Chapter III

Colonialism and Formation of the Viraśaiva Community

In the previous chapter we observed that literature, history and religion are sites of conflicts in post-colonial Karnataka. The Viraśaiva community is very sensitive about its beliefs and its memories of history. Vacanas and the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement are more than literary or historical memories for the Viraśaivas. Therefore, literary controversies around the narratives of Viraśaivism are not only due to the community's agitation over the literary texts. It is also true that the community tries to lay forceful claims over the narratives of its history, literature and religion. The central aim of the community is to possess monopoly over them and resist any challenges to such monopoly. The narratives are central to its identity and the Viraśaivas have constantly re-written them in accordance with the requirements of the community.

The narratives of Viraśaivism do not have a linear progression in the history. They have come under constant transformation, more so in the colonial period. The Viraśaivas have found the narratives an effective means of re-configuring their community identity in the modern world into which they gradually made their presence in the early twentieth century. We argue that the historical imaginings, literary narratives or religious moorings of the community in the colonial period were part of refashioning the identity of the Viraśaivas and the community. Themes, images, metaphors, memories and symbols served as prime cultural resources for the Viraśaivas to imagine a modern identity. The modern identity of the Viraśaivas was premised on the issues of region, history, literature, caste, etc. In the next two chapters, we shall try to examine how the Viraśaivas, as an emerging community, engage in the process of constructing the community identity, and participate actively in refashioning its history and religion. This will be done by analysing literary controversies in the colonial Karnataka. In the present

1 The term 'emerging community' is used to imply the beginning of upward mobility of a community in social, political, economic and cultural spheres in the colonial period either in competition with other dominant communities or in collaboration.
chapter, we examine a historical context of *Shubhodaya* controversy. This controversy and the debates around it are good instances to understand the Brahmin-Viraśaiva rivalry set in terms of modern values. In fact, anti-Brahminism is inherent in the history of Viraśaivism. Hence, it is interesting to see how the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas competed to construct different identities of Viraśaivism during the colonial period. We also try to understand how the Viraśaivas had to face the paradox of resolving its internal differences, besides traditional rivalry with the Brahmins.

The chapter is structured in the following manner. The first section of the chapter will delineate two controversies around a Kannada drama and an article in *Shubhodaya* newspaper related to the Viraśaiva icons. The second section traces the history of the narratives of Viraśaivism documented by the western oriental scholars. This historiography will equip us to understand how the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas, trained in oriental scholarship, clashed against each other and the implications of such encounter on the representational politics. This section will also show how the local Viraśaivas received the 'oriental' knowledge. The third section illustrates the internal contradictions and what they meant for the imagination of Viraśaiva identity. The fourth section will give details about the religious conflicts between two monastic traditions of the community. The fifth section maps the emergence of new perception of Viraśaivism, which heralded a new shift in imagining a secular image of the community. The sixth and the last section discuss the post-*Shubhodaya* controversy circumstances, which haunted the memories of the Viraśaivas.

I

**Entering into Modernity through Narratives**

An article on Basava and Allama by R. Shrinivasacharya titled “Allama, Basavana Vrithantavenu? " (What is the chronicle of Allama and Basavanna? 18th April, 1919) in a Kannada weekly newspaper *Shubhodaya* triggered off a controversy in the cultural domain of Karnataka. Many Viraśaiva scholars objected to certain parts of the article. They accused the writer of tarnishing the image of Basava and Allma Prabhu in the article. Siddharamappa Pawate, an eminent Viraśaiva scholar and a legal expert, was
the most vocal in condemning and carrying out a systematic campaign against the article and the writer. He filed a defamation case in the first class magistrate court of Dharwad against the writer and the editor of the newspaper. Later the case was taken to the Bombay High court too. In the writ petition, Pawate demanded the cancellation of license to the newspaper on the ground that the article was in excess of freedom of expression and hurt the religious sentiments of the community. The article was seen as a challenge to the community's self-identity. Though there was no public disturbance, this controversy was an occasion in which the Viraśaivas tried to come together for a brief period to encounter the challenges to the community from the outsiders. This controversy became a question of self-respect for the community. The contents of the article are as follows,

Historical records of Allama indicate that he was a Shudra. The name 'Allama' is the symbol of a Muslim god. He is more connected to the Muslims. Chitrakalladurga's Muragi Mutt has been collecting donations from the Muslims in the name of their kinship with the Muslims. Allama went to Kalyan in order to assist Basava, a minister under Bijjala, who was converting many people into his new religion. He fed the followers of his faith. Allama went to his place with a liquor pot on his back, true to his previous caste ... We can confidently say that Basava spoilt the sacred Viraśaiva faith instead of developing it. With the desire to become the king, he harbored Minda-Punda Jangamas and built a secret army. He fed one lakh and ninety thousand Jangamas. This patronage of Basava was not out of Bhakthi but out of his desire to become the king. He was a conspirator but not a true devotee. Mythical beliefs and descriptions about Chennabasava and others are utterly wrong (1919:3. Italics mine)

Describing the Shiva Sharanas as Minda-Punda enraged the Viraśaivas. Pawate and other Viraśaivas condemned the article for defaming Basava as a conspirator and deriding the caste background of Allama. The article was seen as disrespecting and hurting the religious beliefs of the 'whole' community. The Viraśaivas adored Basava and Allama and therefore, distortion of their image was objected strongly. Mysore Star carried debates around this controversy regularly. In an editorial (20th June, 1919) an attack was launched on the article and the writer. In the editorial it was argued that religious feelings

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2 The original article was not available to us. Therefore, we have reproduced a part of the article, as it appeared in Mysore Star, a Kannada-English bilingual newspaper in the Mysore region. We have translated this part from Kannada into English.

3 Minda jangama means a mendicant who has not renounced enjoyment and sexual passion (probably belonging to one of the Tantra schools); punda means somebody who is mischievous,
of the Viraśaivas were hurt beyond imagination by the article. The editor warned the community,

... silence over this issue might spell doom to the community. Derogatory views against our religious icons should not be tolerated. That too the writer of the article belonged to the Brahmin caste (p.4).

The fact that the writer of the article belonged to the Brahmin community fuelled the controversy. The writer was denounced for the ‘excesses’ he committed in the article. The article was seen as an intrusion into the coherent narrative structure of Viraśaivism.

There were many efforts to involve the Viraśaiva religious heads in the campaign against the article since religious mutts were very important centres of social and religious activities of the Viraśaivas. For instance, Aratala Rudragowda, a prominent Viraśaiva leader, expressed his anger in a letter (18th April, 1919) to Tontadarya of Gadag (Tontadarya mutt) about the defamation of Shiva Sharanas in the article and sought his support in the campaign. In the letter, he strongly felt that the wrong doers should be punished. He quoted Viraśaiva Chintamani, an ancient puranic text in Sanskrit, to show that the Viraśaiva tradition advocated punishment to anybody who hurt the sentiments of the Viraśaivas. He appealed to the Tontadarya to donate Rs.3000/- to bear the legal expenditure and promised him that he would inform the public everyday about the expenditure in a newspaper everyday.

Following the hearings of the petitioner and the respondents, Mysore Star reported, the Dharwad magistrate court passed an order and asked the editor as well as the writer of the article to tender an apology for hurting the Viraśaiva community. At the same time the court also suggested the Bombay Government (since the jurisdiction of the court came under the Bombay Presidency) to file a case once again in the higher court, if found necessary. Another editorial in Mysore Star (20th Sep. 1919) cautioned that the Viraśaivas should not be satisfied with a mere apology of the editor but should persuade the Bombay Government to move the Bombay High Court. It maintained,

\[4\] Mysore Star was published by a Viraśaiva, Yajaman Veerasangappa. Veerasangappa began publishing this newspaper in 1882. This was one of the very few newspapers, which was taking pro-non-Brahmin positions. It was a very influential mouthpiece of the Viraśaivas.
This editorial also urged the Viraśaivas to realise that other communities (especially Brahmin community) were against the religious beliefs of the Viraśaivas. It reminded them of the Brahmins' unwillingness to recognise the Viraśaiva right to hold *Adda Pallakki* (a palanquin procession) honouring religious figures in 1917. In such hostile conditions, the editorial interpreted the *Shubhodaya* article as rubbing salt into the wounds of the Viraśaivas. The editorial mentioned about a recent resolution passed in a convention organized by the ABVM (1919) seeking a delegation to urge the Bombay Government to move the High Court and redress the loss of the community image. The delegation was comprised of eminent Viraśaiva scholars such as Y. Virupakshayya, Siddaramappa Pawate, Tammanappana Chikkodi, G. Paramashivaiah, and P. G. Halakatti. The Mahasabha appreciated Pawate for being a 'true Viraśaiva' in protecting the image of the community. The Mahasabha reminded the Viraśaivas of their duties to sacrifice one's life for protecting the Viraśaiva religion. The editor of the above article ((20th Sep. 1919) reminded the Viraśaivas of the glorious past when the Viraśaivas sacrificed their life for protecting the Viraśaiva religion and urged them to exhibit the courage now. The editor was proud of the fact that the term *Vira* signified bravery and therefore, the Viraśaivas should do anything for community's sake. A report on the Mahasabha meeting, mentioned above, in *Mysore Star* (in the same issue) suggested that every true Viraśaiva must go to all places to mobilize opinion to persuade the Bombay Government to move the High Court. But the appeal to the governor of the Bombay presidency was not admitted. The Bombay Government declared that it would not interfere in the religious or caste matters of the community.

A biographical sketch of Hardekar Manjappa by Alur Venkataraao has recorded a few details about the *Shubhodaya* controversy. It seems that the court sought the opinion of Alur, a renowned scholar, founder of the Karnataka History Congress and a Kannada
activist, on *Varnashramadharma*. It is not clear what the court wanted to know on the subject because Alur has not elaborated on this point. It could be on the status of *Shudra* for the article considered Allama as *Shudra*. Alur, an ardent Madhwa Brahmin, wrote that the case went against the Viraśaivas for the court considered his opinion on the *Varnashramadharma* (Alur, 1989:141). Ahir's version is quite contrary to the contention of the Viraśaivas that the editor of the newspaper and the writer of the article were required by the court to tender an apology.

Pawate, later on in *Basava Bhanu* (1922), accused Kashinatha Shastri of Gurusthala tradition for master planning the denigration of Shiva Sharanas publicly in complicit with the Brahmins (Pawate, 1922: 69). He blamed Kashinath Shastri for writing sacrilegious articles in the name of R. Shrinivasacharya and Shantappa Hammige. Shantappa Hammige was a Sanskrit Scholar and was closely associated to Kashinatha Shastri. He wrote *'Basavaadinijatratva Darpana'* (1923) in which he asked two hundred questions to Pawate and sought answers from him. Some of these questions challenged the claims made by Pawate regarding the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement and the origins of the Shiva Sharanas. An article by Obba Viraśaiva (anonymous Viraśaiva) in *Mysore Star* (25th January, 1920) severely criticized another article, which appeared in *Sampadhabhyudaya*, an economic journal edited by a Brahmin scholar. The article in *Sampadhabhyudaya* alleged that Pawate moved the court against the *Shubhodaya* out of his bias for the Viraśaiva community and hence it was communal. In a reply to this article, the Viraśaiva contested the allegations that Pawate was biased and drew upon many examples from Sanskrit works to prove Basava’s superior status in the world religion and explained how Basava was revered highly in the past and how Pawate’s case was in line with the expectations of the Viraśaiva tradition to safeguard the dignity of the community and its image. However, the writer was silent on the subject of Allama.

Many Viraśaiva scholars levelled several charges against the indifference shown by the Gurusthala followers in the controversy. In a public meeting on the occasion of

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5 Hardekar Manjappa is famously known as *Karnataka Gandhi* for his simple and saint-like life. He was also a freedom fighter. He did commendable work for the reformation of the Viraśaiva community.

6 For discussion on these questions refer pp. 152-156 of this chapter.
Basava Jayanthi (birthday of Basava) at Mydaragi (May 1920), many speakers appreciated Pawate and appealed to the public to stand by him at that crucial juncture. They condemned the Gurusthala followers for their indifference in this issue. They regretted that the community was unnecessarily caught up in the internal conflicts when the 'outsiders' were trying to tarnish the image of the community and take advantage. In a letter to Mysore Star (25th, April, 1920) Yagati, a Viraśaiva scholar, condemned the hostility of the Gurusthala leaders in not supporting the noble cause of Pawate. He warned that the Guru mutts would lose respect if they continued to practice discrimination against their own people and if they did not support Pawate. He was certain that antagonism within the community would disturb the unity of the Viraśaivas. Drawing an analogy of Pope's removal from the Church by Martin Luther in the fifteenth century, he cautioned that if the Gurusthala leaders continued to behave in partial and indifferent manner, the Viraśaivas would be forced to remove them. He mentioned two hagiographies viz., Basava Purana and Prabhulinga Leele in support of his claims that Basava and Allama were sacred icons of the community and the article in the Shubhodaya deliberately intended to distort their sacredness and divinity (Yagati, 1920:4). He regretted that the Viraśaivas lacked self-respect, dignity and community consciousness. He attributed such woeful condition of the community to selfish intentions of 'some people' (undoubtedly referring to Kashinatha Shastri) and personal rivalry with people like Pawate. He called for developing courage like the national congressmen who were bold and courageous in asserting themselves. He considered that the Shubhodaya article and the controversy was a black spot in the history of the Viraśaivas.

The Shubhodaya controversy became a mirror to see the self vis-à-vis the other for the Viraśaivas. They wondered unity and progress of other communities and regretted their state of condition due to internal divisions. A letter in Mysore Star by an unknown person Yatharthavadi (29th Feb.1920) felt bad about the internal rift within the

7 The Viraśaivas described the National Congress Movement as the Brahmins' movement and they were unwilling to join them. In the first few Viraśaiva Mahasabha meetings, the community tried to focus more on the reformation of their religion and society. Political issues, like Swadeshi movement, which was strong during the first decade of the twentieth century, were not at all discussed or any resolution regarding the political freedom was not passed. The Viraśaivas did not join the Swadeshi movement precisely for the same reason.
community. In the letter, the Viraśaivas were blamed for being constantly at war with one another and forgetting the responsibility of forging unity in the community. The writer exhorted them to learn the lesson from other communities to show solidarity and unity. It was warned that a third party would benefit if the internal conflicts between the Virakthas and Gurusthala followers continued and suggested that the community should strive for gaining maximum benefits from the reservation policies and the social welfare measures of the governments. The writer advised that the Viraśaivas could not afford to ignore such benefits. Several decades later Jawali, the writer of biography of Pawate, blamed the Panchacharya\(^9\) mutts for not supporting Pawate’s cause in the Shubhodaya controversy (Jawali: 1988, 24). He accused that the Pancacharyas showed indifferent attitude to Shiva Sharanas and their views were similar to the Brahmins and since there was no support from the Pancacharyas, Pawate suffered defeat in the case (Jawali, 1988: 25).

The Shubhodaya controversy attracted widespread attention. There were many Viraśaiva meetings in Mysore, Bellary and western Karnataka which passed a resolution that Pawate’s efforts to fight against the writer of the Shubhodaya article was not acceptable to them and the article in the paper was neither defamatory to the Viraśaivas nor to the Viraśaiva icons. The resolution was sent to the Bombay government with 173 signatures in it. But the editor of Mysore Star (20\(^{th}\) March, 1920) denied that such resolution was passed anywhere in the state. However, the editor wrote that if such meeting had taken place anywhere that would cause an incalculable harm to the interests of the community.

The Shubhodaya controversy has to be compared and contrasted with another controversy that erupted in the year 1912 around a play on Basaweshwara. This comparison will be helpful to understand how the community reacted when the Viraśaivas were accused of hurting the feelings of the Jains. The details of the

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\(^8\) In the Mysore region, the State Government had appointed Miller Commission to give recommendations on providing reservations to the backward classes in education and government jobs. The commission considered the Viraśaivas as backward class and they were enlisted for reservations.
controversy around the play are as follows: The first musical drama on Basava namely *Sangeeta Basaweshwara Nataka* was written in 1909 by Amarashastri Hiremath. Shivamurthy Swamy of Kanabaragimatha commissioned Hiremath to write the drama. This play heavily drew resources from *Basava Purana* for its theme. It dramatized the life of Basava and his miracles. It became very popular wherever it was performed because it propagated "devotion and renunciation". *Shri Kadasiddheshwara Prasadhi* *Konnur Karnataka Sangeeta Mandal* performed the drama for the first time in 1909. It was also performed in several places like Bailahongala, Gokak, Konnur, Athani, Rabakavi, Mudhol, Halagali, Bagalakote, Bijapur, Gadag, Dharawad, Hubli and Belgaum from 1909 to 1912. The drama was published in 1912. In a foreword written to this drama, Gurusiddhaswamy Savgaum Konnurmatha points out that the drama intended to serve the Kannada language, work for the welfare of the society and reform the Viraśaiva religion.

In December, 1911 the Bombay Government banned the performance of the play. When the drama troupe landed in Belgaum for performance, a few people from Jain community objected to the performance on the grounds that the drama disrespected their religion and their king (Bijjala). They feared that such dramas might lead to communal tension. In an article by *Nishpakshapathi* (impartial. 11th, March, 1912) in *Mysore Star*, banning the drama was severely condemned. The writer questioned the rationale behind banning it and wanted to know why it was banned now even though it was performed several times in several places in the past. The writer recalled a similar controversy in the past when the Brahmins demanded a ban on the drama due to its anti-Brahmin theme. That time, the government did not ban the drama but removed only those parts, which were objectionable to the Brahmins. But this time the government, due to heavy pressure from the Jains, went to the extent of confiscating the play and banning its performance. The writer expressed surprise if the situation continued like this, one day *Basava Purana* itself would be banned by the government. It was proposed in the article that the

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9 *Panchacharyas* constitute a caste of the Viraśaiva community and they believe that the five Acharyas established Viraśaiva religion before Basava revived it in the twelfth century.

10 S.R.Gunjal, a well known librarian, considers this drama as the first musical drama on Basaweshwara (Gunjal, 1999:27).
Virasaiva community should take the matter seriously and appealed to the government to withdraw the ban. Throughout the article, the writer addressed Basava as a divine propagator of the Virasaiva religion. It is significant to note that the question of internal conflict was not an issue in this context. Why did internal differences become so visible in 1919?

There were many such controversies all over India. In fact, instances of conflicts between the communities and the religions over books, articles and pamphlets were quite common. Censoring or banning a provocative article/book by the government was not uncommon. The government acted upon banning or confiscating only when there was a demand from a community or there arose a law and order problem. Otherwise, anti-government pamphlets, speeches or books were the ones, which were targeted by the government. Inter-religious controversies between Muslims and Hindus; between Hindus and Sikhs; between Hindus and Jains; between Hindus and Christians were quite common due to controversies. We come across controversies among several Hindu faiths too. Due to the social and religious disharmony, both the British government and the local princely states kept vigilance on the local media and literary works. The Government of Mysore was one among the first of the native states in India to enforce a law, which sought to regulate and control the publication of newspapers, books, etc. Many people were opposed to such interference of the government. But there were a few who wanted the government to retain powers to check scurrilous writings which tended to bring animosity between different sections and communities and also engendered hatred against the government. The Government of Mysore had taken large-scale action against many newspapers and periodicals by withdrawing their licenses. In order to prevent the controversies, the government made it mandatory that the name of every editor should appear in every issue? The two controversies, outlined above, clearly demonstrate that there were different versions of the twelfth century movement and the Virasaiva religion. Therefore, the Shubhodaya controversy was not just an indicator of conflict born out of heterogeneous and contradictory narratives of Virasaivism but also an

"The editor has discussed the controversy in detail in Mysore Star (1912).
indicator of the community's proclamation and assertion of its social and political position in the modern public space of Karnataka, which were sought to be realized by claiming control over the narratives of Viraśaivism. Since the public space was characterized by competition and unequal social relationships, the Viraśaivas had to constantly mark the differences with others to form identity and safeguard their interests. For this purpose, the Viraśaivas transformed the vocabulary of community and its identity in tune with the modern period.

The concerns of the Viraśaivas in the Shuhodaya controversy were to safeguard the community's image and encounter the Brahmins’ power of mediating the community. The Brahmins gained the power by recuperating their dominance in the modern condition. Modern conditions not only created opportunities for upward mobility of the communities but also did not alter social equations and patterns. The Viraśaivas, opening up themselves to newer conditions, had to face the modern conditions whose terms were already set by the Brahmins. However, the Shuhodaya controversy was not merely about the conflict between the Viraśaivas and the Brahmins. It is also important to note the processes that were underway within the community. The new literate group in the community had begun demanding a unified community and a progressive vision for the community. They were not happy with the present condition of the community. Their enthusiasm to reform the community, they feared, would be defeated by the internal rifts and the external challenges. The period between the Sangeeta Basaweshwara controversy and the Shuhodaya controversy indicates the culmination of imagination of the community identity in terms of modern values of universality, liberalism, individualism and democracy. The new Viraśaiva middle class felt that if the community matters were not addressed urgently the third party (the Brahmin community) would take advantage of the disunity among the Viraśaivas. On surface the Shuhodaya controversy was seen as the result of the Guru-Viraktha-Brahmin rivalry. But if we examine the social transformations underway during that time, the Shuhodaya controversy seems to be a consequent of the Viraśaiva community's struggle to come to terms with conflicting

narratives of Viraśaivism on the one hand and the rigid religious and social *practices* in the community on the other.

The debates around the origin of Viraśaiva religion, invocation of Basava and Allama in the modern period, unresolved issue of authentic textual tradition, internal social division, external challenges and an implicit desire for upward social mobility, etc. indicate the Viraśaivas' ambivalent position in the newer conditions. Therefore, the following discussion will historicise the narratives of Viraśaivism and examines how the Viraśaivas employ them to create community consciousness, resolve the internal conflicts and encounter the hegemonising designs of the Brahmins. Narratives and social realities are intricately connected and they exhibit dialectical relationship in the case of the Virasaiva community. It is obvious in the *Shubhodaya* controversy that the 'traditional' rivalry between the Viraśaivas and the Brahmins are not only explained in terms of social realities or power relationships but a rational is provided to legitimize the rivalry by invoking the narratives of Viraśaivism. Another point to note here is that the Brahmin" Virasaiva rivalry is constructed as traditional and the internal differences of the Virasaivas are attributed to modern realities. Therefore, the historicization will help us understand why the Viraśaivas, despite social inequalities within, imagined an integrated and a cohesive group. The central issue to our discussion, therefore, is the role played by the narratives of history and religion in imagining the new community identity and the Viraśaivas' attempt to camouflage the internal contradictions within the new identity.

II

**Colonialism, Orientalism and the Viraśaiva Community**

The western oriental scholars were the first to produce modern historiography (roughly from 1800) of the Viraśaiva community, its religion and literature. Initially, the British officers, civil servants of the British administration and the Christian missionaries showed keen interest in understanding the religion, philosophy and social practices of the Viraśaivas and their community. They initiated the modern methods of documenting a much more varied and detailed body of official information about the Viraśaivas through massive projects such as the census, gazetteers and land surveys. They were
comprehensive compilations of information on regional social groups, customs, rituals, religious beliefs and theories of origins. Many ethnographic accounts, theological works, historical facts and literary works were collected and documented by the western orientals from different parts of the then Karnataka. The western orientalists claimed much higher standard of scientific accuracy and finality. The information, thus collected and documented, was used for several bureaucratic, administrative, legal and religious purposes.¹³

There were many surveys and travel writings in the early nineteenth century by Buchanan, Murray Hammick and Mark Wilks related to the southern part of Karnataka. The British government, after dethroning Tippu Sultan and annexing the Mysore region, commissioned Buchanan to collect and record the economic situation, social life, religious practices and popular beliefs of the people in the region. According to Shouten, Buchanan collected details about the Virasaiva castes during his travels between 1800 and 1801 in the southern parts of Karnataka (Shouten, 1991:128). Buchanan relied on oral narratives, traditional documents and Sanskrit-Kannada Virasaiva works (mainly Basava Purana) for gathering facts about the Virasaivas. His main informant was a head of Ujjani mutt who was also a religious head for the Ikkeri chieftains in the eighteenth century. Buchanan's documents reveal the social and professional structures in the community then. According to his accounts, there were many divisions of labour among Shivabhaktas. Shivabhaktas was the term used by Buchanan to identify the Virasaivas. There were many sub-castes of the Virasaivas in the Mysore region. He mentioned the existence of two types of sects among Shivabhaktas viz., Virasaivas and Ordinary

¹³ Bernard Cohn has rightly noticed that the amount of information collected by the British officials was put to practical purposes of administration. He points out,

This information was needed to create or locale cheap and effective means to assess and collect taxes, maintain law and order, and it served as a way to identify and classify groups within Indian society. Elites had to be found within Indian society who could be made to see that they had an interest in the maintenance of British rule. Political strategies and tactics had to be created and codified into diplomacy through which the country powers could be converted into allied dependencies (Cohn, 1996: 283)
Shaivas. The first sect was constituted of Jangamas and Banajigas, while the second sect was comprised of artisans, cultivators, etc.

The accounts of Mark Wilks and Murray Hammick during 1820s reveal interesting aspects of the “Jangums” in the Mysore region. Both the English scholars had consultations with "some intelligent Jungum priests" (Wilks and Hammick, 1980:830) in order to gather details about the community. They found out the anti-Brahmin feelings of the Viraśaivas. They recorded,

... the Jungums condemn as useless and unmeaning the incessant detail of external ceremonies, which among the Brahmins of every persuasion occupies the largest portion of their time and forms the great business of their lives. (Wilks and Hammick, 1980:830).

And they considered,  

*Chen Bas Ishwar*, a native of Callian in the Deccan, the reputed founder of the sect in the eleventh century, to have been only the restorer of the ancient true belief (italics mine. ibid).

A striking point here is that Chennabasaweshwara is mentioned as the founder of the Viraśaiva sect. Owing to lack of historical facts, they could not decide if the Viraśaivas constituted a separate religion or not. Another point to be noted here is that there were several beliefs about the exact founder of the Viraśaiva sect in early eighteenth century and these differences did not emerge suddenly in the twentieth century.

According to R.N.Nandi, a well known historian,

The first historical sketch of the Lingayat sect appeared in H.H.Wilson's essay on the religious sects of the Hindus, which was published in two consecutive issues of the Asiatic Researches (vols. VI-VII) between 1828 and 1832 (Nandi, 1986:167)

However, Wilson could not continue that task since he found it very difficult, as there were very few texts or historical facts available to him. Before abandoning the task, he collected the manuscripts of Sanskrit *Basava Purana* to sketch the life of Basava and understand the features of the Viraśaiva community as delineated in it.

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14 For information regarding these sects, I have relied on Gunjal's article (2000) on Buchanan.
Wilson Mackenzie, the first General-Surveyor of the East India Company, also carried out a remarkable job in recording the details about the local traditions and knowledge systems. He commissioned Devachandra, a Jain, to write the history of the then Karnataka. Since Devachandra did not know English, he wrote ‘Raajawali Kathasaara' in Kannada. In this historical documentation, Devachandra, while narrating the twelfth century religious life, depicted Basava as a wealthy man who amassed huge wealth due to his high political power as the Prime Minister in the court of Bijjala. Basava, according to Devachandra’s accounts, used his position and power to convert large number of lower caste and upper caste people into his religion. Bijjala and other Brahmin colleagues did not like these conversions. They thought that Basava conspired to kill the king. Basava eventually succeeded in getting the king killed and before this incident happened, he fled to Kudalasangama. The general notion that the orientalists consulted only Sanskrit texts and the Brahmins for constructing an image of India seems to be overstated in the context of Devachandra. The western scholars conducted ethnographic studies on the non-Brahmins and they collected details about the local knowledge traditions, which were not in Sanskrit language. A classic example to illustrate this point is C.P.Brown and his works on Viraśaivism.

In 1840, C.P. Brown, a Postmaster General in the present day Andhra region, published a small write-up on the Viraśaivas titled, "Essay on the creed, customs and literature of the Jangamas“ (1840, 1988). In the article, he dealt with the question of the origin of the Viraśaiva sect with greater focus on the Jangamas. His details about the community give us sufficient evidence to show that there were mainly two sects viz., Basava sect and the Renukacharya sect among the Viraśaivas. And both the sects held different views about the origin of the Viraśaiva religion. While Brown was full praise for the Basava cult, he did not like the Aradhya (of Renukacharya sect) because they had incorporated certain Brahmin rituals like Sandhyavandane (adoration of the Sun usually during evening) and they kept distance from the common people. He referred Siddhanta

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16 Brown is praised highly by the Telugu literati for his contribution to Telugu literature and he was the first to prepare a systematic dictionary of Telugu-English.
Shikamani in Sanskrit to record the textual beliefs of the Aradhyas. According to the Aradhyas, Brown noted, Revanaradhya, Marularadhya, Eko Ramaradhya and Panditaradhya were the precursors of Basava. They respected the Vedas, “which as they assert prove their authority as Brahmins” (Brown, 1998: 94). He found them fond of Sanskrit texts like Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita, Nilakanta Bhashyam and Agamas.

Brown drew on various hagiographies of Basava written in the thirteenth century to construct Basava’s life history. For this purpose, he consulted several communities apart from the Viraśaiva community. According to him, Jain myths depicted Basava as an escapist who fled Basava Kalyana for self-protection, while other myths mainly Basava Purana illustrated Basava as a divine incarnation. He considered Basava as “staunch opponent of every Brahminical principle” (ibid: 85). Basava’s rebellious attitude in abandoning the sacred thread of the Brahmins at the young age and his attack on the orthodoxy of all religions are compared by Brown to the Christian ‘Protestant’ movement of the west in the sixteenth century.

He showed keen interest in the Viraśaiva sect for its anti-Brahmin tradition. His interest in the non-Brahmin community was mainly due to his differences with the western oriental scholars. He always held that the western oriental scholars were partial in collecting and concentrating only on the Brahmin texts to understand India. He was also not happy with the local Brahmin experts who gave wrong picture of the Viraśaiva community. They misled him with false information about non-Brahmin local traditions. They were, Brown felt, prejudiced towards other literatures and traditions. His discussion and subsequent differences with H.H.Wilson on the history of the Viraśaiva community inspired Brown’s research and scholarship on the "non-conformist and anti-Brahminical Viraśaiva sects" (Peter, 2001:124). Peter L. Schmittherner, a historian, who has done a commendable study on Brown and his ethnographic works, points out,

Contained in desi literary traditions of Kannada, Telugu, and Tamil speaking peoples, the tenets and lore of these sects had previously been little examined by European scholars. The study of these traditions had certainly been discouraged by most Brahmin pandits, who viewed Viraśaiva works as heretical and inelegant. But through several Viraśaiva assistants that he hired after returning
to India, Brown was able to procure numerous Virashaiva-based texts and he would examine most closely those composed in Telugu. Within two years of returning to India, he would publish extensive articles on the Viraśaivas and their principle text, Basava Purana. While this scholarship would enhance his reputation among European Indologists, it would also adversely affect his already tenuous association with conservative Brahmin scholars, (italics in the original, ibid: 124).

Brown found religious beliefs and practices of the Viraśaivas much more palatable than those of mainstream Brahminic religious traditions. Peter continues,

Before he had begun conducting any research on the Virashaivas, his Brahmin associates had informed him that much Virashaiva literature was 'full of the grossest deprivities' (ibid: 212).

Brown compared the literatures produced by both Viraśaivas and Brahmins. After much deliberation, he came to the conclusion that the Brahminic literature itself was much more offensive than the other literatures. He remarked,

Brahmins frequently allege that the Jangams are a depraved sect, who is guided by Tantra or heretical books. But we should not incautiously believe this. The Jangams are in all respects opposed to licentiousness, which is the main spring of the Tantras ... The Jangams adore the linga and abhor may a, the goddess of Delusion (venus or Kali, as Devi) who is expressively the goddess (yoni or Bhoga Malini) of the Tantriks (Brown, 1988:101).

He expressed disagreements with the Viraśaiva informants about the origin of name of Allama as believed by the Viraśaiva informants. He thought,

Considering that this creed arose in the west of India, in a country bordering on that inhabited by the Syrian Christians, it has sometimes occurred to me that every possibly some of the tales regarding the Basava may have borrowed from legends current among the Syrian Churches. Both chronology and geography seem to strengthen this suspicion; and it is worth of notice that the name Allama, which resembles the Syriac and Arabic name of God, is attributed by them to their deity. The word Allama seems to be foreign (ibid: 106).

However, Brown' views about Allama were strongly disapproved by the Jangama informants who believed "no Jangama had ever been known to embrace Christianity or the Mohameddan faith" (ibid: 106). Brown showed that the Viraśaivas were very law-abiding and admired their "considerate and decent behaviour ... toward the female sex" (Peter, 2001:213). What strikes our attention is his focus on the ‘folklore’ traditions of the
Virasaivas. Apart from the written text *Basava Purana*, Brown based his construction of the Viraśaiva community and religion on the folklore traditions.

Brown’s researches and collection were done in collaboration with the local experts. According to Peter, Brown’s study on Viraśaivism was a collaborative ‘project’. A few Smartha Brahmins like Vireshalinga Shastri and Mallikarjuna Panditharadhya of Rajamundry (Andra region) assisted Brown in accessing the Viraśaiva works. Peter opines that Brown’s ethnographic study shows us how the communities were competing each other for representing their respective literatures and traditions.

In the sixties of the nineteenth century, the attention of Christian missionaries was drawn towards the sect. However, there are marked differences between the British Empire and the missionaries in the construction of local traditions and cults. Missionary movement is generally seen as an aspect of colonialism. But one has to distinguish the activities of the Church and the British administration. Both had their own reasons or agendas for wanting to understand, study or in some way represent the orient. We have,...

... to draw the distinction between the Orientalism which one might describe as the ideology of empire and the attitude and activities of the nineteenth century evangelical missionaries who were also involved in representing and having a different kind of colonialism over the orient (Oddie, 1994:29).

Rev. W.J. Wurth was one such Christian missionary who has done a remarkable survey of the Viraśaivas. He was a Protestant priest of the Bassal Mission and a close associate of the Viraśaivas in Dharwad. In 1853, he translated Bhimakavi’s *Basava Purana*, a late thirteenth century Kannada work translated from Sanskrit work *Basava Puranamu*, into

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17 Daniel D’ Attilio of University of Wisconsin has studied Brown’s works on the folklore traditions of the Viraśaiva community. In his research paper “Challenging Current Virashaiva Historiography: C.P.Brown’s Study of the Role of Folklore and Aradhaya Brahmins in the Evolution of Elite Viraśaivism in Telugu” (paper presented as a part of commemorating C.P.Brown’s birth anniversary) Attilio argues that Brown’s contribution to studies on Viraśaivism should be taken seriously because he highlighted the religion’s folk underpinnings and revealed the central role played by *Aradhya Brahmins*, a caste of Brahmins who have adopted part of the Viraśaiva doctrine and culture, in the development of its elite form. They lived chiefly in Andhra Pradesh where they constitute the highest section of the Viraśaiva community and they are also found in Mysore. He thinks that as long as Brown’s studies are neglected, our understanding of Viraśaiva history is likely to remain skewed. *Orientalist Scholarship on South India Reconsidered: A Panel Commemorating CP Brown’s Birth Bicentenary.* Online. Aasianst. Sasia. 21st, March, 2003.
German. Its abridged version was published in the eighth issue of the *Journal of the Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society* in 1865. In the same issue, Wurth provided a fuller translation of the *Cennabasava Purana*, a late sixteenth century hagiography of Chennabasavanna. In a postscript to the purana, Wurth remarked sarcastically that Basava and Chennabasavanna did not fulfil their promise to reappear from the west and preach the Viraśaiva religion anew. Instead, Christian missionaries appeared from the west to propagate Christianity. The translation of the two puranas, though fragmentary and based on unedited manuscripts, promoted further critical study of the sect and its sacred literature. Publication of various other hagiographies such as *Virupakshasha Purana*, *Chennabasava Purana*, Lakshmisha’s *Jaimini Bharata*, appeared in *Bibliothica Carnatica* (Basavaraju, 1995) during this period.

In 1875, Rev. F. Kittel, another missionary activist of the Basal mission and pioneering force behind the Kannada-English dictionary, discovered and translated seven Lingayath legends "taken from the *Anubhav asikhamani*, a popular Lingayath composition in Kannada (Canarese)" (Kittel, 1875: 211). They were published in the *Indian Antiquary* in 1875. An annotated catalogue of all the Viraśaiva texts in the fourth issue of *Indian Antiquary* is useful as it critically examines the dates of the texts, the type of literary composition, etc. Drawing upon his acquaintance with the Viraśaiva literature, Kittell observed that the earliest literature of the sect was in Sanskrit and probably Telugu. Kittel, in "Ueber den Ursprung des Lingkultus in Indien" (1876), in German, argued that worship of Linga, stone form of Lord Shiva, was transferred to the south India from the north India. Aryans were instrumental behind the origin of Linga worship. According to him worship of Linga existed in the Veda period also. His views about the worship of Linga and its origins were contrary to other western thinkers such as Stevenson, Lossen, W.German who argued that Shaivism first originated in the south India and later on spread to the north India. Kittel opined that the Linga worship was as old as the Aryans. Such scholarly work gave ample evidence for the Viraśaivas of the late nineteenth century to argue that Shaiva works had Vedic origins. The Viraśaivas subscribed to this theory very enthusiastically because they could attribute antiquity to their religion as far

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18 Kittel uses the term Lingayath instead of Viraśaiva.
back as the Vedic period. K.M.Mathew, who has done doctoral thesis in Kannada on Kittel, wonders that Kittel considered the name ‘Allama’ as derivative of Islamic word ‘Allah’ (Mathew, 1994:95). The debates about the exact source of the name of Allama ignited heated discussion now and then. The Shubhodaya controversy was just a tip of an iceberg related to such conflicting and different versions of Allama.

A brief note on the Viraśaiva religion appeared in A.Barth's *Religions of India* (1881). Barth was of the opinion that it was very difficult to reconstruct the history of the sect on the basis of unhistorical texts and hagiographies, but he knew that they contained valuable historical information. He believed that Basava’s sister Nagalambike was a mistress of Bijjala, whom he described as the son-in-law of Basava. Barth's brief note on the sect was followed by other short sketches, which appeared in the *Early History of the Deccan* (1897) documented by R.G.Bhandarkar, a well-known philosopher. His theory of Viraśaivism was based on the Sanskrit works like Siddhanla Shikamani, Basava Purana and Prabhulinga Leele. His views on Basava and his revolution were premised on the evidences drawn from Dharani Pandita’s, a Jain poet, Vijjarayacharite and Wilson Mackenzie's historical accounts. He took up the problem of origin of the Viraśaiva sect for serious investigation in 1913. He discussed his new findings in his monograph *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*. He believed that the sect was founded a hundred years earlier than Basava. He attributed the establishment of the religion to the efforts of the Aradhya Brahmins who were supported by the trading classes. According to him, the Aradhyas were disaffected Smarta Brahmins who had fallen from the royal and aristocratic patronage with the development of temple landlordism and a corresponding devaluation of domestic rites of the householder prescribed in the Smrtis. However, the ritualistic practices of the Aradhyas did not change much even after joining the new faith. They exhibited Brahminical rituals.

Certain parts of the Bombay and the Mysore Gazetteers (1897) on the twelfth century Viraśaiva history became contentious because the Viraśaivas raised objections to

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19 Second edition of this was published in 1985.
the false information about the community and its history. Both gazetteers recorded that Basava's influence increased when Bijjala married his sister. During the revolution, Basava fled and with the help of his numerous followers he defeated the king. His followers killed Bijjala later. Basava instigated his followers and ultimately he could not control them. Consequently, they all went out of his control and committed the murder. It was also written that Basava appointed Jangamas to high positions and spent large sums of King's fortune to support and keep them.

J.F. Fleet, whose essay on the Managoli and Ablur stone inscriptions were published in 1899, reconsidered the problem of founder of the Viraśaiva religion. These two inscriptions belonged to the eleventh century. The Ablur stone inscription disclosed the name of a person called Ekanta Ramayya, who towards the end of the twelfth century brought about the revival of the worship of Shiva. The Managoli inscription gave evidences of existence of Kalamukha sect, a Shaiva sect and revealed details about Basava. But it was not sure if Ekantha Ramayya was Basava or not. Fleet argued that the real founder of the sect was Ekanta Rama and not Basava. He based his opinion on the inscriptive references to the anti-Jain activities of Ekanta Rama. However, his findings suffered from certain limitations because none of the Ablur records mentions for once either the term Viraśaiva or the term Lingayat. Therefore, Fleet's theory that Ekanta Rama established the Viraśaiva religion was ignored as baseless. There were many doubts raised about the authenticity of the inscriptions. Fleet's study, however, brought useful inscriptive data to bear on the anti-Jain activities of the Shaivites of Karnataka, during the latter half of the twelfth century. We can also find many instances of anti-Jaina attitude of the community in the early hagiographies of the thirteenth century including Basava Purana.

Encouraged by inscriptive references to Ekanta Rama, later scholars set themselves to assess the relative roles of Basava and Ekanta Rama in founding the Viraśaiva religion. Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari's Caste and Tribes in South India

20 Fleet discovered these two stone inscriptions in the late nineteenth century. Halakatti accepted the authenticity of these inscriptions in the beginning but later on he doubted if Ekantha Ramayya was really Basava of Kalyana or somebody else. For this information see Jeerige K. Basavappa (1939).
(1909) and later Nicol Macnicol’s articles on the community in *India Theism* (1915), equated Basava with Martin Luther and Ekanta Rama with Erasmus. Thurston and Rangachari, like their predecessors, gave details about the social structure of the community. They pointed out at the unequal professional groups, which constitute the present Viraśaiva community to show that the sect was pressed back into the framework of caste system though it was formed to override such a system, and that the degeneration started about the seventeenth century. According to them,

As the Lingayats, or Panchamasalis, they styled themselves, increased in importance, number, and wealth, elaborate forms of worship and ceremony were introduced, rules of conduct were framed and a religious system was devised on which the influence of the rival Brahmana aristocracy can be freely traced. Thus, in course of time, the Pachamasalis became a closed caste, new converts were placed on a lower social footing, the priests alone continuing as a privileged class to dine freely with them (Thurston and Rangachari, 1987:249-50)

Basing their arguments on the local expertise, field works and excavation of Managoli and Ablur stone inscriptions, the two hesitatingly arrive at the idea,

We have at least met with an epigraphic mention of the Lingayath founder, Basava. This is eminently satisfactory, but is somewhat upsetting, for the inscription makes Basava a member of the Kasyapa gotra (ibid: 244).

The confusion in deciding the *gothra* (zodiac) of Basava was also closely associated with the contentious issue of caste of Basava. They could not definitely arrive at a conclusion that Basava belonged to Kasyapa gotra and hence he was a Brahmin. Nicol Macnicol’s treatment of the subject is impressionistic and does not show his familiarity with the sources. He concluded his study by holding that the chief purpose of the Viraśaiva movement in the twelfth century was to overthrow Buddhism and Jainism.

In 1915, R.E. Enthoven contributed a long note on the Lingayats in the eight volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Enthoven carefully studied the social structure of the Lingayaths to show that the priests and traders together known as the Panchamasalis constituted the highest social stratum among the Lingayats. They are entitled to all the *astavaranas* (eight decorations) of a full Lingayath. However, Enthoven

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21 Enthoven also uses the term Lingayath.
noted, the inessential workers including some untouchables who did not have the right to any of these decorations, but still they were known as Lingayats.

In the light of the above discussion, we can notice four main contradictory and paradoxical points: a) differences over the exact founder of the religion, b) projection of the Basava cult and the Renukacharya cult as the only two dominant religious and scriptural traditions of the Viṣṇuṣṭha community, c) the radical and subversive elements of the community in accepting monotheism and discarding rigid Brahminical rituals, d) existence of caste distinctions, rituals and professional hierarchies. Thus, colonial ethnographic and sociological materials differed widely on several aspects. Amidst these paradoxes and contradictions, the new class of English educated Viṣṇuṣṭhas felt a profound impact of the forces of modern discursive practices inaugurated by the colonial system. With exposure to the ideals of democracy, equality and secularism, it had to engage modernization actively in order to stake claims socially and politically. Modern English education, new political vocabularies, British government policies on agriculture, village panchayath system, centralization of political powers and consequent changes in the social and cultural life of rural and urban areas determined the contours of the Viṣṇuṣṭha community's engagement with modernity. Educated Viṣṇuṣṭhas, very few then, felt the pinch of professional hierarchy in the public life especially in the newer forms of print technology, government jobs, legal system, etc. The counterclaim to ‘Brahminhood’ of the Viṣṇuṣṭhas in the 1880s acted as an equally formative influence on the Viṣṇuṣṭhas. In order to cope with the changing situation and achieve the desired goal of social, political and economic mobility, the Viṣṇuṣṭhas gradually began to mobilize the resources for overall growth. This mobilization was intended to raise the consciousness of the rest of the community.

III
Revolving around the Contradictions of Viṣṇuṣṭhism

K. Ishwaran, a sociologist, explains the three stages in the evolution of affiliations of Viṣṇuṣṭha community and politics in the modern period. They are 1) the fragmented stage, 2) the unitary stage, and 3) the individualistic stage (Ishwaran, 1983:123-25).
A very low level of social mobilization characterizes the first stage. This is because the community is fragmented into a larger number of un-coordinated sub-groups/sub-castes. The primary aim of the politically and socially conscious community leaders is to eliminate this fragmentation by forging a coherent community and political power. Such political power itself was perceived as a pre-condition for the social cohesion of the community. Ishwaran considers such community affiliation as genuine communal politics because it was directed towards the overall community welfare, development and progress. At this stage, according to him, individual welfare was relegated to the background.

In the second stage, the increasing politicisation of the community resulted from the rise of a small middle class within the community. This led not only to an increase in the political resources of the community, but, as well, to a greater sense of political competition between groups within the same caste group. In this period, the Virasaiva community, mediated by its middle class sensibility, became politically modernized in the sense that it displayed a modern political culture, characterized by democratic type of politics, involving the party organization as well as pressure-group mobilization. The overall thrust of this political development was to establish a cohesive community and political power by moving into the broader society.

The third stage indicated the dissolution of the community sense under the pressure of increasing individualism within the caste group. We find at this stage a shift from pre-modern politics to a modern politics of a liberal type. In this stage, according to Ishwaran, the community was oriented towards aggressive individualism. What he meant by individualism was that the leaders of the community became more self-centric and they ignored the interests and welfare of the community. To put it in other words the Virasaiva leaders wore the communal garb to promote self-interest.

Ishwaran's ideas of three stages can be broadly summated into three time periods: a) late nineteenth century, b) early twentieth century and c) post-independent period. For our purpose, it is the first two stages that are relevant for understanding the changes in the
community's social and political life. The above discussed controversies and the emergence of new middle class intelligentsia in the community can be categorized under the first stage. However, we cannot understand the second stage if we do not make sense of the first stage for the second stage is also intertwined with the first stage.

It was only after 1870s that the Virasaivas were aware of the importance of reconstituting their religion, culture and literature in the modern period. They responded and contributed to the heterogeneous and conflicting narratives of Viraśaivism in ambivalent manner. While the Brahmin intellectuals' historical traditions and habitual familiarity with textual learning and wisdom coupled with social and economic privileges facilitated them to scribe a new, modern history of their community (Geetha, 1994) and Karnataka, for the non-Brahmin Virasaivas history and past were to be scripted ‘newly’. The Virasaivas also used sections of colonial discourses in putting forward their own interpretations of their history and the community. It was a historical inevitability for the Virasaivas to rediscover and reshape their history and literature to erase what they thought misrepresentations and contradictions. The Virasaivas felt the need to prove their worth against the 'misrepresentation' of both western scholars and the Brahmins. The feelings of the Virasaivas were all the more sensitive on scripting their own history. The contours of the new consciousness among the Virasaivas began to emerge in the form of new interpretations, selective appropriations, modifications or even a total rejection of the 'old' and 'unacceptable' beliefs, histories and literatures. Besides the oriental knowledge, they relied on the traditional knowledge systems for proving their worth. Kumkum Chatterjee, a historian, considers the deployment of traditional knowledge system as non-positivist approach. In the context of Bengal history she points out,

... the 'modern practice and consciousness of history during this period was equally intertwined with an awareness of other non-positivist forms of commemorating the past in moulding and shaping a rejuvenated Indian nation. The tension between rational history, or iithasa and other narratives of the past as embodied in myth (upakatha), epic and folklore (kimbadanti) is plainly evident in popular middle-class consciousness in Bengal and possibly elsewhere as well (Chatterjee, 1999: 194-195. Italics mine).

The constructions of the Virasaiva self-identity through the narratives of history, religious beliefs, ethnographic accounts, hagiographies, etc. cut across the knowledge boundaries.
In other words, the Viraśaivas did not hesitate to draw sources and approaches already available to them in diverse fields such as history, philosophy, literature, anthropology, ethnography, census and so on. However, they did not accept the oriental knowledge or local textual tradition of Viraśaivism as they were. They put them under constant scrutiny and chose only those parts of history and religion that suited their idea of modern community. Journals, magazines and newspapers became the mouthpiece of the Viraśaivas and they were instrumental in making effective interventions in the policy-making machinery and knowledge producing bodies. They intended to consolidate a sense of unity among the Viraśaivas.

Community consciousness also paved way for creating social boundaries and certain understandings of religion. But what is most interesting is how a specific understanding of religion and certain social claims became the foundational principles of the community. For the Viraśaivas, a modern identity was created in the following manner: a) adoption of 'authentic' scripts as unique to the community, b) canonization of certain historical, religious and literary works into a rigid and totalised system, c) the use of existing and constructed narratives of history, religion and literature to fix certain ideologies into the community's collective imagination, d) drawing boundaries in terms of religious and social taboos to mark inside/outside, self/other and protection against the external challenges, etc.

The initial efforts of Viraśaiva leaders like Yajaman Virasangappa (Mysore), Giliginji Gurusiddappa (Dharawad), Aratala Rudragowda (Dharwad), Sirasingi Lingaraj (Belagaum), P.R. Karibasavashastri (Mysore) and Varada Mallappa (Sollapur) in the 1880s awakened the community consciousness. They were the first ones to realize the importance of government jobs, English and Sanskrit education. The modern consciousness of the Viraśaivas to construct a collective imagination can be roughly

S.S. Bhusareddi and Madhu Venkareddi have identified the Viraśaivas' venture into print media as far back as 1860. They have mentioned that Hucchyya Sangayya Vibhuti started the first weekly of the Viraśaivas in Kannada in Dharwad under the name 'Chandrodaya'. For more details on this see Virashaiva Niyathakalikagalu, (Viraśaiva Periodicals, 1995).

All these people belonged to the merchant and the landed class.
traced back to 1871 when the Mysore and the Bombay census reports considered the Viraśaivas as *Shudras*\(^2\). The consecutive census reports in 1881, 1891 and 1901 also considered the Viraśaivas as *Shudras*. The Viraśaivas strongly objected to such low social profile attributed to them in the state census. As an alternative to the Shudrahood, they claimed Brahminhood. In other words, they demanded that they should be considered as Viraśaiva Brahmins.

There were a series of debates between Virasangappa and the Brahmin pundits over the issue of Viraśaivas' claims of Brahminhood. Virasangappa and his close associate Asthan Vidwan (court poet) P. R. Karibasavashastri launched a scathing attack on Hassan Railway Master Palalli Ranganna, a Brahmin, who contended that since there were many lower caste people in the Viraśaiva religion, the Viraśaivas could not be Brahmins. In reply to Ranganna’s contention, Karibasavashastri quoted several Sanskrit *Shlokās* of Shaiva works like *Neelakantabhashya, Shrikarabhashya, Shankar asamhita, Skandapurana* and *Agamas* in support of 'Brahminhood' of the Viraśaivas!\(^2\). He contended that the lower caste people like Hajams (barbers), Dhobis (washerman), etc. did not come under the *Varna* system so Ranganna’s accusation that they belonged to the Viraśaiva community was absurd and baseless (Karibasavashastri, 1882: 26-27). For Karibasavashastri, there was no ambiguity that the Viraśaivas were equal to Brahmins. His dispute over being categorised as *Shudra* was more than merely a question of the place of the community's place in the *Varna* system. It was also a struggle over the meaning of being a modern community.

\(^2\) These census reports were preceded by the survey conducted by the British administration in 1860. According to Shouten,

The British administration undertook a legal uniformization in the territories under its control; starting in 1860, Every caste had to be classified in the varna system in order to decide which rules were applicable concerning family law and religious privileges. In 1879, the Bombay High Court declared that the Lingayatas were sudras: which caused severe agitation among them (Shouten, 1991:74).

\(^2\) The debates between the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas over the issue of Brahminhood are available in the special edition of *Mysore Star Correspondence*. Yajaman Virasangappa edited and published this special issue of *the Mysore Star* in two volumes. The first volume contained commentaries, discourses, replies and articles by P.R.Karibasavashastri and the second volume was written by Virasangappa. These editions also contained edited version of correspondences in the *Mysore Star* over the past few years. The *Mysore Star* was begun by Virasangappa to contest the Brahmins' opposition to Viraśaivas' claims of Brahminhood.
It is not possible to say that the state recognition of the Viraśaiva community in the form of census enumeration compartmentalized the community identities and they became rigid. The census enumeration did not have any impact on the social acceptability of other castes by the upper castes of the Viraśaiva community. Besides such social animosity, the Viraśaivas had to contend not only the state reports but also the mediation of the census by the Brahmins. Despite the enumeration processes of the state, the Viraśaivas tried to maintain their own social boundaries. For instance, the elite sections of the community were not ready to accept certain lower castes/classes into their social domain. In order to defend and sustain the status of Brahminhood, the above castes (Hajams and Dhobis) were excluded from the Varna system. In an another article (28th July, 1882), Karibasavashastri denied that Nonabas and Hajamas belonged to the Viraśaiva community. He advised them not to emulate the Viraśaivas and pretend to be like Viraśaiva Brahmins. He believed that caste of a person was to be decided by birth but not by action. Therefore, he exhorted Nonabas and Sadars to give up their efforts to become Viraśaivas. This exclusion of castes who did not come under the Varna system continued in the first decade of the twentieth century also. For instance, when these two castes were included in the Viraśaiva community in the 1901 census, it was strongly objected to by the Viraśaivas on the ground that their inclusion would pollute the community. An article in Mysore Star (22nd April, 1915) was written against these castes that chose their own Pithadishas (the pontiffs) for their mutts without the permission of the head mutt.

Owing to caste enumeration in census and the consequent social humiliation, the Viraśaivas supplied a complete scheme to the census authorities during the census of 1901 in the Mysore region. The scheme proposed that all Viraśaivas could be sub-divided

26 In this regard, James Manor points out, "census up to 1891 could list Nonabas and Sadars-agriculturist groups which were at that time heavily Lingayath-as members of the Vokkaliga category. As the finer nuances of 1901, the Sadars and Nonabas were removed from the Vokkaliga ranks and listed as Lingayaths" (Manor, 1977:37).

27 It is a tradition that the authority to appoint a successor or a new religious head to a branch of the mula mutt (head mutt) rests with the head of that mutt. A branch mutt is given institutional legitimacy by the head mutt. And the branch mutt is expected to be accountable to the mula mutt regarding religious matters as well as matters related to property, wealth of the mutt, etc.
into four groups viz., Vīraśaiva Brahmana, Vīraśaiva Kshatriya, Vīraśaiva Vaishya and Vīraśaiva Shudra.\textsuperscript{28} Such classification was based on the previous appeal of the Vīraśaivas to return as Vīraśaiva Brahmins. In 1891, a delegation of Vīraśaivas met the Maharaja of the princely Mysore in Harihara and appealed to him that their registration as Vīraśaiva Brahmins be accepted.\textsuperscript{29} The appeal of the Vīraśaivas for official recognition was redressed by His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore by,

... passing orders to the effect that the Lingayaths should not be classed as Shudras any more than any other non-Brahmins, but should be separately designated by their own name, and that while they were at liberty to call themselves Vīraśaiva Brahmins, they should specify the name of the particular and well-known sub-division of which each census unit belonged (Edgar Thurston, Rangachari K.,1909: 253, Basavalingappa Jeerige, 1933: 114-115 and Shivamurthy Shastri, 1938:58).

\textit{Shri Vīraśaiva Matha Samvardhini Sabha} (established in 1904) expressed its gratitude to the Mysore government for considering the Vīraśaivas as a 'religion' than as a 'caste'.\textsuperscript{30} Such classification of the community was intended to accommodate the lower castes within the 'larger' Vīraśaiva community. The resolution of the census question was essential for the community because they had to accommodate certain subaltern castes who were engaged in an acrimonious battle with the elite castes to be accepted as part of the community. Thus, the Vīraśaiva leaders found out an easy way out to retain the purity in the community but still represented themselves as larger than any other community and retained the powers to decide the community affairs. By accommodating them in the

\textsuperscript{28} The \textit{First Vīraśaiva Mahila Parishat} and the annual meeting of the ABVM (1909) proposed a plan to chart out who constituted these four Varna divisions. According to the plan, Jangamas and Aradhyas constituted Vīraśaiva Brahmana; Desai, Deshpande and other chieftains formed Vīraśaiva Kshatriya; industrialists and merchants came under Vīraśaiva Vaishyas and the remaining castes were Vīraśaiva Shudras.

\textsuperscript{29} The Vīraśaivas carried out a systematic campaign for creating awareness of their social and religious status in the society. For instance, Nanjundaswamy, a religious head of \textit{Ganjam} mutt of Bangalore circulated several hundred copies of pamphlets among the Vīraśaivas and in an appeal he urged them to send applications to the Maharaja to their claim for Brahminhood. An original copy of this appeal is available in B.C. Veerappa’s work \textit{Bangalore Nagarada Vīraśaiva Mathagalu: Ondu Samskritika Adhyayana} (2001).

\textsuperscript{30} The subsequent enumerations became a site of public contention between the Brahmins and the Vīraśaivas. For example, in Mysore, the Brahmins declared that the Vīraśaivas should not carry \textit{Nandidwaja} (a religious banner with a bull on it; symbol of various Shaiva communities) procession, if they wanted to be recognised as Brahmins. Parading with this banner was the custom of a certain group of lower castes, called right hand caste. The logic behind the Brahmins’ opposition to such procession was that, if the Vīraśaivas wanted to be Brahmins, they lost all privileges of their former status among the right-hand caste.
Virásaivised Varna system, the leaders sought to possess the power to represent and mediate the lower castes also. We do not know, due to lack of historical evidences, how the lower castes of the community reacted to such "accommodative" strategies of the community.

The dynamics of exclusion and inclusion was supported by their scriptural traditions. During 1880s, there were many who did not accept Basava's radicalism as outlined by Brown and other oriental scholars. Basava's revolution and his tirade against the Brahminical had not been accepted with enthusiasm and it was not part of the popular consciousness among the Vīraśaivas. But Basava was an incarnation of Lord Shiva in their imagination. He was adored as one of the revivalists of the Vīraśaiva religion. If there were any misinformation about Basava, the Vīraśaiva literati did not hesitate to contest. But the contestation was never in terms of Basava's revolutionary ideas or his anti-priesthood ideas. For example, in yet another article in the *Mysore Star Correspondence*, Karibasavashastri strongly contested the views of Shrinivasaiah and Ramaswamyshastri (both Brahmins) that Basava plotted conspiracy against Bijjala and he founded the Vīraśaiva religion after removing him. Karibasavashastri did not accept that Basava founded the religion and yet, he strongly contested that Basava was a conspirator. One more example of such misrepresentation-contestation phenomenon was a historical account in the *Hindu Charitre Darpana* (translated into Kannada from English in 1882) published by the Bombay Government. In the book, Basava was depicted as a traitor who hatched conspiracy against Bijjala to remove him from his power. In the book, Basava was illustrated as belonging to Smarta (Shaiva Brahmin) background. Karibasavashastri strongly criticized such depiction (25th August, 1882). He denounced that such misrepresentation of Basava was based on a non-Vīraśaiva text namely *Prakavya Maalike* written by a Jain writer and first collected by Wurth. This book was condemned for it misguided the public and contained distorted details about Basava. Virasangappa blamed two Brahmin Munshis i.e. Munshi Shrinivasaiah and Ramaswamyshastri for misleading J.Garret about this book. Though Basava was given a prominent position in the mainstream Vīraśaiva tradition during the last decades of the

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31 *Prakaavya Maalike* was published in 1867 by J.Garret, the then Director of Education in Mysore.
nineteenth century, there was general disapproval to accept him as a revolutionary fighter, champion of the downtrodden and founder of the religion.

People like Karibasavashastri could not entertain anything that went against the claims of Brahminhood. He was agitated whenever Basava was highlighted as the champion of the downtrodden and portrayed as the crusader against the *Varna* system. Though considered as an incarnation of Lord Shiva, such portrayal of Basava went against the claims of Brahminhood by the Viraśaivas. If the Viraśaivas wanted to prove that they were as superior and pure as the Brahmins, they had to subscribe to the notion of purity-pollution. But since Basava’s image as the champion of the poor and the downtrodden was also in circulation, the Viraśaivas had to prove their worth as Brahmins ignoring and marginalizing narratives of Basava’s radicalism. For instance, a review of an ethnographic report, brought out by the Indian government in 1904, by Karibasavashastri\(^{32}\) clearly demonstrate that the Viraśaivas practices the *Varna* system in the community. He found the contents of the report contrary to their claims of Brahmin status. He listed eight factors from the ethnography, which were found contrary to the fundamental beliefs of the Viraśaivas. These eight points were: a) Lingayath sect was simple, b) there were no caste discriminations in the past, c) Lingayaths had accepted the legitimacy of the Vedas but they did not agree with the new Brahminical interpretations of the Vedas by Brahmins, d) it was not yet decided that Viraśaivism was Shaiva sect of the ancient period, e) there were many historical evidences to show that Basava was the founder of the sect, f) an inscription found in Bagewadi’s Managoli village and a stone inscription found near Ablur indicated that Basava and Ekantha Ramayya were both Shaiva Brahmins and the Viraśaiva sect was established by them and it was not existent in the ancient period, g) there were no caste discriminations in the food habits and h) widow remarriage was acceptable and Basava fought for the emancipation of the women (Karibasa Shastri, 1925: 15). Karibasa Shastri denied all these points and justified the *Varna* system in the community. He believed that a) the concept 'Lingayath'

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\(^{32}\) Karibasavashastri’s response to the report was published in *Upaya Saga* (Upaya Saga *Sangraha* was a compilation of discourses on religion and social issues given by several Viraśaiva scholars between 1901 to 1914. These discourses were collected, edited and published in 1925 by Sirisi Gurusiddhashastri.)
originated during the reign of ‘Turukaru’ (Muslims) and this concept did not find reference in any Vīraśaiva Shastras or puranas. Therefore those who wore Linga could be described as Vīraśaivas but not as Lingayaths (ibid: 20), b) Vīraśaiva sect was very much grounded in the tradition of the Vedas and the Agamas and the Vīraśaivas recognized the importance of Vedas (ibid: 26), c) the origin of the Vīraśaiva sect should be proved on the grounds of Veda-Agama-Puras but not on the grounds of inscriptions or any other historical fact (ibid: 39), d) Basava did not advocate widow remarriage anywhere (ibid: 43). Other articles in the book by Sutturu Shantaveera Shasthri (1908) and Ingalagundi Shantappa Edehalli (1914) also expressed similar views.

The claim of Brahminhood cannot be represented as ‘sanskritising’ desire of the Vīraśaivas. When the Brahmins were not ready to attribute the status to the non-Brahmins, the latter tried to achieve equality by exhibiting antagonism towards them. This antagonism was articulated in terms of caste, religion and classical textual tradition. Sometimes all the three were conflated and identity of the community was constructed around them. Several ancient Shaiva puranas, Kavyas were collated, edited, translated and published to prove and justify the worth of the Vīraśaivas. Sanskrit and Kannada Shaiva works of the ancient period such as Shatakas, Virashaiva Linga Pujavidhi, Thrishashthi Puraathana Charitre, Basavesha Vijaya, Prabhulinga Leele were translated from Sanskrit into Kannada and published during this period33, Vaarada Mallappa, Aratala Rudragowda, P.R and N. R. Karibasava Shastri and Siddaramappa Pawate, in the north Karnataka, were Sanskrit scholars and began their own printing presses for publishing and popularising the Shaiva Sanskrit and Kannada works of the ancient period to create community consciousness among the Vīraśaivas.34 These ancient texts were related to hagiography, devotion, rites, initiation ceremony, marriage rituals, methods of worshipping Lord Shiva, a guru, Shatstalas, agriculture, etc. The Vīraśaiva imagination of the glorious past was very much part of their experiences in the modern world.

33 Shivamurthy Shastri (1938) and Chidananda Murthy (2001) have given a list of books published by Vīraśaangappa in 1885.
34 S.M. Angadi, who wrote the biography of Aratala Rudragowda, mentions that Rudragowda started Vīraśaiva Vilaas Press in Hubli in 1903 to popularize the ancient Sanskrit works and create awareness among the Vīraśaivas about their glorious past. Rudragowda also published a survey of Vīraśaivism in 1909.
Establishing printing press, publishing books in the western style, new consciousness of time, etc. symbolized that Viraśaivas were part of the modern imagination. Shouten notices the contours of modern imagination of the Viraśaivas as such,

Partly as a result of the troubles with the censuses, the Lingayatha elite made serious endeavours to improve the prestige of the community. In 1904, the All India Viraśaiva Mahasabha was founded: an organization for the promotion of the interests of all Lingayaths. .... The Mahasabha played an important role in the emancipation process of the Lingayath caste. The leaders claimed a glorious place for their community in the history of India and they usually tried to demonstrate that lofty Viraśaiva tradition was closely connected with the most orthodox Sanskrit schools of philosophy. In this view not much importance was attached to Basava and his twelfth century revolution; but, rather, Viraśaivism was claimed to date back to the earliest phases of history (Shouten, 1999:75).

The President of the ABVM annual meeting (1904) Lingappa Jayappa Desai declared that the Viraśaiva religion existed much before Basava. He mentioned Siddhanta Shikhamani and quoted Brown’s ethnographic evidences in support of his declaration. However, he also expressed a note of anxiety about the dissidences within the community over the question of and founder of the religion. According to him, the Lingayath religion existed much before Basava’s birth. The President of the fourth Viraśaiva Mahasabha (1909) Rao Bahaddur Basappa Mallappa Vaarada also pointed out that the Lingayath religion could be traced to the lineage of Renuka, Daaruka, Gajakarna, Ghantakarna and Vishwakarna several centuries before Basava. Renukacharya was believed to have given sermons to Agatsya muni (saint) on Shaiva Siddhanta during Lord Shri Rama’s period.

IV

The Guru-Viraktha Rivalry and the Contours of Community Identity

The Viraśaivas could not overcome the paradoxes in their imagination of the community identity and its past. They could not boast of complete control over the narratives of Viraśaivism. The western historiographers, ethnologists, anthropologists and missionaries, who claimed higher standard of scientific accuracy and finality, could not alter the structure of social patterns and religious practices of the Viraśaivas. The rivalry between the Gurusthala and Viraktha traditions in the community also supplemented the contradictions and paradoxes. The rivalry between these two monastic traditions was

35 For more details see Presidential Speeches in the Viraśaiva Mahasabha (1983).
characterized by institutional, textual, religious and social differences. Before we discuss the impact of this rivalry on the new image of the community, let me explain their lineage, philosophy, religion and ritual practices.

These two traditions have opposite viewpoints about the origin of Viraśaiva religion. The Viraktas adhere to an ideal of Viraśaivism that is rather 'sectarian' in nature. They emphasize inner experience of the individual than external ceremonies. The tradition venerates the account of Basava who rejected societal mores in favor of devotion. They are of the firm belief that Basava was the one who established Viraśaiva religion in the twelfth century. Their social distance from any established community characterizes their religious and mutt activities. As the term ‘Virakta’ (the one who has renounced the worldly matters) denotes that a Viraktha should renounce the world and devote their lifetime in spreading the ideals of Viraśaivism.

The Gurusthalins adhere to an ideal of Viraśaivism that is more 'ecclesial' in nature. They attribute an antiquity to the movement that far predates the twelfth century. In ancient past, the five great Viraśaiva teachers—Revanaradhya, Marularadhya, Ekoramaradhya, Panditaradhya and Vishwaradhya—established, respectively, the great monastic centers in Balehalli, Ujjain (both in Karnataka), Srisaila (Andra Pradesh), Kedara and Kasi (both in Uttar Pradesh). They did not act in radical distinction from the social context around them but rather sought to accommodate themselves to that context. The priests of the sect do not dissociate from the social contexts. They are involved in performing rituals and ceremonies to realize the spiritual needs of the devotees and followers. Since they carry out the rituals, they encourage learning Sanskrit. Ritual activities all differ in both sects. While Virakthas follow relatively flexible rituals, Gurusthalins observe relatively complex rituals.

Both traditions developed a monastic culture over several centuries. There are mainly five religious centres related to Gurusthala tradition. The location of the five centres and the names of the founders are: a) Balehalli (formerly Rambhapuri) in

36 For information on these two traditions, I have relied on the work done by R. Blake Michael (1983).
Chikmagalur (established by Revanaradhyayana) b) Ujjain in Bellary (established by Marularadhyayana), c) Kedar (established by Panditaradhyayana), d) Shrisaila (established by Ekoramaradhyayana) and e) Benaras (established by Vishwaradhyayana). The first two pontiffs are in Karnataka. Kedar and Benaras centres are located in Uttar Pradesh and Shrisaila centre is in Andra Pradesh. There are many mutts in several places affiliated to one of the five head mutts. These five mutt, also known as Panchacharya mutts, claim to be of immemorial age and they traced the history of their founders many thousands of years back, sometimes to primordial times.

The Viraktha mutts are mainly three (Shouten, 1991: 202): a) Murugharajendra mutt in Chitradurga, b) Tontadarya mutt in Gadag and c) Murusavira mutt in Hubli. They are all mula mutts (head quarters). Each of these mutts has several shakha mutts (branches) spread all over Karnataka. The head quarters have greater resources and prestige and it trains preceptors and other functionaries for the branches. The precise details of the relationship between headquarters and branches are not available, especially with regard to the number of branches attached to the headquarters. In return to the help rendered by the mula mutt, a shakha mutt is expected to pay some financial tributes to the former. These mutts claim their origins in the twelfth century. For instance, the Murugharajendra mutt claims to have the direct lineage of the pontifical seat of Allama and the Taralabalu mutt of Sirigere was supposedly founded by a disciple of Marulasiddheshwara, another Preceptor.

Function of these two mutt traditions underwent changes and these changes were related to their functions and traditional authority. Many aspects of these two traditions overlapped with the socio-religious transformations during the colonial period. M. Chidanandamurthy (1984), a Kannada critic, has traced the transformations of the mutt traditions in the modern period. He points out that though the two traditions are antithetical, there are instances of the Gurusthala head assuming the responsibility of the

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37 Pandit Kashinatha Shastri always held this view and was proud of the antiquity (1931). See Speeches by Pandit Sri Kashinatha Shastri (1969).
38 The mutts, mentioned here, form the mainstream mutt tradition of the community. They claim exclusive authority over defining and deciding the community matters.
Viraktha mutts sometimes (Murthy, 1984:25-27). While some Viraktha mutts have remained loyal to the classical ideals of ascetic renouncement, some others have become active organizations of social work and education. A typical feature of the modern Viraktha mutts is that many of them shifted their headquarters to the towns. The ideal of world renunciation is still recognized by the religion but active social and political engagement is regarded to be important too.

A few instances of conflicts between the two traditions would reveal more about their hostile relationship during the early twentieth century. An appeal to the Virāśaivas by Charamurthy in *Mysore Star* (May, 1932) expressed deep anguish over the recent rivalry in the religious life of the Virāśaiva community due to differences between the two traditions. Charamurthy regretted that new Virāśaiva mutts did not give respects to the Gurusthala heads. Without consulting the *mula mutt* of the Gurusthala tradition for any religious matter, new mutt heads functioned according to their own customs and beliefs. And they did not recognize the traditional powers of the Gurusthala mutts. Therefore Charamurthy lamented,

In recent times, internal conflicts have increased and several leaders have come up in the society. Disunity among the Niranjana Peethas [of Viraktha tradition] and the Aacharya Peethas [of Gurusthala tradition] is against the spirit of true religion. In such critical situation, some have gone against the wishes of the Gurusthala Peethas by appointing their own religious heads without the permission of the mutts. Some have established Virāśaiva *Tatwapracharaka Sangha* [association for disseminating Virāśaiva philosophy] to misguide the people by spreading false notions about Basava and others. It is unfortunate to notice that Shri Mrithyunjayaswamy of Dharwad is encouraging such anti-religion activities through the young Virasaivas studying in his hostels (Charamurthy, 1932:4).

He requested the Virāśaivas to respect the Gurusthala mutts and work for the unity of the community. In the above remarks, Charamurthy disliked deviant attitude of the Virakthas and is not ready to validate anything that is different from the normative purview of the Gurusthala tradition. For Charamurthy, the traditional authority rested with the Gurusthala tradition and social-religious life of the Virasaivas ought to be still organized around this authority.
Kashinatha Shastri of the Gurusthala tradition who initiated tirade against the Viraktha tradition and the new class of reformers who advocated the Basava philosophy in 1910s. He wrote commentaries and discourses on Renukacharya, Siddhanta Shikhamani and other Sanskrit works to prove that the Viraśaiva religion existed prior to Basava. The head of Rambhapuri mutt supported him. In a preface to a compilation of speeches by Kashinath Shastri, the manager of Panchacharya Press, who published the speeches, writes about the active part played by Kashinath Shastri towards reclaiming the traditional authority of the Gurusthalins ever since his return from Varanasi in 1917. The manager admires,

Panditji [Kashinath Shastri] rose to the occasion; toured all over the parts inhabited by Veerashaivas & delivered cogent reasonable and sastraic speeches and disabused the minds of Veerashaivas regarding Basava and the Viraktas and instilled into them devotion to Panchacharyas and the real tenets of Veerashaivism. Thus, with marvellous power he dealt a death-blow to the influence of Viraktas and restored glory and eminence to Dharmapeethas (1969:ix).

Kashinatha Shastri advised his followers not to respect the Shiva Sharanas. He made it mandatory for his followers that they should not visit the Virakthas mutts and took promise from them that they would not worship the Shiva Sharanas (Shouten, 1991:218). This anti-Viraktha and anti-Basava campaign angered the Viraktha followers and disappointed the reformers. Following this controversy, both sides engaged in blaming each other.

The role of these mutts in the overall development of the Viraśaiva community is immense. The most important area in which the mutts are active is education. The heads of these mutts realized the importance of educational initiatives and made a considerable contribution. The Viraśaiva reformists also contributed a lot in enlightening the importance and relevance of education and they turned to these mutts for broad support and investment. Thus, the mutts provided modern education apart from imparting traditional knowledge in the Gurusthalas. The mutts founded a number of schools for Sanskrit education. For example, Chitradurga's Shri Brihan mutt helped Deputy

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39 For more details see B.V, Shiroor (1994) and also (1998).
Chennabasappa, the education officer in Dharwad during 1860s, to improve education in Dharwad and its surrounding areas. Sri Jagadguru Gangadhara Samskrita Pathasale, attached to the Mooru Savira mutt in Hubli was the earliest to establish modern Sanskrit school in 1901. The mutt also provided boarding and lodging facilities. While the Viraśaiva students were given boarding and lodging facilities in the school, other caste students could only take advantage of the lodging facilities. The Murugha mutt of Dharwad established Prasada Nilaya (the house where food is served to the devotees) for the community students in 1917. This mutt also built hostels for the students of the community. The Siddhaganga mutt of Tumkur started a Sanskrit College in 1938. The Naganur mutt of Belgaum started hostels in 1943 for more than 200 students. The Sharana Basaweshwara Mahadasoha Peetha of Gulbarga was active before 1918. It had established a library by 1918. In 1934, it started a school for girls. These mutts belonged to the Viraktha tradition. Some Gurusthala mutts also followed this example. Thus, the Taralabaalu mutt of Sirigere founded student hostels in Chikkamagalur in 1913 and Davanagere in 1923. The Sutturu mutt of Mysore started hostels for the first time in Mysore in 1940. These mutts had at their disposal rather large incomes and considerable capital from their extended landed properties and devotees and they invested a part of it on modern education.

Another possible cause of the rift between the two traditions could be, as Chidanandamurthy notices (2001:178), over the rights of punishing or pardoning the devotees. Many a time, the mutts used to take the responsibility of resolving the conflicts and reconciling the differences between individuals or communities and they had power and authority to punish the guilty, if found guilty. According to Chidanandamurthy, increased visibility of the Viraktha mutts in the public life, their efforts to expand the popular and institutional base by relaxing certain rigid practices raised the question of their original religious functions. The heads of the Panchapeethas (five pontiffs) were not ready to concede their rights (related to appointment of heads, punishing or pardoning a devotee) over their follower devotees to the Viraktha mutts and they resented the
deviation of the Viraktha mutts from traditional functions. The portrayal of Basava heritage and twelfth century vacana tradition as radical, subversive, anti-Brahminic and revolutionary by some Viraktha mutts\textsuperscript{40} and the reformists was strongly challenged by the Gurushala tradition and the votaries of Varna system in the community. Chidanandamurthy believes that these differences developed between 1850-1900.

Thus, the modern spaces occupied by the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas were grounds of battle for the two. The contests between the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas were frequent. Most of these contests were centered on both 'traditional'\textsuperscript{41} and modern status of the two communities. The Brahmins, beginning from Ranganna to Shrinivasacharya to Alur, appropriated the contradictory narratives of Viraśaivism and mediated them on their own terms to contest the Viraśaivas who challenged the Brahmins. The Viraśaivas, on the other hand, tried to conceal the internal differences and fight the Brahmin hegemony. An obvious point made by them is to hide differences when they found the Brahmin mediation 'illegitimate'. These mediation-contestation processes were more pronounced and loud in the Shubhodaya controversy.

V

New Waves in the Perceptions of Viraśaivism

Non-Brahmin backward class movement for reservation in education and government jobs in the Mysore and Bombay Presidency, non-Brahmin Brahmin movement of Tamil Nadu and Ezhava movement in Kerala, home-rule movement led by Tilak and Annie Besant\textsuperscript{42} and later on the nationalist movement under the leadership of

\textsuperscript{40} Not all Viraktha mutts were ready to accept the radical ideas of Basava and the twelfth century movement. The Viraktha mutts continued to function with elite and hierarchical notions of Viraśaivism. For instance, many Viraktha heads were not ready to accept non-Jangama as the head of their mutts. Hanagal Kumaraswamy, who was instrumental in establishing the ABVM and Shivayogamandira in Bijapur, believed that only Jangamas were eligible to become the pontiffs of Viraśaiva mutts. B.C. Veerappa, who has researched on the Viraśaiva mutts, notes that Shivayogi Basappaswamy of Toiadadevara Mutt did agree with Hanagal Kumaraswamy and he was ready to accept non-Jangama as the pontiff (Veerappa, 2001:162).

\textsuperscript{41} The term in inverted commas' indicate the distinctions that the Viraśaivas made between tradition and modernity to legitimise their claims and their activities. We are very well aware that the traditional aspects were interpreted in accordance with the tracks of the time and they signify modern imagination of the Viraśaivas.

\textsuperscript{42} This does not mean to say that everybody accepted the home-rule movement. Since the Brahmin leaders led the movement, the Viraśaivas looked upon the movement suspiciously. In an editorial 'Brahmanaru Mattu Itararu'(Brahmins and Others), the editor of the Mysore Star condemned the Brahmin demand for
Gandhi, unification movement of Karnataka, Russian revolution, the first world war, economic progress of Russia and Japan, emergence of Marxist and socialist thoughts and the promotion of vacana literature as radical and democratic gradually changed the self perceptions of the Viraśaivas and their nationalist feelings. Nationalist feelings of the new middle class English educated Viraśaivas were directed towards uniting, reforming and creating awareness among the Viraśaivas for the common cause of social justice and joining the mainstream national life. At political level too, a notable number of Viraśaivas had begun to show their allegiances to the National Congress party by 1935. In the formal arena as well as in the public sphere, the idea that the Viraśaivas were upper-caste Hindus with a glorious tradition of warriors and kings became dominant. Thus, a new interest emerged to restructure the existing images of Viraśaivism devoid of Sanskritic influence and tradition. The reformists like M. Basavaiah, Halakatti, Hardekar Manjappa, Basavanal, Bile Angadi, etc. projected Basava as the leader who strove for establishing an egalitarian and democratic society way back in the twelfth century. The Gurusthala tradition and its identification with Sanskrit tradition and practice of Varna system were castigated as 'orthodox' and conservative. Shouten very well documents this religious and social rift among the Virasaivas.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, we find that the Lingayaths were gradually more inclined to deny any allegiance of the orthodox Hindu lore. Now that they were apparently not recognized as high caste Hindus, they tended to stress their own socio-religious system alongside Hindu orthodoxy or even opposed to Hinduism. The question arose in the community whether they were Hindus at all; and some leaders insisted on an official recognition as a distinct religion like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Jainism. Instead of the former focusing on the Virashaiva Sanskrit tradition, a new orientation towards their own Kannada heritage arose. Basava was honored again, not always as the founder, but at least as the reviver of the Lingayath religion. His anti-Brahman standpoint, in the preceding age mostly withheld out of shame, was again defended as a necessary and honorable reaction to the circumstances of his time. The vacana literature was rediscovered, mainly because of the enormous efforts of P.G. Halakatti. He collected the manuscripts of the almost forgotten vacana from all over the Kannada-speaking country. His editions of vacanas created a new awareness of the tradition. However, not all Lingayaths were in favour of the new orientation. Particularly those who were connected with the five 'pontifical seats'

home-rule. He wrote: "There are only a few lakhs of Indian literates opposing the domination of the British and they have occupied lakhs of jobs in India. How can it be a crime if the crores of non-Brahmins demanded a share in them? The intention behind the self-rule and opposition to the English domination is born out of the Brahmin's self-interest. If the home-rule ideology is to benefit the whole Indian continent, no body should oppose the non-Brahmins' progress" (2nd Jan. 1917).
of the Panchacharyas preferred the Sanskrit tradition to the Basava trend. Notably Pandita Kashinatha Shastri and his company (Shouten, 1995:77-78).

The new middle class reformists believed that Kannada society, since the beginning, was progressive and radical. Now it was high time for them to bring back that ideal society and rewrite the history of Viraśaivism. It was P.G. Halakatti who made constant efforts to set right the 'wrongly' interpreted Viraśaiva religion by the Western scholars, the Brahmin pundits and the Viraśaiva conservatives. His ambitions to reform the community and popularise vacanas were also supplemented by the others' attempts to iconise Basava as a public figure. ‘Publicisation’ of Basava Jayanthi was a part of projecting the image of Basava as the religious and cultural icon of Karnataka as well as the Viraśaivas. For the first time in 1913, Hardekar Manjappa and Mruthyunjaya Swamy of Chitradurga mooted the idea of celebrating the birthday of Basava during the month of April publicly. It was begun on a small note in Davanagere in the same year. Subsequently the celebration grew as the most prestigious and religious festival of the Viraśaivas. Basava Jayanthi was planned on the lines of Ganeshotsava and Shivaji Jayanthi in Maharashtra and Raamotsava in Tamil Nadu.

The reformation of the community coincided the emergence of non-Brahmin backward class movement for reservation. From 1910 onwards, the Viraśaivas and other non-Brahmin communities launched a strident and uninhibited campaign for social justice through communal representation and vehement attack on the Brahmins who were opposed to such communal representation. This movement was more forceful in the Mysore region. We have evidences to show the non-Brahmin backward class movement


44 Even as Manjappa tried to find out accurate details about the exact date of Basava's birthday, he was discouraged by Chandrashekar Shastri not to waste time on the irresolvable issue of Basava's birthday and advised him to celebrate the Renukacharya Jayanthi. Manjappa, at that time, did not understand why Shastri gave such advice. Regarding this conversation see G.S. Halappa (1966).

45 There are many documentations and studies on this movement. Notable among them are a) James Manor's Political Change in an Indian State: Mysore (1917-1955), 1977, b) G. Thimmaiah’s "Emergence of the Backward Class Movement in Karnataka" 1993 and c) The History of Karnataka Legislature (Mysore Assembly), Vol. I, 1908-23.
in the southern Maharashtra (Bombay presidency) too. The attack on Brahminism and the struggle for reservations by the Viraśaivas quickly grew into a radical critique of caste and religion of their community. For instance, M. Basavaiah, the non-Brahmin movement leader, opposed vehemently the proposed plan of the Viraśaiva Mahasabha (1909) to adopt the Varna system within the community (Deveerappa, 1985:15). He challenged the elitism and orthodoxy of the Mahasabha. Tammanappa Chikkodi, freedom fighter, alleged that "the Viraśaiva Mahasabha was founded in order to satisfy individual interests and the Mahasabha was meant for the elite of the community" (Jayavanth Kulli, 1983:27-28).

The histories of the community written by the western scholars, local Brahmins and the Viraśaivas who believed in the Varna system were condemned as irrational, conservative and inimical to morals and social justice believed by the Shiva Sharanas of the twelfth century. The reformists were spreading the democratic and egalitarian ideas of Basava and his concept of devotion. The justification for reformation and progress of the community was not completely grounded on the discourses of modernity but were grounded on the narratives of tradition. But the point of departure for the orthodox and the reformist forces was on the ground of 'correct' interpretation of the tradition and a debate on what tradition really meant. Gradually the attack on religion and orthodox social practices within the community were turned on the Gurusthala/Panchacharya tradition. The Viraktha seers and the pontiffs, despite their own internal hierarchies, discriminations and disputes, took advantage of the changes in the social and political turn to attack the Gurusthala tradition. Sanskrit works such as Siddhanla Sikhamani, Agamas, Vedas were sidelined. The Viraktha mutts inducted many lower castes into the Viraśaivism. It is said that in the 1920s the Balehalli pontiff derided the teachings of Basava, on the ground that they led to the induction of low castes into the Viraśaiva

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46 Neil Chalsworth has done work on the backward class movement in the southern Maharashtra region. He says, "Non-Brahmin movement in the Bombay Presidency (especially in the south) was entirely political, in contrast to Jyothiba Phuley's range of social interests. This non-Brahmin movement demanded the reservation of half the public service appointments given to Indians for 'the backward classes'. This demand by the urban intellectuals was always complemented by the rural elite, who were rich peasants. But this non-Brahmin movement was sporadic, dislocated and always narrow in outlook and impact". (Chalsworth, 1985:280).
community. The Muruga mutt, whose pontiff was Jayadeva Swamy, opposed castesim on the ground that it was retrograde and inimical to the Basava tenet that caste distinction should not be observed among the Viraśaivas. The votaries of Varna system in the community had for a long time seen the anti-Brahmin feelings and non-Brahmin movement as efforts to champion the community cause and protect their interests. However, they soon felt the threat emanating from the reformists and the Viraktha mutts to their own social position. With the relentless campaign of the non-Brahmin movement and the opposition it evoked, the different ideological streams became distinct, highlighting an ambivalent relationship between the votaries of the Varna system and the reformists. It was precisely due to such public rise of Basava and increased enthusiasm of the Basava followers, there was a hostile reaction from the Gurusthala followers which reached climax in the Shubhodaya controversy.

VI

Continuing with the Contradictions

Any historical incident or an event does not disappear with the passage time. It will leave its own marks, which will be either remembered or forgotten eventually. But it would definitely impact our worldview, our imagination, patterns of socio-political structure, etc. The Shubhodaya controversy left unforgettable and unfortunate memories for some Viraśaiva scholars. Pawate and his supporters found it difficult to forget the controversy because it exposed the lack of collective will and imagination while the Gurusthala scholars referred back to it to criticise the Basava tradition. A classic debate between Siddharamappa Pawate and Shantappa Veerabhadrappa Kubesada in 1922-23 will illustrate the intensity of this recourse to this historical event. The debates also show that the rivalry between Gurusthala tradition and the Basava cult continued to fracture collective identity of the Viraśaivas. following the Shubhodaya controversy. The confusions and contradictions about the Viraśaiva tradition, religion and history continued to persist and they were intensified.

47 In an interview, the present editor of the Pachacharya Prabha opined that the Viraktha mutt became powerful because they converted many non-Viraśaivas into the Viraśaivism. This interview was conducted by me on 21st, Dec. 2001 in Mysore.
Pawate believed in Basava's doctrines and was a follower of Tilak and Annie Besant. He gave several discourses on vacanas and demonstrated the Vedic roots of the Viraśaiva religion. Shantappa Kubusada belonged to the Panchaacharya sect; he was a Sanskrit pundit and a close associate of Kashinath Shastri. Kubusada's Basavadi Nijatvatdarpana contains two hundred questions, objections, and doubts challenging Pawate to establish and justify the truth about the origins and history of Basava and other Shiva Sharanas. He made use of many anthropological, literary and historical accounts, especially the works done by Fleet and J.Garrot, in support of his questions and doubts. He quoted extensively from Basava Purana, Prabhulinga Leele, Kaadasidheshwara Vachana, Singiraja Purana, Chennabasava Purana (all in Sanskrit) to highlight the contradictory views about Basava and his divinity. He pointed out at the contradictions inherent in the narratives about Basava's birth. According to him, Prabhulinga Leele in Sanskrit showed that Basava was born in Bagewadi but Basava Purana illustrated that Basava was born in Ingaleshwara (Kubusada, 1932:10). Kubusada asked why such contradictions exist and what they exactly meant. He was curious to know why there were several versions of Basava's Linga dikshe (ritual initiation of Linga) in both these Puranas (ibid: 15). He asked Pawate to prove who exactly gave dikshe to Basava. Kubusada was not sure about Basava's death. So he asked Pawate to throw more light on the exact manner of Basava's death (ibid: 25). Kubusada was curious to know if it was only Basava who got salvation in the end or his wives were also blessed with it (ibid: 25). He was more inquisitive about the exact identity of Chennabasavanna's father (ibid: 26). This question over Chennabasavanna's birth and the exact identity of his parents is still unresolved and haunts the contemporary Virasaiva imagination. Kubusada continued and enquired if some Virasaiva puranas gave several versions about Chennabasavanna's birth, some others did not mention his father's identity at all. Therefore, Kubusada wondered how to trust Singiraaja Purana, written in the sixteenth century, which depicted that Shivaswamy was the father of Chennabasavanna (ibid). Question over Chennabasavanna's birth was also linked to the question of his mother's relationship with

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48 This book was first published in 1921. However, I have referred the fourth edition of the book published in 1932.
Bijjala. Kubusada sought Pawate's response to J.Garret’s views on ‘Prakaavya Maalika’ which recorded that Nagalambike was the wife of Bijjala and naturally, Chennabasavanna’s was his son (ibid: 26). The reason for raising the question of Chennabasavanna’s birth was to know if he belonged to the Jain community or a true Viraśaiva. Kubusada also cited Hindu Charitre Darpana to show that Nagalaambike was married to Bijjala (ibid: 27). Kubusada questioned the etymology of Allama’s name. He wanted to know if the name, Allama was Sanskrit or Persian. He suspected if the Virakthas were the true Viraśaivas as they resorted to bloodshed in the twelfth century movement and killed several non-Lingayaths and murdered Bijjala (ibid: 31). He made sarcastic comments on the tradition of devoting a Jangama's wife to Linga before accepting her as one’s wife and the justification given for such tradition in some vacanas (ibid: 45-46). Through out the book, Kubusada highlighted the inconsistencies in the doctrines of the Shiva Sharanas; ambiguities existing in the Viraśaiva hagiographies and contradictions arisen between the vacanas and the puranas. He criticised the new consciousness of the reformists and the Viraktha followers who had begun to popularise the values of vacanas.

Siddaramappa Pawate gave replies to these questions in his work Basava Bhanu (1922). He refuted all the allegations and doubts raised by Kubusada. However, there is coherence and consistency in his replies. He was arbitrary and rhetoric in his replies. His responses did not correspond to the questions asked by Kubusada. But he was very categorical in stating that Basava was not a Brahmin but a true Lingayath. According to him, Basava was a true devotee of Lord Shiva and he had thousands of followers who adored and followed him. He also quoted many Sanskrit shlokas from Vedas, Upanishads and several Shaiva works in support of his defense. He denounced Kashinath Shastri for encouraging the sacrilegious works on Basava and other Shiva Sharanas. He was of firm belief that Basava was the incarnation of Lord Shiva. Therefore, according to him, Basava was God on earth. Through out his defence he used Shri as prefix to Basava. It was a mark of high respect that Pawate wanted to give to Basava. He opined: a) Shri

49 Though the debate took place in 1922, it was published in a book form in 1932. We have referred the 1932 publication.
Basavesha did not render initiation to any low caste people. In fact he did not perform any rituals because he was against any rituals that reinforced priesthood (Pawate, 1922:122); b) Shri Basava did not build any army of Minda Jangamas (Jangamas with sexual desires) against Bijjala because it was not at all necessary (ibid,: 121); c) Shri Basavesha did not instigate or hatch conspiracy against Bijjala. Bijjala was killed by the Shiva Sharanas because his sins had reached the ultimate point and there was no other option but to route out the sins in the society (ibid;111); d) Shri Basava had great knowledge in Sanskrit and since he wanted to awaken the religious consciousness among the common people he used popular Kannada language. He was not ignorant of Sanskrit language (ibid: 125). Pawate projected Basava as a great scholar who was a versatile in both Sanskrit and Kannada.

Pawate’s replies were followed by counter-questions and replies to him by another Virasaiva scholar Sirsi Gurusiddha Shastri in a book titled Basavadhwanta Diwakara (1923). Gurushiddha Shastri was also a close associate of Kashinath Shastri. Encouraged by Kashinath Shastri, he edited a newspaper Panchacharya Prabhe. In Basavadhwanta Diwakara Gurusiddha criticized his chaotic style of answering questions asked by Kubusada and challenged the validity and truth in Pawate’s replies. He also asked several questions highlighting the contradictions and absurdities in Pawate's defence.

Kubusada’s book angered the Virasaivas. A Virasaiva meeting in Gadag (1922) vehemently condemned and passed a resolution to ban Basawadhwanta Diwakara. The meeting blamed that the book contained worthless and meaningless questions that spoilt the society.50

We have seen in the Shubhodaya controversy that it was the local communities, which challenged each other and resolved it through the colonial legal system.

50 The contents of the book were discussed in the meeting and it was said that Shantappa Kubusada wrote this book on the advise of Kashinatha Shastri. For more details see a report written on the resolution by Bharamagowda Police Patil in the Mysore Star, 12th Feb. 1922, p.6.
Introduction of colonial legal system by the British had, in principle, promised to be secular and impartial in delivering judgments. Therefore many modern communities in the urban centres had to rely on the modern legal system for redressing their problems. In such colonial context, the 'indigenous/traditional' ways of resolving the legal problems between them were inadequate and unviable. Moreover, the controversy was not just confined to ritual or religious matters. There were factors contending one's belief in modern history and modern legal system. We have already alluded to the controversy over the *Sangeeta Basaweshwara Nataka* controversy and the Viraśaiva community's anger and appeal against banning the play.

The *Shubhodaya* controversy clearly established a fact for the liberal reformists of the community that there was a necessity of a strong ideological base for the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement and the ideals it stood for. The terms of debate in the *Shubhodaya* controversy were inadequate and inappropriate for the reformers like Halakatti to imagine a secular Viraśaiva identity. The reformers could no longer associate the Shiva Sharanas with divine qualities or talk about their miracles. They found it unconvincing and ineffective to debate Viraśaivism exclusively in terms of religion, as done by the Gurusthala and Viraktha traditions. The internal rivalry between the Gurusthala and Viraktha tradition and the traditional rivalry between the Viraśaivas and the Brahmins could not be resolved on the grounds of tradition or rituals. Modern values such as Universalism, liberalism and individuality, in whose domain the Brahmins had already made significant interventions and achieved pan-Indian approval of being secular, had to be appropriated in order to realize the formation of identity on secular grounds. Therefore, the reformists tried to re-write the community history within a modern critical tradition available to them. Interventions in the *Shubhodaya* controversy fostered shared feelings among the Viraktha sect followers (especially Basava sect followers) and the reformists in all the four regions of Karnataka.

Though the trial around *Shubhodaya* controversy proved to be a setback to Pawate and others, its importance for the Viraśaivas laid in the exposure of certain ideologies behind the denigration of Allama and Basava. The *Shubhodaya* controversy widened the
gap between the two sects. The 'loss of image' in the controversy prepared the ground for
more systematic way of projecting Basava and other Shiva Sharanas in the coming days.
Immediately after three years of this controversy, P.G. Halakatti published the first
anthology of vacanas (1923) to give a rationale and a strong ideological base to the
Viraśaiva community to come to terms with changing circumstances, ambivalences and
contradictions in the community that we witnessed in the Shubhodaya controversy. He
heralded a new shift in the conception of Viraśaivism.

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