: “We cannot assume, as philologists have often done, that the texts line up like elephants, each holding on to the tail of the elephant in front...” (2009: 22).

performative contexts and, more broadly, the oral literary world out of which they developed. These elements are crucial for understanding how a text was composed and how it was consumed by its immediate audience. Socially, *bhakti* traditions appealed to varied populations, and their literary product had to appeal in content and form to different immediate audiences, including those outside the strictly literati and socially hegemonic.<sup>36</sup> This means that the *bhakti* authors had to employ different textual strategies in order to transcend social barriers. For example, the manner in which Brahmins are represented in *bhakti* texts might get considerably modified when the audience changes from courtly to popular, non-elite crowds.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, we must bear in mind that these texts are fragments of a larger and dynamic narrative conversation, a conversation that was repeatedly reenacted in multiple and variegated public settings to which we evidently have only limited access.<sup>38</sup>

In this regard, the textual genealogy laid out in the previous section can be misleading if it imparts a notion of an elite and hermetic literary society of informed and educated doyens; nor should it imply that these authors were engaged in an linear and evolutionary literary conversation carried across via the written medium.<sup>39</sup> Rather, the above genealogy should demonstrate the complex, cross-regional, and cross-traditional conversations that took place among the different *bhakti* cultures of south

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<sup>36</sup> There are regional nuances to consider here. The Tamil *śivabhakti* tradition was more attuned to courtly cultures than the parallel Kannada one. There are plenty of literary endorsement in the *Pēriya Purāṇam* of the Coḷa kings. We find nothing remotely similar to close political collaboration between agents of Tamil *śivabhakti* and the Coḷa dynasty in the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition. The Kannada literary tradition throughout the medieval period is almost univocal in its derogatory depiction of the court and the king. See section 8.1 below.

<sup>37</sup> Christian Novetzke explores this aspect of the Brahmin authors in the Nāmdev *bhakti* tradition (2012, 2008: 30).

<sup>38</sup> See brief discussion about orality in the Purāṇas (Narayana Rao 2004: 114-15).

<sup>39</sup> While there is a clear thematic thread that runs through these early texts, we do not find in any of them references to previous *bhakti* works (section 1.1.2 above).

India during the early second millennium. Significantly, these conversations also cut across formal literary boundaries; the various innovative poetics that shape many of the texts mentioned above attest to non-elite interventions, or even ruptures, in contemporaneous writing practices, through local and non-conventional meters, innovative expressive modes and language usage, new narration styles, and unorthodox themes and characters.<sup>40</sup> Such unorthodox practices, coupled with the striking thematic correspondences woven across different languages and regions, serve as indicators of a new and emerging world that is unbounded by traditional writing practices of the elite literary culture. It is the new world of *bhakti* composition.

As already mentioned, one of the most significant aspects of this new *bhakti* literary world is its oral medium. We find frequent allusions and descriptions in the texts themselves of the oral world in which they were produced. I dedicate a section in this study to *śivagoṣṭhis*, described by Harihara in his *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* as spontaneous assemblies, in which Śivabhaktas share devotional stories about famous Bhaktas and sing devotional poems.<sup>41</sup> Not to be taken as historical, these descriptions nevertheless point to Harihara's recognition of the centrality of oral communication for creating cohesion and a sense of fraternity among Bhaktas from different regions and backgrounds. Notably, the Śivabhaktas described by Harihara in the stories themselves hail from different regions, speaking at times different languages, and it seems safe to assume that the practice of Bhaktas sharing stories across regional and lingual boundaries was a central element in the dissemination of *bhakti* stories and poems from one area to another in the southern peninsula. It is also very probable that Harihara

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<sup>40</sup> I demonstrate the complex *bhakti* "literary turn" using the case of the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* in chapter four below. For poetic innovation in the *Pēriya Purāṇam* and the *Basava Purāṇamu*, see Monius (2009) and Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990: 5-7) respectively.

<sup>41</sup> See section 7.4 below.

himself, purportedly living only few decades after the oral culture he portrays in his *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, participated in such gathering and heard stories and songs by and about remarkable Bhaktas, stories he later retold in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>42</sup> The influence of oral culture over Harihara's writing also is not limited to the thematic realm: the prosody of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, as well as its poetic devices and lexical usages—all unfamiliar in the written medium of their time—convey a public, non-courtly performative setting and suggest a varied set of audiences to this text, including non-elite and illiterate.<sup>43</sup>

Another pronounced testimony for oral influence is found in the other significant text produced by the *śivabhakti* narrative tradition of the Kannada-speaking regions in the thirteenth century, Pāḷkuriki Somanātha's *Basava Purāṇamu*. As noted earlier, the *Basava Purāṇamu* was composed in Telugu and not Kannada. However, the stories in this text are mostly about Bhaktas from the Kannada-speaking regions. More generally, the cultural eclecticism of the *Basava Purāṇamu* attests to the absence of sharp political, social, religious, and linguistic boundaries between the Kannada- and Telugu-speaking regions during this period (as we also see during later periods). In the opening of the *Basava Purāṇamu*'s first chapter, right after the inauguratory benediction to Śiva, Somanātha writes:

Śrīśailam is the throne of the great God ... At the eastern gate of that great king of mountains ... is Tripurāntakam. [There] one day ... I fell prostrate like a stick before the glorious, innumerable *māheśvaras* ... And I submitted to the assembly,

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<sup>42</sup> P. B. Desai notes that the distance between Hampi, where Harihara composed the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and Sangama, where Basavaṇṇa passed away according to tradition, is only about sixty miles, and adds: "It is in the fitness of things to assume that Harihara who was younger than Basavaṇṇa by a few decades, must have heard many reliable episodes of Basavaṇṇa and his extraordinary devotion to Sangameśvara. Sangama and Hampe [Hampi], being both great centres of pilgrimage for *śaiva* devotees and on account of their proximity, we can reasonable surmise that there existed closer contacts among the pilgrims who visited these places" (1968: 251)

<sup>43</sup> See chapter three below.

saying, “I want to narrate the incomparable *Basava Purāṇa*. Kindly tell me how to handle the thread of that story and make me fulfilled ... They looked at me affectionately, cast their kindly glances upon me, and said, “We have given you the ability to spread the *Basava Purāṇa*. Now you must compose it so that it pleases the steadfast devotees.”

When they spoke, I accepted the command of the assembled devotees with great reverence. There, I will now begin to compose this poem.<sup>44</sup>

According to Somanātha’s own testimony, the *Basava Purāṇamu* existed as an oral text well before he sat down to write it. Note that Somanātha’s claim is highly detailed: he provides the specific locale of the Śiva assembly in which he heard about Basavaṇṇa (at the eastern gate of Śrīśailam<sup>45</sup>) and also the names the specific devotees with whom he conversed (these names are omitted from the above quote). We can assume by this level of detail just how important it was for Somanātha to communicate to his audience the living environment that transmitted these stories to him. Even if we do not take this description as solid history, the fact that Somanātha was invested in making such a detailed, historiographical claim is significant, pointing to the sensibilities of the author and its audience of the oral setting for the performances of devotional stories. Furthermore, the fact that the *Basava Purāṇamu*’s textual authority is the immediate oral environment of Bhaktas, here referred to as “Māheśvaras,”<sup>46</sup> is unusual compared with the stock attributions to previous Sanskrit texts used by contemporaneous Telugu poets,<sup>47</sup> and this exceptionality demonstrates the rupture

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<sup>44</sup> Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990: 41-43). Harihara does not provide in his *Ragaḷēgaḷu* a testimony regarding the context for composing the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. Later traditions do, and their accounts, more in line with Purāṇic narrative themes than Somanātha’s statement quoted here, attribute a divine source to Harihara’s stories. See discussion about these accounts in section 2.2 below.

<sup>45</sup> See specific geographical location in *ibid*, p. 270n17.

<sup>46</sup> See section 1.2.2 below regarding this terminology.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 271n33.

*bhakti* literature brought into the contemporary literary culture of the southern vernaculars. The *Basava Purāṇamu* stories are genealogically connected to a community whose oral narrative practices are recognized by the text itself as an important part of its collective religious experience as well as social and public markers of its communal identity.

From Harihara onwards, all *bhakti* stories about Kannaḍiga saints describe them as roaming from one *śaiva* center to another, meeting fellow Bhaktas from different regions on their way, and exchanging stories, poems, and morals, on the way.<sup>48</sup> Thus, for example, Mahādeviyakka, Allama Prabhu, and Siddharāma—all central figures in this narrative culture—are reported to have reached Śrīśailam at some point of their saintly career;<sup>49</sup> Revaṇasiddha, an eccentric Guru and a political conjurer, is described in the Ragaḷe dedicated to him as having intimate ties with different rulers in the southern peninsula as he roams from one *śaiva* center to another both in the Tamil- and Kannada-speaking areas; a Śivabhakta from Orissa hears a Vacana composed by Basavaṇṇa and comes over to Kalyāṇa in order to meet and challenge the Vacana poet in person.<sup>50</sup> In conclusion, *bhakti* narrative literature in early medieval south India, which Cekkīlār inaugurated in Tamil, Harihara in Kannada, and Somanātha in Telugu (in this chronological order), reflects a deeper oral culture that was literally carried by pilgrims across different geographical, political, and lingual borders.

There is ample extra-textual evidence to show that there were intense cultural exchanges between one *śaiva* religious center to another across linguistic regions in

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<sup>48</sup> One could also make a similar claim with regard to the Tamil Nāyaṇārs who are depicted in the *Pēriya Purāṇam* as wandering from one temple to another, marking with their feet the sacred *śaiva* geography of the Tamil land.

<sup>49</sup> See Mahādeviyakka's story in section 6.1.1 and Allama's in section 7.2.4.

<sup>50</sup> See section 6.6.1 below.

early second millennium south India. Bounded by the limited scope of this study, I can only refer here in passing to epigraphical records that indicate that Cālukya rules of the northern parts of the Kannada-speaking regions visited Śrīśailam during the eleventh century<sup>51</sup> and to the existence of a western route to Śrīśailam, used during this period by pilgrims from the Kannada-speaking regions.<sup>52</sup> Two to three centuries later, during the reign of the Vijayanagara Empire, we even find identical images of ascetic yogis repeated in Śrīśailam, Hampi, and Śrīringeri, which might serve as indication of a geographical network of specific sects.<sup>53</sup>

Another aspect of the above quotation from the opening of the *Basava Purāṇamu* that merits our attention is politic aegis or, rather, its absence. Significantly, attributions to direct royal patronage are missing from both the *Basava Purāṇamu* and the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. This absence of kingly ascription may be connected to the explicit antipathy, expressed in other parts of these two texts, toward the human king and toward courtly and elite cultures.<sup>54</sup> The general hostility of the two śaiva authors toward royalty and elite culture reflects one of the core values of the śivabhakti tradition from the Kannada-speaking regions as a whole, which is an uncompromising resistance to worldly institutions and to cultural bodies that are not directly framed by devotion to Śiva. This point is central for understanding this literary culture, and I deal with its broader implications on my reading practices throughout this study.

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<sup>51</sup> Parabrahma Sastry (1990: 14).

<sup>52</sup> See Anuradha (2002: 18-19), who also refers to a description by Somanātha himself in his *Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritramu* (1974 [1939]: 224-27).

<sup>53</sup> Shaw (2011).

<sup>54</sup> I deal separately with Harihara's attitudes toward courtly culture (chapter eight below) and with later biographical accounts about Harihara own brief and abysmal courtly career (chapter two below). See also Ben-Herut (2012) for differences in Harihara's and Somanātha's political attitudes as conveyed through their different treatment of the story of Ekānta Rāmayya.

Beyond issues of community and patronage, it is instructive at this point to pay attention to the geographical locations in which these texts were first conceived. Hampi,<sup>55</sup> in which the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* was composed, and Śrīśailam, in which Somanātha heard the stories on which the *Basava Purāṇamu* is based, were both important śaiva pilgrimage centers for at least several centuries before the thirteenth century. The recorded history of Śrīśailam goes as far back as before the Common Era, and throughout this vast period Śrīśailam served as the locus for a complex nexus of relationships between various religious and political agents.<sup>56</sup> The eleventh to thirteenth centuries were especially propulsive for Śrīśailam in terms of the emergence of śaiva colleges (*maṭhas*), growth in local administration, and urban development.<sup>57</sup> Hampi, before the Vijayanagara Empire established its political and administrative center there at the beginning of the fifteenth century,<sup>58</sup> was geographically situated at the political periphery and did not draw the same political attention Śrīśailam drew.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, Hampi was recognized, even in its pre-Vijayanagara phase, as an important śaiva site that attracted both members of political circles and śaiva pilgrims.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Linguistically, Hampē and not Hampi is the correct transliteration of this place, since this word is a Kannada derivative of Pampā (*p* become *h* and finite *ā* is replaced with *ē* in medieval Kannada).

<sup>56</sup> Anuradha (2002: 22-30).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>58</sup> Shaw (2011: 237).

<sup>59</sup> During the twelfth century, the most significant political entity in the area was Kalyāṇa (roughly hundred and fifty miles to the north of Hampi). After the demise of Kalyāṇa at the turn of the twelfth century it was the Hōysaḷa dynasty, based roughly two hundred miles to the south at Halebid, which became the strongest political power in this region. See archeological study of Hōysaḷa's capital Dorasamudra in Kasdorf (2013).

<sup>60</sup> With regard to the religious centrality of Hampi: Āc. Devīrappa, one of the most significant scholars of Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, writes that during Harihara's time Hampi was a major learning center for traditional Śaivism (Devīrappa 1979: 2, Knn). With regard to political affiliations: P. B. Desai refers to an inscription that describes a visit to Hampi paid by Kalyāṇa's last significant ruler, Bijjaḷa, in 1160 CE (1968: 59) and postulates that Harihara witnessed this visit as a young boy (p. 251). On representations of King Bijjaḷa in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, see sections 8.1.3 and 8.1.4 below.



Despite the historical differences between Hampi and Śrīśailam, both religious centers had considerable administrative independence that was directly connected to their religious function. A physical testimony for the administrative independence of both centers is the śaiva temples that surrounded both Hampi and Śrīśailam at the four cardinal directions.<sup>61</sup> The cardinal temples served as gateways for entering into the holy spaces (*puṇyakṣetra*) of these sites, and they marked the external boundaries of these two centers. These gateways were more than geographical boundaries; they marked sacred thresholds crossed by the pilgrim who came to visit Śiva, in his specific manifestations at Hampi and Śrīśailam. Both Harihara and Somanātha, the authors of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and the *Basava Purāṇamu* respectively, mention the cardinal temples in their texts, an indication of their significance during the thirteenth century.<sup>62</sup> While it is doubtless that these centers maintained active and fruitful relationships with local kings during this period, as attested in inscriptions referred to above, it is equally clear that these centers were outside these kings' immediate political purview. The geographical sacred cardinal borders these two religious centers attests to this, as well as Harihara's and Somanātha's uninhibited antipathy toward royal institutions while they composed devotional poetry at these centers.<sup>63</sup> Ēm. Cidānandamūrti goes as far as reading Harihara's frequent attributions in his *Ragaḷēs* to Śiva Virūpākṣa as "the King of

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<sup>61</sup> Ēm. Cidānandamūrti lists the four temples constructed during the eleventh and twelfth centuries around Hampi (2007: 81, Knn). Similarly, P.V. Parabrahma Sastry lists four temples that were constructed around Śrīśailam in the four cardinal directions at different periods and which contain many inscriptions by the Western Cālukyas from the eleventh century onwards (1990: 23-27).

<sup>62</sup> Harihara described the "four doors" (*nāḷkuṁ bāḡiligaḷ*) to Hampi in his *Pampākṣetrada Ragaḷē* vv. 1-18 (1999: 509). This *Ragaḷē* is dedicated to the physical description of Hampi during Harihara's time. Somanātha describes the four gateways to Śrīśailam in his *Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritramu* (1974 [1939]: 221-22). See also (Anuradha: 30), Parabrahma Sastry (1990: 36).

<sup>63</sup> In the case of Śrīśailam, this claim is also supported by inscriptional evidence that attests to the administrative independence of the locale (Anuradha 2002: 30).

the City of Pampā [Hampi]” (*pampāpurada arasa*) as a literal coin for this god’s political governance over the Hampi, mediated *de facto* by a council of Brahmins.<sup>64</sup> Though such a claim merits further investigation, it seems very probable that at least some measure of autonomy existed in these centers. This point is significant for understanding the cultural context in which the *bhakti* narrative texts were composed and performed. For example, it can explain how these texts received public attention and communal support despite their non-affiliation with local rulers: the local devotional communities in Hampi and Śrīśailam must have been resilient and persistent enough to facilitate these texts’ sustainability in history, despite their anti-kingly rhetoric.

To recapitulate the arguments I put forth until now regarding the religious centers in which Harihara and Somanātha composed their *bhakti* oeuvre or heard its oral fountainhead : as these poets themselves attest to in their work, the religious centers of Śrīśailam and Hampi, as well as others in the southern Deccan belt, served different *śivabhakti* communities as “cultural hubs” in a manner which enabled the emergence of a *bhakti* narrative tradition. These cultural hubs may have been established by providing a protected environment in which the performance of Bhaktas’ stories by wandering pilgrims was an integral part of the collective worship of Śiva. I use the term “protected environment” to foreground the postulation that the liberties taken by these authors in their writings, especially the discounting attitude they betray toward the institute of the king, must have required a political, economic, and social framework that was at least partly independent of direct royal affiliation.

Finally, the cultural model for literary production laid forth here is useful for thinking more broadly about the relations between the Tamil *śaiva* tradition and those

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<sup>64</sup> Cidānandamūrti (2007: 82, Knn). I return to Harihara’s invocation of Śiva as the actual political sovereign in section 2.3.2 below.

of the Kannada- and Telugu-speaking regions. The more radical postulation would pronounce a “mini *bhakti* movement” narrative,<sup>65</sup> according to which the cultural products of the Tamil *śivabhakti* tradition reached hubs such as Śrīśailam and Hampi, as well as in the opposite direction. This culture of dissemination might explain the strong Tamil influences on Kannada Śaivism on the one hand, as well as indigenous and local features that set the Kannada tradition apart from the Tamil one.

## 1.2 The Genealogy of Terminology and its Implications

### 1.2.1 TERMS NOT USED IN THIS STUDY

In contemporary scholarship, the term “Vacana” came to be identified with Vīraśaivism. (This identification corresponds, of course, to indigenous trends by contemporary Vīraśaivas).<sup>66</sup> Despite the fact that the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is the earliest written text to describe performances of Vacanas and quote specific lines from famous Vacanas,<sup>67</sup> the term “Vacana” is completely absent from this text. Instead, we find in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* the term *gītē* (“song, poem”) to designate what we call today “Vacana.” It is possible that the recognition of these poems as belonging to an independent style of poetic composition termed “Vacana” only occurred at a later period, though probably not long after Harihara.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> On criticism against the grand-narrative of the “*bhakti* movement,” see Hawley (forthcoming-b, 2007).

<sup>66</sup> There are also cultural agents in today’s Karnataka who oppose the *vīraśaiva* claims of religious ownership over the twelfth-century Vacanas. See Chandra Shobhi (2005: 24-89).

<sup>67</sup> The specific Vacanas are attributed to Basavaṇṇa and Mahādeviyakka. See sections 6.6.2 and 6.1.1 respectively. Ā. Basavarāju surveys other early sources—later to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—that contain quotes from Vacanas (2001 [1960]: 34-35, Knn).

<sup>68</sup> According to Ā. Basavarāju (2001 [1960]: 24nA, Knn), the first occurrence of the term “Vacana” (literally—“speech, message, utterance”) with regard to the twelfth-century Śivabhaktas is found in a text by Harihara’s nephew Rāghavāṅka, called *Siddharāma Cāritra*, in verse 4.73 (Rāghavāṅka and Viveka Rai 2004: 220).

The perhaps-surprising absence of the term “Vacana” from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* can serve as an effective gateway into a broader discussion about nomenclature *in absentia*. As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the nomenclature used in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* with reference to Kannada *śivabhakti* of the early second millennium differs from the terminology used with reference to this cultural body by later agents. For example, few are aware that the usage of the term “*vīraśaiva*” in reference to this tradition in its earliest phases is problematic.<sup>69</sup> Several textual, religious, and historical questions revolve around this issue. Of these, the most relevant to this study is textual, since the term “*vīraśaiva*” (literally, “Heroic Devotee of Śiva”) does not appear in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* or in coeval Kannada texts. Until the Kannada *Basava Purāṇa* of the late fourteenth century, “*vīraśaiva*” appears only once in a Kannada text and, based on studies of its manuscripts, it is possible that this one appearance is a later interpolation.<sup>70</sup> Some Vacanas that are attributed to twelfth-century Kannada

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<sup>69</sup> The questioning of the historical connection between *Vīraśaivism* and the twelfth-century *Bhaktas*—especially those who composed *Vacanas*—is highly contentious in academic and political circles in contemporary Karnataka, as part of a larger conversation about whether *Vīraśaivism* should be considered by the secular Indian state as a Hindu sect or as a separate religion. Chandra Shobhi’s dissertation (2005) is an attempt to reopen for discussion historical questions regarding the appropriation the twelfth-century *Śivabhaktas* by later *vīraśaiva* agents. My engagement with this issue here, in contrast, is limited to lexical usages in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century materials.

<sup>70</sup> The issue of the authenticity of “*vīraśaiva*” in the early Kannada sources is highly contentious among Kannada scholars. “*Vīraśaiva*” appears in the first verse of the early twelfth-century *Śīlamahatvada Kanda* (“A Poem in the *Kanda* Meter about the Glory of Proper Conduct”) by *Kōṇḍaguḷi Keśirāja* (Keśirāja 1978: 59). For a thorough discussion about this important *Śaraṇa*, see sections 5.2.2 and 8.1.1 below. This text also contains a single reference to the term “*liṅgāyata*” with similar obscurity. Ēm. Cidānandamūrti, a leading Kannada scholar who champions for a pre-Basavaṇṇa origins for *Vīraśaivism*, sees these lexical references in the *Śīlamahatvada Kanda* as indicative of a *vīraśaiva* communal identity already at Keśirāja’s time and its inherent relation to what we call today Hinduism (1989a: 12-18, Knn, Chidananda Murthy 1983: 204-205). Ēm. Ēm. Kalaburgi, another central figure in Kannada scholarship and a promoter of separation of *Liṅgāyatism* from Hinduism, argues against the application of the term “*vīraśaiva*” with regard to the twelfth-century *Bhaktas* and questions the authenticity of the single appearance of “*vīraśaiva*” in Keśirāja’s text (2010 [1998]-e: 197-98, Knn, 2010 [1998]-f).

Bhaktas contain the term “*vīraśaiva*,” but the orality of these texts until at least the fifteenth century makes it very difficult to use them as textual proofs for the earlier period.<sup>71</sup>

The term “*vīramāheśvara*,” which is semantically identical to “*vīraśaiva*,” is found in a few pre-twelfth century inscriptions. It is prevalent in the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* but is only referred to twice in the relevant portions of the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*.<sup>72</sup> Some scholars claim that the two terms have separate significations, since “*vīramāheśvara*” designates a previous tradition from areas outside of the Kannada-speaking regions (mostly Andhra and Tamil).<sup>73</sup> (In the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, we also find the compound *vīramāheśvarācāra*, a term that can be translated as the “practices of the *Vīramāheśvaras*.”)<sup>74</sup> In the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*, Harihara frequently uses the term “*vīra*” (literally “heroic”) in specific moments in his narratives, but usually in order to convey the

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<sup>71</sup> This claim is made by Ēm. Kalaburgi (2010 [1998]-e: 198-200, Knn). According to Basavarāju, the earliest manuscripts of Vacana collections extant today are from the beginning of the fifteenth century (2001 [1960]: 37, Knn), roughly two centuries after their composition. Using a textual comparison of the Vacanas found in these manuscripts to those included in the sixteenth-century *Śūnyasampādanē*, Basavarāju shows how names of specific Bhaktas (Allama Prabhu is the most conspicuous example) were interpolated into the Vacanas during the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (pp. 29-38). I bring this as an example for the textual fluidity of the Vacanas, especially when issues related to communal identity are involved. See also Chandra Shobhi (2005: 90-137).

<sup>72</sup> In the English translation of the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, Velcheru Narayana Rao uses the term “*vīraśaiva*” whenever “*vīramāheśvara*” appears in the original (personal communication, February 2012). Among the *Ragaḷes* dedicated to the Kannaḡiga saints, *vīramāheśvara* appears once in the *Māruḡigē Nācitandēya Ragaḷē* (in chapter 2, Harihara 1999: 266) and once in the *Kovūra Bōmmitandēya Ragaḷē* (in chapter 2, Harihara 1999: 340).

<sup>73</sup> There is an ensuing debate in Kannada public discourse about when the term “*vīraśaiva*” started to appear and what it designated prior to the thirteenth century. See, for example, the exchange of opinions in the op-ed pages of the *Prajāvāṇi* and the *Vijaya Karnāṭaka* during 2011 (Cidānandamūrti 2011b, Savadattimaṭha 2011, Kalaburgi 2011, Maridevaru 2011, Cidānandamūrti 2011a).

<sup>74</sup> Ēm. Cidānandamūrti makes the complex but compelling claim that *Vīraśaivas* existed before the twelfth-century, but in a nascent, noninstitutionalized form (Chidananda Murthy 1983: 205).

emotional intensity of a specific Bhakta rather than to signify a specific sect.<sup>75</sup> In general, for Harihara, “*vīra*” is a predicate and not a proper noun.

To complicate things further, there are similar obscurities also with regard to the other term often used to refer to the people of this movement—*Liṅgāyatas* (literally, “Carriers of the *Liṅga*”).<sup>76</sup> The textual usage of the term “*liṅgāyata*” in pre-fifteenth-century Kannada texts has its own set of peculiarities, about which I will not go into detail.<sup>77</sup> It suffices to note here that the term “*liṅgavanta*,” which semantically is very similar to “*liṅgāyata*,” does appear in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* but, similarly to the early instances of “*vīraśaiva*” in other texts, it is difficult to determine if Harihara’s usage of “*liṅgavanta*” denotes a general description or a specific cultic marker, though its sporadic appearances in the text suggest the former.<sup>78</sup>

“*Vīraśaivas*” and “*Liṅgāyatas*” are completely absent from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* despite the fact that Harihara is well acquainted with the twelfth-century *śivabhakti* tradition later identified with *Vīraśaivism* and that he dedicates some of his longer and most detailed compositions to narrate stories about the leaders of this tradition, such as the case with the *Ragaḷēs* of Basavaṅṅa and Mahādeviyakka. Does the glaring absence of

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<sup>75</sup> See section 5.1.1 below. In one location, Harihara invokes the term *vīramārga* (“heroic path,” *Kovūra Bōmmītanḍēya Ragaḷē* 3.27 in Harihara 1999: 341), but this instance appears as a general, adjectival designation (section 8.intro below). In this *Ragaḷē*, we also find mentioning of Śiva Vīrabhadra, a ferocious form of Śiva that some scholars claim to be connected directly to the *vīraśaiva* tradition.

<sup>76</sup> *Liṅga* is the emblem for Śiva which, in this tradition, is carried on the body of the adept. See section 7.2.4 below. On the differences between the terms *vīraśaiva* and *liṅgāyata* in modern Karnataka, see Ripepi (2007: 84-86).

<sup>77</sup> The word *liṅgāyata* appears only sporadically in earlier texts (outside the *Vacanas*). It is found in the early twelfth-century *Śīlamahatvada Kanda* (v. 33, Keśirāja 1978: 64) and in the early thirteenth-century *Dikṣābodhē* (1.96, Padmarasa 1972: 8). The scarcity of this word in pre-fifteenth century texts led few scholars to regard these as later interpolations. On the obscure etymology of *liṅgāyata*, see Cidānandamūrti (1989b).

<sup>78</sup> See *Bhogaṅṅana Ragaḷē* 143-44 in Harihara (1999: 275). This story is summarized and discussed—with specific regard to practice of carrying a personal *liṅga*—in section 7.2.3 below.

these terms indicate that Harihara was ill-informed about the tradition's self identity formation? This possibility seems unlikely for several reasons: Harihara operated in Hampi, which, as discussed earlier,<sup>79</sup> was a central *śaiva* hub, connected both geographically and culturally to Kalyāṇa. As just stated, Harihara dedicated his most elaborate poem to Basavaṇṇa, the famous Kalyāṇa leader, and this serves as indication of the poet's recognition of the historical importance of the Kalyāṇa events for the development of this tradition. Furthermore, the importance and influence of Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* was acknowledged by the later *vīraśaiva* poets of the fifteenth-century and onward; these are the same agents who consolidated the *śaiva* tradition in the Kannada-speaking regions under the arch-term "*vīraśaiva*."<sup>80</sup> All these indications undermine the possibility that Harihara was not informed about the well-used terminology of "*vīraśaiva*" and "*liṅgāyata*" during his time.

There are two more explanations for the absence of the two terms from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. The first is ideological: by deliberately avoiding the usage of these two terms, Harihara is trying to resist the sectarian, separatist line among the Kannadiga Śivabhaktas. This postulation corresponds with Harihara's general strategy of including various voices—from different *śaiva* traditions and different regions—into the ambit of his *bhakti* narratives.<sup>81</sup> One of the defining features of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is its validation of any form of Śiva worship while disregarding specific cultic, sectarian, or tradition

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<sup>79</sup> See section 1.1 above.

<sup>80</sup> The majority of medieval *vīraśaiva* poets commemorated Harihara (chapter two below), and his impact on the medieval literary world in Kannada was decisive (chapter four below). Conversely, a few of the medieval *vīraśaiva* poets did not approve Harihara's religious vision which they sought to replace (section 4.2.2 below). Taken as a whole, all these different reactions attest to Harihara's significant contribution to and central position in the later *vīraśaiva* tradition.

<sup>81</sup> One indication for this inclusivism is Harihara's unconventional mixing of Tamil and Telugu words and names into the Kannada (in addition to Sanskrit, which is strongly present in Kannada) (Saudattimath 1988: 323-26).

affiliations. The single unifying principle of all the Bhaktas represented in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is their uncompromising devotion to Śiva alone, and the variety of manners with which they worship their god shapes Harihara’s religious vision.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Harihara does not label specific family lineages or religious traditions to which the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* Bhaktas belong to; titles of major śaiva cults we know of from contemporaneous epigraphy—such as the Lākuḷīśas, Kāḷāmukhas, Kāpālikas, and Pāśupatas—are conspicuously absent from this text, although some of the Bhaktas whose lives are narrated by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* clearly follow traditional śaiva practices.<sup>83</sup> Instead, Harihara only uses very general attributions, such as “Brahmin” or “goldsmith.” This inclusive strategy is emblematic of a deeper representations problem: in his narratives, Harihara is ambiguous regarding Brahmanical-centered practices. For example, he is the first in the literary history of Kannada to narrate Basavaṇṇa’s iconoclastic removal of his sacred thread (*jannivāra*) in the *Ragaḷē* dedicated to Basavaṇṇa,<sup>84</sup> but he also describes Śiva as wearing the sacrificial sacred thread (this time termed *yajñopavīta*) in the another *Ragaḷē*.<sup>85</sup>

The other possible explanation for the absence of the terms discussed here from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is more historically nuanced. It is possible that “*vīraśaiva*” and “*vīramāheśvara*” came into use as definite communal markers in the Kannada-speaking regions only at a later period than the thirteenth century. The first Kannada text that

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<sup>82</sup> See chapter seven below.

<sup>83</sup> S. Settar (2000) effectively reconstructs the operation of the Kāḷāmukhas’ religious institutions (*maṭhas*) in Baḷḷigāvē during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, although the historical scenario he offers to explain the Kāḷāmukhas’ disappearance vis-à-vis the Vīraśaivas’ ascendance appears to the author of this study too hermetic. See also Lorenzen (1991), Desai (1968: 70-77, 111-23), Thipperudra Swamy and Angadi (1968:38-40).

<sup>84</sup> *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē* 2.prose in Harihara (1999: 309).

<sup>85</sup> *Ādayyana Ragaḷē* 2.prose in Harihara (1999: 354). This *Ragaḷē* is summarized and discussed in section 9.2.2 below.



specifically refers to the twelfth-century Bhaktas as “Vīraśaivas” is Bhīmakavi’s *Basava Purāṇa* of the late fourteenth century, and its source, the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* from the second half of the thirteenth century, is the first non-Kannada text to apply the term “vīramāheśvara” to a particular community of Bhaktas. The lexical migration of “vīramāheśvara” from the Telugu text to “vīraśaiva” in the Kannada text, which occurs as late as two centuries after the purported community emerged in the early to mid twelfth century, is significant, since it suggests that “vīraśaiva”—either as a general descriptor or a specific predicate—was not native to the Kannada-speaking regions. This postulation is valid only if we assume that the usage of “vīraśaiva” in the *Vacanas* from the twelfth century is a later interpolation.<sup>86</sup>

I discuss these complexities not as exercise in philological scrutiny but because it is simply impossible to refer to the Bhaktas narrated in the *Raḡaḷḡaḷu* as “Vīraśaivas” in light of the absence of this term from the *Raḡaḷḡaḷu*. (This is despite the obvious nonexpert’s expectation from a study dedicated to medieval Śivabhaktas of the Kannada-speaking regions, especially those of which who composed *Vacanas*). In order to avoid referential ambiguities, I invoke the term *vīraśaiva* and its derivatives in this study only with regard to the post-thirteenth century era of the *śivabhakti* tradition in the Kannada-speaking regions,<sup>87</sup> and refer to the thirteenth-century and earlier tradition described in the *Raḡaḷḡaḷu* as “Kannada *śivabhakti*.”

As a concluding remark, the lexical complexity around early usages of the term

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<sup>86</sup> See footnote 71 above. There are also other possible explanations for this lexical absence in the *Raḡaḷḡaḷu*—such as later editorial omissions of specific terms—which are less relevant for our purposes.

<sup>87</sup> Formally, from the moment the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* was translated into Kannada by Bhīmakavi during the second half of the fourteenth century. Note that my usage of “vīraśaiva” is nominal in the sense that it should not imply a reified sense of a single, coherent *śaiva* tradition in the Kannada-speaking regions, even during the later medieval period or the modern.

“*vīraśaiva*” is emblematic for broader issues pertaining to the history of the Śaivism during the early centuries of the second millennium in the Kannada-speaking regions.<sup>88</sup> Consider, for example, Blake Michael’s study of the lives of the twelfth-century Kannaḍiga Śivabhaktas as narrated by an early sixteenth-century text. Michael’s book is titled *The Origins of Vīraśaiva Sects*,<sup>89</sup> and his attribution of the *vīraśaiva* origins to the twelfth century, as indicated by this book’s title and its content, is plainly true, as the *vīraśaiva* tradition undoubtedly develop out of the twelfth-century śaiva renaissance. However, considering the historical problematics of using the term “*vīraśaiva*” with regard to the twelfth century, it is evident that Michael’s reading collapses the literary representation from the sixteenth century onto the twelfth century events.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, the title of Michael’s study “The Origins of Vīraśaiva Sects” is problematic for two reasons: first, because he reads a sixteenth-century narrative as twelfth-century history and, second, when he uses the title “*vīraśaiva*” without being sensitive to the potential prolepsis involved in making claims about the twelfth-century movement using this term. Paradoxically, the title “The Origins of Vīraśaiva Sects” is accurate if we understand the origins of Vīraśaivism to dates at the sixteenth century, which is Chandra Shobhi’s central argument.<sup>91</sup> M. Chidananda Murthy’s inconclusive statement at the end of his article “Pre-Basavaṅṅa Vīraśaivism” illustrates the difficulties at hand: “Basavaṅṅa’s Vīraśaivism is a continuation and at the same time is not a continuation of the earlier religion ...” (Chidananda Murthy 1983: 205). Similarly,

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<sup>88</sup> Chandra Shobhi’s dissertation is a watershed mark in English-speaking scholarship about this issue (2005). Elsewhere, I discuss the historical problems involved in delineating the boundaries of Vīraśaivism during this early period, as well as the issue of sectarian conflicts against Jains in this period, through the story of one Bhakta named Ekānta Rāmayya, as well as the issue of sectarian conflicts against Jains (2012).

<sup>89</sup> Michael (1992).

<sup>90</sup> A similar reading of this text also informs Ripepi (2007: 77-79).

<sup>91</sup> Chandra Shobhi (2005).

P. B. Desai comments that “[w]e are unable to trace its [orthodox Śaivism’s] relationship with the new Śaivite movement of Basaveśvara, which gained strength later” (1968: 71). It appears that a finite conclusion regarding the correct identity and nomenclature of the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition before the fourteenth century is beyond scholarly reach at the moment, perhaps forever so.

### 1.2.2 TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

Notwithstanding the conspicuous absences of the terms “*vīraśaiva*” and “*liṅgāyata*” from the early texts and their implications regarding cultic affiliations in the *śaiva* milieu of that time and place, we do find in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* a plethora of non-cultic appellations that refer to Śivabhaktas. The most popular terms found in this text are “Bhakta,” “Śaiva,” “Māheśvara,” “Pramatha,” “Gaṇa,” “Jaṅgama,” “Śaraṇa,” “Kāraṇika,” “Purātana,” “Nūtana.” In this dissertation, I follow Harihara’s use of these terms, according to the following key:<sup>92</sup>

“Bhakta” carries the most general sense of a person who follows a devotional path in myriad of ways and in different regions and contexts. Naturally, “Śivabhakta” has the specific sense of a devotee dedicated to Śiva. The following terms have similar general meaning in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*: “Śaiva,” “Māheśvara,” “Pramatha,” and “Gaṇa.”<sup>93</sup>

“Jaṅgama” has a more specific sense in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* of a roaming mendicant whose life is dedicated to worship Śiva.<sup>94</sup> This term is also found in later texts from

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<sup>92</sup> There are cases in which Harihara uses some of these terms interchangeably, despite the specific semantic differences attested by his repeated use of each term, but these are the exception rather than the rule. See Desai (1968: 328-29) for a brief discussion about this nomenclature in other early sources, including the *Vacanas*.

<sup>93</sup> “Pramatha” and “Gaṇa” also designate in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* Śiva’s attendants in his heavenly abode in Kailāsa. “Māheśvara” here is synonymous with “Śaiva.”

<sup>94</sup> See section 7.2.4 below. The meaning of this term changed over time, with the consolidation and institutionalization of *Vīraśaivism*. See Ripepi (2007: 73-75), McCormack (1973: 178-80).

outside the Kannada-speaking regions to specifically designate mendicants from this tradition.<sup>95</sup> Like “Jaṅgama,” the term “Śaraṇa” (literally “guarding”<sup>96</sup> ) has a specific sense, though slightly different than “Jaṅgama.” Its usage by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is the closest among the available emic terms to what is termed in the study of religions “saint:” a devotee whose life story is presented to a devotional audience as exemplary for maintaining a direct and continuous connection with the deity or embodying divine traits in a human framework, and whose behavior, from the perspective of the tradition, is axiomatically benevolent.<sup>97</sup> The Śaraṇa’s sainthood, as defined here, is, of course, central to the narratives of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. In this study I use the term “Śaraṇa” for referring to the protagonists of Harihara’s stories, signifying their distinctive qualities over the rest of the characters in the story, whether Jaṅgamas, Śivabhaktas, or others.<sup>98</sup> A term sometimes used in the stories in reference to Śaraṇas is “Kāraṇika,” which signifies a person motivated by a divine cause.

The last noteworthy significations in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are “Purātanas” and

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<sup>95</sup> Heidi Pauwels translates and discusses a Kabīr song that has the word “Jaṅgama” in it (2010: 514). Monier-Williams refers to *Śaṅkaravijaya* 4.28 for a usage of “Jaṅgama” as a designation for a particular śaiva sect, though it is unstated whether it is Kannada śivabhakti (Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 408 s.v. Jaṅgama 2).

<sup>96</sup> Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 1057 s.v. śaraṇa 5).

<sup>97</sup> See a similar definition by Zelliot and Mokashi-Punekar (2005: 12). This depiction of “Śaraṇa” in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* corresponds with how this term is understood by later indigenous traditions as well. Desai (1968: 318) quotes a Sanskrit verse from the *Śivarahasya* (verse number unspecified) with the following statement: “The Śaraṇa is to become a visible part of Śiva and Śiva is to become a part of the Śaraṇa” (*śivāṅgam śaraṇaḥ sāksāt śaraṇāṅgam śivo bhavet*). Dan A. Chekki (2003) describes the Śaraṇa as: “[t]he Vīraśaiva saint ... The Vīraśaiva philosophy depicts a śarana [*sic.*] as one who is free from worldly experiences, attachments or taints. Though having form, a śarana is, in fact, absolutely formless, seen but not seen, representing Lord Śiva, the timeless Absolute ... The śarana engages in action, however, these actions are no longer those of the śarana, but of the Divine ... The words of a śarana are holy words, and those who listen to the words of a śarana in reality listen to the Divine. The śarana lives in a divinized universe” (pp. 25-26).

<sup>98</sup> For the terminology used in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* for non-Śaivas, see chapters eight and nine below.

“Nūtanas.” The former, which literally denotes the “Ancient Ones”,<sup>99</sup> is usually used in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* to designate the sixty-three Tamil Bhaktas called the Nāyaṇārs, whose lives were captured by the *Pēriya Purāṇam* about a century earlier. Sometimes, “Purātanas” may also refer in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories to prior, first-millennium Sanskrit poets—such as Kālidāsa and Bāṇa—whom different *śivabhakti* traditions, including the Kannada, identify as exemplary Śivabhaktas.<sup>100</sup> The term “Purātana” is etymologically related to the widely-used term “Purāṇa,” which denotes a vast literary mythic corpus, written both in Sanskrit and the vernaculars.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the term “Purātana” invokes a sense of mythical imaginaire that its outer cultural contours stretch far beyond the Kannada-speaking regions.

In contrast to the cross-regional connotations of the “Ancients,” the term “Nūтана” (literally, the “Recent Ones”) designates the more immediate Kannada saintly figures.<sup>102</sup> The emic distinction between the Ancient Ones and the Recent Ones is significant, since it conveys an indigenous recognition of the chronological precedence (and perhaps even superiority in traditional terms) of Tamil *śivabhakti* over the local one. At the same time, it points to an innate tension within Kannada literary culture between association with the previous Sanskritic and Tamil “grand” *śaiva* traditions,

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<sup>99</sup> Monier-Williams (1986: 635 s.v. *purātana* 3).

<sup>100</sup> See the brief discussion about Sanskrit poets in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in Nārasimhācārya (2005 [1929]: 255-57, Knn). Another term that is invoked in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and other texts with reference to pervasive Śivabhaktas is “Ādyas,” which has its own set of referential nuances outside the scope of this discussion. See section 8.1.1 below.

<sup>101</sup> Little study has been done on the complicated textual relations between the Sanskrit Purāṇas and the vernacular ones, in terms of themes, form, poetics, and so on. The latter group of vernacular Purāṇas entails, of course, a multiplicity of kinds. See Anne Monius (2009) for a comparative reflection of the Sanskrit Purāṇas and the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*.

<sup>102</sup> S. Settar, who coins the term “neo Śaivas” with relation to the twelfth-century Bhaktas in order to distinguish them from the previous, traditional Śaivas, seems to borrow this neologism from “Nūтана” (2000: 78).

(with the Tamil being the more immediate and central of the two for the Kannada-speaking regions), and perceptions of local identity and a drive to distinguish the local tradition from past, cross-regional ones.<sup>103</sup>

In conclusion, since the terms “*vīraśaiva*” and “*liṅgāyata*” do not appear in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, I use these terms only to refer to agents who operated after Harihara, from the fourteenth century onwards. Furthermore, I refer to the Bhaktas in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* using emic terms such as “Bhaktas,” “Jaṅgamas,” and “Śaraṇas,” reserving the last term to the protagonists, whom Harihara describes as divine figures or saints. Lastly, Harihara’s eclectic approach to Śivabhaktas of different regions, traditions, and eras, as well as to their practices, is conveyed also by an implicit tension between the local and the pan-Indian in the narratives. The same tension also informs the fragmented structure of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, to which the next section is dedicated.

### 1.3 Approaching the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*

The text which is at the center of this study, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, is a collection of disparate poems in varying lengths, all written in the *ragaḷē* meter.<sup>104</sup> The poems are completely distinct from each other. There is not thematic or formal framework that explicitly binds them. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is, in this sense, a sort of archipelago. Manuscripts of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* poems were found in different bundles (“*kaṭṭu*”) that contained different poems in each, and the fragmented structure of the collection naturally raises

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<sup>103</sup> A.K. Ramanujan discusses the poetic tension found within the Vacanas between *mārga* (Sanskrit-based poetics) and *deśi* (local and vernacular poetics) (1973: 22-37). See chapter three below for a discussion about the incorporation of both poetics in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. More generally, tensions between the local and the para-regional are foundational for early second-millennium Kannada literature also in discourses other than *bhakti*, such as the political and the philological of the late first millennium (Pollock 2006, 2004).

<sup>104</sup> See section 3.1 below for a discussion about this meter and its unorthodox application by Harihara.

questions of authenticity. More specifically, it poses the challenge of deciding which of the Ragaḷēs were, indeed, composed by Harihara.<sup>105</sup> The issue is contested among Kannaḍiga scholars, and estimates run from fifty-three at the minimal end to over a hundred in the most expansive account. This obscurity is not only the result of the disparate format of the Ragaḷēs, but also of the fact that many Ragaḷēs appear to have been composed by later authors while using Harihara’s signature.<sup>106</sup>

In light of these issues, I follow here Ēc. Devīrappa’s study, which appears in the introduction to his edition of several of Harihara’s Ragaḷēs, titled *Śaraṇacaritamānasam* (“Sacred Lake of Śaraṇas’ Stories”).<sup>107</sup> Devīrappa lists sixty-one Ragaḷēs found by him to be authentic, based on a thorough literary study that tracks both internal literary patterns in the different Ragaḷēs as well as broader linguistic features. Devīrappa’s study is considered as authoritative in contemporary Kannada scholarship.<sup>108</sup>

Within the limited list of sixty-one Ragaḷēs, I focus in this study on the seventeen that are dedicated to the Nūtanas, the Śaraṇas that operated during the twelfth century in the Kannada-speaking regions.<sup>109</sup> A list of the relevant Ragaḷēs with additional information is given in Table 1 (p. 3). There are two other groups of Ragaḷēs in the corpus: those about the Purātanas (the Tamil Nāyaṇārs) and those that fall

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<sup>105</sup> Saudattimath (1988: 3).

<sup>106</sup> Ēm. Ēm. Kalaburgi, admitting to the difficulty of determining which are the authentic Ragaḷēs, decides to include all those Ragaḷē which contain Harihara’s signature in his edition (Harihara 1999: xx, Knn). He comes up with a hundred and eight Ragaḷēs, a markedly auspicious number in Indian culture. There are additional subtleties and complexities involved in the question of the Ragaḷēs’ authenticity which I do not bring here for the sake of clarity. See Kalaburgi’s discussion (pp. xix-xx, Knn).

<sup>107</sup> Harihara (1995 [1968]: i-xxvii, Knn).

<sup>108</sup> N.S. Tharanatha, personal communication (January 2011).

<sup>109</sup> See section 1.2.2 above. The Ragaḷē about Revaṇasiddha, which is sometimes included in the group of Ragaḷēs about the Nūtanas, is only referred to in passing in this study due to the centrality of the Tamil land in this Ragaḷē and the liminality of the protagonist in terms of regional affiliation. See section 7.3 below.

outside the first two groups, usually termed *sankīrṇa* (miscellaneous).<sup>110</sup> While I occasionally refer to Ragaḷēs of the other two groups, I focus in this on the seventeen Ragaḷēs about the Nūtanas, providing summaries of all of them in the body of the dissertation.<sup>111</sup> One could argue that in order to understand the narrative tradition of the early *śivabhakti* tradition in the Kannada-speaking regions, there is good sense in closely examining also Ragaḷēs that are not directly connected with the Nūtanas. For example, one could learn about the attitudes of this tradition by comparing the narratives about the Tamil Śaivas, as they appear in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, with those appearing in the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*. As much as this argument is pertinent and should be address in future research, my focus in this study on the Nūtanas is motivated by the relative obscurity of these materials from contemporary scholarship.

The tripartite division of Harihara's Ragaḷēs into those about Nūtanas, those about Tamil Purātanas, and miscellaneous (*sankīrṇa*) is commonly used by contemporary scholars, although it appears to be a modern one, for, as already noted, the Ragaḷēs themselves contain no meta-poetic verses or innate organizing principles.<sup>112</sup> It is also significant to note that Harihara's Ragaḷēs were first published in modern print edition relatively late, in 1931.<sup>113</sup> This means that nineteenth-century Orientalists, such as F. Kittel and J. F. Fleet, knew none to very little about this work and

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<sup>110</sup> In this group are included Ragaḷēs about Sanskrit poets from the first millennium that are considered by this tradition as Śivabhaktas, as well as non-narrative Ragaḷēs of various topics, including liturgy and nature descriptions.

<sup>111</sup> Most of the summaries are of the full narratives. See Table 1 for locations of the summaries in the study.

<sup>112</sup> There are also more detailed methods for organizing the Ragaḷēs. See, for example, the division into seven groups in Devīrappa (1979: 24-27, Knn)

<sup>113</sup> Saṅṅayya (2002: 144, Knn).



its contribution for the development of *bhakti* literature and the Kannada language.<sup>114</sup>

As mentioned, the *Ragaḷe* poems appear in varying lengths. For the sake of clarity, I organize them to three groups according to their length: short, medium, and long. The shortest *Ragaḷes* consist of one chapter (*sthala*), with verse count running from about a hundred and eighty to about four hundred and fifty. The medium length *Ragaḷes* have three chapters, and the longest have more than three. The number of chapters in each *Ragaḷe* is always odd, and the even chapters are always written in prose.<sup>115</sup> Throughout the second part of this study I relate to length of specific *Ragaḷes* as an indication of the cultural importance of the specific saint for Harihara and his immediate audience.<sup>116</sup> For example, the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷe*, dedicated to Basavaṇṇa (the famous *Vacana* poet and charismatic leader), is conspicuously long, consisting of twenty-five chapters (out of which only thirteen are extent).<sup>117</sup>

The edition I use as the source for reading the *Ragaḷegaḷu* in this study is the most recent one, edited by Kalaburgi.<sup>118</sup> This edition builds on previous publications (rather than on new manuscripts),<sup>119</sup> has relatively few of copying mistakes, and contains all the *Ragaḷes* that are relevant to this study.

#### 1.4 Concluding Remarks: Creating a New Space within an Established Tradition

The *śivabhakti* tradition of the Kannada-speaking regions during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was evidently complex, as most cultural phenomena are.

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<sup>114</sup> This lacuna explains the absent of the *Ragaḷegaḷu* from the references of Kittel's Kannada-English Dictionary (1982).

<sup>115</sup> See section 3.2.1 below.

<sup>116</sup> A similar organizing principle is usually at work with regard to the early Buddhist *Jātakas*. see Flores (2008).

<sup>117</sup> See sections 8.1.3 and 8.1.4 below.

<sup>118</sup> Harihara (1999).

<sup>119</sup> Saṅṅayya (2002: 152, Knn).

Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* reflects this complexity on several plains. First, this text consciously and thoroughly engages with existing *śivabhakti* traditions from other regions, with the Tamil one as the most immediate and central. The emic categories of Purātanas and Nūtanas is indicative of the complexity of this appropriation—the simultaneous acceptance of preceding traditions and the conscious effort to establish a new and local one. Harihara's self-conscious eclecticism is also expressed by the plethora of approaches and practices within the grand-framework of *śivabhakti*, and this, in turn, generates a difficulty in locating a cohesive community of Śivabhaktas in the Kannada-speaking regions according to the text.

Side by side with ideological issues that shape the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the terminology used in this text also implicates our understanding of the early Kannada-speaking *śivabhakti* tradition. Due to the absence of the terms “*vīraśaiva*” and “*liṅgāyata*” in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, I do not use them in this study to refer to the *bhakti* culture that is described in this text. Rather, I follow emic terms directly used by Harihara to refer to the subjects of his writings. The foremost group here are the Śaraṇas—the saint figures who are the protagonists of Harihara's corpus. More broadly, the complexities and qualms involved with terminology of early Kannada *śivabhakti* hinge upon broader questions regarding the communal-identity of what we term today as Vīraśaivism or Liṅgāyatism. Like in other cases, the past and present of this tradition are interwoven in a Gordian knot.

The body of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is inherently fragmented. It is a collection of poems connected by themes and form, but without any organizing principle or a single encompassing thematic thread, other than the theme of total devotion to Śiva. This, as well as other questions regarding manuscript transmission, raise questions regarding

which of the *Ragaḷēs* was actually written by Harihara. I follow in this study the conservative and widely accepted authentication by Devīrappa. From an analytical point of view, there is also a benevolent effect to the fragmented nature of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. The plotting of its stories is usually superbly lucid. We do not find, as in other central *bhakti* texts of early medieval south India (namely, the *Pēriya Purāṇam* and the *Basava Purāṇamu*), a convoluted storyline that violently embeds distinct stories under one narrative framework. In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, each story has a clear beginning, middle, and end, and this clarity is an asset for the sake of thematic analysis.

## 2 Harihara's Life in History and Tradition

Tradition expresses its attitudes toward a text through the life story it constructs for the text's author. Thus, if we want to understand Harihara's position and role in the greater Kannada *śivabhakti* literary tradition, there is merit in examining the traditional accounts about his life. Furthermore, the traditional accounts about Harihara are instructive for understanding deeper collective dispositions of the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition, as they are manifested through recurring narrative patterns across stories from different eras and about different figures. The central argument in this chapter is that Harihara's life story—as told by later *vīraśaiva* poets—hinges upon themes that are already at work in his own literary corpus. In particular, an intense and intimate mode of devotion, royal patronage and resistance to it, transgressive etiquette and miracle making—all prominent in the hagiographies written by Harihara, are also central themes in the hagiographies about Harihara's life.

### 2.1 Basic Details about Harihara's Life and Work

Harihara was an accomplished and prolific author. In addition to the innovative *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, he also produced poetry that was more in line with contemporaneous Kannada literary practices. In this category are included the *Pampāśataka*, the *Muḍigeya Aṣṭaka*, , the *Rakṣāśataka*, and what is acknowledged by many as Harihara's masterpiece, the *Girijākalyāṇa*, an eight canto *mahākāvya* (epic poem) written in the classical style of *campū*.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, despite the magnitude of Harihara's overall *oeuvre*, he is remembered by the Kannada literary tradition as the “*Ragaḷē's* Poet” (*ragaḷēya kavi*). This

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<sup>1</sup> Another work attributed to Harihara but now lost is the *Śivākṣaramālē* (Narasimhācārya 2005 [1929]: 257, Knn).

is undoubtedly due to the poetic and thematic uniqueness of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and its impact on future medieval Kannaḍiga poets.<sup>2</sup> For the interest of this study, which is early *śivabhakti* narratives in the Kannada-speaking regions, the significance of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is unparalleled, because of its being the first text to elaborately narrate the lives of the most prominent figures who occupy the public memory about early Kannada *śivabhakti*. This chapter, then, thematically contextualizes this work using the accounts about who Harihara was.

### 2.1.1 HARIHARA'S DATE

The most reasonable, though not hermetic, estimation provided by most contemporary Kannaḍiga scholars is that Harihara's literary activity took place between 1220-1230 CE,<sup>3</sup> and following this estimation I assume in this study that Harihara was operating during the early thirteenth century.

To demonstrate the complexities and obscurities involved in fixing Harihara temporally, I can briefly note the undecided identity of one Hōysaḷa king, titled in the later *vīraśaiva* texts as Narasiṃha Ballāḷa, who, in an episode we shall explore below, is said to have had a brief acquaintance with Harihara. The lack of temporal clarity here pertains to whether these texts refer to Ballāḷa II (r. 1173-1220) or to Narasiṃha II (r. 1220-1234/5).<sup>4</sup> Most contemporary scholars seem to adhere to the former, Ballāḷa II,<sup>5</sup> but, beyond this particular argument, the larger question here is whether it is even

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<sup>2</sup> The innovative nature of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is considered in chapter three, and its impact on the literary history of Kannada is discussed in chapter four.

<sup>3</sup> Cidānandamūrti (1970: 130, Knn). Compare this estimation with the rather theoretical and over-expansive one that places Harihara's activity sometime between 1145-1300 CE (Śivarudrappa 1976: 235, Knn). The earliest discussion in English about fixing Harihara's date is from the early decades of the twentieth century (1988: 52-55).

<sup>4</sup> See epigraphical study of these two kings in Kasdorf (2013: 46-60).

<sup>5</sup> Nāyaka, Veṅkaṭācala Śastrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1255-60, Knn).

possible to historically connect Harihara to this king's court, when we do not possess any direct inscriptional or other "hard" evidence for this claim. Conversely, the locating of Harihara in the temporality of early thirteenth century does seem cogent if we consider the prevalent attributions to him by later authors, since some of those are more easily fixed in time.

### 2.1.2 HARIHARA'S NAME

Uncertainties also surround the meaning of Harihara's peculiar name.<sup>6</sup> One possible way to translate "Harihara" is denoting it as "Hari as well as Hara," (that is, Viṣṇu as well as Śiva), which is also the title of a cult that developed in south India at the turn of the first millennium by *smārta* Brahmins in an attempt to reconcile between competing Hindu-based sects.<sup>7</sup> It is uncertain whether Harihara's parents belonged to this anti-sectarian movement and, thus, named their son in the spirit of religious tolerance.<sup>8</sup> (Clearly, Harihara did not end up promoting such values). A related but different explanation points to a town named Harihara, in which there is a temple that celebrates the joined *vaiṣṇava-śaiva* tradition. It is told in several traditional accounts that the poet Harihara visited this town on his way from Dvārasamudra to Hampi, and that he released an evil demon (*brahmarākṣasa, ugrabhūta*) that took over this town's temple.<sup>9</sup> This explanation is not commensurate with the fact that all the traditional

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<sup>6</sup> A different level of complexity with regard to the title "Harihara" involves the proliferation of different variations of this poet's name, as appearing in various sources. Of the more popular variants are Harideva, Hariśvara, Hariga, Hari, Hariyaṇṇa Paṇḍita. These are sometimes used interchangeably in the same text. Often, these are preceded by the title Hampēya ("of Hampi").

<sup>7</sup> The origins of the Harihara cult in this region go back to the sixth century (Desai 1968: 115).

<sup>8</sup> Liṅgaṇṇa seems to be the only scholar to claim that Harihara's parents were Smārtas and that they named their son to signify this harmonious concept (1979: 387, Knn).

<sup>9</sup> For detailed accounts about the ghost in the temple story, see Nāyaka, Venkaṭācala Śāstrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1266-67, Knn); Śivarudrappa (1976: 236, 238, Knn).

sources about Harihara's life specifically state that he was given this name by birth and not due to this incident. These sources also do not provide any alternative name the poet had prior to the miracle he allegedly performed in the town Harihara.

In seeking a thematic correspondence between the title Harihara and the religious persona of the poet, it is possible to consider a different explanation of Harihara's name: the "Destroyer (*hara*) of Hari," or in a less harsh variation—Hariśvara, "the Lord (*īśvara*) of Hari." This explanation taps into a popular medieval *śaiva* claim that Viṣṇu is a great Bhakta of Śiva and coheres well with Harihara's anti-*vaiṣṇava* temperament that is oftentimes reflected in his work.<sup>10</sup> This explanation is explicitly given by Harihara in three verses of his *Pampā Śataka*, in which Harihara claims that devotees call Śiva "Harihara" because Hari bows his head to Śiva's feet; because Śiva carries Viṣṇu as an ornament on his head; because Śiva, as Śarabha, killed Viṣṇu as Nṛsiṃha; and so on.<sup>11</sup> Still, Harihara does not directly attribute this explanation to his own name but to Śiva only.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the most adventurous theory about the etymological origin for Harihara's name is the one offered by Ęm. Ęm. Kalaburgi, who thinks this name's lingual and cultural origin is Dravidian rather than Sanskritic.<sup>13</sup> Kalaburgi suggests that Harihara's name is derived from a name of a local god called Paṛi (>Paṛiyala>Hariyala>Harihara). In a later article, Kalaburgi suggests a different explanation according to which the origin of Harihara's name is Hĕrĕyāḷa, which is the

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<sup>10</sup> Devīrappa (1979: 30, Knn).

<sup>11</sup> *Pampā Śataka* vv. 95-97 in Harihara and Basawanal (1969: 35, Knn). See discussion about Harihara's sectarian belligerent against Vaiṣṇavas in section 8.2 below.

<sup>12</sup> Devīrappa (1979: 21, Knn).

<sup>13</sup> Kalaburgi (2010 [1998]-c: 433-34, 439-40, Knn).

crescent moon, an emblem of Śiva (Hēṛyāḷa >Hariyāḷa>Hariyala>Hariyara>Harihara).<sup>14</sup> What is significant about Kalaburgi's musings is that he attempts to reclaim the epithet "Harihara" as thoroughly Dravidian rather than Sanskritic, while Harihara himself expresses no such linguistic Puritanism in his own work.

The plethora of explanations for Harihara's name does not allow us to take a finite stance on this issue. We might find a cold comfort in the fact that a similar obscurity pertains also in the case of Harihara's nephew Rāghavāṅka, who is depicted, like his uncle Harihara, as exclusively devoted to Śiva, but nevertheless carries an ambiguously *vaiṣṇava* epithet.<sup>15</sup> More significant than locating the "historical" and "correct" explanation for Harihara's name is the fact that the pre-modern tradition is not pressed to present any conclusive stance on this issue. Reflection about Harihara's name in the pre-modernity is minimal and, in the hagiographies about them, Harihara and Rāghavāṅka are celebrated for their *śaiva* zeal despite their accommodating names. Perhaps epithets in South-Asian imaginaries are not always suggestive of deeper meaning.

## 2.2 Stories about Harihara's Life and about his *Raḡaḷēḡaḷu*

This section presents a brief sketch of Harihara's life and then focuses on specific incidents in his life, incidents which, as already mentioned, are tightly connected with broader themes of this region's *śivabhakti*.<sup>16</sup> As we shall see in this

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<sup>14</sup> Kalaburgi (2010 [1998]-c: 439-40, Knn).

<sup>15</sup> "Rāghavāṅka" denotes either a positive affiliation with the Raghu dynasty, which is connected to Viṣṇu in the classic imaginaire, or a negative one, since *aṅka* can be translated wither as "decoration" or as "affliction" (Kittel 1982: 17 s.v. *aṅka* 13 and 14). Some scholars echo this obscurity. See, for example, Kurtakoṭi (1995: 174-79, Knn).

<sup>16</sup> For comprehensive comparative discussions about Harihara's life, see Devirappa (1979, Knn); Nāyaka, Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1245-81, Knn); Śivarudrappa (1976: 235-43, Knn).



section, the Vīraśaiva Purāṇas that narrate Harihara's life give a central place to his *magnum opus*, the *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu*. This makes Harihara's life story a good introduction to the poetic and thematic analyses of the *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu* that take up the rest of this study.

### 2.2.1 A SUMMARY OF HARIHARA'S LIFE STORY

A detailed biography of Harihara's life was composed shortly after or perhaps during his life by his nephew, the famous poet Rāghavāṅka. Unfortunately, this biography, titled *Hariharamahatva* ("Harihara's Greatness"), is not available today.<sup>17</sup> The available narratives about Harihara's life are taken from the later medieval Vīraśaiva Purāṇas, the earliest being the *Padmarāja Purāṇa* (1385 CE). This work, composed about a century and a half after Harihara's time, narrates the life of Harihara's contemporary and close friend, Kēreya Padmarasa. A more detailed account that directly builds on the now lost *Hariharamahatva* is Siddhanañjeśa's *Rāghavāṅka Caritē* (ca. 1650 CE).<sup>18</sup> More succinct accounts about Harihara's life appear in the *Cēnnabasava Purāṇa* (1578 CE) and the *Bhairaveśvarakāvya Kathāsūtraratnākara* (1672 CE).

Four *Ragaḷeḡs* contain first-person narratives: the *Piṇḍotpatti Ragaḷeḡ* (aka the *Samsāravayāmahānirasana Ragaḷeḡ*), the *Puṣpa Ragaḷeḡ*, the *Rakṣā Śataka*, and the *Pampā Śataka*.<sup>19</sup> These vignettes, generally narrate in the wretched life of a poor farmer and later a servant who decides to renounce the world and dedicate himself to Śiva. While some eminent scholars of past generations<sup>20</sup> accept these descriptions as authentically autobiographical, recent scholars contest this view. The main reason for this disapproval is that the personhood that these descriptions depict—steeped in poverty and

<sup>17</sup> Narasimhācārya (2005 [1929]: 268, Knn).

<sup>18</sup> Śivarudrappa (1976: 237, Knn).

<sup>19</sup> These four works are considered by Ēc. Devīrappa as Harihara's. See section 1.3 above.

<sup>20</sup> These include Ā. Ēl. Narasimhācār, Ār. Ēs. Muḡaḷi, and Ēl. Basavarāju. See, for example, Narasimhācār (2005 [1971]-a: 238-39, Knn).

depravity—does not correspond well with the erudition that is reflected in the writings of Harihara. According to this postulation, Harihara’s first person voice in the abovementioned texts is an authorial strategy meant to communicate devotional intimacy to its immediate audiences, a postulation that seems cogent in light of Harihara’s overall effort in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* to celebrate devotionism for Śiva. Furthermore, despite the fact that they are written in first person, Harihara’s first person narratives convey a general sense of contrived stories<sup>21</sup> and are radically different from anything told to us by the later poets about his public identity.

The following skeletal account of Harihara’s life is based on the *Rāghavānka Caritē*:<sup>22</sup>

Once, in Kailāsa, a Gaṇa (Śiva’s attendant<sup>23</sup>) called Gaṇaharuṣa (the “Joy of Gaṇas”) comes up to Śiva and asks him to tell the stories of the Gaṇas’ great deeds on earth. Śiva responds: “There is none other than you who is fit for narrating my greatness. Go to earth and compose such stories in the *ragaḷē* meter.<sup>24</sup> Then, return here.” Gaṇaharuṣa follows Śiva’s order obediently. He is born as a human being in Hampi to two ardent devotees, Mahadeva and Śarvāṇi. After birth, he undergoes a *śaiva* initiation (*dīkṣē*) by the Guru Mādarasa.<sup>25</sup> Harihara grows up worshipping Śiva Virūpākṣa and, following his god’s order, moves to Dvārasamudra to become the chief accountant<sup>26</sup> of King Narasiṃha Ballāḷa. Here, Harihara establishes good ties with Kēreya Padmarasa, the king’s chief minister (*mukhyamantrin*), who himself is a *śaiva* poet of name. Following a rift with this king,<sup>27</sup> Harihara quits his position at the court and starts his journey back to Hampi, passing through Belūru (aka Belur) and two other towns.

<sup>21</sup> Nāyaka, Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1275-77, Knn).

<sup>22</sup> The summary here is based on the accounts that appear in Nāyaka, Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1265-71, Knn); Śivarudrappa (1976: 237-40, Knn).

<sup>23</sup> See section 1.2.2 above.

<sup>24</sup> See discussion about this meter in section 3.1 below.

<sup>25</sup> In some sources this Guru’s name is Māyideva. We are not told about this Guru’s specific sectarian affiliation. In the *Rāghavānka Caritē*, this initiation is termed as *sujñānadīkṣē*, which is a general attribution that can be translated as “initiation of deep understanding.”

<sup>26</sup> The term here is *karaṇikara kulatilaka* (“the chief among accountants”). See also footnote 55 below.

<sup>27</sup> This incident is elaborately discussed in section 2.3 below.

In each of these places, he performs some miracle related to the local temple. On the way to Hampi, Harihara merrily sings a praise for the city, a praise which later becomes known as the *Pampā Śataka*.<sup>28</sup> The people of Hampi receive Harihara with great celebration, and he is given a house next to Śiva Virūpākṣa temple, where he starts composing his poetry at the feet of the god. This period is checkered by many miracles and meaningful interactions with other people.

While the *Rāghavāṅka Caritē* ends the story about Harihara at this point, with Harihara happily composing poetry while bestowing boons upon and performing miracles for his surroundings, the earlier and terser account that appears in Padmaṅka's *Padmarāja Purāṇa* narrates how Harihara passed away from this world by uniting with Śiva Virūpākṣa:<sup>29</sup>

Kēṛya Padmarasa decides to relinquish the world and sets out on a journey to Vāraṅsi. On his way north, he passes through Hampi and spends a few days with Harihara, celebrating together the *śivabhakti* experience. When the time comes to part, Padmarasa says to Harihara: "In eight days you shall unite with Śiva. Beforehand, you must finish composing an epic poem (*mahākāvya*).” After Padmarasa leaves, Harihara sends his nephew Rāghavāṅka to a *śaiva* town and starts composing the poem. On the eighth day, as Harihara eulogizes Śiva,<sup>30</sup> and the god in the temple takes Harihara into him.

There is some sense of dramatic urgency in this denouement, as Harihara sends away his nephew, who according to tradition was very close to him, in order to devote himself exclusively to writing for the following eight days. We can also note the following merging of Harihara into the *liṅga* at the temple, which is a recurring theme of many famous Śivaśaraṅas' stories, including Basavaṅga's, which Harihara himself

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<sup>28</sup> "Hampi" is a modern Kannada derivation of the Sanskrit word Pampā. See footnote 52 below.

<sup>29</sup> Here I follow the summaries appearing in Nāyaka, Veṅkaṭācala Śastrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1273-74, Knn); Narasimhācārya (2005 [1929]: 257-58, Knn).

<sup>30</sup> The name of the *mahākāvya* is not given in this source, but many assume that the text at hand is the *Girijākalyāṇa*, Harihara classic *campū* work about the unity of Śiva and Pārvati. See also section 2.3.1 below.

composed.<sup>31</sup> The plotting of this story imparts a sense of urgency and inevitability, connected with the theme of renunciation and departure from this world. In addition, urgency is key for the narrative claim that a whole *mahākāvya* (“courtly epic”) can be composed in just eight days. The only *mahākāvya* Harihara composed that we know of is the celebrated *Girijākalyāṇa*, and the abovementioned episode sanctions its central theme—the uniting of Pārvati and Śiva—with an intense, death-bound unity between the devotee and the god.<sup>32</sup>

### 2.2.2 CELESTIAL ORIGINS

Let us pay attention to the framing story in the above passage. The opening scene is located in Kailāsa, where Śiva and his Gaṇas assemble at the main hall of Śiva’s abode that resembles a king’s palace. A short conversation ensued between Śiva and one of the Gaṇas ends with a mission: the latter is to descend to earth and, having taken birth as a human being, narrate the Śivaśaraṇas’ stories. Upon completion of this human assignment, the Gaṇa is (re-)united with Śiva, a mark of the recovery of his or her former heavenly status.

This literary device—framing the earthly story about a *śaiva* devotee with a divine interaction—is, of course, not new to Harihara’s times, but already very popular in the Sanskrit Purāṇas from the middle of the first millennium CE onward. There, the

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<sup>31</sup> See section 8.1.4 below.

<sup>32</sup> Despite its mainstream genre of *mahāprabandham* (“great literature,” the more-popular term in Kannada for the Sanskrit-based genre of *mahākāvya*, or “courtly epic”), Harihara’s *Girijākalyāṇa* does contain several interesting stylistic innovations, such as his intensive use of *oḷaprāsa* (“inner rhyming,” usage of rhymes within the verse’s feet) which was uncommon in the classical medium and betrays Harihara’s enhanced sensibility to *deśī*, oral literature (Kurtakoṭi 1995: 158, Knn). Some traditional sources claim that Harihara wrote the *Girijākalyāṇa* in order to prove his poetic prowess to those who discounted his literary erudition. See Devīrappa (1979: 27, Knn); Basavārādhyā and Sītārāmayya (1974: 22, Knn).

heavenly frame connects the pan-Indian god with his specific locale in the south-Asian peninsula. In this manner, divine framing plays an important role in the inclusion of local traditions into the pan-Indian, Brahmanical tradition. What we have in the case of the story about Harihara, however, is a distinct offshoot of this narrative technique: while in the Sanskritic texts the divine arena set the ground for a direct divine intervention on earth, (whether through *avatāra*, incarnation, or another method), here the descent to earth is not of god but of his attendant, who is manifested on earth in the form of human Bhakta. This shift marks an important transition in the hagiographic literary culture of south-Indian *bhakti*, a shift of narrative focus from god himself onto his human Bhakta.<sup>33</sup> Harihara was the first to introduce this narrative strategy into Kannada, applying it to most of his *Ragaḷēs*—whether those dedicated to the Tamil Bhaktas or to the local Śaraṇas from the Kannada-speaking regions. This strategy works on different levels in the hagiographies by Harihara, allowing him to suggest thematic, as well as theological, elaborations about the Bhakta protagonist, and I discuss this further below.<sup>34</sup>

In the case of Harihara’s story, the celestial framing story conveys the centrality of the composition of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* for later traditions. Not only does Śiva order Harihara to compose stories about Śaraṇas on earth, he also specifically directs him to do this using the *ragaḷē* meter. The circumstances for composing the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are also central to the earthly story about Harihara. As we shall immediately see, the god actively participates in the composition of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*; this is in sharp distinction from Harihara’s active, independent role in all his other compositions as described by

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<sup>33</sup>Later, this device is also adopted by other medieval vernacular Purāṇas for specific purposes. See, for example, the case of the Tamil *sthalapurāṇas* (Shulman 1980) .

<sup>34</sup> See section 5.2.1 below.

the hagiographical accounts about Harihara. For example, the *Rāghavāṅka Caritē* claims that the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is composed only while Harihara is sitting at the feet of Śiva Virūpākṣa, in contrast to the *Pampā Śataka*, composed according to this text by Harihara on the way to Hampi. Similarly, there is a philological significance that in this text Harihara's part in narrating the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories is often communicated using the verb *ōṛē* ("to tell, to narrate"). There are many verbs in Kannada to denote the act of narration, and the choice of this particular verb is significant in this context since it also denotes "to come in contact, to touch, to stick to, to adhere."<sup>35</sup> The sense of physical proximity to and intimation with the god while composing the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, as implied by the usage of this particular verb, is significant. In addition, Śiva is depicted in this episode as personally initiating the production of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and this theme is further developed in the following section.

### 2.2.3 DIVINE INTERVENTION IN COMPOSING THE RAGAḶĒGAḶU

In the following episode from the *Rāghavāṅka Caritē*, which details how the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* were composed, Śiva's participation in this process is made explicit:<sup>36</sup>

As Śiva narrates the Śivabhaktas' stories, Harihara writes them down. But Śiva's accounts are so terse, that one ascetic (*tāpasa*), unable to bear their brevity, approaches Harihara and protests: "Why are you abridging the Śivabhaktas' stories in such a way?" Harihara drops his pen, goes to Śiva Virūpākṣa and says: "Why have you brought upon me a deriding Bhakta?" Śiva, being always dependent upon his Bhaktas (*bhaktādhīna*), replies: "From now on I shall only narrate lengthily, and you too shall write it in this way." But, this time, the stories come out infinitely long, with no end in sight. Again, a revered Śivabhakta approaches Harihara and complains: "In the manner you started writing, these stories will never reach their conclusion!" Harihara retorts: "It is

<sup>35</sup> Kittel (1982: 313 s.v. *ōṛē* 3 and 5). I thank Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi for explicating this (personal communication, January 2011).

<sup>36</sup> The summary here is based on the accounts that appear in Nāyaka, Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1270-71, Knn); Śivarudrappa (1976: 239-40, Knn).

Śiva Virūpākṣa, by making these stories either too short or too long, who is the cause for this problem!” Immediately, Harihara goes to Śiva’s inner chamber (*garbhaguḍi*) and shouts at the god: “You arch traitor! You are again and again failing, making me look like nobody in the eyes of the Śivabhaktas!” Then, Harihara decides to cut off his own head.<sup>37</sup> Śiva immediately appears before Harihara, stops him, and says: “Each one of these life stories is so elaborate that it would take years to narrate. It was for this reason that I told you these stories in an abridged manner. Do not hurt yourself so recklessly. You will please me only by paying no heed to the Bhaktas’ complaints! Even if they abuse you, you must not sadden!” Then, Śiva orders Harihara to worship him daily with fresh flowers, an order Harihara follows faithfully.

This story is revealing in several aspects. First, we have the uniquely active participation of Śiva in the crafting of the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*. None of the stories about Harihara composing his other works is similar to what we are told here. We observed earlier, for example, that the *Pampā Śataka* was composed as an instant expression of Harihara’s excitement upon reaching Hampi, and a work that is most probably the *Girijākalyāṇa* was composed in front of Śiva Virūpākṣa as a prelude to Harihara’s physical merging with his god. In the above summary, in contrast, the creative process is utterly reciprocal, equally involving Harihara and Śiva. Actually, the cooperation is hardly symmetrical: Śiva is the actual composer of the stories, to the level of deciding the style and length of the narration, while Harihara is on the passive, receiving end of the creative dyad, as we learn from his frustration, his dramatic reproaches of Śiva, and from Śiva’s responses to those.

The theme of co-authoring the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* is hinted at in the framing story, in which Śiva actively sends Gaṇaharuṣa from Kailāsa down to earth in order that the

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<sup>37</sup> This is a recurring trope for an act of intimation between the Bhakta and his god. Harihara himself writes about another famous Bhakta, Ekānta Rāmāyā, who have cut off his own head and succeeded to retrieve it. See Ben-Herut (2012) and section 9.2.1 below.

latter shall serve as his earthly voice for the Śaraṇas' story. The theme of a dialectical creativity between the poet and his god, as it appears in the earthly story, is rich and complex, and in the following section I unpack some of its implications to our understanding of how the alter tradition perceives this text.

#### 2.2.4 DIVINE DIFFICULTIES IN COMPOSING THE RAGAḶĒGAḶU

Despite the celebrated ghostwriter of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, who is the god Śiva, the above story clearly conveys a sense of dissatisfaction by the immediate audience of Śivabhaktas from this text. And it is Harihara they blame rather than the real culprit. The unusual and evidently imperfect dynamic between the god and his Bhakta in the process of producing new poetry has interesting implications in terms of how this medieval *bhakti* tradition perceives the intimate relationship between the devotee and the god, and I discuss these below. First, however, it is significant to note that the later tradition about Harihara's life commemorates the process of creating the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as fraught with difficulties. This rather brief passage is, after all, a kind of creation myth for a new and unique literary style and, as this story tells us, the process of creating this new poetry involves experimentations, revisions, repeated criticism and resistance, frustrations, and even passing failures. At the heart of the stylistic difficulties attested in this story lies the problem of plotting the length of the narratives: at first, Harihara's Ragaḷēs are criticized for being too short, and then for being too long; finally, Śiva himself is made to explain the lengthiness issue to Harihara. In this process, it becomes clear that Śiva does not know how to please Harihara's audience in terms of their expectations for a good story. Thus, in its basis, this episode is about artistic exploration, about the experimentation required in order to concoct the right serving that will faithfully present the Śaraṇas stories and at the same time get accepted by its



demanding immediate audience.

As much as such considerations are at the heart of any creative writing, they become painfully acute when one experiments with new genres and expressional modes. It is for this reason that any discussion about Harihara's poetic innovation cannot be complete without a consideration of his stylistic choices, and I dedicate the following two chapters to unpack this poetic process and its trajectories on Kannada literary history.<sup>38</sup>

Along with telling us about how the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* was first conceived, this story also portrays the intimate relationship between Harihara and his god. This intimacy allows Harihara to complain about Śiva and to chastise him, and all to his face. In this relationship, the Bhakta's sense of intimacy with Śiva grants him a direct, undisturbed access to the god. But perhaps what is more striking in this tight relationship is the fact that this intimacy also removes any sense of reverence: Harihara has no doubt that his troubles originate in the god's failures and does not hesitate to tell this to the god's face. Harihara's complaints are evidently not baseless, for Śiva takes the trouble to amend his poetic ways and, when this strategy again fails, to explain his own contested artistic choices to Harihara. The god, then, is not immune to criticism. He can make mistakes, correct himself, and politely ask his devotee to bear this divine imperfection.

Here, we observe a theological disposition that permeates Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as well as other *śivabhakti* works from the Kannada-speaking regions: the god's accessibility to not end with his physical availability to the devotee but extends more deeply into the nature of their relationship. The Bhakta, while acknowledging his or her dependence on the god, also exhibits a sense of mastery over him. In the case of the

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<sup>38</sup> See chapters three and four below.

story at hand, Harihara does not undermine Śiva's position as his one and only god, but at the same time he also does not hesitate to be critical of Śiva and in an uninhibited way. In the peak of Harihara's anger and frustration, caused by the Bhaktas' complaints about his flawed composition, he bursts out toward Śiva: "You arch traitor! You are again and again failing, making me look like nobody in the eyes of the Śivabhaktas!" Notice how the text does not convey any sense of discomfort with regard to the indignation that Harihara exhibits toward his god. Furthermore, Śiva himself is not concerned at all in this story with Harihara's indignation toward him; the god's only interest is in satisfying and placating his devotee. The author, quite aware of the irreverent tone of Harihara's complaints toward Śiva, goes as much as to rationalize it, retorting to a theological principle of the true relation between the Bhakta and the god, when he describes Śiva as *bhaktādhīna*, literally "dependent upon his Bhaktas."<sup>39</sup> As stated earlier, this disposition is foundational for the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition as a whole, and we find the same impatient and demanding sentiment toward Śiva, for the first time in Kannada literature, in Harihara's own stories.<sup>40</sup>

Let us return to the main discussion regarding the difficulties Harihara experienced when he composed (together with Śiva) his *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu*, as narrated in the *Rāghavāṅka Caritē*. According to the above story, it is clear that Harihara's experimentation and innovation were not supported by his immediate audience. Significantly, Harihara is not described as being completely rejected by his audience. Several episodes in the later sources tell us that at least few of the *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu* stories

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<sup>39</sup> Kittel (1982: 54 s.v. *adhīna*).

<sup>40</sup> See section 5.2.3 below. The other significant text to come out of this thirteenth century narrative tradition is the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, and the same subjugation of the god is observed there. See, for example, the story of Nimmavva (Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair 1990: 144-49) and discussion in Shulman (1993b: 57-62).

were, in fact, well received by the immediate audience. For example, we read about a rich prostitute from Andhra who is so moved after hearing Harihara's *Nambiyaṇṇana Ragaḷē* that she comes to Hampi, accompanied by an entourage of horses, elephants, and fellow women, in order to meet Harihara in person. Finding Harihara extremely attractive, this woman begs for his love, but Harihara refuses her on the ground that he already considered himself as the female consort of Śiva and, being a wife himself, he cannot marry another wife. Consequently, this woman becomes a servant at Harihara's house and, finally, unites with Śiva.<sup>41</sup> This story merits attention since Harihara's rejection of this voluptuous wooer's courting—on the ground that he is already engaged to Śiva—has a theological background: it conveys the *vīraśaiva* concept of *śaraṇasati liṅgapati* (“Śaraṇa is wife, Śiva is husband”), here invoked by Harihara in a perhaps too literal fashion.<sup>42</sup> The significance of this story for our current discussion lies in the claim that the *Nambiyaṇṇana Ragaḷē* (the longest and one of the most celebrated of Harihara's *Ragaḷēs*) is reported to have won him fame already during his life time, beyond Hampi and even beyond the Kannada-speaking regions, in Telugu-speaking Andhra.<sup>43</sup> Another central and famous *Ragaḷē* mentioned by the traditional accounts about Harihara's life is the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē*. Stories tell us that Harihara offered this poem to Śiva and that the god had lovingly consumed it like milk.<sup>44</sup> Although the historical claims in these vignettes are posterior and contrived, they show that Harihara was perceived by later tradition as a recognized and established poet already during his lifetime.

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<sup>41</sup> See a summary of this story in Nāyaka, Veṅkaṭācala Śastrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1268-69, 1272-73, Knn).

<sup>42</sup> See discussion about this theological principle in section 5.2.2 below.

<sup>43</sup> The presence of Andhra culture and language in the works of Harihara and his successors is not rare in itself, and indicates the cultural cohesiveness in the region of southern Deccan (section 1.1 above).

<sup>44</sup> Nāyaka, Veṅkaṭācala Śastrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1270, Knn).

The above survey of the traditional accounts about the composition of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* suggests a complex picture. On the one hand, we read claims that some Ragaḷēs brought Harihara fame already in his life time but, on the other hand, the texts describe the creation process of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as fraught with difficulties and even frustrations, both on the creative side and the reception side. Notwithstanding its imperfect dynamics, the creative process of composing the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is claimed to have been a divine one.

### 2.3 Harihara and Royal Patronage

According to the narratives about his life, Harihara had a fallout with the king at whose court he was holding a central position. This fallout had a crucial impact on Harihara's life since, the traditions claim, his parting from the court led Harihara to start composing poetry. This connecting thread also plays a major role in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories themselves: we find several Ragaḷēs in which the Śaraṇa leaves the court to dedicate his life to Śiva devotion. Thus, the following discussion serve as prelude to discussing Harihara's prescriptions regarding courtly culture and royal patronage as evinced in his own stories.<sup>45</sup>

#### 2.3.1 BOOK ACCOUNTING AND MIRACLE MAKING

As just stated, the impact of Harihara's early career at the king's court had a decisive and dramatic impact on his later career as a poet according to the stories about his life. The following summarized account is based on *Rāghavāṅka Caritē* (ca. 1650 CE):<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> see chapter eight below.

<sup>46</sup> Nāyaka, Venkaṭācala Śāstrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1265-66, Knn), Śivarudrappa (1976: 237-38, Knn). A synopsis of this story in English can also be found in Datta (1987: 1548-49).

Following Śiva's command, Harihara travels to Dvārasamudra,<sup>47</sup> the capital of the Hōysaḷa dynasty, to become the chief accountant (Karaṇika) in the court of King Narasiṃha Ballāḷa. For a period of twelve years, Harihara signs every account page in the state budget with the name of his personal god Śiva Virūpākṣa. Finally, some rival accountants complain about this practice to the king, and he angrily summons Harihara and questions him about this and about the integrity of his work. Harihara responds: "There is not one mistake in the books of the last twelve years. Nevertheless, I shall not move from here until we go over all those accounts together. Mind you, however, that the sun shall also remain rooted in its place until we finish this audit. I swear this in Śiva's name." The accounting inspection starts, with the sun itself halting in the sky. Suddenly, Harihara stops his calculations, shouts "Virūpākṣa!" and starts waving his hands in the air. The attendants at the king's court say: "The insanity of his *bhakti* finally went up to his head!" and they all start laughing. Harihara retorts: "Crazy is the worldling (Bhavi<sup>48</sup>) who wallows in this world's sickness, forgetful of contemplation (*dhyāna*) on Śiva." The king intervenes and asks Harihara: "Regardless of this, why were you waving your hands in this manner?" Harihara answers: "Sir, at that very moment the curtain that covers the King of Hampi (Śiva Virūpākṣa) caught fire in a *dhūpārati* (waving of incense and lamp) ceremony. Thus, I held out my hands and extinguished the fire." The king laughs: "How could it be possible that you extinguished a fire so far away from here?"<sup>49</sup> Harihara answers: "The darkness of ignorance makes a fool's mind its permanent home." Then, he shows to the king his sooty palms. The king, eager to check the validity of Harihara's claims about a fire in Śiva Virūpākṣa's temple, sends a messenger to Hampi. Upon arriving, the messenger enters the Virūpākṣa temple and, indeed, finds that the curtain is half burnt. When he inquires about the circumstances in which the curtain was burnt, the local priests tell the messenger that the curtain caught fire during the *dhūpārati* ceremony, and that the same Harihara indeed came rushing in and extinguished it with his bare hands. Hearing this testimony from the mouth of the messenger, the Hōysaḷa king becomes so thrilled that his body hair bristles. He prostrates in front of Harihara and says: "Please go up north in order to stay near Śiva, King of Hampi. I shall provide you with all your needs," and the king orders to immediately

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<sup>47</sup> Dvārasamudra is oftentimes written in Kannada as Dorasamudra and is more famously known today as Haḷēyabīḍu or Halebid in English transcript.

<sup>48</sup> See discussion about this term in section 9.3.3 below.

<sup>49</sup> The distance between Hampi and Halebid, measured by today's highway system, is roughly 330 Km (about 205 miles).

shower gold on Harihara (*kanakābhiṣeka*). Harihara, however, refuses the offer and says: “From this moment onward I shall follow only god. If I shall desire in my mind the support of a human, I shall go to hell (*naraka*).” With this resolution in his heart, Harihara departs from King Narasimha, heading for Hampi.

We begin discussing this rich story with its most apparent motif: Harihara’s affinity with Hampi and with Śiva Virūpākṣa who resides there. This affinity brings Harihara to quit his job as Karaṇika (accountant) in order to become a Kāraṇika (a man guided by divine purpose).<sup>50</sup> Harihara’s affinity with Śiva Virūpākṣa is so powerful in the logic of this narrative that it is able to telekinetically transplant Harihara to Hampi in order to save his god’s sanctum from going up in smoke.

Hampi, which is Harihara’s birth place, but also an important center of Śaivism in this period,<sup>51</sup> also stands out as a geographical center in many of Harihara’s own works, and the same intimate connection between Harihara and his god described above is evinced in Harihara’s poems. For example, all of Harihara’s Ragaḷēs either begin or end with a *maṅgaśloka* (benediction verse) dedicated to Śiva Virūpākṣa of Hampi. Harihara’s dedication to Hampi as Śiva’s most favorite abode also infiltrates another text of his, the *Girijākalyāṇa*. In this work, which generally follows the preexisting and famous pan-Indian narrative about Pārvati’s wooing after Śiva, Harihara transposes the location of Śiva’s penance, called Hemakūṭa, from the Himalayan plains into the local geography of Hampi.<sup>52</sup> The author dedicates twenty

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<sup>50</sup> This wordplay is taken from Liṅgaṇṇa (1979: 391, Knn). The term Kāraṇika is pregnant with spiritual and religious meanings and is used by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* (section 5.2.1 below).

<sup>51</sup> See section 1.1.4 above.

<sup>52</sup> Harihara taps onto a previous tradition that identifies one of the rocky hill-tops in Hampi as Hemakūṭa. This tradition and this specific location persist till today. The name “Hampi” is a Kannada derivative from Sanskrit of *pampā*, which alludes to Lake Pampā from the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

verses<sup>53</sup> of this work to meticulously describe Pārvati's journey on an aerial chariot (*puṣpakavimāna*) from the Himalaya ranges southward to Hampi and the geography, flora, and fauna that is found in this locale.<sup>54</sup> These thick descriptions, as well as Harihara's repeated proclamations about the greatness of Hampi and its lord Śiva Virūpākṣa, betray his deep connection to this place. The above episode faithfully recapitulates this trend.

### 2.3.2 LORDS AND PATRONS; HAMPI AND DVĀRASAMUDRA

In addition to the evident connection between Harihara and the religious center of Hampi, the above story also conveys a deeper insight regarding Harihara's religious commitment: according to this story, it is clear that Harihara's existential commitment to Śiva has a worldly, contingent context outside the realm of personal devotion. To understand this, let us reiterate how the said incident unfolds: in the beginning, we hear of the appeal by Harihara's rival accountants to the king regarding Harihara's usage of Śiva Virūpākṣa's name in signing the state accounts book. At least for all the parties besides Harihara, this writing practice exceeds the realm of personal faith and impinges upon financial and even political misconduct. Let us not forget that Harihara signs with his god's name—strangely enough—in the state's financial records and not in some religious or literary composition. As the story tells us, this eccentric practice naturally raises the king's suspicion, and this suspicion brings Harihara to perform, not without affront, an open and public audit of the books. Considering all this commotion

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<sup>53</sup> *Girijākalyāṇa* 5.1-20.

<sup>54</sup> This thematic innovation is emblematic of this work's overall reconstruction of the classic story. For example, several Kannāḍiga scholars state that Pārvati's role is reworked in Harihara's version and that she is made into the central character of the story, rather than Śiva (Narasimhācār 2005: 240-50, Knn). However, this claim is problematic and invites further comparative study against Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, since Pārvati's role is central already in Kālidāsa's version (Tubb 1984).

at the king's court, it is safe to assume that what disturbs the king in Harihara's conduct are not only the latter's religious predilections but also his questionable accounting practices and perhaps even his political fidelity.

As we shall see in the Śaraṇas' stories composed by Harihara himself, the relationship between Śivaśaraṇas and royal financial resources are always complex, fraught with internal contradictions and sharp edges. We find in these narratives fruitful cooperation with the king, but also tension, suspicion, caprice, and conspiracy. Significantly, several central figures in this movement's early phases were said to have occupied central roles in courts. These roles included accountants (Karaṇikas),<sup>55</sup> treasurers (Bhaṇḍāris), and chief ministers (Daṇḍāyakas), and the list of persons includes Harihara, his associate Kēṛya Padmarasa, Harihara's nephew Rāghavāṅka, the famous Basavaṇṇa, Kōṇḍaguḷi Keśirāja, and Tēlugu Jōmmayya. While Harihara turns his back on court life in order to devote himself to religious life, Padmarasa, Rāghavāṅka, Basavaṇṇa, Keśirāja, and Jōmmayya try to combine the two modes of living (the religious and the political) in varying degrees of success.<sup>56</sup> With each of these figures' stories, tension between the religious and the political is a central theme.

As the story about Harihara at the king's court unfolds, we see that Harihara's religiosity openly clashes with his political environment. Moreover, throughout this story, Harihara himself is evidently aware of the political implications of his extrovert religious lean. For example, during his confrontation with the king, we read that

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<sup>55</sup> The plethora of references about the historiographical role of Karaṇikas in medieval south India invites further study. The fact that Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam (2003) focus on the historiographical produce by Karanams of sixteenth- to eighteenth-centuries Andhra Pradesh, who are also accountants at the king's court, suggests a continuum between these cultural spheres. It also suggests the centrality of the Karaṇikas for medieval south-Indian historicity already from at least the thirteenth century.

<sup>56</sup> For the Raḡalēs about Keśirāja, Jōmmayya, and Basavaṇṇa at kings' courts, see section 8.1.



Harihara openly refers to his god as “the King of Hampi,” a title which has direct and clear political connotations when uttered in front of the Hōysaḷa king, whose kingdom extends to Hampi.<sup>57</sup> In this and other revealing phrases that betray Harihara’s intense devotional commitment, the ideological friction with his political surrounding becomes tangible. This friction reaches its climax during the audit, when Harihara enters into a religious trance, and in the resolution that follows, when Harihara completely turns his back against these worldly contingencies. He refuses the admiring king’s benevolent offer to patronize him. Instead, Harihara proclaims his preference for a voluntary retirement to complete devotional life in Hampi, committing himself never again to rely on human aegis.

This story reveals a socio-political tension that is one of the key features in Harihara’s own writings and that, according to all the stories, can have only one possible resolution: a strong and explicit rejection of courtly life in favor of uncompromising devotional life. The normative prescription in these stories does not only dictate a clear separation between the two spheres; it also explicitly pitches the two modes of living against one another, without allowing any space for worldly compromises. This tradition’s anti-kingly sentiment does not imply that the Śaraṇas’ stories always occur far away from the court. On the contrary, as we just saw in the incident about Harihara and the king, the need to reject the court and its political, religious, and metaphysical compromises, occurs many times *within* the court.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hampi was located at that time at the periphery of the Hōysaḷa territory, after getting included into the regional empire during the reign of Ballāḷa II (Narasimhacharya 1988: 53).

<sup>58</sup> For the hagiographical tradition of south India, the basic structural tensions between the Bhakta poet and the king are not unusual. Such an example is the pregnant, melodramatic story of the seventeenth-century Sanskrit poet Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, who quits his position as the chief minister of King Tirumala Nāyaka after the latter blinded him. See Ben-Herut (2011: 74-7); Nīlakaṇṭha (1967: 4-6).

The voice of dissent both in Harihara's narratives and in those about him is unmistakable. For example, the first verse in the first chapter (*āśvāsa*) of the *Girijākalyāṇa* is dedicated to Śiva Virūpākṣa who is the "King of the City of Pampā" (*pampāpurada arasa*).<sup>59</sup> Similar phrases are common also in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. As mentioned earlier, every chapter (*sthala*) in each of Harihara's *Ragaḷēs* opens and closes with a *maṅgaḷaśloka* (benediction verse), and in the majority of cases these verses connect the protagonist of the specific *Ragaḷē* to Śiva Virūpākṣa in Hampi, who is frequently referred to as the "King of Hampi." There is even a *Ragaḷēs* called *Hampēyarasana Ragaḷē* ("Ragaḷē for the King of Hampi"), dedicated, as one would expect, to Śiva Virūpākṣa.<sup>60</sup> When we consider the relative political independence of Hampi at that period and its location at the periphery of the region's twelfth- and thirteenth-century empires, as discussed earlier in this study,<sup>61</sup> the statements about Śiva's rule over Hampi can be read as a public endorsement by Harihara of this religious autonomy. This endorsement implies a politically subversive message, especially when it is made in the court of the Hōysaḷa king and in his presence, as claimed in the above story.

In light of Hampi's religio-political status and Harihara's overt support of it, this public declaration is not merely provocative; it is disobedient and in some sense also actively rebellious. Therefore, the king's excitement and his generous offer to Harihara to quit courtly life in this story gives way for imagining a more subversive and realistic reading of this gesture: it is possible that, in this story, the king's proposal might not have been as spontaneous and artless as it might seem at first reading. The Hōysaḷas, ruling upon different religious communities, could not have tolerated explicit

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<sup>59</sup> See *Girijākalyāṇa* 1.1 in Harihara (1977: 22, Knn).

<sup>60</sup> Harihara's attributions to Śiva Virūpākṣa clearly exceeds his attributions to his living gurus (Devīrappa 1979: 2, Knn). The Guru lineage is detailed in *Girijākalyāṇa* 1.33-34.

<sup>61</sup> See section 1.1.4 above.

sectarianism such as that demonstrated by Harihara in this story at their court. It is very possible that Harihara's sectarian bent, considered within the text, created discomfort around him in a political environment that had to carefully and sensibly navigate between multiple and competing religious and cultural traditions and whose rulers, perhaps to Harihara's disadvantage, were personally affiliated with another sect.<sup>62</sup>

We find in the *vīraśaiva* sources indirect narrative claims about sectarian enmity between Harihara and the Hōysaḷa king. In the *Padmarāja Purāṇa*, we are told that the king tried to force Harihara to visit the *vaiṣṇava* Govinda temple in the capital, but that Harihara insisted on staying outside the temple while it rained ceaselessly.<sup>63</sup> The *Bhairaveśvarakāvya* *Kathāsūtraratnākara* tells us that Harihara asserted his exclusive commitment to Śiva in a secret correspondence he conducted with Kērēya Padmarasa, who was the king's chief minister (*mukhyamantrin*, "secret" here spells out without the knowledge of this king).<sup>64</sup> These vignettes indicate that later traditions perceived a problematic relationship between Harihara and his king that was, with religion at the core of their differences of opinion. Thus, it is not unreasonable to assume, within the logic of Harihara's traditional life story, that the Hōysaḷa king was actually happy for the opportunity to drive Harihara the zealot troublemaker out of his court and his

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<sup>62</sup> Ēc. Devīrappa describes the multi-religious and multi-linguistic culture at King Narasimha's court (1979: 3-4, Knn). Emic traditions claim that the Hōysaḷa dynasty since King Viṣṇuvardhana (twelfth century) was affiliated with Vaiṣṇavism and that King Viṣṇuvardhana also had a personal relationship with the famous promulgator of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, Rāmānuja (Nilakanta Sastri 1976: 388). Conversely, a recent dissertation by Katherine Kasdorf points to a more complicated history with regard to the religious affiliation of specific Hōysaḷa kings (Kasdorf 2013: 128-38). In any case, the assumption that the Hōysaḷa kings had to politically navigate their court between different sects seems cogent, even if we do not read the story about Harihara in a historical mode.

<sup>63</sup> Nāyaka, Venkaṭācala Śāstrī, and Sundaram (1977: 1272, Knn).

<sup>64</sup> Narasimhācārya (2005 [1929]: 258, Knn).

power center by expelling him to far away Hampi. We can conclude this discussion by commenting that as much as all of Harihara's hagiographies univocally declare that Harihara voluntarily dissociated himself from the king's court while refusing the latter's benevolent patronage, the same sources allow us to imagine the possibility that the king himself was equally disinterested in maintaining a relationship with Harihara after their discordant communications. From this perspective, the king's echoing of Harihara's coin the "King of Hampi" in the last part of the story above suggests the king's sarcastic (or, alternatively, wary) response to his eccentric, disobedient, and provocative accountant.

In the broader context of the medieval Kannada literature, Harihara's fallout with the king symbolizes a historical watershed that can be drawn between the classic Jaina era and medieval *śaiva* literature in Kannada in terms of their prescribed attitudes to political patronage.<sup>65</sup> While the former literary culture was invested in, as well as defined and shaped by, an explicit affiliation between the Jaina court poets and their patronizing kings—right from the first Kannada composition that is available to us today, the ninth-century *Kavirājamārga*,<sup>66</sup> the *śaiva* poets, starting with Harihara of the early thirteenth century, did not only avoid such attributions, but at times also prescribed in their narratives an explicit resistance toward the courtly culture and the institution of the human king. In this sense, we can draw a clear thematic thread between thirteenth-century Harihara and the later *vīraśaiva* poets of the Vijayanagara era. At the same time, it is important to stress that the literary figure of Harihara, with its extrovert antipathy toward the inherent compromises of *realpolitik*, marks an extremity among figures of medieval *śaiva* poets. For example, his contemporary and

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<sup>65</sup> Śivarāmayya (2010: 4-6, Knn); Nagaraj (2003).

<sup>66</sup> See opening verses in the first chapter of the *Kavirājamārga* (Śrīvijaya 1983).

faithful companion Kēṛēya Padmarasa, who also was the chief minister (*mukhyamantrin*) of the same the king, is not known to have had such loud arguments with this king as Harihara had, despite Padmarasa's attested *śaiva* bent. The same goes for Harihara's nephew Rāghavāṅka, who according to literary sources, in a manner completely opposite to his raucous uncle, actively sought royal patronage at some points in his poetic career.<sup>67</sup>

## 2.4 Concluding Remarks: Celebrating Harihara

This chapter introduces Harihara as he is commemorated by the medieval Kannada literary culture. According to the stories discussed in this chapter, the dramatic shift in production practices away from the court is commemorated as tightly connected with Harihara's creation of a new literary medium, the *Ragaḷeṣ*. This creative process, as narrated by later traditions, was not simple but involved revisions, criticisms, and creative crises. Notwithstanding, the same accounts also attest to Harihara's success in capturing the spirit of *bhakti* in the new format of the *Ragaḷeṣ*.

In the eyes of medieval *vīraśaiva* authors, Harihara, the first *bhakti* poet in the literary world of Kannada, was a heroic figure.<sup>68</sup> The texts by these authors depict Harihara as a total person, whose extreme religious commitment pushes him to pave new paths in the world of Kannada literature. The stories surveyed in this chapter celebrate this important moment with miracles and drama. Perhaps the most meaningful of them, at least in terms of its wider socio-political implications, is Harihara's early retirement from his courtly career, a retirement caused by his

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<sup>67</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 174-79, Knn).

<sup>68</sup> I consider the famous *Vacana* poets, who preceded Harihara by about a century, as operating outside the world of Kannada literature. See section 4.1.2 below.

uncompromising commitment to argue for intense devotion to his god. Harihara's voluntary departure from courtly patronage is emblematic for the literary resistance of the Kannada *śivabhakti* movement for at least four centuries, starting with works Harihara himself composed.

### 3 The Poetics of Devotion

Form and content are intertwined, and in the case of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the text's form (its structure, linguistic choices, and poetic devices) is central to the author's project of constructing the *śaiva* devotional community. In this chapter, I introduce several poetic features of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* that were groundbreaking compared with contemporaneous literary mainstream, and I argue that these poetic features are directly connected to the content of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—the stories about the saintly lives of Śivabhaktas. In addition, I claim that the specific poetic features employed by Harihara in this text are foundational for generating an experience of devotion among the text's immediate audience. I start this chapter with introducing the highly exceptional metrical choice for the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—after which this text is called—the *ragaḷē* meter. Then, I continue to explain how this meter, when used for complete narrative works such as the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, has literary ramifications on other aspects of the text, such as poetic devices and narrative strategies. Lastly, I point to contemporaneous local, non-elite, and oral literary culture as the possible source for many of the linguistic, stylistic, and narrative innovations that we find in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>1</sup>

In order to give a more concrete sense to the subsequent discussion about the poetics of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, this chapter contains vignettes taken from the *Guṇḍayyana Ragaḷē* (*Guṇḍa Ragaḷē* henceforth), which is one of Harihara's most popular *Ragaḷēs*. This *Ragaḷē* tells the story of Potter Guṇḍayya, a popular figure in the medieval Śaivism of South India. The gist of the story is as straightforward as its protagonist: while making

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the relative obscurity of Kannada literature among Western audiences, the discussion about the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* poetics in this chapter can also serve more broadly as an introduction to some major literary trends of early medieval Kannada literature.

his pots, Guṇḍayya becomes more and more immersed in *śivabhakti*, until the grip of this devotion-while-working becomes so intense that Guṇḍayya starts skipping meals and sleeping in order to ceaselessly continue producing pots while contemplating on his god. At the same time, Guṇḍayya's constant tapping on his pots generates rhythms that cause Śiva, in his heavenly abode in Kailāsa, to burst into a spontaneous, wild dance. The deep performative connection between the Bhakta and his god in this story is realized by the descent of Śiva to earth in order to dance together with Guṇḍayya, and culminates in Potter Guṇḍayya's ascent to Kailāsa and his becoming one of Śiva's attendants (Gaṇas).<sup>2</sup> As will be discussed later in the dissertation, this story has considerable metaphysical implications in terms of religious practices and the relationship between the Bhakta and the god.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, however, the purpose of my treatment of this Ragaḷē is to illuminate technical aspects in Harihara's writing.

### 3.1 Kannada Prosody and the Ragaḷē Meter

While Harihara had two contemporaneous collaborators to his literary revolution—the poets Rāghavāṅka and Padmarasa—the breath of themes and motifs covered in Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is unparalleled, as are his exceptional thematic and stylistic choices.<sup>4</sup> When viewed over against contemporaneous mainstream literature, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* presents a radical change in composition style, literary devices, narrative construction, and themes.

The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is composed, with the exception of the *nandiślokas* (opening and

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<sup>2</sup> For a versified English translation by Shankara Mokashi Punekar of roughly a paragraph from this Ragaḷē, see Shivaprakash and Radhakrishna (1990: 61-63).

<sup>3</sup> See section 5.2.3 below.

<sup>4</sup> As Ēc. Devīrappa attests, Harihara conveys in his work exceptional proficiency in various matters, from detailed knowledge about *śaiva* centers from around the peninsula, through familiarity with non-elite cultures, to elaborations on nature, flora, and fauna (1979: 3, 29, Knn).



closing verses in each chapter), with a single meter called *ragaḷē*.<sup>5</sup> Until Harihara, this meter is only used sporadically and no one employs it to compose whole works. Harihara himself makes explicit references to his novel poetic style. He is also referred to in pre-modern texts as the “*Ragaḷē’s Poet*” (*ragaḷēya kavi*), a testimony for the uniqueness of his metrical choice and its application in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>6</sup> Why is Harihara remembered by the meter he used and what is his contribution to the literary tradition by his particular usage of this meter? I address these questions in the following sections.

### 3.1.1 THE RAGAḶĒ METER: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

In Kannada prosody, one finds three distinct groups of meters. First are *akṣaravṛtta* meters, which are borrowed directly from Sanskrit prosody (generally referred to as *mārga*<sup>7</sup>). In *akṣaravṛtta* meters there is a fixed template or structure of *laghu* (short) and *guru* (long) syllables, usually arranged as *catuṣpadi* (verses made of four feet).<sup>8</sup> The second group of meters used in classical Kannada poetry is *mātrē*<sup>9</sup> (mora) meters, which apparently originated from Prakrit prosody, again in *catuṣpadi* arrangement in most of the cases. Here, a *guru* syllable is interchangeable with two *laghu* syllables: one short syllable is equivalent to one *mātrē*, while one long syllable (or two short syllables) is equivalent to two *mātrēs*. This grants the author more flexibility

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<sup>5</sup> In the longer poems of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* Harihara had also interwoven prose chapters. I return to this practice below.

<sup>6</sup> According to some hagiographies, this term was used in a derogatory manner against Harihara during his early career (Ēc. Devīrappa in Harihara 1995 [1968]: iv, Knn). See also section 4.1.3 below.

<sup>7</sup> For the dictionary definitions of this term, see footnote 59 below.

<sup>8</sup> An exception to this metrical fixedness is the popular *śloka / anuṣṭubh* meter, with its many varieties. This meter allows some liberty in *laghu/guru* choice in specific locations of the verse foot. Another group of Sanskrit meters that does not always correspond with these restrictions are the Vedic meters.

<sup>9</sup> “*Mātrē*” is the Kannada derivation of the Sanskrit word *mātrā*.

in the metrical composition.<sup>10</sup> The third group are *aṁśa* meters, which are considered to be purely *deśi* (local, regional) and are characterized by two features: varying number of feet, or *padas* (*dvipadi*—two *padas*, *tripadi*—three *padas*, and so on) and variations in the count of *mātrēs* of each syllable cluster (*gaṇa*), thus allowing the composer a higher degree of metrical laxity than in the previous two systems.<sup>11</sup>

The growing degree of prosodical freedom of the *aṁśa* meters suggests the influence of oral performance and non-elite, popular culture on compositional practices. Indeed, till today *aṁśa* meters are equally used by oral bards as well as by writers. Whereas *aṁśas* are considered to be strictly *deśi*, *akṣaravṛttas* are considered as *mārga*, and the meters in the middle group of *mātrē* incorporate structural elements from both. Despite these formulaic distinctions, however, it would not be imprudent to imagine ongoing and bilateral borrowings throughout history from the *deśi* meters into the more metrically strict *mātrē* and *akṣaravṛtta* groups, and back.<sup>12</sup> In any case, the metrical features of the *ragaḷē* meter place it in the second group of *mātrē* meters (having interchangeable *guru/laghu* syllables and a strict count of syllables per *gaṇa*), although this particular meter carries, as I explain below, strong structural resemblance to the *deśi aṁśa* meters.

As the scheme below shows, a *ragaḷē* verse can contain one of the following three arrangements; each contains four *gaṇas* of a given number of syllables (either three, four, or five per *gaṇa*):

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<sup>10</sup> See definitions of the first two groups in Appendix I (Sanskrit Prosody) of Apte (1965).

<sup>11</sup> The title “*aṁśa*” is a modern one. In pre-modern treatises about Kannada prosody the *mātrē* meters and *aṁśa* meters are cramped together under the term “*deśi*,” despite the fact that there is a considerable conceptual and formulaic difference between the two groups, the former group emerging from courtly Prakrit poetry while the latter from popular oral performances of local stories.

<sup>12</sup> Sheldon Pollock writes: “[A]lthough it is impossible for us now to reconstruct the conversation between Sanskrit and Kannada metricians, it was very likely to have been two-way” (2004: 395)

**Table 3: Three types of ragaḷe meter, as used in Harihara’s Ragaḷeḡaḷu**

<i>utsāha</i> (“energy”):	3 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 12 syllables per verse <sup>13</sup>
<i>mandānila</i> (“gentle breeze”):	4 + 4 + 4 + 4 = 16 syllables per verse
<i>lalita</i> (“pleasant”):	5 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 20 syllables per verse

We should note that in each of these arrangements the count of *gaṇas* (syllable clusters) remains consistent within the line. This creates a simple, unvarying, and flowing rhythm to the *ragaḷe* meter, a feature that take on greater importance when the text is performed, as I explain below.<sup>14</sup>

Basically, the *ragaḷe* meter as used by Harihara has no *pada* (foot) restriction. Unlike other meters, which are restricted either to four *padas* per verse (as most *akṣaravṛttas* and *mātrēs* are) or to another number of *padas* (the *aṃśa* meters), a *ragaḷe* passage may continue without a break for as long as the author wishes. This quality partly explains why all the Kannada poets prior to Harihara who use the *ragaḷe* meter employ it only for short passages within larger works. Harihara, for the first time in the history of Kannada literature, used the *ragaḷe* as a single meter to compose elaborate and complete poems.

### 3.1.2 HISTORY OF THE RAGAḶĒ METER

The *ragaḷe* meter is first mentioned in Nāgavarma I’s *Chandombudhi* (ca. 990 CE), which refers to this meter interchangeably as *ragaḷe* and, in Sanskritized style, as

<sup>13</sup> Due to the short length of the *utsāha* meter, the *utsāha* verse is doubled, giving a total of twenty-four syllables per verse.

<sup>14</sup> See section 3.2 and 3.3 below.

*raghaṭā*.<sup>15</sup> We cannot know for certain if this word came from Sanskrit into Kannada (a *tadbhava*<sup>16</sup>) or entered the Sanskrit from Kannada. If the origin of this word is Sanskritic, then the word *ragaḷē* might be a nominal inflection (*taddhita*) of the root *raghu*, in the sense of “hastening, going speedily, fleet, rapid.”<sup>17</sup> This etymology makes sense since the *ragaḷē* meter is uniquely characterized by its rapid, forward-going pulse.<sup>18</sup> Some scholars reject the Sanskritic origins of the name *ragaḷē* and instead claim that this word is purely Dravidian, perhaps derived from *araghaṭṭa* (“wheel of a well”) or *gharaṭṭa* (“grindstone”). However, only a few words in the Dravidian family of languages begin with the syllable *ra*, which makes this claim somewhat less likely.<sup>19</sup>

Nāgavarma’s definition of this meter contains four basic principles, which are as follows:<sup>20</sup> 1. It is unbounded by a given sets of *gaṇas*. 2. It contains exclamations. 3. It has equal *mātrēs* per verse. 4. It fits the rhythmic principles of *tāla* (“musical time or measure”<sup>21</sup>). Nāgavarma’s definition is quite general, and the first complete definition of the *ragaḷē* in its mature form as used by Harihara (including its three sub-types of *utsāha*, *mandānila*, and *lalita* described above) appears only as late as the middle of the seventeenth century, in a text called the *Chandassāra*.<sup>22</sup>

There are some difficulties in fixing the origins of the *ragaḷē* meter, partly

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<sup>15</sup> Other variants are the Prakrit *ragaḍā* and the Telugu *ragaḍa* (p. 370). The discussion hereafter follows the chapter on *ragaḷē* meter in Ṭi. Vi. Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 267-315, Knn).

<sup>16</sup> *Tadbhava* denotes a cross-lingual borrowing from Sanskrit to the vernaculars. See Eivind (1992) for philosophical problems embedded in the concept of *tadbhava*.

<sup>17</sup> Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 860 s.v. *raghu*). I thank H.V. Nagaraja Rao for pointing to this etymology.

<sup>18</sup> This swaying reading experience is, in itself, a defining feature in the poetics of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and I return to discuss it in the next section.

<sup>19</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 166, Knn), Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 269, Knn).

<sup>20</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 281-82, Knn).

<sup>21</sup> Kittel (1982: 711 s.v. *tāla* 2, also spelled *tāḷa*).

<sup>22</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 281-82, Knn).

because it has developed over time in multiple ways.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the origins of this are in Prakrit or Apabhraṁśa poetry, as there are some structural similarities between *ragaḷe* meter and the structure of the Prakrit meter *paddaḍi* (Skt *paddhati*, Knn *paddaḍi*). *Ragaḷe* was also used in Telugu and Sanskrit poetry, but only later than in Kannada.<sup>24</sup>

In Kannada, the earliest instances of *ragaḷe* appear in epigraphy and literature of the eleventh century. We have a brief *praśasti* (“eulogy”) inscription called *Tomara Ragaḷe* from 1055 CE, composed by a Jain.<sup>25</sup> Few brief passages composed in the *ragaḷe* meter appear in Pampa’s *Ādipurāṇa* (941 CE),<sup>26</sup> and later this meter also appears in works by Ranna and Ponna. But, despite the fact the *ragaḷe* meter is used before Harihara during the classic age of Kannada literature, this usage is no more than sporadic; at this period, poets use *ragaḷe* as one of several meters within one poem, though not as frequently as other more popular meters.

### 3.1.3 THE RAGAḶĒ METER IN HARIHARA’S HANDS

Harihara earned the appellation “*ragaḷe*’s poet” because he experiments with *ragaḷe* more intensely than anyone before him, perfecting its features and turning it

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<sup>23</sup> Over time, as the structure of the *gaṇas* and their length became more varied and sophisticated, more possibilities of combining together *gaṇas* were introduced. In addition, different rhyming methods were applied as we move from the classic era into medieval times. See discussion about rhyming in the *ragaḷe* meter as used by Harihara in section 3.2.2 below.

<sup>24</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 268, 277, 285-86, Knn). Significantly, it was Pāḷkurikē Somanātha, the author of the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* (section 1.1.3), who applied the *ragaḷe* meter in a fashion similar to that of Harihara to his Sanskrit, Kannada, and Telugu compositions, developing this meter even further into nine sub-types, including *gaṇas* of six and nine *mātrēs* (pp. 277-78, Knn, Nilakanta Sastri 1960: 450-51). Incidentally, Somanātha does not call this meter *ragaḷe* (or the Telugu equivalent *ragaḍa*) but *gadya* (not to be confused with the Kannada word *gadya*, which denotes “prose”). I thank R.V.S. Sundaram for elucidating this.

<sup>25</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 275, Knn), Narasimhācār (2005 [1971]-a: 677-78, Knn).

<sup>26</sup> For two such instances, see Pampa and Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (2006: 363-64; 437-38, Knn). I thank Sarah Hicks for locating these specific instances.

into what Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī terms as “an accomplished meter” (*siddhachanda*).<sup>27</sup> As mentioned earlier, Harihara himself is self-conscious about his groundbreaking endeavor of perfecting the *ragaḷe* meter. In a meta-poetic passage in the *Liṅgārcanēya Ragaḷe*, he writes: “With a new style (*rīti*) I spread my poetry to all places.”<sup>28</sup>

Of the three sub-types of *ragaḷe* described earlier, Harihara used mostly the *lalita ragaḷe*, which is the longest and is rhythmically considered as the most soothing of the three, while paying attention to the musical and rhythmic correspondence between wordbreak and *gaṇas* and taking into account distinct phonetic features of Sanskrit and of *accagannaḍa* (“pure Kannada”) compounds.<sup>29</sup> But, more importantly, Harihara’s enhanced usage of the *ragaḷe* meter marks a watershed in the history of Kannada prosody. By breaking away from the traditional *campū* structure of the Sanskritic tradition and the enhanced usage of the simple and flexible *ragaḷe* of the *mātrē* meters, Harihara paved the way to what Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī terms as a “new literary path.”<sup>30</sup> It was only after him that Kannada poets started using a single *aṁśa* meter for a whole work, building on Harihara’s literary explorations of new narrative, rhythmic, metrical, and linguistic styles. The influence of Harihara’s unorthodox literary practice is not merely inferred by modern literary scholars but was explicitly acknowledged by poets who came immediately after him, starting with his own nephew, the famous and popular poet Rāghavāṅka.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 307, Knn). See also Narasiṁhācār (2005 [1971]-a: 429, Knn)

<sup>28</sup> *Liṅgārcanēya Ragaḷe* v. 89 in Harihara (1999: 507):  
*pōsarītirāgadim dēsēdēsēgaḷam biri*

<sup>29</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 302-7, Knn). The practice of compounding together Sanskrit and Kannada words has occupied Kannada poeticians right from the earliest poetic treatise composed in Kannada in the ninth century, the *Kavirājamārga*. See verses 1.51-61 in Śrīvijaya (1983: 13-15).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 307, Knn.

<sup>31</sup> See section 4.1 below for further discussion about Harihara’s influence on subsequent Kannada poets.

### 3.2 Poetics and Narration in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*

Harihara's unusual metrical choice for the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* has poetic implications that stretch beyond this work's form into the devotional message of this work as well. Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi, when briefly discussing Harihara in his dissertation, comments:

Unlike the *campu*, the *ragaḷe* form ... enabled Harihara to describe the free flowing mood of *bhakti*. While each line has a fixed number of *mātra gaṇas*, *ragaḷe* does not have fixed number of lines and hence can conceivably extend limitlessly. This quality suits Harihara's objective of celebrating the excessive devotion of *śaiva* devotees and their actions.<sup>32</sup>

Chandra Shobhi points to a correspondence between the unbounded nature of the *ragaḷē* verse (the absence of *pada* structure) and a "free flowing mood of *bhakti*." To explicate this connection, we need first to explore the effect of Harihara's application of the *ragaḷē* meter on the reader or listener. Here, I build upon a seminal study by Kīrtinātha Kurtakoṭi, a Kannada literature scholar of the recent decades.<sup>33</sup> Kurtakoṭi's writing is exceptional in the landscape of contemporary Kannada scholarship in that he takes a phenomenological approach to the literary material, focusing on the inner experience of the reader or listener.<sup>34</sup> Although phenomenology, as a reading strategy, is not problem-free, it is highly effective for examining how choices of meter and of other poetic devices inform this text's meaning, and below I follow Kurtakoṭi's analysis while adding some critical remarks at specific locations.

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<sup>32</sup> Chandra Shobhi (2005: 212).

<sup>33</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 167-73, Knn). I am thankful to Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi for introducing me to Kurtakoṭi's writing and his assistance in thinking with it about the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

<sup>34</sup> The only other Kannada scholar I came across who writes in a similar manner is Ḍi. Ār. Nāgarāj.

### 3.2.1 “FOOTLOOSE”

Unlike other meters, *ragaḷē* does not entail bounded verses, but brief lines that continue from one to the next without any structural or thematic break. In fact, the only definite, structured break in a *Ragaḷē* passage appears at its very end, oftentimes after a continuous reading of hundreds of verses. Thus, on the most basic level, reading or listening to a *Ragaḷē* involves a sense of thematic indetermination which is caused by the absence of bounded verses. The verse, as a basic unit of any Indian metrical text—whether composed in *akṣaravṛtta*, *mātrē*, or *aṁśa* meters—always consists of the sub-unit of *pada*, or foot, but the *ragaḷē* meter makes an exception to this rule, because it only contains one verse with no inner *pada* division. The absence of *pada* structure in the *ragaḷē* verse results in one uninterrupted passage, and this continuous structuring is very different from the structural pauses that are inherently embedded between each verse of other meters, as characteristic of Indian prosody. The *Ragaḷē* listener, instead of apprehending the composition in a “per-verse” manner and pace, is confronted with a continual and even forcefully monotonous reading without strict structural boundaries or arrests. Kurtakoṭi explains this basic difference between *ragaḷē* and other traditional meters:

It is impossible to achieve this [*ragaḷē* effect] in a four-line verse construction. In one verse construction [of other meters,] there is beginning and end. In a bounded, restricted place, it is possible to give form to one thought, to create one picture. There is no such line-restriction to *ragaḷē*.<sup>35</sup>

Embedded in Kurtakoṭi’s explanation is the unusual narrative transmission that is found in the *ragaḷē* text, since such a text is not made, as is the case with other meters, of a collection of bounded “thoughts” or “pictures” (to use Kurtakoṭi’s

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<sup>35</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 167-68, Knn).



terminology) but rather of one syntactical and narrative continuum.

To demonstrate the effect of the *ragaḷē* meter on the narrative transmission in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, I provide here the opening lines of the *Guṇḍa Ragaḷē*, in which the protagonist Guṇḍayya is introduced. Although it is not possible to replicate the experience of listening to the oral Kannada performance of this text in written, English form, I nevertheless hope that reading the following passage might give a sense, albeit an indirect one, of the gripping flow of narration that this text communicates to its audience in its original form:

In the northern region there is  
 a peaceful city called Ballukē  
 in which a Śaraṇa of Moon-Crested Śiva resides  
 happily and free from illusion,  
 and his work is making pots—  
 rejoicing in the dance of Forehead-Eyed Śiva,  
 he is called Kumbara (“Potter”) Guṇḍa (“Servant”)  
 and this name turns to divine nectar (*amṛta*) when entering Śiva the Moon-  
 Bearer’s ears  
 every little observance, my god!<sup>36</sup>  
 the greatest devotee on earth, my god!  
 how can I narrate the work he is doing?  
 I know when I see it, but how to narrate it?  
 Guṇḍayya’s base energy-center becomes the base for his potter’s wheel  
 his voice becomes its turning axis  
 the six energy-centers become the potter’s wheel  
 his shining navel is the very center of the machine  
 his ephemeral body becomes the clay  
 and remembrance of Śiva becomes the thread with which he fettles the clay  
 determination in Śiva becomes the turning rod  
 while his revolving fists operate as the source of his livelihood  
 and the devotion he performs becomes the boiling cauldron  
 with joint legs he pounds away  
 and the heat dries up everything

<sup>36</sup> The literal expression here is “śivaśiva,” an exclamation that denotes great concern or awe.

the belly-fire burns in excess  
 as the water of joy overflows  
 the cauldron of multiple devotions  
 filled with the waters of Śiva's mercy  
 is given to Śiva's Bhaktas with great joy.

ěntěnaluttarabhāgadōḷ irpudu  
 santata ballukĕpuravěnisirpudu  
 allirpam śasīmauḷiya śaraṇam  
 sallalitam māyāniruharaṇam  
 ghaṭakāyakavāyatavāgīrpudu  
 niṭilākṣana naṭan ěgĕ naliveppudu  
 nāmam kumbara guṇḍan ěnippudu  
 somadharana kiviginidāgīrpudu  
 nemastham nemastham śivaśiva  
 bhūmiyōḷ uttamabhatkam śivaśiva  
 māḍuva kāyakavadan en ěmbĕm  
 noḍuvaḍĕnagaridinnĕtĕmbĕm  
 ādhāravĕyādhāram adāgīrĕ  
 vedhĕyĕ cakrada mōḷĕ tānāgīrĕ  
 migĕ ṣaṭcakramĕ cakram adāgīrĕ  
 sōgayipa nābhiyĕ nābhiyadāgīrĕ  
 kanasina kāyam mṛttikĕyāgīrĕ  
 nĕnaham cātĕdāraṅgaḷavāgīrĕ  
 niṣṭhĕyĕ piḍivurudaṅḍam adāgīrĕ  
 muṭṭi tiruguvudu jīvanam āgīrĕ  
 māḍuva bhakti kaṭāham adāgalu  
 kūḍida karaṇadĕ mardisutāgalu  
 migĕ śoṣāṇadātapadīndārisi  
 baḡĕ migal udarāgnigaḷim dāhisi  
 ānandajalaplāvanam āgīrĕ  
 nānā bhakti kaṭāham adāgīrĕ  
 śivakāruṇyāmbugaḷim tīvutĕ  
 śivabhaktargānandadōḷ īvutĕ<sup>37</sup>

This passage continues without any formulaic break until the end of the poem.

<sup>37</sup> *Guṇḍa Raḡalĕ* vv. 1-8 in Harihara (1999: 269).

No formal markers divide the narrative into sub-sections. Rather, the unfolding of this story continues, moving seamlessly from its exposition into the ensuing events until it reaches its denouement. The original Kannada dictates continuous and intensive recitation and gripping listening experience, in which the reader or listener barely has time to stop for a breath.

Other noteworthy syntactic and thematic elements in the above passage contribute to its unstoppable flow. First, the texture of a *Ragaḷe* poem is generally straightforward, lacking the complex expressivity of the *mārga* literature. Complex poetic devices that permeate the Sanskrit poetic world, are almost completely absent from the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*. Beyond these specificities and in a deeper sense, the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* does not share the condensed intellectual idiomaticity that is the hallmark of Sanskrit literature but utilizes a more straightforward and linear manner for unraveling its themes. This means that the informed listener (familiar with the specific linguistic register of Middle Kannada, *naḍugannaḍa*, and its imaginaire) is not required to suspend his absorption of the text in order to reflect on hidden meanings or suggestions, or to relish a specifically rich embellishment; these are infrequent in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*. In addition to this immediate expressivity, formulaic syntactical structures such as rhyming and verb placement in each line, which are prevalent in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*, add to an unbounded experience of consuming the text. These elements are difficult to translate but are pervasive in the original.<sup>38</sup>

In order to create some kind of thematic organization within a chapter (*sthala*) and to allow the reader or the listener to repose occasionally, Harihara utilizes lexical

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<sup>38</sup> I could not duplicate verb placement in the English translation above, but even a cursory and uninformed examination of the original Kannada transliteration of this passage reveals repeated syntactical structures.

and metrical signposts to mark thematic or descriptive divisions within the chapter unit. These divisions are called *ghaṭakas* (“substantial parts”).<sup>39</sup> In the above passage, for example, after introducing the protagonist and before describing his devotional zeal during his pot making, Harihara exclaims: “How can I narrate the work he is doing? I know when I see it, but how to narrate it?” The verb repeated in these two lines is *ĕmbĕm* (“I narrate/shall narrate”), a word that marks the beginning of a new narrative section. Such divisions are “soft” and informal rather than formulaic and, consequently, different modern editions of Harihara’s text demarcate the chapter’s subdivisions in different locations.

These quasi-paragraph divisions to paragraphs indicate, on the one hand, a need to organize the unbounded *ragaḷĕ* flow into coherent narrative subunits. On the other, their nonstandardized nature attests to Harihara’s refusal to commit his devotional writing to strict and formable boundaries. They indicate an innate tension, perhaps consciously devised by Harihara between the devotional zeal of a religious performance and organized plotting of a narrative text.

One danger of this composition style is the monotony created by the simple and unchanging *ragaḷĕ* meter. The most apparent strategy Harihara applies to fight this monotony is to switch to prose (non-metrical writing) every other chapter.<sup>40</sup> As one would expect, these switches also signal significant transitions in the narrative, such as the moment in which a protagonist leaves one town on his way to another. Kurtakoṭi also sees a correspondence between the chapter’s metrical choice (whether *ragaḷĕ* or

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<sup>39</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 303-4, Knn); Harihara (1995 [1968]: clxxxvii-clxxxix).

<sup>40</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 305, Knn). Harihara embellishes the alternating chapters by using the auspicious word *śrī* at the beginning of each *ragaḷĕ* chapter and *intu* (“thus,” or “in this manner”) at the beginning of each of the prose chapter.

prose) and its central theme.<sup>41</sup> According to him, the metrical alternation creates, on a phenomenological level, a distinctive effect:

The listener, being fully immersed and concentrated all the way till the end of the versified section, is suddenly forced to open his shut-eyes when the prose section begins. Or, put differently, it is as if the listener's attention, right after being completely absorbed in meditation, spreads out into the hustle and bustle of the street market. In this manner, as the verse and prose regulate each other, complete one another, they push forward the story.<sup>42</sup>

These subtleties are significant, because they are tightly connected with the central theme of all of Harihara's *Ragaḷē*, and that is *śivabhakti*, the uniquely intense devotion to Śiva. All the Śaraṇa stories told by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, as we shall see in the second part of this study, are pregnant with dramatic weight, frequent life-risking moments, and defiance of the mundane. In a performative context, the flow of narrative is instrumental for the generation and strengthening of the experience of a cohesive religious community, since in group recitation, the collective, unstopped performance induces devotional fervor and zeal that increases as the story unfolds. The alternation mechanism, as the other mechanisms I discuss below and, more generally, the stylistic choices made by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* —all enhance the emotional effect these themes have over the reader or listener.

### 3.2.2 THE POETICS OF PHONETICS: RHYMING

The correspondence exhibited in Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* between form (which is

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<sup>41</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 169, Knn). Kurtakoṭi brings as a case example the wedding scene in the *Nambiyaṇṇana Ragaḷē*, which tells the life story of the Purātana Nambiyaṇṇana, aka as the Tamil Nāyaṇṇār Cuntaraṇ (also written Sundarar). According to Kurtakoṭi, the highly descriptive nature of this scene, in which an old and eccentric man (who is, in fact, Śiva) ruins the young prince's wedding, could not have been written in any other form but prose.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

*ragaḷē*-based) and content (which is *bhakti*-centered) has several facets. In order to invoke what is termed by poetics and theologians as *bhaktirasa* (“emotive relishing in devotion”) in the reader or listener, Harihara markedly uses—at specific moments in the plot—rhyming, word repetitions, exclamations, and onomatopoeia in a manner that is groundbreaking for the contemporaneous world of Kannada literature.<sup>43</sup> For example, in the above passage, we encountered the exclamation “my god!” (*śivaśiva*) right before Harihara starts to describe Guṇḍayya’s pot-making, which is auspiciously connected with his deep devotion to Śiva. The exclamation helps communicate Harihara’s own sense of awe at Guṇḍayya’s vocational fervor.

There is also a ubiquitous phonic technique that informs meaning in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, which is rhyming. Every couplet in any of Harihara’s *Ragaḷēgaḷu* contains two rhyming syllables that bind the two verses together.<sup>44</sup> This rhyming technique is a defining feature in pre-modern Kannada poetry, usually applied in two modi: *ādiprāsa* (rhyming at the beginning of a line) and *antyaprāsa* (rhyming at the end of a line).<sup>45</sup> In the case of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, with its intrinsic lack of bounded verses, *prāsa* also has a significant technical role as an editorial device to verify the order of the verses across different palm leaf sheets when these are not numbered. For the purposes of this study, the significance of the *prāsa* lies more in the conceptual framework that their phonic effect generates. The *ādiprāsa* and *antyaprāsa*, which link together two consecutive lines phonically, effectively turns these into a couplet—a softly-bounded unit that can be

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<sup>43</sup> For lists of onomatopoeia used by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, mostly exclamational, see Gonāla (2010b: 52, Knn); Saudattimath (1988: 102-3).

<sup>44</sup> See transliteration of the Kannada original on pages 106 and 111.

<sup>45</sup> Pollock, building on Nāgavarma’s discussion in the *Chandambudhi*, writes about *prāsa*: “[I]t is something essential for Kannada, without which poetry in the language is said to be unable to achieve beauty” (2004: 395). Pollock translates *prāsa* as “second-consonant rhyme” (ibid), but there are also other locations in the metrical foot for rhyming, such as the *antyaprāsa*.

contrasted with the hermetically bounded multi-*pada* verse.<sup>46</sup> According to Kurtakoṭi, *prāsa* restrains the gushing river effect of the *ragaḷē* meter, shaping it into a potentially endless emanation of ordered and balanced waves.<sup>47</sup> These, in turn, carry an uninterrupted, rhythmic flow that Kurtakoṭi compares to that of the body's blood circulation and of life-breath.<sup>48</sup>

Harihara's rhyming technique also opens up possibilities which are purely thematic in nature. As an example of the thematic implications of rhyming, Kurtakoṭi cites a couplet from the *Ragaḷē* that is dedicated to Basavaṇṇa, the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē*. Harihara applies rhymes in this example on multiple axes: in addition to the *ādiprāsa* and *antyaprāsa* that vertically bind the two lines together, in each line he also creates, on the horizontal plane, a *prāsayati* (rhymes that occurs between the line's first two syllables and the two following line's *yati*, or caesura). The result is phonetically dense:

Among the renouncers, Saṅga's Basava renounced the most.  
Among those who possess, Saṅga's Basava possessed the most.

*cāgigala naduvē kaḍucāgi saṅganabasava*  
*bhogigala naduvē migē bhogi saṅganabasava*<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See section 3.2.1 above.

<sup>47</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 168, Knn). Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī uses a similar metaphor of a river cycling between ebbs and tides (1978: 302, Knn). Along similar lines, Narasimhācār also mentions the stylistic oscillation found in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, though he uses the metaphor of a kite whose flight is controlled by Śiva Virūpākṣa (2008: 154-55, Knn). Harihara's entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature* contains the following statement: "Rhymes, rhythms and alliterations were naturally best suited to this metric form due to its running nature without being bound by any rules or regulations of the old traditions" (Datta 1987: 1549 s.v. *Harihara [Kannada]*).

<sup>48</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 168, Knn). The bounded couplet makes the *ragaḷē* meter similar to the *dvipadi* meter, although there are structural differences between the two.

<sup>49</sup> *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē* 9. 83-84 in Harihara (1999: 325); Quoted in Kurtakoṭi (1995: 167-68, Knn). I mark with bold the *prāsa* phonemes.

Thematically, this couplet hinges upon a very basic and central tension in Basavaṅṅa's traditional biography; according to the basic story, repeated in many sources, Basavaṅṅa was an abstemious person by his devotional disposition yet also affluent due to his public role as the king's treasurer.<sup>50</sup> The rhymes in this couplet bring to the fore this inner tension: on the one hand, Basavaṅṅa is the ultimate renouncer (*cāḡigala naduvē kaḡucāḡi*), but on the other hand, he is an unparalleled accumulator of wealth (*bhogigala naduvē miḡē bhogi*).<sup>51</sup> Thus, the intensified rhyming in the above example works on multiple levels: beyond its phonically compelling effect, it frames the couplet thematically and, at the same time, bifurcates its thematic content. But, beyond demonstrating his poetic ingenuity, Harihara's enhanced attention to this type of rhyming conveys his interest in the performative dimension of his work, since this kind of rhyming enables a more pronounced sense of rhythm (*laya*) and beat (*tāla*).<sup>52</sup> Harihara is the first Kannada author to be attributed for using this complex, multidimensional rhyming technique.<sup>53</sup>

This basic polarity in Harihara's construction of Basavaṅṅa's personality here is, in itself, emblematic of the dyadic structuring of many of Harihara's stories. As we shall see in the second part of this study, tensions such as those between the Brahmin and the Śaraṅa, the Śaraṅa and the king, and even the Bhakta and his god, repeatedly frame the stories in the *Raḡaḡeḡaḡu*.

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<sup>50</sup> For additional discussions about Basavaṅṅa's career as treasurer, see sections 8.1.3 and 8.1.4 below and Desai (1968).

<sup>51</sup> I underline here the *prāsas* in order to illustrate their phonic effect. Basavaṅṅa is also an important patron of the *vīraśaiva* movement. Compare with the *vīraśaiva* resistance to royal patronage in sections 2.3 above and 7.2 below.

<sup>52</sup> Harihara himself declares in the *Liṅḡārcanēya Raḡaḡe* the specific *rāga* he uses (called *varāḡi*, v. 68), the tune (called *gujjari*, v. 69), and a new *tāla* that will spread all over the world (v. 90) (Harihara 1999: 502).

<sup>53</sup> Saundattimath (1988: 1).



### 3.3 Daily Non-Elite Elements in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*

Harihara, who in his writings situates himself outside of the cultural purview and political patronage of the court, was not operating in a cultural vacuum but in the rich and fertile ground of non-elite, popular society. We have already learned about Harihara's favoring a simple, performative poetic style through his extensive usage and enhancements of the *ragaḷē* meter and *prāsas*, and when we shift to examine the linguistic register of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, its narration style, the descriptive language, and the way Harihara constructs his characters, we find a corresponding adherence to non-elite elements.

While *bhakti* is undoubtedly interwoven into what we might mean by “non-elite culture” and its various ways of expressions, I use the latter term in this section to denote cultural elements that are not strictly connected with experiences, practices, or concepts that we label as devotional *per se* but with a larger cultural sphere that includes realms such occupation and work patterns, daily family life, economic conditions, and others. One word that is often used by Kannadiga scholars with regard to this culture is *jānapada*, literally “peasant, rustic”<sup>54</sup> and more broadly “belonging to or suited for the inhabitants of the country.”<sup>55</sup> C. Liṅgaṇṇa, in an article titled “The Country Wisdom of Poet Harihara” (*Harihara Kaviya Jānapada Prajñē*) defines *jānapada* as—

a culture that takes form naturally by common people who live their lives in manifold ways. If these people constitute what we call “country culture” (*jānapada saṁskṛti*), then all the remaining people constitute “urban culture”

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<sup>54</sup> Kittel (1982: 647 s.v. *jānapada* 2).

<sup>55</sup> Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 418 s.v. *jānapada*).

(*nāgara saṁskṛti*).<sup>56</sup>

Liṅgaṇṇa’s definition is highly inclusive—perhaps too inclusive—as his dyadic approach renders all that is non-urban as based in “country life.” One could argue, for example, against the inclusion of all non-urban cultures under the umbrella of “country” by bringing to the table the emic Indian category of *saṁnyāsa* (renunciation), which is evidently non-urban (or even anti-urban) but also non-local, non-rural, pan-Indian, and highly intellectual in a manner which clearly resist classification in terms of mundane life and demotic, country culture.<sup>57</sup> Despite such analytical pitfalls, “country” as a concept of a certain cultural sphere can be useful for thinking about the *Ragaḷgaḷu*, since representations of small and local towns, handicraft industries and manual labor of village life, with the daily and domestic rituals and the eating habits that accompany them, are central in this text, as the following pages will show.

Another analytical approach that can be useful to delineate the non-elite culture that informs Harihara’s writing is A.K. Ramanujan’s mapping of the intricate cultural spheres of Karnataka using the dyad of *deśi/mārga*.<sup>58</sup> Strictly speaking, these emic categories are used to differentiate between local, multiple literary traditions (clustered together under the term *deśi*, local, regional) and the pan-Indian, Brahmanical-centered Sanskrit literary tradition (called *mārga*, the [“proper”] way).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Liṅgaṇṇa (1979: 385, Knn). Liṅgaṇṇa builds his argument here on previous Kannada scholarship. See also pp. 386-87, Knn.

<sup>57</sup> One could argue for a more complex relationship between the *saṁnyāsi* (renouncer) and non-elite culture, but such a claim is outside the purview of our discussion here.

<sup>58</sup> Ramanujan (1999: 261-552, 1973: 19-55).

<sup>59</sup> Ramanujan labels the *mārga/deśi* as “great” and “little,” respectively (1973: 23). For different shades of meanings in the word *mārga*, see Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 816 s.v. *mārga*). Some of these meanings denote “way” in its neutral sense and some specifically point to the Sanskrit poetic tradition. See section 3.1.1 above. In the classical tradition of Kannada literature the concept of *mārga* serves as a central trope for establishing its own poetic ethos right from the earliest treatise, the ninth century

Following Ramanujan, I use *deśi* to denote a wider culture sphere than strictly a literary one.<sup>60</sup> It is obvious that the fluidity of linguistic boundaries and the complexities involved in pre-modern South Asia (as well as in modern South Asia) render the binary approach of country/urban or *deśi/mārga* as oversimplified.<sup>61</sup> Still, these dyads are useful for elucidating, at the introductory level, the uniquely syncretic poetic mode of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

### 3.3.1 DEŚI LANGUAGE, DEŚI STYLE

As stated earlier, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories and texture convey both explicit resistance to the institute of the human king, including courtly culture and royal patronage, and familiarity and overt interest in the socially and politically underprivileged.<sup>62</sup> This strategy for literary representation, or even better—of literary resistance—was unprecedented in Harihara’s time. It is almost axiomatic that *bhakti* poetry throughout South Asia identifies itself to a high degree with non-elite and daily culture. Since the *bhakti* poets wanted to appeal to the common man with their messages, their literary expression had to be brought nearer to daily usages of the language. In the case of Harihara, this attempt to simplify language was explicit and self-conscious. In the metapoetic section in the beginning of the *Girijākalyāṇa*, Harihara advises fellow Kannaḍiga poets to simplify their literary language by dropping from

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*Kavirājamārga*.

<sup>60</sup> For a recent English translation of *deśi* stories from the Kannada speaking regions, see Rāmacandran (2007).

<sup>61</sup> See Guha (2008) for a historical treatment of cross-language changes in Maharashtra of the late medieval period, including a consideration of the contact between the political and the religious spheres using and examination of literary artifacts.

<sup>62</sup> In the introduction chapter of *Prācīna Kannaḍakāvya: Sthiratē mattu Calanaśīlatē* (“Old Kannada Literature: Static and Dynamic Aspects”), Śivarāmayya names Harihara as the first among the Kannada poets not to enjoy royal patronage but compose his work while being near to simple village life and away from the political center (2010: 5, Knn).

their compositions the letter /ḷ/, which pronunciation was, according to his own testimony, hard to distinguish from /l/ and /l̥/ by his time.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, his alternating usage of phonemes /h/ and /p/ in the beginning of words might indicate (if we suppose a faithful transliteration transmission from Harihara’s time) a linguistic shift from the Dravidian-based phoneme /p/ to the Kannada-specific phoneme /h/, which is a shift toward a more colloquial and local use of the language, possibly recorded for the first time by Harihara.<sup>64</sup>

Another of Harihara’s linguistic innovations in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* that merits mention is the use of words that he himself coined. Some of these are direct translations of Sanskrit compounds into pure native Kannada (*accagannaḍa*) such as *kaṇṇumūṛaravanu* (“The Three-Eyed,” Skt *trinetra*).<sup>65</sup> Harihara also used informal words, native words, Telugu words, and popular sayings and proverbs, many of which he

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<sup>63</sup> Saudattimath (1988: 106). In *Girijākalyāṇa* 1.32 (Harihara 1977: 29), Harihara writes: “It is very difficult to pronounce the /l/ letter in three distinct manners—*ṛāḷa*, *kuḷa*, and *kṣaḷa*.\* Therefore, poets should not belabor to maintain the distinction in this matter.”

*noḍuvōḍōndakkaram adu*  
*māḍuvōḍuccaraṇegaridu mūṛum teṛanam |*  
*kūḍe kavitati vicārisa*  
*beḍadaṛim ṛāḷakuḷakṣaḷaṅgaḷan idaṛo! ||*

\* *ṛāḷa* stands for a separate phoneme (here transliterated as /ḷ/) that was merged into /l̥/ (retroflex /l̥/) around Harihara’s time. This phoneme is still in use in Tamil and Malayalam. *Kuḷa* is retroflex /l̥/ that is in use in pure native Kannada words (*accagannaḍa*), as opposed to *kṣaḷa*, which denotes a retroflex /l̥/ in words borrowed from Sanskrit. (Such words are usually termed by Kannada grammarians as *samaśaṁskṛtas*). Compare with Prasanna (2003: 134-35, Knn), who mistakenly includes *śakatarepha* in this process. See also Pollock (2004: 403).

<sup>64</sup> For example, the Dravidian word *pīri* (which generally denotes “great, extensive”) appears in Harihara’s *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as *hiri*, but the Dravidian word *Pōlēya* (“polluted, untouchable”) appears both as-is and as the later form *Hōlēya*. For the latter case, see sections 6.4 and 9.1 below.

<sup>65</sup> A full list of coined words by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* appears in Saudattimath (1988: 108). ḍi. Ēḷ. Narasimhācār states that Harihara tends to use more Sanskrit vocabulary in the *Girijākalyāṇa* and more *deśi* words in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* (2008: 154, Knn).

introduced for the first time to the written culture of Kannada literature.<sup>66</sup> Harihara's incorporation of *deśi* elements in his *Ragaḷēgaḷu* can also be located in his practice of coining the specific traits of a particular character using a few words or an idiom, which is a common feature of Kannada *deśi* literature.<sup>67</sup> For example, Basavaṅṅa, the “Embodiment of *Jaṅgama*” (*basava jaṅgamaprāṇi*), or Mādara Cēnnayya, the “Honorable Secret Worshipper” (*mādara cēnnayya guptārcanēya māni*).

The purpose of this discussion is not so much to educate those unfamiliar with the intricacies of the intellectual history of Kannada linguistics or of poetic devices in Kannada oral literature.<sup>68</sup> Rather, by pointing to these linguistic elements, I wish to support the more fundamental claim about the significance of Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* by arguing that Harihara's conscious practice to popularize literary language was grounded in stylistic elements that are found in oral literature and non-elite culture.

### 3.3.2 INCORPORATING DAILY CULTURE

As discussed earlier, the poetics of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is such that it indicates a conscious effort to fit this text to popular performance through musicality, rhyme, and rhythm. The popular dimension of this text is also exhibited at the level of storytelling. The *Ragaḷēs* tend to start with a terse expositional formula characteristic of oral storytelling such as “In that region there is a certain city, and in that city, there is a king.” The *Guṇḍa Ragaḷē*, which was examined earlier in this chapter, opens in this way:

In the northern region there is  
a peaceful city called Ballukē  
in which a Śaraṅga of Moon-Crested Śiva resides  
happily and free from illusion,

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<sup>66</sup> Gonāla (2010b: 50-55, Knn).

<sup>67</sup> Liṅgaṅṅa (1979: 389-91, Knn).

<sup>68</sup> For an thorough linguistic study of Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in English, see Saudattimath (1988).

and his work is making pots

*ěntěnal uttarabhāgadōḷ irpudu  
santata ballukěpuravěnisirpudu  
allirpaṁ śaśimaḷiya śaraṇa  
sallalitaṁ māyāniruhaṇaṁ  
ghaṭakāyakavāyatavāgipudu*<sup>69</sup>

Even if we defer for now the implications of introducing a protagonist who is a simple potter into the medium of written literature, the mere sense of condensed brevity that is easy to detect in this opening is typical of the narrative strategies of the Kannaḍiga bard.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Harihara's brief first-person interludes communicate a sense of spontaneity characteristic of oral performance:

every little observance, my god!  
the greatest devotee on earth, my god!  
how can I narrate the work he is doing?  
I know when I see it, but how to narrate it?

*nemasthaṁ nemasthaṁ śivaśiva  
bhūmiyōḷ uttamabhaktaṁ śivaśiva  
māḍuva kāyakavadan en ěmběṁ  
noḍuvaḍěṇagaridinněntěmběṁ*<sup>71</sup>

These examples of Harihara's usage of popular language and style are at the level of words and phrases, but there are deeper narrative strategies that he borrows from the world of oral storytelling. For example, many of the Śaraṇas that populate Harihara's corpus are people who are born, raised, and operate in the village and at the

<sup>69</sup> *Guṇḍa Ragaḷě* vv. 1-5 in Harihara (1999: 269). See section 3.2.1 above.

<sup>70</sup> For a discussion about this feature in the *Ragaḷěgaḷu*, with some other examples, see Liṅgaṇṇa (1979: 401-04, Knn). See also A.K. Ramanujan (1999: 461-62) for a more general discussion about this stylistic feature in folk stories.

<sup>71</sup> *Guṇḍa Ragaḷě* vv. 9-12 in Harihara (1999: 269). See section 3.2.1 above.

margins of the social and political center. To illustrate this, it suffices to simply refer to the occupational background of some of the main characters in the *Ragaḷḡgaḷu*: potter, basket-maker, hunter, prostitute, simpleton girl, and so on.<sup>72</sup> All these figures are taken from the figurative cadre of common village people. Significantly, such characters are usually absent from the stock figures of the classic, *mārga*-based literary culture of Kannada. Therefore, the significance of Harihara’s writing about people with such backgrounds lies in the fact that he expands the gambit of literary figures in the written medium of medieval Kannada culture.

A. Gonāla, in a book chapter titled “Country Wisdom in the Poetry of Harihara and Rāghavāṅka” (*Harihara-Rāghavāṅka Kāvyaagaḷalli Jānapada Prajñē*), lists themes in the *Ragaḷḡgaḷu* stories that are influenced by village culture—descriptions of village life, eating and dressing customs, conduct and ethics, occupations—among other linguistic and structural elements that were discussed earlier.<sup>73</sup> Gonāla also adds that the works of Harihara and his nephew Rāghavāṅka group together different sensibilities pertaining to village life.<sup>74</sup> In the thematic analysis that follows this passage, Gonāla refers to incidents from the *Ragaḷḡgaḷu* in which a poor fellow searches for firewood in order to protect himself from the cold, another person reaches to the brink of starvation due to poverty, and familial feuds reach the prying ears of nosy neighbors.<sup>75</sup> All these incidents, as Gonāla argues, are saturated with descriptions of village life. In addition, the rustic language of these earthly characters infiltrates into Śiva’s own

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<sup>72</sup> This list corresponds to: Kumbara (“Pot Maker”) Guṇḍayya, Jeḍara (“Basket Weaver”) Dāsimaḡya, Beḍara (“Hunter”) Kaṇṇappa, Nimbavvē (“Lemon Face”), Kōḍagūsu (“Milk-Pot Girl”).

<sup>73</sup> Gonāla (2010a, Knn).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 17-25.

speeches in his conversations with them at certain moments in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories.<sup>76</sup>

As suggested earlier, there are also deeper narrative elements in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* that are directly correspond with non-elite oral culture, such as plotting and character descriptions. According to Liṅgaṇṇa, the Śaraṇas, despite their unsurpassed commitment to their god, oftentimes live as married householders who raise children, without having any sense of conflict or tension between the two modes of living.<sup>77</sup> This aspect of worldliness, which neither threatens nor is threatened by extreme devotion, echoes well an ethos found also in oral literature.<sup>78</sup> Along similar lines, a recurring theme in many *Ragaḷēs* is the protagonist's and his spouse's wish for a child. This wish is always intimated to Śiva, who, in turn, always fulfills it. The moral of a great many *Ragaḷēs* parallels the general theological notion that "god will prevail," a notion that permeates oral stories and culture.<sup>79</sup> An indication for the intense correspondence between Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and oral literary cultures can be found in the *sāṅgatyas* (poems in a certain *aṁśa* meter) sung by Mahādeva Kavi. The narratives on this markedly oral songs are directly taken from Harihara's corpus, and are similar to it in form as well.<sup>80</sup>

One finds a strong trend in contemporary Kannada scholarship of foregrounding the impact of oral culture on other cultural forms, especially written literature. Despite the potential embedded in such a trend to overstate this effect, the claim regarding a profound influence by this culture on the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* does appear, in

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<sup>76</sup> Liṅgaṇṇa (1979: 412-16, Knn).

<sup>77</sup> In the second part of this dissertation I highlight stories that prescribe a sharp rejection of mundane living, with the exception of familial life. See sections 5.2.2, \*8.1, and 9.3.3 below.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 406. Literary representations of the sixteenth-century Marathi saint Eknāth foreground the same feature of his life story. I thank Jon Keune for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>79</sup> Liṅgaṇṇa (1979: 405, Knn).

<sup>80</sup> Kavi and Bhānumati (2004: xiii, Knn).



light of the above survey, to be substantive.

### 3.4 Syncretic Poetics

#### 3.4.1 NOT “SIMPLY” *DEŚĪ*

Despite the presence of village culture in Harihara’s work, it would be incorrect to classify the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as popular or oral literature. The manner in which Harihara incorporates popular elements into the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is, as is the case with other aspects of his writing, syncretic. In other words, just as Harihara does not follow the *mārga* path set by the classical poets, he also does not fully adopt the voice of *deśī* literature. Rather, he creates his own eclectic blend of various cultural voices. It is possible to argue that stylistic borrowings are part-and-parcel of any pre-modern South-Asian literary culture, elite as well as non-elite, but Harihara’s stylistic syncretism has a particular bent to it, for it carries a multivocality, the text’s innate ability to relate simultaneously to different crowds. We have observed earlier in the chapter this enmeshing at work at the metrical level, and we find similarly complex syncretism also at the level of narrative and character structuring. To illustrate this multivocality, let us revisit the opening passage about Potter Guṇḍayya, in which Harihara describes—or at least tries to describe—Guṇḍayya’s labor:

how can I narrate the work he is doing?  
 I know when I see it, but how to narrate it?  
 Guṇḍayya’s base energy-center becomes the base for his potter’s wheel  
 his voice becomes its turning axis  
 the six energy-centers become the potter’s wheel  
 his shining navel is the very center of the machine  
 his ephemeral body becomes the clay  
 and remembrance of Śiva becomes the thread with which he fettles the clay  
 determination in Śiva becomes the turning rod  
 while his revolving fists operate as the source of his livelihood

*māḍuva kāyakavadan en ěmbēm*  
*noḍuvaḍēnagaridinnēntēmbēm*  
*ādhāravēyādhāraṁ adāgirē*  
*vedhēyē cakrada mōḷē tānāgirē*  
*migē ṣaṭcakramē cakram adāgirē*  
*sōgayipa nābhiyē nābhiyadāgirē*  
*kanasina kāyaṁ mṛttikēyāgirē*  
*nēnaham cātēdāraṅgaḷavāgirē*  
*niṣṭhēyē piḍivurudaṅḍaṁ adāgirē*  
*muṭṭi tiruguvudu jīvanam āgirē*<sup>81</sup>

This vignette is remarkable if we consider the multiple cultural layers that Harihara manages to condense into a very short passage. Right after the author vents his difficulty of describing the inner works of Guṇḍayya's pot-making in the first two lines, he invokes a metaphor that builds on the *tantra* map of bodily energy-centers, or *ṣaṭcakra*.<sup>82</sup> A small piece of the esoteric, intellectual tradition generally referred to as *tantra*, is imaginatively superimposed here (with some levity on the side of Harihara) onto the working environment of a village potter. Significantly, the *tantra* superimposition in this passage does not only pertain to Guṇḍayya's body and mind, but is extended to also include his machinery; by generating an uninterrupted continuum between the personhood of Guṇḍayya and his work as a potter, this complex metaphorization transcends the conceptual boundaries of the world of *tantra* and transfers its metaphysical efficacy into the realm of work ethics, which is a central motif for this *bhakti* tradition.<sup>83</sup>

The cohesion among different imagery planes in this passage is purposeful, as

<sup>81</sup> *Guṇḍa Ragaḷē* vv. 11-20 in Harihara (1999: 269).

<sup>82</sup> For a thorough mapping of one system of *tantra* metaphysics, see Padoux (1990).

<sup>83</sup> See discussion about the soteriological potential of labor, as conveyed by this *Ragaḷē* and more broadly by this *śivabhakti* tradition, in section 6.3 below.

evinced from the way the story continues to unfold. The following verses tell us that Guṇḍayya's occupation becomes the sole center of his life, his one and only obsession. He abnegates eating, sleeping, or any other activity but the making of pots. As told earlier, while working, his incessant tapping on the pots rises up all the way to Kailāsa, inspiring Śiva to dance and eventually come down to earth to take Guṇḍayya back to heaven with him. The encounter between the god and his devotee is highly ecstatic, to the level of threatening the world, and Guṇḍayya's consequent ascent to Kailāsa at the story's denouement marks a metaphysical unity between the two. The metaphoric language of *tantra* that is introduced in the beginning of the *Guṇḍa Ragaḷē* is suggestive of the metaphysical transition from duality to unity that occurs at the story's denouement: collapses of human/divine boundaries; the adept's growing omnipotence, particularly in his ability to invoke the god upon will; the human body as the arena for divine manifestation through intense bodily practice and enhanced bodily experience—all these defining features of *tantra* take narrative form in the brief description of how Guṇḍayya makes his pots.

The complex *tantra* metaphor for Guṇḍayya's mystical experience is constituted in very few lines, in which the science of *tantra*, the devotion of *bhakti*, and common village life, are all enmeshed together into Guṇḍayya's character. Such a complex, multivalent descriptive strategy transcends the boundaries of one genre or cultural sphere. This makes this passage a good example for the complex imaginaire applied by Harihara throughout the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, a unique idiosyncraticism that transcends conceptually separated cultural spheres. It is this imaginaire, perhaps more than everything else, that makes the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* operate in a highly integrative manner at multiple levels simultaneously.

### 3.4.2 OCCASIONAL VISITS TO THE MĀRGA PATH

A cultural sphere that shapes the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in a more profound way than *tantra* is the world of Sanskrit *kāvya* (literature), to which we refer here as *mārga*. In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, we often find poetic passages that strictly belong to that world, with long descriptions of seasons, geographies, and settings, and sometimes also the suggestive, indirect mode of speech (*vakrokti*) that is so central in Sanskritic poetics.<sup>84</sup>

Although Harihara speaks about, and presumably also to, new crowds beyond the literate of the classical era, he evidently belongs, at least in terms of his poetic milieu, to that world. One indication of Harihara's traditional training in *mārga* literature is the *Girijākalyāṇa*, considered as Harihara's other masterpiece, which is written in the classical form of *campū* and adheres to the Sanskritic-based standards of courtly poem (*mahākāvya*).<sup>85</sup>

But there are indications for Harihara's classical training also in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. For example, when Harihara tells about the king's messenger who visits Mahādeviyakka's parents in order to ask for her hand (against her will), the author names this messenger Vasantaka, literally "spring." In the Sanskritic imaginaire, spring is the season of lovers and its coming marks an erotic mood. Harihara, by applying this convention in a story about the failure of earthly marriage to a king who is also a non-Śaiva, makes a sarcastic remark against this courtly culture.

The opening of Mahādeviyakka's *Ragaḷē* can serve as another example of Harihara's original usage of classical conventions:

The silvery mountain of auspiciousness,<sup>86</sup> loved by all the gods

<sup>84</sup> See a brief discussion about this poetic influence of the *Ragaḷē* in Liṅgaṇṇa (1979: 388-89, Knn).

<sup>85</sup> Even here, in the *Girijākalyāṇa*, Harihara introduced innovations to the genre. See section 4.1.3 below.

<sup>86</sup> I have incorporated the opening word *śrī* into the translation, using its meaning as "auspiciousness." "Śrī" opens all the versified chapters of all the *Ragaḷēs* and, thus, bears an additional formulaic and

The silvery mountain, respected by the King of Gods Indra and by Manu the Sage  
 The silvery mountain, never separated from the best of qualities and  
 superpowers  
 The silvery mountain carries rows of jeweled crowns  
 The silvery mountain lends its luster to the moon  
 The silvery mountain spreads its light of merit to all directions  
 The silvery mountain seizes the shinning of the holy ash  
 The silvery mountain is Śiva's abode of happiness

*śrī sakaḷadevar olidoppippa rajatagiri  
 vāsavaṃ manumuniḡaḷ ādaripa rajatagiri  
 aṇimādi guṇavagaladōppippa rajatagiri  
 maṇimukuravīthiyam taḷedippa rajatagiri  
 śāsīḡe bēḷudiṅgalam kaḍanīva rajatagiri  
 dēsēḡe puṇyada bēḷaganalavaḍipa rajatagiri  
 bhasitada bēḷagan eḷēdukōḷutirpa rajatagiri  
 asamanayanana sukhasthalavāda rajatagiri<sup>87</sup>*

Harihara begins Mahādeviyakka's story with a detailed description of Kailāsa Mountain, the heavenly abode where Śiva, Pārvati, and their retinue reside, and where Mahādeviyakka, as a divine consort of Pārvati, starts her journey down to earth.<sup>88</sup> In this brief passage, Harihara combines different literary techniques. At the most basic level, we can note the repeated subject "Kailāsa Mountain" (*rajatagiri*) and the syntactical formula (agent/object + verb + nominal subject) that permeates every line in this passage, both generate a sense of bardic oral performance that is untypical of elite poetry. Yet, the imaginaire that permeates the passage is clearly taken from the classical Sanskritic lore, with stock phrases and images, such as Kailāsa as the heavenly mountain that is worshipped by all the gods and sages, adorned by magnificent white tops, and so on. In addition to the oral formulaic structure and the classical themes,

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performative significance.

<sup>87</sup> *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷē* 1.1-8 in Harihara (1999:393).

<sup>88</sup> See summary of Mahādeviyakka's story in section 6.1.1 below.

there are elements in this passage that are directly borrowed from the world of Sanskrit courtly literature. The description of Kailāsa Mountain as the backdrop to the opening scene is a standard element of the Sanskrit courtly poem (*mahākāvya*), and the correspondence in this case is even more specific, as Kālidāsa’s famous Sanskrit *mahākāvya Kumārasambhava* opens up with a descriptive passage of the Himalaya Mountain. Also, we find in this passage poetic devices that are characteristic of courtly literature. For example, the verse “the silvery mountain lends his luster to the moon” relies on a metaphor in which the mountain is made comparable to the moon, but the mechanism of this metaphor is intricate: first, the mountain is not only compared to the moon but is imagined as one, for it lends its light to the “real” moon like a sort of a moon itself. But there is another element to the metaphorization of the mountain to a second moon: the comparison between the two objects dictates that the mountain is not equal to the moon but superior to it.<sup>89</sup>

In this manner, we find throughout the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* poetic elements taken from the elite world of Sanskrit literature and embedded into Harihara’s syncretic and eclectic world. Harihara is the first to ingeniously mix the classical style with other less-conventional literary styles. Consequently, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* embodies a uniquely new and complex poetic vision, perhaps even one of a kind.

### 3.5 Concluding Remarks: Poetics at the Service of *Bhakti*

The stylistic features surveyed in this chapter are in no way exhaustive of the intricate innovations that Harihara introduces to medieval Kannada literature in his *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and the limited scope and general nature of this study allows only a short discussion about them. Harihara, by further developing a pre-existing but insignificant

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<sup>89</sup> This specific poetic device (*alankāra*) is called *atīśayukti*.

meter into a full-blown one, and by making it the sole metrical platform for his *magnum opus*, creates a sophisticated and syncretic poetics that projects a unique socio-religious vision. This groundbreaking poetics is the platform on which Harihara presents narratives about issues and agents that, until his entrance to the literary arena, are excluded from the Kannada literary imaginaire. These issues revolve around the lives of people whose common denominator is the new world of *bhakti* and not the court or institutionalized religion.

The poetics of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* also allows us to reimagine its immediate audience as an emerging religious community that one of its core shared experiences in the collective aesthetic relishing of devotion to Śiva.<sup>90</sup> This newly conceived arena allows, for the first time in the history of written Kannada literature, non-elite forms of linguistic communication (lexical, syntactical, phonetic, and others) to occupy the central stage of a written text. In this manner, the form of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is a central ingredient in this text's capacity to constitute a new religious cum literary tradition.

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<sup>90</sup> See discussion on *śivabhakti* oral cultures in section 1.1.4 above. In section 7.4 below, I reconstruct the possible ritualistic arena in which devotional literature was performed according to Harihara's own descriptions.

#### 4 The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and Kannada Literary History

In this chapter, I consider the significance of Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* for medieval Kannada literature. As a background to this discussion, I critically assess claims made by Kannada scholars about Harihara's role in the considerable changes that the Kannada literary culture had went through during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The gist of my argument in this section is that, despite the conspicuity of the literary products called *Vacanas* in academic and non-academic crowds, their relation to contemporaneous Kannada literary practices is not as substantial as that of Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and that, therefore, the latter text deserves more scholarly attention than it received thus far if we wish to better understand the sea-change the Kannada literary culture has gone through during this period. Then, I discuss the difficulties that Harihara's innovative literary style and eclectic religious approach had created for the future generations of Kannada writers in general and *vīraśaiva* ones in particular, in two major realms: the literary, in which Harihara's virtuosity was hard to reduplicate, and the religious, in which Harihara's doctrinal leniency was replaced by more hermetic institutionalized forms of communal self-representation.

My conversation in this chapter is mostly with secondary materials by Kannada scholars. As I discuss in my introduction chapter, the reason for my direct engagement with contemporary Kannada scholarship is the scarcity of relevant scholarship in non-Indian languages, as well as the contribution some of this scholarship has to offer regarding our understanding of medieval Kannada literary history. This chapter concludes the first part of this study, dedicate to the introduction and framing of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in its literary context. The second part deals with the



content of this corpus, dedicated to saints' stories and to their prescriptions.

## 4.1 The Doyen of a New Literary Era

### 4.1.1 PERIODIZATIONS OF PRE-MODERN KANNADA LITERATURE

Any attempt to appraise Harihara's contribution to the development of Kannada literature requires some kind of a larger historical consideration of this literary culture, especially since Harihara had a pivotal role in the shift Kannada literature underwent during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I tackle this task by examining different methods for periodicizing Kannada literary history. Periodizations are never a clear cut business; the attempt to essentialize, divide, and categorize complicated cultural processes over vast temporalities cannot but spawn a host of problems, such as leaving out important nuances or germinating inaccuracies or misconceptions. An indication for such difficulties with regard to the specific case of Kannada literature is the fact that contemporary literary historians use different methods and approaches for dividing its literary past into eras. Significantly, each of these different periodizations pays attention to the moment in which *bhakti* entered the arena of Kannada literature. Thus, the purpose of the following discussion is not so much to introduce the reader to the pre-modern history of Kannada literature as a whole, as this subject is well beyond the scope of this study, nor to critically evaluate the theoretical pros and cons of each periodization method that exists, but rather to highlight the decisive impact *bhakti* had on the development of pre-modern Kannada literature, and Harihara's dramatic role within it.

Two straightforward approaches to divide Kannada literature into periods are the linguistic and the stylistic. The linguistic division implies three major periods:

*halēgannaḍa* (“Old Kannada”), *naḍugannaḍa* (“Middle Kannada”), and *hōsagannaḍa* (“Modern Kannada”). The stylistic approach, which corresponds to the linguist, divides the history of Kannada literary output according to stylistic changes, starting with the classical compositions of the early period (marked by a substantial *mārga* influence), via the medieval writings in *deśi* meters, and finally with *navya sāhitya*, or modern literature, with its own set of specifications.<sup>1</sup> There are two additional approaches with which scholars periodicize Kannada literature. The first entails attributing to each period a dominant religious affiliation. Thus, scholars sometimes divide pre-modern Kannada literature into three periods: *jaina*, *śaiva*, and *vaiṣṇava/brāhmaṇa*. With some overlap with each of the previous periodizations, a fourth approach uses a taxonomy based on the leading poetic figure of each religious phase. Thus, for example, R.S. Mugaḷi, in his popular book *Kannaḍa Sāhitya Caritrē* (“History of Kannada Literature”), presents eponymous titles in his division of Kannada literary history: Pampa, Basavaṇṇa, and Kumāravayāsa.<sup>2</sup> As just stated, there is some historical and conceptual overlap between the different periodizations just presented. For example, Mugaḷi’s doyens for each era correspond with the division according to religious affiliation: Pampa was a Jain, Basavaṇṇa was a Śaiva, and Kumāravayāsa—a Vaiṣṇava. Similarly, the classical compositions in the *mārga* style are usually attributed to Jain poets, while the

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<sup>1</sup> In both cases, the linguistic and the stylistic, the first classical/*halēgannaḍa* period is sometimes further divided into the pre-literary, inscriptional phase until the ninth century and the later written literature phase from that moment onwards. Another sub-division is sometimes applied in the case of the modern phase, but this matter is outside the scope of our study. On modern Kannada literature, see Zydenbos (1996).

<sup>2</sup> Mugaḷi (2010 [1953], Knn). This book, composed over half a century ago, is now in its nineteenth edition. Mugaḷi also argues for a pre-Pampa period that includes, in addition to epigraphy, also literary works that are now lost to us. There is a common misconception about Pampa being the first significant poet of Kannada. This misconception obscures the Śrīvijaya’s poetical treaty *Kavirājamārga* from about a century earlier, as well as earlier texts mentioned by Śrīvijaya and that are now lost to us. See *Kavirājamārga* 1.32 in Śrīvijaya (1983). See also Pollock (2006: 338-56); Mugaḷi (2010 [1953]: 51-78, Knn).

medieval *deśi* compositions, at least in the first centuries of this period, are usually attributed to Śaivas. Thus, a rough scheme of the four abovementioned periodization would look like this:

**Table 4: Periodization Schemes of Kannada Literary History**

Kannada Register	<i>haḷḷegannaḍa</i> ("Old Kannada")	<i>naḍugannaḍa</i> ("Middle Kannada")		<i>hōsagannaḍa</i> ("Modern Kannada")
Literary Style	<i>mārga</i>	<i>deśi</i>		<i>navya</i>
Religious Affiliation	<i>jaina</i>	<i>śaiva</i>	<i>vaiṣṇava/brāhmaṇa</i>	
Doyen	Pampa	Basavaṇṇa	Kumārvyāsa	

Notwithstanding these correspondences, the complexities and inaccuracies involved in each of these periodizations abound. For example, Harihara, the staunch Śaiva who in many ways inaugurated the *deśi* literature in Kannada with his *Ragaḷḷegaḷu*, also composed one literary work in *campū*, which is the most celebrated of the *mārga* genres (traditionally attributed to Jainas). But this is just a minute example for Kannada works that do not commensurate fully with the theoretical periodizations discussed here. Broadly speaking, as one becomes more familiar with the literary genealogies of

the Kannada world, it becomes evident that a new period does not completely replace the previous one but, rather, creates a new literary medium that slowly, over several centuries, displaces or marginalizes the previous. Similarly, a style that appear anachronistic might continue to thrive in specific cultural contexts for many centuries after its theoretical passing.

But the significance of the about table is in that it illustrates that the dramatic entrance of *śivabhakti* into the arena of Kannada literary during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is clearly demarcated for whatever periodization method of the abovementioned we may choose: on the linguistic level, it is the *bhakti* movement that incorporates, for the first time in the history of Kannada literature, the register called Middle Kannada, which is direct and demotic, and displaces archaic forms of Old Kannada. In parallel to that process, *bhakti* literature introduces dramatic changes on the stylistic level, with the appearance of new literary forms that are usually based on a single *deśi* meter per composition, this is in sharp contrast to the previous *mārga* style and its syncretic usage of interchangeable Sanskrit, Prakrit, and *deśi* meters.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, this shift also occurs on the religious level, with the entrance of *śivabhakti* and its completely new set of religious, social, cultural, and political value systems, as well as new lineages of poets, into the literary arena.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.1.2 CONTESTING “BASAVA’S AGE”

The earliest traceable *bhakti* compositions in Kannada are the first Vacanas, probably from the early twelfth century, which is about a hundred years before

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<sup>3</sup> See more on this in section 3.1 above.

<sup>4</sup> See sections 2.2, 2.3, and 3.3 above.

Harihara.<sup>5</sup> Evidently, it is impossible to discuss medieval Kannada literature, its close relations with the *bhakti* movement, and its conscious and explicit resistance to classic Kannada literary culture, without considering the significant role of the Vacanakāras for these processes. The early Vacanakāras composed short blank meter poems—Vacanas (literally “utterances”<sup>6</sup>)—using simplified, daily language in order to convey the unmediated religious sentiment and vision of *bhakti*. Clearly, the Vacanas are the most celebrated literary product to come out of pre-modern Kannada literature both in India and outside of it.<sup>7</sup> One testimony for the Vacanas’ salience can be found in Mugaḷi’s naming of the whole medieval period in Kannada literature as *basavayuga*, “Basavaṇṇa’s Age;”<sup>8</sup> Basavaṇṇa was a highly charismatic leader of the twelfth-century Kalyāṇa movement. Many Vacanas are attributed to him, and many others are considered to have been composed by his *bhakti* fellows.<sup>9</sup> Mugaḷi’s claim about the primacy of Basavaṇṇa’s literary production during this period duplicated by many in the last half a century.<sup>10</sup>

In light of Basavaṇṇa’s centrality for Kannada culture and the *bhakti* tradition in general, and for the production of early Vacanas in particular, it might seem natural that the whole literary era is eponymous of him, if we choose to accept the Vacanas’

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<sup>5</sup> The attempt to hermetically determine when the earliest Vacanas were composed is fraught with difficulties. Previous studies tended to locate the earliest Vacanas at the tenth century (Ramanujan 1973: 91-94, Basavarāju 2001 [1960], Knn). This estimation is problematic for several reasons that are outside the scope of this study. In any case, more recent studies point, with substantial support, to the early twelfth century. See Nāgabhūṣaṇa (2000).

<sup>6</sup> Kittel (1982: 1371 s.v. *vacana* 2).

<sup>7</sup> One possible reason for this phenomenon is the experiential effectiveness of the Vacanas and their universal appeal. Ramanujan’s superb translations of selected Vacanas in his *Speaking of Śiva* (1973) marks a pinnacle of this universal appeal.

<sup>8</sup> Mugaḷi (2010 [1953]: 133-41, Knn).

<sup>9</sup> See more on Basavaṇṇa in sections 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 6.intro, 6.4, 6.6.1, 7.1.2, 7.4.1, and 8.1.3.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Desai (1968: 333-35).

primacy of all other contemporaneous Kannada literary forms. But is this the case? The attribution “Basavaṅṅa’s Age” with regard to medieval Kannada poetry can be misleading, since it suggests that the Vacanas were of utmost importance in term of the development of medieval Kannada literature, that this medium introduced into contemporary literary practices features that were defining, or axiomatic, for the rest of the medieval literary world in Kannada. But this does not seem to be the case, since, from a literary perspective, the Vacanas are categorically separated from to the rest of Kannada medieval literary forms. When we try to form any kind of evolutionary genealogy to early Kannada literature, the Vacanas do not fit into contemporaneous works. This is due to the uniqueness of their poetics, a uniqueness that pertains to several elements: lack of any metrical consideration;<sup>11</sup> usually short length compositions;<sup>12</sup> limited usage of poetic conventions; self-attested resistance to poetical mastery;<sup>13</sup> and a subjective, experiential, and non-narrative expressivity. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult to trace any poetic style in pre-modern Kannada outside the Vacanas that possesses even one of these traits, let alone all of them combined.<sup>14</sup> There is little doubt that the poetic uniqueness of the Vacanas described here brought them their outstanding fame, but the same uniqueness also sets them apart from the rest of Kannada literature, a very rich literary culture that has its own genealogy and history.

Despite the fact that Mugali’s nomenclature is axiomatic for many literary

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<sup>11</sup> I regard meter in its technical, phoneme-based sense and not the syntactical. Compare with Ramanujan (1973: 41-44).

<sup>12</sup> Most of the Vacanas are only a few verses long, although there are longer Vacanas that are less known to non-Kannaḍiga audiences. See, for example, Allama’s Vacanas in (Basavarāju 2001 [1960], Knn).

<sup>13</sup> See Ramanujan (1973: 37).

<sup>14</sup> The only exception to this rule is the *vaiṣṇava* poems collectively known as the *dāśasāhitya* (“literature of the [Lord’s] servants”), which is of a much later era (from the late fifteenth century onward). Like the Vacanas, the *dāśasāhitya* literature marks an anomaly in the history of Kannada literature.

historians of Kannada, one finds among contemporary Kannaḍiga scholars those who contest it. In his recent translations of Vacanas, H.S. Shivaprakash writes: “The vachanas [*sic.*] were not composed with the intention of producing pure literature but to revolutionize the individual and the society in the light of an innate sense of truth and justice.”<sup>15</sup> Shivaprakash’s claim that Vacanas were not composed from a literary intention points to the disconnect between this medium and the rest of Kannada literary world. This claim is not new; already in 1964, just eleven years after the first publication of Mugaḷi’s compendium, T.S. Śāmarāya directly challenges the concept of “Basavaṇṇa’s Age” and instead offers “Harihara’s Age” as the appropriate title for this literary era:

It is true that R.S. Mugaḷi’s method of division [of Kannada literary history] is applicable. However, is the title he applies—“Basavaṇṇa’s Age” valid? We reject the conceptualization of Basavaṇṇa as a poet or author. He was, rather, a great saint. “The essence of a hundred poems is equal to one revelation” [so Basavaṇṇa says].<sup>16</sup> Thus, “he was a saint and not a learnt, brave poet.”<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt that he and other Vacanakāras gave a passionate impetus to all poets to follow. However, we do not agree to place the Vacanakāras, who are philosophers, in the same line with others who are purely poets. Consequently, we term this period as “Harihara’s Age”. Our division is: “the Age before Pampa,” “Pampa’s Age,” “Harihara’s Age,” “Kumāravayāsa’s Age.”<sup>18</sup>

The gist of Śāmarāya’s argument is that Basavaṇṇa *et al* were not poets. Despite the fact that Śāmarāya is in agreement with the claim that Basavaṇṇa *et al* had influenced Kannada poets in terms of giving the latter group a “passionate impetus,” he at the same time insists that it did not go beyond that, that the Vacanakāras’ influence

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<sup>15</sup> Shivaprakash (2010: xxii).

<sup>16</sup> There is no reference to the specific Vacana by Basavaṇṇa that Śāmarāya quotes here.

<sup>17</sup> No reference is given to this quote.

<sup>18</sup> Śāmarāya ([circa. 1964]: 9, Knn).

*de facto* on literary practices in Kannada was only limited.

Śāmarāya is not the only scholar to prefer Harihara over Basavaṅṅa as the literary doyen of this period. In a collection of translations to English of different Kannada poems from little more than twenty years ago, K.S. Radhakrishna writes:

Harihara was the first revolutionary poet of Kannada. He had the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerasaiva Saints as his models. But unlike his mentors whose discourses turned out to be literature, Harihara was a conscious poet and what he wrote was conscious literature.<sup>19</sup>

Radhakrishna alludes in this quote to the fact that Basavaṅṅa *et al*, to which she calls the “Veerasaiva Saints,” are not poets and their utterances are not directly poems, but are discourses meant to ignite social and religious change in contemporaneous society. Harihara, in contrast, writes literature.

Even before we start to unpack the abovementioned claims about the Vacanas’ medium and poetic mode, there are initial textual and historical problems with trying to assess the Vacanas’ influence on contemporaneous literary creation. For example, it is unclear whether the Vacanas were transmitted in the earliest phase in written form or as oral texts that only later started to be written down. The earliest narratives describing the creation of the Vacanas portray an oral setting,<sup>20</sup> and we do not have any manuscripts of Vacanas that can be dated before the beginning of the fifteenth century.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Harihara was the first to capture in writing vignettes of Vacanas in

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<sup>19</sup> Shivaprakash and Radhakrishna (1990: 58).

<sup>20</sup> See section 7.4 below. There is a claim regarding the recording of Vacanas in the immediate setting of their utterances by designated scribes. This claim, however, is proleptic, since it is based on literary descriptions found in the first and second editions of *Śūnyasampādanē* from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. See Michael (1992).

<sup>21</sup> Basavarāju (2001 [1960]: 29-32, Knn).



his *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>22</sup> This point is crucial, because it implies that the corpus we recognize today as the earliest Vacanas incorporates considerable textual alterations from later periods. I am not arguing that the earliest Vacanas were composed at a later period than the twelfth century, but that the temporal gap that potentially exists between the Vacanas' oral composition and the process of fixing them in writing considerably undermines the attempt to historicize their literary features. Put differently, we do not have access to the twelfth-century Vacanas in terms of language, style, texture, and theme, and, therefore, we cannot historicize these aspects of these poems.<sup>23</sup> This lacuna becomes crucial when one tries to appraise the Vacanas in relation to other forms of contemporaneous literature.

The discussion regarding the position of the Vacanas within the genealogy of pre-modern Kannada literature hinges on another, perhaps more intrinsic issue, and that is the Vacanas' poetics. Here again, we find substantial scholarship that questions the literary nature of the Vacanas and claims that since the Vacanas does not have a clearly bounded poetics, it should not be regarded as literature per se.<sup>24</sup> H.S.

Shivaprakash, in the abovementioned introduction to his Vacanas' translations, writes: "[I]t is better to consider the vachanas a species of collective poetry, consisting of as many distinctive poetic idiolects as the poets themselves."<sup>25</sup> The significance of this quote for our discussion lies not simply in the Vacanas' poetic multivocality, but in its implications on the attempt to point to their influence on or relation to contemporaneous literature. There are many facets to this problem, perhaps the most apparent one is the absence of any meter in the Vacanas' versification: we do not find

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pp. 34-35. See sections 6.1.1 and 6.6.1 below.

<sup>23</sup> See thorough discussion about this issue in Chandra Shobhi (2005: 90-137).

<sup>24</sup> See chapter 3 in Chandra Shobhi (2005) and chapter 16 in Ramanujan (1999).

<sup>25</sup> Shivaprakash (2010: xxii). See also discussion in Chandra Shobhi (2005: 138-185).

in the medieval period of Kannada literature any other written composition style that does not involve versification or metrical considerations. Admittedly, this in itself does not automatically exclude the Vacanas from the broad ambit pre-modern Kannada literary world, as non-metrical compositions do exist in the classic South-Asian literature.<sup>26</sup> But there are other, more substantial indications that the Vacanas were a literary anomaly rather than a literary standard. For example, the later narratives that tell us about the settings in which the Vacanas were created stress the completely spontaneous confessional mode of the Vacanakāras while composing Vacanas, without any pre-meditation regarding poetics or a literary afterthought. Again, this claim in itself does not render the Vacanas as non-literary; spontaneity is a popular, perhaps even essential, ingredient in the South-Asian ethos about poetic composition. However, in the case of the Vacanas, the claim regarding non-meditative mode of composition also corresponds with their poetic texture, which, indeed, lack any meter-based, formulaic framework. Significantly, the claim for spontaneity goes beyond the issue of meter and lies at the heart of the medium of the Vacanas: the expressive mode in the Vacanas is usually described as *bhāvaḡītē* (literally, “sentimental poetry,” poetry about inner, personal feelings), a mode that is completely internal and is usually alien to narrative progression or even a notion of consolidated, biographically oriented personas.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, any metaphoric language in the Vacanas is subjugated to a non-narrative inner-experience that is delivered in anonymous first and second persons. Furthermore, classic aesthetic conventions are almost completely absent from

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<sup>26</sup> For example, prose literature is an organic part of classic Sanskrit *kāvya*, literature.

<sup>27</sup> It is exactly for this reason that the medieval text *Śūnyasampādanē* weaves a biographical narrative of Allama Prabhu and other saints around their Vacanas.

the Vacanas.<sup>28</sup> These are just some indications for a culture of spontaneous expressivity that does not hinge upon a literary tradition. In addition, we find explicit claims against the literary mode in the Vacanas themselves, such as this one, which is attributed to Basavaṇṇa:

I don't know anything like timebeats and metre  
nor the arithmetic of strings and drums;

I don't know the count of iamb and dactyl.  
My lord of the meeting rivers,  
as nothing will hurt you  
I'll sing as I love.

(Vacana #949)<sup>29</sup>

In itself, the explicit voice in this Vacana against poetic virtuosity serves an agenda of directness and simplicity that is emblematic of many *bhakti* poetic traditions. At the same time, it also demonstrates the conceptual chasm between the Vacanas and the rest of medieval Kannada literary world, which, even in its most unconventional manifestation, as in the case of Harihara's *Raḡaḷeḡaḷu*, is steeped in poetic traditions and conventions.

Whether the Vacanas should be regarded as literature or not, and whether or not they do own some form of poetics, be it a syntactical one or poet-based, their correspondence with the evolving literary culture of early medieval Kannada in terms of poetics is limited. In fact, the most natural literary successors to the Vacanakāras, in terms of dispositions as well as poetics, are few twentieth-century Kannada poets, (which is in itself a remarkable literary achievement by the Vacanakāras). The

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<sup>28</sup> See chapters 2 and 3 in Nāgarāj (1999: 33-84, Knn). Nāgarāj thinks that most Vacanas (with the important exception of those composed by Allama) do invoke *śṛṅgārarasa* ("love-experience") but only as a vehicle to generate the sentiment of *bhakti*.

<sup>29</sup> Translated by Ramanujan (1973: 37).

exclusion of the Vacanas from the body of pre-modern Kannada literature is not at all new: none of the pre-modern literary anthologies from the twelfth century onwards include the Vacanakāras in their lists of poets.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4.1.3 THE LITERARY CONTRIBUTION OF HARIHARA'S RAGAḶĒGAḶU

Until now, I have argued against the appraisal of the Vacanas as the quintessential Kannada literary project of their era. The complimentary, positive argument I would like to present now pertains to Harihara and his seminal influence on medieval Kannada literature. As stated earlier, Śāmarāya, among the few scholars who explicitly contest Mugaḷi's term "Basavaṇṇa's Age," goes as far as offering an alternative to this appellation, which is *hariharayuga*, "Harihara's Age."<sup>31</sup> I will consider this approach, building on several Kannaḍiga scholars as well as my own critical reflections. The claim that medieval Kannada literature should be considered as "Harihara's Age" is not the central argument I want to put forth; such claims are over-reductive in their very nature. The question at hand is, rather, whether the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* could serve as a case-example for the sea-change that Kannada literature went through during the early medieval. And, indeed, we find a plethora of contemporaneous Kannada scholarship that recognizes Harihara's historical significance for medieval Kannada literature. In the previous section, I quoted Radhakrishna contrasting between the Vacanakāras, whom she defines as saints, and Harihara, whom she defines as a poet. Radhakrishna describes Harihara thusly: "He broke away from the classical Champu tradition and created an entirely new Kannada metrical form which he called Ragale."<sup>32</sup> For this achievement, Radhakrishna terms Harihara as "the first revolutionary poet of

<sup>30</sup> Nāgarāj (1999: 47, Knn).

<sup>31</sup> Śāmarāya ([circa. 1964]: 9, Knn, quoted above).

<sup>32</sup> Shivaprakash and Radhakrishna (1990: 58).

Kannada.”<sup>33</sup> Under the entry *Harihara (Kannada)* in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature* one finds the following statement: “Harihara is known as a revolutionary poet in the sense that he completely changed the mode of poetic expression ... He heralded a new era in the field of literature and was widely appreciated as the poet who changed the technique and theme of poetry.”<sup>34</sup> S.D. Saudattimath, a prolific Kannadiga philologist, attests that “Harihara is recognized as one of the ‘four great poets’ in the history of Kannada Literature, spread over a period of two thousand years.”<sup>35</sup> Ēc. Devīrappa, a leading philologist who did considerable research on the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* during the second half of the twentieth century,<sup>36</sup> writes that the whole body of *vīraśaiva* literature in Kannada in the medieval era is considered as the “Harihara Tradition” (*harihara sampradāya*), and that there is no other poet quite like Harihara in the whole Kannada-speaking region.<sup>37</sup> Elsewhere Devīrappa writes that “Harihara utilized unique and unparalleled perseverance, imagination, erudition, poetic abilities, and knowledge in musical scales and rhythms [in his *Ragaḷēs*] ...”<sup>38</sup> Devīrappa also comments that Harihara’s writing still shows the light today to many poets today, whether composing in the *ragaḷē* meter or in prose, as both were so effectively used by Harihara when he paved “a new path (*udita mārga*)” in literature.<sup>39</sup> A similar assessment is given by Ṭi. Vi. Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī, one of the most acclaimed philologists of Kannada literature living

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Datta (1987: 1549 s.v. *Harihara*[Kannada]).

<sup>35</sup> Saudattimath (1988: 1). The other three being Pampa (eleventh century), Kumāravayāsa (fifteenth century), and Ratnākaravarni (sixteenth century) (ibid). This scheme might be a response to the famous Ratnatraya (“triple gems”) of classic Kannada poetry, who are Pampa, Ranna, and Ponna.

<sup>36</sup> See section 1.3 above.

<sup>37</sup> Devīrappa (1979: 30, Knn).

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 303, Knn).

<sup>39</sup> Devīrappa (1979: 31, Knn). *Mārga* can be read in this context in its wider semantic connotations of a literary tradition, such as used in the ninth-century treaty the *Kavirājamārga*.

today, in his monumental monograph on Kannada prosody, the *Kannaḍa Chandaḥsvarūpa*.<sup>40</sup> He also writes that it was a great event in the history of Kannada literature that Harihara paid notice to the distinct ability of the metrical features of *raḡaḷē* to beautify narrative poetry.<sup>41</sup> Another eminent literary historian, Ḍi. Ęl. Narasiḡhācār, perhaps the leading figure in his field during the first half of the twentieth century, brings to the fore Harihara's innovative style (which he describes as perfect), his sophisticated usage and maturity of language, and his unparalleled influence the medieval poets, both those of *mārga* and of *deśi*, by developing existing and inventing new poetic and metrical tools.<sup>42</sup> Narasiḡhācār concludes his discussion about Harihara by stating that this poet is one of the greatest (*atiśreṣṭha*) among Kannada poets. There are other scholars who echo these claims in their appreciation of Harihara's importance for the world of Kannada literature.<sup>43</sup>

Harihara was the first to break away from the heavily Sanskritized *mārga* style and to compose a literature that was heavily influenced by the poetics and themes of oral literature and the emerging cultural world of *bhakti* (including, of course, the *Vacanas* themselves) but at the same time also used an embellished, poetic mode of expression that directly corresponded with its contemporaneous, classic-oriented literary culture.<sup>44</sup> Harihara's unique blend of oral, non-elite traditions and courtly

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<sup>40</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 302-3, Knn).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Narasiḡhācār (2008: 154-55, Knn). Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī and Narasiḡhācār are both leading figures in the world of Kannaḍiga literary scholars, each in his own period. Together with few other Kannaḍiga scholars, Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī and Narasiḡhācār are described by Sheldon Pollock as "scholars endowed with authentic philological sensibilities, deep historical understanding, and keen critical intelligence" (Pollock 2004: 389)

<sup>43</sup> These include C. Nāgabhūṣaṇa (2005: 221-22, Knn); Saṅṅayya (2002: 143-53, Knn); Ęs. Ḍi. Savadattimaṭha in his Kannada writings (1999: 321, Knn); and Kīrtinātha Kurtakoṭi (1995: 151-73, Knn).

<sup>44</sup> See chapter three above.

literary traditions created something new that will impact the world of Kannada literature for several centuries, practically throughout its pre-modern phase. It is difficult to exaggerate with the appreciation of Harihara’s role for the literary shift of medieval Kannada; it suffices to point to the fact that after Harihara, practically all the salient Kannada poets switched to compose literary works with a single *deśi* meter. Until then, for a period of at least four centuries, Kannada literary production was controlled by the genre of *campū* of mixed meters and descriptive prose sections. Beyond prosodical conventions, the themes of classical Kannada *campū* literature also followed the cultural framework of *mārga* (the classical, pan-Indian, and Sanskritic culture). Until the thirteenth century, this classical, embellished courtly Kannada literature was patronized by kings, with only few exceptions, while even those operating outside the purview of the court did not deviate from the mainstream genre of *campū* nor from its core value system.<sup>45</sup> Although Harihara himself also composed several works that follow traditional genres,<sup>46</sup> he is commemorated by later poets and by Kannada scholars as the “*Ragaḷe*’s Poet.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, while Harihara was able to exemplify his mastery over traditional genres of Kannada poetry, it is clear that his historical contribution to Kannada literature stems from the *Ragaḷegaḷu*.

Harihara’s appellation “*ragaḷe*’s poet” is ambiguous, since the term *ragaḷe* also denotes in Kannada, in addition to the specific meter, the meaning of “nuisance” and “gabble”.<sup>48</sup> And, indeed, Harihara’s poetic legacy is complex; in the following section, I

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<sup>45</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 151, Knn).

<sup>46</sup> See section 2.1 above.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, in Āc. Devīrappa’s introduction in Harihara (1995 [1968]: iv, Knn). The medieval *vīraśaiva* literary tradition also highlights the centrality of the *Ragaḷegaḷu* when it narrates his life story. See section 2.2 above.

<sup>48</sup> Kittel (1982: 1326 s.v. *ragaḷe*). See also section 3.1 above.

discuss the problematics and tensions that are connected to Harihara's role in the history of Kannada literary culture. As a concluding remark as well as a prelude to that discussion, it can be noted that the tensions around Harihara's unorthodox literary practices do not undermine the historical significance of his work. On the contrary, these tensions, like in the case of so many other artistic geniuses, only contribute to the sense of *avant garde* that surrounds Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

#### 4.2 Complexities in Harihara's Legacy

Difference facets of Harihara's life and work portray an uncompromising, perhaps even eccentric, persona. As we have observed in chapter two, the narrative traditions about Harihara's life dramatically describe how he blatantly rejected the comforts of courtly life in favor of abstemious religious life. As the poetic analysis of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in chapter three shows, Harihara refused to follow the footsteps of his literary ancestors and instead chose to pave a new literary way. It is because of these traits that Devīrappa, a leading figure among scholars of Harihara's work quoted earlier in this chapter, describes Harihara as a "revolutionist" (*krāntipurūṣa*).<sup>49</sup> Of course, this term should not be read literal; Harihara, in contrast to some of the leading Śivabhaktas he wrote about in his *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, was not a leader of the masses and did not change the face of society of his times. His revolution was literary rather than social, and it inaugurated a new era in Kannada literature, an era that will continue until at least the eighteenth century.

Despite the Harihara's huge influence on Kannada literature from the thirteenth century onwards, the relation of his literary successors to his work is complicated. As we shall see below, Harihara's literary practices, as well as the socio-religious agendas

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<sup>49</sup> Devīrappa (1979: 29, Knn).



he promulgated, had generated a wide range of responses from his successors. His innovative work marks the beginning of the era of medieval Kannada literature, setting apart the previous classical work from the following literature in terms of language, style, narrative strategies, and themes, but it does not become a new classic or role model to be copied. In spite of the revolutionary nature of Harihara's work, or perhaps *because* of it, we see that what might be ostensibly termed as "Harihara's literary and religious legacies" are contested by the same tradition that commemorates his personal audacity and literary ingenuity and that acknowledges his historical significance in the development of its own religious poetry. This section speculates on the possible reasons for this development from two perspectives: the literary and the religious.

#### 4.2.1 LITERARY ECCENTRISM

The basic fact is that only few have followed Harihara's style of *Ragaḷeṣ*;<sup>50</sup> no meaningful medieval Kannada poet, with the exception of Harihara's contemporary and *bhakti* comrade Kēreya Padmarasa, utilized the *ragaḷe* meter in a manner similar to Harihara. Since the 1920's, the only pre-modern *Ragaḷeṣ* printed in Karnataka outside of Harihara's are a handful by a minor poet from the seventeenth century.<sup>51</sup> This state of

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<sup>50</sup> I excluded Pāḷkurikē Somanātha, who did experiment with *ragaḷe* meter in his Kannada, Telugu, and Sanskrit compositions, but in a limited and less-meaningful manner compared to his central works, the *Basava Purāṇamu* and the *Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritrē*, both written in *dvipadi* (or *dvipadi*), which is a related but not identical meter to *ragaḷe* (Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair 1990: 5-6). Tribhuvana Tāta, a contemporary of Harihara and a minor poet of few *Ragaḷeṣ*, is excluded as well. There were also those who continued the limited use of *ragaḷe* within a metrically diversified text, in continuance with the classic tradition of *campū* (Venkaṭācala Śāstrī 1978: 308-15, Knn). Interestingly, some modern poets have actually picked up *ragaḷe* in a robust manner (Shivaprakash and Radhakrishna 1990: 58). See, for example, Kuvempu's acclaimed *magnum opus* the *Rāmāyaṇadarśanam*. One possible explanation for the renewed interest in *ragaḷe* in the twentieth century could be its inherent structural simplicity that corresponds well with modern literary trends.

<sup>51</sup> A single *Ragaḷe* attributed to Bhīmakavi is also said to have been published in 1970. See the survey of *Ragaḷeṣ* publications in Kannada during the twentieth century, compiled by Saṅṅayya (2002: 143-153,

affairs might seem surprising when we consider the prominence of Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* compared to the previous and later literary production, as echoed by contemporary scholarship, and the centrality of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in Harihara's own commemoration. Moreover, the technical simplicity of the *ragaḷē* meter might be thought to have produced numerous followers. Considering all these factors, how can we explain the fact that Harihara's literary heritage did not prevail? From a literary perspective, it is precisely in the inherent formulaic simplicity of *ragaḷē* that might explain the discontinuance of Harihara's poetic path. As described earlier,<sup>52</sup> the *ragaḷē*'s metrical traits generate a text which is very simple in its structure, and this simplicity can easily deteriorate by mediocre hands into technical monotony. Kurtakoṭi remarks:

The rhythm of versification can become technical as it stretches, as if endlessly, in the uniformity of the syllabic arrangement (*mātrē-gaṇa*) [of the *ragaḷē* meter]. Nevertheless, despite this monotony, the rhythmic diversity that Harihara creates is surprising.<sup>53</sup>

Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī also praises Harihara's ingenuity in his effort to break the inherent monotony of the *ragaḷē* meter<sup>54</sup> and later explains:

In none among the *ragaḷē* poets subsequent to Harihara can his devotional frenzy, divine inspiration, lofty voice, and the like, be traced, and their works appear like pale imitations when compared against his. This is the case not only with regard to verse construction, but also to dialog construction, word repetitions, various alliterations, tonal modulations, and so on. However, with regard to metrical composition, not only is Harihara's accomplishment not visible in others' works, but also many weaknesses stand out.<sup>55</sup>

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Knn).

<sup>52</sup> See section 3.1 above.

<sup>53</sup> Kurtakoṭi (1995: 161, Knn).

<sup>54</sup> Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī (1978: 305, Knn).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 309, Knn.

According to Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī, the case is not so much that later poets did not try to follow Harihara's giant footsteps, but that they simply did not possess his poetic virtuosity.<sup>56</sup> According to Veṅkaṭācala Śāstrī, this was the reason that no work by the other *ragaḷē* poets made it into the literary pantheon of Kannada as Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* did. Harihara's work was inimitable.<sup>57</sup> For example, the *ragaḷē*'s innate absence of fixed feet structure, which implies an unstoppable flow of narration, becomes a hurdle for the mediocre poet. In order to overcome this hurdle, the *ragaḷē* composer must develop sophisticated narrative strategies, and it seems that Harihara's ingenuity in this matter was difficult to get reproduced by later poets. Something of Harihara's unique quality is reflected in the following critique by H.S. Radhakrishna, which simultaneously praises and scolds Harihara's style:

[Harihara's] chief weakness is his unrestrained poetic fluency that fails to register the consistency which is the hall mark of the creation of any great poet. Strangely enough, his strength appears to lie in his weakness: he writes always in ecstatic joy which not even the greatest of poets can sustain for any length of time for his poetry to be consistent. In his intense moments of joy Harihara's brilliance is incomparable and it takes us to the world of mystics; its sparkling poetic sheen leaves the reader dazzled. But suddenly from the heights of ecstasy, he falls into the abyss of mundane prosaic statements.<sup>58</sup>

The point to be made with regard to the failure of later traditions to continue producing *Ragaḷēs* is that, despite this failure, Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* had an incredibly substantial impact on the medieval literary tradition in Kannada. Although we do not find any other significant *ragaḷē* narrative work in pre-modern Kannada poetry, the

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<sup>56</sup> This opinion is also echoed by Saṅṅayya (2002: 143, Knn).

<sup>57</sup> Paradoxically, there were attempts to compose *Ragaḷēs* under the Harihara's name. See section 1.3 above.

<sup>58</sup> Shivaprakash and Radhakrishna (1990: 59).

impact of Harihara's *Ragaḷeś* on medieval Kannada literature can be easily traced: it is Rāghavāṅka, Harihara's nephew and *protégé*, who adopts the literary strategies developed by Harihara in his *Ragaḷeś* in order to put forth the less chaotic and more contained meter of *ṣaṭpadi* (six feet verse structure), and it is this meter, and not the *ragaḷe*, that becomes the standard medium for *vīraśaiva* narrative compositions in the medieval period to follow. Rāghavāṅka's composition style for his narrative works, based on the single meter of *ṣaṭpadi*, embodies many of the innovations that Harihara introduces in his *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*, such as the central theme of *śivabhakti* and the lives of Śivabhaktas, the linguistic shift to Middle Kannada, and an expressivity based on oral traditions. At the same time, the feet-based verse structure of the *ṣaṭpadi* has a much wider appeal than the uncontrolled flow of the *ragaḷe*—for the author as well as for the audience—and this is the basis for the *ṣaṭpadi*'s success among the later *vīraśaiva* authors.<sup>59</sup> Thus, from the perspective of literary history, it is not the case that Harihara's literary revolution went unnoticed or failed but, as the case with most revolutions is, was translated into less extreme and more complaisant literary practices that soon became the norm.

#### 4.2.2 RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVENESS

There are less formulaic and more ideological issues with Harihara's *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* that contributed to what can be termed as an alienation of this text by later *vīraśaiva* authors. As we advance in the history of *vīraśaiva* literature from the thirteenth century till the sixteenth, we find next to the literary attributions to Harihara's work also literary testimonies for a growing discomfort with Harihara's portrayal of the Śivaśaraṇas, a discomfort that is evinced by the repeated need to rewrite Harihara's

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<sup>59</sup> See Kurtakoṭi (1995: 171-73, Knn).

narratives. This trend can be explained by Harihara's unique religious vision, a vision that becomes less and less suitable for the specific needs of the institutionalized tradition in the centuries that follows him.

In accordance with his textual approach, Harihara's plotting considerably differs from other *vīraśaiva* texts in its very structure: while later hagiographies weave many stories about different Śaraṇas around one central figure, Harihara's *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* carries no such overbearing thematic framework. Instead, each of his Ragaḷēs is dedicated to the life of a particular Śivaśaraṇa, be it a famous Sanskrit poet from the pan-Indian imaginaire (temporally situated before the turn of the first millennium), a Śaiva of the Tamil Nāyaṇārs tradition (from the turn of the first millennium), or a more recent saintly person from the Kannada- or Telugu-speaking regions;<sup>60</sup> as many Kannaḡiga scholars contend, the only criterion for entering Harihara's hall of fame is having a life story that exhibits a clear and unwavering devotion to Śiva, while issues of specific praxes, creeds, or traditions are rendered as irrelevant.<sup>61</sup> This nonhierarchical inclusiveness, in which different Bhaktas from different locales and eras are clumped together without any organizing principle—be it chronological, religious, thematic, or else—invites doctrinal obscurities and ambiguities, especially when dealing with a religious phenomenon that sharply oscillates between Brahmanical orthodoxy and radical iconoclasm.<sup>62</sup>

When viewed from the perspective of the later *vīraśaiva* movement, the shortcomings of Harihara's non-judgmental inclusiveness become apparent: for one, Harihara's amalgam of multiple and different traditions without any explicit attempt to

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<sup>60</sup> More on the thematic structure of the Ragaḷēs in section 1.3 above.

<sup>61</sup> See 7.intro below.

<sup>62</sup> I allude here to Richard Davis' *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshiping Śiva in Medieval India* (1991). See discussion in chapter seven about the varied practices described in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*.

prioritize them or organize their differences according to some ideological measuring stick is problematic for a growing community that requires clearly demarcated boundaries; this is all the more true with regard to the complex issue of the obscured origins of the *vīraśaiva* tradition.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Harihara's enhanced focus on devotionalism as the sole criterion for his writing about saintly characters allows him some levity in terms of the characters' infallibility. Consequently, the protagonists in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are imperfect from a doctrinal point of view, or that of a religious community. Consider, for example, the following remark by P. B. Desai with regard to Harihara's most celebrated *Ragaḷē*, the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē*:

... Harihara narrates that originally Basavaṇṇa was Gaṇēśvara, a member of Śiva's assembly in Kailāsa, and that he was cursed by Śiva to be born in the mortal world for uttering a blatant lie. This presentation indirectly casting aspersion on Basavaṇṇa's fair character, appears, partly at any rate, to have contributed to the unpopularity of Harihara among the followers of the faith.<sup>64</sup>

The issue here is not merely the puritan-like demands by a later, institutionalized community, but the author's ideological approach to the text as whole. It appears that Harihara's style made this text less palatable to the medieval *śivabhakti* community in the Kannada-speaking regions, especially compared to texts such as the *Basava Purāṇamu*. Harihara's relatively non-dogmatic writing, allows, side by side with fantastic descriptions, also realistic narration strategy with certain resistance to hyperbolism. On this, P. B. Desai writes:

Harihara's account ... breathes with a lively sense of an intimate biographer who was in possession of some matter of fact details ... All the *Vīraśaiva Purāṇas* describe that Basavaṇṇa's first contact with Bijjala and the subsequent events of

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<sup>63</sup> See discussion in section 1.2 above.

<sup>64</sup> Desai (1968: 250).

his life took place in Kalyāṇa only. But it is only in Harihara's work that we get details of his official career as it commenced at Maṅgaḷavāḍa. This is fully borne out by the epigraphical evidence ... Therefore we have to treat Harihara's portrayal of this phase as true to history.<sup>65</sup>

As much as Harihara's style of narration is palatable to the modern historian (as is the case with Desai himself), it seems to have hampered the canonical adoption of this text.<sup>66</sup> Compared with the generally sober narrative style of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, that of the *Basava Purāṇamu* is filled with hyperbolic descriptions and illogical twists.<sup>67</sup> The latter text's convoluted plotting can be explained by the fact that Pāḷkurikē Somanātha is invested in this text in establishing Basavaṇṇa's figure as the absolute political and religious leader of the *vīraśaiva* movement for generations to come. For this purpose, Somanātha literally (as well as literarily) weaves into his narrative about Basavaṇṇa a bewildering number of stories about other Śaraṇas and, by this, subjugates their historical significance to Basavaṇṇa's. Somanātha is by no means the first to exercise such convoluted narrative strategy. We find a similar principle already at play in the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*, composed more than a century earlier. Both these texts, after all, belong to the same genre of vernacular Purāṇa and share the same *śaiva* tradition.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, pp. 244-46.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 249.

<sup>67</sup> See Ben-Herut (2012) for a comparison and analysis of one story as it is retold in the two texts, together with a third contemporaneous version.

<sup>68</sup> See discussion in section 1.1 above about the cross-regional *śivabhakti* movement in early-medieval south India. Regarding the genre affinity between the *Basava Purāṇa* and the *Pēriya Purāṇam*, it is clear that there is a need for an analytical study of south-Indian vernacular literary genres in the pre-modern second millennium, a subject yet to be taken to thorough examination. For a specific comparative reflection in this direction, see Monius (2009). We do not have any concrete proof or claims by the authors regarding direct appropriations of the *Pēriya Purāṇam* either by Harihara or by Pāḷkurikē Somanātha. However, the structural similarities between the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam* and the Telugu *Basava Purāṇa* suggests direct textual appropriation by Somanātha. A support for this claim can be found in the fact that Somanātha knew Tamil and composed few verses in this language.

What is important for our discussion here is the fact that the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* lack the foreboding political agenda regarding Basavaṅṅa that the *Basava Purāṇamu* has. It appears that this political agenda contributed to the immense popularity of the Kannada version of the *Basava Purāṇamu* among the medieval *vīraśaiva* community, a popularity that clearly exceeded that of Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>69</sup> Put differently, we can say that—in a manner that is perhaps paradoxical to modern rational dispositions—the quasi-realistic and straightforward narration style of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* attributed to its marginalization by more grandiose and convoluted accounts, such as that of the *Basava Purāṇamu*.

Another problem with the reception of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* by the later Kannada *vīraśaiva* community started to develop a few centuries after Harihara. As Chandra Shobhi cogently argues, the religio-political climate of the Vijayanagara court from the fifteenth century onwards required coherent religious narratives from the participating sects.<sup>70</sup> Harihara's text could not provide such a narrative, despite its acknowledged and central status for the *vīraśaiva* tradition. Particular features of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, namely the inclusion of different *śaiva* sects and the unexpurgated manner of describing some Śaraṇas, seem to have been become its weak points when encountered by new, puritan-like demands of the Viraktas, the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *vīraśaiva* reformers at the Vijayanagara court. Chandra Shobhi writes:

They [the fifteenth-century *virakta* poets] find Harihara to be a problematic figure, whose account of *śaiva* devotees had to be challenged ... He does not write

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<sup>69</sup> Desai (1968: 244-53). One could make in this case a broader claim about the correspondence between historical progression and the growing fantastic hyperbolism in South-Asian hagiographies. For such a study about a modern, twentieth-century tradition, see Rinehart (1999).

<sup>70</sup> Chandra Shobhi (2005: 195-225).



about a collective in any of his *ragaḷes* nor does he or other poets of the pre-*virakta* era write about Lingayat theology and practice, as Cāmarasa and the various editors of *Śūnyasampādane* do.<sup>71</sup>

Chandra Shobhi shows how doctrinal anxieties regarding contemporaneous communal identity and the manner in which the *vīraśaiva* past is projected reshaped the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century narratives about the Śaraṇas in considerable ways. He presents a lucid example of this process by focusing on the changing nature of the important mystical figure of Allama Prabhu, contrasting the depiction of young Allama's romance with a voluptuous dancer in Harihara's *Prabhudevāra Ragaḷe* and his abstemious piety in Cāmarasa's *Prabhulingalīḷe*.<sup>72</sup> Harihara starts his story about Allama in Kailāsa, where Allama (as a Śivagaṇa called Nirmāya) is infatuated with a divine damsel (Surasati).<sup>73</sup> The distracted couple is sent to earth by Śiva in order to culminate their earthly desires outside of Kailāsa. Indeed, immediately afterward we are told about the sensuous love story between the two heavenly beings as worldly youngsters. This love affair tragically ends with the unexpected death of the woman lover, a death that throws young Allama into an abysmal state. He goes through a religious epiphany that alters his life and sends him on a spiritual mission that culminates in his unity with Śiva at Śrīśailam. For this plot, Harihara's narrative logic dictates that the more earthly young Allama's affair is, the darker his post-affair depression and the more effective is the drama of his spiritual awakening. Within this narrative logic, Allama's humaneness (his vices included) plays a crucial dramatic role. Indeed, Harihara seems to celebrate young Allama's earthly (and theologically faulty) desires with erotic descriptions of

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, pp. 212-13.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, pp. 195-207.

<sup>73</sup> See summary of this *Ragaḷe* and a discussion about it in section 7.2.4 below.

Allama's sexual unity with his lover.

Matters are very different in Cāmarasa's version. Cāmarasa, who labors in his text to reconstruct Allama's figure as the utmost spiritual authority of the *virakta* movement, (a parochial role that is almost alien to Harihara's Allama), cannot allow the perfect mystic Allama to be stirred by earthly desires. Accordingly, Cāmarasa completely drops the Kailāsa story about the erring *Nirmāya* and transforms the earthly union between Allama and his lover into a broken metaphor for an asymmetrical and lustless encounter. In fact, in Cāmarasa's text, Allama's lover dies exactly because of her failure to seduce Allama.<sup>74</sup> Other *virakta* authors adopt less extreme reconfigurations of Harihara's Allama than that by Cāmarasa, though they still reconstitute the saint's figure according to theological restraints that are completely absent in Harihara's work. For example, in Lakkaṇṇa Daṇḍeśa's *Śivatattvacintāmaṇi*, a voluminous fifteenth-century work, *Nirmāya*, Allama's heavenly persona, desires a female beauty only after Śiva chastises him over another issue. This narrative shift is intended to ameliorates Allama's "original sin," as his arousal is reframed and explained away by Lakkaṇṇa Daṇḍeśa, in contrast to Allama's quite straightforward heavenly infatuation in Harihara's version.<sup>75</sup>

I would like to support Chandra Shobhi's claims regarding the reconfiguration of Allama by the later *Viraktas*. Beyond the issue of earthly lust, a more general discrepancy between Harihara's depiction of Allama and all the later depictions pertains to his talkability. Here, again, we find that the chasm between Harihara and the later writers is difficult to bridge. While in Harihara Allama appears to be a highly

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, pp. 204-6.

<sup>75</sup> This incident appears in the *Śivatattvacintāmaṇi* 29.34-31. See L. Basavarāju (2001 [1960]: 44-45, Knn). Compare with the *Prabhudevara Raḡaḷe* vv. 1-10 in Harihara (1999: 300).

terse person who, despite some sporadic spiritual encounters, shuns away from human contact or verbal exchanges, in the later accounts Allama is a provocative and confident debater, an orator. Somewhat paradoxically, it is the former depiction of Allama that better fits his philosophically suspicious attitude toward language as conveyed by many of the Vacanas attributed to him.<sup>76</sup> Conversely, Allama's latter depiction better fits the huge corpus of Vacanas that is attributed to him by the medieval tradition.

As stated earlier, these specific examples point to a larger trend by the later authors to replace Harihara's narratives about the Śaraṇas with more doctrinally aligned accounts. Chandra Shobhi even presents an emic reflection from a later seventeenth-century account about Harihara's problematic status in the view of the Viraktas at the Vijayanagara court. The text describes a *vaiṣṇava* minister who comments while debating with a Virakta about the latter's intent to retell the stories about Śivaśaraṇas: “[You] characterized the verses of Hampe Harihara as *abaddha* (incoherent) ...”<sup>77</sup> Clearly, Harihara became something of a doctrinal problem for the later *vīraśaiva* agents, and it appears that this state of affairs contributed to his marginalization in the history of *vīraśaiva* literature.

#### 4.3 Concluding Remarks: The Literary Turn of *Bhakti* in Medieval Kannada Literature

This chapter argues for Harihara's unique contribution to the history of Kannada literature. In the beginning of the chapter, I referred to different approaches in contemporary Kannada literary criticism to periodicize the history of Kannada

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<sup>76</sup> Chandra Shobhi quotes a line of a famous vacana attributed to Allama: “See, *lipi* (script) that should not be erased ought not to be written” (2005: 180). On Allama's anti-lingual metaphysical stance, see Nāgarāj (1999: 45-84, Knn).

<sup>77</sup> Chandra Shobhi (2005: 198).

literature. Rather than adhering to one specific method, my argument was that regardless of the prism with which we wish to divide pre-modern Kannada literature into distinct historical phases, it is clear that the appearance of *śivabhakti* literature completely changed the way Kannada literature is composed. This new trend inaugurated a new literary era, and it is difficult to exaggerate with its significance. I asserted that within this sea-change, the role of the Vacanakāras might not have been as central as scholars generally assume, as they operated at the margins of the established literary culture. I then argued that in order to better understand the dramatic developments of the Kannada literary culture during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there is more sense in focusing on Harihara's groundbreaking work of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, since this is the first literary piece to artfully incorporate into existing literary practices dramatically new literary devices and expressivity. More than any other work, it is this work that set the way for the medieval literary culture to come. Harihara's work exhibits the historical literary shift discussed here in the most profound and lucid way.

At the same time, and as is often the case with literary (or any other) *avant garde*, the infantry of *bhakti* poets who had followed Harihara's example, did so only to a limited extent and in a restrained manner. In the second section of this chapter, I showed how Harihara's unwavering ingenuity not only inaugurated a new literary era, but also, paradoxically, played a role in the gradual marginalization of his legacy by the later *vīraśaiva* poets. Compared with Harihara, these poets adopt a less adventurous and experimental literary model for their literary production, based on the *ṣaṭpadi* meter, as well as a more cohesive and doctrinal ideology for their religious dictum. Thus, while Harihara's critical contribution to the world of *bhakti* literature in Kannada is not

denied by later generations, at the same time its presence in this world becomes more and more problematic as we advance in time. Still, the repeated attributions to Harihara by later poets indicate that the problematics in his heritage discussed above did not completely obscure the recognition by the later tradition of his contribution to the field of literature.

## **PART II: RELIGIOUS TEXT**

## 5 The Śaraṇa's Interiority

What did it mean to be a devotee of Śiva in the early thirteenth-century Kannada-speaking regions according to the hagiographies of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*? In the second part of the dissertation, I address this question using an inside-out vector of narrative spaces; the first space that I deal with in this chapter is the devotee's interiority. In this arena, as we shall see below, devotional dispositions and intimate relationship with the god are articulated in their most intense forms. By presenting summaries of a series of stories from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and analyzing their narratives, I argue in this chapter that the Śivabhakta's internal space—one's attitudes toward oneself and the god—is uniquely configured toward the absolute and the extreme, and that narrative action in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is primarily shaped by this uncompromising disposition.

All *bhakti* traditions foreground the devotee's interiority as the central arena for divine realization, starting from the *Bhagavad Gītā* onward,<sup>1</sup> and Kannada *śivabhakti* is no exception. However, the literary figurations of this devotional tradition do stand out due to the extreme vision and uncompromising attitudes they articulate. David Shulman, while comparing the devotional dispositions of the Tamil and Kannada Śaivism as articulated in the early narratives, recognizes the uniquely acerbic voice of Kannada *śivabhakti*, which conveys “a horror of compromise and paradox, a drive toward absolutization, hence toward straightening out the zigzag patterns so characteristic of the Tamil Śaiva universe.”<sup>2</sup> Shulman's diagnosis, voiced with regard to

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<sup>1</sup> Pechilis (1999: 5).

<sup>2</sup> Shulman (1993b: 50).

the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, is equally applicable to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>3</sup>

According to the stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the arena of the devotee's interiority is the most firm and unambiguous of all. The Śaraṇa's emotional and cognitive realms remain in almost all of these narratives impervious to contingencies, nomic compromises, and oppositional resistance, using an unmistakably protestive voice. Oftentimes, this internal quench for absolute theology does not remain enclosed in the devotee's interiority in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories, but invokes impatient, protestive gestures against members of other religious communities, fellow devotees, oneself, even against the god. Some of the protagonists are violent; others irascible; all of them are pertinacious. This tradition, in short, is hot-tempered and concrete, constantly defining itself against the mundane, often in a volatile manner. We shall also observe below how, in some cases, the burning impatience and absolutized disposition that characterize this tradition are also projected onto the relationship between the Bhakta and Śiva, giving license to the Bhakta to exercise control over his or her god.

### 5.1 Determining *Niṣṭhē*

Unhindered determination is the strongest and most identifiable thread that runs through all the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories, and more broadly, of the early śaiva literary works of these regions. While religious practices, caste and social affiliations, and even Śiva's own personality vary from story to story, from region to region, and from one character to another, all of the Śaraṇas from the Kannada-speaking regions in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* share a basic and unyielding determination that underlies their actions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Note that I include the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* in what I term as Kannada Śaivism, as this particular text is part of a literary and devotional tradition that is based in the Kannada-speaking regions, in which this Telugu text had more impact than in the Telugu literary milieu. See discussion in section 1.1.3 above.

<sup>4</sup> From a pan-Indian perspective, the focus in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* on interiority as the defining feature of this



The emic term for “determination in Śiva” is *ekaniṣṭhē* (single determination), or simply *niṣṭhē* (determination). In Kittel’s Kannada-English Dictionary *niṣṭhē* is defined as: “devotion or attachment to, devotedness, ordinary and uniform practice; religious duty; believing in, faith, reliance.”<sup>5</sup> This definition is vague and general, in the sense that it binds together attitudes and practices without a clear semantic focus. In the recent *Vīraśaiva Lexicon for Technical Terms (Vīraśaiva Pāribhāṣika Padakośa)*, *niṣṭhē* is defined as “devotion endowed with unwavering belief ... Firm belief is *niṣṭhē*.”<sup>6</sup> This definition indicates that, for the Kannada śaiva tradition, the term *niṣṭhē* marks an interior mode of devotion rather than practice (in contrast to Kittel’s definition). In addition, it foregrounds the uniquely intense quality of *niṣṭhē* by echoing the Sanskrit verb from which it is derived, *(ni)sthā*, in the sense of “to be grounded.”<sup>7</sup> Harihara’s invocation of the term *niṣṭhē* at particular moments in the narratives corresponds well to this theological sense, as we shall observe below.

### 5.1.1 A PIERCING NIṢṬHĒ

*Niṣṭhē* shapes the telos of the following story and also serves as the most definitive trait of its protagonist. The Ragaḷē is called the *Surigēya Cauḍayyana Ragaḷē* (*Cauḍa Ragaḷē* henceforth), and it is a short-length Ragaḷē of 188 verses. Here is the story’s summary:

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religious community challenges to a point the overarching analytical observation that Hinduism is an orthopraxy and not orthodoxy, as stated, for example, by Alf Hiltebeitel in Hawley (1991: 27).

<sup>5</sup> Kittel (1982: 886 s.v. *niṣṭhē* 2).

<sup>6</sup> Vidyāśankara (2000: 296-97 s.v. *niṣṭhābhakti*, Knn). In the doctrinal world of Vīraśaivism, for example, *niṣṭhē* signifies one of the six sub-stages of the first of the six spiritual phases (*ṣaṣṭhala*) taken by the adept on his path to Śiva realization. The presentation of *niṣṭhēbhakti* as a fixed stage within the philosophical scheme of *ṣaṣṭhala* appears in the *Siddhāntaśikhāmaṇi*. See Śivayogīśivācārya, Mallikārjuna, and Siddhēśvara (2004 [1966]: 267-73, Skt and Knn) and English translation Śivayogīśivācārya et al. (2007).

<sup>7</sup> Monier-Williams et al (1986: 563 s.v. *niṣṭhā* 2).

In the northern region, there is a *śaiva* settlement (*śivapura*) in which the Bhakta Surigēya Cauḍayya<sup>8</sup> lives. Every day, without fail, Cauḍayya fulfills his ritual observances (*nema*<sup>9</sup>): going to the pond in the morning to purify himself, picking flowers for the worship (*pūjē*), and then going to Śiva's temple. But every time Cauḍayya enters to temple, it is overcrowded, and he cannot even get a glimpse of Śiva before the afternoon arrives. By then, the fresh flowers in his hands are wilted and Cauḍayya gets filled with frustration. One day, with tears in his eyes, Cauḍayya takes a vow (*āṇē*) to Śiva: if on the following day, or any other, a person shall come in the way between him and Śiva, he shall do away with that person, and the responsibility to prevent this is Śiva's. In this manner, with great determination (*niṣṭhē*), Cauḍayya starts to carry a dagger (*suragi*) whenever he visits Śiva's temple, and, indeed, on every visit Śiva makes sure no one stands in the way between him and the devotee. One night, Śiva appears in Cauḍayya's dream and says he is hungry. Cauḍayya immediately gets up and orders his wife and her assistants to prepare divine food for Śiva. Cauḍayya takes the prepared food and heads to the temple. There, he approach Śiva's statue, places the food in proper plates and waits, with folded hand, for the god to eat. But, despite Cauḍayya's pleadings, nothing happens, until Cauḍayya pulls out his dagger and places it on his own neck. At that moment, a hand comes out of the *liṅga*, takes the food and starts to feed Śiva's five mouths, and then also the rest of the gods, goddesses, and attendants (Gaṇas) in the hall. However, the food is not finished, and Śiva, afraid (*aṅji*) of Cauḍayya using his dagger on himself, continues to eat despite his satiation. Only then Cauḍayya is satisfied. He decides from that moment onwards to make the practice of feeding the *liṅga* into a daily observance (*nema*). Many days pass in this way, until one morning, as Cauḍayya enters the temple with the dagger ready in his hand, two visitors to the town—unaware of Cauḍayya and his vows—stand in his way to see Śiva. He immediately stabs them to death and throws their bodies aside. He then turns toward Śiva and asks: "Is it proper that you are blocked from my view?" Cauḍayya continues to perform his rituals while people gather outside the temple around the two dead bodies and ask: "Is this proper?" They call Cauḍayya to come outside, and when he sees the commotion, he turns to the two dead bodies and yells: "Get up you two!" Both immediately stand up and fold their hands in reverence to Cauḍayya. Then, flowers rain from the sky, and a heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends, picks up Cauḍayya and the two Bhaktas, and takes them to Kailāsa.

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<sup>8</sup> The name Cauḍayya is also spelled Cavuṇḍa, Cāvunḍa, and Cavuḍa.

<sup>9</sup> This term is discussed in section 7.1.1 below.

When Cauḍayya enters Kailāsa, Śiva turns to his attendants and tells them: “This is Cauḍayya, a great devotee who will not let anything to come in the way between me and him. He kept his observance, killed those who stood between us, and then also brought them up here. Have you ever seen such a wonderful devotee?”

The *Cauḍa Ragaḷē* introduces us to the intense world of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* saints. In this story, the saint is engaged by his daily service to Śiva, located in the local temple. He will do anything—including murder—to prevent anything from coming in the way of his worship.

Cauḍayya’s story contains several features that are foundational for this *śaiva* tradition; perhaps the most obvious one in this story is *niṣṭhē* (determination). The term *niṣṭhē* is explicitly used by Harihara in the crucial moments of the story: for example, when Cauḍayya takes a dagger with him to the temple, faithful to his vow to use it. But what we should pay particular notice to is the fact that Cauḍayya’s *niṣṭhē* is manifested though a markedly impatient disposition. His interiority is completely unfamiliar with any sense of reflection or hesitation with regard to his devotional disposition. He is continuously prepared to demonstrate or, rather, to perform his devotional duties with a mechanically and absolutized determination, supercilious to any earthly consequences.<sup>10</sup>

The two central scenes in this story communicate to the audience Cauḍayya’s unwavering determination, and both are constructed around Cauḍayya’s readiness to use his dagger in order to maintain his vows. In the first one, he places his dagger on

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<sup>10</sup> In the *Pēriya Purāṇam*, the main hagiographical text of the neighboring and related tradition of the Tamil Nāyaṇārs, there is a similar effort to communicate this intense devotion through action. Indira Peterson writes: “[T]he core of the Tamil Śaiva ideal of devotion, and therefore of sainthood, is the capacity to love Śiva with intense emotion, and to express this love in equally intense and spontaneous acts of devotion” (1994: 205)

his own neck and threatens to kill himself if Śiva does not eat the food he brought him.<sup>11</sup> Śiva yields to Cauḍayya's threat and starts eating against his own will. By this, the narrative communicates not only Śiva's dependence on the devotee's food but also the god's subordination to the devotee's will.<sup>12</sup> Cauḍayya, in contrast to his god, operates in an intense and hermetic interiority that dictates complete determination to perform—in fact, externalize—his or her devotion at any given moment. In the second central scene, Cauḍayya uses the dagger to do away with two Bhaktas. Like Cauḍayya, they are Śivabhaktas who come to the temple to worship Śiva, but, despite this fellowship, Cauḍayya stabs them without hesitation. His vow not to have his view of Śiva obstructed is kept, not matter at what cost; the utilitarian calculus is simply irrelevant for this Śaraṇa. On second thought, the price for acting out the Śaraṇa's *niṣṭhē* in fulfilling his vows to Śiva does have some significance to the story: it allows the Śaraṇa to exhibit his inner devotion, to put it on an external, public display. All the protagonists that occupy the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories about Śaraṇas from the Kannada-speaking regions are equally extrovert and impervious to deliberation.

The uncompromising aspect of the Śaraṇa's determination has another signifier in Harihara's devotional lexicon, which is *vīra* ("valor").<sup>13</sup> In later periods, this term becomes synonymous with all the *bhakti* strands of Śaivism in the Kannada-speaking regions, but Harihara uses it only in specific moments and for predicative purposes, not as proper noun.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, the term *vīra* appears in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* almost

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<sup>11</sup> The literary trope of self-sacrifice is found in several *Ragaḷēs*. The most extreme example is the mass suicide orchestrated by Kovūra Bōmmayya, discussed in section 9.1 below. For the centrality of food practices in religious settings for this *śaiva* culture, see sections 6.5, 7.4.1, and 9.3. below.

<sup>12</sup> I elaborate on this intricate relationship in section 5.2 below.

<sup>13</sup> Ēṁ. Cidānandamūrti draws a direct connection between the concepts of *ekaniṣṭhē* and *vīra* (1989b: 432, Knn).

<sup>14</sup> This pattern suggests that the *śaiva* tradition in the Kannada-speaking region during Harihara's time

exclusively in sectarian settings in which the Śaraṇa is required to challenge a member of another sect in public. During these interactions, the term *vīra* signifies the Bhakta's tenacity in performing his devotion by opposing the religious "other," at times in violent ways.<sup>15</sup> I discuss in detail this operative mode against the "other" later in the dissertation,<sup>16</sup> although it reemerges several times in the discussion below as well.

### 5.1.2 CULTIVATING NIṢṬHĒ

I just stated that *niṣṭhē* is an axiomatic trait for the saintly characters that fill the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories, but there is one exception to this rule: a devotee called Kallayya. He is the only character in this saintly cadre that does not own this determination in the first place but, rather, builds it over time. The *Hāvinahāḷa Kallayyana Ragaḷē* (*Kalla Ragaḷē* henceforth) is a short-length *Ragaḷē* that consists of 458 verses. Here is its summary:

Hāvinahāḷa is a city filled with Śivabhaktas and Brahmins. A young couple from a family of goldsmiths asks Śiva for a son, and after paying a visit to his temple, the wife becomes pregnant. At an auspicious date, she gives birth to a healthy son who is named Kallayya after Śiva Kallinātha. When the son becomes fifteen years of age, the parents take him to the temple and explain to him that he is not like everyone else, for Śiva delivered him to them, and that Śiva is his Guru. Kallayya starts to worship Śiva with complete devotion. He gets irritated by the unworthy ones (*aprastuta*) who do not worship Śiva, such as Brahmins and others. Their sight pains him, but he cannot translate his inner thoughts and devotion to Śiva to external action. Wanting to win over the Brahmins, Kallayya

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did not think of itself as a bounded community as the later authors did. See discussion about the historicity of the term *vīraśaiva* in section 1.2.1 above.

<sup>15</sup> The term *vīrabhakti* as denoting this belligerent mode in Harihara's stories is briefly mentioned by M. Chidananda Murthy (1983: 203–204, 205n3). A similar association is provided by David Shulman, when he writes about the *vīraśaiva* movement as depicted in the thirteenth-century Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*: "It is an impatient movement, in love with an exclusive and absolutized truth, and prepared to fight for it; it is not by chance that its exemplary figures are classed as *vīras*, 'heroes'" (1993b: 50).

<sup>16</sup> See chapters eight and nine.

goes to Śiva Kallinātha at the temple and asks for his help, but Śiva does not respond. Kallayya grows angry and frustrated with the god, but to no avail. At that time, a bad Vaiṣṇava who is an officer in King Bijjala's army approaches Kallayya's father and asks that Kallayya, who is a talented goldsmith, make him a golden necklace, for which he will pay generously. But Kallayya refuses to do so. The father, enraged, approaches Kallayya at the middle of the night and shouts at him: "What is this? Why are you so occupied with Śiva? You should take care of life in this world. Why did I give you Śiva's name? My life is ruined because of *bhakti*! You are killing me with your refusal to live in this world. You shall not go to the temple anymore! You have to kill me first!" Kallayya responds to his father's threat: "Even if you kill me, I will not leave the feet of Śiva Kallinātha, for he is my mother and father." Kallayya's father, furious at his son's insolence, starts to beat him. Kallayya grabs a long knife (*kaṭhāri*), yelling: "I do not want to live in this world!" and leaves for Śiva's temple. There, he sits on the ground next to the *liṅga* and says: "You are my father and the cause for all of this." He cuts open his belly and takes out his intestines. He hugs Śiva, who hugs Kallayya back and tells him: "You shall prevail. Revaṇasiddha's son, the great teacher Rudradeva, will become your Guru. You will also get to spend time with Siddharāma before joining me at Kailāsa." Kallayya, his belly wide open, passes out, and when the temple priests discover him in the morning, they take him to his parents. His wound is treated, and his whole body is covered with holy ash (*bhasma*). Kallayya recovers to the joy of the people around him. After his recovery is complete, he learns the Vedas and the Śāstras and wins in theological debates against Brahmins, atheists (Lokāyatas), Buddhists, and materialists (Cārvākas). When the famous Revaṇasiddha visits the city, Kallayya approaches him and says: "You are an eternal Guru. Can you bless me by appointing me with a Guru?" Hearing this, Revaṇa turns to his son Rudradeva and says: "Become Kallayya's Guru and remove his worldly illusion (*māyē*)!" At the temple, Rudradeva approaches Kallayya and initiates (*upadeśa*) him with Śiva knowledge. The lotus petals of Kallayya's mind properly open (*mānasadōḷaḷavaṭṭu daḷaverutaṁ*).<sup>17</sup> Few days later, while Kallayya worships Śiva, a terrible snake (*ugrasarpa*) crawls up to Kallayya and bites him, Kallayya yells to Śiva: "It is your doing, so you solve this!" As a result, the snake immediately dies and Kallayya remains unaffected by the bite. Seeing this, Kallayya asks: "Am I so poisonous that a snake that bites me dies? Why did you make me like this?" A voice says to Kallayya: "Why do you feel so miserable? The snake is not dead but alive!"

<sup>17</sup> This is a Tantric expression that signifies a state of divine bliss. See also section 3.4.1 above.

Kallayya turns to look at the snake, which starts moving again. Kallayya thanks Śiva and starts to praise him in song. He is transformed into Knower of Śiva (Śivajñāni<sup>18</sup>), completely free from worldly desires.

Kallayya's story continues, but the passage above reaches a clear sense of thematic and theological closure, and thus we can draw several themes already at this point.<sup>19</sup> As noted earlier, Kallayya is an exceptional figure among the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* Śaraṇas. He is an imperfect devotee, whom, at the beginning of the story, unable to challenge non-believers despite his wish to do so. It is not that Kallayya is not devoted to Śiva, but he is not determined enough to translate this devotional interiority into real action. The first scene at the temple exemplifies Kallayya's shortcomings, as Śiva remains aloof to Kallayya's feeble appeal for assistance. Note that this scene is completely opposite to the scene we encountered in Cauḍayya's story earlier in the chapter, in which Śiva agrees to eat Cauḍayya's food in response to the latter's threat to cut his own throat.<sup>20</sup> Where Cauḍayya is determined to get the god's attention, even at the price of giving way his own life, young Kallayya simply walks away from the temple, frustrated from the god's disregard to him. The rest of Kallayya's life story is made of a series of tests through which Kallayya builds or bolsters his determination. In the second time he visits Śiva at the temple, Kallayya is so determined in his devotion that he readily cuts his belly open at the feet of Śiva's statue. This time, Śiva cannot ignore his devotee and responds. The two temple scenes in the *Kalla Ragaḷe* are couched by another set of twin scenes: in the first, prior to Kallayya's first visit to temple, he fails to challenge the nonbelievers. In the second, which occurs after the second temple

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<sup>18</sup> This term carries mystical signification in *vīraśaiva* theology (Vidyāśaṅkara 2000: 504 s.v. *śivajñāni*, Knn).

<sup>19</sup> We shall pay attention to the aftermath to Kallayya's story separately in section 8.2.2.

<sup>20</sup> See section 5.1.1 above.

visit, Kallayya successfully wins over them. This doubling of scenes, with reversed consequences, demonstrates Kallayya's progression as a determined devotee. Kallayya's story, considered as a whole, is unique to this corpus due to the internal process the Śaraṇa goes through in it: from an imperfect devotee, undetermined to risk his own life for his devotion, into a self-confident saint, whose overcoming of hesitation and fear is epitomized by his winning over non-Śaivas and his fantastic immunity to deadly snakebite.

We are obviously operating within an intense literary world in which the commemorated are those willing to make immediate and extreme sacrifices, preferably self-inflicted, but not only.<sup>21</sup> Here, physical sacrifices are performances: the Bhakta exhibits *niṣṭhā* through the readiness to inflict violence upon oneself or others. Kallayya's cutting open of his belly is an example for such a performance: although it occurs at night when Kallayya is alone next to his god, the location of the scene is public—at the town's Śiva temple—and Kallayya is discovered in the next morning by the temple priests. The narrative background to Kallayya's attempt to commit suicide merits close attention: Kallayya enters an acrimonious debate with his father when the latter demands that Kallayya help him to complete a commissioned work. The father perceives Kallayya's devotion as a hindrance to daily life, but Kallayya refuses to give up his devotion. He breaches his father's prohibition on going to the temple and tries to take his own life there.<sup>22</sup> (There is also a sectarian slant orchestrated into the debate between Kallayya and his father: the catalyst for the fight comes in the form of a

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<sup>21</sup> Later in this study we shall explore narratives that pertain to encounters between Śaraṇas and Jains, all of which are pregnant with hyperbolic descriptions of violence against the *jaina* "other." See chapter nine below.

<sup>22</sup> Kallayya's search of the god and, later in the story, of a Guru, can be read through psychoanalytical lens as a quest for a divine father figure. See Ramanujan (1999: 377-97).



Vaiṣṇava who commissions the job from Kallayya's father). Kallayya's dramatic reaction—his cutting open of his belly—is protestive; it is aimed as resistance to the father's demand that his son lessen his devotional fervor in favor of more daily concerns, such as earning a living. Many stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are shaped by such a protest against worldliness (*bhava*), instrumentality, and contingencies, perceived by the author of these stories as completely contrary to determined devotion in Śiva.<sup>23</sup>

What might have been the message of Kallayya's story to its immediate audience? It seems safe to assume that Kallayya's violent gestures are not meant to be prescriptive in any literal fashion. Rather, Kallayya's story offers its audience a narrative of devotional growth, of cultivation of inner determination, of the possibility of improving one's commitment to live a life dedicated to devotion in Śiva at the cost of cutting away familial bonds. In this sense, Kallayya is a figure that the audience can identify with: he is no stranger to imperfection and to gradual spiritual growth, in a way that the other perfected and opaque Śaraṇas in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are not.

## 5.2 The Śaraṇa and the God

The Kannada *śaiva* tradition is famous for the unique practice by its adherents of carrying a personal *liṅga* (*iṣṭaliṅga*) on their body.<sup>24</sup> On a metaphysical level, the practice of carrying one's deity on one's body all the time entails intense and personal relationship. The deep connection between the adept and the god is an inherent element of all *bhakti* movements across the sub-continent; it is central already at the earliest canonical text to treat *bhakti* as one of its central themes, the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

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<sup>23</sup> I discuss in detail the dyad of *bhava-bhakti* in section 9.3.3 below.

<sup>24</sup> See Leslie (1998: 229), Zydenbos (1997: 525), McCormack (1973:175). The practice itself is called *liṅgadhāraṇē* and is discussed separately in section 7.2.4 below.

There, the dialog between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa is framed by the narrative of their earthly connection (their familial ties and Kṛṣṇa's role in combat as Arjuna's coachman) but is configured, through a direct and personal conversation, by the much more profound theme of the god made available, in person, to the adept. This basic theological frame of a concrete, direct, and candid connection between the adept and the god controls also the tradition of Kannada *śivabhakti*. However, basic elements of this relationship, such as the superiority of the god, his omniscience, and his omnipotence—all central to the *Bhagavad Gītā*—are reconfigured by this tradition. In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the Bhakta has considerable control over the god, to a point of transgressing the assumed boundaries of this hierarchical relationship. In a commensurable way, the god can also be subjugated to the Bhakta in this tradition.

#### 5.2.1 BHAKTA AS DIVINE

We start this investigation by positing a basic claim: the Śaraṇa in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, as any other saintly person in any religious tradition, is a man of god, a person whose earthly presence projects a quality of non-earthly “otherness.” Usually, this “otherness” is interpreted by the saint's immediate surrounding (as communicated by the religious text) as godly.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, the saint is truly a Janus-faced figure: facing god but at the same time watched by (and is also compelled to engage with) the humans around him. In many of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* narratives Harihara makes the Śaraṇa's divine quality pronounced by framing the saint's human story with a celestial one. In all these framing stories, the Śaraṇa attends on Śiva or on his wife Pārvati in their heavenly abode Kailāsa, when some sort of a mishap falls upon the Śaraṇa. This mishap always brings the god or the goddess to punish the Śaraṇa by sending him or her to

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<sup>25</sup> See examples from medieval texts of the Abrahamic religions in Cornell (1998), Brown (1981).

earth, the imperfect world of human beings. As stated earlier in the study, the literary device of framing the earthly story with a divine one is found already in the Sanskrit Purāṇas of the first millennium CE, although the vernacular hagiographies of south India, from the twelfth-century *Pēriya Purāṇam* onwards, introduce a significant modification to this narrative element: instead of the god or goddess descending to earth (*avatāra*), it is their attendants who descend, taking the form of human Bhaktas.<sup>26</sup>

At the most basic level, the narrative strategy of couching the Bhakta's earthly life with an earlier, heavenly career, both before and after the earthly incarnation, allows the *bhakti* authors to make claims about the Bhakta's divine quality. In the case of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and of other texts as well, this paradigm is further developed to also provide a divine telos to the Śaraṇa's earthly biography. In other words, the theological significance for the saint's actions on earth is revealed, or hinted at, in the framing narrative about his or her life as an attendant of Śiva and Pārvati in Kailāsa. Thus, for example, Basavaṇṇa is said to have been sent to earth by Śiva because, while distributing flowers to worship Śiva at the heavenly hall in Kailāsa, he mistakenly left out Skanda.<sup>27</sup> Śiva, in response, sends him to earth to learn how not to be partial to his devotees. Using this expository scene, Harihara provides us with what he perceives as the most profound aspect of Basavaṇṇa's presence on earth, which is taking care of all Śivabhaktas regardless of their familiar origin, social affiliation, trade, caste, and so on.<sup>28</sup>

Harihara repeatedly invokes in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories the term “Kāraṇika” in

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<sup>26</sup> See section 2.2.2 above. See also the Kailāsa frame story about the Tamil saint Cuntaramūrtti (called Nambiyāṇṇa in the Kannada tradition) in Peterson (1994: 201-202).

<sup>27</sup> See summary and discussion in section 4.2.2 above.

<sup>28</sup> Equal service to all Bhaktas is one of the hallmarks of Basavaṇṇa's leadership in the eyes of all medieval śaiva authors, beginning with Harihara. See story summary and discussion in section 7.3 below.

order reveal the divine reason for the appearance of the saint on earth. The *Saṅkṣipta Kannaḍa Nighaṇṭu* (the *Concise Kannada Dictionary*) by the Kannaḍa Sāhitya Pariṣattu plainly defines Kāraṇika as “a divine being, a human incarnation.”<sup>29</sup> But to consider the deeper implications of “Kāraṇika,” it might be useful to explore its etymology. “Kāraṇika” is derived from *karaṇa*, of which the most relevant meanings for our purpose are “instrument” and “cause.”<sup>30</sup> These meanings highlight the causal element for the Kāraṇika’s incarnation on earth, in accordance to its usage by Harihara in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

The term “Kāraṇika” appears in several of the Ragaḷēs with regard to Basavaṇṇa, Allama, Keśirāja, Jōmmayya, and Revaṇasiddha. For each of these characters, “Kāraṇika” is invoked at specific moments in the narrative, when the hidden motivation for the Śaraṇa’s existence on earth—the divine imperative for his or her descent from Kailāsa to earth—is revealed to the people who surround the Śaraṇa, as well as to himself. An example for such a moment appears in the Ragaḷē dedicated to Allama, who is considered by later *vīraśaiva* traditions as a central figure in the cadre of Śaraṇas.<sup>31</sup> Devastated after the sudden loss of his beloved one, young Allama agrees to enter into the abysmal darkness of a temple unearthed just moments ago amid dunes of sands. Allama is the only one in the crowd of the local king’s retinue who is willing to do so, and his risky gesture betrays his profound understanding about the futility of attaching oneself to this earthly life. When Allama approaches the king to declare his

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<sup>29</sup> Prasād (2001: 258 s.v. *kāraṇika* 2). F. Kittel, in his *Kannada-English Dictionary*, does not gloss *kāraṇika* in its theological sense (1875: 409 s.v. *kāraṇika*), perhaps due to his unfamiliarity with Harihara’s *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. In Sanskrit this term denotes a judge or a teacher (Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 274 s.v. *kāraṇika*).

<sup>30</sup> Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 254 s.v. *karaṇa* 18 and 22).

<sup>31</sup> See *Prabhudevāra Ragaḷē* vv. 226-230 in (Harihara 1999: 302). The scene is summarized below in section 7.2.4.

readiness to enter the temple, the crowd surrounding them is amazed, and the elderly people call: “Allama is a Kāraṇika!”<sup>32</sup> This proclamation connects Allama’s risky resolution his divine origin and foregrounds Allama’s ascetic inclination, the trait which he is most identified with among the Kannada Śaraṇas. The elders’ proclamation that Allama is a Kāraṇika illustrates the inherent ambivalence in the status of the saint. On the one hand, it brings to the fore Allama’s turning away from the world. At the same time, it gives a public recognition to this alienage. Similarly, in all the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories, the Kāraṇika functions as a mediatory figure between an external setting of human crowd and an internal divine calling.

The Kailāsa framing story plays an important role in establishing this configuration in narrative. There is an interesting reversed symmetry between the status of the saint on earth and his or her preliminary experiences in heaven. There, in Kailāsa, the Śaraṇa always transgresses the ethical boundaries of the utopian space of Śiva’s abode. Since contradiction, friction, and disharmony are completely foreign to the benign atmosphere of this utopia, the Śaraṇa’s impropriety propels his or her descent to earth.

### 5.2.2 ŚIVA AS HUSBAND, BHAKTA AS WIFE

The relationship between the adept and the god as it is narrated in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is epitomized by the term *śaraṇasati liṅgapati* (“Śaraṇa is wife, *liṅga* is husband”), which is invoked by Harihara in several locations in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. Harihara’s usage of this term, as we shall soon observed, is deliberately theological, which suggests the term’s formalized status already in Harihara’s time. In this

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<sup>32</sup> *Prabhudevara Ragaḷē* v. 234 in Harihara (1999: 303):  
... *allamaṁ kāraṇikan eṇutam irē*

expression, the word-choice of *liṅga* and not Śiva might gesture toward the intimate relationship between every adept and the *iṣṭaliṅga* he or she carries over their bodies. This ostensibly stable relation is subverted in the narratives by deeper and disturbing currents that we shall explore later, but at its basic level, it leans toward the Brahmanical, *śāstra*-based subjugation of the wife to her husband. This is evinced, for example, in this term's definition in the *Vīraśaiva Lexicon for Technical Terms* (*Vīraśaiva Pāribhāṣika Padakośa*): "Thinking himself as wife and the *liṅga* as husband, the one who is in the existence of devotion (*bhaktibhāva*) surrenders one's complete being (*sarvasva*) to Śiva".<sup>33</sup> As we shall observe in the narratives below, this imagined and idealized nuptial servitude is often subverted by more complex dynamics between the devotee and the god.

As is the case with the term "Kāraṇika," "*śaraṇasati*" is also invoked by later traditions with regard to Harihara himself.<sup>34</sup> The story, repeated in several of the Vīraśaiva Purāṇas, tells about a rich prostitute from Andhra who falls in love with Harihara after reading or hearing his *Nambiyaṇṇa Ragaḷē* and decides to marry him. But when she arrives to Hampi and confesses her wish to Harihara, he refuses her on the ground that he is already married to Śiva, as the god's wife.<sup>35</sup> The term *śaraṇasati* appears in a few Ragaḷēs and is implicit in others. In the case of the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē* (*Basava Ragaḷē* henceforth), it emerges in several scenes; the first one is when Basavaṇṇa is initiated into the *śaiva* faith by Śiva's bull Nandi. The context for this initiation is that Basavaṇṇa is about to leave for the Kalacūri capital Maṅgaḷavāḍa to

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<sup>33</sup> Vidyāśaṅkara (2000: 497, Knn).

<sup>34</sup> Although the term Kāraṇika is not explicitly used in the pre-modern narratives about Harihara, they frame his earthly life with a previous heavenly carrier. In addition, modern Kannada scholars directly invoke this term with regard to Harihara's biography. See section 2.3.1 above.

<sup>35</sup> See discussion about this story in section 2.2.4 above.

embark on a public career, as Śiva ordered him in dream. The initiation is significant in this context because Basavaṇṇa is reluctant to leave his beloved god in the temple at Kappaḍi, and the initiation is orchestrated by Śiva as a wedding in order to affirm the impervious connection between Basavaṇṇa and Śiva Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva, despite their nearing separation. This scene, at the end of the fourth chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, is charged with elaborate descriptions of the ceremony and with poignant language:

[4 end]After Nandi gives Basavaṇṇa a *liṅga* and the Five-Syllable Mantra (*pañcākṣari*<sup>36</sup>), they both sit on the floor at the temple's inner hall, which looks like a wedding hall: the gods escort the groom and the objects of the senses escort the bride. The senses themselves circulate the burning lamp around the bride and groom, and the fluid of devotion (*bhaktirasa*) is poured over their hands. At the most auspicious moment for the wedding, life and death hold the partition screen of rebirth (*saṁsāra*) between husband and wife. When it is removed, Basavaṇṇa gently looks at Nandi's face, and cumin seeds and pieces of jaggery are thrown at them, while Basavaṇṇa hugs Nandi. Śiva Saṅgam is husband, Basavaṇṇa is wife (*saṅgam patiyāgi basava satiyāgi*).

Harihara constructs the *mise en scène* as of the initiation ceremony as a complex metaphor of wedding between Basavaṇṇa (as wife) and Śiva (as husband).<sup>37</sup> The terminology of *śaraṇasati liṅgapati* is alluded to at the end of the passage but the wedding metaphor is made explicit throughout by the use of technical terms: wedding hall (*vivāhamaṇṭapa*), of bridesmaids and groomsmen (*nibbaṇigar, suvāsiniyar*), ritual hand wash of the bride and the groom (*kaidhārē*), astrologically auspicious moment for

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<sup>36</sup> See section 7.3 below.

<sup>37</sup> Chidananda Murthy reads the marital overtones of this temple initiation in a more literary fashion when he comments: "One is really reminded of the devadāsi system of marriage where the bride goes to the temple and marries the deity there without the mediation of a priest" (Chidananda Murthy 1983: 205n2). Note that the term *devadāsi* is absent from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. See the fictional narrative on *devadāsis* in modern north Karnataka in Dalrymple (2010: 55-75) and its critique in Soneji (2012).

the wedding (*muhūrtam*), and others.<sup>38</sup>

While this scene is highly intimate, we do find in the *Basava Raḡaḷē* other scenes that also invoke the metaphor of marrying the god. For example, the seventh chapter describes a scene in which a communal Śiva worship takes place at Basavaṇṇa's house.<sup>39</sup> Toward the end of the scene, Harihara invokes twice the term *svayamvara* to describe the event.<sup>40</sup> *Svayamvara* is a term denoting a wedding ceremony in which the bride (usually a princess of a powerful court) chooses her a husband from a crowd of young suitors.<sup>41</sup> Here, this particular form of nuptials is used to describe the Śaraṇas' choice of the *śivabhakti* path, enacted by a ceremonial worship.<sup>42</sup> Another allusion to *śaraṇasati liṅgapati* is found at the end of chapter twelve of the *Basava Raḡaḷē*. Here, Basavaṇṇa is at the peak of his political success, both as the king's administrator and as the leader of a devotional community. Though affluent on the public front, Basavaṇṇa is required to sacrifice his most intimate asset, his wife's chastity:

[12 cont.] On one occasion, Śiva decides to test Basavaṇṇa's willingness to serve the Bhaktas. He sends his attendants (Gaṇas) to occupy all of Maṅgaḷavāḍa's prostitutes and appears himself at Basavaṇṇa's palace, disguised as a sixteen year old licentious person (Viṭa). Basavaṇṇa thinks the young person is a

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<sup>38</sup> Temple ritual is used by Harihara several times in the *Raḡaḷēgaḷu* as a metaphor for internal worship of Śiva, with similar allusions to bodily and mental parts as ritualistic instruments. This metaphor is usually invoked at intense moments in the Śaraṇa's life, such as the case of Vajjakavvē (section 9.3.2 below) and of Mahādeviyakka (section 6.1.1 below). See discussion about the internalization of temple ritual in literary tradition in section 7.2 below.

<sup>39</sup> This portion of the *Basava Raḡaḷē* is summarized in section 7.1.2.

<sup>40</sup> *Basava Raḡaḷē* 7.117-18 in Harihara (1999: 319).

<sup>41</sup> Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 1278 s.v. *svayamvara* 2). *Svayamvaras* are a popular theme in the classical South-Indian imaginaire, including the two grand epics. A particularly rich example for a narrative that has *svayamvara* in its center is the *Mahābhārata*'s episode about Nala and Damayantī (Shulman 1994).

<sup>42</sup> In the verses that follow, Harihara describes the Śaraṇas feeding their *liṅga* as if their own child. This description corresponds to a general pattern found in many the *bhakti* traditions in which the devotee's emotional connection with the god is manifested through gestures of motherly love. This mode, however, is rarely invoked in the *Raḡaḷēs* discussed in this study.



pleasure-seeking Jaṅgama (Sukhijaṅgama) and welcomes him with honor.<sup>43</sup> The young man demands that Basavaṅṅa supplies him with a woman or he shall leave. Basavaṅṅa calls for a prostitute but is informed that all of the city's prostitutes are occupied. Recognizing the divine scheme, he decides to give the Jaṅgama his own wife Māyidevi, though inside his heart he wishes to become a woman so he can fully actuate the value of *liṅgapati śaraṅasati*. When Māyidevi hears Basavaṅṅa's order, she agrees to give herself to the young Jaṅgama, but when she tries to disrobe the Jaṅgama, Śiva appears in front of her in his true form, with five heads and three eyes. Then, defeated by the couple's willingness to comply with his unholy wish, Śiva disappears. Basavaṅṅa, in response, sings to his god: "You try to test me by asking me things, but you are not willing to take them!"

Basavaṅṅa's commitment to Śiva is such that he is wholeheartedly ready to give his wife to another. His readiness to pass his wife to a Jaṅgama, as well as his wife's cooperation with the plan, are de-eroticized, since they emerge from the couple's recognition of the divine scheme of things. Similarly, Basavaṅṅa's wish to become a woman so he can literally consummate his marriage to the *liṅga* in this scene is devoid of an erotic thrust but is representative of Basavaṅṅa's totalistic commitment to serve Śiva. The denouement of the scene, in which Śiva disappears without fulfilling his ploy to sleep with Basavaṅṅa's wife, also undermines any notion of erotic flare in the story. Accordingly, the marriage between Śiva and the devotee is never consummated at the physical plane but serves to elucidate an interiority of intimate bond and commitment.

Mahādeviyakka is the only Śaraṅa whose relationship with Śiva are imbued with eroticism, and in the *Ragaḷe* dedicated to her, her erotic sentiment is a central pillar in the story's structure.<sup>44</sup> Although the devotional eroticism of the *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷe* is unequivocal and is commensurable with many of the *Vacanas* attributed to

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<sup>43</sup> See section 6.1.3 below for a more developed narrative and discussion about sexual exchanges within the framework of *śivabhakti*.

<sup>44</sup> See story summary and discussion in section 6.1.1 below.

Mahādeviyakka, it is anomalous in relation to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* and the Śaraṇas' biographies as a whole, even when the concept of *liṅgapati śaraṇasati* is invoked.

There is another noteworthy element in the above scene of Basavaṇṇa, his wife, and the licentious Śiva: the initial request by the young Śivabhakta to have Basavaṇṇa's wife is never actualized,<sup>45</sup> but not because Basavaṇṇa is reluctant to fulfill it.

Basavaṇṇa, as a determined Bhakta, is undeterred by any ethical transgression on the way to satisfy his god's wishes. Śiva is the one who is deterred from the unholy act he himself initiates, and the god's retraction frustrates Basavaṇṇa. He airs this when he complains to Śiva by the end of the incident: "You try to test me by asking me things, but you are not willing to take them!" This narrative progression, in which the god retracts from his divine scheme (or plays, *līlē*<sup>46</sup>) to test the devotee with, is not uncommon in this literary culture. Shulman comments with regard to the Telugu

*Basava Purāṇamu*:

The ultimate is ... an entirely familiar and domesticated being, so close and real as to preclude any thought of compromising one's commitment to him. Only *he*, when embodied in his play, is in danger of introducing forms of compromise, from which his servants must now save him.<sup>47</sup>

The context for Shulman's statement is the poignant story of Siriyāḷa as it appears in the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* (1993b: 48-67), but it also applies to many of the Śaraṇas' stories in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>48</sup> Compromise controls the god and never the

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<sup>45</sup> There is a similar story in the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*, in which Śiva does culminate his unity with the devotee's wife (Peterson 1994: 213).

<sup>46</sup> This term appears in the thirteenth chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, which is discussed in section 8.1.4 below.

<sup>47</sup> Shulman (1993b: 62).

<sup>48</sup> There is also a *Ragaḷē* dedicated to Siriyāḷa that is outside the purview of this study, since it is included in the section of the *Ragaḷēs* about the Tamil *Nāyaṇārs*.

devotee, who is completely alien to indetermination. In a way, while discussing the marital-like relationship between the devotee and the god in Kannada Śaivism, we have come full circle with the claim made in the first section of this chapter about *niṣṭhē* (determination) as the foundation for the Śaraṇa's devotion in this literary culture.

Surprising asymmetries between the human and the divine, such as the one just explicated, are deep and pervasive in this literary culture. They even complicate the gender-based hierarchy implied by *śaraṇasati liṅgapati*, as evinced from the concluding episode of the *Keśirāja Daṇṇāyakara Raḡaḷē* (*Keśirāja Raḡaḷē* henceforth), dedicated to a Śaraṇa called Keśirāja.<sup>49</sup> In the final scene of the *Keśirāja Raḡaḷē*, *śaraṇasati liṅgapati* is invoked at a tense moment: Keśirāja, accompanied by other Bhaktas, prepares to worship his *liṅga* at the banks of a river, when Viṣṇu's eagle Garuḡa, who covets the *liṅga* for his master, dives from the sky and snatches it. At that moment, Goddess Gaṅgē comes out of the river and demands that Garuḡa leave the *liṅga* for her, which he agrees to do, and the *liṅga* is dropped into the river:

[3 end.] Gaṅgē vows never to let go of Śiva and hugs the *liṅga* in the river's abyss. Seeing this from the river bank, Keśirāja grabs his sword and gets ready to dive into the river in order to retrieve his *liṅga*, but his fellow Bhaktas beg him that he let them help scrutinize the water for the *liṅga*. Keśirāja adamantly refuses their help but agrees to take a boat in order to reach the river's middle point. Entering the boat, Keśirāja calls to his *liṅga*: "Śiva Somanātha! I was always faithful to you. If this is true, come back to me. Otherwise, I shall perish from this earth!" He enters the boat with unwavering determination (*niṣṭhē*) and paddles to the center of the river. There, he stands on the boat's floor and shouts: "Somanātha! Come here! Do not cause me trouble, my treasure! You are my happiness!" Śiva, hearing this, jumps out of the water like a Bhakta's fresh breath. All the Bhaktas start dancing in joy. Keśirāja tells the *liṅga*: "Why have you come out like this? Where are all the ritual decorations I adorned you with?" This Śaraṇa-wife (*śaraṇasati*) scolds Śiva in great anger. Śiva, with love toward

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<sup>49</sup> See section 8.1.1 below.

his Bhakta, returns to the water, decorates himself with flowers, sandalwood, and other things, and comes out of the water and sits in the palm of Keśirāja, looking fresh and shining. Keśirāja is ecstatic, and all the Śivabhaktas celebrate the event. A heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends from the sky and takes Keśirāja back to Kailāsa. Śiva, proud of Keśirāja, tells all his attendants about the Śaraṇa's doings.

The concluding scene of the *Keśirāja Ragaḷe* is useful for furthering our understanding of the emotional world denoted by *śaraṇasati liṅgapati*. Note how the narration style of this incident shifts when Keśirāja takes on the role of Śaraṇasati. The scene opens with an intense, action-film like quality generated by the sudden competition ensued over the *liṅga*. Will the divine agents Garuḍa and Gaṅgē relinquish their aspirations for the *liṅga*? Will Keśirāja survive the gushing river and succeed in recovering from it his *liṅga*?<sup>50</sup> At the peak of the scene, however, when Keśirāja stands on a boat in the middle of a gushing river and calls out to the *liṅga* to return to him, the voice of *śaraṇasati* unexpectedly takes over him, shaped by the wide range of emotions of a wife who just managed to reunite with her missing husband. Keśirāja's calls to the *liṅga* convey devotion and attachment but also betray a deeper sense of concern, since the husband (*liṅga*) worried his wife (Keśirāja) by disappearing into the river. Immediately after, when the *liṅga* rejoins Keśirāja, the latter's worries are replaced with explicit scolding: *why did you return without the decorations I have put on you?* he asks the *liṅga*. At this point, Harihara befittingly refers to Keśirāja using the term Śaraṇasati and consciously evokes stock familiar themes from the world of love poetry. The devotee's anger toward the *liṅga* is obviously an intimate one, modeled after the character of heroine who manages to retrieve her lover after a disturbing separation. *Śaraṇasati*—

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<sup>50</sup>According to this story, the consequences of a Bhakta losing his *iṣṭaliṅga* are grave. M. Chidananda Murthy comments on this *śivabhakti* tradition, with specific regard to this scene, that a Śaiva who lost his personal *liṅga* was expected to immediately commit suicide (1983: 204).

Śaraṇa as wife—is taken in this scene in its fullest sense: the absolute attachment and fidelity that the Śaraṇa takes on himself, following the ideal of a wife as imagined in this milieu, also implies emotions such as frustration, anger, and reprimand. It also entails the husband’s corresponding submissiveness: the *liṅga* silently obeys Keśirāja’s demands and returns to the river to decorate before returning to Keśirāja, as the latter demands. Thus, the concept of *śaraṇasati liṅgapati*, as it is narrativized in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*, stretches beyond a simplified notion of complete submissiveness to god, expanding the range of possible emotional and relational structures to include more demotic—but no less intensive—inter-personal modes.

### 5.2.3 SUBVERTING THE GOD/HUMAN POWER STRUCTURE

The Śaraṇa’s descent to earth, discussed earlier in the chapter, marks a shift from the Brahmanical Purāṇas to the vernacular hagiographies of early second-millennium South India. This shift is in its base anthropocentric.<sup>51</sup> In contrast to the centrality of the divine agents in the Sanskrit Purāṇas, the protagonists in the vernacular hagiographies are human beings, and the gods—including the particular object of the Bhakta’s devotion—have only a limited, contained role in the narratives. This cultural shift from focusing on the deity into focusing on his human adepts in the *bhakti* imaginaire is a complex one; one implication that is central in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* stories is the subversion of god’s given superiority over his Bhakta. Let me qualify the last statement with regard to the stories at hand: in Kailāsa, the “traditional,” god-over-human power structure is pedantically kept; both in the stories’ beginnings and endings the Śaraṇa, as one of Śiva’s and Pārvati’s attendants (Gaṇas), is completely

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<sup>51</sup> Anne Monius (2004b) explores one aspect of this anthropocentric shift as attested by the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*. India Peterson also notes, with regard to the same text, the “hagiographer’s shifting focus from Śiva to the saint and the hymn in the miracle narratives” (1994: 209).

submissive to the gods. However, this axiomatic submission is repeatedly subverted and, at times, is even reversed.<sup>52</sup> Here, the human *avatāra* does not only enjoy divine agency within a human setting but also exercises this divine agency over his own deity, during the latter's quest appearances on earth.

The first step in Harihara's realignment of the god/human power structure is the identification between the human Śaraṇa and Śiva. This identification might surface in a passing comments made by different characters: when King Bijjaḷa sees Basavaṇṇa as Śiva himself, and a bit later in the story when Basavaṇṇa himself makes claims about the identity between the Śaraṇas who come to visit him and Śiva.<sup>53</sup> The case of Śaṅkaradāsīmāyā is even more literal: this devotee embodies Śiva on earth by carrying the god's third eye on his own forehead. Śaṅkaradāsīmāyā's identification with Śiva is made explicit in the text by King Jayasīmharāya, who shouts while begging the Śaraṇa to stop emitting fire from his third eye: "Lord! You are an incarnation of Rudra!" (*devā rudrāvatāran ęndar*).<sup>54</sup>

Karen Pechilis' definition of *bhakti* as a theology of embodiment, where "God should inform all of one's activities in worldly life,"<sup>55</sup> takes on the most literal sense in all of the above cases.<sup>56</sup> In the *Ragaḷęgaḷu*, this embodiment runs parallel, and in a latent form, to the more explicit dichotomy between the god and his devotees. The embodiment of god through his devotees on earth, in itself, does not necessarily imply

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<sup>52</sup> Laurie Patton discusses an older paradigm of the human's subversion of the gods in the *Bṛhaddevatā* (1996: 215-53). This thematic correspondence points to a deeply engrained tension in the classical South-Asian imaginaire between human and divine agents.

<sup>53</sup> *Basava Ragaḷę* 6.prose in Harihara (1999: 317-18).

<sup>54</sup> *Śaṅkaradāsīmāyāna Ragaḷę* 2.prose in Harihara (1999: 283). This incident is summarized and discussed in section 8.2.1.

<sup>55</sup> Pechilis (1999: 6).

<sup>56</sup> See a similar terminology of embodiment in Peterson (1994: 211)



I present below several examples, gradually moving from the suggested and even comical into more extreme and dramatic human appropriations of the deity. We start with a scene from the *Basava Ragalē*, in which Basavaṇṇa is challenged by another Śivabhakta to provide him with stupendous amounts of riches, according to Basavaṇṇa's promise to always satisfy his Śaraṇas' wishes (a promise made public through one of his Vacanas).<sup>59</sup> On the night before the imperious Bhakta arrives to Basavaṇṇa's house and challenges him, Śiva appears in front of Basavaṇṇa to warn him of that Bhakta's impossible demand. The brief conversation that ensues between Śiva and Basavaṇṇa is surprising and even comic in terms of the parts played by each side: it is Śiva who expresses his worry that Basavaṇṇa will not be able to come through, while Basavaṇṇa is completely calm, expressing his confidence in Śiva.<sup>60</sup> Basavaṇṇa's complete serenity is contrasted with Śiva's own worry and generates a comical tone to this scene; Basavaṇṇa's trust in Śiva is so complete that it becomes the latter's concern to fulfill whatever the Basavaṇṇa has promised to Śiva's devotees on earth. Already in the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam* Śiva is constructed at specific moments in the narratives as a father figure of the devotees.<sup>61</sup> In this *Ragalē*, we find an extension of this devotional model, in which the child (devotee) is carefree as any child is, while the parent (Śiva) is perturbed by his child's irresponsible acts. This episode serves as an example of how the non-hierarchical relationship between the god and the devotee implicates a potential theological ellipsis in its most absurd sense: Basavaṇṇa is completely dependent on Śiva to fulfill the Bhakta's demand, but Śiva's commitment to deliver on Basavaṇṇa's promises inherently subjugates him to his human devotee. Śiva is

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<sup>59</sup> It is said in the *Basava Ragalē* that according to Basavaṇṇa's Vacana he shall decapitate himself if he fails to do so (*Basava Ragalē* 12.prose in Harihara 1999: 332).

<sup>60</sup> The story is summarized and discussed in section 6.6.1 below.

<sup>61</sup> Monius (2004b).



diminished to an instrument in the hands of his Bhakta.

The symbiotic interdependence between the Śaraṇa and the god also shapes the story of Guṇḍayya the Potter, but from a slightly different perspective.<sup>62</sup> Guṇḍayya, with the drumming sound of his pot-making, brings Śiva down to earth and makes him burst into dance. Śiva's dancing to Guṇḍayya's rhythms is so intense that Pārvati worries it might ruin the earth, and thus she interrupts the ecstatic celebration of the Bhakta and his god. The close physical interaction between the devotee and Śiva conveyed by this scene has several implications, discussed in other sections of this story,<sup>63</sup> but its relevance to the current discussion is straightforward: Guṇḍayya's pot-drumming makes Śiva descend to earth and dance. Śiva, himself the Lord of Dance (Naṭarāja), is made to dance by his devotee. This is a powerful image of the Śaraṇa's control over the deity.<sup>64</sup>

The following case is taken from Surigēya Cauḍayya's story, discussed earlier in this chapter. I already noted how Cauḍayya is an exceptionally staunch devotee who does not hesitate to kill others or himself in order to fulfill his religious vows. For Cauḍayya, the liability for such actions is Śiva's, as he declares in the beginning of the story. Later in the story, Cauḍayya places his dagger on his own neck and threatens Śiva he will kill himself if Śiva does not eat the food prepared for him. The morbid quality of this scene is not the striking feature here; we find in many South-Asian *bhakti* traditions such intense, life-staking moments in which the Bhakta threatens his god with taking

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<sup>62</sup> This Ragaḷē is summarized in sections 3.2.1, 3.3.2, 6.3, and 7.2.1.

<sup>63</sup> See sections 6.3 and 7.2.1.

<sup>64</sup> In the *Pēriya Purāṇam*, Cekkiḷār tells about Tirunilakaṇṭhapāṇa (aka Tirunilakaṇṭha Yālppāṇa), a Bhakta who plays the lute in many Śiva temples and wins the god's praises. In this story, however, the boundaries between the god and the musician do not collapse, and at no point in the story does Śiva come down to earth in order to celebrate this Bhakta's playing (Cekkiḷār and McGlashan 2006: 363-64).

his own life. What is disturbing here is the portrayal of Śiva's docile collaboration with his devotee's caprice; it is a portrayal of a god violated by his devotee. Note the language used by Harihara at this point: "Śiva was fed, fearing Cauḍayya. Coerced by the steadfast dagger and fearing, he was fed".<sup>65</sup> Śiva in this scene brings to mind Stephen King's miserable lead character from *Misery*, Paul Sheldon, fixed to a bed and nursed by his fervid and disturbed admirer Annie Wilkes.<sup>66</sup> Motivated by his total devotion to Śiva, Cauḍayya treats his deity indignantly, and we should note that the author of the text does not repudiate his human protagonist's treatment of the god but celebrates it through stressing Śiva's fear. The subjugation of the god in this scene is not exceptional in this *Ragaḷē*, not in other *Ragaḷēs* or this literary culture as whole; the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* betrays very similar notions of demanding impatience toward as well as active control over the deity.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps the most extreme possibility that stems from the theological autonomy of the devotee in this corpus is refusing Śiva and, even worse, refusing to enter Kailāsa. This scenario is not without its problems, and we shall address them momentarily. The specific incident I relate to here is taken from the thirteenth and last chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē*:

[13 cont.] Once, Śiva Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva appears in front of Basavaṅṅa as a Jaṅgama and invites him to enter the heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) and come with him back to Kailāsa, Śiva's abode. Basavaṅṅa, however, refuses by answering: "Does Kailāsa entertain Śiva assemblies (*goṣṭhis*) as the one we have here? If not, I would rather stay!" Śiva, realizing Basavaṅṅa prefers to stay on earth, returns

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<sup>65</sup> *Cauḍa Ragaḷē* vv. 99-100 in Harihara (1999: 347):

*ārogisida śivaṁ cavuḍarāyaṅgaṅji*  
*dhīran alagaṁ kitaḍārogisidan aṅji*

<sup>66</sup> King (1987).

<sup>67</sup> Shulman (1993b: 48-67).

to Kailāsa alone.

How can we explain Basavaṇṇa's adamant refusal to join Śiva in Kailāsa, to enter heaven itself? There are several ways to explicate this theological qualm. The first one is theological: Basavaṇṇa's refusal lies in the communal devotional experience that permeates the assemblies of devotees, or *goṣṭhis*. This communal institution of the Kannada śaiva tradition is foundational in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* narratives and in this early literary culture as a whole.<sup>68</sup> In the seventh chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, which describes Basavaṇṇa's first assembly and his enthrallment that follow, Basavaṇṇa vows to continue conducting assemblies for the rest of his life, and here he refuses to end his life because of the same reason. Similarly to what we saw earlier in the case of Cauḍayya, the Śaraṇa's celebration of the deity—in this case in the setting of the assembly—enthralls him to a level of anomaly, outside the assumed boundaries of god/devotee relationship. Thus, Basavaṇṇa's response to Śiva that he would rather stay on earth and celebrate the śaiva faith than joining him in Kailāsa marks, similarly to the tableau of Cauḍayya forcefeeding Śiva, a narrative *reductio ad absurdum* of the Bhakta's intense devotional determination, since it detains the Bhakta's arrival to Kailāsa. An alternative reading of this passage takes into consideration narrative constrains: Basavaṇṇa's famous union with Śiva Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva in Kappaḍi occurs shortly after in the same chapter, an event that is foundational for all narrative traditions about Basavaṇṇa. It is possible that Harihara, wishing not to undermine it, had to provide some narrative explanation as to why Basavaṇṇa does not receive that same fantastic denouement of ascending to Kailāsa on a heavenly chariot like the rest of the Śaraṇas in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* but instead unites with Śiva in a particular temple. Yet a third

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<sup>68</sup> See section 7.4 below.

reading of this passage is entirely supra-textual, pointing to the possibility of a later interpolation of this passage.<sup>69</sup> But whatever the explanation for Basavaṇṇa's refusal to ascend to heaven might be, the fact that the text can sustain Basavaṇṇa's direct refusal to join Śiva attests to the particular extreme type of anthropocentrism that Kannada *śivabhakti* professes to according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

### 5.3 Concluding Remarks: The Intensification of Human Agency in the Early Kannada *śaiva* Literary Tradition

At the center of this chapter is the interiority of the Śiva's devotee as it is narrated in the *Ragaḷēs* dedicated to the Śaraṇas of the Kannada-speaking regions. The Śaraṇas' devotion in these stories is shaped by one principle: unyielding determination (*niṣṭhē*). As demonstrated in this chapter by the character of Surigēya Cauḍayya, the Śaraṇa in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* does not know how to hesitate; his or her actions are driven only by religious sentiment in a complete and unreflective manner and in complete disregard of the consequences. The unusual case of Kallayya demonstrates through a series of life-staking tests how to cultivate the complete determination under which a Śaraṇa one must operate.

Saints, as literary characters, embody both divine and human traits. In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the emic term "Kāraṇika" signifies a saintly person motivated by a divine cause. In several instances, the people around the saint use this term as a public acknowledgement of the Śaraṇa's superhuman distinctiveness. Together with the concept of Kāraṇika, Harihara marks sainthood by providing divine narrative framework for the Śaraṇas: the stories almost always starts in Kailāsa, where the

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<sup>69</sup> The possibility of interpolation of the thirteenth chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē* is discussed in section 8.1.4 below.

Śaraṇa commits a sin or mistake and is punished by an earthly incarnation in which the Śaraṇa atones for the mistake in heaven. The telos of the Śaraṇa's human story is structured around this purpose, and the Śaraṇa, after successfully fulfilling his earthly task, is returned to Kailāsa on a heavenly chariot, flowered by the gods.

The term *śaraṇasati liṅgapati* ("Śaraṇa is wife, Śiva is husband") is foundational in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories for defining the Śaraṇa's emotional disposition toward his or her god. This term, which is included into the *vīraśaiva* technical nomenclature only at a later period, marks in this corpus the Śaraṇa's wife-like relationship to Śiva. This intimate relationship lacks erotic texture but is rich with intense emotions, including worry, anger, frustration, and so on. In addition, the matrimonial model for the Bhakta-god relationship is further complicated in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* by certain incidents in which we find theological transgressions of the assumed hierarchy between the devotee and the god. Śiva still orchestrates the world according to his playful wish (*līḷē*), but the Śaraṇa, empowered by determination (*niṣṭhē*), takes control over the unfolding events by using Śiva as an instrument to fulfill his or her own wishes. This rearrangement of the relational structure between the two ends of the devotional dyad is perhaps the most dramatic reworking entailed by the shift toward the human *avatāra* by the southern *bhakti*.

## 6 Complicating Equality

A considerable portion of scholarship about Viraśaivism highlights the charter of equality promised to all the members of this movement over any other element.<sup>1</sup> Often we find in these writings terms such as egalitarianism, gender-equality, and so on. Applying terms that were developed in modern and Western context is obviously a problematic practice, as these are inherently anachronistic. Robert Zydenbos cogently remarks that “to write that Viraśaivism has been ‘democratic’, ‘feminist’, or ‘egalitarian’ from the beginning, as some modern writers do, is somewhat like writing that nuclear weapons were used in the Rāmāyaṇa, as some other authors do.”<sup>2</sup> With this sensibility in mind, I discuss the subject of equal treatment of Bhaktas from different parts of society using the emic term *samaśīla*. Monier-Williams defines *samaśīla* as “having the same customs or character.”<sup>3</sup> This generic definition flattens any notion of context or difference. But, as we shall see throughout this chapter, the *Ragalēgaḷu* stories that deal with this subject are far from projecting any simplistic understanding of this subject.

Broadly put, the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition, perhaps more than any other *bhakti* movement in South Asia, invests itself in transferring the personal and religious agency charted by the innate populism of *bhakti* onto the social realm.<sup>4</sup> The role of *samaśīla* in this process is obviously significant. In the Kannada *bhakti* tradition, social

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<sup>1</sup> Two glaring examples are Schouten (1995), Ishwaran (1992).

<sup>2</sup> Zydenbos (1997: 535).

<sup>3</sup> Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 1152 s.v. *samaśīla*).

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that other *bhakti* traditions are not invested in appealing to different strands of society, including the underprivileged ones. See, for example, Peterson (1994: 195-86) with regard to the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*.

agency is directly derived from the religious emancipation promised by *bhakti* ideology, and the ethos of unqualified agency is deeply interwoven in Kannada *śivabhakti* myths, social structures, and doctrine. At the same time, it seems that right from the beginning, the *bhakti* authors were acutely aware of the shortcomings and potential pits that the attempt of implementing *samaśīla* into real life situations might entail.

Already in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the earliest narrative text by the *śivabhakti* tradition in Kannada, we find an intense engagement with the idea of *samaśīla* in many of its narratives. In most cases, *samaśīla* is invoked (literally and through narrative progression) against what is described in the stories as the dominating Brahmanical discrimination. However, there are broader circumstances in which the implications of *samaśīla* take the central stage: gender roles, occupational background, wealth and social class, and food habits. While Brahminism has a say in each of these, the frame of references in the stories, as we are about to observe, is wider than strictly “anti-Brahmanical.” For example, many times conflicts with regard to equal treatment or, more precisely, its absence, arise within the community of Bhaktas or between the Bhakta and the god. Earlier in the dissertation, I quoted Bōmmayya declaring while Śiva’s statue is entered into town: “Now I see in front of me Dāsīmayya’s ritual plate, Nambiyaṇṇa’s thoughts, Bhogayya’s wealth, and Guṇḍayya’s dance.”<sup>5</sup> Note that each of the Śaraṇas mentioned by Bōmmayya in this quote belongs to distinct cultural and social spheres: Śaṅkaradāsīmayya is Vaiṣṇava Brahmin initiated into the *śivabhakti* faith who then becomes a miracle-maker, a warrior, and an orchestrator of public festivals;<sup>6</sup> Nambiyaṇṇa, more famously known as Cuntaraṇ (also referred to as Sundarar), is also a Brahmin (of a family of temple priests) from the Tamil Nāyaṇārs tradition; Bhogaṇṇa, a

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<sup>5</sup> Kovūra Bōmmitandēya Ragaḷē 2.prose in Harihara (1999: 340). See section 5.2.3 above.

<sup>6</sup> See sections 6.6, 7.3.1, 8.2.1.

administrator Brahmin who is a chief opponent of social exclusion;<sup>7</sup> and Guṇḍayya, a simple village pot-maker who reaches mystic union with Śiva through his pot-making.<sup>8</sup> The grouping together of people of different backgrounds under the unifying umbrella of Śivaśaraṇas in this short passage demonstrates Harihara's investment in social diversity for the Bhaktas' community.

The figure of Basavaṇṇa is identified, perhaps more than any other Śaraṇa, with the value of *samaśīla*, and his *Ragaḷē* is referred to in several locations in this chapter. Harihara foregrounds the theme of *samaśīla* already in the opening passage of the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē* (*Basava Ragaḷē* henceforth):

[1] Up in Kailāsa, Śiva is surrounded by his family, by other gods, and by attendants (Gaṇas). Śiva calls one of them, Vṛṣabhamukha,<sup>9</sup> and hands him garlands made of Campaka flowers. He orders him to distribute them to all those present in the hall. Vṛṣabhamukha proudly follows the command but, unintentionally, skips Śiva's son Skanda. Skanda complains to his father that Vṛṣabhamukha has skipped him. Vṛṣabhamukha responds that this is impossible, and Skanda's face turns white with shame. Śiva turns to Vṛṣabhamukha and tells him: "You are wrong, and for this I will send you to earth!" Vṛṣabhamukha does not want to leave for earth and asks for Śiva's forgiveness, but Śiva insists that he shall first help all of Śiva's devotees on earth and only then return to Kailāsa. Śiva also promises Vṛṣabhamukha that he shall accompany him on the sojourn.

As discussed earlier, the narrative device of Kailāsa framing story is used in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* to inscribe divine agency for the Śaraṇa's human life by attributing to the Śaraṇa a primeval offense during his or her heavenly career in Kailāsa. In the case of Basavaṇṇa, the nature of this offense is discriminating one of Śiva's followers (the god's son Skanda), albeit undeliberately. According to Harihara, it is because of this offense

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<sup>7</sup> See section 6.2 below.

<sup>8</sup> See sections 3.2.1, 3.3.2, 6.3, and 7.2.1.

<sup>9</sup> Literally "Bull Face." The Kannada derivation for *vṛṣabha* (meaning "bull" in Sanskrit) is *basava*.



that Basavaṇṇa's earthly life is dedicated to *samaśīla*, or equal care for all the members of the *śivabhakti* community and, indeed, this theme is central and explicitly stated in several episodes of the *Basava Raḡaḷē*. At one point of the story, for example, Basavaṇṇa arranges a devotional gathering for the Śaraṇa community, and the Śaraṇas start to eulogize Basavaṇṇa, testifying that Basavaṇṇa, among other things, does not discriminate according to a Jaṅgama's familial origin (*jāti*) and does not recognize purity or impurity in consecrated food (*prasāda*).<sup>10</sup> It is not incidental that these two markers are mentioned here as criteria for *samaśīla*. Familial origin is central in the traditional Brahmanical system for establishing social exclusion that is based on issues of purity, and one of its strongest manifestations is food practices, especially with regard to ritualistic exchanges with the deity at the temple. It is unsurprising that these specific themes—familial origins and food practices—are prominent also in other *Raḡaḷēs*, as we shall observe below.

*Samaśīla* in the *Raḡaḷēḡaḷu* is not championed as a social value in itself but bounded to the exclusive worship of Śiva and is usually invoked in the context of ritual. Furthermore, the underprivileged in the *Raḡaḷēḡaḷu* stories are referred to in the text primarily as Śivabhaktas and not in relation to their occupation, social class, gender, in itself. This point is significant to bear in mind when discussing this pre-modern literary tradition within modern and post-modern discourses about equality. Another caveat to make with regard to the prescription in the *Raḡaḷēḡaḷu* of *samaśīla* is that this prescription is not monolithic but multilayered and dialectic. By “multilayered,” I wish to stress that different *Raḡaḷēs* highlight different aspects of *samaśīla*, as it is played out

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<sup>10</sup> *Basava Raḡaḷē* 8.prose in Harihara (1999: 322):  
*jaṅgamadalli jātiyan arasē, prasādadally apavitratēyan ariyē*

in different spheres of the social world: gender, occupation, and class. By “dialectic” I mean that, in describing an early religious and social movement, the stories convey at times social dynamics, processes, and interpersonal negotiations, with regard to how *samaśīla* ought to be practiced in the complex and rich social textures of the south Indian medieval. In one incident, for example, in which two Śaraṇas confront each other on the issue of *samaśīla*, Harihara comments that Śiva desires, as part of the restlessness of his godly playfulness (*līlāloka*), to ignite quarrels between his Bhaktas.<sup>11</sup> This comment attests to the difficulties of maintaining harmonious relationships between different members of the *śivabhakti* community, at least according to Harihara.

## 6.1 Gender

Scholarship has started to reexamine gender in the context of South-Asian traditions in recent decades, moving beyond basic questions such as power relations, gender behaviors, as a so forth.<sup>12</sup> In this section I examine the normative boundaries prescribed for women in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*. The basic premise that applies to all of the *Ragaḷeḡs* that deal with gender is that *samaśīla* does not directly imply equal agency to women: Harihara’s prescription for the role and place of women in the community of Śivabhaktas is undoubtedly a liberating one compared with traditional practices but, at the same time, it is not equality in its literal sense. However, the stories do present the reader/listener with a liberating vision of active and resolute female voice, especially in

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<sup>11</sup> Śaṅkaradāsimayyana *Ragaḷeḡ* 2.prose in Harihara (1999: 281):  
*nijabhaktapraṇayakalahalīlālacitta*

This incident is discussed in section 6.6 below. Śiva’s *līlā* (*līlā* in Sanskrit) is a central component in *śivabhakti* theology as well as more broadly in Hindu thought. Many narratives convey the inexplicability of god’s intervention in the human world (Monius 2004b). By invoking this term, Harihara signals his inability to fathom discords among fellow Śivabhaktas.

<sup>12</sup> Patton (2002: 4).

the arenas of marriage and conjugation. This vision considerably deviates from the traditional notion, sanctioned by Brahmanical ethical scripture, of “virtuous wife” (*pativrata*). Another qualification to make with regard to the implementation of the gender-equality ideal in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is that the pro-female charter prescribed in this corpus is always conditioned by affiliation with the *śaiva* devotional tradition. This theme shall be observed with regard to each of the following stories.

Many of the *Ragaḷēs* about Kannaḍiga Śaraṇas host minor female characters (a queen or a Śaraṇa’s wife for example), but three *Ragaḷēs* are dedicated to the following female Śaraṇas as their protagonists: Mahādeviyakka, Vaijakavvē, and Nimbiyavvē.<sup>13</sup> The female-centered stories project different visions of gender-based *samaśīla*, and we shall examine each separately in order and unpack its specific significances.<sup>14</sup>

#### 6.1.1 A DIVORCEE

Mahādeviyakka (also called Akka Mahādevi, or simply Akka<sup>15</sup>) is by far the most famous of all female Śaraṇas appearing in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, equal in fame to Basavaṇṇa and Allama, both in Karnataka literary and religious communities as well as in academic circles.<sup>16</sup> Within the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* dedicated to the Kannaḍiga Śaraṇas, her poem

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<sup>13</sup> Three additional female Śaraṇas with their own *Ragaḷēs* are not considered here, since they are unauthenticated. These are Koḷūru Kōḍagūsu, Ammvavē, and Herūra Heṇṇu. Kōḍagūsu is an extremely popular figure, referred to in some *Ragaḷēs* and throughout the *vīraśaiva* literary tradition. There are also many other *Vacana* poetesses venerated by this tradition. See Yaravintelimath (2006).

<sup>14</sup> See Patton (2002: 5) on the necessity to develop multiple approaches to the question of gender in the context of South Asia. On p. 203, Patton states: “Whatever the strategies, and whatever the individual scholar’s opinions about the role of activism within the academic field of Indology, a new era is opening up for textual practices by and about women.”

<sup>15</sup> “Akka” in Kannada means “elder sister” or “mother.”

<sup>16</sup> There are numerous publications, both in English and in Kannada, of Mahādeviyakka’s *Vacanas*. One of the most famous renditions in Kannada for Mahādeviyakka’s *Vacanas* is edited by L. Basavarāju (Akkamahādevi and Basavarāju 1966). A famous English translation of Mahādeviyakka’s *Vacanas* is Ramanujan (1973: 111-42). Mahādeviyakka is highly venerated and commemorated by many

is second in length only to Basavaṇṇa's.<sup>17</sup> The *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷē* (*Mahādevi* henceforth) also stands out as having exceptional arrangements of opening verses in the beginning of each chapter.<sup>18</sup> In several places in the *Mahādevi Ragaḷē*, Harihara describes Mahādeviyakka singing, a narrative artifact that might indicate that the fame of her Vacanas already during the time of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. The *Mahādevi Ragaḷē* also contains direct quotes from Mahādeviyakka's Vacanas,<sup>19</sup> which makes this Ragaḷē, if we do not suspect these quotes to be later interpolations, the earliest extant source of her Vacanas.<sup>20</sup> The *Mahādevi Ragaḷē* is the earliest written account about Mahādeviyakka, and it significantly differs in terms of thematic content from the later and more famous accounts found in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *Śūnyasampādanē* and *Prabhulingalīlē*.<sup>21</sup> Here is a chapter-by-chapter summary of this text:

[1] One day, in celestial Kailāsa, Śiva sends one of his Gaṇas to inquire about Pārvati's doings. The Gaṇa enters the harem and finds Pārvati, along with many female Gaṇas and goddesses who are busy decorating her. Walking toward Pārvati, the excited Gaṇa accidentally touches the feet of one of the female Gaṇas that groom Pārvati. The female Gaṇa reacts in anger and shouts toward him:

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communities in Karnataka today.

<sup>17</sup> The *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷē* contains seven chapters. Basavaṇṇa's Ragaḷē contains twenty-five, out of which the first thirteen are extant today.

<sup>18</sup> Once again, Basavaṇṇa's Ragaḷē is the only one, other than Mahādeviyakka's, that has nonstandard opening verses. The standard for the seventeen Ragaḷēs dedicated to Śaraṇas from the Kannada-speaking regions is one verse at the opening of each chapter, always in the *kanda* meter. In these two Ragaḷēs, in contrast, the opening verses change meters, and there are sometime more than one.

<sup>19</sup> See chapter 6.prose in Harihara (1999:406-7) and 7.45-50, 7.103-16, 7.177-96 in Harihara (1999: 408-10).

<sup>20</sup> The claim that Harihara is the earliest poet to quote Vacanas in his works has been made by Kannaḍiga scholars as well (Basavarāju 2001 [1960]: 34-35, Knn). See section 4.1.2 above.

<sup>21</sup> Ramanujan uses the *Śūnyasampādanē* as the source for his presentation of Mahādeviyakka's life (p. 112n1). The *Śūnyasampādanē*'s fourth author dedicates a whole chapter (number sixteenth) to Mahādeviyakka and to her Vacanas. See Gūḷūra *et al* (2007 [1965]-b: 279-396, Knn), Michael (1992: 50-52). There is also a later medieval Vīraśaiva Purāṇa written in Kannada that is completely dedicated to Mahādeviyakka's life, titled the *Mahādeviyakkana Purāṇa*, which was composed by Cannabasavāṅka (1968). This version, in turn, spawned a rendition in modern Kannada prose by Candrayya (1973).

“You worldling (Bhavi)!” For calling a true Bhakta a worldling, Pārvati punishes the female Gaṇa by decreeing that she will be born on earth and marry a worldling herself.

[2] This female Gaṇa is born in Uḍutaḍi to two ardent Śaivas who ask Śiva to grant them a little daughter. At the age of ten Mahādeviyakka is initiated by a Guru and receives her *iṣṭaliṅga*. She grows to be a remarkably beautiful maiden with strong faith in Śiva.

[3] One day, as Kauśika, the king of Uḍutaḍi, is strolling through the streets of his town, he notices young Mahādeviyakka and immediately falls in love with her. He feels he must have Mahādeviyakka as his queen and sends a messenger to ask Mahādeviyakka’s parents to agree to marry their daughter to him.<sup>22</sup> Despite the parents’ basic agreement to the marriage, Mahādeviyakka refuses adamantly, for she is an ardent devotee of Śiva, and the king is a complete worldling. How could luster reside with darkness?<sup>23</sup> Since King Kauśika simply cannot live without having Mahādeviyakka, his ministers revisit the parents, this time threatening them with execution if they won’t marry their daughter and offering them gold if they will. The parents again talk to their daughter, citing famous cases of interreligious marriages. At last Mahādeviyakka succumbs to her parents’ pressure but with two conditions: first, she will be free to worship Śiva, to participate in Śiva assemblies (*śivagoṣṭhis*<sup>24</sup>), to serve her Guru, and to choose when she spends her time with the king. Second, if the king breaches three times any of the abovementioned terms, she will be allowed to leave him and terminate the marriage. The ministers agree to these conditions and Mahādeviyakka’s parents sign the wedding contract. In return, the king lavishes gold and vestments upon them.

[4] The whole city is getting ready for the wedding celebrations. These start at Mahādeviyakka’s parents’ house and after four days shift to the palace. In the process, everyone is thrilled except for the desperate and anguished Mahādeviyakka.

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<sup>22</sup> The messenger’s name is Vasantaka, literally—“spring,” the time of lovers. See discussion in section 3.4.2 above.

<sup>23</sup> *Mahādevi Ragaḷē* 3.121 in Harihara (1999: 399):  
*beḷagingē kattaleya kūṭavonte?*

<sup>24</sup> On *śivagoṣṭhi*, see section 7.4 above.

[5] After the ceremonies end, Mahādeviyakka quickly retires to her boudoir to perform an elaborate and intimate *pūjē* to her *iṣṭaliṅga*. Her mode of worship (*pūjē*) is her body, and she prompts Śiva to enter her heart. She holds the *liṅga*, which is Śiva Mallinātha, in the palm of her hand, bathes and covers it with flowers and gems. Her form is inside the *liṅga* and the *liṅga* is inside her mind, without any difference between them (*bhinnavilladē*). Her breath is mixed with the smell of the flowers. Only then does she feel happy and free.

[6] Days pass while Mahādeviyakka participates in Śiva assemblies, while every night a maid comes to take her to King Kauśika's private chambers until the next morning. During this period Kauśika breaches three times Mahādeviyakka's terms: first, he refuses to give food and money to Jaṅgamas who come to beg at the palace. Then, becoming aroused at the sight of Mahādeviyakka performing *pūjē* to Śiva, he sneaks on her from behind and hugs her. The third breach occurs while Mahādeviyakka welcomes her Guru, who pays her an unexpected visit in the royal couple's inner chambers. Rushing to prostrate at her Guru's feet, Mahādeviyakka forgets to clothe herself. When the Guru asks her to dress, Kauśika prevents her from getting her Sari. He mocks her and sarcastically calls her a renouncer (*Viraktē*<sup>25</sup>) for not wearing any clothes in public. Humiliated by Kauśika, Mahādeviyakka declares that he has just made his third breach of the marriage agreement, which is now abrogated. In response to Kauśika preventing her from covering her body, she vows not to wear any clothes for the rest of her life. From this moment onwards, Mahādeviyakka covers her private parts using only her long hair.

[7] Mahādeviyakka relinquishes all her property to the town's Śaraṇas and, holding firmly the *liṅga* in her left hand, sets out toward Śrīśailam in order to unite there with Śiva Mallikārjuna. Her parents follow her to Śrīśailam and implore her to return home with them, but Mahādeviyakka refuses. Finally, Kauśika himself comes to Śrīśailam, dressed as a *śaiva* renouncer (*Virakta*). He begs her to teach him how to worship Śiva, but Mahādeviyakka doubts his alleged change of heart and dismisses him. As a last resort, Kauśika attempts to bribe with gold coins the head Gurus of two Śrīśailam *śaiva* colleges (*maṭhas*) but they, mesmerized by Mahādeviyakka's pure devotional grace, hamper Kauśika's conspiracy.<sup>26</sup> Mahādeviyakka performs a consecration (*pratiṣṭhāpana*) for the

<sup>25</sup> For the term *Virakta*, see section 8.1.1 below.

<sup>26</sup> Harihara explicitly names two *maṭhas*: Kalumaṭha and Hulumaṭha (*Mahādevi Ragaḷē* 7.121 in Harihara

goddess Śakti and meets a Śaraṇa called Kinnara Bōmmitandē.<sup>27</sup> Finally she decides the time has arrived to leave this world and unite with Śiva.<sup>28</sup> A heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends from the sky and takes Mahādeviyakka up to Kailāsa. She receives a pure heavenly body (*divyadeha*) and regains her position as Pārvati's female Gaṇa.

The *Mahādevi Ragaḷe* is shaped by sensibilities to feminine issues. We can note, for example, the centrality of Pārvati in the framing story, which is also repeated in other stories that involve female protagonists.<sup>29</sup> Mahādeviyakka's parents specifically ask Śiva for a daughter, which is an indication of the legitimate space for female progeny in this text. We are also told that when Mahādeviyakka turns ten, she is formally initiated into the *śaiva* faith by a Guru and receives her *iṣṭaliṅga*, the devotee's personal emblem of Śiva.<sup>30</sup> This initiation is remarkable compared with tradition Brahmanical attitudes based in Vedic exegetics about female exclusion from the ritual. There, women's religious practices are relegated away from the formal and public sphere.<sup>31</sup>

But beyond these specific tokens for female agency in Mahādeviyakka's story, the most central pro-female assertion in this text is Mahādeviyakka's desertion of marriage life, a desertion which the text legitimizes on the religious basis. In this regard, Mahādeviyakka's case demonstrates a widespread trend in the early phases of this tradition. Velcheru Narayana Rao, in the introduction to his English translation of

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1999: 410). Both exist in Śrīśailam today.

<sup>27</sup> Kinnara Bōmmitandē is a famous Śaraṇa who is said to have associated with Basavaṇṇa. See section 6.4 below.

<sup>28</sup> There is a cave in Śrīśailam with a sculptured image of Mahādeviyakka. This cave is identified by local tradition as the location where she performed her penance for Śiva (Anuradha 2002: 43).

<sup>29</sup> See the story about the female Śaraṇa Nimbavvē in section 6.1.3 below.

<sup>30</sup> *Liṅga* worship in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* is discussed below in section 7.2.4.

<sup>31</sup> McGee (2002).

the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*,<sup>32</sup> comments:

In brahminic religion, women are placed in the same category as the low castes ... In Vīraśaivism,<sup>33</sup> every person, without regard to caste or sex, receives a liṅga. Paṇḍitārādhyā even sanctions a woman to disobey her husband if he does not share her Vīraśaiva devotion. The *Basava Purāṇamu* repeats Paṇḍitārādhyā's instruction, and illustrates it by the story of Vaijakavva in the sixth chapter.<sup>34</sup>

Narayana Rao refers in the above quote to the story of Vaijakavvĕ,<sup>35</sup> in which we find the following statement:

If a husband deviates from the devotion to Śiva, it is completely appropriate for the wife to disobey him. If a wife worships Bharga [Śiva], she can never go wrong by leaving her husband.<sup>36</sup>

Narayana Rao points in the first quote to the overt clash between the values of traditional Brahmanical society and those of the emerging *bhakti* movement. Pāḷkuriki Somanātha, the author of the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, legitimizes in the second quote the *bhakti* resistance to institution of marriage by postulating a deviant husband. The Raḡaḷĕ of Mahādeviyakka puts these claims into narrative form: Harihara tells us about a marriage contract that was signed between Kauśika's ministers and Mahādeviyakka's parents. The marriage contract is a sophisticated narrative mechanism that naturalizes Mahādeviyakka's divorce by anticipating Kauśika's three breaches of the contract.<sup>37</sup> But in a more profound and normative manner, the marriage contract in the *Mahādevi*

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<sup>32</sup> See section 1.1.3 above.

<sup>33</sup> On the usage of the term Vīraśaivism in the early literature, see section 1.2.1 above.

<sup>34</sup> Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990: 12).

<sup>35</sup> Vaijakavvĕ, discussed separately in the following section, is named Vaijakavva in Narayana Rao's English translation to the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*.

<sup>36</sup> Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990: 216). See also p. 300n45.

<sup>37</sup> For Harihara's interest in publicly written agreements in the context of sectarian conflicts with regard to the Rāmayya story, see Ben-Herut (2012: 144).



*Ragaḷē* supplies a formal as well as moral approval for Mahādeviyakka's divorce, and this demonstrates well Harihara's commitment to empower female agency. But this commitment needs to be framed by the religious context: despite the considerable female agency in this story, the basic logic for legitimizing the wife's divorce in the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* and the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, is narrowly limited to the husband's deviation from Śiva devotion. On the other hand, we find the theme of nuptial feuds prevalent in other *bhakti* traditions as well, but in none of these the charter for the wife to break the marriage on questions of devotion incongruity is articulated as clearly as it does by this narrative tradition.<sup>38</sup> It is significant to note that even within this tradition, however, there is no legitimating for leaving one's husband on issues beyond the sectarian.<sup>39</sup>

#### 6.1.2 A FEMALE GURU

As with many stories, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* retelling of Vaijakavvē's life story is significantly different than that found in the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*. While Vaijakavvē leaves her husband in the Telugu text, in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* she initiates him into the *śaiva* faith. This initiation separates Vaijakavvē's story in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* from that of Mahādeviyakka and opens up new possibilities for reading female agency in the thirteenth-century *bhakti* literature from this region. Here is the summary of the *Vaijakavvēya Ragaḷē* (*Vaija Ragaḷē* henceforth):

A beautiful girl is born in an auspicious *śaiva* settlement (*śivapura*). Her name is Vaijakavvē. She is extremely beautiful and also a faithful follower of Śiva. Her father's sister, who is married to a Jain, comes for a visit from a town called Parivaḷigē and, seeing her niece's exceptional beauty, wants to marry the girl to

<sup>38</sup> See Glushkova (2005), especially p. 181. *Aṅṭāl* and *Mīrābāi* are the nearest to Mahādeviyakka in terms of their social transgression of traditional marriage life.

<sup>39</sup> In section 9.3.3 below, I further develop the sectarian themes in Mahādeviyakka's story.

her son Nemisēṭṭi. But Vaijakavvē's father refuses his sister. He tells her: "Nemisēṭṭi might be a fine person, but how can I marry a Bhaktē of Śiva to a worldlying (Bhavi), a *jaina* puppy?"<sup>40</sup> The sister is not deterred by this answer and declares a fast unto death if the girl's father will not agree to the marriage. The father's relatives press him to comply with his sister's wish, pointing to the familial relations, their shared *gotra*, and the horrible alternative of being responsible for the death of his own sister. The father finally yields, and wedding arrangements are initiated, including consulting an astrologer for an auspicious date for the wedding. Vaijakavvē, however, is deeply depressed by the prospect of marrying a Jain and cries out to Śiva, asking how she could continue worshipping him inside a *jaina* house. Śiva appears in her dream and promises not to abandon her in her married life.

After four days of wedding celebrations, the young couple moves to live at the husband's family house in Parivaḷigē. Vaijakavvē is like light within great darkness in her new home; like a sandalwood tree among shrubs. She worships Śiva, but in mind only: her heart is the temple, her breath is the ritual lamp (*ārati*). She adjusts to her new *jaina* environment but at the same time is completely detached from it. She is simultaneously present and absent (*hōddē hōddadē*). One day, Nemisēṭṭi returns home and tells Vaijakavvē to prepare food for some *jaina* Ṛṣis who will come to stay as guests in their house. Vaijakavvē obeys her husband's order and cooks many delicious dishes. While cooking, she suddenly bursts into tears, crying out to Śiva that she would have liked this food to be consumed by Śivabhaktas or Śiva himself and not by *jaina* puppies. Śiva hears her cry and immediately appears in her house disguised as a Śaraṇa asking for food. Happy to fulfill the Śaraṇa's request, Vaijakavvē starts filling the beggar's bowl with the food she has just made for the *jaina* Ṛṣis. But, surprisingly, no matter how much food she puts in the Śaraṇa's bowl, it cannot be filled. Vaijakavvē continues filling the bowl with food made for the *jaina* Ṛṣis until it the food almost runs out. The Śaraṇa eats with great appetite, but just before Nemisēṭṭi returns home with the group of Jains, he suddenly disappears. When the Jains discover that their food was consumed by another, they refuse to eat whatever is left and instead leave the house angrily. Nemisēṭṭi is furious that

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<sup>40</sup> *Vaija Ragaḷē* vv. 39-40 in Harihara (1999: 384):

... *bhavigē kuḍēnu*

*mṛḍana bhaktar āvu savaṇagunnigaligē hēṇṇa kuḍenu*

his wife ruined his *jaina* vow (*aruhana vrata*<sup>41</sup>) by spoiling the food with a Śaraṇa's touch. Vaijakavvē retorts, claiming that the whole world is purified by Śiva's touch; that the Jina is nothing as it is not even mentioned in the Vedas and the Śāstras; and that it is madness to worship useless and naked dolls (*bayala bariya bombēga!*). When Nemisēṭṭi hears this, he loses his self-control and starts beating his wife very hard. That night, as Vaijakavvē lies aching in her bed, Śiva again appears in her dream and promises her on the following morning he will break the head of the Jina in the *jaina* temple (*basadi*).

As the Jains come to their temple to pray in the morning, they find its doors locked. They cannot open the doors, even by using an elephant. They infer that the Jina inside the temple refuses to open the doors due to some fault in their ethical conduct (*dharmahāni*) or due to an act of violence done in the past (*bhūta hirsē*) by a member of the *jaina* community. At that moment, Nemisēṭṭi steps forward and admits he has lost his temper the previous night and had brutally beaten his wife. The whole community goes to Vaijakavvē's house to ask her forgiveness. They ask her to come to their temple so that the Jina will agree to open the doors. Vaijakavvē respectfully yields to their request, but adds that the Jina has nothing to do with this issue; in fact, it is Śiva himself that now resides in the temple after breaking the Jina statue and that it is he who prevents them from entering the temple. Like a kingly goose among crows, Vaijakavvē walks with the Jains to the temple and, after eulogizing Śiva at the entrance, the doors open. Inside, they all find the Jina's head broken and a shining *liṅga* stands instead of it. Unable to bear the shame, all the *jaina* leaders (Ṛṣis, Paṇḍitas) leave the temple. Vaijakavvē is shivering and ecstatic with happiness, and her husband Nemisēṭṭi falls to her feet, begging for her forgiveness. Vaijakavvē forgives him, smears holy ashes (*bhasita*) on his forehead, and converts him into the *śaiva* faith. She orders her husband to make a heap of dirt. He obeys her and a *liṅga* arises from it. This *liṅga* is named Vaijanātha. A heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends from the sky and takes Vaijakavvē to Kailāsa. Śiva tells about her greatness to Pārvati and transforms Vaijakavvē into one of Pārvati's

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<sup>41</sup> *Aruha* is a Kannada derivation (*tadbhava*) of the Sanskrit work *arhanta* (from *varh* "to be worthy of"). It is noteworthy that in Monier-Williams *et al arhanta* denotes Buddhists and not Jains (1986: 93 s.v. *arhanta*) while in the Kannada semantic field, according to Kittel (1982: 108-9 s.v. *arha, arhat, arhanta*) and in Harihara's corpus, this term primarily denotes Jains.

Rudrakannikē (a female equivalent to the Śiva attendant).<sup>42</sup>

I start the discussion about this poignant story with its very ending, where Vaijakavvē initiates her husband into the *bhakti* religion. This is a climactic moment from a dramatic point of view, but also with regard to its ritualistic context: in sharp contrast to the Vedic framework of ritual, this initiation is spontaneous and highly emotional,<sup>43</sup> although it is located inside a Śiva temple. More fundamentally, Brahmanical orthodoxy limits the role of an initiating Guru to males only while excluding women from direct ritual participation,<sup>44</sup> and this backdrop contributes to the challenge posed by this story to traditional gender boundaries.<sup>45</sup> Vaijakavvē's dramatic initiation of a male who is also her husband (two categories that traditionally render the initiated as superior over the initiator) prescribes an antinomian role-model for female religious autonomy, agency, and self-empowerment. In light of the overt challenge of gender boundaries, it is unsurprising that Vaijakavvē is referred to as role-model by other female characters in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>46</sup>

We might also consider Vaijakavvē's social and religious background. Though we are not directly informed about the social status of her family—there are no attributions such as the family's *gotra* or *varṇa* in this text—Vaijakavvē's name, which is

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<sup>42</sup> This summary also appears in section 9.3.2 below.

<sup>43</sup> See discussion about initiation as depicted in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in section 7.3 below.

<sup>44</sup> Banks Findly (2002), McGee (2002).

<sup>45</sup> Transgression of orthodox gender-boundaries is one of the characteristics of omnipraxy, about which H. Daniel Smith writes: “worship techniques ... are neither gender- not class- exclusive. Nonspecialist males and females assume central roles, with remarkably economical rituals” (1995: 39) . See more on omnipraxy in section 7.1.2 below.

<sup>46</sup> Vaijakavvē is described at the beginning of the *Mahādevi Ragaḷē* as one of Pārvati's consorts in Kailāsa (*Mahādevi Ragaḷē* 1.84 in Harihara 1999: 394) and is again mention in this text when Mahādeviyakka's parents refer to famous cases of Bhaktēs who married Bhavis (*Mahādevi Ragaḷē* 3.181 in Harihara 1999: 400).

derived from *vaija* (Sanskrit *vaidya*<sup>47</sup>), suggests that Vaijakavvē belongs to a high class family, possibly Brahmanical.<sup>48</sup> However, the text does allude to Vaijakavvē's thorough knowledge of Brahmanical scripture when she is arguing with her Jain husband about Śiva's superiority over the Jina.<sup>49</sup> Vaijakavvē's mastery over Brahmanical scripture is significant in this context, because it betrays the uniquely syncretic religious agency ascribed to her by Harihara: Vaijakavvē's invocation of the Vedas, coupled with her role as a Guru for of her husband, capacitate her transcendence of gender-boundaries dictated by orthodox Brahmanism, while adopting and appropriating some of its core values. Significantly, this complex mechanism of female appropriation of male-centered Brahmanical values is a key ingredient of *bhakti* in general and, once more, we find in the *Ragaḷgaḷu* an intense narrative articulating of it.<sup>50</sup>

### 6.1.3 A LICENTIOUS FEMALE DEVOTEE

We shift now to what is the most provocative *Ragaḷ* with regard to its disposition toward female agency. This *Ragaḷ*, the *Nimbiyakkana Ragaḷ* (*Nimbi Ragaḷ* henceforth), is a short-length *Ragaḷ* consisting of 254 verses that describes the life of a poor *Bhaktē* who gives sexual services to Śiva's male devotees. Here is the poem's summary:

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<sup>47</sup> Kittel (1982: 1432 s.v. *vaija*).

<sup>48</sup> "Vaidya" is a term that denotes a person learned in the Vedas or, alternatively, a physician (Kittel 1982: 1433 s.v. *vaidya*; Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 1022 s.v. *vaidya*). See also Hawley (forthcoming-a: 5n7). Note that by the end of the story we learn that the *liṅga* that rose from the mound created by the fresh convert Nemisēṭṭi is named *Vaijanātha*, literally "The Lord of *Vaija*." There is a greater and pan-Indian tradition of Śiva *Vaidyanātha*, and it is possible that this vignette deliberately taps on to this tradition.

<sup>49</sup> One of the claims she makes is that the Jina is insignificant since it is not mentioned in the Vedas or the Śāstras even once. See Ben-Herut (2012: 138-40) regarding Harihara's usage of theological claims within a sectarian argument in the case of *Ekānta Rāmāyā*'s story.

<sup>50</sup> See Laurie Patton (2002: 5-7). On p. 7 Patton writes: "... [T]he universalism of *bhakti* has raised the question of women's participation in what were traditionally male, brahmin roles" (p. 7). See also discussion about the *Ragaḷgaḷu* appropriation of Brahmanical values in section 8.2.2 below.

In Pārvati's hall in Kailāsa, Madhuramukhi ("Sweet Face"), one of Pārvati's attendants (Rudrakannikē), is cleaning the floor when another attendant called Kalpakujē ("Heavenly Wishing Tree") walks by and is sullied by a grain of dust. Angry, she turns to Madhuramukhi and swears: "You servant (*tottē*)!" Pārvati overhears this and angrily curses Kalpakujē: "All of my workers are as great as the goddesses Lakṣmi and Sārasvati. For calling Madhuramuki a servant you shall now be born on earth and be known to everyone as "Lemon" (*nimbi*), an indication of your lowliness. And you shall live on earth as servant!" As Pārvati's commands, Kalpakujē is born in the northern region to a faithful *śaiva* family in a *śaiva* settlement (*śivapura*). When she is born, healthy and beautiful, the parents name her Nimbavvē and bring her a *liṅga* and consecrated food (*prasāda*) from Śiva's temple. Nimbavvē grows up while associating with other Śaivas, and her faith in Śiva also grows stronger. But, as she becomes young woman, Pārvati's curse causes all of her family to suddenly parish, except for her father. The two become very poor, and the father decides they need to move to another city, where they are unknown, in order to beg for food. And so they do. One day the father falls ill and Nimbavvē, in order to provide for her father's needs, becomes a servant of Brahmin who is a worldling (Bhavi). By now, Nimbavvē is a beautiful maiden. When she goes to fetch water,<sup>51</sup> she observes a *śaiva* festival (*gaṇaparva*) nearby. She is immediately remembered of her lost youth and cries out her distress to Śiva. Hearing her cries, her father prompts her to worship Śiva instead of crying. She washes and goes to the temple, where she touches the *liṅga* and says: "Śiva! I have nothing and therefore cannot serve the Jaṅgamas. Find me a Jaṅgama that I can become a vessel to satisfy his desires." Nimbavvē feels relieved after expressing her wishes to Śiva. She starts associating with Śaraṇas at the Śiva temple and becomes famous as a Gaṇabhājana ("Śaiva-Vessel"). One day, while Nimbavvē walks home, a Jaṅgama sees her and his heart is captured by her looks. He follows her home and expresses he desire to have her. Nimbavvē first prays to Śiva and then unites with the Jaṅgama. From this moment on, she starts sleeping with the group of Bhaktas with a determined mind, serving each in the same manner: if it is a handsome person or one with a golden body, if he can walk or not, if he can speak or not. Without scarring her mind, she pleases them all. She also continues her household work at the Brahmin's house. Detached, she does everything with complete enthusiasm for Śiva. Then one day, her father dies, and she performs the death rituals

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<sup>51</sup> Harihara says that the pot she uses to fetch water with was made by Guṇḍayya, whose story is summarized in section 7.2.1 below.

(*samskāra*). Later, while touching the *liṅga* at the Śiva temple, a Bhakta approaches her and demands she fulfill his desires. Nimbavvē decides to sleep with him right then and there, before her worship ceremony begins, and so they do, with Nimbavvē's head placed on the basin (*pīṭha*) of the *liṅga*. Pārvati sees this in the sky and immediately tell Śiva: "Is this a good moral for men? Is this a proper behavior for women? How can you just watch this without heed?" Śiva, ashamed, reveals one of his heads in the *liṅga* under which Nimbavvē and the Bhakta are having sex, turns to Nimbavvē, and asks: "What is this, Nimbavvē? Can't you find another place to do this? Must you have sex in front of me?" Nimbavvē answers him: "Is there a place from which you are absent? Besides, those who enjoy me are Śaraṇas, which is a manifestation of you!" Śiva, left speechless from her arguments, says: "Your answer is agreeable to me! Whatever you want I shall give" Nimbavvē tells Śiva: "On the next Monday, seven days from now, take me to Kailāsa!" Śiva agrees, and during the following week many Bhaktas gather to celebrate and pray for Nimbavvē's ascent to Kailāsa, which occurs exactly seven days after Śiva's promise. There, Śiva presents Nimbavvē to Pārvati and tells his assistant Nandi: "Nimbavvē has so much devotion for me. Through desire (*kāma*) she became desireless, through attachment (*prema*) she became impartial. She has made good people into my Bhaktas! She endured Pārvati's curse and returned here." Nimbavvē is made once again an attendant of Pārvati in heaven.

Nimbavvē's life story deals with issues of poverty, *samaśīla*, and female agency, framed within the larger discourse of *śivabhakti*. As much as the story's progression in the *Nimbi Ragaḷe* is linear, focusing on a sequence of events in the life of one protagonist, its underlying ethical framework is unsimplest. Harihara describes, with much empathy, the economic deterioration of Nimbavvē's family. This deterioration culminates with Nimbavvē taking on the position of a servant at a house of a non-Śaiva Brahmin. The fact that Nimbavvē is required to serve a Bhavi (a non-Śaiva worldling)<sup>52</sup> in order to sustain her ailing father marks to the immediate audience her poor state. Harihara also employs sentimental language to describe the small family's vicissitudes,

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<sup>52</sup> This term is discussed in section 9.3.3 below.

such as the difficulties of Nimbavvė’s father’s to beg for alms. Overall, Harihara’s explicit and emphatic treatment of poverty and his focus on a female servant as the story’s protagonist demonstrates his commitment for promulgating *samaśīla* as well as for bringing to the literary fore lives of people from non-elite social strata.<sup>53</sup>

References and allusions to *samaśīla* are ubiquitous throughout the story: at the beginning of the story, in Kailāsa, Pārvati proclaims, in her angry response to Madhuramukhi, that all her workers are equal to the goddesses Lakṣmi and Sārasvati. This claim is framed by the notion that working for the god (or goddess in this case) is a form of devotional practice, a notion that is central for this *bhakti* tradition.<sup>54</sup> *Samaśīla* is again invoked when Harihara describes Nimbavvė’s impartiality when she is sexually serving the Bhaktas. She treats each of them “in the same manner” (*ōndě tēram*).<sup>55</sup> This stress on Nimbavvė’s equal sexual treatment to all of Śivabhaktas conveys a certain legitimacy to her practice, even though it is evidently problematic, as we learn from Pārvati’s and Śiva’s reactions to it soon after.

There is a narrative disconnect between Pārvati’s curse at the beginning of the story that Nimbavvė becomes a servant and her sexual conduct with the Bhaktas: Pārvati’s curse sends Nimbavvė to serve a worldling, as she actually does at the Brahmin’s house, while Nimbavvė’s sexual servitude is set outside the curse’s purview. Pārvati herself opposes Nimbavvė’s sexual conduct on moral grounds and sends her husband Śiva to chastise Nimbavvė. Thus, the separateness of Nimbavvė’s sexual acts from the rest of the story sheds light on her volition in serving the Bhaktas. Nimbavvė voluntarily chooses to sexually serve Bhaktas, and this behavior—as much as it

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<sup>53</sup> See discussion about popular culture incorporated in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in section 3.3.2 above.

<sup>54</sup> This theme is further discussed in section 6.3 below.

<sup>55</sup> *Nimbě* vv. 145-48 in Harihara (1999: 376).



contested by the god and his consort—empowers Nimbavvė to the point of rejecting the god’s own plea not to perform these sexual acts in his temple. We get a sense of Nimbavvė’s empowerment also in the episode about her father’s passing away, after which she performs the *saṃskāra* rituals for him, rituals that traditionally are limited to men. In conclusion, the agency of Nimbavvė’s character is empowered because of the familial responsibilities she has to take on herself, but no-less, because of her independent sexual conduct. As in the previous stories, the ethical license for the social and religious transgressions of the Bhaktė is grounded in her devotion to Śiva.

Like earth, Kailāsa in the *Ragaḷėgaḷu* is a gendered space. It is Pārvati and not Śiva who sends the female Gaṇa to earth, and it is Pārvati who Nimbavvė returns to serve upon concluding her earthly life.<sup>56</sup> Pārvati reappears in the middle of the story, during the sex scene at Śiva’s temple. In this scene, Harihara uses three different voices to articulate three separate ethical stances toward Nimbavvė’s sexual act at the temple, and Pārvati’s is the most conservative. She opposes Nimbavvė’s conduct on moral grounds: “Is this a good moral for men? Is this a proper behavior for women?” she asks her husband. Śiva is more earthly and practical on this matter: he asks Nimbavvė to perform her unholy acts somewhere else, away from the holy ground of the temple. Nimbavvė, in her response to both, transcends the normative and ethical boundaries assumed by the god and goddess: you are everywhere, she tells Śiva and adds: sleeping with the Śaraṇas is my way of uniting with you. Nimbavvė’s first answer articulates a metaphysical truth that Śiva cannot dismiss. Her second answer conceptualizes the Bhaktas with which she sleeps as earthly embodiments of Śiva. This response echoes a recurring disposition in the *Ragaḷėgaḷu* about the embodiment of the divine in the

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<sup>56</sup> The same female rearrangement of the Kailāsa frame story is found in the *Mahādevi Ragaḷė*, which was discussed earlier in section 6.1.1.

human Śaraṇa, which was discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the sexual cum epiphanic context in this *mise en scène* raises a quasi-Tantric approach to sexual union as a means of attaining godhood, although there is no explicit allusion to this in the text.<sup>58</sup> But more significant than the Tantric overtones in this scene is the fact that Nimbavvė does not merely carve out legitimacy for her contested actions but redescribes them as a valid form of worship for a female Bhaktė.<sup>59</sup>

Śiva is deeply affected by Nimbavvė’s unabashed response, immediately switching from chastising her act into endorsing it.<sup>60</sup> After confirming Nimbavvė’s sexual service as a form of worship, Śiva grants her permission to rejoin to Kailāsa, thus bringing her wish to unite with him—a wish only partially fulfilled on earth through her sexual servitude to Bhaktas—to a culmination.

On a concluding note, it is significant to mention that the story of Nimbavvė is conspicuously absent from any of the later śaiva texts about this region,<sup>61</sup> and this might indicate a certain level of discomfort by later traditions from the provocative

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<sup>57</sup> See section 5.2.1 above.

<sup>58</sup> Compare with the *Guṇḍayyana Ragaḷė* as discussed in section 3.4.1 above. See Biernacki (2006) for a reading of female agency in Tantric manuals from north India of sexual rites.

<sup>59</sup> We find references also outside of this *Ragaḷė* to Śivabhaktas that are interested in casual sexual contact. In the *Basava Ragaḷė*’s story discussed above in section 5.2.2, Basavaṇṇa identifies the disguised Śiva as a pleasure-seeking Jaṅgama (Sukhijaṅgama), a term that attests to acceptability of this phenomenon. In the beginning of the third chapter of the *Śaṅkaradāsimaṅgala Ragaḷė*, a rich prostitute visits Śiva Mailanātha temple in order to worship him. A story about Śiva who, disguised as a devotee, visit prostitutes at the street of Kalyāṇa is given in Cikkanaṅgeśa’s *Rāghavaṅka Caritra* (Kittel 1875: 18). There are speculations about archaeological evidence for sexual services under the canopy of *śivabhakti* in these regions: P. B. Desai (1968) describes caves carved at the outskirts of Kalyāṇa that might have served as “the dwellings of free women, visited by the merrygo Jangamas” (p. 358). There is a story about a Bhakta’s wife who prostitutes for devotional purposes in the Hindi *Bhaktamāl* (Hawley 2005: 60-62).

<sup>60</sup> Śiva’s implicit admittance of his mistake and the superiority of the Bhaktė’s arguments demonstrate the Śaraṇa’s potential to triumph his or her own deity, as discussed earlier in section 5.2.3.

<sup>61</sup> There is a different and popular character in the cadre of Śaraṇas called Nimbavvė or Nimbivakka. See Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990), Shulman (1993b: 48-67), Śāmarāya (2009 [1967]: 224-25, Knn).

and problematic materials of this story.

## 6.2 Contesting Discrimination by *Jāti*

Beyond the question of gender, issues of social status are derived in this milieu from one's "position assigned by birth, rank, caste, family, race, lineage," which is Monier-Williams' definition of the term *jāti*.<sup>62</sup> This definition is evidently broad, and I do not delve into its subtleties. Rather, I pay attention in the following three sections to three areas in which discrimination based on a Bhakta's *jāti*—in its broadest sense as given in the above definition—is contested in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* stories. The three areas are one's occupation, the ritualistic purity attributed to one, and one's personal wealth. Harihara opposes in his stories any discrimination based on these criteria. In his idealistic prescription, social capital is directly derived from one's religious interiority, in the sense that it is determined by the Bhakta's devotional capacities alone and regardless of occupation, familial affiliation, and accumulation of wealth. In the social context in which these stories partake, these three realms index social status, and it is this indexing that the Śaraṇas in these narratives fight to replace with a new indexical system, one based on faith in Śiva.

Harihara's commitment to *samaśīla* is made explicit in the opening of the *Bhogaṇṇana Ragaḷe*, a poem dedicated to a court Brahmin who is also a Śaiva.<sup>63</sup> The opening passage of this *Ragaḷe* introduces the pious Brahmin called Bhogaṇṇa, and it includes the following statement:

He would never inquire about the Śivabhakta's *jāti*  
He would never distinguish between Śivabhaktas

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<sup>62</sup> Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 418 s.v. *jāti* 5).

<sup>63</sup> Bhogaṇṇa's story is summarized and discussed in section 7.2.3 below.

He would never judge Harabhaktas<sup>64</sup> according to their manner of speech  
 He would never examine Harabhaktas' scriptural knowledge

*śivabhaktarōlagē jātiya vicāripudilla*  
*śivabhaktarōlagē bhedava kalpisuvudilla*  
*harabhaktarōlagē jāṇṇuḍiyanar asuvudilla*  
*harabhaktarōlagadhikavidyavar asuvudilla<sup>65</sup>*

In this vignette, by eulogizing Bhogaṇṇa, Harihara protests against the social discriminations endorsed by “traditional” society: inquiring about one’s *jāti*, giving weight for differences (*bheda*) among people, and privileging people who can articulate well (*jāṇṇuḍi*) and those who are Brahmins, endowed with higher education (*adhikavidya*). Each of these partialities is directly negated here. Bhogaṇṇa’s impartiality toward the social background of the Bhaktas is presented as an alternative to these hierarchical mechanisms. We can say that this brief passage epitomizes the promise of *samaśīla* by this *bhakti* tradition. In contrast to this simplified presentation however, the narratives in which *samaśīla* is a central theme convey (in similitude to what we have seen earlier with regard to gender relations) a more complex stance.

### 6.3 Work and its Felicities

A hallmark of Kannada *śivabhakti*, one which is undoubtedly a considerable propeller for its popularity, is its rejection of social ranking according to occupational background. Unsurprisingly, this issue is central in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories about the Kannaḍiga Śaraṇas, although, once again, the social prescription here does not imply any totalistic, modern-like sense of free choice of occupation or even a potential release

<sup>64</sup> Hara is a common synonym for Śiva.

<sup>65</sup> *Bhogaṇṇana Ragaḷē* vv. 11-14 in Harihara (1999: 273).

from the constraining matrix of familial occupation.<sup>66</sup> The social critique of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* with regard to traditional attitudes toward familial occupations is much more specific: it is aimed to purge occupations that are considered as ritualistically polluting according to Brahmanical-centered social ideology. In the *Nimbi Ragaḷē* story discussed in the previous section, Pārvati scolds Nimbavvē for calling the cleaning lady of Pārvati’s hall a servant.<sup>67</sup> Pārvati exclaims that whoever works for her is goddess-like, including people who clean the floor of her hall. This statement is not incidental to the text but reflects a core value repeated in several stories, aimed at neutralizing any sense of inferiority or pollution attributed to specific occupations by the Brahmanical-centered society.

Many Vacanas connect Śaraṇas to various occupations, and all these figures are equally venerated by this tradition. We also find in the later Vīraśaiva Purāṇas many characters whose occupations were traditionally considered as polluted but are venerated by the texts.<sup>68</sup> A similar trend is at work already in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. Different Bhaktas are identified by their profession in the stories, including those considered as low and polluting, and the presentation of their trade is completely purged from any such judgmental values.

The *Ragaḷē* that prescribes the devotional value of work in the most pronounced manner is the *Guṇḍayyana Ragaḷē* (*Guṇḍa Ragaḷē* henceforth).<sup>69</sup> The *Guṇḍa Ragaḷē* is a short-length *Ragaḷē* of 278 verses. Here is its summary:

In the northern region, in Ballukē, there is a simple potter and a dedicated

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<sup>66</sup> Similarly to Robert Zydenbos’ warning quoted earlier in this chapter, R. Blake Michael admonishes against a cursory identification of the *vīraśaiva* work ethic as “Protestant” (Michael 1982: 607-8).

<sup>67</sup> See section 6.1.3 above.

<sup>68</sup> Michael (1982: 606).

<sup>69</sup> The story is summarized and discussed also in section 7.2.1 below.

Śivabhakta named Guṇḍayya. When Śiva hears the Guṇḍayya's tapping on his pots, he is happy. Guṇḍayya makes pots day and night without stopping for food or sleep, and each pot he makes is like a different form of *bhakti*. And while making the pots, his mind is continuously focused on the god, taking upon himself the oath of the Three-Eyed Śiva. One day, Guṇḍayya goes to Śiva's temple and, seeing the god, his eyes are filled with tears of excitement. He drinks the holy ritual water and, filled with the sacred experience of the worship, he returns to his home. Seeing in his mind the ritual he attended, Guṇḍayya starts to make pots without food or sleep. All night, while Guṇḍayya makes pots on the outside, he sees in his mind only Śiva. And although his eyes are closed, the pots he makes come out beautiful. In the morning, it is again time for Guṇḍayya's observance of going to the temple and worshipping Śiva, and he absorbs into his mind the image of Śiva's statue and then returns home to make more pots. The drumming music of his pots reaches the Himalayas and makes Śiva happy. What is seen as work on the outside is music on the inside. What is seen as tapping on the outside, is worship on the inside. Śiva is inside Guṇḍayya, and this celebration goes on for many days. One day, as Guṇḍayya starts banging on his pots, Śiva bursts into dance in his abode at Kailāsa. The music is earthly but the dance is heavenly. Śiva comments to Pārvati: "I am dancing inside Guṇḍayya's heart. I do not know the difference between me and my Bhakta nor between heaven and earth." Then, Śiva takes Pārvati to earth to meet the enthralled Bhakta. When he reaches Guṇḍayya's house, he and Guṇḍayya start dancing together. Seeing this, the gods want to join in by playing their music, but Śiva refuses their offer, saying he desires to hear only the sounds of pots. All the world's inhabitants, animate as well as inanimate,<sup>70</sup> start to dance with Śiva and Guṇḍayya, until Pārvati fears that the earth will not be able to hold this dance, and asks Śiva to cease. Śiva yields, stops dancing, and hugs Guṇḍayya. Then, a heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) comes down from the sky and takes Guṇḍayya to Kailāsa. Śiva introduces Guṇḍayya to all his attendants and declares: "I make everyone dance, but this potter made me dance!" and he officially declares Guṇḍayya as one of his attendants.

In this story, Guṇḍayya the Potter, after visiting the local Śiva temple, enters a frenzy of pot-making, and the banging sounds on his pots reach Kailāsa and make Śiva

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<sup>70</sup> The terms Harihara uses here are *sthāvarajaṅgama* (*Guṇḍa Raḡalē* v. 220 in Harihara 1999: 272). This term is significant in the *vīraśāiva* thought-system, although it appears that in this instance it lacks the theological implications usually attributed to this term. See section 7.2 below.

burst into dancing. Next, Śiva comes down to earth and starts dancing with Guṇḍayya. Finally, both the Bhakta and his god rise to Kailāsa, where Guṇḍayya is consecrated as Śiva's attendant.

Guṇḍayya's profession of making pots, generally associated with country culture (*jānapada*),<sup>71</sup> is portrayed by Harihara in this *Ragaḷe* as a powerful and effective soteriological regimen (*sādhana*): if exercised with enough determination and devotional focus, the making of pots can make Śiva reveal himself (*sākṣāt*) to the Bhakta and ultimately bring to their unity in Kailāsa. However, despite the powerful image of Guṇḍayya's pot-making, what generates the devotional efficacy in his activity has nothing to do with this particular profession.<sup>72</sup> It is, rather, Guṇḍayya's internal and intensive devotional mode, his religious determination, that fuels the process of metaphysical unity with his deity. The spiritual implications of this story transcend pot-making: any occupation can be equally efficacious, as long as the internal mode of the Bhakta is determined on unity with Śiva.<sup>73</sup>

As just mentioned, the premise that one's occupation can become one's main tool for practicing devotion is central to the Kannada tradition even beyond the *Ragaḷegaḷu*. It is captured by the slogan *kāyakave kailāsa*, "it is only work which is

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<sup>71</sup> See section 3.3.2 above for a discussion about country culture and the *Ragaḷegaḷu*. There is an endogamous community in *vīraśaiva* society today, called Kumbara Lingayat, that specializes in pottery (Singh 2003: 925-27).

<sup>72</sup> Regardless of the general endorsement found in the *Ragaḷegaḷu* of any occupation as a soteriological path, drumming does have a ritualistic and, more specifically, soteriological or mystical role in many religious traditions in South Asia. See, for example, Killius (2003), Clarke (2002). The Tamil hagiographical tradition of the Nāyaṅārs also celebrates the vocation of pot-making through the devotional figure Tirunilakaṇṭhapāṇa, a potter by profession, who plays the lute to Śiva. The devotional climax of this story, however, is more contained than that of Guṇḍayya's story. It occurs when Śiva gives Tirunilakaṇṭhapāṇa a secret access to his temple, which is only the starting point in the *Guṇḍa Ragaḷe*. See section 5.2.3 above.

<sup>73</sup> On the centrality of determination in the Bhakta's actions, see section 5.1 above.

heaven,” which can be found in many Vīraśaiva texts. This term is defined in the *Vīraśaiva Lexicon for Technical Terms (Vīraśaiva Pāribhāṣika Padakośa)* as “doing work out of a feeling of complete surrender to Śiva” (Vidyāśaṅkara 2000: 123 s.v. *kāyaka* 1, Knn).<sup>74</sup> Thus, the prescription in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* for worldly vocation as a soteriological tool fits well into a broader theological framework that professes renunciation within this world.<sup>75</sup> Harihara explicitly uses the term *kāyaka* to describe Guṇḍayya’s pot-making,<sup>76</sup> but it is difficult to deduce from this that *kāyakave kailāsa* was an already-established theological concept in Harihara’s time. In any case, it is reasonable to postulate that Harihara was one of the first to canonize this concept.

On a concluding note, we can briefly observe the outer realm in which work ceases to be a value endorsed by the Śaraṇas’ stories in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. In the first chapter of the *Ragaḷē* about Kallayya, he is asked by his father to forge a gold necklace for a client who is a Vaiṣṇava. Kallayya’s adamant refusal develops into a harsh argument with his father, and this argument culminates in Kallayya’s attempted suicide in Śiva’s temple. Here, the ideal of *kāyaka* ceases to be supported by the text when it leaves the śaiva devotional framework. Like in the case of gender, *samaśīla* in the case of occupation is completely dependent in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* on the specific śaiva-based religious affiliation and does not exist outside this purview. Furthermore, as I noted earlier, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories do not convey any sense of rejection of hereditary, guild-like, and this-world occupational affiliation, and there is some significance in acknowledging the endorsement of traditional social structure implied by this acceptance. Put differently, the stress found in these stories on one’s traditional

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<sup>74</sup> See Ishwaran (1992, throughout), Michael (1982), Ramanujan (1973: 34-35).

<sup>75</sup> See section 5.2.2 above for martial life and progeny. We shall also observe this mechanism at work in the political sphere in chapter eight below.

<sup>76</sup> *Guṇḍa Ragaḷē* v. 5 in Harihara (1999: 269).



vocation as a soteriological tool also precludes professional mobility, mobility that—as a social ideal detached from the religious context—is completely absent from this corpus. Rather than a release from the constraints of traditional occupation, the stories usually sanction it, as long as it is practiced under the theological canopy of the *śaiva* faith. In other words, *jāti* still matters in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, even after its discriminatory baggage is jettisoned.

#### 6.4 Reversing Untouchability

As already stated, Basavaṇṇa’s life story in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* (as well as in the later *vīraśaiva* literature) serves as a fertile narrative ground for exploring the possibilities, as well as the external and internal difficulties, of exercising *samaśīla* in a highly hierarchical society. In chapter ten of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, Harihara narrates an incident that is later repeated in many later *Vīraśaiva Purāṇas* about Basavaṇṇa and an untouchable (Pōlēya):

[10] One day, Basavaṇṇa, accompanied by a large procession of Bhaktas, goes to visit elder Śaivas living outside the city skirts. When reaching there, he hears the sounds of bells inviting Śivabhaktas to consume the food consecrated by Śiva at his temple (*ārogaṇṇē*).<sup>77</sup> Basavaṇṇa decides to eat with the local Śivabhaktas. He enters the house of Nāgideva and eats with him the communal sacred food (*saṅghaprasāda*). A *vaiṣṇava* spy sees this and immediately runs back to the city to inform the Brahmin community, and consequently, a group of Brahmins is sent to King Bijjaḷa and declares: “Lord! Basavaṇṇa’s conduct is contrary (*viparīta*) to the custom: he calls untouchables (Pōlēyas) Noble Śaivas, and if we call them untouchables, he would kill us. Furthermore, he eats at an untouchable house and then comes into your court without purifying first. By this practice he pollutes this place! If this continues, we cannot stay here.” Bijjaḷa invites Basavaṇṇa to meet him outside the palace, in an open field. There, Bijjaḷa tells Basavaṇṇa: “Listen! It is improper that you call untouchables great, eat at their

<sup>77</sup> Commensality is further discussed below in section 6.5. See also sections 7.4.1, 9.2.2, and 9.3.2.

homes, and then come here without purifying.” Basavaṇṇa answers: “It is insane that you listen to just anyone. It is not true that I went to homes of Vaiṣṇavas, or touched or even smelled those untouchables!” Hearing this, the king responds: “How can you call people who learn the Vedas, Purāṇas, Śāstras, and Āgamas untouchables? And how can you call an untouchable a Śaiva noble? If we cut a Brahmin’s body, will blood flow out of it? And if we cut that of an untouchable, will milk flow? Be sensible!” Basavaṇṇa laughs at Bijjaḷa’s words and says: “If blood does not flow out of a Brahmin’s body, and milk from an untouchable, then I shall dissociate myself from the Bhaktas’ community!” Basavaṇṇa quickly goes and fetches the Bhakta Nāgideva to the field. He prays to Śiva and then asks Bijjaḷa: “Summon here those who are stupefied with *karma* (Karmajaḍas).” When they arrive, Basavaṇṇa cuts open the body of one Brahmin in front of everybody, and blood flows out. Some ugly insects crawl out as well! Then, Basavaṇṇa cuts open Nāgideva’s toe, squeezes it gently, and rivers of milk gush out. All the Śaraṇas cheer him, and the people of other religions (Parasamayins<sup>78</sup>) quietly abandon the field. Basavaṇṇa turns to Bijjaḷa and says: “Dear King, how can divine nectar (*amṛta*) turn bitter? You do not know the greatness of the Śaraṇas. Those stupefied by the Vedas (Vedajaḍas) have spoilt your thought.” Then, Basavaṇṇa takes Nāgideva on an elephant and leads him to his house, where he sits him on an honorable seat and gives him gifts.<sup>79</sup>

This story narrates the Brahmanical ritualistic and political resistance to *samaśīla* and the Śaraṇa’s prescription to confront this resistance. Note that the Brahmins in this story are people of the court; they have access and influence over the king. They are also, by their names, markedly Vaiṣṇavas. These sectarian themes—that Vaiṣṇava Brahmins are politically privileged; that they actively oppose *śivabhakti* practices; and the *śaiva* reversal of the Brahmanical purity/pollution values—are persistently invoked in several of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and with specific intensity in Basavaṇṇa’s *Ragaḷē*.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> See discussion about the “religious other” in chapters eight and nine below.

<sup>79</sup> The end of the *Basava Ragaḷē*’s tenth chapter is dedicated to the unrelated story of the birth of Basavaṇṇa’s son Siddharasa.

<sup>80</sup> See discussions in sections 8.1.3 and 8.2.2 below.

The intrinsic arguments for *samaśīla* are argued in evident intensity in this scene. Perhaps the most conspicuous of these arguments is the subversive indexical reversal of the dyad “untouchable” and “eminent person.”<sup>81</sup> This reversal is invoked by the narrator and by the character of Basavaṅṅa in the story in order to cripple any notion of Brahmanical superiority and to replace it with that of the Śivabhaktas. The story’s prescription is that traditional social classes are irrelevant; the only criterion for social acceptance and ritual authority is being a Śivabhakta.<sup>82</sup> Significantly, this provocative reversal simultaneously exhibits an explicit internalization of the Brahmanical exclusion.<sup>83</sup> Similarly to what we have already seen in the previous sections, *samaśīla* against ritualistic exclusion is anchored in the limited context of *śaiva*-centered ethical system.<sup>84</sup>

## 6.5 Commensality and Dietary Restrictions

The attempt to promote *samaśīla* in a highly structured and hierarchical society is evidently a complex one according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. There are moments in which these complexities generate friction between different Śivabhaktas joined together to serve Śiva. In the following stories, discords among fellow Śaivas revolve around food

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<sup>81</sup> Pōlēya and Hiriyar respectively.

<sup>82</sup> A very similar story appears at the beginning of the *Bhoga Ragaḷē*, with a similar class-related terminology (Pōlēya, *jāti*, *kula*) and a similar social prescription. See discussion in section 7.2.3 below.

<sup>83</sup> The same reversal is prescribed in the *Dikṣābodhē* (a text that is roughly contemporaneous to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*) as a prohibition to eat in a non-Śaiva house and an imperative to join a meal at a Śaiva’s house (*Dikṣābodhē* 1.413-18 in Padmarasa 1972: 23).

<sup>84</sup> In addition to the reversal of untouchability, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* also prescribes access to learning the Vedas to people from non-Brahmanical background. Such is the case of Vaijakavvē and Kallayya: the former is a woman that refers to them during a heated argument with her Jain husband, the latter is a non-Brahmanical goldsmith who wins in theological debates against Brahmins and others using Vedic knowledge he acquires and also induces a dog to chant the Vedas in front of Brahmins. See sections 5.1.2 and 8.2.2 respectively.

practices, against the background of Brahmanical ideology regarding purity and pollution. Through the question of ritualistic food consumption, these stories projects qualms and difficulties that undoubtedly were part and parcel of the *śivabhakti* movement, at least during its early phases. Significantly, Harihara also prescribes manners with which to negotiate and alleviate these tensions, and we shall pay attention to these as well.

### 6.5.1 ANIMAL KILLING AND MEAT CONSUMPTION

The *Tēlugu Jōmmayyana Ragaḷē* (*Jōmma Ragaḷē* henceforth<sup>85</sup>) narrates the story of a hot-tempered devotee who, in the first part of the story, kills a Vaiṣṇava at the king's court.<sup>86</sup> The second part of Jōmmayya's life story, summarized and discussed here, pertains to his second career as a forest hunter. It is during this activity that Jōmmayya is paid a visit by a Brahmin and Śivaśaraṇa called Keśirāja Daṇṇāyaka, a central figure in this cadre of early Śaraṇas.<sup>87</sup> The clash between the Śaiva Brahmin and the Śaiva hunter is narrated twice by Harihara, once in the *Ragaḷē* about Jōmmayya and another in the *Ragaḷē* about Keśirāja. Since the two narratives correspond to each other, I summarize and discuss here the more elaborate version which appears in the third chapter of the *Jōmma Ragaḷē*:

[3] Śiva orders Jōmmayya to hunt and kill forest animals, and Jōmmayya is determined to fulfill this task. When Jōmmayya spots a mob of deer—themselves motivated by the divine wish (*kāraṇika*<sup>88</sup>) to reach Śiva's heaven—he says to

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<sup>85</sup> Vacanas attributed to Jōmmayya are dedicated to Tēlugeśa, the Lord of Tēlugu or Tēlugu Land (Śāmarāya 2009 [1967]: 182, Knn). In this *Ragaḷē*, Jōmmayya's epithet "*tēlugu*" remains unexplained, which, in itself, might indicate the permeable boundaries between the Kannada and Telugu cultures in this temporal and spatial setting. See section 1.1.3 above.

<sup>86</sup> This part of the story is discussed in section 8.1.2 below.

<sup>87</sup> See section 8.1.3 below.

<sup>88</sup> See discussion about this term in section 5.2.1 above.

himself: “This is not a sin but an order from Śiva.” He aims his arrow at the animal, chants the *pañcākṣari*,<sup>89</sup> and then shoots. The animal is startled. The arrow cuts through its head, and it falls to the ground. At that moment, the animal’s soul (*jīva*) is liberated (*mukti*) and ascends to Śiva’s heaven in Kailāsa. This is proper devotion aiming straight to liberation,<sup>90</sup> with arrows that grant the ultimate calm (*nirvāṇa*). The forest ascetics (Ṛṣis) bless Jōmmayya who never shoots an animal unmarked by Śiva. Keśirāja, hearing about Jōmmayya’s devotional determination (*ekaniṣṭhē*)<sup>91</sup> and his killings, thinks that this is an improper behavior for a Śivabhakta and decides to visit Jōmmayya. Together with fellow Śaraṇas, Keśirāja goes to Jōmmayya’s village and stands in front of his house. Since Jōmmayya is not there at the time, Keśirāja decides to go inside the house. There, he sees many piles of animals’ corpses and raw flesh scattered around the room. Keśirāja, deeply disgusted, leaves the house and goes to a nearby Śiva temple and settles there, preparing to worship Śiva Somanātha. At that time, Jōmmayya, returning from his recent hunt to his house, asks his wife if any Śivabhakta had visited them today. His wife tells him about the elder person with a crowd of Bhaktas who happily entered their home, but after seeing the animals’ corpses decided to leave and instead reside at the local Śiva temple. Jōmmayya is happy to hear about the visiting Bhakta and sets out to the temple to meet him. There, the two Śivaśaraṇas hug. Jōmmayya, wanting to be blessed by serving Śaraṇas, tells Keśirāja: “You are such a respected and elder Bhakta. You must stay at my house.” Keśirāja, unable to tolerate the dead bodies at Jōmmayya’s house, deviates from non-discriminatory (*samaśīla*) practices and refuses Jōmmayya by saying that he cannot transfer his personal *liṅga* while in preparations for worship at the temple. Jōmmayya, thinking that Keśirāja can definitely take the *liṅga* with him, understands the real reason for Keśirāja’s refusal, but says nothing to him and leaves the place, facing his home. Keśirāja follows Jōmmayya with his eyes and is amazed to see wonderful fields surround Jōmmayya, with magnificent ponds filled with lotuses, geese, and heavenly creatures. Keśirāja rubs his eyes in disbelief, and when he looks again, the mirage is gone. He then re-enters the temple, completes the worship to his personal *liṅga*, and tries to put it back into his carry bag. But the *liṅga* refuses to move. At that moment, Jōmmayya enters the temple and again invites Keśirāja

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<sup>89</sup> See discussion about this term in section 7.3 below.

<sup>90</sup> *Jōmma Raqaḷē* 3.38 in Harihara (1999: 251):  
*yuktikōḷḷada bhakti muktivyōḷ nēḷēgōṇḍu*

<sup>91</sup> See discussion about this term in section 5.1 above.

to his home, asking him for the real reason for his former refusal. Keśirāja has a change of heart, and he tells Jōmmayya: “See, Śiva is not with me today. He will not move with me. If he agrees to stay at your house and eat together with Śiva Bhīmanātha (Jōmmayya’s personal deity), then I shall also come.” Jōmmayya performs a small gesture with his hands, and the *liṅga* that refused to move earlier immediately jumps to Keśirāja’s hands. Keśirāja hugs Jōmmayya, and they all go to the Bhakta’s house, where they prepare *liṅga* worship (*arcane*) for both deities: Jōmmayya’s Śiva Bhīmanātha and Keśirāja’s Śiva Somanātha. But when Jōmmayya’s wife brings food offerings for the deities, Keśirāja’s face grows gloomy. Jōmmayya, seeing this, laughs and addresses Śiva Somanātha: “Hey Somanātha! Please follow Keśirāja’s inner wish and turn this meat (*palala*) into rice dish (*pakvāna*).” At once, the meat curry on the offering plate turns into sweets made of rice and jaggery, boiled milk porridge, rice cakes, and fruit dishes. Keśirāja becomes ecstatic with joy and consumes the sacred food (*prasāda*), and both Bhaktas celebrate the whole night in their Śiva assembly (*śivagoṣṭhi*<sup>92</sup>), as if it is Śiva’s festival (*śivarātri*). Keśirāja tells Jōmmayya not to go hunting the next morning, and Jōmmayya agrees. But the next day, when the forest animals see that Jōmmayya is not coming to kill them, they enter the village and start looking for Jōmmayya, moaning and howling to Śiva: “We want to reach heaven! Please bless us with Jōmmayya!” Keśirāja asks Jōmmayya for the meaning of the animals’ groaning, and Jōmmayya explains to him that these animals are guided by divine purpose (*Kāraṇikas*). Keśirāja closes his eyes and prayers: “Śiva! If you desire, one’s demerit (*pāpa*) turns to merit (*puṇya*), immorality (*anīti*) to morality (*nīti*), unfit deeds (*aḥkārya*) to proper deeds (*kārya*), confusion (*akrama*) to coherence (*krama*), bad familial origins (*duḥkula*) to good familial origins (*satkula*), unrighteousness (*adharmā*) to righteousness (*dharma*)” and then Keśirāja composes a poem for Jōmmayya. Jōmmayya bids him and his retinue of indiscriminating (*samaśīla*) Bhaktas farewell and returns to hunt the forest animals that eagerly wait for him. A heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends from the sky to take Jōmmayya and another to take the animals. They all rise to heaven together, and when they enter the gates of Śiva’s abode all the animals turn into forest ascetics (*Ṛṣis*). Śiva tells Nandi: “See? This person killed a person who reviled me and brought back all these animals to heaven,” and he makes Jōmmayya one of his attendants as well as making room for all the ascetics who came with him.

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<sup>92</sup> See discussion in section 7.4 below.

Despite its pronounced departure from Brahminism, Kannada *śivabhakti* is traditionally known for its vegetarianism and avoidance of killing animals.<sup>93</sup> In this story, it is clear that Jōmmayya's deeds are a source of tension—not only for Keśirāja but also for the immediate audience of the text. This is evinced by the fact that Harihara takes pains throughout the text to legitimize Jōmmayya's killings: he repeatedly explains to his audience that the killing of animals was ordered by Śiva and that it is completely meritorious since it materializes the animals' divine purpose. At a certain moment in the story, while describing in detail the killing, Harihara stops and declares: "This is proper devotion aiming straight to liberation, with arrows that grant the ultimate calm (*nirvāṇa*)." This statement betrays the author's concern with Jōmmayya's killing of animals—a practice unmeritorious in a Brahmanical setting but also for the more general, non Brahmanical *bhakti* public. Harihara is compelled to clear any doubt regarding the practice, to legitimize it on a theological ground and this is why he repeatedly stresses the killing's initial cause—Śiva's wish—and its soteriological efficacy. Along the same lines, Jōmmayya's self-confidence is evident in the story throughout, especially in all his interactions with the Śaiva Brahmin Keśirāja. Jōmmayya is a proud hunter, even when conversing with a Brahmin at the temple grounds. Not only is Jōmmayya's traditionally-polluted occupation legitimized by Harihara, but also are the meat offerings he and his wife give to Śiva.<sup>94</sup> The only difficulty that arises in the narrative with regard to these meat offerings is when they

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<sup>93</sup> McCormack (1973: 179), Desai (1968: 323). Other *bhakti* traditions adopt a similar stance. See Pauwels (2010: 530), Ulrich (2007).

<sup>94</sup> The Tamil tradition of *śaiva* saints, the Nāyaṅārs, is also occupied by the figure of a hunter who is a *śaiva* devotee and the implications on traditional concepts of purity. His name is Kaṇṇappa (Tamil: Kaṇṇappar). See Ulrich (2007: 249-50), Cox (2005), Monius (2004a), Peterson (1994). See also section 7.1.2 below.

are served to Keśirāja the Brahmin, who is a vegetarian due to his Brahmanical background. Jōmmayya’s casual transformation of the meat curry to vegetarian dishes attests to the relative inconsequence of the matter on a devotional scale.<sup>95</sup>

The chasm of social class and traditional religious education between Keśirāja and Jōmmayya also becomes concrete in the text by the particular manifestations of Śiva that each of them worships: Śiva Somanātha, Keśirāja’s personal deity (*iṣṭadevatē*), is markedly a mainstream embodiment of Śiva, worshipped in many Brahmanical-run temples throughout India. In sharp contrast, Jōmmayya’s deity Bhīmanātha (literally, “Lord of Fear”) is an obscure and terrible form of Śiva. The tangible difference between the two manifestations of Śiva points to two different *śaiva* devotional worlds that Harihara is interested in reconciling or at least enabling them to connect with each other. Keśirāja’s assertion at the end of the story that Śiva can transform unrighteousness (*adharma*) into righteousness (*dharma*) directly reflects the Brahmin’s ethical distance from Jōmmayya’s conduct as well as his personal willingness to accommodate the latter. It can also be read more generally as a testimony for the potential to transcend social and ethical boundaries by devotional communality.<sup>96</sup>

The denouement of this story points to the insignificance, in the view of Harihara, of Brahmanical-based food restrictions when compared with devotional authenticity, of which Jōmmayya has plenty of in the story. The text prescribes a tolerant approach when two Bhaktas from different backgrounds (and different eating

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<sup>95</sup> Chidananda Murthy writes with regard to Jōmmayya’s eating habits: “There were meat-eaters among the devotees (Ex. Telugu Jommaṇṇa) and they were not looked down upon for this” (Chidananda Murthy 1983: 204). (“Jōmmaṇṇa” is another form for “Jōmmayya,” *aṇṇa* and *ayya* being interchangeable suffixes in this context).

<sup>96</sup> For a phenomenological exploration of interconnectedness of *adharma* and *dharma* in the Hindu imaginaire, see Glücklich (1994).



restrictions) meet in order to worship Śiva together. Harihara prescribes an *ad hoc* stance that enables the Brahmin to participate in the specific worship, while abrogating Brahmanical, purity-based sense of superiority. Meat consumption, in itself, is not the central problem for Harihara. Far more significant for him is the breeching of the principle of *samaśīla*. This term is invoked twice in this passage text:<sup>97</sup> first, when Keśirāja refuses to Jōmmayya’s offer to stay at his home (thus, neglecting *samaśīla*). The second instance of *samaśīla* is near the end of the story, when Keśirāja departs from Jōmmayya. Here, this term marks the restoration of Keśirāja’s proper stance of accepting all of Śiva’s devotees.

#### 6.5.2 COOKING WITH ONION

Another Ragaḷē story that directly deals with the discords among Śaraṇas on issues of food practices appears in the eleventh chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē*. Here is the summary of the chapter:

[11] A Bhakta called Kinnara Bōmmitandē hears about Basavaṇṇa’s generosity and wants to meet him. When he enters the city, Basavaṇṇa’s bodily hair suddenly bristles and he thinks to himself: “This is a sign that a great Śaraṇa will soon come to visit me!” When Bōmmitandē enters Basavaṇṇa’s house, the latter receives him with great honor. Despite the fact that Basavaṇṇa is surrounded by twelve thousand Śaraṇas, he himself takes care of Bōmmitandē and performs an elaborate Śiva ritual together with him. Bōmmitandē is very happy for this welcoming reception and the affection between the two grows from day to day. One day, Bōmmitandē thinks to himself “Whatever I bring for Śiva, Śiva shall take” and decides to cook for the god an onion curry. Other Śaraṇas join Bōmmitandē in the preparations, and soon the smell of cooking onion reaches Basavaṇṇa. When he smells the onions, Basavaṇṇa exclaims: “Who brought this uneatable (*abhojya*) food here?” Bōmmitandē hears Basavaṇṇa and starts to fume and cry. He thinks: “I should not have come here. I have made a heavenly dish (*amṛta*) for Śiva Mallayya to enjoy, and Basavaṇṇa is complaining! I cannot stay

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<sup>97</sup> *Jōmma Ragaḷē* 3.98 and 3.222 in Harihara (1999: 252 and 254, respectively).

here!” Angry, Bōmmitandē steps out of Basavaṇṇa’s house and out of the city, stopping for the night at a nearby village. When Basavaṇṇa joins the other Śaraṇas for worship, he notices Bōmmitandē’s absence, and the Śaraṇas tell him what has happened. Basavaṇṇa, terrified, tells the group of Bhaktas: “I made a grave mistake. I have sinned to the whole Bhaktas’ community and I should be punished. Tell me how to correct this situation!” The Śaraṇas respond to Basavaṇṇa: “What caused this mess is onion, so let onion fix the issue!” Basavaṇṇa agrees. He immediately orders to bring him a large quantity of the best onion, which is then placed on many carts and taken on a procession, surrounded by musical instruments and decorations. When the procession reaches Basavaṇṇa, he orders to give onion to their animals and to wear it as ornaments on the clothes and in the hair. The whole city is filled with onion. Basavaṇṇa, heading the procession, sits on an onion seat, with onion in his hands, on his clothes, and in his hair, and they all walk toward the house in the nearby village where Bōmmitandē is staying. When Bōmmitandē sees the spectacle, he is amazed and immediately understands Basavaṇṇa’s wish to appease him. Bōmmitandē thinks: “What a great person is Basavaṇṇa. He understood his mistake and turned his anger into love.” When the two meet, Basavaṇṇa prostrates to Bōmmitandē’s feet, and both shed tears of joy. They hug each other without saying a word. When Bōmmitandē returns to stay at Basavaṇṇa’s house, he sees the huge piles of onion everywhere. He sees Śaraṇas singing to the onion, and many onion dishes all over, with the color of jasmine and the taste of moonlight. They offer the dishes to Śiva and consume them afterward. All the Śaraṇas praise Bōmmitandē and Basavaṇṇa, and Basavaṇṇa vows that this onion festival shall be made a yearly celebration and that eating onion shall become from now on one of his religious observances (*nema*<sup>98</sup>). Basavaṇṇa is the moon for Śivabhaktas, and the scorching sun for the stupid people of all other congregations (*parasamaya timira*<sup>99</sup>).

Basavaṇṇa’s initial repulsion from the smell of onion is a peripeteia after the honeymoon-like relationship between Basavaṇṇa and Bōmmitandē, shifting the narrative into a new direction. Although Basavaṇṇa’s dislike for onion might appear to be a personal inclination, it is actually indexed in a broader conceptual frame: for

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<sup>98</sup> See discussion about this term in section 7.1.1 below.

<sup>99</sup> See discussion about sectarianism in chapters eight and nine below.

Brahmins (as well as for Jains), the consumption of onion is precluded, and Basavaṅṅa's reaction,<sup>100</sup> who was born and raised as a Brahmin, betrays his deeply engrained elitist origin, to which there is no room under the *samaśīla* principle of the Bhaktas' community. Thus, from the story's point of view, Basavaṅṅa's initial impropriety is similar to that of Keśirāja discussed earlier. The telos of the story dictates that Basavaṅṅa should change his "old," Brahmanical ways. It also makes a broader communal comment, drawing a new line regarding food practices.

Considered together, the two food stories discussed here—one about meat that turns into rice and the other about onion placed on the plate of a Brahmin Śaraṅa—delineate communal food ethics that is central for the identity of the *śivabhakti* community in the Kannada-speaking regions till today. Karnataka Vīraśaivas are known till today as strictly vegetarians but also as favoring onion dishes on their plates.<sup>101</sup> This syncretic ethics both appropriates existing practices (Brahmanical and Jain) as well as distinguishes the *śivabhakti* from the other sects.

From the perspective of clashing social backgrounds, the two stories about Keśirāja and Basavaṅṅa suggest that personal and social dynamics caused by the creation of this movement were stormy at times, not only when coming in contact with non-members, but only within the forming community, among fellow Bhaktas who come from different backgrounds. The vision of this *śaiva* movement is an inclusive one: embracing different people from different social backgrounds under a unifying

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<sup>100</sup> In the *jaina* case, refrain of onion is foremostly practiced by renunciators (Ulrich 2007: 241).

<sup>101</sup> I bring here an ethnographical comment to illustrate this: When visiting the Kannada University in Hampi, north Karnataka, one of my teachers, who is a Brahmin, commented that the food served to us was cooked by a Vīraśaiva. When I asked how she could tell, she said it was the particular spices used and the onion. Later she went to the kitchen and affirmed her guess. For a modern case of vegetarianism as an important identity marker for the *vīraśaiva* community, see Ripepi (2007: 71n16). complexities with regard to

devotional umbrella, and the solutions for accommodating differences can be *ad hoc*, as we have observed in the case of Keśirāja's story or, structural and ritualistic, as observed in the case of Basavaṇṇa's story.

## 6.6 Material Wealth

### 6.6.1 GREED'S REWARD

Another social marker that is explicitly undermined in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories is material wealth. In chapter twelfth of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, we find a story that exemplifies the prescription in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* against social privileging of monetary capital. Here is the summary of the chapter:

[12] Basavaṇṇa serves Śiva Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva by doing numerous good deeds. At that time, in Orissa (Kaliṅga), a Śivabhakta called Mahādevisēṭṭi hears stories and songs of great devotees. Once, he hears a song attributed to Basavaṇṇa, in which the Bhakta declares: "If I fail to give to a Śaraṇa whatever he asks, I shall cut my own head."<sup>102</sup> Hearing this, Mahādevisēṭṭi decides to test Basavaṇṇa by asking him to fill ten bullock-carts with precious stones, additional ten with pearls, and addition ten with gold bullions. Together with other Śivaśaraṇas, he travels to Maṅgaḷavāḍa in order to challenge Basavaṇṇa. That night, Śiva comes to Basavaṇṇa's bed, wakes him up, and says: "Why do you sing without thinking of the consequences? Now this Orissa Bhakta is coming to ask you for impossible riches. What will you do?" Basavaṇṇa smiles and tells Śiva: "Do not worry, Lord. Such tests come in life. Whatever I do is meant for the Śaraṇas, so why should I worry? With you as my father, why should I worry?" Śiva, surprised from Basavaṇṇa's self-confidence, returns to Kailāsa. There, he summons Kubera, the god of riches, and orders him to collect all the precious stones, pearls, and gold available into a heap as big as Mount Meru and to bring it to Basavaṇṇa's house in Maṅgaḷavāḍa. The next day, Mahādevisēṭṭi arrives to Basavaṇṇa, who receives him with great honor. Mahādevisēṭṭi tells Basavaṇṇa that, following the latter's Vacana, he would like Basavaṇṇa to fill his thirty carts. However, influenced by

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<sup>102</sup> See Ben-Herut (2012: 136-41) for discussion and additional references about the cultural meaning of self-beheading in the milieu of this *śivabhakti* tradition.

Śiva, Mahādevisēṭṭi asks to fill them with flour, rice, and lentil rather than gold and precious stones. Basavaṇṇa responds to Mahādevisēṭṭi's demand: "Mahādevisēṭṭi, I know what your original request was. It is fine. Go ahead and ask for it now." Hearing this, Mahādevisēṭṭi drops down his head in shame. Basavaṇṇa places his hand on his sword, and immediately rain of gold and gems starts pouring from the sky. He collects all the precious stones and metals, places them on Mahādevisēṭṭi's carts, and sends him back home, happy. Basavaṇṇa is also happy for standing up to his words.<sup>103</sup>

The story about the Odissi Bhakta named Mahādevisēṭṭi<sup>104</sup> who challenges Basavaṇṇa to provide him with phantasmic treasures works on several levels. First, the story claims that Basavaṇṇa's song received wide acceptance among different Bhaktas outside of north Karnataka already during his lifetime. Even without taking this as a historical fact, the fact that such a claim is made by Harihara in the early thirteenth century attests to the popularity of the Śaraṇas' songs at that time. This story is significant, then, since in it Harihara makes the claim about Basavaṇṇa's cross-regional success as a Śivabhakta leader. In addition to Basavaṇṇa's aggrandization, the story portrays Śiva as a complex character: his unnerved behavior in front of Basavaṇṇa, as well as his compulsive commitment to assist Basavaṇṇa, reveals some of his imperfections or vulnerabilities in Harihara's view.<sup>105</sup> Beyond personal dynamics, another element that plays an important role in this story is fiscal wealth. Mahādevisēṭṭi can ask for rice or gold—they are all equally immaterial under the canopy of true devotion.<sup>106</sup> Through the story's denouement, in which Mahādevisēṭṭi's fiscal challenge is met after he himself retracts from it, renders wealth as completely

<sup>103</sup> The rest of chapter twelfth of the *Basava Ragaḷe* is summarized in section 5.2.2 above.

<sup>104</sup> *Sēṭṭi* is a Kannada derivation of *śreṣṭhi* (Kittel 1982: 1588 s.v. *sēṭṭi*). In the Kannada-speaking regions, the name suffix "Sēṭṭi" usually denotes the occupation of a merchant or a banker, which corresponds well with Mahādevisēṭṭi's interest in money in this story.

<sup>105</sup> The Śaraṇa's distinct sense of entitlement over his deity is discussed above in section 5.2.3.

<sup>106</sup> See Michael (1982) for comparative observations of this tradition with protestant values.

irrelevant, perhaps also unscrupulous.<sup>107</sup>

### 6.6.2 TRASHING TREASURES

An even more pronounced stance against materialistic affluence is conveyed in chapter two of the *Śaṅkaradāsimayyana Raḡaḷē*:

[2] After Śaṅkaradāsimayya burns all the gods' statues (except Śiva's),<sup>108</sup> his fame spreads across the region, and people start flocking to see Śaṅkaradāsimayya, bringing him expensive clothes and other gifts. Śaṅkaradāsimayya refuses to take any gifts and prays to Śiva for advice about what to do with them. Śiva orders him to bring it to him as offerings.<sup>109</sup> Another Bhakta named Jeḡaradāsimayya lives in Mudanūru. He is a proud Bhakta, who gets whatever he wants from Śiva. Śiva, wanting to teach Jeḡaradāsimayya some modesty and restraint, decides to meet him with Śaṅkaradāsimayya, for Śiva, as part of the restlessness of his godly playfulness (*līḷē*<sup>110</sup>), desires to ignite quarrels between his Bhaktas. He appears in Śaṅkaradāsimayya's dream and commands him to go on a pilgrimage to different śaiva settlements (*śivapura*) and overcome earthly illusion (*māyē*). Śaṅkaradāsimayya sets out on the journey with fellow Bhaktas. He liberates<sup>111</sup> many people in many places, and finally reaches Mudanūru. Many people reside there, getting supply and support from Jeḡaradāsimayya, who has an endless treasure (*tavanidhi*<sup>112</sup>) supplied by Śiva. Śaṅkaradāsimayya goes to the local Śiva temple and rests outside the temple grounds. When Jeḡaradāsimayya hears that the eminent Śaṅkaradāsimayya is in town, he comes over and sits

<sup>107</sup> However, it would be incorrect to assume an overwhelming undermining of money by this tradition. See section 8.1.1 below. A similar narrative undermining of material wealth under the arena of the sacred can be found in the post-Vedic *Bṛhaddevatā* (Patton and Śaunaka 1996: 294-300).

<sup>108</sup> See summary and discussion of this episode in section 7.3 below.

<sup>109</sup> One of the gifts brought to Śaṅkaradāsimayya is millet called *śaṅkaraḡaṇḡa*, a popular grain used in śaiva rituals in this region. It is also mentioned the *Bāhūra Bōmmibandēya Raḡaḷē*, summarized and discussed in section 8.intro below.

<sup>110</sup> See footnote 11 above.

<sup>111</sup> The word used here is *mukti*.

<sup>112</sup> Kittel glosses *tavanidhi* as a Sanskrit derivation of *taponidhi* (Kittel 1982: 701 s.v. *tavanidhi*), a term that denotes "an eminently pious man" (Monier-Williams 1986: 437 s.v. *taponidhi*). However, in this story this term has a slightly different meaning that is not found in Kittel's dictionary but is found in the *Concise Kannada Dictionary (Sankṣipta Kannada Nighaṇṡu)*. According to this dictionary, *tavanidhi* denotes "never-ending treasure" (Prasād 2001: 525 s.v. *tavanidhi*, Knn). The unfolding of this story clearly indicates that this gloss is more fitting.

next to him, and together they start a Śiva assembly (*śivagoṣṭhi*<sup>113</sup>). But when Śaṅkaradāsimayya's wife Śivadāsi asks for some grains, Jeḍaradāsimayya's heart is filled with pride. Like needlessly giving coolness to the moon and light to the sun, Jeḍaradāsimayya offers them a huge quantity of his rice. Śaṅkaradāsimayya, sensing Jeḍaradāsimayya's pride, says: "We are just poor beggars who eat whatever is put into our begging bowl, but this begging bowl belongs to Śiva." Then, Śaṅkaradāsimayya orders Jeḍaradāsimayya to bring a trash can from the front of Jōmmayya's house. Inside it Jeḍaradāsimayya finds a treasure of gold. Śaṅkaradāsimayya tells him: "Take as much as you want. This trash is gold, and it is worth more than your rice. All the endless treasure is given to you by Śiva, and he can also take it away from you." Jeḍaradāsimayya, now feeling like a dried-up creeper, leaves the place and goes to his house. There, his wife Duggaḷavvē sees his fallen face and asks for the reason. Jeḍaradāsimayya tells her, and she is cowed, saying: "May Śiva help us! Do you want Śaṅkaradāsimayya to open his fiery third-eye?<sup>114</sup> We are truly inferior to this Bhakta. Come with me!" Both go to Śaṅkaradāsimayya, fall humbly at his feet, and beg for his forgiveness. Śaṅkaradāsimayya's anger subsides. He puts his hand over Jeḍaradāsimayya's head and blesses him: "Śiva Rāmanātha will give you endless treasure that grows infinitely" Then, he sends the couple back to their home, where they find a huge treasure, ten times larger than before, continually growing in front of their eyes, and they rejoice. Such is the greatness of Śaṅkaradāsimayya.<sup>115</sup>

This story describes how wealth and prosperity generate haughtiness even in the heart of a great devotee such as Jeḍaradāsimayya. Jeḍaradāsimayya is a prominent *śaiva* poet in the Kannada tradition, which attributes many Vacanas to him.<sup>116</sup>

Nevertheless, in this story his prosperity, used to support fellow Śaraṇas, also fails him. Wealth, according to Harihara, has a corrupting quality, even when it is in benevolent

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<sup>113</sup> See discussion in section 7.4 below.

<sup>114</sup> See summary and discussion of this episode in section 7.3 below.

<sup>115</sup> The rest of chapter two of the *Śaṅkara Raḡalē* is summarized and discussed in section 8.2.1 below.

<sup>116</sup> Some of Jeḍaradāsimayya's Vacanas are translated to English in Ramanujan (1973: 91-110), Shivaprakash (2010, passim). Ramanujan's dating of Jeḍaradāsimayya as living during the tenth century is early by about a century according to contemporary Kannadiga scholars (Nāgabhūṣaṇa 2000, Knn, Chidananda Murthy 1983: 203).

hands and is framed and utilized in the context of supporting the Bhaktas' community. Another significant point with regard to ethical attitudes toward wealth in the story is the easiness with which Śaṅkaradāsimayya takes away and restores Jeḍaradāsimayya's supernatural wealth. This easiness signals the inherent ephemeral quality of material capital, rendering it highly volatile.

Śaṅkaradāsimayya's assertion during his admonishment to Jeḍaradāsimayya that he (Śaṅkaradāsimayya) is just a simple beggar is ironic, for, as the story shows us, a beggar of Śiva has infinite access to earthly resources if he only wishes so. However, the real beggar is the one who is misled by such falsities. From the point of view of *samaśīla*, then, this story ridicules the false superiority of rich people who donate money and food to the poor. It also champions material abstinence as conducive for devotional integrity. Within such value system, external markers for social status are debilitated. Despite this, the basic structuring of the story reveals a tension and ambivalence in this regard, for wealth is acknowledged already at the beginning of the story as required for sustaining this *bhakti* community. This tension is further discussed later in the dissertation.<sup>117</sup>

## 6.7 Concluding Remarks: Qualifying Equality

The attempt to exercise equality, or *samaśīla*, in the highly diverse, structured, and hierarchical society of medieval South India inherently poses considerable ideological and practical challenges, and the *Raḡaḷēgaḷu*, through the specific stories discussed in this chapter, directly engages with them. At the most fundamental level, Harihara's approach to the problem of implementing the ideal of *samaśīla* in "real life" situations is embracing, tolerate, and even pliable according to the aforementioned

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<sup>117</sup> See section 8.1.1 below.



stories. The most general notion regarding *samaśīla* that is repeated in all these stories is that *samaśīla* is relevant only when asserted under the canopy of the *śivabhakti* community. No attempt is done in these stories to legitimize *samaśīla* as a social value in itself, and is brought to the fore only when derived from devotion to Śiva and the recognition that this devotion grants an equal charter to anyone, regardless of gender, social background, occupation, caste, and so on. Placed against the background of discrimination that is deeply structured in many aspects of life in medieval society, it is difficult to underestimate the social significance of this charter.

Moving to the specific realms in which the practice of *samaśīla* signifies social change in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories, we find that Harihara's treatment is a complex one, certainly beyond any simplistic and proleptic expectation that might stem from a modern notion of "equality." Mahādeviyakka is able to walk out of married life, but only as a mendicant. She does not regain her previous, normative life once she becomes a divorcee. Vaijakavvē comes out the sectarian rift with her *jaina* husband with her hands on top, but only after her private vicissitudes are reframed by a public and religious crisis. Nimbavvē asserts a feminine-based freedom, but one that invokes connotations—in the text itself—of impropriety and exploitation. Oppressive patriarchic control is never completely overcome in the stories, and it would be difficult to try and imagine, with the cultural context and imaginaire of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, narratives that would go that far.

Harihara's challenging of *jāti* differences is a dramatic one. As observed in this chapter, it is made explicit by the author and by the Śaraṇas in the stories. Occupation, or more precisely, its social and religious values, undergo in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories two major transformations: the first is the complete catharsis of any occupation from

notions of pollution, as prescribed by the Brahmanical code. This purging facilitates the second transformation, which is redescribing one's occupation as a valid path for liberation, a *sādhana*.

The neutralization of traditional “metaphysics of pollution” by the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition has other dramatic implications. Untouchability, the most manifest and forbidding aspect of the Brahmanical “metaphysics of pollution,” is directly impugned in the abovementioned stories. More precisely, untouchability is reversed: in this literary world, the Śivabhakti is the pure one, while the Vaiṣṇava Brahmin is the impure. The *Dikṣābodhē*, a coeval text, contains the following statement: “All the remaining who are not Śivabhaktas must be avoided as if they are low-born (*antyaja*), even if they are from good families (*satkula*).”<sup>118</sup> The narratives of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* adhere to the same stance, according to which the value system of Brahminism should not be ignored but explicitly subverted.

Commensality is yet another charged arena in which social discrimination is laid bare and contested. The *bhakti* crowd that populates these stories is highly diverse, consisting of Brahmins and non-Brahmins from different strands of society, and the complex dynamics that are generated by this motley kaleidoscope become particularly brittle with regard to food practices. The prescriptions that Harihara devises for tackling this issue are diverse: a vegetarian Brahmin can adhere to his non-violent practices but must not exclude or evade the company of non-vegetarian Bhaktas. Onion, though excluded from Brahmanical diet, becomes a central food ingredient for the *śivabhakti* community, exactly because of the Brahmanical exclusion. This dietary

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<sup>118</sup> *Dikṣābodhē* 1.419-20 in Padmarasa (1972: 23):  
*uḷidavara kulavu satkulavādaḍantavara*  
*kaḷēvudantyajar ēndu śivabhaktar allavara*

solution generates a unique communal identity, based on a distinct form of vegetarianism.

The value or significance of material wealth is also undermined in the stories, although there is an implicit acknowledgement in its instrumentality for providing whatever is necessary for the Bhaktas' community. The stories that were discussed in this chapter in the context of materialism and its demerits present the frictions it might generate *within* the community: one Bhakta is overcome by his own greed and this brings him to challenge Basavaṅṅa's spiritual integrity; another Bhakta—a famous an important Śaraṅa—looks down upon another famous Śaraṅa. It seems reasonable to assume that these stories provide us with a peek into actual personal dynamics that took place among Bhaktas in the young, forming community.

In conclusion, though the literal demand for *samaśīla* might appear straightforward and simple at first, the stories surveyed in this chapter attest to the difficulties that arise when it is practiced “on the ground.” At a deeper level, it is possible that our modern, Western, pro-democratic expectations of equality are very different from that of a thirteenth-century *mentalité*. This difference should not be neglected when reading the past.

## 7 Experience and Ritual

In chapter five, we examined the Bhakta's devotional attitudes and his relationship with the god and, in chapter six, intersubjective dynamics within the *bhakti* fellowship. In this chapter, we continue our movement outward, away from Bhakta's interiority toward external and more concrete realms, by examining ritual action in the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition as evinced in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>1</sup>

Harihara's understanding of what constitutes ritual action is inclusive and multilayered. One testimony to this variety is the many *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories dedicated to *śaiva* traditions outside of the Kannada-speaking regions, foremostly the Tamil. Even within the group of *Ragaḷēs* dedicated to the Śaraṇas of the Kannada-speaking regions one finds a diversity of practices and rituals that cannot be coerced into a single ritualistic framework.<sup>2</sup>

Di. Ēl. Narasimhācār, one of the earliest Kannada scholars to point to Harihara's literary significance, commented in 1939 regarding the richness of ritual practices described in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*:

Seeing Śiva's statue and touching it, toiling the sacred land, lighting incense, lighting lamp, serving food to the god, singing to him, playing on stage, serving the Śaraṇas, keeping vigilance, building temples, studying, praising, reciting prayers, bathing the deity, and so on—all these worship activities are valid spiritual means (*sādhana*s) in order to obtain the grace of the lord. [In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories,] when one worships Śiva by performing any of these,

<sup>1</sup> The metaphor of moving from inside out alludes to Handleman and Shulman's *God Inside Out: Śiva's Game of Dice* (1997), a monograph dedicated to mapping out Śiva's emanation into the world. My interest in this dissertation to delineate devotionalism by moving on the human Bhakta's inside-out vector hinges on the anthropocentric shift from god to human that is introduced by Southern *bhakti* in general and the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition in particular. See discussion in section 5.2.3 above.

<sup>2</sup> There are several works in English that present Vīraśaivism as a matured tradition with a distinct ritualistic system. See, for example, Chekki (1997), Nandimath (1979), Desai (1968: 320-37).

ceaselessly and with determination, regardless the numerous obstructions that might arise, one is invited to and also reaches Śiva's abode in Kailāsa. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* narrates the greatness of the Śaraṇas who went on the spiritual path of *bhakti* in these manifold ways.<sup>3</sup>

The diversity of worship practices attested to by the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories reflects historical developments in the religious landscape of the Kannada-speaking regions during the early centuries of the second millennium. This period introduced an almost-bewildering verity of religious traditions in the region, all clustered together under the single umbrella of faith in Śiva. As in the Tamil lands of the same period, Vedic-based and Āgama-based ritualistic traditions were prevalent in the Kannada-speaking regions and produced a rich canopy of practices.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Tantric sects were operating at the social margins of this religious landscape. The twelfth-century Śaraṇas operated within this rich ritual background. As Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi contends in his dissertation, the notion of a solidified *śivabhakti* tradition in the Kannada-speaking regions, known today as Vīraśaivism or Liṅgāyatism, was the result of consolidation efforts of a later period than that of Harihara, beginning at the early fifteenth century.<sup>5</sup> From the perspective of the institutionalization of this *bhakti* tradition, Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu* marks a primordial phase, a preliminary attempt to capture in writing practices and events from different regions and traditions, whose only common denominator—as aptly stated in the above quote by Narasimhācār—is the protagonist's uncompromising belief in Śiva. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is missing any cohesive or unified

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<sup>3</sup> Narasimhācār (2005 [1971]-a: 256, Knn).

<sup>4</sup> See Champakalakshmi (2011b: 62) for the Tamil case and Settar (2000), Lorenzen (1991) for the Kannada case. For a detailed study of the Āgama-based ritualistic system of Tamil Śaivism, see Davis (1991).

<sup>5</sup> Chandra Shobhi (2005).

framework to encompass the rituals and the devotional practices is describes.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of the variety of ritual actions portrayed by Harihara, there is little sense in imposing one interpretive framework to all of them. Rather, I organize the different rituals of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* according to the genuine cultural background of each while reflecting on several analytical approaches in order to bring these into conversation with each other. For this purpose, I begin with laying out the formal, systematic ritual framework that permeates in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories, the *āgama* system, and reflect on the dialectical forces in the narratives that subvert and expand this ritualistic system. I set out to this task using the terms “orthopraxy” (institutionalized practice) and “omnipraxy” (individual practice). Then, I shift to discuss two emic terms, *jaṅgama* and *sthāvara* (literally, the “moving” and the “static”) and consider their evolving denotations as evinced in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* corpus and by later agents, including modern scholarship. Finally, I discuss two specific ritualistic arenas which are central for the early Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition as described by the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—initiation and assemblies—and consider their uniqueness and contribution for the development of this early movement.

## 7.1 Transcending the *Āgama* Rituals

### 7.1.1 RITUALIZING MIRACLES

The underlying ritualistic system that pervades the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* narratives, in similitude to the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*, is *śaiva āgama*.<sup>7</sup> This system is based on the Sanskrit *Āgama* scriptures, controlling royal-sponsored temples and run by the

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<sup>6</sup> See discussion in section 4.2.2 above.

<sup>7</sup> On the Tamil *Āgamaic* tradition in the *Pēriya Purāṇam*, see Cox (2005), Monius (2004b), Peterson (1989: 9-10).

Brahmanical elite. Śaiva āgama serves in Harihara’s text as “orthopraxy,” the “correct” system ritualistic practice according to mainstream, institutionalized tradition. We shall learn about the mechanics of the āgama system, as it is represented by this literary culture, by surveying the stories discussed in this chapter.

Despite the presence of the śaiva āgama system in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* narratives as the underling framework for worshipping Śiva, we also find in the stories more spontaneous and personal forms of devotion for Śiva. The following story demonstrates well how these two approaches are interwoven in narrative. It is a short-length *Ragaḷē* of 178 verses called the *Musuṭṭeya Cauḍayya Ragaḷē* (*MCauḍa Ragaḷē* henceforth), dedicated to a Śaraṇa called *Musuṭṭeya Cauḍayya*. Here is the story’s summary:

There is a city called *Musuṭṭe* in the northern region, famous for its *śivabhakti*. A Bhakta lives there, named *Cauḍayya*.<sup>8</sup> How is it possible to describe his worship of Śiva (*śivācāra*)? He always seeks refuge (*śaraṇārthi*) in servitude of Jaṅgamas, day or night, always reciting the five-syllable mantra (*pañcākṣari*<sup>9</sup>). Every day, *Cauḍayya* goes to the lake to fetch fresh water for washing the *liṅga*. One day, on his way back, he sees a funeral procession of Bhaktas who carry on a palanquin the dead body of a fellow Bhakta. *Cauḍayya* approaches the corpse and proclaims: “Śiva! If you are not returning this man to life, I will kill myself!” Śiva hears this and concedes, and the dead Bhakta immediately regains consciousness, then stretches his arms and dismounts the palanquin. All the Bhaktas praise *Cauḍayya*, saying: “*Cauḍayya*, this is a religious observance (*nema*)!” *Cauḍayya* feels blissful, brimming with undivided determination (*ekaniṣṭhē*<sup>10</sup>). From that day, whenever *Cauḍayya* sees a dead Jaṅgama, he brings him back to the world of the living. At another occasion, while *Cauḍayya* is fetching water and flowers for the daily worship (*pūjē*), he observes a dead bull lying on the side of the road. *Cauḍayya* thinks: “Is it proper that Śiva’s bull *Nandi* is dead? *basava! basava!*”<sup>11</sup> The bull immediately gets up and bellows, and

<sup>8</sup> There is another Bhakta among the Kannaḍiga Śaraṇas called *Cauḍayya*. See section 5.1.1 above.

<sup>9</sup> See section 7.3 below.

<sup>10</sup> See section 5.1 above.

<sup>11</sup> *Basava* is a Kannada derivative of the Sanskrit word *vṛṣabha*, “bull” (Kittel 1982: 1092 s.v. *basava*). This word carries spiritual connotations for Kannaḍiga Śaivas as a referent of Śiva’s bull *Nandi* and of their

Cauḍayya wonders: “I have so many observances (*nemas*), let this be another one.” From this day, he starts helping both Jaṅgamas and bulls, and his fame grows and grows. Again, when Cauḍayya returns one morning from the lake with water and flowers for his worship, he sees a group of children playing. They use a big rock as a signpost for their game, and Cauḍayya’s curiosity is awakened. He comes near and asks the children about the rock. They tell him it was placed there by someone who buried his bull underneath. Cauḍayya responds: “I shall bring this bull back to life, or I shall die!” With highest valor (*ativīra*), Cauḍayya lifts his sword and with great determination (*kaḍuniṣṭhē*) calls to the rock: “Basava! Come out of there! This is my oath (*āṇē*), for I swear on the Śaraṇas’ lives.” As the bull prepares to come out, the earth starts to shake. People who follow other religions (Parasamayins) move away in fear, together with their gods. A crack opens, and slowly the bull rises up from the ground like a naturally-formed *liṅga* (*svayambhūliṅga*). It stands there like a *śivabhakti* elevated by Cauḍayya. Cauḍayya praises the bull, when a heavenly chariot (*puṣṭaka*) descends from the sky and takes both the bull and Cauḍayya to Kailāsa. There, Cauḍayya prostrates to Śiva’s feet. Śiva lifts him and praises him in front of Nandi. Then, Śiva gives Cauḍayya the status of an attendant (*Gaṇa*) and sends the bull to join Surabhi, the heavenly cow of plenty.

Harihara opens the *MCauḍa Ragaḷē* with a question: how to describe Cauḍayya’s worship of Śiva (*śivācāra*)? This question lays out the main thematic frame for this story—which is ritualized action—and I shall use this theme as the central prism for analyzing the story. Cauḍayya is an adamant worshipper: he maintains a daily morning routine of bathing the *liṅga* (*abhiṣeka*) with fresh water, together with offerings such as freshly picked flowers. This ritual is one of the building blocks of many devotional practices in the-sub continent, central also for the temple-based *āgama* worship. But within this hyper-ritualized, external routine, Cauḍayya incites the fantastic: revivals of dead Jaṅgamas and dead bulls. The two modalities, routine rituals and miracle making, are evidently interconnected in the story, and to better understand the

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most venerated leader Basavaṇṇa. In contrast, the Dravidian word *ṅttu* denotes a work bullock and is completely bereft of spiritual connotations.



relation between the two, we need to pay attention to the specific lexicality Harihara invokes in this text: *bhakti* (devotion), *niṣṭhā* (determination), *vīra* (valor), *āṇḍ* (oath), *ācāra* (practice), *nema* (observance), and *pūjā* (worship) repeatedly signify Cauḍayya's devotional actions.<sup>12</sup> These terms are ordered here according to a vector, starting from the Bhakta's interiority (devotion and determination) and moving outward toward the external realm of action, culminating in the most institutionalized forms of ritual (worship). We already dealt with the mechanics of the devotee's interiority, using the terms "devotion," "determination," and "valor," in the previous stories about Surigēya Cauḍayya and Kallayya.<sup>13</sup> These elements also control Musuṭṭēya Cauḍayya's interiority. For example, like other devotees in the corpus, Cauḍayya threatens Śiva with his life and the lives of and other devotees if the god does not cooperate with the devotee's wish to revive the dead. Along the same lines, the term *vīra* conveys here, as in the previous stories, a violent mood that is enacted through Cauḍayya's swinging of his sword.

Continuing our movement outward, we now turn to the concrete, active counterparts of the Śaraṇa's internal moods, those that constitute his ritualistic behavior: "oath," "observance," and "worship." Cauḍayya's story revolves around practices that are performed on different levels. The most basic level is the institutionalized worship, the daily *pūjā*. Cauḍayya's morning routine is constructed around the bathing worship of the *liṅga*. But the ritualistic, routine aspect of Cauḍayya's worship serves only as the narrative background. These rituals are a literary cliché; the main plot occurs at the margins of the routine, when Cauḍayya

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<sup>12</sup> The *MCauḍa Ragaḷē* is not exceptional among the *Ragaḷēs* in its devotional vocabulary but, rather, is emblematic of this linguistic pattern.

<sup>13</sup> See section 5.1 above.

returns from the lake on his way to bath the *liṅga*.<sup>14</sup> It is at these vacant moments when the unexpected and the dramatic occur: in the first instance, Cauḍayya revives the corpse of a dead Jaṅgama. In the second, he revives a bull's carcass, and in the third, he manages to pull up and revive a buried skeleton of a long-gone dead bull. What is peculiar in this succession of related miracles is that they are understood by Cauḍayya and the devotees around him not as exceptional moments but as part of Cauḍayya's *nemas*, observances.<sup>15</sup> This is striking, because the term "observance" implies strong regularity. The framing of Cauḍayya's miracles as "observances" routinizes them. Cauḍayya's ability to revive dead Jaṅgamas and bulls is incorporated by the term *nema* into his formal and everyday set of practices. Cauḍayya's *nema* is further verbally marked by his public oath (*āṇē*) to revive Jaṅgamas and bulls whenever he finds them. This specific lexicality strips the exceptionality from Cauḍayya's miracle-making. It incorporates it into his ritualistic persona.

This integration of the fantastic and the exceptional into the more organized system of rituals is emblematic of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as whole. If we want to identify in Cauḍayya's story a ritualistic pattern that is axiomatic for all the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*' stories, it is the personally constructed and composite nature of the Śaraṇa's religious practice to Śiva. We started our examination of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories in chapter five by positing an absolute, monolithic determination. The Bhakta's interiority, I claimed, is alien to reflectivity. Ritualized action, as presented by Cauḍayya's story, serves as the outer reflection of this adamant interiority: the routinization of devotional practice, including its fringes, such as miracle-making.

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<sup>14</sup> The notion of the ritual as a literary cliché plays on David Shulman's central argument in "The Cliché as Ritual and Instrument: Iconic Puns in Kampan's *Irāmāvatāram*" (1978).

<sup>15</sup> *Nema* is a Kannada derivative of the Sanskrit word *niyama* (Kittel 1982: 909-10 s.v. *nema* 1).

### 7.1.2 ORTHOPRAXY AND OMNIPRAXY

Rituals in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories about the Kannada-speaking Śaraṇas can be divided, in abstract terms, into two: orthopraxy and omni-praxy. The first term is almost self-explanatory; it includes conventional, formalized, customary, and institutionalized forms of religious practice. In the case of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, orthopraxy is manifested most visibly in temple-based public worship. In contrast, omni-praxy in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* can occur anywhere. H. Daniel Smith defines omni-praxy as “any unprecedented, remarkably widespread and democratized, even innovative and idiosyncratic, rituals [that] have crept into common usage”.<sup>16</sup> Smith contrasts omni-praxy with the Brahmanical, temple-based *pūjē*, for the devotee’s omni-praxy implies his or her independence from institutionalized settings and mediating agents, although the two realms (omni-praxy and orthopraxy) continue to exist side by side. Although Smith’s subject-matter is poster worship in modern India, his analytical observations are pertinent also for this thirteenth-century Kannada literary culture. Like in the case of poster worship, the stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* also contrast personal forms of devotion with institutionalized, Brahmin-based temple worship while maintaining both forms of worship as valid.

The composed nature of maintaining institutionalized forms of worship side by side with more personal gestures of devotion is not unique to the *śivabhakti* tradition of the Kannada-speaking regions. For example, we find in the *Pēriya Purāṇam*, dedicated to the Tamil *śaiva* saints, figures who worship Śiva in transgressive ways. Kaṇṇappa, for example, is a forest hunter unfamiliar with Brahmanical concepts of ritual purity. He is described in the *Pēriya Purāṇam* as feeding Śiva with game meat that was first chewed

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<sup>16</sup> Smith (1995: 36).

by him.<sup>17</sup>

The following story, about Śaraṇas who worship the *liṅga* in different and spontaneous forms, demonstrates well how omnipraxy informs ritual action in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories. The story starts in the middle of chapter six of the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē* (*Basava Ragaḷē* henceforth):<sup>18</sup>

[6 cont.] One day, Basavaṇṇa sits next to King Bijjaḷa at his hall, together with other attendants, such as Nāraṇabhaṭṭa, who is the king’s Guru, and his minister Mañcyāṇa. All of them are stupefied by the Vedas (Vedajaḍar) and jealous of Bijjaḷa’s special liking of Basavaṇṇa. Bijjaḷa takes one petal of the *ketakī* flower and hands it to Basavaṇṇa, who places it in his *liṅga* case (*karadiḡē*). Nāraṇabhaṭṭa immediately protests: “This flower is forbidden for worshipping Śiva. It is said so in the Śaiva Āgamas!” Basavaṇṇa laughs and responds: “You are very stupid! God accepts whatever the devotee offers him!” Bijjaḷa, startled by Basavaṇṇa’s bold statement, asks him to show a sign that Śiva indeed approves this. Basavaṇṇa orders one thousand Bhaktas to open their *liṅga* cases, and in each of these, as well as on every *liṅga* in every temple in Maṅgaḷavāḍa, petals of the *ketakī* flower are found. The king, amazed by Basavaṇṇa’s miracle, prostrated to him, seeing him now as Śiva himself, and the friendship between the two people grows stronger. Many Śaraṇas flock into Maṅgaḷavāḍa to meet Basavaṇṇa and praise him. Basavaṇṇa responds to these praises by saying that for him they are identical to Śiva.

[7] Basavaṇṇa gets the blessings of the venerable (*santa*) Bhaktas, and many of the city’s leaders ask their wives to prepare special dishes (*bona*) in big metal pots in order to perform rituals for Śiva. Basavaṇṇa washes the Śaraṇas’ feet and orders to start the preparations for the worship (*arcanē*). All the people are gathered and are given flowers, water, and seats for their *liṅgas*. Then, Basavaṇṇa invites them to sit down for the ritual (*pūjē*) that is about to start. Each has a specific request from Basavaṇṇa, such as: “Bring me a leaf! Bring me a Jasmine! I want a fresh bud! Why is this ritual done according to the Āgamas?

<sup>17</sup> See Ulrich (2007: 249-50), Cox (2005), Monius (2004a), Peterson (1994). See also footnote 87 below for more information about Kaṇṇappa. See section 6.5.1 above with regard to a Kannāḍiga Bhakta who also serves meat to Śiva in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

<sup>18</sup> The first part of chapter six is summarized and discussed below in section 07.4.1 below.

Give me a *ketakī* flower! This flower has a bee in it! I want a flower untouched by the sun! Rub holy ash (*bhasma*) on me! Fetch me the prayer beads (*rudrākṣa*)! Pour here some perfume! Enough rice! Bring me a precious stone!” One insists that the incense (*dhūpa*) should be lit first, another insist it should be the lamp (*dīpa*). Basavaṇṇa is happy that Śaraṇas are performing rituals at his house, and they keep on making special requests: “I want water without any living creature inside! I want a heavenly lotus! I need a *maruga*<sup>19</sup> flower! I want a black color Jasmine! I need the ashes of the god of love after Śiva has burnt him (*kāmadahana*)! I want rice with gold powder! I need threads of the lotus petals for my lamp! I need pearls from an elephant’s head to draw floor decorations! I need the gem from a snake’s head!” Basavaṇṇa is never deterred from or sarcastic toward the Śaraṇas for making such demands. Keeping his mind on his god, he never refuses the Śaraṇas’ requests, and the group grows even more. Dancing and singing, each worships the *liṅga* in his or her own particular way. Some do not place flowers on the *liṅga* but only present them; some only look at the *liṅga*; some dance; some are shivering with intense devotion; some look at Śiva and bloom inside; some repeatedly touch the *liṅga*; some stammer words of praise out of love to Śiva; some want to sing but, seeing Śiva, forget how to; others start singing; some dance and some, hearing the word “Śiva,” are bristled; some are angry at Śiva; some wave the lamp instead of the incense while others wave the incense instead of the lamp. The ritual for *śivaliṅga* is happening. Basavaṇṇa blesses all the attendants and music is played from many instruments. The event appears like a wedding in which the bride, which is the path of merit (*punyaṅvīthi*), chooses *bhakti* for its husband. It is like a wedding in which Śiva’s Yogis choose liberation (*mukti*) as their groom. Then, many types of food are brought and served in the oblation (*naivedya*) for Śiva. Basavaṇṇa feeds the *liṅga* with his hand, and so do the rest of the Śivabhaktas. They all speak to their *liṅgas*: “See how soft these milk balls are! Eat! At least drink some milk! This sweet is hot and nice, eat it!” and so on, nudging their *liṅgas* to take in the food. Śiva appears in front of the Śaraṇas, together with his wife Pārvati and their retinue, and consumes all the oblations. Then, the Śaraṇas serve Śiva a betel leaf (*tāmbūla*) and sit happily to eat the ritual’s offerings (*prasāda*). The bliss (*ānanda*) of their *bhakti* is as diverse as the beauty of each member of the group. They are all satisfied, with their mouths full of praises for Basavaṇṇa.

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<sup>19</sup> *Maruvaka* in Sanskrit (Kittel 1982: 1216 s.v. *maruga*). Monier-Williams lists different plants under this entry (Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 790 s.v. *maruvaka*).

In the first episode, Basavaṇṇa publically transgresses the traditional prohibition of using the *ketakī* flower (the flower of the *ketaka* tree)<sup>20</sup> on the grounds that “god accepts whatever the devotee offers him.”<sup>21</sup> The second episode narrates in great detail the *liṅga* worship performed by a large group of Śaraṇas at Basavaṇṇa’s house. The two consecutive stories are connected by the theme of ritualistic transgression: neither of the worships prescribes adhere to ritualistic restrictions. The connected theme in both stories is made explicit by Harihara during the Śaraṇas’ rituals in Basavaṇṇa’s house, when one Śaraṇa asks Basavaṇṇa to hand him a *ketakī* flower: “Why is this ritual done according to the Āgamas? Give me a *ketakī* flower!”<sup>22</sup> This exclamation also affirms Basavaṇṇa’s ritualistic authority, as demonstrated in the first episode. Basavaṇṇa’s authority is also affirmed in the second episode when every stage of the worship is first performed by Basavaṇṇa and then followed by the Śaraṇas. Furthermore, when considered together, the two episodes construct a new ritualistic authority that can accommodate transgressions of the *āgama* rituals: the Śaraṇas in the second story follow Basavaṇṇa’s authority that is established in the first story, and the prescription for the immediate audience of this Ragaḷē is to directly follow the Śaraṇas’ practices that were established in the second story.

The structuring of the stories, in addition to the explicit statements against the *āgama* prescriptions within them, point to Harihara’s deliberate effort to redescribe the

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<sup>20</sup> In the Sanskrit Purāṇic literature there are several stories in which Śiva develops a particular dislike toward the *ketakī* flower. In contemporary Tamil Nadu, the *ketakī* flower has erotic connotations that reflect its antinomian status by orthodoxy (Schuler 2009: 322).

<sup>21</sup> *Basava Ragaḷē* 6, prose in Harihara (1999: 317):  
*devam bhaktar kōṭṭaḍḍē kaikōlvam*

<sup>22</sup> *Basava Ragaḷē* 7.37 in Harihara (1999: 318)  
*āgamavadekē ketakiya namagīyē*

*śaiva* ritual outside the existing ritualistic boundaries as put forth in the *Āgamas*. These prescriptions also undermine the ritualistic authority attributed to the *Āgamas* in favor of various personal and spontaneous forms of devotion.<sup>23</sup> The *Śaraṇas*' unruly behaviors at different stages of the ritual (decorating the *liṅga* with flowers, offering food, waving incense, and waving the lamp) project a spontaneous festivity during the worship ceremony. One might say that there is an orgiastic quality to these descriptions; the ritual is improvised, beatific, and communal—all at the same time. We can sense in the second episode a celebration of the rich variety of worship forms: “The bliss (*ānanda*) of their *bhakti* is as varied as the beauty of each member of the group.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, the two stories combined communicate to the audience of the text a devotional model to be followed, based on the narrative image of Basavaṇṇa and his *Śaraṇas*. This behavioral model dictates a ritual paradigm that is not disconnected from the *Āgamas* but has a much looser structure, with a new emphasis on the devotional interiority of the worshipper. Devotional behaviors, such as ecstatic dancing and singing, and intimate and spontaneous appeals to the deity, are favored over the ritualistic formalities. In abstract terms, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* prescription for ritual clearly favors omni-praxy over orthopraxy, based on the superior emotive quality of the former over the latter.

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<sup>23</sup> In contrast to the overt rejection of *āgama* ritualistic restrictions, the *Āgamas* are invoked in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, oftentimes together with the Vedas, as valid means of tradition authority. However, these can be read as tokens or appropriations of the religious capital of traditional scriptures rather than actual endorsement of the scriptures themselves. See also section 8.2.2 below.

<sup>24</sup> *Basava Ragaḷē* 7.155-56 in Harihara (1999: 320):

...avara sadbhaktiyānandamaṇi  
nānā vidhadōḷi ippa gaṇanivahadandamaṇi

## 7.2 *Sthāvara and Jaṅgama*

### 7.2.1 AFFIRMING TEMPLE WORSHIP

Contra to misconceptions about a *vīraśaiva* rejection of temple worship, the preference of personal forms of worship in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* does not imply in any way a complete abnegation of temple worship. On the contrary, the focus on devotional attitudes that underlies the endorsement of omnipraxy also gives room for temple-based and routinized worship, as long as it invokes intense devotion. To better understand the relation prescribed in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* between temple-based practices and personal worship we return to Potter Guṇḍayya's story in the *Guṇḍayyana Ragaḷē* (*Guṇḍa Ragaḷē* henceforth), summarized again here:<sup>25</sup>

In the northern region, in Ballukē, there is a simple potter and a dedicated Śivabhakta named Guṇḍayya. When Śiva hears the Guṇḍayya's tapping on his pots, he is happy. Guṇḍayya makes pots day and night without stopping for food or sleep, and each pot he makes is like a different form of *bhakti*. And while making the pots, his mind is continuously focused on the god, taking upon himself the oath of the Three-Eyed Śiva. One day, Guṇḍayya goes to Śiva's temple and, seeing the god, his eyes are filled with tears of excitement. He drinks the holy ritual water and, filled with the sacred experience of the worship, he returns to his home. Seeing in his mind the ritual he attended, Guṇḍayya starts to make pots without food or sleep. All night, while Guṇḍayya makes pots on the outside, he sees in his mind only Śiva. And although his eyes are closed, the pots he makes come out beautiful. In the morning, it is again time for Guṇḍayya's observance of going to the temple and worshipping Śiva, and he absorbs into his mind the image of Śiva's statue and then returns home to make more pots. The drumming music of his pots reaches the Himalayas and makes Śiva happy. What is seen as work on the outside is music on the inside. What is seen as tapping on the outside, is worship on the inside. Śiva is inside Guṇḍayya, and this celebration goes on for many days. One day, as Guṇḍayya starts banging on his pots, Śiva bursts into dance in his abode at Kailāsa. The music is earthly

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<sup>25</sup> The story is summarized and discussed also in section 6.3 above.



but the dance is heavenly. Śiva comments to Pārvati: “I am dancing inside Guṇḍayya’s heart. I do not know the difference between me and my Bhakta nor between heaven and earth.” Then, Śiva takes Pārvati to earth to meet the enthralled Bhakta. When he reaches Guṇḍayya’s house, he and Guṇḍayya start dancing together. Seeing this, the gods want to join in by playing their music, but Śiva refuses their offer, saying he desires to hear only the sounds of pots. All the world’s inhabitants, animate as well as inanimate,<sup>26</sup> start to dance with Śiva and Guṇḍayya, until Pārvati fears that the earth will not be able to hold this dance, and asks Śiva to cease. Śiva yields, stops dancing, and hugs Guṇḍayya. Then, a heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) comes down from the sky and takes Guṇḍayya to Kailāsa. Śiva introduces Guṇḍayya to all his attendants and declares: “I make everyone dance, but this potter made me dance!” and he officially declares Guṇḍayya as one of his attendants.

Guṇḍayya’s story, in essence, celebrates the collapsing of boundaries: between work and worship; interior and exterior; profane and holy; and also between human and divine.<sup>27</sup> The term *nema* (religious observance) is used in this text to describe Guṇḍayya’s daily visits to the temple, but Guṇḍayya’s most effective form of worship is personal and domestic—by making pots in his home.<sup>28</sup> Notably, Harihara draws a direct link between the two forms of worship, the public and the domestic: temple worship inspires Guṇḍayya to keep focusing on Śiva while working on his pots in the setting of his house, and this determined focus is what brings forth the metaphysical unification between the Bhakta and his god. Thus, the *Guṇḍa Ragaḷe*’s narrative demonstrates well the complex relationship between temple and worship in the *Ragaḷegaḷu*: on the one hand, temple worship is described as an integral part of worship practices. At the same

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<sup>26</sup> The terms Harihara uses here are *sthāvarajaṅgama* (*Guṇḍa Ragaḷe* v. 220 in Harihara 1999: 272). This term is significant in the *vīraśaiva* thought-system, although it appears that in this instance it lacks the theological implications usually attributed to this term. See section 7.2 below.

<sup>27</sup> The manifestation of the divine within the bodily framework of the adept is a defining trait of Tantric thought-systems. See section 3.4.1 above.

<sup>28</sup> The relation between work and worship is in itself a central trait of this *śaiva* tradition, and I discuss it separately in section 6.3 above.

time, the public ritual in itself is never sufficient for spawning a real, live encounter with the divine. The efficacy of the temple is measured in this story only to the extent with which it can invoke devotion in the mind of the Bhakta.

In itself, this claim is not unique to this *bhakti* tradition but rather axiomatic to all devotional strands in India. The *Pēriya Purāṇam*, the twelfth-century hagiography dedicated to lives of the Tamil Śaivas, tells us about Pūcalar, a poor devotee who decides to build an intricately decorated temple for Śiva in his mind due to lack of resources. Not only does he succeed in accomplishing his ambitious wish, but his temple is deemed by Śiva himself as superior to the huge, actual temple built simultaneously by King Kāṭavar at Kāñcipuram.<sup>29</sup> It is significant that the *Pēriya Purāṇam* recognizes the superiority of the devotee's interiority over external and public forms of worship, since this particular Tamil śaiva tradition is, in fact, highly invested in temple worship, in much more pronounced ways than the Kannada tradition.<sup>30</sup> It is unsurprising that the Tamil metaphor of "temple in the mind" made its way in to the Kannada literary pantheon through a famous Vacana Basavaṇṇa,<sup>31</sup> since the latter tradition further develops the attention to interior mood that is laid out by the former tradition.

According to Harihara's stories, temple worship is a central landmark in the ritual landscape of the Bhakta. For example, in the stories of Surigēya Cauḍayya and of Kallayya,<sup>32</sup> the most intense devotional moments occur at the temple, in front of the *liṅga* statue. Another Śaraṇa named Śaṅkaradāsimaḃya decides to stay at a local Śiva temple at a place called Navilē instead of completing his pilgrimage to Varanasi, which

<sup>29</sup> *Pēriya* 4171-88 in Cekkīlār and McGlashan (2006: 358-61); Shulman (2011: 4-6).

<sup>30</sup> Pechilis (1999: 94-109), Champakalakshmi (2011b: 62).

<sup>31</sup> I discuss this Vacana separately in the following section.

<sup>32</sup> See summaries and discussion of their stories in sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 respectively.

is another narrative endorsement of temple culture (which, in this case, privileges local networks of temples over pan-Indian and paradigmatic ones).<sup>33</sup> In addition, *śaiva* temples in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are never described as sites of social exclusion by Brahmanical priesthood. Despite the implicit mediation of Brahmins, these places are always presented in the narratives as an inclusive space that is open to different social strands.<sup>34</sup> It is clear that, according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the popular appeal of the Śaraṇas' religion was partly based on prescribing unrestricted temple access. At the same time, these stories clearly communicate the secondary significance of formal practice, or orthopraxy, compared with the devotee's internal mood of devotional determination (*niṣṭhē*). Thus, divine realization can be attained (and in many of the *Ragaḷēs* is attained) also outside the temple and during unorthodox worshipping, which I framed earlier using the term omnipraxy.

### 7.2.2 A. K. RAMANUJAN'S OVERREADING OF *STHĀVARA*

Harihara's complex approach to temple worship, as an integral but not exclusive or necessary part of the Bhakta's devotional practices, is significant for understanding this religious culture, especially in light of the anti-temple stance that is often attributed to *Vīraśaivism*. It is plainly true that claims against temple culture are found in both primary *vīraśaiva* materials and secondary writings about *Vīraśaivism*. The following example for this trend is taken from A.K. Ramanujan's now-classic

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<sup>33</sup> See section 7.3 below.

<sup>34</sup> The Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam* is different in this regard: although this text projects a much more intense commitment to temple worship, it does regulate social access to it, based on caste affiliation. Such is the case, for example, of Nantaṇār, an untouchable who must go through a purification process through Brahmanical rituals before reaching salvation at the temple (Champakalakshmi 2011b: 64, Cekkīlār and McGlashan 2006: 106-8, Pechilis Prentiss 2005).

introduction to the Vacanas.<sup>35</sup> Ramanujan first presents a very popular Vacana attributed to Basavaṅṅa:

The rich  
will make temples for Śiva.  
What shall I,  
a poor man,  
do?

My legs are pillars,  
the body the shrine,  
the head a cupola  
of gold.

Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,  
things standing shall fall,  
but the moving even shall stay.

(Vacana #820)<sup>36</sup>

Ramanujan uses this Vacana in order to develop a discussion about the *vīraśaiva* conceptual dichotomy between the moving (*jaṅgama*) and the static (*sthāvara*).

Ramanujan writes:

The poem opens by relating the temple to the rich ... The Vīraśaiva movement was a social upheaval by and for the poor, the low-caste and the outcaste against the rich and the privileged; it was a rising of the unlettered against the literate pundit, *flesh and blood against stone*.<sup>37</sup>

Building on the Vacana quoted above, Ramanujan creates here a conceptual dichotomy between the stone temple—which only the privileged and the rich can build—and the human body of the poor and the underprivileged, which becomes a

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<sup>35</sup> Ramanujan (1973).

<sup>36</sup> Ramanujan (1973: 19).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 21, emphasis mine.

metaphor to the temple. This dichotomy does not fully correspond with the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* narratives, since, as stated earlier, temples are not exclusive spaces for the privileged only. Notwithstanding this reservation, Ramanujan’s statement about “flash and blood against stone” does make sense with regard to the early hagiographies as well, as long as we read “stone” as a metaphor for ossified interiority rather than as metonymical for temple space. For, according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, it is not the stone (the temple) in itself that the Śaraṇas resist but mechanical ritualism.

Another aspect of the question of temple worship and early Kannada *śivabhakti* that merits reconsideration is Basavaṇṇa’s claims in the above Vacana. This Vacana is highly evocative in terms of its rejection of temple worship, it described as restricted to rich people only. However, in all the traditional narrations of Basavaṇṇa’s life story, temple worship plays a central and positive role. For example, in the *Ragaḷē* dedicated to Basavaṇṇa, there are several significant episodes that partake at the temple grounds, where Basavaṇṇa surrenders himself in front of a *sthāvara* liṅga.<sup>38</sup> In contrast to what the above Vacana conveys, Basavaṇṇa’s active resistance in the *Ragaḷē* dedicated to his life story is not aimed against temple worship. Rather, it is invoked only against the Brahmanical disapproval of *samaśīla*, Basavaṇṇa’s public commitment to not discriminating his fellow Bhaktas.<sup>39</sup> In this *Ragaḷē*, these moments of confrontation never occur at the physical space of the temple but, rather, at the king’s court.<sup>40</sup> There are other external elements to consider, beyond the text of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, that undermine the claim that the *śivabhakti* tradition of the Kannada-speaking temple worship, one of these is the problematics involved in relying on a specific Vacana for

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Basavaṇṇa’s initiation by Nandi at the temple of Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva, summarized and discussed in section 5.2.2 above.

<sup>39</sup> See sections 6.4 and 6.5.1 above.

<sup>40</sup> See section 8.1.3 below.

making definite claims about this *bhakti* tradition. *Vacanas* are an open-ended and pliable medium, transmitted orally for at least two centuries before being fixed as canon.<sup>41</sup> The inherent elasticity of the genre and its innate multivocality render it as a problematic source for making overdetermined ideological claims. In this regard, even the basic supposition regarding the ideological uniformity of the myriad of *Vacanas* attributed to Basavaṇṇa is problematic.

In light of such complexities, any claim regarding a *vīraśaiva* resistance to temple worship, such as those made by Ramanujan, is inherently fraught with qualifications, inconsistencies, or contradictions. Ramanujan is not alone in this trend, as the complexity of the issue does not stem from his work but reflects deeper tensions that are inherent to this tradition. For example, P. B. Desai writes about five years before Ramanujan: “Worship of Linga consecrated in a temple or shrine is not favoured in *Vīraśaivism*. Strictly speaking, it is even prohibited. This Linga is called *Sthāvara* or immovable Linga.”<sup>42</sup> Desai’s interjection—“Strictly speaking, it is even prohibited”—conveys a tacit admittance of the formally proscribed practice. Only a few pages later Desai writes: “Basaveśvara’s God was the Lord of *Kūḍala Sangama*, the Linga enshrined in a temple. A critic is prone to accuse him of inconsistency, because, in his teachings he discredited worship of external Linga and advocated that of personal Linga ...”<sup>43</sup> Desai sets off at this point in an apologetic explanation in his effort to settle the basic contradiction between Basavaṇṇa’s “teachings” in some of the *Vacanas* attributed to him and the centrality of temple worshiped in his own traditional life story. It is difficult to ignore the paradoxes, tensions, and contradictions here, but my intension

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<sup>41</sup> See sections 1.1.2 and 4.1.2 above. See also Chandra Shobhi (2005).

<sup>42</sup> Desai (1968: 321).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 324.

here is not to criticize specific scholars.<sup>44</sup> The theological difficulties I point to here stretch beyond the work of specific scholars; they are deeply engrained in the indigenous expressions of this tradition, with the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as one of the earliest.<sup>45</sup>

In conclusion, the *śaiva* culture as depicted in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, including the *Ragaḷē* dedicated to Basavaṇṇa, does not exclude temple-worship from the canopy of *śaiva* practices and does not identify the temple with an exclusivist elite, Brahmanical or other. In this corpus, temples are an integral and accepted part of this religious landscape, including that of Basavaṇṇa. For Harihara, any setting is suitable for worshipping Śiva, and the temple is an especially pertinent location.

### 7.2.3 THINGS STANDING SHALL MOVE

The tension between *sthāvara* and *jaṅgama* is manifested most clearly in the realm of practice, where the two modes of worship—the public, temple-based and private carrying of a personal *liṅga*—are at times competing with each other. M. Chidananda Murthy echoes this duality when he describes worship as it appears in the stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*: “It was worshipped in the form of *sthāvara* in the temple. Besides, the devotees used to carry a miniature *liṅga* in a casket wherever they went.”<sup>46</sup> The stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are surprisingly self-reflective about the ambivalence and tension that exists between temple worship and carrying a personal *liṅga*, and between

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<sup>44</sup> On a general note, it is not imprudent to state that Ramanujan and Desai contributed to the study of the *śivabhakti* tradition in the Kannada-speaking regions in English-speaking academia more than any other scholar of our time.

<sup>45</sup> The following traditional story demonstrates another aspect of this inherent tension, this time with regard to the relation of the *śivabhakti* tradition to Brahmin-based religion: when Rāghavāṅka, Harihara’s nephew, passed away, an argument developed among his attendants regarding his postmortem rituals. The main question was whether to cremate his body (as the Brahmanical-based tradition dictates) or to bury it (as the local *śivabhakti* tradition dictates).

<sup>46</sup> Chidananda Murthy (1983: 204)

their abstract correspondences, *sthāvara* and *jaṅgama*. The following story, about a Śaraṇa called Bhogaṇṇa, playfully narrates this tension by making the static *liṅgas* that are worshiped in the temple to jump up in the air and start moving on their own. This short-length *Ragaḷē*, called the *Bhogaṇṇana Ragaḷē* (*Bhoga Ragaḷē* henceforth) and consists of 236 verses, is also useful for explicating *liṅgadhāraṇē*, the prescription of carrying personal *liṅga* on the Bhakta's body.<sup>47</sup> Here is the story's summary:

In a Śiva settlement (*śivapura*) called Kēmbhāvi, there is a Jaṅgama called Bhogaṇṇa. He never inquires about the devotees' familial origins (*jāti*), never distinguishes between Śaraṇas, never judges them according to their manner of speech, never examines their knowledge. His only concern is that they are Śivabhaktas.<sup>48</sup> One day, Śiva pays Bhogaṇṇa a visit, dressed as an old and poor Śivabhakta. Seeing him, Bhogaṇṇa immediately prostrates and touches his feet. The neighboring Brahmins see this with dismay. Then, Bhogaṇṇa invites the old Bhakta into his house, offers him a seat, washes his feet, and arranges a worship (*arcanē*) for Śiva. The Brahmins, failing to recognize who the old man really is, go to the local king Candimarasa and tell him: "Look, we always obey your orders. However, in your town there is a Bhakta called Bhogaṇṇa who transgresses all the accepted boundaries. Ignoring communal origin (*kula*) and only minding *bhakti* practices (*ācara*), he lets a poor-looking man, an untouchable (Pōlēya), into his house. By this, he voids Brahmanical values. You must banish him, for it is either us or him who will leave you." The words of these stupid people (Jaḍas) make the king furious over Bhogaṇṇa's behavior. He calls for him and demands an explanation. Bhogaṇṇa says: "Listen, King. I never invite untouchable non-Śaivas—such as your Brahmins—into my house. Is it a mistake to take in a Śivabhakta?" Hearing this, the king responds: "Are you calling my Brahmins untouchables (Pōlēyas)? You better leave this place at once." Bhogaṇṇa, calmly, starts walking away. On his first step outside the town, all the *liṅgas* in the town's temples stand up. He takes a second step, and they jump out of their seats and start following Bhogaṇṇa. A procession of *liṅgas* is formed, marching behind Bhogaṇṇa, and all the trees and flowers ooze their sap on the moving *liṅgas*, like a holy bath (*abhiṣeka*). It was a moving worship (*pūjē*), as if heading to the sacred

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<sup>47</sup> I discuss other themes of this story in section 6.2 above.

<sup>48</sup> See discussion about this proclamation in section 6.2 above.



city Varanasi (Kāśi). When Bhogaṇṇa notices this, he becomes worried and tells the *liṅgas*: “You all have departed from the goddess (Śakti)! You might get hurt walking on the road like this!” He arranges for leaves and creepers to protect the *liṅgas*, and they all continue the march happily. Meanwhile, back in the town, the Brahmins enter Śiva temples in order to perform rituals, but see that the *liṅgas*’ basins (*pīṭhas*) are empty. They run to the king and demand that he brings back Bhogaṇṇa to town. They say: “Bhogaṇṇa is a fine person with great *bhakti*! He is a Liṅga-Worthy (Liṅgavanta<sup>49</sup>). If we do not get him back here, the whole town is ruined!” Candimarasa arranges for a great procession, with many Śaraṇas and others, and they follow Bhogaṇṇa’s path like a pilgrimage (*yatra*) to *śivaliṅga*! When they notice from afar Bhogaṇṇa and the *liṅgas*, they start to cry out to him: “We are sinners! Rescue us! Clear away our earthly illusion (*māyē*)!” Bhogaṇṇa ponders over what to do. Then, he turns to the *liṅgas* and says: “You cannot stay separated like this!” and he decides to rejoin his god with the goddess, the *liṅgas* with their basins (*pīṭha*). Everyone turn back to the city, ecstatic and happy. The *liṅgas* are so thrilled, that they forget their original places: small *liṅgas* jump into big basins (*pīṭhas*), and big *liṅgas* jump into small basins. The Śaraṇas play music, and tears of joy are pouring down from everyone’s eyes, for this is a wedding between Śiva and the goddess. A heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends from the sky and, in front of the king, the Brahmins, and the town’s people, lifts Bhogaṇṇa up to Kailāsa. There, Śiva hugs him and grants him the position of an attendant.

This story demonstrates the shortcomings of Ramanujan’s dichotomic reading of worship practices in this *śivabhakti* tradition. Bhogaṇṇa is called in this text “Jaṅgama.” When attributed to a person, this term denotes an itinerant ascetic, and in the later period this term identifies the priestly class within Vīraśaiva sects.<sup>50</sup> Although the term “Jaṅgama” appears in many *Ragaḷē*—Basavaṇṇa, for example, is often described as taking care of the Jaṅgamas’ needs—its invocation with regard to Bhogaṇṇa at the beginning of the *Bhoga Ragaḷē* story merits attention, since Bhogaṇṇa is not a mendicant but a householder Bhakta who serves other, itinerant Jaṅgamas. It is

<sup>49</sup> See discussion about the term “Liṅgavanta” and related terms in section 1.2.1 above.

<sup>50</sup> McCormack (1973).

only in the denouement of the story, where Bhogaṇṇa leaves town and starts roaming the forest, that he literally becomes a “Jaṅgama” person. The preliminary usage of the term “Jaṅgama” is thus a foretelling one, pointing to the story’s central theme: making the static, stone *liṅgas* that are situated in the temple—move.

Movement and change clearly transcend the static and concrete in this story, though not in a totalistic or doctrinal way: Bhogaṇṇa’s devotion is so strong that the *liṅgas* uproot themselves from their temple stone basins (*pīṭhas*) and start to follow him, and the basins left at the town’s temples are rendered useless without the *liṅgas*, according to the same Brahmins who condemned Bhogaṇṇa to leave the city. The Brahmins’ upended demand soon after Bhogaṇṇa’s departure acknowledges the superiority of the moving over the static, very much in accordance to Basavaṇṇa’s conclusion in the Vacana quoted above: “[T]hings standing shall fall, but the moving even shall stay.” At the same time, and in a manner which is typical of Harihara, the *Bhoga Ragaḷē*’s denouement also restrains this *jaṅgama* principle and reconfirms the importance of *sthāvara* as well.<sup>51</sup> This confirmation is attested in the story by Bhogaṇṇa’s concern that the *liṅgas* will get hurt outside of the temples and by his readiness to return the *liṅgas* to the town’s temples.<sup>52</sup> The *Bhoga Ragaḷē*’s conclusion also attests to the temple’s importance: Bhogaṇṇa returns to Kēmbhāvi together with the *liṅgas*, and the metaphysical conundrum is resolved. Despite the humorous misplacement of *liṅgas* in the wrong *pīṭhas*, the reunification of the *jaṅgama* in the

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<sup>51</sup> On a more abstract level, we find in few Ragaḷēs the tendency to restrain or contain ruptures of devotion. See another example for this containment in section 8.2.1 below. For a uniquely transgressive narrative of violent rupture, see section 9.1 below.

<sup>52</sup> There is also the allusion to the Kāśī (Varanasi), Śiva’s sacred city in north India, which marks in the story the importance of traditional sacred centers. Compare with Śaṅkaradāsimayya’s comment about Varanasi in section 7.3 below.

*sthāvara* is attested by a festival that reunites Śiva (the *liṅgas*) with Śakti (the *pīṭhas*, or basins).<sup>53</sup> This ending demonstrates well Harihara’s complex relation to temple worship in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. On the one hand, there is a general acknowledgement in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* of the powerful new omnipraxes that typically occur outside the temple grounds, and this implies a subordination of the temple to other non-formal and personal worship practices. At the same time, the temple is still efficacious for the Bhakta’s devotional realization and its public significance is reasserted. In sum, temple worship is not rejected but endorsed in this story as in others in this corpus, and *jaṅgama* does not replace *sthāvara*.

#### 7.2.4 CARRYING A PERSONAL LIṅGA

The *liṅga* transformed by Bhogaṇṇa from a static (*sthāvara*) element transfixed at the temple’s inner room (*garbhagr̥ha*) into a mobile (*jaṅgama*) and animate being is emblematic of a conceptual shift in this *śaiva* tradition. The personally carried *liṅga* (called *iṣṭaliṅga*<sup>54</sup>) is fully endorsed as a valid ritual instrument in the Śaivism of the Kannada-speaking regions. Given to the *śaiva* Bhakta close to birth or during initiation, the *iṣṭaliṅga* should be carried by the adept on the body at all times, a practice called *liṅgadhāraṇē*. Doctrinal texts formalize the carrying of personal *liṅga*, making it a defining feature for the Śivabhaktas’ community, and this practice is central also in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Narrative references to Śaktism in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are rare. See references to village goddesses in section 7.4.1 below and to what can be generally be termed as Tantric symbols and values in section 3.4.1 above.

<sup>54</sup> *Iṣṭaliṅga* is defined by the *Vīraśaiva Lexicon for Technical Terms* (*Vīraśaiva Pāribhāṣika Padakośa*, 2000, Knn) as: “a *liṅga* whose sanctity is based in the initiation of a Guru to his pupil” (p. 90 s.v. *iṣṭaliṅga* 1). A *Liṅgāyata* is defined as “One who properly carries on his/her body the *iṣṭaliṅga*” (p. 468 s.v. *liṅgāyata*, *liṅgāyita*, *liṅgāyita*).

<sup>55</sup> The earliest doctrinal Kannada text to express the obligation of carrying the *liṅga* on the adept’s body is

On the metaphysical plane, the *līṅga* intimates the Bhakta and Śiva through continuous bodily presence. On a ritualistic plane, this metaphysical accessibility deprecates formal orthopraxy, foremostly in the form of temple worship.<sup>56</sup> On the social plane, the unmediated access to the god supplied by the carrying of *līṅga* releases the Bhakta from dependence upon the Brahmins' mediation in accessing the godhead during temple worship. Velcheru Narayana Rao, in his introduction to the English translation of the *Basava Purāṇamu*, connects the motility embedded in the practice of *līṅgadhāraṇē* to the occupational background of the Śivabhaktas from the southern Deccan:

One of the characteristics of artisan and trading castes is their mobility. Their skills are always with them; as a part of the body, skills can be carried wherever there are better opportunities to make a living ... [T]he traders and the artisans ... would take their god with them. Like their skills, which were part of their bodies, their god was internal to them. A religion that endowed them with a jaṅgama līṅga, a mobile god, could perfectly symbolize their aspirations.<sup>57</sup>

Narayana Rao also contrasts the above-described motility with the predilection to temple worship attributed to land-oriented castes, castes that are generally absent from the *Basava Purāṇamu*.<sup>58</sup> Although the figures that populate the relevant stories in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* share the occupational background of those of the *Basava Purāṇamu*, the author of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is not invested in undermining temple worship or even the Brahmanical control over the temple; such elements are completely missing from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. As discussed earlier, this text is not as conclusive as the later tradition—and

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the *Dikṣābodhē* (vv. 1.437-44 in Padmarasa 1972: 24-25), which is roughly contemporaneous to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* (section 7.3 above).

<sup>56</sup> The metaphysical intimacy with Śiva through the practice of *līṅgadhāraṇē* also has ramifications for the relationship between the Bhakta and his god. See section 5.2.3 above.

<sup>57</sup> Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990: 10).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

possibly also the *Basava Purāṇamu*—regarding the superiority of *liṅgadhāraṇē* over *liṅga* worship at the temple.

We start our examination of the practice of carrying a personal *liṅga* with the story of Allama Prabhu. Allama becomes a very central figure for the later tradition but in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* his presence is limited.<sup>59</sup> The *Ragaḷē* dedicated to him is relatively short, counting 446 verses, and is titled the *Prabhudevvara Ragaḷē* (*Prabhu Ragaḷē* henceforth).<sup>60</sup> Here is the summary of the *Prabhu Ragaḷē*:

In Kailāsa, an attendant (Gaṇa) called Nirmāya ("One who is Free from Illusion") is attracted to a maiden named Surasati. Śiva notices their infatuation and tells them: "The two of you shall be born on earth, and there you will culminate your desires." The two gladly conform to Śiva's order. In the city of Baḷḷigāvi, which is a *śaiva* center with many Śaraṇas,<sup>61</sup> Nirmāya is born to two Śivabhaktas. When he first opens his eyes, he immediately glances at the *liṅga*. Sacred butter from the temple of Śiva Gōggeśvara is fed to the baby and his father names him Jagakkē Allayya (the "One who Refuses this World"). He grows as a faithful devotee of Śiva and an attractive young man, of whom the God of Love himself envies. He plays the drum at Śiva Gōggeśvara's temple, and Śiva himself appreciates his music. Surasati is born on earth as Kāmalatē, and she is more beautiful than the heavenly nymphs (Apsaras). Men swarm around her like bees. One day Kāmalatē enters Śiva's temple and when the two see each other, they immediately fall in love. Allama stops his playing and faints. Their friends take both of them to Kāmalatē's house and leave. On a small cot, they make love intensely, beyond any description. When they embrace, they become one. Few years fly by like minutes for the two, until Śiva calls Kāmalatē back to Kailāsa. She become ill on earth, suffers great pain, and passes away. Allama loses his world, like a calf who cannot find its mother. His sadness overwhelms him, so he roams outside of the

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<sup>59</sup> Compare with Allama's central role in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *Śūnyasampādanē* in Michael (1992). For critical studies about the figure of Allama in the history of pre-modern Kannada literature, see Nāgarāj (1999, Knn), Vṛṣabhendrasvāmi (1978, Knn).

<sup>60</sup> Allama is also briefly mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē*. See section 8.1.4 below.

<sup>61</sup> An epigraphical study about Baḷḷigāvi during the eleventh to twelfth centuries by S. Settar (2000) supports the claim that this was a major and vibrant center for Śaivism (as well as for other religions), particularly for the *śaiva* sect of the Lākuḷīśa-Kāḷāmukhas (p. 69).

city, until he reaches a flower garden. There, he sits down and cries, until his foot touches something in the sand, and Allama notices a glitter. It is the vertex of a golden shrine. Allama, amazed, goes to the city's palace and tells the local king what he has found. The king comes to the garden with his attendants, and after they dig and clear away the sand, a complete Śiva temple is revealed to them. The king asks for a volunteer to open the temple's doors and enter its darkness, but no one responds, except Allama, who has nothing to lose. All the people praise Allama as a man guided by a divine purpose (Kāraṇika<sup>62</sup>). He prays to Śiva and enters the dark temple, leaving the world behind him. Inside, seated at the feet of the *liṅga*, is a person named Animiṣa (literally, the “Unblinking One”). A glow is radiating from his face. He holds in his left palm a *liṅga* and stares at it without blinking his eyes. His whole body is worship (*pūjē*) for the *liṅga*. Allama's mind receives Śiva's knowledge and he starts praising his Guru Animiṣa who abides in liberation (*mokṣa*): “You are a Śiva Yogi, capturing the sight of the *liṅga* ceaselessly.” Animiṣa sees Allama, and in that moment passes the *liṅga* from his own hand to Allama's. Then, leaving his body, he becomes one with the *liṅga* (*liṅgaikya*<sup>63</sup>). In Allama's mind, love sprouts toward the *liṅga*, and he prays to Śiva Gōggeśvara. After he finishes his prayers, he comes out of the temple and starts walking to wherever the *liṅga* in his hand takes him. When the city's people see Allama, they say: “The love he had for Kāmalatē is now aimed at Śiva. He has so much *śivabhakti*, all thanks for his realization of the *liṅga*. He is beyond body and senses; he is the supreme spirit (*parabarhman*<sup>64</sup>).” In this manner, Allama roams continually, not knowing where he is going, not knowing who is the servant and who is the lord. When he reaches the thick forest, all the forest animals and plants impart love and affection upon him. Tigers, deer, snakes, and mongooses see Allama and say: “He is an incarnation (*avatāra*) of Śiva. His hand is the royal seat for the *liṅga*.” Allama bathes the *liṅga* with his eye glances. His breath is the incense. His soul is the worship lamp. Allama reaches the ultimate joy while worshipping Śiva with his eyes only. He lives in tree cavities, in mountain caves, on river banks, and under shades of trees. On one occasion, Allama meets Basavaṅṅa and shows him the *śivaliṅga*.<sup>65</sup> He then visits Sonnaligē, meets Siddharāma, and teaches him about this corrupted age

<sup>62</sup> See discussions about this term in sections 2.3.1 and 5.2.1 above.

<sup>63</sup> *Liṅgaikya* is defined in the *Vīraśaiva Lexicon for Technical Terms* (*Vīraśaiva Pāribhāṣika Padakośa*, 2000) as “a state in which there is no difference between *liṅga* [Śiva] and *aṅga* [Bhakta]” (p. 470 s.v. *liṅgaikya* 1).

<sup>64</sup> See Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 587 s.v. *parabrahman*).

<sup>65</sup> The location of their meeting is not given in this text, and later traditions place it at Kalyāṅa. See section 8.1.4 below for another reference to this encounter in the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē*.

(*kaliyuga*).<sup>66</sup> Siddharāma advises Allama to head to Śrīśailam,<sup>67</sup> and Allama sets on his way. There, he finds snakes with hands and legs, talking trees, walking plants, animals with eight faces, singing creepers, winged elephants, and more fantastic sights. He meets Bhairava (a form of Śiva), who recognizing that Allama is guided by divine purpose (*Kāraṇika*) and shows him the trail that leads to Śiva's abode. Allama walks that path, and after overcoming many dangers, such as a river of fire and poisonous wind, he finally reaches Kailāsa. There, he sees many gods and divine beings stand in line in order to meet Śiva. But when Śiva sees Allama, he calls him to pass the line and come directly to him. Allama, without removing his eyes from the *liṅga* in his hand, approaches Śiva. Since he cannot prostrate while holing the *liṅga*, he only touches Śiva's feet. Śiva asks him about his *liṅga*, and Allama tells his happenings. Allama gets back his heavenly name *Nirmāya* and also his divine status. Radiating like this, he resembles to Śiva himself.

Allama's story is instructive for our purposes, and there is some sense in examining it right after Bhogaṇṇa's, since it exhibits a more progressive attitude toward *liṅgadhāraṇē* compared with the previous story. Whereas in the previous story the *liṅgas* were returned to the city—a narrative gesture of containing both temple worship and *liṅga* worship—in this story, the sand-covered temple (a possible suggestion for the outmoded significance of the temple) serves only as a point of departure for the Śaraṇa's physical and spiritual journey. After leaving the temple, Allama and his *liṅga* never return to it but continue to roam without a clear sense of direction. This open-endedness wandering is symbolic of the religious ideal that Allama embodies. Allama's epithets in this *Ragaḷē*, “Jagakkē Allayya” (the “One who Refuses this World”) and “Nirmāya” (the “One who is Free from Illusion”<sup>68</sup>), attest to his uncompromising and distinct religious vision among the cadre of Śaraṇas.<sup>69</sup> Allama's

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<sup>66</sup> See sections 5.2.2 and 8.1.1 for other references to Siddharāma in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

<sup>67</sup> Śrīśailam is an ancient *śaiva* center located in today's Andhra Pradesh. See section 1.1.4 above.

<sup>68</sup> See Kittel (1982: 879 s.v. *nirmāya*). Compare with Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 541 s.v. *nirmāya*).

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, discussions in Ramanujan (1973).

image as an extreme mystic is ubiquitous in all the later Vīraśaiva Purāṇas and is reflected in many of the Vacanas that are attributed to him. Nonetheless, there are several significant differences between Harihara's portrayal of Allama and that of the later Purāṇas: in Harihara, Allama's intense mysticism is reflected by his reticence and, fittingly, we find no references in the text to his Vacanas.<sup>70</sup> Conversely, in the later Purāṇas Allama's mysticism is communicated by his verbosity, foremostly expressed by the activity of composing Vacanas but also by dialogue and preaching.<sup>71</sup> It is difficult to explain the chasm between Allama's depictions in Harihara and in later texts. It is possible that Harihara was not familiar with the Vacana tradition attributed to Allama or, alternatively, that this tradition developed only at a later time. In any case, by the fifteenth century Allama's depiction is considerably more developed, as he is attributed with thousands of Vacanas and becomes the most central twelfth-century Bhakta figure for the Viraktas.<sup>72</sup>

As just noted, Allama's mysticism is enacted in the *Allama Ragaḷe* through his religious observance of continuously staring at the *liṅga* in his left palm, which is an intensified modus of *liṅgadhāraṇe* or the carrying of personal *liṅga*. The text is highly invested in this practice: Allama's Guru Animiṣa is described as holding the *liṅga* in his left palm, and his departure from his personal *liṅga* also marks his passing away; throughout the rest of the *Ragaḷe*, Allama's focus on his *liṅga* is so totalistic that it becomes his only conscious activity. This tenacity reaches a point of theological absurdum when Allama meets Śiva in Kailāsa: even at this climatic moment—the

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<sup>70</sup> This is in contrast to the *Ragaḷe*s of Mahādeviyakka and Basavaṇṇa, in which we do find several allusions to their Vacanas.

<sup>71</sup> The two obvious examples are the *Prabhuliṅgalilē* and the *Śūnyasampādanē*. On the developed figure of Allama by the later tradition, see Basavarāju (2001 [1960]: 42-52, Knn).

<sup>72</sup> Chandra Shobhi (2005: 195-207).



utopian and intimate encounter with the true and heavenly manifestation of the god—Allama refuses to remove his eyes from the *liṅga* in order to see him. He even refrains from prostrating to Śiva, a practice that permeates many of the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* stories as a mark for devotional self-surrender.<sup>73</sup> There is a repeated claim by later sources that Allama is, in fact, an incarnation of Śiva (in contrast to Basavaṅṅa, who is considered as an incarnation of Nandi, Śiva’s bull), and this claim is also explicitly made several times by the author of the *Allama Ragaḷe*. But Allama’s carrying of the *liṅga* in his hand also communicates a certain degree of the Bhakta’s independence as well as his control over the god.<sup>74</sup>

The practice of *liṅgadhāraṅe*, as described in the *Allama Ragaḷe*, is the Bhakta’s central worship arena of the god. The adept’s body become a metaphor for the worship itself in the text: Animiṣa’s body is the *pūjē* (worship) for the *liṅga*; Allama’s hand is a royal seat (*siṁhāsana*) for the *liṅga*; he performs ablution (*abhiṣeka*) to the *liṅga* with his eye glances; his breath is the incense (*dhūpa*); and Allama’s soul is the worship lamp (*dīpa*). This detailed metaphorization of the body as a temple—Basavaṅṅa’s central motif in the *Vacana* discussed in the previous section—is repeated almost verbatim in the second chapter of the *Keśirāja Daṅṅāyakara Ragaḷe*, in the *Vaijakavvēya Ragaḷe*, and in the fifth chapter of the *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷe*, in which Mahādeviyakka is described worshipping the *liṅga* with her body and her mind. In addition to the repeated juxtaposition of worship elements and body parts, in all these descriptions we find a stress on the living and dynamics parts of the adept’s body, such as breath, glances, and moving hands; again similarly to Basavaṅṅa’s *Vacana*, this attention to the act of

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<sup>73</sup> See, for example, King Pērmāḡirāya’s prostration to Keśirāja as an acknowledgement of the latter’s spiritual superiority, narrated in section 8.1.1 below.

<sup>74</sup> See section 5.2.3 above.

worshipping as a living organism involves the principle of *jaṅgama*. A special attention is also given in these narrative moments to the Bhakta's mind, which is always central to the worship process: the Bhakta is intensely concentrated in ritual action, and his or her attention to the practice servers as a bridge between the Bhakta's devotional interiority and the external performance of the ritual.

From a broader perspective, Allama's final departure from the temple is emblematic for setting apart the Kannada tradition from the Tamil by introducing *liṅgadhāraṇē* as a soteriological religious practice and as a new addition to temple worship. Historically, *liṅgadhāraṇē* appear to have been practiced in the Kannada-speaking regions by orthodox *śaiva* sects such as the Kālāmukhas already before the twelfth century.<sup>75</sup> Balligāvi, Allama's city of birth according to Harihara, was during the twelfth century an important Kālāmukha center,<sup>76</sup> and it is possible that Allama (literally) carried this practice both metaphorically as well as literally from the southern region of Balligāvi to the emerging Śaraṇa culture in the northern regions of Maṅgalavāḍa, Kalyāṇa, and others as well.<sup>77</sup>

### 7.3 *Dīkṣē*: Initiation

Initiation has been central for the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition throughout its

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<sup>75</sup> Narasimhācār (2005 [1971]-a: 110n1, Knn), Chidananda Murthy (1983: 205n4), Desai (1968: 382-83).

<sup>76</sup> See footnote 61 above.

<sup>77</sup> This is explicitly stated in the *Allama Ragaḷē*, in the brief episode of Allama's meeting with Basavaṇṇa. Mahādeviyakka, who comes from the same region as Allama, is also described in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as worshipping the *liṅga* in her left hand (sections 6.1.1 and 9.3.3). However, Keśirāja, who according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* predated these Śaraṇas and lived nearer to Kalyāṇa, is also described in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as worshipping a personal *liṅga* (section 5.2.2 above). In several places in the *Basava Ragaḷē* we find references to worship of personal *liṅga*. In fourth chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, when Basavaṇṇa is initiated by Nandi before leaving for Maṅgalavāḍa, he received a *liṅga* into his hand. In the ninth chapter, he turns small eggplants maliciously placed in golden *liṅga* cases (*kaṛaḍigē*) by non-Śaivas into real *liṅgas* and by this generates *śivabhakti* in the hearts of these people (section 7.1.2 above).

history till contemporary times.<sup>78</sup> Initiation (*dīkṣē*) can be described as a ceremonial engagement between the priest and the devotee after which the latter is considered a Śiva's Bhakta.<sup>79</sup> The prevalence of initiation scenes in the narratives of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, coupled with the existence of a Kannada work titled *Dīkṣābodhē* ("Instruction on Initiation") roughly contemporaneous to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, attests to the centrality of this ceremony for the Śaraṇas tradition of the Kannada-regions already in the early thirteenth century, and possibly earlier as well.<sup>80</sup> The *Dīkṣābodhē*, written by Harihara's associate Padmarasa, is a unique and significant work both for its form and its content, which elaborate upon the śaiva initiation ceremony. As I discuss initiation in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, I will refer at times to the more doctrinal presentation of this ceremony in the *Dīkṣābodhē* as relevant background.

Initiations in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories about the Kannaḍiga Śaraṇas appear in two modes, orthopraxical or standard, and omni-praxical or non-standard. Standard initiation in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is an initiation which is normative and formal. It is conducted by a human Guru and performed soon after the Bhakta's birth, and is usually described in very few lines in the text. We find several such standard initiations, for example in the cases of Kallayya and Mahādeviyakka. Basavaṇṇa himself is described initiating masses of people who flock to Maṅgaḷavāḍa to participate in the forming community,<sup>81</sup> despite the fact he is not a Guru in any formal sense.

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<sup>78</sup> McCormack (1973: 179-80) provides details about the general stages of the initiation ceremony as it is conducted in modern times.

<sup>79</sup> Another term, which appears in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* oftentimes side by side to *dīkṣē*, is *upadeśa*. This term usually denotes a more specific sense of teaching the Five-Syllable Mantra (*pañcākṣari*) than complete initiation. The entries of these two terms in the *Vīraśaiva Lexicon for Technical Terms (Vīraśaiva Pāribhāṣika Padakośa*, 2000: 98 s.v. *upadeśa*, 251 s.v. *dīkṣē*, Knn) attest to their connectedness.

<sup>80</sup> See section 1.2.1 above.

<sup>81</sup> *Basava Ragaḷē* 9.71-90 in Harihara (1999: 325).

The initiations referred to above are “standard” in the sense that they involve a non-fantastic execution of a preplanned set of actions. As much as these initiations are celebrated by the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, they are clearly secondary in this text to less-orthodox initiations. By “less-orthodox” I mean that non-standard initiations are spontaneous, involve divine agency, and deviate from formal prescriptions. Similarly to other omnipraxes in the text, non-standard initiations are described in great detail, using an exceptionally emotive language. In addition, they always appear at crucial moments in the plot. There are several episodes in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* that involve non-standard initiations: Vaijakavvē, a female Bhakta without any formal indoctrination as a Guru, spontaneously initiates her *jaina* husband after a dramatic domestic quarrel and a temple conversion;<sup>82</sup> Allama is nominally initiated by a silent ascetic called Animiṣa who passes to Allama his own *iṣṭaliṅga* and immediately passes away.<sup>83</sup> Basavaṇṇa’s initiation is no-less quixotic: it is performed right before Basavaṇṇa’s departure from Kappaḍi and involuntary separation from his chosen deity Śiva Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva. Basavaṇṇa is forced to leave his deity because Śiva orders him so in a dream, and the initiation is performed at Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva temple by Śiva’s bull Nandi in order to strengthen the demoralized Basavaṇṇa.<sup>84</sup>

The initiation of Śaṅkaradāsimayya, in the first chapter of the *Śaṅkaradāsimayyana Ragaḷē* (*Śaṅkara Ragaḷē* henceforth) summarized below, follows the abovementioned guidelines: it is spontaneous, contains supernatural elements, and pivotal in the plot progression:

[1] There is a beautiful city named Kandaśilē, in which lives a good Brahmin

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<sup>82</sup> See sections 6.1.2 and 9.3.2.

<sup>83</sup> See section 7.2.4 above.

<sup>84</sup> See section 5.2.2 above.

named Govindadeva together with his wife Ammavvė. Govindadeva has a family and occupation but lives in complete renunciation from all worldly desires (*vairāgya*<sup>85</sup>). One day, he decides to go on a pilgrimage (*pun̄yapatha*) to Varanasi. First, he sets out to a place called Navilė to visit the local temple of Śiva Jėđėya Śaṅkaradeva. Many people are in the temple, worshipping Śiva according to the Āgamas and telling Purāṇic stories about him. Seeing this richness, Govindadeva decides that instead of going to Varanasi he should stay here. He starts visiting the temple regularly, losing himself in the experience of Bhakti. He tells Śiva: “You are my Varanasi, my land of the gods!” Govindadeva visits Śiva’s temple on a daily basis, no matter weather, and his mind remembers Śiva ceaselessly. Seeing this, Śiva decides to appear in Govindadeva’s dream one night and invite him to Mayūrapura, a larger śaiva center, for a mantra initiation (*upadeśa*). When Govindadeva appears in that temple, Śiva orders him to purify himself the following day, before the initiation. Govindadeva responds: “In the initiation, when you place your hand upon my hand, please give me a third eye on the forehead,” and Śiva agrees. The next day, Govindadeva appears at the temple grounds with his body smeared with holy ash (*bhasma*). Śiva Jėđėya Śaṅkaradeva comes out of the *liṅga*, in his true appearance. Then, Śiva—the eternal Guru, the auspicious Guru, the one Guru of the whole world, the true Guru, the innate Guru, the supreme Guru of the ultimate<sup>86</sup>—places his hand over his Bhakta, whose body becomes the Five-Syllable Mantra (*pañcākṣari*). During the mantra initiation (*upadeśa*), Śiva imparts to Govindadeva the sublime knowledge (*unnatajñāna*). Then, he touches Govindadeva’s forehead with his own forehead, giving the Bhakta the pure sight of the third eye. A new feeling of śivabhakti grows inside Govindadeva, coming through the eye given by Kaṇṇappa.<sup>87</sup> Śiva and Govindadeva are united. It is as if Śiva is recreated as his own son, and the Śaraṇa receives the divine knowledge and light. Govindadeva is curious to see what his third eye can do, so he opens its eye-lash. It is a lightning thunder, a huge fire erupts from the eye and burns down a statue of Viṣṇu. Then, it burns

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<sup>85</sup> See discussions about this concept in section 5.2.2 above.

<sup>86</sup> Śaṅkara Ragaḷė 1.139-130 in Harihara (1999: 279):

*nityaguru śāntaguru sakalalokaika guru*  
*satyaguru nijada guru uttamada paramaguru*

<sup>87</sup> Kaṇṇappa is a famous Śivabhakta in south India, a forest hunter celebrated for plucking his own eye and giving it to the *liṅga*. His story is told in the Tamil *Pėriya Purāṇam* (Cekkiḷār and McGlashan 2006: 73-89, Cox 2005, Monius 2004a). Harihara dedicates a Ragaḷė to him, called *Kaṇṇappana Ragaḷė* (Harihara 1999: 43-52).

Brahmā's statue, which breaks worn to pieces. In this manner, the thirty-three statues of the gods are burnt down completely. Then, the statues of the seven Kṛttikās and the eight Vasus are also burnt. All the temple's statues, except Śiva's, are burnt to the ground by the fire emitted from Govindadeva's third eye. When the fire starts spreading outside the temple, Śiva says to Govindadeva: "My child, what are you doing? If you continue, the whole world will be burnt! Please stop!" Govindadeva rests his fiery eye against the body of Nandi, and the fire is extinguished. Then, Govindadeva approaches Śiva and asks for a new name for him and his wife. Śiva hugs him and declares him to be called from this moment onward Śaṅkaradāsimayya and his wife Śivadāsi (both literally denote "Śiva's servant"). Then, Śiva reenters the temple's *liṅga*, and Śaṅkaradāsimayya, the scorching fire of Śiva, stays to live in Mayūrapura.

Śaṅkaradāsimayya's initiation in the first chapter of this *Ragaḷe* is the most significant incident in the whole story; from here onward, Śaṅkaradāsimayya will wander from one place to another and use his third eye as a physical proof for him being Śiva's embodiment.<sup>88</sup> In this scene, the author repeatedly invokes technical terms such as *upadeśa*, *guru*, and *pañcākṣari* in a way that does not leave room for doubt that this is an initiation ceremony. The framework of Śaṅkaradāsimayya's initiation is similar to standard ones: the adept is found by his Guru to be worthy of the *śaiva* initiation due to his intense belief in Śiva and tenacious worship of him. In addition, the Guru performs the initiation by placing his hands over the adept's head and chanting the Five-Syllable Mantra (*pañcākṣari*<sup>89</sup>). The adept receives a new name, a *liṅga* (in the form of Śiva's third eye), and spiritual knowledge. He is formally transformed into a Śivabhakta. The *Śaṅkara Ragaḷe* is faithful to this line of description, but there are also non-standard elements to the initiation narrated here: Śiva himself is the Guru; Śaṅkaradāsimayya's body is claimed by the text to be the Five-Syllable Mantra; the

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<sup>88</sup> See section 5.2.1 above.

<sup>89</sup> The mantra is *om namaḥ śivāya* ("Praise to Śiva, om"). See section 8.1.1 below.

*iṣṭalinga* transferred to the adept is actually Śiva's third eye. The fantastic elements of the initiation maximize the representational value of each of its parts in order to communicate an exceptionally intense experience from the literary figure of Śaṅkaradāsimayya onto the immediate audience of the text. As in previous cases surveyed in this chapter, ritual here is not replaced by intense emotion, but is underwritten by it. An indication for this intensity is the literalization of all the metaphoric descriptions found in the *Dīkṣābodhē* about standard initiation: for example, where the *Dīkṣābodhē* contains a statement that every *śaiva* Guru is actually Śiva, the *Śaṅkara Ragaḷē* depicts Śiva as the actual Guru. Śaṅkaradāsimayya's initiation in the *Śaṅkara Ragaḷē* is the ultimate initiation possible, for it almost completely annuls the gap between the god and the devotee by physically transforming the latter into a metonym of the former. At the same time, this absolutization of the non-standard initiation undermines the more standardized forms in this text.<sup>90</sup>

Śiva's explicit taking on of the role of Guru in Śaṅkaradāsimayya's initiation in this scene merits attention. At a general level, the figure of the human Guru does not occupy a central place in the stories of the Ragaḷēs about Kannaḍiga Śaraṇas. None of the Śaraṇas, with the single exception of Kallayya, has a Guru to guide him on the spiritual path, and none of the Śaraṇas, with the single exception of Revaṇasiddha, is described as a proper Guru that gives spiritual services to a particular communities or people. Harihara's near-silence about the institution of the human Guru might be explained by this text's enhanced focus on saints; such spiritually perfected figures do not require the spiritual guidance of a Guru. In addition, Harihara's preference for

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<sup>90</sup> M. Chidananda Murthy affirms the subverting potential in Harihara's descriptions of unorthodox initiations, in which the adept is "[t]aking for oneself the *linga-diksha* [*sic.*] in a temple" (Chidananda Murthy 1983: 205n2).

personal and inner devotional moods over formalized religious institutions also undermines the significance of a formal Guru.<sup>91</sup>

Kallayya, who is the only Śaraṇa in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* assigned with a Guru (three actually)<sup>92</sup> is also an exceptionally insecure and conflicted figure among the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* Śaraṇas, and this fact explains why Gurus are so central in the story about him.<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, the only Śaraṇa in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* who is described as a Guru of Śivabhaktas is Revaṇasiddha, who is a liminal figure in the Kannada śaiva landscape, connected more directly with the Tamil tradition. The exceptionality of these two figures—Kallayya and Revaṇasiddha—supports the postulation made above about the relatively minor role of the institution of Guru in this text. As already stated, the figure of the Guru is central in the *Dīkṣābodhē*. This work is structured as a dialog between the Guru and the initiated, the former elucidates to the latter the core ethics and practices of the śaiva faith. In addition, throughout the first chapter (*sthala*) of the *Dīkṣābodhē* there are numerous imperatives and assertions meant to establish the Guru's absolute authority and his infallibility.<sup>94</sup> The difference between the two texts with regard to this matter is significant. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* does associate the Guru with the initiation ceremony but not much beyond that; the normative and institutionalized role for the Guru that is carved by the *Dīkṣābodhē* is almost completely absent from the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. The reason for this absence in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* might be the inherent tension between personal modes of devotion, which are the central focus of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and the institutionalizing role of

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<sup>91</sup> The depiction of Allama by the Vīraśaiva Purāṇas from the fifteenth century onwards as a spiritual guide to the Kalyāṇa community does not correspond in this regard from his portrayal in the early thirteenth-century *Prabhudevara Ragaḷē* (footnote 71 above). This difference is emblematic of the institutionalization process that this movement went through during this period.

<sup>92</sup> Revaṇasiddha, Rudradeva, and Siddharāma.

<sup>93</sup> See section 5.1.2 above.

<sup>94</sup> Padmarasa (1972: xvi-xviii; 3-57, Knn).



the Guru.

#### 7.4 *Goṣṭhis: Śiva Assemblies and Discourses*

A central physical space for the Bhaktas' communal gathering is the assembly (*goṣṭhi*). At the assembly, Śivabhaktas from different places—some are local, some are pilgrims, and some are ascetic wanderers—meet, worship Śiva together, and exchange stories and songs. Thus, assemblies serve both as a ritualistic setting and a discursive environment. This duality is made apparent in the denotations to the word *goṣṭhi*, which means in Kannada both “assembly” and “discourse.”<sup>95</sup> Significantly, in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* the two meanings of *goṣṭhi* converged, for the assembly of Bhaktas always engages with discursive communication about Śiva. In the first part of this study, I considered external references to the activity of *goṣṭhi*,<sup>96</sup> and in this section I discuss the institution of *śivagoṣṭhi* as it is portrayed in Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

It appears that the status of *goṣṭhi* was already canonical in the times of Harihara, for—in addition to numerous references to it in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—it also appears in the coeval *Dikṣābodhē*.<sup>97</sup> However, the term *anubhava maṅṭapa*, which becomes a central component in the *vīraśaiva* public memory of the twelfth-century *śivabhakti* community from the fifteenth century onward, is not even mentioned in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. According to the later *Vīraśaiva Purāṇas*, the *anubhava maṅṭapa* was a gathering place of the Kalyāṇa Śaivas under the leadership of Basavaṅṅa. It is described as a place in which the Bhaktas met, discussed, and debated theological issues, composed and recited *Vacanas*, and told stories about Bhaktas to each other.<sup>98</sup> It is

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<sup>95</sup> Kittel (1982: 573 s.v. *goṣṭhi* 1, 2).

<sup>96</sup> See section 1.1.4 above.

<sup>97</sup> See *Dikṣābodhē* 1.17.

<sup>98</sup> See description in Chandra Shobhi (2005: 156, 286-87), Ramanujan (1973: 64, 144-45), and mentioning of

unclear if there was, in fact, an institution in twelfth-century Kalyāṇa called *anubhava maṇṭapa*, since this term is completely absent from contemporaneous epigraphy and literature. The following passage by P. B. Desai conveys the problematics involved in the usage of the term *anubhava maṇṭapa* for describing the twelfth-century Kalyāṇa community:

Now the question remains whether the imposing edifice of Anubhava Maṇṭapa ... was actually established and existed in the time of Basaveśvara himself. Taking a rational view of the matter, we have to concede the historicity of this institution which came into being in the form of a firm nucleus in the time of Basaveśvara. It is obvious that the later writers endowed with poetic fancy and philosophical metaphor, glorified it by adding colourful details and embellishments, as it often happens. Can one deny the existence of the child simply because it assumes transformed features as an adult?<sup>99</sup>

Despite Desai's apparent conviction that the institute called *anubhava maṇṭapa* did exist during the twelfth century, it is difficult to overlook his admittance in this passage that a historical apprehension of the form and nature of the *anubhava maṇṭapa* is beyond reach. At the same time, the thickness of detail and description of *goṣṭhis* in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—down to the level of specific food items and decorations of the main stage—strongly suggests that such an institution was an integral part of the communal activities of this tradition already during its earliest stages. The genealogical connection within this literary culture between *goṣṭhi* in the early texts and the later claims about the *anubhava maṇṭapa* is made evident by the term *anubhava goṣṭhi*, which is used side by side with *anubhava maṇṭapa* in some of the later texts.<sup>100</sup>

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the *anubhava maṇṭapa* in the *Śūnyasampādanē* as discussed in Michael (1992: 28, 53).

<sup>99</sup> Desai (1968: 272).

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, in *Śivatattvacintāmaṇi* 1.10 (Basavarāju 2001 [1960]: 36n1, Knn).

#### 7.4.1 A NEW LOCUS FOR WORSHIP

In the following story from the *Basava Ragaḷē*, Harihara describes a *goṣṭhi* that Basavaṇṇa conducts in his house, together with fellow Bhaktas. It differs from the descriptions about the *anubhava maṅṭapa* in later texts in that it takes place in Basavaṇṇa's house in Maṅḡalavāḍa and not in a public space in Kalyāṇa.<sup>101</sup> It is also described as more spontaneous and less organized compared with the institution called *anubhava maṅṭapa* in the later sources. The spontaneous nature of *goṣṭhi* is repeated in other *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories as well. The following summary is taken from the first part of the sixth chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē*:<sup>102</sup>

[6] After Basavaṇṇa is made chief treasurer to King Bijjaḷa, he marries Gaṅgādevi and Māyidevi. Few days later, after performing the morning ritual to his personal *liṅga* (*iṣṭaliṅga*<sup>103</sup>), Basavaṇṇa goes to Bijjaḷa's palace on a great procession and enters the hall, where he is given a seat equal to that of the king. The court is bustling with people of different sorts and from different places, and Basavaṇṇa starts to collect royal taxes from local rulers of different regions. He takes their gold, precious stones, and other commodities and deposits everything in the treasury. When midday arrives, Basavaṇṇa discusses few matters with Bijjaḷa and then turns to return to his home. On his way there, Basavaṇṇa comes across a large crowd of Bhaktas who arrived to the city specially in order to see him. Seeing them, Basavaṇṇa steps down from his chariot and prostrates at their feet. Then, he invites them to his home, where he washes their feet, and they all perform a ritual (*arcanē*) for the *liṅga*. After its conclusion, they start a discourse (*goṣṭhi*) dedicated to Purāṭanas' songs (*gītē*), and they relish on the waves of aesthetic pleasure (*rasatarāṅgiṇi*) that emanate until the next morning. At that point, Basavaṇṇa, ecstatic and blissful, proclaims: "Lord of lords! In this *goṣṭhi* I have reached the joy of Śiva's festival (*śivarātri*), and I never want it to cease. I now take a vow (*nema*<sup>104</sup>) to continue

<sup>101</sup> See section 8.1.4 below.

<sup>102</sup> Chapters four and five of the *Basava Ragaḷē* are summarized in section 8.1.3 below.

<sup>103</sup> See section 7.2.4 above.

<sup>104</sup> See section 7.1.1 above.

having *śivagoṣṭhi* forever.”<sup>105</sup>

Basavaṇṇa’s day of work starts at the king’s court, where he is engaged in collecting tax. On his way home, he meets fellow Śivabhaktas, and they all go to his home to conduct a *goṣṭhi*, after which Basavaṇṇa vows to continue having such events for the rest of his life. The two spaces—the court and the Basavaṇṇa’s house—are the only two narrative settings in all the chapters about Basavaṇṇa political career in this Ragaḷē, and each has an important role for the establishing of the Bhaktas’ community in Maṅgaḷavāḍa under the leadership of Basavaṇṇa: the court is the arena in which Basavaṇṇa provides for his community political support and resources;<sup>106</sup> his house is the arena in which Basavaṇṇa supports the community in terms of shared religious experiences. Both the court and Basavaṇṇa’s house are public spaces: the court is naturally so, being an arena for political transactions; Basavaṇṇa’s house is made public by Basavaṇṇa’s insistence to share it with any Bhakta who wishes so.<sup>107</sup> At the court, Basavaṇṇa functions as an administrator, and his conduct in this environment is mechanical, revolving around the mechanical collection of taxed commodities and their deposit at the empire’s treasury; in sharp contrast, in the company of fellow Śaraṇas during the *śivagoṣṭhi* at his own house, Basavaṇṇa is described as inspired and

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<sup>105</sup> The story deviates at this point from the assembly descriptions to narrate a miracle done by Basavaṇṇa at Bijjaḷa’s court. For summary and discussion of this portion of the sixth chapter, see section 7.1.2 above.

<sup>106</sup> The role and significance of the court for the formation of the Bhaktas’ community is discussed in section 8.1 below.

<sup>107</sup> Harihara uses a particular term—“great house” (*mahāmanē*)—to describe a house of a wealthy Śaraṇa that is used as a gathering place for Śivabhaktas. Basavaṇṇa’s private palace in Maṅgaḷavāḍa is oftentimes referred to in the *Basava Ragaḷē* as *mahāmanē*, and this term is used in other Ragaḷēs as well (e.g., the *Keśirāja Daṇṇāyakara Ragaḷē*). *Mahāmanē* is defined by the *Vīraśaiva Lexicon for Technical Terms* (*Vīraśaiva Pāribhāṣika Padakośa*, 2000, Knn) as: “A place in which Śivabhaktas connect with Śaraṇas for the purpose of self-surrender, worship, and mystical experiences” (p. 413 s.v. *mahāmanē* 1). Ēm. Ēm. Kalaburgi writes that a Śaraṇa’s house is called a *mahāmanē* (2010 [1998]-a: 144, Knn).

even ecstatic. The vow he declares to continue conducting and sponsoring *goṣṭhi* is not negligible: from this moment in the story, Basavaṇṇa's commitment to the Śaraṇas outgrows his commitment to his administrative career at Bijjaḷa's court and also damages his personal relationship with King Bijjaḷa.<sup>108</sup> By the end of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, Basavaṇṇa's adherence to the *goṣṭhi* praxis is so great that, when he invited by Śiva to join him in Kailāsa, Basavaṇṇa declines the godly offer by asking: "Does Kailāsa entertain *goṣṭhis* as the one we have here? If not, I would rather stay!"<sup>109</sup> In short, *goṣṭhi* is marked in the *Basava Ragaḷē* as a major event in the biography of its protagonist and in the life of the Kalyāṇa śivabhakti community in general.

The presentation of the Śiva assembly in the seventh chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē* as a collective event of an ecstatic nature is not exceptional in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. In several *Ragaḷēs*, Harihara presents the *goṣṭhi* as the central arena for producing collective devotional experience.<sup>110</sup> In these stories, the Śiva assembly serves as a new locus for experiencing and expressing in public the Bhaktas' devotion to Śiva. It is a spatial alternative to the temple, an intimate space in which the community of Bhaktas can practice spontaneous forms of worship regardless of formalities or social differences. Earlier in the chapter, we observed how the temple, as described in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, loses its primacy in favor of a more personal, *liṅga*-based forms of worship. The Śiva assembly provides the organizational as well as physical space for *liṅga*

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<sup>108</sup> In the story that immediately follows, in the second part of chapter six, Bijjaḷa is exposed for the first time to Basavaṇṇa's religiosity at the court (section 7.1.2 above). Despite Harihara's statement at the end of that incident that Bijjaḷa admires Basavaṇṇa, this incident marks the beginning of their fallout, which is discussed in details in sections 8.1.3 and 8.1.4 below.

<sup>109</sup> This is an abridged translation of *Basava Ragaḷē* 13.31-36 in (Harihara 1999: 335). The scene is discussed in section 5.2.3 above.

<sup>110</sup> In addition to the *Basava Ragaḷē*, descriptions and references to *goṣṭhis* can be found in the *Keśirāja Daṇṇāyakara Ragaḷē*, *Kovūra Bōmmittandēya Ragaḷē*, *Tēlugu Jōmmayyana Ragaḷē*, *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷē*, *Śaṅkaradāsīmāyana Ragaḷē*, and *Revaṇasiddheśvarana Ragaḷē*.

worship to partake on a supra-personal, communal level.

The *goṣṭhis* described in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are a complex and ongoing public event. It is massive in nature, described as taking place for long periods of times: in the second chapter of the *Keśirāja Ragaḷē*, Harihara describes a *goṣṭhi* that takes place continuously for over seven days, without stopping for sleep.<sup>111</sup> Significantly, the communal experience at the *goṣṭhi* goes beyond strictly worship. A central activity that is repeatedly described as integral to the *goṣṭhis* in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is the performance of songs and stories by and about famous Bhaktas, which I discuss in detail below. In addition to publically worshipping and narrating the experience of devotion, some *Ragaḷēs* also emphasize the role of ritualized food, termed *bona*, in these assemblies.<sup>112</sup> In traditional, Brahmanical-based society, commensality is a charged arena in terms of purity practices and social exclusion of society's lower strati, and the *goṣṭhi* experience of sharing food is constructed in the narrative to prescribe the complete opposite.<sup>113</sup> Special dishes, mostly curries and sweets, are described in text in great detail, stressing the superb ingredients and magnanimous quantities.<sup>114</sup> In the texts, sustaining such grandiose events required considerable collective organization and resources; the Bhaktas' excessive demands in the seventh chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, coupled with Basavaṅṅa unconditioned commitment to fulfill them, conveys this well. It is

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<sup>111</sup> This chapter is summarized and discussed in the introduction and in section 8.1.1.

<sup>112</sup> Food has a central role also in more private encounters between laity and renouncers in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. See sections 9.3.1 and 9.3.2 below.

<sup>113</sup> See discussion in section 6.5 above. See also Novetzke (2008: 18-19) about commensality in general in *bhakti* communities.

<sup>114</sup> In two *Ragaḷēs* about Kannaḍiga Śaraṅas, huge amounts of rice and grain are mentioned with regard to feeding the Bhaktas during a festival for Śiva (*gaṇaparvan*): the *Śaṅkaradāsimayyana Ragaḷē* (section 6.6.2 above) and the *Kovūra Bōmmīandēya Ragaḷē* (section 9.1 below). In both stories, the husking of the legumes is done by spirits (Bhūtas) and village goddesses (Masaṅkabbē and Mārikavvē) who reside at burning grounds (*smaśānas*).

unsurprising that several *Ragaḷeṣ*, including the one dedicated to Basavaṇṇa's life, pickup the theme of funding the Śaraṇas assemblies. We even find suggestions in a few *Ragaḷeṣ* that the participation in court life by some Śaraṇas was motivated by such interests.<sup>115</sup>

Beyond such logistical issues, the Śiva assembly, as described in the *Ragaḷeṣ* dedicated to the Śaraṇas from the Kannada-speaking regions, is a communal setting for Śivabhaktas to experience self-abnegation and mystical elevation. Although ritualized forms of worship are inherent to *goṣṭhis*, the ambit of communal action at the *goṣṭhi* is larger, and the following section focuses on an activity that merits particular attention.

#### 7.4.2 CONSTRUCTING COMMUNAL IDENTITY THROUGH SONGS AND STORIES

Communicating the experience of devotion through verse and prose is not only a defining feature of Harihara's *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu*, but also a popular activity performed by many of the characters in the *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu* stories.<sup>116</sup> Narration and singing permeate the *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu* stories, in various settings and various modes, and the most central of these is the environment of the *goṣṭhi*. In few *Ragaḷeṣ*, the most common and central verbal exchange described when two or more Śaraṇas meet is reciting songs by famous śaiva poets and telling stories about famous Śivabhaktas.

Operating within the communal space of the Śiva assembly, the performance of songs and stories imparts a collective experience that bears, judging by the vocabulary and literary style applied by Harihara, soteriological qualities. The soteriological

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<sup>115</sup> See section 8.1 below.

<sup>116</sup> Harihara, like the author of the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* Pāḷkuriki Somanātha, does not use the term *Vacana* (section 1.2.1 above). The most commonly-used term by Harihara is *gītē* for songs and *gadyapadya* for prose and verse compositions. The latter terms already appear in the *Kavirājamārga*, a highly influencing poetic treaty and the first Kannada text extant today from the ninth century. See verses *Kavirājamārga* 1.23-1.32 in Śrīvijaya (1983: 6-8).

efficacy of *bhakti* narration is conveyed well by the phrase *purātanagītagoṣṭhirasatarāṅgiṇi*, which appears in the Basavaṅṅa story summarized above.<sup>117</sup> This phrase can be translated as “the waves of aesthetic pleasure emanating from the discourse of songs by and about ancient Bhaktas.” The word *rasa* (literally, “liquid”) used in this phrase alludes to the Sanskritic discourse on poetry and connotes an aesthetic relishing on the part of the consumer of the work of art.<sup>118</sup> Different *bhakti* literary cultures make different usages of the term *rasa* within their theologically-bounded discourses, utilizing the soteriological potential that is attributed to *rasa* by the tenth-century polymath Abhinavagupta. Harihara is no different in this regard, and he invokes this term in many locations in the *Ragaḷḷgaḷu*. In the above context, which is Basavaṅṅa’s first *goṣṭhi*, Harihara uses *rasa* in order to describe the participants’ experience of hearing songs by famous Śivabhaktas and the stories about them. Here, the full meaning of *rasa* comes to the fore: on a basic level, it is an aesthetic experience occasioned by a literary device. At the same time, the Bhaktas’ aesthetics of experience, as it is grounded in the religious world of *śivabhakti*, bears a soteriological efficacy that is immanent to that world.

At the end of the *goṣṭhi* in chapter six of the *Basava Ragaḷḷ*, Basavaṅṅa vows to continue conducting such sessions, and indeed another *goṣṭhi* occurs in the concluding passage of chapter nine. Basavaṅṅa is described as taking the new Śaraṅas into his ritual (*pūjḷ*) room, where they all conduct a worship ritual. The section that follows describes how they start to sing new songs (*pōsaḷḷta*) for Śiva.<sup>119</sup> The Śaraṅas are described in this passage expressing in song a wide range of intimate feelings toward

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<sup>117</sup> See section 7.4.1 above.

<sup>118</sup> McCrea (2008).

<sup>119</sup> *Basava Ragaḷḷ* 9.195-210 in Harihara (1999: 326-27).



Śiva, such as affection, love, respect, and also anger. They “cross the boundaries” (*merēgēdē*) through song. They radiate with “single determination” (*ekaniṣṭhē*<sup>120</sup>) to Śiva. They are all joined together as one unit (*śaraṇara samagrave jigilitirē*) in the singing, appearing as the ruin of other divinities (*paradaivaśoṣaṇam torutirē*) and generating fear in their followers (*parasamaya bhīṣaṇam puṇmutirē*). Other descriptions follow until the end of chapter nine, right after which, at the beginning of the tenth chapter, we find an unusual arrangement of three opening verses.<sup>121</sup> These verses describe the greatness of “Basavaṇṇa’s poem” (*basavana gīta*), which permeates the whole world and carries the collective meaning of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, the Śāstras, and the Āgamas. Though Harihara does not use the term “Vacana” in this passage, it appears that Basavaṇṇa’s poems referred to by Harihara here are what we recognize today as Vacanas.<sup>122</sup> If this postulation is correct, then this passage, written in the early thirteenth-century, is the earliest literary piece that alludes to Vacanas in their performative context.

In chapter twelve of the *Basava Raḡalē*, Harihara again mentions the performance of Basavaṇṇa’s poems, but this time a *goṣṭhi* that partakes at Orissa (Kaliṅga).<sup>123</sup> The significance in this description is twofold: first, Harihara presents the *goṣṭhi* in Orissa in a similar fashion to those he describes partaking in the Kannada-speaking regions, without relating to the language barriers. Though Harihara’s claims about cross-regionality are probably not historical, the fact that Harihara can make literary claims about the cross-regionality of *bhakti* stories and poems to his audience is significant, reflecting on the interregional vision of this *bhakti* tradition. Second,

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<sup>120</sup> See discussion about this term in section 5.1.1 above.

<sup>121</sup> Harihara (1999: 327).

<sup>122</sup> In his famous monograph on Allama’s Vacanas, Ā. Basavarāju states that there is a confusion in the early sources between *gītē* (poems) and the particular poetic form of Vacanas (2001 [1960]: 24, Knn).

<sup>123</sup> This chapter is summarized and discussed in section 6.6.1 above.

Harihara's claims in this passage about Basavaṅṅa's fame as crossing regions indicate this Śaraṅa's unique status for Harihara and his audience. It is evident from this passage that Basavaṅṅa's reputation as a *śivabhakti* poet and a leader of *śivabhakti* community was established by the time the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* was composed.

### 7.5 Concluding Remarks: Toward a New History of Kannada Śivabhakti Praxis

In this chapter, I delineated several frameworks in which rituals and practices operate in the literary world of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. The basic mechanism of all ritual action in this early *bhakti* tradition, as in many others, is based in the Bhakta's interiority. The adept's emotional and cognitive content, the intensity of his or her intentionality during the ritual are the prime concern of the author and the most central ingredient for the success of the ritual, a success measured by the revealing of the godly—either through miracles or direct epiphany—on earth.

We also observed at the beginning of the chapter that this literary tradition is obsessed with ritualization or the routinization of spontaneous worship. Even miracles become an integral part of the Bhakta's toolbox of ritual practices, and one is capable of invoking them successfully as long as one is determined enough to do so.

The conceptual dyad of orthopraxy versus omni-praxy is instructive for mapping out ritual action in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. The two modes of action are mutually exclusive, but the text does not oppose either, since the key for any ritual action in the Bhakta's interiority rather than external paradigms. Thus, orthopraxy is a legitimate part of devotional practice in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, since it reinforces the Bhakta's devotional mode. The function of omni-praxy is different in this regard, because it is the result of the Bhakta's intense devotional mode at particular, spontaneous moments. In terms of worship practices in the narratives of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, orthopraxy is mapped onto

institutional, public, *āgama*-based worship of the *sthāvara* (static) *līṅga* at the temple. Omnipraxy marks a wide range of worship forms, but the most concrete of those is the worshipping of *iṣṭalīṅga* (personal *līṅga*) that the Bhakta carries on his body at all times (*līṅgadhāraṇē*).

The text's endorsement of temple worship as a valid means to access Śiva brought me to reconsider binary scholarly approaches to *vīraśaiva* ritual, such as those expressed by Ramanujan and Desai. These two eminent scholars echo a common claim made with regard to Vīraśaivism about the theological rejection of temple ritual. My reading of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* suggest that, in fact, temple ritual has a more complex status, at least for the early phases of Kannada *śivabhakti*: theologically, while it is true that the temple *līṅga* is *sthāvara* (static), the Bhakta's determined devotion can turn it to *jaṅgama* (moving), and this devotional potential creates a legitimate space for temple worship. Furthermore, from a social perspective, the temple is not a contested space in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and we do not find any descriptions of social exclusion in the context of the temple. Notwithstanding the acceptance of temple rituals, it is clear that the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* celebrates *līṅgadhāraṇē* and *iṣṭalīṅgārcanē* (worship of personal *līṅga*) as an epitome of immediate, spontaneous, uncontrolled access to god.

Another area about the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* prescription is a complex one is initiation. I identified in the stories two modes of initiation: standard, orthopraxical initiation is a mark for institutionalized religion. Bhaktas are described in few stories as initiating their newly born child into the *śaiva* faith by dedicating it to a particular form of Śiva, giving it a *śaiva* name, and so on. Side by side to this formalized form of initiation, we also find in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* descriptions of non-standard, omnipractical initiations. These are crucial moment in the narratives, in which the Śaraṇa experiences divine

revelation. Usually these non-standard initiations involve a miracle and a sea-change in the adept's persona. Harihara, through a marked shift of literary register, revels in these unique and inspirational moments while treating standard initiations with more terse and contained expressivity. Similarly, the institution of the Guru is not central in this text but secondary, since it marks a formal and mediated form of devotional relationship and not a spontaneous and direct revelation. If we posit a basic polarity with the literary figure of the Guru (teacher) on one side and that of the Śaraṇa (saint) on the other, then most of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories clearly side with the latter.

The last section of this chapter is dedicated to *goṣṭhi*, the assembly of Bhaktas in which they collectively worship Śiva, but no-less importantly, also share food and perform devotional songs and stories to each other. If temple worship becomes a secondary, albeit valid, means of worship in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories, then it is equally clear that *goṣṭhi* becomes in this text the primary locus for the collective experience of *bhakti*. The *goṣṭhi* is a physical and discursive space in which Bhaktas from different places can meet and share their devotion to Śiva. In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, this setting defines the collective identity of the Bhaktas' community and inculcates practices and dispositions among its members. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is filled with detailed descriptions of *goṣṭhis* and, based on these, it seems reasonable to assume that Harihara heard many of the Śaraṇas' stories while participating in *goṣṭhis* such as he describes in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

Considered together, the enhanced attention to various forms of personal and collective devotional practices in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories about the Kannaḍiga saints indicates that Harihara was operating in a rich and complicated ritualistic setting. The acceptance in the narratives of orthopraxy side by side with the celebration of new, unorthodox, and sometime also subversive, approaches to worship Śiva, reflect

tensions that are inherent to any emerging religious community between the influence and adoption of existing practices and an antinomian thrust toward the unprecedented. These two modes coexist in the *Raḡaḷḡaḷu* but also in later texts, and any thorough consideration of the *vīraśaiva* tradition *en masse* must consider both of them.

## 8 Court, Kings, and Brahmins

Similar to the Tamil *śaiva* literary tradition, Kannada *śaiva* literature projects a strong, albeit multilayered, sectarian bent.<sup>1</sup> Within the *Ragaḷēs* about the Kannaḍiga saints, sectarian attitudes can be conceptualized in three concentric circles: the Śaraṇa and the *śaiva* community; the local or regional king and the his advisors the Vaiṣṇava Brahmins; and the Jains.<sup>2</sup> In the previous three chapters, I dealt with the first circle: the Śaraṇa as the epicenter for prescribed devotional life. This chapter is dedicated to the second concentric circle, the king and the Vaiṣṇava Brahmins.

The king is an unstable and ambiguous character in terms of affiliation with and commitment to the Śaraṇas, and in the first section of this chapter I examine narratives that are woven around the relationship between the two figures—the Śaraṇa and the king. Slightly distal to the king at the second circle are the Vaiṣṇava Brahmins, to which the second section of this chapter is dedicated.<sup>3</sup> In the relevant *Ragaḷēs*, Vaiṣṇava Brahmins at the king's court are a “religious other” that is always in competition with the Śaraṇas. The conceptualization of the sectarian rivals as the “religious other” is part of this text's basic vocabulary, with expressions such as *Parasamayins* (literally,

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<sup>1</sup> See Ulrich's conclusions regarding the consolidation of Tamil religious identity and accentuation of the rivalry between religious communities in Tamil land as depicted in literature from the sixth century onward (Ulrich 2007: 258-61). For additional discussion about sectarian attitudes in the Tamil *śaiva* tradition, see Champakalakshmi (2011a, b), Monius (2004a), Peterson (1998), Davis (1998). Other references to studies of pre-modern literary antagonism in Tamil can be found in Monius ([forthcoming]: 1-2).

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to some texts in the Tamil *śivabhakti* literary tradition, Kannada *śaiva* literature is almost completely mute regarding Buddhists. The only exception is a nominal reference in the *Kallayyana Ragaḷē* (section 5.1.2 above). See Monius ([forthcoming]) for attitudes against Buddhists in Tamil *śaiva* literature.

<sup>3</sup> At the lexical level, the more common designation for Brahmins in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is *Vipra* (Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 973 s.v. *vipra* 4 and 5).

“Those of Other Congregations” or “Those who Follow Other Dogmas”<sup>4</sup> and *paradaivasantāna* (“those who follow a family of other divinities”). These coins, repeated in different variations in the text, are indicative of “religious otherness” being a defining element of this literary culture.<sup>5</sup> As just mentioned, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* almost always places the antagonistic Brahmins in physical and political proximity to the local king. In the relevant stories, the king is surrounded by and attentive to his Vaiṣṇava Brahmins advisors. These Brahmins, motivated by incessant antagonism toward the *śaiva* community, its practices, traditions, and goals, actively interfere with and sabotage the intimate relationship that is woven between the Śaraṇa and the king.

The reading of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in this chapter, as in the rest of this study, is literary and not historical, aimed at recovering the author’s *mentalité* rather than validate the events he describes. At the same time, this literary reading does allow one to make several claims a historical nature. For example, the poet’s envisioning of courtly dynamics that bear sectarian overtones (as well as friction) indicates that, at least for the *śaiva* community if not to a broader public, the political sphere was perceived as tightly connected to the religious sphere, in what generally can be termed as sectarian competition over royal patronage.

Despite the narratives’ expressive hostility toward courtly Brahmins, narrative action aimed against Brahmins is limited in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and this is in striking contrast compared to the treatment of the Jains in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. It is with respect to the Jains that the quality of “religious otherness” is expressed in the most definite and

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<sup>4</sup> *Samaya* has a more specific sense in Kannada than it has in Sanskrit. Among the entries given by Kittel in his Kannada-English dictionary, the most relevant are “congregation” and “dogma,” each sheds light on a different aspect of what we term in contemporary discourse as “religion” (Kittel 1982: 1508 s.v. *samaya* 2 and 10).

<sup>5</sup> For a similar nomenclature in contemporaneous *śaiva* literature in Tamil, see (Peterson 1998: 179-80).

harsh manner. Jains, whom the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* depicts as the furthest from the Śaraṇas and from the court, are the most villainous in these stories. It is for this reason that I treat the Jains separately in the following chapter.

As a prelude to our inquiry into what constitute “otherness” in Harihara’s text, I present the *Ragaḷē* about Bāhūra Bōmmayya. This story is useful here as a contrast to the paradigmatic narratives we shall meet throughout this chapter as well as in the next chapter.<sup>6</sup> The *Ragaḷē*’s title is *Bāhūra Bōmmiṭandēya Ragaḷē* (*Bōmma Ragaḷē* henceforth), and it is a medium-length *Ragaḷē* of three chapters:

[1] Bōmmayya is an ardent Śivabhakta from the town of Bāhūru. Every Monday he visits Kalyāṇa in order to see Śiva in the temple. One Monday, while passing the market on his way to the temple, Bōmmayya hears a Jain merchant shouting the name of a particular grain he sells, called *śaṅkaraṅḍa*. Bōmmayya interprets the Jain’s cry as an offense against Śaṅkara, who is Śiva.<sup>7</sup> Furious, he calls the Jain a dog (*aruhakunni*) and circumambulates the pile of grain. Thereupon a deep *om* sound emanates from the pile. Bōmmayya continues to the temple, where he is praised by other devotees as the “Terrible Scorcher of the Family of Other Divinities” (*paradaivasantānatimira bhāskaran*).

[2] One day, the rutting elephant of Kalyāṇa’s king Pērmāḍirāya wreaks havoc in the city market. Everyone runs away except Bōmmayya. Commenting that this sight symbolizes the king’s instability, he successfully stops the elephant. When the king arrives, he accuses Bōmmayya of using tricks (*mantra, māyē*), but then Bōmmayya kills the elephant in front of the king.<sup>8</sup> The king prostrates to Bōmmayya and asks for his forgiveness. Bōmmayya accedes and takes the king to Śiva’s temple.

<sup>6</sup> A *Ragaḷē* that contains episode about a Śaraṇa’s interactions at the court and that is not included in this chapter is the *Revaṇasiddheśvarana Ragaḷē*, the reason being the character of Revaṇa, who does not strictly belong to this regional śaiva tradition but is rather trans-regional, operating equally in Tamil land and in Karnataka. See more about Revaṇasiddha in section 7.3.

<sup>7</sup> *Bōmma Ragaḷē* 1.80-83 in Harihara (1999: 256). Literally *śaṅkaraṅḍa* means “the prowess of Śiva” and is, in fact, a name of millet called *joḷa*, which is used in śaiva rituals (Prasād 2001: 1191 s.v. *śaṅkaraṅḍa*). Bōmmayya gets angry from the fact that a Jain sells a grain that is considered holy for the Śaivas.

<sup>8</sup> A similar scene appears in a famous *Ragaḷē* called the *Nambiyaṅṇana Ragaḷē* that is dedicated to the Tamil Śaiva Bhakta Cuntaraṅ (also written Sundarar), who is known in Karnataka as Nambiyaṅṇa.



In the third chapter, discussed in \*\*. Bōmmayya is a performer. He performs miracles in public and his miracles always involve interactions with non-Śaivas. These interactions in the first two chapters occur at the city's market, and this story is the only one in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* that uses the marketplace a public arena for asserting religious identity and challenging political authority. The common arenas for contestation in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* are the palace and the temple; these are ideal locations for sectarian “showdowns” in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, each with its particular narrative logic for serving as an arena of contestation. The marketplace in this story, in contrast to the palace and the temple in the others, is an unmarked territory that is shared by different agents. This neutrality might explain the exceptionally anticlimactic texture of these two incidents, compared to what lies ahead in the following stories. The relative mildness with which Bōmmayya treats the Jain in the *Bōmma Ragaḷē* is, thus, a narrative anomaly that is played out by the uniquely neutral geographical setting.

Another comment regarding geographical settings in the relevant *Ragaḷēs* is that, from the thirteenth-century onward, the śaiva literary culture of the Kannada-speaking regions shows particular interest in the city of Kalyāṇa and the two dynasties that ruled it during this period, the Cālukyas and the Kalacūris. Most of the following *Ragaḷēs* share this locale and are temporally set at the early and middle of the twelfth century.

### 8.1 Court and King

Courts, according to the *Ragaḷēs* about the Kannaḍiga Śaraṇas, are an ambiguous arena. On the one hand, they provide the Śaraṇa with access to the wealth and political support needed to sustain the community of Śivabhaktas. At the same time, and for the

same reason, courts in these stories are also infested by Vaiṣṇava Brahmins that spite the Śaraṇas due to their spiritual, but also political and economic, superiority. As we shall see, these antagonists always try to implicate the Śaraṇa in worldly intrigues, and while such an environment calls for political connivance and maneuverings, the Śaraṇa—representing here this *śaiva* tradition as a whole—refuses to participate in this squalid displays of scheming and worldliness. In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the tangled web of warring interests and ethical compromises by the different agents at the court, religious and mundane, always leads to a fallout between the Śaraṇa and the king, usually accompanied by a public display of the Śaraṇa’s uncompromising religious vision by means of a miraculous act. In the denouement that follows this rupture and which is reduplicated in all these narratives, the Śaraṇa renounces courtly life in order to dedicate himself to Śiva and his Bhaktas.

We find a similar disjuncture between the Bhakta poet and the king in *bhakti* traditions from other regions of South Asia as well: traditions about the Telugu poet Potana of the fifteenth century claim he refused to dedicate his *vaiṣṇava* text to the local king.<sup>9</sup> Hagiographical representations of the mid sixteenth-century Bundelās from the Braj area challenge the political legitimacy of the Mughal empire area.<sup>10</sup> Harihara’s text is the first among these literary artifacts to articulate *bhakti* resistance toward the authority of the human king. Perhaps more significantly, he is the most relentless. A good contrast to Harihara’s resistance to courtly life can be evinced from the literary tradition of Tamil *śivabhakti* tradition. The king is referred to in few of the early hymns and more systematically in the eleventh- and twelfth-century narratives.<sup>11</sup> In the

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<sup>9</sup> Narayana Rao and Shulman (2002: 200).

<sup>10</sup> Pauwels (2009).

<sup>11</sup> Champakalakshmi (2011b: 73).

twelfth-century *Pēriya Purāṇam*, the king is an object for conversion and a source for patronage.<sup>12</sup> Although he is flatly-portrayed as a minor character in the Tamil stories, the king is never depicted in derogatory or subversive manner.<sup>13</sup> From “hard” evidence from this period it appears that the Tamil Śivabhaktas and the royal courts of the late Pallavas and the Coḷas enjoyed a fruitful cooperation,<sup>14</sup> and this corresponds well to the generally benign treatment of the figure of the king in the Tamil *śaiva* stories. The relevant Ragaḷēs regarding the relationships between Śaraṇas and local kings in the Kannada-speaking regions paint, as we are about to observe, a very different picture.

### 8.1.1 SERVING THE KING, SERVING THE ŚARAṆAS

We begin our examination with a charismatic Śaiva—a popular leader, a remarkable poet, and apt administrator as well—who purportedly operated in Kalyāṇa, the capital of the flourishing Cālukya Empire, during its heyday of the early twelfth century. In this story, the imperial resources won by this leader are channeled to support the city’s community of Śaivas. The community quickly flourishes, but this success soon brings tension, then rift at the king’s court: other ministers of the king—all Vaiṣṇava Brahmins of course—are jealous of the success of this charismatic figure and his flock, and turn the king against him. Following a highly charged confrontation at the king’s hall between the Śaraṇa leader on the one hand, and the king and his antagonistic ministers on the other, the *śaiva* community at Kalyāṇa is disbanded, and the leader leaves the city in destitution.

Those familiar with the famous story of the Vacana poet Basavaṇṇa and his pregnant relationship with Kalyāṇa’s king Bijjaḷa might have identified the above

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<sup>12</sup> See section 2.3.2 above.

<sup>13</sup> I thank Anne Monius for this characterization (personal communication, October 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Champakalakshmi (2011b: 71-72), Pechilis (1999: 96-113).

narration as his. But it is not. A *Ragaḷē* titled *Keśirāja Daṇṇāyakara Ragaḷē* (*Keśirāja Ragaḷē* henceforth) claims that, about fifty years before Basavaṇṇa, another *śaiva* leader in Kalyāṇa followed a brilliant political and religious career.<sup>15</sup> His name was Koṇḍaguḷi Keśirāja, and the text says he was the chief minister for King Pērmāḍirāya.<sup>16</sup> The similarity between the narratives of Basavaṇṇa and Keśirāja indicates that the fascination of the *śaiva* literary tradition of the Kannada-speaking regions with royalty, financial resources, communal formation, and political competition was not unique to Basavaṇṇa's story, and that the tradition identifies another *śaiva* leader prior to Basavaṇṇa. In addition, this literary tradition repeatedly commemorates a specific place and time, which is twelfth-century north Karnataka, with Kalyāṇa as its political center (though not the only one). More broadly, the shared traits between Keśirāja's and Basavaṇṇa's stories hinge upon a larger narrative paradigm shared across other stories as well. This paradigm portrays a complex set of relationships between the Śaraṇa, the king, and the representatives of other religions at the king's court. We shall unravel some of these paradigmatic relationships using the following stories, starting with the *Keśirāja Ragaḷē*.

The figure of Koṇḍaguḷi Keśirāja is more historically grounded in what is termed “hard” evidence than most other Śaraṇas in this literary tradition (including Basavaṇṇa, about which there is no contemporaneous epigraphy).<sup>17</sup> Contemporary inscriptions tell of a chief minister (Mahādaṇḍanāyaka) named Keśirāja who operated under the Cālukya king Vikramāditya VI (r. 1076-1126 CE), aka King Pērmāḍirāya; that Keśirāja was born in Koṇḍaguḷi; that he composed devotional poetry for Śiva; and that

<sup>15</sup> The *Ragaḷē* dedicated to Basavaṇṇa is dealt with below in sections 8.1.3 and 8.1.4.

<sup>16</sup> There is consensus among contemporary scholars that King Pērmāḍirāya in the *Keśirāja Ragaḷē* is the famous King Vikramāditya VI (1076-1127 CE). See footnote 18 below.

<sup>17</sup> Desai (1968: 52, 132-35, 254-55).

he had built a temple for Śiva Somanātha under the patronage of that king. The substantial agreement between this inscriptional evidence and the following Ragaḷe indicates that both sources refer to the same person.<sup>18</sup> Significantly, the Keśirāja mentioned in inscriptions appears to be the first poet to compose devotional śaiva poetry in the Kannada language, before any Vacana poet.<sup>19</sup>

The *Keśirāja Ragaḷe* is a medium-length Ragaḷe containing three chapters, out of which the first two, directly pertaining to the interaction with king and court, are summarized here:

[1] In Koṇḍaguḷi, the Brahmin quarter of Kalyāṇa, lives a faithful Bhakta and his name is Keśirāja. Śiva Somanātha is his lord. He is a capable man who helps all people around him. He composes eight poems to Somanātha, poems filled with the five sacred syllables (*pañcākṣari*).<sup>20</sup> One day, Kalyāṇa's king Pērmāḍirāya

<sup>18</sup> The most significant inscription about Keśirāja was found in Koṇḍaguḷi and dated as 1107 CE (Archaeological Survey of India. and India. Dept. of Archaeology. 1890). There is an elaborate discussion in Kannada scholarship regarding the historical identity of Koṇḍaguḷi Keśirāja. Recent scholarship is unequivocal that the protagonist of the *Keśirāja Ragaḷe* was indeed the chief minister of King Vikramāditya VI. Although Harihara does not explicitly refer by name to King Vikramāditya VI, there are references to this king as Pērmāḍirāya in other texts, such as Bilhaṇa's biography of King Vikramāditya VI (called the *Vikramāṅkadeva Carita*, in Sanskrit) and several inscriptions (Fleet 1882: 445-46). See discussions in "Koṇḍaguḷi Keśirāja" by Vi. Śivānanda (1966-67, Knn), Chidananda Murthy (1983: 203), and Kalaburgi (2010 [1998]-b: 67-78, Knn, 1978: vi, viii-xvi, Knn, 1970: 40-43, Knn). For a political history of Vikramāditya VI, see Nilakanta Sastri (1976 [1955]: 169ff; 1960: 355-70). There is also a less likely possibility that Harihara's Pērmāḍirāya is the Kalacūri governor Pērmāḍi, the brother-in-law and son-in-law of Vikramāditya VI, and father of King Bijjaḷa (Desai 1968: 13-21). (For King Bijjaḷa, see sections 8.1.3 and 8.1.4 below). This possibility is weaker since Pērmāḍi the Kalacūri was not a king but a provincial governor (Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara) and was residing in Bijapur area and not in Kalyāṇa as Harihara describes.

<sup>19</sup> The dating of Jeḍaradāsīmāyā's Vacanas from the tenth or early eleventh centuries, which appears in Ramanujan (1973: 91) is refuted by Nāgabhūṣaṇa (2000, Knn). See also section 6.3 above. Kalaburgi makes the explicit claim that Keśirāja is the first to compose śaiva religious poetry in Kannada (2010 [1998]-a: 144, Knn). Kalaburgi also refers to Keśirāja as one of the Ādyas (literally "the first ones"), a term usually reserved for the Tamil śaiva Bhaktas (Keśirāja 1978: v, Knn, Desai 1968: 329). Both Ḍi. Ē. Narasimhācārya and Ē. Basavarāju argue that Keśirāja composed Vacanas (though none extant today) (Basavarāju 2001 [1960]: 16, Knn). See also footnote 20 above.

<sup>20</sup> See discussion about *pañcākṣari* in section 7.3 above. We have today five of these eight poems (Keśirāja 1978). The most famous of Keśirāja's works is the *Ṣaḍakṣara Kanda* (aka *Mantramahatvada Kanda* and *Ṣaḍakṣaramantramahimē*). It is possible that Harihara alludes here to this work. Note that the term

decides to find a capable man to run his administration, and asks his Brahmins if they know such a person. They all point to Keśirāja. King Pērmāḍirāya summons Keśirāja, puts him on a gem-studded chair, gives him money and precious clothes, builds a palace for him, and appoints him as chief minister (*daṇṇāyaka*<sup>21</sup>) of Kalyāṇa. Keśirāja takes upon himself all the administrative chores and the king is greatly pleased with him. In his new position, Keśirāja also starts caring for the city's Śaraṇas: he builds temples for them, feeds them, and spends time in their company. One day, while Keśirāja is completely immersed in a Śiva assembly (*śivaḡoṣṭhi*<sup>22</sup>) with fellow Śivabhaktas, the king's servants appear and tell Keśirāja that the king is looking for him. Keśirāja tries to ignore them, but they refuse to leave without him and persistently demand that he accompany them to the king.<sup>23</sup> The Śiva assembly is spoilt. Keśirāja, deeply disturbed, declares to all present at the assembly: "Wealth is the enemy of the Śaraṇa community, and the company of worldly people stabs me in the heart! Śiva, you are the only god of Kalyāṇa and its entire people will love you!" As Keśirāja approaches the king's palace, the king is told of Keśirāja's offensive speech and grows angry with him. The Vaiṣṇava Brahmins that attend the king take advantage of the situation and further inflate the king's anger, saying: "That Keśirāja tells the story of how Śiva, in the form of Śarabha, killed Viṣṇu as Narasimha. When he bows down to you and folds his hands, he actually surrenders to the ring in his hand, which has the seal of Guru-feet. He does not bow down to you at all, and he thinks he is better than you!" When Keśirāja arrives at the hall, King Pērmāḍirāya offers him a seat and starts conversing with him without showing his anger. The king notices that Keśirāja does not wear the aforementioned ring on his finger this time and when they bid farewell, he also notices that Keśirāja refrains from prostrating to him. Now the king is furious and orders Keśirāja to return immediately to the hall. With eyes reddened and mustache bristling he shouts: "You are disgraceful to me. You were a poor man before you met me, and now you are rich because of me alone! If you can't appreciate all this wealth, then return it to me at once!" Keśirāja listens patiently and then responds: "Listen, King! I will give you back all your wealth,

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*ṣaḍakṣaramantra* ("Six-Syllable Mantra") is used to describe the *pañākṣari* with *om* counted as an additional syllable.

<sup>21</sup> *Daṇṇāyaka* is a Kannada derivative of *daṇḍanāyaka* ("a judge," Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 466 s.v. *daṇḍanāyaka*). The Kannada term has a wide semantic field and several conventional usages that includes army general and chief minister (Desai 1968: 53, 268).

<sup>22</sup> See section 7.4 above.

<sup>23</sup> This scene is summarized in more details in the introduction.

for no wealth is equal to *bhakti*.” Keśirāja Immediately takes off all his ornaments, rings, bracelets, and other jewelry. He even gives away the personal *liṅga*’s golden carrying box (*karaḍigē*) and all his clothes. Keśirāja walks away from the king’s palace completely naked, having decided to become a *śaiva* renouncer (Virakta<sup>24</sup>) and never again to serve a human.

[2] Keśirāja walks toward his home, holding in his hand the *iṣṭaliṅga*,<sup>25</sup> wearing just the locks of his hair as clothes. When his wife Gaṅgādevi sees his state, she gives away all her jewelry and, wearing simple clothes, joins her husband’s march of renunciation. After a few miles they reach a hut of a Śivabhakta. The Bhakta seats Keśirāja under a mango tree, washes him and hands him white clothes. Meanwhile, Gaṅgādevi enters the house and starts cooking a sacred meal for Śiva Somanātha. The host Bhakta praises Keśirāja for turning his back on the worldlings (Bhavis<sup>26</sup>) and becoming a renouncer. As more Bhaktas assemble, a Śiva assembly commences and continues for seven days without stopping for sleep or food. Their bristling hair is worship (*pūjē*), their breath is the incense (*dhūpa*), their singing is the lamp (*ārati*). It is only after Gaṅgādevi interrupts to bring the sacred food that they feed Śiva Somanātha and then eat themselves. In this manner, the assembly carries on. Many more people flock to the assembly outside the Bhakta’s hut, including King Pērmāḍirāya, who comes barefoot and dressed in simple clothes. When he sees Keśirāja, he prostrates to him. Keśirāja does not recognize him at first, but people tell him: “This is King Pērmāḍirāya!” Keśirāja asks the king to stand up, and then the king says: “I did such wrong to you! I was full of greed, hatred, and delusion. Return to my palace and I will make it an abode for Śaraṇas (*mahāmanē*)<sup>27</sup>. I shall give my treasure to the Śivabhaktas. The Bhaktas advise Keśirāja to accept King Pērmāḍirāya’s offer, and they all return to Kalyāṇa, where Keśirāja’s position as chief administrator is restored. Once again he supports the city’s Bhaktas and helps King Pērmāḍirāya run the city.

I stop the story at this point as our current interest is in *śaiva* prescriptions for

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<sup>24</sup> See footnote 30 below.

<sup>25</sup> On the practice of carrying and worshipping the *liṅga* held by the devotee, see section 7.2.4 above.

<sup>26</sup> In this chapter and the next one I follow Ramanujan’s translation of Bhavi into “worldling” (Ramanujan 1973: 29n5); Kittel (1982: 1166 s.v. *bhavi* 2). See also discussion about Bhavi and *bhava* in section 9.3.3 below.

<sup>27</sup> See section 7.4 above.

court behavior, although Keśirāja’s impressive career as a *śaiva* renouncer does not end here: after serving some more time as the chief minister, Keśirāja decides to visit his fellow Śaraṇa Jōmmayya,<sup>28</sup> and then he continues to wander until uniting with Śiva.<sup>29</sup> As we shall see below, the thematic departure from the court, about two-thirds into Keśirāja’s story, is indicative of Harihara’s intentional downplaying of courtly life that is repeated over several stories.

But before I develop this argument further, let us examine the first two chapters of the *Keśirāja Raḡaḷē* that are dedicated to the Śaraṇa’s interactions with the king as one thematic unit. As is the case with many Raḡaḷēs, the above story about Keśirāja is constructed around one key scene in which the protagonist undergoes a life-changing transformation. I am not referring here to Keśirāja’s professional initiation into the king’s chief minister—the Daṇṇāyaka; for the author of this story this event is merely instrumental; it enables Keśirāja to financially support the communal activities of the Śivabhaktas. The central scene on a spiritual scale is, rather, Keśirāja’s resignation from the position of Daṇṇāyaka, since this resignation marks an intense inner realization. It is here that Keśirāja is transformed from a lay devotee into a renouncer (Virakta<sup>30</sup>). Like any key scene, this one has a dramatic texture, with Keśirāja casting off his insignia and walking away from the palace, bare-naked and holding his head high.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This meeting is discussed in section 6.5.1 above.

<sup>29</sup> See summary in section 5.2.2 above.

<sup>30</sup> In fifteenth-century Vijayanagara, the term “Virakta” becomes a specific designation for Vīraśaiva reformists (Chandra Shobhi 2005, Desai 1968: 152-54). In the *Raḡaḷēgaḷu* the term carries a more literal sense for someone who is devoid of attachment to worldly objects and passions. Kittel glosses “Virakta” thusly: “free from passion or affection; one who is void of attachment to worldly objects or freed from worldly affections and passions” (1982: 1412 s.v. *virakta* 3).

<sup>31</sup> The most celebrated naked devotee from this religious milieu is of course Mahādeviyakka, whose story is discussed in sections 6.1.1 and 9.3.3. See also opposite, derogatory descriptions of Jains as naked in sections 9.1, 9.2.2, and 9.3.2 below.



Despite Keśirāja's impressive resignation, his professional biography is described as a complicated affair in this story. First we read that, until his confrontation with King Pērmāḍirāya, Keśirāja tries to sustain his administrative position while spending time with the fellow Śivabhaktas. But, when his administrative commitments are confronted with his devotional predilections, the latter easily prevail. In light of Keśirāja's instinctive partisanship in life of devotion, one might ask why he agrees to take on the demanding public role of serving the king in the first place, and I develop the rest of this section as an answer to this question.

The latent tension between the Śaraṇa's interiority and his public behavior does not end in the first chapter of the *Keśirāja Ragaḷe*. Later in the story, the king is described begging Keśirāja to return to his administrative position, and Keśirāja agrees to reoccupy his public position despite its worldly engagements and compromises. Why does he do so? This zigzagging conveys a tension between the spiritual aspirations of the Śaraṇa and external demands by the community of the Śaraṇas and the world as a whole. Let us reflect on this matter using broader terms, using Keśirāja as an example: the devotee is always drawn into totalistic subjectivity that is characterized by an experience of intense ecstasy coupled with utopian overtones. In the case of Keśirāja, this subjectivity is narrativized by the ongoing and consuming experience of participation in the Śiva assembly.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the Śaraṇa is invested in and drawn by powerful external and mundane forces. The Śaraṇa's presence at the court and his active involvement in the local ruler's political sphere reflect an *ad hoc*, frustrating compromise, but this experience—painful as it is for the Śaraṇa—is never peripheral in these stories.

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<sup>32</sup> See section 7.4 above.

Another example of a Śaraṇa who embodies this inner tension is Kovūra Bōmmayya.<sup>33</sup> Bōmmayya is both a local king and a Śivaśaraṇa and thus personifies in one character the paradigmatic conflict between a life dedicated to devotion and life of politics. A similar tension can also be found in the story about the Śaraṇa Siddharāma, told by Harihara's nephew, Rāghavāṅka.<sup>34</sup> Siddharāma is requested by King Bijjaḷa's relative Karṇadeva to consecrate him on his throne,<sup>35</sup> but Siddharāma tries to avoid this worldly obligation. Alas, Karṇadeva insists and has Siddharāma caged inside a sealed chest that is brought before him. To the surprise of the king, when the chest is opened, Siddharāma is nowhere to be found.<sup>36</sup> Similarly to Keśirāja, Siddharāma is also torn between earthly commitments and his devotional life, but the latter clearly prevails.

The resistance of this śaiva literary tradition to performing honorary tributes for the human king becomes palpable in the *Keśirāja Ragaḷē* when the protagonist, not wearing the ring with his Guru's feet, does not bow down to Pērmāḍirāya before leaving the king's hall. (This refusal, accidentally, renders the Brahmins' initial allegations about Keśirāja true). The significance of this vignette for our purposes is that neither Keśirāja nor the narrator try in the least to explain or defend Keśirāja's disrespectful behavior toward the king. In more generic terms, the Śaraṇa does not respond to the challenge raised by the Brahmin antagonists. Rather, he refuses to

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<sup>33</sup> This is a different Śaraṇa than Bāhūra Bōmmayya discussed earlier in this chapter. Kovūra Bōmmayya is discussed separately in section 9.1 below.

<sup>34</sup> Discussing Siddharāma requires a brief literary bypass—outside the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—to the *Siddharāma Caritē*, which was composed by Harihara's nephew Rāghavāṅka and presumably is based on a *Ragaḷē* now lost to us. For few translated Vacanas by Siddharāma, see Nagabhushana Swamy and Laxmi (2007: 219-23). For a discussion about Siddharāma in the Kannada literature, see Narasimhācār (2005 [1971]-b: 101-106, Knn).

<sup>35</sup> On the obscure relation between Bijjaḷa and Karṇadeva, see Desai (1968: 91).

<sup>36</sup> This incident is narrated in the *Siddharāma Caritē* 9.1-20 in Rāghavāṅka and Viveka Rai (2004: 269-73, Knn).

participate in such petty courtly games.<sup>37</sup> This protestive refusal is axiomatic for all the relevant Ragaḷēs. To articulate this refusal, we can invoke here the traditional stories about Harihara himself. There, when the court Brahmins claim for Harihara’s insanity, he replies: “Crazy is the worldling (Bhavi) that wallows in this world’s sickness, forgetful of contemplation (*dhyāna*) on Śiva”.<sup>38</sup> By proleptically utilizing Harihara’s own life story, we can formulate a foundational disposition that prefigures all of Harihara’s Ragaḷēs about the court conduct, a disposition that dictates an impatient and uncompromising divide from whatever is worldly. The Śaraṇa’s rejection of worldliness is always unreflective and mechanical, such as in the case of Keśirāja’s protestive resignation from his courtly position. In this literary tradition, there is no room for reflection, indecision, or doubt in the Śivabhakta’s subjectivity. The superiority of his or her devotional determination is always a given.<sup>39</sup>

Equally mechanical, perhaps, is King Pērmāḍirāya’s act of begging Keśirāja to reoccupy his administrative position, mentioned earlier. This plastic, utopian portrayal of the ruler’s promise to always financially support of the Śivabhaktas is another foundational element in these stories. Its significance lies in the fact it allows Harihara to simultaneously sustain in his narratives two existential modes that are inherently contradictory: on the one hand, an uncompromising, non-worldly devotionism and, on the other, a totalistic political and financial support system for the Bhaktas’ community. The narrative difficulty lies in trying to bridge between the second (royal

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<sup>37</sup> The rejection of worldly affairs is encoded in this devotional system by the term *bhava*, “mundane existence” (Kittel 1982: 1166 s.v. *bhava* 5) and Bhavi, “worldling.” See more about *bhava* in section 9.3.3 below.

<sup>38</sup> This quote is taken from a summary of the *Rāghavāṅka Caritē*. See section 2.3.1 above.

<sup>39</sup> This uncompromising *śaiva* determination, termed *ekaniṣṭhē* in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* lexicality, is more frequently used in scenes in which the Śaraṇa is facing the “religious other.” See discussion in section 5.1

patronage) and the first (unyielding devotion). This unresolved tension generates what can be termed as the “political utopia” of this *śaiva* tradition, in which the Śaraṇa is never inclined to compromise his devotional ethics for worldly consideration and, despite this resistance, the king readily and publically supports the *śivabhakti* community. Significantly, this utopia is short-lived and volatile. Keśirāja, for example, after returning to his courtly position as the chief minister retires again for a life of an itinerant *śaiva* mendicant.<sup>40</sup> The most extreme termination of the political/financial utopia in the narratives of the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* is, of course, the story of Basavaṇṇa, with its cataclysmic and also—on a communal scale—traumatic denouement.<sup>41</sup>

A similar narrative disjunction can be found in the gap between Keśirāja’s artless nature and the required connivance of courtly life. The narrative portrays King Pērmāḡirāya’s court as fraught with conflicting interests, pressure groups, and *ad hoc* solutions. The sectarian nature of the accusations made by the king’s ministers against Keśirāja convey a brittle status quo at the king’s court; a trifling bit of gossip or comment that carries sectarian undertones—such as the allegation that Keśirāja has told to his faithful crowd the Śarabha story about Viṣṇu’s defeat by Śiva—can imply political perfidiousness. However, Keśirāja himself is not politically savvy; the political *savoirfaire* that is demanded in such a charged political environment is clearly outside his temperament and sentiment. Nevertheless, the king desires Keśirāja for his administrative talent, though one might question the applicability of this talent in light of Keśirāja’s inability to endure the courtly intrigues inflicted upon him.

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<sup>40</sup> See summary in section 5.2.2 above. The term *vairāgya*, which denotes renunciation from worldly matters, is repeatedly invoked in this *Ragaḷe*.

<sup>41</sup> See section 8.1.3 below.

### 8.1.2 STORIES ABOUT KILLINGS, KILLING FOR STORIES

Keśirāja's story conveys the author's inimical attitude toward the Vaiṣṇava Brahmins at King Pērmāḍirāya's court, who are depicted as a menace for Keśirāja. The sectarian affiliation of these Brahmins is explicit—we know that they have a *vaiṣṇava* bent since they tell the king that Keśirāja told the anti-*vaiṣṇava* story about Śarabha killing Narasiṃha. This depiction of court strife through sectarian storytelling between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas—in itself a trope in medieval narratives from south India<sup>42</sup>—reemerges in several of Harihara's *Ragaḷeś*, such as in the *Tēḷugu Jōmmayya Ragaḷeś* (*Jōmma Ragaḷeś* henceforth), a *Ragaḷeś* about a contemporary associate of Keśirāja called Tēḷugu Jōmmayya.

I mentioned earlier the encounter between Keśirāja and Jōmmayya, when discussing *śaiva* attitudes about equality and conflicting religious practices among fellow Śaraṇas.<sup>43</sup> Jōmmayya was invoked in that context because of his provocative and lethal vocation of killing animals at the forest. The following story, which narrates an earlier incident at King Pērmāḍirāya's court involving Jōmmayya, is also colored red with blood, this time of a human. The *Jōmma Ragaḷeś* consists of three chapters, and the first two, summarized below, are dedicated to the courtly incident. Thus, in addition to thematic correspondence between the *Jōmma Ragaḷeś* and the *Keśirāja Ragaḷeś* (the third chapters of both texts narrate a meeting between the two protagonists), a structural correspondence can also be drawn, for in both texts, the first two chapters narrate a friction between the Śaraṇa and courtly agents, while the third chapter brings the Śaraṇa's life story to a closure away from the worldly context of the court, out in nature, where the Śaraṇa can dedicate himself completely to worshipping Śiva. This

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<sup>42</sup> For a particularly rich example, see Bronner (2011).

<sup>43</sup> See section 6.5.1 above.

structural contrast between a courtly career and renunciation that shapes both these text is indicative of Harihara's endorsement of life of uncompromising devotion away from the social and political center.

Here is the summary of the first two chapters of the *Jōmma Raḡaḷē*:

[1] In Kalyāṇa there is a Bhakta named Tēlugu Jōmmayya, always dedicated to Śiva Bhīmanātha and averse to worldlings (Bhavis). Every once in a while Jōmmayya goes to King Pērmāḡirāya and asks for gold coins to distribute to the Śivabhaktas. The king, afraid of the fervent devotee, gives him whatever he wishes, pleasing the king's wife Queen Lakumādevi who supports Jōmmayya for his devotion to Śiva. One day, while Jōmmayya is waiting for the king to finish his daily worship to Viṣṇu in order to get more money from him, he overhears a Purāṇa storyteller (Purāṇika<sup>44</sup>) narrates stories from Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, telling many lies and denigrating Śiva. Hearing these, Jōmmayya grows furious. He cries to the Purāṇika: "Why are you telling these lies?" He then draws his sword and stabs the man to death. Panicked by what he has just done, Jōmmayya leaves the palace and seeks shelter at the Śivabhaktas' house. There, he cries and tells them what he did, regretting ever associating with worldlings (Bhavis). The Bhaktas calm him, saying he did nothing wrong since he killed a Śiva offender (Śivadrohi). Jōmmayya collects himself and proceeds to do his daily *śaiva* rituals.

[2] Meanwhile, at the palace, King Pērmāḡirāya finishes his worship and notices that he cannot hear the Purāṇika's voice. He also notices that the Viṣṇu statue at the worship room has started to shed tears, and, coming out of the worship room, he discovers the dead body of the Purāṇika. Confused and angry, King Pērmāḡirāya—the Rāvaṇa of the Kali age—sits on his royal throne and asks for Jōmmayya. When Queen Lakumādevi hears all that is going on, she thinks to herself: "Jōmmayya never bows to the king who is a worldling (Bhavi). If I can make Jōmmayya bow just this time, it might save his life." And so, the queen plans a ruse, according to which she will hold a Siva *liṅga* in her hand to make Jōmmayya bow down while the king thinks Jōmmayya is bowing to him. However, when Jōmmayya spots the *liṅga* in the queen's hand, he calls out to it: "Why are you next to a Bhavi?" Jōmmayya opens his hands and the *liṅga* jumps out of the queen's hands and into the air. Jōmmayya then bows down to the

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<sup>44</sup> Kittel: "A man well read in the purāṇas; a public expounder of them" (1982: 996 s.v. *purāṇika*). Purāṇika is the Kannada equivalent for the Sanskrit Paurāṇika. See also footnote 47 below.

*liṅga*. King Pērmāḍirāya, upon seeing this miracle, is confounded. A new belief in Śiva is born in him. Without anger he asks Jōmmayya why he killed the Purāṇika. Jōmmayya replies: “I did not kill the fellow for telling the Purāṇas; I killed him for telling lies about Śiva.” The king retorts: “Then you should prove to me that the Purāṇika told lies!” To this challenge Jōmmayya responds: “How can you suggest that a Śivabhakta is wrong? We shall visit right now the dead body of the Purāṇika. I will uncover the corpse’s shroud, and you will find underneath it nothing but maggots!” They go to the place where the dead body was kept. Jōmmayya prays to Śiva and declares that he never hated that person and only killed a worldling (Bhavi) for telling lies. He draws back the shroud and reveals a pile of disgusting maggots. Nauseated by the disturbing sight, the king orders the remains disposed of and apologizes to Jōmmayya for ever doubting him. Later, the king and his wife shower gold on Jōmmayya and also grant him a piece of land, situated few miles outside of Kalyāṇa, upon which Jōmmayya builds a Śaraṇa congregation place (*mahāmanḍ*). Many Śaraṇas follow Jōmmayya. There, they surround him and call him the “Fire of Doom to the Vaiṣṇava Forest” (*vaiṣṇavāranyapraḷayāgni*). Jōmmayya starts to fulfill Śiva’s order to him to hunt forest animals and inaugurates, with the rest of the Śaivas, a Śiva assembly (*goṣṭhi*) that goes on for many days.

Jōmmayya’s story repeats several themes found in Keśirāja’s story: a rather loose and crooked system for royal patronage of the Śaraṇas, mediated by the charisma of a single Śaraṇa with a monopoly on access to political resources; a contestation between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas that arises in the context of devotional and public storytelling with a very specific type of sectarian prejudice; the theme of indicating the king’s superiority by bowing down—or rather its denial—serves in both stories as a pivotal narrative element for publically displaying the Śaraṇa’s uncompromising *śaiva* determination;<sup>45</sup> and, finally, a denouement that leads to the Śaraṇa’s retirement from courtly life in favor of the Śaiva fellowship, away from the city.

Within this set of similarities, we should pay attention to narrative element of

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<sup>45</sup> See footnote 39 above.

sectarian storytelling. We find in both stories a political sensibility to narrating in public Purāṇic stories that bear sectarian overtones. Within a political context, narration of sectarian stories is used as an assertion—a sort of a speech-act—aimed at strengthening or repositioning one’s tradition over the other’s at the king’s court.<sup>46</sup> We are told that the Purāṇika tells a *vaiṣṇava* story while the king is making a ritual to his own personal god, who is Viṣṇu. Thus, the Purāṇika’s *vaiṣṇava* storytelling is supported by the king’s personal religious bent, and both create an enhanced sense of antagonism against Jōmmayya. This antagonism leads to the latter’s violent and wrathful outburst.

In the performative culture of the Purāṇas there is considerable room for the Purāṇika to orally recontextualize and at times also reproduce the Purāṇic text, and this interpretive freedom allows sectarian sensibilities—such as in the case of this story—to arise.<sup>47</sup> A similar narrative progression, though on the opposite pole of the sectarian scale and with less violent overtones, is given in the case of Keśirāja, with his Śarabha’s storytelling that sets off King Pērmāḍirāya’s anger. In both stories the act of devotional storytelling, set in a public sphere and connected to the king, is a markedly sectarian and politicized act, with considerable implications.

Notwithstanding the similarities between Keśirāja’s and Jōmmayya’s stories, it is clear that, compared with Keśirāja’s story, the one about Jōmmayya is more violent and overall more intense. While Keśirāja struggles, at least during his political servitude as the king’s Daṇṇāyaka, to divert his fervent devotionism, Jōmmayya does not even try

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<sup>46</sup> Tension between Vīraśaivas and Vaiṣṇava Brahmins around public performances of sectarian Purāṇic stories within a markedly political context is tangible also in modern times. See the story about a *vīraśaiva* procession at Kolhapur in 1911 (Ripepi 2007: 81-82).

<sup>47</sup> For discussion about the Purāṇas’ oral performative culture, see Narayana Rao (2004: 114-15). For the relation of Purāṇic culture and *bhakti* in the Tamil context, see Champakalakshmi (2011b: 71), Shulman (1980).



to conceal it. This devotional intensity bears few ethical implications.<sup>48</sup> First, we should note the impromptu nature of Jōmmayya's act. This is an important trait in all the *Ragaḷēs* pertaining to sectarian conflicts: the Śaraṇa seldom instigates the conflict, though he always effectively reacts and (naturally) prevails. Thus, these narratives generate a sense that the Bhaktas' sole interest is in worship. It is only when this worship is disturbed, that the Bhakta is required to react against the instigators.

Another ethical implication pertains to the level of response by the threatened Śaraṇa. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, within this general sense of resistance, there is an important distinction to make between the stories that relate to the king and his Vaiṣṇava Brahmins surveyed in this chapter and the stories pertaining to Jains discussed in the following chapter: resistance to the Brahmins is generally of limited impact. It never bears long term or sweeping consequences in terms of the power relations between the Vaiṣṇava Brahmins and the śaiva Śaraṇas. At the most, a specific temple is converted to Śaivism or one person is killed. Things are radically different regarding the Jains' stories, in whose case we can clearly identify a definite thrust to completely wipe out any trace of the "religious other"—an active, complete, at times even premeditated form of resistance: *jaina* temples of whole cities are converted; *jaina* houses are razed; sometimes whole communities are wiped out. We find indications for this difference between the Brahmin "other" and the Jain "other" in the ethical overtones of the conflicts: in the above story, Jōmmayya's first response to his spontaneous killing is fear and regret (immediately abated by the supportive Bhaktas who justify the killing). In the case of the Jains, such reflections are alien to the texture of the stories. While I deal with the Jains' stories separately in the following chapter, it

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<sup>48</sup> By ethical implications, I mean in this context behavioral prescriptions that are grounded in a formally constructed identity, in this case of the Śivabhakta.

is instructive to establish the bounded and limited sense of contestation with regards to Brahmins—albeit a hot-tempered one—at this point, as it will serve us in the following stories as well.

The moral stance toward Jōmmayya’s act of killing a Brahmin is developed as the story progresses. As just stated, Jōmmayya’s immediate response to the killing is fear and regret. Is Jōmmayya afraid of the political consequences of the act? Of the personal price he might be required to pay once the king discovers the dead Brahmin? Or perhaps Jōmmayya’s fear is based on a more fundamental feeling that he has committed a sin? The text does not directly gesture toward a possible answer on this matter, but it does acknowledge that there is clearly a moral issue to be explicated. This is evinced by the response by Jōmmayya’s fellow Bhaktas, who claim that the killing was justified because of the Brahmin’s insult toward Śiva. The claim immediately eliminates Jōmmayya’s vexation. In the second chapter, when interrogated by the king in the courtly hall, Jōmmayya responds with complete confidence that conveys nothing of his previous distress. Thus, the brief moral rupture in the story, when Jōmmayya realizes he has just murdered a Brahmin (in the premise of the palace), might echo an almost reflexive admittance of Brahmanical eminence, although this is “traditional” attribution is quickly replaced by the model author of the text with the paradigmatically *śaiva* ethical scale, which is aligned according to the belief in Śiva’s absolute superiority.

There are additional ethical dimensions to Jōmmayya’s exchange with King Pērmāḍirāya regarding the Purāṇika’s killing. The scene in which the king summons Jōmmayya to account for the murder starts out as a public trial of Jōmmayya’s act. But, as it develops, it is completely transformed: from a trial pertaining to ethics the event is

converted into a religious discourse with epiphanic qualities: first, the queen's *liṅga* jumps out in the air following Jōmmayya's order. This immediately assuages the king's antagonism toward Jōmmayya's act and induces a devotional change in the king. At this point, the legal issue of whether the Purāṇika deviated from the original Purāṇic narratives in order to slander Śiva is replaced by an underlying theological question: is it possible to claim that Śiva is inferior to Viṣṇu? This question shifts the discussion from ethics to theology, and Jōmmayya (literally) has the upper hand. While the text tacitly echoes the ethical problems raised by the killing of the Purāṇika, it celebrates the precedence of Śiva's faith over them. In this way, general ethics are subordinated in this story to a higher authority that is controlled by Śiva and his Śaraṇas.

### 8.1.3 BASAVA AND KING BIJJAĻA'S TREASURY

The stories of Keśirāja and Jōmmayya served us thus far for setting the ground for understanding Harihara's complex stance toward the court. But there is no story that conveys this foundation tension more strongly than the *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷe* (*Basava Ragaḷe* henceforth), which is without a doubt the most important Ragaḷe in the corpus from a thematic point of view, for it engages with the Śaraṇa who is identified more than any other with the ascendance of *śivabhakti* in the second-millennium Kannada-speaking regions.

The dramatic story about Basavaṇṇa and Bijjaḷa, the *kalacūri* king he purportedly served, had a decisive impact on Karnataka's cultural history.<sup>49</sup> Both

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<sup>49</sup> Basavaṇṇa and Bijjaḷa, and more generally the meteoric rise of the *śivabhakti* community in Kalyāṇa, has captured the minds of many writers in Kannada, both in pre-modernity and modernity. Many stories and plays were and still are written about these events. A stage play that was translated to English and also received attention outside of Karnataka is Girish Karnad's *Talēdaṇḍa* ("Death by Beheading") (Karnad 2005: 1-102, Leslie 1998). See discussion about modern plays focused on this period in Chandra Shobhi (2005: 295-319).

people are said to have been born in the same year (1105 CE) and purportedly passed away close to each other (around 1167 or 1168 CE),<sup>50</sup> and their relationship not only dramatically affected their own lives but also changed the religious and social landscape of today's north Karnataka, at least according to literary claims.<sup>51</sup> Despite the richness of the literary sources, it is very difficult to establish a historical connection between Basavaṇṇa and Bijjaḷa, since the former is completely absent from contemporaneous epigraphy, in which the latter figures prominently.<sup>52</sup> An abundance of literary sources describe Basavaṇṇa's central contribution to the rise of King Bijjaḷa to power and the latter's taking over Kalyāṇa, which was formerly a Cālukya capital for centuries. In turn, these sources also convey Bijjaḷa's contribution to the rise of the *śivabhakti* movement in twelfth-century north Karnataka.

Unsurprisingly, the *Basava Ragaḷē* is the longest poem in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, containing twenty-five chapters (of which thirteen are extant)<sup>53</sup> and contains a unusually rich arrangement of opening verses for each chapter.<sup>54</sup> These formal markers indicate that Basavaṇṇa's seminal role in the formation of the *śivabhakti* movement during the twelfth century in the Kannada-speaking regions was recognized by the time Harihara composed the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, purportedly about half a century after the usually accepted date for Basavaṇṇa's demise.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The most cogent and up-to-date discussion about the dating of these two figure is found in Gopal (1981: 362-71). See also Desai (1968: 284-91)

<sup>51</sup> The most thorough historical study in English about the two figures juxtaposed together is Desai (1968). It is also the only study in English that engages with the *Basava Ragaḷē* except Ishwaran (1992).

<sup>52</sup> According to P. B. Desai, the earliest inscription to mention Basavaṇṇa is from 1251 CE (1968: 132).

<sup>53</sup> I return to this issue in the following section. The only *Ragaḷē* with similar lengthiness is the *Nambiyāṇṇana Ragaḷē*, having nineteen chapters.

<sup>54</sup> The *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷē* also has an irregular set of opening verses. See section 6.1.1 above.

<sup>55</sup> See discussion about dating the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in section 2.1.1 above. The accepted date for Basavaṇṇa's passing away is 1167 CE (Gopal 1981: 364).

The *Basava Ragaḷē* is the earliest written account of Basavaṇṇa's life and, therefore, is repeatedly revisited by Kannada writers both in pre-modernity as well as in recent works and studies. The *Basava Ragaḷē* is also seminal for examining courtly representations in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, for in it Harihara directly connects Basavaṇṇa's successful career as a religious leader with his public administrative role at King Bijjaḷa's court and also to his rivalry with leaders of other religious sects at the court. Significantly, the *Basava Ragaḷē* corresponds to the two Ragaḷēs discussed earlier in the chapter not only from a thematic perspective, but also from a structural one: the module pertaining to the *Keśirāja Ragaḷē* and the *Jōmma Ragaḷē*, according to which the text is divided into two parts—the first dedicated to the Śaraṇa's conflictual life at the king's court and the second to his retirement to devotional life that culminate in Śiva's abode in Kailāsa—applies also for the *Basava Ragaḷē*.<sup>56</sup> The first four chapters of this text describe Basavaṇṇa's heavenly career, his birth on earth (in Bāgēvāḍi), his youth, and his early adulthood at Kappaḍi, respectively. It is only in the fifth chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷē* where Basavaṇṇa's life takes a public turn at the court of King Bijjaḷa at Maṅgaḷavāḍa. The events during this period in Basavaṇṇa's life take up the bulk of the *Basava Ragaḷē*'s text that we have today, up till the penultimate chapter, numbered twelfth. In this section of the text, Harihara repeatedly switches between the setting of the court and the setting of Basavaṇṇa's private palace. Below I include summaries of specific episodes of this part, mostly pertaining to courtly interactions. The thirteenth chapter, the last extant of this text, is discussed separately in the following section below.

It is instructive to begin our examination of Basavaṇṇa's political career in this

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<sup>56</sup> A fourth Ragaḷē that also fits this module is the *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷē*, which is discussed in sections 6.1.1 and 9.3.3.

text before his actual move to the Kalacūri capital city of Maṅgaḷavāḍa, during the concluding phase of his adolescence in Kappaḍi. Kappaḍi is described in chapter four of the *Basava Ragaḷē* as a large learning center of the Vedic tradition. It is here where Basavaṅṅa acquires his Brahmanical educational and is also made intimate with the local manifestation of Śiva, called Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva or Saṅgamadeva.<sup>57</sup> At this point of the story, Basavaṅṅa has a dream:

[4] One evening, after finishing his worship at the hall of Śiva Saṅgamadeva temple, Basavaṅṅa falls asleep on the floor. Śiva appears in his dream and says: “I will make you famous. Go to Maṅgaḷavāḍa,<sup>58</sup> where King Bijjaḷa rules.” Basavaṅṅa wakes up and refuses to heed Śiva’s command, because it implies departing from Śiva Saṅgamadeva. Śiva returns on the following night to Basavaṅṅa’s dream and promises him that he will be present with him in Maṅgaḷavāḍa. He adds that in Maṅgaḷavāḍa Basavaṅṅa is to worship all the Bhaktas and stop the arrogance of those who follow other observances.<sup>59</sup> Basavaṅṅa wakes up the next morning and worships Śiva’s bull Nandi, who initiates him by giving him a personal *liṅga* and the five-syllabi mantra (*pañcākṣari*<sup>60</sup>). It is like a wedding ceremony.<sup>61</sup>

Before we pursue the next section of this story, we might pause to articulate Basavaṅṅa’s disposition toward the godly mission: Basavaṅṅa is not interested in going to Maṅgaḷavāḍa and becoming a *śaiva* leader that champions his religious community and fights others. He concedes only after Śiva promises that he will accompany him. An internal conflict depicted in this episode, between renunciatory devotionism and public life, and the tension between the two modes of living, which we observed earlier

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<sup>57</sup> Ramanujan translates Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva as “Lord of the Meeting Rivers” (1973: 47).

<sup>58</sup> Maṅgaḷavāḍa is also referred to in different sources as Maṅgaḷiveḍa and Maṅgaḷavedḥē (Desai 1968: 18).

<sup>59</sup> *Basava Ragaḷē* 4.prose in Harihara (1999: 312):  
*parasamayada garvamam nilisi*

<sup>60</sup> *Basava Ragaḷē* 4.prose in Harihara (1999: 313). For *pañcākṣari* see footnote 20 above.

<sup>61</sup> This scene is also discussed in section 5.2.2 above. The wedding metaphor alludes to a central concept in this *śaiva* tradition—*saraṅasati liṅgapati*—according to which the devotee is regarded as Śiva’s wife.

with regard to Keśirāja's and Jōmmayya's stories, also anticipates the rest of Basavaṇṇa's life story.<sup>62</sup> In addition, public leadership is tightly linked in this episode to sectarianism: Śiva himself orders Basavaṇṇa to simultaneously support the Śaraṇas and to fight the "religious others" (Parasamayins). Śiva's declaration that Basavaṇṇa will uplift the Śaraṇas and oppress the "religious others" is repeated by the Bhaktas further along in the *Basava Ragaḷe*,<sup>63</sup> and this statement is repeated for a third time in the text, this time by the model author.<sup>64</sup> The duplication of this assertion attests the centrality of sectarian contestation within the role of public leadership of the śaiva community in Harihara's mind.

We shall pay attention to the issue of sectarian contestation at the court as it takes place in the *Basava Ragaḷe* below, but first let us observe Basavaṇṇa's arrival to Maṅgaḷavāḍa and his first steps as a public figure:

[5] Basavaṇṇa weighs how he could help the Jaṅgamas and decides to become an accountant (Gaṇaka) at Bijjaḷa's palace. When he reaches Maṅgaḷavāḍa, he immediately sets out to the palace, where he sees incredible riches, huge armies, crowds of courtiers and courtesans, accountants, and also the chief minister (Daṇḍanātha<sup>65</sup>) giving out money to people. The chief accountant (Gaṇakādhipa), named Siddhadaṇḍa, conducts a routine public book audit at the hall, and Basavaṇṇa comes forth and claims there is an arithmetic mistake in the audit. The accountants repeat the check and see that Basavaṇṇa is right. Chief accountant Siddhadaṇḍa praises Basavaṇṇa and recruits him as an accountant for one-hundred and one gold coins per year. When he finds out that Basavaṇṇa is from the same Brahmanical *jāti* as his (Brahmins called Kammē<sup>66</sup>), his trust in

<sup>62</sup> P. B. Desai writes with regard to Basavaṇṇa: "A saint and a politician are paradoxical; and it is a strange phenomenon to see the one play the role of the other" (1968: 301).

<sup>63</sup> See *Basava Ragaḷe* 8.prose in Harihara (1999: 322).

<sup>64</sup> See *Basava Ragaḷe* 11.215-16 in Harihara (1999: 332).

<sup>65</sup> Daṇḍanātha is an equivalent term for Daṇḍanāyaka (Knn. Daṇṇāyaka). See footnote 21 above. Desai reads these designations as literary conventions and claims that Basavaṇṇa's position as chief treasury officer was equivalent to a minister (1968: 52-53, 180-81, 267-68).

<sup>66</sup> See Desai's discussion about the cultural contribution of the Kammē Brahmins to Kannada literature

Basavaṇṇa grows even more and he gives Basavaṇṇa greater ascendancy, as the tax collector of far away provinces (such as Coḷa). However, Basavaṇṇa is concerned seeing all these resources go to materialists (Lokāyatas<sup>67</sup>) and not the Śivabhaktas. He prays to Śiva to help him start supporting the Bhaktas. Soon after, Siddhadaṇḍa falls sick and dies, and King Bijjaḷa appoints Basavaṇṇa as the new caretaker of the kingdom's treasury of gold (Bhaṇḍāri) as well as the kingdom's chief minister (Daṇḍanātha). Basavaṇṇa praises and worships all the Bhaktas of the city.

Basavaṇṇa's public career is propitious from the outset according to this passage. Every narrative development turns out to be for Basavaṇṇa's benefit, including the death of his relative and patron Siddhadaṇḍa. Of most interest here is the premise—explicitly expressed by Basavaṇṇa himself at the very beginning of the passage—that the best way to benefit the Śivabhaktas is working as an accountant at the king's court. Here, we tap on a central narrative motif we already met in the previous narratives surveyed in this chapter, which is the Śaraṇa's conscious and continual interest in royal wealth and patronage to support and promote the community of Bhaktas. Earlier in this study, I presented traditional accounts about Harihara's own career as an accountant of a Hōysaḷa king, including oblique allegations that he misused the treasury for devotional purposes.<sup>68</sup> We might say that accounting and state administration are repeatedly invoked in this *śaiva* narrative tradition as vocations pursued by *śaiva* leaders in order to support the *śaiva* community as a whole. What is peculiar in this trend is that it is coupled in these stories with the Śaraṇa's marked antagonism toward the institution of royalty—what I termed with regard to

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(1968: 375-77).

<sup>67</sup> In this context it seems that the term Lokāyatas designates non-Śaivas, usually referred to in the *Raḡaḷḡaḷu* as Bhavis. See discussion about the term Bhavi in section 9.3.1 below.

<sup>68</sup> See section 2.3 above.



Harihara as “anti-kingly sentiment.”<sup>69</sup> We observed this overt antagonism in the cases of Harihara, Keśirāja, and Jōmmayya, as well as in the case of Mahādeviyakka.<sup>70</sup> We see a hint of this in the case of Basavaṇṇa as well, by his resistance to Śiva’s command to serve Bijjaḷa, and we shall see this resistance deepened as we advance on Basavaṇṇa’s story.

Another trope shared across the *Ragaḷēs* mentioned thus far, including Harihara’s own life story, is the menacing presence of antagonistic Brahmins. In chapter six of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, summarized in an earlier chapter,<sup>71</sup> the Brahmins complain to King Bijjaḷa about Basavaṇṇa’s unorthodox worship practices, though to no avail. In chapter eight of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, we find another incident that involves Brahmins. Chapter eight begins with a long description of Basavaṇṇa’s complete servitude to the Śivabhaktas of Maṅgaḷavāḍa. This servitude consists of honoring the Bhaktas and supporting their ritualistic needs, but also—and the text is very explicit and detailed here—of granting them expensive gifts, such as clothes, jewelry, and gold. Basavaṇṇa is described as “craving for [the Bhaktas’] merit” (*punya lobhi*), and his passion is the engine that propels him to give to the Bhaktas incessantly. As we shall immediately see, his actions do not go unnoticed by other members of the court:

**[8 cont.]** Seeing the endless giving by Basavaṇṇa and the success of the Bhaktas’ community in the city, the envy of the Vaiṣṇava Brahmins is ignited. Unable to tolerate the Śaivas’ extravagant wealth, they go to King Bijjaḷa and tell him: “Dear king, you have lost your mind! The Bhaktas are wearing on their bodies the wealth of the kingdom! Their riches exceed yours! Basavaṇṇa is emptying your treasury, and their well-being has become the empire’s first priority. What

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<sup>69</sup> See section 2.3.2 above. Chidananda Murthy writes with regard to the Śaraṇas of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*: “Many of them were officials who serve under a king for the sake of bread: their loyalty was not for the King but for God. God was their real master and not the King” (Chidananda Murthy 1983: 204).

<sup>70</sup> Mahādeviyakka is discussed separately in section 9.3.3 below.

<sup>71</sup> See section 7.1.2 above.

about the Vaiṣṇavas of the kingdom? the Brahmins who believe in the *brahman*?<sup>72</sup> the Jains? the followers of the six doctrines (*ṣaḍdaraśana*)? You are mesmerized by Basavaṇṇa, and if you do not awake from his thrall, we shall leave the kingdom. You must call Basavaṇṇa and order an immediate public audit of the treasury books!” Bijjaḷa, incited by the words of those animals disguised as Brahmins, calls for Basavaṇṇa and the rest of the accountants. Basavaṇṇa soon appears at the court, smeared with holy ash (*bhasma*) and covered with *śaiva* insignia, looking like Śiva himself. While he sits and waits, the accountants audit the books, and when the audit concludes the accountants declare that eighteen crores (180 million) coins are missing from the treasury. Bijjaḷa asks Basavaṇṇa for an explanation, and Basavaṇṇa replies: “Oh king! Do you think the ocean needs the river? That the sun craves the glitter of mirror? The Bhaktas can purchase with their own money whatever they need without using a penny from the kingdom’s treasury. Come and check the treasury yourself!” They all go to the treasury, open the countless boxes that are there, and start to count the money, but the amounts are simply beyond measure: ten times, hundred times, lakh (100,000) and crore (10 million) times the said amount! There is so much more money than what the audit indicated, that everyone simply gives up the counting. The faces of those of other religions (Parasamayins) turn pale, and those of the Bhaktas shine. Basavaṇṇa tells Bijjaḷa: “Do you think all this property (*artha*) is really yours? Don’t you realize that you are enjoying the grace of others? To us Bhaktas, a sesame seed from Śiva Saṅgamadeva is like divine fortune, his smallest glitter is the sun. You are operating under the influence of illusion (*māyē*), being in fact nothing more than a mud doll. Who are you compared to the Bhaktas?” Basavaṇṇa says this in great fury, and Bijjaḷa, realizing this, immediately prostrates and apologizes. Then, he pours eighteen crore (180 million) coins at the feet of Basavaṇṇa to subside his anger. Basavaṇṇa leaves the court and goes to his home, where the Bhaktas welcome him and praise his generosity.

This scene marks the beginning of deterioration in the relationship between Basavaṇṇa and Bijjaḷa, but it is seminal for other reasons as well. At the most basic

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<sup>72</sup> This could also refer to the followers of god Brahmā. *Basava Ragaḷē* ch. 8 (prose) in Harihara (1999: 323): *brahmanam bagēyar endadē b[r]āhmaram ballar āru?*

See section 8.2.1 below for a reference to Brahmā’s statue inside a temple.

level, it supplies us with a narrative background for the political and economical ecology at the king's court, as represented by Harihara. For one, somewhat unsurprisingly, this episode attests to the supreme importance of the empire's treasury as an object of sectarian competition, and not only from the Brahmins' side. Recall that the chapter opens with elaborate descriptions of Basavaṇṇa providing the city's Bhaktas with valuables such as gold bracelets and silk clothes as part of his service to them. Even if we ignore the question of whether Basavaṇṇa uses the kingdom's treasury for this purpose—and it is amply suggested that he does—it is clear that money plays an important role in the Bhaktas' communal identity. This, in itself, is significant, because issues such as economic conditions and practices of material production are peripheral, almost-never explicitly addressed in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. If material wealth is invoked in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*' stories at all, it is in a derogatory sense.<sup>73</sup> The episode summarized above, with its wealth of fiscal-oriented detail (of long description of the Bhaktas' wealth; accountants, book counts, and audits; repeated usage of paradigmatic numbers; and fantastic sums of money) serves as a good example of how—despite the overall downplay of such issues in the stories, this literary culture is in fact preoccupied by money, even if referring to its obliquely.<sup>74</sup>

The relations and relationships between the Śivabhaktas and the Brahmins within this narrative framework deserve separate treatment and are dealt with in the following section. For now, it suffices to point to the fact that the Brahmins in this story

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<sup>73</sup> See section 6.6 above. The only indication of appreciation of material production in this regional śaiva thought system is the principle of “it is only work which is heaven” (*kāyakave kailāsa*), which appears in many Vacanas, theology treaties, and the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. However, this coin is used in this cultural milieu more as a signifier for social indiscrimination than as an endorsement of producing wealth. See section 6.3 above.

<sup>74</sup> R. N. Nandi (1975) connects the rise of Kannada śivabhakti during this period with new economic affluence in the northern parts of this region.

fit well into their paradigmatic role as the Śaraṇa's menace at the court, as we already came to know in previous stories. As was the case with Jōmmayya, the text does not disprove the Brahmins' allegations regarding the Śaraṇa's embezzlement. Rather, the plot dissolves the Brahmins' challenge through the Śaraṇa's miracle-making, to wit, Basavaṇṇa's fantastic inflation of the royal treasury. The narrative actually allows the possibility that Basavaṇṇa had indeed used the treasury for his communal purposes, but this issue becomes completely irrelevant once Basavaṇṇa performs his miracle. I mentioned earlier, while discussing Jōmmayya's killing, that Harihara's resort to a miracle rather than to a direct refute of the ethical charge made by the court Brahmins conveys a śaiva-based ethical prescription that transcends an intercommunal or political etiquette. In this story as well, Harihara's invocation of a *deus ex machina* solution to the Brahmins' charge about Basavaṇṇa's embezzlement suggests the superiority of devotional ethics over any other earthly jurisdiction.

The deterioration in the relationship between Basavaṇṇa and Bijjaḷa continues—helped by the Brahmins—in chapter ten of the *Basava Ragaḷē*.<sup>75</sup> In this chapter, Basavaṇṇa dines together with a Śaiva who is considered by the Brahmins an untouchable,<sup>76</sup> leading them to complain to Bijjaḷa, who demands explanations from Basavaṇṇa. The latter does not deny his actions but, rather, demonstrates to Bijjaḷa—through a miracle—a spiritual hierarchy opposite to that professed by the Brahmins. In the miracle, Basavaṇṇa cuts open the body of one Brahmin and blood flows out (and together with it, a few ugly maggots crawl out). This is narrative token for pollution. Then, Basavaṇṇa cuts open a toe of the so-called untouchable, who is a Śivaśaraṇa, and from it flows milk (a symbol of purity). As in earlier stories brought in this chapter, the

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<sup>75</sup> This chapter is summarized in section 6.4 above.

<sup>76</sup> The term for untouchable here is Pōlēya (Kittel 1982: 1025 s.v. *pōlē* 2).

Brahmins' complaint to the king might be a genuine one: in this case, Basavaṇṇa did eat with one they consider an untouchable. Basavaṇṇa's victory over them is based on an alternative ethical scale, which is particularly devotional. Again, as in stories referred to earlier in the chapter, Basavaṇṇa's superiority is enacted through a miraculous performance that transcends the boundaries of the actual complaints of the Brahmins and instead points to deeper, existential truth, in this case—the given purity of the Śivabhakta, regardless of his or her social status, contrasted with the physical impurity and vileness of the Brahmins. Significantly, milk and blood, the substances that mark purity and impurity in this scene, are taken from the Brahmanical imaginaire.<sup>77</sup>

This scene also marks the formation of an irrevocable chasm between Basavaṇṇa and Bijjaḷa: when Bijjaḷa wants to hear Basavaṇṇa's response to the Brahmins' allegations, he meets him in an open field in order to prevent Basavaṇṇa from polluting the palace after he shared his meal with an “untouchable.” At the end of the story, Basavaṇṇa blames Bijjaḷa for following those who are stupefied by the Vedas (Vedajaḍas<sup>78</sup>) and by false belief in *karma* (Karmins<sup>79</sup>). Basavaṇṇa then walks away to celebrate his victory in a public procession with fellow Bhaktas, while Bijjaḷa is described by Harihara as struck dumb by Basavaṇṇa's miracle. All these are indications that the relationship between Basavaṇṇa and Bijjaḷa has grown cold, in contrast to their rosy beginning. From chapter ten of the *Basava Ragaḷē* onward, Bijjaḷa is not mentioned

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<sup>77</sup> I return to the intentional inversion of Brahmanical values in section 8.2.2 below. One of the inversions in this story is articulated by Basavaṇṇa himself, who denies to have eaten in houses of the “real” untouchables, i.e., Bhavis. The exact same inversion is articulated in the doctrinal text the *Dikṣābodhē* in the form of a formal prohibition (vv. 1.413-14 in Padmarasa 1972: 23).

<sup>78</sup> See section 8.2.2 below. Throughout the *Basava Ragaḷē*, Brahmins are ridiculed by many epithets. See Desai (1968: 64).

<sup>79</sup> Harihara obliquely refers here to the soteriological license granted by *bhakti* belief to break away from the cycle of rebirths that is governed by the rule of *karma*.

again, except for a single line in chapter thirteen, which is discussed separately below. This breaking off in the *Basava Raḡaḷē* makes the story about the untouchable honored by Basavaṇṇa the last reference to Basavaṇṇa and Bijjaḷa in this work.

To bring some closure to the broken *Basava Raḡaḷē*'s narrative about the complicated relationship between these two towering figures, I again invoke here the story about Harihara at the Hōysaḷa court.<sup>80</sup> In that story, rival accountants (non-Śaivas, no doubt) complain to the Hōysaḷa king that Harihara signs the accounting books with Śiva's name. The complaint raises suspicion in the king's mind, who now questions Harihara's professional integrity and demands an immediate public audit. Harihara, not without taking offense, accedes to the audit only to interrupt it in the middle with a performative miracle, following which the king comes to recognize Śiva's greatness. Harihara, however, refuses to bury the hatchet and demonstratively quits the court to become a renouncer and a *śaiva* poet. The similarities between the stories about Harihara and Basavaṇṇa are extensive and meaningful: both start with the Śaraṇa's provocative, public gesture of *śaiva* devotion. Next, non-*śaiva* courtiers react to this provocation by complaining to the king. The king immediately suspects that the Śaraṇa, who in both cases is the chief accountant and has (at least potentially) access to the empire's treasury, steals from him. In turn, the Śaraṇa in both stories shows up to the audit and proves his spiritual superiority over the king and his sycophants using a miracle, leaving the actual accusations unanswered. At this point, both narratives do not preclude the possibility that the Śaraṇa did use the empire's money to provide for his *śaiva* predilection: Harihara performs his miracle during the audit and in effect prevents it from reaching its completion, and Basavaṇṇa does allow the audit to reach

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<sup>80</sup> See section 2.3 above.

completion, but its results indicate that considerable monies have disappeared.<sup>81</sup> Finally, in both stories we find that despite the king's recognition and acknowledgement of the Śaraṇa's spiritual dominance, the Śaraṇa is not willing to absolve the king for having doubted him: both stories end with a departure of the Śaraṇa from the king's court, though in Basavaṇṇa's case, this final departure occurs a bit later in the narrative.

By comparing the two stories, one can articulate the prescription that underlies all the Śaraṇa/king narratives surveyed here. The general premise in the Śaraṇa/king stories is that faithfulness to Śiva and his followers wins over general ethical conduct.<sup>82</sup> Accordingly, the king's fault in these stories is spiritual myopia, his inability to recognize the superiority of Śiva as manifest by his agents on earth, the Śaraṇas. All these ideological clashes culminate with the public display of the Śaraṇa's superiority. Thanks to the unexpected miracle—a *Śiva ex machina*, if you will—the Śaraṇa is not only exonerated from the worldlings' accusations, but immediately transcends all these earthly considerations and contingencies; often, he becomes transcendent to the scene itself.<sup>83</sup> We should note, however, that beyond this point matters can never return to their former state. Despite the king's unequivocal contrition, the Śaraṇa's resentment toward his unfaithfulness does not dissipate. This crisis marks an innate and irresolvable tension between the Śaraṇa and the king, caused by the Śaraṇa's inner passion to submerge in his devotion to Śiva, on the one hand, and his need to support

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<sup>81</sup> In Basavaṇṇa's case, there is a prior claim in chapter six of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, summarized above in section 7.4.1, that Basavaṇṇa did place in the treasury all the regional taxes given to him (*Basava Ragaḷē* 6.prose in Harihara 1999: 316).

<sup>82</sup> Desai argues for Basavaṇṇa's perfect moral conduct, against what is implied in the early hagiographies, by relying on ethical proclamations from Basavaṇṇa's *Vacanas* (1968: 306-308).

<sup>83</sup> I am grateful to Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi for elucidating this motif (personal communication, March 2011).

and sustain the community of Śaraṇas, on the other.

#### 8.1.4 AN EPILOGUE WITHOUT A CLOSURE

Considering the centrality of the Basavaṇṇa and Bijjala story in the *vīraśaiva* communal consciousness and in the Kannada culture more broadly, mention is warranted of Bijjala's demise as portrayed in the *Basava Ragaḷē*. As stated, about half of this Ragaḷē was lost and, therefore, we do not have its full depiction of the culmination of the rift between Basavaṇṇa and Bijjala and, more broadly, of the clash between the *śivabhakti* movement in Kalyāṇa and its greater society. These events are incomplete in the extant portion of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, but are described in details by all subsequent accounts, from the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* onwards. All these accounts narrate the tragic expel of the Śivabhaktas from this region and the fall of Kalyāṇa, which are elements that are largely absent from the *Basava Ragaḷē*. In fact, in the incomplete *Basava Ragaḷē* text we have at hand Harihara only mentions Bijjala's first capital Maṅgaḷavāḍa, and never mentions Basavaṇṇa's or Bijjala's move to Kalyāṇa.<sup>84</sup> It is possible that the Kalyāṇa events take up the second half of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, which is not available anymore.<sup>85</sup>

Chapter thirteen, the last one of the extant *Basava Ragaḷē*'s chapters, is problematic for two reasons: from a thematic aspect, we find in this chapter the statement that Basavaṇṇa is indirectly responsible for King Bijjala's murder, though unexplained by the text; from a textual aspect, this chapter appears to have been

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<sup>84</sup> The epigraphical evidence regarding Bijjala's early reign in Maṅgaḷavāḍa brings P. B. Desai to argue for the historical significance of the *Basava Ragaḷē*, which is the only literary source about Basavaṇṇa's operations in Maṅgaḷavāḍa (1968: 245-46, 252), although no inscriptions from the period and place mention Basavaṇṇa.

<sup>85</sup> One can only speculate about a possible connection between the cultural significance of the Kalyāṇa story for the later *vīraśaiva* communities and the absence of the relevant chapters of the *Basava Ragaḷē*.



interpolated. Let me briefly summarize this chapter’s storyline: it starts with a brief mentioning of a visit paid by the famous mystic Allama to Basavaṇṇa.<sup>86</sup> Then, the story turns to two other short and unrelated subplots (involving Basavaṇṇa’s wife and another Jaṅgama).<sup>87</sup> The next section, which concludes the chapter, appears in one manuscript only.<sup>88</sup> It contains the following line: “Basavaṇṇa has Bijjaḷa, who did harm to Śiva, killed.”<sup>89</sup> Then, the text says that Basavaṇṇa leaves for Kappaḍi and there unites with Śiva Kūḍalasaṅgamadeva. We are not told why Basavaṇṇa orders Bijjaḷa killed or why the latter is said to have done harm to Śiva.

The erratic structuring of subplots in the thirteenth chapter, its uncharacteristic brevity, and the shortage of reliable manuscripts have all been noted before,<sup>90</sup> and we can only speculate about the possible reasons for this textual anomaly. A literary reading of this chapter would suggest a deliberate stylistic signaling on behalf of Harihara of the tragedy that ruptured Basavaṇṇa’s career and ruined the growing śaiva community of Kalyāṇa. A less willing reading would explain the erratic and haphazard narration of this chapter as an indication that this chapter was

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<sup>86</sup> *Basava Ragaḷē* 13.1-8 in Harihara (1999: 334). There is no indication in the text about whether this seminal meeting occurs in Maṅgaḷavāḍa or in Kalyāṇa, though all other traditions claim this occurred in Kalyāṇa. What is minutely represented by eight verses in the *Basava Ragaḷē* becomes during the Virakta period of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the foundation story for the *vīraśaiva* community, constructed around Allama and Basavaṇṇa’s activity in Kalyāṇa at the *anubhava maṅṭapa* (“the Hall of Experience,” Ramanujan 1973: 64, sometimes spelled as *anubhāva maṅṭapa*). See discussion about Śiva assemblies (*śivaḡṣṭhis*) and the proleptic usage of the term *anubhava maṅṭapa* in section 7.4 above. About literary accounts regarding the Hall of Experience, see Chandra Shobhi (2005: 155-56, 232-43, 286-87), Michael (1992: 52-53), Desai (1968: 188-89, 270-72).

<sup>87</sup> The latter incident is discussed in section 5.2.3 above.

<sup>88</sup> See footnote by the editor Ěř. Ěř. Kalaburgi in Harihara (1999: 335).

<sup>89</sup> *Basava Ragaḷē* 13.59 in Harihara (1999: 335):  
*śivadrovaṁ gaida bijjaḷana kōlisutaṁ*

<sup>90</sup> K. Ishwaran pithily states: “[T]he style and the biographical account presented in the last chapter is not congruent with the style of the rest of the text” (1992: 25)

interpolated by a later editor, a mixture of disparate verses rather than an organic continuum of the original work. Naturally, each of these two approaches sheds a different light on how we interpret this text's representation of Basavaṇṇa's responsibility for Bijjala's killing. It is noteworthy, however, that the other central literary source from the thirteenth century, the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, makes similar claims regarding Basavaṇṇa's connection to Bijjala's murder.<sup>91</sup> To complicate matters further, contemporaneous epigraphy, which does not contain any references to Basavaṇṇa, is also obscure regarding the circumstances for Bijjala's death.<sup>92</sup> It seems that a definite historical narrativization of the clash of the Śaivas at Kalyāṇa, Bijjala's demise, and Basavaṇṇa's role in these events, is beyond reach, at least until further evidence may be found.<sup>93</sup>

Regardless of the particular way in which Basavaṇṇa and Bijjala's paths parted, the premise of the stories surveyed in this chapter thus far, that political life and devotionalism are inherently conflicted, doomed the relationship between those two prominent figures from its very beginning. The intense commitment to Śiva and his followers by the *śaiva* leader, coupled with the strain of innate antagonism in this community toward worldly compromise, as delineated so acutely by these stories, precludes, on the aesthetic, narrative level rather than historically, the possibility for a

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<sup>91</sup> Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990: 262). Compare with Settar (2000: 77-79), Desai (1968: 101-102, 220-31).

<sup>92</sup> Gopal (1981: 371-72), Nilakanta Sastri (1976: 179), (1960: 377).

<sup>93</sup> Nilakanta Sastri's claim that the Ablūr (Abbalūru) inscriptions contradict literary claims about Bijjala's death seems to the author of this study unsubstantiated, as there is no counter referencing regarding Bijjala's death in these inscriptions nor any other indication that might undermine what is claimed by the literary sources. I discuss the Abbalūru inscriptions in section 9.2.1 below and in Ben-Herut (2012). Desai (1968) dedicates a whole chapter in his monograph about Basavaṇṇa and Bijjala to this question ("Responsibility of Bijjala's Death," pp. 220-231). See a similar strategy to Desai's by Settar (2000: 79-80). To the author of this paper, the claim made by these two scholars that Basavaṇṇa had nothing to do with Bijjala's murder seems as overly-interpretive and speculative based on the sources we have.

long-term and peaceful cooperation with the king. An indication of the literary anomaly imbued in Basavaṇṇa's public service at King Bijjaḷa's court is found in the title of this poem, *Basavarājadevara Ragaḷē* ("A Ragaḷē for the Godly King Basavaṇṇa"), a title that leaves little room for any human sovereignty over Basavaṇṇa or, for that matter, over any other Śivabhakta.<sup>94</sup>

## 8.2 Vaiṣṇava Brahmins

The narratives surveyed above are already replete with Brahmin characters, and, to a certain point at least, we are already familiar with the text's claims regarding the Brahmins' doings in these court clashes. (The word most commonly used to describe their function in this chapter thus far has been "menace"). In addition, we are not finished with kings in this section; they take an active role in the following stories as well as in the previous ones. Why then dedicate at this point a section to the Brahmins? Because the way in which Harihara deals in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* with Brahmins and, more broadly, with Brahmanism, is multilayered and ambiguous, and this complexity merits separate examination.

### 8.2.1 A SPONTENOUS FIRE

We set out on this exploration with the *Śaṅkaradāsimayyana Ragaḷē* (*Śaṅkara Ragaḷē* henceforth), a Ragaḷē dedicated to a Śaraṇa called Śaṅkaradāsimayya. The richness of miracle-makings and interactions ascribed to him by Harihara in this Ragaḷē attests to his centrality for the culture in which Harihara composed his poetry. We already visited Śaṅkaradāsimayya while discussing his encounter with another famous

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<sup>94</sup> Basavarāja ("King Basavaṇṇa") and Basaveśvara ("Lord Basavaṇṇa"), as well as Basavaṇṇa ("Elder Brother Basavaṇṇa"), are very common designations for Basavaṇṇa until today. More generally, Harihara oftentimes addressed specific Śaraṇas in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* with royal titles (Savadattimaṭha 1999: 325, Knn). See also section 2.3.2 above.

Śaraṇa called Jeḍaradāsimayya in the second chapter of this *Ragaḷe*,<sup>95</sup> and the initiation (*dikṣe*, *upadeśa*) he underwent in the temple in the first chapter.<sup>96</sup> Here we shall review the fantastic and dramatic denouement of this initiation for our current purposes. Recall that by the initiation's end, Śaṅkaradāsimayya receives on his forehead a fiery third eye—Śiva's fiery third eye—and immediately starts using it to shoot fire. The first target is Viṣṇu's statue, which is burnt completely from the discharged fire. Then, Śaṅkaradāsimayya shifts to Brahmā's statue, which is split and broken to pieces. Śaṅkaradāsimayya attends in similar fashion to the remaining statues of the thirty-three gods, followed by the seven Kṛttikās and the eight Vasus. By the end of the fiery ordeal, all statues in the temple (except that of Śiva of course) are deformed beyond recognition. Only when Śiva himself approaches Śaṅkaradāsimayya and restrains him and his fiery eye—does it belong to Śiva or to Śaṅkaradāsimayya at this point?—the third eye's chaotic and consuming powers are suppressed.

As suggested by the question about the ownership of the third eye—Śiva's or his Śaraṇa's—this scene presents us with significant implications regarding the reconfiguration of Śiva, such as the externalization and detachment of the god's wrath, in the form of his third eye, away from of his iconic body—a sort of a counter-metonym—and the parental, assuaging role assigned here to Śiva himself after this iconic split.<sup>97</sup> For the purpose of the current discussion about sectarianism against Vaiṣṇava Brahmins in the *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu*, we can note two significant elements in this story: first, Vaiṣṇavism is marked in this story as the primary target of Śaṅkaradāsimayya's wrath. Śaṅkaradāsimayya's name prior to the initiation is Govindadeva, an ambiguous

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<sup>95</sup> This chapter is summarized in section 6.6.2 above.

<sup>96</sup> This chapter is summarized in section 7.3 above.

<sup>97</sup> See section 5.2 above.

term in terms of its sectarian connotations.<sup>98</sup> Second, one readily senses the spontaneous, uncontrolled, perhaps also frivolous nature of Śaṅkaradāsimayya's attack on other gods of the Brahmanical religion. Far from being depicted as a preplanned attack, it is a jovial act, relished as such by the author.<sup>99</sup> The absence of preplanning in the attack on Brahmanical religion in this episode is significant and will serve as the main analytic prism for the remainder of this chapter.

By the end of scene just described, Śaṅkaradāsimayya's emission of flashes is restrained, but not for long. The following story appears in the second part of the second chapter of the *Śaṅkara Ragaḷe*.<sup>100</sup> Like most of the stories surveyed earlier in this chapter, it occurs in Kalyāṇa, ostensibly during the second quarter of the twelfth century, under the reign of one of Vikramāditya's sons, King Jayasimharāya.

**[2 cont.]** The Brahmins at the court of King Jayasimharāya are very skilled and brave with regard to receiving cow donations (*godāna*) and such. Once, after performing a benediction (*āśīrvāda*) for the king, they tell him: "We heard of a popular devotee who burnt with his third eye the statues of gods and goddesses. Narasimha, the killer of Hiraṇyakaśipu, is here with us. Let us invite this Śaṅkaradāsimayya and see how his third eye performs in front of our god." The king agrees and invites Śaṅkaradāsimayya to the city. Śaṅkaradāsimayya, unaware of the inimical intentions of his hosts, accepts the invitation and is received in the city with great honor by the king himself. Then, he settles down with some Śaraṇas and they start a Śiva assembly (*śivagoṣṭhi*<sup>101</sup>). After a few days, the king and his Brahmins meet Śaṅkaradāsimayya and visit with him the city's *śaiva* temples. Unexpectedly, they also show him a Viṣṇu temple. The Viṣṇu

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<sup>98</sup> Govinda, literally "cow herder," usually refers to Kṛṣṇa. Govindadeva can either denote "Lord of Kṛṣṇa," (which gives the title a *śaiva* bent) or "Lord who is Kṛṣṇa" (which gives it a *vaiṣṇava* bent). In any case, Śaṅkaradāsimayya asks that Śiva gives him a new *śaiva* name right after destroying the Viṣṇu statue (*Śaṅkara Ragaḷe* 1.199-200 in Harihara 1999: 279).

<sup>99</sup> This can be observed, for example, in the passage that describes how the fire spreads over different gods (*Śaṅkara Ragaḷe* 1.171-187 in Harihara 1999: 279).

<sup>100</sup> This Ragaḷe is of middle length of three chapters. The first part of the second chapter of the *Śaṅkara Ragaḷe* is summarized in section 6.6.2 above.

<sup>101</sup> See section 7.4 above.

status inside the temple is made of gold, looking as beautiful as a chicken hen, and even more! The king then asks Śaṅkaradāsimayya to open his third eye and perform an auspicious consecration (*ghanapratiṣṭhā*) for this Narasiṃha statue. Śaṅkaradāsimayya refuses, saying he does not wish to harm the statue or the celebrated people around him, but the king insists, commenting sarcastically (*parihāsa*) that this would be a benevolent consecration. At this point, Śaṅkaradāsimayya loses his temper. He removes the cover of the third eye and opens it wide. Immediately, fire shoots out of the eye and burns the Narasiṃha statue. First, its beard is set on fire. Then, its mouth goes up in flames, resembling a large frying pan. The lion's teeth break off and fall to the ground. The tongue crumbles to pieces. The eyes pop out of the lion's face, which is now covered by flames. Its fingernails become crooked from the unbearable heat. Finally, the whole statue melts to the ground like wax. Jayasiṃharāya and the Vaiṣṇavas are greatly frightened. They beg for Śaṅkaradāsimayya's mercy, declaring that now they recognize that he is Śiva's incarnation on earth. Śaṅkaradāsimayya assents, closes his third eye and replaces its cover, and declares they should fear no more. Śaṅkaradāsimayya then returns to his house to continue the Śiva assembly with fellow Śaraṇas.

As mentioned, sectarianism is but one of the themes of Śaṅkaradāsimayya's story, but, in the case of the specific passage above, it is pronounced. The description of the Brahmins at the court of King Jayasiṃharāya, for example, begins with the model author's sarcastic statement about their habit of taking donations, an insinuation for their corrupt nature and vocation. Sarcasm marks not only the author's sectarian perspective of the Brahmins, but also the king's attitude to Śaṅkaradāsimayya. It is explicitly stated that the malevolent king uses sarcasm (*parihāsa*) when addressing Śaṅkaradāsimayya at the Narasiṃha temple. In addition to sarcasm, markedly harsh language permeates this passage: Śaṅkaradāsimayya is described as the one who "stopped the arrogance of the group of those faithful to other divinities" (*paradaivakulada garvavan ilupi*<sup>102</sup>), and the Brahmins are referred to as the "unfaithful

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<sup>102</sup> *Śaṅkara Raḡaḷe* 3.9 in Harihara (1999: 283). Such titles are commonly used by Harihara. See, for

liars to their own lord” (Svāmivañcakaru).

As is the case with stories surveyed earlier in this chapter, Purāṇic stories have a significant role in inflaming the sectarian tension which saturates the king’s court, although the Purāṇic presence is played out in the *Śaṅkara Ragaḷe* somewhat differently than what we have met earlier: while in the other stories Purāṇic storytelling was framed as a recollection of the past with political implications for the present, here the story itself reenacts Purāṇic elements (the third eye as a spontaneous, uncontrollable, and consuming force; Śaṅkaradāsimayya as a semi-incarnation of Śiva who is challenged by Viṣṇu Narasiṃha and prevails).<sup>103</sup> In this episode, the boundaries between past stories and present reality are melted by the fire emitted from the third eye, and, on a more general note, we again observe how Purāṇic imaginaire is central for the narrative grammar of the sectarianism that pervades the *Ragaḷegaḷu*.

The sense of literalization of the sectarian conflict between Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism also affects the arena for its resolution. Despite this story’s investment in the political forces at the king’s court just like previous stories surveyed above, it consciously transposes the arena of contestation from the court to the temple by the king’s invitation to Śaṅkaradāsimayya to enter the *vaiṣṇava* temple. Here, the contest is not focused on fiscal patronage but, rather, on the king’s direct endorsement of the sectarian identity of the temple, although this could be read as another form of royal asset being contested by the belligerent sects.

What is the nature of the clash described here, and what are its limits? The two fiery attacks by Śaṅkaradāsimayya on the other divinities’ statues are perceived by our author as felicitous and fortunate, as one would expect. However, we should notice that

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example, footnote 59 above.

<sup>103</sup> The identification between Śaṅkaradāsimayya and Śiva is explicit in the text (section 5.2.2 above).

they are also inherently accidental and spontaneous. There is nothing contrived in Śaṅkaradāsimayya's searing of the statues of other gods, not even during his earlier initiation episode. In that case, he is unprovoked, and no indication is given of preplanning on his part. Allow me to be clearer on this issue: we do not find in either attack any sense of premeditation, of a well-thought-of scheme to destroy the competing religious community. As much as the spontaneous attacks are celebrated by the text as moments of victory, these moments are also presented by the text as short-lived and are immediately restrained. The text provides the emotional catharsis involved in the annihilation of any sort of "religious other," but at the same time recognizes the danger such a reckless and unruly behavior poses. Śiva himself explicitly says so when he appears in front of the emitting-fire Śaṅkaradāsimayya during the first fire ordeal:

"Oh, dear child, if you look with your third eye  
 you shall burn all the other gods,  
 and all the worldlings who serve other gods,  
 and then—the whole city, and the whole world, and the earth itself!  
 Not a single man shall remain, my dear child!  
 Enough, please, enough!" yelled Śiva toward the forehead.

*... ho ho maganē nīm noḍē  
 devar irē mikkuhōraḡam noḍuvarē mattē  
 bhāvipaḍē paradaivavaṃ noḍuvarē mattē  
 puravuridu jagavuridu dharēvuridēlē maganē  
 narar ḡbbar uḷiyadantappudinnēlē maganē  
 beḍayya beḍendu ghuḍu ghuḍipa bhāḷakkē<sup>104</sup>*

Śiva's proclamation is remarkable on several levels. The most tantalizing,

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<sup>104</sup> Śaṅkara *Raḡalē* 1.188-93 in Harihara (1999: 279).



perhaps, is the reconfiguration of Śiva as the “responsible adult” in this scene.<sup>105</sup> But for the sake of the current discussion, this brief monologue exemplifies the underlying sectarian premise in this story, as well as in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as a whole, according to which the daily reality of co-existence with Vaiṣṇava Brahmins and more broadly with Vaiṣṇavism, despite its being a source of tension and friction, is also, at the same time, a concrete and persistent part of daily life, a part that must not be annihilated by the Śaraṇa’s violent ruptures. In contrast, the antagonistic prescription in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* against Jainism is totalistic and relentless.

### 8.2.2 QUALIFYING “OTHERNESS”

The following story about Kallayya demonstrates the complexity of relationship between the Śaraṇas and the orthodoxy of Brahmins in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and thus can be seen as a direct continuation of the discussion regarding Śaṅkaradāsimayya. Like Śaṅkaradāsimayya, whose miraculous transplant of Śiva’s third eye occurs in a temple that houses different gods, Kallayya also operates within a complex sectarian reality. Thus, his resistance to the people around him who belong to other sects mirrors in the text the intensity of his inner devotion. And yet, Kallayya’s challenging of the Brahmanical authority is not totalistic in that it also reveals a certain level of acceptance, influence, fusion, as well as reversal of Brahmin values and themes into the Śaraṇa’s cultural system.

We already dealt with Kallayya in the discussion of the role of determination (*niṣṭhē*) in the life of the Śaraṇa.<sup>106</sup> Here, we shall focus on a minor scene in the life of Kallayya, proximate to his ascendance to Kailāsa. Until this moment in the *Hāvinahāḷa*

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<sup>105</sup> This theme is discussed in section 5.2.3 above.

<sup>106</sup> See section 5.1.2 above.

*Kallayyana Ragaḷē* (*Kalla Ragaḷē* henceforth), Kallayya's contact with people of other sects remains secondary. The text tells us that as a child Kallayya hates the worldlings (Bhavis), who are unworthy (*aprastuta*), but that he is not bold enough to face them directly. Soon after, we are told about an incident in which Kallayya refuses to work for a wealthy Vaiṣṇava. These sectarian interactions, however, are indirect: Kallayya, at this point of the story, refrains from confronting the "religious others." It is only after mastering the Vedas and the Śāstras that Kallayya starts facing non-Śaivas. His first interaction is engaging in theological debates against Brahmins, atheists (*Lokāyatas*), Buddhists, and materialists (*Cārvākas*).<sup>107</sup> This episode is short, consisting of only five verses, and it is hard to determine the nature and content of these debates beyond the claim that Kallayya wins them all.

The next direct encounter with antagonist Brahmins in Kallayya's *Ragaḷē* occurs close to the end of the *Kalla Ragaḷē*:

Kallayya sends his daughter to fetch water in order to worship Śiva. While returning from the water tank to the temple with the mud pot full of water on her head, Kallayya's daughter sees a Brahmin named Somāji coming opposite her on the road. At the same time, a mad elephant (*madagaja*) blocks the road, and due to the lack of space, the Brahmin accidentally touches the young girl. She is startled and screams: "Śiva, rescue me! I was tainted with sin and the water is now polluted and cannot be used for the ritual!" She deliberately throws away the mud pot, which breaks on the ground. The Brahmin cannot believe his eyes. He runs to his fellow Brahmins and tells them what has just happened. Immediately, they all go to complain about the girl to her father Kallayya. They tell him that no one in the world avoids the touch of Brahmins, implying that they are polluted and should not be touched. Kallayya retorts the Brahmins: "Even the dog of a Śivabhakta will not touch you!" For this, the Brahmin replies with a question: "Can your dog recite the Vedas? If that is the case then we accept our position to be as low as that of a dog." Kallayya immediately fetches a black dog from a fellow Śivabhakta. He asks the Brahmins: "Which Veda do you

<sup>107</sup> *Kalla Ragaḷē* vv. 190-94 in Harihara (1999: 367).

want the dog to chant?” and they reply: “The Yajurveda!” Kallayya prays to Śiva and Pārvati and immediately the dog starts chanting the Yajurveda in a sweet voice and according to tradition. Kallayya fondly calls the dog “the King of Vedic Recitation” (Vedakādhipati) and declares: “All Brahmins are equal to Śaivas’ dogs!” The Brahmins admit defeat and praise Kallayya, who retires in order to worship Śiva.

The dripping sarcasm at the pinnacle of this story, in which a Śaraṇa’s dog recites the Vedas “in a sweet voice and according to tradition,” is exceptionally effective, but can also be misleading to a point, because it might convey the impression that knowledge and mastery of the Vedas is a lowly matter in the view of the author of this text. But the text’s approach toward the Vedas and, more broadly, Brahminism, is more complex than that. There is a basic reversal in this episode: Harihara aims at ridiculing the Brahmins’ haughtiness by reversing the trope of exclusive Vedic knowledge and general untouchability on its head:<sup>108</sup> a Brahmin’s touch contaminates ritual water, and Vedas are mastered by a dog. The reversed trope dictates appropriating the social capital traditionally claimed by Brahmins and, by this, also appropriating their social status.

This is why the reversal of untouchability and, more to the point, its public performance, is so central in this story. Similarly, battle over access and mastery of Vedic knowledge entails in this story social acceptability, legitimacy, and prestige. In fact, when considering an earlier episode in Kallayya’s life story, the one in which he wins in theological debates with Brahmins and others using Vedic and Śāstric knowledge that he acquired through learning, it is clear that Kallayya is already familiar with the value of mastering the Veda when challenged by the Brahmins in this

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<sup>108</sup> See section 6.4 above.

episode.<sup>109</sup> Significantly, Kallayya himself is not a Brahmin but a goldsmith,<sup>110</sup> and, therefore, his access to and knowledge of the Vedas mark social upscale in his personal biography. Twice in this story, then, the Vedas are used as instruments for attaining public respectability and even a certain type of upward social mobility. Significantly, for the author of Kallayya's story, the Vedas in themselves are not directly efficacious or meaningful on a theological plane but on a social one, when the Śaraṇa interacts with non-Śaivas and, especially, with non-Śaivas who are Brahmins.

This instrumental approach to the Vedas permeates the narrative tradition of the early Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition. V. Narayana Rao makes the following claim with regard to the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, (which, incidentally, also tells Kallayya's story, though with considerable difference).<sup>111</sup> Narayana Rao writes:

Even though Somanātha [the author of the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*] vehemently rejected brahminism and brahminic literary styles, he accepted the Vedas, the *purāṇas*, and the *śāstras* ... Although in every detail the BP [*Basava Purāṇamu*] was antibrahminic, Somanātha insisted that the religious practices advocated therein closely adhere to the vedic texts. He took care, however, not to extend the respect given the texts to their chanters, the Brahmins.<sup>112</sup>

This statement, considered together with the above episode from the *Kalla Ragaḷē*, indicates that the Vedas are accepted by this *śivabhakti* tradition, if only in the most utilitarian sense, which is social interaction with people of other sects. This is in contrast to effective verbal knowledge about Śiva, which is reserved to the new literary

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<sup>109</sup> That episode is summarized and discussed in section 5.1.2 above.

<sup>110</sup> *Kalla Ragaḷē* v. 8 in Harihara (1999: 365)  
... *honnakāyakavalli toḷatoḷagē*

<sup>111</sup> The story appears in the seventh chapter of the Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu* (Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair 1990: 233-36). It also receives attention in David Shulman's book review of Narayana Rao's translation of the *Basava Purāṇamu* to English (1993a).

<sup>112</sup> Somanātha, Narayana Rao, and Roghair (1990: 7).

culture of this tradition, foremostly the poems by and stories of famous Bhaktas.<sup>113</sup> To summarize Harihara's relation to the Vedas, it suffices to quote a verse from the end of the *Musutēya Cauḍayyana Ragaḷē*,<sup>114</sup> when Śiva eulogies the Śaraṇa Cauḍayya in Kailāsa, in front of his attendants. At that moment, Harihara writes: "Musutēya Cauḍayya prostrates to Śiva's twin feet ... the feet which cannot be visualized by seekers of Vedic knowledge."<sup>115</sup>

Significantly, the affirmation of the Vedas in this tradition (albeit grounded in mundane instrumentality in this case) attests to a certain intimacy this tradition has with Brahmanism, an intimacy that is not shared with other "religious others." This is an important point to make when contrasted with Harihara's treatment of Jains, which is discussed separately in the following chapter. While the Brahmins are an enemy "from within," one that shares a rather wide spectrum of cultural indexes, and thus can be perceived as an "opponent other," the Jains are targeted by this literary culture as a "wholly other," as a communal and cultural body that despite the fact it occupies similar social resources and even shared geographical spaces with the Śaivas, uses a set of cultural symbols that is altogether alien to this śaiva culture.<sup>116</sup> In light of these complexities, it is difficult to overlook at the irony imbued in the following statement, taken from the *Vaijakavvēya Ragaḷē*. The statement is made by a female Śivabhakta while retorting to her *jaina* husband during a heated argument: "[T]he Jina is nothing, as it is

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<sup>113</sup> See sections 1.1.4 and 7.4 above.

<sup>114</sup> This Ragaḷē is summarized and discussed in section 7.1.1 above.

<sup>115</sup> *Musutēya Cauḍayyana Ragaḷē* vv. 159, 161 in Harihara (1999: 345):  
*musutēya cavuṇḍarāyariṁ harana caraṇakkē ...*  
*vedaṅgaḷ arasi kāṇada pādayugaḷakkē*

<sup>116</sup> I borrow the terms "opponent other" and "wholly other" from by Hirst (2008) but apply them differently in the context of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

not even mentioned in the Vedas and the Śāstras.”<sup>117</sup> Here, the instrumental appropriation of the Vedas by the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition is used to demarcate a boundary, and the Jains are clearly placed outside this boundary.

### 8.3 Concluding Remarks: At Court, *Ad Hoc*

In this chapter, I discussed the manner with which Harihara presents in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* sectarian conflicts that partake at kings’ courts. We started by identifying three forces that operate outside the inner circle of Śaivas: the king, the Brahmins, and the Jains. Because of the inherent connectedness that permeates the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* between the former two as well as the marked disjunction between Jains and court circles in the relevant *Ragaḷēs*, this chapter was dedicated to the king and the Brahmins as one narrative unit while the following chapter separately deals with the Jains.

Within the bounded narratives of *Ragaḷēgaḷu* that involves kings and Brahmins, we noticed that the three central agents involved in courtly dynamics—the Śaraṇa, the king, and the Brahmin administrators—are almost always connected to each other in a complex and volatile relationship that involves transference of fiscal resources, political support, and public religious attributions.<sup>118</sup> Accordingly, these narratives are situated at the court, where the Śaraṇa is required by the antagonists—the king and the Brahmins—to prove his political loyalty and ethical impartiality. The Śaraṇa, however, always chooses to deflect attention from the political and ethical doubts raised against

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<sup>117</sup> *Vaija Ragaḷē v.* 213 in Harihara (1999: 386):  
*vedadḷagē śāstradḷagē noḍal illa nuḍiyal illa*

See discussion about this story in section 9.3.2 below.

<sup>118</sup> The only exception to this triangular relationship in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is the *Kalla Ragaḷē*, in which the confrontation between the Śaraṇa and the Brahmins is played out without any relation to political authority or finances, and outside the court.

him and instead performs a miracle that transcends the immediate charges and displays the Śaraṇa's spiritual superiority. Through this paradigmatic denouement, the public and sectarian conflict dissolves and is replaced by a public acknowledgement of the śaiva superiority on behalf of the king and the Brahmins.

From the perspective of the Śaraṇa, his function and presence at the court is always conflictual, perhaps even paradoxical. His overt motivation for his political activities is to funnel material resources to the direction of the Śaraṇa community. On the other hand, he is perpetually drawn to a totalistic renunciatory way of living that defies such worldly affairs and contingencies. This ecstatic, almost mystical form of devotionism, is usually presented in the stories in the form of Śiva assemblies (*śivagoṣṭhis*). The Śaraṇa's Janus-faced role causes his presence at the court to always be provisional and relied upon *ad hoc* solutions. It is only natural that these stories end with the Śaraṇa's dramatic resignation from his public office, a resignation accompanied with a public proclamation to dedicate his life henceforth to worshipping the god. The fact that this resolution is not always successfully maintained—that the Śaraṇa may return to his earthly position at the court—reiterates to the basic paradox described above.

The king in all these stories is a flat character, and the author is always suspicious toward his intentions and loyalty to the śaiva endeavor. At the same time, the king in these stories is often described as operating within a complex nexus of conflicting loyalties and sectarian sensibilities. The king's necessity to successfully navigate between these intricate forces often yields unexpected narrative turns. However, the stories always culminate in the king's realization of the superiority of the śaiva faith, as communicated by Śiva's human agent, the Śaraṇa. Despite the king's

formulaic acknowledgement, often accompanied by generous offers of patronage, the Śaraṇa turn his back and walks away from the court and its worldly dynamics. In a sense, the necessity for the Śaraṇa to exercise a miracle at the court also marks his disenchantment from courtly life and from the possibility of maintaining a positive and fruitful relationship with the king. The devotional logic of the early Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition dictates either complete surrender to the *śaiva* faith or complete alienation. Under such a strong binary approach, courtly compromises and temporary political treaties are difficult to contain and, eventually, are utterly rejected. The king can only be an avid supporter of the Śivabhaktas or a terrible threat to them. There is no room for middle ground, and when the king moves away from the Śaraṇa, the latter is quick to quit his courtly job and disengage from his worldly relations.

The Brahmins in these narratives are lexically marked as the “religious other” (Parasamayins, *paradaivasantāna*). Significantly, however, they are “opponent others” and not “wholly others.” The relevant stories reveal a sense of deep acquaintance and intimacy with the Brahmins, through shared scriptures (Vedas, Śāstras, Purāṇas) and even shared practices (public and communal storytelling, temple worship of multiple Purāṇic gods, including Śiva). Thus, often the Śaraṇa’s victory over the Brahmins involves a marked appropriation of their ethics and value system (such as untouchability). Accordingly, active resistance to the Brahmins is always contained in these stories and lacks the texture of totalistic annihilation. Things shall be quite different when we discuss the stories about clashes with Jains in the following chapter.

The fact that Harihara and Somanātha were able to produce literature that is so visibly antagonistic and immune to immediate political considerations is significant for several reasons. The political freedom that enabled such anti-courtly rhetoric surely



required a powerful network of social and institutional support outside the court to substitute and sustain the composition and transmission of such materials.<sup>119</sup> By making this claim, I build on Daud Ali's argument that courtly interactions included multiple agents beyond the king.<sup>120</sup> Ali criticizes the patronage/legitimacy model for understanding political interactions in classical Sanskrit literature until the thirteenth century. The case of Harihara's and Somanātha's explicit resistance to the court calls for an expansion of Ali's model beyond the limited purview of the court. The appearance of a new *bhakti* literary culture that had enough self-confidence to challenge contemporary courtly literary practices as well as to explicitly assert itself as a distinct cultural entity, independent of royal affiliations and interests, signals significant social and political developments. In a way, this literary turn completes Sheldon Pollock's argument regarding the vernacular shift in the royal courts of south India at the turn of the first millennium.<sup>121</sup> It appears, at least according to the limited purview of the Kannada hagiographies at hand, that the *bhakti* vernacular turn was no-less political, even though it occurred outside the courts or, actually, *because* it occurred elsewhere, and protestingly so.

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<sup>119</sup> See sections 1.1.4 and 2.3.2 above.

<sup>120</sup> Ali (2004).

<sup>121</sup> Pollock (2006).

## 9 Ragaḷēs about Jains

There are markedly two different “religious others” in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and a watershed line can be drawn between the two; its color is sanguine. While the stories about Brahmins are imbued with rivalry and courtly ruses, the ones about Jains are imbued with physical violence and bloodshed. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* clearly communicates that the Jains are a different kind of “religious other,” and this chapter is dedicated to delineate its salient features.

### 9.1 Wave of Mutilation

We start out the journey into Harihara’s narration of conflicts with Jains with the most odious case in terms of its violent idiomaticity. The Ragaḷē’s name is the *Kovūra Bōmmitandēya Ragaḷē* (*KBōmma Ragaḷē* henceforth), a medium length Ragaḷē of three chapters. Here is its summary:

[1] The town Kovūru, located in the northern region of Kalyāṇa, is ruled by a Cālukya king called Bōmmayya.<sup>1</sup> He is a devoted Bhakta of Śiva Rāmanātha, whose temple is about half a mile away from the town. The town of Kovūru is swarming with *jaina* snakes, with eight thousand *jaina* temples (*basadis*) and eight thousand *jaina* ascetics (Rṣis). They are eight times worse than the materialists (Cārvākas), and they control the entire administration of the town, while only three hundred benevolent Śaivas reside in Kovūru. Nevertheless, Bōmmayya has an undivided determination (*ekaniṣṭhē*) in the *śaiva* faith. With the blessings of Śiva, Bōmmitandē and his wife Kaḷāvati beget a son, and when the child turns sixteen, Bōmmitandē conducts a huge festival for the Śivabhaktas (*gaṇaparva*) at the Śiva Rāmanātha temple and orders that he must not be interrupted during the festivities. At that time, a hellish Jain (Pātaki) comes to the palace dressed as a Śivabhakta. Bōmmitandē’s son receives him with great

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<sup>1</sup> Kovūru is identified as today’s Kovaḷḷi by Śāmarāya (2009 [1967]: 82n2, Knn). However, the Ragaḷē describes Kovūru as situated north to Kalyāṇa (*KBōmma Ragaḷē* 1.1 in Harihara 1999: 336), while Kovaḷḷi is to the south of it and quite remote (almost two hundred miles).

respect, and when the two are alone, the Jain takes out a sword, stabs the boy and cuts him into pieces. After fifteen days, the celebrations end. When Bōmmitandē returns to his town, the Jains meet him and claim that there is no merit in Śaiva celebrations. An argument ensues, and the Jains challenge Bōmmitandē to revive a large tree they have just burnt to the ground. Bōmmitandē sprays the tree's cinders with holy ash (*bhasma*) and the tree immediately grows back, this time ten times larger than it was before. King Bōmmayya joyfully continues the walk to his palace, but there he learns of the murder of his son. Bōmmayya immediately gathers the three-hundred Śaraṇas and, together with his wife Kaḷāvati, they all go to the child's burial space (*samādhi*). There, he orders the dead child to get up, and so the child does. Everyone is rendered ecstatic by the miraculous revival.

[2] Bōmmayya decides to organize another festival, larger than the one before, but the eight thousand Jains demand that this time Bōmmayya brings Śiva Rāmanātha to the city rather than having the celebrations in the temple on the city's outskirts, so they can see him. Bōmmayya calls them devilish beings (*Piśācas*) but accepts the challenge of publically displaying the Śiva statue. Śiva Rāmanātha is brought to the city on a bull, and when the procession passes *jaina* temples, the Jinas inside tremble with fear. Bōmmayya is ecstatic on the occasion and shouts toward the Jains: "You are an anthill that must be burnt! You have made three mistakes (referring to the burning of the tree, the boy's murder, and forcing Rāmanātha into the city) and I have had it with you!" Meanwhile, the eight thousand Jains are organizing their own festival called *puṣpāñjali* ("handful of flowers") and collect poisonous flowers for this purpose. When Bōmmayya hears about this, he becomes furious, and promises to tear down and smash all the *jaina* naked dolls (*battalē bōmbēgaḷu*). Bōmmayya and the three hundred Śaraṇas strap on armor and weapons and start killing any Jain they encounter (whether Paṇḍita, Ṛṣi, or Āruhata). After slaughtering all the eight thousand Jains, the Śaraṇas want to go into each house and replace the Jina with a *liṅga*, but Bōmmayya refuses to even set his foot inside the houses of untouchables (*Hōlēyas*<sup>2</sup>). Instead, they raze all the *jaina* houses, bring into town many *śaiva* Bhaktas, and reestablish it as a *śaiva* settlement (*śivapura*).

[3] Bōmmayya organizes many assemblies (*goṣṭhis*<sup>3</sup>) in which the Śaraṇas sing

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<sup>2</sup> Hōlēya is also spelled Pōlēya in some locations in the text. See sections 3.3.1 and 6.4 above.

<sup>3</sup> See discussion about this term in section 7.4 above.

the stories of ancient Bhaktas (Purātanas). He also grants all the Śivabhaktas new clothes and gold, and venerates them all. One day, during such an assembly, a scroll falls from the sky, sealed by Nandi (Śiva's attendant). It is a message from Śiva Rāmanātha, who orders Bōmmayya to join him on the morrow at Kailāsa, with his three hundred Śaraṇas, on the path of bravery (*vīramārga*). Bōmmayya declares: "The suffering of this worldly existence (*samsāra*) is finally over." With excitement and determination (*niṣṭhē*<sup>4</sup>) he bequeaths his reign over the town to his son and orders him to always worship Śiva and follow the words of Śivabhaktas. Surrounded by the three hundred Śaraṇas, Bōmmayya goes on a procession in the main street of the town and then sets out to Śiva Rāmanātha's temple. Inside the temple, it is as dark as the hair of the village goddess Māriyamma, and only the glittering of weapons can be seen. Bōmmayya gathers all the heroes (Vīras), all radiating from the light of white ash (*bhasma*) and wearing the prayer beads (*rudrākṣa*). They all roar with Śiva's ecstasy like lions, like the attendants of Wrathful Śiva (Vīrabhadra). The three hundred Śaraṇas tell Bōmmayya that they came of their free will and are determined to reach Śiva's world (*śivaloka*) by giving up their own bodies. They hold their swords high and to the sound of trumpets start sever parts of their own bodies. The earth itself never witnessed such a sight. After cutting their toenails, they start to sever their feet and legs. Rivers of blood flow onto the temple's floor and around Śiva's statue. Then, they extract their own intestines, cut them into small garlands which they place on Śiva's head. With swords and axes they hack each other and shout happily. Fountains of blood gush in all the eight directions. They tear their hearts out and their nerves too. Now they start chopping their bones, which break with a sound of splitting. Skipping on the bloody floor without legs and skidding on the blood, they celebrate *śivabhakti* without any sense of pain. Bōmmayya sees this and smiles. Then, he takes a sword, cuts both his legs and throws them away. The left leg hits some Jains and kills them. The right leg circumambulates all the Śaraṇas. A heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends from the sky to take Bōmmayya to Kailāsa, together with three hundred chariots, one for each Śaraṇa. When reaching Kailāsa, they all prostrate in front of Śiva. Śiva proudly tells Wrathful Śiva (Vīrabhadra): "Look at these heroes who have voluntarily made a body sacrifice (*tanupūjē*) to arrive here!" and grants Bōmmayya the position of an attendant.

This story is about Bōmmayya, a king who is also a Śaraṇa. This king has a

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<sup>4</sup> See section 5.1 above.

political-cum-religious problem: his court is run by vile Jains who actively compete with the *śaiva* religion at the public sphere but also, motivated by their sectarian hatred, murder the king's own son. Bōmmayya's retaliation to these threatening provocations is equally acerbic. Perhaps even beyond it: he gathers a small army unit of Śivabhaktas and together they annihilate the Jains of this town. Then, following Śiva's command from heaven, this army unit, headed by Bōmmayya, enters the local Śiva temple and commits a bloody mass suicide.

Advancing from the *Ragaḷēs* about Vaiṣṇava Brahmins surveyed in the previous chapter to those about Jains, it is clear that we are entering *terra nova* in terms of the emotional antagonism, internecine implications, verbal hostility, non-realistic and paradigmatic numbers of victims, and the acerbic level of public and sectarian confrontation. The last element is most notable: we do not find in Harihara's narratives about conflicts with Brahmins the magnitude of resistance to public display of religious otherness that dominates narratives about Jains. Of course, we already discussed several instances of literary representations of violence against Brahmins, including the murdering of a Vaiṣṇava<sup>5</sup> and the burning of a Viṣṇu statue.<sup>6</sup> But these anomalous events serve as momentary lapses of the general sense of restraint that controls these stories.<sup>7</sup> The *Ragaḷēs* about Jains, in contrast, are suffused with deliberate and orchestrated violence that at times leads to a systematic expulsion or even annihilation of the "religious other," the local communities of Jains.

This theme will be explored as we delve further into these stories, but it might be useful in advance of the readings to consider why Harihara takes on such a strategy

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<sup>5</sup> See section 8.1.2 above.

<sup>6</sup> See section 8.2.1 above.

<sup>7</sup> See section 8.2.2 above.

for the othering of Jains. On the onset, it is possible to postulate two reasons for the particular disposition of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* toward Jains, and these two reasons stand in complex relation with each other. The first one, which is easily detectable in the setting and texture of stories, is that there are no shared cultural repositories—such as the Vedas or the Purāṇas in the case of Brahmins—that can be used in the stories as channels for mediation or even as indexical tools for cultural confrontation like we find in the case of the stories that involve Brahmins. The second reason, which is less visible than the first but inherently supplements it and complicates the discussion, is the striking similarity of communal and religious practices that are shared among the two agonistic communities.<sup>8</sup> While the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories do not point to any directly shared cultural repository (such as a sacred text) between the two communities, the descriptions they contain regarding practiced religion in the case of the two traditions are conspicuously similar. For example, according to these stories, renunciation and asceticism are manifested in both these traditions in the form of itinerant individuals who are supported by the lay community. This form of relationship is completely alien, for example, to the Brahmanical classes as described in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. Similarly, public festivals are a central means for both traditions—*śaiva* and *jaina*—for asserting communal identity. This was demonstrated well in the above summary of the second chapter of the *KBōmma Ragaḷē*, when there is a public competition between the festivals of each tradition. Another concrete religious arena in these stories that functions in similar fashion in both traditions—and thus serves the narratives as an emblem for contestation between Śaivas and Jainas—is the temple. A common trope for temple

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<sup>8</sup> Davis (1998) argues for the implicit affinity between the *śivabhakti* and *jaina* traditions with regard to the cultural landscape of Tamil. I make a similar claim here regarding the Kannada-speaking regions, according to the limited purview of what is prescribed in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

conversion in these stories, and possibly also in actual history,<sup>9</sup> is the smashing of the Jina idols that are situated at the temple and their replacement with *liṅgas*.<sup>10</sup> Finally, a central arena that embodies the strong anthropological affinity that exists between these two traditions in these stories is the home, an intimate space that is inhabited by married couples of which one is an ardent Śaiva and the other—an equally ardent Jain. The conflicts in the stories discussed below are played out in these different arenas, and I relate to them according to each context.

To recapitulate, Harihara’s othering of the Jains in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* stories relies, on the one hand, on the complete alienage of their imaginaire and, on the other hand, on their enhanced co-presence in terms of practiced religion (including public festivals and domestic rituals). The perhaps surprising high degree of institutional and communal affinity that exists between the specific traditions of Śaivism and Jainism as depicted in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* stories explains why the sectarian competition with the Jains, as laid down in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*, is inherently different from that with the Brahmins. In the case of the Jains, sectarian competition transcends political capital, financial resources, or social prestige, as conveyed in the stories about Brahmins, and is more focused on occupying physical spaces: temples for one, but also land in general, and houses. Another sectarian space in which this competition is enacted is initiation: at least potentially, Jains can convert their religion to Śaivism in these stories. Vaiṣṇava Brahmins never do. Thus, the stories about Jains portray a struggle for more vital stakes in confronting the “religious other” than is the case with Brahmins.

Though I bring the *KBömma Ragaḷe* in the introductory discussion as an example

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<sup>9</sup> Dībbad (2011).

<sup>10</sup> Ĕm. Ĕm. Kalaburgi claims that there were also temple conversions and, more broadly, attacks, by Jains against Śaivas, but the scarce cases he brings rely mostly on literary accounts and are not backed up by historical evidence (2010 [1998]-d: 45, Knn).

of Ragaḷeṣ that deal with Jains, this Ragaḷe marks certain extremities as well as anomalies within this group of texts. To begin with, Bōmmayya is the local king of the town, which is an unusual position for the Śaraṇa; no other Śaraṇa from the Kannada-speaking regions appearing in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu* is said to be the political ruler. This exceptional unification of Śaraṇa and a political ruler into one character is significant, and what we identified in the previous chapter as an external tension between the Śaraṇa and the king is fused in the *KBōmma Ragaḷe* into Bōmmayya's character, with noteworthy consequences: the fusing of fervent Śaraṇa and affluent ruler into a single character generates a denouement unusual in its intensity, one that singles out this story from others discussed in this chapter. Similarly, the role of the *KBōmma Ragaḷe*'s Jains as the king's administrators also stands out in comparison to other Ragaḷeṣ about Jains, in which the king or the court are never mentioned.<sup>11</sup> Even in this case, it is hard to make out the nature of the political hold the Jains exercise, for their presence at the court in this story lacks any substantive narrative value beyond menacing Bōmmayya. Along similar lines, we can note that the whole Jain community of Kovūru is treated as one monolithic body, both by the author and by Bōmmayya's army. This plastic treatment is unusual within this group of stories.

With regard to the representation of Jains in this story, we should also note the exceptional intensity of their vilification, compared with all the following stories as well as with the stories about the Vaiṣṇava Brahmin discussed in the previous chapter. In none other do we find such a degree of abuse of the "religious other" as of Jains in this story. To be sure, all these stories share a derogatory, harsh linguistic register in

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<sup>11</sup> The antagonistic character of King Kauśika in the *Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷe* might be a Jain, but this Ragaḷe does not explicitly say so, and nothing in the king's behavior is particularly *jaina*. See section 9.3.3 below.



describing the “other” and all labor to establish the “other’s” baseness.<sup>12</sup> However, in this story, the immorality ascribed to the Jains is exceptional because it is assumed rather than constructed or explained by some contingency; in this story, it is axiomatic: Harihara does not try to present a narrative setting that might explain the Jains’ motive or logic in killing the king’s beloved child, other than their innately abominable nature. Indeed, it is hard to imagine an immediate interest—a court conspiracy for example—that could have induce the Jains to commit this hideous murder. Compared with this, all the narratives about Jains to follow have concrete rationale for the emergence of the conflict between the two communities.

We can mark this moment, when the Jain disguised as a Śaiva draws his sword and slashes Bōmmayya’s son, as foreshadowing the totalistic, grotesque, hyperbolic violence that takes over the rest of the story. The story’s gory violence is progressively intensified to its final crescendo: first, by the Jains’ unexplained, brutal murder of Bōmmayya’s son; then, Bōmmayya’s lethal retaliatory attack that annihilates the entire *jaina* community of eight thousand;<sup>13</sup> and culminating with the Śaraṇas’ suicidal carnage orchestrated by Bōmmayya.<sup>14</sup> Or is there even an earlier narrative element in

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<sup>12</sup> See section 9.2.1 below.

<sup>13</sup> The number of eight thousand, specifically attributed to the antagonist *jaina* community, is a literary trope in itself, also used by the Tamil poets with regard to the popular story about the impaling of Jains at Madurai (Peterson 1998: 181). See also Champakalakshmi (2011b: 65ff), Pechilis (1999: 126-27).

<sup>14</sup> The self-massacre by the Śaivas might have some vague resonance in history. There is historical evidence to suggest the possibility of actual practices of religious mass suicide by Śaivas—referred to in this text as *tanupūjē* (“bodily sacrifice,” *KBōmma Raḡaḷē* 3.154 in Harihara 1999: 343)—during the medieval times in this region. A mass burial ground containing about six hundred skulls neatly arranged in lines and dated using Carbon-14 from the fourteenth century was discovered in the city of Aṇṇiḡērē (located roughly sixty miles south to today’s Kovaḷḷi and mentioned in the following two *Raḡaḷēs*: the *Ekāntarāmitandēya Raḡaḷē* and the *Ādayyana Raḡaḷē*). Popular media speculated on the origin of this unusual finding, and some have connected it to *śaiva* self-sacrifice practices (though other theories were given as well). The claim that this mass burial ground is a *śaiva* practice was chiefly made by Ēm. Ēm. Kalaburgi, who dubiously uses the *KBōmma Raḡaḷē* as historical evidence for such practices. V. Anuradha

the story that produces its cataclysmic denouement? I would like to suggest one, namely the fusion of the Śaraṇa and the king into Bōmmayya's character. I already discussed the paradigmatic tension between the Śaraṇa and the king as evinced by relevant Ragaḷēs, a tension that is structured around the conflicting dispositions of these two agents:<sup>15</sup> the king is obligated to function as a political, mediatory force between different external and conflicting agents and their wide, contradicting array of interests and compromises, while the Śaraṇa is motivated by an opposite force, an inner and linear sense—even passion—toward an intense, uncompromised, and continual existential engagement with his god. Bōmmayya's character is anomalous because it represents the impossibility of containing these two conflicting forces within one persona. It is, of course, a given that his devotionism transcends any political and cerebral commitment that might be required from his public role as the ruler, but Bōmmayya's ordeal stems from his inability to avoid the effects of his functioning as a king: Bōmmayya's political duty forces him to return to the court and the political realities it dictates, in which wretched Jains menace him. Unlike all other Śaraṇas discussed in this and the previous chapters, Bōmmayya cannot simply resign from his court; he must attend to this problem from the position of king, as he indeed does. We can find a deeper connection between Bōmmayya's role as king and his murderous attack on the town's Jains: Bōmmayya's mastery of the sword, his effectiveness in using

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also makes claims about the practice of severing one's head as an offering to Śiva at Śrīśailam during the fourteenth century (2002: 65). For newspaper reports on the archeological findings, see Nandy (2011), Pattanashetti (2011). For Kalaburgi's claims in popular media, see Srinidhi (2011), Katkar (2011). We can only speculate about the historical pertinence of such practices. M. Chidananda Murthy attests to an equally lethal practice: "[A]mong Śaivites, there was a custom that in case a devotee loses his *liṅga* (which is his real master), he should commit suicide immediately" (1983: 204). For a story about a Śaraṇa who loses his *iṣṭaliṅga* and his reaction to this loss, see section 5.2.2 above.

<sup>15</sup> See section 8.1 above.

weaponry—abilities expected in a king—infiltrate his inner world of devotion and inspire his decision to annihilate the Jains. Bōmmayya’s kingdom informs the violent, suicidal spree with which the story culminates.

Clearly, the gruesome, self-consuming violence in this story overpowers its other narrative elements. In a sense, it even transcends its sectarian agenda and gives way to an internal experience of devotion, for its culmination has, indeed, little to do with Jains, and all to do with a public and communal self sacrifice, performed at the temple of the god. The level of violence in this text is piercing, and its celebration of violence is made palpable through detailed descriptions such as those of Bōmmayya’s followers slaughtering the town’s Jains and during the horrific orgy of suicide at Śiva Rāmanātha’s temple. This literary use of graphic violence exemplifies a specific literary practice, a poetics of violence, consists of hyperbolic numbers of victims, detailed relishing in sanguine descriptions, an authorial *tour de force* of describing different types of weaponry and also bodily injuries, and so on. This poetics of violence can be traced to other *śaiva* works, notably the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam*, as well as an earlier *jaina* sources.<sup>16</sup> It is very possible that Harihara was familiar with this literature, and that he tries to outshine it in this particular *Ragaḷe*.<sup>17</sup> Within the *Ragaḷeḡgaḷu*, however, the *KBōmma Ragaḷe* is unmatched in its celebration of violence, leaving the modern reader (and perhaps the immediate audience as well)—aesthetically if not morally—disgusted.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Monius (2004a).

<sup>17</sup> See section 1.1.3 above.

<sup>18</sup> The overall aesthetics of this specific *Ragaḷe* brings to mind the *bibhatsarasa* (“sentiment of disgust,” Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 733 s.v. *bibhatsa* 6), which is one of the eight (or nine according to some enumerations) classical aesthetic sentiments in the classic Sanskrit poetics. See Chakrabarti (2001) for reflections about *bibhatsarasa*.

Lastly for this introductory discussion, it is worth invoking the term *vīra* and its centrality of this tradition. Literally “heroic,” *vīra* becomes one of the most significant markers of Kannada *śivabhakti* as a whole. However, in Harihara’s work, it is used in particularly intense moments, especially those that involve violence.<sup>19</sup> The conflicts with the Jains, thus, serve as a culmination of representing *vīra* in narrative form. It is possible that the efficacy of these particular stories for inciting intense devotion at the hearts of the *śivabhakti* audience—a possible response to this particular form of aesthetics of disgust—brought forth the general designation of “Vīraśaivas.”

## 9.2 Fighting over the Temple

The temple, according to Harihara’s narratives, symbolizes religious control over a town, city, or small kingdom. As a narrative setting, the temple enables Harihara to dramatize intense devotional moments, especially when framed by a sectarian contestation. In the following stories the mere sight of a *jaina* temple pains the Śaraṇa. It is this basic reflex that sets the narrative stage for the Śaraṇa protagonist to contest the “foreign” identity of the temple and to claim a new *śaiva* identity for it instead. This process, clearly constructed upon an agonistic framework found as early as in the Vedas,<sup>20</sup> always concludes with victory for the *śaiva* party, and the definite conversion of the temple’s identity is marked in the narratives by the triumphant visual image of the Jina statue smashed to the ground and the *liṅga* erected in its place.<sup>21</sup> The basic mechanism for converting the temple in the texts is, evidently, a simple one, revolving

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<sup>19</sup> See section 5.1.1 above and Chidananda Murthy (1983: 205n3).

<sup>20</sup> See Ben-Herut (2012: 138-40) for a discussion about verbal debate as an agon. For a reading of the Vedic ritual as agonistic, see Heesterman (1985).

<sup>21</sup> Claims in contemporaneous epigraphy also highlight the smashing of the Jina statues in the conversion process (Kalaburgi 2010 [1998]-d: 39-43, Knn).

around the replacement of the emblem of the deity that resides at the temple's inner chamber (*garbhagrha*). Other than this major symbolic and performative process, the temple itself is not described in the texts as changed by the conversion, not in appearance nor in function.

The simplicity of the temple conversion process in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* supports the above postulation that the *śaiva* and *jaina* traditions in the Kannada-speaking regions (and possibly elsewhere) practiced their respective religious traditions in a similar manner. Significantly, *jaina* temples and *śaiva* temples look very similar in the stories. For example, when Ekānta Rāmayya, the protagonist of one of the stories I discuss below, arrives to the outskirts of Abbalūru city, he is excited by the outlook of what he thinks are *śaiva* temples. Upon entering the city's gates, however, he discovers to his distress that all these temples are, in fact, *jaina* temples. This scene relies on the physical similarities between the temples of the two traditions; furthermore, it conveys a deeper recognition of the potential for the *jaina* temple to “transform,” or more simply, function, as a *śaiva* temple. Along similar lines, the moral mechanisms that drive the performative temple conversion are simple. As stated with regard to Bōmmayya's story above, the *jaina* “otherness” in Harihara's text is always defined by an inherent corruption which, within this narrative world, legitimizes the conversion.

Beyond the inherent immorality attributed to *jaina* identity, there is certain ambiguity as to what constitutes “Jainhood.” We shall find in the following stories different understandings of what it means for the author to be a Jain, with possibilities ranging along two axes: the individual/communal and the antagonistic/complaisant, and the two axes correspond to each other: while a specific Jain could support the Śaraṇa and his *śaiva* cause, the *jaina* community as a whole is always treated in the

stories through antagonistic lens.

Our examination of the Harihara's portrayal of the temple as a setting for conflicts with Jains follows the two relevant narratives found in the *Ragaḷeḡaḷu*: the *Ekāntarāmitandēya Ragaḷe* and the *Ādayyana Ragaḷe*.<sup>22</sup> My reading strategy for these particular stories is meant to explicate Harihara's dispositions regarding contestation at the temple: the temple as a contested-*cum*-holy arena; moral attitudes and ethical prescriptions regarding the "religious other" with which the Śaraṇa compete for the temple's identity; and the symbolic system through with sectarian identities and contestations are played out.

#### 9.2.1 LOSING A HEAD, GAINING A TEMPLE

I have dealt in detail with thirteenth-century versions to the story about the Śaraṇa called Ekānta Rāmayya, including the *Ekāntarāmitandēya Ragaḷe* (*Rāma Ragaḷe* henceforth), elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> Here, I shall succinctly present the basic narrative and discuss its relevance for our discussion about temple grounds as a contested arena set against Jains.

The basic storyline of the *Rāma Ragaḷe* begins with an ardent devotee of Śiva who enters the city of Abbalūru (in Dhāravāḡa district, aka as Dharwad or Dharwar), a city described in the text as dominated by numerous towering *jaina* temples. Bitter and disappointed from the *jaina* control over Abbalūru, Rāmayya locates the only destitute Śiva temple in the city and spends the night there. In the morning, he discovers that a Jain is sleeping inside the temple with his feet turned toward Śiva, which is a terrible

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<sup>22</sup> Another story that shares this theme is the *Vaijakavvēya Ragaḷe*, which is treated below in a separate section because of the centrality of the domestic sphere, in addition to that of the temple, in that story. See section 9.3.2 below.

<sup>23</sup> Ben-Herut (2012).

offence in this religious setting. The two start a verbal fight that culminates in a wager: if Rāmayya succeeds in cutting off his own head and retrieving it, the Jains of the city will willingly install a *liṅga* in one of their *jaina* temples instead of the Jina statue there and initiate the city's *jaina* community into the *śaiva* faith. Rāmayya happily accepts the challenge and severs his head, but the Jains, at the unnatural sight of Rāmayya's standing torso, refuse to acknowledge defeat until seven days pass. During this time, Rāmayya's head is taken to a pilgrimage around sacred *śaiva* sites, serving as an oriflamme to recruit *śaiva* devotees. Then, the morbid pageant returns to Abbalūru, where Rāmayya manages to recapitate and returns to life. The moment of his revival—as one would expect—is charged and dramatic, and is followed by the Śivabhaktas scaring the Jains out of all the *jaina* temples and out of the city, smashing all the Jina statues found in it, and establishing instead of them *śivaliṅgas*.

It is noteworthy that tradition locates this incident at a temple that exists till today, and that its outer walls bear detailed inscriptions about the incident (inscription “E” has an exceptionally detailed narrative).<sup>24</sup> J. F. Fleet dates these from the turn of the twelfth century, slightly before or contemporaneous to Harihara's incident. In addition, the temple walls feature some carvings that depict few scenes from this incident.<sup>25</sup> Tangible references to Rāmayya's story do not end here; on the outer wall of the temple hangs the chopper that Rāmayya is said to have used for his own decapitation.<sup>26</sup> This “evidence” posits a challenge to a historical reading of this incident: on the one hand, the abovementioned artifacts—dated in temporal proximity to the purported events—lend themselves to the general tendency of reading inscriptions in a historical mode

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<sup>24</sup> Fleet (1898-9)

<sup>25</sup> Desai (1951).

<sup>26</sup> A photo of this chopper is printed in Nāgabhūṣaṇa (2005: xvi, Knn).

but, on the other, they excel in slanted pro-*śaiva* rhetoric and celebrate an impossible, fantastic revival of a decapitated body and Rāmayya do adhere.

In the context of our discussion, several points related to this story are significant. First, the Jains of Abbalūru behave, according to the three early versions including the *Rāma Ragaḷē*, as socially, politically, and religiously privileged over Rāmayya and over the city's *śaiva* community. Portraying the Jains as superior was, obviously, an interest of all the *śaiva* authors of the early versions, because the telos of the story runs opposite to the *jaina* superiority described at its beginning: from the point of view of the *Rāma Ragaḷē*'s author, as well as that of the authors of the other two early sources, the Jains' self confidence is without basis and does not hold, for, as it turns out, Rāmayya succeeds to recover from his lethal self decapitation and succeeds in converting the *jaina* temple. From dominating Abbalūru at the beginning of the story, the Jains end up being expelled from the city, leaving their houses and temples to the hands of the Śaivas.

Thus, this story communicates a gap, essentially cognitive, between the Jains' collective self confidence as a privileged community and their actual political frailty, as well as between the Śaivas' absence from Abbalūru's religious landscape prior to the conflict and their ability to quickly and effectively seize control of it when opportunity comes. Put differently, the Jains' uncurbed haughtiness and the Śaivas' communal prowess as described in the Abbalūru story as it is told in the *Rāma Ragaḷē* (but also as it is told in the other early versions) are suggestive of a cultural change that is deeper than the conversion of one temple, and it is possible that this story is emblematic of a broad historical shift.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The following statement by the P. B. Desai conveys the historical veracity that is traditionally



We can note that today this region is inhabited almost solely by Vīraśaivas and that the local temples still bear fading marks of a *jaina* past.<sup>28</sup> In light of this evidence, we could say that the cultural shift embedded at the basic narrative of a *jaina* landscape turning *śaiva* resonates with history. Nevertheless, it is difficult to take the literary claims regarding the sudden, miracle based *śaiva* takeover over the Abbalūru *jaina* temples as historical, and the specific descriptions found in the *Rāma Raqaḷē* about a aggressive, sudden, and totalistic transference of religious ownership of Abbalūru’s temples should not be read as history.

In addition to the Jains’ haughtiness, Harihara is also invested in this story in conveying their deep corruption: they, not Rāmayya, are the initial aggressors; they, after Rāmayya’s self decapitation, unfairly demand an extension of the wager by seven days; finally, after Rāmayya’s successful recovery, it is they who flee in panic instead of standing up for their part of the wager. The Jains’ baseness is conveyed not only by the *Rāma Raqaḷē*’s narrative but also by its texture: as in the case of the *KBōmma Raqaḷē* discussed above, the language used in this text to describe and ridicule the Jains is harsh and demeaning. Expressions such as “sick dog” (*huḷita kunni*) and “Śiva offender” (*śivadrohi*) appear frequently in the text. At the same time, despite suggestions of physical violence in this story—such as the powerful image of Rāmayya recovering his head and immediately thereafter waving his sword and cursing the Jains—the *Rāma*

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attributed to the Rāmayya’s story, regardless of its fantastic components or the differences between the early versions: “By the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Karnāṭaka witnessed the upsurge of a great religious movement emphasizing the superiority of god Śiva and his devotion. Two eminent personalities, one in the south and the other in the north, were instrumental in bringing about this upheaval. These were Ēkāntada Rāmayya of the Ablūr inscriptions and Basavēśvara, the founder of the Vīraśaiva faith” (1951: 143). Of course, the words “upsurge” and “upheaval” in the above quote do not necessarily indicate a violent take over, though they are, perhaps, suggestive of that.

<sup>28</sup> Nāgabhūṣaṇa (2005: 47).

*Ragaḷē* does not make claims about actual direct violence against the Jains.<sup>29</sup> The *Rāma Ragaḷē*, thus, contains sectarian themes we have already observed in the *KBōmma Ragaḷē*—specifically with regard to a totalistic, consuming resistance to the Jains—although here the conflict is played out in the more specific setting of the temple and without physical violence.

### 9.2.2 BEING HUNGRY, BEING ANGRY

The following story narrates the conversion of a *jaina* temple to a *śaiva* one in the city of Puligēṛē (sometimes referred to as Huligēṛē and today known as Lakṣmeśvara or Lakshmeshwar, located at the Gadag District of north Karnataka). The rich epigraphy and architecture found in this location attest to its continual centrality as a religious center of several traditions over many centuries, from before the turn of the first millennium CE and onwards.<sup>30</sup> According to archeological evidence, there was a significant *jaina* presence during the city's earlier period and a later control by *śaiva* sects, and it is possible that the historical shift of the city's control from Jains to Śaivas inspired the *śaiva* literature about Ādayya. Though Ādayya's story is repeatedly retold by *śivabhakti* authors following Harihara,<sup>31</sup> he is not mentioned in any inscriptions (this

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<sup>29</sup> The modern translation of the *Rāma Ragaḷē* to Kannada prose in Pāṭīla (2006) does contain explicit descriptions of violent acts toward the Jains during the temple conversion, even though they do not appear in the original *Ragaḷē*. Compare Pāṭīla (2006, 390-91) with *Rāma Ragaḷē* 380-83 in Harihara (1999: 364). The Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*, written about half a century after the *Rāma Ragaḷē*, is very explicit regarding violence exercised against Jains in this story. See Ben-Herut (2012: 159-60).

<sup>30</sup> The breath of cultural artifacts about Puligēṛē is such that these materials merit a comprehensive and independent study. It suffices to refer to the mentioning of Puligēṛē as one of the three centers of Kannada culture in the important ninth-century poetic treaty the *Kavirājamārga*: “In that country, Kisuvōṛa, the well-know city of great Kōpaṇa, Puligēṛē, and the prized Ōnkunda—in the midst of each of these places is the true essence of Kannada” (*Kavirājamārga* 1.37 in Śrīvijaya and Krishnamoorthy 1983: 9, translation by Ben-Herut, Pierce Taylor, and Sundaram).

<sup>31</sup> The narrative of the *Ādayyana Ragaḷē* is picked up and further developed by Harihara's nephew Rāghavāṅka in his *Somanātha Caritrē*.

is sharp contrast to the many epigraphical references to Rāmayya).<sup>32</sup>

The *Ādayyana Raḡaḷē* (*Āda Raḡaḷē* henceforth) is a medium length poem that consists of three chapters. Here is the summary of Harihara's text:

[1] In Kailāsa, a chief Gaṇa (Gaṇanātha) and a divine damsel (Surakanyē) look at each other and immediately fall in love. Observing this, Śiva lovingly announces that he decided to send the two to earth so they could consummate their desires there. When the male Gaṇa protests against the idea of living an unholy life on earth, Śiva promises him he will return to Kailāsa after fulfilling his earthly assignment. Then, Śiva adds: "On earth there are many crooked and pompous Jains (*kaḡu pērcidarā savaṇar*), and you will stop them." In accordance with Śiva's wish, the chief Gaṇa is born to a family of faithful Śivabhaktas, and his emergence from his mother's womb is like the moon's rising from an ocean of milk. He is named Ādayya, and Śiva Somanātha is his only Guru. At the age of sixteen, Ādayya starts to work with his father, who is a successful merchant. Soon, the father hands to Ādayya sixteen thousand gold coins and sends him to the bustling cities of Puligēṛē and Aṇṇigēṛē in order to become established as a businessman there.<sup>33</sup> He tells Ādayya to be faithful to Somanātha but also not to neglect the making of profit. Ādayya replies: "Is there a greater profit than *śivabhakti*?" Meanwhile, in Puligēṛē, the divine damsel is born to a *jaina* family of temple priests, like a pure lotus in a dirty swamp. She is named Padmāvati<sup>34</sup> and she is beautiful and elegant as the bud of the lotus flower. When Ādayya enters Puligēṛē and sees the multitudes of *jaina* temples and monasteries (*basadis*), he becomes very angry. In turn, the Jinas in the temples start to shiver with fear, sensing Ādayya's close presence. Ādayya decides to make the local Śiva temple his home and starts trading and making good profit in that city.

[2] One day, while walking the streets of Puligēṛē, Ādayya sees Padmāvati and is completely captivated by her appearance. Padmāvati stares back at him, and they fall in love with each other. They become like one, living together happily for many days. One day, while taking a stroll near a pond outside the city, the

<sup>32</sup> Ęm. Ęm. Kalaburgi composed a monograph about the Śivaśaraṇas mentioned in epigraphy in the Kannada-speaking regions (1970, Knn). According to this study, Ekānta Rāmayya is mentioned in eight inscriptions (pp. 182-83), and Ādayya is not mentioned in any.

<sup>33</sup> Puligēṛē and Aṇṇigēṛē are mentioned as pilgrimage sites visited by Ekānta Rāmayya in the *Rāma Raḡaḷē*. This reference temporally places Ādayya before Rāmayya within this literary tradition.

<sup>34</sup> Padmāvati is a commonly *jaina* name.

young couple meets three wandering ascetics. They wear the *śaiva* prayer beads (*rudrākṣa*) and are smeared with holy ash (*bhasma*), but their faces betray distress. Ādayya prostrates in front of them and asks for the reason for their fallen countenance. The ascetics reply that they arrived in Puligēṛē the previous day and immediately became nauseated by the vileness (*pōlēgeri*<sup>35</sup>) of the city, having so many *jaina* temples and inside them—naked dolls (*battalēya bōmbēga*). Since the three ascetics refuse to take food from the filthy Jains, they ate nothing since the previous day. Hearing this, Ādayya becomes overwhelmed with frustration and anger, but Padmāvati immediately suggests she will cook food for the ascetics in their house and bring it to the lake where they reside. Around the same time, Padmāvati’s father invites some lowly, ignorant, naked *jaina* monks (Munis) and plans to feed them. But when the Jains arrive at the father’s home, he realizes the food he has made will not be sufficient to feed them all. His wife suggests they use the food prepared by their daughter for the *śaiva* ascetics at the lake. The parents call Padmāvati and ask her to hand over that food. She refuses, but the father snatches the food from her and gives it to the Jains. As Ādayya approaches the house with the three ascetics and sees the *jaina* monks, he immediately senses something is wrong. Padmāvati tells him what has happened and suggests cooking another meal for the *śaiva* ascetics. Ādayya, now fuming over what has happened, refuses his wife’s offer. He thinks to himself: “Killing my wife, scolding her father, and cutting to pieces these Jains will not satisfy the ascetics’ hunger,” and he takes the ascetics to the market, where he buys them some fruit and sends them away. Then, upon returning home, he refuses to eat and instead declares an unbroken fast (*upavāsa*) until he kills all the Jains who unjustly ate the food specially prepared for the ascetics. Facing Padmāvati’s parents, he extends the vow by promising he will not eat until he brings Śiva Somanātha from Saurāṣṭra (in today’s Gujarat) to Puligēṛē and places him at the *jaina* temple run by his wife’s family of priests.<sup>36</sup> Padmāvati promptly declares she joins her husband’s vow of fasting, and Ādayya sets out toward Saurāṣṭra. Ādayya walks for many days, indifferent to hunger and to the conditions of the weather, his body bruised and bleeding from the rough road. After twenty-eight days, Ādayya faints at the feet of a wood apple tree.<sup>37</sup> Śiva Somanātha pities Ādayya and appears before him, disguised as an old Śaiva

<sup>35</sup> *Pōlēgeri* literally means “giddiness of vileness.” Perhaps this expression plays on the city’s name, Puligēṛē.

<sup>36</sup> The name of this specific *jaina* temple is Surahonnē.

<sup>37</sup> Wood apple tree is called *bēlla* in Kannada and *bilva* in Sanskrit. Its leaves, called *bēllavatta* in Kannada and *bilvapattrā* in Sanskrit, are used for worshipping Śiva (Monier-Williams *et al* 1986: 732 s.v. *bilva*).

(Vṛddha Māheśvara), wearing the sacrificial sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) and holding in his hands an umbrella and a begging bowl. After a brief conversation between Ādayya and the old Śaiva, the latter reveals his true form to Ādayya and both head back to Puligēṛē.

[3] Ādayya cannot abide the grandeur of Śiva's true appearance and asks him to return to his disguised form. Śiva yields, blesses Ādayya, and miraculously transports the Bhakta back to Puligēṛē. When Ādayya opens his eyes, he sees Padmāvati before him. She is rendered ecstatic by his return and orders sacred food (*bona*) to be prepared for him. But Ādayya refuses to eat until Śiva himself arrives to the city the following day and breaks the Jina statue inside the *jaina* temple. When the *jaina* women around Padmāvati hear this, they immediately run to tell the disturbing news to Padmāvati's father. Knowing well the stubbornness of his son-in-law, the father, accompanied by other Jains, appears the next morning at the entrance of the family's *jaina* temple. But when Padmāvati's father attempts to open the temple doors, he is surprised to find them sealed shut. All the Jains are amazed. It is only after Ādayya and Padmāvati arrive together at the temple and open the doors that everyone can see that inside the temple stands Śiva Somanātha together with his bull Nandi. All the Jina dolls inside are broken. Standing within the temple, Ādayya starts to scream incessantly, unable to utter words in his ecstasy. Śiva approaches Ādayya, hugs him, and brings him back to senses. Then he orders Ādayya: "Kill all the lowly (*kṣudra*) Jains standing outside the temple and thus bring glory to *śivabhakti*." He places in Ādayya's hands thirty-two weapons and orders one of his own attendants (*Gaṇas*) to assist Ādayya in the killing. Outside stand one lakh (one hundred thousand) Jains. Ādayya warns them not to enter the temple, but they insist on seeing Śiva Somanātha up close, and attempt to enter. Those who resist Ādayya are killed by him and those who seek refuge from him are saved. With the assistance of the *Gaṇa*, Ādayya kills thirty-two thousand Jains and then returns the weapons to Śiva. In commemoration of this battle this place was later named as Khaḍgatīrtha ("sacred crossing place of the sword"). Meanwhile, a flower chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends from heavens and takes Ādayya and Padmāvati to Kailāsa, to the sounds of the cheering Śivabhaktas and the wailing Jains, and to the general amazement of the city's people. In Kailāsa, Ādayya is happily received by Śiva and regains his status as a Śiva attendant.

Two lovers at Śiva's abode in heaven are sent by the god to earth in order to

oppose the vile Jains. They are separated in their human birth: Ādayya is born to a family of Śivabhaktas, becomes a successful merchant, and arrives to Puligĕrĕ to develop his business further. Padmāvati is born to a *jaina* family at this city. When the two meet in their earthly incarnations, they again fall in love with each other and live as a young couple at the Jain's family house. On an occasional stroll outside the city, the couple meets three *śaiva* ascetics and offers to prepare and bring them food. However, the food prepared for the *śaiva* mendicants by Padmāvati is given by her *jaina* father to *jaina* monks. When Ādayya discovers this, he becomes furious and swears to bring the statue of Śiva Somanātha from Saurāṣṭra to Puligĕrĕ and place it inside the *jaina* temple, which, in effect, will convert the temple. Śiva assists Ādayya to fulfill his oath by smashing the Jina statues, killing thirty-two thousand Jains, and initiating the rest of the city's Jains to the *śaiva* faith. Ādayya and Padmāvati are then taken on a flower chariot back to Kailāsa to regain their heavenly status.

Ādayya's story is similar to Rāmayya's in several aspects. We can begin delineating these similarities with the physical landscape in which these stories take place: like Abbalūru, Puligĕrĕ is portrayed as a city in its heyday, an important commercial hub, but this affluence in both stories is connected to the prevalence of Jains in the city and, perhaps more importantly, to the *jaina* temples dominating the urban landscape. The control of the rival religion over the urban landscape severely impacts the Śaraṇas at the center of both stories. Ādayya becomes furious when he enters Puligĕrĕ and sees the *jaina* temples. As if to sharpen the Śaraṇa's distress, he soon after moves into a house of *jaina* temple priests and, a little later in the story, the three *śaiva* ascetics tell Ādayya that they, like him, also became sick from seeing the towering temples of Puligĕrĕ. In the *Rāma Raḡaḷĕ* as well, Rāmayya is stricken with grief

when he realizes that the towering white Abbalūru temples he saw from afar are *jaina* and not *śaiva* as he initially thought. Thus, in both stories, the temple is perceived as a public symbol, an icon, of religious control over the city, and gaining control over the temple also implies, beyond practical motivations such as winning a religious center for performing rituals, also a symbolic impact of seizing control of the city as a whole.

Both Rāmayya and Ādayya are depressed by the sight of flourishing temples, and their plight is resolved at the end of both stories with the smashing of *jaina* insignia at the temple and establishing of *liṅgas* instead of them. This public act serves as visual testimony for ceasing control over the public landscape, controlled until that point by Jains. The temple in these stories, then, is the arena in which sectarian, public conflicts are played out and are also resolved (in violent ways), and they are emblematic of ubiquitous religious presence at the city. It is worth recalling here the centrality of palace or royal court in the *Ragaḷēs* about Brahmins. Schematically, we can say that in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—in contrast to more complex and contextualized historical dynamics—antagonistic Brahmins control the court while antagonistic Jains control the temple.<sup>38</sup> Despite the ebbing production of courtly-sponsored *jaina* literature during the twelfth century,<sup>39</sup> Harihara's plastic division of these two public areas according to religious traditions seems unhistorical.

Moving from the story's spatial setting to its ethical prescriptions, it is unsurprising to find that Harihara again portrays the Jains' conduct as faulty. Like in the *Rāma Ragaḷē* and in the *KBōmma Ragaḷē* surveyed above, the Jains in the *Āda Ragaḷē* are the instigators of the clash, through their provocative abuse and unjust consumption of the food especially made for the *śaiva* ascetics. The language used to

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<sup>38</sup> For a complex, context-specific set of religious affiliations of the Hōysaḷa kings, see Kasdorf (2013).

<sup>39</sup> Śivarāmayya (2010: 4-6, Knn), Nagaraj (2003).

refer to and describe the Jains in this story, as in the *Rāma Ragaḷē*, is highly offensive; this Ragaḷē contains complete passages dedicated to denigration and abuse of Jains.<sup>40</sup>

However, and this distinguishes the *Āda Ragaḷē* from the Ragaḷēs surveyed previously in this chapter, there is one dramatic exception to the Jains' lowliness, and this is the character of Ādayya's *jaina* wife, Padmāvati. Although her name and familial background plainly mark her as Jain, her role in the story is unambiguously benevolent from the *śaiva* point of view of the author. Despite her Jain background, Padmāvati is portrayed by Harihara as an intimate companion and supported of Ādayya's specifically *śaiva* agenda. From the point of view of religious identities, Padmāvati is an anomaly to the general antipathy Harihara maintains for Jains. This anomaly generates a narrative space that deals with interreligious contact between individual Śaivas and Jains outside the stereotypical manner it deals with the friction between the two communities in general. This complication of interreligious contact at the domestic and intimate sphere also controls the following Ragaḷē, which also discusses *jaina-śaiva* encounters as they occur under the same roof of a single family.

### 9.3 Sleeping with the Enemy

Up to this point, I introduced the basic mechanics of Harihara's sectarian disposition toward Jains as evinced in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, while paying specific attention to the temple setting in which these conflicts occur. The Ragaḷēs discussed in this section and The *Āda Ragaḷē* from the previous section present a more complicated narrative

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<sup>40</sup> Jinas are referred to throughout the *Āda Ragaḷē* as "naked dolls" (*battalēya bombēgaḷu*) and Jains as *battalēya bāhīryaru* ["naked on the outside"] and as puppy dogs (*kunnigaḷu*). More broadly, Jains are repeatedly described as mindless, senseless, and without any control over their senses. The invoking of nudity for the purpose of deriding Jains is repeated in several of the Ragaḷēs surveyed in this chapter. (Although the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* also tell us about two Śaraṇas who completely relinquish their clothes in moments of divine realization. See Mahādeviyakka in section 6.1.1 and Keśirāja in section 8.1.1).



setup to the conflict, a setup in which Jains and Śaraṇas marry each other and try to live their distinct religious lives, next to each other and under the same roof. This coexistence, however, does not imply greater tolerance by the author toward the *jaina* “other;” we already saw in the *Āda Ragaḷē* that the intimacy shared between the Śaraṇa and his *jaina* household members (other than his wife) is volatile and can be replaced by aggressive antagonism when boundaries that mark religious identities are crossed. At the same time, these stories do allow us to reconstruct more subtle textures of coexistence between the two communities as well as more complicated notions regarding what constitutes religious identity. It is possible to draw a conceptual line in the *Ragaḷēs* that deal with Jains between “public space,” represented in the narratives by the temple and “private space,” represented by the home, shared by the Śaraṇa and his *jaina* spouse; as already suggested, the narrative treatment of what constitutes religious identity is markedly different between these two realms. The first involves public festivals and rituals, as well as iconic competition between the gods’ statues, while the second involves domestic rituals, foremostly revolving around commensality, dietary practices, ritual purity, and personal worship. Although the difference between sectarianism at the temple and at the house is categorical, the two spaces are intertwined in the following stories around sectarian issues, as we shall observe.

The theme of marriage is present in several of the Śaraṇas’ stories but usually does not constitute the main storyline. It is only when marriage occurs between a Śaiva and a non-Śaiva that marriage and its implications become weighty for the progression of the narrative. Of seventeen *Ragaḷēs* dedicated to Śaraṇas from the Kannada-speaking regions, we find three *Ragaḷēs* that directly deal with the issue of interreligious marriage. These three *Ragaḷēs* are the *Āda Ragaḷē*, the *Vaijakavvēya Ragaḷē*, and the

*Mahādeviyakkana Raḡaḷē*, all named after the *śaiva* devotee at hand: Ādayya, Vaijakavvē, and Mahādeviyakka.

### 9.3.1 “LOVE WILL TEAR US APART AGAIN”

We continue our examination of the *Āda Raḡaḷē*, this time from the perspective of domestic sectarianism. I mentioned earlier that Padmāvati’s character marks an anomaly with regard to Harihara’s treatment of *jaina* characters. In contrast to totalistic and absolutely negative depiction of the rest of the Jains in the *Āda Raḡaḷē*, Harihara constructs Padmāvati’s character in a more complex manner by bifurcating it into two separate entities: her external religious identity, which is concretely *jaina*, and her behavioral-derived personality, which is completely committed to her Śaiva husband and his *śaiva* agendas and interests.

The love affair and, later, marriage between Ādayya the Śaiva and Padmāvati the Jain are central to the storyline, although their role and relation to the other central theme of the story—the public and communal strife between the Śaivas and the Jains of the city of Puligēřē—is as complex as Padmāvati’s character. The story begins by describing the celestial passion between a chief Gaṇa and a divine damsel at Śiva’s abode in heaven. Śiva does not disapprove of this mutual crush but also does not allow it to be consummated in heaven; for Śiva, earthly desires can only be fulfilled on earth, and so he sends the two to earth as a human couple so they can fulfill their mutual desires. Already in this framing episode, it is made clear that the personal relationship between the two heavenly attendants is pivotal for the whole story. And indeed, the entire first chapter and a half of the text celebrates the powerful and erotic love that binds together the two young lovers, on heaven as well as on earth.<sup>41</sup> Then, the plot

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<sup>41</sup> This part of the story, including the lovers’ infatuation in Kailāsa and the erotic descriptions of their

takes a sharp turn from an intimate love story of a young couple into a public and communal clash between the Śaivas and Jains of Puligěrě, using Padmāvati's family and the feeding incident as the trigger for the clash. There is a sharp contrast between the manner with which the personal relationship of Ādayya and Padmāvati is presented in the story, from beginning to end, and the manner with which the public controversy with Padmāvati's family develops. This narrative bifurcation between the personal level (Ādayya and Padmāvati) and the communal level (Ādayya versus the Jains of the city) is maintained throughout the story up to its climax, after which the two lovers climb into the heavenly chariot *puṣpaka* and together enter Kailāsa, where they regain their heavenly identities and status.

The contrast between these two narrative axes is most visible in the manner with which the author treats his characters. As we already observed, Jains as a rule are depicted using belligerent and offensive descriptions. For example, Harihara tells us that Padmāvati's family of priests runs a central *jaina* temple in Puligěrě and, as such, is repeatedly vilified in the text through harsh language. In contrast to her close family, Padmāvati is marked by the author as ethically superior already before her birth by virtue of living in Kailāsa, and her divine past shapes her human life as well. Throughout the rest of the story, the author is conscious of the categorical difference between Padmāvati and her family. For example, when describing Padmāvati's birth and childhood, which inevitably involves both her and her family of Jains, he effectively uses the stock metaphor of "lotus in a pond" to distinguish Padmāvati's purity from the overall tawdriness of her *jaina* family. Later in the story, Padmāvati is

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union on earth, is structurally very similar to another famous love story narrated in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* about Allama Prabhu and Kāmalatē. In that story, the lovers' honeymoon serves as the backdrop for Allama's personal crisis that follows his sudden loss of Kāmalatē. This episode is told at the beginning of the *Prabhudevara Ragaḷē* (section 7.2.4 above).

repeatedly depicted as chaste and faithful to her husband as well as to his extreme devotion to Śiva, and whenever Padmāvati is required to choose between allegiance to her *śaiva* husband and her *own jaina* family, she chooses her husband's side. She always cooperates with the wishes and demands of her fervent husband (by cooking food for the three Śaraṇas; taking the fast vow together with Ādayya; and escorting him to the “showdown” at the *jaina* temple), and she persistently resists the malevolent intentions of her own family members (she refuses to handover the food she cooked for the Śaraṇas; she does not warn her family of her husband's intention to attack and convert the *jaina* temple the next day). In accordance with Padmāvati's benevolent role, it is only befitting that in the story's aftermath she enters Kailāsa together with Ādayya and regains her divine status. This is a clear and final indication for absolute legitimization of Padmāvati by the author, despite her being a Jain on earth.

How can we reconcile the text's aggressive hostility toward *jaina* identity in general and its favorable treatment of Padmāvati, who is also a Jain? A key step toward such a reconciliation is to separate between collective identity and personal choice. While this story's dictum rejects any *jaina* makers at the communal level, its treatment of Padmāvati leaves considerable space for personal choices that support *śaiva* interests, even as a Jain. Put differently, the fact that Padmāvati, or anyone, is born as a Jain does not necessarily precludes the possibility for such a person to favor Śaivism. This narrative element foregrounds a basic impulse in this literary tradition: the predilection and promoting of personal devotional choice over familial obligations.<sup>42</sup> The narrative allowance for a Jain's partisanship of *śaiva* interests carves a space for religious reconciliation within the antagonistic literary world of sectarian conflict in

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<sup>42</sup> See section 5.1.2 above.

the *Ragaḷēs*. According to this story, interreligious contact can lead to reconciliation, albeit unilaterally *śaiva*, as long as it takes place at the personal level and not the communal one.

### 9.3.2 DOMESTIC INITIATION

In addition to the openness in *Ādayya*'s story for *jaina* support of *śaiva* interests, its basic structuring also depicts a society in which interreligious co-living is not an exotic choice but a daily reality. We are told of the spontaneous and unhindered love story between two youngsters, one an ardent *Śaiva* who even lives for a while in the local *śaiva* temple, and the other a Jain whose family runs a central *jaina* temple, and, until the cataclysmic conflict around the issue of sacred food, we are not told of any social, familial, or religious discord within this complex relationship: up to the point in which the narrative takes a dramatic turn, the young couple lives at the house of the bride's parents, a *jaina* house, without any complications, neither from the bride's parents nor from her spouse. Thus, even though Harihara clearly sets up this interreligious co-living as a stage for the inevitable religious clash, it is equally clear that the actual practice of interreligious co-living was not extraordinary transgressive in itself in this literary world. In the following story, which revolves around themes similar to those of the *Āda Ragaḷē*, we can find support for this claim.

The story about the female Bhaktē *Vaijakavvē* and her *jaina* husband *Nemisēṭṭi* brings the personal and the communal aspects discussed above into an effective narrative convergence and can be seen, from an analytical point of view, as completing the *Āda Ragaḷē* story.

The *Vaijakavvēya Ragaḷē* (*Vaija Ragaḷē* henceforth) is a short *Ragaḷē*, consisting of 338 verses in one chapter. Here is a summary of the story:

A girl is born in an auspicious *śaiva* settlement (*śivapura*). Her name is Vaijakavvė. She is extremely beautiful and also a faithful follower of Śiva. Her father's sister, who is married to a Jain, comes for a visit from a town called Parivaḷigė and, seeing her niece's exceptional beauty, wants to marry the girl to her son Nemisėṭṭi. However, Vaijakavvė's father refuses his sister. He tells her: "Nemisėṭṭi might be a fine person, but how can I marry a Bhaktė of Śiva to a worldlying (Bhavi), a *jaina* puppy?"<sup>43</sup> The sister is not deterred by this answer and declares a fast unto death if the girl's father will not agree to the marriage. The father's relatives press him to comply with his sister's wish, pointing to the familial relations, their shared *gotra*, and the horrible alternative of being responsible for the death of his own sister. The father finally yields, and wedding arrangements are initiated, including consulting an astrologer for an auspicious date for the wedding. Vaijakavvė, however, is deeply depressed by the prospect of marrying a Jain and cries out to Śiva, asking how she could continue worshiping him inside a *jaina* house. Śiva appears in her dream and promises not to abandon her in her married life.

After four days of wedding celebrations, the young couple moves to live at the husband's family house in Parivaḷigė. Vaijakavvė is like light within great darkness in her new home; like a sandalwood tree among shrubs. She worships Śiva, but in mind only: her heart is the temple, her breath is the ritual lamp (*ārati*). She adjusts to her new *jaina* environment but at the same time is completely detached from it. She is simultaneously present and absent (*hōddė hōddadė*). One day, Nemisėṭṭi returns home and tells Vaijakavvė to prepare food for some *jaina* ascetics (*Ṛṣis*) who will come to stay as guests in their house. Vaijakavvė obeys her husband's order and cooks many delicious dishes. While cooking, she suddenly bursts into tears, crying out to Śiva that she would have liked this food to be consumed by Śivabhaktas or Śiva himself and not by *jaina* puppies. Śiva hears her cry and immediately appears in her house disguised as a Bhakta beggar asking for food. Happy to fulfill the Śivabhakta's request, Vaijakavvė starts filling the beggar's bowl with the food she has just made for the *jaina* ascetics. But, surprisingly, no matter how much food she puts in the Śaraṇa's bowl, it cannot be filled. Vaijakavvė continues filling the bowl with food

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<sup>43</sup> *Vaija Ragaḷė* vv. 39-40 in Harihara (1999: 384):

... *bhavigė kuḍėnu*

*mṛḍana bhaktar āvu savaṇagunnigaliḡ hėṇṇa kuḍėnu*

made for the *jaina* ascetics until it the food almost runs out. The Bhakta eats with great appetite, but just before Nemisēṭṭi returns home with the group of Jains, the Bhakta suddenly disappears. When the Jains discover that their food was consumed by another, they refuse to eat whatever is left and instead leave the house angrily. Nemisēṭṭi is furious that his wife ruined his *jaina* vow (*aruhana vrata*<sup>44</sup>) by spoiling the food with a Śivabhakta's touch. Vaijakavvē retorts, claiming that the whole world is purified by Śiva's touch; that the Jina is nothing as it is not even mentioned in the Vedas and the Śāstras; and that it is madness to worship useless and naked dolls (*bayala bariya bombēga!*). When Nemisēṭṭi hears this, he loses his self control and starts beating his wife very hard. That night, as Vaijakavvē lies aching in her bed, Śiva again appears in her dream and promises her on the following morning he will break the head of the Jina in the *jaina* temple.

In the morning, as the Jains come to their temple to pray, they find its doors locked. They cannot open the doors even by using an elephant. They infer that the Jina inside the temple refuses to open the doors due to some fault in their ethical conduct (*dharmahāni*) or due to an act of violence done in the past (*bhūta hinsē*) by a member of the *jaina* community. At that moment, Nemisēṭṭi steps forward and admits he has lost his temper the previous night and had brutally beaten his wife. The whole community goes to Vaijakavvē's house to ask her forgiveness. They also ask her to come to their temple so that the Jina will agree to open the doors. Vaijakavvē respectfully yields to their request, but adds that the Jina has nothing to do with this issue; in fact, it is Śiva himself that now resides in the temple after breaking the Jina statue and that it is he who prevents them from entering the temple. Like a kingly goose among crows, Vaijakavvē walks with the Jains to the temple and, after eulogizing Śiva at the entrance, the doors open. Inside, they all find the Jina's head broken and a shining *liṅga* stands instead of it. Unable to bear the shame, all the *jaina* leaders (Ṛṣis and Paṇḍitas) leave the temple. Vaijakavvē is shivering and ecstatic with happiness, and her husband Nemisēṭṭi falls to her feet, begging for her forgiveness. Vaijakavvē forgives him, smears holy ashes (*bhasita*) on his forehead, and initiates him into the *śaiva* faith. She orders her husband to make

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<sup>44</sup> *Aruha* is a Kannada derivation of the Sanskrit word *arhanta* (from *varh* "to be worthy of"). It is noteworthy that in Monier-Williams *et al arhanta* denotes Buddhists and not Jains (1986: 93 s.v. *arhanta*), while in the Kannada semantic field, according to Kittel (1982: 108-9 s.v. *arha, arhat, arhanta*) and in Harihara's corpus, this term primarily denotes Jains.

a heap of dirt. He obeys her and a *liṅga* arises from it. This *liṅga* is named Vaijanātha. A heavenly chariot (*puṣpaka*) descends from the sky and takes Vaijakavvë to Kailāsa. Śiva tells about her greatness to Pārvati and transforms Vaijakavvë into one of Pārvati's Rudrakannikë (a female equivalent to Śiva's attendant).

Structurally, the story of Vaijakavvë contains elements familiar to us from the story of Ādayya: a Śaiva and a Jain are married and live together at the house of the *jaina* spouse's parents.<sup>45</sup> Then, a sacred and festive meal is prepared for ascetics of one tradition by the woman of the house, but the food is consumed by agents of the "other" religion, leaving the husband frustrated and angry. In both cases, the husband reacts to the provocation with eruptive violence, and this leads to a temple conversion. In both stories it is a *jaina* temple that is converted to Śaivism by the emblematic visual images of blocking the entrance of Jains to the temple, smashing the Jina statues, and establishing *liṅgas* instead. Finally, in both stories we find conversions of Jains, though in Ādayya's story this conversion is embedded in a gruesome bloodbath that is absent from the present story.

Despite the structural similarities with Ādayya's story, the two narratives are not completely parallel. While the narrative of the *Āda Ragalë* betrays a clear disjunction between the private realm (a loving couple) and the communal realm (a violent communal strife), the story about Vaijakavvë interweaves the two spheres throughout the plot in a more complex manner. The intimate space between Vaijakavvë and Nemisëṭṭi remains the center of the story even as it shifts from their home to the temple grounds, and the drama of the narrative is always played out within the unit of the couple: Vaijakavvë is forced into the marriage; she tries to uphold

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<sup>45</sup> In the of this *Ragalë*, the newlywed are also cousins. The practice of marrying cousins is not rare in some parts of south India.



her married life while practicing her *śaiva* faith in secret; the sectarian conflict is ignited by a domestic argument between husband and wife and revolves around the misuse and pollution of sacred food. Finally, the story's denouement highlights the personal sphere of the couple, with the conversion of Nemisēṭṭi by his own wife.

There are other textural differences between the two stories. The *Āda Ragaḷē* and the *Vaija Ragaḷē* equally preclude the possibility of a fruitful and peaceful status quo between the two traditions under one roof; and both stories dictate a one sided solution for the spiritual incongruence within the nucleolus family, as publically enacted by the destruction of the Jina idol and its replacement by a *liṅga* at the temple in both stories. But, while Ādayya's story betrays little patience for verbal exchanges between its characters, the story about Vaijakavvē exhibits a more pliable approach. We find in the *Vaija Ragaḷē* some indications of intercommunal dialog and the possibility of redemption for the worldling Jain, such as: the theological debate between the husband and the wife; the Jains' repentance (starting on the communal level and culminating with Nemisēṭṭi's personal confession of hitting his wife); and lastly, Nemisēṭṭi's conversion to Śaivism. These events mark a categorical difference between the *Vaija Ragaḷē* and the *Āda Ragaḷē*'s narratives. In comparison, recall the powerful and aggressive image in the latter story of Jains who beg on their knees for their lives to be spared. Perhaps a result of the gender reversal between these two stories, the *Vaija Ragaḷē* prescribes a form of resistance to Jainism that is much less violent and more geared toward argumentation, initiation, and redemption that is absent from the *Āda Ragaḷē*.<sup>46</sup>

I use the word "resistance" and, indeed, life is not rosy for Vaijakavvē at her

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<sup>46</sup> See section 6.1.2 above for a discussion about the implications of the Vaijakavvē's story from the point of view of gender dynamics.

husband's *jaina* house. For one, she cannot worship Śiva openly but is rather forced to worship him in her mind only. There are several ways with which we can understand this internalization. First, this motif reminds us of the general shift inward in ritualistic practice that Kannada *śivabhakti* professes to.<sup>47</sup> Another parallelism we can draw with regard to Vaijakavvė's internal worship is, perhaps surprisingly, the underlying rejection of external worship in favor of internal ones that underlies *jaina* ritualistic thought.<sup>48</sup> Thus, despite the overt sectarian antagonism related to Vaijakavvė's circumstances for worshipping Śiva in mind only in this story, the conceptual affinity regarding internal forms of practice here supports the claim made at the beginning of this chapter regarding implicit resemblances between the two antagonistic traditions. We can also note that, from the point of view of religious practices, Vaijakavvė's frustration at being unable to worship Śiva at the *jaina* home is completely overturned by the story's denouement into a completely extrinsic and public victory at the temple grounds (and Nemisėṭṭi's initiation also implies the introduction of overt *śaiva* practices in the formerly *jaina* house).

The resistance to Jainism is not only played out in this story at the level of devotional religious practice, but also on the ethical plain. Recall that when the Jains realize that their temple's doors are sealed from within, they immediately start to scrutinize their recent conduct in search for an ethical violation committed by one from their community, a fault that might explain the Jina's refusal to open the temple to the community. Nemisėṭṭi promptly comes forward and admits he has sinned to the *jaina dharma* by violating the prohibition on exercising violence (*ahimsā*) by beating his wife the previous night. The *jaina* community assumes that it was this act that caused

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<sup>47</sup> See section 7.2 above.

<sup>48</sup> Babb (1996).

the Jina to preclude their entrance to the temple, and they decide to ask for Vaijakavvė's forgiveness in order for her to absolve Nemisėtti and, by extension, the whole *jaina* community. This vignette might seem at first inconsistent with the overall *śaiva* bent of this text, since it appears to promulgate or exhibit support of *jaina* ethics, but a reconsideration of this incident in its narrative setting and its aftermath reveals the sarcasm exercised in this episode by Harihara, for what might seem at first as an ethical accommodation of the *jaina* value of non-violence is in fact a complex narrative progression meant to ridicule Jainism. The story's denouement proves that the Jains' diagnosis as well as prognosis turn out to be utterly wrong: in the *śaiva* world of this text, it is not the Jina who refuses to open the temple's door for the Jains but Śiva, while the Jina statue's head at this point has already been smashed to the ground. Furthermore, what finally brings Śiva to open the temple's doors is not the absolving of Nemisėtti's violence but Vaijakavvė open and public appeal to Śiva at the gates of the *jaina* temple. Thus, rather than ignoring *jaina* ethical framework of non-violence, Harihara ridicules it. From an ethical point of view, it is safe to say that, similarly to what we observed earlier with regard to contestations with Brahmins,<sup>49</sup> ethical consequences that are not specifically *śaiva* are completely overridden in the *Ragaḷgaḷu*, or subjugated to an overwhelming emotional commitment to Śiva through ritual action dedicated to him only.

Another narrative element salient in both stories is food, and more particularly—the ritualistic feeding of holy people by laity, as practiced in the local *śaiva* and *jaina* traditions. We find a similar stress on food practices as a contested arena between Śaivas and Jains already in the devotional poems of the Tamil *śaiva* saints

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<sup>49</sup> See sections 8.1.2 and 8.1.3 above.

Appar and Campantar from the sixth to eighth centuries.<sup>50</sup> In the Tamil context, the sectarian criticism of food practices, termed by Ulrich as “dietary polemics,” revolves around which food is consumed (and which is forbidden for consumption) and the manner in which food is consumed.<sup>51</sup> The *śaiva* attack on the *jaina* dietary practices in our stories is related to those found in the Tamil landscape, but is not identical, for its only focus is on who consumes the food.<sup>52</sup> Not only are the *Āda Ragaḷē* and the *Vaija Ragaḷē* silent regarding what food is prepared for the renouncers of either traditions; both also convey a sense of leniency regarding who prepares the food to be consumed by the renouncers. In both stories, the wife, who prepares the food following her husband’s request, is situated on the “wrong” side of the religious boundary: in the *Āda Ragaḷē*, it is Padmāvati the Jain who prepares food for the *śaiva* renouncers at the lake, and in the *Vaija Ragaḷē*, it is Vaijakavvē the *śaiva* who prepares food for the *jaina* renouncers invited by Nemisēṭṭi. These details are significant because they contribute to the general sense of daily cooperation, participation, and inclusion—even pertaining ritualistic settings—between members of the different traditions who live under the same roof. In these stories, the spiritual capital of ritualistic food,<sup>53</sup> like its volatile

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<sup>50</sup> Ulrich (2007: 243-52). Food practices are used in sectarian literary rhetoric of the *bhakti* movements also in other regions of South Asia few centuries later (Glushkova 2005, Pauwels 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Ulrich (2007: 230). Ulrich mentions in her article that *jaina* dietary practices are particularly restrictive. *Jaina* renouncers, in addition to restrictions to the general *jaina* community of meat, fish, eggs, alcohol, and honey, also “eschew garlic, onions, butter, certain fruits and vegetables, processed foods, and water that has not been boiled and filtered” (2007: 241; see also relevant references on pp. 240-41). In addition, Tamil *Śaivas* ridicule the *jaina* practices of using both hands for eating, naked dining (by certain *jaina* renouncers), fasting by night, and eating in silence (pp. 241, 243, 251).

<sup>52</sup> None of the restrictions and rules mentioned in the previous footnote with regard to the Tamil culture are described in the *Āda Ragaḷē* and the *Vaija Ragaḷē*, despite the general centrality of food in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, specifically in relation to rituals and worship (section 7.4 above). There is a story in the *bhakti* tradition of north India in which food reserved for holy men is consumed by a rival sect in a domestic setting. See Pauwels (2010: 531-34)

<sup>53</sup> I borrow the term “spiritual capital” from Verter (2003).

potential, is not connected to its preparation but to its consumption, and it is only when religious specialists from outside the domestic setting come in contact with the mixed couples that religious boundaries harden. At that point, the tension generated by crossing ritualistic boundaries become overwhelming to the point that it tears apart the gentle tissue of co-living. Thus, in this religious landscape, food functions differently on the mundane, private, and non-ritualistic level than on the ritualistic and public level (even when it penetrates the domestic sphere).

An interesting symmetry exists between the two stories with regard to narrative dynamics of laity and renouncers: in both cases, sectarian crisis is ignited as result of the consumption of the food meant for renouncers of one sect by those of the other sect. Somewhat in contrast to the Tamil focus on sectarian food practices, here we find a more general sense of religious attribution that does not surfaces at the mundane level but only comes into play when the domestic sphere is exposed to an external, public, and performative requirements. I return to this issue at the conclusions below.

### 9.3.3 AN UNBRIDGEABLE GAP

Mahādeviyakka is doubtlessly the most famous and popular of the three Śaraṇas discussed in this section (in addition to Vaijakavvë and Ādayya). From the point of view of interreligious marriage, Mahādeviyakka's story is the least sectarian of the three discussed in this section: while both Vaijakavvë's and Ādayya's stories posit the marriage between a Śaiva and a Jain at the center of the sectarian clash between the two communities, Mahādeviyakka's story revolves more around the personal implications of what can be termed "spiritual incongruity" between husband and wife, and stark sectarian claims or communal identities are largely absent from the

*Mahādeviyakkana Ragaḷe* (*Mahādevi Ragaḷe* henceforth). Mahādeviyakka’s husband is not explicitly identified in this Ragaḷe as a Jain, but is only referred to as a worldling (Bhavi)—an open category in this literary corpus (and more broadly in Kannada *śivabhakti*) that includes anyone who is not an avid follower of Śiva, an outsider to this tradition.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to Harihara’s silence about the religious identity of Mahādeviyakka’s husband, later traditions specifically identify him as a Jain.<sup>55</sup> We can contrast the obscurity of the spouse’s religious identity in the *Mahādevi Ragaḷe* with the other two Ragaḷes, which are explicit regarding the specifically *jaina* markers and identity of the devotee’s spouses; this contrast demonstrates the thematic difference between the personal story of Mahādeviyakka and the more community-centered stories of Ādayya and Vaijakavvē.<sup>56</sup> Despite the obscurity regarding the *jaina* identity of Mahādeviyakka’s husband, I include this story in the chapter about Jains due to the correspondence between the themes in this story and in the other stories dealt with in this chapter.

The *Mahādevi Ragaḷe* tells about a young and beautiful female devotee that is forced by her parents into marry the town’s ruler King Kauśika, who is obsessed with her. The bulk of the story is dedicated to describing Mahādeviyakka’s ordeal as a married woman. Her sole interest is worshipping Śiva and spending time in the

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<sup>54</sup> An indication that the category of “Bhavi” relies on an internal criterion of non-devotionalism can be found in the ninth chapter of the *Basava Ragaḷe*, in which Basavaṇṇa’s evil antagonists at Bijjaḷa courts, termed Bhavis by Harihara, are transformed into Bhaktas and start to believe in Śiva after witnessing Basavaṇṇa’s miracle (*Basava Ragaḷe* 9.67-70 in Harihara 1999: 325).

<sup>55</sup> The much later *Prabhuliṅgalīḷe* explicitly identify Mahādeviyakka’s husband as a Jain (Michael 1992: 50-52; 75 note 128). See also Desai (1968: 128-29, 152-54). The only explicit reference to Jains in the *Mahādevi Ragaḷe* is in found in verse 7.92 (Harihara 1999: 409), in which Mahādeviyakka mentions a known story about a female *jaina* mendicant who is famous for seducing men as *māyē* (“illusion personified,” Kittel 1982: 1241 s.v. *māyē* 5).

<sup>56</sup> Along similar lines, though the setting of Mahādeviyakka’s story is the king’s palace, it projects no explicit public or political prescription, in sharp contrast to the stories examined in section 8.1 above.

company of other Śivabhaktas, while her husband demands she spends her time with him. Finally, the tension between the married couple erupts, and Mahādeviyakka walks away from the palace as a naked mendicant, heading to Śrīśailam, the holy mountain and Śiva's abode. King Kauśika follows her there and tries different schemes to get her back, but she adamantly refuses, and at last unites with her true lover, the god Śiva.<sup>57</sup>

In essence, the story about Mahādeviyakka and her marriage to King Kauśika presents the difficulties, both internal and external, of a Śaiva's attempt to maintain her devotional identity while married to a non-Śaiva. Mahādeviyakka's life as depicted by Harihara in this story is tragic since the chasm that separates her, a Bhaktē, from her husband, a Bhavi, is impossible to bridge; their differences are simply insoluble. This theme, in itself, is similar to what we have found in the Vaijakavvē story: like Vaijakavvē, Mahādeviyakka is a physically attractive maiden and a strict follower of Śiva who is forced by her family to marry a Bhavi against her will. The *Mahādevi Raḡaḷē* is structured around the conflicting personalities of Kauśika and Mahādeviyakka, husband and wife, both are equally strong headed, and the main narrative is propelled by the incongruity between Kauśika's emotional and erotic obsession with Mahādeviyakka and the latter's insistence to live a devotional life as a dedicated śaiva Bhaktē. Both protagonists are guided by their passions and their equal unwillingness to compromise their own ways of life for the benefit of their shared life.

The author lays down a dyadic foundation for the whole story—Bhavi versus Bhaktē, *bhava* versus *bhakti*—at the very beginning of the story: as a pretext for Mahādeviyakka's frustrating birth as a human devotee on earth, the author tells us that Mahādeviyakka cursed a Śiva attendant in Kailāsa, calling him a worldling, and this

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<sup>57</sup> A summary of the *Mahādevi Raḡaḷē* is provided in section 6.1 above.

term also dominates the whole earthly story through Mahādeviyakka’s conflictual co-living alongside a worldling. When Pārvati punished the female Gaṇa, she explicitly declares that Mahādeviyakka has to “cross the ocean of *bhava*” before she can return to the Kailāsa.<sup>58</sup> *Bhava* in this context implies a world fraught with daily compromises, ambiguities, and contingencies, away from the intimate experience of serving Śiva and Pārvati in heaven. Kailāsa denotes in this literary tradition the exact opposite: an a-historical and utopian space or perfect devotion.<sup>59</sup>

In a more profound manner, the story of the *Mahādevi Ragaḷē* is structured around the dyad of *bhakti* versus *bhava*, and oppositions control the plot in many episodes: in the beginning of the earthly story, Mahādeviyakka is described as luster and Kauśika as darkness; during their wedding, Mahādeviyakka is profoundly distraught by her pairing with a Bhavi but comes alive when worshipping Śiva in her boudoir;<sup>60</sup> in the period immediately following the wedding, Mahādeviyakka participates in the Śiva assemblies (*śivagoṣṭhis*<sup>61</sup>) during the day and sleeps with Kauśika during the night; finally, right before Mahādeviyakka unites with Śiva Mallikārjuna at Śrīśailam, she declares that it was wrong to unite with a Bhavi and that now she will unite with Bhava, which in this context means Śiva. Mahādeviyakka’s proclamation,

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<sup>58</sup> *Mahādevi Ragaḷē* 1.119 in Harihara (1999: 395):  
*āptarenavarabhavanolum ēyullavaruṅtu*

<sup>59</sup> See related discussion about Kailāsa in section 5.2.1 above.

<sup>60</sup> This is a highly intimate, charged, and suggestive moment of spiritual unity between Mahādeviyakka and her *liṅga*. Harihara describes the two at this moment as *bhinnavilladē* (“without any difference,” *Mahādevi Ragaḷē* 5.114 in Harihara 1999: 404). At the end of the intimate *pūjē* ceremony, Mahādeviyakka reaches a state described as *aṅgaliṅgasāṅghasukha* (“the ecstasy of unity between the devotee and god,” *Mahādevi Ragaḷē* 5.110 in Harihara 1999: 110). The term *aṅgaliṅgasāṅghasukha* is semantically close to *aṅgaliṅgasamarasa* (“unified delight between the devotee and god,” Vidyāśaṅkara 2000: 3 s.v. *aṅgaliṅga*, Knn), which is a central term in later *vīraśaiva* theology. The sensuous hue of Mahādeviyakka’s worship is exceptional in the generally de-eroticized texture of the Śaraṇas’ devotion (section 5.2.2 above).

<sup>61</sup> See section 7.4 above.



which concludes her relentless stay on earth before returning to Kailāsa, also epitomizes the dyadic architecture of this story, since it contains a pun built on the multiple meanings the term *bhava* carries, with each meaning at the opposite end of the narrative dyad: *bhava* as worldly existence and *Bhava* as a form of Śiva, the ultimate antonym of worldly existence.<sup>62</sup>

There are additional, deeper thematic dyads embedded in the narrative's structure: when Mahādeviyakka, as Pārvati's female Gaṇa, wrongly calls Śiva's faithful and true Gaṇa a "worldling," she is immediately punished. This episode is reversed several chapters later: toward the middle of the story, when Kauśika sardonically calls Mahādeviyakka a renouncer for appearing naked in front of others, he is also immediately punished. This Janus-faced mechanism of misidentifying devotion for worldly existence and vice versa reemerges for the third time in the story toward its end, when Kauśika, in a desperate attempt to win back Mahādeviyakka, dresses up as a *śaiva* renouncer and goes to Śrīśailam to ask Mahādeviyakka to teach him what true devotion really means. Kauśika dresses up as a *śaiva* renouncer in order to display his resolution to replace his very earthly obsession with Mahādeviyakka for real love of Śiva. Here, the recurring motif of devotee versus worldling is superimposed on Kauśika's exterior and interior entities respectively. It is also a narrative moment where the internal conflict between Mahādeviyakka's and Kauśika's dispositions surfaces onto the external realm through Kauśika's appearance as a Śaiva. The conflict culminates when Mahādeviyakka refuses to accept Kauśika's guise as a genuine embrace of *śivabhakti*. Thus, for the model author, as well as for the protagonist Mahādeviyakka, Kauśika's costume is just another expression of his habitual

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<sup>62</sup> Monier-Williams *et al* (1986: 748 s.v. *bhava* 4 and 10).

imperialistic manipulations, similar to his forcing Mahādeviyakka’s parents to marry their daughter to him. In conclusion, both the author, Harihara, and the protagonist of this *Ragaḷe*, Mahādeviyakka, are “hardliners” with regard to interreligious marriages, and this story, through different mechanisms of binary structures and their reversals, conveys the impossibility to reconcile between the devotee’s pious interiority and the worldling’s lowly existence.

Despite the author’s adamant disapproval of worldly, non-*śaiva* existence, Mahādeviyakka’s parents exhibit in the story a more tolerant approach toward worldlings and worldly experience. They try to convince their daughter to accept the marriage, saying that “in this world many are coupled with Bhavis and there is nothing exceptional about it.”<sup>63</sup> Then, they cite numerous famous cases of faithful Bhaktēs marrying non-Śaivas,<sup>64</sup> and these references indicate that this phenomenon did not appear to have been rare or unusual for this literary culture, even though contested by the author himself. We return to this significant issue below.

The *Mahādevi Ragaḷe* compliments the *Ragaḷes* of Ādayya and Vaijakavvē within our discussion about interreligious marriages in that it presents us with the texture of personal incongruity between the Śaraṇa and his or her *jaina* spouse, in contrast to the more external level discussed earlier with regard to the previous stories, encompassing ritualistic food practices, negotiations pertaining to the domestic space, religious communal identities, and public arenas. The main thematic framework of the *Mahādevi*

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<sup>63</sup> *Mahādevi Ragaḷe* 3.178 in Harihara (1999: 400):  
*vasudhēyōḷu bhaviyōḍanē bāḷar enutkaṭarin*

<sup>64</sup> The term for “countless Bhaktēs” in the text is *agaṇita śivātmar*. Four Bhaktēs are mentioned in name: Kārikāḷammē, Herūra Hēṅgūsu, Vaijakavvē, and Maṅgāyakka (*Mahādevi Ragaḷe* 3.179-84 in Harihara 1999: 400). Vaijakavvē’s story is treated in section 9.3.2 above.

*Ragaḷē* is largely detached from these realms and is, instead, focused on the personal drama of husband and wife caught in an impossible interreligious marriage. For Harihara, such marriages are doomed to failure not only because of different practices and communal commitments, as evinced in the previous stories, but also because of the unbridgeable internal divide between the two partners. The devotee committed to Śiva cannot sympathize nor be intimate with a spouse who is a worldling, as their basic dispositions toward life and living in the world are categorically different. Such unholy matrimony entails constant friction and frustration that are, according to Harihara, irresolvable within the framework of marriage.

#### 9.3.4 THE ENEMY WITHIN

The reading of domestic stories in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* points to a considerable distance between the text's overt prescription of rejecting mixed marriages and its description of daily and intimate forms of social engagements between the different religious groups. It is obvious that the three stories in Harihara's corpus that deal with such mixed marriages—the *Mahādevi Ragaḷē*, the *Āda Ragaḷē*, and the *Vaija Ragaḷē*—project a strong resistance to mixed marriages: Mahādeviyakka's last resort from a frustrating marriage with a person who is completely alien to her *śaiva* world is a dramatic and problematic divorce, and even the *śaiva* haven of Śrīśailam cannot protect her from the long arm of her former husband;<sup>65</sup> Ādayya cannot contain the frustration and wrath induced in him by his *jaina* parents-in-law, and he replaces romancing together with his *jaina* wife with a murderous bloodbath at her family's *jaina* temple; Vaijakavvē cannot worship Śiva at her parents-in-law's *jaina* house and is ruthlessly beaten by her husband for trying. Hagiographies are dramatic by their very nature, but

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<sup>65</sup> See discussion in section 6.1.1 above.

it seems that the *Ragaḷeṣ* addressing the theme of the “domestic other” are particularly poignant. It is as if Harihara employs his most dramatic narrative arsenal to preclude even a possibility of imagining harmonious co-living with the “religious other,” one who is not a Śaiva and, more specifically, is a Jain.

At the same time, domestic spheres are inherently complex. In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, they host a gamut of interactions, each one is invoked at different moments: from daily cooperation and co-living to highly charged moments of religious exclusion. Despite the foregrounding of the latter mode in Harihara’s narratives, it is difficult to overlook the prominence of the former in the stories. After all, these stories do tell us about mixed families living under the same roof: a non-śaiva king marries a śaiva Bhaktē and builds her a private worship space for Śiva in the palace; a family of *jaina* temple priests takes into its home the daughter’s lover, who is a zealous Śaiva; a *jaina* community led by the beating husband seeks the forgiveness of a the śaiva wife at the couple’s home. It is clear that the stories at hand describe such mixed marriages as part and parcel of daily life in this milieu, well grounded within the boundaries of social acceptability: Mahādeviyakka’s parents approve her marrying a Bhavi and even enumerate such famous cases; Ādayya, an ardent Śaiva, falls in love with a Jain and freely moves into her family’s house, despite the fact they are *jaina* priests; Vaijakavvē’s family already has mixed marriages in the parents’ generation without this fact threatening the family’s sense of shared identity (according to an assertion made by some relatives, they all still belong to the same *gotra*). We also see that in all three stories, the wedding ceremonies are unhindered by sectarian differences, and in Vaijakavvē’s story Harihara is comfortable to describe how an astrologer determines the auspicious wedding date (*muhūrtam*), without mentioning any difference between the two religious’ wedding

customs.

In addition, while these stories take effort to vilify Jainism as a religious and social construct at the public level, they do allow the possibility of *jaina* support of *śaiva* interests and also conversion into the *śaiva* tradition. There is always a narrative possibility for a Jain's change of heart and, consequently, his or her acceptance into the Śaiva community if they choose so. In light of the social textures that are implicitly conveyed by the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, it seems safe to assume that the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* casts itself against a social reality in which the two communities coexisted with some measure of healthy and ongoing cooperation.

The “domestic other” is almost always identified by Harihara as a Jain and never as a Brahmin, who is the paradigmatic nemesis at the king's court. At the most basic level, we can say that there is a difference within the category of the “religious other” as prescribed by Harihara between Brahmins and Jains. In continuance to the assertion made in the previous chapter regarding the familiarity and communal affinity between the Śivabhaktas and the Brahmins,<sup>66</sup> we can induce that marriage between Śaivas and Brahmins, some of which are Śaivas themselves of course, appears to be a lesser source for anxiety and friction for the author of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* compared to marriage with Jains. This can be explained by the wider set of cultural affinities and practices shared with Brahmins or, alternatively, by Brahmanical endogamous practices, which made such cases, at least on paper, less common.<sup>67</sup> It is difficult to state with certainty why no stories about Śaraṇas marrying Brahmins appear in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*—Harihara is silent

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<sup>66</sup> See section 8.2 above.

<sup>67</sup> Later in this literary tradition, we find a story about the marriage of a Brahmin girl to a low-caste boy in Kalyāṇa during Basavaṇṇa times, and this story becomes central for the dynamics between the *śaiva* community, the court's Brahmins, and the king (Chandra Shobhi 2005: 188, 191-92, Desai 1968: 193-94, Ramanujan 1973: 63-64).

about this—but this silence in itself is telling with regard to how Harihara perceives the communal threat from Brahmins and that stemming from Jains. From the author’s point of view, each group occupies completely different social spheres.

#### 9.4 Concluding Remarks: Competing through Alienation

While impudent criticism toward Brahmins is one of the characteristics that sets apart the Kannada *śaiva* tradition from the Tamil *śaiva* literary tradition (at least in its hagiographical mode), the aggressive attitude toward Jains is shared by both traditions. We find anti-Jain polemics in Tamil *śaiva* literature as early as the sixth century, and this theme reaches its highest point in the Tamil hagiographies of the twelfth century.<sup>68</sup> In both literary traditions, the Jains are—to use Richard Davis’ term—“[a] clearly distinguishable Other”,<sup>69</sup> beyond comparison to any other religious rival.<sup>70</sup> In both *śaiva* traditions, we find inimicality towards Jains, figured around *jaina* practices, specifically those pertaining to issues of asceticism, purity, and food consumption, at private settings (such as the home) or public (the temple).

Still, within this overall representational congruence between the two *śaiva* traditions with regard to their totalistic opposition to *jaina* communal identity, one difference stands out: in the Tamil narratives, specifically those by Cekkīḷār, we also find competition with the Jains over royal patronage; Jains are portrayed as having access to and influence over kings, and the Śaivas struggle to assume their position at the court.<sup>71</sup> It is the theme of patronage for the *jaina* community that is absent from the

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<sup>68</sup> Peterson (1998: 164, 212-23).

<sup>69</sup> Davis (1998: 220).

<sup>70</sup> Peterson (1998: 165).

<sup>71</sup> Peterson (1998: 175-80), Davis (1998: 213).

Kannada hagiographies of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the absence of *jaina* influence at the court in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* narratives does not imply their absence from the other public arenas or any sense of subalternity. On the contrary: the stories discussed in this chapter portray powerful and vibrant *jaina* communities, whose public presence is asserted by economic activity, religious festivals, and large temple edifices.

Almost in all the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories that involve Jains, we find moments in which they are violated. Such moments are not rare in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*; rabid acts of violence, at times completely unchecked, are pervasive, and are consistently accompanied by denigrating language that dehumanizes the Jains. These literary patterns are also found in other narratives of south-Indian *bhakti*.<sup>73</sup> The disturbing figurations of gory violence and, more generally, the deliberate transgressions of normative negotiation and coexistence in these stories, raise obvious questions in terms of their prescription to their immediate audience: how were these violent stories understood in their original settings? What is the author's purpose of this violent, outlandish imaginaire? I am not suggesting hermetic answers to these questions, but one could find a possible lead in the literary genealogy of violent idioms in south-Indian religious texts. Anne Monius, by tracing similar patterns of violent imaginaire in the *Pēriya Purāṇam* and earlier Jain texts, connects violent figurations to specific literary conventions repeated across religious traditions and literary cultures.<sup>74</sup> This figurative connection suggests that the representational language of violence in *bhakti* materials should not be read in a

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<sup>72</sup> The *Ragaḷēs* that involve *jaina* figures never mention nor imply royal affinities, with the exception of the *KBōmma Ragaḷē*, although even this *Ragaḷē* does not describe a fruitful cooperation between the Jains and the ruler but, rather, sharp enmity.

<sup>73</sup> The most immediate ones are the Tamil *Pēriya Purāṇam* and Telugu *Basava Purāṇamu*.

<sup>74</sup> Monius (2004a). Violence and self-sacrifice are also integral to earlier South-Asian literatures, such as the Buddhist *Jātaka* tales.

narrowly prescriptive mode but as a conventional method of expression. This postulation, considered together with the centrality of determination (*niṣṭhā*)<sup>75</sup> in the narrative logic of the Śaraṇas' stories, suggests that by narrating extreme violence the author of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* posits devotional models for inner determination rather than for uncontrolled and abusive aggressions.

Despite Harihara's surly attitude toward Jains, the portrayal of Jains in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is as complex as that toward Brahmins. In this text, both are "religious others" though very different from each other. The Brahmins in the stories are portrayed as an "opponent other," sharing with the *śivabhakti* tradition the space of the temple, scripture and canon, and even a set of core values and attitudes. At the same time, Brahmins are usually portrayed in the relevant stories as distanced from daily life; they operate mostly at the king's court and in direct relation to him. In contrast, Jains are depicted in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as a "wholly other;" there is no shared grammar or system of shared cultural symbols between the *śaiva* and the *jaina* traditions as depicted in this text. At the same time, the social spaces they occupy are intricately connected and shared. In these stories, locale determines action, and the Śaraṇa is repeatedly motivated by "geographical jealousy," an impulse to displace and inherit *jaina* control over the public religious landscape. Among the contested spaces, the most sanguine is the temple. With some contrast to the Tamil tradition, this literary tradition does not dissociate blood and self sacrifice from the temple.<sup>76</sup>

The stories about struggles with Jains over religious landscapes of urban, economic centers suggest an anthropological and demographical proximity between the *śaiva* and *jaina* communities. At the public level, we see competition between Jains

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<sup>75</sup> See discussion in section 5.1 above.

<sup>76</sup> Compare with the later Tamil *śaiva* Purāṇic tradition (Shulman 1980).



and Śaivas over religious festivals and temple identity. Within these spaces, each community asserts its presence through a specific set of cultural indexes, and the competing community strives to replace these with its own. Thus, a *śaiva* festival is challenged by a *jaina* festival, and a temple Jina idol is replaced by a *śivaliṅga*. The parallelism between the two communities runs also at a deeper level. Religious practices, at various levels and modes, are surprisingly similar. For example, we find similar behaviors by the laity of both communities in relation to renunciators as well as by the renunciators themselves, and similar dietary restrictions and food rituals.

At the private level, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*' stories describe an even greater level of intimacy between Śaivas and Jains. At the most basic level, the practice of interreligious marriages between Śaivas and Jains was not a rare one according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*. Sharing a house means also sharing food, festivals, and certain ritual practices. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* prescribes sectarian resistance to mixed social texture. Harihara's concentrated effort to untangle this complex net is based on a strategy of alienation by constructing the Jains as a "wholly other." It is here that the Kannāḍiga Śaraṇa stories rejoin the Tamil tradition. Richard Davis writes with regard to the Tamil case:

At this moment of social change, the *bhakti* poets were engaged in constructing a new sense of Tamil identity, incorporating Vedic, Saṅgam, and Śaiva values and practices, and they needed a clearly distinguishable Other to set this forth. Their rhetorical misrepresentation of Jainism gave them what they needed.<sup>77</sup>

The sectarian project of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is conceptually similar to the Tamil one as described here by Davis, with its own particular features: the *Ragaḷēs* about Kannāḍiga Śaraṇas are mute regarding a *jaina* presence at the Cālukya and Kalacūri courts and explicit about shared domestic spaces. Both of these elements are

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<sup>77</sup> Davis (1998: 220).

unsimplest in these stories. The absence of Jains from court in the stories does not imply that Jains did not enjoy royal patronage (in form of temple support, communal protection, and so on). The co-living and intermarriages between Śaivas and Jains does not imply that both communities shared religious identity and worldview. The *Ragalēgaḷu* portrays the Jains as simultaneously close participants of mundane life and profoundly aliens from a religious point of view. This text also conveys an ideological effort to separate them from the religious—but also the social, political, and economic—landscapes in order to enhance a sense of communal cohesion among the worshipers of Śiva.

## Concluding Thoughts

The journey taken in this dissertation is dedicated to a particular corpus, Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, as considered in its wider diachronic and synchronic contexts: its role and significance in the cultural history of the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition and more broadly medieval Kannada literature, and its relation to contemporary aspects of society in the Kannada-speaking regions. The premise in this dissertation is that the early *śivabhakti* culture of the Kannada-speaking regions is richer than the Vacanas alone, and stretches beyond the temporal and geographical boundaries of Basavaṅṅa's Kalyāṅa. Accordingly, I aim in this dissertation to deepen the scholarly discourse about this devotional tradition and medieval Kannada literature at large.

It is clear that the *śivabhakti* movement in the Kannada-speaking regions, as represented in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, was still in a nascent phase during the early thirteenth century. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, in contrast to other narrative accounts about the Kannada *Śivabhaktas* to follow, including the Telugu *Basava Purāṅamu* from the late thirteenth century, is not constructed around one central figure but, rather, holds together separate narrative units without any overarching ideological or formalistic organizing principle apart from the protagonists' intense faith in Śiva. The fragmented structure of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* allows Harihara to include in his religious vision different cultural settings, different social backgrounds, and different practices of and approaches to worshipping Śiva, without forcing them to hermetically cohere with each other. From an analytical point of view, the innate multivocality of this text can be regarded as advantageous since, for us modern readers, the merit of this motley creation is in the possibilities it opens up for understanding a religious tradition before it started to think

of itself as a unified, doctrine-based tradition.

In order to demonstrate the rich potential of studying previously unexplored materials of the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition, it suffices to reiterate to the story about the Śaraṇa discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. Keśirāja, described in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* as the chief minister at the Kalyāṇa court, is temporally located by the text about fifty years earlier to the purported beginning of the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition under Basavaṇṇa's leadership. Keśirāja is completely unknown to Western scholarship despite the fact he embodies many of the features that constitutes this *bhakti* tradition in its early phase: he is a Brahmin committed to lead a non-excluding devotional community; he composes untraditional poetry in the vernacular; he conducts assemblies in which devotees collectively worship *liṅgas* and tell devotional stories; and he utilizes his public role at the king's court to benefit the city's Bhaktas. And still in similarity to Basavaṇṇa's political career, that of Keśirāja also ends in catastrophe. Even this brief survey testifies to the fact that the cultural world of the early Śaraṇas from the Kannada-speaking regions is more varied than we currently are able to imagine, and the first step toward unlocking it involves the uncovering of primary materials previously unavailable to the West.

### **The Poetics of Devotion**

Significantly, the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* developed out of a narrative culture that stretches beyond the geographical and linguistic borders of the Kannada-speaking regions. This narrative culture about Śivaśaraṇas borrows heavily from and directly appropriates narratives about the Tamil Nāyaṇārs and maintains thematic connections with pan-Indian devotional narratives. It also consciously makes claims about its direct connections with devotional strands from other regions in the peninsula. This is a

deeply oral culture, transmitted and communicated by Śivabhaktas who travel from one pilgrimage site to another, across regions and languages. In the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the open-ended nature of this narrative culture is not only evinced by the text's references to śivabhakti traditions outside the Kannada-speaking regions, but also in the absence of any restrictive, defining conceptualization with regard to the Kannaḍiga Śivabhaktas. The terms *vīraśaiva* and *liṅgāyata*, which became identified with this tradition from the fifteenth century onward, are completely absent from this text or contemporaneous ones. But more significantly, beyond matters of nomenclature, in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories about the Kannaḍiga Śaraṇas there is no inherent and explicit principle that binds the protagonists together and distinguishes them from others. In contrast to the Tamil narrative tradition, for example, geographical and linguistic identities are not central in this corpus. Other markers such as a restrictive, formal set of practices or an organized doctrine (that will later become prominent for the Vīraśaivas) are not to be found in this text. This is not to say that there are no features that distinguish this tradition but, rather, that this tradition did not “think” of itself as distinguished. In contrast to the later Viraktas, for example, Harihara's vision of Kannada śivabhakti is a highly inclusive one.

Harihara himself, as depicted by the later tradition, embodies some of the distinctive features of Kannada śivabhakti that permeate the protagonists of his own corpus, such as an eccentric impatience toward compromise and negotiation. In the later traditions about Harihara's life, Harihara is depicted as a highly capable but also eccentric person, in two separate arenas: the literary and the political. At the literary front, the process of composing the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* was, according to tradition, a complicated one: it involved trial and error, and even, at least at the beginning, its

rejection by the immediate community of devotees. At the political front, Harihara's unconventionality brought to his distancing from the court, away from political rivals and inhibiting ethics. But the foregrounding of Harihara's literary and political exceptionality by the later tradition, coupled with the recognition of his greatness, signals his historical significance in developing a expressive mode for Kannada devotionalism as well as a new mode of literary expression. Significantly, both traditions about Harihara and Harihara's own narratives reject courtly culture and challenge the authority of the human king. These claims, supported by "hard" evidence for the political independence of the early *śaiva* authors at centers such as Hampi and Śrīśailam and contrasted with the traditional kingly patronage of authors of classical Kannada literature, suggest that this literary culture developed outside and away from the court and with a considerable level of independence.

The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is an exceptional piece of literature, in conversation with the hegemonic literary culture of its time but also daring and groundbreaking in its literary practices. It would not be an overstatement to say that Harihara's contribution in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* to the history of Kannada literature is massive. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is a sophisticated text in a simple format: it employs unconventional linguistic, metrical, rhythmical, and phonic devices in order to captivate the attention of its immediate audience, which was also a specific religious community. The *Ragaḷēgaḷu* is clearly a text meant to be performed to and by large crowds, a practice meant for defining the communal identity of this tradition. At the same time, this text consciously corresponds with written, elite literary traditions. As a direct result of the unique poetic mixture of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, the written medium of Kannada poetry started to express itself in new ways immediately after Harihara, attuned to new and popular

crowds. Therefore, if we wish to put our fingers on the literary moment in which medieval Kannada literature made its most dramatic leap in terms of writing practices, there is a good case for locating it in Harihara's *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

### **Early Kannada Śivabhakti according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu***

Advancing from the literary to the religious, what can we say about the *śivabhakti* tradition of the Kannada-speaking regions according to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories? First, it is clear that the devotee's interiority is a major concern in these stories, and we find in them a highly developed vocabulary to communicate this interiority. Among the different terms used for this purpose in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, there is one term that guides the devotee in all his interactions and actions on earth, and that is *niṣṭhē* (determination), or *ekaniṣṭhē* (single determination). The Śiva's devotee in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories is blind to hesitation, reflection, or fear, even when confronting the god that he himself worships. In light of the Bhakta's absolutist interiority, it is unsurprising that in such encounters the devotee has the upper hand over his god, while Śiva, who is characterized in the pan-Indian Purāṇas as impatient and at times even capricious, is transformed in this narrative culture into a tamed and responsible father figure.

Intersubjectivity between members of the emerging *śaiva* community is also central to the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, and is expressed through the term *samaśīla* (equality). This ideal is central to all devotional traditions in South Asia but rarely gets translated onto the social plane as deeply and thoroughly as it does in the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition. Nevertheless, this principle is never implemented in the stories of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* in a straightforward or complete manner. Rather, the stories in this corpus constantly negotiate this ideal against complicated social realities: Bhaktēs (female devotees)

receive considerable agency in these stories but are not equal in any way to their male counterparts, relatives, and friends. *Jāti*, the familial origin of the Bhakta, is deliberately and completely undermined in the stories, together with any precluding notion of untouchability, but untouchability is wholeheartedly adopted by this narrative tradition and projected outward against non-Śaivas, (especially, Vaiṣṇava Brahmins and Jains). The significance of personal accumulation of money is contested in the stories but not occupation in itself: one's traditional occupation is strongly endorsed in these narratives, and this endorsement obliquely also supports existing social hierarchies and structures. A similar complexity exists with regard to commensality and dietary restrictions: on the one hand, the commitment to embrace any devotee of Śiva is expressed in the stories in the acceptance (and also sanctioning) of meat consumption, even in collective gatherings. At the same time, we also find in some of these stories an adoption of the Brahmanical and Jain values of vegetarianism, with some distinct exceptions (such as the consumption of onion). Significantly, all the progressive prescriptions of *samaśīla* only function within the boundaries of the devotional community, sanctioned by the shared devotion to the god Śiva, and have no holding or application outside it.

A similar level of complexity pertains to the religious practices that the author of the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* prescribes as valid means of worship. The multivocality of this text probably becomes most apparent with regard to this subject. First, we find in the stories an endorsement of orthodox forms of practice, including temple worship; the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* do not preclude temple worship in any explicit manner though, admittedly, this text lacks the celebration of the temple as sacred space, a celebration that permeates the Tamil *śaiva* literary tradition. Side by side to temple worship, we also



find in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* an enhanced attention to individual, nonstandard forms of worship, foremostly through the mechanics of worshipping one's personal *liṅga*. This mélange of parallel practices we are used to think of as competing with each other in the context of Kannada *śivabhakti* is bewildering but also indicates the diversity of this tradition in its earliest steps and its disinterest in distinguishing itself through excluding or distinct forms of ritual practice. This multiplicity of religious practices accompanies the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition also in its later phases, but in those phases it generates an inner tension that is not to be found in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*.

I mentioned earlier the downplaying of fiscal resources in interactions between fellow Śivabhaktas in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu*, but there is a clearly identifiable interest in this text in public money meant to fund the community of devotees. The source for this money in the narratives is always the court, an arena about which the author is particularly suspicious. Here, we can locate a bifurcation between Harihara's descriptions and prescriptions: though the narratives overtly celebrate the Śaraṇa's turning away from the court, it is clear from the same narratives that the author and his audience are familiar with themes connected with finances and politics (such as tax collections, written commercial agreements, court etiquette, and so on). Furthermore, in several moments in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* stories, the author and the protagonists are candid about the (cynical) usage of the court for providing the community's needs. Vaiṣṇava Brahmins are always depicted as privileged at the court and are marked by the stories as religious opponents of the Śaraṇas. However, these are ideological opponents rather than immediate ones: interactions with Brahmins in the *Ragaḷēgaḷu* generates a general sense of coexistence (albeit imperious) and we also find direct appropriations of Brahmanical values and practices by the Śaraṇas and the

communities of devotees.

In sharp contrast, cooperation and coexistence is completely prohibited with regard to communal contact with Jains. Jains in the text are more immediate opponents than Brahmins. While the latter group operates at the segregated, elitist court, the former group can be found anywhere but the court: at the house (through intermarriages between Śaivas and Jains), at the market, and at the wilderness (where we find renouncers from both traditions, all behave very similarly to each other). But the most significant and contested arena between Śivabhaktas and Jains is the temple. Harihara prescribes intense competition against a religious community that lives and maintains close relations with his *śaiva* audience. The actual history of the sectarian competition between Jains and Śivabhaktas in the Kannada-speaking regions during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is without a doubt complex and dramatic, and has yet to be told in any comprehensive and thorough manner, but the othering by *śaiva* texts such as the *Ragalēgaḷu* of Jains is so totalistic and violent that it signals the intensity of this untold story.

### **Future Directions**

The recovery of the early literary culture of Kannada *śivabhakti* opens up three immediate directions for further research of South-Asian religious history. The first among these is within the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition: although this dissertation and Chandra Shobhi's both contain specific points of comparison between Harihara and the later *vīraśaiva* authors, the task of reconstructing the cultural genealogy of the Kannada *śivabhakti* tradition has yet to be taken up. The literary production by this tradition throughout the ages is so prolific, and its imaginaire is so rich, that this line of study appears promising in terms of its contribution to our understanding of how a religious

community's self-representation develops over time according to changing and contextual communal needs, anxieties, and interests. Publications of pre-modern *vīraśaiva* literature are widely available due to vibrant secondary scholarship in Kannada and to patronage by different contemporary *vīraśaiva maṭhas* (colleges), and language is the only barrier for this project, although two central texts in this genealogy, the late thirteenth-century *Basava Purāṇamu* and the sixteenth-century version of the *Śūnyasampādanē*, are available in English translation and were hardly studied thus far by Western scholars.

Another project that might further the study of this dissertation pertains to the intense but still obscure contact between the religious sects of medieval south India, and particularly the untold story about the Jains and the Śaivas from the medieval Kannada-speaking regions. This is a vast area to work in. To exemplify how backward Western scholarship is on this subject, it suffices to point to the rich Jain literature in Kannada that remains almost completely unexplored till this day.<sup>1</sup> But literature is just one component for examining this field; others include material culture and archeology in large. Furthermore, the premise for embarking on such a project should be that this sectarian contact was not only theological in nature, but also economic and political. For this, further historical studies are required, especially with regard to the social and economic history in this region during the early medieval period.

A third project that this study points to is an examination of cross-regional *bhakti* as expressed in vernacular narrative cultures. Against the recent trend of questioning the purported affinities and historical connections between different *bhakti* sects, I would suggest exploring the textual similarities between different *bhakti*

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<sup>1</sup> A text such as the twelfth-century *Samayaparīkṣē* by the jaina author Brahmaśiva is but one noteworthy example. See Zydenbos (1985).

traditions, similarities that partake at different levels: innovative poetics, theological claims as expressed in songs and stories, narrative patterns, shared miracles, and so on. While a historical reconstruction of the contact between different *bhakti* sects may be beyond the realm of what is possible, there is still much to learn about how the cultural history of *bhakti* in South Asia developed, within linguistic regions and across them.

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