CHAPTER-3
MYSTICISM IN AKKAMAHADEVI.

Akkamahadevi followed the path of devotion. She never came under the influence of wealth and prosperity nor the charm and youth ship. She devoted all her love, concern and affection to Shri Chennamallikarjuna. She trespassed the distinct way and gave up the desire of marrying worldly husbands. Her deep rooted love and affection is to become a wife of proprietor of this cosmos. Such was a spiritual way of Akkamahadevi.

I’ve loved the youth
Formless, beyond dissolution or death:
Peerless and infinite, entire,
Unmanifested is the youth I loved,
O sisters! Beyond birth or fear,
A fearless youth.
I loved the limitless, past bound;
Passionately, o my sisters, did I love
My husband, Chennamallikarjuna!(73)p.no.26**
Such was the valour of Akkamahadevi. Such finest soul couldn’t confines herself in the palace of king Koushika. So only blasted and came out of the palace.

She had such a charm and great beauty that even king Koushika would have become her servant and had possessed wealth under the feet but in spite of all these attractions her soul always yearned to be free from all these passion and desires and prayed earnestly to make her soul free form all these attractions so she prayed

Lord, break my maya’s pride,............

...That wraps me round and round, I pray! (203) P.no.99**

Even Akkamahadevi experienced a kind of bewilderment, nervousness and dismay which we find in almost all the people, one who pursues his chosen path assiduously. So only she tells, ‘an antagonist whose name is family is following me wherever I go, It is killing me, All these days I have acted according to your wishes and desires and I have all the time suffered a lot in the earthly life’. So she requests God earnestly to stop all these things and make her a stance devotee of Him. In the beginning she too like all other worshippers has been tied with the
world by the charm of Maya. So she earnestly pines or longs intensely to win over all these worldly affairs.

Maya, as shadow, taunts my body,

………….The net of maya cast by thee! (158) p.no.81**

Here she describes beautifully mighty power of the maya. Maya as a shadows troubled the body, as a breath and life troubled the mind, as a memory troubled the mind and as consciousness the memory like this nobody can escape from the net of maya cast by the lord Chennamallikarjuna.

In another vachana she tells, ‘though I want to give up this maya (illusion) it will not leave me. If I don’t give up it follows me wherever I go, like a female devotee to an ascetic, For pincers it is pleasant for a devotee it is like a benediction, But I will not fear for your mayas or illusions,’ and she completely surrenders herself to her husband lord Chennamallikarjuna.

As is said earlier in the path of devotion of a devotee a feeling of husband and wife is specially exhibited. Especially women have taken the protection of God by considering God as their husband. So many of the women practitioners have taken the protection of this emotion. Even
Akkamahadevi has embraced this, so only loved Lord Chennamallikarjuna so deeply and felt other worldly husbands are nothing. She never gave up her soul to the feelings which common man experiences with his bodily affairs. In the following vachana Akkamahadevi splendidly expresses her inner determination.

Through joys of Linga I overcame

…….The writing on the heart-born’s head! (165) p.no.83**

Here we have to observe and concentrate specially on the last lines. Lord chennamallikarjuna slained Kama and blessed let him live as the heart born. But Akkamahadevi says that has erased the writing on the heart barn’s head. Means he will bear in every body’s heart but not in her heart. She has not subdued to the Kama and continuously agitatedly craves and sings for earnest love of Lord Shiva. Such a Divine love made her to write pleasant devotional Vachanas. Her heart being perplexed hopping for Lord Chennamallikarjuna. He has completely taken away her heart.

He paralyses my will,

……….The beloved of Chennamallikarjuna.(76) p.no.27**
Like this Akkamahadevi has thrown away all the worldly pleasures and comforts to be united with Lord Chennamallikarjuna, goes in search of him and on her way she asks……

O parrots, prattling your shrill patter,

................My Chennamallikarjuna!(47) p.no.17**

She questions parrots, cuckoos, bees, swans and peacocks whether they have seen her beloved divine lover. Like this her ardent desire is to being united in him trying to find his image in whole of nature.

She never regarded the conceit and dishonour what she had faced. Instead had a compact or strong devotedness to search and being united in her lover Lord Chennamallikarjuna. She knows that it is not so easy to be pleased by him. So she decides to face the tasks however hard they may be.

Should I feel hungry, there be alms;............

.......O Chennamallikarjuna Lord! (55) P.no.20**

Such is the devotedness of Akkamahadevi. All the time she has considered Chennamallikarjuna as a
companion of her soul. So is ready to endure any sort of violent miseries and fling the fragrance of peace of soul.

You cut and saw and rub the sandal-wood;

.........To love the hand that slays !(247) p.no.118**

Sandalwood spreads its scent in spite of being hurt, gold shines being heated more and however much the sugar cane is squeezed at last it gives sugar and juggery. In the same way Akkamahadevi tells she too will endure all the miseries and will give only love and affection. She is being fearless challenges the God to examine her by giving different kinds of hardship. But she will not fear for it and declares though she is slained she will not stop chanting his name. Whatever may be the condition however may be the situation she will get the pleasing love by him.

If spark has kindled spark,

..........O Chennamallikarjuna Lord ! (248) p.no.118**

Here she tells that her hunger and thirst has quenched if a spark in a forest has scatted and has enraged her, if a cloud comes tearing down that is her bath, if a mountains falls that is to say flowers showering down and even though her head breaks and drops down she feels her
life is offered unto thee Lord Chennamallikarjuna. Like this she beseeches God to give her many troubles and destroy her egotism or pride.

Lord, make me beg from door to door,........

........O Chennamallikarjuna Lord! (195) p.no.96**

She begs God to put her in a troubles fire pit and to grieve and remove inner haughtiness. And make a perfect and beautiful idol by giving hundreds of beating from a chisel. Examine her in all the possible ways but bestow his love to her like this her steady, constancy devotedness moves towards Lord Chennamallikarjuna.

Later Akkamahadevi walked towards Kalyana¹ but in every foot step she faces many hurdles moreover her splendid beauty was following her like an enemy. Wherever she goes the whole world did not realize that she is an unequalled soul and strength of the society. And troubled her in many ways. So only Allamaprabhu in Anubhava Mantapa ² tried to seduce her by a violent ordeal. By this showed to the world that in a path of success or achievement such an extraordinary power and eccentric behavior could be possessed only by Akkamahadevi.
Akkamahadevi enters Anubhava Mantap with so much of happiness as her ardent desire to see all the ShivaSharanas is fulfilled. But Allamprabhu wanted to show her competency to the world and decides to examine her in all the possible ways and asks her...

Why came you hither, pray,
O woman in the lusty bloom, of youth?

........O mother – (10) p.no.292*

Company of woman is venom. That too you are a woman in the lusty bloom, of youth. For a woman husband is supreme Divine. If you could reveal the identity of your husband come this side otherwise you can leave. So says Allamprabhu being very rude and unkind. The whole groups of saranas are wonder struck and view this spectacle scene.

But Akkamahadevi is not feared and opens up her genuine feelings towards her husband Lord Chennamallikarjuna.

What if the body darkens black as black?

.........................That she is ‘in Chennamallikarjuna, God of gods’. (16) P.no.297*
Here she discards the outer appearance and says inner beauty is much more valued.

But Prabhudeva is not satisfied by her answer and puts before her even more ruthless questions, and catechizes her whether it was true that she had laid blame against king Koushika and left him.

Is it true that you laid the blame?

......................This sort of dress does not befit Guheshwaralings! (15) P.no.297*

Prabhudeva says, unless and until he loves you, you cannot marry him you tell that you have shed the fondness and attachment towards body, heart and body has purified but really if you have shed the fondness of body then you wouldn’t have hid the body by hair. Shedding your dress affection of dress has gone seizing affection of hair, then how do you say that you have surrendered or given up your worldly affection?

For a while akkamahadevi was bewildered by these questions of Allamaprabhu. But she was not taken aback, because her renunciation is not a momentary act of sway of emotion but it is a result of determined genuine
feeling of inner thought and knowledge. So she gives answer like this..

Unless the fruit is ripe within..........................

In Chennamallikarjuna, God of gods. (18) P.no.299*

It is really an answer of intense agony. So she tells I have not covered my body by hair for myself. It is for you, you would not be hurt by the sight of seals of love. Because unless the fruits are ripen within the outer peal will never lose its gloss.

All the saranas are very happy and appreciates her answer. Allamaprabhu too is happy internally, but still not satisfied because by this only her intense renunciation and determined loyalty has been proved but prabhu wanted to exhibit her internally flowered genuine feelings and knowledge so he shoots out

Are you in god? Or god in you?

..................Guheswara! (19) p.no.299*

Prabhudeve asks Akka you told till the fruit is ripened outer peel will never lose its gloss. But when the peel has lost its gloss the juice within the fruit has turned to rot how will you defend this?
For this akka tells....

...............To talk of Chennamallikarjuna.(20) p.no.300*

Akka replies 'this is not the fruit which is going to rot when there is desire, anger, pride, fascination and greed chances of rotting is there but the body which has transcended all these will not be rotten. As I have exceeded all these and have taken refuge in my husband Chennamallikarjuna and became ' Saranasati lingapati'.

But Allamaprabhu again tries to hold her so asks

Does the corpse cry out is dead?

Or does the hidden hoard call out?

Is curdled milk still sweet?

This kind of talk will never please Guheswaralinga. (34) p.no.312*

For this akka elaborates her idea like this....

...............The curdled milk, hardened to ghee,

God of gods? (37) p.no.313*

It is like dead body awakens when having dreamed in a reverie and tells its dream. Likewise direct communication with god has been like a dream for me. But
that should become real for which I need your grace and good wishes. And submits that if she has been able to conquer lust and make captive of the holder of the moon and ensnare Chennamalikarjuna’s intemperate love and ‘forget her, being one with him, transcending that twain’ it is because of grace of Basavanna. She asserts that by her association with saranas, she acquired the constant joy of truth. Allamaprabhu is really impressed by her intellectual words so he comes and receives her warmly and honours her. Prabhu appreciates Akka from the bottom of the heart and the whole saranas where amazed to look at her grace and virtue so everyone bows before her.

Thereafter for some period she stays in anubhava mantapa for some period and gets Mystic experience so only she says.

Except through contact, fire
Cannot be kindled, nor seed sprout
Nor body be born, nor yet
Can any happiness come to be
O Chennamallikarjuna lord, because
Of thy sarana’ mystic companionship
I was made supremely happy and was saved. O Prabhu. (65) p.no.345* 

Akkamahadevi’s visit to kalyana has been a rewarding experience she is particularly indebted to Basavanna and Cennabasavanna. So on her part, is greatful to the saranas. Her stay at kalyana and their living example has enriched her experience. Akkamahadevi had in abundance all the sarana qualities; but they needed the stamp of the accomplished saranas’ approval. She now feels she is a child of their grace. 

My piety is your grace
My knowledge is prabhudeva’s grace
My peace is Chennabasavanna’s grace
Mark you, sangana basavanna
As I love lord Chennamallikarjuna,
I am your compassions child. (52) P.no.331* 

It is one great devotee recognizing another. Now her only desire is to seek Chennamallikarjuna and become one with him. She imagines that all the saranas married her off to Chennamallikarjuna. In that marriage 

Guru was kinsman to officiate;
Linga the bridegroom, I the bride;
May all the worlds know it!
My father and my mother were
The innumerable saints:
They found for me a fitting groom
And gave me away.
Hence Chennamallikarjuna is my lord:
No other husbands in the world
Are aught to me! (53) P.no.19**

Guru gave away the girl in marriage, Linga the
bridegroom and whole group of sharanas is attends the
marriage party and the marriage is
Setting a canopy of fire

..........Named Chennamallikarjuna. (269) p.no.129**

Setting a canopy of intelligence over a vacillating
mind. Guru became hailstone seat. Bride is one who does
have any worldly experience and bridegroom is one who
has transcended this world. This is a perpetual and spiritual
marriage.
When we observe these words of Akkamahadevi we can see how greatly she dreamt and imagined about her marriage. In this devotion of wife and husband relation we can’t see even a bit of yearning or aspiration for worldly pleasures. A real devotion is one which transcends a shadow of worldly relationship of husband and wife. Here by we see Akkamahadevi has reached such a great level of devotion.

At last when she reaches the Aikya (merging) level of mysticism she does not feels any difference between husband and wife. All this time she yearns for her husband and at last she reaches the stage where even she does not yearn or think about her husband and says. After my body became

Thyself, whom could I serve?

............Chennamallikarjuna Lord,

Through Thee have I forgotten Thee! (223) p.no.109**

She imagines herself to be in the lord so questions “after my consciousness were last in thee, whom could I know? Being thyself in thee”. Her great mystic achievement ends in the happy blending with the lord Chennamallikarjuna. She seeks the guidance of
Prabhudeva. She asks him where her ‘unitize state be’ – the place, the time and circumstances of her consubstantial union with linga. For that Prabhudeva directs thus.

If you can shed

This twainness of you and me

...................................................

Thither you go, mother!

In Guheswara, the highest peak

Becomes your own. (15) p.no.297*

The plantain grove referred to here is symbolic of the field of one’s life’s activities. One has to cut a path for oneself to life’s ultimate goal, working strenuously the whole of one’s life. The term Kadali (plantain) has a wider and deeper significance for man’s infinitely varied life. He has to live and work in the field assigned to him and fight his way through to life’s final goal. The ultimate resting place of the divine, for her ultimate union with the absolute. Prabhudeva here directs Akkamahadevi that she should, first disengage herself from the ‘I’ ness to ‘Thou’ ness. Then she can see with the eye of knowledge wide
open and she will come to the experience of the infinite light and the Absolute void completely rid of all form.

So, Akkamahadevi, her heart heavy with deep feelings, bids goodbye to them all. Guided by Prabhudeva, she makes her way to mount Srisaila, about 250 miles from Kalyana. Her journey was fraught with difficulties and dangers. But to her the mountains and the caverns, the forests, the beasts and birds, the very earth and the skies presented the face of the Divine. Climbing the mountain, she comes to the well known plantain-grove. Her desire for union with Chennamallikarjuna grows intense.

She expresses her great happiness being in the company of those Saranas and while taking leave assures them that she will bring honour and credit to them.

Within the holy Guru's palm I had my birth;

..................................................

Hail, o hail! I bow to you! (214) p.no.104**

Then she walked towards the plantain grove on mount Srisailam. The journey was very long and wearisome. But she is happy walking in that hazardous path so she says...
The entire forest is a Wishing-tree,

.................................................................

The mountain loved of Chennamallikarjuna,

I saw the plantain-grove! (211) p.no.102**

After hazardous penance she meets her Devine lover and at last achieves the fulfillment of her heart’s desire – the consubstantial union with Chennamallikarjuna.

This woman saint had the good luck to ‘bathe’ in the confluence of the Bhakti stream of Basavanna, Jnana stream of Chennabasavanna, and in the Vairagya stream of Allama. She chooses Chennamallikarjuna as her beloved ‘linga pati’ calling herself Sarana sati. Like Mirabai of the North and Andal of Tamil Nadu. She exhibited her Madhurabhava bhakti. The story of her devotion ending in her final absorption with Mallikarjuna in Sri Saila reads like a divine poem. Though born a woman, regardless of the travails of her body, she patiently bore all abuses. She incessantly referred to Chennamallikarjuna as her husband, and refused to touch other males as if there were thorns on their bodies. Her life is a living wonder to the entire Sarana world. Basavanna praised her thus:
Kayada lajjeya kalpitava kaledu
Jivada lajjeya mohavanalidu
Manava lajjeya nenaha suttu
Bhavada kuta battale yendaridu
Tavaka sneha vyavaharakke hogadu
Kudala sangama devayya enna hetta
Tayi mahadeviyakkana nilava noda!

Bodily modesty she cared not, soul’s desires she gave up, mind’s decency or memory she burned: she thought reciprocity of mind was denuding of herself; she cared not for ordinary friendship. O Kudala sangama God—look at my mother Mahadeviyakka’s stand.

In a similar strain Chennabasavanna sings, praising her;

Anuvanaridu ghanava berasi hiridu
Diridemba bhedava maride kudala
Cenna sangayyanalli berasi berilladippa
Hiriyatana namma mahadeviyakkanagayittu
Kela prabhuve.
Having assessed all things properly and having merged in the 'great' being oblivious to all distinctions of big and small Mahadeviyakka occupies the exalted position by getting herself merged with Kudala Chenna sangayya.

AkkaMahadevi who reached such an exalted position, has become the flower of the liberal Vira Saiva Dharma. Vira Saiva faith allowed women to stand shoulder to shoulder with men in religious matters. Allama, Chennabasavanna, Basavanna and other saints honoured her with a glorified seat in Anubhava mantapa. She sat there among the saints and argued out her original ideas sufficiently along with her male compatriots. There were many stories which are current about her own life. It is however agreed that she gave up an earthly husband, choosing instead a husband who knew not worldly tribulations, and who knew not worldly fear. That was Chennamallikarjuna.

One husband for this life,.............

...As painted puppets screened by cloud ! (56) p.no.20**

Should there be one husband for this world and another for the other my husband is Chennamallikarjuna
alone, others are only like the painted toys behind the cloud.

One time I clutch at Kamas feet,

That Lord Chennamallikarjuna will not Have me. (45) p.no.16**

Being in a state of confusion she says "Once I prostrate before Kama, at another time I beg of the moon in all humility. To hell with these pangs of separation. O heart, you lose course as you have not been able to obtain the grace of Chennamallikarjuna, hence you have to crave for the grace of everyone".

She also tells....

In flameless fire I burnt,

.........And come again ! (61) p.no.22**

Thus the woman saint plaintively lamented: "I am living upon the dried leaf, I am resting on the swords, edge, If Chennamalikarjuna cares not for me, I am ready to offer my life and soul to him and be purified - thus she like mother Sita stood ready to sacrifice her body. She won over her eternal and real God and propitiated him. She
dedicated her mind to the “Eternal who knows no death and to the Beauty without any form”. Her dependence on births and deaths vanished. She cast aside her wealth, cared not for kith or kin; she even gave up her cloths and went about naked, covering her body with her long thick tresses. Never did she complain on the road; she walked regardless of sun, shower thirst and thunder, querying everybody if he had seen her Lord Chennamallikarjuna; she walked many leagues, with a determined mind, even when her body was languishing. If somebody asked her why she was giving trouble to her delicate limbs, she gave the following reply

What if the body darkens black as black?

.................................................................

That Chennamallikarjunalinga loves? (153) p.no.79**

Further she expressed her dedication to Chennamallikarjuna in such unfaltering terms and crossed hills and forests, inquiring every tree, creeper, bird and beast about her lover; she walked on and when she met the Lord on the Sri SAILa, she prayed to her heart’s content:

Hara, for endless time have I

..........Chennamallikarjuna’s own. (62) p.no.22**
Praying thus her eyes become full of tears and her heart elated, her hair stood erect, her heart swelled like the ocean and she meditated on her lord's attributeful form and she sang in glee;

'sparkling red matted locks covering the gem set crown, with a face beaming with smiles, illumining the fourteen worlds with his eyes - I set my face on Him! The famine of mine eyes suddenly vanished. I saw the pride that rules all the wedded pairs, both husbands and wives he who merges Himself into the primary Shakti of the world, the Supreme Teacher Chennamallikarjuna - I saw and managed to live on;'

Thus her untiring penance became fruitful at that moment. She got the Eternal, Undying, Formless beauty for her husband and she prayed to him; 'I became enamored of thee and Thou of me, Thou wilt never be separated from me, and I will never forsake thee. Have you any other place to dwell in? I know thou art all mercy. I will remain wherever and howsoever thou choose to keep me. Thou you know everything, Oh! Chennamallikarjuna!' thus praying she dedicated herself entirely to Him.

Nothing remained which she could call her own. All things belonging to her merged into her Chennamallikarjuna so she says 'I cannot call it Linga or
Lingaidya, attachment or detachment, cannot say it happened or can’t happen, cannot say it is You or I; after the Ghanalinga, has become merged into Chennamallikarjuna linga, nothing remains: this linganga samarasa sthiti or condition she attained to at the end.

We are remained of Mirabai when we pursue the travails she underwent in her Madhurabhakti. Mirabai declares:

I have the God Giridhar and no other

I have forfeited the respect of the world by ever sitting with holy men

The matter is now public, everybody knoweth it

Having felt supreme devotion I die as I behold the world

I have no father, son or relation with me

I laugh when I behold my beloved, people think I weep

I have cast away my fear of the world, what can anyone do to me.

Mira’s love for the God is fixed come what may

Exactly like Mirabai, Mahadeviakka could not live with her worldly husband; she pined for her eternal Lord
and earned the odium of the world. With a zeal matched by Mira’s. With practices of genuine Madhurabhakti, she suffered pangs of separation from the Lord; she also attained finally her goal to be absorbed in the infinite. In the vacanas of Akkamahadevi there is naïve simplicity, deep devotion and natural directness; her realization is echoed in her utterances. These utterances breathe forth the beauty of her sincere and honest love for Chennamallikarjuna.

She discarded all the earthly men but admired, worshipped and married the ‘most handsome Chennamallikarjuna who is formless, beyond death or dissolution, who is fearless and dauntless one.

Akkamahadevi is a highly honoured soul who had possessed women’s uniqueness of viability. She had experienced natural renunciation, intense devotion and was a great soul, who has renounced the world and grew as a great intellectual ascetic. Though born in a orthodox family emerged as a great mystic saint. Her nudity bewildered the contemporary society. Many tried to take advantage of her loneliness, but calmly with a great patience became
successful in changing the thought and views of those men. She wins over all the hard tasks put forth before her.

Her great love, affection and involvement in her beloved lord Chennamallikarjuna, made the people to appreciate her inner glory. She was born during the days where condition of women was pitiable. But, nothing could change her firm act of becoming one with Lord Chennamallikaujuna. During those days women were discarded as an illusion in a society but Akkamahadevi stood against it and became a great achiever.

Being all alone like an elephant which has separated from the herd fought for her existence. She tried to shed all the psychological debilities one be one and gradually gained emancipation. Like Akkamahadevi we also find many other mystic saints in Karnataka. To name a few we see Bontadevi who was supposed to be princess of Kashmir, but greatly influenced by the views and principles of Sharanas of Kalyana and left all her fortune, wealth, prosperity and masterdom and possessed the “Sharanasati Lingapati” principal and became a great follower of Shivasharanas of kalyana. Many other contemporary mystics who were the part of veerashaiva movement6 of
Karnataka were Akkamma, Muktayakka, Gangambike, Aydakki Lakkamma, Ammuge Rayamma, Ketaladevi, Sule Sankavve and many others.

There are also many other Indian and foreign mystics who inspite of few differences share similar views of Akkamahadevi. To name a few Indian mystics are Karikalamme and Andale from Tamilnadu, Lallayogishwari from Kashmir and Meerabai from Rajastan. Since from the Ancient time Karnataka and Tamilnadu are famous for Bhakti. Veerashaivism was followed in Karnataka. Shaivism and Vaishnavism was practiced in Tamilnadu. Bhaktas of Karnataka who were the great followers of Shiva are called as ‘Shivasharanas’. Bhaktas of Tamilnadu who were also the great followers of Shiva are called as ‘Nayanars’

Akkamahadevi has also written about nature’s mystery introspection and importance in her vachanas with philosophical background.

Who is he, pray, that fed sour water to

-------------------------- -His way is His, apart!(110) p.no.43**
Here she describes distinctive qualities of fruits, outstanding flavours of food grains, and aroma of flowers. Along with these outer qualities she also explains inwardness of nature.

On the one hand there are thorn apple, orange, mango and lime which tastes sour on the other hand there are banana, sugarcane, jackfruit and coconut which tastes sweet. She questions who has put sour or sweet water to them. Further continuous questioning who has squeezed flavor on the various kinds of aromatic rice and who has distilled perfume into cuscus, jasmine and marjoram.

Curiosity would have endured but Akkamahadevi’s intention is not to retain the curiosity but explains why they are like that. So only she tells though water soil and sky are one and the same they look and tastes differently. Then tells, in spite they blend with several substances remains in its own kind in the same way lord Chennamallikarjuna might have united with several people but has retained his own acquaintance. Here she has tried to see abstractness with concrete beings.

Natures basic source are earth, plain field and sky which she compared with body and soul when body gets
soiled and soul becomes one with sky she questions “which one to hold? And how to get drenched in them”. For this again we have to get answers in nature. She has limited the glaring contrast existing between the body and soul with earth and sky.

In many of vachans she has tried to tell us that this type of unique strength could be found only in spirituality.

You cut and saw and rub the sandal-wood;

O father Chennamallikarjuna Lord,

Though you may slay me,

I’ll never cease

To love the hand that slays! (247) p.no.118**

Here she picks up three things form nature i.e sandal wood, piece of gold and sugarcane. Whose real essence or substance will be known only after they are fragmented. Giving scent is the specialty of sandal wood, shining is the specialty of gold and giving sweetness is the specialty of sugarcane. They give these things only after sandalwood being cut, piece of gold being heated and sugarcane being squeezed and heated. Like them she also will never cease
to love Chennamallikarjuna inspite of her being slain. Here she chooses sandal wood, sugar cane and gold and shows their loyalty and allegiance.

Like them even saranas too have loyalty and allegiance regarding their guru. So saranas stand aloft form other people and these things in nature also show their devotion. Likewise it is interesting to see how Akka utilizes nature. In her another vachana

The peacock strutting on the mountain-tops-

......................................................

Than Chennamallikarjuna?

Tell me, O cronies mine! (42) p .no.15**

Through the images like peacock, swan, a cuckoo and a bumble bee Akkamahadevi tries to explain the temperament of saranas. Mountains, lake, mango tree and perfumed flowers. They are the symbols of excellence. Grassy knolls, brook, dried tree and fragrance less flowers are the symbols of the humblest. So in creation itself there is a presence of excellence and humbleness. Peacock, swan, cuckoo and bumble-bee are familiar with these things. So only they dwell in excellent spots like mountain
tops, lake, mango tree and perfumed flowers not in least places like grassy knolls, wee brook, dried tree and fragrance less flowers. Like them even she is not drawn to the other people or things except the lord Chennamallikarjuna.

She correctly identifies the real dwellings of these natural inhabitants. This was true in the past, is true in the present, will be true in the future. With this eternal function Akkamahadevi shows her inner conscience and shows transparent characteristics of Shivasharanas.

In her another vachana she gives opposite intention.

My dear, the agitated mind

...........This sense of twain.(44) p.no.16**

Here she tries to imply the fact that of a conscience of a man is contented and gratified then each and everything seems to be new and novel. If a conscience of a man is discontented and ungratified then each image seems to be dangerous. Here she seems to be unhappy not because something has hurt her but because Chennamallikarjuna has resented with her, so only gentle air causes a burning sensation and moonlight is hot like sunlight. Likewise there
is a connection with one another in nature. The anger of Chennamallikarjuna has adverse effect on her; because of that adverse effect nature too seems to be adverse.

So Akka tries to imply the fact that conscience or inner voice is very important. So whether it is gentle breeze or thrashing air, moonlight or sunlight firstly it appears for conscience. If conscience is good everything appears to be good if it is bad everything appears to be bad. With her own experiences she bridges a sort of bond between nature and conscience. At last she tells -Do make him understand, advise him, my dear, and fetch him here. This hears her resentment and reduces internal combat.

When her conscience is jubilated entire forest is a wishing tree; every tree is restoring the life; every stone is a Alchemic stone; every place as a holy place; All water is unageing nectar and every beast a man-like beast. Like this Akka in her vachanas through nature has exhibited the conflicts arises in the soul, and their impact, and their relationship with each other. It is meaningful to see that Akka started searching her beloved lover form nature. She has an immense faith in nature. She tries to see her immense beloved lover Lord Chennamallikarjuna in nature.
The following vachana is very meaningful where she keeps nature as her evidence.

O parrots, prattling your shrill patter,

My Chennamallikarjuna! (47) p.no.17**

Here she tries to see Chennamallikarjuna in bird's community. Repeatedly she enquires them have they seen her beloved lord. Like this Akkamahadevi searching her lover Chennamallikarjuna in nature is marvelous and relevant even today.

The vachanas of Akkamahadevi are highly intellectual, and deeply emotional. They are the enlightenment of man's love, affection, pain and joy. Some of her vachanas exclusively show her engrossment towards Lord Chennamallikarjuna. Her vachanas show her cosmic emotional and mystic communion with the lord Chennamallikarjuna. Her emotional vachanas exhibit young lovers yearning with excellence for a lover and finding deep satisfaction with her exorbitant in a mortal

When, rising from Thy bed of rest,

Thou comst, O shivalingas, to my palm,
In the resplendent luster of Thy light

I shamelessly embrace Thee: mark,

O Chennamallikarjuna! (1) p.no.1**

When her lover comes to her palm rising form the bed of rest her body, mind and eyes are riveted in the resplendent luster of light of Linga7. She beseeches God with magician’s throat. She is languishing for him. She has become depressed, so wails and withers to see him. Because she feels that her devotional husband Chennamallikarjuna is far away from her. So, she grieves for being separated and she experiences an uncommon ecstasy. In the beginning Akkamahadevi was transfixed. As the glitter of the gold is in gold itself she doesn’t know that the lord Chennamallikarjuna is in her.

She desires ardently to see her divine lover and she feels lonely in his absence. So she tells,

One time I clutch at Kama’s feet,

That Lord Chennamallikarjuna will not

…………..Have me.(45) p.no.16**
Here pain of separation is more. So, she tells one time I clutch at kama’s feet. Another time beseeches the moon. She has a great desire to unit her lover because she is at everybody’s mercy as Lord Chennamallikarjuna does not want to have her otherwise she wouldn’t have feared for the other. Here we see along with her unique anguish there is a great desire to unite him. The whole day she pines for him and at night she craves to get united with him.

All the four quarters of the day, O lord,

……..My hunger, thirst and sleep. (48) p.no.17**

The ardor and lust of the body with exuberant heart is being wasted. So being in a gloom she prays to god.

There is an ardour in the fivefold sense;

…………….O Chennamallikarjuna? (22) p.no.8**

Akkamahadevi dreams about her lover, obsessed with him and recalls him day and night. She has already suffered a lot being in a false impression about her lover. Inspite of it she ardently longs to be united with him. The love what she has possessed towards Chennamallikarjuna
is not a blind belief. But it is an eye which shows her lovers body, soul and spirit.

Seeing the one of god-like face

..........Is now my bridegroom, I his bride. (11) p.no.4**

Being adorned she anticipates for the arrival of her beloved lover.

‘I’ve bathed in turmeric,

..........My mouth is parched! (46) p.no.17**

Not only is that she ready to discard everything.

Let my heart put its trust in thee;

..........O Chennamallikarjuna,

As water in a heated iron !(71) p.no.25**

Akkamahadevi eagerly waiting for her lover’s arrival son only she tells.

Watching the road he should come by,

..........Parted from Chennamallikarjuna for one night,

I was like a Cakora bird
That feels a loosening of her embrace. (74) p.no.26**

Her craving for the lord has become more which she cannot withstand so she gives definite traces of her lover to her friend and requests to send him towards her if she happens to meet any such person.

Mark, lady, the young moon

...........This is the emblem, lady, of

Lord Chennamallikarjuna! (59) p.no.21**

But her integrated love does not seem to convince him. Being helpless she seeks help of her friend.

If he march to the battlefield,

I have nothing to say.

But when he is upon my palm,

.............Make Chennamallikarjuna love me,

What shall I do, my dear? (60) p.no.21**

To meet her lover she never hesitates to do anything. She is ready to face all kinds of circumstances. So
agitatedly requests her lover not to give any lame excuses and come as early as possible and unite with her.

Then she tells the happiness what she gets form being united for the first time is far greater than the happiness what she gets from the departure after the meet. So she tells,

Better than joy

Of parting after having met

........Of parting form my Lord Chennamallikarjuna,

Yet never more to part?(49) p.no.18**

Inspite of all these things she does not have bit of heartburn. So she tells

I do not mind that you

.................................................................

O Chennamallikarjuna Lord,

Your mouth is foul with begging for our love ! (93)
p.no.32**

Means even god expects love from human beings. To get that human love he is even ready to beg. But human beings should not beg for the mercy of god it is shameful.
Akkamahadevi is very eager to see her Lord but disappointed as she couldn’t meet him. Inspite of it she enquires with the birds, plants and bees where her lover is and beseeches them to tell if they have seen him.

For her love is nothing but submission of herself. Her respectful presentation is the gift she wants to give to her lover Lord Chennamallikarjuna.

If I dedicate my body, it is
An offering to you;
If I dedicate my senses, it is
.........A curse, your curse, on me,
O Chennamallikarjuna! (92) p.no.92**

Akka in her imagination draws a picture of her marriage. And explains her imaginary marriage very beautifully.

An emerald floor, a gold festoon,
A diamond pillar and a coral canopy-
...............They wed me to a groom by name
Chennamallikarjuna. (63) p.no.22**
But later she comes out of her imaginary marriage illusion and her love becomes even more dense and immersed. This experience even though painful gives happiness to her.

Look at the way that love has been

So fast! Whenever you shoot your shaft

...............O mother, Chennamallikarjuna's love

Is very sweet! (43) p.no.16**

Like this variously she experiences pain, agony and suffering. But as she is a lover of Chennamalikarjuna for him she is ready to take as many births as possible. Not only that in all her births she wants Lord Chennamallikarjuna to be her lover. Because for her being united with her devotional lover is a heavenly happiness.

Good is the bed, his look my ornament;
His clasp a robe, his kiss a feat;
His coaxing words my tambulam;
His passion is my toiletry.

To be united with Chennamallikarjuna

Is, to me, mother, heavenly bliss! (78) p.no.27**
A Chennamallikarjunas glimpse of foot itself is an esteemed honor.

Is as if a stream

Had rushed into a mud-caked tank;

...............Had, walking, come! Behold,

Seeing the Guru Chennamallikarjuna's feet,

I have been blest! (40) p.no.15**

But at last both of them are united but for

Akkamahadevi the thought of being united itself derives pleasure,

He paralysed my sill,

.............................................................

The beloved of Chennamallikarjuna.(76) p.no.27**

Akkamahadevi submits her pride and egoism to the only truth which we see in the following vachana

As I gazed steadily, my eyes were closed,

O mother; and as I heard and heard,

.............................................................

All unaware what meant
To be united with Lord Chennamallikarjuna,

O mother, I forget myself ! (80) p.no.28**

Aikkamahadevi is a great mystic. Because with her spiritual introspection she has understood the actual knowledge of God and real truth. For this spiritual eye she has to get the help of soul and senses so only being a self reliant she experiences a state of comfort. So only she tells.

My plantain-tree is all I do;

..........................................  

Chennamallikarjuna ! (218) p.no.106 **

Following vachana is to know that she has understood the ultimate truth.

It has transcended body and mind.

And higher intellect; there is

..........................................  

The ultimate principle that know

No merging with Chennamalikarjuna. (204) p.no.100**

Akkamahadevis concept of love is in the beginning was confined only to ‘Sharanasathi and Lingapathi’. Throughout her life her investigation was with the ‘Anga’
and ‘Linga’ and that investigation ends with mutual suitability or happy blending with the Lord Chennamallikarjuna.

Akkamahadevi was a born mystic. With a brilliant intellect and a charming personality with a heart burning with a desire for the Divine union, Akkamahadevi was joined to the Divine lord in an eternal wedlock. For Akkamahadevi sex, desire, greed and all other passions do not seem to be problems at all. Her purity of heart and mind, soul and body, she seems to inherit from her parents. She was born in a world surcharged with love and devotion, knowledge and practice as a result of the sarana movement.

The sarana way of life had seized her entire being. The idea of having God as a lover appealed to her and grew more firm and intense as she grew older. Her Lord Chennamallikarjuna appeared to her virgin vision with a divine radiance and beauty, as the only bridegroom. When the saranas speak of sarana as the spouse and of Linga as the lover, it denotes the relationship that obtains between the individual self and the transcendent self.
Akkamahadevi awakened to this hidden self could not but give it her whole heart.

Before this love all external loves become meaningless. She has chosen the Divine for her spouse. Her love filled her entire being and there was no room in her heart for anyone else. As she declares, she loved the most beautiful, infinite and eternal, untouched by death or destruction and hungered for union with Him.
NOTES:-

- * - The figures within brackets specify the number of vachanas from the book: S.S.Bhoosnurmath and Armando Menezes, tr., Sunya Sampadane, (karnatak University, Dharwar. 1970).

- **- The figures within brackets specify the number of Vachanas from the book: Armando Menezes and S.N.Angadi, tr., Vachanas of Akkamahadevi, (Dharwar, 1873).

1. Kalyana: It is a place in Karnataka district, two miles from the birth place of Akkamahadevi i.e. Udatadi. It is in Bidar district, Karnataka state.

2. Anubhava Mantapa: The mantap was a forum at which spiritual and religious experiences came to be shared and discussed.

3. Sharanas: Basavanna and his followers are called as shivasharanas.

4. Saranasati Lingapati: The Sati-Pati Bhava (husband and wife relation) is the most common Bhava that we come across in any writings of vachanas of Basavanna and his followers, Shiva sharanas as they are called. This Sati-Pati Bhava where in the devotee considers himself to be the wife of that immortal husband God. Which could be a very natural feeling for a woman saint, comes out with equal naturalness in the Vachanas.

6. Veerashaiva movement: The institutions of temple originally came into existence to cater to the spiritual needs of the devotees. But they soon became the centers for begging all worldly needs through the mediation of a priest who commercialized these sacred places. He entertained only the mighty kings and the people of higher castes who exploited the poor and the downtrodden keeping them far away from the gates of the temples. Basavanna who appeared at the time of such ugly social surroundings, was the central figure of the Veerashaiva Movement (12 C A.D) in Kalyana (South India). With the political powers in his hands as the chief minister in the Kalachuri kingdom ruled by a Jain king Bijjala, he waged a war against the inhuman discriminations of people based on castes, creeds and sex under his dynamic leadership, people of identical thoughts forged their way to Kalyana strengthening his hands to fight against the age old discrimination. Whether a Brahmin or untouchable, whether a man or woman, whether the rich or poor, the symbol of Istalinga adorned the necks of Shiva Sharanas (the divine seekers) as his followers are called. The symbol Linga carried by everyone on his own body not only served as the symbol of God but also served as a sign of social equality and religious freedom of the oppressed heralding a new era of human freedom.

The word veerashaiva, another name for our tradition has to be viewed in this historical perspective. Shaiva means believer of God Shiva. Veera means a hero. Veerashaiva, therefore means a heroic shaiva who revolted against the social inequalities and injustices melted out in the name of religion and scriptures. It is not just a name of a new religion with two words put in juxtaposition for its identification from other traditions but it conveys the deep human suffering and the great struggle the people of those times had to encounter and how they became martyrs in their struggle against injustice.
7. **Linga:** Is a tiny symbol, otherwise known as Ishta - Linga. It is always carried on our body and is never part with it. A child gets it on the same day it is born be it a boy or a girl, and it is tied to the cradle. As the child grows, it is kept in a silver container (Karadige or Karandaka) suspended from the neck by means of a thread. Oval in shape and black in colour, it looks like a tiny stone of salagrama smaller than a walnut with a shining appearance. After taking bath every morning and evening, we sit in a meditative posture with all the pooja articles around like the flowers, rosary beads, sacred ash, incense, camphor and light. The sacred ash is anointed on the forehead and a different part of the body symbolizing purification of the body preparing oneself for purification of the mind. The Linga is removed from the silver container and held in the left palm raised to the level of one's nose. It is worshipped with flowers and incense like an idol in any temple. With the eyelids half open, it is gazed at with unblinking eyes reciting inwardly the sacred words of Shiva Mantra (the mystic syllables). Devotional songs are also sung as long as one pleases.