7.1 Hero Stones/Viragals:

The hero-stones or viragals, spread over the length and breadth of Karnataka, speak of the hero-cult and the philosophy underlying the process of commemoration which are deep rooted both in our ancient literature and history and the variety and forms of memorial tablets are interesting enough to secure them an independent status in the art-history of India.

The hero-stones remind us of the glorious self-sacrifice of the heroes. The medieval society expected chivalry from the brave persons just as it expected charity from the wealthy citizen. In turn, the heroes were assured of 'fame and gain in this world and place in heaven'. 'Assurance of spiritual, social and economic gains appears to have emboldened soldiers so much as to lead them to embrace death on the battle field without anxiety'.
'It is interesting that stone has been selected for the medium of such expression, implying the toughness, durability and naturalness of the bravery displayed by the person commemorated.'

The वीरगाळ or hero-stone of the Vijayanagara period represents a flat slab of stone divided into three rectangular panels. At the top, Śivalīṅga and conchant Nandi is worshipped either by a devout pair or a standing worshipper, flanked on either side by the sun and the moon. In the lower panel are noticed standing hero and his soldiers. The hero dressed in the typical manner, wearing all his ornaments, folds his hands placed in front of the chest, the women, raised their hands. Sometimes these devotees stand in front of the Śivalīṅga, flanked by Śaiva-cārya. From the point of view of artistic conception or design the sculptor carved, the uppermost portion of the वीरगाळ in details and it assumes the greatest importance.

7.1.1 वीरगाळ of Kaulēdurga :

At Kaulēdurga, near Mahānavami dibba, a number of वीरगाळ are found, which belong to the
Keladi Nayaka period. One of the viragals has simhamukha at the top, below which the sun and the moon are depicted, with two figures carved underneath. The hero has a sword in his right hand and a shield in the left. The lady by his side has raised her right hand, the left hand holding a mirror. The head-dress of the lady looks like the radiant rays of the sun, the usual style under the Keladi Nayakas.

Another viragal from the same place has in the upper panel Nandi at the centre, along with the moon and the sun. Below them are carved two swans. In the 2nd panel at the right side is a minar-like structure, next to it are carved figures of standing couple. In the third panel at the right side of the panel is carved a figure of a horse-rider, along with a person who is holding an umbrella over him. To the left side are carved several Kumbhas (pots) in three sets, filling the panel.

The next viragal at the same place has simhamukha motif at the top. The representations of the sun or the moon is absent. A male and a female figures are sitting with folded hands.

The next viragal has the sun and the moon at the top, and below are figures of husband and wife. The
hero is going to the battle-field, the wife has a lemon in her right hand and a mirror in the left hand. The attendant, in between them is standing with folded hands.

Interestingly, there are more than a dozen vīragals in the area, and each vīragal is situated by the side of a mound, which might be the graveyard of the hero (?).

7.1.2 Vīragals of the Shimoga Museum:

We find in the Shimoga Museum a collection of varieties of vīragals of the period which are brought from various places within the district.

One of the vīragals kept in the Shimoga Museum belongs to the 16th Century and brought from Yadehalli. It is depicted as follows: A chieftain is riding the horse with umbrella-bearer holding umbrella, another soldier is leading the march. The herostone is simple in character.

A vīragal brought from Nagara has a representation of Śivalinga at the top, being worshipped by a person, the sun is seen at the top of the stone. In the centre is seen a couple in standing posture, and three
figures seated on horse are seen on the left border. This hero-stone is ascribable to the 16th century.

From the same area is brought another viragal representing the sun and the moon mark at the top along with Śivalīṅga and Nandi, the second panel representing male figure seated in the centre, accompanied by gaurī-bearer on either side. The bottom panel represents a fighting scene in which both male and female figures holding bow and arrow along with another figure who is also holds bow and arrow. The inscription suggests the period of this herostone belongs to 1509 A.D.

Another viragal brought from Kaṭṭekoppa in Hosanagara taluk, represents the sun and the moon mark and three male figures (devotees) who are standing on top, whereas the middle and bottom panels represent war scenes. This hero-stone belongs to the 16th Century.

"To summarise, the hero-stone is a miniature replica of a funerary monument. It is structural in concept, plastic in execution and miniature in size. It is a product of classic traditions both conceptually and artistically".5
Thus, their plastic form, their stylistic idiom, and their decorative and thematic detail would be of immense interest. The art history of several minor dynasties and feudatories can be known better from their contemporary memorial stones.

7.2 **Sati-Kallus/Mahāsati** Stones:

'Sahagamana' or self-immolation was a common practice during the medieval period. It was considered as an act of respect and pride on the part of the wife, who decides to commit 'Sati'. The eye-witness of an account of such an act, Pietro Della Valley, the Italian traveller who visited Ikkeri, gives a vivid description of a 'Sati' incident.  

"Gaiccamma, a drummer's wife, decided to commit Sati, had young children. The other two wives of deceased person, were not ready to self immolate". The procession is explained by the traveller thus. "She rode on horse back about the city with a face uncovered, holding a looking glass in one hand and a lemon in the other, I know not for what purpose; and beholding herself in the glass, with a lamentable tone sufficiently pitiful to hear went along, I know not whether, speaking or singing certain words which I understood not; but they told
me they were a kind of farewell to the world and herself .......... She was followed by many other women and men on foot, who perhaps were her relations; they carried a great umbrella over her, as all persons of quality in India are want to have, thereby to keep off the sun....... Before her, certain drums were sounded....." The account of Della Valle corroborates with the scenes depicted in the Sati stones of the period.

Usually, the Mahāsati stones can be described as follows: The hand is fully projected from the pillar (stambha) representing Sati. Just at the place where the hand emerges out are seated the husband and wife, above them the couchant Nandi and above it a Śivalinga, crowned with the sun and the moon marks.

7.2.1 Sati stones of Kaulēdurga:

At Kaulēdurga (town), near the Kalyāna mahal are found heaps of Sati stones which are laying unattended. Most of them have similar characteristics. A Sati stone which is not mutilated, has the stambha of about 1.5 mtrs. height, 0.6 mtrs. width and 0.6 mtrs. thickness. The slab where the arm is carved, is 0.45 mtrs. wide. The top portion of the stambha resembles the minaret.
Below it are carved the moon and the sun at the bottom of which is a leaf-motif, below which are three seated figures and again leaf-motif. The other seven Sati stones of the same place are mutilated.

7.2.2 Sati stones of the Shimoga Museum:

In the Shimoga Museum are displayed a number of Sati stones. Some of the sati stones belong to the Keladi Nayaka period. A life size figure of Mahāsāti brought from Nagara area (Begadali) belongs to the 16th century. This is an irregular granite slab. The hero is shown in small scale, just below the right arm of the Sati. He is seated in Padmāsana with folded hands. The lady has right hand with the palm shown, the left hand holding a citrurs fruit. The Sati figure is fully ornamented and adorned with the head dress which is typical of the Keladi style.

In the Shimoga Museum is noticed a Mahāsāti stone brought from the revenue sites of Ānandapura. It has a figure of couple standing - the husband is holding sword in his right hand and the wife is raising her right hand upwards. The couple are adorned with usual dresses and ornaments. The Sun-Moon marks are seen on
Another Mahasati stone in the same museum, which was brought from Yalagajale in Sagara Taluk, belongs to the 17th Century. The figure of a couple is standing with usual dresses and ornaments. The husband holds bow and arrow, the wife holds a gindi in her left hand and her right hand is raised upwards.

Another Mahasati stone is brought from Hosanagara taluk, belongs to the 18th Century. At the top are the sun, the moon, Śivalinga and Nandi. A male figure is performing ārati to the Śivalinga. Right hand of Sati is impressively raised upwards along with a lemon in between the thumb and a seated couple is seen, at the bottom of the shoulder of Sati's hand.

7.2.3 Sati stones of Keladi:

A similar sati-stone is found at Keladi in the backyard of Sri K.N. Dharmarayaru. The stone is 1 m. long (above the ground) and 50 cm. broad. The life size figure of a lady is carved with all the ornaments and head-dress. 'Bendole', the broad circular ear ring is well carved. The head dress is in imitation of
redient rays of the sun. In the prabhavali is Nandi, Linga, a devotee with folded hands, sword by his side. Another figure may be identified as a saint standing with a Kamandalu in the left hand, right hand raised in the pose of blessing. To his right side is a figure of lady with folded hands.

Another Sati stone of the same place has a large rectangular slab attached to the pillar, with the Sati, an attendant and the right hand shown prominently. One more Sati stone typical of the Sati stone, has the pillar, a rectangular small piece, to which another piece is attached on which the right palm of Sati is prominently shown with a lemon in her hand, by the side of which are carved an attendant and Sati.

7.2.4 Sati stones of the Keladi Museum:

The three mastikals kept in the Keladi museum are of characteristic of the Keladi Nayaka style. The bigger stone has more decorations. By the side of the palm two figures - viz., figures of husband and wife are seated in padmasana with folded hands. On either sides are two pilasters, by the side of which two cauri-bearers are standing. The palm holds a citrus fruit, as usual,
in between the thumb and the second finger. Just below the arm, on the pillar are found carvings which are typical of the Keśādi style - square based, octagonal in the middle and again square-based at the top.

The other two mastikals are similar to this, except the figures of cauri-bearers which are absent here and the pillar is squarish, instead of octagonal at times.

Thus the mahāsati stone reflect one of the social customs of medieval Indian society. The devoted Satis, who desired to go along with their husbands to the other world also, are praised by the foreign travellers as "a custom indeed cruel and barbarous, but with all of great generosity and virtue in such women and therefore worthy of no small praise....".

7.3. Niśidhi Stones:

The niśidhi memorials symbolise spots where pious monks and nuns and even the common people among the Jains, took their seats while submitting themselves to voluntary death, or when they got their final rest. The Jains preferred to erect niśidhi in select sacred centres, rather than in places of their actual death.
Not many nisidhis are so far found and ascribed to the Keladi Nayaka period of our study. S. Settar observes that "between the end of the 15th Century and the end of the 19th Century, we hardly get half a dozen recorded references to these nisidhi stones". This indicates the decline in the number of Jains committing such a voluntary death.

A nisidhi stone has been brought from Tavanandi fort in Soraba taluk and displayed in the Shimoga Museum. It belongs to the 16th century. The stone is characterised by simhamukha and scroll designs, the sun and the moon at the top portion. The second stage represents the figure of a Tīrthaṅkara seated in padmāsana in the centre, accompanied by a seated female figure with folded hands to his right side and a male figure chanting mantras in the left. The third stage represents the main figure seated in the centre of the pillars on either side, accompanied by Cauri-bearers also on either side of the pillars. The fourth stage shows a picture of a seated figure of a female figure with folded hands in the right corner and a male figure chanting mantras in the left. At the centre is kept the Jaina sacred book on a stand.
7.4. **Liṅga Mudre, Vāmana Mudre and Nandi Kallus**: 

Liṅga-mudre and Vāmana-mudre stones represent the boundary stones or the stones which indicate the extent of land grants in terms of actual lands given to generally a scholar or to an agrahāra or to the heads of the mathas and priests of the temples.

The Śaiva agrahāras, mathas and persons are generally used to get the land grants marked with Liṅga Mudre stones and the Vaiṣṇava agrahāras and persons generally marked with Vāmana mudre stones. The top portions of these slabs are meant for carving the relief sculptures of Śivalīṅga or Vāmana.

**Liṅgamudre Stones**: 

They have stylised figure of Śivalīṅga carved at the top. In the Shimoga Museum are found two liṅga-mudre stones belonging to the Keḷadi area and period. They have the sun and the moon mark on either side, with Śivalīṅga at the top. Both of them have been brought from Kaṭṭekoppa of Hosanagar taluk and are ascribable to the 18th century.

**Nandi Stone**: 

Like the liṅga-mudre stones, the stone slabs
generally have figure of Nandi at the top. These are also called as 'Gadikallus' or boundary stones.

**Vamana Mudre Stones:**

On a rectangular slab, is carved the figure of Vamana, with umbrella in his right hand and Kamandalu in his left hand. The Sun and the moon marks are seen on either side.

The art tradition of the period is enriched by these small carvings and therefore should not be neglected in the general study of art and architecture of the Keladi Nayakas.

Apart from these stones, the inscriptions (usually land grants) are also to be noted, as their top portion contains some art motifs. If the inscriptions are affiliated to the Śaivism we notice at the top, the moon and the sun, Śivalinga and Nandi, below which, the matter of the inscription is inscribed. If the inscriptions belongs to the Vaisnavism Vamana is generally depicted, with other details. The stone inscriptions of Bhadrappa Nayaka, a land grant, to Narayana Malya at Gaṅgolli Veṅkaṭaramaṇa temple depicts
these details. Vāmana is standing with an umbrella in the left hand and kamandalu in the right hand. On either side of Vāmana are marks of cakra and śāṅkha, above which, the moon and the sun are carved. In the extreme right corner is a cow and calf, the calf drinking the milk of its mother. To the extreme left corner is found a representation of a pūrna-kumbha with a phala on the top. The art depicted here is symmetrical and deserves a special note.

Notes and References

2. Ibid., op. cit., p. 17.
4. Noticed during the recent field work.
7. Noticed during the recent field work.