

## Lingayatism :- A Historical Study

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**Abstract:** *Lingayatism was an important moment in 12th century. It was started by Basava in Karnataka. It was socio religious in nature. It was against caste system. Basava rejected caste system. He also opposed child marriage, alcoholism and other evils. Vachans and other sources play an important role to reconstruct the history of lingayatism.*

**Keywords:-** Lingayatism, Basava, Caste, Child Marriage, History.

**Introduction:** Lingayatism emerged as a great force in the sphere of religion in Karnataka in 12th century. There are many historical evidence which clarify Lingayath religion was founded by Guru Basareshwara. They are as following given below:-

- PalkurikeSomnath (1200 A.D., in the Telgu language)
- Mayidevaaprabhu (Magge) [1400, Kannada Poet]
- ChaturmukhaBommarasa [1500 A.D., Kannada Poet]
- VirupakshPandit – ChannabasavaPurana [1585 A.D. Kannada language]
- Gururaj [15<sup>th</sup> Century] (Sanskrit Language)
- Keladi'sBasavaraj (Sanskrit language)

- Maritontadarya [16<sup>th</sup> Century] (Sanskrit language)
- Poet Harihara (Hampe) 1195 A.D. (Kannada Poet)
- GubbiyaMallanaraya-GururajCharite (1650 A.D., Kannada language)
- Chamarasa-PrabhulingaLeela (1400 Kannada language)

As far as the life of Basava is concerned, he was a native of Bagevadi in present Karnataka. he was the son of Madiraja. His mother was Madalamba. He belong to Brahmin caste by birth. Bladeva his maternal uncle was a minister in the court of king Bijjala. Basava was also appointed as a minister in the court of Bijjala. But there are multiple views about his job. In one view, when his uncle fell sick and was bedridden, his responsibilities were transferred to Basava.

In another view, Basava successfully deciphered an inscription that disclosed the location of treasure. On this incident, king Bijjal was very happy and appointed as his minister in his Court.

According to BasavaPurana, when Basava assumed power, he distributed gift to the devotees of Lord Shiva. the other people who were left out, began angry with Basava.

They began instigating the king who letter punished to devotees of Lord Shiva cruelly. This incident had a deep effect on Basava. An important incident also happened during his initiation ceremony (holy thread ceremony of Brahmins). He opposed it. He was only of 8 years.

There are some Scholars who assessed that lingayatism was not before Basava. As professor Sanyamad wrote a book named “Basavannavaru Lingayat Dharma Samsthapakaru” in which he clearly mentioned Basava was the founder of lingayatism. Panchcharyas or not the ones who founded lingayatism, with historical roots appeared in the book “History and Philosophy of lingayat religion” by M.R. Sakhare, existence of the lingayatism is not at all found in any part of India or in book of any language before 12 century. So he came to the conclusion that Basava was the founder of lingayatism.

Another scholar P.B. Desai mentioned in his book “Basaveshwara and his times” by indicating various sources that Basaveshwara was the founder of the lingayat religion. There are other books which mentioned that Guru Basaveshwara founded Lingayatism in Karnataka state. Basava started different kind of worship method. Lingayatism was also called Virashairism. Lingayats substituted a Linga image one on the body and symbolising God Shiva. Due to this image, they were called lingayats. lingayat’s worship

method was monotheistic and free of Temple worship which was started by Guru Basaveshwara.

The Lingayat movement was not only religious but also social in nature. It had a great impact on society in Karnataka. Lingayatism totally opposed caste system prevalent in Hindu society. It rejected this caste system completely. Guru Basaveshwara accepted the people from all castes in his new religion. He proclaimed his kinship with lower and oppressed caste and rejection of Brahmin by birth. Shiva is the chief God of this religion Basava announced, “A person who wears Linga of Shiva is well-borne”. God Shiva is all. All people are part of God Shiva. So any kind of discrimination could not be accepted because God Shiva had made all people equal.

To reject the caste system at that time when this system was very rigid was a great social reform. If we see it from the point of humanity is very appreciable. The radicalism off early moment culminated in a marriage between a formerly untouchable boy and a formerly Brahmin girl, which the orthodox section of society condemned and opposed. The fathers of both were sentenced to death by king and dragged by an elephant through the streets of town, which led to a full-fledged revolt by the oppressed and lower caste people assassinated the king Bijjala; the orthodox section was finally victorious and the movement expelled from the kingdom.

Guru Basaveshwara was a great social reformer. He raised voice against some other social evils also. Basava opposed child marriage. Basava was in the favour of remarriage of widows. He also opposed alcoholism.

‘Jangam’ is also a category of monks in lingayat religion who give their preaching by wandering from one place to another.

So we see that Guru Basaveshwara was a great religious and social reformer in a region of Karnataka. Due to him, Lingayatism became a great movement in Karnataka in 12th century.

**Sources of Lingayatism:** To reconstruct historical context, origin and development of lingayatism, one will need to draw up on various sources. In these sources, we can mention inscriptions, the vachanas, folk literature, post Basava development, regale literature, the lingayat and Jain Puranas, doctrinal and philosophical works. By comparative study of these sources, we can easily reconstruct the history of Lingayatism. The Arjunavada inscription is very important from the point of view of Lingayatism. The vachana literature is very important source.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, we can say that Lingayatism, which was founded by Guru Basaveshwara, a great socio-religious movement. It left deep impact on the society of Karnataka. It tried to demolish the rotten structure of Hindu religion and society. It produced a challenge before Brahmanism and

Hindu Caste system. It tried to break all barriers which had created hurdle in Hindu religion and Hindu Society.

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