

**INTRODUCTION OF VIRASAIVA MATHAS OF HYDERABAD –KARNATAKA  
AREA****Dr. Nalini Avinash Wghmare**

Department of History

Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune

**Introduction:**

India has always cherished the past as the pattern of the present and future. The highest effort of ancient Indians was directed towards training human beings for a state of spiritual perfection. India has been the centre for the spread of the truth in the world all through the ages, through a galaxy of spiritual personalities who have inspired and guided mankind with a sublime vision of the divine and also to achieve Moksha. To achieve Moksha or deliverance, a very high degree of morality was insisted upon. This can be seen in the Ashrama theory of ancient times, which later on became the model for monastic institutions of all other religions on India. Thus, the idea of asceticism has its source in Brahmanism. Such spiritual leaders are known as sages, saints, ascetics, mystics, gurus and the dwelling places of these holy men are called Ashramas or Mathas among Hindus, Viharas and Chaityas among Buddhist and Basadis among Jains.

The religious history of Karnataka took a new turn from the beginning of the tenth century, when there was a revival of Hinduism in Karnataka. The immigration the Kalamukhas in to the South, the impetus given by Ramanuja to the Vaishnava movement in South India, and the spread of Virasaivism under the leadership of Basaveshwara are significant development that changed the course of Hinduism in this part of the country.<sup>1</sup> Especially Saivism, in its various forms, became predominant; and the movement evolved new institutions known as Matha, which began to serve not only as the instrument of spreading the faith, but also as a means if sustaining and establishing Saivism.

**About Matha :**

In generally Matha was a residential college for students, a free feeding house for the poor and the infirm, and a resort of religious men as well as of mendicants.

It is thus, quite clear that the Mathas besides controlling in a few cases. The affairs of the temple and providing lodging and boarding to devotees were important centers of educational, moral and spiritual activities.

There are two accounts of origin of the Virasaiva Mathas. The first is a traditional account which associates the establishment of the Virasaiva monasteries with the founding of the religion by five traditional Acharyas.

---

<sup>1</sup>R.Basavaraja, Basaveshwara, His Life, Vision and Work, Someshwara Publications, Dharwad, 2001, pp.564-565.

The five Mathas were established to propagate the tenets of religion. They were the main centre of proselytisation. The five Mathas established at five different parts of India –Kedara in the Himalayas, Ujjaini in the South, Sri-Sailam in the East, Rambhapuri in the west, and Benaras in the North.<sup>2</sup>The traditional founders of the Mathas are Revanasiddha, Marulasiddha, Ekorama, Panditaradhya and Visvardhya.

We have another account of the origin of Virasaiva monasticism. This relates to the establishment of Sunyasimhasana or throne of the void in Kalyana.<sup>3</sup> Basaveshwara established the Matha and he invited Prabhudeva to occupy the pontificate. Sunyasimhasana was established at Kalyana during the year 1156A.D.

These two origins of Virasaiva monasticism bring to light the two fundamental functions of the Virasaiva Mathas. They are the conversion of non-lingayats into Virasaiva fold and the propagation of the Virasaiva tenets.

In every Virasaiva village there is Matha, and each is affiliated to one of the five original Mathas. The gurus are from among the Jangamas. Every Virasaiva must belong to a Matha and have a Guru.<sup>4</sup> The heads of these Mathas have generally divided the Virasaivas into five great divisions, and each head exercises spiritual control within his own legitimate sphere, through all of them have a general jurisdiction over all the Virasaivas generally.

#### **Kinds of Matha:**

There are two kinds of Mathas in Bidar district, namely Pattada Mathas and Virakta Mathas had specific functions to perform. The Pattada Mathas were primarily concerned with Acara, the liturgical work and supervision of the conduct of the devotees. The heads of Pattada Mathas were given the power to punish those who were founded to be at fault in their religious and social duties as enjoined by Virasaivism.

The Virakta Mathas were mainly entrusted with Vicara the task of interpreting the tenets of religion, writing books elucidating the tenets of Virasaivism and delivering discourses to the people on the tenets of Virasaivism. The main task of a Virakta was to enlighten the devotees about the ways and means of attaining liberation.

There are numerous Mathas throughout Karnataka; Hubli had three thousand Mathas, Murugarajendra Brahman Matha Chitradurga, Totadarya Matha Gadag, Suttur Matha Mysore-like many of Virasaiva Mathas throughout the Karnataka. And these Mathas performed well work in religious, social, educational, cultural field extent its work.

Like this Bidar district Hiremath of Bhalki, Hulsur's Shri Gurubasaveshwara Matha, Harkud Brahmamatha, Bhatambra Viraktamatha etc. Mathas many other Mathas also do their extension work.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Suryakant B.Ghugare, Veerasaivism In India, Sadhana Book Stale, Gandhinglaj, Kolhapur, 1995, pp.259-260.

<sup>3</sup> S.S.Wodeyar, Sri Basaveshwara, Eighth Centenary Commemoration Volume, Govt of Mysore, 1965, p.18.

<sup>4</sup> Desai.P.B.Basaveshwara and His Times, Karnataka University, Dharwad, 1968, p.332.

<sup>5</sup> See for detail Nalini Waghmare, The Continuity of Tradition, Mathas of Bidar District, Ekvira Publicity, Pune, 2015, pp.51-55.

These Mathas flourished because people took interest in religious, educational and literary activities. Even though they were not properly educated, they were interested in religion and philosophy. The main purpose of the Mathas was to give encouragement to learning and other cultural aspects of life, and also to give patronage to scholars engaged in the pursuit of spiritual knowledge.

The Matha was primarily and predominantly, an educational centre. Its main aim was the spread of education and furtherance of scholarship. Above all, they felt that it was their duty and responsibility to preserve and continue their literary tradition.

The functions of the Mathadhisha are being initiation, ceremony and helping the devotees to realize 'mukti' or release from the bondage of rebirths. He instructs the devotees that they should give up socially harmful practices.

Thus it is seen that the Virasaiva Matha not only has trained men to spread the tenets of Virasaivism, but it was also a place of learning, where the literature of the community was preserved and the tradition of writing religious book was kept alive.

In Sharana Movement every home converted as a Matha. In Bidar district approximately there were one thousand three hundred forty one Mathas existed but now if we consider the whole district have Ninety four Mathas under that thirty nine Mathas which existing continue religious work.<sup>6</sup>

Mathas were existed in the society in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and still continue to exist till present day. The purpose for the establishment of the Mathas was to serve the society for the society for the well being of human beings. The main objective was to popularize religious teachings and also to preserve them.

#### **Mathas of Hyderabad Karnataka:**

Many of the Mathas in Hyderabad-Karnataka area served the society and continued for the development of culture. The main objective of my case study is to find out the contribution of these Mathas in the various fields like social , religious, educational , literature and cultural.

The present situation of globalization era many political and social parties dominate the Mathas, destroying the cultural background. The Hyderabad-Karnataka areas have been ruled by many dynasties creating history. In spite of this situation, these Mathas preserved the culture and served the society in the fields of literature, religious, ethic and cultural fields also.

The Mathas of Hyderabad-Karnataka places rose mainly for religious purpose. These Mathas arranged the Puranas, fairs and discourses on religion. Through these programmes, the Mathas maintained the relation with devotees and society. In the sphere of religion, the Mathas performed Vacana Utsava, Vacana Anubhava Geeta, Srujana Sahitya and along with spreading of Virasaiva principles and philosophy in the society. Thus the Mathas maintains the relationship with the society.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Chandrashekara Naranapura, Karnatakada Veerasaiva Mathagalalu, Geleya Prakashana, Chikamagalur, 2002, p.790.

<sup>7</sup>Ramesh Mulage, Bidar Jilleya Veerashaiva Mathagalalu, Shri Vishwaguru Basavadharm Prachara Kendra, Shri Basaveshwara Samsthana Matha, Hulsur, 1998.pp.4-9.

There are in total 150 Mathas in Hyderabad-Karnataka areas. Few of these have changed its shape and other Mathas closed for reasons unknown. The rest Mathas have taken shape as a worldly life. At present 75 Virasaiva Mathas existed and these try to preserve the culture and spread religion in their own way in their places and neighbouring states as well.<sup>8</sup>

Hyderabad-Karnataka scope is very vast one. Before India became independence, this place involved 16 districts. Geographically North Karnataka places involve the Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur. In Maharashtra it covers Aurangabad, Osmanabad, Bhid, Parabhani, Nanded, in Andhra Pradesh Medak, Nizamabad, Mehbubnagar, Karimnagar, Varangal, Secunderabad and Hyderabad. It means, according to historical sources Andhrapradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka these places stated involved in Hyderabad –Karnataka before independence.

The Hyderabad-Karnataka places were ruled by many dynasties like Satavahana, Maurayas, Rashtrakutas, Kalyana Chalukyas, Mughals, Bahamani rulers, Nizam and Britishers etc. In the present status, the study is taken only in Bidar, Gulbarga, Raichur and Koppal which is considered in Hyderabad-Karnataka places. Many national leaders fought against Britishers and its government. After a long struggle, these Karnataka places involved (merged) in Indian Territory in 1948. During independence period, these places were merged with Mysore State. Later on D.Devraj Chief Minister consider these places as Karnataka in 1972.

In these places, many religious followers like Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Saivism, Islam etc were popular. In 12<sup>th</sup> century, in Basavakalyan, Basaveshwara and his contemporaries popularized Virasaivism religion. The majority of population comprise of Virasaivas. Thus those places became very popular to spread Virsaivism by the Mathas from the beginning upto the present day.

During the Nizam period, in Hyderabad, the people suffered a lot. They were ruled by foreigners. The Razakars also gave a lot of trouble to them. People were killed on the road. At that time the Razakaras protected the Mathas. Not a single Matha was destroyed by them. Instead, the land was forcefully captured by rich people and was given to the Mathadhisha. During this time, the Mathas did not perform any religious function. After the British rule Mathas gave a Blue Map to the society. Many religious and cultural programmes were performed by the Matha and trying to maintain peace and prosperity in the society.

In this manner, the study of contribution of Hyderabad-Karnataka Mathas to the field of religious, social and cultural field is the main objective of this research work.

Before independence, many places were involved for administrative work. Few places were chosen for administrative purposes, few others for old Mysore administrative purposes, few other places for Hyderabad administration purposes.

As per the historical sources, the Karnataka states have been divided into 4 districts, mainly Bidar, Gulbarga, Koppal and Raichur which comes under Hyderabad –Karnataka places. These districts have 24 talukas. Presently Raichur is divided into other villages called Koppal. It is an interesting place. So in this way, the Mathas, existing in these 24 taluka places, propagates

---

<sup>8</sup> Bidar District Gazette, Government of Karnataka, Government Press, Bangalore, 1977, p.2.

Virasaivism. A special study is considered in these Mathas for their valuable contribution to the society as well as the nation. The four district talukas are mentioned as below:<sup>9</sup>

<b>Bidar</b>	<b>Gulbarga</b>	<b>Raichur</b>	<b>Koppal</b>
Aurad	Alanda	Devdurga	Kustagi
Bhalki	Afzalpura	Manavi	Koppal
Bidar	Gulbarga	Raichur	Gangavali
Basavakalyan	Zivargi	Lingasur	Yalburga
Humanabad	Chincholi	Sindhanur	
	Yadgiri		
	Surapura		
	Sedam		
	Shapur		

The Virasaiva Mathas exist for socio-religious cause. Mathas are the centre for religious purposes, but also contribute to various fields. As a result, the Mathadhishas role is the highest and noble one. He has to serve the society selflessly.

The Mathadhisha more away, or do not involve in politics and treat each and every devotee with equal blessings. This is very necessary for the development of society and the Mathas. There is no discrimination is made on the basis of Caste, Class and sex. Besides these, the Mathas encourage religious discourses and cultural programmes. The Mathadhisha is well versed with the knowledge of the preaching and philosophy of Virasaivism. Then only it is possible for the Mathas to get , positive results or response from the devotees , or society.

In the history of Virasaiva religion the Matha tradition is the old one. We find two types of Mathas in Virasaiva religion. One is the Gurusthala Matha and another Viraktasthala Matha. Gurusthala Matha is attached to Panchacharya tradition and Virakta Matha is attached to Sunyasinghasana of 12<sup>th</sup> century by Lord Basaveshwara.

**The present Status of Hyderabad-Karnataka Mathas:**

- These Mathas fulfill the main aim of religion and besides serving the society.
- The two types of Mathas Guruvarga and Virakta Mathas spread Virasaivism in their own ways.
- Majority of the Mathas are economically strong, while few Mathas face economic problem.
- In all the Mathas , the Mathadhishas has taken up the leading role in building the Matha strong and well developed.
- Only few Mathas discriminate on the basis of caste, creed and sex. But the most of the Mathas serve the society and in open to all.
- Every big Matha has an educational institution and through it spread education to all from primary upto the college level.

<sup>9</sup> Ramesh Mullage, Hyderabad Karnatakada Virasaiva Mathagalu-Ondu Adhyana, unpublished Ph.D.Thesis submitted to Karnataka University, Hampi, 2012 pp.35-47.

- These Mathas not only preserve the Virasaivism but also popularize the Basava Philosophy and Vachana culture.
- All Mathas contribute to various fields like socio-religious, educational, literature and culture.
- The Mathas have their own branch Mathas and their own publication also. Thorough these Medias, the Mathas spread religion in the society. Approximately 16 to 200 books are published by the Mathas.
- Every Mathas celebrate Vachana Utsava, Vachana Mahotsava, Amavasya ( new moon) and Poornima ( full moon days). The birth and death anniversaries of the Mathadhishas. Various fairs are arranged by few Mathas of Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

### **Conclusion:**

Vachanas are guiding principles in the modern world. Liberty, equality, and fraternity principles are found in Vachanas which are also the principles of democracy. These principles were preached by the Basaveshwara and Vachanakars around 900 years ago. To solve the present day problems related to religion, society, economics, and politics, these Vachanas give remedies. Remedies like Kayaka, Dasoha, and Social welfare Society etc are found in Vachana Sahitya. Most of the Mathas propagating the Basaveshwara philosophy along with Vachana Sahitya to new generation.

### **References:**

- Athishankar K., Raichur District Gazetteer, Government press, Government of Karnataka, 1970.
- Basavaraj Sabarada, Hyderabad-Karnataka Tattavapadagalu, Prasaranga, Kannada University, Hampi, 2000.
- Basavaraj.L, Pujya Shri Sharana Basaveshwara Appanavara Mahadasoha Sutragalu, Shri Sharanabasaveshwara Grantha Vishwavidyala, Gulbaraga, 1988.
- Basavaraja K.R.“ History and culture of Karnataka,Karnataka University, Dharwad, 1984.
- Basavaraja, Basaveshwara, His Life, Vision and Work, Someshwara Publications, Dharwad, 2001.
- Desai.P.B.Basaveshwara and His Times, Karnataka University, Dharwad, 1968.
- Jagannath Hebbale ( ed), Hyderabad –Karnataka Jatregalu-Ondu Samskrutika Adhayana Kannada Sahitya Parishat , 2008.
- Latthe .M.S.( ed), Kalyananadina Paramjyoti, Shri Channabasaveshwara Samsthana Hiremath, Harkud, 2002.
- Nagesh Shastri “ Shri Gavisiddheshwara Purana” , Shri Gavisiddheshwara Krupa Poshita, Shri Gavi Matha Koppal , 1971.
- Nandikeshwara, History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion being an introduction to Lingadharanacandrika (Trans) by Sakhare M.R. 1942.
- Nandimath S.C, Handbook of Virasaivism, The Literary Committee, L.E.Association, Dharwar, S.India, 1941.
- Nalini Waghmare, The Continuity of Tradition, Mathas of Bidar District, Ekvira Publicity, Pune, 2015.
- Palekar, S.A., Basaveshwara’s Political Philosophy, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2006.
- Ramesh Mulage, Bidar Jilleya Veerashaiva Mathagalu, Shri Vishwaguru Basavadharm Prachara Kendra, Shri Basaveshwara Samsthana Matha, Hulsur, 1998.

- Sakhare, History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion, Sakhare, M.R. Karnataka University, Dharwar, 1978.
- Shivananad .D.V.,Vachana Sahityadalli Samajo-Bhashika Chintanegalli, Shree Basaveshwara Peetha, Karnataka University, Dharwad, 2003.
- Shivananda .V, Hyderabad –Karnataka Bhagada Kannada Shikashashanagalu, Benaras Hindu University, Benaras, 1992.
- Suryakant Ghugre, Veerasaivism in India, Veerabasappa Balasaheb Ghugare, Sadhana Book Stall, Ganhigraj, Kolhapur ,1995.
- Visaji J.B.“ Dr.Channabasava Pattadevaru Jivana Charitre” , Shri Basava Dharma Prachara Samsthe, Bhalki, 1990..
- Wodeyar, S.S (ed), Sri Basavesvara-Eighth Centenary Commemoration Volume, Government of Mysore, 1967.