

**A Journey Through
Hindu and Viraśaiva Concepts**

**Linga Raju
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PREFACE

It is said that a retired person starts showing genuine spiritual interest in order to attain spiritual liberation. This interest may lead one to start studying the available religious literature. The intellectual knowledge gained by such studies may help one to chart out a spiritual path, and embark on that journey. It is expected that such a journey, whatever it may be, will result in a qualitative improvement in the inner Self. It appears that, as a retired person, I acted upon my spiritual instincts, and proceeded to write articles about what I read and understood. These articles form the basis of this book, and reveal my journey through Hindu and Viraśaiva concepts. Shorter and modified versions of many of the articles have been published in *Baandhavya* which is a newsletter of the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America. Also a few of the articles have been published in *Sangama*, a newsletter published by Veerashaiva Samaja of New York.

Participation of family members in this project has enhanced my spiritual experience. After completion of writing each article, my wife Uma Raju would be the first one to peruse the articles and comment on them. The article would then be sent by e-mail to our daughter Dr. Bindu Raju for editing. Despite her busy schedule as a Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine specialist, she made sure that every article was readable and understandable. Our son Vinay Raju was able to be involved with only a few articles.

My sister's husband Dr. Ram Srinivasan and my wife's brother Sri S. N. Shanmukha gave me very valuable input and kept me true to what I was writing. Sri Nataraj Sidgal, husband of one of my nieces, raised several questions that kept me in the right path.

Dr. Guru Bale of Edison New Jersey who has authored and published many of his own books and published books written by others, guided me throughout the whole process. Dr. C. V. Angadi of Hicksville New York, a peer reviewer, commented on most of the articles. His comments were very helpful in meaningfully representing the views. Dr. Halappa Hakkal of McLean Virginia and Dr. Gurushanthaiah of Huntington Beach California reviewed and commented on some of the articles. I am grateful to everyone who helped me in this endeavor.

Linga Raju
April 14, 2011

Second Edition: Please note that some minor changes and correction of detected typographical errors have been made to the original book manuscript.

DEPICTION OF SAṂSKṚTA AND KANNAḌA WORDS

Most of the articles written in English, and published in this book, have many Saṁskṛta (Sanskrit) and Kannaḍa words that are written using the English alphabet. Transliteration of these words for proper pronunciation is a challenge to the authors as well as to the editors. It seems appropriate to gain insight into this problem and come up with a practical solution.

Saṁskṛta means perfected or put together perfectly. There is a Vēdic Sanskrit which is the older language of the Vēdas, and a Classical Sanskrit which is the language of the Bhagavad-Gītā. The Vēdic Sanskrit begins with the Ṛgvēda which supposedly was composed more than five thousand years ago. All the Vēdas in this language were passed down orally/verbally from generation to generation by a line of Ṛṣis (Rishis, seers), by Guru (teacher) to disciple, and father to son. It is believed that the ever-existing vibrations (dēva-vāṇi) were received or perceived by the seers, and the vibrations were reproduced in the form of hymns of the Vēdas. These hymns had to be chanted exactly, so as to produce the same perfect vibrations and sounds every time. Error-free chanting was of prime importance. In addition to transmitting these hymns verbally, over generations, the rules of pronunciation, the pitch and duration of each uttering, how the sounds of words change in different environments (Sandhi rules), and complex grammar rules (Vyākaraṇa), were transmitted without a script or written form.

The present-day written form of Sanskrit known as Dēvanāgarī script, 'the language of the city of immortals,' was derived from the Brāhmi script that had been developed about two thousand five hundred years ago. One of the two divisions of the Brāhmi, known as 'Pallava Grantha' was in use in the southern part of India. Kannaḍa is derived from this division of Brāhmi. Many words in Sanskrit and Kannaḍa are same with the same pronunciation and meaning. The standard alphabet of Sanskrit has fifty syllables - akṣaras from a, to kṣa, and that of Kannaḍa has fifty-two. These two scripts have no capitol letters, and the alphabet is arranged according to the functional structure of the mouth. Each letter of the Dēvanāgarī alphabet and the corresponding letter of the Kannaḍa script have only one specific sound of pronunciation. This poses a problem of exactly depicting these sounds, with only about half the number of the letters in the English alphabet. The following is the English representation of the letters of the Kannaḍa (and the corresponding Dēvanāgarī) alphabet that is in common use nowadays. The lines, dots and other marks used here are called 'diacritics' or 'diacritical marks'. The diacritics are combined with English letters to represent new sounds. This representation is slightly modified from the scheme of transliteration given in ŚŪNYASAMPĀDANE Volumes I through V, Published by Karnatak University, Dharwar, India (1).

Vowels: a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ṛ, ṝ, e, ē, ai, o, ō, au
Anusvāra: aṁ (also aṅ)
Visarga: aḥ

Consonants: Five sets of five each of the twenty-five consonants are arranged according to five points of articulation.

Velars or gutturals - the sound is produced in the throat or back of the mouth:

ka, kha, ga, gha, ṅa

Palatals – the sound is produced with the tongue touching the palate (roof of the mouth):

ḥa, ḥha, ja, jha, ṅa

Retroflex or cerebrals – the sound is produced with the tongue bent backwards:

ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, ḍha, ṇa

Dentals – the sound is produced with the tongue touching the back of the upper teeth:

ta, tha, da, dha, na

Labials – the sound is produced at the lips:

pa, pha, ba, bha, ma

Semi-vowels: ya, ra, la, va

Palatal sibilant: śa

Retroflex sibilant: ṣa

Dental sibilant: sa

Aspirate: ha

Lateral: ḷa

Conjunct (combination of two letters): kṣa. jṅa

A personal note: In the past, I thought that a special software program was required for this purpose. I asked Dr. Guru Bale of Edison NJ, how he is using these marks in his many publications. He was very gracious enough to take me through the whole process. There is no need for a special program. The Microsoft Word word-processor software program has everything. You click on the 'Insert' at the top tool-bar. It opens a list. Click on 'symbol' – this opens a window with a list of Fonts and the corresponding symbols. Select the Font that

you prefer. Dr. Bale and I use the 'Tahoma' variety. You select the symbol you want to insert at the cursor, and click on 'insert'. There you will have it. To hasten the process, you can assign symbols to short-cut keys on the key-board. For example, I assign Ā to Alt A keys and ā to Ctrl A keys. And so on. This will simplify the process of symbol insertions.

If the diacritical marks cannot be used for some reason, then there are a few accepted ways of representing some of the sounds/letters: aa for ā, ee for ī, oo for ū, and sha for retroflex ṣa. In this version the palatal śa, as in Śiva, seems to have been written both ways – sa and sha. The New York Samāja uses Veerasaiva (without the h), where as VSNA uses Veerashaiva (with the h) in their Samāja names.

Another point to make here is that the sounding of the individual words, changes when two or more words are joined together. For example, the only three descriptions of the Absolute One (Brahman), Sat (eternal existence, being), Ćit (pure knowledge, consciousness), and Ānanda (infinite bliss), when put together, become Saĉĉidānanda. Note that 't' in Sat changes to ĉ, and 't' in Ćit changes to d. This is because the position of the oral structures for sounding the last syllable of the preceding word has to change to conform to the structural positioning for sounding the first syllable of the succeeding word. Another three-part example: ṣaṣ (six) + sthala = ṣaṣṭhala (ṣ changes to ṭ); ṣaṣ + mukha (face) = ṣaṣmukha (ṣ changes to ṇ); ṣaṣ + akṣara (syllable) = ṣaṣakṣara (ṣ changes to ḍ). The ṣaṣakṣara mantra (six syllable mantra) 'Ōm na maḥ si vā ya' is the mantra the Viraśaivas use. It means 'Ōm obeisance for/to Śiva'.

It is not too difficult to use this type of representation in the articles. Although it takes more effort to properly depict the Saṁskṛta and Kannaḍa words, it is worthwhile to use the diacritical marks so that the words are sounded properly. The authors and editors are encouraged to do so.

HINDU AND VĪRĀŚAIVA SCRIPTURES

The word scripture generally means a handwritten sacred or religious document. Every religion has a scripture of its own, and every scripture claims divine origin. It is the scripture that spells out the spiritual goal and the path to reach it. A scripture is generally considered an authority in regulating human behavior, primarily for leading a religious life. The followers are expected to profess that religion (2). Hinduism is unique in the sense that, not only it is the most ancient continuously practiced religion, but also has the most amount of sacred material than any other religion. Although the Sanskrit word śāstram is considered equivalent to the word scriptures, it generally refers to the doctrines of various Hindu religious philosophical systems, and does not usually include all the Hindu sacred material. **These sacred materials are placed into two main categories – śruti and smṛti, and a third subsidiary category.** All these are in the Sanskrit language.

Śruti means 'what is heard'. The divine vibrations/sounds were heard by the ancient ṛṣis (rishis, seers, sages) and these were verbally/orally transmitted over thousands of years without any written script. Śruti deals with eternal virtues that do not change with time or place. Because the śrutis are divine revelations, and not man made, they are considered to be never wrong. **The four Vēdas - Ṛgvēda, Yajurveda** (two versions: the original version also called kṛṣṇa [black] Yajurveda, and the other śukla [white] Yajurveda), **Sāmavēda, and Atharvavēda - and their appendages - Brāhmaṇas** (comprising of ritual texts), **Āraṇyakas** (comprising of ritual and meditational texts for forest dwelling ascetics), **and Upaniṣads** (comprising of the esoteric texts) – **are the śrutis** (2).

Smṛti texts contain 'remembered knowledge'. They are an elaboration of the truths that are in the śruti. They use simplified and interpretative method for teaching the common masses. History, mythology, legends and other stories are employed to make the abstruse philosophy understandable by an average person of the society. **There are a multitude of Smṛti texts:** the two epics – **Mahābhārata** which includes **Bhagavad-Gītā**, and **Rāmāyaṇa** – many **Purāṇas**, various **Dharma-śāstras** (the so called Law-books), and the four **upavēdas** – **Ayurvēda** (the science of life), **Arthaśāstra** (the science of wealth or economics), **Dhanurvēda** (the science relating to weaponry and warfare), **and Gāndharvavēda** (treatises on the fine arts of music, dance, drama, etc.) (3).

Another set of scriptures, parallel to the Vēdic scriptures, is called **Tantra**, the scripture by which knowledge is spread. **The Tantra scriptures include a vast array of śāstras.** They fall under five categories – śaiva, śakta, vaiṣṇava, sora,

and gāṇapatya. In addition there are Buddhist Tantras. From the outset, Tantra has straddled both Hinduism and Buddhism, and the tantric style teachings can be found even in Jainism (4).

An oldest form of **Śaivism** that was present in North India possessed a considerable amount of literature called **Āgamas**, a number of which are still preserved. The Āgamas were 18 in number according to one tradition, and 28 according to another. The two lists might be two different ways of computing the same literature. The religion of Āgamas developed through two channels. One was pure Śaivism with greater emphasis on the devotional aspect of worship with a view of attaining salvation. The other continued as Śaktism with greater emphasis on various Śakti cults. **The Śakti literature became the Tantra proper, where as the pure Śaivism literature ceased to be called Tantra** (4). These Śivāgamas (earlier version – pūrvāgama) are the basic scriptures of the Śaivas. The later modified version of the Śivāgamas (uttarāgama) form part of the philosophy of the Vīraśaivas.

Vaċana śāstra, most of which is in Kannaḍa language, is the basic scripture of the Vīraśaivas. In the 12th century CE (Common Era, used to be called AD), there was a great religious movement in the form of revitalization and reformation of the Vīraśaiva, Śaiva and other Hindu sects, in Karnāṭaka, India, resulting in the formation of a new religious faction called Vīraśaiva or Liṅgāyata. The great leader of this movement was Basava, popularly known as **Basavaṇṇa** and respectfully referred to as Basavēśvara. He was the Prime Minister of the king Bijjala who ruled from the capitol city of Kalyāṇa, over a large territory of the present day Karnāṭaka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra States. Basavaṇṇa founded an assembly hall called **Anubhava Maṇṭapa** where regular discourses about religion and society were held. Scholars from all over India were attracted to this place, and one among them was Allama Prabhu, popularly known as **Prabhudēva**. He was regarded as the most intellectual Vīraśaiva scholar of the time, and became the leader presiding over deliberations in the Anubhava Maṇṭapa. A new Philosophical System was developed, with accurate interpretation and practical implementation of ideas. With this system, a new kind of literature arose – the **vaċana**.

Vaċanas, consisting of short rhythmic prose and yet poetry in spirit, **were widely used by the Vīraśaivas to propagate knowledge and the right way of life among the masses.** The vaċanas were simple in form, and were in everyday language of the people. They were very inspirational and appealing to the masses. They were full of spiritual insight and had mystic overtones. The vaċanas were said to be comparable to the Upaniṣadic sayings of the great ancient sages. At the end of each vaċana, the authors addressed the Absolute Divinity with a unique name selected by them, the name, specific to each author, serving as the author's identification signature. For example, Basavaṇṇa's

vaċanas had Kūdala Saṅgama Dēva, and Allama Prabhu's vaċanas had Guhēsvara (and sometimes Guhēsvaraliṅga) in them. In a span of 20 years time then, an enormous number of vaċanas, according to one estimate, as many as a million, were composed and recorded on thalegari leaves and metal plates (5).

However, due to disturbed conditions that ensued, the vaċana literature was scattered, and some of it was lost. It is only during the Vijayanagara Empire in the 15th century that the Viraśaiva religion and culture were revived. The Viraśaiva scholars systematically collected the retrievable portions of the vaċana literature. About 25,000 vaċanas and 300 authors were identified, and 1,426 vaċanas of Basavaṅṅa and 1,643 vaċanas of Prabhudēva were found (5). The vaċanaśāstras were collated, edited and annotated. It was at that time that four versions of **Śūnya Saṁpādane** were compiled. The first version was compiled by Śivagaṅṅa Prasādi Mahādēvayya. It comprises of 1012 vaċanas. The second version containing 1599 vaċanas was compiled by Halageyadēva. The third was prepared by Gummaḷāpura Siddaliṅgēśa Śivayōgi, a disciple of Toṅṅada Siddaliṅgēśvara; it contains 1439 vaċanas. The fourth compilation of Śūnyasaṁpādane with 1543 vaċanas was by Gūḷūra Siddhaviraṅṅārya. This fourth scripture was first edited and brought out in print form by Dr. P. G. Halakatti (1930), and later revised and published by Professor S. S. Bhusanurmāth (1958). This Kannāḅa version of the Śūnyasaṁpādane was translated into a comprehensive edition in English by the Karnatak University, Dharwar, India (1). The five volumes contain not only Kannāḅa texts and vaċanas but also English introduction, text, transliteration, translation, notes, and comments. The five volumes were published one at a time in 1965, 1968, 1969, 1970 and 1971. It is this five volume version (1) that is referred to in all the articles of this book. Literal meaning of Śūnya is 'void' or 'emptiness'. The Śūnya of Viraśaivas is the 'Infinite' or the 'Absolute', equivalent to Brahman, Parabrahman or Paramātman of the Upaniṅads; and is different from the 'Śūnya/Śūnyatā' of the Buddhists. Saṁpādane is the 'attainment' of this supreme state Śūnya. **The Śūnyasaṁpādane is one of the most important documents of the Viraśaiva philosophy and faith, and it occupies a very high place in the whole range of Indian literature.**

TIMING OF THE VĒDIC CIVILIZATION

It is said that the Vēdas are without a beginning because they contain the ever present divine revelations. Ṛgvēda in ancient Sanskrit, previously a purely oral literature, is the most ancient of all compositions of the revelations. Although it is extremely difficult to place the beginning of this Ṛgvēda period, it is generally considered by the Indian scholars to be around 10,000 Before Common Era, BCE which was previously called BC (2).

India has emerged as the oldest continuous civilization on earth. New biological evidence suggests that the Indian population has lived in the peninsula for at least 75,000 years. In addition to the older archeological finds in Harappa and Mohenjodaro, and Mehrgarh (all in present day Pakistan), significant new sites relating to Indian antiquity have been discovered – great city of Dholavina in Gujarat (one of the largest ports in the ancient world), Rakhigarhi west of Delhi (considerably larger city than Harappa and Mohenjodaro, and at least as old), and other ancient sites in the eastern part of India as far as Lucknow. Archeologists had explored about one hundred settlements by the year 1968, but the number of such sites has increased tremendously to about 2,500 archeological finds by now (6).

The earliest Indic art is preserved on rocks, and dates from the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods – dated from 40,000 BCE to the historic times by means of radiocarbon dating techniques. The rock sites are found distributed all over India. A continuity of the central theme between the rock art and the art of the Indus-Sarasvati civilization (8,000 BCE to 1,900 BCE) has been found. According to the archeological record, there is an unbroken tradition going back to 8,000 BCE. Ṛgvēda, a compilation of very ancient material, has astronomical references recalling events in the third to the fifth millennia BCE and earlier, indicating that the Ṛgvēda period had been well established during that period prior to 3,100 BCE (6).

The ancient Indic civilization reached maturity during the period from 2,700 BCE to 1,900 BCE. This was the golden age of the Vēdas when the vēdic religious practice was in vogue. The practice was based on all the Vēdas; composition of the main parts of the four Vēdas being completed by then with some of the appendages added at a later date. The Ṛgvēda speaks of, and praises the mighty river Sarasvati (She who flows) the largest of the seven rivers forming the life support of the Vēdic civilization. Originally the Sarasvati flowed through Rajasthan and poured itself into the Gulf of Kuch near Kathilawar Peninsula. One of the main tributaries was the Yamuna River which now flows into Gaṅga (Ganges) River. Sutledge River was also a tributary of Sarasvati; it now flows

into the Sindhu (Indus) River. Around 1,900 BCE, over a comparatively short period of time, major tectonic shifts occurred which drastically altered the flow of rivers and turned the Sarasvati region into inhospitable desert – the present day Thar Desert in India. Prior to the final demise, the Sarasvati River had shifted its course at least four times, gradually turning the region inhospitable. Śatapatha (Hundred Paths) Brāhmaṇa of the Śukla (white) Yajurveda, the biggest of all the Brāhmaṇas, vividly describes the conquest of the swampy area east of the Gaṅga River, and does not mention the drying up of the Sarasvati River. This indicates that the eastward migration of the Vēdic people occurred over several hundred years prior to the catastrophe of 1,900 BCE and that the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa was composed during that time period (6).

Gaṅga River valley had been inhabited at least since 5,000 BCE. It was a thickly forested swampy area with heavy monsoon rains. Forest had to be cleared to make room for the new settlements. The center of vitality shifted from west to east, from the Sarasvati to the Gaṅga. Remembrance of the period of forest living in the Gaṅga River valley before this urbanization may be contained in the sacred Āraṇyakas (forest books) of the Vēdas. Hence, composition of the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads of the Vēdas belong to the second millennium BCE. Apparently, this was also the time of further development of the doctrines about reincarnation, karma, and spiritual liberation. This ensued into the 'historical' times and eventually to the well established dates for Goutama the Buddha (563 BCE to 483 BCE), founder of Buddhism, and Mahāvīra (540 BCE to 468 BCE) the founder of Jainism (6).

The so called Aryan invasion theory which supposedly happened between 1,500 BCE and 1,200 BCE seems to be a scholarly myth (6). The theory argues that the Vēdic Aryans entered India from the northwest through the mountain passes of Afghanistan. They supposedly were barbaric semi-nomadic tribes who came in search of new grazing land for their cattle. They apparently came down on horsebacks and chariots, armed with swords, bows and arrows, and other weapons, and were ruthless in conquering and subduing the native population. In that process, they apparently destroyed the existing political, economic and religious order. But there is no evidence that such invasion ever took place. The Vēdic civilization had been well established in India prior to 1,900 BCE. The so called Vēdic Aryans were indigenous to India. The word Aryan comes from the Sanskrit word 'ārya' meaning 'noble' or 'cultured'. The ancients, who transmitted the sacred heritage of the Vēdas, described themselves as the 'āryas' (6).

In course of time a need arose to compile and record the Vēdas. A sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana now revered as the **Vēda Vyāsa** (meaning Vēda compiler), collected them and arranged them in four Vēda formats: All the hymns used by the Hotā-priest to invite the various deities to the sacrifice became the Ṛgvēda. All the liturgical parts of the Vēdas, useful to the Adhvaryu-priest, the chief executor of

the sacrificial rites, formed the Yjurveda. Collection of all the musical chants, especially those associated with the Soma group of sacrifices, and to be sung by the Udgatr-priest (the singer), was named the Samaveda. The rest, a sort of miscellaneous appendix and addenda, assigned to the Brahma-priest who is considered as the supervisor over the whole sacrificial process, became the Atharvaveda (2). It is generally believed that Vyasa compiled and classified the Vedas as above, more than 5,000 years ago (3). Furthermore, he taught the Vedas to his four chief disciples, and assigned one each of the Vedas to them to be transmitted over the generations. Paila was assigned Rgveda, Vaisampayana the Yajurveda, Jaimini the Samaveda, and Samantu the Atharvaveda (2,3).

Traditionalists believe that Veda Vyasa and Badarayana are one and the same and that he authored Brahmasutra which is a doctrine of Uttara Mimamsa Philosophical School (also called Vedanta Philosophical School), and Mahabharata which includes Bhagavad-Gita. However, there is considerable evidence now to believe that Badarayana and Veda Vyasa are not one and the same person. The confusion might have been because that some form of Vedanta-sutras must have existed before Buddha, and that Veda Vyasa must have had a hand in the present recensions of the sutras (7).

VĒDA

The word Vēda, derived from the Sanskrit verb root 'vid' (to know), means 'knowledge' or 'wisdom'. The Vēdas are the records of revealed wisdom that have been faithfully passed down orally/verbally over thousands of years. They are the largest body of sacred literature surviving from the ancient world, and are the most impressive literary achievement of antiquity. The ability to preserve this comprehensive literature against the ravages of time is an incredible achievement (6). The Hindu religious tradition has accorded the Vēdas the highest place, and as such, they are revered as the basic scriptures of Hinduism (2). The Vēda consists of four collections of hymns (hymnodies) - Ṛk, Yajus, Sāman and Atharvan. These four Vēdas served as the foundation for the later additions to each in the form of Brāhmaṇas (ritual texts), Āraṇyakas (ritual and meditational texts for forest dwelling ascetics), and the Upaniṣads (the esoteric texts).

The collection of hymns contained in each of the four Vēdas is called Saṁhitā. It means that which has been collected and arranged in the form of mantra (3). These hymns were revealed to various Ṛṣis or sages at different periods of time; consequently the style of language, grammar, ideas, as well as the historic and cultural factors vary widely (2). Ṛgvēda refers only to Ṛgvēda saṁhitā, because the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads attached to the Ṛgvēda have their own separate names. The four saṁhitās, in course of time, branched off to form about 1180 Śākhās or recensions (critical revisions with intent to establish definitive texts), each śākhā branch meant specialization by one group of scholars. The origin of these śākhās is probably because the four principal disciples of Vēda Vyāsa entrusted to preserve the Vēdas in posterity, had several disciples of their own, and they and their successors might have done some readjustment of the Vēdic mantras to suit the needs of the times (2). Many of the śākhās have been lost - Ṛgvēda supposedly had 21 śākhās, but only 5 are currently in existence (2).

Ṛgvēda: Ṛk+Vēda = Ṛgvēda (Saṁskṛta sandhi rules). Ṛk means a chant or hymn in praise of the Divine. The hymn is also called a mantra which is a sacred utterance. Ṛgvēda is wholly in the form of hymns. It has a total of 10,589 Ṛks which are grouped into 1,028 sūktas. These are distributed into ten maṇḍalas (circles or cycles), equivalent to books or chapters. It appears that the ancient ṛṣis painstakingly composed each hymn with rigorous standards of metric composition along with the 'perfected' Saṁskṛta language so that these poetic forms would be remembered, more so than the prose form, and transmitted, error-free, in posterity over thousands of years. Although more than 15 distinct meters of composition are employed, only about 7 of them are frequently used

(6). One of the common forms of these poems/verses has four lines/feet (pāda) with eight syllables in each pāda. Approximately one quarter of the hymns in Ṛgvēda is composed in gāyatri meter which has three pādas with eight syllables in each pāda (6). Although the mantras are named after the Dēvatas (Divinities) that they refer to, the famous Gāyatri Mantra (III/62/10) is named after the meter of its composition itself. It goes like this: 'tat savitur varēṇyām; bhargō dēvasya dhīmahi; dhiyō yō naḥ praçōdayāt' ('Let us contemplate the beautiful splendor of God Savitur, that he may inspire our visions') (6). The Dēva is Savitur – the Divine Light manifesting in the luminous orb of the sun (3,6). The Gāyatri Mantra is recited at sunrise and at sunset.

Ṛgvēda begins with a hymn in praise on Divine fire Agni – 'I Laud Agni, the chosen Priest, God, minister of sacrifice The Hotṛ, lavishest of wealth' –, and ends with another one on Agni (8). There are about 200 Ṛks on Agni; about 250 on Indra (Divinity of lightening, thunder and rain); over 100 dedicated to Soma, whose mystery is embodied in the nectar that is consumed by the illumined sages to stimulate their visionary experiences; and fewer Ṛks on many Divinities – said to be 'thrice eleven' in number (6).

Although these praises to multitude of Dēvatas may give a wrong impression of the advocacy of polytheism (belief in many Gods), **Ṛgvēda teaches 'ēka-dēvatā-vāda' or monotheism** (belief in one God). Maṇḍala I, sūkta 164, verse 46 of Ṛgvēda goes like this – 'They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and He is heavenly nobly-winged Garutmān, **To what is One, sages give many a title,** they call It Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan' (8). Other hymns proclaim – God creates this world out of Himself (X/81/2-4); He is omnipresent (I/13/10), and omniscient (VI/7/6 & VIII/25/9) (2).

The attachments/appendages of the Ṛgvēda are – Aitarēya and Kauṣītakī Brāhmaṇas; Aitarēya and Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyakas; and Aitarēya and Kauṣītakī Upaniṣads (2).

Yajurveda: Yajus+Vēda = Yajurveda. The word yajus is derived from the Sanskrit verb root 'yaj' which means 'to sacrifice'. The word yajña is also derived from 'yaj', and means 'sacrificial worship'. Yajurveda consists of hymns that are in the form of sacrificial formulas. About a third of its 1,975 verses are taken from Ṛgvēda; the rest is original and is in prose form. The text is arranged in the order in which it is used in the ceremonies (6). Yajurveda includes formulas for all sacrifices, and gives the hymns of Ṛgvēda, a practical shape in the form of yajña (3). Although Yajurveda reflects the true principles of earlier Ṛgvēda, it shows some new developments. Certain deities, such as Prajāpati (Father of creatures), Viṣṇu, and Rudra-Śiva attain greater prominence (6). Although five sūktas called 'Pañça Rudraṃ' are in Ṛgvēda, the term 'Sri Rudraṃ' refers only to that which is contained in Yajurveda (3). Yajurveda is supposed to have had 85

śākhās, but only 4 are available, of which the Taittirīya Saṁhitā is the important one. Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, and Upaniṣad of the same Taittirīya name and Kaṭha Upaniṣad are its appendices (2).

When Vēda Vyāsa compiled the four Vēdas, he entrusted one of his four chief disciples, sage Vaiśampāyana, to preserve the Yajurvēda for posterity. This was the original version of the Yajurvēda. Vaiśampāyana taught this Vēda to his disciples including his chief disciple Yājñavalkya who in turn was supposed to do the same. However, it appears that Yājñavalkya had his own revelations from Sūrya (the sun God) in the form of a new and different version of Yajurvēda named Śukla (white/bright) Yajurvēda. Hence, the original version, in retrospect was named Kṛṣṇa (black/dark) Yajurvēda. The later Śukla version is completely in hymn form, and it also deals mainly with the sacrifices. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the biggest of the Brāhmaṇas, Bṛhad Āraṇyaka, and Īśāvāsya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads are its appendages (2).

Sāmavēda: Sāman means a song or melody. It is a mantra of Ṛgvēda set to music. It has 1,875 verses, but only 75 are original to Sāmavēda, the rest are from Ṛgvēda (6). Mantras of Sāmavēda, simply known as Sāmans, have seven svaras or musical scales identical with the seven scales of Classical Music of India. Hence Indian Classical Music has its origin from Sāmavēda. Nine Brāhmaṇas, Talavakāra or Jaiminīya Āraṇyaka, and Ćhāndogya and Kēna Upaniṣads are the appendices of Sāmavēda (2).

Atharvavēda: Mantras of this Vēda are said to have been brought to light by a ṛṣi named Atharvan. The mantras are in prose as well as in verse form (3). About one fifth of the hymns are drawn from Ṛgvēda. However Atharvavēda is generally considered to have been composed in an era considerably more recent than the Ṛgvēda (6). Major part of this Vēda is concerned with diseases and their cure, rites for prolonging life, rites for fulfilling one's desires, building construction, trade and commerce, penance, black magic, and other subject matters (2). It also has many hymns dealing with creation (2,3). Gopatha Brāhmaṇa and three well known Upaniṣads – Praśna, Muṇḍaka and Māṇḍūkya – are its appendices (2).

Appendices of the Vēdas: Brāhmaṇa serves as a guidebook in the proper use of the mantras by the ordinary householders or family persons. It lists the Vēdic karmas or rituals to be performed, and explains how they are to be performed. As the Vēdic rituals grew more and more complex, the step by step home-based Vēdic religious practice was taken over by priests who made the sacrifices even more elaborate (6). Hence, arose the priestly class.

Āraṇyaka is a sacred text similar to the Brāhmaṇa, but intended for the forest dwellers who having fulfilled their householder duties, live in solitude in the

forest. The focus is on certain powerful rites that lead to ritual purity followed by awakening of mystical powers. Āraṇyakas also contain a number of meditational and devotional teachings similar to the Upaniṣads, and they stand midway between Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads in form and spirit (6).

Upaniṣad: Upa-ni-ṣada means 'to sit beside'. It is what is taught to a seeker who sits by the side. **Upaniṣads are personalized instructions to those who are fit to receive them. The general thrust of the teachings is towards non-dualism – ultimately, all things are one, and that the innermost essence of the human being is the very same essence that underlies the universe at large** (6). Upaniṣads are the best known aspects of the Vēdic literature. They not only come at the end of the textual presentation of the Vēdas (Vēdānta), but also contain the ultimate goal of the realization of the end-product of the Vēdas. They are the end as well as the summit of the Vēdas.

Vēdas, in all, are generally considered to have two portions. The first part is the portion dealing with action or rituals (karma kāṇḍa) with the belief that Mōkṣa (salvation) can be obtained through the right performance of rituals as enjoined by the Vēdas. And the second part comes at the end of the Vēdas, in the Upaniṣads, dealing with knowledge (jñāna kāṇḍa), that is said to be the quintessence of the Vēdas (3). These two parts are considered to be complementary rather than contradictory to one another.

Vēda, as the name implies, is informative – it supplies the information regarding the 'unknown'. It does not compel anyone to do anything; it simply prescribes means for attainment of desired results and avoidance of untoward effects (2). It has no barriers of race, creed or religion; it is universal and eternal (3). Vēda does not state 'this is the only way' or 'this is the only God'. It makes it clear that any good religious path with faith and loyalty, and worship of any Dēvata in whatever way, will lead to the true goal (3). **Each of the Vēdas has many mahā-vākyas (great sayings).** But four, one from each Vēda, are important, thought provoking and powerful. They are contained in the jñāna kāṇḍa part of the Vēdas in the four Upaniṣads. In Aitarēya Upaniṣad of Ṛgvēda, it is said '**prajñānam Brahma**' meaning that **exalted actual experience alone is Brahman.** In Taittirīya Āraṇyaka of Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda '**ahamasmi brahmahamasmi**', and a slightly different version '**ahaṁ brahmāsmi**' in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad of Śukla Yajurveda, mean '**I am Brahman**'. In Ćhāndogya Upaniṣad of Sāmavēda '**tattvamasi (tat-tvam-asi)**' means '**that thou art**' or '**you are that (you are Ātman/Brahman)**'. In the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad of Atharvavēda '**ayamātmā brahma**' means '**Ātman is Brahman**' (3). These mahāvākyas clearly state the philosophy of non-dualism – **the individual Self and the Universal Self are one and the same, and that there is only one Absolute Reality.**

ADVAITISM OF VĪRĀŚAIVAS

Vīrāśaivas/Liṅgāyatās are advaitins/advaitas in general; they believe in only one Absolute Reality – Śūnya/Liṅga (1). Monism is the western term that refers to the view that Reality is basically one. Śūnya encompasses the whole universe. To simplify, it seems that Vīrāśaivas have adopted Śiva (male component) and Śakti (female component) to represent Śūnya. Śiva and Śakti are inseparable; the inseparable relationship is compared to the fire and its burning power. Śiva's consciousness is the Power represented by the symbol ŌṂ. The universe and the worldly existence are created by Śakti in Śiva's Consciousness. The activities are being played out as Līlā (sport, game, play, play acting) in Śiva's Consciousness. It is believed that Śiva, not only is tranquil, but also has active consciousness at the same time (1). Hence God is real and everything else is real within God's Consciousness – that way everything is still one – one Reality.

The Oneness philosophy is practiced by many Hindu groups of which Vīrāśaivas are just one group. **Hinduism accommodates both theistic (belief in the existence of God) and atheistic (belief that there is no God) ideas.** Based on the Vēdas, there are six major religious philosophical systems which were developed by Hindu sages at different periods of time (9). In addition many other systems have been adopted by other Hindu groups. All these systems are so diverse that each one may qualify to be a separate religion. One of the most ancient of all the schools of Hindu Philosophy – the **Sāṅkhya System – is atheistic;** but still it can help people attain spiritual liberation (9). This system recognizes two types of ultimate realities – Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Puruṣa is pure spirit, and there are as many Puruṣas as there are conscious beings. Prakṛti is primordial matter. Puruṣa must acquire the knowledge – Vivēka jñāna – that, as spirit, it is completely distinct from Prakṛti and Prakṛti's evolved products – body-mind complex. Only this knowledge will disentangle Puruṣa from Prakṛti, and result in its emancipation. This liberation can be achieved even during one's life, while still inside the body (9). Sāṅkhyas are not advaitas since they believe in two realities.

The term Mīmāṃsā, in the Mīmāṃsā School of Philosophy, more specifically the **Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā Philosophical School,** means an enquiry or deep analysis of a subject worthy of reverence, namely the Vēdas (3). Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā stresses the importance of sacrifices and rituals mentioned in the karma-kāṇḍa portion which is the first or older part (pūrva-bhāga) of the Vēdas. Whether God exists or not is not their concern. They believe God is not the bestower of the results of an action or karma, that every action automatically results in its fruit/reward, yielding good rewards for merit and bad rewards for bad deeds, and that non-performance of nityakarma (daily rituals) also results in bad rewards (3).

Furthermore, for them the question of creation is not important, because, the world has always been in existence without a beginning (3). Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā School believes only in after-death liberation of the soul. Mōkṣa can be achieved through the right performance of rituals as enjoined in the Vēdas. The liberated soul goes to svarga (heaven, paradise) and enjoys heavenly bliss according to the early Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā System, but as per the later System, mōkṣa is a state devoid of the possibility of rebirth and consequently of any pain or suffering. It does not mention any heavenly bliss (9). It is to be pointed out that their process of liberation is sometimes referred to as karma mārḡa (karma path), but it should not be confused with the karma mārḡa and Karma Yōga of the Vēdāntins. Pūrva-Mīmāṃsākas expect a reward for every action or karma they perform. Whereas the philosophy of Karma Yōga and Karma Mārḡa of the Vēdāntins is that karma should be performed without expectation of any reward, and that it is to be dedicated to God (3). Pūrva-Mīmāṃsākas are not considered as advaitas.

The original treatise of the Uttara Mīmāṃsā or **Vēdānta Philosophical School** is known as **Brahmasūtra**. Sūtra means a string, and Brahma Sūtra is said to be a string that holds the Vēdic flowers in the form of a garland. The authority behind Brahma Sūtra is the Upaniṣads. It deals conclusively with the goal of the sannyāsins, and it is an enquiry into Ātman (Soul) within the śarīra (body) (3). Several famous Philosophers – Śāṅkarācārya (788 to 820 AD), Rāmānujācārya (11th century AD), and Ānanda Thīrtha more commonly known as Madhvācārya (1199 to 1278 AD) – have written their versions of commentaries on Brahmasūtra.

Śāṅkarācārya's Advaita Philosophy is the one that is usually referred to as Advaitism. Here Brahman is the only Reality (Satya), and everything other than Brahman is Mitya (false) (10). Brahman is neither male nor female, and has no active consciousness. It is pure knowledge. The Jīva or the Individual Soul is Brahman itself. There can be no real birth, death or origination for the Jīva – it is described as being in par with the Jīva in a dream (10). From Brahman's standpoint, the world has not really been created; it is real to those who are under the spell of Māyā (illusiory power). A rope in partial darkness may appear to be a snake to an observer; at that moment the observer perceives the snake to be real. But when the light shines, the misperception disappears. Both Śāṅkara's and Vīraśaivas' advaita philosophies agree with the concept of oneness and that God is real, but they disagree with regard to whether God has active consciousness or not. Both systems believe that one can attain oneness with the Absolute, even when alive. The spiritual aspirant has to first go through various moral and ethical practices, worship of personal God, etc., and then go through intense meditation which enables the aspirant the knowledge of the inner Divine Self. Both systems believe that worship of, or meditation on the monosyllable **ŌM** can lead to the highest knowledge. When ignorance is completely eliminated, and all sense of I or Thou is wiped out, oneness is attained.

Rāmānujācārya's version is known as **Viśiṣṭādvaitism**. It is a qualified monism. It holds the view that three entities – God, soul and matter – are steady factors, and the three form inseparable elements of one (11). “It is one and not two, and still that one is made up of the three, a unity of trinity and therefore it is known as Viśiṣṭādvaitam” (page 2 of reference 11). If so, some state that, it can be categorized as traitism, not advaitism (10). Viśiṣṭādvaitins believe that only bhaktimārg/bhaktiyōga can lead to mōkṣa (salvation). They also believe that a person can attain mōkṣa only after the person's death. This mōkṣa means living blissfully in Vaikuṅṭha (god Viṣṇu's abode), subservient to god Viṣṇu, not becoming one with God.

Madhvācārya's version of the Vēdānta Philosophy is dualistic – **Dvaita Vēdānta**, and thus not advaitism. Dvaita School believes in liberation only after death. A person who has gone through rigorous ethical and moral discipline, followed by, acquiring right knowledge, right action, non-attachment and devotional meditation on the personal God, becomes fit for release or mōkṣa (9). There are four gradations of mōkṣa; the first one is the lowest and the fourth one is the highest. Depending upon the person's spiritual progress, the departed soul may achieve any one of the four kinds of mōkṣa. In Sālōkya, the soul resides blissfully in the abode of the personal God. In Sāmīpya or Sānnidhya, the soul enjoys bliss in the proximity of the personal God. In Sārūpya, the soul enjoys intense bliss by acquiring the form of the personal God. In Sāyujya or Kaivalya, the soul becomes blissfully absorbed in the personal God (9).

Another major philosophical system - **The Yōga School** – was founded by **Patañjali** who is the author of the **Aṣṭāṅga (eight-limb) yōga**, the practice of which results in the Union of the Individual Self and the Universal Self. The philosophy is that, complete control over the mind's distortions and disturbances is necessary in order for perfection to manifest itself. God can be the subject of concentration and meditation. But God, as an all-powerful being to whom supplication may be made, is not recognized in this system. In order to follow this yōga, one need not believe in or accept God. Patañjali prescribes meditation on the personal God as one of the methods for the attainment of highest union (12). Aṣṭāṅga yōga is somewhat similar to **Śivayōga** of Vīraśaivas.

Nyāya and **Vaiśeṣikā** Schools of Philosophy: These two schools have similar concepts. With logic and deduction, they propound a theory that the world is real and not illusory, and that the individual souls are many and are different from the cosmic Soul. They strongly affirm the existence of God, and that Paramēśvara created the universe (3). Liberation is achieved by cultivating ethical virtues and acquiring right knowledge. This state of liberation called Apavarga is said to be beyond pleasure, happiness, pain or any other experience.

There is no rebirth after this achievement (9). Both these Philosophical Schools are not considered to be Advaitas.

It appears that **Vīraśaivism** and **Liṅgāyatism** are synonymous, and terms are used interchangeably. **However, the Liṅgāyat version applies/uses the term Liṅga for everything to emphasize the oneness philosophy.** Śūnya is Liṅga. The Universal Self is Mahāliṅga. The Individual Self is Atmaliṅga. Śūnyasāmpādane, the attainment of oneness with the Absolute, is Liṅgāṅgasāmarasya. The personal god Śiva is Iṣṭaliṅga (portable form) and Sthāvaraliṅga (fixed version at a temple). In the other older religious philosophical systems, the soul is said to be enclosed in five sheaths that form three bodies. The outer sheath forms the gross body Sthūlaśarīra; the middle three sheaths form the subtle body Sūkṣmaśarīra; and the innermost sheath forms the causal body Karaṇaśarīra. The triple body – the gross, the subtle and the causal – are known in Vīraśaiva terminology as tyāgāṅga, bhōgāṅga and yōgāṅga. The respective Liṅgāyat equivalents are Iṣṭaliṅga, Prāṇaliṅga and Bhāvaliṅga (page 194, volume III of reference 1).

Śūnyasāmpādane compilations are considered by Vīraśaivas to be what the Bible is to the Christians. The compilations consider Vīraśaiva philosophy to be Śiva-advaita philosophy - Śivādvaitism. However some others have raised controversy, stating that it is Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaitism (13). This term is not mentioned anywhere in Śūnyasāmpādane. Professor Sakhare in his book (13) states that the philosophy of Liṅgāyatism is the same as that of Kashmere Śivādvaitas. Śiva is characterized and distinguished (viśiṣṭa) by His power (Śakti) or capacity to work. Kashmere philosophers imply the viśiṣṭatva of Śiva, but do not express it in so many words; but Liṅgāyatas do – this is the point of difference in terminology only (page 281 of reference 13). He continues – Liṅgāyat philosophy of Māyā is an improvement upon Kashmerean theory where there is no explanation of what the real Māyā is (page 290 of reference 13). He admits that misconception is possible if the content of Paraśiva, the un-manifest condition of the universe in his consciousness (Śakti) is stressed; and that this could be construed to be similar to the philosophy of Rāmānuja's school of Viśiṣṭādvaita (page 290 of reference 13). By emphasizing Śakti and using the term viśiṣṭa, the proposal of Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaitism as the philosophy of Liṅgāyatas, may be causing too much of confusion and the concept may be misconstrued.

As to the practice of Vīraśaivism – Śūnyasāmpādane (1) is replete with the use of the terms Śivādvaita and Śivādvaita-bhakti in the practice of Vīraśaivism where the worshipper and the worshipped are one and the same. Despite the above controversy it appears that Śiva-advaita philosophy is generally accepted to be the philosophy of Vīraśaivas. If there is a need for another term to differentiate the philosophy of Vīraśaivas from others, may be the terms Vīra-advaitism (Vīrādvaitism) or Liṅga-advaitism (Liṅgādvaitism) could be used.

CREATION

Viraśaivas and various Hindu Philosophical Schools have differing theories about Creation. The Creation is considered by many schools of philosophy, including that of the Viraśaivas, to be beginning-less and endless with an infinite series of successive creations and dissolutions (9). The world/universe becomes manifest when God projects the world out of Self. The world, after manifestation, is still inside God, and it undergoes a process of evolution. The evolved world is allowed to exist for a certain length of time, lasting billions of years, until it is withdrawn (*praḷaya*). Each cycle of projection, evolution, existence, and withdrawal of the world is called a *kalpa* (9). The cycle goes on again and again endlessly. Hinduism is unique in that it accepts both theistic (belief in God) and atheistic (belief that God does not exist) views. The Sāṅkhya Philosophical School is one of the oldest Hindu philosophical systems, and it is atheistic. The Sāṅkhya concept of Creation without any God is more than interesting because it is incorporated into the concepts of some of the theistic philosophical systems.

Creation according to Sāṅkhyas: Sāṅkhyas recognize two Realities - *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is pure spirit and is totally devoid of matter. It is passive and remains indifferent. It does not create the world. There are as many *Puruṣas* as there are conscious beings. *Prakṛti* is non-conscious primordial matter. It is constituted of three cosmic factors or potentialities. These are extremely subtle substances or qualities (*guṇa*), and they are said to be in equilibrium. The three *guṇas* are *Sattva*, the equilibrating power or the factor of presentation that gives rise to the desire to return to the Source of being; *Rajas*, the projecting power or the nature of outgoing activity and movement; and *Tamas*, the veiling power that causes delusion and ignorance (12). The theory of the three *guṇas* is described as the most noted contribution to philosophical thought by the Sāṅkhyas (10), and is accepted by the other schools of Vēdantic philosophy (3). In the proximity of *Puruṣa*, *Prakṛti* supposedly becomes active as a consequence of in-equilibrium of the three *guṇas*, and goes through a process of evolution to become the world. It evolves into 23 evolutes. Each evolute is known as *tattvam*, 'thing-in-itself', meaning quality of being that, basic material or inherent principle (3,4). *Puruṣa*, *Prakṛti*, and its 23 evolutes constitute a total of 25 *tattvas* (1,3,4,9,10).

Mahat (Buddhi) or cosmic intellect is the first evolute. It is the mental faculty of intelligence with a capacity for making distinctions.

Ahaṅkāra, the cosmic ego is the second product. It has three types of ego in it. The first type in which the *Sattvaguṇa* predominates, evolves into *manas* (mind), five *jñānēndriyas* (sense organs) – *śrōtra* the sense organ of hearing; *tvak* the

touch sensing organ; *ĉakṣus* the sight organ; *rasana* the taste sensing organ; and *ghrāṇa* the sense organ of smell –, and five karmēndrias (motor organs) – *vāk* the faculty of communication (speech); *hasta* the faculty of manipulation (hand); *pāda* the faculty of locomotion (foot); *pāyu* the digestive faculty (anus); and *upasthā* the procreative faculty (genitals).

The second type of ego with the predominance of Rajōguṇa provides five kinds of energy - *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna* and *samāna* – to the first and third ego types for them to evolve further. These *prāṇas* are not counted as *tattvas*.

The third ego type with the predominance of Tamōguṇa evolves into five *tanmātras* (subtle physical essences): *śabda* the subtle element of sound; *sparsāna* the subtle element of touch; *rūpa* the subtle element of form; *rasa* the subtle element of taste; and *gandha* the subtle element of smell.

The five *tanmātras* further evolve into five *mahābhūtas* (gross physical elements): *ākāśa*, sky/space/ether/cosmos; *vāyu*, air/wind; *tējas*, lustre/fire/light; *ap*, water/liquid; and *pṛthivī*, the earth.

These elements combine in different proportions according to the creation rules of permutation to further evolve into manifold universe.

Creation according to the Advaita Vēdanta Philosophy: The Advaitins categorically reject the above Sāṅkhya theory of creation, and point out that under no circumstances can any non-conscious (*aĉētana*) entity, *Prakṛti*, be credited with any activity, let alone creation. According to the Advaitins, Brahman is the only reality, and therefore, anything else can have no real existence. As far as Brahman is concerned, the world has not really been created. It is real to those who are under the influence of *Māyā* which is the mysterious power that obstructs our understanding of the reality. This theory is known as *Vivartavāda*, the doctrine of the apparent modification of Brahman into the phenomenal world (7). This theory alone can accurately describe the *Pāramārthica* Reality of higher knowledge of Brahman. Hence, everything is illusory, and there is no real creation. However, Advaitins do admit that so long as the knowledge of the Brahman is not secured, the world is a reality and it can be experienced. In this lower knowledge *Vyavahārika* state, any theory of creation is accepted as long as it is in the *Upaniṣadic śrutis*; if it is in the *smṛtis*, then, it is accepted only if it is not in conflict with the *śrutis*. On this basis the Advaitins have accepted the *pañĉikāraṇa* (five-fold) process of evolution of the world (10). The order of creation is said to be *ākāśa* which then gives rise to *vāyu* then to *tējas*, then *ap* and then *pṛthivī*. Brahman as the creative principle residing in the preceding element is the cause of the subsequent element in the order of creation (7). The five subtle elements (*pañĉa-sūkṣma-bhūta*) – space (*ākāśa*), air (*vāyu*), fire

(tējas), water (ap), and earth (pṛthivī) – combine in a set proportion to produce the five gross elements (pañca-sthūla-bhūtas):

$\frac{1}{2}$ subtle ākāśa + $\frac{1}{8}$ subtle vāyu + $\frac{1}{8}$ subtle tējas + $\frac{1}{8}$ subtle ap + $\frac{1}{8}$ subtle pṛthivī = gross ākāśa

The other four gross elements are produced when subtle elements combine in similar proportions, the gross product being named after the predominant subtle element constituting it. The subtle body of man is made of the five subtle elements, and the gross body of man and all gross objects in nature are made of the five gross elements (9,10). The dissolution comes about in the reverse order.

Purāṇas' view of creation: The vast Purāṇa texts come under the smṛti category of the scriptures. The authors of the Purāṇas took advantage of the support of the śruti texts for superstition and popular ideas, and presented to the readers, fanciful pictures especially when different sects, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and others, were coming into prominence (10). Some of these ideas include creation of seven upper worlds (lōkas) - bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ, mahaḥ, janaḥ, tapas and satyam; seven nether-worlds – atala, vitala, sutala, talātala, rasātala, mahātala and pātāla; and the four-fold gross body – jarāyuja, aṇḍaja, svēdaja and udbhijja; and so forth (10). The authors presented these creations in order to incorporate them in the process of attainment of mōkṣa. Bhuḥ is Earth. After the death of a person, the gross body is discarded, and with the help of the subtle body, the soul goes to one of the other six upper worlds for good deeds, or to one of the nether-worlds for bad deeds.

In the doctrine of five-sheath (kōśa) package, Jīva (soul) is enclosed in five sheaths which are arranged concentrically one inside the other. Only the outermost sheath, annamayakōśa, forms the gross body. Anna means food (cooked rice in Kannaḍa) and maya, not Māyā, means constituted of. Each succeeding sheaths become associated with more and more subtle entities. Prāṇamaya, manōmaya and vijñānamaya kōśas form the subtle body. The innermost sheath Ānandamayakōśa forms the causal body.

Śaiva concept of creation: Śaivas incorporate Sāṅkhya creation philosophy into theirs. According to **Śivāgamas** there are 11 more tattvas than the Sāṅkhyas' 25 to bring the total to 36 tattvas (page 399, volume II of reference 1). The Śaivas have adopted these 36 principles. Paramaśiva is the Creator. The first five principles that evolve from Paramaśiva are called pure principles – Śuddha tattvas. They are also called the Universal principles.

1. *Śivatattva*: Śiva principle manifests only the aspect of Consciousness. It is purely the subjective 'I', and has no objective reference.

2. *Śaktitattva*: This manifestation takes place almost simultaneously with the above. There is polarization of Consciousness into 'aham' the subject 'I', and 'idaṁ' the object 'this', without separation.
3. *Sadāśivatattva*: The Power of the Will to produce the universe predominates. The notion of being 'I am this' comes with the emphasis still on the subject 'I'.
4. *Īśvaratattva*: Refers to the 'Lord' the Creator. The formulation is complete. The notion of 'this I am' comes with the emphasis on the object 'this'.
5. *Śuddhavidyātattva*: Pure Knowledge tattva, also known as Sad-vidyā (the Knowledge of Being) tattva. Establishes the state of balance between the subjective and the objective forms of the One. The universe appears in a full-fledged form.

During the above five Śuddhatattvas, the sphere of influence of the Āṇavamala comes in. It is the first of the three taints/impurities. This impurity, the primordial dirt, subsists in the soul and keeps the soul separate from God (page 392, volume I of reference 1). The next six principles are called the pure-impure principles – Śuddha-aśuddha tattvas. They are also called the limiting principles.

6. *Māyātattva*: The Power of Delusion predominates. The One appears to be limited through the separation of the subject and the object. The next five tattvas are associated with Māyā, and said to be covered over by five sheaths, and become constrained.
7. *Kalātattva* (art of creation): The creatorship is limited, causing limited effectiveness.
8. *Kālatattva* (time): The eternity is limited to temporal existence, marked by past, present and future.
9. *Vidyātattva* (knowledge): The omniscience of consciousness is limited, resulting in only finite knowledge.
10. *Niyatitattva* (necessity): The independence and pervasiveness of the Consciousness is curtailed, causing limitation relative to cause, space and form.
11. *Rāgatattva* (attachment): Wholeness (pūrṇatva) of consciousness is disrupted, giving rise to desire for partial experiences.

The above six and the Puruṣatattva of the Sāṅkhya's come under the sphere of influence of Māyāmala, the second of the three taints/impurities. It is associated with subtle matter, subtler than the cosmic matter, and is not an illusion. Sāṅkhya's Prakṛti and its 23 evolutes, belonging to the province of nature, come under the sphere of Kārmikamala, the third of the three taints. Śaivas consider karma to be a taint. It is associated with the individual souls, and is the result of actions performed – the souls enjoy or suffer according to their deeds (page 392, volume I of reference 1). All the 25 principles of the Sāṅkhyas' are called impure principles – Aśuddhatattvas. Paramaśiva, in this way of the 36 principles, has created Many, and in addition has given rise to countless objects. Each individual is said to have all these principles.

Vīraśaiva concept of Creation: Prabhudēva's vaċana, translated into English, on page 58, volume I of the reference 1, exemplifies the so called beginning.

When neither Source nor Substance was,
 When neither I nor mine,
 When neither Form nor Formless was,
 When neither Void was nor non-Void,
 Nor that which moves or moves not,
 Then was Guhēśvara's votary (Śaraṇa) born.

All Vīraśaiva philosophers, and particularly Prabhudēva, hold the view that the world evolved out of nothing. In the beginning there was nothing, not even Śūnya (Void) or Niśśūnya (Primal Void). Then Śaraṇa arose. This is the fundamental theory of the Vīraśaivas (page 369, volume I of reference 1). Ṛgvēda hymn of creation (X.129.1), says '*There was not the non-existent nor the existent then; there was not the air nor the heaven which is beyond*'. Similarly in Ćhāndōgya Upaniṣad (VI.2.1) '*Some say that, in the beginning, this was Non-being (asat) alone, one only, without a second. From that Non-being, arose Being (sat)*' (14). Hence the Vīraśaiva/Liṅgāyata theory continues 'In the beginning the formless undivided Liṅga (Niṣkala Liṅga), inclusive of the entire Void, which is existence, knowledge, bliss, eternity and perfection, in order not to remain as Void, by an impulse of spontaneous play and sport (līlā), putting forth the glow of Consciousness, creates within Self, an infinity of macrocosms and myriad of microcosms, and attaches to them the twenty-five categories (tattvas). The souls, as a result of attachment of these categories, forget their true nature, and in asserting their body, become subject to pleasure and pain, and become captive to death and desire' (modified; pages 52 and 53, volume I of reference 1). The twenty five categories referred to here are the same Sāṅkhya tattvas as above (page 363, volume I of reference 1). However, the Vīraśaivas consider these tattvas to be aśuddha or impure.

The above version of the creation is in the main translated portion of Śūnyasaṃpādane (1). The following part is in the preface section on page vii,

and has been included there by the editors of the volume I of reference 1. In the beginning there was a state of complete Void (Sarva-Śūnya), and in this stage, Śiva is Śūnya. Śiva's consciousness is known as Power indicated by the symbol Ō̄M̄. Then Śūnya Liṅga evolved. This is considered as the first stage in the evolution. Then from it, Mahāliṅga evolved. From Mahāliṅga, Sadāśiva of five faces came into existence. From the five faces of Sadāśiva, five sādākhyas arose, and from them the five elements – earth, water, light, air and sky. From Sadāśiva's eyes and mind the sun and the moon, and from the hidden face the Ātman evolved. Thus it is said that the universe evolved from Sadāśiva and will be reabsorbed in the reverse order.

BODY, BREATH AND MIND, AND THE INNER SELF

Vīraśaivas/Liṅgāyatas believe in only one Absolute Reality – Śūnya/Liṅga. The main aim of the Vīraśaivas is to attain oneness with this Reality - Śūnyasāmpādane (1). To attain oneness, first in the preparatory steps, the person has to realize the Divine presence in one's body, and then in six stages (Ṣaṣṭhala), one must ascend from the initial dim awareness of God to the final and complete identity with Śūnya (1,15). In this process of attainment through the practice of **Śivayōga**, it is emphasized that the inner Self and the body are not identical, and that to shift the sense of identity from the body-breath-mind to the inner Self. A question then arises as to the importance of body, breath (life/Prāṇa) and mind in this process of liberation of the Self.

According to the Advaita Vēdānta Philosophy of Śankarācārya, Brahman is the only Reality, and everything else is mitya (false/illusion). The world of multiplicity, including the body, breath and mind, is simply a product of spiritual ignorance (avidyā), and when the root ignorance of the unenlightened mind is removed, the world reveals itself in the true nature which is Saĉĉidānanda (being-knowledge-bliss). Since the body and the world as a whole is deemed insignificant, the spiritual seeker is further advised to focus exclusively on the Self, abandoning all conventional pursuits. It also views the body as a breeding ground for karma, and an automatic hindrance to enlightenment, and therefore it is worthy of a little more than condemnation (16). On the other hand Ćarvākas the materialists who accept only what is directly perceived, believe only in the existence of material elements including the body, and reluctantly agree in consciousness as a by-product of the material brain, and not as a primary manifestation (16).

Contrary to the above two views, the Vīraśaivas believe that the universe is a manifestation of the Ultimate Reality, and that body is a temple of the Divine. **The Vīraśaiva Sadbhakti requires not only the liberation of the soul but also the liberation of the body, life and mind** (page 412, volume II of reference 1). **What is more important is that, all these three should be made into the nature of the Divine, and be united with the Divine.** The body should be emptied of its earthliness – this is the liberation of the body. The next step is to fill the body with the Divine nature which is practice (ācāra), and it is elevated to the position of Liṅga itself. Then the mind should be delivered from its earthliness which is ignorance, and should be further filled with Divine knowledge – this is the liberation of the mind. From birth till death, the outer covering, the body, serves its master, the vital breath Prāṇa, in all possible ways. Life is infinitely more important a factor than the body. Life is an active function, and according to Upaniṣadic saying, gets its energy from Brahman. According to

the Viraśaivas it is the Liṅga (page385, volume II of reference 1). The relationship between the body and the vital breath is compared to that of bhakta and the Jaṅgama. Ćennabasavaṅṅa's appraisal of the body is noteworthy (page 8, volume III of reference 1). 'How could one get the divine vision without the body? How could one attain to the divine knowledge without the body? And how could one have the divine grace without it? This is why the body is regarded as a gift of the Divine Grace – Prasādakāya (kāya pertains to the body). The body contains the seeds of Divinity'.

Viraśaivism asserts the value of the body, life and mind for spiritual realization. It considers that the Liṅga has taken triple form in these - Iṣṭaliṅga, Prāṅaliṅga and Bhāvaliṅga respectively. It is through the realization of the three Liṅgas that one has to advance and attain to the Absolute (pages 387 & 392, volume III of reference 1).

Religious practice is based on the philosophy of that particular religion or sect. The Viraśaiva Philosophy for the attainment of the Ultimate Reality is the reverse process of creation and evolution of the worldly life. The practice of **Śivayōga** takes the individual back to the original source, in the reverse order in which the individual came into existence.

The One has become Many, and in addition has given rise to countless objects. In order to be liberated, an individual must trace back the path from Many to the One. In Viraśaivism, Prakṛti, or phenomenal nature, is considered to be aśuddha, or impure, and so too all the evolutes of Prakṛti, namely, earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind (moon), intellect (sun) and ego. This impurity is known as Pūrvāśraya. It has to be purged off by the touch of Spiritual-nature, Parā-prakṛti, through the **Aṣṭavaraṅga – eight-fold external protective coverings or shields, namely – Guru, Liṅga, Jaṅgama, Pādōdaka, Prasāda, Vibhūti, Rudrākṣi, and Maṅtra** (page 401, volume I of reference 1). **According to Viraśaivas, the above eight-fold external protective coverings have counterparts in the inner being. These are – Arivu (awareness), Sujñāna (right knowledge), Svānubhāva (self-experience), Karuṅāmṛtā (nectar of compassion), Kṛpāprasāda (gift of grace), Bhasita (self-conscious splendor), Ćitkānte (self-conscious light), and Ćidānaṅda (self-conscious bliss).** (page 415, volume III of reference 1). Although the followers of Bhaktimārga advocate the necessity of ritualistic spiritual practice, including the above aspects, **for the attainment of the Absolute, Prabhudēva, however, preaches the superiority of jñāna – 'to claim that religious practice is indispensable for the realization of Paraśiva, shows a sense of duality which betrays a want of faith that God is inherent in the Consciousness'** (page 427, volume I of reference 1). It is to be noted that the aspirant, here, sheds the earthly nature of the body, breath and mind – breaks the bondage of things but not the things themselves, as they

are of vital importance for advancement; they are the offerings one must make to God (page 292, volume V of reference 1).

After overcoming the *ásuddha tattvas* as above, the individual is faced with the influence of *Māyā* and the three *malas* (taints/impurities). The three *malas* - *Āṇavamala* the primordial dirt that subsists in the soul and keeps it separated from God, *Māyāmala* that is not an illusion and is associated with subtle matter, and *Karmamala* the result of action performed by the individual and associated with the soul which enjoys or suffers according to its deeds - which are considered formidable by the *Śaivas*, can, according to the *Viraśaivas*, be wiped out by the grace of Guru (page 393, volume I of reference 1). *Anugraha* is the bestowal of Supreme Grace by the *Sadguru* (divine teacher) upon a disciple who is fully ready for receiving it. It is a process in which the impurities of the disciple's body, mind and soul are cleansed. There is a transformation – a spiritual rebirth. The disciple feels the Divine presence in the body (page 357, volume II of reference 1). The aspirant, who vanquishes these three *malas*, attains purity of the body (*Śuddha*), clarity of the mind (*Siddha*), and perfection of the will (*Prasiddha*) (page 403, volume I of reference 1).

After overcoming the above obstacles and completing the preliminary steps in the practice of *Śivayōga*, the aspirant must now continue to transcend the *śuddhatattvas* (please see the next article 'Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini'). This is accomplished by the continued practice of *Śivayōga*, where one ascends in six stages (*Ṣaṣṭhala*), in one's spiritual path, for the complete identification with the Absolute.

PRĀṆA AND KUṆḌALINI

Prāṇa, an old Sanskrit word used in Ṛgvēda where it meant 'breath of the Cosmic Person', means breath of life in general. It also means life, life-force, life-energy and vital-breath. Prāṇa is a dynamic form of energy (kinetic energy), and is responsible for all the life-forces that make the embodiment of the Divine possible. Source of this energy is Liṅga. Vīraśaivism considers that Liṅga has taken triple form in the body, prāṇa and mind in the form of Iṣṭaliṅga, Prāṇaliṅga and Bhāvaliṅga respectively.

Prāṇa, the life-energy courses throughout the body through a network of currents/ pathways/ conduits/ channels - **nāḍi**. Although these nāḍis may have correlation with the anatomical structures such as blood vessels, nerves, nerve plexuses, spine, spinal canal, spinal cord and brain, these nāḍis were visualized or perceived by the ancient yōgic seers to be currents of prāṇa in the body, and therefore not to be confused with the physical structures within the body. It is said that these cannot be seen by dissecting the body, but can be visualized during yōgic meditation. Tantric manuals state that there are innumerable nāḍis that traverse the body. Of these, 770 are considered to be of primary importance by the Vīraśaivas. There are three main nāḍis. The central/axial current pathway **Suṣumnā** nāḍi courses from the base/root position (mūlasthāna), deep in the pelvis at the level of the lower end of the spine, to the top of the head. The two spiral currents, **Īḍā** (comfort) nāḍi located to the left of Suṣumnā at the base, and **Piṅgaḷā** (tawny) nāḍi located to the right of Suṣumnā at the base, spiral upward around the Suṣumnānāḍi, and end at the level of the upper part of the nasal passages; each ending on the opposite side of Suṣumnā.

Prāṇa courses through all these nāḍis in a discontinuous fashion, and pools in some areas along the Suṣumnā to form vortices or wheels (**ĉakra**) of energy centers. These centers are also called lotuses (**Padma**). There are seven main ĉakras/lotuses. The lower six lotuses face upwards and have a total of fifty petals connecting fifty Sanskrit letters (akṣaras) in the form of sacred spells. The seventh lotus is located at the top of the head. This lotus has 'thousand' petals and it faces downward; these petals are white, and the filaments are red. The fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet go around and around twenty times in the thousand petals. The seven lotus centers are listed from the base to the top of the head.

1. **Mūlādhāra**: Mūla is base or root, and adhāra is support or prop. It is located deep in the pelvis at the level of the lower end of the spine. This lotus has four petals representing the four quarters of space. The Vīraśaivas believe that Āĉārāliṅga has its seat here.

2. **Svādiṣṭhāna:** Sva is self or own. It is located at the level of the genitals. More than any other center, this one relates to desire, especially the sexual urge. It is depicted as a six-petaled lotus whose petals are connected with six afflictive emotions of lust (kāma), anger/aggression (krōdha), greed (lōbha), delusion (mōha), pride/ego (mada), and envy (mātsarya). Guruliṅga is said to be seated here.
3. **Maṇipura:** Maṇi is gem or jewel, and pura is city or town. This ten-petaled lotus is located at the level of the navel (nābhi). It is connected with the digestive system. Śivaliṅga is seated here.
4. **Anāhata:** Anāhata means unstruck. Nāda is the unstruck sound. It is located at the heart, and is also known as '**heart-lotus**' (hṛt-padma, hṛdaya-kamala). Ever since the time of Ṛgvēda, the heart has been considered as the abode of Ātman (Ātmaliṅga, jīvaḥṁsa, individual soul). The heart lotus has twelve petals; the petals are arranged in two layers. The lower eight petals tend in a downward direction; where as the upper four petals tend in the upward direction. Jaṅgamaliṅga is said to be seated here.
5. **Viśuddhi:** Viśuddhi is purity. It is located at the throat/neck, and is also known as throat-center (kaṅṭha). It is a sixteen-petaled lotus, and is linked with vowel sounds only. Prasādaliṅga is said to be seated here.
6. **Ājñā:** This 'command' center is situated in the middle of the head at the level where bindu the kuṅkuma dot is placed on the forehead (the third-eye position on the forehead). The yōgic masters consider this center as a place where mental telepathic communication can take place. This lotus has only two petals which connect to two seed letters (bijākṣara) 'harh' and 'kṣarh' representing the last two letters of the Sanskrit alphabet ha and kṣa. Mahāliṅga is said to be seated here.
7. **Sahasrāra:** It is located at the crown of the head. It is also known as Śivapura - Paramaśiva is said to be seated here. **Brahmā-randra**, meaning Brahmic-fissure, is another term used for this lotus because some yōgis believe that at the time of liberation, consciousness leaves the body through this fissure or exit-point, to merge with the Brahman.

Kuṅḍalini Śakti: Kuṅḍalini means 'she who is coiled'. Kuṅḍalini is the Divine Energy. Śakti lies dormant (coiled-up) in the Mūlādhāra, like a resting coiled snake in a lid-closed basket container of a snake charmer. The coils of Kuṅḍalini convey the notion of potentiality. It is the potential type of energy. Kuṅḍalini, the Divine energy, is more powerful than Prāṇa, the life-energy.

All these - Prāṇa, Nāḍi, Ćakra/Padma, and Kuṇḍalini – come into play during the practice of **Śivayōga**, particularly in the Prāṇaliṅgi stage and onwards of Śaṭsthala.

Self-experience is the main characteristic of **Prāṇaliṅgisthala**. The seeker's vision tends inwards and gets clarified. The body is a temple that enshrines the Divine. The vital-breath which courses through the body, worships the Liṅga with the flower of right aspiration. The breath, when regulated, emits fragrance which serves as a wreath of flowers for Liṅga seated in Śivapura. The breath regulation, **Prāṇāyāma** which means storing and distribution of vital-energy, is practiced only in its elementary form by the Viraśaivas. It is performed while seated in the simple cross-legged position (It could also be practiced in the lotus position – Padmāsana). It is not deep breathing which may lead to complications. Every aspect of breath-control is to be performed in a relaxed manner, and there should not be any jerky/sudden movement. There are three aspects – inhalation, retention and exhalation. Inhalation is accomplished by taking in a large breath of air smoothly. Retention of the breath is a natural breath-hold, and it should not be forced. If stability of the breath-hold is lost, the breath has to be released. Duration of retention is what is comfortable for that person. Exhalation of the breath is gradual and smooth. During this process of breath regulation, one feels a gradual expansion of the chest, and feels the air reaching all parts of the lungs. This allows full utilization of the life-breath. This process moves life-energy through both Īḍānāḍi and Piṅgalānāḍi, from their upper ends, down to the lower ends at the Mūlādhāra. The life-energy then rises up in the Suṣumnānāḍi, and reaches all the way to the top center Sahasrāra. The energy is also distributed throughout the body via the innumerable smaller nāḍis. All this occurs during the phases of inhalation and retention. During the phase of exhalation, the energy courses back in the reverse order. Breath-control directly affects the ascending and descending currents of life-force. In an ordinary individual, the currents exist in a haphazard manner, and pose as obstacles for a free flow of vital-energy. The yōgic meditative practice of self-purification places these currents in a proper order of alignment. When breath regulation becomes effortless, the person is totally absorbed in its fineness. Prāṇa and mind become intricately connected with each other in Sahasrāra.

The ultimate purpose of Prāṇāyāma is to effect the flow of Prāṇa through the central passage Suṣumnā, which then draws the much more powerful energy of Kuṇḍalini into the Suṣumnā. Before Kuṇḍalini can ascend the axial pathway, all impurities must be removed from the network of nāḍis and padmas. If not, it may result in serious physical and mental imbalances. Therefore, prior to embarking on Prāṇāyāma, one must purge all desires and emotional afflictions such as lust, anger/aggression, greed, infatuation, boasting/ego and envy/jealousy. This purifies the disorderly nature of Svādiṣṭhāna and Maṇipura. Then, cultivating kindness, compassion and other such virtues, enhances the

purification of heart lotus Anāhata. Breath control then aligns the life-energy currents into proper order, so that Kuṇḍalini can rise up into Suṣumnā unimpeded.

Once activated, Kuṇḍalini forces its way through Suṣumnā, and causes each pool of energy center (padma) to vibrate intensely and fully. It opens up the closed-petaled lotuses (it blooms). As it goes from center to center, it leaves the previous center in a state of "void". At each center there is profound purification of the tattvas/principles seated there. All the centers are increasingly homogenized until they vibrate in unison. Amṛta, the nectar of life, is released from the Sahasrāra. It is then that ŌṂ is heard in the state of ecstasy. Śakti "voids" the respective Liṅgas seated at the lotuses, and finally joins Śiva in Śivapura/Sahasrāra. There is synthesis between Dṛṣṭi (vision) and Sṛṣṭi (creation), the vision being the subject and the creation being the object. The inner light pervades the whole universe.

The union of two things is indispensable in every one of the different yōga systems. In Jñāna yōga it is the union of Ātman and Brahman, in Haṭha yōga it is Prāṇa and Apāna, in Layayōga Nāda and Biṇḍu. Similarly, in Śivayōga, the union of Śakti from Mūlādhāra and Śiva abiding in Sahasrāra is accomplished in Anāhata the heart lotus.

In this course of spiritual practice, the model of Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini assists the practitioner, in the person's inward odyssey from the Many to the One.

For the scientific minded, this may all seem strange. But if one analyzes this further, one may realize that there is some truth to it. Modern science and the ancients agree that the universe is all full of energy. If matter can indeed be converted into energy (Theory of Relativity $E=MC^2$), then the human body, a product of the material cosmos, is energy at a more primary level. Energy and Consciousness are ultimately conjoined together as the two poles of the same Reality (16).

YŌGA

The word yōga is derived from the Sanskrit verb root 'yuj', meaning to join, to unite or to yoke. Yōga is a unique process, by the practice of which an aspirant, the individual Self, is united with the Universal Self. It is to be noted here that Vīraśaivas consider that the 'union' does not mean union of two separate entities which may imply duality. It is considered 'union-less union' because it is the reformation of the same entity, which under the influence of Māyā (the power that obstructs the understanding of Reality), falsely appears to be two. Hindu philosophy is unique in that its different methods of yōga practice can lead to the same highest goal. For the psychic type of person, Rājayōga is suitable. The discriminating or the reasoning type of person is suited for the path of Jñāna yōga. Bhaktiyōga is suitable for a devotional type of person, and Karmayōga is for an action oriented person. A general study and practice of the principles of all types of yōgas may be more beneficial to an individual.

Yōga, when unspecified, usually refers to **Patañjali's Yōga-Sūtra**. The Yōga School was founded by Patañjali who is the author of the **Aṣṭāṅga (eight-limb) yōga**. The Yōga School's philosophy is that complete control over the mind's distortions and disturbances is necessary in order for perfection to manifest itself. God can be the subject of concentration and meditation. But God, as an all-powerful being to whom supplication may be made, is not recognized in this system. In order to follow this yōga, one need not believe in or accept God. Patañjali prescribes meditation on the personal God as one of the methods for the attainment of highest union (12). Aṣṭāṅga yōga is also referred to as Rāja yōga – 'kingly or royal yōga'. Patañjali's Aṣṭāṅga yōga is somewhat similar to **Śivayōga** of Vīraśaivas. Prabhudēva had mastered the Aṣṭāṅga yōga (1).

Aṣṭāṅga yōga as the name implies has eight limbs or steps, namely – yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi. These eight steps are grouped into three disciplines (17). Bahiraṅga-sādhana comprises of ethical practices in the form of yama or general ethical principles, niyama or self-restraint, and physical practices in the form of āsanas. The second discipline antaraṅga-sādhana is emotional or mental discipline brought to maturity by prāṇāyāma and pratyāhāra or mental detachment. The third, antarātma-sādhana is the successful quest of the soul through dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi (17).

Yama consists of five very basic ethical principles that are to be followed in everyday life. The first one is **ahimsa** or nonviolence. The thought of non-injury is stressed to be as important, if not more important than non-injury by word or deed. One must love and sympathize with fellow beings, and must not harm anyone in any way. There is no room for aggression, cruelty or harassment of

others. If one is jealous, rude or unjust to any being, that one is said to never enter the gate of yōga, because the mind will be so disturbed that it will frustrate all effort at meditation (12). The second one is **satya** or truthfulness. Truth is to be observed at all times, not only in speech but also in action and thought. Lying, cheating, dishonesty and deception are not acceptable. Every gesture of the body, the body-language, must speak the truth so that the life becomes a living illustration of it (12). Truth will not cause any fear or uneasiness, and will bring one closer to perfection. Thirdly **asteya** or freedom from avarice or greed, also applies to both action and thought. It is more than just not stealing – one must not misappropriate someone else's property or right which may be gross, emotional, intellectual or spiritual. Misappropriation may inflict injury to one's consciousness, which may make it difficult to attain the path of perfection. In addition, one should recognize and acknowledge service done by others. Fourth, **brahmaçarya**, 'roaming in Brahman' is chastity. Behind the sex instinct, there is the instinct of immorality which is unacceptable. One must develop moral strength from within. Sex-energy is to be understood, managed, and converted into another channel of energy that will lead one towards the highest realization. The fifth ethical principle **aparigraha** is freedom from accepting gifts with strings attached. One should not accept any gifts from anyone who expects something in return. These types of gifts are considered equivalent to accepting bribes, and therefore should not be accepted. Maintenance of independence to fully uphold justice where applicable is important in maintaining clear consciousness.

Niyama is cultivation of good habits that give positive feelings. It also has five basic principles. **Sauçā** is cleanliness, both external and internal, and both physical and mental. Cleanliness must be cultivated within and expressed outwardly. **Santōśa** is contentment. Dissatisfied individual does not make any progress in any field. Discontentment makes chaos in ones mind. Contentment induces cheerfulness and mental calmness. **Tapas** is austerity. It involves self-discipline to purify body, senses and mind, and devotional attention to God. **Svadhya** is regularity of study and steadiness in practice. This regularity of study and practice becomes a rhythm that helps one to accomplish things without much effort and with much ease. **Īśvarapranidhāna** is devotion or practice of surrendering oneself to the higher authority – God.

Āsana is a physical performance of a steady and sustained posture that is comfortable to the individual. Āsana is not just a mechanically assumed posture; it involves thought, at the end of which a balance is achieved between movement and resistance (17). Performance of āsanās results in a perfected body that has beauty, grace and strength. As the performances become effortless, synchronicity and harmony of the body-mind develops. Simple posture for yōga meditation that can be held for a sufficient time without any discomfort is the sitting position - sitting straight and cross-legged with eyes looking straight

out and with hands resting on the lap. Effortless performance of the āsanas helps to reach the infinite being within. It is to be pointed out here that there is another category of yōga called Haṭhyōga that concentrates its efforts on the physical aspects of various āsanas to 'harden the body'. That is not the purpose here in this yōga system.

Prāṇāyāma is complete control and distribution of vital energy in the body by means of regulation of breathing. For details please refer to 'PRĀṆA AND KUṆḌALINI' article in this book.

Pratyāhāra is to disengage all sensory input, particularly about the objects of desire, coming from the sense organs, and release the mind from the power of these senses, so that the mind can then be directed to carry out the function of concentration for meditation. It requires regular and repeated practice to steady the mind. The process of steadying the mind is compared to stopping the flickering of the flame of a burning candle by freeing it from the influence of the wind.

Dhāraṇa: Once some control over the mind has been achieved as above, one must now practice holding the collected consciousness together for some period of time. One has to focus the thoughts to the object of meditation or the inner Self. Once this unwavering focus on the object or the inner-Self has been maintained for a period of time, then dhāraṇa state has been achieved.

Dhyāna is meditation proper. Meditation is described as a continuous stream of image making in one's consciousness (12). One continues the deep focused meditation. After about fifteen minutes of uninterrupted meditation, the image drops from consciousness, and only super-consciousness remains (12). This kind of meditation flows into the next stage, Samādhi.

Samādhi is achieved when continued meditation leads the knower, the unknown, and the known to become one (17). This is the state of total absorption where self-awareness is lost (17). In this state there is no bondage, no limitation, and no imperfection of any kind – perfection has been attained (12). When one meditates on an object, there is a subject-object relationship, and the Self is poured into the object which becomes the All, the abstract Truth. This kind of samādhi is called savikalpa samādhi ('with variation'). When no object is used for meditation, the Self, free from all modifications, reveals its own nature. This is nirvikalpa samādhi ('without variation, or changeless') (12). When consciousness vanishes and super consciousness manifests in the highest state of samādhi, the perfectness has been attained. This complete realization is the goal of yōga.

JÑĀNĀ YŌGA is the path of knowledge. The method of attaining perfection is based on the philosophy of non-dualism – advaitism (monism). The philosophy is – Brahman is the only reality; the universe as we know it is unreal; by the influence of Māyā the inscrutable power that obstructs our understanding, Brahman appears to us as the universe with its manifold manifestations; and the reality of the individual soul is nothing but Brahman. Here the contention is that there is nothing to be ‘attained’. The veil of ignorance that obscures the knowledge has to be removed. As soon as the veil of Māyā is removed, ‘you become what you have always been’. Discrimination and dispassion are the fundamental requisites for this goal of Jñānayōga. Discrimination here refers to differentiating the Self from the non-self with one’s self-consciousness. Self is the Observer, and should not get mixed up with the functioning of the faculties of the body-mind non-self. Superimposition of the non-self on the Self must be understood and stopped. This discrimination leads to the non-self merging with the Self (12).

Five preliminary practices – control of speech, not accepting gifts, avoiding hope, freedom from activity, and living in a secluded place – will bring one’s mind to a state of steadiness and strength with less need for support from external world. These practices will prepare one to become an *adhikāri* – a student who has developed a capacity to retain spiritual teachings. A guru, then, using three methods of instruction - *śravaṇa* meaning ‘hearing’ or the process of taking in; *manana* meaning argumentative assimilation; and *nididhyāsana* meaning ‘meditation towards’ a constant and spontaneous flow of knowledge – unveils the inner potentiality of the *adhikāri*. The knowledge becomes part of oneself. These disciplines purify one’s consciousness until it shines in its own pure splendor that is *nirvikalpa samādhi*, a state beyond all duality. That is the goal of Jñānayōga (12).

BHAKTI YŌGA is the path of Love. There is a subject-object relationship, and is dualistic to start with; but in the end it brings the realization of Oneness by merging the ‘I’ into the ‘Thou’. Love is a positive expression of the emotion within an individual. By purifying this love, inner perfection may be realized. Bhakti is the supreme devotion to God, and one who has this devotion is a *bhakta*. *Bhakta*’s lovable God is projected out of *bhakta*’s consciousness as a concrete and finite *Iṣṭam*. Guru discovers this *Iṣṭam* for the disciple, and gives the disciple a mantra to go with it. According to the guru’s instructions, the *bhakta* carries out spiritual practices (*sādhana*) on the *Iṣṭam*, and develops a state of being, ‘*bhāva*’, which is the attitude of the aspirant towards the *Iṣṭam*. *Bhaktiyōga* includes the following components (12).

Niyama is same as in the *Aṣṭāṅgayōga*. *Niṣṭa* is adherence to certain rituals, and to practice them with tenacity. *Upāsna* is worship. It has four components – *pūja* is ritualistic worship, *japam* is repeated chanting of a mantra, *smaraṇam* is

constant remembrance, and dhyānam is meditation. *Dinata* is modesty and humility that comes with realization of something very great. *Sēva* is service to others which is considered as service to God. And *Ātmasamarpaṇam* is self surrender to God. It is the conclusion of the Bhaktiyōga that any primary emotion consistently cherished and intensified, and carried out to its logical conclusion, unfolds the inner potential perfection in the individual (12).

KARMA YŌGA is the path of selfless work. It is a method of attaining perfection through dedicated action or work. The word karma is derived from the Sanskrit verb root 'kri' which means 'to do'. Karma includes everything we do – all actions, both physical and mental. It also includes the subtle law of cause and effect. Every action has its effect on something else, including the effect on the cause of future action. Every action is the result of previous action. Cause-karma-effect is one three-fold link in a chain with multitude of links. This wheel of motion of causation and effect, action and reaction, produces karma which results in agitation, and disturbed perfection. This karma has to be effaced to attain perfection. The karma cannot be extinguished by avoidance or non-performance of action. It must be destroyed by Karmayōga (12).

There are three types of karma. *Sanċitakarma* is the accumulated or stored karma. This karma may be drawn upon at will which may explain a sudden acquired ability. One may be able to control this sanċitakarma by proper analysis, understanding, culture and discipline. *Kriyāmānakarma* is being acquired now, and can be controlled by performance, by discrimination/discernment, and by discipline. *Prārabdhakarma* is the discharged karma, the consequences of which are being experienced now. One has no control over it. It will run its course until its effects are exhausted. However one should not be dejected by it and one should make sure that more karma is not created. Karma is also classified as good and constructive, or bad and destructive. Good karma is the action that uplifts the doer and produces the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. Bad karma is the opposite of that (12).

A student has to fulfill three requirements to become an adhikāri, the yōga student – first is simple willingness, but not subservience; second is capacity or capability including health conditions, background, resources, etc; and the third is absence of any obstructing conditions such as dependents who need to be looked after. Some aspirants may be slow, and others may be medium or fast in learning. The aspirant must continue to learn at one's own pace; competition is said to be a hindrance to spiritual progress. In Karmayōga, work is never done in anticipation of a reward or recognition. Advancement occurs in three stages. The first stage is that of self-purification where all work is done to purify self-consciousness. Any work done with desire leads to 'I and mine'; desire and attachment create the relationship of cause and effect, and must be avoided. As self-consciousness becomes purer, Divinity begins to shine out of one's activities.

The work is then performed in the form of service. Goodness becomes one's nature, and one feels the presence of the Divinity in the Self. Then the work is done in the form of worship. One will sense the Divinity in all beings. One will be in a state of bliss without any happiness or unhappiness. One has reached the samādhi of Karmayōga which is called sthita-prajña samādhi – it means 'a process of steady wisdom' (12).

Śivayōga of Viraśaivas includes components of all the above four yōga systems. Patañjali's Aṣṭāṅgayōga forms the main basis. Although Śivayōga has all Aṣṭāṅgayōga's components, the eight steps and their divisions are not listed as such. Components of Jñānayōga – particularly discrimination/discernment of the Self and non-Self, and the Māyā concept albeit somewhat different - are included in the preliminary steps of Śivayōga. Bhaktiyōga forms the basis of Bhaktasthala of the Ṣaṣṭhala system of Śivayōga. Karmayōga is the Kāyaka (dedicated labor) in the practice of Śivayōga.

ŚŪNYASAMPĀDANE AND ŚIVAYŌGA

The Viraśaivas/Liṅgayatas believe that the Universal Self and the Individual Self are one and the same. The main aim of Viraśaivas is the attainment (sāmpādane) of the Supreme State (Śūnya) – the attainment of Oneness - Śūnyasāmpādane. The process by which this can be achieved is Śivayōga. Some Viraśaiva scholars call this process **Liṅgayōga**. It is a lifelong process that involves **preparatory steps** in which the aspirant has to realize the Divine presence within self, and then six stages (**Ṣaṣṭhala**) where one must ascend from an initial dim awareness of the Divine, to the final and complete identification with the Absolute.

It is to be noted that the Divine experience is not to be had after death, but to be attained during life.

The Viraśaivas have devised this practical way of achieving Oneness, with a common person in mind. It is within reach of anyone whether it is a man or a woman, or of any caste or creed, and it is not a monopoly of a chosen few. By recognizing a wide diversity among individuals – love and affection predominating in some, action and will in some, and logic and reason in some others – the Viraśaivas have given equal importance to devotion, action and knowledge. Vaĉanas are the simple devices that are used to direct the masses. One such vaĉana commands the practice of very basic ethical principles (18).

These commandments engrave in the heart –
Thou shalt not steal nor kill.
Let no falsehood foul thy tongue;
Nor anger burn thy brow.
Bear with one another
Stand not high in thy own esteem.
So shall thy ways both of heart and demeanor
Proclaim thy purity;
And shall favor find
Of Lord Kudala Sangama.

In order to accomplish the goal, the Viraśaivas prescribe five codes of conduct (**pañĉāĉārā**). **Liṅgāĉāra** is Liṅga worship. **Sadāĉāra** is to lead a simple and virtuous life. **Śivāĉāra** is to realize that Divine Śiva is in everyone, irrespective of gender, wealth, caste or creed, and to treat everyone equally. **Bhr̥tyāĉāra** is to show humility, modesty and respect for others. And **Gaṇāĉāra** is to strive for improvement and development of the community as a whole.

In the **Preparatory steps**, an individual has to realize that God is immanent in the self, has to become absolutely free from all evil desires and inclinations, and has to attain serenity of mind so as to be a fit vehicle for the Divine.

First step: Divine immanence can be recognized only by one who is aspiring to achieve the goal. God is in everything, not visible, and is not affected by the quality of the object in which it dwells. The characteristic of this step is that the aspiring soul (Aṅga) visualizes the existence of God (Liṅga) in one's own body, and realizes that the body and soul are not identical. When an individual soul assumes the body, it plunges into Māyā (illusive glamour) and identifies with the body. As the round of life in this world begins, it errs into the belief that the passage from birth to death is all there is to life and existence. It is driven by a compelling passion for worldly pleasures. This thirst is not satisfied by enjoyment. The more one tries to appease the sense organs and senses the more disillusioned one becomes. This causes distress and misery. Such an individual, fond of the body and the pleasures associated with it, is not in a position to realize the Divine presence. The individual has to understand that the body and the soul are not identical. One has to get rid of all the desires and passions such as lust, anger/aggression, greed, infatuation/delusion, boasting/ego and jealousy/envy. There is no room for hatred or violence of any kind. One has to understand that money itself is neither holy nor unholy; it depends on how it is earned. Money earned by dedicated labor is taken as something holy; that earned with avarice is unholy. In the path of spirituality, it is sheer ignorance to require commendation for performance; it is ego. **One who has purged all passions and desires, attained contentment, and has realized the difference between the body and soul advances further in one's path towards the Absolute.**

Next step is for the soul to realize its identity with God. The earthbound soul identifies itself with the phenomenal world which is constituted of three guṇas (qualities). Sattva being stainless and luminous binds the embodied one by creating attachment to happiness and knowledge. Rajas being of the nature of motion and passion, binds by attachment to action. And Tamas of the nature of inertia or lethargy, born of ignorance, binds by attachment to indolence and sleep. As a consequence the soul begins to feed on multiplicity. The embodied one has to transcend the three guṇas. It is recommended that one practice the principles of Aṣṭavaraṇa, acquire knowledge and practice Yōga (for Aṣṭavaraṇa, please see the article 'Body, Breath and Mind, and the Inner Self'). **As one frees oneself from the self inflicted ignorance and acquires the right knowledge, and realizes that the phenomenal world is nothing but the manifestation of the Self, the phenomenal play ceases and the sense of duality is obliterated.**

Restlessness of the mind is a great hindrance in the way of discipline. Life, mind and intellect remain impure, if the stillness of the soul is not attained. In order to attain calmness, **in the ensuing step**, the seeker should continue to acquire knowledge and practice Yōga. Restless activities of the mind are brought to a stable status, not through force or suppression, but through persuasion, and by directing the expression towards a more socially or culturally acceptable way of life. Disciplining the mind and the thought process is important. One must not venture into any bad thoughts and thoughts of harming other beings. At the verge of such, those thoughts are to be diverged into good thoughts and thoughts of helping others. Sometimes it may be necessary to avert such bad thoughts by chanting as many times as necessary, either silently or aloud, the (six-syllable) ṣaḍakṣara maṅtra 'Om Namaḥ Śivāya', or simply 'Om'. **Once the restlessness of the mind disappears, the mind itself merges with the Self.**

The seeker is ready to break the fetters of bondage, for which one may need the grace and guidance of a Guru. Guru is a master of spiritual knowledge who has realized the state of identity with Liṅga. The Guru instills spiritual knowledge into the disciple. This **initiation** process can be achieved by a physical process in an ordinary individual – besmearing the body with sacred ashes, placing the palm on the disciple's head, whispering the mantra into one's ear, and investing Iṣṭaliṅga on the seeker's palm. For one who is on the higher plane, the initiation can be effected through mere will. Guru's grace helps to purge the triple malas (taints/impurities) that obscure the native Divinity (for the three malas, please see the article 'Body, Breath and Mind, and the Inner Self'). **Once purity of the body, clarity of the mind and perfection of the will are achieved, then there is Divine descent into mind, life and body. Love, knowledge, power, bliss and peace are the radiant expressions of the Divine.**

Mere sight of God is not enough to be united with God. The seeker must now ascend in six stages to attain oneness. Please see the next article **Ṣaṣṭhala**.

It is to be noted that the attainment of oneness is a life long process. It does not happen overnight or in a few years. In Hinduism, an ordinary individual has to live through the four stages of one's life – brahmaçārya, gārhaṣṭhya (gṛhaṣṭhya), vānaprastha (vānaprasthya) and sannyāsa; this is the Āśrama Dharma. Brahmaçārya is the student life consisting of formal education and acquiring noble virtues with emphasis placed on character development, acquiring right knowledge, and purifying the body and soul. The student must stay clear of going the way of evil worldly desires. Gṛhaṣṭha is the householder, a family person. Gṛhaṣṭhya is the life of righteousness, love, devotion and respect. Vānaprasthya is the retired person's life, and nowadays it is not a forest life of a hermit. The person gradually detaches from the worldly passions and possessions. Once the person completely renounces the worldly life, that person

enters the life of a monk (sannyāsi). Some individuals may go directly from any of the first three stages of life to saṅnyāsa by completely renouncing the worldly life. The Vīraśaivas do not follow this āśramadharmā; there is no need for the complete abandonment of the family. Spiritual development and progress is similar to the āśramadharmā; it occurs throughout one's life. The Vīraśaivas consider everyday to be a pious day, as well as an auspicious and celebrating day. **Practice of Śivayōga is not just worship, acquiring right knowledge and meditation; it includes all aspects of one's daily life.**

ṢAṬSTHALA

Ṣaṭsthala is the spiritual hierarchy of six stages through which the seeker advances stage by stage till the apparent duality vanishes and attains oneness - Śūnyasampādane.

Bhaktasthala: Bhakti is devotion or enlightened faith. Bhakta is one who is characterized by this state of faith. Bhakta's daily life includes **worship of Liṅga** usually in the morning, performing dedicated work (**kāyaka**), serving the community (**dāsōha**), and treating everyone with respect and humility. **Humility** is the crowning characteristic of this stage. Worship of Liṅga, unconditional service to Guru, and dāsōham (self-dedication) to Jaṅgama form the principle features of this stage. Jaṅgama is one who has renounced all earthly attachments, and travels to impart spiritual knowledge into people, without asking for anything in return. **Real worship is not with material things, but is with pure devotion and knowledge** – perfect blend of love and knowledge dawns Divine Consciousness. The concept of discipline or spiritual practice (**ācāra**) is important. Bhakta is to incorporate love, knowledge, power, bliss and peace – the divine expressions – into one's inner and outer being, and have these functioning through one's body, life and mind. One has to harmonize one's thinking, saying and doing.

Māhēśvarasthala: Mahēśvara is one who is steadfast in one's faith, and who understands that wavering and lack of faith in oneness is neither brave nor resolute. As Liṅga encompasses the whole universe and is present in one's own self, there is no need to go to a temple. Going to a temple, and praying, imply duality. Worship of Liṅga is personal and there is no intermediary agent. Mahēśvara understands that the **worshipper and the worshipped are one and the same**. As the devotion becomes intense, all external rites and rituals are dispensed with, and only internal concentration is developed. The silent contemplation of the Divine remains the only yearning.

Prasādisthala: Everything is offered as prasāda, and one who offers it is a prasādi. One should offer everything with a sense of self-dedication and self-surrender, and it must be free from any attachment. If attachment or craving persists, the transformation to prasāda cannot be effected. **When it is offered properly, the fire of knowledge burns the illusion of desire into an illumination of joy.**

Prāṇaliṅgisthala: Self-experience is the main characteristic. Body is a temple that enshrines the Divine. **Breath-control and meditation** performed by the seeker activates the vital force that permeates the whole body (please see the

article 'Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini'). The seeker recognizes the Divine in every part of the body, and experiences vivid impressions of light, sound and taste. When the force/energy moves through the nervous system, a peerless peace wells out, and the external world is kept in abeyance. Prāṇalingi sees ones own Self permeating the whole universe.

Śaraṇasthala: The seeker continues to perform deep and intense meditation, and as a result experiences pure delight. Intermittent flashes, and streams of sensations and experiences of the prāṇalingisthala, are replaced by the Self seeing its own form shining in Divine splendor. There is a serene mood where remembrance of work-a-day-world is gone, illusion of will is burnt, awareness of the body is forgotten, and all external phenomena have crumbled. There is no motion of any kind, the mind is stilled, and the individual consciousness is overcome. The empirical knowledge resolves into supra-mental knowledge, and the sense of duality is replaced by the knowledge of significance of the Union. The seeker experiences pure delight.

Aikyasthala: Intense and focused meditation continues. A state of Unitive Consciousness is reached where there is no volition, no motion, no sound, no word or speech, and where all consciousness of time and space is suspended. In this Supra-Consciousness state, the One has reached true Reality – it is indescribable and the great white light is everywhere. Oneness has been attained. Prabhudēva's vâcana, below, enumerates the six characteristics of an Aikya, the one who has transcended.

He who having known Reality, is past care;
The Hero, vanquisher of Death;
The Glorious, embodiment of the Most High;
The Blessed, who has attained the Bliss;
The Perfect, who inhabits the Void;
The Incarnation, Self-begot,
Who has attained the perfect poise,
Guhēsvara.

After Aikyasthala there is final consummation. This state, where one revitalizes the society, is referred to as Jaṅgamasthala. A Jaṅgama moves for the redemption of mankind, and seeks not for ordinary alms but for unreserved surrender. In Bhagavad-Gītā, it is said (VI/29) 'a realized individual, being harmonized by yōga, sees one's own Self in all beings; sees all beings in one's own Self; and sees the same in all, and makes no distinction whatsoever'. Attainment of Oneness is the essence of Vīraśaivism. It can be attained during one's own life, and it is not an attainment to be had after death. It is not a monopoly of a chosen few; it is within reach of anyone and everyone.

SAMPĀDANE OF KASHMIR KING AND QUEEN

In the 12th century CE (AD) there was a great religious movement at Kalyāṇa, now Basava Kalyāṇa, in Karnāṭaka that attracted seekers and scholars from all parts of India. So great was the attraction that Kashmir king Mahādēvarāya and his wife Mahādēvi renounced their kingdom and all their wealth to the life of śaraṇas at Kalyāṇa. They were convinced that that was the only way to the Absolute, and that the search for the Divine, its realization and practice, outweighed all the hardship.

Kashmir is in the north-north-western part of India. King Bhāḷalōcana, father of Mahādēvarāya ruled the Kashmir kingdom from the capitol city of Māṇḍavyapura. Bhāḷalōcana has been credited for providing to his son an excellent education that embodied many virtues – modesty, generosity and valor. Mahādēvarāya became extremely pious; when coming of age, married Mahādēvi; and after his father's death assumed the rule of the kingdom. He ruled for many years. He continued his worship of Liṅga, and fed six to twelve thousand Jaṅgamas every day.

The religious movement at Kalyāṇa and Basavaṅṅa's greatness attracted the Jaṅgamas. When Basavaṅṅa 'stole them away' to Kalyāṇa, the king at first became infuriated and unsuccessfully tried to get them back. When the brother of king's Guru returned from Kalyāṇa, as a token of his devotion the king offered him presents which were not accepted – only the things earned by one's own labor (kāyaka) would be acceptable. To overcome this, the king disguising himself, worked at a blacksmith's workshop, and from what he had earned, obtained an item made out of iron, and offered it. It was accepted. All this made the king realize that the śaraṇa way of life is the only way to the Absolute – Śūnya. He renounced his kingdom in favor of his son Liṅgārati, and as he prepared to depart for Kalyāṇa, requested his wife to stay behind, but she refused – her place is at the husband's side. She accompanied him to Kalyāṇa. This older couple braved all the hardships of the long journey that took many months to complete.

At Kalyāṇa, the king changed his name to Mārayya, and his wife was known as Mahādēviyamma. He had not brought any of his belongings. He started his work as a firewood gatherer and seller. Every morning he would go to the forest, gather the wood sticks, tie them up into a bundle, carry the bundle on his head, and sell it for a price in strict accordance with the spirit of true and honest labor. He spent his earnings for the service of Bhaktas and Jaṅgamas. For this he came to be known as Mōḷige Mārayya, or simply, Mōḷigayya (there was already a śaraṇa there by name Āydakki Mārayya). Occasionally he would go to the

Anubhava Maṅṭapa and participate in the discussions; he became a prominent figure in the Śaraṇa Assembly. His wife was to him the perfect helpmate and companion; they would hold discussions pertaining to the Life Divine at home in the evenings. The Jaṅgamas after feasting at Basavaṅṇa's place would sometimes visit their house where Mahādēviyamma would serve them porridge made of rice or jawar. This simple dish apparently tasted better than what they had at Basavaṅṇa's. As word spreads, the number of guests increased. Basavaṅṇa was deeply moved when he came to know this – a true Dāsōhi in this former king who is now a simple laborer.

One day, Basavaṅṇa disguised as an ordinary bhakta, visits their house. Bowing in reverence, he requests Mahādēviyamma to give him his meal as he is very hungry. Amma complies by arranging for his Liṅga worship, and after that, serving him her famous porridge. Basavaṅṇa was overjoyed by the gift of Grace – Prasāda. Unknowing to Mahādēviyamma, he leaves two containers with gold coins, behind the basin over which Iṣṭaliṅga is washed. Mōḷigayya comes home after work, and as usual takes a shower and starts his Liṅga worship. He sees the gold coins, and from his wife, comes to know of a bhakta's visit. He becomes enraged that their sense of kāyaka and dāsōha was offended by this bhakta, whom he instantly realizes to be none other than Basavaṅṇa. After informing his wife, he goes to Basavaṅṇa's place, brings the Jaṅgamas to his house for a meal; Mahādēviyamma feeds them the porridge; Mōḷigayya gives all the gold to Jaṅgamas, and sends them back to Basavaṅṇa. Basavaṅṇa realizes his folly in daring to commiserate with the great śaraṇas' poverty. It is a mistake to think that śaraṇas could suffer from poverty when they are living in tune with the Infinite and doing their Kāyaka – they are masters of Infinite wealth. This puts Basavaṅṇa's bhakti to a severe trial by Mōḷigayya. Thus repenting, Basavaṅṇa comes to Mōḷigayya's house with Ćennabasavaṅṇa (his intellectual and spiritually enlightened nephew), the great Śivayōgi Siddarāma, Haḍapada Appaṅṇa (great śaraṇa and associate serving betel-nut and leaf) and others, and fully prostrating himself in humility, makes his submission and asks for forgiveness from Mōḷigayya. Mōḷigayya would not be easily conciliated. He wonders how a bhakta of Basavaṅṇa's stature could forget himself and make such a mistake. He makes it clear that **bhakti should never be done for applause or admiration**. Ćennabasavaṅṇa comes to Basavaṅṇa's rescue – he condemns the action taken by Basavaṅṇa, and states that Basavaṅṇa is aware of the infinite powers latent in kāyaka, and that Mōḷigayya is no ordinary śaraṇa and Mōḷigayya's kāyaka is done in the utmost sincerity. Siddarāma also comes to rescue, and praises Mōḷigayya. There is complete reconciliation. Mōḷigayya, although he does not approve of Basavaṅṇa's action, shows overflowing love and admiration for Basavaṅṇa.

Mōḷigayya and Mahādēviyamma continue to lead the rigorous life of śaraṇas. After the śaraṇas leave Kalyāṇa following the revolution, Mōḷigayya and his wife continue to live at Kalyāṇa. They spend their time in high spiritual discussions;

their cottage becomes a mini Anubhava Maṅṭapa. They live to quite a ripe old age. After the great śaraṇas have already gone before them, Mōḷigayya wonders 'How long shall I keep up for You this mission of a mortal man? Make me a state of unity with Thee'. Mahādēviyamma is surprised to hear such words from her husband. She brings him up to the Reality, to the utter **Oneness where there is none to ask and none to reply**. To ask to be united with Reality implies duality, and so long as the duality persists, union is not possible. The ultimate union with the Reality is '**union-less union**'. When one comes to the real knowledge and finds that one's actions flow from the Divine housed in one's body, and that the individual self is nothing but the Divine Self, then one experiences the profound Truth and one's consciousness melts into Divine Consciousness. She continues to describe the various stages a seeker has to pass through to finally attain the Absolute One. First, one has to recognize the real teacher, a Guru, in one's spiritual path; Guru reveals to the one, the Divine enshrined in one's heart, and puts Iṣṭaliṅga the representation of the inner Divine on to one's palm. Second, when one comes to the realization of the Liṅga the Divine - which can occur only after eliminating any hatred, enmity and violence, and purging all the evil desires and inclinations such as lust, anger, greed, infatuation, ego and jealousy - one has to express that Divine in practice; **the Divine expressions are Love, Knowledge, Power, Bliss and Peace**. Third, when the Divine is firmly established in both knowledge and action, one attains the Supreme Knowledge that is Jaṅgama. Then the six-fold hierarchy, the **Ṣaṭsthala**, is a matter of living experience; the time comes when all the varied love, knowledge, discipline and action consummate into realization of the Absolute.

Mahādēviyamma plays a magnificent role in shaping the spiritual life of Mōḷigayya. He acknowledges the wisdom of his wife, and becomes one with his own Self; and then Mahādēviyamma too, with him and the Absolute. It is generally believed that they breathed their last at Kalyāṇa itself. Some indicate that it could be a place about 10 miles from Kalyāṇa, and some others say it could be at Uḷave where Ćennabasavaṅṅa spent his last days. About 809 vaĉanas of Mōḷige Mārayya and 69 of Mahādēviyamma have been found; the vaĉana signatures are Niḥkaḷaṅkamallikārjuna and Enṇayyapriya Immaḍi Niḥkaḷaṅkamallikārjuna respectively. Please note that most of what is written in this article is taken from volume IV of reference 1.

SAMPĀDANE OF ĀYDAKKI MĀRAYYA AND HIS WIFE LAKKAMMA

Mārayya, later known as Āydakki Mārayya, was one of the great śaraṇas of the 12th century. He was born in a village Amarēśvara, named for its Lord Amarēśvara temple, located about four miles south of the Kṛṣṇā River in Raichur District of Karnāṭaka. The village was also surrounded by tīrthas (places of pilgrimage on the banks of sacred streams and rivers) and other holy places. He seemed to have been drawn to Kalyāṇa, now called Basavakalyāṇa in Karnāṭaka, by the great movement launched by Basavaṇṇa in the 12th century. He settled there with his wife Lakkamma until the end of their lives. Every day Mārayya would pick up spilled rice and other grains, from the streets and the courtyard of Basavaṇṇa's place. For this he was called Āydakki Mārayya. Lakkamma would cook using the collected grains and serve food to the śaraṇas, before eating the Prasāda themselves. Afterwards, Mārayya would go to the Anubhava Maṇṭapa to listen, with deep interest, to the śaraṇas' discourses. Lakkamma also would do the same; her motto was duty first and discourses afterwards. For some years, their presence passed unnoticed.

One morning, before picking up the grains for the daily meal, Mārayya went to the śaraṇa assembly in the Anubhava Maṇṭapa to ascertain whether his way of doing kāyaka and dāsōha would take him to the Divine. This time he actively participated in the discussion, particularly with Prabhudēva.

The term kāyaka, derived from kāya meaning the body, ordinarily means something related to the body. In the śaraṇa system of life, it means manual labor; the labor may extend to the mental or intellectual field. More importantly, the fruits of one's labor are to be offered to God/God-kind first, and not looked upon as a means for maintaining oneself or one's family. A bhakta or śaraṇa works and lives for God. Śaraṇa is always moving towards the Divine Life; becomes more and more awake to all-enveloping and all-pervading Reality; and comes to realize that one lives for God, moves for God, and has one's being in God. Mārayya performed his kāyaka in this firm conviction. He elaborated his view of the nature of dedicated labor. First, in the name of service to God, one should never beg. Such a beggar moves away from, rather than towards, realization. Second, while engaged in kāyaka, one should not mind anybody, even if it is Guru, Liṅga or Jaṅgama; they are all working with the One, as they are not exempt from kāyaka. Third, the labor of a bhakta should never fetch more than it is worth; may get less, but never more. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the śaraṇa to do kāyaka with a pure heart and mind, and always put one's best into the work. This is how one tries to express the Divine in oneself through one's work. Such work should never be motivated by greed or egoistic self. It is always dedicated to the Divine.

Dāsōha, the service, (Dāsōham means 'I am Thy servant') is closely associated with kāyaka. The work and all the earnings from work must first be offered to God. Since God is formless, the offerings are directed through the godly – Guru, Jaṅgama and the community of śaraṇas. The bhakta's activities are driven by this profound sense of service – Dāsōha.

Prabhudēva indicated to Mārayya that there was more to it than just kāyaka and dāsōha. A śaraṇa completely absorbed in the work and service will not be aware of the Reality nearest to the one. One must reach beyond 'I am the doer' and 'I am the server'. One must reach the profound depths where there is no sense of the 'I', and must try to reach the depths of silence where the mind's strivings have ceased. Mārayya accepted Prabhudēva's explanation, and fully appreciated its deep significance. But he still wanted to know how exactly this had to be done.

By then, his wife Lakkamma came looking for him, and reminded him that the daily task should not be neglected. Mārayya bowed to the śaraṇas and rushed away to collect the grains. In this hurry, he gathered a lot more grain than the usual daily quantity, and brought it home. Lakkamma was astonished to find that he had brought so much more rice. She remarked that it was greed, and it implied poverty. True lover of God is not poor. To love is to be rich. With this she asked him to drop back the surplus rice where he had picked it up from. He complied.

They continued their quest to feed the śaraṇas including Basavaṅṅa, Prabhudēva and other notables, Lakkamma somehow found out what each śaraṇa liked, and prepared the dishes to suit each one of them. The śaraṇas were wonder-struck at the couple's devotion to kāyaka and dāsōha. Even Basavaṅṅa expressed that, although they were poor in wealth, they were richly endowed with a great heart.

Mārayya was wholly dedicated to the Divine, leading his life in conformity with the Ṣaṭsthala system. Fortunately for him, he had found in his wife Lakkamma, an ardent and pious soul. She even surpassed her husband in her progress towards self-realization. Mārayya wanted to know from Lakkamma, how he could merge with the Liṅga. She stated that, if work and dedication take one to Heaven/Kailāsa, the Heaven is just a worker's wage; it does not lead to the union. All desire in any form or guise is to be eliminated. Once the sense of 'I' and 'do' are gone, the service to Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama, itself will lead to the Absolute. One should tread the path with one's own legs. Devotion illuminated by knowledge, unless translated into action, is no devotion. Knowledge, devotion and action should go hand in hand. Mārayya was then fully ripe for the Divine union. The couple was great in their own way – they had two bodies with one great soul. As bhakti became manifest in Mārayya, he became one with the

Supreme Divine. Lakkamma with her profound knowledge and her unshakable faith in things divine soon followed in the One undivided perfect Absolute.

Āydakki Mārayya's vaċana signature is Amarēśvaraliᅅga, and Lakkamma's is Mārayyapriya Amarēśvaraliᅅga. Please note that most of what is written in this article is taken from volume IV of reference 1.

SAMPĀDANE OF GHAṬṬIVĀLAYYA

Ghaṭṭivālayya was one of the most eminent śaraṇas of the 12th century. He bore the name of Muddaṇṇa ('lovable person'). He followed the profession of dancer/actor, and he was highly accomplished in the act of playing mṛdaṅga (drum). He could express his devotion in its varied modes by dancing and playing. His talents gave inexpressible delight to others. His earnings were spent, in accordance with the śaraṇa way of life, in the service of the wise and the realized. He was also a bold thinker, and his mind dwelt on the problems of life and its ultimate goal. He was a strong-willed person, being candid and forthright even when it involved the highest in society. Because of his courage and unshakable determination, he was called Ghaṭṭivālayya which means a tough bold person. His wife was unfaithful to him and that made him to leave his house and go to Kalyāṇa. He danced and played his drum, on the way there, in tune with the Absolute. He was not a person to beg for alms. His professional performance earned his livelihood and helped serve the śaraṇas.

One day he went to Basavaṇṇa's courtyard where he observed a crowd of Jaṅgamas, who upon hearing the announcement that the food was ready, competitively rushed to get their meal. He was shocked and amused at the same time. This set him off on an analysis of the Jaṅgamas.

A true Jaṅgama is a moving God. The Jaṅgamaliṅga's garb should not be a means for sustenance or satisfaction of the body. Jaṅgama should accept only when one is convinced that the offering is done with love and devotion. Jaṅgama should never hanker after 'women, land and gold/wealth'. Jaṅgama is not tainted by the threefold malas (taints) - āṇavamala, māyāmala and kārmikamala. In this way, Ghaṭṭivālayya denounced and derided the crowd's behavior, even questioned the sincerity of Basavaṇṇa's piety. The crowd deeply offended by this called him names, and attacked and manhandled him. This did not stop him; he continued to ridicule them. This row drew many of the śaraṇas including Prabhudēva to the spot.

Prabhudēva, intervening, requested Ghaṭṭivālayya not to disparage the Community of the Jaṅgama Order (samaya). Ghaṭṭivālayya replied that the Order should be like an 'ocean'. It should not be upset whenever its defects and shortcomings are pointed out. A true Jaṅgama should not have anything to do with such an Order. **The Community should accept constructive criticism gladly, and should try it's best for the growth and betterment of the individuals of which it is composed of.**

The crowd, not satisfied, forcibly took away Ghaṭṭivālayya's Iṣṭaliṅga from him. This is an extreme punishment for a Vīraśaiva. Ghaṭṭivālayya unruffled by this openly defied the convention. He declared: "**Śivaliṅga is the one that is worshipped in a Static form on earth. Iṣṭaliṅga is the one that is worshipped in the Dynamic form on earth. But that, abiding eternally upon the point of Consciousness, which gets worshipped, is the Vīraśaivaliṅga.**" He placed a huge round stone at the gate blocking it, and tied a rope to the stone and to his neck. For him the nearest stone could serve as Iṣṭaliṅga.

All the great śaraṇas including Prabhudēva, Basavaṇṇa, Ācennabasavaṇṇa, and Siddarāmayya witnessed what was going on. They acclaimed that Ghaṭṭivālayya is a true bhakta, a great yōgi, and a real practican of the Vīraśaiva discipline; and that he is the one who could see no difference between the Iṣṭaliṅga and a big wayside stone. The great śaraṇas, particularly Ācennabasavaṇṇa, appeared ready to revise their opinion with regard to wearing the Iṣṭaliṅga. In the past when Prabhudēva had brought with him, an already well established great Śivayōgi Siddarāmayya, to Kalyāṇa, the śaraṇas were reluctant to admit Siddarāmayya because he was not wearing Iṣṭaliṅga. After an extensive discussion about the necessity of Iṣṭaliṅga, Siddarāmayya being convinced accepted the Liṅgadhāraṇa procedure from Ācennabasavaṇṇa. Similarly, when Nuliya Ācandayya refused to take back the Iṣṭaliṅga that had fallen off of him while he was intensely engaged in his kāyaka of cutting grass to make ropes, the same śaraṇas had convinced him about the necessity of taking it back and wearing it all the time. Now they seemed to make an exception. **Ghaṭṭivālayya is considered as a Liṅgavanta, 'the one possessed of Liṅga', and does not need the Iṣṭaliṅga. Whatever Ghaṭṭivālayya wears turns into Liṅga; for him there is nothing that is not Liṅga.**

Ghaṭṭivālayya, the Liṅgavanta, taught everyone a lesson with regard to Jaṅgama, the Community Order, and Liṅga. His mission being accomplished, he attained oneness with Śūnya – Śūnyasaṃpādane.

Ghaṭṭivālayya was a great Vaĉanakāra with a vaĉana signature Ācikkayyapriya Siddaliṅga. He also authored two other works called Kālijñāna and a separate Kālijñāna Vaĉanagaḷu. Please note that most of what is written in this article is taken from volume IV of reference 1.

PILGRIMAGE TO VĪRĀŚAIVA HOLY PLACES

In the year 1997, Mr. M. B. Vishwanath, then resident of Chicago, and a past president of the Chicago chapter of the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America (VSNA), wrote a letter to some of the fellow Vīraśaivas and the VSNA, urging everyone to support the efforts to restore the Vīraśaiva holy places – Basavana Bagewadi, Basava Kalyana and Koodala Sangama. Since then I have been yearning to visit these holy places. In January 2010, I embarked on a pilgrimage and visited Kūḍala Saṅgama, Basava Kalyāṇa, Śrīśaila, and Vijayanagar Empire Ruins at Hampi.

Basavana Bāgēvāḍi and Kūḍala Saṅgama: Basava popularly known as Basavaṅṅa and respectfully known as Basavēśvara was born (1131/1132 CE/AD) at Bāgēvāḍi in the Bijapur district of Karnāṭaka. Basavaṅṅa as a youngster revolted against the religious ceremonies, left his home along with his elder sister Nāgāmbike, and came to Kūḍala Saṅgama. This holy place is located about 35 miles south-southwest of Basavana Bāgēvāḍi at the confluence of Kṛṣṇa and Malaprabhā Rivers. At Kūḍala Saṅgama, there was then a learned scholar Īśānya Guru, under whom he studied the Vēdas, Āgamas, Śāstras, and other religious literature. Basavaṅṅa's day to day worship of Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama, at the site, brought him peace of mind and spiritual fulfillment. He apparently had his Liṅga Dīkṣa here at Kūḍala Saṅgama. Most of his adult life and his work were at Kalyāṇa (now called Basava Kalyāṇa). He returned to Kūḍala Saṅgama in 1167 CE after the revolution at Kalyāṇa. He spent his final days here, and attained oneness with Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama. The Vīraśaivas are very familiar with his vaḍana signature Kūḍala Saṅgama Dēvā.

Saṅgamanātha/Saṅgamēśvara Temple complex is located here at Kūḍala Saṅgama. More importantly, the Basavēśvara Aikya Maṅṭapa and Aikyaliṅga are here. Newer developments – Gateway, Basavaṅṅa's statue in a worshipping position, Basava Dharma Pīṭa, Sabhā Maṅdira (Auditorium), and Basava International Center – are of interest also. The site is fairly well developed for visitors. It is a vast area and not within any urban town. Accommodation is available – with air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned rooms, and a restaurant service.

Basava Kalyāṇa: This is the site of a great religious movement in the 12th century that led to the revitalization and reformation of the Śaivas and other sects of the Hindu religion. It is the place where a new Hindu sect known as Vīraśaiva or Liṅgāyata was started. The great leader of this movement was Basavēśvara. He was the Prime Minister of the king Bijjala who ruled a large territory that included parts of present day Karnāṭaka, Andhra Pradesh and

Maharashtra States. Kalyāṇa was its capitol. Basavaṇṇa was about 25 years of age when he started serving the kingdom, and he served for 12 years. His efforts were mostly oriented in two directions – religion and society – and perhaps towards a closer approximation of the two. He insisted upon the dignity and necessity of manual work; all work was equal in his eyes and in the eyes of God. The work was dedicated work (**Kāyaka**) in the form of worship. Furthermore, surrendering all the fruits of one's labor for the welfare of humanity (**Dāsōha**) was one of the essential tenets of his faith. The reforms were rooted in a profound **humility**. He was not the man to lay down the law in matters of religion and philosophy. Hence came the existence of the Anubhava Maṅṭapa where a large number of scholars and seekers would gather to participate in learned discussions on the highest ends of life. They came from all parts of India.

Kalyāṇa was both a symbol and an actual place where the Anubhava Maṅṭapa became a spiritual academy. Allama Prabhu, popularly known as Prabhudēva, was the central character, or protagonist – its moving spirit. He was regarded as the most intellectual of all the Viraśaiva scholars at the time. As he traveled all over India, he drew the scholars and the seekers towards Kalyāṇa. The discourses were held in the Anubhava Maṅṭapa. The main theme of these discussions was the Ṣaṭsthala philosophy – the six stages a person has to ascend in one's pilgrimage to God. Prabhudēva presided over these deliberations. All these deliberations were documented in writing in the vaṇana form. The vaṇanas were used for propagating spiritual knowledge and the right way of life among the masses. Prabhudēva, the Jaṅgama, after a long association with the śaraṇas, went on a tour in the southern part of India and then in the northern parts. He traveled only to sanctify the land. He went on sowing the seeds of devotion, knowledge and good deeds everywhere. He went as far north as the Himalayas where in a large cave he meditated and entered into Real Trance. As in the Upaniṣadic saying "one who knows Brahman becomes Brahman", Prabhudēva become one with Śūnya, but he did not die there.

Meanwhile at Kalyāṇa, the śaraṇas knowing that Prabhudēva would return, as he had promised, made arrangements for the construction of a Śūnyasiṁhāsana – Throne of the Absolute, for him. Basavaṇṇa erected a visible throne, a replica of the inner invisible one whereupon is seated the realizable Divinity, and awaited Prabhudēva's return. Prabhudēva returned to Kalyāṇa in a disguised form, apparently to test Basavaṇṇa. Although many Jaṅgamas gathered there, failed to recognize Prabhudēva, Basavaṇṇa recognized him immediately and attended to him. Prabhudēva satisfied, ascended the throne and sat on the Śūnyasiṁhāsana. He consumed all the food there was and wanted more. Only after Basavaṇṇa offered him his own bhakti-prasāda, Prabhudēva was satisfied. It is only Infinite Love that can feed an Infinite God to satisfaction. Prabhudēva seemed to have a clear vision of the shape of things. He was satisfied with Basavaṇṇa's mission of sowing the seeds of Śivabhakti, Śivadhyāna and Śivācāra in the heart of

everyone, and to divinize the whole of existence. He also saw that the end of the śaraṇas was fast approaching. Satisfied himself about the spiritual attainment of the śaraṇas, bid them to spend the last days of their lives in places dear to their heart. For himself, he chose the plantain grove at Mount Śrīśaila. Bidding them goodbye, he left for Śrīśaila.

At Kalyāṇa, the social reforms of Basavaṇṇa and an inter-communal marriage conducted there, were resented by the orthodox Hindus, and resulted in the disturbed conditions. Basavaṇṇa's resignation from the Prime Minister position, and his hurried departure to Kūḍala Saṅgama ensued. The śaraṇas dispersed away from Kalyāṇa for safety. As a consequence the vaċana literature was scattered and some of it was probably lost.

Basava Kalyāṇa is located in the northeastern corner part of Karnāṭaka, close to the border with Maharashtra State. An assembly hall has been built where the Anubhava Maṇṭapa supposedly was. Basavaṇṇa's standing portrait (with Kūḍala Saṅgama background) is mounted on a dais consisting of six semi-circular stages, decreasing in size from the base to the top, representing six stages of Ṣaṭsthala. There does not seem to be a representation of Śūnyasiṁhāsana or Prabhudēva. In the Basava Kalyāṇa town there is a Basavēśvara temple complex. Basavaṇṇa's statue in the sitting (namaskāra) position is at front, and in the inner sanctum, there is another one which seems to be gold-plated. Some original caves and the fort are at the outskirts of the town. There are no accommodations similar to the ones at Kūḍala Saṅgama, and it seems unattractive to visitors at this time.

Śrīśaila is in the Andhra Pradesh State, about 250 miles southeast of Basava Kalyāṇa. It is on the bank of the same Kṛṣṇa River downstream from Kūḍala Saṅgama. The Liṅga at the Śrīśaila temple is known as Mallikārjuna Liṅga (also Mallinātha Liṅga). The great Śivayōgi Siddharāma when he was a boy came there looking for Mallikārjuna in the form of a person, and was disappointed then to see only a Liṅga installed there. Siddharāma sets up 64 Liṅgas at Sonnalige, now Sholapur, a district headquarters in the Maharashtra State, and constructs temples, water tanks, alms-sheds, etc. As he was engaged in this work, Prabhudēva comes there, convinces him that there is more to it than just building temples and such, and brings him down to Kalyāṇa. Siddharāma's vaċana signature is Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna (and Kapilasiddha Mallinātha).

Mahādēviakka, popularly known as Akka Mahādēvi was born at Udatadi in the Shimoga district of Karnāṭaka State. She finds the idea of having God as a lover appealing. This idea becomes firm and intense as she grows older. She renounces the world, leaves Udatadi, and comes to Kalyāṇa to seek spiritual union with the Lord Ćennamallikārjuna. At Kalyāṇa, Prabhudēva puts her to a severe test. Akka, after argument and counter-argument, convinces Prabhudēva that she has given herself away to Ćennamallikārjuna, and is worthy of attaining

union with the Supreme. She asks Prabhu to tell her the place, time and circumstances of her consubstantial union with Liᅅga. He complies and sends her to Śrīśaila. The plantain grove near the Śrīśaila Mountain was a dreadful and a dangerous place. It was practically an impossible adventure to cross this grove and come to the temple of Śrīśaila Mallikāᅇjuna. Hence the grove here is symbolic of the field of one's life's activities. One has to cut a path for oneself to life's ultimate goal. Mahādēviakka, guided by Prabhudēva, makes her way to Mount Śrīśaila and attains her union with Ćennamallikāᅇjuna there. Her vaĉana signature is Ćennamallikāᅇjuna.

Prabhudēva, after bidding farewell to Basavaᅅᅇa and the śaraᅇas at Kalyāᅇa, proceeds to Śrīśaila. He goes beyond the temple of Mallikāᅇjuna, to the cave in the plantain grove situated in the mountain gorges. He probably had been there before, as he had advised Mahādēviakka to go to the grove, when he was still at Kalyāᅇa. Here at the grove with serene sylvan atmosphere, the Light of his divine soul finds its ultimate resting-place.

A personal note – Śrīśaila Liᅅga is our Manedēvaru (house God, family God). The Śrīśaila Mallikāᅇjuna Liᅅga temple is run by the Vīraśaivas. You are allowed to go all the way inside and touch the Liᅅga yourself. The boat transport at the dammed Kᅇᅇᅇa River to go to Akka Mahādēvi's place leaves only in the morning to allow enough time for the visit.

Vijayanagar Empire Ruins at Hampi: This Empire was founded in 1336 CE/AD by Harihara of the Saᅅgama dynasty. Vijayanagara the capital city was located on the bank of Tungabhadra River which is a tributary of the Kᅇᅇᅇa River. After the revolution in Kalyāᅇa in the 12th century, the śaraᅇas dispersed away for safety, and the vaĉana literature was scattered. It was only in the reign of Prouᅇha Dēvarāya (1417-1447 CE, Dēvarāya II of the Saᅅgama dynasty) in the Vijayanagara Empire that the vaĉana literature was revived. It was systematically collected, although some of it is lost, and compiled into Śūnyasaᅅpādane. It has more than 1,500 vaĉanas, and it occupies a very high place in the whole range of Indian literature. Vijayanagara was ravaged by invaders, leaving extensive ruins of the Empire, located at Hampi, near Hospet in Karnāᅇaka. The glory of Vijayanagar Empire seems to have faded away.

I am very pleased indeed that I was able to fulfill my yearning by completing this pilgrimage. I intend to visit these places again sometime in the future. I urge all Vīraśaivas to visit these holy places at least once in their lifetime.

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This article explains the Hindu concepts of Atman, Dharma, Varna, Karma, Samsara, Purushartha, Moksha, Brahman, Bhagavan and Ishvara. In Hinduism it means 'duty', 'virtue', 'morality', even 'religion' and it refers to the power which upholds the universe and society. Hindus generally believe that dharma was revealed in the Vedas although a more common word there for 'universal law' or 'righteousness' is rita. Dharma is the power that maintains society, it makes the grass grow, the sun shine, and makes us moral people or rather gives humans the opportunity to act virtuously.

