CHAPTER : II

"LINGAYAT COMMUNITY IN KOLHAPUR DISTRICT"

(RITES AND PRACTICES)
1. KOLHAPUR: THE ADVANCED DISTRICT:

Kolhapur is a city of great antiquity which has been able to maintain its ancient celebrity and distinction almost uninterruptedly. Kolhapur derives its importance from its past political associations and its position as a great commercial, religious and educational centre. It was the capital of the former Kolhapur state, a premier state in the Deccan and was also the seat of the Residency for Deccan states. Kolhapur is known as the Dakshin Kashi or the Kashi of the South, the ancient temple of Mahalaxmi being the main attraction. Kolhapur is probably one of the oldest religious and trade centres in Western India. It has ever remained the great centre of learning and culture.

In the first decade of the eighteenth century, Kolhapur began as a Kingdom, one of the two branches descending from the first Maratha King, Shivaji Chhatrapati. During the British Raj, it remained as semi-independent princely state, after the independence, it merged into Maharashtra, one of India's major territorial divisions.

FORMATION OF KOLHAPUR DISTRICT:

Kolhapur as a district came into existence in 1949. Kolhapur is the one of the advanced and progressive districts of Maharashtra in respect of agriculture, Industry, marketing and Co-operative movement etc.
AREA AND BOUNDARIES:

The rivers like Kasari, Kumbhi, Dhamani, Tulasi, Bhogavati, Panchaganga, Duddaganga, Vedaganga, Hiranyakeshi, Tamraparni flow in the Kolhapur district. These rivers are useful for agriculture purpose and establishment of sugar factories. The district of Kolhapur lies between 15' and 17' north latitude and 73' and 74' east longitude. It has an area of 3,188.4 square miles.¹ It is bounded on the north by the district of Satara, on the west by the district of Ratnagiri and on the south by the Belgaum district of Karnataka state and east by Sangli district.

2) POPULATION OF LINGAYATS:

Today, it is difficult to state about exact population of the Lingayats in India or in Maharashtra or in Kolhapur district. From the available sources we can state that? In 1911 the population of Lingayats in Kolhapur state was 72,350.² In 1921 they numbered 60911. Males 31,901 and 29,010 females.³ Lingayats were recorded in 1931 as numbering as 74,975 in Kolhapur state of whom 38,646 were males and 36,329 females. They are chiefly found in the Hatkanangale, Gadchinglaj and Shirol subdivision. More than one third of their population is found in Gadchinglaj on the south east border of Belgaum.⁴ In 1941 the population of Lingayats in Kolhapur state was 85,656.⁵ After 1941, record about Lingayat population is not available. Mogalewar, the authority on study of Lingayat religion has given the population of this religion. He pointed out, there are fifty lakhs of Lingayats in Maharashtra.⁶ He also noted down the population of Lingayats in India also. In this connection
he pointed out that the population of Lingayats in India is about 4 crores.7

Today it is difficult even for a Lingayat person to state about the exact population of the Lingayats. This is the burning problem of the Lingayat community. Katkar has thrown light on this problem. Government of India has taken census after every ten years. There is separate column for every religion in the main Indian Census Book. The religions like Hindu, Buddha, Jain, Muslim, Christian and Sinkhs had separate column in the census book, but there is no separate column for Lingayats. Lingayats are divided in their sub-castes in the census book, like Maheshwar, Jangam, Veerashaiva Lingayat, Silvanta, Dixavanta, Pancham, Vani Lingayat, Kosti, Devang, Veerabhadra, Sudake, Gurava, Gouda, Gavali, Teli, Mali, Sali, Kumbhar, Tambloi, Hatagar, Cachar, Madival, Kapari, Abbik, Ilgar, Telage, Karad, Reddy, Simpi, Burud, Lingadhar, Lingader, etc. But in census book all these sub castes are mentioned under Hindus.8

3) SPREAD OF LINGAYATS IN KOLHAPUR DISTRICT:

How does the Lingayat religion spread in Kolhapur district is one of curious question. There are some Lingayat mathas in Kolhapur district of which some mathas have contributed a lot to the spreading of Lingayatism in Kolhapur district. These mathas had historical background and social significance. Allama prabhu Jyoti mandir, Alate, Ningudage Basavanna matha Ningudage, Siddhagiri matha Kaneri, Chitradurga matha Kolhapur, Jadiyasiddheshwara Bilvashvarma matha Gadhinglaj are the important mathas, which played an important part in spreading the Lingayat
religion in Kolhapur district. Allama Prabhu, the president of Anubhava mantapa, visited many places to spread Lingayat religion before the revolution of 12th century. During his visit, he lighted a flame in Alate, taluka Hatkanangale dist. Kolhapur. A temple is erected on that place, which is known as Allama Prabhu Amar Jyoti mandir Alate.9

It is the oldest religious centre and matha of the Lingayats in Kolhapur district. Today it has become a famous religious centre too. The flame which was lighted by Allama Prabhu about 850 years ago is still burning there.10 In this connection Mogalewar, has pointed out, today's Maharashtra was not existing in 12th century. Kalyan, which was situated in Karnataka state and boundary line of the Maharashtra was the centre of Veerashaiva movement. Mahatma Basaveshwara spread this movement in Andhra, Mysore and Maharashtra. Specially, on account of their trade the people of Lingayat community came into Maharashtra.11

4. CLASS STRATIFICATION:

The four social classes of Lingayat community are found in Kolhapur district. They are 1) Jangamas (priests) 2) Vanis (traders) 3) Panchams or Panchamalsals (craftsmen, husbandmen and herdmen) and 4) an unnamed class including servants, barbers, washermen and Mahars.12

These four classes are consisted of sub-classes. Jangamas include five classes Viraktas (renouncers of worthy pleasures), Pattadevirus (head priests) ayyas (teachers), carantis (wanderers) and maris (acolytes). Mogalewar states that married and unmarried are the two classes of the Jangamas.13 Viraktas wear the lion cloth
and short loose shirt and spent most of their time in devotion and study. Pattadevrus wear a waistcloth instead of a lion cloth and are less retired than virakatas. Ayyas are married and live chiefly on begging. Carantis (wanderers) go from place to place and gather contribution from Lingayat laity for the support of mathas. Maris (acolytes) are celibates and wait an viraktas. Unlike Bijapur Lingayats, Kolhapur Lingayats have no ganacaris.14 (Monastery managers) In Kolhapur, the heads of small monasteries are called mathadayyas. Vanis and Panchams or Panchamsalis can become Jangamas but it in only when a Jangama has no child or relation that he adopts a boy from these classes. The boy must be unmarried and must not be the child of a widow by her second husband.

The next class of Lingayat is vanis (traders). They are divided into silavantas and Lokavantas. Silavanta's rank is next to Jangamas and can become Jangamas by passing the purifying ceremony called diksa. Lokavantas who rank next to silavants can also become Jangamas. Except when a Jangam is the host or when the feast is held in a religious house, neither Silavantas nor Lokavantas eat with members of the lower classes.

The third division includes panchamas or pachamasalis, Teli (oilmen) Ambis (ferrymen), Gavalis (cowherds), malis (gardeners), and Kumbhars (potters). A Jangama may adopt a pancham boy.

The fourth or lowest class includes Nhavis (barbers), parits (washermen) and Mahars.15 Today the class restrictions are not observed strictly. These days all these sub castes are treated as Veerashaiva or Lingayats.16
5. CULTURAL LIFE OF LINGAYAT PEOPLE:

The cultural life of Lingayat people of Kolhapur district is more similar to the fundamental tenets of Lingayatism. They are similar to Lingayats of other parts of India. The features like Guru, Linga, Jangama and Vibhuti in the Ashtavarana are commonly found in their social life. They wear a linga on their body. Generally they observe fast on Mondays. It is supposed to be the day of Lord Shiva, so Monday is a pious day in Lingayat community. Kolhapur Lingayat people worship Gods like Basava, the founder of the faith whom they consider an incarnation of Nandi (Shiva's bull) Ganapati and Virabhadra, the son of Shiva and Ganga and Parvati the wives of Shiva. They also worship Yallamma of Hampi in Bellari and Yallamma of Soudantti in Karnataka state, and Dhannamadevi of Guddewadi in Jath taluka, then Tulajabhavani of Tuljapur in Marathwada is also worshipped by them. They observe fast of Shivaratri (Shiva's Night) in Magh (January, February) and make pilgrimage to Ulvi in North Kanara and Sangameshvar in Bijapur. Trade is the main and agriculture is the secondary business of the Kolhapur Lingayats. The names in common use among men are generally taken from the names of Shiva and some from the Basava, such as, Basaveshwara, Basappa, Basavani, Basayya, Veerabasappa, Channabasappa, Channappa, Chanayya, Siddheshwara, Siddappa, Siddhayya, Sivrudra, Gurusiddhappa, Gurappa, Gurulingappa, Gurulinga, Veerappa, Veerabhadra, Durdundeshwara, Dundappa, Danappa, Dundayya, Rudrappa, Mallappa, Mallikarjuna, Kadsiddheshwara, etc. These names are found in the old generation in Kolhapur district. Names like Kallappa, Kadappa are also found.
If a woman has lost several children, she gives the next child a mean name as Kallappa and Kadappa. Names like Mahadevi, Basavva, Basamma, Channavva, Chanamma, Chanakka, Siddhavva, Siddhakka, Siddhamma, Rudravva, Gangavva, Danamma, Ghoravva, Kallavva, Jivvakka, Parvati in women are found in Kolhapur Lingayats. Some double names are also found, such as Shiva Basava, Shiva Rudra, Basavarudra, Basava Prabhu, Basava Jyoti etc. There is one interesting thing that these names of men and women are chiefly found among aged people. These names are not found among the new generation of this community, due to the influence of modern life.

6. LANGUAGE:

Lingayats from Kolhapur district speak both languages Kannada and Marathi. Lingayats of Gadhinglaj in the South part of Kolhapur district speak pure Kannada. The mother tongue of the rest is a somewhat impure Kannada spoken in a Marathi tone. Many people use pure Marathi language in their day to day contacts with other people.17

7. HOUSES:

The houses of Kolhapur Lingayats are simple and clean and are occasionally two storeyed. They are divided into several dark and aired rooms, a cooking and a store room, a living room and a bed room. Near the kitchen there are niches in the wall with folding doors where pickles and dried sandge and other edible delicacies like papad are kept. A portion of the centre hall is set apart as a shrine where the Jangama is worshipped. No one is allowed in the kitchen or in the shrine except Lingayats. They have a strong dislike of leather. Leather and leather material is strictly
prohibited inside the house. Even to touch leather is to be avoided. Cattles are not kept in the house. They are kept in a separate shed. But now-a-days due to economic prosperity many Lingayats are living in the modern bunglows of cement. So generally old houses are vanishing and modern building are coming into existence.

8. FOOD:

Generally Lingayat community is a vegetarian community. Lingayats never use animal food or spirituous drink. Their daily food includes rice, millet bread, pulse curry, vegetables and milk whey, curds, butter and clarified butter, on holiday and at small parties they have rich dishes. Their caste feasts are plain. The two chief dishes are 'huggi' and 'holagis'. 'Huggi' is made of wheat and milk boiled together and seasoned with raw sugar and 'holagis' (rolly polies), is wheat cakes stuffed with gram flour and raw sugar. A Lingayat when alone or at one of a small party sits to eat on a low wooden stool and generally eats his food in a brass plate set on an iron or brass tripod. Except in travelling, when metal plates are not easily got and leaf plates are used, usually Lingayats do not use leaf plates. At dinner, before he eats, he holds his linga emblem in his left hand and bows to it. At caste dinners the guests sit on matting instead of on stools, and except Jangamas, they lay their plates on the ground and not on a tripod. A caste dinners before guests sit to eat, tirtha (holy water) that is water in which Jangamas feet have been washed, is poured over the guests hands. The guests sip the holy water, shout "Har Har Mahadev" and begin to eat. In eating, the right hand is
alone used. They never touch a waterpot to their lips while drinking water. Women dine after men.19

9. DRESS:

Virakta wear a loin cloth hung from a waistband and ochre-coloured shoulder and head clothes. Laymen and married priests generally wear a somewhat scrim waistcloth, and a headscarf. They do not colour their clothes with ochre. Husbandmen generally wear a loin cloth or short trousers, a blanket, a headscarf. Lingayat women tie their hair in a knot at the back of the head. They rarely deck their hair with flowers or ornaments. They wear the ordinary choli (bodice) with a back and short sleeves and the ends tied in front on the bosom, and ordinary sari, the skirt of the sari which falls like a petticoat is seldom drawn back between the feet. Lingayat women are also careful to veil the robe over the head. Like the men, women mark the brow with white cowdung ashes. Except that the women wear no head ornaments, the ornaments worn both by men and women are more or less the same as those worn by other Hindu communities.20

DAILY ROUTINE OF THE KOLHAPUR LINGAYATS:

Lingayat rises early, marks his brow with ashes and goes to the monastery to pay his respects to the Swami. He works till eleven, bathes, and sits on a white blanket in the central hall near the Jangama shrine, worships the Linga for about half an hour and then dines. In the evening he visits the monastery and bows to the head priest. Priests and a few pious laymen worship the Linga in the evening in the same way as he worships in the morning. But
the bulk of the laity simply wash their hands and feet and then wash the Linga and eat their supper.21

The Lingayat philosophy is called Sakti-Visistadvaita, a term which means the non-duality of God (viz., paraj Siva) as qualifies by Sakti (power). According to this system, God and Soul are inseparable it is 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 anisa (part) of Shiva and it imagines itself to be different from him on account of avidya (ignorance). The final goal of the soul is conceived in the Veerashaiva system is its aikya (unity) with para Shiva, the supreme reality. It is technically called Linganga samarasya.22 In this connection Sakhare, has pointed out, Shiva and Shakti cannot be apart from each other but are inseparably one. Shiva is the supreme entity. He is the all knowing, all doing, all sustaining, being called parkash, the serene Lord, all pervading invisible and infinite.23 Philosophy and practice are the two parts of the religion. The practice of a religion is based on the philosophy of the religion. Lingayatism attaches great importance to the observance of eight rules called astavarna. These are as follows: 1) Obedience to the Guru, 2) Worship of the Linga, 3) Reverence for the Jangama, 4) Smearing of Vibhuti, 5) Wearing of a rosary of rudraksa beads, 6) Padodaka, sipping the water in which the feet of Guru or Jangama have been bathed, 7) Prasada, offering food to a Guru, Linga or a Jangama, partaking sacramentally of what is left, 8) Mantra, the sacred
formula of five syllables, "Namah Sivaya" meaning, "obeisance to Shiva". These eight modes of piety are taught to every Lingayata child at the diksa ceremony.

All Lingayats from Kolhapur both men and women, from childhood to death wear, a linga. A Lingayat is very careful not to lose his linga. In theory a man who loses his linga is degraded and cannot again become a Lingayat. In practice if the linga is accidentally lost, the loser has to give a caste dinner, go through the ceremony of Suddhi, and receive a new linga from the Guru. Jangama performs all ceremonies in Lingayat community, including marriage ceremony and the last performances. The Jangama is succeeded by his son or near kinsman, or if he has no near kinsman, by a disciple. The head pontiff of the Lingayats is the Ayya of the Chitrakaldurga monastery in north west Mysore. He is greatly respected and when ever he visits Kolhapur he is received with enthusiasm. The Guru is a married Jangama and seems to be the direct descendant either by birth or by adoption of the first head of several families. The Guru is required to be present at every family ceremony. If he is not present, his place is taken by an ordinary ayya who conducts the ceremony. Besides linga which is worshipped by the wearer at least once a day, almost every Lingayata household has a wooden shrine for the house gods, those are worshipped every morning in the house. The shrine is placed in majaghar (central hall) close to the Jangama shrine. The house gods are small brass images generally representing Shiva's family, Shiva himself, his two wives, Ganga and Parvati, his two sons Ganapati and Virbhadra, and his bull the Nandi. The worshipper bathes, wears a silk, woollen or freshly
washed cotton waistcloth, marks his brow with cowdung ashes and worships the gods.

Most of the Lingayats of Kolhapur district fast on Sivarathri in Magh (name of a month in Marathi calendar). On Shravan Mondays (i.e., Mondays during the Marathi month of Shravan.) they take only one evening meal. Most of them go on pilgrimage to Kedarling on Jotiba's hill in Vadiratnagiri about nine miles north west of Kolhapur, to Nidsushi near Sankeshwara in Belgaum district, to the matha or monastery of Siddhgigi in Kadappa about six miles south of Kolhapur city and to Yedur in Chikodi in Belgaum district. A few go the Gokarn in north Kanara and Ulvi twenty five miles south of Supa in north Kanara.

In theory the Lingayat has no good or bad days. In practice Kolhapur Lingayats have a belief in good and bad luck and they often consult Jangama astrologers to find an auspicious day to perform a ceremony.  

**BIRTH:**

Formerly any suitable room in the house is used as a lying room when a woman is in labour a midwife is sent for. If the labour is long and trying, Jangamas are called to recite texts. After birth the room is purified by sprinkling water in which a Jangamas feet has been washed. But now-a-days a pregnant Lingayat woman generally is admitted to maternity home and gives birth to child. The birth time is recorded and a Jangama astrologer is asked to prepare horoscope and is paid according to the means of the family. If a birth takes place at an unauspicious time, the evil stars are honoured with offerings. On the fifth day after the birth of a
child a Jangama comes, recites verses, takes a linga, winds it in a
piece of silk cloth, and ties it round the child's neck or its
upper right arm. The name of the child is generally chosen by the
parents or by some elder of the family and is baptised by women
neighbours who came to witness the ceremony.25

MARRIAGE CEREMONIES:

Marriage system in Lingayat religion is simple.26 Lingayats
have adult marriages at present, though in the past girls were
married before marriageable age. Usually the proposal of marriage
comes from the boy's father, but in case the girl's parent aspire
for an educated son-in-law, the subject may be broached by the
bride's party. Educated and advanced families allow their children
some freedom in the choice of the male, and obtain their consent
before finalising the proposal. In the past marriages among the
Lingayats were not very expensive, as no dowry was required to be
paid either to the girl or the boy. However, in recent years we
come across the dowry system in this community.

The marriage day is fixed by a Jangama astrologer and marriage
booths are raised in front of the boy's and girl's houses. The
first pole of the booth is driven in pious moment. A marriage
ceremony generally lasts for four days, on the first day comes the
Videghalne (betel string) in token of the fact that the marriage
settlement is made and is binding. The bride is decked with
ornaments and in the presence of Jangamas and other respectable
members of the caste sugar is given to all. On the second day of
the Ganapati worship and the gugul ceremonies in honour of
Virbhadra. To worship the Virbhadra gugul ceremony is performed,
almost in all families, before the marriage ceremony, it is a procession with lighted torches from the house of bride or bridegroom to the river.

On the third day comes the devaka ceremony. All Lingayata families have the same devaka (A term for the deity or deities worshipped at marriages) on the fourth night the bridegroom goes to a matha with his wife in a great procession both riding on the back of a bullock or, of late, on horseback. At the matha the couple lay a coconut before the Swami and prostrate themselves before him. From the matha the procession goes to the bridegroom's house, where the ceremony ends with a feast and the distribution of alms.27

WIDOW MARRIAGE:

Window marriage is forbidden among Jangamas, silvants and lokavants pancams. Barbers, oilmen, potters, washermen and Mahars allow and practice of widow marriage. But today, in changing circumstances all Lingayats allow the widow marriage. The Lingayat widow may use a sari of any colour, wear the bodice and ornaments except the nosering and the lucky necklace (which is called Mangalsutra). But still a widow is held unauspicious and is not invited to take part in the marriage and other religious ceremonies.28 However, the married widow is treated with respect and is allowed in all marriage ceremonies or in religious activities like any other married women.
DEATH CEREMONY:

The dead body is buried in Lingayata community. When a Lingayat is on the point of death he is advised to distribute money in charity. Present a cow to the Jangama. His body is covered with sacred ashes. This rite is believed to cleanse the sin of the performer and is generally performed by old men and women. Jangamas are not required to undergo this rite as they are considered holy and do not need purifying. After death the ornaments, if there are any, are removed from the body, the dead body is washed in cold water in an open space near the house and is clad in full dress. The body is placed cross legged slightly leaning against a wall for two to eight hours or even longer if the dead is an old and very important personality. The dead body is seated cross legged in the chair and the chair is borne by four friends or kinsmen. No fire is taken with the procession and no women go with it. Mogalewr has stated that fire is taken with the procession. If the family is well to do musicians play ahead in the funeral procession. As the body is borne to the grave, men in the procession cry out "Siva Siva" or "Hara Hara" and at intervals betel leaves and copper coins are thrown on the road. Meanwhile the grave is being dug by labourers. The grave is 4 1/2 feet long, 2 1/2 feet wide and 3 feet deep. In the east side of the grave a niche large enough to hold the dead body is cut, and the inside of the grave is smeared with cowdung and purified with padodaka (i.e., water in which a Jangama's feet have been washed.) On the outside of the grave at each corner earthen linga with an earthen bull in front of each linga is placed. The grave is filled with salt and ashes till the
body is covered, and then with earth, and over the earth one or two slabs of stones are laid. The priest stands on the stone and the mourners wash his feet, lay flowers and bel leaves on them and offer him money. Then the whole party goes to a river or well, bath and return in wet clothes to the house of mourning where each of them sips a little Karuna literally grace, which is of higher efficacy than padodaka, and over which a large number of texts have been repeated. On the third, fifth or seventh day after death Jangamas and the near kinsmen of the dead are asked to dinner, and after this the family is considered pure and strangers may take food in the house. No monthly or yearly sraddhas (Death anniversary) are performed in honour of the dead. Rich families build a tomb with a masonry linga and nandi in the memory of the dead. They are worshipped daily by some members of the family.\textsuperscript{31}

Lingayat community in Kolhapur district is rich and many families follow trading activities. Now-a-days some people of this community are also pursuing studies and acquiring academic degrees. Co-operative banks and sugar factories are run by this community. There are many leaders in this community, who are active in the politics of Maharashtra.

In changing circumstances while going hand-in-hand with other people in the main social stream of Maharashtra, the community has still maintained its identity.
REFERENCES

1. Maharashtra State Gazetteer, p.166.


4. Ibid. p.167


16. Interview with Sangavdekar, Vasant of Kolhapur.


21. Ibid. p.175.


30. Ibid. p.212.