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From Fields to the Throne Keladi-Ikkeri Rulers and the Culture of Nature

ABSTRACT: The territory administered by the Nayakas, first from Keladi and later from Ikkeri (c. 1499–1763 CE), first on behalf of the Vijayanagara rulers and then in their own name, was the western strip of Karnataka, known as Kanara-Malnad. The Kanara coast is very fertile and the hills of neighbouring Malnad (Malladeśa) are noted for their biodiversity. The *Śivatattvaratnākara*, an encyclopaedic work in Sanskrit authored by the Keladi-Ikkeri king, Basavarāja (r. 1697–1714), besides discussions related to various fields of knowledge, holds not only passages describing the region and the history of its rulers, but also other content that may reveal a way of thinking about nature and human-nature relationships. Reference will also be made to Pietro della Valle's account of his travels in the area between 1623 and 1624.

KEYWORDS: *Śivatattvaratnākara*, Basavarāja, Keladi-Ikkeri Nayakas, Malladeśa, horticulture, water bodies, Pietro della Valle

[...] what it does imply, however, is the assumption that nature is only accessible to us through cultural, i.e. linguistic and textual forms, and that it is therefore crucial to analyze and reflect on the multiple ways in which nature is discursively represented,

manipulated, repressed, empowered, or creatively used in the symbolic forms and textual practices of a culture. (Zapf 2010: 140)

The substantive aim of this paper is to study attitudes towards environment and biotic resources which could be characteristic of the rule of the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayakas (c. 1499–1763 CE) and, what is important, are expressed in the *Śivatattvaratnākara*.

The *Śivatattvaratnākara* is an encyclopaedic work in Sanskrit authored by the Keladi-Ikkeri king Basavarāja (r. 1697–1714). As a work of cross-disciplinary nature, it continues the tradition started by Varāhamihira (c. 6th century CE) and his *Bṛhatsamhitā*¹ as well as that of the *Mānasollāsa* ascribed to king Someśvara III (12th century CE), son of Vikramāditya VI.² Although the *Śivatattvaratnākara* relays heavily on earlier sources (among them the *Mānasollāsa*), there are passages which concern the particular territory that the Keladi-Ikkeri rulers were responsible for.

After the battle of Talikota in 1565, the importance of the Vijayanagara kingdom declined and its territories reduced; some of the warrior lords, previously appointed as *nāyakas* over certain districts or provinces with clearly defined privileges and responsibilities towards Vijayanagara monarchs (Asher and Talbot 2006: 58), declared their independence.³ This was also the story of the Nayakas of this locality, who first established their capital at Keladi and then at Ikkeri. The first independent ruler of the line was Venkaṭappa Nayaka (c. 1585–1629).⁴

The Keladi-Ikkeri realm encompassed Malladeśa (present-day Malnad or Malenadu) or the region of the Western Ghats (pre-

¹ See: Subrahmanya Sastri and Ramakrishna Bhat 1946.

² Edited by G. K. Shrigondekar in three volumes.

³ Jonathan Peterson rightly stresses the “durability of Vijayanagara state power. The collapse narrative fails to take seriously the extent to which Nāyaka rulers broadly, and Keladi rulers especially, recognized Vijayanagara sovereignty well into the seventeenth century, even after discontinuing annual tributes of money and military service” (Peterson 2022: 106).

⁴ More about the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayakas in Bes 2022: 122–140.

sent-day Karnataka), areas in the coastal region of the Karnata country, parts of northern Malabar (present-day Kerala) and fertile lands along the rivers. The region receives a great amount of annual rainfall and is full of plants and animals, especially in the evergreen dense forests of Malnad. Even today new species of flora and fauna are discovered periodically there. With an easy access to the coast, the kingdom had a robust trade in pepper, areca nut, rice, etc.

The physical layout of the land was defined in the first chapter (*taraṅga*) of the fifth book (*kallola*) of the *Śivatattvaratnākara* as follows:

ŚT V.1.

ramyaṃ vanavasādeśakuṭajādryor yadantaram |
malladeśa iti khyāto deśaḥ so 'yaṃ samrddhimān || 6 ||

This beautiful land called Malladeśa between the Kuṭajādri Hills and the densely forested areas is rich.

In the second *taraṅga* of the same fifth book (*kallola*), Malladeśa is depicted with more details listing and explaining the reasons for its richness.⁵ Each consecutive distich contains the relative pronoun *yatra* 'where', which introduces further elaboration into the description of this fertile and spectacular land.⁶ In stanza V. 2.4. there is a mention of splendid rivers which flow everywhere (*tungabhadrā-dayo yatra paritaḥ saritaḥ śubhāḥ*). Among them, only the Tungabhadra is referred to by name. No wonder, it was the most important river of the region and mentioning it could also be understood as underlining the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayakas relationship with and continuation of the Vijayanagara legacy. The City of Victory was situated on the Tungabhadra banks and the river itself arises from the confluence of two rivers, the Tunga and the Bhadra. The Bhadra meets the Tunga River at Koodli near Shivamogga and their combined

⁵ Also, the Kannada work *Keladi Nrpa Vijayam* “furnishes a poetic account of the geographical features of this country” (Krishnamurthy 1995: 4).

⁶ It is interesting to note that for Peter Mundy (1597–1667), a British traveller, trader and writer, “the Country resembled England For the lovely, lowly round rising hills” (Carnac Temple 1919: 81).

waters flow as the Tungabhadra from Malnad to the east. In Maladeśa, we learn, numerous lakes shine as if filled by the *amṛta*-hiding ocean which has left its own place for fear of being drunk by sage Agastya.⁷ There are also rivulets consisting of sugar-cane juice, which constantly flows from the beaks of parrots and brings excessive sweetness to the fields.⁸

Perhaps such an abundance of liquid substances present in the region is responsible not only for its lush vegetation, but also for the title and the division of the text into chapters called *taraṅgas* and *kallolas*. Usually, literary works that contain the word ‘sea’ or ‘river’ in their title have their chapters named ‘a wave.’ Both words, *taraṅga* and *kallola*, mean a wave or a billow, but what we have as the last part of the compound forming the title is *ākara*, or to be more precise, *ratnākara*, i.e., a jewel-mine, which is also an epithet of the ocean as a reservoir of precious gems. That is why the title *Śivatattvaratnākara* can be rendered as “The Ocean or Jewel-mine of Beneficial Truths,” where the word *śaiva* (‘beneficial’) at the same time refers and points to the Śaiva affiliation⁹ of the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayakas.

⁷ ŚT V.2.

*kumbhasambhavabhīyaktāḥ svasthānāḥ sambhṛtāmrtāḥ |
sāgarā iva kāsārā yatra rājanti bhūriśaḥ || 13 ||*

Where numerous lakes shine like possessing *amṛta* oceans that have abandoned their place for fear of Agastya.

⁸ ŚT V.2

*śukacañcūmukhadalatapuṇḍreḥśūdyadrasāpagāḥ |
kṣetrāṅām atimādhuryaṃ āvahantyo vahanti yāḥ || 19 ||*

These streams of sugar cane juice flow leaking from the beaks of the parrots and bring immeasurable sweetness to the farmland.

⁹ Peterson points out that Basava positions Keladi “territories as a kind of bucolic Śaiva paradise” (Peterson 2022: 104–105). The author of the *Śivatattvaratnākara* writes that the rivers of Maladeśa “remove all sins by touching just a drop of their waters” (*svapayobindusambandhanirdhūtākhilapātakāḥ*). The beauty of these lands goes hand in hand with the qualities of the people who inhabit them. Undoubtedly, however, according to Basava, this is because the inhabitants of the region venerate Śiva and Śiva *līngas* “which fulfil the desires of those who have concentrated their minds upon them” (Peterson’s translation, *ibid.*: 105). This approach is

If there is a lot of water, the vegetation is lush. The tree branches are bent over because of the weight of fruit (*drumāḥ phalabharā namnā...* V.2.20), the creepers of betel in the gardens embrace areca nut trees.¹⁰ Paddy fields are green everywhere:

ŚT V.2.

*yatra śālivanī vyāptā parito haritaprabhā |
mahīṣyā bhūpateḥ kṣoṇyāḥ pratisīreva dṛśyate || 15 ||*

Where a greenish glow covers the rice fields all around, looking like the veil of a royal spouse-earth.

This metaphoric image provides reference to the concept of king as the husband of the earth. The compounds *mahī-pati* or *kṣoṇi-pati* serve as the title of the king denoting his role as protector of his territory.¹¹ In Sanskrit literature, we find references to *mahī* bearing children to the king in the form of jewels, provided he takes proper care of her. In this stanza yet another image appears—apparently, the earth-wife, wearing a delicate greenish veil, will soon give birth to rice.

Basavarāja marks one more specific point on the literary map of Malladeśa. This is Kuṭajādri, a mountain peak among dense forests situated in the Western Ghats. It is described as “covered all

evocative of the passages extolling the beauty of Kashmir contained in Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara*. For instance, in the story of Bhūnandana we read: “It [Kashmir] is adorned by the Vitasta (Jhelum), which with her hands of waves, drives away all sin: *Go far away from here! There is no place for sin here, where everything is full of divine īrthas!*” (KSS XII.6.83: *devatīrthamayād dūram ito yāhīti kalmaṣam | vīcīhastair nudanty eva bhūṣitam yad vitastayā ||*). The kingdom of the Keladi Nayakas was frequented by Śiva and his spouse, while Kashmir becomes the favourite place of Śrī and Sarasvatī. Also, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva appear at certain places there.

¹⁰ ŚT V.2.

*yatra tāmbūlavallībhīr āśliṣṭāḥ pūgaśākhinaḥ |
ārāme kāmināṃ bhūyaḥ sūcayanty upagūhanam || 17 ||*

The branches of the areca tree with betel vines clinging to them very much imitate the hugs of lovers in the garden.

¹¹ More in Minoru Hara's article, “The king as the husband of the earth: *mahī-pati*” (Hara 1973).

over with herbs and many gems,”¹² which overtly sounds as a conventional description of a mountain.¹³ However, this particular location is still known to be home to rare plants endemic to the area. Even the name of the place comes from the plant *kuṭaja*, known as jasmine of the hills or *Wrightia antidysenterica*, a plant used in Ayurvedic medicine. As to the gems, what we know now is that its soil contains iron ore and the stones found there have magnetic properties.

It is also a place of pilgrimages and as such it becomes the subject of a conversation between Śiva and Pārvatī (*malladeśaviṣaye śivagaurīsaṃvādaḥ*) reported in the *Śivatattvaratnākara* V.1. After describing Kuṭajādri (*kuṭajādrivarṇanam* V.1.8–14), Śiva speaks about its holy places (*kuṭajādrau vidyamānāni tīrthāni* V.1.15–30) and ends his talk with an appeal directed at Gaurī:

ŚT V.1.

*saṃhr̥tya mūkanāmānaṃ dānavam bahudarpitam |
ihaiva vasa mūkāmbety ākhyāṃ prāpnuvatī || 29 ||*

Having killed an overly proud Dānava named Mūka, earning the name Mūkāmbikā, just settle here!

*ity uktvāntardadhe devaḥ śaṅkaro lokaśaṅkaraḥ |
tathā vidhāya tannāmnā khyātāvartata tatra sā || 30 ||*

That said, the god Śiva auspicious for the world disappeared. Having thus done she [Pārvatī] dwelt there under that name.

The story recalled here concerns a certain demon, who had been promised that nobody could kill him but a woman. However, alarmed by the slaying of Mahiṣāsura, he intended to obtain complete invincibility through penance. But this was not possible be-

¹² ŚT V.1.

*yatrāścaryakarānekamaṇyośadhisamāvṛtaḥ |
vartate kuṭajākhyo 'driḥ siddhasaṅghaniṣevitaḥ || 7 ||*

There is Mount Kuṭaja, covered with awe-inspiring numerous gemstones and herbs, frequented by numerous Siddhas.

¹³ Compare the depiction of the Himalayas at the opening of the *Kumārasaṃbhava* of Kālidāsa, Smith 2005 and Boccali 2003: 57–72.

cause, at the request of the gods, Sarasvatī had made him dumb; hence he was called Mūka, which means dumb. Usually, the demon slayer Mūkāmbikā is depicted as having come into existence through the energy of three goddesses: Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī, and Gaurī, respectively the wives of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Two well-known and important Mūkāmbikā temples are located at Chottanikkara in Kerala and at Kollur in Karnataka. A pilgrimage to Kollur often includes visiting Mūkāmbikā's abode at Kuṭajādri. Also today, the pilgrims from Karnataka and Kerala visit it, as one may read on Onmanorama,¹⁴ where the place is introduced "as pristine locations with greenery, mist, wind, and clouds greeting intrepid travellers."¹⁵

But there is mention of one more place in Basavarāja's work where one can see the local landscape in the vicinity of the future capital of the kingdom, that is Keladi. The legend concerning the beginnings of *nāyakaship* established in this territory is retold by Basavarāja, just after the description of Malladeśa.

ŚT V.2.

deśe 'smin keladīnāmnī pure gārhashtyam āśritah || 27b ||

gurubhaktiparas tasthau śaivo basavanāmaka |

sanāmnayā kāntyā yuktaḥ śivayā sa yathā śivah || 28 ||

In this country, in a city called Keladi, there lived a devotee of Śiva named Basava—the head of the family—filled with great devotion, having a wife of the same name, just as Śiva has [a wife called] Śivā.

tasya paryāptavasanāśanasaukhyasya jajñire |

kramāt kumārās catvārah pumārthā iva dhīmataḥ || 29 ||

In the course of time, four sons, like the four goals of human life, were born to this prudent man, who had attained an affluent life.

Two sons died, but the other two grew up. They were called Cauḍa and Bhadra. One day Cauḍa went to the field to do the

¹⁴ *Malayala Manorama* is a morning newspaper published in Malayalam since 1888. From 1998 it has an English News Website called Onmanorama.

¹⁵ Moothedat, A. N. 2018. Kudajadri—a Place for Spiritual Awakening. *Onmanoram*. <https://www.onmanorama.com/travel/outside-kerala/2018/12/06/kudajadri-a-place-for-spiritual-awakening.html> (accessed on 17.07.2021).

ploughing (V.2.33¹⁶). On the way he saw good omens: lizards and birds.¹⁷ In the field, tired Cauḍa fell asleep in the shade of the mango tree where a snake crawled up to the sleeping Cauḍa and spread his hood over the man's head. The mother, who came to the field, saw her son's head under the ring of snake's hood. The snake slid away, and she woke her son up and told him what she had just witnessed. Both concluded that:

ŚT V.2.

*raṇe vane jale śaile suptaṃ mattaṃ ca dehinaṃ |
purākṛtāni puṇyāni rakṣantīti na vāṇmṛṣā || 39 ||*

There is no falsehood in the words that the good deeds of a previous life protect the sleeping or unconscious man in battle, in the jungle, in the element of water and in the mountains.

Then it happened that a cow belonging to Cauḍa's family went into the forest and shed her milk in the thicket, a fact discovered by their cowherd later. Before long, a *liṅga* inscribed with the name of

¹⁶ ŚT V.2.

*svakāritāṃ kṛṣiṃ draṣṭuṃ cauḍanāmā vinirgataḥ |
kṛkalāsāḥ pakṣiṇās ca tasya śreyāṃsy asūcayan || 33 ||*

¹⁷ Ute Hüsken in her article, "Two Lizards in Kanchipuram's Varadarāja Temple," writes about superstitions concerning house lizards, their voice considered a bad omen and the prognostication based on a lizard's fall on one's body parts (Hüsken 2022: 179–180). In the case of the Cauḍa-related story, it is not a domestic lizard. Additionally, among the animals whose sight brings good luck if they are on the left side, the *Brhatsamhitā* mentions lizards (BS 86.37). Also, Basavarāja included a section on omens or *śākunas* (ŚT V.8.3–112) and among prognostications of good or bad fortune from dreams, sneezes, cries of animals, sight of articles, persons and animals, sounds made by lizards are mentioned.

Lizards and birds are motifs which appear in the Vīrabhadra temple in Keladi, most likely founded by Doḍḍa Saṅkaṇṇa (r. c. 1565–1570?), as well as in the Ag-horeśvara temple in Ikkeri, again by most sources credited to the same ruler (Kanekar 2010: 148), although some other consider a son of Cauḍa, namely Sadāśiva, to be its founder. In case of birds these are high reliefs on pillars of pairs of birds (Fig. 1). In case of lizards on the lower part of the temple walls, again they are shown in pairs in the vicinity of a scorpion (Figs 2, 3, 4). Perhaps these reliefs illustrated some local narratives, or referred to the amazing and spectacular way lizards can fight scorpions.

Rameśvara was found at this very spot. Cauḍa worshipped it every day. Sometime later, he had a dream about finding a hidden treasure and by Śiva's grace he indeed found it;¹⁸ he then became the chief of his village and even gathered a troop of soldiers. His actions apparently caught the interest of the Vijayanagara monarch, for Cauḍa was summoned to his court. Hearing him out, Sarvabhauma¹⁹ decided:

ŚT V.4.

*śrutvāyaṃ sumahān śauryaśampanna iti nanditaḥ |
malladeśaṃ vaśaṃ tasya vidhāya tadanantaram || 41 ||*

*nāmādāt 'keladī cauḍappanāyaka' iti svayam |
labdhvā nāma ca deśam cānujñayā tasya nirgataḥ || 42 ||*

After listening, [the ruler] was satisfied: 'He is powerful and possesses courage'. Having given him sovereignty over Malladeśa, he at once conferred on him the title of Keladī Cauḍappanāyaka. And so, having himself gained the country and the title with his [Sarvabhauma's] consent, Cauḍappa set out.

Thus, as an able administrator and commander of his own army, he was assigned by the Vijayanagara ruler the administration of the areas around Keladi.

As one can see, the work, which is a compendium of knowledge spanning various fields, contains extensive passages referring to the history of the Nayaka rule in these areas, including the foundation story, which indicates that the first Nayaka administrator was given the *nāyakaship* not only by the ruler of Vijayanagara, but was also chosen by the Lord Śiva himself.

¹⁸ Francis Buchanan introduces Sadāśiva as the hero of this story and speaks of him as the first *nāyaka* (Buchanan 1807: 255–256). From the inscription of Sadāśivarāya, the Vijayanagara monarch, dated 1554, we know that Sadāśiva Nayaka of Keladi was appointed by the same ruler of Vijayanagara as the governor of Tulu-rājya (Shama Sastry and Rao 1941: 649–650) but this piece of information does not speak of him as the first *nāyaka* of Malladeśa, with whom the foundation myth should be connected.

¹⁹ *sarvabhauma*, lit. 'a ruler of the whole earth'—one of the titles of the Vijayanagara rulers.

It is worth noting that the above-mentioned fragments related to the local history are immersed in the local landscape. First, we get some data on the topography of the area, along with references to its vegetation. The dynasty's origin myth presented later is also set in this landscape: details of the simple life of an agriculturist of the area has already been mentioned. Cauḍa is wealthy, he oversees the ploughing, hires a cowherd or cowherds, has servants. His connection to earth is emphasized by the choice of omens. From the entire long list of possible auspicious signs, lizards and birds are selected. Later, a serpent's hood spreads over him. The snake appears in its natural habitat, under the *rasāla* tree growing in the fields. According to Monier-Williams dictionary, *rasāla* denotes a mango or breadfruit tree. However, the breadfruits are not native to the Indian Peninsula and grow in the coastal Karnataka and Kerala only. Most probably Cauḍa slept under a mango tree. Anyway, fruit trees attract rodents, which in turn attract different snakes.

These are the beginnings of the *nāyakaship* for Cauḍa and his successors as narrated by Basavarāja. Starting from Veṅkaṭappa I, they ruled the region in their own name, changing its landscape successively, building new cities and adding structures in the old ones. It could not have been otherwise, but one must remember that the realm of the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayakas was not a very large and densely populated kingdom, and the urban centres did not have the character of huge metropolises. Cauḍa built the Rāmeśvara temple in Keladi and later shifted his capital to Ikkeri, building there a palace and other structures. His successors also built new towns and embellished the existing ones. However, it seems that they always remained close to nature that accompanied their ancestors in everyday life. Veṅkaṭappa Nayaka (1585–1629),²⁰ the first to rule independently, built a city close to Ikkeri. He was a builder of temples, palaces, forts, tanks, but also gardens²¹ and thanks to him a beauti-

²⁰ Regnal dates after Bes 2022: 138.

²¹ *tatra nānādrumatāramyam udyānam ātanot* ŚT VI.1.6a

There [in Ikkeri] he spread the park beautiful through its various trees and vines.

ful *nāṭakaśālā* was constructed in Ikkeri (ŚT VI.1.3–6). It is interesting to know how these cities were also described by Pietro della Valle, the Italian composer and musicologist, who travelled to India between 1623 and 1624 and left accounts of his voyages. He wrote that he entered the city of Ikkeri through three gates with small forts and ditches and three enclosures; the first two of them had walls “made of very high Indian Canes, very thick and close planted, [...] besides that the Herbs which creep upon them, together with their own leaves, make a fair and great verdure and much shadow” (Grey 1892: 245). He tells us that Ikkeri is “of good largeness, but the Houses stand thinly and are ill built” (ibid.). As far as the streets of the city are concerned, they are great and long and “some of them shadow’d with high and goodly Trees growing in Lakes of Water,²² of which there are many large ones, besides Fields set full of Trees, like Groves, so that it seems to consist of City, Lakes, Fields and Woods mingled together, and makes a very delightful sight” (ibid.)

Pietro della Valle also visited the newly constructed town of Sāgara, lying nearby. He writes: “The way between Ikkeri and Sa-gher is very handsome, plain, broad, and almost always direct, here and there beset with great and thick Trees which make a shadow and a delightful verdure” (ibid.: 266). Such a description corresponds perfectly with the following stanza:

ŚT V.2.

drumāḥ phalabharānamrā yatra pallavapāṇibhiḥ |
calitair āhvayantīva chāyām prati adhvayāyinaḥ || 20 ||

Where [i.e., in Malladeśa] the trees bent under the weight of fruit
look as if summoning travellers to the shadow waving with their
hands of twigs.

What Pietro della Valle observed and noted in his travelogue, Basavarāja expressed in a poetic manner. The seemingly conventional images hide often the real state of affairs.

²² Most probably della Valle speaks about the circular ditch under the tree, filled with water (Skt. *ālavāla*).

Pietro della Valle also noticed and Francis Buchanan²³ was told about it: “Houses all made with Earth” (ibid.: 265), that is of mud or of sun-dried bricks. These were not very permanent structures and that is why nature so quickly consumed the material evidence of those times.

Basavarāja’s encyclopaedic work is composed in the convention of instructions for the edification of the young prince Somaśekhara. In addition to topics directly related to governance, there are also those the choice of which for such a compendium is not so obvious. These are, for instance, sections on horticulture, formation of clouds, rainfalls and winds. King Veṅkaṭappa, who was particularly interested in laying out gardens, is mentioned in the *VI kallola*, where horticulture is discussed among the various branches of knowledge.

Introducing detailed issues related to gardens, plants growing in them, knowledge about them and their care, Basavarāja states:

ŚT VI.10.

daśakūpasamā vāpī daśavāpīsamo hradah |

daśahradasamaḥ putro daśaputrasamo drumah || 6 ||

One pool is equal to ten wells, ten pools are equal to one lake, ten lakes are equal to a son, ten sons are equal to one tree.

Even if Basavarāja repeats popular opinions, the fact of inserting them into his own work is significant. He also declares that among charitable acts of a king (*pūrta*) are the construction of water tanks, lakes, wells as well as laying out gardens. After all, only then is the gifting of food possible, an item also mentioned on the list. The mention of the construction of temples further elevates these activities belonging to royal obligations.

²³ Francis Buchanan-Hamilton (1762–1829), a Scottish physician working in India, who, after the defeat of Tipu Sultan in 1799, surveyed South India and merely heard the story of what Sadāśiva’s palace, which was no longer extant, looked like (Buchanan 1807: 257).

ŚT V.4.

vāpīkūpataṭākādi devatāyatanāni ca |

annapradānam ārāmān pūrtam āryāḥ pracakṣate || 78 ||

Noble people regard [the construction] of wells, lakes, water tanks, temples, gardens and food distribution as acts of charity.

Further, in this chapter devoted exclusively to kingship, he gives the characteristics of such water bodies as *kūpa*, *vāpikā*, *puṣkariṇi*, *dīrghikā*, and *taṭāka* (ŚT V.4.79, 80).

The manner of presenting qualities required of a king draws on comparisons derived from natural environment. The author of the *Śivatattvaratnākara* states that the king who mastered 21 qualities shall be successful. The qualities in question may be learnt from animals: one from the lion, one from the crane, four from the rooster, five from the crow, three from the donkey and six from the dog. It is worth noting that it is not the king of animals—the lion—who is the model of royal virtues. The only thing that one can learn from the lion is that irrespective of whether the goals are important or marginal, one must endeavour to end what one has begun. Much more may be learned from animals that are useful to humans and live in their close proximity such as the rooster, the donkey or the dog.

ŚT V.6.

prāgutthānaṃ ca yuddhaṃ ca saṃvibhāgaś ca bandhuṣu |

striyam ākrāmya bhogaś ca vindyāc catvāri kukkuṭāt || 20 ||

Getting up early, fighting, distributing among relatives, and enjoying his wife—these four [qualities] can be learned from the cock.

bahvāśī cālpasantoṣī sunidraḥ suprabodhakah |

svāmibhaktaś ca śūraś ca ṣaḍ ete ca śuno guṇāḥ || 22 ||

Having a big appetite, but being content with a little, sleeping well, but easily awaking, remaining faithful to his master and brave—these are six qualities of the dog.

suśrānto 'pi vahed bhāraṃ śītoṣṇe ca na vindati |

santuṣṭas ca bhaven nityam kharasya ete trayo guṇāḥ || 23 ||

It carries the load, though exhausted with fatigue, it does not respond to heat and cold and it is always pleased. These are three qualities of the donkey.

It can be said that such a selection of examples from the world of animals is related to the age of the recipient, i.e., the son of Basavarāja and all the young princes of future generations. However, such a particular way of communicating the teachings is only marginal to this work. Rather, it seems that starting with the title and structure of the work (ocean and its bigger and smaller waves) and ending with the way of presenting or introducing certain subjects, the richness and diversity of regional ecosystems translate into complexity of the inner landscapes of mind and these traits, acquired or inherited, can be seen in the *Śivatattvaratnākara*.

Gernot Böhme has written on the European self-understanding of the human being from classical antiquity up to the present as being articulated “through the contrast between nature and technology, nature and social composition, later then between nature and culture, nature and civilization” (Böhme 2002: 4). In the light of this, it might be interesting to ask, what would have been Basavarāja’s or his predecessors’ and contemporaries’ self-interpretation of a human being? All things considered, it is not only in his work that we should look for answers, but also in the few monuments²⁴ that remain of the Nayakas of Keladi and Ikkeri. The elevation of the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayakas from the agriculturists to the rulers did not seem to bring about the sharply articulated man-nature opposition usually achieved with the help of technology. Their green cities described by Pietro della Valle as kind of gardens, the palaces constructed from mud and timber dissolved quietly and quickly in the surrounding environment leaving behind few traces of their presence.

²⁴ More about artistic programme of the Vīrabhadra temple in Keladi, see Dębicka-Borek and Sudyka 2022.

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Fig. 1. High relief on a pillar of a pair of parrots, Aghoreśvara temple in Ikkeri.
Photo by L. Sudyka



Fig. 2. Two lizards and a scorpion on the Vīrabhadra temple walls in Keladi.
Photo by L. Sudyka



Figs 3, 4. Two lizards and a scorpion, Aghoreśvara temple in Ikkeri. Photo by L. Sudyka