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Dr. C. Naganna

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and Literature

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Editor: Dr. C. Naganna

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The Suttur Swamiji Speaks

'Storm' and 'calm' seem to chase each other as an inevitable phenomenon of nature. Therefore, neither is a permanent occurrence or in other words, both 'storm' and 'calm' stay on the curvature of time temporarily. The convulsion of gathering clouds, thunder and lightning is quite unnerving; sometimes, it may even unhinge individuals who are not prepared to welcome the terrible aspect of nature. But exposure to such experiences is necessary in order to realise that nature is not always prone to sing lullabies; it roars and explodes to become light again expending pent up energy.

What is happening in nature, the human nature reflects and replicates; because it knows no other model to learn from. Fortunately, like nature, human nature also regains 'calmness' after a period of vigorous activity. The election time is a stormy moment; especially so in a democratic set up as ours, where individuals feel free to hop, jump and skip in search of greener pastures. The election time, thus, ensures its quota of entertainment to the larger society. But the common man refuses to be amused at these tricks of the leaders, though he pretends to approve of their predilection. Because an election decides his future and the future of his progeny, he hopes to see the end of his predicament via the wise decisions the people's representatives make on his behalf. Since he expects them to orient their thinking to achieve the well-being of the society and the nation, he weighs very carefully the pros and cons of his choice. This deliberation is seen in the manner in which he installs governments and rejects regimes. If our leaders are sensitive enough, they can learn a lesson or two by paying heed to the implied instructions of the common man.

Democracy is an arena where everyone must strive to establish peace and harmony. Because, by living in peace and harmony man can ensure enduring stability. But unfortunately, democratic norms have been flouted time and again, so much so, that whoever has the lung-power succeeds in drowning the voice of sanity and wisdom. The triumph of the 'loud speakers' is obviously the defeat of the cultured and the courteous. The day we sacrifice the latter in order to placate the hustlers, our progress on the righteous path will be seriously hampered. Once we lose our acceleration, it will be difficult to regain the lost ground. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all the stake-holders to make our democracy a vibrant one. There cannot be permanent conflicts in the minds of the people belonging to the same nation though they profess allegiance to different political affiliations. Allamaprabhu, the great mystic of the twelfth century, has taught us to live in harmony, because the entire creation is the handiwork of Guheshwara and therefore no one can claim that it is his contribution alone that stands out significantly in this phenomenal world. Listen to Allama:

*In this unlimited darkness
who put this uncommon light
dark it is
light it is
what wonderment
one is not afraid of the other
seeing the elephant and the lion
feed together
Guheshwara I wonder.*

The leaders might delude themselves in thinking that they are like the proverbial lions and elephants, not destined to come together on a common platform; but the common man expects them to channelise their energy to achieve "greater common good", vindicating Allama's vision. They will surely succeed if they listen to his words of wisdom.

Notes From The Editor

The month of June in the West, they say, is the most pleasing segment of the season. Luckily, June in Mysore is no less pleasant. There is sufficient greenery in the central part of the city, though the extensions are yet to get their share of attention from the city fathers in this regard. Since nature alone creates elevating thoughts in the minds of the inhabitants of a town we can't help meditating on the necessity of creating and maintaining the right ambience. We need to nurture hope that the vigilant citizenry would demand more alertness from the authorities concerned, because only when the physical atmosphere is wholesome the people could command fragrant thoughts which will ensure meaningful living.

This issue of "Sharana Patha" is fortunate to have articles by Parama Pujya Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji, the President of India Smt. Prathibha Devisingh Patil, and the late Maharaja, Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar ('Pages from the Past') in addition to the regular features that have defined the contours of "Sharana Patha".

The Revered Swamiji has drawn our attention to the role of the media in modern times where media is reaching billions of people all over the globe in one go. Juxtaposing "Media and Truth", the Swamiji has gently reminded the news-gatherers that their job is never divorced from Truth and it is, in fact, a relentless search for Truth which will eventually succeed in wiping out the tears of human beings.

Her Excellency, the President of India, Smt. Prathibha Devisingh Patil, in her Silver Jubilee address, has located the lack of medical facilities to the rural population of our country which has hampered

the progress of the nation. She has lauded the initiative taken by the Mahavidyapeetha in making Suttur a "Model Healthy Village".

Dr. Vijay Guttal has traced the history of the English translation of the vachanas and how the translators have made this project an integral part of the Kannada literary movement, though not consciously. Smt. L.V. Shanthakumari, continuing her preoccupation with the less-known women Vachanakartins, has placed Bonthadevi in the context to obtain a well-defined portrait of the said Shivasharane.

I have focussed my attention on Akka Mahadevi's Kalyanaphase where she responds to the "Call of the Communion" which is a more advanced stage in her spiritual journey, poised between the Udutadi and the Srishaila phases. The late Maharaja, Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar, as a true inheritor of a great legacy of philosopher-kings of Mysore, has understood Sri Basaveshvara as a mystic par excellence. The Wadiyar has underlined Basavanna's mystic way evolving from the control of the mind (*Manojaya*).

The renowned scholar Sri H.V. Nagaraja Rao has analysed different aspects of 'praise' and 'censure' as estimated by the Vachanakaras whose instructions are sure to protect us from the contradictory pulls and opposite sentiments.

Our attempt is to reach out to new contributors in order to obtain write-ups from them on different aspects of Vachana literature. We look forward to receiving questions on Sharana thinking especially, from the students. This is our humble attempt to orient them towards the Vachana movement and the great personalities who were part of that movement. We hope the students will raise to the occasion. I thank everyone who has lent a helping hand in bringing out this issue quite on time.

Dr. C. Naganna

Media and Truth - A Religious perspective*

Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji

We are living in the era of Information Technology. We have witnessed a sea change in information dissemination in the last few decades. The revolution in technology has reduced the entire universe into a global village. The internet, the foremost and latest *avatar* of media expansion, has succeeded in providing information at the tip of one's fingers, wherever required. In modern times, the media have great influence on the minds of the people. They trust the print and electronic media more than anything else. It is the media that convey facts to billions of people. But the moot point is: how much do the media adhere to truth? Reporting only one side of the events or emphasizing one view in a partisan manner does not lead us anywhere towards the truth. The media should be impartial and should act only as a witness. They should never take a biased stand.

Religion is an eternal search for truth. It is a quest for reality. "ಸತ್ಯಾನ್ನಾಸ್ತಿ ಪರೋ ಧರ್ಮಃ" (There is no Religion higher than Truth). From a religious perspective, it would be the most ideal situation if all people spoke the truth, and if all people found the truth. Finding truth should be made possible for all. The media have a great role to play in this regard. The electronic medium has an eye which can see everything and every incident.

* FUREC (Foundation for Unity of Religions and Enlightened Citizenship) Distinguished Lecture delivered at Adichunchanagiri Srikshethra on 20.11.2005

It is capable and competent to take the truth to every nook and corner of the world, to every house of every country. It can shape the minds of our children and youth. It can inculcate great values in the minds of one and all. In olden days sages had to walk from place to place and from village to village to teach and preach. Now they can reach a million people at the same moment and transmit their ideas and ideals. It is a great opportunity for those who want to spread the fragrance of truth hidden in all great religions. The message of harmony, friendship, realisation and immortality can be bestowed on all those who seek them, through modern media.

In the context of developing countries, we can hardly afford to ignore the importance of the print medium. Both electronic and print media have become major channels for reaching out. All aspects of mundane requirements are largely depending upon these two powerful channels. Search for truth is an endless endeavour. Men in the present day, as in the past, are engaged in the quest for truth - both ultimate and contextual. For some, truth is relative; for some, it is absolute. Truth, by and large, is conditioned by ethical and moral values. It cannot be seen only from a rational angle. It also has to be seen from the angle of faith.

For a long time, faith seems to have played a major role in understanding truth. The *Bhakti* Movement in India, the *Sufi* Movement in Persia and the theological preaching of Europe offered many guidelines to understand the nature of truth. Mystics of many countries have shown illuminated paths to the Truth Supreme. In olden days, as there were no media facilities such as we have now, many philosophers and visionaries were itinerant preachers, moving from place to place and acted as guides to the seekers of Truth. The Buddha, Christ, Mohammad, Allama, Confucius and many more belonged to this

category. Their main purpose was to lead common people to the mansion of Truth. It is a strange but true phenomenon that people, in spite of the best efforts of philosophers, have been lured by superstitions of all hues and descriptions. However, the rationalist philosophers rejected the dogmatic religious practices and tried to redefine religion in the light of reason. For them, Truth in its absolute form was the ultimate goal of realisation.

Great religious leaders realised that the common masses were victims of superstitions. There arose an urgent need to wean people away from superstitions and lead them to Truth in its purest form. So, taking recourse to the media - oral and print - became a necessity. In modern days, some religious organisations own printing presses and they publish their own journals and books. Since people have developed enormous faith in printed words, total care should be taken to offer unsullied truth to the readers and take care not to lead the readers astray. Media personnel should be the votaries of Truth in its absolute form. They should shun sensationalism, however alluring it may be, to the gullible reading public. There should come a day when 'Truth Secular' can be on par with 'Truth Religious' or Spiritual. Only then can the votaries of dissemination of Knowledge can be on par with votaries of Realisers of Truth.

Our philosophers and true religious leaders have realised this from time immemorial. Hence, they emphasized the importance of Jnana (Knowledge). They relentlessly fought for the synthesis of *nade* (ನಡೆ = behaviour) and *nudi* (ನುಡಿ = utterance). Philosophers like Confucius went to the extent of establishing transparency in speech and behaviour. Their great vision of this belief itself manifested as religion. Most of our Sharanas, Bhakti poets, Swami Vivekananda and the likes were more of rationalists than mere believers in traditional religious tenets. They were all wonderstruck at the very nature of the

human mind, behaviour and communication skills that were employed. They untiringly preached against all menaces and maladies that existed among their contemporaries. Their ultimate objective was "*Sarve Janah Sukhino Bhavanthu*" (Let everybody be happy). They wanted this prosperity to reach unto the last person in the social ladder.

We earnestly wish that the media will have a holistic approach and will always stand up to tell the truth in spite of temptations to do otherwise.

As religious persons, we expect the media not to restrict themselves to trivial entertainment and sensationalism, but to give equal importance to enlightenment as well. Trying to gain cheap popularity through sensationalism is, to say the least, immoral. Viewership and readership should be enhanced on the basis of true, fair and fearless reporting only. Thus, we hope the Indian media continue to be messengers of truth and peace.

Let us wish and pray that worship of truth will not be an ever-elusive utopian idea but a realizable reality. Let us deeply inculcate the maxim of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, *Satyam Vada* -speak the Truth and the aphorism of *Basavanna*; *Husiyā nudiyalu beda* - do not utter a lie. Let us conclude these remarks with the lines of the great Russian poet, Mayakovsky:

*Wherever pain is - there am I
On every single tear that is shed
I myself am crucified.*

These are not the words of Mayakovsky alone. They are the words of Jesus, Mohammad, our great ancient saints like the Buddha, Basava and even the monk of the 20th century, Swami Vivekananda. These should be the words of modern media also.

Inaugural Speech *

Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil
Hon'ble President

I am happy to be here with you today, at the JSS Mahavidyapeetha which comprises a number of faculties and colleges such as the Medical College, Dental College and College of Pharmacy in Karnataka as well as colleges in some other states.

I am also very happy to inaugurate the Silver Jubilee Seminar on "Development of Sustainable Rural Health", organized by the JSS Medical College. I am told that students in the Medical College here are not only taught the skills required in the medical profession, but emphasis is also placed on serving society through the practice of socially meaningful medical education, research and healthcare. Rural development and reaching health facilities to all our villages is an area where there is a need for sustained focus and continuous efforts. I hope the Seminar will create interest in the students to go to villages and do humanitarian work there. The discussions in the Seminar should help define what is meant by sustainability of rural health? What are the parameters? How to maintain its standard? Who will ensure it?

For any country, the welfare of its citizens is of utmost importance, and provision of healthcare is fundamental for the well-being and, indeed, for the progress of the country. Healthy individuals can contribute more productively to the progress of the nation.

* Delivered at the inauguration of JSS Medical College Silver Jubilee Seminar on "Development of Sustainable Rural Health" and JSS School Girls' Hostel Building at Suttur on 9.5.2009

We have gained significant achievements in health parameters since our independence, such as increase in life expectancy and eradication of some endemic diseases. However, a lot has to be done to achieve the development goals like reducing the infant mortality rate and morbidity among the population.

Meeting the health needs of the over one billion population of our country requires the expansion of health services along with ensuring quality service across a vast spectrum of healthcare. These should be our objectives. An efficient healthcare delivery system has to ensure that affordable medical facilities are available to all sections of society, especially to the disadvantaged sections of society and those living in rural areas for whom access to medical facilities is not easy. Our healthcare system faces various deficiencies ranging from shortages of doctors, paramedics and infrastructure and their uneven spread across the country. 75 percent of our medical facilities are located in urban areas while 70 percent of our population lives in villages. This highlights the great need to improve medical facilities in rural areas. We would need more and more doctors and more and more facilities for our population across the entire nation.

Functional partnerships between the community, government and the private sector to meet these challenges, with a focus on the social aspects of providing medical assistance can be the effective pathway for the future. Such partnerships between the government and private sectors are essential in the rural areas, where latest medical facilities are not available.

I am, therefore, happy that the Mahavidyapeetha has taken up the task of making the village of Suttur a "Model Healthy Village" through its Model Health Village Programme. I am told that over the past five years, comprehensive surveys of the entire population of the village were conducted to take care of health problems. I would suggest that efforts for preventive care should also be strengthened. Although, it may be correct that our

villages are not as yet suffering from lifestyle diseases, such as cardiac problems, diabetes and stress related disorders, the JSS Mahavidyapeetha could also look into the preventive aspects of the occurrence of these medical problems.

I would urge special attention on the health problems of women in rural areas, as it deeply impacts on the rural economy, the family and the community as a whole. NGOs, other social organizations and prominent doctors in and around villages could be asked to participate in this initiative. I would like to mention a scheme started in Purandar Taluka of Pune in which, women villagers from different communities who have studied till middle school are given training in the local language, for providing basic medical help to villagers. Trained doctors are always available to these women on walkie-talkies in case they need advice in serious cases for which even trained doctors can be sent to attend to the patient. In addition to providing this basic medical help, these women, as a value addition, also work on social issues such as urging mothers to send their children to school. As a result, school drop out rates have gone down. Women have become more participative at local Panchayat meetings on issues affecting them. The overall effect has been an improvement in the social atmosphere and in the resolution of village problems.

The education of women and the girl child is a very important aspect in our roadmap for development. Most of you will be familiar with this saying of Kuvempu, the famous Kannada poet,

ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಭತ್ತ ಬೆಳೆಯುವ ಗದ್ದೆಗಳಾಗಬೇಕು

This means that education should make the minds of students as fertile and productive as paddy fields. Education should empower individuals not only to take their own decisions and earn a living, but make them thinking people who can contribute positively to the nation and enrich society. Much has been done for the education of women, yet much remains to be done. I am

happy that one aspect which can be useful in helping young women during their education has been catered to by the JSS Mahavidyapeetha through the establishment of the Girls' Hostel at the JSS School, which I have inaugurated. I am sure that the hostel shall provide a safe and healthy atmosphere for all the girls residing there. If such an atmosphere is provided, girls can do well in their studies. Our women and girls are no less talented than our men. What is required, is proper encouragement and a conducive atmosphere.

In recent weeks we have witnessed unfortunate incidents of ragging in colleges which is emerging as a problem on our campuses. I am deeply concerned about these incidents. I saw the agony of parents who lost their child in a ragging incident. These are intelligent and brilliant students. Those new students who are subjected to ragging can go through a range of emotions from fear to humiliation. It is a crime against humanity. I urge all students to be more responsible and sympathetic in their behaviour, especially senior students while dealing with junior students. Seniors always have the greater responsibility of making their juniors feel at ease in their new environment. Not only students but parents, teachers, managements, university authorities and State Governments should also take up this initiative seriously. If need be there should be legislations on this to prevent ragging.

Universities are centres of learning. Here, there should be a congenial environment for developing mutual respect, friendship and understanding. I urge the youth of the nation to channelize their energies towards positive activity. There is much that they can contribute to the development of our country and everyone looks forward to their role in the great task before us. A positive approach will not only benefit them, but will also be for the good of the nation.

I convey my best wishes for the success of this Seminar marking the Silver Jubilee of the Medical College. Thank you.

Jai Hind

Vachanas and Kannada Literary Culture

Dr. Vijaya Guttal

The social and spiritual conflagration the Shivasharanas achieved at Kalyana in Karnataka in the 12th century has been recognized as an amazing fact of history. This movement which is popularly known as the Vachana movement, and traditionally described as Veerashaiva movement is essentially a Bhakti movement of which we may see different expressions at different stages in the spiritual history of India. The unique phenomenon of Bhakti tradition appears to have begun in South India, in Tamil Nadu with the Alvars and the Nayanars. The Bhakti cult found its strongest expression in the Vachana movement of the Shivasharanas, spearheaded by Basavanna during the 12th century in Karnataka. The Shivasharanas were followed by the Haridasas in the 15th century. The Bhakti tradition continued with Jnanadev, Tukaram, Janabai and others in Maharashtra and Vallabhacharya, Narasi Mehta in Gujarat. If Tulsidas, Kabirdas and Mirabai are the great mystics of the north, Chaitanya belongs to Bengal and Lalleshwari to Kashmir. The bhakti tradition has continued in the other saints of later times.

Modern scholars, not satisfied with the description of the Vachana movement as a Bhakti movement, have attempted to extend the definition of the Vachana movement beyond the concept of Bhakti in the light of its complexity and polyphonic character. The Kannada literary culture prior to 12th century was characterized by the unity between the institutions of State and centres of religious power which was broken by the Vachana movement. As D.R. Nagaraj observes, an oppositional relationship, between politics and religion developed in the 12th

century and the movement of differentiation developed a new conception of language itself which marked a sharp departure from hierarchical conceptions of speech that the Sanskrit cultural formation had sought to legitimize (*Literary Cultures in History*, 326). He writes, “A dramatic instance of emergence occurred in the 12th century when an entirely new communicative form appeared, along with a new religious practice. The movement is popularly referred to by this literary form which was named with disarming simplicity, the Vachana (which means utterance, statement, discourse; an author in the genre was called a Vachanakara, or maker of a Vachana). Along with this new literary form and religious practice a whole range of new images and radical propositions came into being, marking this moment as one of profound discontinuity” (*ibid.* 347). The Vachana movement thus marks an important turning point in terms of both religious practice as well as literary expression in the trajectory of Kannada culture.

The Vachana movement was a spirited revolt against the accepted social inequality and religious injustice practised by the dominant institutional religion. Under the leadership of Basavanna who served King Bijjala of Kalachuri lineage, the city of Kalyana became the centre where great minds like Allama Prabhu, Akka Mahadevi, Siddharama, Chennabasavanna and many other Shivasharanas gathered, debated and sought to redefine the relationship of man and god, of man and society, and of man and man. The conflict between the *Vaidika* or Brahmanical forces and the anti-*Vaidika* forces which stands out in the revolt of Vachana movement is said to be ‘one of the shaping forces of Kannada literary culture’ (*ibid.*, 336). Until the 12th century, Kannada literature was dominated by the verse form called ‘*champu*’ which had the royal patronage. It was heavily influenced by canonical Sanskrit verse forms and strategies whereas the ‘Vachana’ adopts a near-prose form which harnessed everyday

speech not only as a vehicle of protest but also to reach out to the lower classes in the social hierarchy. As D.R.Nagaraj puts it, ‘In Heideggerian view, human beings have their habitats in language’ (*ibid.*, 349). The Vachanakaras chose to compose in Kannada, the language of the common public and not in Sanskrit, the language of hegemony, and this choice implied several radical positions. “The history of Kannada literary culture shows that by the 11th century the influence of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan order had reached scandalous proportions. In the realm of public poetry, the polity and temple-based religion had established a monopoly over literary uses of Kannada” (*ibid.*, 349). The real source of the radical energy of the Vachana movement lay in the rejection of established religious power centre indicated in the term *sthavara* in favour of the moving principle of the *jangama*. The idea finds its powerful expression in the oft-quoted vachana of Basavanna “The wealthy build temple of Shiva” where the metaphor of the human body as the temple is juxtaposed with the rigidity of the temple the rich build, relating it to the display of material power. The poem very subtly transforms the sense of inability into strength, the changeless into the evolving. Basavanna communicates in the apparently simple vachana an ideology that revolutionized existing modes of thinking.

The Vachana narrative foregrounds the binary opposites *sthavara* / *jangama* in the sense of the fixed / the moving, rich / poor, upper class / lower class, *Vaidika* / non-*Vaidika*, Sanskrit / Kannada, Vachana poetry / Sastras etc. which are embedded in the radical positions the movement takes. The Veerashaiva movement which initiated a social upheaval that aimed at transforming the lives of the lower castes also underscores the unity of the three principles of guru, linga and *jangama* i.e., the spiritual teacher, the emblem of shiva and the wandering ascetic. The Vachanakaras, not only scorn the effectiveness of the Vedas as scripture and the Vedic rituals, they are full of contempt for

the numerous little gods and goddesses worshipped by the lower social sections. The Vachanakaras mock at superstitious beliefs and customs of the ignorant masses as seen in the following vachana:

*The pot is god
The winnowing fan is god
The stone on the street is god
The comb is god
The bowstring is god
The measuring vessel is god
The small cup is god
There are gods and gods
No place to set foot in
But there is just one God
Koodalasangamadeva*

The Vachanakaras, unlike in other Bhakti movements, rejected the four-fold categories of Vedic religion and attempted to erase differences of caste and gender. The equality of human spirit perceived by the Vachanakaras has still remained unattainable for modern man. In a well-known vachana, Jedara Dasimayya says,

*If breasts and braids grow
they call it female
if beard and moustache grow
They call it male look,
The soul moving in between
Is neither male nor female,
Ramanatha*

The vachana of Jedara Dasimayya here foregrounds the most revolutionary thought which seems to level down all gender differences. The characteristic feature of the vachanas is this

outspokenness and clarity of vision.

Sri A.K. Ramanujan says, “Some of the incandescence of Veerashaiva poetry is the white heat of truth-seeing and truth-saying in a dark deluded world; their monotheism lashes out in an atmosphere of animism and polytheism (*Speaking of Siva*, 27)”. The search for unmediated vision is what is inscribed in the vachanas which reject all dominant, oppressive power structures, rituals and customs, superstitions and sacrifices. As D.R. Nagaraj writes, “One crucial element of their transformation of Kannada literary culture that helped the twelfth century vachanakaras maintain their autonomy vis-a-vis structures of power and dominance was their reliance on near-folk practices.” (*ibid*, 361). Although the Vachana movement itself was short-lived, its spirit has survived more strongly than that of movements which lasted much longer.

The ideologies embodied in the vachanas in particular and the vachana discourse in general have found a greater relevance in the post-colonial context, which perhaps is one reason for the increased appearance of English translations of the vachanas. The first vachana translations into English are supposed to have been done by the Christian Missionaries in 1860 which are difficult to locate now. The vachana translation activity really started after Fa.Gu.Halakatti, the man who is responsible for bringing Vachana literature to light, began to edit and publish them in the early part of the twentieth century. The translations of vachanas into English tend to fall into different categories. The translations carried out by scholars like Halakatti, Masti and Basavanal form the earliest category and are experimentative in spirit (Halakatti, 1922; Iyengar, 1935; Basavanal & Iyengar, 1940). If we consider the translations that have appeared in the post-Independence period we may identify three main categories. The translators of the five volumes of the bilingual edition of

Shunyasampadane published (1965-71) by Karnatak University, Dharwad, namely Nandimath, Armando Menezes and Angadi form the first category. In the second category we may include the translations of A.K. Ramanujan (1973) and those of Prabhushankara and Rowena Hill (1983) whereas the third category consists of the translation, *Muffled Voices*, done by Sarojini Shintri, Yaravintelimath and Sajjan (1994); and the translation of women Vachanakaras by C.R. Yaravintelimath published in 2006. The most recent of all in the third category is the anthology of translations, *The Sign*, which consists of nearly 500 vachanas of 62 different Vachanakaras. It is published by Kannada University, Hampi in 2007 and the vachanas were translated by O.L. Nagbhushana Swamy, Laxmi Chandrashekhar and Vijaya Guttal. The whole project was co-ordinated by Dr. V. B. Tarakeshwar.

As Kathryn Hellerstein puts it, "...translating is the supreme art of making choices. The translator must constantly negotiate between risk and compromise, originality and collaboration, individuality and community... Rather than choosing to be either faithful or free, either patriot or traitor, the translator must create more terms, shape other terms, rearrange old terms. By selecting, modifying, combining and recasting these terms, the translator will transform a poem embedded in one language and culture into a different poem in a second language" (Translating as a Feminist). It is true that the choice of text and technique makes the translator's ideology explicit. Referring to the translations made by Nandimath, Menezes and Angadi on the one hand and A.K. Ramanujan on the other, Tejaswini Niranjana comments, "Attempting to assimilate *Saivaite* poetry to the discourses of Christianity these translators reproduce some of the nineteenth century native responses to colonialism. Accepting the premises of a universalistic history, they try to show how the *vachanas* are already Christian, or "modernist" and therefore worthy of

the West's attention" (1992: 180). Even the translation of Prabhushankara and Rowena Hill approximates the modernist spirit of Ramanujan's translations.

What is interesting about the third category is its effort to counter the tendency to focus mainly on the major Vachanakaras and thus ignore the others by 'othering' them. The special feature of the translation of Shintri, Yaravintelimath and Sajjan is that theirs is a translation exclusively devoted to the Vachanakaras hitherto considered minor. Most of the earlier translations of Vachanas had laid an emphasis on representing the main stream Vachanakaras like Basavanna, Allama Prabhu, Akka Mahadevi, Siddharama, Chennabasavanna and some others whereas in the Vachana movement there were 130 Vachanakaras in all who have composed nearly 22,000 vachanas. As the title *Muffled Voices* itself suggests, this anthology carries translations of thirty-one Vachanakaras coming from the working class inclusive of both men and women and introduces the lesser known Vachanakaras to the non-Kannada readers for the first time. C.R. Yaravintelimath has gone on to translate all the women Vachankaras in his anthology giving representation to women writers in the movement though the use of language tends towards approximating it nearer the target language and is characterized by an eagerness for correctness of language and a self-conscious manner. Yet both these translations aim at privileging the underprivileged.

In *The Sign*, the most recent anthology of translations, the translators have gone one step further by translating 62 Vachanakaras, the largest number of Vachanakaras translated so far, belonging to all categories, both high and low and, men and women. The anthology carries an exhaustive introduction foregrounding various aspects of the vachana discourse and the problems of translating vachanas. Underscoring the fact that the vachana movement was 'neither monolithic nor homogeneous'

(*Citing Translation*, 176), the anthology facilitates representation of the multiple voices within the movement. The introduction not only affords a highly useful explanation of the major preoccupations of the Vachanakaras to facilitate the reader to understand this unique body of writing, but also provides a note on the translational strategies adopted. It makes definite demands on the part of the reader. The main guidelines it follows are, firstly, to include the lesser-known Vachanakaras along with the mainstream ones; secondly, to familiarise the cultural debates of 12th century Karnataka; and thirdly, to project in the translation of the vachanas the typical linguistic and cultural expressions unique to the culture it represents, instead of attempting to bend the texts for an Anglo-American readership (*The Sign*, 17). Each vachana is read as a single unit, the equivalent of a sentence, broken into lines depending on the rhythmic pattern and the meaning of the vachana. *The Sign* also adopts interesting strategies which keep pace with the changes that are taking place in the contemporary world of literature and culture. These translations eschew punctuation marks as the original vachana manuscripts carried a running text without a line-break or punctuation marks. Another strategy used is capitalizing only the first letter at the beginning. There is a conscious effort at coming closer to the Kannada vachana verse-form and retaining peculiarities of Kannada culture-specific terms. A glossary is provided at the end only for terms which, if left unexplained, would create a gap in meaning. This translation negotiates a balance between the non-Kannada but with an Indian cultural background and non-Kannada readers from an alien culture, without a compromise. If bringing the text to the audience or the audience to the text are the two major translation tropes, this vachana translation attempts to strike a balance between these two tropes and the assertion of identity is so explicit in the strategies of translation of the vachanas that they form an inevitable part of

the decolonizing project.

In the mediaeval times, the vachana writers had consistently attempted to shake off the hegemony of Sanskrit language, literature and poetics and assert their '*Kannadahood*' by empowering Kannada, the language of the common people and rewriting their own poetics. Reviving the vachanas in the early decades of the 20th century was part of the nationalist project. The recent English translations of the vachanas may be read as an emphatic attempt to relocate Kannada identity in the global context. The recent vachana translations into English taking recourse to uncompromising translational strategies are trying to create a space for the Kannada identity as represented in the vachanas in the post-colonial context.

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Bonthadevi

Smt. L.V. Shanthakumari

Bonthadevi is unique among the women saints of the 12th century Vachana Movement. In her search for God Shiva, she resembles Akkamahadevi in certain aspects. Like Akkamahadevi, Bonthadevi too renounces all comforts of the palace; with a passionate and profound devotion towards God, she discards even her clothes and walks naked towards Kalyana. Whereas Akkamahadevi, as a protest to Kaushik's breach of promise, she releases herself from the bondage of family, palace and starts to seek her Channamallikarjuna. Bonthadevi, with an intense devotion and detachment, without any provocation strips off her clothes and starts to realise her *Istalinga*, the diety Bidadi, the boundless. Bonthadevi's spiritual journey from Kashmir to Karnataka is an astounding story.

The daughter of the king of Mandavyapura in Kashmir, Bonthadevi's original name was Nijadevi. Right from childhood, she had a steadfast devotion towards Shiva and when she grew up she felt a profound devotion and an intense spiritual passion towards Shiva and abandoned the pleasures and comforts of the palace. Hearing about the fame of Basavanna and the socio-religious revolution at Kalyana in Karnataka, she renounced everything and moved towards Kalyana. God Shiva, with an intention of testing her devotion, disguised himself as a handsome young man and asked her, "Will you be my wife?" But Nijadevi, recognizing the true identity of this man, turned the table "You being an enemy of Kama, how can I marry you?" Shiva again came in the guise of a merchant and asked the same question. Then Nijadevi quipped: "You have already two wives and three

children; is it proper for me to marry you?" Then Shiva appreciated her valiant detachment and asceticism and gave her a sort of quilt – made from pieces of cloth – and told her to cover herself with that. That quilt of rags was called 'Bonthe' and from that day onwards Nijadevi assumed the name of Bonthadevi. She came to Kalyana and led a devoted life there.

The difference between the lives of Akkamahadevi and Bonthadevi is that Akkamahadevi finds her salvation in Srisaila achieving union with Channamallikarjuna and there is no evidence in her vachana that she wore clothes after sometime, Shiva or Channamallikarjuna did not offer her clothes to cover herself as in the case of Bonthadevi.

Bonthadevi's journey from Kashmir to Karnataka, like that of Molige Mahadevi's, brings before us the unified and integrated picture and the wholeness of India during that period of history.

The fifteen vachanas of Bonthadevi, that are extant, reveal her independent mind and they stress on Shiva's infinity, his boundlessness and omnipresence. Some of her vachanas exhibit her secret devotion and spiritual achievement. Her concept of 'Bayalu' or Nothingness may be compared with that of Allamaprabhu.

Bonthadevi has composed her vachanas with the *Ankitha* or signature, Bidadi (pronounced as Bidaadi) meaning the Bondless One. She advises people not to grumble about what has happened; instead, she expects people to move on the path of attaining the knowledge of infinity of Shiva, the Boundless One. She puts a philosophical question: "What is it that responds to our call? Is it 'Nada'? Is it 'Bindu' or is it 'Prana'?" Nada (sound, word) Bindu (atom, dot, cipher), Prana (vital life) are the words that carry a gamut of spiritual meaning in Veerashaiva Siddhantha. "If you know, what it is, you tell me," Bonthadevi asks. She says, without mentioning the name of Shiva: "The Word itself is Brahma, the Word is fulfilment, the Word is pure, you

see Boundless One.” Against all Vedas, Shastras, Puranas and Agamas, this is the proved truth. It is said the “Aum” is the “Shabda” and ‘Nada’ the word that includes, pervades, sustains the whole cosmos itself is “Bramha”; and thus it surpasses all Vedas, Shastras, Puranas and Agamas. Bonthadevi, perhaps, is referring to this power of the Word, when she says: “Shabda itself is Bramha”.

ಅಂತಾಯಿತ್ತಿಂತಾಯಿತ್ತಂತಾಯಿತ್ತೆನಬೇಡ
ಅನಂತನಿಂತಾನಂದರಿಯೆಯಾ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ
ಕರೆದಡೆ ಓ ಎಂಬುದು ನಾದವೋ, ಬಿಂದುವೋ, ಪ್ರಾಣವೋ?
ಇದಾವುದು? ಬಲ್ಲಡೆ ನೀ ಹೇಳಾ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ
ನಾಲ್ಕು ವೇದ, ಹದಿನಾರು ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ, ಹದಿನೆಂಟು ಪುರಾಣ, ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತೆಂಟಾಗಮ
ಇದ ಪ್ರತಿ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ
ಶಬ್ದವೆ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ, ಶಬ್ದವೆ ಸಿದ್ಧ, ಶಬ್ದವೆ ಶುದ್ಧ ಕಾಣಿರೆ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ
(V.No.1, P. 296)

*Don't say, it happened like that, like this, like what
Don't you know the Boundless One is Infinite?
What is it that does respond when you call?
Is it sound, cipher or Vital Breath?
Tell me if you know this the Boundless One.
Four Vedas, sixteen Shastras, eighteen Puranas,
twenty eight Agamas.
And against these
The word is Brahma, the word is fulfilment, the word
is pure, you see the Boundless One.*

This Vachana, along with the knowledge of religious doctrines, reveals Bonthadevi's study of the Vedas and Shastras and her mastering of the essence of all these texts.

In another Vachana, Bonthadevi speaks in paradoxes:

ಅರಿವೆ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ, ಅರಿಯದೆ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ
ಮರವೆ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ, ಮರೆಯದೆ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ
ಅರಿವೆರಿತು ಕುರುಹಿಲ್ಲದಾತ ನೀನೆ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ [V.No.2]

*Knowing is boundless, Not knowing is boundless
forgetfulness is boundless, not forgetting is boundless
Knowing and not leaving any mark is your way,
the Boundless One.*

Bonthadevi finds no difference between wisdom and ignorance. She says both are boundless. A spiritual seeker, who has achieved perfection, does not discriminate between these two, for him both are manifestations of the same principle. Forgetfulness and not forgetting, that is memory, are the outcome of the same principle called the mind. If so, what is meant by achieving union with Shiva, the Infinite or ourselves becoming the ‘Infinite Boundless One? Bonthadevi says that having realized Shiva, having known that Principle, you should not have the ‘Cognizance’ of your knowledge, then you yourself will be the Boundless One. The achieved spirituality, a mystic perfection should be kept a secret. As Mukthayakka and other Sharanas have said, the mystic experience or spiritual knowledge must be like a dream dreamt by a baby. Even Sarvajna has said in one of his stanza as “If you have known Brahman you must keep quiet” This leads us to the concept of “Bayalu” as treated by Bonthadevi:

ಘಟದೊಳಗಣ ಬಯಲು, ಮಠದೊಳಗಣ ಬಯಲು,
ಬಯಲು, ಬಯಲು, ಬಯಲು,
ತಾನೆಲ್ಲ ಬಯಲು, ಬಿಡಾಡಿ ಬಯಲು (V.No. 4)

ಊರ ಒಳಗಣ ಬಯಲು, ಊರ ಹೊರಗಣ ಬಯಲೆಂದುಂಟೆ ?
ಊರೊಳಗೆ ಬ್ರಾಹ್ಮಣ ಬಯಲು, ಊರ ಹೊರಗೆ ಹೊಲೆ ಬಯಲೆಂದುಂಟೆ?
ಎಲ್ಲಿ ನೋಡಿದೊಡೆ ಬಯಲೆಂದೆ?
ಭಿತ್ತಿಯಿಂದ ಒಳ ಹೊರಗೆಂಬನಾಮವೈನೆ
ಎಲ್ಲಿ ನೋಡಿದಡೆ, ಕರೆದಡೆ ಓ ಎಂಬಾತನೆ ಬಿಡಾಡಿ (V.No.3)

*Nothingness inside the pot, Nothingness inside the mutt,
Nothingness, nothingness, nothingness!
Self is nothingness and Nothingness is that Boundless
One himself.*

*Is there a difference between the void within the town
and without?
Is Brahmana void within the town and paraiah void outside?
This void is all one,
Only the wall creates the duality of within and without.
He who responds at once when he is called, he is the
Boundless One.*

“Bayalu” is a central concept in Veerashaiva Siddhantha and it evokes many meanings like Absolute Being, Ultimate Reality, attainment of Nirvana, achieving oneness with God etc. Sometimes, the word expresses the formlessness and omnipresence of God. In common usage, to become Bayalu means, cease to exist, to die. Bonthadevi in the small vachana makes it clear that there is no difference between the space inside the pot and outside the pot, or the space inside the Mutt and outside the Mutt. As ‘Bayalu’ represents formlessness and omnipresence God, the essence and spirit of God is manifest inside the pot that is inside the body of man and outside it also: and it pervades the whole universe. As such, Bonthadevi repeats thrice the word Bayalu, wherever you see there is only Bayalu, Nothingness or Void and in this Nothingness is the Nothingness and Completeness. So the Self is Bayalu and the Boundless One Shiva Himself is Nothingness. When the devotee achieves this state he realises that there is no difference between himself and the Almighty.

The other vachana by Bonthadevi, expresses her social concern. She stresses that there is nothing like the Void of the inner city and the outer city; the Nothingness of Brahmins inside the city and Nothingness of the outcasts outside the city. To the Absolute Principle, there is no difference of caste and creed. It is ONE and ONLY ONE, wherever you see. Only the artificial wall has caused compartmentalisation and therefore, whoever responds to the anguished call of a seeker, He is the Boundless

One. This vachana, though very clearly points out the prevailing divisions like the Brahmin quarter and the paraiah quarter in a town, it underlines the meaninglessness of such a division.

Again and again Bonthadevi stresses upon the truth that the governing force behind this cosmos is only One. She further says very metaphorically, that there is only One Wind and all the dry leaves fly. There is a popular legend regarding Bonthadevi’s union with her Isthalinga. When the revolution took place in Kalyana, all the Sharanas scattered. But, it is said, Bonthadevi remained in Kalyana until the end of her life and was united with her Boundless One, when she felt her time of union with the Isthalinga was imminent, she threw the quilt Shiva had given to the sky. That cloth flew into the sky and vanished. Along with the vanishing of that cloth, Bonthadevi too attained her Nothingness. Many puranas like *Somanatha Purana*, *Bhairaveshwara Kavya Kathamani Sutra Ratnakara* and *Channabasava Purana* describe Bonthadevi’s courage, detachment, spiritual achievement and secret devotion.

(The Vachanas edited here are taken from *Shiva Sharaneyara Vachanagalu*, Published by Directorate of Kannada and Culture, Karnataka Government. Editor: Veeranna Rajura)

*When the body is gripped by ailments galore
Worship Lord Shiva
Accomplish the same with flowers of all kinds
Chant the name of Panchakshari
Three times a day
The sting of indisposition will vanish surely
I swear on Marulashankarapriya Siddharameshwaralinga*

– Vaidya Sanganna

Call of the Communion : Akka Mahadevi's Kalyana-Phase

Dr. C. Naganna

Udutadi forms the first stage of Akka's spiritual awakening; the next stage of her path of perfection is Kalyana, where she decidedly finds her moorings in the communion of the Sharanas; the chief among them of course, is Allamaprabhu. But the gathering of the Sharanas does not depend upon the hierarchy that we find in the secular arrangement. For example, the profound mystic Allamaprabhu says of his relationship with Basavanna, Chennabasavanna and Madivalaiah:

*My body Basavanna occupied
My mind Chennabasavanna occupied,
My thought Madivalaiah occupied
And since these three
Took over an aspect of each of mine
I, Guheswara, bow again and again
To this trinity of saints*

(Trans. D.A. Shankar - *Shoonyasampadane*, 2003)

The most forthright and bold assessment of Akka Mahadevi's position among the Sharanas is made by Chennabasavanna in one of his outstanding Vachanas:

*Are those who have lived for eons great men?
Are those ascetics around whom
Anthills rise and reeds grow great men?
Are those whose hair has gone white and back's bent,
Skin wrinkled and are garrulous great men?
Knowing what is proper, understanding the mystical,
And forgetting the difference between the high and low*

*Our Mahadeviyakka has become one with
Kudala Chennasangaiah,
And she has become a revered ancient among all.*

(Trans. D.A. Shankar–*Shoonyasampadane*, 2003)

Akka has been extolled by all the Sharanas for her extraordinary devotion in realizing the Absolute. In that sense, Kalyana is not a mere geographical entity; for her it is a veritable 'Kailasa'. And therefore, she says in one of her vachanas:

*Only he who has overcome lust and desire
Could move towards Kalyana
Only he who has transcended the ego
Could enter Kalyana
As I have overcome both
I bow to Kalyana seeing it to my heart's content*

(Trans. mine)

Akka is an evolved spirit, no doubt; but she requires the communion and guidance of the devotees of Shiva. Because the communion with the Unlimited pre-supposes the communion with the Sharanas. The company of the devotees is an inevitable concomitant of the new step forward. Akka's gregariousness is confined to the devotees of the Lord; otherwise, she is some sort of a recluse. The existence of the degrees of divine union is made evident by the life of the mystic as all the horizons are not available for perception in one go. The unlimited participation in the divine life is ensured by the preceding association with the Sharanas, which is not achievable as long as it is confined by the fundamental limits of its natural selfhood. Those limits belonged to the Udutadi-phase. When the Self experienced a prison of darkness and pain, obviously, that was also a phase of dereliction and gloom which did not promise the possibility of a transforming union. The destruction of obstacles is a must for a mystic to forge ahead to enable the soul for the progressive possession of itself by God.

The phase of darkness is also a phase that makes the mystic long for the company of other mystics, because the mystic would not dwell for too long in ‘the world of time’ (Udutadi) but would like to move on to ‘the world of eternity’ (Kalyana and then Srisaila). Kalyana is the convention of the Sharanas where Akka would earn more divination of her faculties, or in other words, she would further strengthen her interior life for the eventual ascent of Sri Giri (that is, Srisaila).

Akka has expressed her deep satisfaction regarding her association with the Shivasharanas at Anubhavamantapa in Kalyana. Because *Anubhava* also means, in addition to the usual meaning, the exchange of ideas on a spiritual plane (Anubhava). The arrival of Akka Mahadevi to Anubhavamantapa of Kalyana acquires a profound significance if we realise the spiritual altitude attained by the saints who were already present there.

To understand fully the meaning and purpose of Akka’s life during the Kalyana-phase, the dependence on *Shoonya-sampadane* is both inevitable and rewarding. Because the compilers have kept in mind the importance of ‘graded ascent’ as far as the spiritual career of a mystic is concerned. According to their firm belief in the phenomenon of graded ascent they seem to have brought Akka on a common platform with Allama, Basavanna and other saints at Kalyana. Her movement from Udutadi to Kalyana is inevitable because Kalyana is the ‘treasure-trove’ of the mortal world. Being a container holding all religions, it is the face of liberation, it is a chandelier of merit. Allama himself has praised Kalyana thus:

*This town
Kalyana is an earthen lamp
Fed with the oil of devotion,
Right conduct is its base,
And when Basavanna lighted the lamp,
The glory of Shiva shone and spread.*

(Trans. D.A. Shankar–*Shoonyasampadane*, 2003)

Kalyana is the place where Akka is going to climb to a higher mystical state in the company of the Sharanas. The poet has visualised Akka to have encountered Kinnari Bommaiah before entering the city of Kalyana. He is supposed to have approached Akka on the outskirts of the city at the behest of Allama Prabhu to find out whether Akka was chaste or not. This episode is accepted by all poets who have sketched Akka’s life in their works as a test that established her greatness as a mystic who had conquered desire.

Channabasavanna in his narrative (*Mahadeviyakkana Purana*) has made Kinnari Bommaiah stop Akka at the outskirts and use elegant and harsh words alternately and finally advance with lascivious intentions. Mahadeviyakka then shows the ash in her hidden part which she had obtained by burning the desire. Thus they declared that she was a ‘Sarvangalinge’ or the one who possessed linga all over her body. Kinnari Bommaiah expressed his regret and Akka herself consoled him with sympathy.

We see him thanking his good fortune that he “survived even after licking the tiger.”

All the four compilers of *Shoonyasampadane* have referred to this episode; but they give differing importance to the incident. For example, Shivaganaprasadi Mahadevaiah has touched upon it very briefly. Another compiler Halage Devaru has elaborated it adding a few more verses than his predecessor, Mahadevaiah; he makes Kinnari Bommaiah an intriguing character. Siddhaligayati and Siddhaveerannarya have depicted this episode in an identical fashion and that seems to have gained acceptability. Accordingly, it was decidedly Allama’s intention to establish in the eyes of the world that Akka was a ‘Kamasamhari’, a conquerer of desire. Since Akka had left all pleasures and treasures behind, being an exceptional renunciator, any suggestion that Kinnari Bommaiah was provoked to make sexual advances appears to be far-fetched and inappropriate.

Akka's progress was not free from hurdles. She had to defend her mystical position repeatedly. *Anubhavamantapa* has played a significant role in achieving the transcendence of the bodily- sense (Kayajivabhava) and upholding the 'devotee-wife', 'divinity-husband' sense (Sathi Pathi Bhava). This mystical test is crucial for her at this stage; because we see her defying on the secular plane the patriarchal authority, in whatever form it existed then; and on the spiritual plane she communicated to the Sharanas so that the distinction between male and female ceased to matter when the Lord became everybody's husband.

Anubhavamantapa is the place where Akka had to defend her choice, her way of life; she had to establish her purity and quality of her renunciation before the Sharanas. Mahadeviyakka's passionate rejection of the world, her tender love towards the Lord, her humanity, her wisdom—all these and her spiritual fulfilment are clearly brought out in this episode. Allama's question includes the reference to her marriage, her nudity and her 'keshambara' or the tresses. Therefore, Akka takes up the issue of nudity again and again:

*Unless the fruit is ripe within,
The outer peel will never lose
It's gloss.... I covered myself
With this intent:*

(Menezes and Angadi, 1973)

Prabhudeva's intention is to make the world accept the 'peculiar' behaviour of Akka by projecting it in all its metaphysical dimension. When Prabhudeva asks "Oh, mother, why have you, in the bloom of lusty youth, come this way?" he pretends to infer that youth has a different office to take care of and the pursuit of the divine should be a later preoccupation as the world thought traditionally. This is because normally, saints have a past. The amplitude of Akka's life was so brief and intense that it accommodates no neat division as childhood, girlhood, youth

and so on.

Scholars on St. Francis' spiritual life and career have said that his life can be divided into two parts, his youth and onwards. The biographies of Francis give us glimpses of younger and quite another Francis. Havelock Ellis brings to our attention a very important aspect of the Saint's biographers attitude regarding his early life. Ellis says, "Just as the biographers of Jesus omitted all reference to the formative years of his life, so also the biographers of Francis gradually eliminated the early records, terrified at the thought that their founder may not have been a virgin" (*Selected Essays*, London, 1947).

The mystic is an explorer determined to find higher levels of existence. After severing connection from everything that bound her to the world, she moves on to a plane where she has meeting-points with the fellow-seekers. The release from the worldly clutches mark a particular phase and the next phase strengthens the seeker's inner resolve for the onward journey. She requires the help and support of the 'Innumerable Ones' (Sharanas), as she puts it, to accomplish the journey. Since she expressed her final decision to bid good-bye to the world and go beyond, she would also fulfil the demands of a new life by associating with the realised souls. This has been the 'ground and the goal' of her Kalyana-phase.

Before winding up the discussion on Akka's Kalyana-phase, a reference to Muktayakka's episode in *Shoonya-sampadane* is very vital to understand the Cosmic Awareness in all its variety as implied in the life of Muktayakka, another devotee of immense mystical potential. The compiler, very significantly, brings this episode at the very beginning and makes it precede Akka Mahadevi's episode. This will enable us to understand Akka's arduous journey on the path of perfection by noting how there were fellow women-saints at Kalyana contemporaneous to Akka.

Muktayakka had taken Ajaganna, her brother, as her guru because he was known for his secret devotion (*guptabhakti*). But during the course of time Ajaganna lost his Ishtalinga while uttering a word. This act, although not intentional, broke his silence and his practice of *Shivayoga* and the same day he attained *Aikya*.

Ajaganna's death brought sadness to his sister Muktayi and she grieved the loss of her brother and guru. She equated the loss of her brother and her guru to the act of standing before a mirror blind-folded, meaning that she wouldn't be able to practise *Shivayoga* any more. When Allama appears before her on his way to Kalyana he explains to her that her brother had gone beyond duality and hence he was neither a presence nor an absence. He further enlightens her that there is no question of separation from Guheshwara Linga.

Allama, after a long debate, succeeds in making Muktayakka understand that guru is merged in the disciple and vice versa. Allama implies that the guru is seated inside the heart.

Since the Kalyana-phase of Akka's spiritual journey pertains to the absence of a guru, Muktayakka's episode which precedes Akka Mahadevi's, telescopes the twin events to communicate to the reader the necessity of a guru; but at the same time all that a guru represents is to be formed within one's own heart, the abode of the Absolute. In that sense, Akka Mahadevi's next destination, Srisaila, is a climb to the 'Summit of Light', which ought to be realised, paradoxically, by touching the deepest core of the heart, because "The Kingdom of God is within you."



Tatvapada and Bhakti Movement in Karnataka

Prof. O.L. Nagabhushana Swamy

Tatvapada is known by several names such as *Kaivalya Sahitya* and *Svaravachana*. Sometimes it is even referred to as *Bhajans*. All these names suggest the attitude of the people towards these unique creations. *Tatva* is 'philosophy' and '*pada*' means 'song'; *Svara* suggests '*Raga*' or 'tune' and '*Vachana*' is the name of that genre of expression that evolved in the socio-religious movement of twelfth century Karnataka; *Kaivalya* is '*Moksha*' or liberation and *Sahitya* is literature. Bhajan is of course, the most popular form of devotional singing. Hence, these terms suggest, that these oral creations are considered as 'philosophical lyrics', or as unique genre of Vachana adapted to music or as expressions of metaphysical concerns or plain devotional songs. Recently these *Tatvapadas* have aroused much academic interest as to their content and structure. While the scholarship of the first half of the century considered Tatvapada mainly as religious literature, the present day concern is to observe Tatvapadas from the perspective of Cultural Studies as expressions of socio-economic and socio-political expressions and as part of Kannada literary tradition. But whatever the perspective Tatvapada is concerned with the experience of religion and devotion. Tatvapada, historically speaking, has evolved in four distinct stages. The first stage is represented by works of the Veerashaiva saints of the twelfth century. The works of Vaishnava saints represent the second stage and the great bulk of songs composed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represent the third and the most important and prolific period. The

presentday singers represent the fourth and the last phase of the development. The Tatvapadas of the first period were composed by the Sharanas of the twelfth century. Dr. L. Basavarju has edited 188 songs of this period in his *Shivadasa Geetanjali* (Mysore, 1963). The songs composed by the great Vachana composers like Basava, Allama, Akka and a host of others reflect the socio-religious concerns of the Bhakti Movement. The songs are set to various Ragas of Karnatak music and are composed in various meters. These songs intend to convey the basic concepts of *Guru, Linga, Jangama, Vibhuti*, the nature of Bhakti and the guiles of *Maya*. The images and metaphors of the Vachana lore are also employed. If one studies the text of these songs one would realize that they were intended to disseminate the ideology of Veerashaiva religion. If the Vachanas were addressed to the intellect and the reasoning capacity of an individual the songs were used to influence the emotive aspect of the people. There are also a few songs which describe the process of *Yogic* experience.

A translation of a song by Akka Mahadevi would serve as an example of the compositions of the period (Ref: *Shivadasa Geetanjali*).

Don't Want the Company of My Husband

*I don't want to live with the family of my husband,
 Alas, his home is full of hardships!
 My mother-in-law served thin porridge in a broken plate
 And hit me with the winnowing fan.
 As I sat in front of the oven, deep in grief,
 She Came in and kicked me Alas!
 Without oil my hairs have become clotted,
 My youth has dried up!
 There is no hope of life with the in-laws
 And my husband has no virtues at all
 I'll send words to my village
 And ask my father to come here*

*Listen, O Srisaila Chennamallikarjuna
 My parents have given me to the house of sinners.*

As we know Akka Mahadevi renounced family life and yearned for God, in the form of Chennamallikarjuna, to be her husband. This song contains a similar theme but unlike her Vachanas gives a graphic description of unhappy family life. If her Vachanas are lyrical and poignant the song is discursive. The life of a young wife in the house of her in-laws gains prominence. This is true of most of the songs of the period. Though the concern is the same in the Vachanas and songs, Vachanas give importance to the 'idea' whereas the songs give importance to detailed description and illustration. Though the Vachanas too used illustrations from every day life to illustrate an idea, the same illustrations become more elaborate in the songs.

In the second phase of development of Tatvapada we come across an interesting development. Whereas the composers of the first phase were mostly Sharanas attempting to change their social environment through their practice and preaching, the composers of the second phase, from fifteenth to eighteenth century, were mostly heads of religious institutions. And also there is a large body of compositions which are Vaishnavite. The Movement of Haridasas relied upon songs and other forms of musical composition for the propagation of their ideology. In an extended sense these compositions of Haridasas, like Purandara, Kanaka and many others, could be called Tatvapada. In fact the Veerashaiva Bhakti Movement of the twelfth century was the source of inspiration for the Haridasas. The imagery and the ideology of Bhakti of the twelfth century continue in these compositions.

There is a difference in this continuity: the intellectual rigour of the Vachanas is 'diluted' and an attempt is made to reshape the ideas of the Vachanas in a more lyrical form. A detailed analysis of comparable Vachanas and songs would be very rewarding and there is rich material too, as such a study would reveal how

texts are transformed and' made into different texts and how the dissemination of a text, and through it an ideology takes place in a predominantly oral society. Here I would quote one example:

*What will come tomorrow, let it come today
That which happens today, let it happen now
Who will be afraid of it, who will feel sad for it?
'One who is born is certain to die'
Kudalsangamadeva has written it
And Hari, Hara and Brahma are unable to alter it.*

This is a Vachana of Basavanna and the text is transformed as follows to a song by Jagannatha Dasa:

*Who will be afraid of it, Gopala?
Who will be afraid of it?
What will come and go tomorrow
Let it come and go today.
What will come and go today
Let it come tomorrow.
What will come and go afterwards
Let it happen this very moment
Why fear, Achalanada Vithala?*

Such examples can be seen in hundreds and a detailed study of such texts will throw light on the inter-textuality of Kannada literature. Dramatic, narrative and discursive modes are also employed in the compositions of this period. Especially the dramatic and narrative modes are later developed by composers like Muppina Shadakshari.

The third phase of Tatvapada, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is most interesting and presents a bewildering variety of compositions. The composers come from all strata of society, but most of them belong to the 'lower' castes; these composers appear in almost all parts of the state and many of these songs are bilingual; there is heterogeneity of ideas and attitudes; dramatic, narrative and riddle modes of expression are employed and the ritual aspect of the text gains prominence.

The Tatvapada in its third phase of development is an expression of devotion in a changed social and political atmosphere. The British rule had affected the whole of the social, fabric and the Tatvapada can be seen as a document of the reaction of the most common man to the changes happening around him, Here is a note of desperation, born out of poverty and social oppression and also a grim determination. The very disturbing changes provide the raw material for many of the songs.

Sishunala Sharif, Kadakola Madivalappa, Kaivara Narayanappa, Gattahalli Anjanappa, Mailara Basvalingappa, Balaleela Mahantha Shivayogi, Nijaguna Shivayogi, Sarpabhusana Shivayogi, Muppnia Shadakshri, Chennur Jalal Sahib are only some of the well-known composers. The actual number of Tatvapadakaras may be more than several hundreds. Rejection of caste barriers, emphasis on the coexistence of several religions and faiths, importance of personal experience of God, criticism of the dogmas are some of the themes of Tatvapada of this period.

Most of the composers were considered as great saints by the people of the area. These 'local saints' fulfilled the religious and spiritual needs of the people. One of the effects of globalization is marginalization of such local saints.

Sishunala Sharif (1819-89) has gained popularity even among the academics. He can be considered as a typical example of a Tatvapadakara. Born in a village in Dharwad District in a poor Muslim family he had a devout Brahmin, Govinda Bhatta, as his Guru. So far as religion is considered his outlook is most humane and liberal. He has composed prayers for different 'gods' and has strongly spoken for coexistence. He has also responded to the social changes. The new schools and cotton mills established by the British, the Queen Victoria, the epidemic of plague, the great war and such things have provided material

for his compositions. One unique thing is that all these contemporary material is used to convey the spiritual equality of man and also to record the social changes. Some of his songs use Urdu and Kannada in alternate lines. His songs have become a valuable part of Kannada lore and a yearly celebration is held in commemoration of Sharif.

Kaivara Narayarappa is another such saint from the southern part of the state. Kadakola Madivalappa, a washerman by birth and profession, was a contemporary of Sharif and his songs contain very strong social criticism.

The fourth phase of Tatvapada can be seen as it is practised today. Tatvapada is unlike the poetry of the literate people. It is not meant to be read in isolation but is part of a singing ritual in which there are no observers but only participants. And these participants come from various social groups and do not belong to any one particular religious institution. Singing becomes a way of worship. Sometimes singing may be accompanied by discussions on the theme of the song. There are even groups who move from place to place singing these songs. As opposed to the sectarian way of established religions the practice of Tatvapada ritual has helped the mass to develop the qualities of harmonious coexistence.

Tatvapada as an expression of the masses has several parallels in other parts of the country. The Baul songs of Bengal and compositions of the Sufi Saints come to mind immediately. The nature of religious experience expressed in these compositions and sometime conflicting ideologies (as for instance the role to women), the relation of these oral texts and written texts of the language, a comparative study of Tatvapada of Kannada and similar songs, in Bengali, Telugu and Tamil are some of the still unexplored areas. Such a study would help us understand the under-currents that have shaped our social life.

Reference

(Dr. L. Basavaraju, (Ed.) *Shivadasa Gitanjali* (Kannada)

Praise and Censure As seen by the Sharanas

Vidwan H.V. Nagaraja Rao

Everyone likes to be praised. None likes to be censured.
The great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa says:

"ಸ್ತೋತ್ರಂ ಕಸ್ಯ ನ ತುಷ್ಟಯೇ?"
(*Who is not pleased by praise?*)

It is believed that even gods like praise and dislike censure. However, Sharanas had a different view. Basavanna thought that praise, especially flattery, was a punishment. In one of the Vachanas he says:

ಎನ್ನವರೊಲಿದು ಹೊನ್ನ ಶೂಲದಲಿಕ್ಕಿದರೆನ್ನ ಹೊಗಳಿ ಹೊಗಳಿ
ಎನ್ನ ಹೊಗಳತೆ ಎನ್ನನಿಮ್ಮೆಗೊಂಡಿತಲ್ಲಾ
ಅಯ್ಯೋ ನೊಂದೆನು, ಸೈರಿಸಲಾರೆನು
ಅಯ್ಯೋ, ನಿಮ್ಮ ಮನ್ನಣೆಯೆ ಮಸೆದಲಗಾಗಿ ತಾಗಿತ್ತಲ್ಲಾ,
ಅಯ್ಯೋ ನೊಂದೆನು, ಸೈರಿಸಲಾರೆನು,
ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗಮದೇವ, ನೀನನಗೆ ಒಳ್ಳಿದನಾದಡೆ
ಎನ್ನ ಹೊಗಳತೆಗಡ್ಡಬಾರಾ, ಧರ್ಮ

*My own people put me on the golden
gallows by praising me too much.
This praise made me feel too big, alas?
I am tormented by this,
I cannot endure this
Sir, your flattery pierced me like
A honed knife
I am tormented and cannot endure.
Lord kudalasangama, if you are kind to me,
Please come in the way of my flattery.*

The word used generally in Kannada (and many other Indian languages) for praise or flattery is 'stuti.' It is said:

"ಗುಣಿಗತಗುಣಾಭಿಧಾನಂ ಸ್ತುತಿಃ "

(statement of the virtues that are actually present is 'stuti')

But even such praise was not welcome to Sharanas. They were happy when somebody censured them because it gave them an opportunity for introspection and for rectification. Basavanna states in another vachana as follows:

ಹೊಯಿದವರೆನ್ನ ಹೊರೆದವರೆಂಬೆ
ಬಯಿದವರೆನ್ನ ಬಂಧುಗಳೆಂಬೆ
ನಿಂದಿಸಿದವರೆನ್ನ ತಂದೆತಾಯಿಗಳೆಂಬೆ
ಅಳಿಗೊಂಡವರೆನ್ನ ಆಳ್ವವರೆಂಬೆ
ಜರಿದವರೆನ್ನ ಜನ್ಮಬಂಧುಗಳೆಂಬೆ
ಹೊಗಳಿದವರೆನ್ನ ಹೊನ್ನ ಶೂಲದಲಿಕ್ಕಿದರೆಂಬೆ
ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗಮದೇವಾ

*I call those that lash at me as my guardians
I call those that rebuke me as my relatives
I call those that censure me as my parents
I call those that gossip about me as my lords
I call those that condemn me as my friends of
previous lives
I say that those that praise me
Are putting me on the golden gallows, Lord Kudalasangama.*

Siddharama, however, appears to think that an equanimity or equipoise of mind has to be maintained by a Sharana despite praise or censure. He says:

ಆರೇನೆಂದರೂ ಓರಂತಿಪ್ಪುದೆ ಸಮತೆ
ಆರು ಜರಿದರೆನ್ನ ಮನದ ಕಾಳಿಕೆಯ
ಕಳೆದರೆಂಬುದೆ ಸಮತೆ
ಆರು ಸೌತ್ಯವ ಮಾಡಿಹರೆನ್ನ ಜನ್ಮಜನ್ಮದ

ಹಗ್ಗಗಳೆಂಬುದೇ ಸಮತೆ
ಇಂತಿದು ಗುರುಕಾರುಣ್ಯ
ಮನವಚನಕಾಯದಲ್ಲಿ
ಅವಿತಥವಿಲ್ಲದಿದರ್ಥೆ
ಕಪಿಲಸಿದ್ಧಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನ
ನಿನ್ನವರ ನೀನೆಂಬುದೆ ಸಮತೆ

*In spite of what others say
To stay undisturbed is equipoise
When somebody condemns us,
To think that they removed
The dirt of our mind is equipoise.
When somebody flatters us,
To think that they are foes
of our previous lives in equipoise
This comes only from the compassion of the Guru
O Kapilasiddhamallikarjuna,
If untruth is not present
In thought, word and deed
To think that Your people are You
Is the real equipoise*

Recognition and honour shown by society is another form of praise. Siddharama seems to think that it could be either good or bad. He states:

ಮನುಜರ ಮನ್ನಣೆಯದು
ಮಸೆದಲಗಿನ ಗಾಯ ನೋಡಾ
ಮನುಜರ ಮನ್ನಣೆಯದು
ಪರಿಮಳ ಪುಷ್ಪದ ಸೋಂಕು ನೋಡಾ
ಕಪಿಲಸಿದ್ಧಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನಾ

*The honour shown by people
is a wound caused by a honed blade,
The honour shown by people is the touch of a fragrant
flower, Kapilasiddhamallikarjuna*

Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavadgita :

ತುಲ್ಯನಿಂದಾ ಸ್ತುತಿಮೌನೀ ಸಂತುಷ್ಟೋ ಯೇನ ಕೇನಚಿತ್ |
ಅನಿಕೇತಃ ಸ್ಥಿರಮತಿರ್ಭಕ್ತಿಮಾನ್ ಮೇ ಪ್ರಿಯೋ ನರಃ ||

One who considers praise and censure as equal, is always silent, is satisfied with whatever is available, has no possessions and keeps the mind firm is my dear devotee. This idea is endorsed by Akkamahadevi also as far as praise and censure are concerned. She says:

ಬೆಟ್ಟದ ಮೇಲೊಂದು ಮನೆಯ ಮಾಡಿ
ಮೃಗಗಳಿಗಂಜಿದೊಡೆಂತಯ್ಯಾ?
ಸಮುದ್ರದ ತಡಿಯಲೊಂದು ಮನೆಯ ಮಾಡಿ
ನೊರೆತೆರೆಗಳಿಗಂಜಿದೊಡೆಂತಯ್ಯಾ?
ಸಂತೆಯೊಳಗೊಂದು ಮನೆಯ ಮಾಡಿ
ಶಬ್ದಕ್ಕೆ ನಾಚಿದೆಂತಯ್ಯಾ?
ಚೆನ್ನಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನದೇವ ಕೇಳಯ್ಯಾ
ಲೋಕದೊಳಗೆ ಹುಟ್ಟಿದ ಬಳಿಕ
ಸ್ತುತಿನಿಂದೆಗಳು ಬಂದಡೆ
ಮನದಲ್ಲಿ ಕೋಪವ ತಾಳದೆ
ಸಮಾಧಾನಿಯಾಗಿರಬೇಕು.

*How is it right if you fear the beasts
after constructing your house on a hill?
How is it right if you fear from waves
After constructing your house on a seashore?
How is it right if you dislike noise
after building your house near a market?
Lord Chennamallikarjuna, listen.
One should remain calm without anger, even when praise
and censure are rained,
Since one has taken birth in the world.*

Allamaprabhu approves this by saying:

"ಸ್ತುತಿ ನಿಂದೆಗೆ ಕಿವುಡನಾಗಿರಬೇಕು "

(One should be deaf to both praise and censure.)

One should never crave for flattery. One should also not lose temper when one's censure is heard. It should be welcomed as an advice to correct one's faults. A Sanskrit poet says:

ಆಕುಷ್ಟೇನ ಮತಿಮತಾ ತತ್ತ್ವಾರ್ಥವಿಚಾರಣೇ ಮತಿಃ ಕಾರ್ಯಾ |

ಯದಿ ಸತ್ಯಂ ಕಃ ಕೋಪಃ ಸ್ಯಾದನ್ಯತಂ ಕಿಂ ನು ಕೋಪೇನ? ||

(When an intelligent man is censured, he should contemplate on facts. If the charges are true, there is no reason to be angry. If they are untrue, there is nothing to be gained by anger.)

So, we must be ready to rectify our faults if the censure has a grain of truth. If the charges are made with ulterior motive, it is better to ignore them. One should never hanker after honour or recognition. Even when they come on their own, the recipient should not consider himself or herself as superior to others. Such feelings destroy the fabric of personality.

*You came as tongue to experience taste
You came as nose to experience fragrance
You came as eyes to experience form
You came as ears to experience sound
You came as skin to experience touch
Thus you stayed in me as Five-Face God
Eshanyamurthy Mallikarjunalinga*

– Shivalenka Manchanna

Pages from the Past

H.E. Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar

Sri Basaveshvara : A Mystic

I

The beginnings of Indian mysticism may be traced to the Vedas. In these religious texts we find a number of hymns addressed to the gods by the Vedic Seers (risis). From the hymns we learn that the sages experienced blissful visions of their favourite deities by intuition and not by either perception or by inference. We also learn that by meditation the seers felt absorbed in the divine essence. In such a state they experienced not only complete identity with the deities but also enjoyed supreme ecstasy.

The essence of mysticism, namely, the intuitive apprehension of the Supreme and the consequent experience of ecstasy formed the subject-matter of the Upanishads also. In these great philosophic texts it was pointed out that the Self and the Supreme were non-dual and that it should be man's earnest endeavour to experience this spiritual state. Such an idea is clear from the brief but effective statements like, "This Brahman is the Self", "That thou art," "I am Brahman" and "Brahman is Consciousness." The nature of mystic experience is beautifully portrayed in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* which says: "His form is not to be seen; no one sees Him by the eye. Those who know Him by mind as dwelling in the heart become immortal."

* Taken from *Sri Basaveswara*, the Eighth Centenary Commemoration Volume published by the Directorate of Kannada and Culture, 1967 and 2003. We express our indebtedness to the author and the editor.
-Ed.

The theme of mysticism was continued in the Bhagavadgita. Indeed some thinkers are of the opinion that the "Gita is a gospel of mysticism". Attempting a description of an ideal mystic, the Gita says: "Whenever a man sees the existence of different beings as rooted in the Supreme God and thinks that all beings are projections from Him, that moment he attains the Supreme". It further points out that to have a vision of the Lord, a third or the mystic eye is absolutely necessary. Lord Krishna blessed Arjuna with such an eye before He revealed His universal form to him. And it is the Gita that points out that Bhakti, or devotion, is the primary means to the attainment of mystic experience.

It is interesting to note that in many schools (Darshanas) of Indian philosophy, logical recognition is given to the mystic. The *Nyaya-Vaisheshika* in particular speaks of the supernormal perception of the yogis or mystics. This system not only mentions 'transcendental experience' but also says that it is of two kinds: of those who have attained concentration and of those who are striving for it. It establishes that a yogi "who has attained concentration always has knowledge of everything while the yogi of the second type is aided by meditation". Many systems believe in the exceptional capacity of mystics and point out that they perceive things which ordinary people cannot. Such yogis have a state of ecstasy; and during this state they have knowledge of things, however subtle they may be, solely through their own mental power.

II

There were a number of great mystics in India from early times. Some of the important ones among these were: Goswami Tulsidas, Bhakta Mira, Saint Pattinathar, Saint Purandaradasa, Guru Nanak, Saint Tukaram, Saint Tyagaraja and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. And to this list of great Indian mystics should be added the name of Sri Basava, or Basaveshvara, who lived in the state of Karnataka in the 12th century A.D. He was

a great religious reformer and was responsible for the development of the Veerashaiva faith which believes in the worship of the omnipotent Shiva as the only God. He possessed great spiritual powers gained from the practice of mysticism. This is clear from the many deeds of wonder which are attributed to him. We learn that the River Krishna once made way for him when he wanted to cross it. On another occasion, he showed King Bijjala the exact place where a valuable treasure was hidden. When a devotee of Shiva called Shivalenka Mancharasa approached Basava with a request for pearls, the latter gave him a measure of corn which later turned into brilliant gems. On a different occasion and to the great amazement of people around him, Basaveshvara seems to have commanded even the sun God to stop from moving for a period of eleven days! Many other extraordinary acts attributed to Basaveshvara clearly indicate that he was gifted with supernatural powers commonly associated with mystics.

The reasons why Basaveshvara chose the path of mysticism are unique. He found religious-minded men of his times advocating dogma, tradition and scriptural study for the realization of God. When he appeared on the religious scene, he found in the state of Karnataka both Buddhism and Jainism in a weakened state. The cult of sacrifice was widely practised and society was hopelessly divided into castes and communities. The path of knowledge and the 'path of action' taught by the early Indian scriptures for winning the grace of God were difficult ones for the ordinary man to tread. Basaveshvara was therefore dissatisfied with the ways advocated by different religions of his times for the realization of God. To him, the proper method of attaining divine knowledge was to cultivate that condition of mind in which the unity of soul and God was immediately felt. He therefore rebelled against the traditional modes of religious practices and tried his best to organize a religious society which could experience the

pleasures of divine bliss unhindered by other useless considerations. In short he came to the conclusion that the practice of intense devotion to Shiva, the Supreme God, was the surest and indeed the only way of establishing unity with that Godhead. Basaveshvara enkindled and deepened Hinduism on its religious side and made the path of devotion highly popular. He gave a worthy expression to the emotional factor in religion. He threw wide open the gateway of devotion and invited all to enter the palace of divinity. He was not only an unequalled devotee of Shiva but also a staunch advocate of the path of devotion. He was impatient with those who argued for the performance of religious rites to realise God. "How can devotion to Shiva and adherence to rites agree?" - he exclaimed often; and he discarded the 'sacred thread' which was the symbol of one who was devoted to the observance of rituals. He forcefully maintained that 'Shiva could be won over only by devotion and not either by music or by Vedic chants'. He described very vividly the signs of ecstasy that can be noticed in a devotee while experiencing a mystic vision of God: "His (the devotee's) mind melts, he experiences thrills of rapture, his eyes shed tears of joy and his speech becomes choked with feelings of pleasure." And Basaveshvara longed to experience such signs of devotion in his person.

Practice of intense devotion led Basaveshvara to experience the mystic joy of seeing the vision of Lord Shiva and of feeling one with him. He dreaded the moment when he thought that Shiva's vision was disappearing from his mind. "Do not run away", he exclaimed once, addressing the deity of his choice, "I dislike asking for favours. I only beg to have a full view of Thee, Oh! Lord, and experience the joy. Why can't you speak to me, my Lord; after all I am your devout servant." When he stayed in the holy place called Sangamakshetra, Sri Basava was not disturbed either by his family or by his political activities or by opponents belonging to other faiths. And during his stay in this holy place,

he often experienced feelings of joy which were the result of his mystic communion with Shiva, the Supreme God. In such ecstatic moments Basava repeatedly begged Shiva to bless him with Grace. He shed tears of joy, he was overcome by feelings of spiritual bliss and he engaged himself continuously in the worship of his chosen deity.

The gift of experiencing such mystic delight could come only to a person who led a moral life. Basava in his sweet and profound sayings emphasised this point and called upon all the people belonging to the Veerashaiva faith to become morally pure. He tried to set an example for others by his own conduct and sincerely prayed to God ‘not to make him at any time a man of bad conduct or of wicked thoughts.’ His sole aim was to be a person of virtue keen on serving God (Linga) and His devotees (Jangamas). He did not sympathise much with the view that a person was destined to reap the rewards of his past deeds and that one was good or bad in accordance with actions done in previous lives.

The mystic way of life also depended on the control of the mind (*Manojaya*) and Basava was not less insistent on the practice of this essential quality. Objects of the senses generally weaned away a person from his noble pursuits and broke a man’s powers of concentration on God. In one of his moments of deep devotion Basaveshvara begs God to equip him with the ability to discard all objects of pleasure and requests Him to mercifully remove them from his sight. “After all” said Basava, “like an animal, man falls prey to the ‘gross of sense-objects’ spread before him. God, therefore, in his infinite Grace, has to help by removing all objects of pleasure from him, by feeding him with the ‘juice of devotion’ and by strengthening him with the ‘Waters of Wisdom’”.

And in such a person whose moral stature is high and whose powers of control are exemplary, faith in God which is absolutely necessary for leading a mystic way of life grows in strength. Basava

earnestly pleads for the cultivation of unbounded and firm faith in God (Linga) and his devotees (Jangamas). He passionately yearned for the development of such faith in himself and advised all his disciples to follow him in this regard. He warned his followers that even a momentary feeling of doubt or indifference entertained towards God and his devotees would lead to dire calamity. Indeed, this essential trait of a mystic was predominant in the life and activities of Basaveshvara even from his childhood. For we learn that when he was yet a boy and was falsely accused of pushing a friend into the waters of a river close by, Basava sought shelter under the roof of a temple of Shiva, embraced firmly the idol of the deity in it and did not move out until he was cleared of the charge. And we learn that Lord Shiva stood by his sincere devotee in this hour of trial and made His omniscience felt both by Basava and the people who surrounded him.

High moral sense and unshakable belief in the Almighty led Basaveshvara to abandon his ego and to surrender himself entirely to the will of God. It was firmly his conviction that the slightest sense of agency (*kartrutva*) was enough to pull a devotee away from God. He gave expression to this important truth in his saying: “I said that my body was at the service of my teacher (Guru) and I strayed away from him; I said that my mind was made over to the Lord and I lost Him; I said that my wealth was at the disposal of devotees (*jangamas*) and I missed their company. . . . Oh! Lord of Kudala Sangama, nothing is so baneful as to say that I did something for you.” He wished to completely surrender himself to Lord Shiva which in turn brings him to a position near enough to enjoy complete identity with the object of his worship. Addressing the Lord of Kudala Sangama, he exclaimed: “Lord, Thou art my father, thou my mother; thou art my near and dear relation and there is none to protect me other than Thee”. Thereafter he delighted in the worship of Shiva; he offered his Lord the best of scents and the most beautiful of flowers. This

kind of sincere worship in its turn helped him deeply to concentrate on God. He always desired to be thinking of Him: "O Father", he exclaims, "make me a cripple so that I do not move away from you, a blind man so that I do not see others around, a deaf one so that I do not hear of anything other than yourself. And make me think of nothing else other than the holy feet of your devotees."

Deep devotion to God, cultivation of ethical virtues, control of the mind, service of the Supreme, contemplation and faith, these made Basaveshvara think that there was absolutely no difference between him and other *Sharanas*, or devotees of Shiva. He experienced in the true mystic style complete identity between himself and these *Jangamas*, God's great representatives on earth. Nor did he see any difference between them and the Supreme Shiva (Linga). It is for this reason that we find Basava often proclaiming: "Come what may, I shall ever worship Shiva (Linga), I shall ever revere His devotees (Jangamas) and I shall never miss their Grace". Basava also taught that it was only God's devotees (Sharanas) who can really lead men towards realisation of the Supreme and called upon all of the Veerashaiva faith to pay the highest regard to Sharanas and Jangamas.

The non-duality which Basaveshvara experienced between himself and the Jangamas was perhaps the first kind of mystic experience that he had. This step led him gradually to the final mystic phase of experiencing non-duality or identification between himself and the Supreme Shiva. He saw it in a flash that he and the Supreme (Linga) were one and identical in essence. After this supreme experience of oneness, Basava set aside all thoughts of duality which he had felt earlier in the worship of Shiva. Indeed he had thought of himself at first as a servant of God and as a dear sweetheart of the great Lord. And now with the dawn of the great truth that the Supreme and himself were one, he cast

away all sense of difference and experienced the ecstatic pleasures of non-duality. In a moment of supreme delight, he describes this state of non-duality thus: "What is the use of worshipping the Lord if a devotee does not realise that they are of the same pleasure, of the same essence and of similar happiness? And of what use is it to worship the Lord if he does not feel that he is like water flowing into and mixing with the waters of a river"? At such moments too Basaveshvara was not conscious 'of the ten directions, of the earth and of the heavens above'. Nor was he conscious then that the 'entire universe was situated in the Supreme' – for the universe and the Supreme were identical. Indeed he felt then that he was like a hailstone that had fallen into the vast waters of the ocean. He was conscious of nothing except the presence of Shiva everywhere. He had only the absorbing mystic experience of merging into the Great 'omnipresent mass' and of being one with the 'omniscient light' - the indivisible Supreme.

Such was the nature of the supreme mystic ecstasy that Basaveshvara, the ardent devotee of Shiva, experienced in his moments of deep contemplation. And it goes very much to the credit of this great and godly man, religious and social reformer, that at moments when he was not in deep contemplation, he had the compassion and goodness to share with his fellowmen his mystic and ecstatic experiences. After the manner of a *Sthithaprajna*, or one of steadfast mind, his attention was always fixed on God though he was engaged in the affairs of the world. Men of Sri Basaveshvara's stature truly set a model for other human beings; and by following the footsteps of such religious masters, devoted men of God are bound to realise the delights of spiritual experience.



News and Events

This is a new feature of “Sharana Patha” intended to share with the readers some information about the important happenings pertaining to innumerable activities undertaken by the JSS Mahavidyapeetha in general. A separate booklet is required to record the programmes that take place all through the year. But keeping in view the primary aim of “Sharana Patha” we are highlighting only a few programmes so that the rest of the space is devoted for scholarly and spiritual disquisitions.

Jayanthi Mahotsava

‘Jayanthi Mahotsava’ of Adi Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreshwara Bhagavatpadaru is an annual feature celebrated at different cities and taluk headquarters of different districts in Karnataka. The objective is to involve people at the grassroot level so that they imbibe and internalize the message of the Adi Jagadguru and orient their daily living towards spirituality. The ‘Mahotsava’ spreads over a week’s time bringing to the common man’s doorsteps art, literature, music, folk music, rural sports and many more items covering all aspects of social life.

People’s representatives participate in this joyous celebration and take a pledge to serve their electors. Different locales are chosen every year with a view to achieving an all-round development of the respective venue. One week of spiritual jamboree in the town instills sufficient stamina of righteous living in the heart of the beneficiaries. The spiritual imprint will be so obvious that after the ‘Mahotsava’ the place will never be the same again.

The world needs non-violence and tolerance today -Dalai Lama

Inaugurating the newly constructed building of the Management Studies on 19.2.2009 in the JSS Technical Institutions Campus, His Holiness, Sri Dalai Lama said: “The world needs the type of non-violence and tolerance established by Mahatma Gandhi today, in the context of growing terrorism all over. Wherever I go, I carry the message of religious tolerance. I am a messenger carrying discussion, debate and peace”. Appreciating the role played by India in accommodating religions like Hindu, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, he said “India has always emphasized the necessity of living in peace and harmony and therefore this country is not only a great shock-absorber, but it is an ever dependable spiritual guide too”.

We need nation-building education - Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

While inaugurating the JSS International School on 30.3.2009, the Former President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said: “We must create opportunities for education that could build the nation. That means, once again, we are emphasizing the value-based education. The youth of the nation must be inspired to receive the best form of education. Therefore, the responsibility of the educators has increased several folds.”

Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji, in his Benediction, said: “The Indian educational system has been recognized for its efficacy all over the world. Such an institution is being established in Dubai at the moment. The aim is to inculcate education to the young students in the field of art, culture, yoga so that they blossom into knowledgeable citizens not only of their country but of the world at large”.

Health programmes should reach rural India – President

“Rural development and health facilities should reach all our villages and we must chalk out plans and programmes to realize the intention giving top priority,” said the President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil. She was inaugurating the seminar entitled “Development of Sustainable Rural Health” organized to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of JSS Medical College, Mysore and also the Free Hostel for Girls at Suttur Sriksheetra on 9.5.2009.

In her speech, she also emphasized the fact that “India has achieved significant progress in the field of health care after Independence; but still the rural society has not been able to receive the required quantum of attention to obtain total health security. This situation should change without any delay.”

Attention Students & Young Enquirers!

As you are aware, the lure of modern education need not deflect our attention from our traditional moorings which have stood us in good stead through vicissitudes of centuries. We have to search our hearts to find out convincing answers to our young people's doubts in respect of the efficacy of our traditional wisdom. Here is an opportunity for you to seek responses we encounter in the sharanas of the 12th century in general and the Veerashaiva philosophy, in particular.

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Inauguration of Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeswara Bhagavatpadara Jayanthi Mahotsava at Pandavapura. Gracing the celebrations: Sri Jagadguru Shivarathri Deshikendra Swamiji, Sri Jagadguru Shivakumara Swamiji of Siddhaganga Math, Sri Jagadguru Balagangadharanatha Swamiji of Adichunchanagiri Math, Sri Ramachandregowda, Sri Narendraswamy, eminent cine artiste Smt. B. Saroja Devi and Chairman of the Organizing Committee Sri C.S. Puttaraju.

SHARANA PATHA



Inauguration of the new building of Management Studies at the JSS Technical Education Institutes campus by His Holiness Sri Dalai Lama on 19.2.2009. Gracing the function: Sri Jagadguru Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji, Dr. H.P. Khincha, Vice-Chancellor of VTU and Smt. Nagalambika, Director of College of Education.



Inauguration of JSS International School in Dubai by Former President of India Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Gracing the function: Sri Jagadguru Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji, Sri Jagadguru Balagangadharanatha Mahaswamiji, Sri Haneef Hassan Al Qasami of UAE, Dr. B. Suresh, Sri Venu Rajamani, Lt. Gen. Musabe Rasheed Al Fathan and others

SHARANA PATHA



Inauguration of Girls' Hostel Building at Suttur and the Seminar in connection with the Silver Jubilee of JSS Medical College, Mysore by His Excellency President of India Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, Sri Jagadguru Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji, Sri Jagadguru Shivakumara Mahaswamiji, Chief Minister Sri B.S. Yeddyurappa, Minister Smt. Shobha Karandlaje, Former Deputy Chief Minister Sri Siddharamaiah, Governor Sri Rameshwara Thakur, Sri B.N. Betkerur, Dr. B. Suresh and others