CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

"HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LINGAYAT COMMUNITY"
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LINGAYAT COMMUNITY

Lingayat Community became an important factor since the rise of Basaveshwar, who is regraded as the founder of Lingayat religion in the 12th century. The strongholds of Lingayat religion in Maharashtra are Kolhapur, Sangli, Solapur, and Latur districts. Kolhapur district is a progressive district in all ways. In Kolhapur district a large numbers of Lingayats are staying and pursuing trade activities. In the pre-independence period some Lingayat leaders took active part in the Freedom Struggle of India.

In 1947, India won the Independence and Lingayat freedom fighters turned their attention towards other fields, such as co-operative, agriculture, education and Banking. This Community rendered yeomen service to the all round progress of Kolhapur district. Shri Rattannappa Kumbhar and Late Vishwanath Kore, founded Sugar factories and brought socio-economic change in their respective areas. Veerashaiva Bank established in 1942, has been financing a number of poor men and giving incentives to change the life of common man in the district. Now-a-days this is one of the well established banks having thirteen branches all over the district. In Kolhapur district there are old Lingayat Mathas such as, Kadsidhawar Kaneri Math, Allmprabhu Matha Alate, Chitradurga Math Kolhapur which are centres of cultural activities.

Therefore, in this work an attempt is made to study Lingayat Community in Kolhapur district. A socio-economic study
(1949-1990) by using original sources such as Annual Reports of
the Banks, sugar factories and biographies of the Lingayat
leaders, Matha records etc. as well as secondary sources
pertaining to our study.

In this respect it is very important to take a brief survey
of early history of Lingayat religion since 12th century to 1949.
DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION:

Generally religion played an important role in human
civilization. It occupies important place in human society. It is
very difficult to define religion. Many scholars and thinkers
tried to define religion. But there is no unanimous definition of
religion. The following are some important definitions of
religion.

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, Religion is a kind of life.
He states that, Religion is not the acceptance of academic
abstractions or the celebration of ceremonies, but a kind of life
or experience of reality.¹ (Anubhava) About religion Swami
Vivekananda has stated, Religion is constitutional necessity for
man and plays a role higher than anything else in our life.²
There are so many factors which lead man to develop faith in God
and religion. Man is religious by his inner nature and necessity.
We may refer to the numerous ways in which it has rendered
service to mankind. It has taught us to care for our own Soul and
body character, to nourish the sick and give succour to the
needy. It has taught us to love others as we love ourselves and
to serve them. Religion has helped to unite men at the spiritual
level.

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Buddha, Christ and Mohammad all spoke of love and compassion for the humanity. Secondly Religion has been one of the most powerful factors in the creation, propagation and preservation of civilisation and culture. Most of the well known civilisations of the past were centred round religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. Turning from the collective to the individual the religion is the great force in disciplining the character. It may be added that religion helps an individual in his efforts to remake himself. According to Vidyarthi P.B., Religion springs from the spiritual constitution of man. It can vanish only when man is able to abandon his spiritual nature and constitution which is simply impossible. Man is not satisfied with the finite because it does not contain that which he seeks. It is clear that Religion is essential for the man. He cannot live with peace without religion. Gillin John Lewis has stated in this connection that, Religion in its simplest and most scientifically acceptable definition is a belief in the supernatural in relation to man. Dr.Purushottam Ganesh Sahstrabudhye states that the hypothesis of Indian philosophers is that the religion is not ultimate goal but it is a means to achieve the goal. The upliftment of society is the goal of religion. So he defines religion as whatever that causes (makes) for the upliftment of society is the religion. D.K.Bedekar states that religion is the heritage. He further elaborates that it consists of tradition, customs, dogmas, principles, manners, etiquettes in our day to day life. The habits, customs and other things in the life of man may change,
but the religion remains constant. For the well being of society there must be religion. As an individual needs a religion for mental peace so also ti needs for society. Society without religion will be meaningless, there will be riot. Hence the concept of religion is very essential for the well-being of society. Ogburn William A. and Nimkoff Meyer F. write that, religion is a system of beliefs, emotional attitudes, and practices by means of which a group of people attempts to cope with the ultimate problem of human life.

RELIGIONS IN INDIA:

Today, the religions in the world are divided into two groups. Eastern religions and Western religions. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are the Eastern religions and Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam, are Western religions. Daily life of Indian people being pervaded by a religious atmosphere. India is rightly considered to be the land of the origin of the Eastern religions. Indian is a predominantly religious country.

HINDUISM:

Hinduism is one of the oldest and prominent religions of India. In India majority people are Hindu. Hindu religion was founded by Arya, the inhabitants of India who came from central Europe. There was not a single founder of this religion. Vedic literature and two great Epics of Hindus, Ramayān and Mahabharat speak about Hindu religion. Some say that Hindu religion was founded by Vyasa. The Hindu consider the Vedas to be revealed books and gave them the titles of Apaurusheya (not made by man)
and Nitya (Eternal) it is also known as "Sanatan Dharma", "Puranoktha Dharma" and "Vaidik Dharma."

BUDDHISM:

Next to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were important religions in Ancient times. The rise of Buddhism and Jainism were facilitated by the conditions of Hindu Society on the eve of Buddha's birth. The Hindu society had lost its former glory and many kinds of abuses and superstitions had crept into it. The Brahmins had a monopoly in the field of religion and they behaved as unscrupulous human beings. They encouraged superstition and tried to extort as much as they could from the people. Gautam Buddha (567 B.C. to 487 B.C.) was the founder of Buddhism. He dedicated his entire life for the teaching and propaganda of Buddhism in India.

In the history of Indian religion, Buddhism occupies unique place, firstly, for throwing its portals open not only to the Indians of all strata of the society, but also to the foreigners like the Indo-Greeks and Indo-Seythians, who settled in India, and secondly, for its propagation in foreign countries like Ceylon and Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, Central Asia and China, Nepal and Tibet, and the Indonesian countries, and ultimately in Korea, Japan and Mongolia.

After Buddha the emperor Ashok (273 B.C. to 236 B.C.) played a vital role to spread Buddhism in India and other neighbouring countries like Ceylon, Burma etc. Unfortunately, Buddhism declined after 6th century A.D. in India.
JAINISM:

Like Buddhism, Jainism is also heterodox religion. Jainism, which has its roots in the ancient philosophy of India has now been accepted by scholars to be of earlier origin than Buddhism. Some of its features are of so striking simplicity, that these can be accepted as primary. The religion of the Jains existed in India from very early times, and its origin is ascribed to Sri Rishabha, who according to tradition was the son of a Rajput King, and is said to have become an ascetic. He is the first in the line of the Tirthankars, who according to the Jains are "those, who show the true way across the troubled ocean of life." He is also known as Adinath, and is held in great esteem by the Jains.

At the beginning it was believed that Mahavir was the founder of Jainism, but now-a-days it is accepted that Mahavira was the twenty fourth Tirthankara or prophet of Jainism. The sacred books of the Jains tell us that the real founder of Jainism was Rsihabha who was succeeded by 23 Tirthankaras. Now-a-days some people profess Jainism in India as well as in Maharashtra.

LINGAYAT RELIGION:

In 12th century South India witnessed the emergence of new religion which was named as Lingayatism. It is one of the minor but important religions of India after 12th century. Before, turning to this religion it is essential to clarify the word Lingayat and Veershaiva. It is found that often people get confused with these words. Some people think that these two words
are separate, while, others insist that both words are the same. The word Veerashaiva and Lingayat are more popular among the people. Besides this, Lingayat people are also called by many names like Lingayants, Lingadhara, Lingangi, Lingsamagi, Lingasngi, Basavayata, Sharana, Jangama, Shivacharya and Maheshwara. Many thinkers throw light on the words Veerashaiva and Lingayat. In this connection Dr. Jash has pointed, that the Veerashaiva are also known by their more popular designation Lingayat. It is so called because its followers carry a "Linga" of Phallic emblem of Shiva on their bodies. Some scholars are inclined to explain the compound "Vira Saiva" as a "stalwart follower of Siva" Murthy (Dr.) Chidananda clarifies the meaning of the word Lingayat. He says, it is very difficult to fix the etymology of the word Lingayat. Many explanations are offered. One is that the term is composed of Linga and ayata and Lingayat is described as one who has become great (ayata = extension) by wearing Lingam. (= the phallic symbol) on the body. Another explanation is that, it is a corrupted form of Lingavanta, a man possessing a Lingam. It is a bit difficult to explain the above derivation linguistically, although, there is a somewhat cynical statement that any word can be derived from any other word. But more satisfactory explanation would be to take the term as meaning a person whose main concern is lingam. While defining the term Veerashaiva Mogalwar, has said, Veerashaiva means a brave person who is engaged in Lingasamarasya. Sakhare M.R., says that, the word Lingayat is common and popular. He stated, the term Veerashaiva is significant and looms large in religions
tracts and literature to the total exclusion of Lingayat but is less common in ordinary language. Lingayat is ordinarily more common and more known.14 In this connection Patil M.P., author of "Veerashaiva Dharmamut" states that there is no difference in these two words. He remarked, some people believe that there is a difference among these two words. Followers of Panchacharyas are known as Veerashaivas and the followers of Basaveshwara are the Lingayats, but this supposition is wrong and based on ignorance. Veerashaivas and Lingayats both are one and the same.

FOUNDATION OF LINGAYAT RELIGION:

There are different opinions about the origin and founder of Lingayat religion. Many Philosophers and thinkers have analysed the origin and founder of Lingayatism based on different sources. In connection with the origin of this religion, there are three main streams of thought. These are as follows:

i) Religion founded by the Lord Shiva Himself.
ii) Religion founded by Panchacharyas.
iii) Religion founded by Basaveshwara.

i) RELIGION FOUNDED BY LORD SHIVA HIMSELF:

Lord Shiva is the only God worshipped in Veerashaiva or Lingayat religion. The worshipping of other Gods, except Lord Shiva, is not allowed in this religion, Kashinath Shastri, has stated, it is a pleasant thing that Veerashaivas or Lingayats have been worshipping Shiva since Anadi period (remote past). Veerashaivas or Lingayats do not think of Gods except Shiva in their dreams also. Because devotion to Shiva is the basis and fundamental principle of this religion.15

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According to Patil M.P. and Sankanwade S.B., Shiva is known by many names like Rudra, Shiva, Mahadeva, Maheshwara, Parameshwara, Mahesha, Pashupati, etc.

Many thinkers agree with the view that Veerashaiva or Lingayat religion is founded by Lord Shiva himself. But various founder of this religion are also mentioned. About this, Jaydeva has said, Veerabhadra, Panchacharyas and Basaveshwara have been considered to be the founders of this religion. But it is not true. Because Veerashaiva or Lingayat religion has been founded ages ago. It has emerged from Lord Shiva. If it had not been so, it would have been called Panchacharyas religion or Basaveshwara religion. It has been called Veerashaiva or Lingayat religion because it has originated directly from Lord Shiva.  

There is also a stream of thought that Veerashaiva religion is a contemporary of Shiva religion. In this connection Manurkar has stated, In Sanatan culture, Veerashaivism or Lingayatism is an ancient and supreme as Shaivism. Mogalwar, has pointed out, there are many evidences which proved that the seeds of Lingayat religion have taken roots in the non Vedic culture. Dr. Panase also concurs this view. He stated, Shaiva, Veerashaiva or Lingayat panth (religion) of Maharashtra is ancient. Chamake, has made the picture more clear with the help of sources. He has pointed out, Veerashaivism is not a sect or creed or a branch of any Universal religion but an independent Darshan. He concluded on the basis of Agamas, Upnishads some other pertaining literature that Veerashaivism, a beginningless, Anadi Darshan is an original tree and remaining Shaiv schools are its branches.
The Veerashaiva culture is prehistoric, the relics of Veerashaiva culture are found in Mohonjedoro and Harappa. The religion is not founded by any individual. Veerashaiva or Lingayat is the Shiva Dharma originated from the supreme Shiva.

ii) RELIGION FOUNDED BY PANCHACHARYAS:

Panchacharyas means Jagadguru, Dharmguru of acharyas. They are five in number. Therefore they are called Panchacharyas. There are Dharmapeethas of Panchacharyas in different states of India. They are known by various names. In this connection the things handed down traditionally. Tradition avers that the five original acharyas were born out of five different Jyotirlingas. 1) That the Lingayat religion was formed long ago by the five great prophets, namely, Revanaradhya or Revanasiddha, Morularadhya or Marulashiddha, Ekoramaradhya, Panditradhya and Vishvaradhya. 2) That they rose out of the five great Sthavarlingas of Kolliplki (Balehalli or Balchournur), Mysore State, Ujjaini, Bellary district, Himavat Kedaar, Shrishail Mallikarjuna and Kashi or Benares, under different names in different Yugas or ages. In this connection Kashinatha Shastri has stated that it has been proclaimed in the Shivagamas that the Veerashaiva religion was founded by the Panchacharyas or the five Acharyas. By order of Shri Parameshwara, the Lord of the Universe, these holy beings came down to the earth in divine forms from Kailasa (the abode of Parameshwara) to propagate Shivabhakti (devotion to Shiva) among the people. Mr.S.B.Varnekar has stated the same opinion, in this regard, he states that Basweshwara was not the founder of "Veerashaiva Sampradaya" but he was the reformer of the religion.
According to religious tradition it was founded by the Vedic teachings of Pandhacharya in the ancient times. Dr.R.B. Manchankar concurs the same view. He writes Panchacharyas rule this religion in different ages by different name. It is the strong belief of Veerashaivas.

iii) RELIGION FOUNDED BY BASAVESHWARA:

There is also major opinion that Basaveshwara is the founder of Lingayat religion. Most of the scholars, specially from Karnataka strongly assert this opinion. Jagadguru Maine Mahadevi, Kumarswamiji, Basavaraj K.R. were important among them. Kumarswamiji has stated "As Buddha founded Buddhism, and Christ founded Christianity so also Basaveshwara is supposed to have founded Veerashaivism. Lingayatism is the faith professed and followed by the Karnataka Veerashaivas, Basava was the founder of this faith and Vachan Shastras are the scriptures that embody the principles of the Lingayatism. In this connection Jagadguru Male Mahadevi, has attempted her level best to show that Basava is the founder of Lingayatism.

As regards the foundation of this religion Bhandarkar, has stated, that, the foundation of this sect is generally attributed to Basava. In this connection Nilakantha Sastri has remarked that the other development in Saivism was growth of Viva-Saivism or the Lingayat cult in Karnataka and Telugu Country. Basava, the prime minister of Kalachuri Bijjala, King at Kalyani (1156) is usually regarded as the founder of the sect. Lingayat tradition avers that the sect is very old and was founded by five ascetics - Ekorama, Panditaradhya, Revana, Morula and Visvaradhya - who
were spring from the five heads of Shiva. Basava, they say, was but the reviver of the faith but the fact is that five ascetics named were all contemporaries of Basava, some of them older, some of them were younger to him. The early history of Veerashaivism is therefore still somewhat uncertain. 17

BASAVA THE FOUNDER OF LINGAYAT RELIGION:

There are only two mantras usually repeated by the Veerashaivas, one is the mantra of Shambhu, the great god Shiva, and the other is of Basava, the second Shambhu. So Basava's place, at least so far as Veerashaivas are concerned, is next only to the god. It is significant to note that none of the Panchacharyas has his name constructed into a mantra.

Basava has endeared himself to the Veerashaivas as no Acharya has done. The reason is clear, for it is to him that they owe their religion. It is not uncommon to find among the Veerashaiva people who rise with the name of Basava on their lips and go to bed with the name of their lips. They usually address him as Basavanna, where “anna” is a term of endearment. Their favourite Basava is Shiva and Shiva is Basava. Basava is the most common of the proper names found among Veerashaivas. 28

If the Veerashaiva religion were there even before Basava, then there would be no necessity on the part of Basava to revolt against the Varnashramic faith. It would have been enough for him to become a convert to the Veerashaiva religion and he would have lived contentedly in that fold. But as it was, his very revolt led to the rise of the Veerashaiva faith.
Basava got disgusted with things as he found them, went to Sangameshvara and concentrated his mind to find a way out of the difficulty. Light did dawn upon him and in accordance with the promptings of his conscience he went to Kalyana, the capital city of Karnataka, to spread the light he received at Sangameshwara. His religion was the religion of Ishtalinga. Though the idea of Linga itself was not new, the idea of Ishtalinga was new and this idea he seems to have conceived at Sangameshwara. Ishtalinga stood for him as the symbol of both Samgamalinga at Sangameshwara and his own soul. He himself was responsible for his Lingadiksha. This is only another way of saying that he and he alone started Linga, diksha or the cult of the Ishtalinga. The Vachan of Allamprabhu lends ample support to this. Allamprabhu says that Channabasava and he belonged to the tradition of Linga started by Basava.

The Acharyas after Basava are real personages. The Acharyas before Basava have no existence apart from miracles and Basava performed no miracle apart from his life. The history of Lingayatism from the time of Basaveshwar upto the modern period is fairly clear and well documented. There is absolutely no doubt that Lingayatism came into prominence by the efforts of Basava.

SPREAD OF LINGAYAT RELIGION:

There are two crore Lingayats in India and twenty lakhs in Maharashtra. Karnataka is the birth place of Lingayats, but it is spread over Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. It is interesting question that how the Lingayats penetrated into Maharashtra. In
In this connection Dr. R.C. Dhere's opinion is that, Lingayats came into contact with Maharashtra in the 12th century during the period of Yadavas of Devgiri. He stated, the landmarks of Lingayats contact with the cultural history of Maharashtra are found in the regime of Yadavas. The reasons behind it are geographical juxtaposition of Karnataka and Maharashtra, in gaining one another's area by political rulers and the transportation of the intellectual thoughts or a religious sect. According to Desai (Dr.) P.B. the capital of Bijjal was Mangalvede means modern Mangalveda situated in Taluka Sangola, Dist Solapur of Maharashtra state, Basaveshwar lived in Mangalvede from 1132 to 1153 A.D. During his twenty years of stay in Mangalvede he laid his first steps of new sects preaching. Revanshidha, one of the famous Acharyas of Lingayats concerned with Mangalvede. His memory was fresh in the form of a temple in Mangalvede. His son and the famous Lingayat saint Rudramani, born of Sidhankere, hardly eight miles away from Mangalvede. This is mentioned in the traditional religious documents.

The close relationship of Basaveshwar and other Lingayat saints with Mangalvede shows that the sect Lingayat, has risen in the area of Pandharpur situated in Maharashtra. Due to the geographical concern of Kanrataka and Maharashtra new Lingayat sect naturally spread all over Maharashtra.

**SOLAPUR THE CENTRE OF LINGAYATS:**

Geographical condition played an important role for the spread of Lingayat religion in Maharashtra. Kalyani, the oldest centre of Lingayats is near the border line of Maharashtra. Still
the traditional Maratha customs are survived there today. The effect of geographical, political and cultural close contacts among the people of Karnataka and Maharashtra is responsible for the Lingayats entry in Maharashtra. Acharya Sidharameshwar, the contemporary of Basaveshwara was from Solapur. Kolhapur, Solapur, Sangli which is known by the name South Maharashtra, (Kuntal Desh) and area of eastern Maharashtra which is nearby Bidhar, Kalyani was ready welcome Lingayats to some extent. Many Kannada inscriptions are available in Nanded, Usmanabad and the surrounding area. Therefore the contact of this area with Karnataka, is became clear. In Maharashtra in many temples of "Shiva" the "Jangam pujaris" are found likewise, the small groups of merchants called wanis, kostis, etc. are spread throughout Maharashtra. In Marathwada, "Tantugivi Devang Samaj" and "Dakkalwar" the priests of backward class, too, are the followers of Lingayat sect. The landmarks of Lingayats are found in their mythologies. Prof. Bhusari R.M. says that the spreading of Lingayats in Maharashtra was completed in Yadava's regime. Thus Lingayats came in Maharashtra in 12th century. There is another view about the spread of Lingayats. According to this view Lingayats were the inhabitants of Maharashtra. In this connection, Mogalwar (Dr.) Sudhakar, has stated, Northern Kasi (Varanasi) is one of the pithas and it is the Dnyanpith of Vishvaradhyya Jagadguru, and still the Vairagypith at Kedarnath is giving message of the creed. It is better to say that the Veerashaivias entered into Maharashtra from the North and South and settled. Since the last 800 years this community has been
living in Maharashtra. Marathi became their mother tongue and they mingled with the culture of Maharashtra. In Maharashtra Shateshwar, manmath etc. Lingayats saints, priests and Acharyas tried to uplift and protect this sect through the medium of Marathi.33 One more interesting opinion put forth by Agnihotri (Dr.) D.H., is that when the Veerashaiva creed of Allabhamprabhus approached Basaveshwar alongwith the followers, the kings gave them patronage. Before the rise of Veerashaiva creed. Kalamukh, Pashupat was in existence in Gujrat, Karnataka and Maharashtra. They built temples and monasteries (Mathas). They started educational centres and built tanks for the water supply. After the existence of Veerashaiva creed, the Kalamukh, Pashupat creed merged into it.34 Patil M.P. agrees with this view. He writes in his introduction to "Lila Vishambhar" by Brambadas, that, Kalamukha, pashupat creed and Veerashaiva creed are one and the same. Before arising the Veerashaiva creed, Kalamukha, pashupat was in existence in Karnataka. After the existence of Veerashaiva creed the Kalamukh, pashpat creed merged completely into Veerashaiva religion and its separated existence came to an end.

It means before the existence of Veerashaiva creed, the followers of Kalamukh, pashupat creed were living in Karnataka and Maharashtra. After the rise of Veerashaiva creed, the followers of Kalamukh, pashput merged into new religion because of its attractive principles and they are known by the name Veerashaivas. It proves that the Veerashaivas or Lingayats were the inhabitants of Maharashtra. In this connection a powerful evidence is available in Palsidha Matha at Sakharkherda, district
In this matha there is a reference on the "Samadhiwar".

By this reference one must not avoid the fact that the Samadhi Shake (according to Hindu calendar) of Palsidha Swami is 980. It means Palsidha lived in Maharashtra before Shake 980, and he was engaged in awakening the people about religion. Parsidha was the man of origin of matha at Sakarkherda. This tradition is continued up to the present time. This shows that Lingayats had come into contact with Maharashtra before the 12th century and settled here, and before Basaveshwar Lingayats in Maharashtra were well established. It proves the birth date of Basaveshwar and Samadi date of Palsidha Swami. Birth date of Basaveshwar was 1106 A.D. and samadi date of Palsidha Swami was 1058 A.D. (Shake 980). This evidence proves the inhabitants of Lingayats in Maharashtra. The traditional opinion about the Lingayat people in Maharashtra is that the people of this creed had to take shelter in nearby area after 12th century because of trade, business and religious revolution of Shivsharanas in Karnataka. So they spread all over Maharashtra as they did in Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu. But this is hardly true. Because before Basaveshwar there were Lingayats in Maharashtra who were called Maheshwar, veer Maheshwar of Jangam. Basaveshwar founded new religion. Because of his liberal policy he accepted the people of all the religions, creeds and sects in his religion so the Lingayats of Maharashtra...
merged in this religion. Dhere (Dr.) R.C. made it very clear. He stated, Lingayats are more ancient than Veerashaivas. At present we accept the term "Veerashaiva" and "Lingayat" as one and the same, but Lingayats are more ancient than Veerashaivas. The term Veerashaiva came into existence at the time of Shaiv movement by Basaveshwar in 12th century. The tradition of the Linga holding Shaivas is very ancient. Dr. Ketkar has described Bharashivas, who were "Ishtaling holder" living in Maharashtra at least 600 years before Basaveshwar.

Lastly, there is another evidence which made clear all the matters. This evidence is available in the Department of History and Archaeology, Karnataka University, Dharwar. There is a map of Kannadanadu, which is prepared on October 21, 1948 by Panchamukhi R.S., director of Kannada research, Dharwar with the help of Kannada epigraphy. This Kannadanadu map consisted the modern area of Gadhinglaj, Chandgad, Kolhapur, Hatkanangale, Iohalkaranji, Shirol, Miraj, Sangli, Tasgaon, Jath, Mangalweda, Pandharpur, Solapur, Barshi, Udagir and Kalyan. If we take into consideration this source then there will be no question of spread of Lingayats in Maharashtra because it is clear that Lingayats were the inhabitants of Maharashtra. They were inspired by the new doctrines introduced by Basaveshwar and efforts made by monasteries (Maths) and Shivasharana's for the spreading of religion.

II PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF LINGAYAT RELIGION:

Veerashaiva philosophy and religion forms a significant chapter in Indian philosophical and religious history. It is
difficult task to give philosophy of Lingayat religion. We shall not be able to do justice to the subject. Lingayatism attaches the utmost importance to the inward and outward purification of the individual. Purity is essential in spiritual pursuits. Lingayat mystics have prescribe certain rites, disciplines and aids which are very helpful to the aspirant in spiritual progress.

Lingayat religion has two parts: 1) the philosophy and 2) the practice. The practice of a religion is based on the philosophy of the religion. The philosophy of Lingayat religion is monism and is called shaktivishistadvaita.

1) SHAKTIVISHISTADVAITA:

The Lingayat philosophy is called Sakti-Visistad-vaita, a term which means the non-duality of God. (viz., paraj Shiva) as qualified by Sakti (Power) According to this system, God and Soul are in one inseparable union through the inalienable power called Sakti, the individual Soul is neither absolutely identical with nor entirely different from God. Sakti is the power which eternally resides in para. Siva as his inseparable attribute. The individual soul or Jiva is aniha (part) of Shiva, and it imagines itself to be different from him on account of avidya (ignorance).

The final goal of the soul as conceived in the Lingayat system is its aikya (unity) with para-siva, the supreme reality. It is an experience of unexcellable bliss technically called Linganga-Samarasya of i.e., identity in essence between Linga (Shiva) and anga (Soul). According to Sakhare, Shiva and Shakti cannot be apart from each other but are inseparable one. Shiva is the
supreme entity. He is the all knowing, all doing, all sustaining being called prakasha, the serene Lord, all pervading all transcending.\textsuperscript{41}

2) SATSTHALA:

The Satsthala or the six stages of approximation towards union with the Shiva, are bhakta, mahesa, prasada, pranalinga, sarana an aikya.\textsuperscript{42}

The six stages can be defined as follows:

i) \textit{Bhakta}: One who is pious, worshipper of God Shiva, who thinks that Guruling and Jangam are the same, and who always keeps with him emblem of Shiva (i.e., Shivlinga) with sacred belief is called "Bhakta"

ii) One who is expert in donation instinctively, deeply indulged in the worship of Shiva is "Maheswara".

iii) The Maheshwara who consumes "prasad" which causes "Pure Knowledge" within him hence he is called "Prasadi".

iv) "Parashiva Brahma" is the ultimate self hence "Linga" is the symbol of this "Prasadi" believes it, so he is "Prenalingi".

v) He considers that he is "sata" and "Linga" is the husband (He conceives husband and wife relationship between God, and himself) and enjoys this material life. This "Pranlingi" is "Sharana".

vi) This Sharana with the help of "Ling Yoga" enjoys sublime happiness (eternal happiness) and becomes one with Shiva. This union with Shiva is called "Aikya".
These are the six stages to achieve "Mukti". One who has to become one with Shiva, he has to cross these six steps.

Thus it is the very life and soul of the Lingayat spiritual discipline and religious practice. To take away satsthala is to take away the very life and soul of the religion. Thus satsthala takes very important place in the Lingayat religion.

PRACTICE OF LINGAYAT RELIGION:

In any religion practice is more important than philosophy. If philosophy is great but if there is no way for practice then it is not useful for the society. So practice is important. Religious practice is a sequel to the philosophy of the religion for the attainment of moksha, the last and the most important of the objective of human life. Religious practice is based on the philosophy of religion. Thus a Lingayat is one who practices. 1) Astavarana and 2) Panchacar. It is not easy to follow the satsthala or six stages aikya for every Lingayat, so there is simple way which every Lingayat can follow. These are Astavarana and Panchacar. Before the particulars of Astavarana and Panchacar are explained it would be better to note the principles underlying the practice. They are as follows:

PRINCIPLES:

1. The first principle is that, religion is as necessary for human beings as food is necessary for a man. A man without religion is the creature of circumstances. Man without religion is like a boat on the sea without a rudder.
2. The second principle of religion is that, it is a personal affair, the affair of the Jiva, male or female, in order that it may be free from the trammels of the ever-recurring birth and deaths and miseries thereof. Every Jiva is the driver of the car of his own life.

3. The third principle is men and women are equal. This is the fundamental principle because it makes no difference in sexes and gives equal chances for both sexes.

4. The fourth principle is the principle of universal brotherhood of man in matters of religion. Doors of true religion are open to all people without any distinction.

5. The fifth principle is that life in this world is in no way incongruous with the practice of true religion. It is not necessary for any one to go to a forest for the sake of attaining Moksha.

6. Simplicity and suitability of practice is the sixth principle.

7. Ahinsa or non-injury is the seventh principle of the religion. In the opinion of prophet Basava, it is not a religion that does not teach ahinsa, kindness and compassion.

8. The last principle of religion is the unity of thought and action, or perfect concordance between knowing and doing. Taking into consideration principles of
Lingayatism, now it is better to explain details of practice.

3) THE EIGHT AIDS -- ASTAVARANA:

Astavarana and pandhacar has very important place in Lingayat religion. Avarana means shield. Avarana hides the original shape of the things. The word Avarana is very significantly used in Lingayatism. There are eight Avaranas, viz., Guru, Linga, Jangama, Padodaka (Tirtha) prasada, Bhasma, Rudraksa and mantra. Avarana means a shield to protect, the follower of the religion who is worshipper of Shiva is protected from all bad instincts (vikaras). These eight Avaranas help the Lingayats to earn the Moksha. These Astavaranas are divided as follows:

3.1 GURU: (A religious teacher or preceptor)

The Astavaranas are the eight fold shields or protective coverings of the devotee." In our Indian culture first place has
been given to Guru. Without Guru one cannot learn anything. There is not a single creed throughout the world which is without the Guru. In the Lingayats Astavaran first place has been given to the Guru. The role of a guru is most significant in the spiritual pursuit. He is the spiritual and religious guide who initiates the novice into the Lingayat faith with due forms.44

Guru stands first in the list of Ashtavaranas, as Guru initiates the Anga and guards him in the religious practice and spiritual culture. He performs the Dixka ceremony of the devotee. He gives the devotee real insight into the principles of the religion, explains the inner meaning of the practices and guides him on the path to Mukti. The Guru explains at the same time the difference between the Lingayat religion and other religions and proves and establishes how this religion is superior to all others. He is a spiritual mother. The devotee proceeds with the study of the principles and philosophy of the religion with the help of the Guru and takes guidance from him wherever necessary. Kapale, also stated that because of importance of the Guru he stands first in the list of Ashtavarana.49

3.2 LINGA (The phallus or emblematic representation of Shiva)

Linga stands second in the list of Ashtavarana. The Linga is given to the body at the time of birth, as the custom. The linga is always on the body of a person from the time of his birth till his death. The person should never lose his linga, because to lose it is to lose his life in the literal sense of the word. The daily worship of the Linga is necessary. It makes devotee aware of the necessity of religious life and spiritual discipline to be on the
way to Mukti.\textsuperscript{50} Kapale, also stated about the Linga. According to him, Linga is made of stone and it has three parts. These are Ban, phithika and Jalhari.\textsuperscript{51} Dr. Shivacharya also put forth the same view. According to him, Linga is made of sfatika or simple stone. It has three parts. These parts are Ban, Phitha and Gomukha.\textsuperscript{52} Shivacharya has used the word Gomukha. But there is no difference between Jalhan and Gomukha.

3.3 JANGAMA (An individual of a particular sect or saint)

The word Jangama derived from the root, gam, to move and the root also conveys the meaning of knowledge. In Lingayatism, the Jangama is used to denote a person, who is endowed with knowledge par excellence, who moves from place to place preaching the doctrines of Lingayatism and guiding the devotees in their spiritual endeavour. Rathinasabhapathy R. says about Jangama that, Jangama is the moving temple.\textsuperscript{53} It is stated in the Viragama that Shiva himself moves on the world in the form of the Jangama for the good of mankind. The Jangamas are persons competent to impart the sacred knowledge, because they have realised true nature of Shiva, so the Lingayat priests are called Jangama. Mogalewar, calls him "Maheshwar". According to Mogalewar, Jangama means he who moves place to place for preaching the Lingayat religion. According to Shivacharya, Jangamas are classified into a 'Svaya' 'chara' and 'para' indicating the graded development of God Realisation. Svya jangama lives in a village or a monastery (matha) in nagar. Chara Jangama moves from place to place for preaching the religious knowledge to devotees. Para Jangama lives at one place or he can move from place to place.\textsuperscript{54}
Kapale, has classified Jangamas in Guru, Desik, Ganachari, Mathpati, and Virakhta. In fact the Guru, Linga and Jangama are regarded as forms of the ultimate reality. Sakhare concurs with this view. Sakhare has stated that, Jangama is an itinerant moving about in the country for the guidance of the devotees in their spiritual exercises and culture. He is, therefore, considered equal to the Godhead, the Linga and also Guru.

3.4 VIBHUTI (ASHES)

The word Vibhuti means 'prosperity' wealth, etc. Vibhuti, Bhasita, Bhasma, Kasra and Raksa are the kinds of Vibhuti. It is essential to every Lingayat person to wear vibhuti. It is essential for lingapuja also. It is a religious exercise. It is sacred ash identified as spiritual wealth and prosperity. According to Sakhare, every religion has a set of religious exercises for its followers. The wearing of the cross by Roman Catholics is a special exercise intended for reminding them of the great solicitude that Jesus had for the salvation of the world. The Cross induces them to accept, and to co-operate with Christ for their personal salvation. Similarly, the sacred ashes of the Lingayats remind them of their six-fold enemies, viz, the desire of the world, anger, avarice, infatuation, pride and hatred.

Kapale, described how to wear Vibhuti. According to him, one should wear Vibhuti by uttering (reciting) "Triyayush Jamadahne" mantra on the shoulder, head, forehead, throat, hands, arms, ears, wrist, chest and on navel almost on the fifteen places on the body.
Shivacharya described the importance of Vibhuti as under: (i.e., forehead without vibhuti and a village without the temple of Shiva be condemned.)

3.5 RUDRAKSA (Beads)

The Saivagamas state that Rudraksa emanated from the eyes of Shiva, so it is termed Rudraksa. Seeds of particular tree are also called Rudraksa. All Lingayats treated Rudraksa as holy and wear it on their body. This is also a tradition that wearing the Rudraksa is considered as Lingadharma. It has important place in Lingayat religion. There are 38 kinds of Rudraksas and they are of one Mukha to fourteen Mukha.

It suggests that an aspirant (Sadhaka) should fix his firm and concentrated attention on the istalinga in order to burn the inward impurities and to realise himself. The fruit of wearing Rudraksa on the body is described in a number of works. Similar views regarding the emancipation and the reward of wearing Rudraksa are expressed in the Rudraksajbalopanisad.

3.6 MANTRA (Hymns or the sacred name of Shiva.)

The mantra is the aid to a sadhaka. It is termed mantra, because it protects the individual from difficulties and recitation of it leads ultimately to Salvation. According to Kapale, "Mannat Mayalc iti Mantra" it means the recitation which protects us is called 'Mantra'. According to Shakhare, the word mantra is derived from the roots 'to think' and 'to save or protect.' The mantra is a significant and precious word, which stands for deity 'Namassivaya' is the mantra which is expressive of Shiva. This mantra is termed 'Panchaksaramantra' but when 'Om' Pranava is added
to it, it is termed 'Sadaksaramantra'. Among the Seven crores of mantras, this 'Panchaksaramantra' is regarded as the best. Valuable works have been written by very great poets in Kannada to elucidate the significance and greatness of 'Panchaksaramantra'. Every religion has its own mantra, viz., 'Namosidhanam' of Jains, 'Buddham Sharanam Gachhami' of Buddhists. 'Jai Jai Ramkrishna Hari' of Varkari, like wise 'Panchaksaramantra' is the important mantra of this religion.

Lingayat Acharaya gives the mantra to their followers at the time of mantradiksa.

3.7 PADODAKA (Holy water.)

Padodaka means the holy water, In which the Linga, the feet of the Guru, and the Jangama are washed. Water is the most important of the five elements from the point of view of cleanliness. Water enables man to keep clean by washing away all dirt. According to the system of Lingayat puja having purified charanamrut from worshipping Guru, Linga or Jangama’s Padpuja is also called padodaka. By drinking it devotionally filth of mind is washed away and it becomes aware to understand his own 'self' and the knowledge.

The term padodaka is significantly interpreted in Lingayatism. 'Pada' denotes the preceptor and 'udaka' the disciple, their oneness is achieved through the process of Diksa. Padodaka is also interpreted as 'Pada' standing for supreme Bliss and 'udaka' for knowledge. Thus it can be said that padodaka serves to achieve the oneness of the precepter and disciple through the grace of the precepter, which helps the devotee to enjoy knowledge and the
supreme bliss. According to Sakhare M.R. external cleanliness of the body makes mind fresh and clean. This is a psychological effect. The padodaka is not merely ordinary water called thirtha. It is symbolical of the water of knowledge that washes away the taints that stick to and constrict the soul. Padodaka is holy for both Guru and devotee also. So Guru drinks it first and then devotee drinks it. Today in modern period Lingayat community does not give much importance to the Padodaka.

3.3 PRASAD: (Favour)

Prasada means 'favour'. In religious literature 'Prasada' is generally used in the sense of 'favour' or grace of God to the devotee, while prasada means the presentation of food to a guru, Linga or Jangama and eating sacramentally what is left. According to Linhayatism all objects have taints. The objects are to be purged of the taints and purified before using them. Hence, the devotee first offers food and other objects to the God and afterwards uses them. A warning is given that not to use any object unless it offered to the God. By the process narrated in the ritual works, objects transformed into 'prasada'. Hence, the devotee will be free from the bad effect of impurities attached to them and so enjoy serenity of mind.

A part from their religious purpose, padodaka and prasada have sociological significance. The devotees partake of the padodaka and prasada with others in the same place with utmost devotion. This helps to remove the distinctions of caste, colour, creed, rank, etc. Thus padodaka and prasada help to develop fraternity and unity among the Lingayats.
4) PANCHACHAR

In Lingayat religion instead of Ashavarana there are five rules. (codes of conduct). They are called panchachar. They are shivachar, Lingachar, Sadachar, Brutyachar and Banachar. The Panchachars are intended to convey the principles of religion and religious conduct in general, by these two psychological operations to the members of the community. These panchacharas or five codes of conduct are laid down for the behaviour of an individual as a social being. These panchachar are describes as follows in brief.

4.1) SHIVACHAR:

Every Lingayat should believe that the Shiva is the Supreme entity. He has not to worship any other deity. Lingayat should worship only Shiva throughout his life. Sakhare M.R. describes the Shivachar in following manner. The devotee has to maintain all throughout his life the faith and belief that Shiva is the only Godhead as the object of upasana to the exclusion of other deities. Whatever devotional acts he performs, prayers he offers, and thoughts he thinks they must be all about Shiva and none else. This is Shivachara. Mogalewar puts forth the same view.

42. LINGACHARA:

Lingachara is the worship of Shiva, through Linga. Linga is the symbol of Shiva. The worship of Linga is the worship of Shiva. Every Lingayat should worship the Shiva in the symbol of Linga and they should wear the Linga on their body throughout the life. The devotee should remain faithful to linga and serve him faithfully, throughout his life, as faithfully as the devoted wife has to serve her husband to the end of her life.
4.3 SADACHAR.

Sadachar means good behaviour. Sadachar requires a Lingayat to follow a profession and live strictly a moral and virtuous life. He should earn money by moral behaviour in his profession. He should utilise his money for supporting his family. He should use surplus money for others in their needs. He should give money to his Guru for the propagation of religion and service of the public. Lingayats do not make difference among them. They should take all to be as respectable and good as Shiva. Character, right moral and religious conduct, should be the only criterion and consideration in the intercourse with other members of the community, and nothing else like a high or low profession should influence affairs of social life. This is Sadachar. Mogalewar calls shudachar to the sadachar.

4.4 BRUTYACHAR:

Brutyachar is the devotee’s attitude of complete humility towards Shiva and his forms of Linga. Lingayat should maintain attitude of humility towards his guru, Jangama and give them respect. The attitude of Lingayat in social behaviour and intercourse should be one of humility, modesty and respect for others, so also he should be kind to all animals and treat them kindly. In short, he is a servant of the society and a friend of all animals.

4.5 GANACHAR:

Lingayats behaviour towards the community as a whole is called Ganachar. As a member of the community, he has to strive for its upliftment and development.
The two short descriptions of the panchachar will make it clear how they are intended to cultivate in the Lingayats an attitude of devotion and godliness, brotherhood in religion and co-operation between members, a straight forward and honest life. Mutual helpfulness and kindness to the animal world.75

MAIN FEATURES OF LINGAYATISM:

The main features of Lingayat philosophy and religion as preached by Basavesvara and his colleagues may briefly be summed up here.

According to Lingayatism the supreme soul in the form of Shiva or Linga is the only eternal and the real entity. The individual soul is Shiva coming to the worldly existence under the influence of Avidya or illusion. Avidya is also called Maya and sakti or energy, the origin of matter. The individual soul can be freed from the influence of maya by jnana, knowledge of the supreme soul and kriya, proper observance of prescribe rules. The individual soul can thus attain Mukti or liberation and be united with Shiva.76

Lingadharana is a distinctive feature of Lingayat religion. It is on account of this Lingadharana this religion is called Lingayat Religion and its followers, Lingayats. Linga worn of the body is not only the most prominent characteristic of the religion but its basic and central point.77 A true Lingayat must wear Linga on his body all times and never to be separated. This is the outstanding characteristic of the Lingayats. The most important and glaring feature of Lingayatism is the introduction of the ultimate reality, the emblem of Shiva in the form of Linga which is to be worn on the body by a person of this faith till his or her death.78
The union of the individual soul with the Supreme is the goal of the human life. This can be achieved by observing the rules, of Astavaranas Panchacharas and Shatsthala. Shatsthala leads a Lingayat on the path of spiritual progress and perfection. Among the Ashtavaranas Guru, Linga and Jangama occupy a prominent place. It is different from the orthodox creed of Vedic traditions in essentials. All are treated on the footing of equality.

Lingayatism laid stress on Ahinsa of non-injury. There is no place for violence. For the attainment of salvation due importance is given to faith, knowledge and manual work. Another important characteristic of Lingayatism is rule of Kayaka. it is attained dignity and is endowed with the Sanctity of religions observance.

Lingayatism is spiritual in essence and based on democratic principles which are applicable in social as well as in religious order. Liberal in outlook and simple in practice, it afforded equal opportunities for all without distinction. Apart from the ideals and principles preached, the teacher's spiritual eminence, spotless character, sincerity and earnestness, charming personality and benevolent activities vastly contributed to the propagation of the faith. This is also a characteristic of Lingayatism. The 12th century A.D. witnessed the rise and growth of Lingayatism, a major development in the cultural history of Karnataka and an exclusive contribution of Karnataka to Indian culture.¹⁹

Thus in brief, Lingayat religion and Community is prominent since the 12th century and played a vital role in the cultural life of South Maharashtra and Karnataka state. It is ideal religion and it has maintained its special identity and features even today.
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