

GOLDEN RESEARCH THOUGHTS

VEERASHAIVA PHILOSOPHY IN KARNATAKA



Jagannath .K

**PICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow Department of History
Gulbarga University
Kalaburagi**

Abstract :

Veerashaivism is derived from reformed Shaivism and it has developed in Karnataka as it emphasized on occupation (work), caste and gender equality and freedom of expression. Occupation or work is way to successful life and to live happily, the Veerashaivas have to follow principles and philosophy of Veerashaivism as revealed in Shat-Sthala. The paper discussed the principles and philosophy of Veerashaivism, which is started by Shivasharanas.

Keywords: Veerashaiva Philosophy , principles and philosophy , Shivasharanas.

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INTRODUCTION

Siddhanta-sikhmani elaborately expounds the Veerashaiva tenets. It tries to give the etymology of the term Virasaiva in a verse according to which “vi” stands for the “art of union of Shiva and Jeeva”, and “ra” for “delight in such a divine art”. Thus Virasaiva is one who experiences the bliss of the union of ‘jeeva’ and ‘Shiva’ and the oneness of ‘anga’ and ‘linga’. This is more a symbolic than an etymological explanation of the word ‘vira’ which ordinarily means heroic¹.

Many of the Shivasharanas and Shivasharaneyas were expressed their ideas, which become philosophical foundations of Veerashaivism. Physical experiences pains and aches can be felt by the senses, hence could also explained and attended to, but mystic experiences can neither be seen nor explained; it is felt by the inner feeling and not by the senses; one can orally enjoy these mystic experiences but cannot express in words or in writing. It is like the feeling of a dumb man, who cannot express his pains or pleasures or such other experiences in words. At the most he can express by gestures. Mystic experience is highly personal which he expresses in the form of vachanas which is strangely the medium of describing mystic experiences.

In Vachana literature of the Shivasharanas, the basic principles of Veerashaivism, both philosophic and ritual are fully discussed and broadened so as to tackle the problems of the day, and so Vachana-shastra has become the manual of Virasaiva religion. In addition to Sivagamas and Sivapuranas in Sanskrit and Vachana-sastra and its various forms in Kannada, there are some other notable books on Virasaivism like Siddhanta-sikhmani, Lingadharana-chandrika, Sivanubhava-sutra in Sanskrit and some of the puranas in Kannada such as Basavapurana, Prabhulingalile, Sivattattva chintamani and so on.

Veerashaiva Philosophy:

According to Veerashaivism, Shiva is a strong god and created the world with his power. But he has remained untainted and unattached from the world. He being omnipresent and omnipotent, pervades the entire universe created by Himself, yet transcends it, without being caught in its tangled web. His pristine purity and original nature are not marred by his activity and he has continued to be indivisible, perfect and whole.

The Supreme Siva, in his divine sport of creation, bifurcates himself into linga and anga; and his power into kala-sakti and bhakti sakti. Kala-sakti shelters in linga and the other in anga. In the heart of kala-sakti which is like a blaze hidden in linga, is enshrined the creative ability and so it is called pravritti sakti. The other sakti, which is bhakti (devotion), with its pure, subtle, auspicious nature provides pleasure and family liberation to anga in which it is sheltered. The bhakti is called nivritti-sakti. The two, the sakti and the bhakti are Siva's evolution and involution; his exhaling and inhaling. Siva creates the Universe through his sakti, and liberates the anga through bhakti. The liberation or moksha is termed as linganga-samarasya².

In the Shat-sthala system or six-fold hierarchy, bhakti (devotion), Kriya (work) and jnana (Knowledge)-all the three get equal importance. The synthesis of all these faculties that are latent in man is the special significance of this system. Based on spiritual progress of religious seekers the six sthalas may broadly be divided under two heads. The first three (bhakta, mahesa, prasadi) are known as kriyatmaka-the stages where action in the form of worship, etc. forms the prominent features; the other three (paranalingi, sarana, aikya) are known as jnanatmaka where knowledge in the form of philosophical enquiry, etc. becomes important. It does not mean that kriya is absent in the later stages or jnana in preceding ones. They are blended together from the beginning to the end. It only means that in the first three places kriya gets upper hand; in the last three jnana³.

Shatsthala as described by Kumara Swamiji⁴ are as under.

1. Righteous belief in the Linga or Divine Ground with its corollary of self-denial
2. Righteous means of livelihood or the choice of such professions as are not harmful in their exercise to any living creature.
3. Righteous action with the aim of creating and maintaining peace and good will.
4. Awareness or intuitive recollection to be practiced under all the circumstances of life, so that the aspirant may never do evil by mere thoughtlessness.
5. Dedicated commitment to contemplate on the unitive knowledge of the Ground.
6. Perfect penetration into the Divine Ground where the Trinity of the knower, known and knowledge is lost.

Guru, Linga, Jangama and Kayaka are four aspects of divinity in Veerashivism. They are inseparable from one another. These subjects were discussed elaborately in Anubhava- Mantapa and decisions arrived at are before us in the form of code of conduct to be followed. Kayaka - Dasoha theory put forward by Sharanas through Anubhava Mantapa is a rare and distinct gift to the whole world.

To earn one's livelihood one will have to adopt one profession or the other. Work done only for earning one's livelihood is a profession, whereas if it is done with dedication, honesty and sincerity as worship of God, it transforms into Kayaka. Every one should do his work as worship of god. Money earned by Kayaka, does not entirely belong to a particular individual. Part of it should be spent for Guru and Jangama Dasoha who are none other than Parashiva in human

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form. Dasoha means offering. Jangama means Holy man with spiritual perfection. In broad sense it means all that moves, particularly society. Therefore money earned by Kayak should be spent for society also. Since Jangama is the mouth of Linga (Parashiva) whatever is offered to Jangama reaches Linga (Good) also. In other words it pleases God and therefore Kayaka becomes Kailas or abode of God itself. Thus Kayak-Dasoha principle serves as straight path for material and spiritual progress. All Kayakas are equal. There is no superior or inferior work or Kayaka. Kayaka of cobbler Haralayya and Basava's Kayaka as Prime Minister are both equally dignified. Kayaka should be done with honesty and a sense of dedication. Even money earned by hard manual labour in agriculture satisfies Linga. Money earned by foul means is not acceptable to Jangama and Linga as it is sinner's money which is fit only for expiating his sins. Even jungle wood leaves earned by hard and sincere work is acceptable for Jangama Dasoha. Much importance is attached to dignity of labour in Kayaka Principle. Since every one has to do Kayaka for Jangama Dasoha compulsorily it helps eradicating unemployment and makes society economically sound. Since money earned by Kayaka should be used for Dasoha compulsorily it prevents hoarding and checks inflation. This concept of Kayaka Dasoha involves well knit system of both production and distribution avoiding amassing of wealth by individuals. In fact it is association that is spiritual oriented.

Moreover, as there is no superior or inferior Kayaka (Occupation) it establishes equality among people doing different Kayakas, cobbler, herdsman, tailor, washerman, treasurer or prime minister are given equal status in society. Thus judging the status of people based on Kayaka disappears and helps establishing casteless and classless society on the basis of moral and spiritual values.

In the spiritual life of any seeker a distinctive and decisive stage occurs wherein the anguish of his mind and its consequent transmutation are found. This is the result of constant and purposeful effort; but it cannot be denied that in a few cases it may be sudden conversion unanticipated. In either case, it comes as a sort of rebirth. The western mystics call it by a technical term 'purification' in the initial stages of shat-sthala such a rebirth takes place.

In Veerashaivism, Diksha-initiation-is signified as the symbol of rebirth. This is a very significant ceremony where the spiritual preceptor or guru gives ishta-linga to the disciple observing certain symbolic rituals to make him realise the inner meaning of the linga. This ishtaMinga which is capable of fulfilling all the desires of spiritual progress of the devotees, has always to be worn on the body. It should be his only object of worship and nothing else; not even shavaralinga form of worship as found in the temples. In this way it is strict monotheism which commands only ishta-linga form of worship. This is also called Lingayatism as its main tenets are based on the conception and evolution of Linga⁵.

Veerashaiva movement touched the root of the people's conscience and fed it with the water of life. Thought of right and wrong, examination of one's self and an effort to live righteously became common among its followers. Thus it is that many of these saints came from the common people. We need not be afraid of the phrase "common people," in this context. It merely means persons whose pursuits were not particularly learned or religious. The saints were men and women going about the ordinary business of life, earning their bread and looking after wives and children. Yet when touched by the teaching of a great faith they evolved in the commonplace circumstances of their lives a spiritual consciousness that might not come with years of mere learning. How common the pursuits of these people were is worth nothing Ittappaiya was an umbrella-holder; Chennaiya an out caste and shoe-maker; Machideva was a washerman; Sangaiya was a huntsman; Muddaiah a cultivator; Kamideva was talwar or watchman; Kamappa had an oil mill, cowherd Ramanna, Kethaiya the mat-weaver, Somavve who lived by pounding rice for wages, Maraiya the fire-wood seller, Basavanna the door-keeper, Bemanna the artisan, are among them. Equally remarkable is the number of woman whose sayings are recorded. Gangambike, wife of Basavanna, and the wives of Maraiya the fuel-seller referred to above, of Konde Manchanna and of Urilinga peddie, other devotees who themselves recorded their experience, are here. Mahadeviakka, many of whose sayings have appeared, is easily the equal in point both of experience and expression of any woman who devoted her life to God. Muktayakka, Remmavve, Kalavve, Rekamma, Goggavve, Masamma, Thayamma, Guddavve, Sathyakka, Remamma and Suvarna Devi are other names of woman who made these sayings.

The sayings cover all phases of spiritual life. Here are words on the pervasiveness of God, on the difficulty of knowing the godhead, on the absurdity of claiming to have known the Unknowable as there is no knower when one has known Him, and on the inadequacy of a theory of the godhead like absolute monism. Here is acknowledgment of the gifts of God, of the real and ultimate value of life on earth. Here is ridicule of worshipping an image as God or of relying on the symbol of the godhead, divorced from thought of what it means, to save. Wholehearted condemnation of Worldliness delighting in the pleasures of the senses, hoarding for wife and child, covering its shame with appearance of devotion and godliness, is found here. Here also is found, along with the condemnation of evil in others, confession of the evil in one's self, of the little darkness that lurks unnoticed within because the light of God is not accepted fully. Faith in the ultimate success of goodness and the trust in God that refuses to be shaken by trial are found here. Love for all creation because at the heart of it all is One; and patience with the world and its ways because that is how it is made; and with the body and its weaknesses because that is how the body is made; these are also found in these sayings⁶.

There are many principles as derived from the preaching and Vachanas of Shivasharanas. They are broadly grouped into seven types.

Desire- To ascend the first rung of the ladder of morality one should give up desires. Desires increase wants. If wants are not satisfied uneasiness crops up. Shivasharana Ambigeru Chowdayya expresses the same view in different words. Sister Mahadevi has expressed this idea; by a beautiful idea thus- "Just as a spider weaves a net out of the materials of its own body and is caught in the net and dies, so also do I worry myself by creating so many desires. Oh! God, clear away my mind

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from these filthy desires and show me the path leading towards you”.

Anger- Anger is an obstacle to moral progress. If a man falls a prey to his senses and their objects he becomes enamoured with them. From such attachment desires arise. If desires are not appeased anger is born. On account of anger one loses his balance of mind. From the loss of equanimity one finds his reason missing. From the loss of reason he meets the destruction of his self. Thus anger leads to so many evils in its chain of evils.

Self-control: Senses are the root cause of all evil temptations. If the mind follows the fleeting senses, the mind is carried away just like the boat that is driven away by the storm. The better course would be to turn the mind towards Linga (God) and offer the sense objects to God and then enjoy them as God's gifts. By this way bodily qualities in man vanish and Godliness manifests itself in man. Shivasharana Adayya has graphically described the states of entangled and disentangled mind in this way:- “He is happy who disentangles his mind from the snares of his senses. He is miserable who is swayed by his senses, he who turns his mind outward, is caught in the worldly Maya. He who turns his mind inward, is called a man of full knowledge. This is the way of making the senses sublime. One who reposes his mind solely in God, becomes liberated. If one's mind is entirely absorbed in God, he becomes one with God”. These saints have preached to look upon women as mothers. Shivasharana Jedara Dasimayya says:-“One who regards another's wife as goddess, Gowri (Siva's consort) will be born a king and one who commits adultery with another's wife, will be thrown into the hell”.

Truth- Adherence to truth ennobles a man's character and he will be held in high esteem by the public. A truthful man may suffer for a long time but he is sure to get the good fruits of truth in the long run. To speak falsehood is to cheat one's own self. Basavanna says- “To speak the truth is to have a heavenly quality and to speak falsehood is to have a hellish quality”.

Non-thieving- To restrain from thieving other's property is a great virtue. Veerashaiva saints were not content with this statement. They went further and said that to earn more than what they required for their subsistence was a theft. Shivasharana Molige Marayya used to maintain his livelihood by picking up rice grains in the street every day. One day when he had brought more rice than what was required; his wife rebuked him and caused him to throw away the excess rice in the street. To keep the excess rice was as good as depriving others' food. All these saints were following some particular professions to maintain themselves. The idea of self-help and self-reliance was felt by them as of great value. To rely on others for their livelihood was considered by them as a great sin. They did not even stoop to touch others' silver and gold.

Harmlessness- Not to cause pain to others either by evil motive or by words or by action is defined as harmlessness (Ahimsa). Shivasharana Akhandeswar says:- “When wise men speak to us, we should humbly reply them. God departs from the place wherein hard words are exchanged just as fire arises when two stones meet with force”. This saying lays emphasis on humility as a precious virtue. Purity of words and actions presuppose a pure mind.

Charity- To help others in their difficulty or distress is charity. Veerashaivism says that we regard our neighbours and enemies as ourselves because the souls of all are one and the same. Even the birds and beasts assemble at a distressing call of any one of their group. Basavanna exemplifies this social virtue in his saying- “Does not the crow call all its group at seeing a morsel of food? Does not the cock make a call for its kith and kin at seeing a few grains? A devotee of Siva, who has no such feeling, is worse than cocks and crows”. Charity advances the interest of the person who shows charity and of the person to whom charity is shown. Selfishness results in the aggrediment of others and harm to the reputation of the selfish person. The reward for charity is the love and blessing from the recipient. Selfish man's reward is the hatred incurred from others.

Somasekhara⁷ summarized the principles of Veerashaivism as under.

Compassion is the fountainhead of religion:

To the Shivasharana, compassion is the veritable bedrock of religion. A religion devoid of compassion is no religion at all, in his eyes... Compassion can create a society in which fellowship is pervasive. Compassion creates, in a society of human beings, an atmosphere of mutual affection and harmony. The younger generation particularly needs this message of love. The religion of the Sharanas brings all living beings into the radiant circle of Love. There is no room for hatred in the religion of the Sharanas.

The Conception of a secular society:

The Sharanas never advocated caste. The society they visualize is a beautiful society, a Secular Society based on the Equality of All. Basaveswara's vision was to create a society of love, equality and brotherhood which are basic traits to bring peace in the entire world.

Work (Kayaka) is Worship:

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"Kayaka' or work is the exalted value which the Sharanas enjoined. The incomparable economic principle which the Sharanas gave the world in order to end social and economic inequalities is the Kayaka Tatwa, the Principle of Work. To Basava and other Sharanas goes the credit for proclaiming that only he who toils has the right to eat. Using the technical terms of economics, these may be called Work. Production and Distribution. To the Sharanas, 'Kayaka' is not just the work that a man does to sustain himself; it is the worship of Lord that he performs in a state of purity in thought, word and deed. The Sharana holds that Kayaka is indispensable to everyone, that all work is honourable and that no one work is superior and none inferior. From the sweeper who keeps the city clean to the sovereign who rules over a country, all were engaged in different tasks-tasks all equal and equally worthy of respect.

The Principle Of Dasoha:

Another socio-economic principle that the Sharanas advanced was that of Dasoha. The Shivasharanas were devoted to work; they also believed that this world of mortals is the Lord's mint. Therefore, Basavanna and other Shivasharanas were not only reformers but also loved to experiment. To the Sharana, to engage in work with Comrhitment and devotion is mandatory; and it is also mandatory to distribute in society the fruits of labour-and to do'this'with affection and warmth. This principle of loving distribution in society the Sharanas name 'Dasoha'. To the Sharans goes the credit for transforming the doctrine of Karma into doctrine of Kayaka and the culture of Charity into the culture of dasoha. Kayaka does not permit hoarding. The doctrine of Dasoha prescribes that one shall retain just as much as one needs and that one shall distribute the rest in society.

The Equality Of Woman:

The revolutionary Sharanas have yet another great achievement to their credit-the equality of women and man. To a society which publicly branded woman as 'maye' or illusion and treated her as worse than the Shudras, the Shivasharanas brought the thrilling message of the equality of man and woman. The role of the Shivasharanas in the Sharana movement is illustrious. Several of them like Akka Mahadevi, Mukthayakka, and Ayedakki Lakkavva enriched Vachana Sahitya with their compositions. The Sharanas addressed every woman as a Shivasharane. They gave them freedom of expression. In the Anubhava Mantapa, which was the forum of Sharana thinking, the Sharanas gave women an equal status and share, and there by gave in impetus to the free expression of thier spiritual contemplation wearing the sacred Linga. As the credit for this liberating step goes to the Sharanas, the credit fo making splendid use of the social and religious freedom granted to them by Basava and other Sharanas and enriching Sharana Sahitya with their reflections displaying their lustre as symbol of the self respect of all women goes to the Sharanas.

Rationalism:

The greatest contribution of the Sharanas to the progress of mankind is; rationalism. They never encouraged superstition. Superstition, blind belief and blind practice, moth-eaten practices in the name of the worship of God-all these they condemned unequivocally. The Sharanas condemned pompous celebrations, hypocrisy and empty show. To the Sharana, devotion is supreme. The Sharans hold that no knowledge of music is needed to please God, and no Knowledge of the Vedas is needed. All that the Lord asks of the devotee is loving devotion, devotion that rises from a pure heart, devotion that rises form the innermost depths of his heart. The rationalism of the Sharanas is the fruit of the ideological probing of their minds.

Conclusion:

To sum up, Veerashaivism is founded on the basis of equality and rationality. Here, irrespective of castes, gender or occupation, all are equally respected. Even freedom of expression was enjoyed by all classes of people. Further, philosophically the principles of Veerashaivism expressed in terms of Shat-Sthalas were valuable principles to salvation or Moksha, which emphasize on the pathways toward successful life. In this regard, philosophy of Veerashaivism is based on equality, freedom and worship towards one's own occupation.

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