



The Female Personalities In Śivatatva Ciṃtāmaṇi

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Abstract: The Śivatattva Ciṃtāmaṇi, authored by Lakkaṇṇa Daṇḍeśa during the Vijayanagara period, stands as a significant literary and philosophical work in Kannada literature. While primarily rooted in Śaiva philosophy and metaphysics, the text also reflects intricate portrayals of female characters, providing insights into the roles, virtues, and challenges of women within the socio-religious fabric of the time. The female personalities in Śivatattva Ciṃtāmaṇi are not merely passive figures; instead, they embody devotion (bhakti), moral strength, intellectual depth, and emotional resilience. These characters are portrayed in diverse roles—as devoted wives, seekers of spiritual truth, and embodiments of dharma and sacrifice. Through these representations, the text explores the intersections of gender, spirituality, and duty, highlighting the importance of women in the path of liberation (mokṣa). This aims to shed light on how Śivatattva Ciṃtāmaṇi gives voice to feminine perspectives, enriching the narrative with a multidimensional portrayal of womanhood in the context of medieval Kannada literature and Śaiva thought.

Index Terms - Lakkaṇṇa Daṇḍeśa, śivatatva ciṃtāmaṇi, śaiva, śaraṇ.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lakkaṇṇa Daṇḍeśa is the poet who composed *śivatatva ciṃtāmaṇi*. He is known to have served as a *Mahā amātya* (chief minister) in the court of one of the Vijayanagara kings, *Praudhadevarāya*. He was a skilled military commander and an expert in administration. He had deep knowledge of Sanskrit, Kannada, and the vachanas of the *śivaśaraṇaru*. With the intent of promoting the philosophy of Shiva, he composed this work. The poet portrays the *Vīraśaiva* tradition through this composition.

II. FEMALE PERSONALITIES

Along with narrating the stories of the *śivaśaraṇas*, Lakkaṇṇa Daṇḍeśa has depicted several **women śaraṇas** (*śaraṇe*) from his own unique perspective. He describes how, even during that time, women engaged in occupations and used the income to serve *jaṃgama* (wandering Shaiva monks).

*Koṭṭaṇava kuṭṭuta
koḍa nīraneledu taṃ
daṣṭu rokkadi baṃda
jaṃgamake nīḍuvalu
muṭṭi muṭṭada teradi saṃsāradaṃdugada
koṭaleya baṃdhanagala
biṭṭu niścimṭeyiṃdippa niṃbevvaṃ*

This example demonstrates economic independence. The work of pounding grain and selling it resembles today's cottage industries. The act of making food products and getting income from selling it represents worldly involvement, but using that money for *jaṃgama* service reflects a level of detachment even while being involved in worldly life.

Lakkaṇṇa Daṃḍeśa also refers to the seller of fried grams, “*Guggariya kāyakada piṭṭavve*”. This woman traded the ready-made food item, guggari.

This epic shows that religious freedom for women was limited in those times. Yet, women were successful in preserving their spiritual autonomy. One fine example of this is *Vaijakavve*.

*parivaligeyolu
vaijakavveyara pati jaina
gurugalige carigeyaṃ
māḍiralu mattorva
caraliṃga baṃdaḍārogaṇeya
māḍisalu kaṃḍu kaḍugopaḍiṃda
poramaḍisalāke śiva
bhavanavenutā basadi
girade baṃdappalā pratume
liṃgaveyāgi mereyalu*

This highlights the religious conflict between a Jain husband and a Shaiva wife. The woman lacked the freedom to openly give food meant for Jain monks to the *jaṃgama*. She had to do it secretly. When her husband found out, he reacted with anger. This incident shows that women may not have had the freedom to worship the deity of their choice. But it also emphasizes that devotion is internal and cannot be forcibly taken away which is a key message conveyed through this character.

A contrasting portrayal is that of *Guḍḍamma*. Unlike other gentle women, she is fierce and warrior-like. *Lakkaṇṇa Daṁḍeśa* presents her as someone who could fight battles with valour. Through this, he conveys that bravery and heroism are not exclusive to men, but women too can embody these traits.

barutiralu sakala
devottamana mahimegala
birudinuggaḍada dani
gelutaṁ dūṣakaru
śaradabhraninadamaṁ kelda
haṁsegalaṁte dharegilidu dhairyavaḍagi
śaraṇu pokkalladuliyalbārademdu ma
tsaravalidu caraṇamaṁ
sārdaraṁ salahi muni
dara śirava ceṁḍāḍe baṁda
guḍḍammagala caraṇāmbujakke śaraṇu

When *Guḍḍamma* was approaching, hearing her name caused slanderers to tremble like swans that hide upon hearing thunder. She protected the devotees and ruthlessly eliminated those who opposed them. She proves that women too can possess the valour of a brave king.

Another unique portrayal is that of *Prasādi Vīramma* of *terakaṇāmbi*, who did not commit *sati* after becoming a widow. Instead, she chose to live on courageously, even if it meant facing social stigma.

III. CONCLUSION

Lakkaṇṇa Daṁḍeśa presents various facets of women in his poetry. On one side, he portrays women who struggle without freedom, and on the other, he gives examples of those who lead independent lives through economic self-reliance. He depicts the mental pressure faced by widows and those expected to practice *sahagamana* (*sati*), and at the same time, he presents brave women who stood against it.

Thus, through these examples, we can understand the status of women, the challenges they faced, and the courage with which they dealt with social constraints during that era.

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