



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2020; 6(4): 85-89
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 06-02-2020
Accepted: 07-03-2020

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Virasarvasvam: A text on martial arts in Sanskrit

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Abstract

The present text “*Vīrasarvasvam*” written by Gopinath Chamupati Singh/ Gopinath Tuṅga (both names used) is a palm leaf manuscript, which is based on the system of ancient war & its related subjects in Odisha. This is a palm leaf manuscript which is an unpublished work with much significance. However, the present work is based on the palm leaf manuscripts of *Vīrasarvasvam* has many new vistas of research in ancient martial arts. The topic is a challenging subject which has a modern relevance in the field of Indological Research.

Keywords: *Vīrasarvasvam*, gopinath chamupati singh, gopinath tuṅga, tigiriā dynasty, *Garajāts*, *sāmantas*, war, weapons

Introduction

Gopinath Champupati Singh, the author of “*Vīrasarvasvam*” was a royal descendant of Tigiriā Garh, of Cuttack, Odisha State. As he belonged to Tigiriā dynasty, it is very much essential to know about his dynasty, his date, place and all sorts of descriptions available about him and his dynasty. Hence, a brief history of the Tigiriā Garajat or Tigiriā dynasty is given below. The art of ancient war system with all types of descriptions like types, soldiers, positions, weapons and methods of victory are studied briefly here.

Dynastical History of Tigiriā royal dynasty

No definite and regular history is found about the royal family of Tigiriā state. So, Tigiriā dynasty’s history is mainly based upon the data provided by the rulers of Tigiriā *Garh* from time to time, by some literary works, by some accounts etc. It is said that a small group of Aryans were settled down in Tigiriā. It is known that during the period of the fall of Chauhan dynasty in Delhi, two Rajputs of western India, Nityananda Tuṅga and his younger brother pitambara Tuṅga had on a pilgrimage to Lord Jagannātha of Puri in Odisha ^[1].

One day Lord Jagannāth told Nityananda Tuṅga in a dream that he is going to be the king of Triguhia state, situated in western side of the river Citropalā of Puri ^[2]. It is because the then ruler in Triguhia was an out religious chief. As a result of which Nityananda Tuṅga by taking the order from Gajapati Langula Narasimha Deva came to Tigiriā. He defeated and killed that mischievous chief and conquered the three *Garhs*. Thereafter, he brought the neighbouring areas under his control. In 1246 by uniting all three areas, he named it as Tigiriā or Trigiriā and ruled there ^[3]. The name “Tigiriā” was the misinterpretation of “trigiri”. Some say it is the misinterpretation of “Tigiriā”, which was under the suzerainty of Gajapatis of Odisha ^[4]. The rulers of these *Garajāts* were the *sāmanta rājās* Gajapatis of Odisha.

Garajāt rulers (Tigiriā Garh) under the Gajapatis

The Gajapatis of Odisha had divided odisha into two parts for revenue purpose. One part was retained with the Gajapatis for collecting revenue, for maintenance of the royal house, to give the salary of the royal house servants, the land for the deities or the *Devottara* i.e. the temples and the land for Brāhmins or *Brahmottara* i.e. the Brahmin sāsanas. The other part of this state was distributed among the *sāmanta rājās* were to maintain law & order in their state, to save the state for foreign attacks, & to be present during the time of war at the order of the Gajapati ^[5].

In return the sāmanta rājās were providing certain services for the Gajapatis besides the above activities.

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For instance, the king of Darpañi was showing mirror to the Gajapati at the time of his coronation [6]. Some were doing the service as *chowrie* beares and some were spittoon beares in the court of the Gajapatus. But in spite of the above services, the *sāmanta* or vassal king's main service was to help the Gajapati in the battle field. Again the *sāmantas* kept some portion of the gifted land of the Gajapatis for their maintenance & the rest of the land was distributed among the *pākas*, *khaṇḍāyatas* & *killadars*, etc. as atoken of Jāgir [7]. They could maintain their life by cultivating the during the time of peace. But they had to present themselves during the time of war. Based upon the geographical expression, the *sāmanta* states which were also known as Garjāts were divided into 3 divisions mainly a) Odisha Garjāt, b) Sambalpur Garjāt and c) Ganjam Garjāt.

Regarding the text “*Vīrasarvasvam*”

The text enlightened “*Vīrasarvasvam*” was a treatise on war. The author of this text was Gopinath Tuṅga. He belonged to moon linear. He was great lover of learning and was eminent for knowledge & for literary activities. In the beginning of the text of “*Vīrasarvasvam*”, he has given his dynastical identification [8]. From that text it is known that Svara Singh, Divya Singh, Govinda Tuṅga, Nanda Tuṅga, Pitambara Tuṅga, Sri dhar Tuṅga & Krupasindhu Tuṅga, etc. were prominent kings who had ruled the Tigiriā dynasty. In this dynasty Gopinath Tuṅga was born from Sanskarshan Tuṅga.

*“tatra Śaṅkarśaṇa josau haribhakti parāyaṇāḥ
tīrthakṣetropasebi ca nānāsamarakobidhaḥ
sāvītre ca padāitve gaṇānā magraṇīrabhū,
tasya putrabhaba vīro dhīradāṭṭa guṇo tīarah,
gopīnāthābhīdhastungastuṅga - vaṃsābdhicandramāḥ,
soyam kutūhalenaiva samāreme tu śāstraktam”* [9].

No correction information is known about Gopinath Tuṅga, but we get some information about him from the account of Mahamahopadhyaya Govinda Mishra, the court poet of Gopinath Tuṅga. Mahamahopadhyaya Govinda Mishra was learned man & he had excellence in different *śāstras*. He is said to have copied the *pātañjalīvṛti* of Rojadeva at the order of Gopinath Tuṅga. In the end of this copy, Gobinda Mishra has given the time of Gopinath Tuṅga [10].

*“daśasapte śate śake vatsare phālgune site,
Bhoujī patañjalīvṛtirgobindena kabindunā”
nidestuṅgarājasya gopīnāthābhīthasya ca”* [11].

From the above statement it is known that Goninda Misra had copied the *Pātañjalīvṛti* of Bhojarāja. Here Nilamani Mishra has confused by stating two different authors of *Pātañjalīvṛti* such as Bhojarāja and Rojadeva. However, it is known that towards 1778 Gopinath Tuṅga had already adorned the throne of Tigiriā. Future Nilamani Mishra has expressed doubt by stating that during his reign, Gopinath Tuṅga might have written the “*Vīrasarvasvam*” text by somebody in his name [12]. But it may not be true. The author has written in the beginning that.

*“bhūpālānām bhābinām kṣatriyānām
maryādāyei śāstravidyapayogī,
prādurbhutām Vīrasarvasvam metachhāmtraṃ
dhīrāḥ santatām śīlayantu”* [13]

Gopinath's “*Vīrasarvasvam*” is a kind of epitome of the Santatan Dharma. It is vast compendium of twenty seven śāstras, a mosaic of many – coloured stones, a many – splendoured smṛiti śāstras based on The kalkīpurāṇa, The Brahma-purāṇa, The Harivamśa, The śrīmad Bhāgavatam, The *Bhagabat Gītā*, The *Dhanurveda*, The *Atharvaveda*, The Haṭṭabhāskaram, The Bhaṭṭabhāskaram, Śuddhiicandrikā, etc. It deals within its encyclopaedic range, with a genesis of the earth, the geography of India, its territorial divisions, the four varṇas, three types of forts, eight types of metals, nine types of jewels and ten types of iron. It describes palace architecture, the qualities of Rājās, Yuvarajas, ministers, priests, astrologers, poets & generals. It describes the uniforms of soldiers, auspicious times for starting battles and leading expeditions, organization of the army, use of war-drums, recitation of mantras, making of arms and ammunitions. It records various types of injuries and their treatment, fairs and festivals, marriage and birth, indoctrination and convocation, songs and seasons, ploughing and slowing, barter and business, Oriental and Western music etc. Thus, “*Vīrasarvasvam*”, is an attempt and first of its kind containing “infinite riches in a little room”. It is a miniature universe of knowledge which ranges from music to medicine, military science to veterinary science, marriage to morals, war to peace, art to architecture, poetry to philosophy, sex to salvation. Gopinath Tuṅga had composed the treatise named “*Vīrasarvasvam*” for the enhancement of esteem of *kṣatriyas*, division of states, origin of *Somavamsi*, *Suryavamsi* *kṣatriya* King's knowledge on samaraśāstra. [14] & description about the Tuṅga dynasty. Besides this, he has also described about the forts, choosing of place inside the forts, inhabitations, determination of exercises, Swastika, padma, determination of vīrabhadra āsana, origin of weapons, the rules for preparing bow, origin of bow and arrows, *pāśa* (snare) goad (*aṅkuśa*), symptoms of sword and other things, mace or club (*pāśa*), peg (*śalya*), knife (*churīkā*), stick (*daṇḍa*), spear (*kunta* or *varchha*) lance (*teñṭā*), Thunderbolt (*Braja*), double bleded sword (*paṭṭīsā*), club (*mudgara*), axe (*kuthāra*), battle axe (*paraśu*), Bill hook (*kartarī*), bedpost (*khatvāṅga*), bhūṣandī (the name of mythological crow), villīpāla (the leader of a wild tribe), the Sheldrake (*cakra*) peg (*śūla*), forehead (*vāllā*), Killer-sharp edge (*yamadādha*), crow-bar (*śābelī*), *parighī* (a in ancient India), armour (*karvaca*), etc. He has also described in detail about the symptoms of eighty four types of movements of feet (*caurāśi prakāra pādagati*), four spheres (*caturbidha maṇḍala*), technique (*khadga sādhanā*), gollop injury (*pllutaghāta*), light injury (*laghughāta*), speed injury (*drutaghāta*), etc. Besides this the hymns of arrow and fireworks (*bāṇa o śara mantra*), symptoms of seven types of war (*saptavidha yuddha lakṣaṇa*), protection of weapons (*śāstra mocana*), west pill (*gutikā bāraṇī*), the victory hymns of war (*ranajaya mantra*), the victory drum (*jaya dhakkā*), *muraj* (a kind of drum), the victory trumpet (*jayakāhālī*), the symptoms of *duṇḍubhi* (*duṇḍubhi lakṣaṇa*), etc. have widely been described [15]. Creation of battle array is a special act in times of war which forms an important part of the text “*Vīrasarvasvam*”. It is because the defeat or victory in war depends upon it. The author of the “*Vīrasarvasvam*” has explained about different types of battle arrays and their importance in the war. In this connection, he has mentioned about the means and types of *sarvatobhadra vyūha* (all gentel array), *karkata*

vyūha (cancer array), *sarvatomukha vyūha* (all faced array), *śṛṅga vyūha* (horn array), *ardhavartaka vyūha* (half-circle array), *vajra vyūha* (thunderbolt array), *chhurikā vyūha* (knife array), *kākapāda vyūha* (crow's feet array), *gomūtrikā vyūha* (Cow urinal array), *ahisañcārī vyūha* (Serpent creating array), *makara vyūha* (Shark array), *kuksi vyūha* (stomach array), *mūṣika vyūha* (rat array), *balaya vyūha* (ring array), *garuḍa vyūha* (*Garuḍa* array) or king of bird array), *padma vyūha* (lotus array), *bhujāṅga vyūha* (*Garuḍa* array), *sūcī vyūha* (needle array), *śakaṭa vyūha* (cart array), *śvena vyūha* (hawk array), *jālandhar vyūha* (Jalandara array), *balākā vyūha* (Balaka array), *kāka vyūha* (row array) *krouñca vyūha* (Krounca array), *simha vyūha* (Lion array), *varāha vyūha* (Wild boar array), *puṣkarīṇi vyūha* (pond array), *agni vyūha* (fire array) and *cakra vyūha* (circular array), etc. Here, the author has described in detail about the above arrays arrangement of the soldiers accordingly to the rules of the of the Aryans. Besides this, in the “*Vīrasarvasvam*” the author has mentioned how to create his own battle array or *vyūha* and how to penetrate the different arrays or *vyūha* of the enemy side being informed about the enemy's array of *vyūha*. In the “*Vīrasarvasvam*”, the author has not only described about the different techniques of the war, but also how to suppress to enemy by chanting different hymns or mantras like *sadākṣara Nārāyaṇa mantra*, *dvādaśākṣara vāsudevamantra*, *saptākṣara vāmanamantra*, *dvātriṅśākṣara varāhmantra*, *sadākṣara rāmatārka mantra*, *viśvakṣeamantra*, *garuḍamantra*, *sahsrākṣara*, *nṛsimhamantra*, *pāsupata mantra*, *mṛtyuñjayamantra*, *candogramantra*, *mañjuḥṣamantra*, etc.

By chanting the above *mantras*, the author has described how to create revolutions, epidemic etc among the enemy camps. Besides this, the author has also mentioned about different *śāstracālanā mantras* (hymns for proper handling of weapons) and their application in *parśu* (battle axe), *kuthāra* (axe), *parighā mūṣala* (club), *vajra* (thunder bolt), *khatvāṅga* (bed post), *bhuṣuṇḍi* (the name of mythological crow) and *viṇḍipāla*, etc.^[16]

The kings of those days were giving emphasis on different omens before going for any victorious campaign. Accordingly *māsa*, *dina*, *tithi*, *nakṣatra*, *Yoga* and *karaṇa* were decided for taking any decision good or bad. The author has not forgotten to write all these things rather he has given special emphasis on it. Though, composed in the middle of 18th century, “*Vīrasarvasvam*” written by Gopinath Tuṅga was very use ful book on war & war techniques^[17].

Remarking on the military importance Gopinath Tuṅga's work, K.K. Bisoi mentions “*Vīrasarvasvam*”, another military treatise written by Gopinath Tuṅga, the Rājā Tigira.” The author has described the principle of the warfare prevalent during the time along with system of constructing forts of various categories, organization or array arrangement of the fighting force in the battle field, costumes and equipment of soldiers auspicious moment for commencement of the wars, nature of the king, minister & commander of the array, four fold division of the array, use of war drums, recital of mantras during the time of actual engagements and so on. It is known from the colophon of the manuscript of *patañjalya yogaśāstra* Gopinath Tuṅga *Vīrasarvasvam* was alive *śaka* year 1710 or 1778 A.D.^[18]

All military operations were conducted on auspicious for which there were several methods to find out lucky

moments through the help of astrologers. Success or failures in military engagement were much depended on their auspicious beginning. Good or bad omens and dreams played vital roles in instating the marching of soldiers to the battlefield^[19].

Different aspects of war mentioned in *Vīrasarvasvam*

With regard to the work of Gopinath Tuṅga *Vīrasarvasvam*, let us discuss the division of army. It is well known that army has been regarded as one of the seven essential limbs of astate. Army is quite essential for a state as without it the state cannot run smoothly rather there will be chaos.

The *pāka* soldiers of the later period who constitute the infantry of the army mentioned in the *Vīrasarvasvam*, used to wear cap and a vest made of tiger or leopard skin and a sort of chain armour for the body and thighs and a girdle prepared of the tail of some wild animals. They stain their limbs with yellow earth and put on vermilion on their forehead. The *pāka kheda*, on the other hand furnishes us with a long list of military costumes of infantry soldiers of the medieval Odisha. They *ghanṭāmala*, *ghāgudi*, *olamāla*, *ghantiā*, *kavaca*, *kaliṅgī*, *bāhuti*, *hoda*, *baghapati*, *vāla*, *rūpacandra*, *kathā*, *rūdhimāla*, *cakra*, *handia peti* & *jhoba*. *The infantry soldiers was equipped with the weapons* like nail, *thunka*, *barudakumpha*, *jhulikata*, *sagadi nail*, *olatadhāra khaṇḍā*, *hastakhapar*, *dhāl*, *khaṇḍā*, *katri*, *bānkachūri*, *katidhāla*, *katimāla* (*churī banati*), *rudhi* & *dhanu*^[20]. Cavalry also constitute a great part of the army mentioned in the *Vīrasarvasvam*. Kautilya in his *Arthaśāstra* recognized the merit of this force and defined its principle functions as consisting in cutting off the provisions & reinforcements of the enemy, screening and protecting the strategic front of the armies, outpost and detached service, occupying advanced positions, delivering a charge, courting & recontiring, gaining the flanks and rear of enemy, covering an advance and pursuing a retreating foe^[21].

Battle order (*vyūha*) has been given almost importance by the authorities of ancient treatises when two hostile armies faced each other and conflict was eminent, it was the usual practice to draw up them in battle orders. In a developed form this order consisted of seven divisions, viz. wings, flanks, vanguard, centre, rear centre, rear guard and *koti*. The soldiers were organized in various battle formations as per orders envisaged in the *Mahābhārata* wars. They were *sarvatomukha vyūha*, *Acala vyūha*, *Vajra vyūha*, *krouñca vyūha*, *Garuḍa vyūha*, *Ardhacandra vyūha*, *makara vyūha*, *śyena vyūha*, *sūchi vyūha*, *maṇḍla vyūha*, *śṛṅgata vyūha*, *Ardhacandra vyūha*, *sarvatobhādra vyūha*, *cakra vyūha* & *mahā vyūha*^[22].

In this context *Vīrasarvasvam*, a military treatise of the 18th century by Gopinath Tuṅga of Tigrā Garjāt of odisa, gives a long list of such *vyūhas* which were practiced by ancient & medieval rulers of Odisa. They were *sarvatobhādra vyūha*, *karkata vyūha*, *sarvatomukha vyūha*, *śṛṅga vyūha*, *Ardhavartaka vyūha vyūha*, *chūrikā vyūha*, *kākapada vyūha*, *gomūtrikā vyūha*, *ahisañārī vyūha*, *makara vyūha*, *kuksi vyūha*, *mūṣika vyūha*, *valava vyūha*, *Garuḍa vyūha*, *Bhujāṅga vyūha*, *padma vyūha*, *sūcī vyūha*, *śakaṭa vyūha*, *śyena vyūha*, *jalandhar vyūha*, *padma vyūha*, *valākā vyūha*, *kāka vyūha*, *krouñca vyūha*, *simha vyūha*, *varāha vyūha*, *puṣkarīṇi vyūha*, *agni vyūha*, & *cakra vyūha*^[23]. The nature of the battle order adopted by a commander depended on various considerations i.e. composition of force at his

disposal, character of the theatre of operations, strength & character of the enemies battle order etc. [24]

The manner of construction of some later forts in odisa has been laid down in a voluminous book called *Vīrasarvasvam* by Gopinath Tuṅga, the Rājā of Tigiriā, who flourished in 18th century [25]. He has classified the sites suitable for human habitation of the various castes. According to the text lands are of three categories (1) *Anupa* or marshy & watery lands, (2) Jungles or hill lands & (3) *sādhāraṇa* or ordinary lands which have qualities of former two varieties of lands. Such lands are fit for human habitation where śūdras, agriculturists, traders, the owner of cattle, the rich, the wise & men of luxury live. They work for the gradual development of the sites and their habitation [26]. The Rājā constructs his palace at highest point. The place should be majestic looking with sites for concealment of riches with gates, should be surrounded by hillocks & forests and should have the facility of water supply from the river. The fort should have strong walls & gates with strong doors. It should have a moat filled with thorny weeds [27].

Thus, the "*Vīrasarvasvam*" written by Gopinath Chamupati Singh is an epitome of knowledge on warfare and other fields of valuable knowledge [28]. It deals within its encyclopedic range, with a genesis of earth, the forts, eight types of metals, nine types of jewels & ten types of iron. It describes palace architecture, the qualities of Rājās, Yuvarajas, ministers, priests, astrologers, poets, & generals. It describes the uniforms of the soldiers, auspicious times for starting battle and leading expeditions, organization of the army, use of war drums, recitation of mantras, making of arms & ammunitions. It records various types of injuries and their treatment, fairs & festivals, marriage & birth, indoctrination & convocation, songs & seasons, ploughing & showing, barter & business, Oriental and western music etc. [29]

To conclude, *Vīrasarvasvam*, is an attempt & first of its kind which contains "infinite riches in a little room". It is a miniature universe of knowledge which ranges from music to medicine, military science to veterinary science, marriage to morals, war to peace, art to architecture, poetry to philosophy, sex to salvation. The author has given an account on the general outline of the war. He says, "He who observes and by knowing about the conflicting attitude and ideological difference between the soldiers of both the sides, involves in violent activities and words is called as war". He has also classified the war. The author in his hand and by worshipping Lord Rudra with handful flower describes about the *Yuddha śāstra*. While some scholars see warfare as an inescapable and integral aspect of human culture, others argue that it is only inevitable under certain socio-cultural or ecological circumstances. Some scholars argue that the practice of war is not linked to any single type of political organization or society. Rather, as discussed by John Keegan in his *History of Warfare*, war is a universal phenomenon whose form and scope is defined by the society that wages it. Another argument suggests that since there are human societies in which warfare does not exist, human may not be naturally disposed for warfare, which emerges under particular circumstances. The ever changing technologies and potentials of war extend along with a historical continuum. Regarding the weapons, he has mentioned that Weapons were the best friends of the brave, the symbol of authority and the token of command, the visible sign of force, strength and dominations. He has divided the weapons functionally into (1) weapons for

slashing or cutting, like the swords, axes, etc. (2) weapons for thrusting like trident, spears, etc. (3) projectiles like arrow, javelins, fire-arms, etc. (4) weapons for smashing like the mace. Indian soldiers also knew elaborate & comfortable equipment for self-defense.

The strategic arrangement of fighters & weapons is known as battle array. The *vyūhas* mentioned in the *Vīrasarvasvam* are powerful and it was very much difficult on the part of the enemy side to penetrate into those *vyūhas* or battle arrays to fight against the counterpart. Sometimes if the enemy side to penetrate into the *vyūhas*, it became very difficult for the enemy to come out from the *vyūhas* again. This happened when Abhimanyu could not in case of *kurukṣetra* war. Although, Abhimanyu could enter into the *kauravas* side by crossing the *cakra vyūhas*, but could not come out of that and ultimately killed by *the Saptarathīs* of *Mahābhārata*.

In the work of Gopinath Chamupati Singh i.e. *Vīrasarvasvam*, it is found that in the traditional system of warfare, the kings looked for every aspect of war to win over the enemy at any cost. They applied mantras for getting peace by defeating the enemy in the battle field. Besides that the ayurvedic physicians and surgeons accompanied the king. The accompaniment of ayurvedic physicians and surgeons in the battle field, influence of astrology and its impact on the time of going to the war, preparation of dance, music and with its forms for presentation etc also played an important role in the warfare.

Conclusion

Thus, the "*Vīrasarvasvam*" written by Gopinath Chamupati Singh is an epitome of knowledge on warfare and other fields of valuable knowledge. It deals within its encyclopedic range, with a genesis of earth, the geography of India, its territorial divisions, the four *varuṇas*, three types of forts, eight types of metals, nine types of jewels & ten types of iron. It describes palace architecture, the qualities of Rājās, Yuvarajas, ministers, priests, astrologers, poets, & generals. It describes the uniforms of the soldiers, auspicious times for starting battle and leading expeditions, organization of the army, use of war drums, recitation of mantras, making of arms & ammunitions. *Vīrasarvasvam*, is an attempt & first of its kind which contains "infinite riches in a little room". It is a miniature universe of knowledge which ranges from music to medicine, military science to veterinary science, marriage to morals, war to peace, art to architecture, poetry to philosophy, etc.

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