

**Lingayat Dharma**  
**(Veerashaiva Religion)**

**Somashekar Munavalli, D. Sc.**

**Published by**  
**Veerashaiva Samaja of North America**

## Table of Contents

A Note .....	3
Preface .....	4
A Word .....	5
Part I: Basic Concepts .....	7
PART II: Veerashaiva Religion .....	30
Part III: Philosophy of Veerashaiva Religion .....	45
Part IV: Biographies of the Veerashaiva Saints .....	55
Part V: Veerashaiva Institutions .....	64
Part VI: Veerashaiva Festivals and Holy Days .....	67
Part VII: Religions of the World .....	69
Part VIII: Veerashaiva Vachanas .....	84
Part IX: List of General References .....	91
Appendix I - Glossary .....	92
Appendix II – Frequently Asked Questions .....	99

## **A Note**

During the 2006 VSNA Boot Camp, the Detroit chapter – the hosts of the 2007 Annual Convention - promised that the forth coming convention would provide a refreshingly unique religious experience for the participants. In keeping with the above pledge, we are pleased to present the participants the book titled “**Lingayat Dharma (Veerashaiva Religion)**”. This book is intended for use in imparting religious education and creating religious awareness among budding Veerashaiva youths. It attempts to introduce our religion and our way of life in simple terms and is bereft of high sounding the metaphysical philosophy. This does not mean that the fundamental Veerashaiva concepts have been left out. Far from it, these have been discussed in simple terms.

The publication of this book, as a special offering of the 2007- annual convention, was made possible by the gracious financial support provided by Dr. Shiva Prakash and Mrs. Suman Prakash, Bel Air (MD). On behalf of the VSNA members, I thank them for their kind and generous help. I would also like to thank Dr. S. Munavalli for writing the book.

**Gadigeppa Doddamani, Chairman  
2007-VSNA Annual Convention**

## Preface

When the Detroit chapter of the VSNA announced that it would be hosting the 2007-VSNA Annual Convention, it also pledged itself to endeavor to provide an innovative experience to the participants. During the 2006-VSNA Boot Camp, a loud and clear demand for religious education, exposure and experience was made not only by the boot-camp attendees but also by the tele-conference participants. In answer to their demand, the VSNA is pleased to place the book titled “**Lingayat Dharma (Veerashaiva Religion)**” in the hands of the convention attendees. The book has been designed to help young Veerashaiva adults, born and/ or growing up in the North American sub-continent and without the benefit of formal or informal religious education. It attempts to teach our religion and our way of life through simple style. It fulfills the Veerashaiva parents’ quest for ways to impart religious education and information to their off-springs.

I would like to thank three persons who have made this possible. First of all, the members and their families owe their thanks to Dr. Shiva Prakash and Mrs. Suman Shiva Prakash, Bel Air (MD) for their generous financial assistance to publish this book. Secondly, I would like acknowledge the effort, time and trouble that our convention chairperson, Mr. G. S. Doddamani, has pitched in to coordinate its publication. Last but not the least; I would also like to express our thanks to Dr. S. Munavalli for writing this book to help our youth. I trust that this book will be of great help to the Veerashaiva parents in exposing their off-springs to their cherished religion and thus in providing an enriching religious experience.

**Prabhu Patil, President**  
Veerashaiva Samaja of North America

## A Word

Lingayat Dharma (Veerashaiva Religion) is intended to introduce the Veerashaiva High School and Undergraduate Students to the rich heritage and legacy of their great religion. Perhaps this may be the first time that an attempt is being made to help the Lingayat youth, growing up in the melting pot of the North American cultures, in their desire and quest to understand the religion of their parents. This endeavor has been made possible by the financial support provided by Dr. Shiva Prakash and Mrs. Suman Shiva Prakash, Bel Air (MD) and by the Detroit Chapter of the VSNA, the hosts of the 2007 Annual Convention. The generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Shiva Prakash truly reflects their dedicated commitment to the VSNA and to the Veerashaiva religion. It exhibits their devotion to the preservation and propagation of the Lingayat (Veerashaiva) religion. As a part of the decision of the Detroit chapter to provide meaningful religious service to the community at large, it initiated an ambitious book project to bring out three versions of the book on the Veerashaiva religion. In their zeal to fulfill this commitment, the Chairman of the Detroit Convention contacted Dr. and Mrs. Shiva Prakash for help. Once he had their word of support, he then contacted me. Having participated in the 2006-VSNA Boot Camp held in Detroit, I suggested to Mr. Doddamani a compilation of a volume containing three parts; each part aimed at different age groups; namely (1) Pre-School-Children, (2) Elementary School Students, and Middle School Students, (3) High School and Lower Undergraduate Students. He accepted my suggestion and gave me enough time to come up with the drafts of the manuscripts.

The present book - Lingayat Dharma (Veerashaiva Religion) - consists of eight parts: (1) Basic Concepts, (2) Veerashaiva Religion: History and Introduction; (3) Philosophy of the Veerashaiva Religion, (4) Biographies of the Veerashaiva Saints, (5) Veerashaiva Institutions, (6) Veerashaiva Festivals, (7) Religions of the World, (8) Selected Vachanas and Part IX gives some useful references. Also included are two Appendices, Appendix I consists of A Glossary, while Appendix II provides questions generally posed by our children. Part I introduces the readers to the general concepts and discusses the basic terminologies and their meanings commonly used in religious texts. Many of the topics covered and discussed in this segment are directly related to the questions our youth frequently ask; in particular heaven, atma, Brahman, hell, reincarnation, mind, soul, God, religion, kayaka, dasoha, meditation, faith, bhakti, linga, isthalinga, etc. Part II introduces the readers to the brief history of the Lingayat Religion, while Part III provides a bird's eye-view of the complex philosophy of the Veerashaiva religion. A deliberate attempt has been made to keep the style simple and the narration without the complex metaphysical terms. Part IV narrates the biographical sketches of the selected 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva Saints. Included in this part are the life stories of the Sharanas who came from all walks of life. Part V describes the nature of the Veerashaiva

Institutions and the roles they have played over the course of time. A narrative description of the popular Veerashaiva festivals is given in Part VI. Part VII provides brief descriptions of the popular religions of the world. This should provide the Veerashaiva youth a wholesome picture of the ever-shrinking world we are privileged to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Readers interested in knowing about the religions not included in this book are referred to the recent VSNA publication titled “The Veerashaiva Religion: Its Practices and Principles”. Part VIII includes 25 vachanas of the Veerashaiva Saints. It is hoped that the discussion of the vachanas at the group and VSNA-chapters’ meetings, would kindle interest in the minds of the Veerashaiva youths for additional reading and research on their own. Part IX lists some general references.

Some youths may have a tough time in believing how our 12<sup>th</sup> Century Saints could transcend through space and time and how they could see the universe through their mind’s eye. There is nothing unusual about these personal experiences. The steadfast practice of meditation and Shivayoga confers on the individual special supernatural ability to fathom the unfathomable mysteries of the universe. There are scores and scores of recorded examples that lend credence and support to this inference. Readers are referred to Sophy Burnham’s book titled “The Ecstatic Journey” (1999) and references cited therein. Several neurologists - practicing physicians – have recently provided experimental evidence in support of this claim. In the spiritual realm, any thing and every thing is possible if one is endowed with the Vision Divine. In this context, I would like to thank Mr. G. S. Doddamani for asking me to write this book and for his continued encouragement. I would also like to acknowledge and express my appreciation to Mr. Prabhu Patil, President of the VSNA for his vision and commitment to the VSNA’s causes.

**Somashekar Munavalli, D. Sc.**  
**700 Paige Circle, Bel Air, MD**

# Lingayat Dharma (Veerashaiva Religion)

## Part I: Basic Concepts

1). **Anger and Hatred:** These attributes usually go hand in hand, though the latter is ordinarily a consequence of the former. Both have one common denominator: they burn one from within and without!! They are truly unhealthy attitudes, which affect both the mental and physical well being of an individual and should be avoided as such. Both of them spoil one's peace of mind and tranquility, making the day to day life really unpleasant and hindering one's spiritual progress. One should heed the advice given by Basava and Siddharama:

As long as there is egotistical self,  
Anger is unavoidable  
As long there is the body  
Lust is unavoidable  
As long as there is attachment,  
-----  
Kapilasiddha Mallikarjuna

Don't be angry with someone,  
Who is angry with you?  
What good would it be?  
Even if you are;  
Anger shatters the peace of your mind,  
Just as the fire in your house,  
Burns your house,  
And not that of your neighbor's,  
Kudalasangamadeva.

2). **Atma and Brahman:** These two words, namely Atma and Brahman are frequently encountered in the discussion of religions originating from India. The first word means the individual soul or self, while the latter connotes the Universal Soul or the universal consciousness or the Absolute. The inner most atma present in every person is supposed to be identical with the Universal Brahman. Once the individual understands and has gained the knowledge of the oneness of the atma and the Brahman, then individual's soul becomes free from mental and physical bondage. When this occurs, the individual's soul

becomes liberated. It does not have to wait for the day of judgment to do this. Just as the ocean-waves, come and touch the earth and then go back to merge with the ocean, the atma goes back to mingle with the Universal Brahman after it has been liberated from the corporeal body.

**3). Bhakti:** (spiritual submission) or dedicated devotion means ‘single minded devotion’ and submission to God’s Will. Everything that one does should be done in the name of God, for the sake of the God and according to God’s dictum while seeking absolutely nothing in return. God loves Bhakti more than he loves prayers or reading of the Holy Scriptures. Basava makes this abundantly clear in his vachana:

It is said that God loves music.  
God does not love music.  
It is said that God loves the Vedas.  
God does not love the Vedas.  
Ravana, who sang songs praising Lord Shiva,  
Pre-maturely met his Maker!  
Brahma, who knew the Vedas better than anybody else,  
Had his head chopped off!  
Our Lord Kudalasangama  
Loves bhakti.

Shiva is composed of the trinity of Guru, Linga and Jangama; that is all three merge in Him. Devotion to the trinity of Guru, Linga and Jangama means devotion to Lord Shiva. Thus the best way to worship God is through the worship of the trinity of Guru, Linga and Jangama. Basava has said

On the earth called devotion,  
The seed called the Guru takes root,  
And sprouts as the Linga.

The practice of true bhakti is not an easy thing. True bhakti is like a double-edged sword, for it is difficult to have ‘unalloyed bhakti’. It cuts either way! Yet, bhakti forms the basis of all religious exercises and practices in the Veerashaiva religion. True bhakti requires a total internalization of God’s oneness and uniqueness. Oneness means seeing and feeling the presence of God in every thing around us, while uniqueness suggests the all-powerful Brahman. The bhakti-yoga enables one to build a bridge between the self and the Brahman. When this happens, spiritual salvation is at hand. Thus, *moksa* or spiritual salvation becomes possible through bhakti.



#### 4). Compassion\*

LOVE is a multi-colored, many 'splendored' singing parrots. Love pays more dividends than one expects and merits. It knows no boundary. It is limitless. The more one gives, the more one receives in return.

Compassion is a form of love. All great religions preach and teach it. Jesus Christ said, "Love thy neighbors. Be compassionate". Both Judaism and Islam have been preaching and asking their faithful for ages to be compassionate and merciful.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century English poet William Blake describes love as follows:

Love seeketh not itself to please,  
Nor for itself hath any care,  
But for another gives its ease,  
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

What is the true meaning of compassion? How does it form a part and parcel of the Veerashaiva religion? The answer to the latter question becomes apparent and clear when we consider the answer to the first. The dictionary meaning of the word, 'compassion' is: "a deep feeling of sharing with a view to aid or to lend support". Let us underline the word **sharing** in the above. Does that ring a bell? Surely, it should, reaffirms, reflects, resonates and reverberates the **Veerashaiva Philosophy of Kayaka and Dasoha**. Basava has said, "Compassion is the cornerstone of a religion. Could there be a religion without compassion?"

\* J.-C. Carriere, "Violence and Compassion: Dialog with the Dalai Lama", Image Books Doubleday, New York (1994).

#### 5). Faith

Faith is a multi-faceted word; it connotes and conveys a cluster of concepts meaning many things. It is synonymous with other words such as belief, dependence, loyalty, obedience and trust. When used in the religious context, it means all of the above. Simply put, it means the acceptance of what cannot be proved by evidence! But in religion as in other walks of life, faith serves as a self-sustaining support. That is why one says, "Faith moves the mountain". Often, one hears in the United States, "You can be whatever you want to be!" This means that if one has faith in oneself and keeps pegging, the sky is the only limit as to how far one can go. This sentence is an apt description of the word, 'faith'. Basava asks one to have faith in God in these words:

If one believes in Him Firmly,

-----,

Lord Kudalsangamadeva,

Offers Himself to those,

Who believe in Him?

#### 6). Prayer

A prayer can simply be defined as the acknowledgement of God's blessing and bounty. Usually, one meditates on the God beseeching His benevolence and grace. 'Prayer exudes love of God'. 'True prayer is union with God.' Praying to God often provides a solace to the troubled mind. Coleridge states this beautifully and succinctly:

He prayeth best who loveth best,  
The things both great and small,  
For the good God who loveth all,  
He made and loveth.

#### 7). Moksa

This means spiritual salvation. It involves liberation from bondage to the cycle of birth, death and rebirth and merging of the individual soul with the Universal Brahman. In other words; meeting the Maker in a gracious way of exiting from this world. The Hindu religion does not prescribe any particular path to salvation. Just as in its theology, it gives complete freedom of choice. It does, however, suggest some paths; three in particular and lets the aspirant to choose his/her own path. Since the karma is accumulated through avidya (ignorance), the first path – jnana-marg– calls for getting rid off of the ignorance. This is usually carried out through the practice of saddharma and meditation. Meditation enables one to understand the true nature of and the relationship between the self and the Brahman. This necessitates a disciplined approach to knowledge and mind-control, for knowledge alone is not a substitute for experience. This then requires guidance from an experienced individual, a Guru (preceptor) who has acquired and assimilated this knowledge. The Veerashaiva concept of the moksa is similar to the Hindu concept except that it does not subscribe to the latter's acceptance of the cycle of birth and karma. It states that the salvation can be achieved in the present life with Guru's blessings (Guru-krapa).

#### 8). Chanting

Chanting is a form of loudly reciting God's praise. Its origin can be traced to the cave-man, who becoming afraid of the natural phenomena, began invoking God's help by praising Him loudly. With the progress of human civilization, melodies and hand-movements were added to chanting. The latter falls under the domain of what is known as chirognomy. Primarily, the hand gestures are used to jog the memory. The Hindus think that chanting the prayers purifies body and tongue. But there is a greater meaning and purpose attached to chanting, namely to clog and control the fleeting mind and to enable it to concentrate and focus on praying.

## 9). **Worship**

Worship is an expression of love, reverence and submission to God. A puja is a form of worship. During the *puja*, *mantras* (hymns) are chanted and recited, flowers are offered to God and *arathi* (burning incense in a flat plate) is offered to God. Basava expresses this in a more subtle way in his vachana:

A worship without love,  
And an unfeeling act,  
-----,  
Are all like the painted sugarcane,  
Have no taste to relish,  
Oh! Lord Kudalasangamadeva.

## 10). **Ego**

The word 'ego' can be defined, as the sense of consciousness of one's own self, the delusionary self. Ego is a multi-colored chameleon; it is a rainbow which often changes its color; it is an intrinsic animal instinct; it always find its way to rationalize its working and it always has a ready-made answer to whatever it does. It is associated with memory, vision, perception, hearing and feeling and the control of bodily functions. When a person is consumed by the ego, then it becomes dangerous and usually leads to personal problems. When an individual becomes free from it, then he/she can thus become a *sharana*. The concept of ego arises as a result of the dichotomy of the sixth sense, when the sense is confused into pre-supposing a dualism between I and not-I. Thus, we think and act as though we are different entities from every thing else, with a big gap separating the two. Hence the idea of an 'I' becomes embedded in our subconscious. This leads to the point where we begin chanting and claiming 'this is mine', 'I did it', 'I know better than you', sort of 'holier than thou' attitude. Once these feelings begin to germinate and dominate the mind, then they begin to attack every thing that threatens the dominating feelings of 'I' and 'mine'. This state finally leads to enmity, desire and alienation and culminates in pain and suffering. Siddharameshvara describes this beautifully:

As long as there is egotistical self,  
Anger is unavoidable  
As long there is the body  
Lust is unavoidable  
As long as there is attachment  
-----,  
Desire cannot be rooted out  
Do Thou free from such desire  
And show me the path of deliverance  
Oh! My savior Kapilasiddha Mallinatha.

The following poem of the Indian Novelist, **Revindranath Tagore** sums how ego functions:

I came out alone on my way to my tryst,  
But who is this me in the dark?  
I move aside to avoid his presence,  
But I cannot escape him,  
He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger  
He barks in a louder voice to every word I utter  
He is my own-self, my Lord, and he knows no shame  
I am ashamed to come to Thy door in his company,  
Oh! My Lord.

### **11). Doctrine**

The word ‘doctrine’ means the acceptance and affirmation of the teaching and the truth as expounded by one’s religious faith. It also means a scientific principle. Thus it has philosophical as well as scientific overtones. All religions have their unique doctrines. When used in the religious and theological context, it involves emotion, mind and will.

### **12). Dogma**

The word ‘dogma’ is a theological term, which means ‘a principle, belief, or statement of idea or opinion’, considered and accepted as the truth.

### **13). Philosophy**

Philosophy means the love and pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means and moral self-discipline. It also suggests the investigation of causes and laws underlying reality,

inquiry into the nature of things based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods.

**14). Desire:** Desire is one of the attributes of the mind. Although a desire is born in the mind, it clouds one's judgment and affects one's attitude towards others and one's life. It has been stated that one has to break the attachment to achieve salvation and union of the soul with Shiva. To do this one has to know One's Self. Ignorance is said to cover the Self with a veil. To break the bondage, one has to lift this veil off of the Self. The veil that masks the Self is due to desire. Basava has thus warned us against the dangers and consequences of our desires:

I am bound by the snares of my desires,  
Oh! Lord Kudalsangama,  
I am not free to meditate on Thee,  
Please bless me with Thy Grace,  
Thou art compassionate,  
Kindly free me from my distress.

**15). Truth:** Truth is another universal value that all religions enjoin their faithful to practice. The official seal of the Government of India proclaims: "Truth alone shall triumph". In addition, many a writer has said, "Truth is God; God is truth". The 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva saints have unequivocally proclaimed its value in day to day life. Basava has thus compared telling the truth to living in heaven:

Heaven\* and hell\* are not different,  
Where there is truth, there is heaven.  
Where there is untruth, there is the mortal world,  
Pious practice of kayaka does make a heavenly living,  
While immoral conduct is but a hell in itself,  
Thou art my witness to this, Oh! Lord Kudalasangama.

\* Basava uses the words "Heaven and hell", just to illustrate a point using the language of the common people. In fact, the Veerashaiva religion does not believe in the concept of heaven and hell.

Truth is a virtue. It means conforming to facts. It also means honesty, integrity and sincerity. Truth demands character, courage, fortitude and internal strength. What Uriling Peddi did when the Guru asked him about his profession is truth. What Mahatma Gandhi did, in his formative years when he knew that he was going to be punished if he

stated the facts, is truth. He practiced truth throughout his life at all costs.\* Speaking the truth begets benefits, while uttering untruth causes suffering.

Another of Basava's vachanas illustrates clearly what truth means:

If you should speak,  
Your words should shine,  
Like the pearls of a necklace.  
If you should speak,  
Your words should sparkle like a sapphire.  
If you should speak,  
Your words should be like a colorless crystal.  
If you should speak,  
God must applaud your words.  
If your words do not match your deeds,  
Would Kudalasangama care for you?

\* M. K. Gandhi, "An autobiography: My Experiments with Truth", Beacon Press, Boston (1993).

**16). Honesty:** Just like truth, honesty is another virtue that our sharanas preached and practiced. The Kayaka philosophy of the Veerashaiva religion reflects the value that it attaches to honesty. The sharanas of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century exhibited honesty in dealing with people as well as in their businesses activities. The practice of kayaka demanded one to charge a fair and honest price for one's labor/work and goods and produce. The sharanas said that God won't be pleased with those who are greedy and hoard their earnings. Nuliya Chandayya of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century serves as a living example of honesty. He sent his assistant to sell the ropes he had made. The assistant sold the ropes and brought back four times more money than Chandayya honestly expected. Others would have praised this act and given a bonus to the assistant. But Chandayya chastised his assistant for his greediness and asked him to return the excess he had charged to the customers along with an apology.

**17). Humility and Kindness:** Humility is the hallmark of internal fortitude and strength. Being humble is not a sign of weakness. It reflects one's courage, one's strength of character and belief that one should treat others with due respect. Note what Basava's vachana says:

There is none smaller than I am,  
There is none higher than the devotees of Shiva.

Compassion and kindness should be the cornerstone of any religion. Without kindness a religion cannot simply exist. Human beings are expected to show kindness and compassion to their fellow beings and other animals. Channabasava says:

When in your heart you are,  
Merciful to all lives,  
For 'Where life is, there is Shiva'  
Will not Lord Kudalachannasanganna,  
-----,  
Lift you to His heart?

## 18). Meditation

Meditation is an intense and concentrated silent form of prayer. It "is the experience of the limitless nature of the mind." The Indian **rishis** (saints, seers) have been practicing meditation for over "4000 years"; even before the advent of the Vedas, the world's oldest books on religion and philosophy. Buddha practiced meditation over 2500 years ago. It is also mentioned in the first Jewish book written some 2500 years ago. Meditation occupies a prominent place in the Greek and Russian churches. St. Basil wrote about it in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century (A. D.), while Prophet Mohammed practiced it in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century (A. D.).

Meditation requires proper control and frame of mind, elimination of emotions and worldly thoughts from the mind. Meditation enables one to experience peace and tranquility within and without. Meditation enhances one's discipline, memory, mental and physical well-being, relaxation and spiritual up-lift. Meditation is an extremely personal and private practice. During meditation the mind elevates itself to an upper plane and as soon as it is over, it returns to ground zero. It teaches us to be kind and compassionate.

## 19). Metaphysics

**The word metaphysics is considered to be of Mediaeval Latin and Greek origin and means 'things after physics'. In simple terms, it involves speculative or abstract or critical reasoning. It systematically investigates the 'principles and problems associated with the ultimate reality' including ontology (being) and cosmology. It attempts to draw inferences and generalizations based on the accepted knowledge of the nature of the things and the universe and not using scientific methods. Its realm includes such 'qualitative and quantitative' questions as to whether things are really**

what they appear to be or they originate from something else. The most popular metaphysical enquiry is: ‘What is the real and ultimate nature of the reality?’ In a sense, metaphysics can be considered as Logical Philosophy.

It has several doctrines such as Idealism, Absolute Idealism, Naturalism, Supernaturalism, Materialism and Dialectical Materialism, to mention a few. Most religions draw their strength from idealistic ontology and absolute idealism. The latter accepts and propounds the concept that all things in the universe are manifestations of one supreme spirit or soul.

## 20). Religion

Religion is an expression of one’s belief and reverence for the Creator of the universe. It is practiced and pursued with devotion and faith by the faithful. The word religion can be described as a code of behavioral and moral conduct and a set of beliefs and thoughts. It tells us about God and His Creation. It teaches how to worship God and how we have to treat His creation. We are all God’s creation. Whatever is in the universe that is all due to God’s blessing and grace. Religion teaches us to be kind to animals and other human beings and shows us how to lead a blissful life.

## 21). God

All the religions of the world advocate and proclaim their belief in GOD. God is one of the most difficult topics to describe and to discuss. No two persons see God in the same way and in the same form! This is reflected in the following story. Once eight blind-men were debating about how the elephant looks. They did not agree on any description because they had neither seen nor could see the elephant. Then, they decided to go touch the elephant to describe it. Each of them touched a part of the elephant’s body and each of them described it variously as a trunk of a tree, a pillar, a snake, a wall etc. The same applies to those who have the eyes to see, when it comes to describing God. We have to experience God through faith and **bhakti** (devotion). There are numerous examples of people who have seen and experienced God’s presence. There is nothing phony and strange about this. Mahadeviakka saw God as a bright reddish light on the mountaintop before she merged with Him. American writer, Sophy Burnham, describes scores and scores of such examples in her book titled “The Ecstatic Journey”. Just as one cannot see the sweetness hidden in the honey, the ice cream and the sweets we all love to eat, God cannot be seen with the human eye. Faith serves to sustain, while bhakti functions as an aid in the spiritual salvation. There is but ONE GOD. Basava has said, “**God is ONE but MANY are His names**”. The following vachana of Basava describes God’s dimensions:



**Oh! Lord, you are as wide as the world and sky!  
And wider still!!  
Your feet go deeper than the world below,  
Your crown stands far above the universe,  
You are imperceptible and beyond comprehension,  
Limitless and incomparable,  
You have graced my palm,  
In the form of the Isthalinga,  
Microcosmic but macrocosmic in nature,  
Oh! Lord Kudalasangamadeva.**

God is the **One** who created the Universe. There is ONE God but many are His names. God is formless and is invisible to the human eyes. God is all-powerful. We believe in ONE God. Belief in ONE God is called Monism as opposed to Polytheism. The latter term means belief in many Gods. We worship the Invisible God through our Isthalinga. We believe the Isthalinga to represent God; we worship God with bhakti (devotion) and faith. The Isthalinga is neither an IDOL nor a Statue. It is a representation or a symbol of God.

## 22). Mind

The 'mind' is a myth! It means many things to many people! This is one of the most debated subjects. All schools of philosophy and psychology, however, agree on one thing that the mind does not exist without a breathing body!

It has been described as '*Manomatram jagat*' (world is the mind). There are several different theories of the mind. The early theories indicated that a person was made of matter and mind. The matter occupies space and can be seen and touched, while the latter does not occupy space, has no weight, can neither be seen nor be touched. Yet it has been given 'attributes such as will, reason and memory'. To counter this, psychologists have put forth their own theory. They said that 'the mind is the sum total of a person's conscious state' from which emanate emotions, feelings, memories and thoughts. The mind comes into being when an individual interacts with the world. According to this concept, the mind comes into being depending on the complexity of the animal. Yet another theory proposes that the mind is the ultimate source of feelings, thought and will; that is, the mind is the source of the sensation, images, feelings, and thoughts, which form our mental activities.

In this context, another logical question pops up: Whether the thought controls the mind or the mind controls the thought? There does not appear to be a clear-cut single and simple answer to this question, for it may be either way. Also, it may depend upon the mental frame of mind. The physical demarcation of the body and the mind is not possible. 'The mind moves the body. All human activities involve mind'. Mental states reflect the body's wants and desires. Also, certain human glands affect the workings of the mind. Until the body and the mind interact, nothing transpires. Mind is fleeting and is fickle. Control of the mind is the basic requirement to concentrate on any given thing. This is easier said than done. A disciplined practice of meditation coupled with growing from within can be of considerable help in controlling the mind. The following illustration taken from the Scientific American (September 1992) describes the relationship between the Mind and the Brain.

### 23). Concept of Soul

All religions except Buddhism speak of the soul. Every human being is considered and supposed to have a soul in her/his body. Soul is the spiritual Self and hence serves as the tamer, teacher and trainer of mind. That is, the soul can help control the mind and assist a person to protect himself/herself from his mental aberrations and fickle mindedness.

The **Christian theology** indicates three views on the origin of the individual soul: (1) creationism, (2) traducianism and (3) reincarnation. The first means that God creates a new soul for every individual at every conception. The second suggests that the soul is transmitted with body by the parents. Christianity does not believe in reincarnation. Christianity proclaims that the condemned souls are ultimately called to answer for their actions on the Day of Judgment after they have entered their respective bodies. Until that time, the souls linger in a state of limbo.

**The Islamic View of the Soul:** There seems to be a slight difference between the version described in the habit of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century and the Quranic version. The term *ruh* (spirit) means the spirit coming from God and human spirit. It is said that the human body is created before the soul is created. Death means the separation of the soul from the body. It then joins the body after the resurrection on the Day of Judgment. During sleep, the souls leave the body temporarily to communicate with other souls of both the living and the dead persons. At death, the soul leaves the body but returns to the body slowly after the body has been buried and will be summoned to answer questions on the Day of Judgment. Only the souls of the righteous speak with each other. However, the souls of the evil and the non-believers return to the grave to suffer.

**The Jewish View of the Soul:** The Old Testament says that the soul stays with the dead person's body when it is buried. The doctrine of resurrection implies the re-entry of the body and the soul into life [Isaiah 24-27]. This doctrine attracted considerable attention during the Hasmonean Revolt (166 ~ 164 B. C.).

**The Hindu View of the Soul:** The Indians have studied the soul in greater detail and have assigned different roles to different kinds of souls. The Vedas distinguish between *sharira* (*kaya* or body) and the soul (*jiva*, *manassu* and *paramatman*). The *jiva* is the individual soul (biological personality) in sense that each individual has his/her own soul, which is subject to enjoyment and suffering. *Manassu* (mind) is related to humans and God. As implies breath, which is vital to life. It gives life to the matter. The soul is regarded to be part of the Parabrahman and hence it I indistinguishable. While some others say God and Soul are distinctly and manifestly different entities. These two schools of thought have given rise to the concepts of **Advaiat** and **Dviata**.

**The Buddhist's View of the Soul:** The soul according to Buddhism, is something that permits the distinguishing of one person from another. The soul with its intellect, will, morals and ethics governs human behavior. The Buddhist's concept of the soul appears to be somewhat paradoxical. It basically suggests that there is no such thing as a soul. But then, it implies that the soul survives death and goes through the cycles of births.

**The Chinese View of the Soul:** The Chinese concept of the soul includes the presence of two types of souls: (1) 'P 'O', which comes into being with conception of human life and (2) 'hun', the heavenly aspect which comes into being latter. The hun provides consciousness and intelligence, while the 'P 'O' controls the movements and the strength of the body. Both 'P 'O' and 'hun' require support from the cosmos. At death, the 'P 'O' comes down to earth, while the 'hun' goes to heaven.

**The Veerashaiva View of the Soul:** Karma yogi Siddharama says that God 'hides in the soul's core'. The mind and the soul are different entities. The soul is a part of God. After the individual achieves *lingaikya* (death), the soul merges with the Maker. The Veerashaiva philosophy states that the soul sometimes becomes subjected to the influence of the clouding of the mind and hence acquires impurity. Hence, the soul comes under the spell of human passions. These passions must be removed before one can achieve spiritual progress and hence salvation. Thus the harmony of the soul determines the individual's state of the mind.

## 24). Mysticism

The word 'mysticism' has a vast meaning; it cannot be adequately described. In 1899 D. W. R. Inge listed some twenty-five definitions to describe mysticism.<sup>1</sup> All the religions of the world talk about mystical experience and its redemptive nature. According to Underhill<sup>2</sup> mysticism is neither an opinion nor a philosophy. She states, "It has nothing in common with the pursuit of knowledge. It is the name of that organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the love of God."<sup>2</sup> These indescribable experiences of God-consciousness are claimed to arise through individual insight. Thus, mysticism is a one-to-one personal experience with the Creator. After going through such sublime experiences, the mystics feel ecstasy and tranquility. A mystic is considered to be a person who has experienced a direct communication and revelation from the transcendent reality. Each mystic has his/her own unique experience, which he/she achieves through strict mental and physical discipline.

A mystic has three primary goals: (1) an abiding faith in spiritual reality and ardent desire to see it, (2) renunciation of selfish and mundane desires and (3) spiritual salvation and final merger with the Supreme Being. Buddhism describes a mystic as a person who has wiped off the existence of the Self.

In the Fourth Gospel of Christianity, Jesus Christ is said to have transmitted the 'mystical impulses' to his disciples. In the 12th Century, Cistercians introduced the love mysticism to Christianity. Hasan al-Basri (728 A. D.) has been described as the patriarch of Islamic mysticism. Sufism exhibits mysticism in a more pronounced way and the Sufi (Moslem) mystics often go into a trance while dancing and praying. Jewish mysticism has been stated to 'vary from deep speculation to emotional experience' according to the book 'Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism' written by Gersom Schlom (1961). Hasidic (Jewish) mystics are said to shout and twist their bodies while praying and without experiencing any bodily pain.

The Veerashaiva mystics are among the world's greatest mystics. Akka Mahadevi shines like the North Star amongst all women, in her 'asceticism to realize God'. Compared to her age, one can say without any hesitation that she stands tall among the galaxy of the world's mystics, both males and females. Allama Prabhu, Basava and Channabasva shine brilliantly in their own right among the mystic luminaries of the world. Basava's sayings "are characterized by elegance, apotheosis of merit and transfiguration of grace". Allama Prabhu stands sublime in his vachanas, with his 'spirit of detachment and idealism'. To these mystics, there was no mystery.

## Resource Books:

- (1) E. Underhill, 'Mysticism', (Fifth edition), Meridian Books, New York (1967).
- (2) E. Undehill, "The Essentials of Mysticism", one world Publications, Boston (MA), USA (1999).

### 25). Shunya

The concept of Shunya in the Veerashaiva religion is vast and uniquely metaphysical in nature. Shunya in the Veerashaiva metaphysical context has a sublime meaning. It means God. It encompasses every thing. It also means nothing. It is like describing God: He has form and is also without form. In fact, shunya is another name for God in the Veerashaiva religion. It can be compared to ZERO. What is the value of zero if it stands alone: NOTHING. However, when it is put after a certain number, it gains VALUE. For example, six zeros in a row OOOOOO mean absolutely nothing. However, even if smallest number, say 1, is inserted before the first zero, low and behold the valueless six zeros become transformed into ONE MILLION!! This means zero has a value!!!

Buddha describes 'Shunya' thus: 'where there is form, there is void and where there is void, there is form. Shunya forms one of the four Buddhist notions.

### 26). Self, Space, Time and Universe

All religions with their genesis in the Indian subcontinent suggest that gaining the knowledge of the Self is essential and that it is a must to break the bonds to **maya** (illusion). One can gain the knowledge of the self through self-examination and self-study. One looks deeply inside of himself/herself by asking questions and seeking answers to vexing personal questions. Self-study involves the retrospective study of one's strengths and weaknesses and the consequences of one's actions and deeds; sort of judging one-self. After weighing one's self, one accentuates and harnesses one's strength to eliminate the weaknesses. It is a common practice with a person to find others' faults and blame others for her/his mistakes. This is due one's weakness. The strength lies in recognizing one's weakness and then accepting the blame for the mistake(s). The following vachana of Basava describes the effect of self-realization:

Look within and realize,  
Then jump up and reach for the stars,  
There are worlds within,  
Have you fathomed and discovered them?  
Knowledge of the Self means realization of God,

More profound than the wide universe,  
Oh! Kudalasangama.

What our saints said eight hundred years ago about achieving the knowledge of the Self is true according to the recent scientific findings. How Buddha overcame the feelings of “I” and “mine” and how the Hindu *rishis* (saints with no worldly taints) had gained the knowledge of the Self before Buddha described his path, can be rationalized using the neurological results.

The highly complex cerebral cortex, the cognitive center of the human brain, controls sensory and motor functions. It is the cerebral cortex that gives the mind its ‘distinctive quality’ and the faculty of sensory perception. It is also the brain where the mind and body coalesce to create the comprehension of the individual self and the Universal self. Sensory perceptions flash into the brain as electric impulses via the central nerve system. The brain ‘sorts out, cross-references, amplifies, integrates, processes’<sup>1</sup> and e-mails the messages so that necessary action can be taken.

An article – Religion and the Brain - appearing in the Newsweek magazine summarizes the recent research results.<sup>2</sup> (Also see page 19 of this book.) It describes how neurologist, Dr. James Austin, saw the real nature of things and how he lost the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. He recounts, “Time was not present. I had a sense of eternity. .... I had been graced by a comprehension of the ultimate nature of things.”<sup>3</sup> He experienced this felling while he was riding the Underground in London. We see, hear, feel and think because of our brain. It seems specific brain’s electric circuits can be shunted off to get the feelings of time, fear and self-consciousness. As a neurologist, Austin did examine the causes and meanings of the spiritual and mystical experiences. He has analyzed the anatomy of the brain and finds that the **amygdale** is in charge of threats and fear. To dampen it, it has to be short-circuited. The Parietal lobe circuits are said to ‘orient us in space and cause distinction between self and the world.’ ‘Frontal and temporal lobe circuits mark time and generate self-awareness. They must be disengaged’ to cause the disappearance of the feelings of the ‘Self’. It is conceivable that those who go into trance during religious ceremonies and meditations do so, though they may not fully appreciate it, by blocking the electric circuits in the brain. The above inference is based on the age-old observations that religious practices affect the functioning of the brain. The fact that spiritual contemplation affects brain activity makes religious experiences real and meaningful.<sup>4</sup>

As expected, the blocking of the electric circuits of different lobes of the brains ushers in different effects. Thus, the cosmic thoughts relating to our universe are affected by interfering with the flow of electric current in the Parietal lobe. While the Lower

Temporal lobe is involved with prayer and meditation and the Temporal lobe appears to be in-charge of religious experiences, happiness and ecstasy. Concentration is influenced by the flow of the electric currents in the Frontal lobe.

If one blocks e-mailing sensory feelings, as it usually happens during intense spiritual concentration (meditation), the brain fails to distinguish between ‘self’ and ‘not-self’. According to Drs. A. Newberg, d’Aquili and Rause<sup>1</sup>, neurologists and authors of the book “Why God Won’t Go Away”, when this occurs ‘one loses one’s identity and as a result becomes intimately interwoven with every one and every thing’. Under these conditions, ‘the meditators feel they have touched infinity’.

Prayers and mediation are said to reflect “biologically based events” occurring in the brain. “I felt communion, peace, openness, to experience ..... An awareness and responsiveness to God, God’s presence around me and a feeling of centering, a quieting and nothingness, moments of fullness of the presence of God permeating my being” said a person whose brain wave was being screened during intense praying. Neurotheology has affirmed the fact that “spiritual feelings leave neural footprints”. Thus, there are two association areas in the brain: (1) the left and (2) the right. ‘The left orientation area creates the brain’s spatial sense of the self. While the right side creates the physical space in which that self can exist’.<sup>1</sup>

“I could hear the singing of the planets and wave after wave of light washed over me. .... I no longer existed as a separate ‘I’. .... I saw the structure of the universe. I had the impression of knowing beyond knowledge and being given glimpses of ALL”.<sup>5</sup> isn’t this that the Veerashaiva Saints experienced and felt and expressed more than eight hundred years ago in their vachanas?

#### References:

- (1) A. Newberg , E. d’Aquili and A. Rause, “Why God Won’t Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief”, Ballanatine Books, New York (NY) USA (2002).  
Sharon Begley, ‘Newsweek’, May 7, 2001, pp.50.
- (3) J. Austin, “Zen and the Brain”, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge (MA) USA (1998).
- (4) “Religion in Mind” May 2001.
- (5) Sophy Burnham, “The Ecstatic Journey: Walking Path in Everyday Life” Ballanatine Books, New York (NY) USA (1999).

17). Concept of Kayaka and Dasoha

The word “*kayaka*’ is derived from ‘*kaya*’, which means body. Hence, *kayaka* means that which results from the exertion and use of the body’s faculties. Many of the world’s religions demand their faithful to earn their livelihood through productive work. Islam’s definition of work comes closer to that of the Veerashaiva religion. However, the Veerashaiva concept of *kayaka* is loftier, broader and encompassing, more meaningful and more spiritual. In that it involves a sense of prayer and worship.

*Kayaka* expects every body, irrespective of her/his station in life to choose a profession of her/his liking to earn an honest living. It also expects one to charge a fair price and admonishes one not to be greedy. The individual is expected to voluntarily contribute a fair share to *Dasoha*. The latter involves helping members of the community who are less fortunate. More importantly, when viewed against this background, the sense of *kayaka* is more than the Puritanical philosophy of ‘work is worship’. It enjoins one to respect *kayaka* as such and not to differentiate between different types of work. In other words it upholds the dignity of labor. Work is work no matter who does what and what the nature of the work is. Honest labor is pleasing to God. More importantly, when one is performing one’s *kayaka*, one need NOT worry about other things, including the worship of God.

Several *sharanas* who came from the ordinary walks of life figured prominently in the discussions of the intent, content and scope of the *Kayaka* and its philosophy, held in the *Anubhava Mantapa*. These folks came from the so-called lower strata of the society. Their professions were of an ordinary run-of-the-mill variety. *Goggayya* was an agricultural worker, *Ayadakki Marayya* collected rice and other grains sprinkled at the door-steps of the *sharanas*’ abodes, then cleaned and sold the grains thus collected to earn a living and *Nuliya Chandayya* made the rope from the grass and sold it to earn his livelihood. All of them carried out *dasoha*. They were all honest folks, earning enough to support their families and their *dasoha* activity. They did not worry about making more money and did not believe in hoarding it. They thought that hoarding money reflected a greedy attitude. They also charged a fair price for their labor. Ill-begotten money was regarded as unfit for *dasoha*. *Basava* has pointed out that ‘ill-begotten wealth is for repentance and unfit for worship’.

*Dasoha* means willingly using the savings from one’s honest earnings to support the needy people of the community. Since the money for the *dasoha* came from honest labor. *Gurus* and *Jangamas* visited the abodes of the people performing the *dasoha* to pray and fellowship with them. *Channabasava* makes this point abundantly clear in his *vachana*:



**Show me the feet of the devotee,  
Who earns his livelihood through kayaka,  
And carries out the dasoha,  
In the exalted company of the Guru, Linga and Jangama,  
I will bow to him,**

-----.

## 28). Concept of Heaven and Hell

Before explaining and expounding the generally accepted concept of the heaven and hell, it must be categorically stated that the Lingayat religion neither subscribes to nor believes in the concept and notion of the existence of Heaven and Hell. It is, in fact, the ONLY religion in the World that has not fostered and propounded the popular concept of the Heaven and Hell. For the Veerashaivas the world we live in, is where heaven and hell exist. They have no separate existence. Doing a good deed is like being in heaven. One feels good and pleased about oneself for having been a Good Samaritan. Deliberately, knowingly and intentionally hurting a living being is like living in a hell. It makes one miserable and gives a bad taste in one's mouth. It gives one a 'hellish' feeling.

Heaven is thought of as the abode of the God and godly spirits. The souls of the faithful and the righteous are supposed to find a permanent house in the heaven. Heaven is the reward for the righteous and for being a Good Samaritan. In other words, it is a carrot for the good deeds one has committed during one's sojourn on this planet of ours'. Almost all religions claim that the heaven is a place for enjoyment; it is a paradise! It is a place where the righteous can experience God's presence and partake of the meals in God's company and presence. The three religions originating in the Middle East, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam proclaim that the heaven is an eternal place to stay. Islam even goes a step further and states that the faithful souls even get an opportunity to enjoy the company of the virgins. It also says that the faithful can see God. Jewish scriptures say that the heaven is located some where up in the universe.

Buddhism and Hindu religion also subscribe to the notion of Heaven and hell. To these religions heaven is multi-tier and multi-level arrangement, which is not permanent. The level to which a soul gets consigned depends on its karma. As soon as the karma is wiped off, the soul moves to higher level(s). Buddhism considers nirvana as the only permanent achievement, which can guarantee a permanent place in the heaven.

Many religions claim that the hell is the place inhabited by demons. It is the home of the condemned souls, evil and wicked persons. **Dante**, in his book titled "Inferno", depicts

hell to be a place where a person is subjected to violence and torture as a punishment. He describes hell as a place where runs the “the river of boiling blood” and where “whoever by violence doth injure others’ are condemned and committed. **Pope John Paul II** considers hell not as a burning ‘inferno’ in the underground but as “the state of those who freely and definitely separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy” (1999).

The famous evangelist, Rev. **Billy Graham**’s modified statement, “I believe that hell is essentially separation from God. That we are separated from God, so we can have hell in this life and hell in the life to come” (1991). The second part of the above statement appears to reflect a belief in reincarnation, the concept which Catholics disown!

The concept of hell can be considered to have originated from the man’s desire for a righteous living. The concept has found complex and varied descriptions in art, history, mythology and folklore. Perhaps, its origin can be traced to the philosophy of the cavemen. Its description can also be found the Hindu scriptures, the Vedas; in the Hades of Greek mythology, in the Jewish concept of Sheol and in the Islam’s holy book, the Quran. Judaism suggests that all dead people, both good and evil, go to a darker, miserable place called Sheol. Later this notion was modified to imply that god souls are separated from the evil souls, the latter are sent to a burning valley called Gehenna. Christianity and Islam appear to have picked this concept of Gehenna. Christ, according to the Bible, has postulated hell as the “outer darkness with ever burning fire”. The middle Ages saw its permanent implantation in the minds of the Christian faithful. The Christian churches still use the concept of hell as an effective preaching deterrent and tool, to keep their congregations in straight line and to warn against sinful acts.

The Hindus think that the hell is a temporary arrangement until the ill effects of the bad karma are removed and the souls are redeemed.

What does the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva Sharanas think about it? The following Vachana of Basava exemplifies and illustrates the basic Veerashaiva concept of heaven and hell:

Is there a difference between the worlds of the mortals  
And that of the Gods?  
Certainly, not!  
Speaking truth is the world of Gods.  
Uttering untruth is the world of the mortals.  
Being a Good Samaritan is heaven.  
Evil deeds land one in misery and hell.  
Thou art my witness to this eternal truth,  
Lord Kudalasangama!

## 29). Concept of Karma and Reincarnation

Karma means a deed or action or a ritual or a ceremony. The word is derived from the Sanskrit root, **kri**. Karma is called the ‘Universal Law with its inevitable consequences’. The doctrine of karma says that every karma is attended by its consequences just like the Newton’s second law of motion, which states that action and reaction are equal and opposite. The difference between the two being that the consequences of the karma go on accumulating and accumulating until the slate is cleaned off. Good karma begets good consequences, while bad or evil karma gathers evil results. There are four types of karma: (1) the karma brought into the present life at birth, (2) the karma acquired during the present life, (3) the karma being experienced and (4) the karma which is inevitable. The above suggests that the karma transcends time. It is the attitude and the overall objective behind the karma that define whether the karma is good or bad. According to the philosophy of karma, the effects of the bad karma can be reversed by repentance, suffering, penance and praying. It seems that the overall intention of the notion of karma is to shift the blame on something or somebody else rather than owning and accepting the responsibility for the personal action(s).

Reincarnation means going through the cycle of birth and rebirth to atone for one’s karma accumulated in the previous life and being accumulated in the present life. This cycle of birth and rebirth repeats itself endlessly until the slate is wiped off of all of the accumulated results of the evil karma.

**It should be stated that the Veerashaiva religion subscribes neither to the philosophy of karma nor to the notion of reincarnation; for the Veerashaivas we are all God’s children and that God is all forgiving and does not punish His children.**

\* J. Mumford, “Karma Manual”, Llewellyn Publications, St. Paul (MN), (1999).

## 30). Lingadiksha

**Lingadiksha** is a formal religious initiation ceremony during which the Guru gives the lingadiksha to the disciple. The Guru also gives the devotee the holy mantra to recite during the **Lingapuja** (linga worship). The linga issued by the Guru is blessed and accompanies the person from his/her cradle to his/her grave. That is the linga follows the person to his/her death, at which time the individual’s soul is supposed to merge with God. The last act is known as the **lingaikya** or **samadhi**. The same lingadiksha ceremony is performed whether the child is a male or a female.

## 31). Lingaikya

Lingaikya literally means mingling with the maker, the Linga. Linga is God. Every human being is endowed with a soul, which is invisible, yet remains inside of the individual. It disappears at death or lingaikya. The soul is the internal representation of God in a human being. Since death of the human being is inevitable, a person's aim in her/his life is to smoothly achieve this union with the Creator. Thus, Lingaikya means union with Shiva. Samadhi is another term for this union with Shiva.

### 32). Shadakshara Mantra

**Om Namahshivaya** is known as the **Shadakshara Mantra**. A mantra is a vocalized hymn used in a special recitation during praying. The Veerashaivas chant either the Panchakshara mantra or the Shadakshara mantra. The Panchakshara mantra (Namahshivaya) and the Shadakshara mantra (Om Namahshivaya) are used by the Veerashaivas in their prayers. Om Namahshivaya is composed of three parts: Om + Namah + Shivaya. Om is a Primordial sound, first pronounced by Shiva. Namah means salutation. Shivaya, of course, means Lord Shiva, the Universal God. Taken together, the mantra says: "Salutations to Lord Shiva". By chanting the mantra the mind becomes clear, pure and sanctified. The repeated singing of the mantra strengthens one's character, eliminates bad thoughts from the mind. This enables one to develop a righteous mental attitude towards God's creation and encourages one to practice good ethics. Thus, an individual is transformed into a righteous individual (person).

### 33). Religious Rites and Rituals

**Religious Rites** and **Rituals** occupy a prominent place in a religion and play a prominent part in its practice and popularization.

**Religious rites** form a part and parcel of a religion. Rites, thus, are a must. Veerashaivism has its own share of religious rites. The following are important Veerashaiva religious rites: (1) *lingadharana* (wearing of the linga), (2) *lingadiksha*, (3) isthalinga worship, (4) *namakarana* (christening or naming ceremony), (5) marriage and (6) *lingaikya* (death). Lingadharana means wearing of the linga. The family priest gives the linga to the baby before its birth (usually during the eighth month of pregnancy) or after the baby is born. It is note worthy that the baby, while in the mother's womb, can receive the linga through its mother. This linga is worn until the child is 10 ~ 12 years old, at which time the child is considered fit to receive religious instructions and the isthalinga from a religiously ordained Guru.

The worship of the isthalinga is the most fundamental rite of the Veerashaiva religion. The isthalinga issued by the Guru at the time of the *diksha* (investiture) ceremony, should always be worn on the person for the rest of her/his life. The lingadiksha is a simple but poignant ceremony conducted at the home of the child or in a *matha*. During this ceremony the Guru blesses the aspirant, gives him/her the isthalinga and whispers in her/his ears the *Shadkshara mantra*. The mantra should be recited daily during the worship of the isthalinga,. The isthalinga is an important part of an individual's religious life. It stays with the person from his/her cradle to his/her grave. The same lingadiksha is performed whether the child is a male or a female. This again symbolizes the fact that men and women are equal in the eyes of Shiva and the society.

### Religious Rituals

The rituals appear to form a somewhat superfluous part of the practice of a religion. Yet, they are important to the faithful. They are psychologically inspiring and motivating and also are symbolic manifestations. Rituals are commonly and popularly practiced during the community fellowship and worship and marriage ceremonies. Often times, the rituals directly lead to superstitious beliefs and practices. As such, sophisticated minds look down upon the practice of religious rituals.

## **PART II: Veerashaiva Religion** (History and Development)

### **34). Veerashaivism: Introduction**

It is universally accepted that Veerashaivism is a living off-shoot of Shaivism (the religion that worships Lord Shiva). Shaivism can be traced back to the days of the Indus Valley Civilization, about 5000 years B. C. In the by gone days, Shaivism had many branches. The Shivagamas (the scriptures of Shaivism) mention the following seven branches of Shaivism. However, **Dasgupta**<sup>1</sup> writes, “From the Shivagamas, it appears that Veerashaivism was not a part of the original Shaivism”. Since this author has claimed that Basava did not fight the caste system, a historical fact he chose to contradict and ignore, his views appear to be biased and as such do not merit further consideration.

The most conspicuous thing about Dasgupta is the fact he never quotes the original sources. He usually quotes secondary sources as his references, which happened to be the based versions written by people who had very little interesting in speaking the truth or historical facts.

Veerashaivism is truly a progressive LIVING religion, for it reflects and imitates life. There is nothing in the Veerashaiva scriptures that one does NOT come across in one’s life. This means that unlike other religions, our Saints neither sat down and scratch their heads to ponder and pen their thoughts into a logically acceptable format nor did they receive any visits from ‘angels’ to reveal the secrets of their religion nor did God Himself reveal the commandments to them. What they experienced in their lives on the anvil of life in this mother earth, they wove and sang into *vachanas* (a vachana is a pithy saying written in a free style in the vernacular language). These vachanas written by people from all walks of life such as a Prime Minister, a cloth-weaver, a washerman, a cobbler, a carpenter, a rope-maker and a thief (of course, after he had given up his vocation) form the scriptures of the Veerashaiva religion.

### **35). Meaning of ‘Veerashaiva’**

The word **Veerashaiva** is composed of two words; namely **Veera** and **Shaiva**. A Shaiva, as we all know, is the one who worships Lord Shiva. A number of authors have stated that the word, “Veera” means “brave”, “heroic”. Indeed, this is the dictionary meaning of the word. In the aftermath of events of Kalyana following King Bijjala’s murder, the word Veerashaiva came to mean the saviors of the Veerashaiva faith. People had to be bold enough to openly practice their faith, for that invited constant threat to their life.

Some writers have suggested that the word also means a staunch, steadfast, unwavering worshipper of Shiva. This too is a reasonable explanation for the word Veerashaivas, for they had to be brave to wage a war against the social injustices of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century.

After the Sharanas quit Kalyana, they dispersed themselves and carried with them the treasures of the vachana literature that had accumulated over the years and the *Shunyasimhasan* (the pontiffical seat). The *Shunyasimhasan* is in Sholapur still today, the home of Siddharameshawara. A large group of Sharanas went to Ulavi under the leadership Channabasava and his mother Akka Nagamma. They had to be bold to openly practice their religious faith, for the Kings' soldiers constantly harassed and hunted them. If caught, the Sharanas faced certain death, for the Sharanas were accused of murdering King Bijjala. As **Dr. P. B. Desai**<sup>2</sup> has observed, king's own brother, who wanted to usurp the throne, murdered the King. For 150 to 200 years (1320 ~1380 A. D.), the Lingayats were persecuted by Jain Kings and other dynasties tried to suppress the Veerashaiva religion. Sometimes, the Veerashaivas/Lingayats had to hide their religious affiliations in order to save their skin.

It has been said that, "Because of their devotional zeal, the adherents of the movement called themselves Veerashaivas, i.e. heroic followers of Shiva".<sup>3</sup> The word "faithful" has been suggested as the meaning of the word 'Veera' in the sense that the Veerashaivas were and are faithful worshippers of Shiva.

In the present context, there is a more subtle and sublime meaning to the word **Veera**. *Panchachara*, *Astavarna* and *Shatsthala* represent three cardinal principles that the Veerashaivas are expected to practice. By practicing these three principles steadfastly, rigorously and with strict discipline, one conquers one's weaknesses and achieves self-awareness and self-enlightenment. One has to be brave and committed to withstand the rigorous requirements of the above principles. In other words, 'Veera' suggests that an individual has conquered his anger, lust and desires and has eliminated his/her weaknesses and is ready to proceed on the path to *moksha* (salvation).

**Michael**<sup>4</sup> debates whether Veerashaivas can be classified as a 'Hindu sect' or 'Hindu Protestants' and appears to have left the question hanging in mid air. He concludes the discussion by saying the term, 'Veerashaivism' refers to philosophical/theological, historical, social and religious movement'. In addition, he further seems to make a distinction between Veerashaivas and *Lingayats*. However, these two terms are used synonymously. The word 'Lingayat' is derived from two words, namely 'Linga' and 'ayata'. The second part means the 'wearer'.

### 36). What is Linga and What does it Represent?

When one thinks about the Linga, several questions such as the following come to mind: (1) What is Linga?; (2) How did this concept originate?; (3) When did it originate?; (4) What does it represent? and (5) What is its significance? The **Sthvaralinga** (immovable linga), is the heart and soul of the Shaivite temples and religious practices. Linga as seen in the Shaivite temples is a visible representation of Shiva, the Supreme Being, the Absolute, and the Parabrahman. Linga means Salvation and Self-realization. The word is derived from the Sanskrit language; its roots are ‘Li’ and ‘Gama’. Li means to absorb and Gama means to go. **Professor R. D. Ranade** has stated that the Linga is “an allegorical representation of psychological conceptions”. R. C. C. Carr expresses a similar opinion when he says, “The cardinal principle of the faith is an unquestionable belief in the efficacy of the Lingam, which has always been regarded as symbolical of the God Shiva”.

From the discoveries and archeological findings arising from the excavations of the Mohenjodaro and Harappa regions by Sir James Marshall<sup>6</sup> in the 1920’s, it can be categorically stated that Shaivism was prevalent since the dawn of modern civilization in India. This civilization, known as the Indus Valley Civilization, is said to date back to 3000 ~ 5000 years B. C.<sup>7</sup> The discovery of the sthavaralinga (dated 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B. C.) at Gudimallam, [near Renigunta, Andhra Pradesh (India)] indicates the presence of Shaivism in South India around the said period.<sup>8</sup>

During the *lingadiksha* ceremony the Guru gives the Isthalinga. The linga-diksha is the linga investiture or initiation ceremony conducted by the Guru, who whispers in the ears of the aspirant the *Shadakshara mantra*.<sup>9</sup> A Guru is a teacher. The Veerashaivas regard and respect a Guru as the representative of Shiva. The Isthalinga denotes and represents the non-dualism of Shiva-Shakti, Shakti being the female God executing Shiva’s Will.<sup>9</sup> Basava, the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva saint, transformed the community worship ceremony of the Sthavaralinga in the temples into the worship of the Isthalinga in the palm. He institutionalized the wearing and worship of the Isthalinga as a pre-requisite for all Veerashaivas. It is written in the book titled “*Shunyasampadane*” that those who do not carry on their person the Isthalinga become unfit to receive the *prasada*, the consecrated divine offering.<sup>9</sup>

The Linga carries a sublime, spiritual and religious connotation. To think otherwise, displays ignorance. The metaphysical meaning of the word ‘linga’ is subtle and requires intuition and comprehension of the various phases that one has to go through to attain moksha (salvation) as explained by **Sri Kumarswamiji**.<sup>10</sup> the linga symbolizes body, mind, matter, sat, chit, ananda, sharana and shunya. **Professor Sakhare**<sup>11</sup> thinks that the



Sthavaralinga represents a person sitting in a pooja posture with the Istalinga in his/ her palm.

**Sir John Marshall**, a noted Ideologist and archeologist who discovered the Mohenjodaro and Harappa civilization, has expressed that “..The larger Linga seen in the temples serves as aniconicagamata for cult purposes; the smaller one as amulets to be carried on the person, just as miniature Lingas.”<sup>12</sup> However, Marshall’s conclusions have been questioned.<sup>13</sup> Father Heras in his lengthy and scholarly dissertation has concluded that the inscriptions found in the Indus Valley (the Mohenjo Daro and Harappa) certainly depict Shiva and Shakti as the primary deities people worshipped and that the people of that period were certainly Dravidians.<sup>14</sup> Further, Father Heras states, “We must refer to another link existing from those ancient days between Mahenjo Daro and Karnatak. The modern Lingayats of the Kannada country depict a sign on the walls of their houses, the meaning of which does not seem to be known to them. This sign is often found in the inscription of Mahenjo Daro and Harappa. It reads “Kudu”. This sign is so prominent in the religious tenets of the Veerashaiva sect.”<sup>15</sup> During the period this report was prepared, the Lingayat-folks in the villages did write this sign on the walls of their homes.

### 37). Istalinga

The Isthalinga is the light in the palm. It represents the cosmic universe and the invisible forces that govern it. The phrase: “**microcosmic representation of the macrocosmic universe**” has been used to describe the isthalinga. Michael has described it in his Ph.D. thesis as, a “Religious Talisman, a small stone symbol used as a sign and as a means to spiritual perfection for practicing Lingayats.”<sup>4</sup> The isthalinga is certainly not a talisman.

During the linga-investiture ceremony, known as *lingadiksha*, it is the *Guru* who gives the Istalinga to the disciple. However, the Istalinga is not made of stone! It is a brightly shining black-colored spherical object with a flat base, which sits snugly in the palm. It symbolizes Shiva, the source of self-emanating light and *Chaitanya* (which means knowledge/soul/ energy), invisible but existing within the being. It represents Shiva, who has form and yet is formless, who is neither of this world nor of the other world and who is the eternal reality and not bound by the limitations of space and time. The Veerashivas believe that the Universal Truth can be sought and found in and through the Isthalinga.

It is to Basava and his contemporaries who popularized the principle and practice of Istalinga worship. Thus, the concept of the Istalinga permits the individual worship of

Shiva. Since the Isthalinga is worn on the person, the Veerashaivas are thus not required to go to the temples to worship God. The Istalinga is a valuable aid in self-realization and the practice of the *Shivayoga*, which involves worshipping and steadfastly gazing at and of the isthalinga in the palm of one's hand. Sri Kumarswamiji has written a book on Shivayoga.<sup>16</sup> Isthalinga also distinguishes Veerashaivas from the Shaivites, who worship the sthavaralinga in the temple. Devar Dassimayya<sup>17</sup> describes the Isthalinga thus:

Isthalinga is the light in the palm.  
A black piece cast in a mold,  
If one understands it's meaning by one's insight,  
One will experience the bliss of eternal truth.  
If one plods the invisible pathless path by oneself,  
And finds the way and practices,  
One will become a transcendent sharana,  
You know, Ramanatha.

### 38). Origin of the Veerashaiva Religion

To be frank, it is rather difficult to categorically state the exact date or even the year of the origin of the Veerashaiva religion or even the name of its founder of this universal religion. As stated already, for all purposes it is an offshoot of the Shaiva religion. The unearthing of the Indus Valley Civilizations and the findings of Sir John Marshall and Father Heras present evidence to the fact that some form of Shiva and Linga worship was prevalent 3500 to 5000 years ago. It has also been accepted that the people of those days worshipped miniature lingas. However, referring to Shaivism, Schouten dismisses the connection between Veerashaivism and Shaivism by saying, "Shaivism, the cult of Shiva, is very ancient indeed; and it is only natural that many elements of Shaivism are also found in Veerashaivism. The movement of Basava did not arise in a vacuum; it joined in the general revival of Shaivism; which had already reached a peak in Kashmir during the tenth century and was eagerly supported in Karnatak by the **Kalamukhi** and **Pashupatha** schools. But the distinct religious and social convictions, devotional culture and community organizations of Veerashaivism do find their origin in the teachings of Basava and his contemporaries."<sup>20</sup>

### 39). Who Founded the Veerashaiva Religion?

Who is the founder of the Veerashaiva religion? **No Body Knows.** However, one can advance four different views on this score. After all has been said and done on this subject, the answer remains the same, i.e. No Body Knows, for there are no written records to substantiate the conclusion either way. Nonetheless, let us look at the four

different views available one by one: (1) Traditional, (2) Non-traditional, (3) Collateral and (4) Commonsense-based.

(1) The so-called **Traditional View** claims that the *Panchacharyas*, namely **Renukacharya, Marulasiddha, Ekoramaradya, Panditaradya** and **Vishwaradya**, were responsible for the founding of the Veerashaiva religion. This view appears to be endorsed by **Dr. S. C. Nandimath** and **T. G. Siddhapparadya**. A similar voice was heard from Sri Madrambhapuri Jagadguru in 1986.<sup>21</sup> doubtless there are others who subscribe to this opinion. It must be said that there isn't a shred of historical evidence to substantiate this claim. This view more or less appears to be based on sentimentality rather than acceptable historical facts. Schouten notes, "In their (Veerashaivas) imagination, sometimes they trace the history of Veerashaivism back to primordial times. Legends arose among them which related that five divine teachers sprung from five different faces of Shiva, descended to earth, in each of the ages (*yugas*) of the world under different names, in order to preach the eternal truth of Veerashaivism".<sup>20</sup>

(2) **Non-Traditional View** has its support in the **Basava purana** and by some modern writers. According to them, Basava is the founder of the Veerashaiva religion, for he included **Panchachara** (five codes of conduct) and was the most unconventionally conventional revolutionary who revolted against the existing cultural, economical, hierarchical, religious and social establishments of his time. Also, he declared brotherhood, equality, dignity of labor, dasoha (willingly and generously sharing with others what one has earned through Kayaka) and puritanical work ethics (*Kayaka*). This view endorsed by Sakhare<sup>7</sup> Michael<sup>4</sup> and Schouten<sup>20</sup> appears to be the most popular one, although very little can be found about the origin of the Veerashaiva religion either in the Kannada literature or in the Sanskrit language. However, there are quite a few Kannada and Sanskrit books that claim Basava as the founder of the Veerashaiva religion.

(3) **Collateral View**: Presently available collateral evidence supports the fact that Veerashaivism existed before the 12th Century. The Chola Kings of the 10th and 11th Centuries encouraged the propagation of the Veerashaiva religion. During the said period, it was the **Veeramaheshvaras** who administered a Veerashaiva temple in their kingdom. They were considered as Veerashaivas in those days and a Swamiji was in charge of the **Ambalathodi Mutt**. Also, the imperial preceptor of the early 12th Century Chola Dynasty, Poet **Ottukkuttar**, has mentioned the existence of the first **Veerashaiva Periyar Matha** in **Kumbakonam** in Tamilanadu, which was before the arrival of Basava on the scene. It is said that this matha is still in existence.

(4) **Common Sense View**: The answer to the question who is the founder of the Veerashaiva religion lies in the fact that if Basava was the founder, why did he go to the

Kudalasangama temple to receive his *lingadiksha* from his **Guru Ishanyamurthi** and to study Veerashaiva religion? Secondly, it appears to be certain that there were other Sharanas who were preaching Veerashaivism and holding group discussions on the Veerashaiva religion before Basava began his work. One such person is **Devara Dasimayya**, who is reported to have written the Vachanas before Basava popularized the writing of the vachana.\* Basava has referred to Dasimayya and others like him as **Puratanaru** (elders).

\* “Life, Legacy and Lyrics of Devara Dasimayya”, C. S. Bennur (translator), S. Munvavalli (ed), Veerashaiva Samaja of North America (1998).

#### 40). Growth of Veerashaivism

The social fabric of the community was in total disarray and the country was in turmoil at the beginning of the 12th Century. The proponents of Jainism, namely the **Gangas**, the **Chalukyas**, the **Hoysalas**, the **Rastrakutas**, etc were on the decline and fighting among themselves. **Jainism** was thus being orphaned and was on decline. So was the **Vaishanava** (a Brahminical sect) philosophy. Buddhism having experienced its glorious days was on its downward journey. Buddhism’s downfall was considerably aided by the *Advait* (non-dual) philosophy propounded by the electrifying voice of Shankaracharya. In spite of this, Buddhism some how had managed to survive until the 12th century. Shaivism on the other hand was gaining popular support and strength. However, it had splintered into too many sects, Shaiva, Pashupata, Soma, Lakulish, Kalamukhi, etc. The Kashmir Shaivism had migrated to Karnatak (see below for explanation) just a few decades before the advent of Basava. Basava was tremendously impressed with Kashmir Shaivism. The Kashmiri Shaivites were great scholars well-versed in the Vedas, the Shivagamas and the Upanishads. They had established their communities at Ballegavi and Tardevadi. The Kalamukha sect had its mathas in Sri Shaila, Ballegavi, Abbaluru, Hanagal, Gadag, Hubli, Koppal, Suttur, etc. Then there was also, the Lakulisha (Pashupata) which was the oldest sect. The common denominator underlining all the Shaivite sects was the fact that they were all faithful and trusted worshippers of Shiva, contrary to what Ramanujan says.<sup>22</sup>

Around 1130 A. D., the time was ripe for the Veerashaiva religion to spread its wings so that it could get recognized as one of India’s great religious ideologies and philosophies. Contemporary Indian history indicates that the country was divided primarily into three regions: (1) North India, (2) Central India and (3) South India. At that time, Karnatak was more closely linked with Central India. During this period, the Western part of India, namely the **Sindh** and **Punjab**, were under the powerful influence of Islam. **Ghajni Sultan** had invaded Hindu Temples several times and plundered their wealth.

He even had robbed the Somantha temple in Gujarat in 1024 A. D. To escape the on-slaughter of the Moslem Kings, the North Indian Hindus migrated Southwards. At the about the same time there was an upheaval in Kashmir, the Bastian of Shaivism. The Kashmiri rulers were plundering the temples and levying heavy taxes on their subjects. During the middle of the 11th Century, **Jai Sinha** ruled Kashmir with the help of Moslem rulers. Thus, the unbearable prevailing conditions forced the Kashmiri Shaivites to migrate to various parts of the country, in particular to the Southern and Eastern parts of India.

There was stability in the Eastern part of India, where the Kings practiced Buddhism. The Pasluvansha dynasty was ruling Bengal. During this period, Bengal became the homeland of the Shaivites. Four Kingdoms - **Chola, Chera, Pallava** and **Pandya** - ruled South India. Although these Kings fought among themselves, there was stability and peace. Buddhism was on decline and Shaivism was on the rise and was rapidly gaining strength. The Jain religion was also prevalent. The Pallava dynasty practiced some times Shaivism and some times the Vaistnava tradition.

As the geography of the region dictated it, the relationship between Karnatak and South India began to come closer and closer together. This was also necessitated by the growing royal relationships of the Southern Kingdoms with the then rulers of Karnatak. This resulted in the growth of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite traditions in Karnatak. At the dawn of the 12th Century, many of the royal families of Karnatak had accepted Shaivism, Jainism, Budhism and Vashnaiva tradition as their religion, though the lusture and popularity of Jainism and Budhism was on the downward slide. The Vaishnava traditions such as **Bhagwat, Pancharatra, and Shri Vaishnava** were highly observed. Religious clashes between the Shaivites and Vaishnavites began to flare up and as a result some armed conflicts took place. It was under these circumstances that Basava came on the scene in Karnatak.

#### **41). Anubhava Mantapa**

This term translates into the Hall of Experience; another term that would be a better fit, would be the Academy of Experience, both figuratively and literally. The Anubhava Mantapa has been variously described in the literature, e.g.: Anubhava Ghosti, Tattva Ghosti, Shivatattva Ghosti, Geeta Ghosti, Dharma Ghosti, Mahamanta Sthala, Ganasamukh Mantapa, etc. Since experience is the best teacher in life, historically group discussions have been organized from a longtime. The famous dialogs of Socrates and his disciples recorded at the height of the Greek Civilization form an example. Entrance to the Anubhava Mantapa was limited to those who carried their isthalinga on their person.

According to Neelamma, it appears that 720 Sharanas participated in the discussions of the Anubhava Mantapa.<sup>24</sup> Some have claimed that the 12th Century vachanas have been fabricated by the Veerashaivas.<sup>25</sup> Condemning the motives behind such counterproductive activities, Mr. Channamallappa Uttangi authored a book “Anubhava Mantapa is a Historical Fact”, which was published by the Muruga Matha, Dharwad (Karnatak), in 1951 and was reprinted in 1976. This was followed by the publication of three more books by Dr. Chidanandaswami, Dr. H. Tipperudraswami and Dr. R. C. Hiremath.

#### 42). The Shivagamas and the Vedas

“It is an accepted fact that the **Vedas, Shruties, Upanishads** and **Puranas** serve as the source-books of the Hindu religion. The scriptures known as **Shivagamas** form the fountainhead of the *Shaivite* religion and philosophy. It should be noted that the philosophy expounded in the Shivagamas in essence is similar to that preached by the Vedas. The Veerashaivas believe the Shivagamas to be coeval with and complimentary to the Vedas. Both the Shivagamas and the Vedas are treated as revelations to men just the Old Testament was revealed to the Jews, the Bible to Christians and the Quran to the Moslems.

**Veda** means **knowledge**; while **Agama** means **through knowledge**. The former is derived from the root ‘**vida**’ and which means to know and the latter from the root ‘**Gama**’ which means to go. What is stated briefly and aphoristically in the Vedas is amplified and further explained in the Shivagamas. A study of the Upanishads and the Shivagamas makes this abundantly clear. As for the description dealing with the offering of sacrifices found in the Vedas, the Shivagamas remain silent. The Shivagamas deal exclusively with the **Upasana** (practise) and **Jnankanda** (part dealing with knowledge) of the Vedas. What the Shivagamas describe in exhaustive details, the Upanishads describe briefly. Thus the nature of the Supreme Being and the genesis of the elements that go to make up the universe are dealt in greater details in the former, while the latter explains it in scant details. The Shivagamas expatiate upon methods of meditation and devise the means towards the realization of the self via contemplation and meditation. In all **28** Shivagamas are known. The **Kamikagama** mentions the four castes that existed at that time but states that people of all castes could receive **Shiva Diksha**. A *Shudra* (a person who belongs to the lowest caste) once initiated was considered eligible to learn the Panchakshara. However, according to the Karanagama, the Shivalinga installed by the Shudra thus initiated, remains unfit for worship for 12 years by higher caste people. On the other hand the Veerashaiva religion removes the stigma of inferior birth once devotees receive *diksha*. Such individuals become equal in the eyes of Shiva once they have received the isthalinga from the Guru.

### 43). Veerashaiva Literature

Veerashaivism's revival and literature received a tremendous boost and support from the Vijayanagar Empire, which supported arts, literature and different religious faiths prevalent in its kingdom. **King Proud Devaraya** (1426 - 1446) turned out to be an outstanding benefactor and supporter of the Veerashaiva faith. Two of his ministers were Lingayats. This Vijayanagar Empire itself was founded by a Veerashaiva. It is said that **Channarasa's Prabhulinga LEELE** was read in the court, in the presence of the King. Other Kings followed this example. During the reign of the **Keladi Dynasty** (1550 - 1763), Veerashaivism enjoyed the status of the State Religion. It was also the State Religion of **Changaleva Kings of Coorga** (1350 - 1850). Among the kingdoms that supported the Veerashaiva religion, the following are note worthy: (1) **Chitradurga**, (2) **Pavugada**, (3) **Sira**, (4) **Kittur** and (5) **Belavadi**.

The first account of the Veerashaiva religion published outside of India by a Westerner was by a **Dutch Clergy, Abraham Rogerius**, who lived in India from **1632 to 1642**. His book titled, "**The Open Door to the Hidden Paganism**" was published in **1651**. Referring to the Jangamas he says, "this sect marks their forehead with three or four lines of ash from the burnt out cow-dung. Some of them wear around their neck a certain stone or idol, which they call Lingam; but some of them wear it in the hair of their head. They make their children wear it coated in the wax, with a bit of string around their arm, when they are eight or ten years old. Those who wear this Lingam do so as a proof and public confession that they put their hopes and trust completely in Ishwara and that they do not recognize another God but Him. The *shudras* who wear this Lingam refrain from eating meat and everything that was ever alive, just as Brahmins."

Another early description of Veerashaivism by a Westerner comes from an Italian traveler, **Pietro Della Valle (1663)**. He visited in Ikkeri (Keladi, Karnatak) where Veerashaivism was the state religion. He provides his impressions of a procession of a Veerashaiva Guru, "married jangama" and the burial of a Lingayata in a sitting posture.<sup>26</sup> What the term, 'married Jangamas' means was not stated in the book. Probably it describes priests known as the "Ayyanavaru" in North Karnatak. These are religious folks who conduct pujas, christening ceremonies and burials. They are just like the Protestant or Baptist Priests as opposed to their Catholic counter parts. They are married folks. Next Abbe Dubois (1821), who traveled in South India as a missionary.<sup>27</sup> His interesting account of Veerashaivism as appeared in his book is tainted by the personal prejudice of his Brahmin guide who accompanied Dubois on his wanderings. It must be honestly stated that the accounts and the writings of Christian clergies and missionaries, of necessity, often tend to be tainted and biased views of Veerashaivism.

C. P. Brown (a British Civil Servant) has written about the Lingayats and their holy scriptures: 'Account of the Basava Purana, (1840)<sup>28, 29</sup> In addition, the writings of Bhandarkar (1913) and Wilson (1861) did attract considerable attention to Veerashaivism.<sup>30, 31</sup> How authors, though with good intentions, may draw erroneous conclusions from the limited resource material which were available to them, is demonstrated by Fleet, who had opportunities to examine the 12th Century inscriptions. However, based on scant epigraphical evidence, Fleet stated that Ekantada Ramayya was the founder of the Veerashaiva religion.<sup>32</sup> The reason for this was that Ekantada Ramayya was a staunch Shaiva and that his name was mentioned in the Basava Puranamu. Other authors subsequently blindly repeated Fleet's mistake and followed suit. The first Indian, however, to do research on Veerashaivism was **R. C. Artal** in 1908.<sup>33</sup>

During the 1920s, P. G. Halkatti unearthed the Veerashaiva literary treasures (the **vachanas**), which had been lost for the past several centuries, collected and edited these vachanas, and spent all of his available financial resources to get them published. Had it not been for Dr. Halkatti's efforts, the Veerashaivas would have lost a glorious, golden chapter of their religious heritage, identity, legacy and literature. The Veerashaivas owe Dr. Halkatti a debt of ever lasting gratitude, to say the least. Dr. Halkatti's contributions to the Veerashaiva religion kindled awareness and interest in this subject for many Veerashaivas. Among the notable persons are: **S. C. Nandimath**<sup>5</sup>, **S. S. Basavanal**<sup>34</sup>, **M. R. Skhare**<sup>11</sup> etc. But, in spite of these activities, many Indian authors, for reasons unknown, have made and are making misleading statements. Dasgupta has said that Basava did not speak of Shatsthala and did not even protest against the caste system.<sup>35</sup> One reason for this kind of writing, besides personal bias and prejudices, could be due to the fact that more than 95% of the literature dealing with and relating to the Veerashaiva religion is in the Vernacular Kannada language.

This inference is indirectly supported by **Dr. R. R. Diwakar**<sup>36</sup>, a well known Vedic scholar, a seasoned politician from Hubli has observed, "if modern travel and communication facilities such as the trains, telephones, radio, etc. were available during the 12th century, we would be witnessing Veerashaivism in all the continents of the globe. .... It can be categorically stated that the vachanas are the Upanishads in Kannada. If such a lofty literature were in Bengal or Maharastra, they would certainly have loudly blown and would still be blowing their trumpet joyously and loudly all over the entire world. Unfortunately, it must be said that the Veerashaivas are ignorant of the value of publicity (public relation). This lofty literature must be translated into English and other languages to show its greatness."



In the 60s and 70s, the Karnatak University did an outstanding job in publishing Veerashaiva literature in Kannada. It has also brought out the English translations of many of the important original Veerashaiva literary works. Also, Basava Samiti (Banglore) and Veerashaiva mathas in Karantak have done and are still doing their fair share. In addition, during the past 25 years many investigators, sociologists, anthropologists, theology-students and writers have exhibited their interest in the Veerashaiva religion. Among these are: Max Weber, A. R. Beal, J. Assayag, N. J. Bradford, K. Chandrasekharaiah, M. N. Srinivas, K. Ishwaran, David Emmanuel, M. P. Samarth, V. Narayana Rao, K. V. Zvelebil, J. P. Schuten, H. Tipperudraswami, R. C. Hiremath, Sri Siddheshwara swamiji, etc. Doubtless there are others whose names do not appear on this short list, which is just intended to serve as an illustration. For the last 25 years, the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America has been contributing to this effort. The Satsung Group in Zagreb (Croatia, a Catholic country) has been evincing active and keen interest in Veerashaivism.

#### 44). **Shunyasampadane\***

The 15th Century may be considered as the golden age of the Veerashaiva literature after the fall of the Sharana's non-violent, multifaceted revolution that India had the fortune to witness. It is in this time period that the **Shunyasampadane** was compiled (1420 A. D.). The Shunya-sampadane, in a sense, is a dramatic representation and reinterpretation of the events, which transpired and the deliberations which took place in the 12th Century **Anubhava Mantapa** (Academy of Experience) founded by Basava. There are now four versions of the Shunyasampadane by four different authors. The last one was written by **Gulur Siddhaveerayya**, probably around 1608 A. D. The arrangement and selection of the vachanas produces a profound impact on the minds of the readers. The effect is highly dramatic. Since the vachanas represent the original versions and compositions of the 12th Century Veerashaiva saints, the contents of the vachanas are authentic. However, the scholarly interpretation and clever synchronization of the events and dialogues produce a somber yet subtle impact on the readers. Another milestone of this epoch is the appearance of **Saint Tontada Siddhalingesvara's** vachanas ( circa early 14th century), which have been translated into English. Gulur Siddhaveerayya was Saint Tontada Siddhalingesvara's student.

\* "Shunyasampadane", Vol. I, S. C. Nandimath, A. Menezes and R. C. Hiremath (Eds.), Karnatak University, Dharwad (Karnatak) India (1965).

\* S. Mahadevaiah, “Shunyasampadane”, Vol. I, Abridged Version, D. A. Shankar (translator), J. S. S. Granthamala, Suttur (Karnatak), India (1998).

#### **45). Veerashaiva Scriptures**

In addition to the Shivagamas, the Veerashaiva vachanas, free style literary compositions, are regarded as the scriptures of the Veerashaiva religion. They represent what is sublime, for they have come out of the crucible of every day life and living. What one reads and finds in them is the quintessence of life. They “teach the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering and the most comfortable way of dying.” The vachanas possess “the power of awakening an intense moral feeling in every human being. They send a pulse of fellow-feeling through all domestic, civil and social relations and teach men how to like and love the right and discern the right from the wrong”.

The vachana literature contains “true sublimity, exquisite beauty, Puritanical morality and fine strains of poetry. It is a veritable gold mine of knowledge and virtue”. Most of the vachanas are melodious musical renderings and as such can be recited during congregational praying and worship. The truth expounded in the vachanas has the “power of awakening an intense moral feeling in the human being. They fill a man with a high hope of self-purification, an exalted uplifting and a great sense of spiritual accomplishments”.

#### **References:**

- (1) S. Dasgupta, ‘History of Indian Philosophy’, Vol. 5, Cambridge University Press, (1967), pp. 52.
- (2) P. B. Desai, ‘Basava and His Times’, Karnatak University, Dharwad (Karnatak), India (1968).
- (3) R. Kloppenborg and W. J. Hanegraaf, E. J. Brill Publishers, Leiden, Holland (1995).
- (4) R. B. Michael, ‘Origins of Veerashaiva Sects’, Motilal Banarasidass Publications, Delhi, India (1992).
- (5) S. C. Nandimath, “A Handbook of Veerashaivism”, Lingayat Education Association, Dharwad (Karnatak), India (1942).
- (6) John Mrshall. ‘Mahenjodaro and Indian Civilization, Vol. 1, (1931).
- (7) V. D. Mahajan, “History of India’ (7<sup>th</sup> Edn.), New Delhi, India (1990), pp. 35.
- (8) C. Shivaramamurthy, ‘Nataraja in Art, Thought and Literature’, Delhi, India (1965).
- (9) Shunyasampmadane’, Vol. 1, R. C. Hiremath (ed), Karnatak University, Dharwad (Karnatak) India (1965).

- (10) (a) Sri Kumarswamiji, in 'Veerashaivism and Bhakti', S. Munavalli (ed), Veerashaiva Samaja of North America, (1988); (b) S. Munavalli, Veerashaiva Religion, Veerashaiva Samaja of North America, (1991).
- (11) M. R. Sakhare, 'History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion', Karnatak University, Dharwad (Karnatak), India (1978).
- (12) Sir John Marshall, Report on Mahenjo Daro and the Indus Civilization, 1929, pp.59.
- (13) Nilkantha Shastri, 'Cultural Heritage of India', vol. 2, pp.21.
- (14) Father Heras, "The Religion of Mahenjo Daro People According to Inscriptions", Journal of Bombay University, July 1936.
- (15) Father Heras, "The Karnatak Historical Reviews", the Journal of the University of Bombay, V, Part I, pp.3, July 1937.
- (16) Sri Kumarswamiji, 'Techniques of Opening the Third Eye', Tapovan Publications, Dharwad (Karnatak), India (1981).
- (17) 'Life, Legacy and Lyrics of Devar Dasimayya', C. S. Bennur (translator), S. Munavalli (ed), Veerashaiva Samaja of North America (1998).
- (18) S. D. Pawate, 'Veerashaiva Philosophy of the Shaivagamas', W. B. Bileangadi Publisher, Hubli (Karnatak), India (1927).
- (19) Ref. 11, pp.153.
- (20) J. P. Schouten, 'Revolution of the Mystics', Kok Pharos Publishing House, Kampen, Holland, (1991).
- (21) 'Veerashaiva Vicharsa Sankirana', S. S. Marulaiah (ed), Naganur Shri Shivabasavaswamiji Kalyana Kendra, Bangalore (Karnatak), India (1986).
- (22) A. K. Ramanujan, 'Speaking of Shiva', Viking Books Ltd., New York, (1987).
- (23) Tontada Siddhalingeswara, Essence of Shatsthala, A. Menezes and S. M. Angadi (translators), Karnatak University, Dharwad (1978).
- (24) 'Shivasharanara Vachanagalu: Neelamma's Vachanas', R. C. Hiremath (ed), Karnatak University, Dharwad (1968), pp.191.
- (25) Krishnaraya, Jayanti, volume 6, 8th Issue, 1944.
- (26) The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India, vol. 2, Brighton, London, (1892), pp.260, (First Italian Edition 1663).
- (27) J. A. Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, H. K. Beauchamp (translator), Oxford University Press, Oxford, England (1985) (French edition 1906).
- (28) C. P. Brown, Madras Journal of Literature and Science, 12, 271, 1840.
- (29) C. P. Brown, 'Essay on the Creed, Customs and Literature of the Jangamas', Madras Journal of Literature and Science, 11, 143, 1840.
- (30) R. G. Bhandarkar, Vainavism, Shaivism and Other Minor Religious System, Indological Book House, Benaras, (1913, reprinted 1965).
- (31) H. W. Wilson, Religious Sects of India, E. R. Rust, (ed), first printed 1861; reprinted (1958).

- (32) (a) J. F. Fleet, Ablur Inscription, EI, **5**, 236 1899; and Managoli Inscription, ibid **5**, 10, 1899; (b) The Present Position of Indian Historical Research, IA, **30**, 2, 1901.
- (33) R. C. Artal, "A Short Account of the Reformed Shaiva or Veerashaiva Faith", The Journal of Anthropological Society of Bombay, **3**, 171, 1909.
- (34) "Veerashaiva Tattvasara", S. S. Basavanal (ed), Lingayat Education Association, Dharwad (Karnatak), India (1941).
- (35) Surendranath Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, vol. 5, Cambridge University Press, (1962), pp.43.
- (36) R. R. Divakar in "Veerashaiva Tattvasara", S. S. Basvanal (ed), Lingayat Education Association, Dharwad (Karnatak), India (1941).

## Part III: Philosophy of Veerashaiva Religion

### 46). Philosophy of Veerashaiva Religion

There are three practices common to almost all the religions: (1) Beliefs and Principles, (2) Rites and Rituals and (3) Philosophy. The beliefs and principles serve as the central core of a religion, rites and rituals reflect the practical aspects of the religion and its philosophy forms an integral part of the interpretation of the religious principles and determines the place of the religion in the day to day life of the faithful. These considerations aptly reflect what the Veerashaiva religion truly is. The philosophy of Veerashaivism mirrors “the synthetic view of the spiritual experience of God” of the sharanas. To be truly meaningful, the philosophy of a religion has to be practical and not merely speculative.

The Veerashaiva religion epitomizes life and its relationship to reality to a greater extent than any other religion, for it sprang up from people’s life experience and not from revelations of God or through God’s messengers. It is what life is all about. To the Veerashaivas, the world is not imaginary; it is REAL. Its philosophy is tempered with rationale and reason. It places a greater emphasis on the practice of the principles rather than the preaching of the principles. Thus, it attaches more value to ethics and spiritual experience as well as to the ‘development of character, discipline, self-restraint, and self-control’ and on the understanding of what governs the origin and control of desires. The philosophy of Veerashaivism is called the Shaktivishisadvaita or Supra Shakti-Shiva Non-Dualism. The concept of unity (aikya) with Shiva is the corner stone of its philosophy. Basava’s isthadevatha – Kudalasangama – symbolizes this unity. This word is composed of two parts, namely *kudal* and *sangam*; kudal means merging and sangama suggests union. To emphasize the importance of Union, Basava uses the word Kudalasangama metaphorically. Veerashaivism is strictly a monotheistic religion. Basava’s vachana makes this crystal clear:

A faithful wife so honored and cherished,  
Knows but one husband!  
Devout too!  
Who knows of trust in one,  
Beware! Another God is treachery!  
Forbear! Another God is adultery!  
And pays the toll of culprit’s nose,  
Chance to see Kudalasangama.

The uniqueness of Veerashaivism lies in the fact that it practiced and preached in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century the same fundamental tenets, which are still considered basic and apply to our modern times. These principles invoke respect for brotherhood, democracy, equality and freedom. Veerashaivism decreed equality of men and women, abolished all distinctions and discriminations based on the accident of birth and status in the society, preached dignity of labor by equating work to worship, and gave equal freedom and justice to all members of the society. For the first time in the history of human civilization, Veerashaivism actively advocates that women be regarded and respected as equal to men.

These basic tenets of the Veerashaiva religion have attracted the attention of the sophisticated mind. The reasons for this are: (1) it practices and preaches equality of men and women, (2) it practices and preaches that all men are equal in the eyes of God, (3) it practices and preaches that the freedom of work and worship are the birth rights of every person, (4) it practices and preaches the worship of ONE GOD, (5) it practices and preaches that people should not be exploited in the name of religion, (6) it practices and preaches the egalitarian way of life, (7) it practices and preaches that those who are more fortunate should help the less fortunate members of the society, (8) it practices and preaches compassion and kindness and (9) it practices and preaches non-violence, (10) it disclaims and disdains from the philosophy of karma, (11) it does not subscribe to the concept of heaven and hell and (12) it neglects and negates the concept of reincarnation.

A legitimate question that crops up is: If the Veerashaiva religion believes in ONE God, why are there so many gods' names?

The answer to this obvious question is: The Veerashaiva religion uncompromisingly believes in two things: (1) ONE GOD and (2) the Freedom of Worship. The first one is illustrated by the following vachana of Basava:

God id but ONE,  
Many are His NAMES.

The philosophy of the Veerashaiva Religion seems to be best summarized in the first four lines of a lengthy poem titled 'Auguries of Innocence' written by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century English poet, William Blake:

**To see the world in a grain of sand,  
And the heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity if an hour.**

#### 47). Concept of Asthavarana

The word 'Asthavarana' means eightfold shield or vesture which protects a devotee from the impurities of the mind and leads him/her towards the final salvation. The interpretation of the term has some psychological connotation. In simple language, the term Astavarana implies and suggests an eightfold aid to achieve spiritual progress and the final salvation. It is somewhat similar to Buddhism's Eightfold Path. According to the hierarchical order the concept comprises of: (1) Guru, (2) Linga, (3) Jangama, (4) Bhasma (Vibhuti), (5) Rudraksha, (6) Padodaka, (7) Prasada and (8) Mantra. A brief description of the eightfold shield is given below.

(1) **Guru:** The Guru occupies a pivotal place in Veerashaivism. The term has a fine metaphysical meaning. A Guru is the reflection of God. He lives amongst his fellow beings. Since the Veerashaiva religion considers a man to be potentially divine and rejects the concept of the original sin of man, a Guru is considered to be a holy person. It is he who initiates a devotee into the divine secrets of the religion. It is said, "*Guru vakyum, mantragopyayum*" (The Guru's words form the sacred mantra). It is he who performs the *linga-diksha* (religious initiation or investiture ceremony), thus enables the devotee fit to receive the spiritual knowledge and secrets to salvation.. The Guru removes all the impurities, blesses and enjoins the disciples to lead a virtuous and righteous life. Since the Guru imparts a wealth of knowledge and personal experience to his/her disciples and shows the righteous path, the Guru is regarded as the "spiritual mother". Hence, the Guru occupies the first place among the Asthavaranas.

(2) **Linga:** The *Linga* is the epitome and the center of all Veerashaiva religious practices and observances. It isn't just a symbolic representation of God; it represents His divinely sublime presence. A Veerashaiva is also called a Lingayata or Lingavanta, for he/she wears on his/her person the isthalinga given by the Guru.

(3) **Jangama:** The *Jangama* is the third asthavarana and is an itinerant *jivanmukta* (liberated soul). A jangama can also function as a Guru. He travels around the country to guide and provide religious and spiritual enlightenment and education. Since a jangama has no worldly attachment and has renounced all desires and worldly pleasures and pursuits, the jangama is free from the limitations of the feelings of "I", "My" and "Mine", etc. The jangamas' presence and participation in the community life serve as a source of joy, an infinite source of the love of God and a spiritually uplifting experience. Since they are bereft of personal desires, they represent what is best in the society. Since the Jangamas are supposed to have burnt all taints of mind and sense to ashes, they are considered to be the holiest of the holy. In principle, the Veerashaivas are enjoined not to distinguish between the Trinity of Guru, Linga and Jangama.

(4) **Bhasma (Vibhuti):** The word '*bhasma*' means holy ashes. Bhasma symbolizes the burning of the impurities associated with the mind and the soul. It serves as a symbol of inner purity. It is an external ritualistic symbol and serves dual purposes. It reminds the person wearing it that he/she has no impurities such as anger, avarice, envy, hatred, infatuation, jealousy, lust and pride, which are usually associated with mind and hence is free from bondage to life. Secondly, it reminds God's presence among us and when we share it with our fellow beings during the community worship, it fosters the belief that we are all equal in the eyes of God.

(5) **Rudraksha:** *Rudraksha* is derived from 'aksha' (eye) and 'Rudra' (Lord Shiva) and means the eyes of God. It is of plant origin; dried parts of a tree. The beads are strung into a garland and used as a rosary.

(6) **Padodaka:** It literally means the water from the holy feet! Since the things touched by the holy beings become holy, water touched by Guru/Jangama becomes holy. A similar symbolic act of washing the feet is done by the Catholics during the Easter Holiday Celebration.

(7) **Prasada:** In general parlance, it means a favor such as an object given by the Guru/Jangama. However, in practice it means consecrated food offerings to God or Guru or Jangama. It represents the 'holy eatable food'. In practice, it implies the food offered to the Guru/Jangama and/or blessed by them. Thus, the food offering is sanctified by Guru's touch into the prasada. This food offering is then shared with the congregation. Hence, the prasada has a special spiritual and social significance.

(8) **Mantra:** The word '*mantra*' is derived from the root '*mana*' (to mind) and '*trau*' (to save or to protect) and means that which protects who recites it. It is simply a thought expressed vocally into the form of words of praise and prayer (see item # 32, Part I).

#### **48). Panchachara (Veerashaiva Ethics and Morals)**

Ethics and morals form the foundation of all religions. All religions extol the importance and value of goodness, kindness and virtues in the day to day life of human beings. They also point out the dichotomy of good and evil. The human animal is quite distinct from the rest of God's creation and from the rest of the animals. The distinguishing hallmark that makes man different from the rest of the animal-world is his ability to conscientiously, rationally and logically think. Of all the animals, only the human animal has the ability to think what is right and what is wrong.



Ethics and morals (*acharas*) bind this ‘bird’, the conscience. The Veerashaiva religion has a profound sense of ethics and morals. It does not just preach them. In fact, it admonishes and enjoins every Veerashaiva to practice the *acharas* scrupulously and religiously in her/his daily life. With a view to build a society based on the foundations of ethics and morals, the sharanas condemned unethical attitudes and practices in no unmistakable terms. The 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva saints epitomized an ideal life, by themselves leading an ideal life and by practicing what they preached. The following vachana of Basava speaks eloquently about the high value that our sharanas attached to the practice of the ethics in the day to day living:

If you should speak,  
Your speech should sparkle like a pearl necklace,  
If you should speak,  
Your speech should sparkle like a bright sapphire,  
If you should speak,  
Your speech should be as clear as a crystal,  
If you should speak,  
Your speech should be pleasing to the Lord,  
If your words do not match your deeds,  
How then are you going to please Lord Kudalsangamadeva?

The word ‘*achara*’ means conduct, behavior, attitudes, manners, morals etc. This one word defines one’s ethical and moral responsibilities to oneself, to one’s family, to one’s community, to one’s country and to one’s God. The integrity of an individual is measured not by the yardstick of his profession or wealth but by his character, conduct and actions. Every action of the human being is attended by its consequences, both good and bad. When one obeys one’s conscience, one does not have to worry about bad consequences. The bad consequences arise from not heeding the conscience and yielding to anger, desire, greed, jealousy and temptation. The *acharas* show a righteous path. An individual with ethics and morals is called *Acharavanta* or *Lingavanta*. Ethically speaking, this means that ‘the *achara* is equated with the *linga*’. There are five prescribed *acharas*: (1) *Lingachara*, (2) *Sadachara*, (3) *Shivachara*, (4) *Bhratyachara* and (5) *Ganachara*. Channabasava has beautifully described this:

Lingachara purifies the body  
Sadachara purifies the mind,  
Shivachara purifies the soul,  
Bhratyachara purifies the speech  
Ganachara purifies the behavior.

Steal not, kill not  
Speak not the untruth,  
Be not angry,  
Show not contempt for others  
Don't showcase your pride,  
Don't speak ill of others,  
This is the way to internal purity,  
This is the way to external purity,  
This is the way to win Lord Kudalsangama's favor.

#### 49). **Shatsthala Marga (The Sixfold Pathway)**

The **Shatsthala Marga** is the heart and soul of Veerashaivism. Its' ultimate goal is 'to transform the wild psychic force into the mild mystic grace'. There is no doubt that there are some common features between the Vedic religion and the Veerashaiva religions just as there are some commonalties between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In addition, there is a striking similarity between the Veerashaiva shatsthala path, Jainism's **Gunasthana** (guna means modes or tendencies of being or existence) and Buddhism's **Vimokkha**.

The shatshala [the word shatshala is derived from "shat = six, 'sthala = stage. The latter in the philosophical context means God. This pathway currently being practiced by ardent Veerashaivas was expounded, propounded and systematized some 800 years ago by the Veerashaiva saints. The practice of the pathway enables one to achieve one's final goal of eternal union of the *anga* (body) with the Linga (God). The shatsthala is a path, which permits one to accomplish life's ultimate goal. There is a close relationship between Shiva, the human being and the World. A bhakta becomes Shiva by breaking his/her bondage created by ignorance accrued by unrighteous deeds and desires. The shatsthala occupies a premier place in the Veerashaiva religion. It is considered to be the brainchild of Channabasava. The six-stages of the shatsthala pathway are: (1) *Bhaktasthala*, (2) *Maheshsthala*, (3) *Prasadisthala*, (4) *Pranalingi Sthala*, (5) *Sharanasthala* and (6) *Aiykasthala*.

## 50). Shaktivishistadvaita Philosophy (Supra-Shakti-Shiva Non-Dualism)

The **Shaktivishistadvaita**, (**supra-Shakti-Shiva Non-Dualism**) concept, is the cornerstone of the Veerashaiva philosophy and religion. It is the very essence of the Veerashaiva religious principles and practices. It is the living embodiment of the principles of equality and *kayaka* (work-ethics), which are the '*Vibhuti*' (holy ash) of the Veerashaiva religion. It is the hallmark that distinguishes it from other religious concepts and philosophies originating both from within and without India. It expounds, explains and rationalizes "the why, and wherefrom of the creation of the universe" and the human beings. No other religious concept(s) can boast of such a lofty thought. It is what life is all about, for it reflects life as it is.

The phrase **supra-Shakti-Shiva Non-Dualism** is popularly described as '**Shaktivishistadvaita**'. The latter translates into 'Energy Qualified Monism or Non-Dualism'. The term, 'Shaktivishistadvaita', is composed of three distinct parts, namely '*Shakti*', '*Vishista*' and '*Advaita*'. *Shakti*, means power or energy. In this context, it suggests a female god, complementary part of the male god, Shiva. The second word, '*Vishista*' has been translated as 'qualified'. The third word, '*Advaita*', means non-dualism or monism, meaning non-differentiable. The term **Supra-Shakti-Shiva Non-Dualism** replaces the previously used phrase 'Shaktivishistadvaita' in this write-up.

The words 'advaita' and 'dvaita' are usually encountered in the religions of East Indian origin. The term 'Advaita' means the underlying factor in this diverse universe appears to be Unity as propounded by Shankaracharya, who rejuvenated the Hindu religion in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. He claims that God is the only eternal and real entity and the universe is impermanent and unreal, for **Maya** (illusion) has created the latter. Therefore, to Shankara everything except the Absolute God is unreal though it exists. The non-dualism philosophy advocates that it is possible to realize union with the Absolute through knowledge.

However, Madhvacharya ignores Shanakra's interpretation, considers God creates the world by His Will. Madhva further believes in Karma. According to him, God is the Supreme Absolute and salvation is due to the release of the individual self from its bondage to Karma. The Dvaita (Dualism) concept as propounded by Madhava (1197-1276 A. D.), considers God as the only independent reality, the Absolute and that the ignorance of the Absolute results in the bondage of the individual self (soul). Madhva vehemently opposes Shankara's monism (non-dualism) philosophy.

One believes that God and the soul are one and the same, though the soul has to purify itself before it can eventually identify itself with God, while the other regards the soul to

be distinctly different and that the twain will not and shall not become one and the same. Thus, Madhva believes in the dualism of God and soul. Thus to him, God and the soul are different entities. He saw dualism between God and soul, soul and matter, soul and soul and matter and matter. This concept forms the central core of Madhva's philosophy.

The 'Vishistadvaita' concept (qualified non-dualism) owes its origin to Ramanuja (1017 - 1137). It appears that the tail end of Ramanuja's career probably overlapped Basava's early life. He considers God as real and that both matter and soul are eternal. The souls are all alike and their ignorance causes their bondage. Through devotion (bhakti), the soul's ignorance can be removed and the soul liberated. Ramanuja accepts Shankara's description of the Supreme Absolute as the transcendent and immanent reality. Although matter and soul are real according to Ramanuja, they are dependent on God. In relation to God, he thinks that the soul and matter are God's attributes. He further states that the soul and matter form God's body and He is their soul. Thus, Ramanuja preached the inseparability of God from His attributes; implying that the latter have no independent existence. Just as the soul controls the body, God controls the soul. Shankara views the world as unreal, whereas Ramanuja decrees the world to be real. Ramanuja further claims that there are innumerable souls, which are qualitatively alike. He seems to imply that however high the soul may rise in its spiritual achievements. God is always above the individual self.

What is the meaning of the *Shaktivishistadvaita* (Supra Shakti-Shiva Non-Dualism) philosophy of the Veerashaiva religion? The supra-Shakti-Shiva Non-Dualism is a concept that strives to strike a rational balance between the non-dualism principle of Shankara and the qualified non-dualism concept of Ramanuja.

The Veerashaiva Shakti-Shiva Non-Dualism philosophy combines the trinity of Shakti, Shiva and the Sharana (the individual self or soul). Shakti (Shiva's energy or power) is a living vibrant embodiment of Shiva. Shiva's will cause the manifestation of Shakti. Thus Shakti is Shiva's limitless supra-energy. Shakti is the feminine aspect of Shiva and is formed at the behest and bidding of His *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* state. Since she is intrinsically and inseparably associated with Shiva, she has been called 'Shiva'. This is why Basava has described Shakti as the dynamic driving force behind the ever-growing universe. Shiva according to the Veerashaiva concept is forever free of qualities and remains unchanged during the creation of the universe. If Shiva Himself acts to create the Universe and its contents, then He becomes marginalized. This renders Him no longer the Ultimate Reality. Hence, the necessity of invoking and involving a supra-power, closely linked with the Absolute, to create the universe. This arrangement permits Shiva to remain limitless and unaltered, though He acts through Shakti. Thus Shakti (Shiva's energy) is not a counter part of Shiva. She is the complementary part of Shiva.

Shakti is the pulsating, vibrant, rhythmic source of Shiva's creativity. Shakti is Shiva's alter ego. Professor M. R. Sakhare's description of Shakti is apt, appropriate, subtle and succinct: "Shakti is a sort of reflex relation of self-identity. She is the divine nature that is responsible for Shiva's realization of His own-self. She is the illumination of all but the transcendent Shiva. Shiva assumes the form of Shakti, who works wonders in obedience to Shiva's Will. Shakti and Shiva are thus one indivisible whole."<sup>1</sup> According to His Holiness Shri Kumarswamiji, "Shiva is considered to be both the material and efficient cause of the universe. Shakti serves as the mirror and executes Shiva's Will." The above description of Shiva as matter and energy find support Einstein's famous energy equation,  $E=mc^2$ . This equation proves that matter and energy are interchangeable and are the twin aspects of the same entity. In the same way, Shakti and Shiva are one and the same. J. M. Hondius (Holland) once remarked, "In my opinion Western religions and Western philosophy could learn from Veerashaivism that you can experience God immanently as Shakti ('Maria-Sophia' otherwise called Divine Wisdom in Orthodox Theology).

Reference:

(1) "History and Philosophy of Lingayata Religion", M. R. Sakhare, Karnatak University, Dharwad, India (1978).

## 51). Shivayoga

The word 'yoga' means to join; in the present context it means the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. What we know today about the Yoga is due Rishi Patanjali. It is he who popularized the practice of yoga, which tames and trains body, mind and soul.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva saints have frequently referred to Shivayoga in their vachanas. The Veerashaiva sharanas and authors have described Shivayoga as the union of the anga (body) with the Linga (Shiva) through **chitta-shakti**. This generation of the cosmic energy requires the stopping of the bodily movements and mental aberrations and concentration of mind, body and vision on the Isthalinga held in the left palm during the worship. '**Prabhulinga Lile**' states that the control of one's vision leads to the control of both the mind and the respiration system. The noblest aim of the Shivayoga is to join the individual soul with the Universal Soul. This union with Shiva requires the breaking of bondage, which in turn requires purity from both within and without. Hence to the Veerashaivas, Shivayoga means the worship of the Linga through contemplation and knowledge. Six different organs/faculties are involved in the practice of Shivayoga.

They are: nose (breathing), tongue (speech), eyes (sight), hands (touch), ears (hearing) and heart (life).

When one gazes intensively at the isthalinga resting in the palm, the mind becomes enlightened. When this happens, a person experiences a sublime transformation through which he/she can feel Shiva's presence in her/his heart. Channabasava describes the procedure of doing the Shivayoga thus:

Sit in the Padmasana posture,  
Straighten the backbone,  
Strengthen the heart,  
And look up-wards,  
Direct the sensory organs at one point,  
With sun and moon in one place,  
Firmly focus the light on the Linga in the palm  
And look straight at the mid-rib of the Linga.

Channarasa narrates additional transformations that occur as a result of practicing the Shivayoga:

When eyes are fixed,  
On the Instalinga in the palm,  
Breathing comes under control,  
Thus the mind can be controlled,  
With steadfast concentration,  
Fetters of time can be conquered  
And there won't be a trace of illusion.

## Part IV: Biographies of the Veerashaiva Saints

### 52). Biographies of the Veerashaiva Saints

**Allama Prabhu** stands tall among the Veerashaiva saints. He is one of the most enlightened souls, mystics and philosophers of the world. His musings and thoughts rank among the world's best literary and philosophical compositions. **Socrates** is regarded as one of the most gifted and admired Greek philosophers. In his school, he taught philosophy and logical thinking to students. **Plato** was the most famous of Greek philosopher and an ardent and admiring follower and a close friend of Socrates. Most of what we know about Socrates comes from Plato's writings titled 'Socratic Dialogues' and 'Apology'. Allama wrote over a thousand **vachanas**, which reflect his profound spiritual accomplishments and **mysticism**. You can spot his vachanas by the marker he uses, namely the word **Guheshvar**. Allama worshipped **Guheshvar** as his **Isthadeva** (personal **God**). All of his **vachanas** carry this identifying marker. He was the first president of the **Anubhava Mantapa**. From the point of view of philosophy, Allama is respected by the Veerashaivas as a mystic and philosopher par excellence.

Allama Prabhu, the luminary of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva saints and mystics, was born in the village of Balligave [the present day Shimoga district, Karnatak]. His early marriage to a lovely lady named Kamalate lasted only a short time as she succumbed to an untimely death. This tragic event early in his adult life turned out to be the turning point. He felt liberated from the shackles of worldly life. He wandered from place to place in search of a worthy guru, thus gaining valuable experience. He lived like an ascetic, staying and sleeping in the temples and wherever he could find a refuge. He was a well-versed *mridunga* (a musical instrument) player. Once, while he was sleeping in a temple, when the sound of music and dancing awoke him. Without looking at what was happening, he just picked up his musical instrument, *mridunga* and began playing. He became totally engrossed in the music and the rhythm. After it was all over, his music and personality enamored the dancing damsel, who happened to be the king's daughter. Refusing all her entreaties, he left that place. By the time he ultimately met his Guru Animishadeva, under unusual circumstances, he had become an accomplished Shivayogi.

Having heard of Basava and his activities, Allama then set out to meet Basava in Kalyana. On the way he came across Karmayogi Siddharam, whom he enlightened. Both of them traveled to Kalyana to meet Basava, who asked Allama Prabhu to chair the discussions of the Anubhava Mantapa. He was a highly gifted and enlightened soul, an outstanding orator and an excellent teacher. His vachanas are superbly spiritual and remain unmatched in their mysticism and sublime meaning and message. He has authored seven books containing approximately 1700 and odd vachanas.<sup>2</sup>

**Basava** is the pinnacle of the Veerashaiva temple. He is the heart and soul of the modern Lingayat religion. Basava was born in Bagewadi (Bijapur district, Karnatak) in 1131 A. D. in a **Brahmin** family. Resisting attempts to be initiated into the Brahminical rites, he went to **Kudalasangam**, where he studied the Veerashaiva religion under the guidance and tutelage of Ishanya Guru and Jatadeva Muni. He was an intensely religious and dynamic personality. Humility was his trademark, as implied in his **vachana**, “There is none lower than I am.....”. He was a literary genius, well-versed in the Vedas, the Shivaagamas and the Upanishads.

He was a crusader for righteous actions. He condemned superstitious beliefs. He was firm and steadfast in his beliefs. He quit his official position of the Prime Minister rather than to compromise on his principles. He was a statesman. He championed the cause of equality. He upheld the dignity of labor. He said work is worship: “*Kayakave Kailas*”. To help the disabled and the poor folks, he advanced the principle of **dashoha**, which means helping people who need help. More than a thousand of his vachanas have been discovered. His vachanas can be recognized by his marker, **Kudalsangamadeva**, his personal God.

Dr. D. C. Pavate, the Late Governor of Punjab (India ) wrote “Basava was one of the greatest religious social revolutionaries of all times. He revolted against the tyranny of distinctions of caste and creed advocated by the followers of the Varnashrama Dharma. He refused to make any distinction between people following different vocations. Work according to him was sacred. It was he who for the first time advocated the philosophy of the dignity of labor. Work, he said, is heaven itself. Himself an embodiment of great human virtues, he strove for the uplift of the downtrodden. He was a man of farsighted vision. He thought no sacrifice was too great to eradicate the caste system, selfishness and hypocrisy. .... His teachings and his inspiring leadership had a tremendous impact.....” .....” Dr. K. M. Munshi, a political and religio-cultural leader and founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, has stated “Sri Basaveshvara, the great saint, poet and philosopher of Karnatak, occupies a very prominent place among the mystics and religious reformers of Bharata (India). He was born at a time when society driven by political upheavals, social schisms and religious animosities. Confused and confounded by a medley of opposing creeds and doctrines, people were drifting towards atheism. Sri Basaveshvara restored faith in God and inculcated the spirit of service. He revolutionized thought and brought about a synthesis of approach to religious and spiritual matters. He preached the message of universal love and brotherhood, righteous conduct and devotion to God and spread the doctrine of social equality.”



Considering his young age, **Channabasava** was one of the most gifted philosophers of his time. He was wise beyond his tender young age! Yet, he was the most experienced person in the concept and philosophy of the **Shatsthala** Path of the Veerashaiva religion. He was Basava's nephew. After the Veerashaiva Sharanas left **Kalyana**, he was the one who saved and preserved the Vachana literature by hiding it from the King's soldiers. He went to **Ulavi** with a band of the faithful followers. His writings reflect his spiritual experience and knowledge and sublime wisdom.

**Channabasava**, the youngest, yet one of the wisest sharanas of his time, was born in Kudalsangam [Bijapur district, Karnatak], when Basava was studying religion. Historical accounts of his birth and birthplace are some what confusing. This is mostly due to the eagerness of the writers who have tried to ascribe him superhuman attributes. In doing that they muddled the waters and left us with conflicting versions of the facts. Just like Akka Mahadevi, he was wise beyond his age and was an enlightened soul. He was the nephew of Basava, who also performed Channabasava's *lingadiksha* and religious initiation. Thus, Basava was not only his uncle but also his Guru. Channabasava was the driving force behind Basava. It is to Channabasava that the Veerashaivas truly owe a debt of gratitude for protecting and saving the treasure-trove of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century vachana literature of the Veerashaiva saints and the mystics. If it weren't for him, this invaluable treasure would have been lost forever during the turmoil that ensued and engulfed Kalyana after Basava left it for Kudalsangam. Channabasava is also the one who is credited with collecting and codifying the Veerashaiva religious practice and principle of Shatsthala. He was asked to conduct religious initiation and ligadiksha of Karmayogi Siddharama. No tribute is too great for this young Shivayogi, whom Allama Prabhu has praised as "a great Seer". He traveled all the way from Kalyana to Ulavi [the present day Karwar district, Karnatak], where he achieved lingaikya. About 1500 of Channabasava's vachanas exist, of which eight literary works have been unearthed so far.

**Mahadeviakka** represents what is best in the Veerashaiva religion. She epitomizes bhatki, **vairagya**, piety, melodious music, unmatched literary skills, spiritual enlightenment and sublime philosophy. The Veerashaiva mystics are among the world's greatest mystics. Akka Mahadevi shines like the bright North Star amongst all women, in her 'asceticism to realize God'. Compared to her age, one can say without any hesitation that she stands tall among the galaxy of the world's mystics, both males and females.

Akka Mahadevi was born to Sumati and Nirmal Shetty in the village of Udutadi [the present day Shimoga district, Karnatak State, India]. She learned religion in her childhood. Ever since she was a child, she had wholeheartedly surrendered herself to God. She was known to sing songs – vachanas – in praise of Him. She was greatly

enamored by the love of God. She was forced to marry the King. Before she married the king, Akka Mahadevi put forth 30 odd conditions. Included among these stipulations were: the freedom to worship, Guru, Linga and Jangama, the Jain King becoming a Veerashaiva and the King wouldn't force her into a conjugal life unless she gladly agreed to it. The infatuated King accepted all of her stipulations and married her. After the marriage most of the time, Mahadeviakka engrossed and immersed herself in Shivapuja.

She was greatly enamored by the love of God. She was madly in love with God. Her own melodious words beautifully describe her anguish and longing:

Oh! Mother, I am being consumed by the fire with no flame,  
Oh! Mother, I am being hurt by a wound that is invisible,  
Oh! Mother, I have pain without a sign of the cause,  
I am in love with Mallikarjuna,

When the king approached her and tried to force her by grabbing her garments, she resented the king's intentions and motives and walked away from the king's palatial comfort forever. Nothing else in life mattered to Mahadeviakka except meeting and merging with Channamallikarjuna, her cherished isthadevata. She was the very essence and embodiment of vairagya; complete and total renunciation of worldly pleasures and pompous living. Basava and his contemporary sharanas wholeheartedly welcomed her presence in the Anubhava Mantapa. Her religious discourse and dialog in the Anubhava Mantapa with Allama Prabhu reflect an unmatched expression of mysticism and spiritual attainment that Akka Mahadevi had achieved at such a tender age. Enlightened by Allama Prabhu, Akka mahadevi went to Sri Shaila, a holy place pilgrimage for the Veerashaivas. There she merged with her isthadeva (God) and perennial lover Channamallikarjuna. She gives a beautiful yet vivid description of the vision of God she saw before she merged with Him.

Being in amorous love with God may seem strange to some readers. Here, amorous love does not mean physical attraction. It means spiritual union; merging of the souls. Sophy Burnham's book, "The Ecstatic Journey" published in 1999 records several such examples.

**Akka Nagamma** was the older sister of Basava and the mother of Channabasava. Other than this, precious little is known about her. Probably this is true of most of the Lingayat saints of that epoch, for historians of those days only recorded and described events about the royal family only. The same is true with **Jesus Christ**, whose birth date cannot be traced. She was married to Shivaswamy. Author Singiraj, who lived around 1600 A. D., has provided some information about the couple in his book "*Amal Basava Charitre*".

Akka Nagamma and her husband looked after Basava when he was a student at Kudalasangama. She was a highly trained spiritual leader in her own right. She was the heart and soul of the Anubhava Mantapa and was very popular among participants. Basava always could count on her continued support in all his political, religious and social activities.

She implicitly believed in the equality of men and women and in the divinity of human beings. She carried and spread the message of the Veerashaiva religion all across Karnatak. She shaped the lives of Basava and Channabasava, two of the pioneering saints of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. No wonder her contemporaries held her in high esteem. At the present time 15 of her vachanas have been found. Her vachanas' ending with the identifier "Basava Priya Channa Sangayya" exhibit an eloquent testimony to her mystical and spiritual accomplishments.<sup>1</sup> Nagamma has received praise from her contemporary sharanas. In the following vachana, Neelamma pays handsome tribute to Nagamma:

You are the mother who feeds sumptuous meals,  
You are the mother who always makes me happy,  
Mother, you are Basava's guru,  
You are one with Sangayya,  
Oh! Mother Nagamma.

### **Neelamma**

Neelamma was the daughter of Padmagandhi and Siddharasa. The latter was the brother of Baldeva, a minister in the court of King Bijjala. Since her mother died when she was a small girl, she was raised as a member of the King's household. She grew up with the King's daughter. She was very well educated. The King suggested to Basava, who was the King's Prime Minister at that time, to marry Neelamma. Neelamma gave birth to a boy called Balasangayya, who died in his childhood.

Due to differences of opinions on several subjects, Basava resigned his position in King Bijjala's court and returned to Kudalasangama. After Bijjala's murder, chaos reigned in Kalyana. Thinking that King's soldiers might hurt Neelamma, Basava sent his trusted friend, Hadapada Appanna, with message to Neelamma. Basava wanted her to join him in Kudalasangama so that they can achieve **lingaikya** at the same time. Neelamma was a truly accomplished **Sharane** in her own right. She knew the special bond that existed between Basava and Kudalasangamadeva. She also knew that God was everywhere. When she received Basava's message, she expressed her feelings thus:

Behold! Behold! Behold! Oh! Linga!  
Behold Basava's game.  
He has asked me join him in Sangama to achieve Lingaikya.  
Isn't Lord **Sangayya** here?  
It is unbecoming of a great soul,  
To have an attachment to any place.

Neelamma was known for her dedication and devotion to Lingapuja. Although Shivayogi Siddharama has stated that she has written 111,000 vachanas, only 133 have been discovered so far. Next to Mahadeviakka, the Veerashaiva writers have given Neelamma the highest accolades for her spiritual enlightenment and the sublime content and high standard of her vachana compositions.

**Sharana Urilinga Peddi's** life story runs like the Cinderella story. He hailed from Kandhara (Maharashtra) and was a disciple of the famous vachana-writer, Urilingadeva. The Urilinga Peddi matha is located in Kalyana (Karnatak). How Urilinga Peddi, whose earlier name was Peddanna, became a Veerashaiva sharana itself reads like a fairy tale. His profession was stealing! One day he entered Urilingadeva's matha to steal. At that time Urilingadeva was administering lingadiksha to a disciple. Watching this poignant ceremony totally changed his outlook and life, forced him quit his profession and enabled him to resolve to ask for the lingadiksha. He went to the matha to ask the Swamiji to initiate him into the fold. He very well knew his past. He also knew he couldn't change his past. He knew that he could change his future if he wanted. But, he did not have enough courage to ask the Swamiji for the lingadiksha. So Peddanna decided first to serve the matha in some manner and thus to please the Swamiji before asking for a favor. He began collecting and bringing the firewood to the matha. The Swamiji had noticed Peddanna's service to the matha. One day, the Swamiji asked Peddanna what he wanted. Thinking that this was the opportunity he had been waiting for, he asked the Swamiji to give him the lingadiksha.

It was a customary practice with the Gurus to convince themselves about the worthiness of the disciples before accepting them under their wings. The Swamiji asked Peddanna what was his profession. Having decided to turn over a new leaf, Peddanna told the truth that he was thief by profession. Hearing this, the Swamiji refused to give lingadiksha to a confessed thief. Peddanna was not the one to easily give up his hopes! In spite of the setback, Peddanna kept on serving the matha as before. Every time he got a chance, he began to ask the Swamiji for a lingadiksha. This went on for quite sometime. Peddanna's persisting pestering annoyed the Swamiji. So, he picked up a small stone and threw it at Peddanna saying, "Go, and take it". From that day, what the Swamiji had said became Peddanna's mantra and the stone his isthalinga. His Guru was pleased

with Peddanna's steadfastness and dedicated commitment. Peddanna continued his hard work and learned the **Sanskrit** language and became well versed in the Vedas and the Upanishads. He often quotes them in his vachanas. He became enlightened soul in due course and changed his name to Urilinga Peddi. Hundreds of his vachanas have been discovered.

**Madivala Machayya (Machideva)** was one of Basava's contemporary sharanas. He was born in the village of Devara Hipparagi (Bijapur ditrict, Karnatak). Although very little is known about his background, his kayaka was to launder and wash others' clothes to earn his living. In other words, he was a washerman (laundryman). He was the one who picked up the welcoming cloth (mat) from the entrance to the Anubhava Mantapa after Akka Mahadevi entered it to cover her after she walked into it for the first time. He was a straightforward simpleton yet a courageous person. He is said to have fought a tenacious battle with the King's soldiers who were chasing after the sharanas, who had left Kalyana and who were in their exodus to Ulavi. He did not mince words. Whatever and whenever he did not like any thing, he criticized it in his vachanas. 'His language was crisp and sharp'. Brahmins' advice, the Puranas, the pedlars, the caste distinctions, these were some of the targets of his attack recorded in 345 or so of his vachanas. His writings reflect his independent and spotless mind. He suffered wounds while fighting Bijjala's soldiers pursuing, harassing and hunting the sharanas. His samadhi is located in Karimane (near the town of Murugod, Belgaum district, Karnatak).

**Hadapad Appanna**, as his name suggests, was a barber by profession (kayaka). Lingamma was his wife. He was very close to Basava and worked with Basava on several projects. It is said that he was always around whenever Basava needed him. It is also said that Appanna used to serve *beedas* (beetlenut-pana) to Basava and his contemporary sharanas. His samadhi is located in Tangadigi (Bijapur district, Karnatak), not too far away from that of Neelamma, Basava's wife. Basava, after retiring to Kudalasangama, had sent Appanna to Kalyana to fetch Neelamma to Kudalasangama. When the pair arrived near Tangadigi, they heard of Basava's lingaikya. There they both merged with Shiva. About 279 of his vachanas have been unearthed and are presently available. He has described the highly technical and complicated Shatsthala principles in a layman's language.

**Nuliya Chandayya** was born in the village of Shivanege (Bijapur district, Karnatak). Hearing the gospel of the Veerashaiva religion and the assemblage of the Shivasharans at Kalyana, he journeyed to Kalyana to participate in the renaissance movement ushered in by Basava and his contemporaries. His kayaka was rope-making using the tall thin grass. First he used to make a single threaded twine-like material and then twist several of these twine-like things into a strong rope. Before doing this, he had to go into the forest,

search for the suitable material and chop and carry the material back home. This was literally a backbreaking job, but he did it without complaining. He used to charge a fair price for his commodities and used a part of his earnings to support his family and with the rest he used to sponsor dasoha. This was his daily routine. Once while Chandayya was cutting the grass near the river bank, his isthalinga fell into the water. He did not stop his kayaka to pick-up the linga. Asked why he did not pick-up his isthalinga, Chandayya is reported to have said that he was busy doing his kayaka and that nothing mattered to him when he was doing his kayaka. To him, his kayaka was his Shiva puja. He was a living embodiment of kayaka and dasoha. He summarily proclaimed that Guru, Linga and Jangama must do their kayaka as well. He openly condemned greed and the hoarding of wealth, for dasoha conducted with ill-gotten wealth was a sheer waste. Once he sent his assistant to sell the ropes he had made. His assistant returned with money jingling in his pockets and dancing smile on his face. He gave money to Chandayya, whose face became expressionless after learning that the assistant had made four times the amount that Chandayya was expecting. Chandayya admonished and chastised his assistant for being greedy and made him to go back and return the excess to the buyers. Often, he used to engage the pioneers of the Anubhava Mantapa in heated debates over the implications, the meaning and the philosophy of kayaka. He was thought of very highly and as such was respected by the jangamas. Chandayya used to advocate that one should earn honest wages, and use part of the earning to support his family and the rest for dasoha purposes.

**Siddharama** was the son of Muddanagouda and Suggave of Sonnalige, the present day Sholapur (Sholapur district, Maharashtra). Unlike the children of his age, Siddharama was always involved in Shiva-*chintane*. It is said that he caused the discovery of a buried treasure in a farm and gave it to the farm-owners, who in turn provided monetary support to construct a temple. He was very much involved in building temples and water wells to provide drinking water for the poor people. He was a Karma yogi of the first order. Allama Prabhu, while on his way to Kalyana to meet Basava, met Siddharama in Sholapur and convinced him of the futility of building temples and water-wells. Allama told Siddharama:

Water-wells and temples are foot prints in the sand,  
And are the signs of what has been left behind,  
The laws of work and of the yogas,  
Are in the realms of birth and death,  
Cut the knot of the past and of the future,  
Oh! Siddharam, meet and merge with Guheshvara.

Allama's enlightenment transformed Karmayogi Siddharama into Shivayogi Siddharama. He accompanied Allama to Kalyana where he met Basava and other sharanas. During the course of the conversation, Basava found that Siddarama did not have his isthalinga. Therefore, Allama and Basava asked Channabasava to baptize Siddharama and to provide him with an isthalinga. Siddharama was the third occupant of the Chair of the *Anubhava Mantapa* (Academy of Experience), after Allama and Channabasava. He was "a yogi, a self realized soul". Siddharama's samadhi is located in the Siddheshvara temple in Sholapur. It is said that the Chair that he occupied in the Anubhava Mantapa is still there in the temple. His name is associated with four existing literary works, although he is reported to have written 68,000 vachanas... He has received universal praise. Channabasava has said,

Siddharameshvara is the Shivayogi,  
Who can be Linga himself,  
And he is the Linga.

He has drawn similar high marks from Allama Prabhu, who had recognized the light in Siddharama:

Guheshvara if the light of Thy knowledge  
Be kindled, its target shall be the heart of  
Siddharama, Shiva's yogi.

## **Part V: Veerashaiva Institutions**

### **(Mathas, Swamijis, Gurujis, Places of Pilgrimage, Veerashaiva Relics)**

#### **53). Mathas**

The **Mathas** are the Veerashaiva religious institutions. Every religion has, over the course of its existence, developed some sort of organizational arrangement to conduct and manage its affairs. In some cases, the management structure is highly structured and rigid. Christianity, Catholics in particular, represents a highly structured centralized hierarchical management set-up. It is worth mentioning here that the Catholic clergy is required to be celibate. It is a must for the catholic priesthood. On the other hand, we have religions with no such centralized organization structure. Judaism and Islam are loosely knit organizational entities. The priesthood of the above mentioned religions has no place whatsoever for women. It should, however, be stated here that some Jewish groups have recently permitted ordained female rabbis to preach. Veerashaivism has no centralized hierarchical management system. However, well-established large mathas may have sub-mathas under their umbrella. A matha in the Veerashaiva religious tradition is the basic religious monastery performing multi-faceted spectrum of services such as educational, spiritual and social services and rendering counseling assistance.

These mathas have made outstanding contributions to the overall survival, preservation and propagation of the Veerashaiva faith. Some of these institutions have been running boarding and lodging places for the benefit of the poor Veerashaiva youths for the past fifty years or more. Some of them have established elementary schools, high schools, arts and science colleges, professional institutions such as dental, engineering and medical colleges. Several of these mathas have become highly active in publishing books on religious subjects and prominent Veerashaivas who have made outstanding contributions to the overall development and growth of the society. Thus, the roles that the mathas have played over the course of centuries have evolved from inactive passive preaching into highly active educational and social developmental phenomena. Sri Shivakumar swamiji, Siddha-gangamatha, Tumkur (Karnatak) has succinctly described the role that the mathas should play in the new millennium.<sup>1</sup>

#### **54). Swamiji and Guruji**

Swamijis and Gurus usually head the mathas. Depending on the size of a matha, the head of the matha carries the title such as the Mahaswamiji, Jagadguru, etc. The Murusavirmatha (Hubli), the Tontadarya matha (Gadaga), the J. S. S. Matha (Suttur), Taralabalu matha (Sirigeri), Murughamatha (Chitradurga and Dharwad) are some of the



examples of the mathas. The Heads of these mathas may have Junior Swamijis under their wings. A Pontiff (a Jagadguru) sometimes picks up one these Junior Swamijis as his successor or may choose another junior swamiji and train him to shoulder the responsibility in due course. The word ‘pontiff’ again suggests a hierarchical order. Some of the mathas have informal governing bodies composed of prominent members of the community. There is a religious training school in the Bijapur District (Karnatak) to help the aspiring young members of the holy order. In view of the pivotal role that the Guru and the Jangama have played and still play in the practice of the Veerashaiva religion, they have been included as a part and parcel of one of the cardinal principles of the religion, namely the Asthavarana.

Before we proceed further, it is good to clear up the distinction between A Swamiji and a Guruji. The suffix ‘ji’, is a term borrowed from the Hindi language. It is used as a sign of respect. These terms are often used synonymously. There is another term, ‘mahaswamiji’, which means a big swamiji. The use of these terms usually depends upon the size of the matha they are heading. In principle, a Guru is the highest in the hierarchical order. In the Veerashaiva theological context, a Guru occupies a higher position than the Linga itself. This is reflected in the Asthavarana principle.

Then there are the Viraktas. These are teachers who have renounced all personal possessions. They also called Jangamas. They are wandering iterrant, who do not own any personal property and who move from place to place preaching the gospel of Veerashaivism and helping the needy and imparting religious knowledge to the aspirants and inspiring the seekers and giving religious discourses. Sometimes, the word Jangama is used to describe all persons who perform religious activities, rites and rituals. This is sometimes confusing to the laity. Strictly speaking, the Jangamas are the swmijis who have no personal attachment to any place or person and who wander from place to place inspiring and motivating the aspirants and giving talks on religious subjects. The ‘Mathadipathis’ – the heads of the mathas – usually do not perform the life cycle ceremonies, such as birth, marriage, death, etc. However, they do perform *linga-diksha* ceremonies. These Swamijis are usually celibates. Then, there are married priests who perform the life cycle ceremonies. Sometimes, the Swamijis dispense herbal medications, if they are well versed in the *Ayurvedic* (indigenous medical system using herbal medicines) medicine. This loosely knit organizational framework probably permits the mathas to tailor specific projects to meet the specific needs of the community they serve. During the crop harvesting seasons, the Swamijis collect food grains from the farmers to support the dasoha activities and to provide free food in the boarding houses they run to help the poor students.

### **55). Veerashaiva Places of Pilgrimage**

The Mallikarjuna temple in Sri Shaila (Andhrapradesh), the Kudalsangama temple in Bagewadi (Bijapur District, Karnatak); the Channabasva temple in Ulavi (Karwar District, Karnatak) and the Siddharameshwara temple in Sholapur (Maharashtra) are some of the places of pilgrimage for the Veerashaivas. Kalyana and Kudalsangama are two places that are intimately associated with the Veerashaiva religion. They are the places that have been immortalized by Basava. It is at Kudalsangama that Basava received his education. It is also the place where Basava achieved his Lingaikya. Sri Shaila is the place where Allama Prabhu and Akka Mahadevi merged with Mallikarjuna. Sri Shaila is the place where Siddharameshwara heard his calling. It is at Ulavi where Channabasava completed his work on Shatsthal Path and achieved his union with Lord Shiva. It is at Sholapur that Karmayogi Siddharameshwara's samadhi is located and the prasada (as a part of the dasoha ) is served twice daily even today.

### **56). Relics of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaivism**

Kalyana (Gulbarga District, Karnatak) holds a special place in the hearts of the Veerashaivas, for that is the place where the drama took place in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century during the height of the glorious days of the Veerashaiva religion. It is where the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva Saints came together. It is there where the Anubhava Mantap was established. All of the important relics associated with the Veerashaiva religion are still there reminding and beckoning the faithful. Several colored pictures of the relics of Kalyana appear in the most recent VSNA publication.<sup>2</sup>

#### **References:**

- (1) Sri Shivakumarswamiji in "Veerashaivism for the New Millennium: Commemorative Volume", S. Munavalli (ed), Veerashaiva Samaja of North America (2000), pp. 3.
- (2) S. B. Muddappa in "Veerashaivism for the New Millennium: Commemorative Volume", S. Munavalli (ed), Veerashaiva Samaja of North America (2000), pp. 139.

## Part VI: Veerashaiva Festivals and Holy Days

### 57). Veerashaiva Festivals and Holy Days

Like most of the religions of the world, Veerashaivism has its share of festivals and holy days. The faithful celebrate the festivals to commemorate the life, legacy and teachings of the Veerashaiva Saints. By observing their birthdays. The most sacred Holy Day for the Lingayats is the **Shivarathri**. **Ugadi** is another popular festival. A brief description of the two festivals and the celebration of the birthdays of two Veerashaiva Saints, namely **Basava** and **Akka Mahadevi** are given below.

**Mahashivarathri** is the most sacred festival for the Shaivas, the faithful worshippers of Lord Shiva in particular and for the Indians in general. This festival occurs during the eleventh month of the lunar calendar. The faithful usually fast the whole day and after taking a bath and putting on clean clothes, they worship Lord Shiva during the night. They chant mantras, recite **Shiva-stotra** (*stotra* literally means praise) and sing devotional songs. The Holy Scripture such as the *Puranas* (detailed superlative descriptions of the accomplishment of religious personages) are read. A candle or a lamp burns continuously during the night. The faithful stay awake the whole night listening and praying. Some partake of fruits and milk.

**The Ugadi Festival:** The word *Ugadi* means beginning. It heralds the beginning of the spring. It is usually celebrated either during the tail end of the month of March or the beginning of the month of April. Since the people in India follow the lunar calendar, it falls on different days in different years. Since this festival occurs in the spring season, people are in joyous moods. As this also happens to be the celebration of the Hindu New Year, people are in happy and joyous moods. They dress up pompously in new clothes, indulge in merry-making, eating lots of sweets, visiting friends, etc. One significant thing about this day is that they eat a special mixture of sweet and sour things. This reminds them that life is a blend of happiness and sorrow and fortunate and unfortunate events. Hence, all things must be taken in stride.

### **Basava Jayanti**

The biography of Basava and his outstanding contributions to the Veerashaiva religion have already been described. Basava Jayanti commemorates the life, legacy and contributions of this premier Veerashaiva Saint. He is the heart and soul of the Veerashaiva culture, religion and philosophy. In addition to being an outstanding mystic of the first order, he was also an unconventional revolutionary. He 'divinized' and sanctified manual labor. He proclaimed equality and universal brotherhood. He

condemned distinctions and discriminations based on the accident of birth and the individual's sex. No tribute is too great for this Veerashaiva saint. He was also a literary genius and popularized the writing of the vachanas, free style pithy sayings in the vernacular language. These vachanas serve as the Holy Scriptures for the Veerashaivas. His birthday falls in the second month of the lunar calendar. The faithful conduct vachana recital competitions for the children and youths. Adults host religious discourses and discussions of the type conducted in the Anubhava Mantapa.

### **Akka Mahadevi Jayanti**

Akka Mahadevi, a Shivasharane of the highest order, was the North Star of the galaxy of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva Saints. She was a mystic of incomparable spiritual experience. Though she was a teenager, she was second to none in her knowledge and understanding of the Veerashaiva religion and philosophy. Her literary compositions are full of knowledge, melody, rhythm, wit and wisdom. The **Akkanabalagas** (groups or chapters) are spread all across the State of Karnatak, India. Their members often hold meetings to discuss things that are of interest to women in particular and to the community in general. Her birthday falls during the month of April. This is particularly a proud day for the Veerashaiva women folks, for they can showcase their accomplishments. This also celebrates the equality of men and women.

## **Part VII: Religions of the World**

(The following comprehensive but brief narration attempts to introduce the Veerashaiva Youths to the popular religions of the world. Those who would like to have additional details are asked to consult to relevant books on the subject.)

### **58). Religions of the World**

#### **Judaism**

Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religious beliefs of the world and is founded by Abraham. Just as the Hindu religion, the World's oldest organized religion, has served as an inspiration to other religions that originated in Asia, Judaism has served as an inspirational source to Christianity and Islam, two of the major religions of the world. All three are monotheistic religions.

**Theology:** The Biblical God, Yahweh, is regarded as having set the course of heavenly bodies; in other words to have created the universe [Genesis 17: 1 – 8]. He proclaimed “I am who I am” and it is implied that “He is without the beginning or end. He is the first and the Last.” The most fundamental teaching of Judaism is monotheism, belief in one and only one God, who expects the Jewish people to be merciful and to do what is honest and just. The Jews consider themselves as the “chosen people”. Studying religion and practicing what they preach is regarded as serving God. Since God created all humans, they must treat one another with dignity and respect. Jewish people believe that God made a special covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when He showed them His divine form, they have to worship and be faithful to Him. They further believe that God gave them the commandments through revelations to Moses. Jews are expected to serve God by establishing a just society and God in turn assured the Israelites His love, mercy and protection. Jews do not believe that there is a need for any intermediacy between God and man for salvation. They believe they can invoke God for His mercy and blessings but that God has to remain without a name. They think that giving a name to God would restrict Him and His ability.

Their scriptures state that the Jewish people have all the freedom to act responsibly and accept the resultant consequences. The scriptures also say that God sends from time to time a Messiah – the anointed one – to save their community, whenever its existence is threatened. According to the book of Isaiah, the Messiah rights the wrongs and thereby protects the Jewish people. Judaism believes in the life after death and death as a part of life ordained by God. Death terminates the physical existence and a Jew is rewarded (Olam Haba) or punished (Gehinon) according to the deeds he/she has committed. After

the death one is not confined to rot in Gehinon forever; a 12-months stay is considered enough to atone for the sins committed. The dead then are resurrected on the Messiah's arrival. The righteous ones are resurrected to live in the perfect world and those who have committed evil acts are left behind. Judaism does not have a centralized hierarchical system of governance and each congregation elects its rabbi and administers its affairs.

**Holy Scriptures:** The terms Jewish Bible and the Old testament regard the Torah, which consists of five books, as revealed to Moses by God. These books describe the Jewish laws and the Jewish history until Moses' death. Judaism says "add nothing and take away nothing" from the Torah. The Talmud incorporates the compilation of Jewish civil and ethical laws. There are 613 laws in the Talmud: 365 negatives of the do type and 248 affirmative commandments. There are 365 days in a year! Coincidentally, the latter number (248) is supposed to represent the body parts of a human being!! The Jewish people belong to one of the three subgroups: (1) Orthodox Judaism, (2) Conservative Judaism and (3) Reformist Judaism. The Orthodox Jews believe that God revealed the Torah to Moses and that He also gave the laws of the Talmud to Moses, who orally transmitted the latter to his followers. The Orthodox Jews segregate men and women during religious and marriage ceremonies. Women cannot become rabbis. The Orthodox Jews pray three times daily and men wear yarmulkes (small skullcaps) as a sign of respect to God. Conservative Judaism came into existence in the mid 1800's. They believe that the scriptures should be interpreted according to the prevailing culture and knowledge. Men and women pray together and women can be ordained as rabbis. The Reformist Judaism, however, gained prominence in the early part of 18<sup>th</sup> Century. They think that the Talmud as a human creation and that only the Torah to be God's revelation. Hence the Reformist Jews by-pass the traditional Jewish practices and customs and believe in individual moral and ethical freedom and responsibilities.

**Moses' Ten Commandments:** One of the most fundamental religious beliefs that one can find in the holy book - the Torah - of Jewish people is attributed to the revelations that the Jewish Prophet Moses received from God when he prayed on Mount Sinai. These laws are commonly called as the Ten Commandments and constitute what is known as the Jewish Law. They are:

- (1) I am the Lord, your Lord. I delivered you from bondage.
- (2) You shall not recognize other gods in my presence.
- (3) You shall not take the name of the God in vain.
- (4) Remember the Sabbath day for sanctification.
- (5) Honor your father and mother.
- (6) You shall not murder.

- (7) You shall not commit adultery.
- (8) You shall not steal.
- (9) You shall not bear false witness.
- (10) You shall not covet.

**Religious Rites and Rituals:** Prayers form a regular part of the Jewish people's religious rites and rituals. They believe that God hears and answers prayers reflecting their inner conviction. They pray three times daily: once in the morning, once at mid day and once in the night. Judaism expects its congregation members to provide wholesome education to all. At age 13, a boy is considered to be eligible, religiously speaking, to fulfill his commandments. A girl on the other hand gets to shoulder this responsibility at age 12. To this end, two ceremonies "**Bar Mitzvah**" and "**Bat Mitzvah**" are arranged for the boys and the girls respectively. Judaism respects the dead and recommends that the dead person's remains to be kept intact as a mark of respect. Hence, they do not permit autopsies under normal circumstances and the intact body must be allowed to return to the earth from where it came. They religiously observe Sabbath and Holidays to rest and reflect.

Resource Book:

Rabbi T. Falcon and D. Blatner, 'Judaism for Dummies', Hungry Minds, Inc., New York (2001).

## **Christianity**

Christianity, founded by Jesus Christ, is the world's largest monotheistic religion. Its concept of God is rooted in Judaism. However, it fundamentally deviates from the latter in two respects, namely on the concepts of the Trinity and Resurrection. Judaism does not subscribe to these concepts. The Christian faith is deeply rooted in the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, with the Son - Jesus Christ – playing the pivotal part. The Christian scriptures have incorporated the Old Testament -Jewish Bible - into their New Testament and have accepted the concept of God, as the Father, the Creator of the Universe. Where Christianity differs from Judaism is when Christ repeatedly refers to God as his Father and himself as the God's son. The Spirit walked in when Christ is reported to have revealed his bond to God to Apostle Paul. According to the Christian philosophy, God is omniscient and omnipotent and pre-determinates the future of the human being. Then it goes on to say that God created humans in His own image and that humans are born in sin.

Christ forms the central pillar of Christianity. He arrived on the earth, according to his followers, to redeem mankind. The sermon he gave to his followers on the Mount gave them a new disposition (ethos) instead of the old Judaism, which had become mired in meaningless rituals and superstitions, although his claim to be the begotten Son of God caused some concern and consternation among the people. John's Gospel realized and recognized this and modified it to say that Jesus was "adopted" by God and comes as the incarnate in human form [John 1:14], who voluntarily accepts responsibility for mankind's misery and sufferings, gets crucified and finally becomes resurrected. He is said to have paved the way for God's kingdom of justice, which is in the hereafter rather than here on this earth.

**The Concept of Trinity:** The event at Pentecost is considered as the turning point in the annals of Christianity. The doctrine of Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; speaks about faith, mysticism, piety, redemption, revelation, sacraments, spirituality and theology. This concept of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the New Testament without stating their oneness [Mathew 28: 19.2]. The present day dogma on Trinity incorporates Apostle Paul's experience and neo-Platonic philosophy. It is considered to embody faith in God and to proclaim the eventual union of the humans with God. Christians believe God, the Father, is the origin of all that exists and that He sent Christ who in turn sent the Holy Spirit for the redemption of the humans. The faithful thus consider Christ and the Holy Ghost to be holy and worthy of worship. In other words, Christ is regarded as "God's causative personal agent for salvation". This dogma of Trinity has caused concerns, raised many questions and resulted in many a heated debate and discussion. Over the centuries, Christianity has undergone many a metamorphism and renaissance; the first one being during the 5<sup>th</sup> Century under the leadership of Augustine of Hippo (354 ~ 430). Currently, there are many subgroups in Christianity.

**Holy Scriptures:** The Bible incorporates the Jewish Old Testament and the Christian New Testament. The latter, written some 40 years after Christ's crucifixion, recalls the life, legacy and work of Jesus Christ. During the first 200 years, it was re-written several times. The New Testament is comprised of four Gospels of John, Luke, Mark and Mathew as well as the 21 letters of the Apostles and John's revelation. These describe Christian beliefs, doctrines and practices.

**Theology:** God created humans in His own image [Genesis 1:27]. The Biblical statement regarding the fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise and the arrival of humans on the earth through sin has created some concerns and questions in the minds of non-Christians. Islam, for one, does not accept this contention. The Christian belief that Christ died to save humanity from its sins has been attributed to Apostle Paul. This



perspective also defines Christ's role as a redeemer. The Christians also believe in the doctrine of the concept of Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This concept implies that God sent His message through His son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount more or less describes the Christian theology. It asks people to love their neighbors, to do well to them, to forgive and to live in harmony and peace with them. Christians believe in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. It is said that God judges humans according to the deeds they have committed in their life, rewarding those who have been righteous and punishing those who have sinned against Him. However, the final retribution will have to wait until the earth ceases to exist. The righteous will then enjoy eternal life in looking at God and eating with God at His table [Mathew 19:28]. God shows mercy on those who repent sincerely. But those who have committed unpardonable sins get condemned to hell. It should be noted that Catholics, however, are not allowed to divorce and to practice birth control. Catholics can be excommunicated for serious breaches of their accepted canonical vows. It considers men and women as equal; however, the Catholic Church does NOT ordain females as priests.

**Religious Rites and Rituals:** These vary according to the beliefs of the subgroups. The Catholics regard the following sacraments as their cardinal principles: (1) Baptism, (2) Confirmation of Faith, (3) Communion, (4) Mass for Catholics, (5) Confession, (6) Ordination, (7) Matrimony and (8) Anointing the Sick. The most symbolic of the above is baptism, which is considered to clean the slate of the individual's sin(s). It is a must for the salvation of the soul. For Catholics, confession before a clergy is considered to symbolize God's forgiveness.

## **Buddhism**

The Buddha Dharma, a monastic faith, came into being as a revolt against the Vedantic religion, which had become stagnant, stale and steeped in superstitions and meaningless rituals. Gautam (Buddha) (563 ~ 483 B. C.) was born to King Suddhodana and Queen Mahamaya in Kapilavastu (India). His mother died when he was only 7 days old. He was married to Yashoda, who gave him a son called Rahul. Until he was 29 years old, he was shielded from the real life and enjoyed all the worldly pleasure that a princely life would buy and furnish. All of a sudden, however, some thing switched in him. He realized that he was leading an unreal life and that the real life was not bed of roses but a life of misery, pain and suffering. When this dawned on him, he renounced his family and all the pompous pleasures of the princely life. For the next six years, he wandered as a beggar trying to find answers to the problems that vexed him and getting rid off the thoughts of the self while trying to acquire new values of life and living and practicing asceticism and mediation. When he thought that he had come to a dead-end, he sat meditating under a bodhi tree vowing not to get up until he was self-enlightened. With

the arrival of the morning Sun, he was filled with love and understanding. He sat there for forty-nine days. When he got up, he realized that he had become enlightened. He died in Kushinagar (India).

In spiritual matters, Buddhism considers women to be inferior. In serving the food to the Buddhist monks, women cannot touch the food. If they did, then the food becomes unfit to be eaten by the monks. Women cannot walk on the mat or the carpet on which a Buddhist monk is sitting. Women cannot speak to the monk, unless the monks first address them. Women are supposed to sit in a particular posture before the monk, for fear that their sitting in different positions may kindle and awaken his desires.

There are different hierarchies of Buddha's. Buddhism is dominated by the Buddha's of meditation (victorious ones). They form the five sensory organs, the five colors and five virtues. They are said to rule time and space.

**Theology:** Buddha carefully and consciously analyzed the knowledge he had gained on the workings of the mind. In doing that he evolved a novel concept for salvation, which was general enough to attract the attention of the populace. He put it in simple terms, "On the mind depends *dharma*. The practice of dharma depends on enlightenment". The Buddhist meaning of the word dharma is different from that of the Hindu concept. In Buddhism, it means forces, elements. Buddha's teaching of the dharma concept laid the foundation of Buddhism, which considers *Nirvana* (salvation) as the highest goal in life.

Buddhism believes in the doctrine of karma and the cycle of birth and death and that life is full of suffering. It considers that salvation from rebirth does not require divine intervention. It stresses acquiring knowledge through strength derived from the practice of and meditation on the Four Noble Thoughts. It advocates self-denial, meaning a complete abolition of the thoughts of "I", "Self" and "Mine" etc., which accumulate the elements or forces of existence (*dharma*). It says the universe, as we know it, is unreal and impermanent. It regards *Nirvana* as the eternal bliss bereft of the cycle of karma. Buddhism does not believe in heaven and hell. It neither proclaims nor disclaims the existence of God. However, during the past few centuries, the worship of deities, innovative bhakti principle, and importation of the Yoga practice have been welcomed and accepted into the fold. Thus, the concepts of Bhakti, Yogacharins and Tantric Buddhism represent recent innovations in Buddhism.

**Scriptures:** Buddha did not leave any written material behind him. The basic religious thoughts recorded in the Tripitaka, the Three Baskets of Wisdom, are used in teaching Buddhist theology.

**The Concept of Karma:** Buddhism adopted the concept of Karma from the Hindu religion. However, its concept is somewhat different from that of Hindu religion and Jainism. Buddhism's version involves the law of mortality and it works of its own volition. Instead of waiting for the divine power to remove the karma, Buddhism makes use of ethical means. It considers the death of an ignorant individual, who has failed to achieve salvation, is inevitable. One's karma can be improved by good deeds, while evil deeds make it worse. It is the attitude behind the karma that determines whether it is a good or bad karma. Whenever deeds are done without any desire, hatred, hurting others and without expecting any rewards, they are regarded as good karma. This enhances one's progress towards salvation. The humans and the world, being impermanent, are subject to the cycle of birth and death and hence to the laws of dharma. Death, however, does not prevent the accumulation of the dharma, which control the next birth. This cycle will continue endlessly.

The prime factors behind karma and rebirth are the egocentric feelings of 'I', 'self', 'mine' etc. Elimination of these feelings enables one to achieve enlightenment. However, if a person denies these feelings, then he/she will be enchained to misery, pain and suffering. Hence, this ignorance leads one to one's karma. Desire (thirst) and ignorance are the root causes of misery, pain and suffering. By getting rid of desire and ignorance, one can achieve inner and external purity.

**Four Noble Truths:** Buddha saw nothing but misery and suffering – *dukkha* – in life. He carefully analyzed the root causes of *dukkha* and the workings of the mind and came up with the concept of the Four Noble Truths to help humans avoid suffering. These Four Noble Truths were said to have paved the path of Buddha's salvation. He announced them at his first sermon and they form the basic tenets of Buddhism.

(1) **The Truth of Dukkha (sorrow/ suffering)** is the first one. Birth, aging, sickness, death, separation and desires are the various manifestations of *dukkha*. The feeling of "I" and "self" produce false impressions and images and lead to *dukkha*.

(2) **The Trishna (thirst)** is the second truth and is due to the individual's greed, which is rooted in the six senses of the mind. *Avidya* (ignorance) is the basis of this thirst.

(3) **The Annihilation of Dukkha** is the third principle. According to this, burning the feelings of greed, hatred and delusion can eliminate *dukkha*. Greed, hatred and delusion form the root causes of *dukkha* and hence cause the cycle of birth and death. The destruction of these feelings disrupts the cycle of rebirth.

(4) **The Eightfold Path** describes the Fourth Noble Truth and incorporates: (1) right speech; (2) right action; (3) right livelihood; (4) right efforts; (5) right mindedness; (6) right concentration; (7) right view and (8) right thought. Thus the Four Noble Truths, emphasizing moral conduct as they forcefully do, indeed define the overall concept of Buddhism.

**Religious Rites and Rituals:** A code of conduct, known as *Vinaya* – the discipline – was prescribed early in the history of Buddhism. There are three main parts in this doctrine: (1) the discipline, (2) the discourses and (3) the essence. The items pertaining to the code of conduct (*patimokkha*) can be found in the first. This is for the benefit of the *bhikkhu* clan (religious beggars). It talks about the things to avoid and the etiquette to follow. A breach of the serious clauses can cause the expulsion. The bhikkus are expected to recite these at every 14-day interval. Lately they are expected to practice the prescribed code of conduct along with the four perfect exercises (*samyak prahanani*). The latter involves meditation to prevent present and future unwholesome practices.

## **The Islam**

**Islam** is one of the youngest of the World's great religions. Prophet Mohammed founded it around 610 A. D. Islam means, "submission to God". Its unbending, uncompromising and unyielding 'belief in one god but One God' and His intervention in the daily life of the faithful characterize it. Mohammed was born in 570 A. D. in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. He lost his parents when he was young and was raised by his uncle Abu Talib. Until he was 25 years of age, he tended animal herds in the desert. At that age, he accepted the job of manager of a camel caravan belonging to a rich widow named Khalija, who was very favorably impressed by Mohammed's business acumen and shrewdness. Later he married her, though she was considerably older than he was. As a part of his business, he traveled extensively throughout the Saudi Arabian peninsula and got fairly well acquainted with Judaism Christianity and the Arabs (*hanifs*) who were practicing polytheism. According to the Quran's oldest *sura* [Sura 96]\*, he heard his calling when he was 40 years old. One night he received a visit from angel Gabriel, the same angel who had visited Moses on Mount Sinai. The Quran - God's revelations to Mohammed - says that the angel gave Mohammed a book – the Quran - and that God commanded him to read it. Mohammed began to feel somewhat perplexed as to what was happening to him, for he could not read and write and had several visitations and revelations. When he told his wife about these visitations of the angel, it is stated she told him to accept these revelations as God's Word.

When Prophet Mohammed started preaching God's revelations to his fellow beings in Mecca around 610 A. D., the local people did not take him too kindly and he had to flee

Mecca along with a band of his faithful followers. This exodus from Mecca to Medina marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. It took 5 years of war to finally win Mecca and return to it. Mohammed knew his strengths and weaknesses. He was a very skillful articulator and motivator. Whenever the outcome of a battle was not favorable to his side, he used to tell his discouraged followers that God was testing them and their resolve. On many an occasion, that was enough to tilt the battle in his favor. He has stated that he visited the 7<sup>th</sup> Heaven and seen God one night – “night journey to heaven” – when he was sitting on Mount Zion (the Dome of the Rock). While in heaven, the Quran says, the Prophet talked with Prophets Abraham and Moses. In view of the exemplary qualities he exhibited in his latter life, he is said to have lived piously following God’s commands.

**Theology:** The first Sura of the Quran, called Fathima, gives a description of the God according to the Islamic theology. It begins with “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Praise be to God, the Lord of Creation, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the King of the Judgment Day, you alone we worship and to you alone we pray for help. Guide us in the straight path, the path of those whom you have blessed, and not those who have incurred your wrath, nor those who have deviated.” God is the Creator. He is the source of the earth, the heaven and the light [24:35; 31:26]. He created these things through speech. He said “Be, and it was there” [2:117]. Since God created the universe, there is no chaos and there is definitely a purpose behind his creation. God’s creation is an ever-renewing, continuously replenishing process. God loves His Creation and the creation depends on God’s grace and mercy. “God is One; the eternal God, He begot none, nor was he begotten. None is equal to Him. He was not born, nor does He give birth.” [112:1 – 4]. God is self-starting and self-sustaining, nor is He dependent on anybody. God has an all-seeing eye and hence He sees everything and hears everything [3:2; 6:3]. God does what He pleases [2:255].

Islam believes that the Prophets are sent whenever they are needed, in particular when God’s oneness – *tawhid* – is in danger and/ or questioned or challenged. Mohammed was sent as the Seal of the Prophets – the Last Prophet to be sent. The word salvation is not found in the Quran and not often used by the Moslems. It is worth noting that contrary to Christianity, the Islam does not subscribe to the doctrine that man was created in sin. It flatly rejects this contention. Islam is an ethical religion, for it cares what happens to others. It says: “The righteous man is he who believes in God and the Last Day, in the angels and the scriptures and the Prophets, those who for the love of God give their wealth to the kinfolk, to the orphans, to the needy, to the wayfarers and to the beggars and for the freedom of the captives, those who attend to their prayers, and pay their *zakat*,(welfare-tax, 2.5% of annual earnings), who are true to their promises and steadfast

in trials and adversities and in times of war. Such are the true believers of God [2:177]. Every thing that happens to humans is pre-ordained by God.”

The laity does not require an intermediacy to interact with God. Islam does not accept the Christian doctrine of Trinity, for it encourages and entertains polytheism. It advances the existence of devils, who force humans to deviate from the righteous path prescribed by God. The Quran describes the joy enjoyed by the faithful in the Paradise and the painful agonies and tortures the non-believers are subjected to in the hell. On the Day of Judgment, the dead individual is summoned in front of God, who gives the book containing the record of the deeds he/she has committed. God passes the judgment accordingly, separates those who have done good deeds and assigns them to the Paradise. These saved ones receive heavenly rewards including ample food, water and pleasures of senses in the company of virgins. While those who have committed evil deeds, will be dispatched to hell to serve their judgment.

Islam is also a religion of laws and religious commitments. The legal system, *Sharia*, is a functional fundamental Islamic concept. The Sharia gives an insight and understanding by which to arrive at acceptable decisions. There are two types of sins in Islam: (i) major and (ii) minor. The most serious sins that one can commit are those that are against the Creator, the religion and their fellow beings. God, if He chooses, can forgive all sins except those committed against the religion.

**Holy Scriptures:** The Quran is Islam’s holy book. Nothing commands more respect from the Moslems than the Quran save Prophet Mohammed. It is loved, treated and venerated as God’s Word. The faithful say, “nothing can be added to it; nothing can be taken from it”. The Quran has 114 chapters (*suras*), 6616 verses and 77,434 words. It is regarded as the copy of the book that God always keeps by His side. It contains the revelations that Mohammed is said to have received from God over a period of 23 years (610 to 632 A. D.). After Prophet Mohammed’s death, his successor Abu Baker collected and collated all of the Prophet’s revelations into one compendium which came to be canonized some 25 years later when Caliph Uthman was the ruler. The Quran talks about God, humans, and nature, as well as life’s meaning. It addresses questions such as where humans came from, where they are bound, how one must treat one’s brethren, what awaits one in the Paradise if one obeys God and what awaits one in the hell if one does not obey God’s commands. In the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, six orthodox collections of the Islamic traditions called the “*hadith*” appeared. These are second only to the Quran in their importance as scripture.

**Islam’s Commandments:** The faithful are admonished and asked to scrupulously follow the its commandments, namely: (1). Serve one God, (2) Be good to your parents, treat

them with humility, kindness, love and respect, (3) Do not commit adultery, (4) God forbids taking another human life unless for a just cause, (5) Be honest in your business dealings, (6) Practice what you say and control your sight and sensory organs, (7) Don't be greedy and covet for things that God gave others, (8) Desire for your fellow beings what you desire for yourself, (9) Resist evil with good and if you cannot then using any means you can, including violence and (10) Recompense an injury with another injury, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, etc [[4.32, 5.48, 42'40].

**The Concept of Jihad:** This is the most misunderstood and misused Islamic concept. Since it was not well defined in the original text, the interested individuals have taken the liberty of interpreting this to support whatever they wanted it to mean. No matter how one interprets it, it was not meant to be a war cry against humans. The Quarn, which stresses the value of human life, certainly did not mean it that way either. The Quran meant it as war cry against diseases, hunger, ignorance, poverty, social maladies, etc.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that the Quarn's meaning is said to vary "depending on how profoundly it is interpreted and therefore it is useful to everybody".<sup>3</sup> This is claimed, to have given "rise to the theory of double truth", according to which "a thing can be theoretically true and philosophically false or vice versa."<sup>3</sup>

**Women's Status:** The creation of men and women appears to be similar to that described in the Bible. "He created male from a single person; then created, of like nature, his mate" [39.6]. The Prophet Mohammed has said "All humans – male and female are equal. .... There is no superiority of any male or female...." The Quran says a lot more about the place of women than any other social issue it addresses. The above quote of Prophet Mohammed does not seem to be reflected in the Quran. It, however, states:

1. A woman's testimony is worth half that of a man's.
2. A woman inherits one-half of what her male siblings inherit.
3. No polyandry but polygamy permitted.
4. The husband is the head of the family and his wife should be obedient to her husband. The wife has to ask her husband's permission to go out the house.
5. Women cannot be priests (*imams*).
6. Women are expected to wear *purdah* (veils).
7. The Quran gives permission to the husband to use physical violence against his wife – "beat her slightly" – to get her to do what he wants.
8. A woman has to give her final okay to the marriage proposal.
9. Both females and males have equal access to the Paradise. [4:124]

**Religious Rites and Rituals:** Islam prescribes the devotional practice of the Five Pillars of Faith - *Shahada*, *Salat Zaka* and *Hajj*. This is a must for all faithful Moslems.

\* The numbers in [] denote the Suras (Chapters) in the Quran.

Resource Books:

- 1). M. W. Khan, "Principles of Islam", Goodward Books, Delhi, India (2000).
- 2). J. L. Esposito, "Islam", (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), Oxford University Press, New York (1998).
- 3). J. Marias, "History of Philosophy", Dover Publications, Inc., New York (1067), pp. 155.

## **The Hindu Religion**

The Hindu religion, **not** HINDUISM (as it is commonly called), is also known as the **Sanatana Dharma** (Eternal Religion). It is the world's oldest organized religion and its history probably goes even further back to the beginning of the human civilization. It is extremely difficult to trace its origin. Most of the books on Hindu religion suggest its antiquity to be 3000 to 5000 years B. C. But this estimate is predicated by the myth that the Aryans came to India from Central Russia and settled down there. It has also been suggested that they brought their highly evolved life-style and religion to India. This assumption has been repeatedly questioned. There is a school of experts who have suggested that the Aryans did not come to India but that they were indigenous people of India itself. If this view is accepted, then the above stated date has to go back further.

This contention seems to stand supported, by the *Rigveda*. The Rigveda says that God Shiva was worshipped at the time it was written. However, it is universally accepted that Shiva was the God of the indigenous people known as the **Dravidians**. The word, **Hindu**, had more or less a geographical connotation rather than a religious meaning at that time. It is probably of Persian descent, the word being the Persian equivalent of Sindhu. The people who inhabited and flourished on the banks of the Indus (*Sindhu*) River, thus came to be known as Hindus.

The Hindu religion is practiced by almost a billion people. It has no centralized system of governance. The Hindu religion is not one whole composite entity unlike Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is a compendium of religious thoughts. It encompasses a whole spectrum of widely held and practiced religious beliefs. Unlike the above-mentioned religions, which are "closed books", the Hindu religion is an ever-open book. However, the Hindu religion accepts innovative thoughts and uses them to synthesize its own version. Thus, it does not limit its vision by imposing strict doctrines and dogmas. The Hindu religion does not believe in proselytizing. This suggests that it has



the utmost religious freedom and that individual choice is graciously accepted and respected as such. The reason for this ready acceptance of others' religious faiths may be ascribed to the Hindu approach to realities of life and to their thinking that there are different paths to reach a given goal. The Hindu religion has been a dynamic faith, has always been willing to accept and absorb new ideas and at the same time exhibiting considerable tolerance towards other religions. Thus, it has no fixed dogmas. This does not mean that it has no form(s), for it has a plethora of forms!

**Holy Scriptures:** Being the oldest religion of the world, the Hindu faith has not one but a host of scriptures. The ancient and classical texts are in the Sanskrit language. The sacred texts fall under two general categories: (1) *Shruti* (heard) and (2) *smriti* (remembered). The oldest of the shruti are composed of timeless treasure-trove of knowledge, the *Chaturvedas* (the four Vedas). The Rigveda is the oldest of the Shrutis. It describes religious principles and practices in 1028 hymns, all praising the Creator.

The *Upanishads* serve as the very foundation of the Hindu religion and reveal the contents of the Vedas. They tackle the relationship between the self and the Supreme Self (the Brahman). The word Upanishad is derived from: 'upa' (near), 'ni' (down) and 'sad' (sit) and means to sit down and learn from the Guru (teacher). The word Brahman is derived from 'brh' meaning vitality and the term suggests that the Brahman possesses within himself the dynamic potency and energy of the universe that is Brahman is the Creator, the Protector and the Destroyer of the Universe. He is without form and is beyond description. However, the Brahman can be known through the *Atman* (soul), when the veil cast by the *maya* (illusion) is removed through the acquisition of the knowledge of the true reality. The Upanishads preach salvation through knowledge and union of the self with the Absolute. The Upanishads owe their origin to author Badarayana (9<sup>th</sup> Century B. C.) and hence he is known as the 'Father of the Vedanta'.

They are truly a veritable source of knowledge. They represent a systematized theological arrangement of the Hindu religion and theology revealed in the Vedas. He predates by several centuries, Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (15 B. C. – 45 A. D.), who is considered by Western philosophers as the originator of systematized theology.

The *smriti* (the remembered) belong to the second group of authentic religious scriptures of India. The *smriti* were remembered and passed on by way mouth to generations of descendents before they came to be recorded and written. Included in this category are the two great epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharat* and the Puranas. The Puranas, represent the popular folklore containing glorifying stories of the exalted heroes and heroines and how they saved the world. The *Ramayana* narrates the story of Prince Rama, who was known as the very incarnation of truth. It describes Rama's trials, tribulations, travails, travels and triumphs. The *Mahabharat* on the other hand is an enchanting story of a royal family of the **Pandavas** and their conniving cousins, the

**Kauravas.** There is a whole world of experience reflected in this epic. The events described in it are as true today as when the epic was written. It reflects life as we know it today. Mahabharat describes almost every thing we see in our world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century from the sublime to the mundane, political intrigues, murders, gambling, cheating, honesty, truth, love, deceitfulness and moral integrity.

**The Concepts of Dharma and Karma:** The concepts of *dharma* (law, religion, obligation) and *karma* (deeds, actions) pervade the Hindu religion. One meets them at every turn. They connote and convey special sense and spiritual message. Dharma and Karma are two mutually complementary concepts. Dharma expounds and illustrates the responsibilities that an individual has to shoulder in life. These responsibilities have ethical, moral, religious and social consequences, in other words dharma defines the overall moral code of conduct. The practice of dharma includes divine, universe, truth, non-violence, inward and outward purity, compassion and kindness, spiritual salvation and excludes mundane things like the accumulation of wealth, sensual enjoyment and pleasure.

Karma is defined as a consequence arising out from a cause and effect concept that is whatever is done through *kaya*, *vacha* and *manas* (action, speech and mind) results in karma. Karma reflects how one carries out one's ethical, religious and social obligations as defined by dharma. In other words, every action generates a karma, good or bad. Whether it one or the other depends on the individual's intent behind the action taken or to be undertaken. If one carries out one's karma in an ethical and moral manner according to the prescribed norm, then one achieves *sadharma* as well as good karma and thus paves the path to spiritual salvation. On the other hand, if one discharges these responsibilities in an unbecoming manner and in the process that hurts others, then one gets mired deep into one's karma and becomes subjected to the recurring cycles of birth and death. The karma philosophy reflects on the fact that an individual has the freedom of to do whatever he/she chooses and hence he/she alone bears the responsibility for his/her actions.

**The Four Ashramas:** In the days of the Vedas, an individual was supposed to live a hundred years! To facilitate his sojourn on this mother earth, his life was divided into four segments of 25 years each, which are called the *Ashramas*. Each ashrama was supposed to signify a stage of individual development. The four ashramas are: (1) Brahmacharya (celibate student life), (2) Grahastha (householder), (3) Vanaprastha (forest dweller) and (4) Sanyasa (free from worldly activities). The first ashram lasted up to 25 years of age and was primarily spent in preparing for one's future life by acquiring knowledge and experience, mostly as a student. During this period, children between the age of 8 ~ 12 years and belonging to the three upper castes took part in the Upanayana

ceremony (holy thread ceremony). During this ceremony, they became the ‘twice born’ and now are considered fit to receive the knowledge of the Vedas. The second varnashrama involved householder’s life and spent in getting married and raising the family. The third stage, on the other hand, initiates a slow detachment from the worldly life and preparing for the final stage of life. The fourth and the final stage is the *sanyasa* stage, which involves complete detachment from the worldly life and spending the last 25 years of life in learning the meaning of the individual’s life, the Self and the Universal Self and atoning for the karma and the sins the individual has committed so far. Women were exposed to “Shri-dharma”, which mostly consisted of learning interpersonal relationship and family responsibilities. For a long, long time the last two stages of the life cycle have **NOT** been practiced at all. People seem to have completely forgotten them. .

**The Four Varnashramas:** The words ‘Varnas’ and ‘Varnashramas’ mean castes. This is a very controversial and highly debatable issue among the Hindus. The society was divided into four castes: (1) the Brahamins (priests), (2) the Kshatryas (the kings and soldiers), (3) the Vaishyas (the businessmen) and the Shudras (the lowly workers). Probably, in the beginning this was done to facilitate the wellbeing and efficient working of the society as a whole. In the days of the Rigveda, this division of the society became institutionalized perhaps for the selfish reasons on the part of the three upper classes. The caste system directly led to rebellion and encouraged the establishment of other religions in India. It is surprising to note that the epic Mahabharata has condemned this practice in very clear terms, “No birth, nor *samskara*, nor Veda-study, nor ancestry can lead the twice-born (higher castes) ..... Conduct alone is the true cause, thereof....” [313.108].\*\*

\*\* The number in the [] refers to the hymn.

## Part VIII: Veerashaiva Vachanas

1

From the baggage of the worldly existence  
Desire cannot be rooted out  
Do Thou free me from such desire  
And show me the path of deliverance  
Oh! My savior Kapilasiddha Mallikarjuna

**Siddharameshvara**

2

The linga that is invisible  
Is in the palm of my hand,  
And how do I speak of it?  
And how I hear of it spoken?  
When Guheshvara, the formless Infinite  
Assuming the form,  
Comes to my palm,  
How do I speak of it? How do I hear of it?

3

Linga is the cosmic Shakti of Parashiva,  
Linga is the representation of Shakti, the cosmic power  
Linga radiates enlightenment,  
Linga is the abode of contentment and tranquility,  
Linga is the embodiment of knowledge  
Linga is Parashiva himself,  
Linga is the Creator of the Universe,  
Linga is the pulsating light beyond Hari Hara,  
Linga is the refuge for the humans,  
Oh! Lord Urilinga Peddi Priya Vishveshvara  
Comprehending the Linga,  
Is quintessential to gain knowledge.

4

As the fire in the stone,  
As the reflection in water,  
As the tree in the seed,  
As the silence in the sound,  
Oh! Guheshvara,  
Thou art in Thy devotees.

5

If a man says he has conquered maya\*,  
Would maya let the man go?  
If a person does not shake off the maya,  
Then the maya will shadow him.  
For the Yogi, maya becomes yogini.  
For the monk, maya shadows as the nun.  
For the ascetic who has shorn and shed off every thing,  
Maya follows as praise.  
Lord Mallikarjuna, am I afraid of your maya?  
Not, on Thy honor, my Lord.

6

It is said that maya\* is an illusion.  
Maya is not an illusion.  
It is said that Gold is an illusion.  
Gold is not an illusion.  
It is said that land is an illusion.  
Land is not an illusion.  
It is said that woman is an illusion.  
Woman is not an illusion.  
It is the desire that confronts and confounds the mind,  
That is the maya,  
Oh! Guheshvara.

\* Maya is a popular term often encountered in the Indian philosophy and the religions with their origin in India. It is variously translated as illusion, enticement, etc.

7

While absorbed in your Kayaka,  
If your master appears, just forget him/her.  
If it is time to worship, forget it.  
If an ascetic stands in front you, just ignore him/her.  
Work is heaven,  
Amareshvara is in your kayaka.

8

A woman is not just a female,  
Neither is she a demon,  
She is the very embodiment and essence,  
Of Lord Kapilsiddha Mallikarjuna.

9

Before your cheek turn gray,  
And your body becomes a skeleton of bones,  
Before your teeth begin to drop off of your mouth,  
Before your back bends like a bow,  
And you become a burden to others,  
Before you have to use the walking stick,  
And before you have to lean on your knees,  
Before your age catches up with you  
And begins to corrode your brain and body,  
And before you get trapped in the pangs of death,  
Without forgetting, you better pray  
To our Lord Kudalasangama.

10

When they are poor, they worry about food.  
When they have food, they worry about clothes.  
When they have the clothes, they worry about the bank balance.  
When they have the money, they worry about a wife.  
When they a wife, they about the children.  
When they have the children, they worry about a career.  
When they a career, they worry about their losses.

When they no losses, they worry about death.  
I saw people with all worries.  
And none worries about Lord Shiva,  
Says the true devotee.

**Ambigara Choudayya.**

**11**

Whether the mind swallowed form  
Or the form swallowed the mind,  
Since both were swallowed by Brahma,  
Show me where is what is called "I",  
Akandeshvara.

**Shanmukha Swamy**

**12**

To the God, the mind itself becomes the pedestal,  
The body becomes the shrine,  
The memory becomes the worship,  
Contentment turns into fulfillment,  
Just as the completely filled pitcher sinks into the lake,  
I am filled and soaking in your divine unbroken light,  
Forgetting the duality of I and you,  
And knowing nothing, Akandeshvara.

**Shanmukha Swamy**

**13**

If a person has breast and long hair,  
That person is called a woman.  
If a person has a beard and a moustache,  
That person is called a man.  
But the soul that shines in them,  
Is neither a woman nor a man, Oh! Ramanatha.

**Devara (Jedara) Dasimayya**

**14**

When troubles confront people,  
They think of you, Oh! Lord.  
As quickly as the their trials, tribulations and troubles are over,

Lord, they won't recognize you,  
Even if they stumble on you, Ramanatha.

**Devara (Jedara) Dasimayya**

**15**

Without Guru's words,  
Linga cannot be known  
Without Guru's words,  
Jangama cannot be known  
Without Guru's words,  
Prasada cannot be known  
Without Guru's words,  
Yourself you cannot know  
Oh! my father Ajaganna.

**Muktayakka (Ajaganna's sister)**

**16**

Lord, if I try to see Your face,  
My dazzled eyes cannot stand Your brilliant sight,  
Lord, who can glance at Your incomparable effulgence?  
If you don't mind, please show me Your third eye,  
Who can stand to dare Your stare?  
Oh! Kapilasiddha Mallikarjuna,  
I cannot but close my eyes on seeing,  
Your triple-world-consuming brightness!

**Siddharameshvara**

**17**

Lord, not knowing I must surrender,  
In perfect faith, on seeing thee,  
I have endured the burden of pride,  
And thoughtlessly, alas, am lost,  
Lord, what fool was I to lose,  
And then repenting, seek again!  
Oh! Kapilasiddha Mallinatha,  
Thou art my pathway and my god,  
Do with me what Thou Wilt!

**Siddharameshvara**



**18**

The silkworm spins its cocoon,  
Out of the thread it fabricates from its slime,  
And winds up imprisoned in its own house.  
The desires that entice and engulf the mind,  
Lord, I am burning,  
Lord, won't you please remove this greed from my mind,  
And show me the path that leads to you,  
Channamallikarjuna?

**19**

Devotees who exhibit anger towards others,  
Are destined to go to hell,  
However, Good conduct is so dear  
To Rameshvara Linga.

**Akkamma**

**20**

People who fail to perform their duty and kayaka,  
Are not true devotees.  
Desire is the seed of mortal existence,  
Life without desire is eternal salvation.

**Kalavve**

**21**

Does poverty cause true devotees to deviate?  
Do the immortals suffer death?  
Those with impure heart alone are the poor,  
Pure hearted-devotees who perform their kayaka,  
Find Lakshmi\* in the service of Amereshvaralinga,  
Loved by Marayya and in whatever they see.

**Lakkamma**

\* Lakshmi literally means the goddess of wealth. Here it suggests wealth.

**22**

I am not going to beg humans,

Nor am I going to praise the Lord,  
My eyes are not going to wander  
Nor am I going to be under Cupid's spell,  
Nor am I going to forget reciting the Panchakshara mantra,  
I became liberated forgetting my body,  
Oh! Channabasavanna loved by Appanna.

**Hadapada Lingamma**

**23**

What use is the wealth without generosity?  
What use is the cow that does not give milk?  
What use is beauty bereft of virtue?  
So long as I have not seen Thee,  
What use is my existence,  
Oh! Channamallikarjuna.

**24**

What if you perform rigorous penance?  
Will Lord Kudalsangama trust those  
Who are impure in heart?  
When I know that my body,  
Soul and wealth is His,  
Do I need to have another thought?

**25**

Since I accepted what Basava offered me,  
I was able to uproot of this life's creeper.  
Since Channabasava's grace was bestowed on me,  
My mind's illusions were vanquished.  
As I have received the Great Guru Pranhū's blessings,  
Oh! Lord Basavapriya Channasangayya,  
Misgivings of my mind have disappeared.

**Akka Nagamma**

## **Part IX: List of General References**

### **List of General References**

1. S. C. Nandimath, "A Handbook of Veerashaivism", Lingayat Education Association, Dharwad (Karnatak), India (1942). The latest edition of this book is available from Karnatak University, Dharwad (Karnatak), India.
2. M. R. Sakhare, "History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion", Karnatak University, Dharwad (Karnatak) India, (1978).
3. J. P. Schouten, "Revolution of the Mystics", Kok Pharos Publishing House, Kampen, Holland (1991).
4. "Veerashaivism for the New Millennium: Commemorative Volume", S. Munavalli (ed), Veerashaiva Samaja of North America (2000).
5. D. A. Chekki, "Religion and Social System of the Virasaiva Community", Greenwood Press, Westport (CT), USA (1997).
6. R. B. Michael, "Origins of the Veerashaiva sect", Motilal Banarasidasa Publications, Delhi, India (1992).
7. A. K. Ramanujan, "Speaking of Shiva", Viking Books Ltd, New York, USA (1987).
8. Sri Kumarswamiji, "Veerashaiva Philosophy and Mysticism", Navakalyana Matha, Dharwad (Karnatak), India (1960).
9. Sri Siddheshwara Swamiji, "God, World and Soul", Jnana Yoga Foundation, Bijapur (Karnatak), India (2001).
10. C. N. Hiremath, "Light Divine", Jyoti Publications, Gulburga, (Karnatak), India (1985).
11. S. Munavalli, "The Veerashaiva Religion: Its Practices and Principles", Veerashaiva Samaja of North America (2002).

## Appendix I - Glossary

### A

**Anubhava Mantapa:** An assembly hall or a hall of spiritual, metaphysical and mystical experience where people – **Sharanas** and **Sharaneyaru** - from all walks of life gathered to discuss religion, socio-cultural concerns of life, living and society. It was a meeting place where men and women gathered as equals and discussed their concerns and problems. Literally speaking Anubhav mans personal spiritual experience and Mantapa is a hall.

**Astavarna:** literally means eight shields of protection. It is one of the cardinal principles of the Lingayat religion. The term includes **Guru, Linga, Jangam, bhasma (vibhuti), rudrashka, padodaka, prasada, and mantra.**

**Aikya:** Merging with our maker (Lord Shiva).

**Atma:** Soul.

**Advaita:** Non-dualism, meaning the twins – God and soul - are indistinguishable.

**Achara;** Conduct, behavior.

**Ananda:** Bliss.

### B

**Bhasma (Vibhuti):** It is s considered as holy ash. The Veerashaivas anoint their foreheads with it.

**Basava:** A Veerashaiva saint who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. He is the architect who modernized our religion and introduced new concepts such dasoha, kayaka, equality and brotherhood, equality of men and women; wearing and worshipping of the isthalinga, etc.

**Brahmin:** a person who reads and interprets the Vedas and teaches religious concepts embodied in the Vedas. He belongs to one of the four castes described in the Vedas; namely **Brahmin, Vaisyha (farmers and businessmen), Warrior (king, soldiers, etc.), and Shudra (Dasas).** The Brahmins are considered by the followers of the Vedic tradition as belonging to the highest class in the hierarchy of the structure of the society.

**Bhakti:** Means and implies unalloyed or pure devotion to God.

**Bhakta:** A true devotee.

**Bayalu:** Absolute void or shunya or God.

**Bhakti:** Unalloyed devotion to God.

**Brahman:** It is an Upanisdhic term, meaning Ultimate reality. It indicates and implies the personal God. For the Veerashaivas Shiva is the personal God.

**Bhavalinga:** Experiencing Lord Shiva through thoughts or feelings.

**Brityachara:** Serving humanity, in particular the helpless and handicapped-people with humility and modesty.

### C

**Channabasava:** He was a 12<sup>th</sup> Century young religious **prodigy** who had comprehended and internalized the concepts of the Veerashaiva/Lingayat religion and the concept of Shatsthala principle. He was the son of Basava's older sister.

**Chit:** Conscious intelligence.

**Chalukya:** Name of an ancient royal kingdom.

## D

**Deva:** God

**Dharma:** Religion; righteousness.

**Dasoha:** Helping and lending a hand to the needy people.

**Dualism:** Separation of God and Soul. They are distinguishable from another and hence do not merge into one entity.

## E

**Ego:** It is a psychological terminology used to describe the animal instinct in the animals including the human beings. It also means self-love and self-indulgence.

## F

## G

**God:** God is any Deity that people worship as the **Creator** of the **Universe** and all that inhabits it. God is worshipped as the guiding light. Almost all the religions of the world proclaim that God is ONE but many are His names.

**Guheshvar:** The name Allam Prabhu used to address his personal God, whom he worshipped. It is also his "pen-name".\*

**Guru:** Literally means a teacher. But in the religious context, it means a teacher of sublime spiritual thoughts and one who imparts religious knowledge and whispers darkness.

**Guru-kripa:** The Guru's blessings.

**Ganachara:** Boldly taking on injustice and immorality; in other words to right the unrighteous world.

**Gnagas:** Name of an ancient royal kingdom.

## H

## I

**Istadeva:** An individual's personal God. Though the **sharanas** said that God is one but his names many; each one of them had her/his own personal God. This practice was also meant to identify the person who wrote the vachanas.

**Isthalinga:** A miniature linga worshipped by the Lingayats (Veerashaivas) and worn on their person. One of the tenets of the Veerashaiva religion requires that a true Veerashaiva should carry the linga on his body to give her/him the feeling that God's presence is always with her/him.

## J

**Jangama:** Means an itinerant Guru, who has no attachment whatsoever or bondage to anybody and anything. He owns nothing except his clothes, lives on what devotees give him and wanders from place to place preaching and teaching religion and philosophy. A spiritual itinerant treachery moving from place to place.

**Jnana-marga:** Path to and of knowledge.

**Jnana-shakti:** Power of knowledge or power derived orobtsained through knowledge.

**Jedar Dasimayya (Devar Dasimayya):** He was a senior contemporary of Basava. The tail-end of life overlapped the early life of Basava. Though by profession he was a cloth-weaver, he was also a versatile religious teacher. He used to conduct public meetings and explain and expound the principles and practices of the Veerashaiva religion. He is said to be the first one to write the vachanas.

**Jainism:** A religion that originated in India some 400 years B. C. It still flourides in India. It is said to be older than Buddhism by a couple f hundred years.

## K

**Kudalasangama Deva:** The name of the God whom Basasva worshipped. The temple is located at Kudalasangam, a place where three rivers meet. It is a holy place of pilgrimage for the Veerashaivas (Lingayats).

**Kayaka:** Honest physical labor that enables one to earn one's livelihood and dedicate it to Shiva.

**Karnatak:** It is one of the States comprising India. It is the place where the Veerashaiva religion flourished and still forms a sizeable majority of people who practice the Veerashaiva religion. It literally means black fertile volcanic soil.

**Kalamukhi:** It literally means 'blackfaced'. It suggests a religious cult that asked the faithful to color their face while worshipping Lord Shiva. It was a Shaivite community. It is now almost extinct.

**Karmayogi:** An individual who dedicates the fruits of her/his day-to-day labor/work to God. A person who serves God by helping others through her/his physical deeds/work. For example, Siddharama was a karmayogi. He believed in building wells to provide drinking water to the poor and temples for people to worship God.

**Kalyana:** Is the name of the capital of an ancient kingdom in Karnatak. It is the place where the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Veerashaiva saints gathered around Basava. He was the prime minister of King Bijjal of Kalyana.

**Karma:** Experiencing the effects of the past, present and future deeds.

## L

**Lingachara:** Dedicated devotion to Lord Shiva via the worshipping of the isthalinga.

**Lingayat:** This word is synonymous with **Veerashaiva**. It is composed of two words: **Linga** (the spherical black object worshipped as the symbol of God) and **ayata** means carrier or wearer.

**Lingadiksha:** It represents a religious initiation ceremony during which the Guru blesses and bestows the linga to an individual.

**Lakulisha;** A non-existent Shaivite sect.

## M

**Moses:** A Jewish prophet who freed Jews from bondage to the Egyptian rulers (Pharoes) and proclaimed the Ten Commandments, a set of religious codes of conduct and practice. He lived about **3600 years'** ago.

**Mantra:** A five lettered verse praising God and His deeds. It is used in worshipping God. When the mantra is chanted repeatedly either loudly or silently is said to create spiritual vibrations in a person.

**Moksha:** Salvation or liberation.

**Marga:** A path.

**Mind:** It is concept of an illusionary 'object' that cannot be seen. It is supposed to be present in every person and to make her/him fickle-minded and subject to temptations.

. It is supposed to be present in every body. Sometimes it is used synonymously with **Thought**. Thus, it is not known where the territory of the **Mind** ends, where the territory of the **Thought** begins or vice-versa.

**Matha:** A Veerashaiva monastery, which is the abode of swamiji.

**Mantra:** A sound or a sacred verse containing five syllables usually chanted several times during a prayer.

**Maya:** Illusion or non-existent or unreal.

**Mukti:** Liberation of the soul.

## N

**Nirguna:** The Absolute without any blemish and qualifications.

**Nirvna:** Liberation from bondage, followed by the reunion with the Supreme Spirit.

## O

**Om:** The primordial sound emitted during the creation of the universe. It is said that during the **Big Bang** resulting from the fission of the pulsating point (**Bindu**); the creation of the universe; a sound was heard. That sound was Om. One makes this sound during praying, e.g. **Om Namah Shivaya**.

## P

**Plato:** Socrates' student. He lived from 427 B. C. to 347 B. C. What we know today about Socrates is more or less based on Plato's writings on and about Socrates. Plato is known for his philosophical musings and meditations. He is regarded as Greece's most prolific philosopher. He introduced the concept of **Utopia**.

**Padodaka:** Its' literal meaning is water from washing the feet of a swamiji or jangama.  
**Prasada:** Food offered and consecrated to the Lord Shiva and blessed by Him. It has to be shared with the congregation.  
**Pashupati:** Another Shaivite community that worshipped Lord Shiva.  
**Parabrahman:** means supreme reality, again it refers to God.  
**Panchachara:** Five codes of conduct and behavior which comprise one of the principles of the Lingayat religion.  
**Pranalinga:** Linga which forms a part and parcel of one's life.

## Q

## R

**Religion:** In simple terms, it means a way of life and living. It describes a set of codes and conduct and behavior; all aimed to please God and to enable the faithful to lead a righteous life to achieve salvation  
**Rudraksha:** Rosary beads used in praying as an aid. It considered holy by the devotees. It is made from a plant material.  
**Rastrakuta:** Name of an ancient royal kingdom.

## S

**Shakti:** Energy or power.  
**Socrates:** A great Greek philosopher who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century and died in 1399 B.C. B. C. and is famous for his philosophical pronouncements. Socrates plays a pivotal part in **Plato's Dialogs** (a compendium written by Plato), just as Allam Prabhu does in the **Shunysampadane**. The main difference between the two teachers – Socrates and Allam Prabhu – is that the former never answered the student's questions directly. He used to quiz the student again and again and never giving the direct answer. As opposed to this, Allama Prabhu did not mince words. He gave direct answers supplanted with rhyme, reason and rationale. He did not even hesitate to chide a person for her/his lack of knowledge and understanding. He did this in a way to facilitate comprehension and without insulting the person. Thus his objective was to drive home the lesson and meaning of what was being discussed without being distracted.  
**Shadakshara mantra:** The word Shadakshara means six lettered word. Together the two words say that it is a six-lettered phrase repeatedly chanted during praying (mantra). It is **Om Namah Shivaya**. In actual practice it means the mantra used to please Lord Shiva. It means **abeyance** and prostrations to Lord Shiva.  
**Sthavaralinga:** An immobile linga. The word suggests a fixed linga in a temple.  
**Shunyasamapadane:** It is the title of a compendium written for the first time during **15<sup>th</sup> Century**. It a collection of vachanas of the Veerashaiva saints arranged and organized to provide a dramatic effect. It is in a dialog format. It is composed of two words: **shunya** and **sampadane**. The former means void or nothing; sampadane means collection or earned.



**Sindha:** During the British raj, this was part of the Bombay State and then became a separate state . Now this state is a part of Pakistan.

**Sadhana:** Practice

**Saddharma:** Literally means a good religion. However, it also implies leading a decent life.

**Sharira:** Body

**Shunyasinhasan:** The eternal pontifical throne or an exalted seat.

**Sharana:** A male devotee.

**Sharane:** A female devotee.

**Shaktiivishistadvaita:** It is one of the cardinal principles of the Veerashaiva religion. This term is composed of three words; namely **shakti** (energy), **vishist** and **advait**; vishist means special or supra and advaita (non-dualism) The last word itself is composed of two words: **a** + **dvaita**; **a** means not and **dvaita** means dualism. Dvaita in philosophical sense means duality of soul and God. This means they are separate entities. As opposed to this, **advaita** means non-distinguishable or one and the same.

**Shivayoga:** Steadfast and focused gazing of and on one's **isthalinga**. It is a form serene and sublime worship with no worldly distractions.

**Sadachara:** Selfless service and sharing of one's fruits of **kayaka** with less fortunate folks.

**Sharana:** A male devotee who has surrendered to Shiva.

**Sharaneyaru:** A female devotee who has surrendered to Shiva.

**Shatsthala:** Six-stages of pathway of progress to salvation.

**Shivacahara:** Equality and fraternity among Shiva's devotees.

**Shiavagamas:** The most ancient holy scriptures of the Veerashaivas and **Shaivites** (worshippers of Lord Shiva).

**Sat:** Eternal truth.

**Sthala:** A stage. It also means God depending on the context.

**T**

**U**

**Ulavi:** The final resting place of Channabasava. It is a place of pilgrimage for the Veerashaivas.

**Upnishads:** Hindu holy scriptures containing the teachings of the saints and seers, who lived between 9<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B. C. and thus span more than two and a half thousand year period. These are appendages added on to the Vedas from time to time, They form philosophical pronouncements and religious reflections; such as the achievement of salvation and the understanding of the nature and relationship between man and the universe.

**V**

**Vairagya:** Total liberation from bondage to material world or renunciation of wants and desires.

**Vachanas:** They are pithy sayings, written during the 12<sup>th</sup> century in free-style verse and often with no rhyme,. People from all walks of life , such as carpenter, washer-man, shoemaker, clothe-weaver, house-wife. Yet they are full of sublime thoughts and fundamental religious concepts. The vachanas are regarded as the scriptures of the Lingayat religion.

**Veerashaivas:** They are the worshippers of Lord Shiva. This term is composed of two words: **Veera** (brave) and **shaiva** (worshipper) of Lord Shiva.

**Vedas:** The most ancient holy scriptures of the Hindu religion and other religions of the world. They date back to 2000 ~ 3000 years B.C. There are four Vedas; each dealing with a different subject matter.

**Vibhuti:** Bhasma.

**Vishistha:** Special or supra.

**Vaishnava:** A Brahmin sect.

**W**

**X**

**Y**

**Yoga:** It means **to join**. It is a vehicle for training one's consciousness and for gaining spiritual insight and achieving internal and external harmony. It is a form of physical and mental exercise-regimen designed to train body and mind and hence leading to contentment, real happiness and righteousness.

**Z**

## Appendix II – Frequently Asked Questions

### By Veerashaiva Children\*\*

1. Who is God?
2. What is religion?
3. What is Linga?
4. Who started the Lingayat/Veerashaiva religion?
5. What is meditation?
6. What is prayer?
7. What is the difference between mediation and prayer?
8. What is linga-pooja?
9. How does a person do the linga-pooja?
10. What is vibhuti?
11. What does putting the vibhuti on the forehead suggest and really mean?
12. Who is a jangama?
13. Is jangama different from a swamiji?
14. What do they do, any way?
15. Why should we prostrate before them?
16. What is a vachana?
17. What is our holy scripture?
18. What is yoga?
19. What is Shivayoga?
20. Why should we do the Shivayoga?
21. What's Anubhava Mantapa?
22. What happened there?
23. What is dasoha?
24. Why should we do dasoha?
25. What is kayaka?
26. Do we have similar things in other religions?

27. Do we have to go to the temples to worship God?
28. Why have not people in other countries heard of the Veerashaiva religion?
29. What is prasada?
30. Why do people share it after the worship meetings?
31. What is the basic principle of our religion?
32. What is reincarnation?
33. Do Veerashaivas believe in reincarnation?
34. What is karma?
35. Could you explain to us our religion in simple language without the mumbo-jumbo?
36. Does our religion accept and advocate the concept of heaven and hell?
37. Who started the VSNA?
38. What was their objective in founding the VSNA?
39. Why don't they organize religious tutorials and classes to encourage and motivate the members?
40. Why don't our parents like to discuss our religion with us?
41. What are religious rites and rituals?
42. If religious rituals serve no real purpose why we do have to practice them?

\*\* The questions listed above are similar to the ones our children routinely ask. They are listed here to forewarn our parents so that they could be mentally prepared. Our children expect simple straight forward and convincing answers. So let us as parents do our home work and do not disappoint our children.