

## C H A P T E R - III

### THE PEOPLE AND THEIR MATING PATTERN

#### 3.1 Distribution

The Lingayats are a religious community in India. They constitute the majority of the Kannada speaking class of peasants and traders. They form about thirty per cent of the approximately twenty-nine million Kannada speakers, in the Kannada linguistic state of Karnataka which was formed after the reorganization of states in October, 1956. Lingayats are concentrated in their greatest strength in Dharwar, Bijapur, Belgaum, Bellary and Raichur districts. In these districts nearly all caste-occupational groups are represented within the sect. In other districts of Karnataka where Lingayats are distributed in lesser density, only a few caste-occupational groups are represented, principally as the Lingayat priests or Jangamas, and traders or Lingayat Banajigas.

#### 3.2 Meaning of Lingayats

The Lingayats are also known as Lingawantas, Lingangis, Lingadharis, Shivabhaktas and Veerashaivas. The Lingayats derive their name from the Sanskrit word Linga - the phallic emblem, with the affix ayatra, and are the people who wear linga habitually. Every Lingayat

wears on his body a small silver box containing a stone phallus, which is the symbol of his faith. This emblem is worn by both the sexes. They are known as Veerashaivas, because of their never failing zeal and unflinching firmness to observe the tenets of their religion.

### 3.3 The Status of Lingayats in Hindu Society

The status of Lingayats in Hindu society is very much disputed. Bhandarkar (1928) was among the first to use the word 'sect' to describe adherents of the Lingayat, or Veerashaiva philosophy. This usage was later accepted by Nandimath (1942), Basham (1954), and Dasgupta (1955). The anthropologist Hutton (1946) and Sociologist Weber (1958) on the other hand, describe the Lingayats by the hyphenated term 'caste-sect'. A third usage of the term 'sect' for Lingayats takes more of their philosophy and does not emphasize their caste status in society. This position is taken by Renou, a Sanskritist and Dumont, a social anthropologist. This point of view attempts to place Lingayats vis-a-vis the mainstream of Hinduism.

McCormack (1963) has discussed the status of Lingayats in Hindu society in greater detail. He has analyzed the meaning of sect by taking the criteria of

religious definition, social definition and legal definition. Within such a framework, he has tried to fix the position of Lingayats in Hindu society. It is a very difficult task to describe Lingayats by any single term. The terms caste, religion and sect have to be clearly described, before we call Lingayats by any such term. However, for the purposes of our analysis we can consider Lingayats as a caste. Although Lingayatism differs very much from Hinduism in theory, Lingayats in the contemporary period have in practice taken over many of the aspects of Hinduism against which their leader originally revolted. Thus they have acquired the status of a caste in Hindu society, even though they are opposed to caste in principle.

### 3.4 History

The history of the Lingayats cannot be very easily traced. Due to the antiquity of the sect and the scarcity of historical records, it becomes very difficult to discuss authoritatively the socio-political and philosophical foundations of this particular sect. However, an attempt will be made to place the relevant facts in their historical context. We have to trace the history<sup>of</sup> Lingayatism to Shaivism since it gives due importance to Shiva worship. Religious historians claim

the origin of Shaivism in Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, but it is not well established. Through out the history of India the epics and puranas have testified the existence of Shaivism. There is lot of evidence for the existence of Shaivism as a religion in India, but we are not sure of its connection with Veerashaivism as practised today. Bhandarkar (1913) and Rama Rao (1924) think that Veerashaivism is a continuation of Kashmir Shaivism, which in turn is thought to be very old. But the link between today's Veerashaivism and yesterday's Shaivism is not at all clear.

Fleet (in Ayer, 1931) is of the opinion that Lingayats are originally Dravidians. After the invasion of Aryans the primitive deities of Dravidians were absorbed into the personality of the God Shiva. The people who thus lost their deities excluded other members of the triad of Brahminic religion. Along with this preference for Shiva, a dislike of Brahminic ritual and caste ascendancy resulted in the recognition of Lingayatism.

Risley (1907) thinks that the origin of sects can be traced to primitive tribes. He is of the opinion that a large chunk of people of different sects like Vaishnavism, Ramayats and Lingayats are converts with

a tribal origin. Thus, he comes to the conclusion that the members of the Lingayat sect are recruits from other tribes and castes. Enthoven (1931) almost comes to the same conclusion by describing the Lingayats as Dravidians. The basis for this argument is their dark complexion and the Kannada language.

Rajeevalochana (1968) traces the philosophy of Lingayats by discussing the rituals of Lingayats, and concludes that they are non-Aryan. Since Lingayats do not perform Sraddha or Sutaka, he considers the origin of Lingayat religion to be non-Aryan.

Karibasava Sastri (in Ayer, 1931) and Nandimath (1942) recognize the ancientness of Veerashaivism. Taking the evidences of Mukti and Sunya, Nandimath establishes the ancient past of Veerashaivism. On the basis of 'Parmeswara Agama', Karibasava Sastri traces the past of Shaiva sects among Hindus. According to him there are two groups among Shaivites, the one comprising the wearers of the Linga, and the other who do not wear it. Both the authors attribute ancient past to Veerashaivism.

Brown (1840), Bombay Gazetter (1884), Thompson (1909), Sherring (1909), Enthoven (1922), Rama Rao (1924), Nilakanta Sastry (1955), Desai (1971), and many other

authors recognize the history of the Lingayats from twelfth century onwards. It is a very well accepted opinion that Basava was the leader of this new movement. Ayer (1931) quoting Fleet, thinks that Ekoramaradya may be the real leader of this movement. But Nilakanta Sastry (1955) a well known historian of South India does not accept this opinion. He considers Fleet's interpretation based on study of a inscription, as incorrect. He thinks Ekoramaradya was a devotee of Basava.

### 3.5 Basava and His Movement

After alluding to the writings of scholars on the Veerashaiva sect we will trace the history of Lingayatism from twelfth century onwards. The sect was founded by Basava who flourished in the twelfth century and was also the prime minister to the King of Karnataka - a Jain. Basava and his devotees fought ceaselessly to abolish ubiquitous and redundant ceremonies and restrictions that fettered the intercourse between different ranks of the orthodox Hindu society of the period. It was their primary object to establish a community on the basis of equality of all its members, irrespective of sex, by means of worship of one God, Shiva. Basava taught that all men are temples of the great spirit and by birth all are equal.

### 3.6 Main Tenets of Lingayats

The main tenets of Lingayats are as follows:

1. Shiva is the only God, who is all powerful. No other God should be worshipped, nor should any person who worships any other be bowed to.
2. There is no need for sacrifices, fasts, penances or purifying samskaras. Every person should wear a Linga and worship at least once in a day by washing and offering it naivedayam from the food he takes. They should abstain from flesh, fish and liquor and should also practice ahimsa in kindness to animals.
3. They should have asthavarna rites - guru, linga, jangam, Vibhuti, rudraksha, tirtha, prasada and mantra. Jangams are to be regarded as moving and living lingas, and are therefore superior to fixed lingas - made of stones and installed in temples as also worn on persons.
4. A three conception of a guru is another prominent feature.
  - (i) Dikshaguru - who ties the linga
  - (ii) Sikshaguru - who imparts education
  - (iii) Mokshaguru - who is a religious guide.



The linga-wearers are not affected by any pollution caused by death, child-birth or woman's monthly sickness. All linga-wearers are equal and consequently women have a right to choose their husband and to remarry. Any person can become a lingadhari after undergoing a purifying diksha.

In short, the Veerashaiva creed can be summed up in three words, guru, linga and jangam and its philosophy is essentially an exposition of these three words.

The Lingayats worship Shiva and his consort Parvathi, as also his sons Ganapathi, Shanmukha, Virabhadra, his bull Nandi, also Ganga, Basava-avatar of Nandi, Channabasawa-avatar of Shanmukha and sages such as Siddhalingeswar and Murughaswami who are regarded as mahatmas. They worship jangamas as Gods in the shape of men because the jangam is free from the changes of birth and death. All Lingayats visit the twelve sacred shrines of India. But the most sacred of all are the jangamas who have become mediators, the worship of their feet and toes are sacred thirthas, and the leavings of their dishes the sacred prasadas, and the touch of their feet on the head is the greatest of all blessings.

Lingayats revere the Vedas, but disregard the later commentaries to which the Brahmins rely. Originally they seem to have been the product of one of the numerous reformations in India that have been aimed against the supremacy and doctrines of the Brahmins. The sect is essentially anti-Brahminic in origin. It seems clear that in its inception, Lingayatism not only rested largely on a denial of the Brahmin claim to supremacy over all the other castes, but attempted to abolish all caste distinctions. All wearers of linga were proclaimed equal in the eyes of God. The denial of the supremacy of the Brahmins coupled with the assertion of the essential equality of all men constituted a vital departure from the doctrines of orthodox Hinduism. The other important departures from Hinduism were, the prohibition of child marriage, the removal of all restrictions on widow remarriage, the burial instead of burning of the dead, and the abolition of the chief rites for the removal of the ceremonial impurity.

### 3.7 Lingayatism Today

The above account gives an ideal picture which forms part of folklore and common knowledge. For a dispassionate understanding of Lingayatism we have to adopt the criteria of textual and contextual analysis, as suggested by Singer (1961).

Enthoven (1931) rightly asserted that the movement of Lingayatism took a different shape after Basava's death. Caste as a social institution has some characteristics. It is the result of deep-rooted prejudices which received their sanction from the epics. These well-established prejudices result in creating barriers to meaningful social intercourse. The history of this institution, clearly brings out the fact that it tends to reassert itself within the fold of casteless religion. This is what happened to Lingayatism. Soon after Basava's death the enthusiasm of his followers also died out. The result was that it became another caste in Hindu society. The converts who joined the movement in the early period, started claiming superior status over the later converts. In the course of time the old caste barriers were successfully raised, which the reformers had endeavoured to destroy. Thus the Lingayatism constitute a very interesting case of "evolution of caste inside the fold of religious community originally formed on a non-caste basis" (Enthoven 1931). This account is also supported by the customs and rituals of Lingayats today. Many subgroups are formed on the basis of customs and traditions which they practice. In course of time the ideals as preached by reformers could not be adhered to resulting in reorganization of the creed on the lines of ordinary caste.

By the close of the seventeenth century, the Lingayat community had begun to develop endogamous sub-castes based upon the social distinction which their founder had expressly abjured. The sectarian instinct may not last longer though it directly invades the social sphere. It seeks to unify and amalgamate groups of theoretically different origin. In this process it comes in contact with a force too strong for it yielding place to some other entity. According to Risley this happened in case of Lingayatism. After five hundred years of sway the disintegration was already apparent. The subgroups who joined in the earlier phase of the movement started separating. This process of reasserting caste distinction must have fully grown during the past eight hundred years. The historical evidence is scarce and little has been written about these aspects of the development.

In the course of eight hundred years Lingayatism had to go through many onslaughts from invaders. But Lingayatism had maintained a sense of integrity, even though the ideals preached by Basava were lost in course of time. Epigraphic accounts show that during 16th century it enjoyed a very good status under the patronage of Krishnadevaraya. During those years there was a well-knit religious organization among the Lingayats. The

maths were well organized and the heads of these monaster-ies were very particular about maintenance of the tenets of the Lingayat religion. There were many types of Jangamas. Each one of them had different duties to carry on. They used to take care of any breach of law by the Lingayats of those days. Thus these monasteries must have been able to maintain the integrity of the Lingayat religion. The later history of this religion is not clear though it enjoyed good standing during the rule of Keladi, Coorg and Chitradurga Kings.

The social organization of Lingayats during the recent past cannot be easily deciphered through available ethnographic accounts. There is unanimity about the existence of different subgroups among Lingayats, but the classifications vary from author to author. The most reliable account seems to be that of Enthoven.

### 3.8 Census of India (1901)

The census of India (1901) reorganizes 24 subgroups among Lingayats. There is also a category which includes unspecified groups. The following are the names of the subgroups.

- |                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Agasaru             | 2. Ayya or Jangam   |
| 3. Banajiga            | 4. Dewang           |
| 5. Ganiga              | 6. Handeraut        |
| 7. Handevazir          | 8. Hugar or Malagar |
| 9. Ilgar or Kalal      | 10. Kudavakkaligar  |
| 11. Kumbar             | 12. Kuravanshi      |
| 13. Lalgonda           | 14. Nadig           |
| 15. Nagalik or Banagar | 16. Nonabaru        |
| 17. Padasali           | 18. Panchashari     |
| 19. Panchamasali       | 20. Padmasali       |
| 21. Pattasali          | 22. Raddi           |
| 23. Sadaru             | 24. Shivashimpigar  |
| 25. Unspecified        |                     |

Each subcaste was thus enumerated separately. But the later census reports did not enumerate on this basis.

### 3.9 Enthoven (1931)

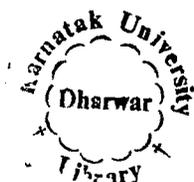
Enthoven (1931) describes Lingayats under three broad groups. This is also supported by Ayer (1931).

1. Panchamasalis with astavarna rites: This contains the priests of the community known as Ayya or Jangamas. It also contains the leading trader caste, Banajigas. This subgroup again has two groups - Adi Banajiga and Silavanta Banajiga. This group is the

nearest approximation to the original converts. In the past subgroups of this division could inter-dine and intermarry without any restriction. Today the subgroups of this division may still dine together, but for marriage they rank one above the other. Members of the lower subgroups may rise to the higher group by performing certain rites and ceremonies. This group may be called as Panchamasalis and are entitled to astavarna rites. They rank socially above the remaining groups.

2. The next group is non-Panchamasalis with astavarna rites. This group contains over seventy sub-divisions which are functional groups, such as weavers, oil pressers, brick-layers, dyers, cultivators, shepherds and the like. It seems probable that this group represents converts of a much later date than those who are called by the name of Panchamasalis. They were never permitted to inter-dine or intermarry with the Panchamasalis. In this group each sub-division is self-contained in regard to marriage.

3. Non-Panchamasalis without astavarna rites. This group contains other groups which are not included in the above two groups.



### 3.10 Bombay Gazetteer (Bijapur District) of 1884

The third version is found in Bombay Gazetteer (Bijapur district) of 1884. This is the most satisfactory 'ethnographic present' of Lingayats. It is a practical description of different subgroups of Lingayats. But still we can find some ambiguities.

According to this gazetter the Lingayats can be divided into three broad groups (1) True Lingayats (2) Affiliated Lingayats and (3) Half Lingayats.

### 3.11 True Lingayats

Every one who wears linga is not a true Lingayat. The true Lingayats are those whose sons can become Jangams or Lingayat priests. True Lingayats may be roughly grouped into four great classes - Jangama or priests, Shilvantas or pious, Banajigas or traders and Panchamasali.

Jangamas are literally considered as movable lingas. Jangam is considered a human linga shrine. They are divided into Viraktas or celibates, Samanyas or common Jangams, Ganacharis or managers, and Mathapathis or Beadles.

Virakthas, the highest class of Jangamas, dedicate themselves to celibacy. They are not allowed to celebrate marriages. They are comparatively a small body and move about the country accompanied by their disciples.

The Samanya Jangam is the ordinary Jangam who had the initiation performed on him. He is a married man, who conducts marriages, begs, serves in a temple or lives by agriculture. When a Jangam goes begging, he wears a garter of bells called Jang below his right knee, and carries a cobra cane or nagbet staff.

Besides the regular Samanyas, five classes of Jangams live by begging. The first of these is Kuginamari-andigolu, who sits on a tree and rings a bell throughout the day. The second is pahared-kayaka-davaru, who begs from door to door, ringing a bell. The third is Mulla Havige Kayakadavaru - who in the presence of Lingayats, stands on a pair of wooden shoes, in whose soles are nails with their points up. He does not come out of the shoes till he is paid what he demands. The fourth is tekke-kayaka-davaru who throws his arms around men and holds until he is paid something. The fifth is Muka-Kayakadavaru who is supposed to be one who feigns dumbness.

Mathapatis or beadles and Ganacharis or managers are Jangams who hold rent-free lands. They are considered rather inferior to the regular or Samanya Jangams. They have not undergone aitan or initiation. These three groups can intermarry but regular Jangams do not marry with them. Their duties are humble. The Mathapathi brings for the Lingayats bel (Aeyle marmosa) leaves, on Mondays, Thursdays and holidays. The Ganachari officiates in widow remarriage, an office which the Samanya Jangam refuse. If a Ganachari or Mathapathi boy has the initiation or aitan performed on him, he becomes a Samanya Jangam and abandons his former duties.

Banajigas are the third main class of true Lingayats. The name Banajiga means shopkeepers. A man who gives Banajiga as his caste generally belongs to one of the three following classes: Holiyachi balakis or beyond river men, Dhulapawads or foot-dust sprinklers, and Chalgeribarkis or villagers. The Holiyachibalkis like the Shilavantas puts a cloth over his water-pot when he carries it home. Unlike the Shilavantas he takes water freely from reservoirs and wells. The Holiyachi-balkis and Dhulapavadas are commonly found as merchants. The Chalgeribarkis are chiefly farmers though many are shopkeepers and wealthy moneylenders. The mass of the Banajigas belong to this subdivision.

The Panchamasalis form the bulk of the cultivating Lingayats. They are more numerous than any other subdivision. Panchamasali seems to mean Jain weavers. The Panchamasalis are admitted to be the parent stock from which the other divisions have sprung. A Panchamasali boy may become a Jangam, even a Viraktha Jangam. But other classes of Lingayats can never attain the status of a Jangam.

A Chelgeribarki, a Dhulapavad, a Holliyachibalki, or Shilavant is a man whose ancestor was a Panchamasali, and went through the Diksha or cleansing rite. Any Panchamasali may enter any of the higher grades he chooses by undergoing Diksha and is invited to dine with the particular division he wishes to enter.

### 3.12 Affiliated Lingayats

This class includes nineteen divisions:

- (1) Are Banajigas, Adi Banajiga, Ad-Banajigas: They seem to be Marathas turned from Brahminism to Lingayatism. They do not differ in appearance from ordinary Panchamasali. They are devoted to Jangamas, and their customs and ceremonies are almost the same as those of True Lingayats (2) Chalavadis (3) Sivacharis (4) Chatters (5) Ganigs (6) Gavalis (7) Handevazirs (8) Handeyavarus (9) Kalavantas (10) Kostis or Nilakanthas (11) Kuda-

vokkaligars (12) Kumbars (13) Kurusalis (14) Kuruvina-shettars (15) Malagaras (16) Nagaliks (17) Nadigas or Nahvis (18) Nilagaras (19) Padasalis.

### 3.13. Half Lingayats

This class includes all other Hindu castes who were converted to Lingayatism. Most of them are untouchables.

All the above accounts give the picture of social organization of Lingayats as it existed in the past. Within a span of some hundred years many changes have taken place in their social organization and occupational pattern. It also becomes obvious that there is a great deal of regional variation regarding social organization of Lingayats. The concentration of Lingayats varies from district to district. It may be recalled here that the origin of the movement was in the northern part of Karnataka. We can infer from this that better organization is found in the northern districts of Karnataka. Even though we can draw a general picture of Lingayats in the northern part of Karnataka we have to allow for some regional variation.

Each district presents a local variation in turn making generalization regarding Lingayats a difficult task. Since the movement originated in

Bijapur district, the neighbouring districts show some regular pattern. Because of proselytization, a clear-cut picture cannot be drawn. To illustrate we can take the case of Marathas in Belgaum district. Though they find a place among Lingayats of Belgaum district, they cannot be considered to be Lingayats in other districts. This is also true with Reddis who originally belong to Andhra Pradesh. But Reddis do find place among Lingayats in many of the districts adjoining Andhra Pradesh. Thus Reddis form a distinct subcaste among Lingayats of north Karnataka.

In the deep South of Karnataka, the picture regarding Lingayats still becomes blurred. This is due to the fringe effect. The districts in the Southern part of Karnataka were definitely in the fringe area of the movement. This means that there are many differences in the social organization of the two Lingayat groups even though they profess the same religion. In the district of Chitradurga the distinction between Banajigas and Panchamasali is not clear, where with the exception of Jangamas all other non-Sadar Lingayats are called by the term - Banajiga. This may be due to the large number of Sadaru in this area. It will be thus easy to distinguish Sadaru from others in this district. Further south we come across many new sub-castes. The Nonabaru

Lingayats of Tumkur district are a case in point. This subcaste can only be found in the district of Tumkur in large number. Though in the adjoining districts it is represented in small numbers, its name is not at all known in the northern districts of Karnataka.

Since Karnataka represents many occupational groups, it will be futile to generalize regarding the pattern of social organization among the Lingayats of Karnataka. It can also be noticed, that the occupational groups among Lingayats are called by different names in this area. But today's Veerashaivism is a mixture of many religions which is due to a series of historical accidents. Two currents can be found in today's Veerashaivism. The Jangams of traditional maths who do not recognize Basava as the originator affirm five Acharyas as the originators. They do not follow the preachings of Basava. They may not openly oppose Basava's teachings, but they do not approve of his ideas of equality. Other people support Basava's ideas and attribute the emergence of the sect to him. But the common man recognizes both these people's ideals and does not strictly adhere to any one of them.

The census of 1901 recognizes 25 sub-castes among Lingayats in Dharwar district. Majority of the

people belong to Jangam, Panchamesali, Banajiga, Sadaru, Ganiga and Shivashimpiga subcastes.

### 3.14 Mating Patterns

One of the important criteria for recognizing a caste is endogamy. It has been recognized as a core criterion. Subcaste endogamy governs the mating patterns of these populations. We can safely classify the subcastes among Lingayats as Mendelian populations.

Ideally speaking all the people of different subcastes who wear linga are equal. They can interdine and intermarry. During Basava's time it was possible to intermarry. But soon after his death the traditions governed by caste barriers came into prominence.

Different ethnographic sources give varied accounts regarding mating patterns. Enthoven (1931) says that in Lingayats it was permissible for a bridegroom of one sub-division to take a bride from the divisions below his. But how far this custom prevailed among them cannot be said. Ayer (1931) says that the Jangams may marry in all castes provided they are Lingayats. But he also says that laymen used to marry within their own sub-caste. But how many marriages of this type happened cannot be said. The Bombay Gazetteer (1884) contains some

information regarding the mating patterns. It is said that Banajiga often marry Panchamasali girls. In rare cases even Jangams marry Panchamasali girls who have brought into their division by Diksha. No true Lingayat boy or girl ever marries a boy or girl from other lower subcastes of Lingayat. Most probably such breach of endogamy must be of rare occurrence.

At present the picture regarding mating patterns is altogether different from what is described in the above sources. Today no Jangam takes a Panchamasali girl in his fold and marries her. Likewise no Banajiga boy marries a Panchamasali girl. As recorded in the Bombay Gazetteer, it is highly impossible for a Lingayat of one group to marry a girl from another group. But there are exceptions to this pattern, which are usually found in urban areas. Thus, it is quite clear that the various subcastes are endogamous and inter and intra village marriages are allowed to take place. Cross-cousin and sister's daughter marriages are preferred, whereas parallel cousin marriages are strictly prohibited.