Biographical Introduction

Shri Nijaguna Shivayogi's Life, Time and Personality -

Shri Nijaguna Shivayogi is a Shining Star in the firmament of Philosophical Literature of Karnataka, in particular, and of South India in general. He was a Philosopher, a Poet, a Composer of Music, a musicologist and a mystic of great spiritual originality. Many are the praises showered on him. If the late Reverend E.P. Rice says: "He was a great scholar and a prolific writer", the late Professor R.D. Ranade, who himself was one of the greatest Philosophic-Scholar-Mystics of this century, has recognised the high position occupied by Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi among the mystics of the world and has called him "the Great Philosopher-Mystic". Prof. R.S. Mugali in his monumental work, entitled 'Kannada Sahitya Charitre' (A History of Kannada Literature), says: "Nijaguna Shivayogi is one of the marvellous personalities of Karnataka. With his immensely vast scholarship and with his long and deep

1. A History of Kanarese Literature, 1921, P. 71
2. Pathway to God in Kannada Literature, Bhavan's Publ. 1970, P. 208
penance and meditation Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi rose to the highest peak of philosophic knowledge and realization and then descended from his high philosophical and spiritual plane to the earth below and bestowed to the people of Kannada-language the benefit of his philosophic knowledge and realization in a variety of works in Kannada prose and poetry.¹ And the late Sri A.N. Krishna Rao, a renowned writer in Kannada, says of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi: "The way in which he has rendered into Kannada language the traditional Sanskritic Indian Philosophy indicates his immense scholarship, his deep spiritual experience and his broad outlook. He was not only a great scholar in the Vēdās, the Āgamas, the Upanishads and the Smritis but was also an expert in the Purāṇās, the Itihāsās, the Science of Music, Grammar, Logic, Astrology and the Yōgās. It will not be an exaggeration if we say that the titles - Adhika vidya sampanna, Sujañāna Chakravarthi, Anupamānandābdhi-etc., borne by Sri Nijaguṇa, were really honoured by being borne by him!"² Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi's place in the history of Vēdāntic literature of Kannada is


peerlessly unique. For he was the pioneer-writer of the Vēdāntic Literature in Kannada language and it was only after him that Sri Mahālingaranga, Sri Chidānanda, Sri Sarpabhūshaṇa Shivayōgi, Sri Muppina Śadakshari, and others have written Vēdāntic literature in Kannada.

There are, in all, three Nijaguṇās in Kannada literature:

1. Sri Nijaguṇadēva or Nijaguṇa Yōgi
2. Sri Nijaguṇārya
3. Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi

1. Sri Nijaguṇadēva or Nijaguṇayōgi belongs to the 12th Century A.D. He composed vacānās (the philosophical and mystical verses in the rhythm of speech) under the ankitams (the poetic seal) of 'Nijaguṇayōga' and 'Nijaguṇayōgi'.

2. Sri Nijaguṇārya is the author of the Advaita Rāmāyaṇa, in Kannada, who flourished about the middle of the 17th century.

2. Ibid p. 245
3. Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi is the Mystical Philosopher with whom we are concerned in this Thesis. His ankitam is 'Shambhulinga'. Although our Nijaguna Shivayogi, whose ankitam is 'Shambhulinga' and who has authored eight works, namely: (i) Paramanubhava Bödhe, (ii) Anubhava sāra, (iii) Paramārtha Geete, (iv) Kaivalya Paddhathi, (v) Viveka Chintamani, (vi) Paramārtha Prakāsike, (vii) Purathanara Thrividhi and (viii) Swarūpa Siddhi, is different from the above Nijagunādēva and Nijaganārārya, the scribes of the works of Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi, however, have addressed him by different names such as: Nijagunādēva, Nijagunayogi, Nijaguna Shivayogi, Nijagunārārya, Nijagunārādhya, Nijagunāśhā and Nijagunāsāmy. This however does not mean that there are as many Nijagunas as the scribes have addressed him. The scribes have addressed the one and the same Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi by all these different epithets out of sheer respect for the great Philosopher-Saint. As a matter of fact

1. A Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Kannada Research Institute, Kannātaka University, Dharwad, Vol. vi, No.50, P.96.

Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi himself has referred to himself in his different works in different modifications of his name 'Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi' such as: 'Nijaguṇayōgi', 'Nijaguṇayōgindra', 'Nijaguṇa Shivayōgindra' etcetera.

**Life and Time of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi.**

As it is customary among many Indian ascetic-poets and philosophers, Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi also has not mentioned anything about his Life or Time anywhere in his works. However, there are several versions about his Life and Time current among the folks residing in the region surrounding the Shambhulinga Hill in Kollēgal Taluk of Mysore District of Karnātaka State. But one thing is accepted quite unanimously by almost all scholars of the History of Kannada Literature and that is the fact that Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayogi was in his early life the ruler of the country around the Shambhulinga Hill (this Hill is also called 'Chilakawādi Betta') in Kollēgal Taluk of Mysore District of Karnātaka State and that later on in his life he became an ascetic
and retired to that Hill and lived there as a Shivayōgi. As Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi himself, as stated above, has not mentioned about his Time anywhere in his works different scholars have drawn different conclusions about the Time of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi along different lines of evidence. About the Time of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi there are mainly four views represented by four different scholars. I shall briefly present, discuss and critically evaluate the essential points in each one of those four views here.


(ii) E.P. Rice: A History of Kanarese Literature 1921, P. 71


1. The late Sri Gangadhara Madivālesswara Turamari (From 1827 to 1877 A.D.) has fixed the Time of Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi before 12th Century A.D.\(^1\) on the grounds (i) that Basavēswara (or Basava, who was one of the greatest mystical saints of Veerasaiva Religion and who belonged to the 12th Century A.D.) has mentioned about Nijagupa in his vačanās and (ii) that Sri Nijagupa Shivayōgi has not mentioned Basavā's name anywhere in his works. But this view of Sri. G.M. Turamari is not tenable; because (i) he has mistaken Sri Nijaguna Shivayōgi for Sri Nijagunadēva or Nijagunayogi of the 12th Century A.D. who was a vačanakāra and whom Basava has mentioned in his vačanās\(^2\) and (ii) he has not taken into his account the fact that Sri Nijaguna Shivayōgi has at one place\(^3\) in his works mentioned the names both of Harshamishra and of his famous work 'Khandana Khanda Khādiya' belonging to the 12th Century A.D.\(^7\)

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3. Ibid, P. 49
The late R. Narasimhachār, the author of the famous Karnātaka Kavicharite (Lives of Kannada poets), has fixed the Time of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi around 1500 A.D.¹ on the grounds (i) that Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi has mentioned about 'Kalpataru', authored by Amalānanda who lived around 1250 AD, in the sub-section 'Sūtravīcchāra' of Chapter I of Vivēkachintāmanī² and (ii) that Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi has been adored by Sri Shadakshararadeva (in his 'Rājashēkhara vilāsa') who lived in 1655 AD³. But on the grounds mentioned by R. Narasimhachār it can only be said that Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi flourished in the period between 1250 A.D. and 1655 A.D. and nothing more than that. Therefore the approximate period conjectured by R. Narasimhachār, namely the 1500 AD, does not get established on the above mentioned grounds of his.

1. Karnātaka Kavicharite, 1919, P. 153
3. R. Narasimhachār: Karnātaka Kavicharite, 1919, P. 442
3. Prof. G.M. Umāpathishāstri, who is generally acknowledged as one of the authorities on the Time of Sri Nījagūṇa Shivayōgi, also has fixed the Time of Sri Nījagūṇa Shivayōgi as 1500 A.D. But his grounds for this fixing are different from the grounds put forward by R. Narasimhāchar, Prof. G.M. Umāpathi Shāstri argues broadly as follows: "In the Philosophical thinking to be found in the works of Sri Jāgūni Maruḍādeva of Sri Nījagūṇa Shivayōgi and of Sri Gubbi Mallānārya we clearly find a uniform and gradually evolving philosophical tradition and this is due to the fact that all these three philosophers have come in the direct philosophical lineage of Guru Sri Tōntada Siddhalinga Shivayōgi. From this statement of Prof. G.M. Umāpathi Shāstri it is clear that he regards Sri Nījagūṇa Shivayōgi as belonging to the Tradition of Pupils and/or

Grand-Pupils of the Guru\(^1\) Sri Tontada Siddhalinga Shivayōgi. Now the time of Sri Tontada Siddhalinga Shivayōgi, which is fixed between 1400 and 1480 A.D. by Dr. R.C. Hiremath\(^2\), is however fixed at 1500 A.D. by Prof. G.M. Umāpathi Shāstri following the fixing to that effect by the late Sri M.R. Srinivāsamurthy\(^3\).

"Therefore", concludes Prof. G.M. Umāpathi Shāstri, "The Time of Sri nNijagunāa Shivayōgi can, without any shadow of doubt, be taken to be 1500 A.D."\(^4\)

As regards the Guru of Sri Nijagunāa Shivayōgi we have got definite and unambiguous internal evidence to be found in four different works, viz., in Paramānubhava Bōdha (1, 1, 5), Vivēka Chintāmanī (P.1), Kaivalya Paddhati (4, 1, 3) and in Anubhava Śāra (8, 1) of Sri Nijagunāa Shivayōgi himself to the effect that his Guru was 'Sri Nirabhāri Dēsikendra'. But the identity and the time of Sri Nirabhāri Dēsikendra have not so far been definitively established by anybody.


Apart from the blatant overlapping contradiction involved here in the fixing of the one and the same 1500 A.D. as the date both of the Guru Sri Tōnūtada Siddhalinga Shivayōgi and of the Sishya or Prasishya Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi by Prof. G.M. Umāpathi Shāstri, there is also a further, more fundamental, difficulty of establishing the identity of philosophical tradition in the works of Sri Juguni Maruladēva, Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi and of Sri Gubbi Kallanārya as it is confidently sought to be established by Prof. G.M. Umāpathi Shāstri. For, Prof. G.M. Umāpathi shāstri seeks to establish the identity both of the general philosophical approach and of the specific nature of mystical experience between Sri Juguni Maruladēva and Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi by comparing some sample-stanzas drawn from Juguni Maruladēva and from Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi, viz., by comparing two stanzas of the 'Swaravachanas' of Sri Juguni Maruladēva, at pages No. 202, 203 and 204 of his (i.e. Prof. G.M. Umāpathi Shāstri's) Preface to his edition of 'Vivēka-Chintāmaṇi', with two stanzas of the 'Kaivalya-Paddhati' of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi at Pages No. 203 and 204 of the same preface of his same edition of the same work. But a close, objective,
impartial and correct study of these two sets of stanzas of Sri Juguni Maruladēva and of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi, respectively, will establish not the identity (as thought by Prof. Umāpathishāstri) but a considerable difference both in the general philosophical approach and in the nature and the mode of expression of the mystical experience of these two Saints. For instance, we do not find the predominantly, butifully and beatitudinally present Rathī-Bhaava of Sri Nijaguṇa's stanzas in the Swara-vachanās of Sri Juguni Maruladēva. But this essential and fundamental difference in the nature and mode of mystical experiences of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi and Sri Juguni Maruladēva has been totally unnoticed by Prof. G.M. Umāpathishāstri while comparing the mystical stanzas of two saints. Secondly, even in the general philosophical and mystical approach adopted by the two saints we find conspicuous difference which also has escaped the notice and attention of Prof. G.M. Umāpathishāstri. For instance in the above referred stanzas of the Swara-vachanas of Sri Juguni Maruladēva we find the Saint Juguni Maruladēva performing the Lingapūja first through his body, secondly, by singing the glory of Linga through his speech and thirdly, by meditating on the Linga in his mind whereas in the above referred
stanzas of Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi we find Saint Nijaguna performing the Linga Pūja firstly itself through his Mind or Anarthanga, secondly, perceiving the Linga inwardly and, thirdly, Loving the Linga through pleasing means. All these clearly indicate a very considerable difference both in the general philosophical approach and in the nature and mode of mystical experience adopted by Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi and Sri Juguni Maruladeva.

Another point which Prof. G.M. Umāpathi Shāstri mentions to establish the identity of philosophical tradition and lineage between the Guru Sri Tomtada Siddhalinga Shivayogi and his Sishyas and Prasishyas, like Sri Juguni Maruladeva, Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi and Gubbimallanārya, is the similarity which Prof. G.M. Umāpathishāstri finds and mentions in the philosophical teachings of (i) the Vachanopanishad of Sri Tomtada Siddhalinga Shivayogi, (ii) the Swaravachanās of Sri Juguni Maruladeva and (iii) the Veerasaivambṛtamahapurāṇa of Sri Gubbimallanārya. But while showing this philosophical

1. Ibid, PP. 204-205
similarity and lineage Prof. G.M. Umāpathishāstrī does not at all mention any work of Sri Nījaguṇa Shivayōgi in which this philosophical similarity, according to Prof. G.M. Umāpathishāstrī himself, can be said to be found. From all this we cannot but conclude that Prof. G.M. Umāpathishāstrī has failed to establish the identity and/or lineage of philosophical tradition between Sri Tōntada Siddhalinga Shivayōgi and Sri Jugunī Maruladēva on the one hand, and Sri Nījaguṇa Shivayōgi on the other. Hence Prof. G.M. Umāpathishāstrī's fixing the Time of Sri Nījaguṇa Shivayōgi as 1500 A.D. cannot be said to have been established for the above reasons.

Vidwan Sri M.S. Basavarājaiah has fixed the Time of Sri Nījaguṇa Shivayōgi finally between 1742 and 1744 A.D. on the basis of a mention of time, as per the traditional Indian calendar, to that effect in Page No. 2 (or 'on the reverse of Page No.1', as Sri M.S. Basavarajaiah puts it)\(^1\) of Manuscript No.K.175 of the Institute of Kannada Studies, University of Mysore, in which there is a mention that one

Shivalingaiah, the son of Siddhananjaih of Wadeyara Pally or Satyāgāla, has submitted at the feet of Sri Nijaguṇaswāmy (whom he describes as a younger brother of Sri Channaveeradevaru, the son of Sri Gurubasavappadevaru and Smt. Basavarajamma of Kallukuní Village and who belonged to the tradition of Rēvanārādhya among the Four Ācharyas) a number of śāstra-works, having written them in his own handwriting, on 17-12-1742, 19-3-1743, 8-5-1743 and 1-3-1744 (the Christian Calendar equivalents of the original traditional Indian calendar-dates mentioned in the manuscripts). However, the same Vidwān has, while maintaining the view that Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi at whose lotus-feet Shadaksharaḍēva, the author of 'Rajashekhara Vilās' in Kannada (whose date has been fixed by Karnātaka Kavicharitekāra R. Narasimhāchār approximately at 1655 A.D. which date is generally accepted by all including Vidwān M.S. Basavarājaiah) has offered his salutations in the preface of his above work, was a contemporary (but whether a senior contemporary or a junior one the Vidwān is not very sure)1 of Shadaksharaḍēva, the author of 'Rajashekhara vilās', has also maintained another view of his own to the effect that Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi

1. Ibid, Preface, P. xxiv.
was a companion of Virakta Shadaksharayya of Yaragamballi who, he says—following the view of R. Narasimhachar—belonged approximately to 1750 A.D. Thus Vidwān Shri M.S. Basavarajaiah seems to accept all the following different dates of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi simultaneously: (i) Between 1742 to 1744 A.D., (ii) 1655 A.D., and (iii) 1750 A.D.!

Thus from my above detailed, objective, comparative, critical and, above all, logical consideration of the four main views, expressed by four different scholars, concerning the Time of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi I can only say that Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi flourished sometime between 1250 A.D., i.e. the time when Amalānanda, the author of 'Kāptaru' which work has been mentioned by Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi, flourished and 1655 A.D., i.e. the time when Shadaksharadēva, the author of 'Rajaśekhar Vilāsa' in the preface of which the author has saluted the lotus feet of Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi and earlier than whom no other author has either saluted or even mentioned Sri Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi, flourished and nothing more precise than that. This conclusion of mine, as the reader will see, agrees broadly with the view of the learned Historian of Kannada Literature, the late Sri. R. Narasimhachar.