Shaivism is one of the oldest religions in the world. It existed in the Indus Valley Civilization dating back to 4000 BC. Shiva is associated with the powers of reproduction and dissolution. Then he was called Pasupata, and Rudra in Vedic times. Shiva is regarded as the Supreme Being and by others as a triad with Brahma and Vishnu. He is worshipped in many aspects as destroyer, ascetic, lord of the cosmic dance and lord of beasts, and through the symbolic linga (which is a visible sign of the invisible god). This linga is made as if a combination of the earth and sky, or as if to indicate the discourse between man and woman. His wife is Parvati, and their two sons are Ganesha and Skanda. Nandi is his mount. Shiva is depicted with a middle eye, crescent moon, skulls and snakes.

The Aryans from the Central Asia invaded India in 1500 BC. Then the Indus Valley Civilization was in its ascendancy. It spread in the Asian subcontinent. Harappa and Mahenzodaro are just two centres of this civilization. Shaivism was the people’s religion. Once Harappa civilization came to an end, either because of Aryan invasion, or because of natural disasters, Harappa way of life degenerated. Because the urban way of Harappa life was destroyed by the barbarous Aryans.

However we find that Harappa way of life is still seen in Gujarati peoples’ life. For example, the Gujaratis developed a kind of Kalamukha sect (Kala means black, a mark the devotees wore). So Pasupata and Kalamukha Shaiva sects along with others came first from the north to the south. Natha Panth was yet another of these 12 Shaiva sects. Veerashaivism
was another Shaiva sect that was formed in the 10 – 12th centuries Deccan Plateau, headquartered in Kalyan, in today’s Bidar district, Karnataka. Veerashaivism otherwise known as Lingayatism rose as the Buddhism and Jainism rose against Hinduism in the pre-Christian era. And like Buddhism and Jainism, Lingayatism is strong and scientific. It is a living religion today. S. M. Hunshal observes,

Shankar’s theology did not inspire the masses to initiative and activity. On the other hand, the masses were mystified by the Maya view of life. The priestly class dominated society. Oppression, inequality, injustice ran rampant. The false view of life and the world that they are an illusion led the masses to spiritual and social slavery. Besides, the doctrine of Karma snubbed and silenced the revolting spirit of the people. Polytheism was quite common, superstitions and crude beliefs reigned supreme.1

It was on such a reactionary horizon that the revolutionary cult known as Lingayatism rose in the twelfth century. Lingayatism under the leadership of Basavavananna roused the masses by X-raying the religious and philosophical tenets of the Vedas, Upanishads, Shruts and Smritis. The old doctrines and dogmas were thrashed threadbare. Even Jainism was cross-examined. Basavavananna like Jesus Christ and Muhammad was a mass-prophet. By examining and analyzing the old religions. Basavananna propounded the progressive doctrine of Lingayatism. A single vachana of a Sharanas sums up the uselessness of the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis and Puranas. Basavananna writes:

May I regard the Shastra as great? It Preaches Karma. May I hold the Veda to be superior? It teaches animal slaughter. And may I think the Smriti to be best? It searches for the object by keeping it
before us. You are not at all found in these except in the triple social
service, Oh Lord Kudalasangama.²

Lingayatism is one of the Shaiva sects which later grew into the shape
of an independent religion. It is just like Sikhisim today. Langayatism grew
in the Deccan Plateau, in Karnataka, parts of Andra, Maharashtra and Tamil
Nadu. Lingayatism is much different from Hinduism and, as so, it has
influenced the life of the people in entire Karnataka and parts of the other
states mentioned above.

Lingayatism is based on agamas like Suksagam, Suprabheda,
Swambhava, Karmika, Vatul and others. Vedic texts like Shivayogi
Shivacharya’s Siddhantashikhamani, Shripati Pandit’s Shrikarabhasya and
Savabhanand Shivacharya’s Shivadvaitamanjari in Samkrit speak of the rise
of Lingyatism. The books based on the 12th century Sharanas-for example,
Shivatatvachintamani, Veerashaivamrata Mahapuran and
Shunyasampadane speak of the religion authentically. These books are in
Kannada.

Lingayatism respects the classical works, though none of them can be
treated as its base. Like Locke, the Lingayats treat experience as the base of
man’s way to find ultimate peace, prosperity and happiness which are to be
treated as religion at higher level. Lingayats do not treat any antique text
which is unscientific, as its part of history or base.

Lingayatism is called Shaktivishistadvaita. Accordingly, God Shiva
himself is the truth. He is the fountain of all creation (Leela or miracle). This
Shiva is not nirguna like Shankar’s Brahma. This Shiva is a living God.

God Shiva is the all, and the eternal. He is life itself. Linga is God
himself and anga is man. This world is created by God, and hence,
everything is true, but not an illusion. Only man has to participate in the world. God himself has become divine again. So, for this sake, man has to face the world, instead of embracing sansyasihood.

How man has to become divine? The Lingayat religion provides the methodology of Shatasthals that include both Panchachars and Astavarnas. This way of life includes devotion, knowledge, meditation, work, and ethics. Lingayatism advocates that man must achieve a coordination between the internal and external.

The great Indian values (pervading in all Indian religions) truth, non-violence, asteya, aparigraha and brahmacharya are adopted in Lingayatism. Pachacharas such as Lingachara, Shivachara, Sadachara, Brityachara and Ganachara embody religious, social and ethical values of life. The astavarnas protect us like the Shiva in life, like the fire in eater. Guru, Linga, Jangam, Padodaka, Prasad, Bhasma, Rudraksa and Mantra are cooperative devices. The wearing of linga is quite unique in Lingayatism which is not available in the other Shaiva sects. Guru in whom Shiva embodies, initiates the body (of the bhakta) with culture. This art is the art of living.

The man makes use of Panchacharas (for bodily protection) and Astavarnas (for ethical protection) and he climbs the six ladders of Shatsthalas in order to reach the void (salvation). The Shatsthalas are Bhakata, Mahesh, Prasadi, Pranalingi, Sharana and Aikya. The stages of devotion can be described as bhaktasthala, Sraddha-bhakti, nistabhakti, and avadhanabhakti. In this regard, the internal life of man matters. The Lingayats feel that sense more than sound, purifies the mind. Since this life is life-divine, man needs to work and serve his guru-linga-Jangam with kayaka and dasoh. They think that work is worship.
All people are free and equal. Even men and women are equal. This is what Lingayatism advocates, heralding the democratic ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Critics think that the 12th century Lingayat movement was a revolution itself. It was a golden age in Indian history. They eradicated caste, class and gender-based feudal society. They removed the blind orthodoxy of Vedic religion, and created a scientific spirit in man. They created what Emerson calls 'a man thinking.' The Sharanas said that man is his own church. God is in us. The goodness is god. This earth itself is heaven.

The Sharanas were revolutionaries. They were literate and conscious people. They wrote verses called vachanas. Great Sharanas like Basavanna, Allamaprabhu, Siddharama, Akkamahadevi, and others were great thinkers. There were as many as 300 Sharanas and most of them have written vachanas. This literature is unique in the history of world literature. It forms the first and best part of Kannada literature. In fact, the Sharanas built up the modern Kannada language and literature. This reminds us what Geoffrey Chaucer has done for the English language and literature. This work headed by Basavanna reminds us what Emerson has done for the 19th century American literature.

Basavanna's Philosophy of Life:

Basavanna was a great human being, a humanist, a socialist, a democrat, a religious reformer and mystic. He was the founder of Lingayatism on scientific grounds. He was also a politician and statesman. He was an economist. In short, he was a revolutionary.

Basavanna: The Founder of Lingayatism and his Religious Reforms
We all believe that Basavanna is the founder of Lingayatism. If that is the first and foremost part of his life, let us analyze it.

Hinduism is India’s major religion. The word ‘Hindu’ comes from the word ‘Sindu’ (in English Indus, leading to the creation of the word India). Hinduism, as a religion, is a system of religious beliefs and social customs. Hinduism as a way of life, developed over the last 50 centuries (since 4000 BC).

Hinduism, like Christianity or Islam, does not believe in one God, but in many (polytheism). It speaks of the concept of universe and society. Accordingly Vishnu, the God has created the universe. Man is a part of this creation. So is the biological world. It speaks of Karma, the law of action by which each cause has its effect in an endless chain reaching from one life to the next. Moksa or liberation is from the chain of birth, death and rebirth. It prescribes varnasramadharma— this is the division of society on the basis of profession as Brahmana, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. Hinduism divides one’s life into four stages as brahmacharya, grahasta, vanaprasta and sanyas. One’s religious duty is conditioned by his birth.

Many great thinkers revived Hinduism over the centuries. Siddartha Gautama, otherwise known as the Buddha (c 563-460 BC) born an Indian prince (in today’s Nepal) renounced life and did penance. On enlightenment he founded Buddhism. Now this religion is a widespread Asian religion. Buddhism does not believe in God and it speaks of Karma (as action). The four noble truths of Buddhism state that all existence is suffering, that freedom from suffering is nirvana, and that this is attained through the ‘eightfold path’ of ethical conduct, wisdom, and mental discipline. There are two major traditions, Theravad and Mahayana.
In the same age of the Buddha, Mahavir strengthened his own religion called Jainism. This is non-theistic against the teachings of orthodox Brahminism. Jainism teaches salvation by perfection through successive lives and non-injury to living creatures, and it is noted for its ascetics. The word ‘Jain’ means ‘victor.’

Shankaracharya of the 8th century South India brought in much reform in Hinduism.

This Hindu way of life deteriorated over the centuries. The political chaos over the times, allowed the foreign invasions in India. The varnasrama dharma itself complicated the affairs. Number one: it divided society into four divisions as Brahman, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Shudra. Unfortunately, this created a class of people called untouchables, who were treated as if animals like the slaves in the 19th century United States. Number two, it divided human beings as man and woman.

Politically, it was feudal times. Both kings and priests – like the state and church in the West, exploited the people. The upper classes had a major pie in both base and superstructure. Hinduism created the concept of caste, God as meant only for the higher-ups, heaven and hell, etitism, salvation for the elites, and damnation for the downtrodden, and other social evils. The class of people called the untouchables and women were treated as if animals. Hinduism upheld Manusmriti, the Vedas, the Puranas and the Geeta although they are not good enough. This provoked Basavanna to write the following:

    Shall I say Sastra is great?
    It only exalts Karma!
    Shall I say Veda is great?
    It tells of animal sacrifice
Shall I say Smriti is great?
It seeks in the future.  

Basavanna found Hinduism in this form of degeneration in the 12th century. He was shocked by the event of discrimination first by the practice of untouchability. For example, the elders of his village excommunicated him because he dined with an untouchable once.

Secondly, the absence of the incident of baptism for his elder sister caused an uproar in his own home. So he gave up baptism all together. Basavanna noticed numerous such orthodoxy and senseless rites and rituals in his society and times. So he felt that he should reform his society. Even he left his caste of Brahminism, his parental home, his village of Bagewadi, Kudalasangam, and finally his Prime Ministership for the sake of social reform. Basavanna decided to reform the religion radically. The result, he founded his own religion Lingayatism.

Basavanna did not believe in the worship of too many gods. He felt that like woman having only one husband, man must have only one God. He condemned the worship of many gods — gods in paper, calendar, mud and stone. So Basavanna spoke of Guru, Linga and Jangama as the new trinity of Lingayatism.

Basavanna advocated that the formless Ultimate Reality which is responsible for creation and sustenance of this universe is God, and not the idols worshipped in the temples. He called it Parasiva, or Void or Linga. According to Agamic diction ‘Linga madhye Jagatsarvam,’ i.e., all the worlds are concealed in Linga. Linga is Sat (existence) Chit (consciousness) and Anand (Bliss). In every particle of the universe it is concealed. It is revealed more conspicuously in man. It has come to our palm as Istalinga. He writes,
Thou art as wide as the world,
Thou art as wide as the sky,
Thou art wider than these,
Thy feel go beyond the underworld,
Thy crown goes beyond the universe.
O Lord Kudalasangamaadeva,
Thou who art imperceptible,
Beyond understanding,
Beyond compare,
Reduced to a small size
As to rest on my palm! (VB. 244)

The investigations of the modern astronomy are in conformity with
this concept of God. If religion is the basis for Basavanna’s total revolution,
Istalinga became the basis for his religious revolution. He used it as a means
to establish social equality.

Guru, by taking out the divine spark existing in disciple’s
Brahmarandhra and incorporating it in Istalinga, gives it to him to wear on
his body always and to worship it as a symbol of his own divine
consciousness embedded in him and to proceed on the path of spiritual
pursuit. The Jangama guides the disciple in his spiritual perfection. They are
as if Shiva has descended to earth in human form. Thus the disciple should
show devotion to Guru, Linga and Jangama, because they are the three
aspects of divinity. Practice of spirituality through Istalinga is very easy.
There is no need of the mediation of a priest to worship it.

To fix one’s vision in Istalinga is Dristiyoga, Lingayoga or
Animisayoga. It is also known as Shivayoga. Apart from being a very easy
yoga, Shivayoga is also a synthesis of all yogas. This should be practiced
regularly to be able to attain spirituality. Basavanna preached seven codes of conduct to lead a virtuous life:

Steal not, kill not,
Tell not a lie, be not angry,
Hate not others, praise not thyself,
Decry not those who are opposed to you.
This is the inward purity,
This is the outward purity,
And this is the way to please our Lord Kudalasangamadeva (VB. 77).

These are the eternal principles applicable to one and all, transcending space and time. All should follow them.

One should march forward in the path of Linga with unshakable devotion,

They say that Shiva loves Nada.
No, He does not.
They say that Shiva loves Veda.
No, He does not.
Ravana did perform Nada,
And lost his life,
Brahma read the Veda and lost his head,
Shiva neither loves Nada nor Veda,
Devotion he loves,
O Kudalasangamadeva! (VB. 59)
Thus when one marches ahead in spiritual practice, his divine consciousness is kindled and becomes infinite in the end. Evolution of consciousness takes place in six stages. This Basavanna named as the path of Shatasthala. Sthala means a step in spiritual progress. It consists of the six steps Bhakta Sthala, Maheswara Sthala, Prasadi Sthala, Pranalingi Sthala, Sharana Sthala and Aikya Sthala.

There is no need for worshipping Istalinga through a priest. One should eat one's food oneself. Similarly, one should worship Istalinga oneself,

Union with one's own life,
And eating one's own food
Can you ask someone else to do it for you?
The rites and ceremonies for Linga,
Should be done by you,
And not by others.
How can they understand you,
Who do this for mere formality,
O Kudalasangamadeva! (VB. 99).

This saved the people from exploitation by the priestly class. The Linga does not need any pompous worship. It is enough to bathe it with water. When a devotee advances in spiritual practice Pranalinga and Bhavalinga are involved in the worship. Heart is the centre of life-force. It supplies blood to all parts of the body and keeps life functioning. Upanisads have stated that God dwells in the hearts of one and all in the size of the thumb of each one.

Rajendra Gunjal observes,
In Basavanna’s time, prayers were offered in a temple through a priest, an agent between God and his devotee. Basavanna uprooted this system of intermediaries by providing every man the opportunity to offer worship to God, Himself. The ‘Ishtalinga’ was his God. Why should a man go to the temple and allow his prayers to pass through the priest in ununderstandable language?4

According to Revd Chennappa Uttangi,

By the introduction of the ceremony of ‘Linga Diksa’ Lingayatism threw open the doors of the new faith to men and women of all castes and creeds and put its followers high and low in equal status, and infused brotherly feelings into the new community which resulted in creating brotherhoods. In short, it built the new society on a democratic basis, in which every individual had the right to enjoy full liberty in social and religious matters. The ‘Istalinga’ is called by some one a ‘Universal Leveller’.5

Basavanna avoided temple worship, for it fostered the use of priestcraft. The American transcendentalists advocated the fact of body – churching in this regard. No doubt, the priests exploited the believers. Secondly, the Hindu church did not allow the untouchables and women. Thirdly, the temple-worship was not accessible to everyone. It was rather a costly affair often involving ritual and sacrifice. So Basavanna writes,

The rich build the temple
Poor am I, what can I do?
My leg is the pillar and body the temple,
And my head the golden pinnacle,
O Kudalasangamadeva,
What that stands will perish
And what that moves does not (VB. 274).

Basavanna’s new religion based on Istalinga led to the following consequences:

1) It gave religious freedom to everyone including the untouchable and woman.
2) It made the affairs of religion scientific, easy and accessible.
3) In other words, it gave a death knell to the idea of Brahminism.

Basavanna pleaded that compassion should be the root of all religions.

What sort of a religion is it
Without compassion?
Compassion should be shown to all beings,
Compassion is the root of a religion,
Lord Kudalasangamadeva
Will not approve other than this (VB. 90).

This new faith reduced everyone to universal brotherhood. All linga-wearers became equal,

Lord, O Lord, hearken to my request,
I view all those devotees of Shiva,
Brahmins at one end, and the lowborn at the other as one,
I consider the priest at one end,
And the untouchable at the other as one
Thus my mind believes,
If there is a doubt as small as the tip of a sesame seed
In this talk of mine,
Cut my nose and expose my teeth,
O Kudalasangamadeva! (VB. 91).

The Istalinga served not only as a means to practise spirituality, but also as a symbol of social equality.

Urilingapeddi, who was an untouchable by birth and a thief previously, became Godman or Sharana, after getting invested with Istalinga by Urilingadeva. He even excelled his Guru in spiritual attainment. He succeeded the elder as the head of that math.

Haralayya was a shoe-maker by profession and an untouchable by birth. By getting initiated with Lingadiksa he became a Sharana. Madhuvayya was a Brahmin by birth and a minister at the court. He became a Sharana after Lingadiksa. Maduvayya’s daughter was married to Haralayya’s son as they liked each other. Such a revolutionary step could be taken up due to rational approach to religion which could establish equality in society. Later this led to bloodshed at Kalyan.

Basavanna gave utmost importance to Guru, Linga and Jangama as the trinity.

Basavanna spiritualized the work we do for our livelihood. Spiritualized profession was called kayaka. If we work to fill our stomach it becomes profession. If it is done honestly as the worship of God, it turns into kayaka. Therefore, Sharanas declared ‘Kayaka is Kailasa,’ meaning work is worship, whatever we earn should be offered to God. Basavanna says,

I practice husbandry for adoring Guru,
I undertake trading for worshipping Linga.
I serve others for Jangama Dasoha.
Whatever I do, I know that
Thou wilt return its fruit.
I offer Thee the money I earn
By Thy grace. I shall not spend it
For other purpose.
I shall offer Thy property to Thee.
I swear by Thee,
O Kudalasangamadeva! (VB. 233).

Money earned by kayaka should not be used for one’s own self. It should be spent for Guru, Linga and Jangama who represent God. Such an offering was called Dasoha. Dasoha means service rendered to Guru, Linga and Jangama with utmost sense of humility. Because Jangama represents society and Guru and Linga are linked to Jangama. Whatever is movable is Jangama. The nation is Jangama and all beings are Jangamas. Then service, therefore, is dasoha. Jangama dasoha is compulsory. Therefore, doing kayaka is compulsory. Part of the money earned by kayaka should be offered to Jangama. Since kayaka is compulsory for every person, there is no question of money. Since it should be used for dasoha, there is no question of accumulating it. Therefore, in kayaka kasoha principle, production and distribution are well-knit. Thus, it becomes a spiritualized socialism. Marx’s communism failed in Russia, whereas Basavanna’s socialism is still being practiced. Kayaka-dasoha principle made people work and prevented them from becoming lazy.

Kayaka dasoha principle was against hoarding money since the money earned on a day should be spent that day. Basavanna writes,
If I say that I want
A single particle of gold
And thread of cloth for today or tomorrow,
Let Thy Saranas' curse be upon me,
But for Thy Sharanas, there is nothing that I do
O Kudalasangamadeva! (VB. 92).

Basavanna himself practiced this principle and became a model for others. He says even the animals like crow and hen practice this. Should, then, man behave selfishly?

Will not a crow call its flock,
When it sees a grain of food?
Will not a hen call its brood
When it finds food,
If one has no faith in devotion,
He is worse than crow or hen.
O Kudalasangamadeva! (VB. 141).

There is no difference among kayaks as dignified and undignified. All kayaks are equal. For Basavanna Haralayya's shoe-making kayak was as dignified as that of Prime Minister's kayak. Thus the dignity of labour was upheld. There were many Sharanas in Anubhava Mantapa, who were doing different kayaks and participating in the spiritual discussions. They were all treated equally in society. Apart from inter-dining, inter-marriages were taking place among the Sharanas. Basavanna writes,

Shall I call Siriyala a merchant?
Shall I call Kakkayya a tanner?
And Machayya a washerman?
If I call myself a Brahmin,
Kudalasangamadeva will laugh at me. (VB. 113).

There is no need to renounce worldly life for the sake of spiritual practice. It could be achieved while leading worldly life. The Sharanas opposed the escapist tendency in man. Basavanna states that this world is the maker’s mint. One who is accepted in this worldly life is accepted in spiritual life. According to him, worldly life itself should become yoga. This world is not an illusion (Maya). It is real, and life is real. It is prasada (gift of God). He writes,

To say ‘I do not want’ is renunciation
To say ‘I want’ is the body’s nature,
Whatever it is, which comes to one,
Should be enjoyed by offering it to God, the Linga,
Let it be a code of conduct.
One should not make the graceful body suffer
Which has come to please Kudalasangamadeva (VB. 93).

The human body has come to please God. It should not be punished. Whatever comes should be offered to Linga.

Sharanas followed this principle, and achieved success both in worldly and spiritual life, though Sharanas like Allamprabhu, Akkamahadevi, Chennabasavanna, and Siddharama are exceptions. These people led an ascetic life to achieve spiritual perfection.
It is very difficult to suppress the six enemies such as lust, anger, miserliness, pride, infatuation and jealousy which are natural instincts. But they can be made to move in the upward direction and sublimated. Basavanna says,

If you control sensory pleasures,
Five senses shall stand before you,
And laugh at your face,
Did Siriyala and Changale give up
Happy union as a married couple?
Did Sindhu Ballala give up
Enjoyment as wife and husband
Offering it to Linga?
Being Thy devotee
If I covet for other’s money and other’s wife
I shall be away from the virtuous path,
O Kudalasangamadeva! (VB. 95).

Basavanna thinks heaven and hell do not exist elsewhere. They are in our thought and behaviour. Our character decides—what is heaven and what is hell. He writes,

The world of gods and
The world of mortals are not different.
To speak the truth is the world of gods,
To speak untruth is the world of mortals
Good conduct is heaven
Bad conduct is hell

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O Kudalasangamadeva
Thou art witness (VB. 96).

Thus importance was given to good conduct, and the myth of heaven and hell was exposed. Basavanna pleaded for good behavior in every day life,

He is a devotee who salutes
Other devotee he meets.
Gentle words are all japas.
Gentle words are all tapas.
Humanity itself is worthy of Sadasiva’s grace
Kudalasangamadeva will not approve those who are not like this. (VB. 80)

The moral values are more important than the chanting of mantras and performing penance, and they are the essence of a true religion.

Basavanna condemned the practice of looking for auspicious day, time, week, date and star for undertaking anything,

Do not say this day or the other day
Today is the day for one
Who says ‘Shiva, I bow to you.’
Today is the day for one
Who says ‘Hara, I bow to you.’
Today is the day for one who always remembers Kudalasangamadeva (VB. 97).
Blind beliefs cannot exert their influence on the people who always remember God. God is greater than stars. Therefore we must do our duty, remembering God. He condemns the fixing of marriage on the basis of horoscopes. The fruit of worshipping Kudalasangamadeva will protect them by removing the evil effects of stars. Basavanna writes,

> When our own god blesses us,
> Say that combination of zodiac is good
> And divine sanctions are there;
> Say that the position of the moon and stars are favourable,
> Say that today is better than tomorrow,
> Since the fruit of worshipping Kudalasangama is yours (VB. 97).

Basavanna freed the people from the exploitation of the priestly class by incorporating it in his religion.

S. M. Hunshal thinks, “Basavanna shaped Lingayat religion on scientific and realistic grounds.” Virupaksappa writes,

Basavanna preached scientific spirituality. He introduced a rational approach to religion and God and paved the way for the success of worldly and spiritual life. In fact, his religious revolution was the basic revolution out of which came social, economic and cultural revolutions. His religious revolution covers all the aspects of perfect life.

**Basavanna’s Social Reforms:**

Basavanna was a great social reformer. If we think of Buddha, Mahavir, Guru Nanak, the Brahma Samaj leaders Vivekanand, Gandhi and Ambedkar, Basavanna was a great social reformer. Most of these thinkers,
who happened to be active in the religious field, happened to be social reformers. In fact, all religious people are social reformers. Every religion has two aspects, namely, (i) tradition or ritualism and (ii) moral, ethical and human values. The point is that man’s fundamental belief in religion and God leads to social reform.

The other aspect of religion is very important. It includes human values such as truth, non-violence, compassion, service of mankind, human brother-hood and religious tolerance. These are universal in nature and common to all religions.

Keeping this point in view, Basavanna attached more importance to human values. Like Aristotle, he considered it as practical philosophy. He tried to build a society based in these everlasting values. According to him, we are all children of only one God. All the religions of the world advocate that we have descended from only one ultimate source. Darvinism confirms this.

Basavanna thinks of equality between people, and equality between sexes. He discarded the division of society based on professions (or varna or caste). He reminds us John Ruskin in this regard. He thinks that there is no relationship between craft and caste; and all crafts or occupations are equal. So there is no one as high born or low born. These distinctions are man-made. According to Basavanna, one becomes great or small by virtue of one’s actions. People become good or bad, just on the basis of their actions. He writes:

The man who slays is a pariah,
The man who eats carrion is low-born.
Where is the caste here?
Our Kudalasangama’s Sharana
Who loves all living beings
Alone is a well-born one! (VB. 193).

The spark of divinity is hidden in every particle of the universe. It is exhibited in a greater degree in human beings. Basavanna tried to elevate the so-called untouchables and the low caste people as ‘Deva manavas’ or Godmen by kindling the spark of divinity hidden in them. Mahatma Gandhi called them as Harizans in this regard. Under this experiment, a large number of untouchables and people from lower strata of society attained spiritual heights. The celebrated names are Haralayya, Madar Chennayya, Aydakki Marayya and his wife. Special mention must be made of Urilinga Peddi. He was an untouchable by birth and a thief by profession. After getting himself initiated by his Guru Urilingadeva, he attained such a spiritual height that he succeeded Urilinga Deva as the head of that math. It is very rare to find such an example in the history of world. Basavanna’s attempt to remove untouchability by establishing equality and by kindling the spark of divinity among all is unique. Revd Chennappa Uttangi says, “Lingayatism experimented on a small scale and solved the problem of uplifting and educating the untouchables who stand even today outside the pale of Hinduism, destitute of the sense of human rights.”

Chandrasekharaiarah calls Basavanna a crusader against exploitation. Had such attempts been continued through all the centuries after Basavanna, untouchability would have been wiped out completely from India.

Further, Basavanna extended the bonds of universal kinship to every one on the earth. He considered all the people of the world as members of one human family. He believed in an open and inclusive society. He says,
Let them not say, O Lord,  
'Who is he, who is he?  
Let them say rather He is ours, 
He is ours, He is ours'  
O Kudalasangamadeva, let me be  
A son of Thine own house! (VB. 22).

It is said,  
The Sharanas or devotees in Kalyan worked as a term, Basavavanna represents them not as the only leader but as one amongst equals. This again shows why every Sharana upheld him as the greatest among them. He says 'Smaller than I there is none; and none is greater than a Sharana.'\textsuperscript{10}

If this message of universal brotherhood is translated into action, many problems of our country and of the entire world can be solved.

Basavanna was a great humanist. He believed in kindness as the core of social life. Compassion should be the guiding principle for all religions. Without compassion there can be no religion at all. In fact, compassion must be the root of all religions. He writes,

What sort of religion can it be without compassion?  
Compassion needs must be  
Towards all living things;  
Compassion is the root of  
All religious faiths:  
Lord Kudalasangama does not care
For what is not like this. (VB. 92).

Shakespeare's Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* has this to say about the importance of kindness in life. It is true, then, that one is not compelled to be merciful, but mercy does not require compulsion. One is merciful simply because it is so wonderful to oneself and to others to be merciful. All religions pray to God, and it is not justice they pray for. Portia says,

*In the course of justice, none of us*

*Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,*

*And that same prayer doth teach us all to render*

*The deeds of mercy...* -11

Isaak Asimov thinks in a sense, this reflects a great philosophic struggle between Jew and Christian (as interpreted through Christian thought) between the letter and the spirit. For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life (2 Corinthians 3:6)

Shri Kumar Swamiji observes,

To see God in the world is to recognize the sacredness of Nature. Since Nature is sacred, subhuman lives and things are to be treated with respect and understanding. His wish is to work with Nature in order to produce material and social conditions in which individuals can realize the Divine at all levels from the physiological upto the spiritual.12

All living creatures in the universe need to be shown compassion. We have violated this principle and made the world a battlefield. Basavanna’s vachana should be the guiding for the United Nations organization to solve the problems between one country and the other, one religion and the other,
one society and the other so that this world could be a better place to live in.
Basavanna writes:

Thou shall not steel nor kill,
Nor speak a lie,
Be angry with no one,
Nor scorn another man,
Nor glory in thyself,
This is your inward purity,
This is your outward purity,
This is the way to win our Lord
Kudalasangama (VB. 77).

It is needless to say that this seven point code of conduct will promote the welfare of an individual, society and the entire mankind.

On the basis of the above principles, Basavanna tried to bring in equality among all human beings by kindling divinity as a equalizing factor. He tried to eradicate untouchability by giving freedom of worship to the so-called low caste people. In those days, and even now to a certain extent, the untouchables were not allowed to enter temples. He admitted them to the Lingayata fold and gave them Istalinga, the symbol of Parasiva for worship without the mediation of any priests and without entering temples, and advised them to live a life of austerity. In fact, he used Istalinga as a symbol of religious and social equality. Whosoever wore Istalinga on the body was given equal status in the society, as all inequalities cease to exist after initiation. Inter-dining and inter-marriage were encouraged. He writes,

Lord, O Lord! heed my prayer,
The Brahmin at one end,
At the other end the low-born man
All devotees of Shiva I deem one.
The priest at one end,
The sweeper at another,
All worldings I deem one.
It is this my heart believes.
Should in this talk of mine be doubt
As large as a sesamum tip,
Lord Kudalasangama
Will, sure, chop off my nose,
Until the teeth show out! (VB. 234).

Basavanna further said that the caste of a person cannot be determined
on the basis of professions. It depends upon one's own conduct,

Unless the menstrual flow appears,
There is no harbourage,
For the embryo to dwell in.
The function of the seed is ever the same,
Greed, lust, anger and joy,
All other passions are the same.
Whatever you read or hear, of what use is it?
What is the rule to judge the caste of a person?
The embryo needs the seven elements.
It is the same birth out of the same womb.
The same the alliance of self and soul:
What is then the usefulness of caste?
One is a blacksmith, if one heats iron;
A washer men, if one washes cloths;
A weaver, if one weaves cloth;
A Brahmin, if one reads the sacred books
Is anybody in the world
Delivered through the ear?
Therefore, O Kudalasangama Lord,
The well-born is he one who knows
The Nature of divinity! (VB. 301).

Basavanna's reforms about gender inequality are remarkable. He kept the
door of religion open to woman. He declared that soul has no sex. Jedara
Dasimayya writes,

One with long hair and breast is called female
One with beard and moustache is called male
But the soul moving in between is,
Neither male nor female
O Lord Ramanatha!13

That means the souls present in male and female bodies are the same.
Woman is generally considered as Maya (evil force) which comes in the
way of spiritual progress. This idea is discarded in Lingayatism. According
to Allamprabhu, woman is not Maya, but our own desire for woman is
Maya. Siddharama went a step further and said that woman is the goddess
herself. He writes,

Woman created by you is at the top of your head.
Woman created by you is on your lap.
Woman created by you is on the tongue of Brahma.
Woman created by you is at the chest of Narayana.
Therefore woman is not mere female entity.
Woman is not a monster.
Woman is Kapilasiddha Mallikarjuna himself.¹⁴

Akkamahadevi says that if woman is Maya for man, man is Maya for woman. If our mind is detached and pure, everything, including woman, appears divine. They upheld the dignity of woman by identifying her as divinity incarnate. Basavanna and other Sharanas declared that woman is eligible for deliverance and to be treated equally in social and economical matters.

It is said,
Basavanna’s concern for the emancipation of women is something astounding even to this day. It is an open secret that our sentiments and sayings on women are most often honored in their breach. But for a brief spell or two, it was not until 12th century, the woman was given her honored place. There may be instances of queens, princesses and such other exalted women in the past taking part in the daily rituals of life as equals of men. But the common lot was totally neglected. Mostly they were treated as slaves and chattels and for all the ill-treatment meted out to the women, they had the sanction of their religion.¹⁵

Inspired by these ideas, many women created history by achieving great heights in spiritual, social and religious fields. Akkamahadevi and a
galaxy of other women saints such as Nilambike, Akkanagamma, Aydakki Lakkamma and Moligeya Mahadevi may be quoted as illustrious examples.

The personality development of woman was arrested in the Vedic culture since it considered woman a Shudra. Vachana culture gave her religious and social freedom. Sadasiva Wodeyar observes,

Virasaivism discarded this idea of inferior status to woman. It gave equal status to women and encouraged them to participate fully in all social and religious activities and thus helped them to live a full life.\textsuperscript{16}

Women were educated. She was treated equal on a par with man in society. Amongst three hundred thirty vachanakaras of the twelfth century there were more than thirty women vachanakaras, many of them belonging to backward classes. The height of advancement in thinking reached its peak, as is evidenced by the following vachana of Akkamma, who belonged to an ordinary class of society.

They ask to do Kayaka, to conduct properly,
To do Dasoha, to do Lingapuja,
To serve Jangama, to accept Padodaka
To accept Prasada-etc.
Do not do these since Sharanas have said,
Do not do as others are doing them,
Do not do anything as kings have
Said it or guru has said it.
If I follow it blindly, it is my defeat.
O Rameswaralinga, whose life breath is good conduct,
If you violate moral code and agree with the above Commandments, you will go to the worst hell (VB. 97).
Some of these women were so advanced as to advise their husbands as regards the right social conduct to be practiced. Lakkamma was the wife of Aydakki Marrayya whose profession was rice picking. One day he picked up more rice in a hurry and brought it home for Jangamadasoha. Lakkamma pointed out to Marayya that it was a social crime to gather more rice than what was required for that day’s need. It amounts to hoarding, and deprives others of their share. This shows that even the people coming from the so-called lower sections of society were so much enlightened in those days because of Basavanna’s move to give equal rights to women. Sarojini Shintri thinks,

He was a great revolutionary. And as a revolutionary he was a free thinker. The Buddha had said to his disciple ‘O monks, do no accept even my own words out of reverence for me, but examine them on the touchstone of your reason,’ Basavanna echoed him when he questioned the Sastras and the Vedas.

Shall I say Sastra is great?  
It only exalts Karma!  
Shall I say Veda is great?  
It tells of animal sacrifice  
Shall I say Smriti is great?  
It seeks in the future.

He said: Stand out uncompromisingly for the freedom of the mind, for the freedom to know, to accept or reject in the light of your reason."
Another glorious example of women’s achievement is in the spiritual field which relates to Akkamahadevi. She considers Parasiva Himself as her husband and refuses to marry King Kousika and rushes to Anubhava Mantapa seeking the company of Sharanas. Allamaprabhu, the president doubts her perfection and puts searching questions to her. He questions her why she has not yet given up the concern for her body.

Basavanna, even as the Prime Minister of Bijjal of the Kalachuris thought that both religion and politics should facilitate social reform.

**Basavanna’s Economic Reforms:**

Basavanna was a true economist. In fact, a reformer, say of any kind, has to base his reforms on economic factors. The concept of reform emerges from economization. If we analyze the works of J. S. Mill or Bentham, we find that they try to reform, and every economic reform is interrelated to religion, society and politics. The classic case is Karl Marx’s ideologies, pertaining to base and superstructure.

Social justice involves a sound economic system in a society and equal distribution of wealth. This is ensured in Lingayata religion by kayaka – dasoha principle.

Every one should earn his livelihood by hard and honest labour either mental or physical. The work done as worship is termed kayaka. One should accept appropriate wages for such work. To demand more money is rather a sin. Money earned by kayaka does not entirely belong to one individual. A part of it should be spent for Guru and Jangama dasoha. A person, who has achieved spiritual perfection, is Jangama who guides people in spiritual perfection, moving from place to place and propogating religion. In a broad sense, humanity at large under the sun are included under the purview of
Jangama. Therefore, money spent for the welfare of society and nation may be interpreted as Jangama dasoha. Dasoha means offering. Money earned by foul or illegal means cannot be used for dasoha, since it is such money which is fit to be used for expiating one's sins.

In Lingayat religion dasoha is compulsory and should be done with hard earned money say by 'Satya Suddha Kayaka,' meaning honest work. This makes kayaka compulsory for every one. Since every one should work without fail, it leads to the creation of a sound social and economic condition in society, solving the problem of unemployment. As part of the money earned thus should be used for dasoha, it prevents amassing of wealth by individuals. Therefore kayaka dasoha concept is a well-knit system of production and distribution. In fact, it is spirituality oriented socialism. This spirituality based socialism has survived 850 years and is still a practicing principle, whereas Karl Marx's system of distribution of wealth, which is based on materialistic concept, has met with its end in many parts of the world.

Basavanna implemented many radical concepts of economy. Basavanna as the chief-minister under Bijjala set forth his ideas as a statesman and not as a mean and short sighted politician. He held the view that all money in the public treasury should be used for the welfare of people. He viewed the surplus money with the rich as public money which should be utilized for the benefit of people at large both the present and future generations. He advocated the maximum well being of all the people and struggled hard to achieve it. But Basavanna gave a practical demonstration of a welfare state in Kalyana Nadu and showed how it could be achieved. One could equally call it socialism based on 'work according to our capacity and receive according to our needs.' This principle was very
much embedded in the concepts of ‘kayaka’ and dasoha.’ In this there is no element of force, exploitation or expropriation. The concept of kayaka may be said to be a signal contribution of Basavanna to his practical philosophy. Kaya means the body. Kayaka means honest manual labour. The kayaka concept has its universal application. Every one has to do some kayaka to earn his bread which Gandhi has called ‘bread labour.’ In such a society where everyone does some kayaka or the other, there is no place for beggary or idleness. While Adam Smith talked of dignity of labour, Basavanna talked of divinity of labour. He considered no occupation as low or high. A Kammara, a dhobi, a nekar, a teacher and so on, these are all occupational groups where there could be inter-mobility. A society or a community if it is to be self-contained, must have all these other occupational groups which need not be hereditary in nature. Kayaka and dasoha are considered as two faces of the same coin and as such inseparable.

Gandhi valued labour and also considered public money and money with the rich as Public Trust to be utilized for the benefit of society at large. Similarly Rabindranath Tagore, talked of labour as divine when he said in Gitanjali: “He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off the holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil.”

Gandhi’s mind was captivated by Ruskin’s Unto this Last and its three teachings as he understood were:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That the lawyer’s work has the same value as a barber’s in as much as all have the same right of earning livelihood for their work.
3. That a life of labour i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and handicraftsman is the life worth living.

We find all these principles are the core of the doctrine of kayaka. B. B. Kanavi thinks,

If we distinguish between manual labor and intellectual labour, then problems arise. This can be overcome through dasoha. One with intellect can earn more but he has to retain what he needs and the rest he must surrender to the society. Hence kayaka and dasoha have to go together. If we stick to the principles, there is no labor high or low, even from the point of view of the reward; then it is difficult in practice to equally reward both. Since both are considered equal, both must get equal rewards.\textsuperscript{19} \textit{our,} p. 63)

What Basavanna envisaged was a self-contained and self sufficient economy free from the clutches of caste, creed or sex.

Basavanna was very much against accumulation of wealth.

‘If I should say
I want, this day, another day
A single particle of gold,
A single thread of cloth,
Let thy and the pioneer’s
Be upon me!
But for Thy Saranas,
There is nothing that I know,
O Kudala Sangam Lord’ (VB. 299).

Gandhi also held similar views when he thought that nature produces enough for our wants from day today, and if everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism, there would be no
man dying of starvation. This is a proof of how great men think alike. These ideas throw light on the modern trends in respect of hoarding, creating artificial scarcity leading on to black marketing, smuggling and such other economic evils.

Basavanna vehemently condemned borrowing and lending for interest and exploitation therefrom, which is very well reflected in the following vachana,

‘The goods and chattels you have got,
Do neither lend nor hire
Except to Siva’s devotees.
It is well if they return,
If not, it is twice as well
If it is there, it is Linga’s food:
And Linga’s food if here,
If what is Linga’s goes to it.
There is no joy that it is come,
No sorrow that it is not come…
Therefore, let nought, be lent or hired
To any but Siva’s devotees,
O Kudala Sangama lord (VB. 301).

Basavanna realized and advocated a life of community as against isolation, a life which could be more natural, simple and ridden by few and limited wants. He was a visionary and true statesman. He was dead against corruption and wanted public money to be utilized for the benefit of people.

Basavanna encouraged the dignity of labour by treating all Kayakas as equal. The kayaka of cobbler Haralayya and Basavanna’s kayaka as Prime Minister are equally dignified. Cobbler, tanner, herdsman, tailor, dancer,
treasurer, washerman, boatman and royal court officers were treated equally. This led to the establishment of an egalitarian society. B. B. Kanavi observes,

Basavanna’s economic thoughts emerging from the vachana literature stand on a much higher plane in relation to those of Adam Smith, the so called Father of Economics of the 18th century – as embedded in his *Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* and equally so in relation to those of Karl Marx, the architect of communism of the 19th century as contained in his *Das Capital*. We say so, because the economic ideas enshrined in the vachana literature stand on an ethical spiritual plane as against just a materialistic plane on which the others stand. Hence, they have an everlasting value and significance.20

The concepts of ‘Samagra Kranti’ by Shri Jayaprakash Narayan or ‘Sarvodaya’ by Gandhiji and Acharya Vinobha Bhave find their origin in vachana literature of the 12 century.

**Basavanna and Politics:**

Basavanna was the Prime Minister of King Bijjal of the Kalachuris in the 12th century South India. This is how we identify him first. His image as if riding a horse indicates this. His times were feudal in nature. Monarchy was the order of day.

It was impossible even to speak about democratic values if not socialism under such a regime. Basavanna, therefore, used religion as a medium to establish democratic values in society.

This was achieved through Anubhava Mantap, a forum of free thinking. All the problems pertaining to both spiritual and mundane aspects
of life were discussed here. Allamaprabhu, a great Shivayogi and mystic, was the president of the forum and Chennabasavanna, who is known as the architect of Lingayatism was its secretary. Basavanna was the very soul of this unique institution. It was, in fact, the first religious parliament in the world which served as a forum for establishing an egalitarian society. The cream of the discussion held at Anubhava Mantapa was expressed in the form of vachanas which were edited by Vacanabhandari Shantarasa.

Basavanna used divinity as an equalising factor to establish equality in society. He advocated that one does not become low or high by birth but by the level of divinity.

Anubhava Mantapa was established by Basavanna and other Sharanas. The first and the foremost among those who helped the institution in general and Basava in particular were perhaps Madara Channayya and Dohara Kakkayya, who had come from the lowest class and who were his senior contemporaries. They were endowed with high spiritual qualities and the great reformer was pleased to call the one, his spiritual father and the other, his great grandfather. The whole edifice rested chiefly on the three great personalities, Basavanna, Channabasavanna and Allamaprabhu who may be compared to the three apostles of the early Christian Church.

Lingayatism experimented on a small scale and solved the problem of uplifting and educating the untouchables who stand even today outside the pale of Hinduism, destitute of the sense of human rights.

This institution reminds one, of the early councils of Asoka, or the Sangam of the Tamilians, or the parliament of religions of Janaka of the Upanishadic days, or the later parliament of religions of Akbar. But unlike these it inverted the order of producer of the theory and practice of religion.
In short his movement may be said to be somewhat unique in the religious history of India.

Basavanna achieved the much sought after social reforms with the help of politics. First of all, the Kalachuri King Bijjal was in trouble, because he had usurped the Badami Chalukya’s throne. He had harmed the Chalukya King Taila III. He had even troubled the other chieftains in the Andra and other parts. King Bijjal was in trouble, and he made use of Basavanna’s Prime Ministership.

Basavanna as a great man appeared to be the King’s savior as well as the reformer. Therefore, the King permitted all kinds of social reforms. The point is that Basavanna brought in two kinds of political ideologies -- one democratic and the other socialist.

Basavanna’s democratic ideas are embodied in his creation of liberty, equality and brotherhood. The French Revolution of 1789 re-created these ideals later. His philosophy of Lingayatism stood for a new way of life, free from the traditional dead dogmas and oppressive structures of various castes, rites and rituals. It was with equal vehemence that Basavavanna and the other Sharanas attacked the un-holy alliance between the profession and the caste. It was here the Karma theory of Vedic religion came under heavy blow. Basavanna gave equality between people and also equality between the sexes. Chandrasekharaih says,

Basavanna’s concern for the emancipation of women is something astounding even to this day. It is an open secret that our sentiments and sayings on women are most often honored in their breach. But for a brief spell or two, it was not until the 12th century, the woman was given her honored place. There may be instances of queens, princesses and such other exalted women in the past taking part in the daily
rituals of life as equals of men. But the common lot was totally neglected. Mostly they were treated as slaves and chattels and for all the ill-treatment meted out to the women, they had the sanction of their religion.\textsuperscript{21}

The Sharanas or devotees in Kalyan worked as a team. Basavanna represents them not as the only leader but as one amongst equals. This again shows why every Sharana upheld him as the greatest among them. He says, ‘Smaller than I there is none; and none is greater than a Sharana.’

Basavanna’s socialist ideals are that of kayaka of Marx’s socialism eight hundred years before Marx. Dasoh is also a socialist value.

Lingayatism was the first to preach the dignity of labour in India. This philosophy is called the philosophy of kayaka. Lingayatism preached that a man should be respected irrespective of whatever vocation he follows in life. Basavanna had believed in community discussion (a basic principle of democracy) and community living. Dasoha was not only eating together but sharing what one has with other. He contemplated a society where there was equitable distribution of wealth, countercuting the class struggle of society which later Karl Marx and Gandhi were to envisage.

Basavanna was a great revolutionary. And as revolutionary he was a free thinker. The Buddha had said to his disciple ‘O monks, do no accept even my own words out of reverence for me, but examine them on the touchstone of your reason.’ Basavanna echoed him when he questioned the Sastras and the Vedas,

\begin{align*}
\text{Shall I say Sastra is great?}\quad &\text{It only exalts Karma!} \\
\text{Shall I say Veda is great?}
\end{align*}
It tells of animal sacrifice
Shall I say Smriti is great?
It seeks in the future (VB. 176).

In a way, Basavanna disapproved the feudal order. He revolted against the concept of monarchy. For example, he considered these things as unfair and useless. This reminds us Confucius's ideas about rationalist way of life. The Chinese Civil Service is based on Confucian wisdom. Confucius said that Govt is meant for the welfare of people. When a high minister asked about government, Confucius, employing a pointed pun, said, "'To govern is to set things right, who will dare to deviate from the right?' Therefore, the first duty of a nobleman is 'to cultivate himself so as to give peace and comfort to all the people.' Confucius said, "Lead the people by laws and regulate them by penalties, and the people will try to keep out of jail but will have no sense of shame. Lead the people by virtue and restrain them by the usage of decorum and the people will have a sense of shame and moreover will become good."²²

Kingship does not go with both democracy and socialism. Metaphorically Basavanna himself has become the king of reforms of the masses of his age.

We can say that Basavanna established an alternative political order through his Anubhava Mantap. It is from there he eradicated untouchability, caste system and gender-difference. He gave life to his vision of kayaka and dasoh. He spoke of the beauty of culture. He asked the people to use the vernacular. Of course, his religious reforms began from there. Still we need not think that he was a dictator. He had the common man's consent for everything he did and implemented. King Bijjal himself liked his reforms. R. T. Jangam observes,
Basavanna’s Anubhava Mantapa was virtually a philosophical workshop of the various intellectuals and scholars designed to evolve various principles and codes of conduct for the guidance and adoption of the masses. In case of Marx, the methods were intellectualistic no doubt. But he appears to be more self-assured and more individualistic than democratic. To be sure, he was greatly assisted and to the extent influenced by Friedrich Engels who was his long-time collaborator. He was also in constant discussion and correspondence with the leaders of various parties and movements in the different countries.23

**Basavanna and Mysticism**

Basavanna was a religious man basically. Such people have a tendency to have a discourse with God. Their religion is often very live and experimental. Basavanna and other Sharanas believed that man can get knowledge through their intuition, apart from, through the senses. Sharanas sought the glimpse of God and truth by contemplation and self-surrender. This spiritual apprehension of truth, they felt, was beyond the intellect.

Such old sciences as miracles and myths, and modern sciences as occultism (for ex, the theosophy), phrenology and alchemy speak of man’s otherworldly business

Madame H.B. Blavatsky who started the Theosophical Movement argues that even miracles take place as per the laws of Nature. It is not yet possible for science to know some of these laws. Chennabasavanna has spoken of cosmology and ontology in the same fashion. Let us take the case of talking through telephone or watching a television. We can listen to the talk from distant places in a fraction of second. We can see the object from
any comer of the globe almost instantaneously. This can be explained on the basis of the properties of electromagnetic waves.

Some ages back, science held that it is not possible to create anything from the void. But, today science advocates that the universe is evolved out of energy emanated from the Bigbang which took place in the void. Though Upanishads and the vachanas held a similar view, we did not believe it till modern investigations of science confirmed it.

Chandimarasa, a Sharana of the 12th century states:

The Undefinable Great assumes the form of
Self-born Linga by virtue of its inherent strength.
From this Linga is evolved Shivasaktyamaka,
Shivasaktyamaka creates Atma,
Atma creates Akasa
Akasa Creates Vayu,
Vayu generates Agni
Agni transforms itself into Appu,
Appu transforms itself into earth.
The earth generates all the life phenomena.
All these are created by your will alone,
O Lord Simmaligeya Cannarama.\(^{24}\)

The universe is evolved step by step. To start with the undefinable great, the void assumes the form of spherical Linga which gave rise to Shivasaktyamaka. Shivasktyamaka was a fundamental unit representing divine consciousness and energy. This generated Atma, the soul. The soul created Akasa or sky. Akasa created Vayu or gas. Vayu generated Agni or fire. Fire transformed itself into water which finally assumed the form of the
earth. All the animate and inanimate objects came into existence from the earth. In short, everything is created out of the energy evolved by the will of the void.

This is Sharanas’s concept of the creation of the earth.

Three types of energies may be identified in nature (i) Physical energy, (ii) Psychic energy and (iii) Spiritual energy. Spiritual energy is the basis for the other two. This transforms into other forms of energies and causes the events to happen heat, light, sound, electric and magnetic energies that play a vital role in all activities. The world functions by the force of these energies. They are the backbone of modern industries.

Psychic energy is another very important factor. Man can create a new environment by the dint of this. He can make great achievements in both individual and social life with his will power. Spiritual energy is at the bottom of these two. Spiritual energy is hidden in human body. All religions of the world believe that man can achieve the unachievable by getting this energy. Christians say faith moves the hills. Those who achieve this feat are known as saints. Sharanas believe firmly that miracles are performed by such great men.

Biographies of the saints of all religions mention the miracles. Jesus converted water into wine. He brought back the dead to life. After his crucifixion he came out of his tomb and appeared before his devotees. One will have to believe them. The biography of Prophet Mohammad mentions many miracles. Shri Krisna redeemed his devotees by being omnipresent. He protected Droupadi when her saree was being removed by Dusyasana. He lifted the mountain by his toe and protected the world from chaotic ruin.
Lingayat puranas state many such instances of miracles performed by Basavanna. Basavanna himself has stated in one of his vacanas that he performed as many as eighty-eight miracles:

My piety I make myself
Eighty-eight miracles, is like the guise
Of a pattering mountebank!
Although my mind is not in body caught,
Although my body is not caught in mind,
My body has in Allamaprabhu been caught,
My mind is in Chennabasava;
In which way shall I love Thee, Lord
Kudalasangama (VB. 299).

Great men do not perform miracles to exhibit their spiritual powers. They happen naturally during the course of their redeeming. Perhaps there is some truth in the statement that they are natural phenomena in their lives. Because of perfection in Linga mysticism, Basavanna had five alchemic powers. He possessed the powers of (i) mind, (ii) thought, (iii) walk, (iv) talk and (v) vision. He used these powers for the welfare of all beings. By dint of these powers whatever he thought he could achieve it.

Mahadeva Bhopala, the king of Kashmir sent one Chikkayya to Kalyan to take revenge on Basavanna for having attracted the Jangamas of his country. The intention of Chikkayya was to assasiante Basavanna as per the orders of his king. After coming to Kalyan he came to know that anyone could enter Mahamane in Jangama garb and join Dasoha. He dressed himself as a Jangama and carried a brinjal within his casket, instead of Istalinga. Basavanna’s practice was to come to every Jangama and request
him to accept the dasoha offered after Linga worship. When he approached Chikkayya, he was surprised to see Chikkayya sitting without doing Linga worship. He appeared to be disturbed. He was afraid that the secret would be out. Basavanna came to know his desire through his divine vision and insisted on his offering Linga worship. Chikkayya had no option but to open his casket and to his utter surprise, the brinjal had turned to Istalinga! This is due to the vision alchemy effect of Basavanna. As soon as Basavanna cost his eyes on the brinjal, it turned into Linga. Chikkayya was immediately transformed into his devotee. He repented. Basavanna told that the Linga had already pardoned him.

There are many incidents in Basavanna's life. Once a thief entered Basavanna's residence at night and tried to remove ear ornaments of Gangambike when she was asleep. Gangambike got up and screamed for help. Basavanna looking at Gangambike said,

I thought you to be  
my wedded companion;  
And a courteous lady.  
My master's hand is hurt,  
O wicked woman hand over  
The ornament to him.  
If a bigger thief comes to the house of a thief,  
He is none other than Lord Kudalasangama Himself (VB. 99).

Could Basavanna who had preached non-violence encourage the thief? He knew that any accumulated money invited danger. He believed in
spending a day’s earning that day only for dasoha. Therefore, he thought that he was a thief in the eyes of God. According to him, he should correct himself and also correct the thief. Therefore, he asked his wife to hand over the ornaments to the thief.

The thief was rather puzzled at Basavanna’s behavior. He thought that he had punished him severely by forgiving him. Moreover, by now he had been transformed into a noble being under the influence of alchemic vision.

Basavanna possessed the powers of distant vision. Indian Texts on Yoga mention that eight acquisitions (ashta siddhis) like anima (power to be reduced to the size), mahima (power to achieve great tasks), prapti (power to get one’s wants), prakamya (power to achieve whatever one desires), isatwa (power to become the master of all) and vasitva (power to hold someone under a spell) could be achieved by Hatha and Raja Yogaa. Puranas mention that people with such fulfillments have performed many miracles. Yoga has been accepted as a science even in the West.

Basavanna achieved in Shivayoga which is a synthesis of Hatha, Laya, Mantra and Rajayoga. Therefore, Shivayoga is considered as an integral yoga and superior to all yogas. Basavanna was a great Shivayogi with internal and external perfection.

Once when Basavanna was in Bijjal’s court he got up and went forward and said ‘do not worry, I am here to save you,’ as if he was consoling somebody nearby. Bijjal was astonished at this behavior of Basavanna and asked him why he behaved like that. Basavanna said ‘a milkmaid while going on the road with a milk pot on her head appealed to him to protect her when she was about to fall as her leg slipped and I stopped her from falling.’ Bijjal did not believe. Basavanna did possess the power of seeing things happening at a distance. He gave the correct location
of the place where the event had happened. Bijjal’s servants brought the milkmaid. The milkmaid confirmed what Basavanna had said.

Shivanagamayya was an untouchable by birth and he became a Sharana by Shivayogic practice. Once Basava went to his house at his colony outside Kalyan and had prasada with him. Traditionalists complained to king Bijjal that it was an offence on the part of the Prime Minister. Bijjal sent word to Basavanna. Basavanna came to the court with Shivanagamayya and explained to Bijjal that Shivanagamayya was not an untouchable but that he was a great devotee, for one who worshipped Linga with devotion ceased to be an untouchable,

What if one knows four Vedas?
Without Linga he is an untouchable!
What if one is an outcaste?
With Linga he is as holy as Varanasi,
His words are gracious, he is sacred to the world,
His prasada is ambrosia to me!
‘One who knows four Vedas by heart
Is not dear to me.
An outcaste although, he cooks dog’s meat,
Is dear to me
To him you give, from him you receive
He is as venerable as I myself
One who knows and worship Kudalasangama
Is greater than the six systems of philosophy
He is holy to the world, you know! (VB. 199).
Thus the one who knows and worships Linga is superior to the one who knows four Vedas and has no Linga culture.

The orthodox people were opposed to the progressive ideas of Basavanna. They strongly condemned his ideas of equating all with Brahmins and belittling their superiority. They conspired to get him removed from the position of Prime Ministership. They used Manchanna, a senior minister in Bijjal’s court for the purpose. They lodged a complaint with Bijjal through Manchanna that Basavanna was using the royal treasury for Jangamas in the name of Jangama dasoha. Bijjal asked Basavanna to submit the accounts before the sunset. Sixty clerks began counting money ceaselessly but could not complete the job. Basavanna ordered the sun not to move further till the accounts were finalized. A lot of time passed away but the sun remained where he was, it is said for eleven days! The order of universe was deranged and the people were afraid of some calamity. Bijjal asked Basavanna to explain this disorder. Basavanna told the truth. Bijjal bowed to the great Basavanna and acquitted him. Then, Basavanna asked the sun to continue his routine course and the clerks reported to the king that the treasury money was intact. Bijjal asked Basavanna to forgive him for doubting his integrity.

Manchanna, the minister though he opposed Basavanna apparently, had praise for Basavanna’s devotion to Shiva and both he and his wife were worshipping Istalinga secretly. Once a Brahmin, their neighbor casually peeped into their house and was astonished to see that both were absorbed in deep Linga meditation at midnight. Prior to this, Basavanna on hearing the news from Jangamas came to Manchanna’s house with Soddala Bacharasa to ascertain the truth. When his door was tapped, Manchanna and his wife thought that their secret was out and they attained Samadhi. Bijjal put the
blame of Manchanna’s death on Basavanna. Basavanna immediately asked Manchanna to get up. In no time both got up as if they were waking up from sleep and saluted Basavanna. Bijjal did not know what to tell and returned to his palace. Thus Basavanna brought the dead to life by dint of his alchemic power.

In Basava Purana when both Medara Ketayya and Basavanna lost their life apparently Madivala Machideva made them come to life by using his yogic technique.

B. Virupaksappa observes, “There was a time when people thought that those who did not perform miracles were not considered Sharanas. It was, of course, a belief of that period. Perhaps for this reason many miracles are associated with the names of almost all great men. Why speak of those days, even today, in Christian faith, it is necessary to perform a miracle to get sainthood. One will have to apply to Pope for sanctioning sainthood. The applicant can get sainthood only if he has performed at least one or two miracles. Mother Theresa was not at all bothered about sainthood. Some of her admirers after her death, applied for sainthood. They pleaded in their application that taking into consideration her curing of uncurable lepers as a miracle, sainthood may be awarded to her.”

This is how Basavanna achieved the unattainable in life. He says,

He who can give a form to Void
Is a Sharana,
He who can turn that form to Void
Is Linga experient
If he can't give form to Void,
How is he a Sharana?
If he can't turn form to Void,
How is he a Linga experient?
If these two can be made in one,
Can there, O Kudalasangama Lord,
Be room in thee? (VB. 311).

Shri Kumara Swamiji observe aptly:
Man's final end or the purpose of his existence is to love, know and be united with the immanent and transcendent Godhead. This identification of the self with God or the Supreme can be achieved only by the death of the ego and rising of the spirit. The total identification brings with it the manifestation of God's power, knowledge, bliss and beauty to some extent.26

The Swamiji thinks 'God is not a what, He is that.' This is why the Absolute is described as Shunya; and the attainment of the Absolute is termed 'Shunyasampadane.' Direct knowledge of the Absolute cannot be had except by union, and union can be achieved only by the annihilation of the self-regarding ego, which is the barrier separating the Thou or Anga from the That or Linga.

**Basavanna and Literature for Life**

The term culture includes man's way of life. Culture relates to man's internal world. It is training. If the mind receives good training it helps life to proceed on the right path and helps for perfection. Civilization pertains to the exterior of man, whereas culture is his inner quality. A blend of these
two formulates the values of life. A beautiful synthesis of these two qualities leads to the perfection of human personality.

Today we have achieved material progress and are advanced in civilization but are lagging behind in culture. But, our forefathers were at the top in respect of the inner qualities. Human values are disappearing today. Lack of inner values in us is responsible for this. Good education imparts good inner training. Vivekanand says, ‘Education is the manifestation of divine perfection in man.’ No knowledge comes from outside. It is hidden in a person. It blossoms due to various experiences in life.

Cultures and civilizations lacking inner strength have disappeared. For example, Roman Civilization fell because of Romans’ pride. But Indian culture has survived all odds throughout the ages, and is alive even today. It is due to its lofty and glorious inner values.

Education for life is one thing which helps the development of both the interior and exterior. Education provides for the material and spiritual aspects of man’s life. Such an education was imparted by Gurukulas during the times of Vedas. This included the ways and means of improving worldly life along with the spiritual progress leading to the realization of truth. The main drawback of this system was that it was based on Varnasrama. There were no equal opportunities for education to all. Sudras and women were excluded.

The Buddhist type of education which was imparted in Nalanda and Taksasila during the later period was rather broad-based. Even the education imparted in Shaiva Maths was not confined to the privileged few.

A great socio-religious revolution took place in Karnataka in the twelfth century under the leadership of Basavanna. It discarded all the man-made barriers. The main aim of the movement was to work for the welfare
of all. As a result of which, an egalitarian society based on moral and spiritual values was established.

A spiritual academy known as Anubhava Mantapa came into existence. Here the principles were laid down for the development of man’s inner and outer being. Teaching was through vachanas (sayings) in the vernacular language, i.e., Kannada instead of Sanskrit. Sharanas taught these values to people after imbibing them.

In India of today the leaders have of late realized the importance of education of the common man. Basava had achieved mass education in every village through Maths. These not only served as schools of religious thought but of liberal education. Every Lingayat house in the villages of Karnataka is known to have at least a few books. And children would be taught to recite vachanas and encouraged in their attempts at writing. With equality well spread and practiced, nothing could bar a man from attaining literary refinement. Add to this the privilege of using one’s own mother-tongue and we have the best possible way of mass education. Vachanas, unlike the ‘Subhashitas’ of Vedic times, are understandable to the common man even to this day.

Vachanas, one of the best forms of literature, touch the heart of man because the man who mused so, spoke forth through the language most familiar to him, even at the highest level, in one’s own mother tongue.

According to Sharanas, there is no line of demarcation between the mundane world and the divine. They viewed life in its entirety. They considered the mundane and spiritual aspects of life as two faces of the same coin. Basavanna says,

Behold! between the worlds
Of mortals and gods
There is no difference!
To speak the truth is the world of gods.
To speak untruth, the mortal world.
Good work is Heaven
Bad work is Hell
And you can witness it,
O Lord Kudalasangama! (VB. 78).

If we achieve purity in speech and actions, that itself is the divine life.
If perfection is achieved in one, utterly neglecting the other, it amounts to an incompleteness. The education imparted to achieve this end is education for life,

This mortal world is but the Maker’s mint;
Those who earn merit here, earn also there;
And those who earn not here, earn neither there;
O Kudalasangama Lord (VB. 97).

‘Here’ means mortal world and ‘there’ means spiritual world. The two are not separated from each other. To co-ordinate these two aspects they evolved kayaka dasoha principle. We have to undertake some profession or the other to earn our livelihood. If work is done for satisfying our needs, it is profession. It becomes kayaka when it is done as worship with honesty.

We should have formulated such an education policy after independence. Gandhi advocated basic education, involving work-experience and moral values. But these principles were thrown to wind by his political heirs, and education was westernized and the country was put on a wrong track.
Another example of rational attitude towards life is to carry out our work not looking for auspicious time, star, day or week. Time is continuous and indivisible. We have divided it into day, week, month etc. We consider them auspicious or otherwise arbitrarily without any scientific basis. In the eyes of God, there are no good or bad days.

Do not say that day, this day, another day!
To one who bows to Siva, today
Must ever be the day!
To one who bows to Hara,
Today is ever the day!
To one remembering ceaselessly
Our Kudalasangama, today
Must ever by the day! (VB. 57).

Many superstitions of this type were removed.

In day-to-day life, we behave roughly exhibiting anger and pride. God lives in modest and gentle behaviour. Divinity is hidden in all beings. Of course, man is a crown of creation. When we meet someone, saluting him is saluting God. The phrase for this is ‘Sharanu Sharanarthi’ meaning salutation for salutation. If we behave with modesty and speak gentle words, it is equal to several meditations and penance. Basavanna writes,

He is a devotee
Who greets with folded hands
Each devotee he meets:
Your gentle speech is worth
All counting of beads,
Your gentle speech is worth
All penances.
True modesty is worth
Sadasiva’s grace.
Lord Kudalasangama spurns those
Who are not like this (VB. 80).

God will not grace those who do not behave like this. Therefore, tread such path strictly. Basavanna even taught us how to behave with people who visit our house,

Does it make you ugly if you say
‘Come right in, how do you do?’
Does your floor cave in when you say
‘Do sit down please?’
Or does your head, or belly, burst
If only you speak to one?
If you have nothing to give, not even a grace,
Lord Kudalasangama, be sure,
Will pull you down and chop your nose (VB. 79).
Not only human beings but all beings under the sun are our kith and kin. They are to be shown compassion.

We hide our defects and point out others’ mistakes and deceive ourselves. This leads to a crisis in society. Instead of mending others, every one should mend himself first. This leads to the betterment of society and nation. This should be practiced as a universal principle for the welfare of
human race, and the United Nations Organization should adopt it as its motto.

Anger is the basis of sin. This is our worst enemy. It first punishes us and then others. The fire in our house burns our own house first, and then it burns the neighbour's house. Anger degrades us and lowers our prestige. It makes us insensible:

Why, Sir, be angry with those
Who are angry with you?
What does it mean to you,
Or what their loss?
To show one's anger means
A loss of dignity
To feel it, loss of sense!
The conflagration in your house
Unless it burns your house,
Does not burn your neighbour's house,
O Kudalasangama Lord(VB. 81).

Therefore, we should conquer our enemy, the anger.

Vegetarian food is superior to non-vegetarian one. Vegetarian food induces Satvika Vritti (good instincts) and promotes goodness. Recent investigations have shown that it promotes longevity. Gandhi has spoken about it at great length. Even he has made experiment with it. Use of alcohol is harmful to health. Their use makes us lose control over our senses, and sets us on the wrong path. No religion encourages the use of alcohol. Many
people, to gratify their senses, indulge in the use of alcohol. Rajendra Gunjal mentions an example of Basavanna’s times,

A special mention may be made of the way he remodeled the life of those engaged in trades harmful to the society. A wine seller, in Basavanna’s time it is said, ought to sell his wine only after impressing on the buyers about every evil that drink would cause. How much ahead of our times! Whereas we are happy to see a statutory a hundred remarks of cigarettes.27

Sensual indulgence is a natural instinct in all animals. To gratify this, religion has ordained marriage. It has been ordained for continuation of family tree. Human race is continuously practicing this method. Some violate the marriage code of conduct. This is one of the worst social crimes. Sharanas have warned us to shun this by exercising restraint. Desire for other’s money is an equally worst social crime. This paves the way for many bad habits. It causes the downfall. Basavanna writes,

For the indulgence of the flesh
They swallow meat and spirituous drinks.
For the indulgence of eye
Commit adultery.
What profits it to wear
Linga and other trappings too?
If those who go astray
From the Linga path
Incur reproach from Jangamas’ lips,
They will not escape
Going down the steep perditions' path
Lord Kudalasangama! (VB. 35).

The Sharana must have the constancy to say,
'I will not have another's wealth,'
The Sharana must have the constancy to say,
'I will not have another's wife,'
The Sharana must have the constancy to say,
'I will not have another's gold,'
The Sharana must have the constancy to say,
'Linga and Jangama are one,'
The Sharana must have the constancy to say,
'Prasada is the Truth,'
Lord Kudalasangama disdains
Such men as have no constancy(VB. 223).

Such a way of life was formulated on the basis of religious practice, and the health of society was restored.

Basavanna as well as Akkamahadevi was a fine poet. There is a close relationship between philosophy and poetry, and poetry is more philosophical than history as Aristotle thinks. Mysticism and poetry are just like sister disciplines.

Armando Menezes thinks, "It is unfortunate that the term Vachana is used to describe the outpourings of the Veerashaiva saints, should mean, literally, a 'saying' or 'utterance.'" What is evident is that among the vachanas of some of the Lingayat saints, and notably among those of Basavanna and Akkamahadevi, there are enough to establish for their
authors the title of poet. The following of Basavanna’s vachana speaks of a saint who is both a man and lover:

‘The Cakora waits, intent,
The Moonlight’s silver dawn;
The lotus’s heart is bent
Upon the splendid morn;
The bee’s, on the flower’s scent,
Even thus, for Thee, even thus
My heart is tremulous,
O Kudala Sangama Lord.’

Here we have all the unmistakable marks of true poetry.

When our country became independent, Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders who brought us independence tried to change the education system which advocated western values, and which was thrust on us. As has already been pointed out, Gandhi tried to introduce basic education, based on work, experience and personality development. This was broadly similar to the education for life advocated by Basavanna and other Sharanas.
References:


3. Basavanna. *Vachanas of Basavanna* (hereafter mentioned as VB). ed by H. Deveerappa. Sirigere: Annana Balaga, 1967, p. 244. All the textual references about Basavanna's vachanas are taken from this text. So the book is abbreviated as VB and the page no. is mentioned.


