CHAPTER FOUR

IDEOLOGICAL BASE

This chapter deals with the ideological base for the conduct prescribed by Virasaivism in attaining individual and social goals. Ideas of individual and society, and their interrelationships as found in Virasaiva texts will be taken up for inquiry.

In the context of this inquiry, ideologies are not taken as mere abstract ideas without relevance to action, but are considered as levers of social action as pointed out by Daniel Bell. He states, "ideology is the conversion of ideas into social levers." Thus, ideologies are not merely system of ideas and beliefs, but are related to actions.

With this we may consider the way in which ideas are related to actions in different contexts and at different periods. Since the Bhagavad Gita is one of the well-known religious texts of the Hindus

wherein ideas are related to actions, a reference is made to this Text at the very outset.

One of the devotional classics of all times is the Bhagavat-Gita in India. Its central message contains elements of both social and personal ethics. Hans Nagpaul points out that "... its social ethics revolve round the concepts of social dharma, equality, and the concern for human problems, while the personal ethics are emphasised through such values as specific dharma, non-attachment, non-violence, self-discipline, and austerity. Both are essential and are inseparable in attaining the ultimate goal of perfection, enlightenment, or immortality. The appeal of this scripture consists in the social inspiration it offers while bringing the supreme end of religious life within the reach of its readers, and harmonizing it with ethics and worldly life."

The Gita has helped in the new definition of the Hindu attitude towards society and has emphasised

the need for altruistic actions and social interactions not only for self-realization, but also for fulfilment of one's responsibility towards others as well. The supreme end, moksha, has become attainable under modern conditions for, as Radhakrishnan³ says, moksha or liberation is to be achieved here and now, on earth, through human relations." It means, then, that Moksha is to be attained by being in the society and not by running away from it. To attain moksha, therefore, human society is the proving ground.

In sociology, two contrasting models of society are suggested. Dahrendorf has termed these two views as the integration theory and the coercion theory.

"According to the former, every society is relatively persistent, stable structure of elements. These elements are well integrated with each other, and every element has a function, i.e., it contributes to maintenance of society as a system. Every functioning social structure is based on a consensus of values among its members. In contrast to these ideas the

coercion theory states that every society is at every point subject to processes of change; social change is ubiquitous. Every society displays at every point dissenion and conflict, and every element in society contributes to the disintegration of the system. Each social structure is based, not on consensus of values, but on the coercion of some by others. Dahrendorf argues that both these theories are necessary for an understanding of society. However, it appears that in the study of social development and social welfare it is the coercion or conflict theory that predominates.

Society is ever-changing. "It exists," as MacIver and Page pertinently remark, "as a time sequence. It is a becoming, not a being and a process, not a product." Coming to the present study, certain socio-ethical values were introduced in the society of the twelfth century when Basava the leader and the maker of modern Virasaivism lived. Basava built Virasaivism on new value foundations such as truth,


non-violence, justice, social equality, morality, love, mercy, compassion, self-help, self-reliance. These values ushered in revolutionary changes in the society then, and, the creation of a new society — casteless, spiritualistic and egalitarian — and a Welfare State, were the goals prescribed by the leaders of this movement.

Basavanna and Srinivasa Iyenger arrive at the right conclusion when they state that "Virasaivism was a healthy growth on the soil of Hinduism because it attempted many useful reforms. Neither sex, nor social status, nor caste disqualifies a person from attaining salvation; and hence in the eyes of the Virasaiva, the 'untouchable' and the 'weaker sex' are potentially the religious and social equals of the members of the highest castes. This means not merely a welcome levelling of castes (and hence eradication of untouchability) but also discountenancing of the five pollutions yet observed by other Hindus ... "

Further, from the point of view of social and economic betterment Basava "discouraged mere vagrancy and beggary as a means

of living, and extolled the dignity of labour. 7

Hunshal points out that "... the secret of the Lingayat movement lies in the fact that theology and sociology proceed pari passu; in fact both are intertwined. The Lingayat sociology is shaped in the monotheistic mould. Social development was possible through religion. ... The removal of age-long untouchability was brought about through the abolition of the temple — and idol-worship which was vitiated by the Brahmin priest-craft ... Basava abolished temple institutions; because those institutions had become reactionary religiously, socially and economically ... He brought about social revolution through religion." 8

In order to bring about social transformation of such great magnitude, Virasaivism had to rely on a strong ideological base. This was built essentially on the ideas of Guru, Linga and Jangama.

7. Ibid., p. 20.
The practice of Virasaivism mainly comprises Panoācāra* and Ashtavarna**. The Panchacara are the five codes of conduct. They lay down the rules of behaviour for individual members of Virasaiva faith as social beings. The Ashtavarnas are the eight aids that enable an individual in his spiritual pursuits. Among the eight aids, the trinity of Guru-Linga-Jangama is important and peculiar to Virasaivism. It is necessary, therefore, to understand them in their proper setting. An interpretation of these terms is necessary, for such an analysis provides the right approach to the current study.

The Guru:

The Guru is the spiritual preceptor who initiates the novice into the Virasaiva fold with due rites. According to Dr. Nandimath, the Guru is superior to father and mother, since it is he who is the cause

* Panoācāra are the five codes of conduct. They are: 1. Lingacara, 2. Sivacara, 3. Sadacara, 4. Brtyacara and 5. Ganacara.

** Ashtavarnas are: Guru, Linga, Jangama, Padodaka, Prasada, Vibhuti, Rudraksha and Mantra. A description of Ashtavarnas is given in S.C. Nandimath, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-64.
of spiritual rebirth, as it were, which is far more important than the biological phenomenon of birth. The Guru grants the individual the Supreme-self, the Linga, that should reside in him for ever. Malledevru\textsuperscript{9} quotes Shivagamas that have described the characteristics of the preceptor (Guru) as one who is well-versed in philosophy, endowed with virtuous qualities, intelligent, free from desire, jealousy etc. In short, he is regarded as Siva himself and even more, as the Guru can protect the disciple against the wrath of Siva, but Siva cannot protect the disciple against the wrath of the preceptor. Sri Kumara Swamiji\textsuperscript{10} maintains that it is the Guru who gives the devotee the real insight into the principles of the Lingayat religion, explains the inner meaning of the practices and guides him on the path of righteousness. Since the Guru has gained a first-hand knowledge of God and the world by experience, the devotee finds great delight in serving and initiating him, and in acquiring knowledge from him.

\textsuperscript{9} Malledevru H.P., \emph{Essentials of Virasaivism} Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Bombay, 1973, p. 67.

\textsuperscript{10} Sri Kumara Swamiji, \emph{Mirror of Virasaivism} Navakalyan Math, Dharwar, 1980, p. 50.
The Guru is responsible to perform three functions, namely, initiation (Diksha), training and instruction (Shiksha) and help to achieve salvation (Moksha). Great reverence and respect is shown to the Guru and he is regarded as superior to all.

The traditional concept of the Guru and his functions are not outdated. But it is necessary to comprehend the term 'Guru' in its new setting as relevant to the present-day society. The Guru is a guide and a leader in the secular field. He guides the individual soul (Linga) with appropriate knowledge and direction to attain self-satisfaction and at the same time showing due regard to societal interests and goals. He leads the individual and society for better prosperity and progress. As a liaison he helps to bring about harmonious relation between the two.

Society is considered to have come with timelessness and the Guru or guide with time. 11


All the Vacanas cited in this chapter are taken from the above work. The references to the particular vacanas are indicated by the letters B.V., followed by the serial number of the Vacana as appearing in the text.
But society has come with such individuals who may not be true and pure in their conduct and they require a Guru because only the true and pure will have no Guru. 12

The Linga:

The Linga is an object of worship. It is an emblem of the Supreme God granted to the disciple in the form of Istalinga. Siva is extracted in the form of Linga by the Guru through his spiritual power and given into the hands of disciple for worship. Linga stands for the association of Siva and Sakti i.e., Mind and Matter.

The term Istalinga means that which grants all the objects desired by the worshipper. The Istalinga helps understand and realize the Pranalinga and the Bhavalinga. A Virasaiva must not worship any other object than the Istalinga. It is necessary here to trace the necessity of worshiping the Istalinga.

Idol-worship has been a very ancient and a well established practice in Hinduism. Animals, trees,

12. Ibid., p. 315, (E.V. 954).
mythological deities, gods, celebrated souls and so on, were worshiped in temples. The temple and the priest-craft are well developed, thereby, at the cost of social prosperity and progress. Swami Lingenanda opines that worship of a plurality of gods gave rise to a multiplicity of castes and this brought about a host of compartmental divisions in society, which has sapped human strength and energy, and accounted for abject servility and continuous subjection to alien ruler for centuries.  

Malledevru\textsuperscript{14} quotes Chandrajnanagama wherein three kinds of pilgrimages are mentioned, namely, the pilgrimage to the preceptor (Guruyatra), the pilgrimage to a deity (Devayatra) and the pilgrimage to a holy river (Thirthayatra). Among these three, the pilgrimage to the spiritual preceptor is the most fruitful. Why are, then, the other two kinds of pilgrimages? Firstly, the laity will not have an easy access to the places of pilgrimages, and secondly, the costs are high, and it means a lot of inconvenience to many of them. Besides,

\begin{itemize}
  \item[14.] Malledevru H.P., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 67-68.
\end{itemize}
the pilgrim centres, by and large, have become the centres of commerce and mechanical worship; the priests are engaged in unseemly practices. Polytheism, thus, coupled with crude beliefs, superstitions and malpractices at temples and shrines had degenerated Hindu society. It is true that Virasaivism was much influenced by early Saivite culture and saivite sects among whom the practice of image worship and static Linga prevailed. But this was so only until Basava came on the socio-religious scene in the 12th century.

Basava stood for a casteless society. He strongly condemned the worship of several deities current in his times, and declared that the belief in one Supreme Power should be accepted. Observe his following Vacana:

Do not say, swollen with pride
The Gods are two or three:
Mark you, He is but one;
That there be two is just a lie!
The Veda says: there is none but
Lord Kudala Sangama

15. B.V. 545.
A Virasaiva worships only one God, the Absolute, (Ultimate Reality) in the form of Istalinga, which is always worn on his person. Thus individual worship is being substituted to the congregational worship in the temples. In the matter of worship and prayers there would be no middleman and the Bhakta should approach God as a Sati (the wife) would approach her lord and thus attain spiritual communion with Him without any interruption from the outside world. He need not have to go elsewhere in search of temples and Shrines. In a modest manner Basava says:

Those who have money build
Temples to Siva, What can I build?
A poor man, Lord, am I!
My body is the Shrine,
Its pillars are my legs,
The golden pinnacle, my head,
Hear me, Kudala Sangama Lord,
There is destruction for what stands,
But not for that which moves.  

This Vachana suggests the adoration of the living god within, instead of the lifeless idol without. Lingananda affirms that through the monatheistic worship

16. B.V. 820.
of Istalinga and Linga discipline one not only attains self-realization but also paves the way for social progress. Virasaivism resisted the perpetuation of invidious caste distinctions prevailing in Hindu society. The worship of the Linga is accepted because it provides social equality to all those wearing Linga. Istalinga, however, is not the exclusive property of Lingayats, it is the property of the entire humanity interested in it and desiring to gain individual and social good.

The worship of the Samadhi Linga, and static or the Sthavarlinga, is not accepted in Virasaivism, although this practice is quite in vogue at present among them. In accordance with the tenets of Virasaivism, "nothing except Istalinga, Guru and Jangama who are the living embodiments of consciousness, should be worshipped, and only while they are alive, not their pictures or tombs after their death (Union with God)." Basava says in this regard as follows:

18. Ibid., p. 126.
No death for any of ours; they know not death;
What is called death is not.
For him who's one with self and risen in Linga
There is no other place except in Linga
When Soddalabacarasa, Lord Kudala Sangama's Sarana,
Pushes his way into
The belly of the Absolute, there's none to tell of it.¹⁹

The Jangama:

Etymologically, Jangama means dynamic knowledge.
When it is applied to a person, in a traditional sense, it means one who is endowed with dynamic knowledge of God; and as per the ways the Virasaivas believe and live, it denotes one who moves from place to place preaching the doctrines of Virasaivism and guiding Virasaivas in their spiritual pursuits. Jangama is the overseer of the conduct of the devotees. Malledevru²⁰ cites Virāgama a text to show that how Siva himself moves in the world in the form of Jangama for the good of mankind. Jangama is called a 'Ohara' because he travels from place to

²⁰. Malledevru H.P. op. cit., p. 69.
place, preaching religion and morality to all. He is, therefore itinerant, Jivanmukta, the one who is emancipated even while living, moving about in the country for the sake of guiding the devotees in their religious and spiritual experiences.

As against the original meaning of Jangama, Nandimath observed, as far back as 1942, that many Jangamas had now abandoned travelling from place to place teaching religion and morality to the Virasaivas and "that they had settled in towns and villages, usually superintending religious functions of the community; in other words, they have now become the priests of the community."\textsuperscript{21} According to Sri Kumara Swamiji, "the ecclesiastical polity of the Virasaivas comprises within itself three orders: (1) Samanya, the lay people (2) Visesha, the specific order, and (3) Nirabhar, the order of the Viraktas. In reality and spiritual sense, all Lingayats are held to be equal, since all are called Siva-bhaktas, the devotees of Siva."\textsuperscript{22}

However, Viseshas and Nirabharis are considered to be

\textsuperscript{21} Nandimath S.C., op. cit., p. 56.
\textsuperscript{22} Sri Kumara Swamiji, op. cit., p. 89.
the two kinds of Jngamas and the Samanya is the bhakta. Viseshaśas are known as Patta&adevaru and, Nirabharis, as Viraktas. The Visesha mediates between Samanya, the Bhakta and Nirabhari, the Virakta. The difference between Bhakta and Virakta is said to be one of degree and not of kind. While the bhakta has worldly pursuits in life, the Virakta order is set apart completely for the work of spiritual elevation of the community.

Nirabharmas are those who do not have burden of any kind. They are free from restrictions and the influence of the three Mālās* or impurities. They are unmarried and without being attached to any Math or a village or a town. The origin of Nirabhar order is traced back to Allama Prabhu, a contemporary of Basava and a leader of the Bhakti movement, in the 12th century. Hence Virakta Maths recognise Sunya Simhasana of Kalyana as their chief math. Moorusaviramath, which is a virakta math, traces its origin to Sunya Simhasana. One may find the traditional role and functions of Jangamas are changing when one sees some Jangamas engaged in all kinds of trade and occupations available to them.

* The three Mālās are Anava mala, Karma mala and Maya mala.
Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the Order of Jangamas in the way in which it is treated here does not consist of all those persons who are born in Jangama families. The Jangama is clearly stated to be a Nirabhari. The distinctions of family and caste are not attached to him. Therefore, as a member of a distinct order, the Jangama is different from the one who is born in a Jangama family.

The foregoing analysis reveals that the Jangama in the traditional sense refers to individuals and to a particular order. The term "Jangama" could only be understood in the light of activities of the order of the "Jangama". The present study has made an attempt to comprehend the role of the Jangama in relation to religion and society. The order of the Jangama carries sufficient weight in the religious philosophy of Virasaivism to warrant such investigation.

The Jangama becomes so all-pervading in the religious doctrine of Virasaivism that the other two, Guru and Linga, could almost be conceived as merging with the Jangama. Reflecting this, we derive a new interpretation of the position of the Jangama in
the religious philosophy of Virasaivism, which is somewhat divergent from what is popularly believed. The Linga and the Jangama, in a special sense, connote "individual" and "society" respectively. Jangama is not at all attributed to any caste, Mate Mahadevi points out, by stating that the Jangama represents the whole society.

To recall a Vacana already cited:

"... There is destruction for what stands, But not for that which moves."

Society is a living unit; it moves and changes. It does not perish. In Virashaiva philosophy the static aspect is called Siva or Linga, and the dynamic aspect of it, Sakti or Jangama. Siva cannot exist without Sakti, nor can Sakti exist without Siva. Jangama consists of souls (Lingas) which interact with one another and are entwined harmoniously with one another. There is no Linga (soul), or individual, without Jangama, (the Universal Soul), or society. The

25. B.V. 837.
Jangama is boundless. Basava questions, "Where is the limit to the Jangama?" Jangama encompasses the entire universe and it has come from the timeless past; the individual is bound in time. Where there is a Jangama there is no caste. To serve an individual Jangama means, serving the society itself, because Jangama is the Linga's mouth:

If, knowing the root is the tree's mouth, you water it below, Lo, high up the sprouts appear!
If, knowing the Jangam to be The Linga's mouth, you serve him food, It gives you a banquet in return!
If, seeing the Jangam to be God, you think him to be man, it is meaningless even if one sings Gita, hears Sastras and Puranas, or reads Vedas unless the Jangama is worshipped. That is why it is said that he is wise who wears himself for Jangama:

27. B.V. 803.
28. B.V. 769.
29. B.V. 420.
30. B.V. 188.
Who knows the Gita is not wise;  
The Master of words, too, is not wise.  
He is wise only who has faith  
In Linga. He is wise  
Who wears himself for Jangama. 31

The individual is asked to see himself  
mirrored in the Jangama:

My brother, you who gaze  
Into the mirror, look  
At Jangama;  
For in Him Linga dwells.  
Kudala Sanga's word  
Says, 'The Immovable and  
The Movable are one.' 32

Serving others is rather a delicate task;  
while one is engaged in service one is called by good  
and bad names. But unmindful of what others say,  
holding aloft the social purpose and social good, the  
individual strives to serve society. He takes up an  
attitude of humility. In the words of Basava:

31. B.V. 153.  
32. B.V. 187.
Come on Basava, and tell us, Sir,
Is there a devotee on earth?
None else, Sir, none, none else!
I only am a devotee:
All other devotees on earth
Are Jangamas; .... 33

In Vacsana literature one comes across such
term as "Jangama Dasoha". It means the service of
the Jangama, implying the service of society. In
popular conception, Jangama Dasoha means to serve the
individual ascetic, "Jangama", by feeding and by other
means. It is partly true that such Jangamas were
engaged in the Kayaka of spreading spiritual knowledge
and not working for material gain. Hence such Jangamas
were to be offered food by the devotees for the
socially useful work they were doing. But there is no
place for begging in Virasaivism:

Devotion can be done
To Linga, with song and dance.
It never makes demand:
You bring and serve it once.
But, O Lord Kudala Sangama,
Should Jangama arrive,
Begging and pestering,
There is no serving him! 34

33. B.V. 893.
34. B.V. 193.
Every one was required to work to make a living. One should never expect alms or charity from any one and make a living at social cost. Basava says that body, mind and wealth are to be dedicated to Guru, Linga and Jangama respectively.

Offering you body, you should
Ender yourself to Guru;
Offering your heart, you should
Ender yourself to Linga;
Offering your wealth, you should
Ender yourself to Jangam. 35

Here, Jangama means society. An individual Jangama expects no wealth. Traditionally, a Jangama is one who does not possess worldly desire of acquiring wealth, but he is the one who has relinquished all desires of acquisition and made himself fully identified with social good. His thoughts and actions are directed toward this end.

The duality between man and God is resolved by the Jangama who elevates the conception of society, as a mere creation of man, to the level of the sacred.

35. B.V. 206.
Thus, even as a member of society, the Jangama is able to resolve the contradictions of social life, such as the distinctions between the rich and the poor, the high and the low. These distinctions disappear as the element of sacredness is attributed to society.

Thus the Jangama is not a mere mortal who could be identified with certain personal attributes. He represents a force generated by society for purposes of bringing to fruition the goals of social well-being.

Social service is the real worship and it is conceived to be superior to Linga worship, and even as one worships Linga one must do so by seeing the Jangama's face.

Look, Linga, grant me the joy Of seeing the Jangam’s face Even as I worship Linga! Come, give me the supreme bliss! I beg to Thee this only gift, O Kudala Sangama Lord! 36

36. B.V. 372.
This implies that social welfare is always kept in mind while one worships the Linga. One should get self-satisfaction and self-realization through the services rendered to society. Gandhiji's conception of life as expressed in the following lines approximates to that of Basava:

If I found myself entirely absorbed in the service of the community, the reasons behind it would be my desire for self-realization. I had made the religion of service to be my own, as I felt that God could be realized only through service. And service for one was the service of India, because it came to me without any seeking, because I had an aptitude for it. 37

It is visualised in the concept of Jangama that social-development and welfare is the ultimate goal rather than mere self-development and self-realization. This realization and the under-current of socio-ethical orientation is kept in mind throughout the study while analysing the social welfare activities of the Math in the secular field.