



VEERASHAIVISM –THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION

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“Veerashaivism, though considered a universal religion, had not taken deep roots in the maps and had not spread widely before the advent of Basaveshwar in the 12th century” said Dr. JawareGowda.

Commenting on the proofs regarding Veerashaiva religion found in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, Patil has clarified, “The origin of the features of Veerashaivism like wearing of Linga on body, worshipping Shiva in the form of Ishtalinga, faith In Shaktivishistadvaita philosophy and worship of Nandi as Shiva's vehicle are found in the rituals of the people of Mohenjo-Daro period”.

Principal Dogmas of Veerashaivism:

A special feature of Veerashaivism is the supreme importance, reverence and worship given to the Ishtalinga as the sole emblem of god Shiva. After receiving it from a qualified guru in Diksha or initiation, it is worn on the body always, thereby purifying every part of the body.

The chief tenets of this faith are: Shiva is the supreme god. The linga is his chief symbol or emblem. The Panchakshari mantra, Namasshivaya, is the redeeming spiritual formula. Panchacharas and Ashtavarnas are the main code of conduct. Shaktivishistadvaita is the philosophy behind this system.

As for the process of evolution of the world, the same 36 tattvas or principles given by Kashmir Shaivism have been adopted here also.

Practical Disciplines:

But for the three malas or impurities (viz., anavamala, mayiyamala and karmamala) would have been as wise as Shiva, the Pati. In order to get rid of these malas, the individual has to take Diksha (initiation) from a duly qualified Guru. Diksha is a simple ritual in which the guru worships a linga and then ties it round the neck of the disciple which will hang like a necklace. The linga is encased in a small silver casket. By this process, the guru gives the Mantra (Namasshivaya) and also transmits his spiritual power. Women are also entitled for Diksha in this cult.

One who is thus initiated is expected to practice the five disciplines known as Panchacharas and also protect himself with eight 'coverings,' the Ashtavarnas, stipulated by the system.

When the jiva renounces his attachment to worldly objects, he is called tyaganga and the linga given to him by his guru at the time of Diksha or initiation is the Ishtalinga which is the means of his upasana or worship. Due to the upasana of the Ishtalinga he is purified, and then he enjoys the things of the world as the grace of Shiva, becomes and experiences the Pranalinga (Shiva's presence in his heart). When he progresses further, to very high states of consciousness in the sahasrarachakra, he is called yoganga and enjoys highest bliss by his identity with Shiva, now called bhavalinga.

Vibhuti:

Vibhuti is another name for bhasma and holy ash. The Sanskrit meaning of the word Vibhuti means glory and it gives spiritual power to those who apply there are many aspects to the usage of vibhuti. First it is a great medium to transfer or transmit energy, and it has the ability to direct and control the energy body. Apart from that, there is a symbolic significance to applying it on the body. It is a constant reminder of the mortal nature of life; it is like you are always wearing mortality on your body. It is also said to protect the people from ill health and evil forces and instead attract the higher forces of nature. The vibhuti is also said to have high healing power and hence it is used in the field of Ayurvedic, Chinese and Tibetan medicines. The sacred ash is applied on their foreheads. There is several meaning of Vibhuti in Hinduism. The sacred ash is prepared by burning dry cow-dung.

Lord Shiva smeared his whole body. The three lines that are applied on Shivaling hold deep meaning. It is believed that applying Vibhuti increases positive energy and also said to boost mental and physical health.

Tripundra is referred to the covering of complete forehead with Vibhuti as part of reverence of Lord Shiva.

The first line signifies the removal of Arrogance.

The second line signifies the removal of ignorance.

The third line signifies the removal of bad Karma.

Within your physical body, there are seven basic centers representing seven dimensions of experiencing life. These centers are known as chakras. A chakra is a certain meeting point within the energy system. These chakras are not physical, they are of subtle nature.

IshtalingaDharana (wearing of linga on body) which is the first and unique Principle of Veerashaiva religion is also found on the idols of Vishnu, Vithoba, Mahalakshmi, Bhavani etc., in almost all the old temples in India. It is also a Sign of the fundamental principle of Veerashaivism.

Ishtalinga its scientific perspective:

It is emblem of supreme God. It is done in a scientific process. The outer layer of Ishtalinga is made of Kanti which is the mixture of Resin, Cinnabar, Lamp black, Ruma mastic, Natural magnetite, Led sulphide and Aragu powdered and mixed with heated geru oil at certain temperature, then the paste mixture is placed around linga, lampblack is coated around it, then it is given shape, it should be of thumb size of the left hand i.e., starting mark of thumb to the tip of thumb.

While worshipping linga, a burning oil lamp is placed behind the left shoulder at a slightly higher level, the linga to be held in front of the eyes, at 12 to 16 inches distance, and without blinking have to stare and concentrate on linga, which is known as 'Trataka'. We have to mingle, merge and become one with linga. When a particular point is observed, the movement of eyes is withheld and breathing is controlled, when the breathing is under control, the mind is also controlled. As the mind is controlled, the energy in the brain which regulates all body activities through all chakras is connected to Linga, from where electrons are ejected. The ions thus ejected are absorbed by our body. This process of absorbing universal energy is not found in any other yoga. Sharanas have discussed about human anatomy and physiology. They have detected the 'Bio plasmic energy' and mapped in detail the exact flow of current in the body. There is no discrimination anybody can wear.

The Panchacharas are:

1. Lingachara-Worshipping daily the Linga given to him in Diksha.
2. Sadachara-Earning money by virtuous profession and utilizing the saving for Serving the needy including the Jangams (itinerant preachers)
3. Shivachara- treating all Lingayats equally as if they are Shiva himself.
4. Bhrtachara-Cultivating humility towards Shiva and his devotees.
5. Ganachara-Zealously guarding one's religion, protesting against disrespect to One's god and religion as also not tolerating cruelty to animals.

The Astavarnas are:

1. Guru- Faith and respect towards Guru.
2. Linga- Treating the Linga with reverence and devotion.
3. Jangama-Respectful treatment of the ascetics and mendicants.
4. Padodaka-Purifying oneself by drinking or sprinkling oneself with water, with which Gurus or a Jangama's feet have been washed
5. Prasad-Accepting food sanctified in worship.

6. Vibhuti-Wearing holy ash on the forehead and other parts of the body as prescribed.
7. Rudraksha- Using a rudraksha rosary for japa and also wearing it on the body.
8. Mantra - Repetition of the Panchakshari mantra (Namasshivaya) as directed by the Dikshaguru.

Since the five acharas and the eight avaranas purify a Veerashaiva or Lingayat burning up all his impurities, there is theoretically - no need for him to observe sutakas (ceremonial impurities) or cremate his body after death. Hence it is buried.

The Doctrine of Sathasthala

In Veerashaivism, Shiva or God is called 'Sthala'. He is Sthala because he, like the sky or space is limitless or infinite. Also the word Sthala can, etymologically, mean that from which the world emerges and evolves, in which it is stationed and into which it get dissolved (stha=being stationed; la= getting dissolved)

According to the doctrine 'Sathasthala -Siddhanta', Shiva divides himself into two aspects, linga and anga, the former being himself and the later, the jiva. Both these, again, Divide themselves into three further aspects; linga into Ishtalinga, Pranalinga and bhavalinga; anga into tyaganga, bhoganga and in Lingapurana that the Gods like Brahma and Vishnu, yogis like Gautama wear the linga on top of their heads. It is mentioned in one of the shlokas of Lingapurana.

Different Types of Linga Sajjike

The cover used for keeping the linga is called lingasajjike, made in sandal wood, copper, mostly silver or gold. Sometimes linga is wound around with thread called as nagosa and sometimes the linga is tied in a piece of cloth hanged around the neck. In Pashupata cult, the practice of tying the Shivalinga on the arm is seen, as per the stone edict of the king Pravarasena.

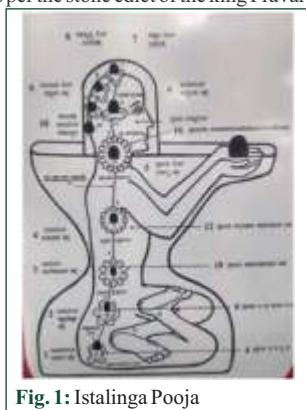


Fig. 1: Istalinga Pooja



Fig. 2: Essence of Veerashaivism

Different Types of Linga Sajjike



Fig. 3: Different Types of Linga Sajjike



Fig. 5: Bhasma



Fig.4: Rudrakshi

Rudraksha:

The Rudraksha is the berry of the tree or shrub Elaeocarpus ganitrus, used to prepare Saiva rosaries. There are 38 varieties of Rudrakshas are stated to be in existence. The bead may be of different sizes, and its mukhas or faces may vary from one to fourteen, wearing of the different varieties on the body is said to produce different results. Performing japa (repetition of the divine name) with a rosary of Rudrakshas duly consecrated is considered extremely auspicious.

Rudrakshas strung with Cotton or silk thread can be worn on different parts of the body, like the two arms, wrists, on the tuft of hair, in the neck, in the ears and on the chest. The number of beads on each has also been specified. One who wears the Rudrakshas must avoid non-vegetarian food and should not consume liquor.

CONCLUSION:

Some decades ago Basaveshwar the spiritual guide, social reformer, political thinker and a great humanitarian, his philosophy was known to scholars and Veerashaivas. But now it has spread worldwide. Veerashaivism or Lingayatism, was nourished by a galaxy of saints. Its active propagation of social equality, its stress on work - not only as a social obligation but also as a part of one's spiritual evolution- earned for itself a large number of followers. The other aspects of its religio-philosophical system have certainly enriched our culture.