Narratives **and** Communities:
A Study of Select literary' Controversies in **Karnataka**

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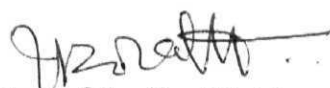
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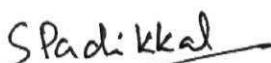
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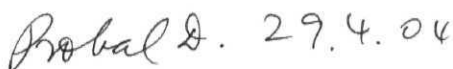University of Hyderabad,
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Contents

A Note on Translation, Transliteration, Suffixes and Italicisation

All translations from Kannada into English are mine, unless and otherwise mentioned. 1 have made use of already available translations by others as well. References are given to such translations in the footnotes. 1 am grateful to all the translators whose works were of immense help in the making of this dissertation. I have used accepted transliterations whenever they were available and transliterated on my own, when required. I followed the heard form, which may at certain places differ from the 'standard form'.

Though the non-English words are usually typed in italics, I have not followed that convention with regard to the Kannada words related to the Viraśaivism and Bhakti writings for the present dissertation is crowded with such terms. Following several scholars, who have worked on subjects like this one, I too in certain places used Kannada words with English suffixes especially, in the instances of plural forms. For example, Kannadigas; Vacanas; Sharanas and so on.

The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances—as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpccio Saint Ursula), stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative.

...the Text does not stop at (good) Literature; it cannot be contained in a hierarchy, even in a simple division of genres. What constitutes the Text is, on the contrary (or precisely), its subversive force in respect of the old classifications.

- Roland Barthes

Chapter I

Conceptualising Literary Controversies, Narratives and Communities

Literary controversies are not new to any literary or linguistic community. They arise without notice and cause not only furore in society but also serious debates on the questions of language, literature, interpretation, creativity, history, truth, freedom of expression, fundamentalism, state, community, democracy, and citizenship etc. Through out history, the hegemonic social groups in different societies have attempted to suppress anything that conflicts with or anyone who disagrees with their beliefs. Though literary controversies are relatively of short duration in terms of repercussions and implications, they shake the stability of society and pose threat to writers' lives as in the case of *The Satanic Verses* controversy (1988). Though there exist tons of literature on specific literary controversies rarely we find serious academic studies on them. One of the reasons for this inadequacy could be that literary controversies are seen as spontaneous and sporadic moments in the otherwise smooth history of literature. They are seen as aberrations in the history of literature. Secondly, there seems to be a feeling that any study on literary controversy does not enhance our literary understanding. Thirdly there is a general feeling that literary controversies are inconsequential to the history of literature and therefore they do not merit any literary attention. The text-centered theories of literature ignored literary controversies with out any hesitation. Hence, they have remained anecdotal in the literary history.

Literary controversies are neither mere expressions of anger nor isolated instances or aberrations. They are inextricably linked with the socio-political contexts in which they are played out. Academicians have usually conceptualised literary controversies as instances of 'fundamentalism' or 'communalism'. However, frequent occurrences of controversies around literary narratives, their intensity and debates raised around them have made it difficult to establish a precise cause or reason for literary controversies. Drawing a typology of literary controversies has been rendered difficult due to multiple

reasons and unpredictable implications of literary controversies. Though India has not remained innocent of controversies around censorship or banning of literary or historical narratives, to the best of our knowledge, there are hardly any attempts to study and understand systematically the problems and issues surrounding them.

Nevertheless, recent interest in interdisciplinary researches, increasing awareness of questions related to the nature of language and its relationship with power has kindled interest in literary controversies. In this area, a few scholars have attempted to explain literary controversies in socio-political terms[1]. They have all investigated the complex relationship between writing, reading and the politics of interpretation. That apart, more importantly, they have addressed a complex connection between language, society and culture. The efforts of a very few but extremely effective and insightful studies of the above kind are far reaching. It is very relevant and significant for us to pick up the issues raised by them and work toward a conceptual framework within which literary controversies can be productively studied.

In this dissertation, *Narratives and Communities: A Study of Select Literary Controversies in Karnataka* we intend to explore relationships between narratives and communities. We focus on the select literary controversies in the literary history of modern Karnataka. We examine the *how* and *why* of literary controversies citing specific instances in which certain communities have demanded the state government of

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[1] There are many social scientists and literary critics who have looked at literary controversies from different perspectives. The controversy around Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 generated variety of perspectives on different issues. For instance, Charles Taylor considers the Rushdie controversy as a blot on the western pride over the freedom of expression and plural culture. He interrogates the western (the English) concept of freedom of expression (1989, 118-122). Feroz Jussawalla applies the Saidian framework of orientalism to study Rushdie's work and describes *The Satanic Verses* as orientalist in mimicking the west (1989,106-116). Sourayan Mookerjea believes that Rushdie has taken up the function of advocacy of migrants in the metropolitan culture of England. It is due to writers like Rushdie that invisibility of minority migrants from the third world countries has become visible in the first world countries (1992-3, 107-127). Peter Bayer sees the controversy as the result of Muslim community's increasing anxiety over the western domination and globalisation (1994:3). Apart from these, Monica Juneja (1997) discusses the controversy around M.F.Hussain's paintings when the Right Wing forces tried to destroy his paintings. She points out that it was the anxiety of losing control over the public sphere, which resulted in coercion on M.F.Hussain by the Hindu communalists. Chitra Panikkar (2000) examines the censorship controversy around James Joyce's *Ulysses* and the question of sexuality.

Karnataka to ban certain literary texts or to expurgate certain portions of literary texts for they hurt the 'sentiments' of communities.

In the recent past, different communities have actively intervened and attempted to contest certain literary narratives in Karnataka. However, such visible intervention has not been properly understood. Therefore, the main focus of the study is to locate literary controversies in their larger social contexts and to examine their relationship with communities. This dissertation has a definite focus. We wish to examine literary controversies related to the modern narratives of Viraśaivism raised by the Viraśaiva community[2] in Karnataka.

In this first chapter, we outline the area of study, its scope and clarify certain conceptual categories employed in the study. The chapter is divided into eight sections. In the first section, we try to understand different kinds of literary controversies and their scope across different issues. In the second section, we explicate the notions of narrative, community and literary controversy. The third section attempts to explain the relationship between literary controversies and the Viraśaiva community. The fourth section briefly gives details about why only certain 'literary' controversies are chosen for our study rather than 'non-literary' controversies. The fifth section delineates the socio-geographical profile of the Viraśaivas and the Viraśaiva community. The sixth section will brief about the methodology adopted in the dissertation. The seventh section is a discussion of different approaches and theorisations of literary controversies and communities. The last section is about the critical engagement with the four theorists of literary controversies.

I

Towards a Typology of Literary Controversies

The most contentious literary controversies in the recent past were around two English novels viz., Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja*

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[2] The Viraśaiva community is also known as the Lingayath community. However, throughout the dissertation the term Viraśaiva is used except in those cases wherein the term Lingayath is inseparable from the contexts under study. We give detailed information about the community later in the chapter, pp. 16-23.

(1993). These controversies exemplify the complex nature of literary controversies. The controversy around *The Satanic Verses* engendered violent reactions from the Muslim community in many countries around the world. As soon as the novel was published in 1988 in Britain, some Muslim leaders immediately called for a ban on the book and prosecution of Rushdie for libel. When the then Prime Minister of the Britain, Margaret Thatcher, refused to heed to the demand of the Muslim community, the first significant Muslim demonstration against the book took place in Bolton in December 1988. Copies of the novel were publicly burnt. Immediately thereafter, Rusdhdie's novel attracted international attention. It was banned in India within a few months of its publication in England. In the following weeks of 1989, the novel was banned in South Africa, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Somalia, Bangladesh, Sudan, etc. The main criticism against Rushdie's novel was that it caricatured the sacred image of Mohammad, the prophet and the novel was seen as blasphemous. The second biggest controversy was around Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja[3]*, which first occurred in Bangladesh and later on spread to other parts of the world. The novel angered the Muslim community not only in Bangladesh but also elsewhere. In India the Central Government banned its circulation. These two literary controversies brought the issues of freedom of expression and Muslim community's religious beliefs into sharp focus. The two controversies were seen as the sites of battle between the 'secular/progressive' forces and the Muslim 'fundamentalists'.

On the surface, the above-mentioned novels were opposed on religious grounds but there are several other instances in the history of English literature of banning books for reasons other than religion. Issues of social ethics and morality have been invoked to restrict freedom of expression. For example, Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722)[4] was banned on the grounds of 'obscenity' and the author was put in the pillory for his political positions. The Catholic Church banned Voltaire's *Candide*[5], published in 1759, for

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[3] This English novel illustrates the difficulties of a Hindu family in the Muslim majoritarian country in the aftermath of the demolition of Babri Masjid (1992) in India. When this novel was published, it was alleged that the author deliberately humiliated the Muslims describing them as violent but expressed full sympathies with the Hindus.

[4] James Sutherland discusses the prosecution of the novel in the new edition of *Moll Flanders* (1959).

[5] "Books Banned in the United States: A Public Service Report from Adler & Robin in Books". Online. Adler Books.com/banned. 20th March, 2004.

containing "immoral" descriptions. In the eighteenth century, literary books were banned on the grounds of general morality and human values. The question of religion was never directly raised during this period while banning a literary work. For example, Nathaniel Hawthorne's masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)[6] was censored for it was considered as pornographic and obscene. Harriet Beechar Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)[7] was banned because it was alleged that the book contained 'obscene language'. Gustave Flaubert's *Madam Bovary* (1857)[8] was banned from circulation for it was seen as a work that could corrupt the minds of the reading public. It was also considered "obscene". In 1885, the Concord Public Library in Massachusetts banned Mark Twain's *Huckelberry Finn,* labelling it as "trash and suitable only for the slums"[9].

The early twentieth century was also marked by several trials, literary censorships and controversies around literary works. For example, D.H. Lawrence's novels were in the eye of controversy and he constantly fought against censoring his novels. In 1915, his novel *The Rainbow* was suppressed on the grounds of obscenity in Britain and the copies of the novel were destroyed without prosecution[10]. In 1928, British publishers refused to print his another novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1922)[11] because it was accused of having graphic descriptions of sexual life, which were uncommon for the time. In the face of the offensive against the novel and upon being denied publication in Britain, Lawrence published it in Italy. The copies of the novel published in Italy were later seized and destroyed by the customs officers at Dover. His novels were tried in the courts of Britain and America in subsequent years. Both the English and the American courts counted his novels as obscene. James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922)[12] was proscribed on the charges of vulgarity, sexuality and he was held responsible for causing moral

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[6] "Books Banned in the United States: A Public Service Report from Adler & Robin in Books". Online. Adler Books.com/banned. 20th March, 2004.
[7] For details on this controversy see the introduction to the novel (1970).
[8] Reference to the controversy is discussed in introduction to the novel (1950)
[9] Alfred Kazin (1981)
[10] *The Times,* an English newspaper in England, reported in 1915 that 1,011 copies of the novel were destroyed. For the original report see R.R. Draper's *D.H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage* (1970).
[11] A review of the novel in *Times Literary Supplement,* another English newspaper in England, gives details about the prosecution. For the review see R.R. Draper's *D.H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage* (1970).

[12] See Chitra Panikkar's article "The Obscenity question" (2000) for details about the controversy.

degeneration in the society. Bernard Shaw's *Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet* (1909)[13] was banned in England for propagating political ideology of Irish nationalism that was against the British rule.

Literary controversies always do not attract international attention outside a particular linguistic/cultural community. There are several instances in the history of censorship where literary controversies were very local as far as the scope and consequences are concerned. For example, Vladmir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955)[14] was banned on charges of vulgarity in France but there was no objection to the novels in America. This was quite the reversal of the previous case when America did not allow *Ulysses* for circulation while it was published and circulated in France. In the case of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Ulysses,* the ban on them in America and England had religious colours. Banning of these novels was legitimised on the grounds of protecting the religious ethics of Christianity, family values and ethics of marriage in the Christian world. Therefore, these controversies were not confined to only 'literary' factors. They involved non-literary factors such as defining and recasting Christian way of life, marriage, sexuality and human relationships. This was accomplished in the name of certain 'humane values', which were seen as inseparable from literary values. The above novels and plays were contested precisely because they were against the established values of humanity and morality.

In all the above-cited controversies literary texts were understood as embodiment of human values and virtues and therefore, they were expected to contribute to the larger goals of humanity, brotherhood and communal harmony. The questions of public morality, ethics, sexuality, obscenity etc. dominate the literary controversies and they are also inextricably linked with several other issues such as history, literature, freedom of expression, state, democracy, public sphere, communities, etc. Therefore, it is important for us to extend the study of literary controversies to non-literary domains.

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[13] Details about this controversy are available in Lucy McDiarmid's article "Augusta Gregory, Bernard Shaw, and the Shewing-Up of Dublin Castle" (1994).
[14] "Books Banned in the United States: A Public Service Report from Adler & Robin in Books". Online. Adler Books.conVbanned. 20th March, 2004.

II

Narratives, Literature and Communities

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term 'narrative' means an account or a commentary of something either in written or in spoken form. A narrative can be, to put it in the words of Abrams, "a story, whether in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do" (Abrams, 1993: 123). This description of narrative by Abrams indicates only literary perception. Narratives that exist out side the realm of literature are not considered in such definitions. The rise of modern linguistic studies and the subsequent development of the Formalist and the Structuralist approaches to different forms of writing deepened the scholarly interest in the study of narratives. Theories of narratives found much significance among French Structuralists. For example, Roland Barthes' *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* (1977) played a crucial role in furthering the studies on narratives. During the latter part of the 1960s, however, Barthes grew increasingly sceptical about the structuralist approach to language, literature and cultural sign systems in general and, influenced by early post-structuralist theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan, had begun to develop a new approach to the analysis of narratives which he styled 'textual analysis'. The impact of these collective influences led Barthes to develop an approach to the reading of narrative texts which, instead of seeking to relate texts to a structuralist notion of the abstract system of narrative, foregrounds the involvement of texts in the vast intertextual arena of cultural codes and meanings. Textual analysis, based on an intertextual notion of meaning, replaces the apparently scientific and objective approach of structuralism with an emphasis on the openness of the text and the productive role of the reader of the text. In textual analysis a text has meaning only when a reader activates the potential meanings intertextually 'present' within it. A text, viewed intertextually, only exists in the act of reading. Such quests for a general grammar and theory of narrative have initiated studies on literary forms such as novel, short story, folklore and so on. The Structuralist/Formalist studies and subsequent theories in the area of narratology set the stage for further theoretical formulations. Some of these theories still continue to inform the contemporary studies on narratives.

The early eighties witnessed a shift in the scholarly focus of narratology. It moved away from predominantly semiotic and linguistic concerns. Literary and linguistic scholars, philosophers, historians, anthropologists examined the issues of narratives in relation to variety of texts apart from the literary. Gradually, the analysis of narratives assumed an interdisciplinary nature. Barthes recognized not only the literary forms of narration but also the cinematic, the historic, and the mimetic, etc. According to him,

> We find narrative in myths, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, and conversation (Cited in Chhibber, 1986: 202).

Barthes's notion of narratives cuts across the boundaries of modern disciplines. Accordingly, many of the methodological questions derived from history, philosophy, socio-linguistics and so on were incorporated in subsequent studies on narratives. It is precisely as a result of such interdisciplinary efforts, that the general notion that literature is 'imaginative', 'creative' and fictional, while history is 'objective', 'actual' and 'scientific', is no more tenable in the contemporary academia. History with the capital H is considered as one among the several kinds of narratives. Hence, it is not possible to distinguish between History and Literature but one can think about the relation between historical and literary narratives.

Hayden White, a historian, has demonstrated the elements of fiction and tropes of language in historiography. He has raised questions of narrative representation and its politics both in history and literature. He has looked at the nature of representation in historiography emphasizing on the role, function and power of narratives (Hutcheon, 1989:50). In his *Melahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (1973), White establishes that scripting history is prefigured in a tropological mode (metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy and irony). He shows how the language of history is not free from the figurative play of meaning that is always associated with literature. However, White confines himself to dismantling the notion that history is either scientific or objective. Another historian Keith Jenkins goes a step further to point out the

subjective elements and ideologies in shaping the discourses of historiography. He opines,

> History remains inevitably a personal construct, a manifestation of the historian's perspective as a 'narrator'…historian's viewpoint and predilections still shape the choice of historical materials, and our own personal constructs determine what we make of them (Jenkins, 1991: 12).

White and Jenkins' theorisation of 'history as narrative' need not lead us to reduce everything to a linguistic/narrative process. There are many other aspects of narratives. They are related primarily to questions such as how certain narratives are established firmly and why; what kinds of narratives gain significance and in which contexts. So, ideologies that determine narratives of literature, religion or history need more scholarly attention. In order to probe into these aspects we need to move away from 'linguistic turn' of narratology to the 'cultural turn'.

Narratives: From Mallory to Motion Pictures (1985) is another critical text in this direction. In the preface to this book, the editor, Jeremy Hawthorn points out the recent developments in the field of narratives. He stresses on the historical, social, textual and generic aspects of narratives for analysing the narratives. He opines that narratives involve an act of interpretation from the beginning. What he means by interpretation is the process of recollecting, selecting and presenting the past in an ordered version. Other essays in the book examine the narratives in various forms of writing such as magazines, pamphlets, novels, criticism, etc. He has analysed the ideologies that influence the production and dissemination of narratives.

Narratives are neither independent nor are they self-constitutive. They are constructed in a systematic and formal way. According to Bannell and Hunt, "narratives provide a link between culture as system and culture as practice" (1999:17). They point out that a culture is dependent on a continuing process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the public and the private narratives. To them,

> Narrative is an arena in which meaning takes form, in which individuals connect to the public and social world, and in which change, therefore become possible (Bannel and Lynn, 1999: 17).

They consider actual narrative forms, their development over time and their eventual impact on historical practice as well. They notice how narratives get their power from being woven into the daily life.

Question of agency in shaping narratives is very vital. For example, description of an event of the past in the present differs from narrative to nan-alive. Different narrations of an event are not naturally told and they need not be 'true' accounts, as we would like to believe, but are constructed by different agential interests. Constructing a past embodies some amount of memorizing process linked to the available cultural and material patterns. As Neera Chandhoke point outs,

> Narratives of memory, we thus comprehend, are not about summoning up a long forgotten or hazy past, or about a 'technique of recall'; they are about making causal connections between things. As a complex exercise in connection and thereby interpretation, the narrative—never wholly real but neither wholly imagined—will always be more than a sum of events that the narrator recounts to us (Chandhoke, 2003:143-144).

Therefore, why the narrator recounts a narrative to us, how s/he recounts it, in which context a narrative is constructed by the narrator, what is the effect of such narrative on the reader/community etc. are some of the important questions that we may investigate. According to Chandhoke, another aspect of narratives or narrativisation is that they act as "power mechanisms"(ibid: 145). What she means by power mechanisms is the power of narratives to dictate the audiences "to imagine that 'this' or 'that' occurred in *this* and not *that* way"(ibid: 145). The process of narration involves an act of attributing significance while ignoring the other as being simply insignificant. In other words, the process of narrating a story always constitutes an act of exclusion and inclusion. What is highlighted and what is marginalized in the story is dependent upon the personal commitments of a narrator, his/her ideology and discursive practices.

Production of narratives, their dissemination/performance is not a matter of an individual choice. Since narratives are part of society and culture, group/collective imagination of narratives too will have multiple implications on narratives of literature and history. Chandhoke demonstrates 'the collective' engagement with narratives in the

context of the *Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi* issue in 1992. The narratives, in this issue, were projected as though the majority Hindu community was victimized and it was turned helpless before the Muslim minority. The 'traumatic' condition of the Hindus was narrated in such a manner that the issue culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid in the hands of the Hindus. The collective and selective memories about Lord Rama, the Hindu culture and the *Hindu Rashtra* were all harnessed to mask as well as to maintain the domination of the majority Hindus over the minorities. It is precisely this 'collective' narration in which the present dissertation is interested.

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III

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Narratives and communities

Narratives and communities are related in a distinct way. Literary controversies are the instances, which help us to understand the relationship between narratives and communities. The role of narratives in forming and naturalizing an image or an identity of a community is vital. They are very important for the communities because they are socially symbolic acts. Nevertheless, it is difficult as well as problematic to assume that there exists a direct relationship between narratives and communities. The collective memories form narratives of communities and help the communities establish the same. In the process of narrating a past or an event, new knowledge is created. Creating new knowledge is followed by consistent efforts to legitimise it. Though the individual members play a crucial role in the production of narratives for the communities, the latter are not passive receivers. Sometimes the narratives created by an individual are acceptable to the community and some other times, they are not. However, an individual writer and the collective consciousness of a particular community may have commonly shared narratives of history. The differences between the two can be over what exactly constitutes the past and what should constitute the past in the present and for the future.

The attempt to produce literary and historical narratives can also be a way of constructing a 'community identity'. The construction of narratives of history, religion or literature is a way of constructing a universe of events around an identity. In the context of literary controversies the construction of community identity through the narratives of

history, literature or religion can either be "a question of empowerment" (Friedman, 1992: 837) or a question of reasserting its dominance and hegemony. Narratives allow the communities to exercise 'authority' over representation and retain it to contest anything that runs against their conventions of narration and representation.

Community is not made up in vacuum. It is a group of people coming together for achieving or realizing a common goal by means of exhibiting a set of commonly shared feelings or interests. This act of coming together is possible only if the members of a social group imagine themselves as belonging to one community. The imagination of 'our' community is always in relation to another imagined community, i.e. 'their' community. This imagination of 'we' and 'they' constitutes the part of a community's consciousness to influence its social and political processes. The imagination indicates a certain transcendental character, a recognition obtained on a moral and collective plane. Although enmeshed in social relations, 'community' is taken to be the primary resource of legitimacy and normativity in those relations, and obtains solidarity offering the participants a collective sense of belonging. The imagination of 'we' and 'they' need not be always antagonistic but can also be mutually complementary. The antagonist or complementary relationship between communities may change in accordance with the immediate needs shaped by historical sensibilities and community interests.

There need not be a single goal, which binds people or communities together. There is also not a single or permanent principle that sustains the unity because the principles of unity or solidarity vary from context to context and from purpose to purpose. There can be several goals and principles of coming together. Among them community identity for socio-economic and cultural mobility or for reasserting traditional dominance can be crucial ones. For instance, in the *Satanic Verses* controversy (1988) several Muslim communities all over the world displayed solidarity in opposition to Salman Rushdie and his novel. As we know, these Muslim communities are not homogenous and vary from region to region. They have different cultural practices and exhibit different trajectory of their histories. These communities took strong objections to Rushdie for his blasphemy. The process of 'coming together' is indicative of several

points here. People, as individuals, are scattered. That does not mean to say that they live a totally unorganised life. They share several concerns as well as discourses of Islam. But they have other identities as well. Their national identity is different. They are divided into moderates, orthodox and so on. However, on specific occasions and for specific purposes they identify with each other and feel the necessity to come together invoking the discourse of 'Islam'. As pointed out earlier, this unity is possible on several binding principles. Narratives of culture, language, religious affinities, caste feelings, political aspirations, economic interests, regional/national unity, ethnicity and more importantly the global affairs etc. are responsible for the invocation of binding principles. The commonly shared narratives are not newly created in the immediate context of a particular literary controversy but produced historically and culturally over a period of time on the basis of certain shared memories, concerns and cultural practices.

IV

Communities and Literary controversies

Literary controversies around banning, censoring or proscribing a book or an artefact are public disputes and they are related to matters of religious belief, political ideology and public morality. Censorships or bans result in arguments and counter arguments in the public sphere. Since the controversies are public, they form social phenomenon. This phenomenon, in most cases, involves the participation of several social groups. The idea to ban a book or to demand for a ban usually arises whenever certain social groups or individuals feel strongly that a particular book has violated or misrepresented the established social values or personal image or commonly accepted beliefs. Even as such demands unfold, the controversies divide a particular literary/linguistic community into two groups viz., the 'votaries of freedom of expression' or the 'secularists' and the 'champions of community sentiments' or the 'communitarians'[15]. Both these groups participate in the process of encountering, exchanging and judging the merits of their respective claims. As Ernan McMullen opines,

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[15] In the dissertation, the terms 'secularist' and 'communitarian' are employed to signify differences existing between the two. By 'secular' we do not mean the common significations associated with the term such as anti-religion, anti-monastic or radical. Their differences with "fundamentalism" or "essentialism" do not entail that they are democratic and non-communal. We employ the term to indicate the terms of

Each side argues that the other is wrong and that they themselves
are right, or at least has the better case. The difference between
them is one of belief, of knowledge claim (McMullen, 1989:51).

Though McMullen is referring to the controversies over the scientific texts, his views hold good for our context as well. He considers that a controversy is "a *community* activity, even though it may begin by involving only two people' (ibid: 52). In the recent years, increasing instances of mobilization of religious 'fundamentalists", communities, voluntary organizations, etc. to demand banning of a particular text or a work of art have necessitated a thorough investigation of 'unofficial social censorship'[16].

In the above instances of ban or proscription, authors of the banned books encounter challenges to their freedom of expression and in turn, they try to protect their 'right to express' supported and aided by their sympathetic readers. Debates over questions of literature, history, religion, politics, community sentiments, sexuality, morality and so on become very important for the contending parties. The debates are usually either between a) an author and the communitarians or b) between an author and a particular government or c) between an author and an organization. In a democratic country like India, the contending parties, in the instances of the first and the third cases, seek the government intervention. Narratives of literature, history, religion, and politics around the controversies do not merely pertain to the discursive practices but often become a ground for conflicting social forces.

The controversies around literary or historical narratives are not mere examples of 'violence' or mere instances of imposition of certain social norms on a writer. They have

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differences existing between two forces of the literati over several issues related to literary controversies. Besides these, we assume that the differences regarding the "proper" ways of understanding history and religion marks differences between the two forces. By communitarians, we mean a group of individuals, who represent themselves as the carriers of sentiments of the community and ignore/marginalise any other stakes for representation. Some politicians, religious heads and scholars constitute the group of communitarians.

[16] The term 'social censorship' is used to describe the recent phenomenon of religious groups/communities or political systems intervening in the literary or artistic matters and pressurizing the governments to ban or censor the works, which are found objectionable. Two articles, Kalpana Sharma's "Censorship: Unofficial Might" (22nd, Dec. 2003) and Rajeev Dhavan's "Ban, burn, destroy" (11th, Jan. 2004) in *The Hindu,* have drawn our attention to the non-government mechanisms of censoring or banning a work of art, history, media or literature. They describe the phenomenon as 'social censorship'.

raised fundamental questions about writing and reading practices. The communitarians attempt to define the nature of narratives; they decide terms of how narratives should be constituted and what is the historical truth, etc. The controversies exhibit the anxiety of the communitarians about how readers, belonging to the different social and cultural backgrounds, interpret a text, which is a part of their 'treasured' tradition. Therefore, it is important to understand and theorize what happens to a literary history/text when it is interpreted through the charge of 'outrage to public morals', 'obscenity', 'blasphemy', or 'racism' by the communitarians. Such examination also involves the question of how controversies influence relationships between narratives, communities and the freedom of creativity of the writer.

<div align="center">V</div>

Why *Literary* Controversies?

Our study on literary controversies is distinctive from history controversies, 'science' controversies, 'religious' or 'political' controversies. The history of literature considers certain kinds of writing as literature and identifies various literary genres for such writings are seen as different from that of philosophical, historical, anthropological, sociological writings and so on. As we know, over several centuries literature is assigned an autonomous and a distinct place of its own. Different institutions, ideologies and theories have sought to answer the question 'What is literature?' from multiple and different points of view. In the twentieth century it was the Russian Formalism and the New Criticism, which were foremost in ascribing several literary genres the privileges of literature. However, the post-modern theories such as Deconstruction[17], Cultural Studies[18] and Post-colonial theories[19] etc. have deconstructed and challenged the

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[17] We consider Derrida and Paul de Man as the representative theorists of this approach to language and literature.

[18] Richard Hoggart's views about cultural studies (1979) are taken as *a* representative of cultural studies. We are aware that there are different streams of cultural studies and different theorists like Raymond Williams (1994) and Antony Esthope (1991), etc. Raymond Williams talks about the future of cultural studies, while Esthope traces the shift of literary studies into cultural studies in England.

[19] Homi Bhabha has been the foremost theorist of post-colonial criticism/literature over the last twenty years. Once again we are aware that these post-modern and post-colonial theories have multiple origins and lineages.

conventional notions of literature and language. The post-modern turn in language and literature is due to its active engagement with Russian Formalism and New Criticism. The post-modern theorists sought to dismantle the genre distinctions between literature and other disciplines. Though their interventions have been extremely valid, relevant and fruitful to understand literary and critical practices, they have not taken into consideration the institutional and social dynamics that receive, interpret and shape literary or critical conventions seriously. It is not only the university academicians who are involved in literary criticism or literary theories, but the reading public also participate actively in the formation of literary world and consolidate certain notions of literature. There are school teachers, student population and vast number of general readers who are untouched by formal courses or theories of literature but still entertain certain 'conventional' notions about literature. These aspects need to be understood and explained in order to discuss the literary controversies in any meaningful way. This will enable us to know why and how different readers receive literary works in different ways. Along with this point we need to understand how literature becomes a domain for establishing certain conventions and strengthening certain ideologies. Since literature is also the site where the monopoly of interpretation is negotiated between/by different communities, it is very productive to know the terms of negotiation.

In recent times, as mentioned earlier, collective/community reading has made noticeable interventions in the literary domain. In order to preserve certain values, the community employs literature or literary aspects for religious/communal purposes. A community intends to protect and preserve certain values of collective belief because it feels that a literary text violates the community beliefs. It is very interesting to note that 'collective' reading exploits the existing discursive practices selectively to read, interpret and define what literature is all about and what it should contain and represent. Even though disciplinary boundaries are problematic and essentialist, the collective/community reading sustains and consolidates the boundaries. Therefore, we need to actively engage with how literature is put to use by several players in the society in the context of literary controversies. In other words, we attempt to open up the socio-political, religious and

cultural interventions by different contending parties and implications of such intervention on general ideas of literature, culture and society.

VI

Narratives of Viraśaivism and Viraśaiva Community

The Viraśaiva community is an economically and politically dominant community in Karnataka. It is the single largest community of the state. It is comprised of heterogeneous sub-sects. K.S. Singh, in his ethnographic survey of castes and tribes in India, says that the Viraśaivas are "spread over 36 of the present-day districts of Karnataka" (Singh, 1998:1984). According to the 1931 Census Report, the Viraśaivas were 63.5% of the total population of the geographical area, which is known today as Karnataka[20]. They belong to various castes and even religious groups such as the priestly class (the Jangama), the peasants (Pachamasali, Sadaru, Kudu Vokkaliga), the traders (Banajiga, Wani), the artisans (Badigar, Banagar, Devanga, Ganiga, Kumbara, Kammara Sivasimpi, Jugar, Hatgar) and the service castes (Hadapad, Madiwal/Dhobi). Though there are many Dalit groups among the Viraśaivas (such as Madiga Jangam, Mala Jangam, Lingayat Samagar, Lingayat Machegar) they are not treated in a dignified way by the upper castes of the community. Instead, *Varna* system is very well applied in their case. The upper castes neither marry nor eat with the lower caste Viraśaivas.

The community holds a unique place in the modern history and culture of Karnataka. It stands apart from other religious and social groups. Today it has its own hierarchy comprising of priests, cultivators, traders, service groups, artisans and scheduled castes. Geographically too, the Viraśaivas are scattered. The geographical location of the Viraśaivas has to be considered while analysing the social, cultural and political life of the community. As many as fourteen sub-groups of the Viraśaivas (58.3 per cent) live in plateau areas, the percentage being on the higher side when compared

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[20] The Karnataka state, as it is known today, has come in to existence only in the year 1956. The reference to *Karnataka* denotes a geographical region. It was divided under many administrative divisions in the colonial period. The South Canara (today's Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts) and Bellary regions were part of the Madras Presidency. Belgaum, Dharwad and North Canara were under the Bombay presidency. Bidar, Gulbarga, Raichur and parts of today's Koppal were part of the Nizam State of

with 17.3 per cent of rest of the communities. Eleven communities (45.8 per cent) live in the plains, the percentage is lower compared with the 61.4 per cent for all communities; only two communities live in the coastal areas among which, is a scheduled caste i.e. Lingayat-Machegar.

These sub-sections pursue varied occupations. They are engaged in government service (91.7 per cent against 65. 83 per cent at the national level), cultivation (79.2 per cent against an average of 54 per cent at the national level), labour (70.8 per cent against 53. 6 per cent at the national level), private service (66.7 per cent against 47.9 per cent at the national level), self-employment and business (58.3 per cent against 44. 27 per cent at the national level), animal husbandry and trade (29.2 per cent against 21. 55 per cent at the national level), specialized service, textile-weaving, textile-dyeing, pottery and terracotta, wood work, metal work, skilled and unskilled labour (one community each; skin and hide-work is reported as the traditional occupation of one community)[21].

It is generally believed that a remarkable religious, social and reformatory movement arose in the second half of the twelfth century. And this movement is known as Viraśaiva movement[22]. The adherents of this movement called themselves 'Viraśaivas' - *Vira* meaning heroic - the ardent worshippers of Lord Shiva. According to many scholars, the Viraśaiva movement contested the domination of the Vedic religion and attracted people from different walks of life into its religious faith. The movement's egalitarian goals and its opposition against caste hierarchy made possible for the downtrodden castes to participate in the movement. Therefore, any individual from any caste could become a Viraśaivite provided s/he believed in Lord Shiva and wore *istalinga*

Hyderabad. Coorg was a separate state directly under the British Commissioner. Apart from this there were as many as 22 little kingdoms including the Princely State of Mysore.

[21] This data is collected from *Indian Communities* (1998) documented by K.S.Singh.

[22] The twelfth century Viraśaiva movement is also known by other names like Vacana movement and Lingayath movement. It is called vacana movement because the ideals of the movement were propagated through large number of vacanas (for an explanation of what vacana is see p. 19 of this chapter) composed by the Shiva Sharanas (the devotees of Lord Shiva). Those who have differences of opinion with the term 'Virasaiva' usually prefer 'Lingayath' to describe the movement. We discuss the differences in the fifth chapter.

[the personal talisman obtained at initiation and worn at all times]. It was a multifaceted movement and was aimed at criticizing traditional notions of purity and rules of conduct. Criticizing the dominant culture of Brahmin community, the Viraśaivas argued for social equality and upheld the dignity of labour.

Though there are several researches, scholarly writings and literary compositions about the origin and spread of Viraśaivism[23], the twelfth century social movement headed by Basava and the vacanas[24] composed by various Shiva Sharanas acquire a special significance for our study of literary controversies. The vacanas primarily include religious doctrines and the mystical experiences of Sharanas. The term Sharana is derived from '*sharanu*' meaning 'to surrender' or 'to submit'. Sharanas are those who have submitted themselves to Lord Shiva or *istalinga*. The term Sharana is often used in Viraśaivism as a synonym of *Bhakta*, the devotee. Though the idea of Viraśaivism prevailed much before the twelfth century, it is now a popularly held belief that Basava founded Viraśaivism in the twelfth century. The names of Devara Dasimayya, Siddharama, Allama Prabhu, Akkamahadevi and Chennabasavanna are prominently associated with the Viraśaivism. There is enough evidence to demonstrate that women and the lower castes participated in the Viraśaiva movement. Though a large number of people from various castes and social background participated in the movement, only a few of them are projected as *the* leaders of the then Viraśaiva community and the

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[23] We use the term 'Viraśaivism' not just to signify the religious practices associated with it, but the whole body of knowledge produced on the Viraśaiva puranas, vacanas, and hagiographies of Shiva Sharanas. It refers to a set of philosophical, literary and religious doctrines. It does not mean any particular school of thought. It also means a way of life, identified so by both the Virasaivas and the non-Virasaivas.

[24] Vacana literally means 'an utterance', 'speech' or a 'promise'. Vacanas are the main source of spiritual and ethical teachings of Basava and his contemporaries. A.K. Ramanujan, in *Speaking of Shiva,* describes them as the compositions of Virasaiva saints (1973:37). In other words, Vacanas are commonly known as the utterances of the Sharanas of the 12th century Viraśaiva community. Those who composed the vacanas are called *Vacanakaras.* Ramanujan considers the common Kannada language used in the vacanas as radical because, according to him, they defy the Sanskritic Kannada used by the earlier Kannada poets. He considers them as *Bhakti* poems, poems of personal devotion to a god. There are varieties of vacanas with multiple interpretations and meanings. As of now, we know approximately 1393 vacanas of Basava, 1409 vacanas of Allama Prabhu, 1378 vacanas of Siddharama, 1471 vacanas of Chennabasavanna and 340 vacanas of Akkamahadevi (Shouten, 1991:11). These five vacanakaras are the most important leaders of the twelfth century vacana movement. But there are many more vacanakaras. More than two hundred twelfth century vacana composers are known till day and, in later times, many vacanakaras joined the

Viraśaiva movement. This is due to various historical/cultural reasons that we explore in detail in the following chapters. Among the prominent Shiva Sharanas, Basava is the most revered icon sculpted in the mainstream Viraśaiva discourse in the last century. Only a few sects within the Viraśaiva community resent the iconisation of Basava. Let us know more about Basava and his iconic image.

Basava was born at Bagewadi, a provincial town in the northern part of the present Karnataka, probably in the year 1105. His parents were Brahmins and they were devotees of Lord Shiva. He was brought up with values of religious observance and devotion. In the available narratives on Basava it is said that even as a boy, he was very religious but also rebellious in nature. He did not believe in strict religious observances prescribed for the Brahmins. His understanding of devotion was different from the traditional approach of his orthodox family. He refused to wear the sacred thread that identified him as a Brahmin. According to some sources, he refused to undergo the *upanayana* (initiation ceremony of being invested with the sacred thread), which was obligatory for every Brahmin male. He even discarded the sacred thread before leaving his parental home at an early age. He left the familiar surroundings of his birthplace and started his own spiritual quest. Along with his sister Akkanagamma, he went to Kudalasangama, a place in the northern Karnataka, the meeting place of the rivers Ghataprabha and Malaprabha. Basava found a guru in Kudalasangama and studied the sacred scriptures al this centre of learning for several years. Then he settled down in the city of Mangalaveda, the present day Basava Kalyana, which was the capital of Kalachuri dynasty. Basava was appointed at the court of Bijjala II, the Jain king, where he rose to become his treasurer. It was here that he married Gangambike first. After a couple of years, Basava married Nilambike.

Basava was very devotional and pursued the spiritual goal intensely. Gradually his spiritual achievements received more and more attention. Basava propagated a form of Viraśaivism in which everybody could participate including even those who were

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vacana tradition. However, in the dissertation we are concerned with the twelfth century vacana tradition and its reception in the twentieth century.

regarded as untouchables. Spiritual seekers from other places came to Kalyana to participate in the Viraśaiva movement. Within a short time, Basava's residence became the centre of a spiritual community that boasted of a great number of Viraśaivas. They rejected the notion of temple institution, dominated by the Brahmin priests. Instead, they worshipped *istalinga,* which every member of the 'new' Viraśaiva community, male and female alike, wore it on their body. Instead of the age-old religious writings in Sanskrit, to be explained and recited by the experts, they used Kannada language for the propagation of their 'new' cult. Many Viraśaivas, including Basava, wrote vacanas in Kannada. In the popular conception it is held that Basava and his followers strove for an egalitarian society without caste hierarchy. Several accomplished mystics became members of the Viraśaiva community and made their own contribution to the development of religious ideas and devotional practices through vacanas.

However, his popularity attracted enmity and hostility. Brahmin ministers in the court of Bijjala conspired against him and began spreading rumours that he misused the money from the king's treasure in order to spread the Viraśaiva religion. The growing popularity of the Viraśaiva movement soon became an eyesore of many others. Along with the spread of Viraśaivas the number of adherents also increased. Gradually, opposition to the new religion also picked up. The Brahmin establishment felt the threat of this new religion intensely. Bijjala, who initially supported Basava, became scared of the growing influence of Basava and disapproved of his doctrines and religious beliefs. The king was not in favour of Basava's rejection of caste barriers. Around the second half of the twelfth century, this hostile atmosphere in the town of Kalyana culminated in a crisis. The king was made to interfere and execute two members of the Viraśaiva community for the violation of caste rules of marriage. This execution followed a marriage arranged by the Viraśaivas between a Madiga boy and a Brahmin girl. Since the parents of the boy and the girl were Viraśaivas, they did not mind this marriage for there was no place for caste hierarchy in the newly acquired religion. The Brahmin ministers and the priests in Bijjala's court took strong objections to the marriage. They argued that if Bijjala allowed this marriage, it would amount to polluting the caste purity. This marriage generated a sensitive situation in Kalyana and the king supported the Brahmins

and decided to punish the violators of the caste rules. The repressive actions of Bijjala against the marriage forced all the Viraśaivas to flee the town in different directions. Basava went back to Kudalasangama, where he passed away shortly after his arrival. There is some mystery surrounding the death of Basava. A few hold that the king killed Basava. However, Bijjala too did not live much longer. It is believed that some Sharanas killed him for revenge. Since the followers of this movement were spread all over Karnataka, they could spread the new religion. Chennabasavanna, the nephew of Basava and the son of Akkanagamma, played a crucial role in giving a philosophical base to form and spread the religion. He is revered as *Shatstala Brahma* for defining basic principles of *Shatstalas*[25]. In the subsequent centuries, Viraśaivism consolidated as a religion and was institutionalised. However, in the colonial period the Viraśaiva community witnessed a new phase of re-formation.

The scholars on Viraśaivism have studied this movement in the context of the Bhakti movement. The 'medieval' period in the history of India is marked by the spread of Bhakti movement in different parts of the country. Members of different communities, especially from the artisan classes, revolted against Brahminism and the Vedic religion during this period. Bhakti became a vehicle of their social and political expression. In the context of Karnataka, details about the Viraśaiva Bhakti movement are available in the vacanas and in the form of hagiographies written by later Viraśaiva poets. These hagiographies were primarily intended to foreground the twelfth century Viraśaiva saints as the incarnations of Gods. However, our intention here is neither to go to the origins nor to provide a 'true'[1] history of Viraśaivism but to look at the ways in which the history of Viraśaivism is constructed in the colonial and post-colonial contexts. The differences and gaps in the history of Viraśaivism provide interesting clues for the analysis of literary controversies.

Literary controversies connected to the Viraśaiva community in the twentieth century are around the narratives of the above explained past and the Viraśaiva icons. The literati in Karnataka see Basava as the leader of the social movement and as a

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[25] For details about Shatstalas see Chapt. 4, pp. 172-173.

historical figure while for some Viraśaivas, especially for the communitarians, he and the rest of Shiva Sharanas are *nulana puratanas* or the new incarnations Lord Shiva. They too acknowledge the historical significance of the Viraśaiva/vacana movement. They see no inconsistency in merging history and the belief about the sacredness of the Shiva Sharanas. The two ways of understanding the history of the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement are one of the root causes of literary controversies in Karnataka. The literary scholars are of the view that since Viraśaivism is a progressive movement, there should not be any problem in researching the movement in order to bring new facts about it. These new facts sometimes contest and are contrary to the religious beliefs of the communitarians. It seems to us that it is this conflict, which is visible repeatedly in debates over the literary controversies.

The 'iconisation' and canonization of the Viraśaiva history and literature have been so strong that any digression from the received beliefs invariably attracts severe criticism from the self-proclaimed saviours of the community. On several occasions, the saviours found the narrativisation of the Viraśaiva past in literature and history objectionable. They used their strength as the dominant community to demand a ban or confiscation of such objectionable literary works or works of historical research. This community is involved in several such controversies since the early twentieth century. These controversies have assumed religious and casteist turns too.

Since the colonial period to the present day, the processes of the formation of Viraśaiva identity have also effected the above mentioned literary/historical narratives. The narratives of its past and literature that undergo a fresh lease of transformation during such controversies have raised the question of self-representation. The communitarians have shown a tendency to keep the monopoly of interpretation over the Viraśaiva literature. They dislike others' interference/intrusion in this matter. But the creative writers and researchers who think that they are the most sensitive, creative and objective minds in the world would not care for the dictates of the communitarians and write what they consider as the truth, which creates a flash point. However, any 'misrepresentation' of the Viraśaiva history becomes a flash point due to various reasons. We relate the

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various reasons to the hierarchical social structure within the community, different historical experiences and circumstances, tensions between secular and fundamentalist forces, literary practices, societal transformations, economic imbalances among the several sub-sects of the community, etc. These reasons have primarily altered the attitude towards narratives of Viraśaiva literature and history.

The dissertation is designed into six chapters. After the introductory chapter, in the second chapter, *Battles of Wills: Secular Intellectuals and the Champions of Community Sentiments*, we deal with the question of representation and describe how the proponents (the communitarians) and the opponents (the secular intellectuals) of ban on a literary text view the given text and argue either in favour of or against it. We show that both the contending parties not only construct a 'self' but also the 'other' during the controversies to represent and legitimise their respective claims. Hence, it is interesting as well as sociologically productive to analyse the *battles of wills* in the context of literary controversies. In this chapter, we analyse three literary controversies: the *Maarga-I* controversy (1989), the *Mahachaitra* controversy (1994) and the *Dharmakaarana* controversy (1997) to demonstrate the process of representation. We intend to open up several contentious issues that are not usually addressed in the context of literary controversies, for the parties involved in the literary controversies generally reduce them to the 'literary'.

The third chapter titled *Colonialism and Formation of the Viraśaiva Community* delineates how the Viraśaivas identify themselves by refashioning the narratives of Viraśaiva literature, history and religion in the context of the *Shubhodaya* controversy in 1919. The delineation focuses on:

a)   The refashioning of the Viraśaiva self-representation in terms of modern values in the colonial period and

b)   The formation of modern identity of the Viraśaivas.

We discuss two controversies viz., *Sangeeta Basaweshwara Nataka* (1912) controversy and the *Shubhodaya* controversy. Discussion of these two controversies will be extended to understand the evolution of community consciousness among the Viraśaivas in the late colonial period. This will be followed by our attempt to re-visit the history of orientalist narratives of Viraśaivism from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.

The fourth chapter, *Crushed by English Poetry? Making of Vacana 'Poetry' and Paradigm Shift in the Imagination of the Viraśaiva Community,* is a sequel to the second chapter in terms of its focus on the shifting identification of the community and the emergence of new perceptions of Viraśaivism. We attempt to examine the politics of secular imagination of the vacanas of the twelfth century Shiva Sharanas in the early twentieth century. The chapter seeks to explore the dynamics of institutionalisation and naturalization of the vacana tradition in the early twentieth century. In doing so, we attempt to show how the production of the vacana tradition provided a new paradigm shift in the perception of Viraśaivism and a secular image for the Viraśaivas. We discuss the contribution of two Viraśaiva scholars in the colonial period towards imagining a secular space of the Viraśaivas through vacanas.

The fifth chapter, *Understanding Collective Interpretations and Literary Controversies* will show how collective interpretations, in the context of literary controversies signify the efforts of the Viraśaiva community to consolidate its power of interpreting the Viraśaiva texts and marginalizing other kinds of interpretations that pose challenge to its power. We begin with the theorisation of collective interpretation attempted by Stanley Fish who describes the collective interpretations as the product of what he calls, 'interpretive communities'. We examine the founding elements of interpretive communities as outlined by Fish and see if his notion of interpretive community is viable to understand and theorise the relationship between literary controversies and collective interpretations. The *Vacana Deepti* controversy (1996) is discussed to show how the so called 'collective interpretation' is manufactured on the basis of certain notions of religion by Mathe Mahadevi (henceforth MM), the first female guru of the Viraśaivas in the modern period, to establish and institutionalise her

perceptions of Viraśaivsim. The *Dharmakaarana* controversy is examined once again to demonstrate how the controversy led to a re-grouping of the Viraśaivas, under the banner of *Akhila Bharata Viraśaiva Mahasabha* (henceforth ABVM), to define Viraśaivism on their own terms in 1997. Both controversies are analysed to show the differences existing between MM and ABVM and their implications on the imagination of Viraśaiva identity in the post-colonial period. We argue that the literary controversies that we discuss in the second chapter are reactions of the upper caste Viraśaivas to the purported threat to their hegemony due to social, political and economic changes in Karnataka and the interventions of subaltern social forces in the domain of Viraśaivism.

In the concluding section, *Conclusion: The Roads Taken and Not Taken,* we attempt a recapitulation of the preceding chapters indicating towards newer areas of research with regard to the narratives of Viraśaivism in Karnataka in general and literary controversies in particular. Since no dissertation can be encyclopaedic, we admit that there are many areas, which we could not explore in this dissertation. Therefore, our attempt is to work towards a 'framework' within which literary controversies can be discussed.

VII

Methodology

In the dissertation, we examine a few select literary controversies related to the Viraśaiva community. So questions such as 'what is happening to the 'largest' community' and 'why is it agitated over literary texts frequently', form our primary points of departure besides examining different features of literary controversies. In other words, the reason for focusing our study on the Viraśaiva community is to know why, despite being a majority social group in Karnataka it gets 'disturbed' or feels 'under seize' by literary narratives. We examine only those controversies, which have created attention of the reading public widely due to pressure on the state government to ban or censor a particular literary work. The specific focus on the 'banned' literary texts is to distinguish it from other controversies. For instance, there are many literary controversies involving several authors but without implicating any particular community and without resulting in any censorship or ban. For example, the debates between Masti Venkatesh

lyengar and Kuvempu, the two great modern writers in Kannada, in the 1940s over interpreting the Ramayana is one such case wherein no particular community was nvolved[26] and there was no ban called for.

Given the theoretical and methodological focus, we have looked into different kinds of sources state archives, legislative proceedings, private collections, newspapers and journals. That apart we interviewed the activists, writers and religious leaders of several Viraśaiva mutts and gathered historical accounts, literary narratives, biographies, autobiographies, folk elements, etc. We have not restricted our study to one specific region while analysing literary controversies because we want to demonstrate how the Viraśaivas reacted to the literary controversies across the state. This helps us to address the issue whether the concerns and reactions of the community are really 'collective' and 'spontaneous' as it is believed to be.

VIII

Beyond the 'literary': Reading Theoretical Formations

Intense debates have always followed whenever a literary text is banned or censored. But the literary critics soon forget these debates. Thus, the literary controversies are treated as isolated episodes in the history of literature. The literary historians do not put the discourse produced by the writers, the critics and the readers during the literary controversies to a productive use. Therefore, it is not surprising that the literary controversies are not well researched.

Literary controversies are not mere battles between writers and a group of people who take objections to their work. Also, they are not instances of state coercion. Instead, they provide us important clues about what is happening in a culture. Hence, we shall investigate the nature of the literary controversies, the deep-rooted multiple reasons that cause controversies and set out to theorise them in socio-political terms, for literary controversies are sites where a particular society becomes aware of its social problems

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[26] Masti accused Kuvempu of humiliating the Brahmins his play *Shudra Tapaswi* (1944). For an analysis of the clash between Masti and Kuvempu see Tejaswini Niranjana's "Whose Culture is it? Contesting the

and tries to resolve it by means of public debate. A few scholars have analysed the literary controversies paying attention to the above facts. For example, Susan Mendus brings forth the complexities involved in the literary controversies. She examines the *Satanic Verses* controversy and wonders:

> Reading through the vast and still burgeoning literature on the Rushdie affair, it is surprisingly difficult to establish precisely what the debate is about; in part it is about how to read novels; in part it is about the nature of Islamic fundamentalism; in part it is about the preservation of cultural identity in a multicultural society [England]. Most pervasively, however, it is a debate about the values which inform modern liberal societies-a debate in which liberal culture, with its emphasis on rationality, choice and the sovereignty of the individual, is pitted against cultures which emphasize sanctity, tradition and group identity (Menuds, 1993: 193)

Mendus's views clearly show us that though during the time of a controversy people involved in it might see only one aspect of the controversy; the controversy itself is symptomatic of several cultural problems.

In the following discussion, we would like to extend this line of argument in order to look at different dimensions of literary controversies and their dialectical relationship with communities. The main purpose of this discussion is to probe into the peculiarities and complexities of literary controversies and communities and to find out further ways of exploring and theorising them.

The four post-colonial social scientists and cultural critics who are examined here have focused on a wide range of issues related to literary controversies. The conceptual framework within which they discuss the literary controversies shows clearly that literary controversies open up multiple issues confronted by a society/community. These critics have clearly shown that the literary controversies between the secular writers and the communities cannot be analysed in terms of literature alone. The specific reason for choosing their essays is that they raise range of issues about modernity, tradition, colonialism and community. There are, of course, other participants in the debate whom we could have included. The purpose, however, is not to offer an exhaustive review of all

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Modern" (1994).

the scholars involved. It is to demonstrate some of the complexities of the literary controversies by showing how the abstract points presented in this introduction work themselves out quite differently in different theoretical approaches.

Literary Controversies, Modernity and Community

Sabrey Hafez is one of the important scholars who have thought about literary controversies from Marxist point of view. According to him, the erosion of progressive values and the replacement of the same by the fundamentalist forces may result in literary controversies. His article "The Novel, Politics and Islam" (2000) examines a controversy around Haydar Hay der's novel *'Banquet for Seaweed'* to expose the impact of religious fundamentalism on literature in Egypt. Hafez considers religious fundamentalism of the Muslims in Egypt as the sole reason for the controversy. The rise of Muslim fundamentalism in the 1980s has resulted in such controversy and according to Hafez, it symbolizes an erosion of modern values such as rationality, secularism and liberalism.

Hayder Hayder is a Syrian writer and he writes novels in Arabic language. The Egyptian government, under the pressure of the Muslim fundamentalists, proscribed his novel *'Banquet for Seaweed'* in 1986. The fundamentalists accused that the holy Quran was considered as a *'Shit'* in the novel. A *Fatwa* was imposed on the writer for being blasphemous. Though the novel was written sixteen years ago and was published several times outside Egypt, it was only in 1986 that the Muslim fundamentalists created uproar over the alleged "blasphemy". The students of Azhar University poured into the streets of Cairo, holding demonstrations against the novel. Police used the tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the demonstrators. Hafez describes this controversy as the sign of Islamic fundamentalism that was gaining strength in Egypt over the last twenty years. He thinks that the conservative Muslims have resurged back to fight modern ethos.

Hafez's theorization of the controversy runs as follows. He identifies that 'novel', as a literary genre, emerged in Egypt in the twentieth century. He sees the rise of the novel as a signification of cultural transition in modern Egypt i.e., from religious fundamentalism to modern intellectualism. According to Hafez, this cultural transition is

very well captured in the genre of novel. In contrast to this modern period, Hafez notices, the pre-modern Egypt was under the grip of Muslim orthodoxy. It was a land of religious dogmatism that had moral and political support from the sovereign power. Religious orthodoxy was complicit with political power in oppressing the common people. However, this nexus between religious orthodoxy and the political power began to erode in the early nineteenth century, when Muhammad Ali (1805-48), often called the founder of modern Egypt, introduced a new educational system based on the European model. Egypt witnessed a sustained modernization and development beginning from the early nineteenth century under Ali's leadership. Schools, hospitals, newspapers, magazines, printing presses, learned societies and charitable organizations were founded in larger numbers. Even during British colonialism after the 1840s, urbanization and modern values continued to flourish and shape the life of the Egyptians. It is important to note that modernity entered Egypt well before British imperialism. As a consequence of modern changes in the early twentieth century, the Muslim conservatives were discredited. Nasser who succeeded Muhammad Ali as the king continued the process of modernization. During his rule a new generation of intellectuals started to rationalize the sacred *Quran*. Later on a secular dimension was attached to it in the 1940s. In 1960 the irst Marxist biography of Muhammad, the prophet, appeared. Hafez continues,

> The development of th[e] intellectual offensive coincided with the country's progress from colonial rule to limited independence, and finally complete liberation from imperialist control at the end of the 1950s (Hafez: 120).

He recalls that there were a few literary controversies in the past in 1920s and 1930s that resulted in the banning of literary works. In such instances Muslim fundamentalism/traditionalism was crushed brutally and successfully. Under the regime of Nasser, in the 1950s and 1960s, fundamentalists remained isolated episodes. The commitment of the progressive government and the measures taken to curb religious fundamentalism made many religious leaders to go underground. Hafez reminiscences:

> Increasing activity of the left resulted in social polarization and a sharp crackdown on the *Muslim Brothers* and kindred groups could be seen now and then (ibid: 121).

However, this progressive phase in the history of Egypt did not last long. With Sadat succeeding Nasser in 1970, the balance between the progressive and the religious forces changed dramatically. Nasser's version of Arab nationalism and state-led industrialization was,

> ...unceremoniously ditched in favour of an open door to western capital and a brazenly pro-American foreign policy in exchange for lavish US and Saudi subsidies (ibid: 122)

Sadat, according to Hafez, on the one hand pursued the open-door policy and on the other, used the Muslim fundamentalists to suppress the progressive forces in Egypt. Adel Hussain, an ex-communist, was instrumental in bringing in such changes with the active consent of Sadat. Adel Hussain, argues Hafez,

> ...cleverly inverted prevailing images of modernity, associating it with failure, defeat and corruption and contrasting these to the puritan, idealistic standards of Islam (ibid: 124).

Slowly religious supremacy in Egypt was reconsolidated. Betrayed by the state, the poor classes were driven towards an alternative welfare system offered by the neo-traditionalists. Muslim fundamentalists took over the political system in Egypt and sought to retrieve orthodox tradition. Too much liberalization and the American hand in the economic affairs of Egypt led to a free reign of fundamentalists. This resulted in various forms of anti-people policies of the regime. Gradually, Egypt witnessed changes in the socio-religious and political spheres. These changes were accompanied by significant cultural shifts towards religious fundamentalism and caused the literary controversy in 1986. Hafez's study on the literary controversy, thus, captures the interrelationship between several factors viz., a) political history of Egypt, b) political changes and their implications on the Muslim world and c) changes in the religious life of the Muslims.

Literary Controversies, Narratives and Reconstitution of Communities

A.R. Vasavi's study, "Narratives in the Reconstitution of Communities", demonstrates the functional aspects of narratives from a cultural and sociological point of view. She has studied the Lingayath community[27] of Karnataka, the Nadar community of

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[27] Vasavi uses the term Lingayath instead of Viraśaiva.

Tamil Nadu and the farmers' community in rural Andhra Pradesh and has shown how these communities have grown into 'political actors' in the contemporary period. According to her, in the post-colonial period there is an increased awareness regarding the political role and strength of communities, which has resulted in 'politicisation of the communities'.

According to Vasavi the resurgence of communities can be seen either as a symbol of their attempt to replace the state and its cultural narratives or as an attempt to use both community narratives as well as state narratives for further consolidation of communities. She notes that in the case of the Lingayath community the first argument holds good. She examines the Lingayath community's attempts to challenge the government of Karnataka in a variety of ways. She points out,

> Lingayath community on several occasions has resuscitated the old symbols…to regain its lost cultural and economic position and status and in the process it has emerged as political actor (Vasavi, 2001: 129).

She mentions two occasions when the Lingayath community demanded to ban books that were considered by it as critical or derogatory of Basava - *Mahachaitra,* a play[28] and *Dharmakaarana,* a novel[29], both in Kannada language. She also mentions a demand to rename the Gulbarga University as Basaweshwara University. According to her, the efforts of the Lingayaths to rename the Gulbarga University were to scuttle the efforts of *Dalit Sangharsh Samiti* to have the university renamed as Ambedkar University. She examines the ways in which Lingayath community has deployed its cultural capital in order to mobilize different sects of the Lingayath community in Karnataka to realise the above demands. The leaders of the community used the cultural symbols and icons of the community effectively during these campaigns. Lingayath mutts and religious leaders emerged as important figures during the agitations. Thus, the Lingayath community was able to use the remnants of the medieval organizational patterns (that of the monastery system) and deploy cultural symbols of the Viraśaivas to put pressure on the government.

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[28] A Controversy around this Kannada play occurred in the year 1994. The contending parties in the controversy were a section of Viraśaiva community and a Viraśaivas writer.

According to Vasavi, some of the pre-modern cultural signs and cultural resources are incompatible with the modern state and its narratives and therefore, there is a clash between the community and the state. For Vasavi, the assertion of certain communities in the recent years is an indication of their awareness about the strength of the identity politics in the modern democracy. The encounter between communities and the state, consequently, has made it possible for the communities to emerge as political actors.

Vasavi looks at the social and economic reasons that are responsible for the political avatar of the Lingayath community. She points out that,

> Changes in land-use patterns, land distribution by the state to landless caste groups, and the decrease in hereditary village posts, once enjoyed by Lingayaths in the area ... (ibid: 127)

are primarily responsible for the political activism of the community. Besides these,

> ...the rise of other middle-rank caste groups into the political foray and the new identity and consciousness of Dalits are seen as threats to the Lingayaths (ibid: 127).

According to Vasavi these socio-economic changes in Karnataka have threatened the once absolute dominance of Lingayaths in the region. It is in this context that the Lingayat community has become oversensitive to the behaviour of other communities towards it. She identifies the encounter between four kinds of narratives in the modern society. These are a) Narratives of the nation-state, b) Narratives of capital, c) Narratives of culture and d) Narratives of community. The communities use 'community narratives' to consolidate their position and counter the state narratives. In Karnataka, Vasavi argues, the Lingayath community has deployed its narratives to counter the state narratives, which has resulted in 'politicisation of the community'.

Politicisation of the community compels the community to behave like a "political actor" (ibid: 126). What she means by 'political actor' is the growing

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[29] This controversy around the Kannada novel took place in 1997. It was between a section of Viraśaiva community and a Brahmin writer.

sensitivity and awareness about its position vis-à-vis the state and other communities. The factors that have facilitated such political emergence of communities are the

> ...failure of the nation-state and its polity to engender and establish a civil society and the incompatibility of modern institutions and rules to pre-modern social formations (ibid: 126).

The failure of the modern state to accommodate the pre-modern social formations and institutions of the communities and to give them a political space to articulate their cultural, economic and political interests have given ample opportunities for the communities to question the state. Besides this imbalance between communities and the state, the latter has penetrated into all spheres of life and has absorbed the pre-modern elements of the communities into modern state technologies.

She compares the Viraśaiva community with the Nadar community of Tamil Nadu. The Nadar community also responded to the discourses of development and progress of the modern nation-state. It was very sensitive to the discourses of capitalism and believed that globalisation could be effectively used for the benefit of the community. In order to reap the benefits of modernization and globalisation it reconstituted itself around the discourses of capitalism. This reconstitution was possible due to its accessibility to the capital resources.

In the case of Andhra Pradesh, the stale intervention to alleviate poverty and food scarcity in a region altered and displaced the local agricultural knowledge and tradition. But such state intervention, instead, did not put in place any measures to obliterate the existing social structures that were hierarchical. Consequently, the hierarchical social system continued to exist. In the process, the state privileged capital and modernization. Vasavi is more concerned with the loss of traditional rural life owing to the interventions of the state. In her other book also, *Harbingers of Rain: Land and Life in South India* (1999), she draws our attention to the violence of the state. She says,

> ...state intervention in rural areas of India is often legitimised in terms of an array of economic compulsions in which 'growth', 'development', 'modernisation' and

'poverty', 'eradication' programmes are sought to be implemented (Vasavi, 1999:7).

The analysis of Vasavi exposes the violence of the state and capital over communities and the latter's reactions to such violence. The success for a community depends upon the proximity of that community to the institutions of the state. Through these three case studies, she shows that the communities have cultural and political capabilities *inherent* in them to fight and negotiate with the state and the capital.

As said earlier, according to Vasavi, it is the fourth kind, the narratives of community that are deployed by the Lingayath community to assert its identity and right to intervene in the process of interpretation of the texts that belong to the community. The Lingayath community has always guarded these narratives from outside interference. However, these narratives of the community, according to her, have become sectarian in recent times. What she implies by sectarian is that the Lingayath community and its narratives, which earlier stood,

> ....primarily to critique the then caste society and to consolidate a non-caste
> society based on work, worship of a single god, and commensality
> earlier...now....are deployed for divisive interests. (Vasavi, 2001: 8)

She is critical of the contemporary Lingayaths' vigilantism over the narratives of Viraśaivism and their attempt to force monolithic identity on the larger public. This self-representation of the Lingayaths is achieved by means of narratives produced by the community and has also resulted in using its cultural images to articulate and assert its political concerns over the state and to challenge its narratives. Therefore, Vasavi considers such sectarian attitude of the community as communal, exclusivist and divisive. This sectarian attitude has also helped a few actors in the community to realize their personal interests.

In fact Vasvi's essay deals with two time-periods, the post colonial and the pre-colonial. The concepts of 'fuzzy' and 'demarcation' point out this oscillation. The pre-colonial 'fuzzy' and 'fluid' communities find it difficult to cope with the new regional

and religious demarcations set by the colonial government in the colonial period. She points out,

> It is as a result of such trends that communities that were once endowed with 'fuzzy' boundaries and 'dynamic' fluidity in the pre-colonial period, and which were subject to regional and religious demarcation in the colonial period, have in the postcolonial period, become susceptible to a consolidation of their identities and collective orientation (ibid: 137).

'Fuzzy' communities in the pre-colonial period were enumerated in the colonial period on regional and religious grounds. In other words, pre-modern India is marked by the plural life patterns but in the colonial and the post-colonial period these plural life patterns were homogenized and the monolithic constructions were foregrounded. The symbols from the plural life patterns of the pre-colonial period are employed to re-assert the community identities and collective orientations in the post-colonial period. Lastly, in such instances of communities emerging as political actors, both individual and collective political ambitions are articulated (ibid: 137) and there is no marginalisation of one at the cost of the other.

Literary controversy, Colonialism and Communities

Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha examine a controversy around Muddupalani's *Radhika Santwanam* (Appeasing Radhika) and the public debates around it in the early twentieth century to demonstrate the changing perceptions of literature, secularism and patriarchy during the colonial period. They raise issues of orientalism, imperialism and bourgeoisie nationalism while examining the controversy.

In their article "Empire, Nation and the Literary Text" (1993), they explain how colonial intervention changed notions of aesthetics, gender and patriarchy in the Indian context in the early twentieth century. They hold that under the pressure of imperialism and colonialism, the patriarchy of the earlier kind underwent a drastic change. This transformed the discursive practices of the bourgeoning middle class in India. According to Susie and Lalitha the discursive practices were developed on the grounds of moral values and ethical principles of the Victorian as well as the nationalist consciousness.

Bangalore Nagarathnamma published *Radhika Santwanam*, a text produced in the pre-colonial period by Muddupalani, in 1911. But the British government, on the charges of obscenity, immediately proscribed it. According to Kandukuri Vireshalingam Pantulu, well-known social reformer of Andhra Pradesh in the nineteenth century, it contained "crude descriptions of sex in the name of *Shringara Rasa"* (Tharu and Lalitha, 1993:200). Vireshalingam denounces Muddupalani's work for her immodesty. According to him, Muddupalani did not have the modesty that was natural to women because she was born into a community of prostitutes.

Muddupalani belonged to the Ganika community (community of dancers) and was a courtesan in the court of Pratapasimha (1739-1763), one of the Nayaka kings of Tanjavur of present day Tamil Nadu. Nagarathnamma felt it necessary to publish the manuscript because it was "brimming with *rasa*" (ibid: 1993). Nagarathnamma also belonged to the Ganika community and she was also one of the socially active members of the community in the colonial period. Therefore, she felt that she should be publishing Muddupalani's work. In this regard, Nagarathnamma said,

> I find the work immensely beautiful and as it has been composed, not only by a woman, but a woman of *our* community, 1 felt necessary to publish the proper work". (Italics mine. Tharu and Lalitha, 1991: 118).

She was aware of the existence of several versions of *Radhika Santwanam* and wanted to publish the 'proper work' (Ibid. 1991:118). As soon as the book was published, there was uproar over the book and this led to demand for a ban on it by the newly English-educated middle class. Even social reformers like Vireshalingam took strong objections to the book. The British government was convinced that the book would "endanger the *moral health* of their Indian subjects" (Italics mine. Tharu and Lalitha, 1993: 201) and decided to ban it ultimately.

The intention of Susie and Lalitha is not to pass any qualitative judgments on the proscription. They discuss this literary controversy in order to understand the changing notions of aesthetics and patriarchy in colonial India, which resulted in restricting certain

kinds of literary expressions. According to them the new nationalist attempt at refashioning of patriarchy, despite giving some space for women in the public life, controlled the women and recast them to suit new patriarchies. The new patriarchy was not of the earlier kind. It was influenced by the post-enlightenment values of liberal humanism. The agency for women was denied by these "new" patriarchies. As we know under the pressures of colonial rule, the new middle class tried to refashion itself and as a part of that effort it was also 're-casting' women. We shall not elaborate on this for this point has been well theorized in the contemporary literature on nationalism and feminism.[30] Susie and Lalitha compare the cultural practices and ambience of the pre-modern period with the modern period of the colonial times in order to show us how the conception of culture and cultural practices, the notions of good and bad, and of morality were refashioned by the middle class elites during the colonial period which were drastically different from the pre-colonial period.

They compare and contrast the new notions of nationalist literature and the nationalist curriculum with the 'secular' atmosphere of the Tanjavur royal court of the pre-modern period. They hold that this court gave patronage to many women writers in the court. They observe, "some quite radical changes were taking place in the society Muddupalani lived in" (Tharu and Lalitha, 1993: 205). They wonder that women poets and dancers,

> ...enjoyed an unabridged right to hold and inherit property and therefore retained control of their wealth. They had the status of free women, whose place in the public sphere was undisputed, and many of them commanded respect for their learning and their accomplishments. Their right to choose their lovers and friends was seldom questioned (Tharu and Lalitha, 1991:117).

They note that Tanjavur was the mosaic of various cultures of Marathi, Telugu and Tamil. The Nayaka period was comparatively progressive. They notice, "Another Telugu work from the same period *Ramalingesvara Satakamu,* dealt with the evil deeds of landlords" (Tharu and Lalitha, 1993: 206). Also, "secular prose narrative had also begun to make an appearance" (ibid, 1993: 206) during this period. They note that with the

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[30] There are plenty of works on this aspect. The most important work among them is *Recasting Women:*

intervention of colonialism things changed. *Radhika Santwanam*, a work that was read, heard, performed and enjoyed by people two centuries ago was banned in modern times. They ask,

> ...what made a work that was unusual but relatively uncontroversial in its time, so dangerous and unacceptable two centuries after? (Ibid: 207).

They point out,

> Colonial restructuring of gender and the curricular institutionalisation of literature both worked to undermine the authority of Indian literatures and undercut the societies that gave rise to them. (Ibid: 209).

According to them, the colonial, orientalist and nationalist perceptions of literature and aesthetics restricted the domain of women's expression. The nationalist recasting of women produced an ideal womanhood that was different from that of the 'western' and the 'traditional'. There was no place to articulate women's desire in this new notion of the ideal Indian womanhood. But Muddupalani's *Radhika Santwanam* was not only a text that primarily articulated the desire of a woman but also gave an active agency to woman in the act of love. This is something, which the nationalist intelligentsia was unable to digest. In the process of recasting women some of the texts written by women writers like Muddupalani were marginalized in the name of obscenity. Susie and Lalitha argue that nationalist agenda of the upper caste male exhibited "Brahmanical" (ibid: 210) qualities and ignored the literary creations of the lower caste women dancers. Consequently the upper caste male gaze of the colonial period, shaped by the western ways of aesthetics and changing ideologies of class, caste, gender, did not consider the concerns and requirements of the women but imposed its own parameters to decide and judge women.

Engaging with Modernity and Colonialism

Before examining Susie Tharu and Lalitha's criticism of colonialism and nationalism, we need to note that there exist three striking parallels between Vasavi and Hafez's understanding of literary controversies. 1) Both have focused on changing nature of communities that have explicit effects on literary controversies. 2) Both have dealt with the question of modernity inextricably linked to the controversies. 3) Both have

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Essays in Colonial History (1989).

pointed out sectarian and essentialist attitudes of the communities in appropriating cultural and religious symbols. They have clearly demonstrated the scope **and** implications of literary controversies on the communities in post-colonial times. However, in their understanding, a community exhibits a homogenous structure. Their concept of community and modernity need sufficient explanation because there are different and antagonistic interventions while accessing modernity and a community cannot be understood as a unified and a homogenous term.

Vasavi deploys the binary oppositions of 'fuzzy' (pre-colonial) and 'demarcated' (colonial) in order to conceptualise the dynamics of contemporary communities. This is to indicate that the modern state dictates term for categorizing/demarcating the pre-modern communities. In her conceptualisation, pre-modern indicates pre-colonial. Her contention is based on the notion that innumerable castes, religions and communities were demarcated on the basis of religion and region during the colonial period and that the modern state in the post-colonial period has perpetuated such demarcation. However, such conceptualisation of community may not allow us to see the multiple ways through which the "fixing of community identities by the state are accepted, negotiated or rejected" (Upadhyay, 2001:34). In the second and third chapters, we have shown that in the colonial period the Viraśaiva community actively engaged with the state whenever the latter enumerated the Viraśaiva population for Census purposes. And we have also demonstrated how the narratives of Viraśaivism were employed to contest the state intervention in the community affairs in the colonial period. The Viraśaivas did not accept the state dictates passively but tried to insert its meaning and imaginations into the state narratives. The second point is that the reconstituting of community as political actor is not a contemporary phenomenon, as Vasavi would like to see. There were many communities that reconstituted themselves during the colonial period by way of a conscious engagement with colonialism as well as with other communities in order to safeguard their interests. Our study of the Viraśaiva community and its relationship with the state and other communities in the colonial period would testify how communities were politically motivated and politically assertive.

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The narratives of the community and the State are not mutually exclusive. The four types of narratives identified by Vasavi are not independent of each other. We need to see through the overlapping tendencies of these four types of narratives. Most importantly, we need to be sensitive to the collaboration and mutual reinforcement of narratives of the state and the communities. Carol Upadhyay has focused on this aspect. She disapproves of the tendency of studying community identity and narratives of self-representation only in relation to the state. She investigates the role of the academia in producing knowledge about identity formations for the state. She points out,

> The discourses and practices of the academy and those of the 'real world' inform and partake of one another in multiple ways, and this interconnection is especially dense with regard to concepts such as community, culture and identity,... It is not only the practices of the state but also academic work that is implicated in the reproduction and transformation of identities (Upadhyay, 2001:49-50)

In the second chapter, arguing along the lines of Upadhyay we have tried to reveal how the academia, the 'public' and the state apparatus work together in order to re-produce and legitimise certain kinds of knowledge through the narratives. The analysis of controversies around narratives of history and literature will demonstrate the complex relationship between narratives of the state and that of the Viraśaiva community.

Another point of Vasavi was that the structural changes in Karnataka were responsible for the Viraśaiva community to reconstitute itself and assert its dominance. But this point cannot be extended too far. Because the structural changes in the spheres of politics and economy have not affected all the Viraśaivas alike and their perception of the structural changes does not boast of uniformity. The Viraśaivas have demonstrated different perceptions of the structural changes because they do not share a unified and homogenous historical lineage and cultural patterns. Besides that, they are stratified into hierarchical social arrangements. Consequently, the multiple perceptions of the structural changes have contributed to certain kind of crisis and a feeling of being 'under seize'. Once again, this feeling has been imagined differently by different sections of the

community. We call this imagination *castiest crisis[31]*. That is, different castes of the community perceive the crisis differently and their perception is related to their distinct socio-political background and historical experiences.

Narratives of history are also narratives of tradition. Invoking tradition need not necessarily be non-modern or need not entail an erosion of modern values as Hafez envisages. Like history and literature, traditional values are also invented in the modern period and they act as principles of mobilization of opinions. However, Hafez's critique of fundamentalism in terms of binary oppositions of tradition and modernity does not consider Muslim 'fundamentalism' as a modern phenomenon. His critique of Muslim fundamentalism is in a way a nostalgic trip to the early modernity and early modern state institutions. Though Hafez makes a valuable point about how religious fundamentalists took advantage of globalisation, his obsession with modernity does not consider how different sections of Muslim community intervene the domain of modernity from different axis within the Egyptian society. He does not see that the controversy over Hayder's book is a sign of Muslim community's battle for political power and identity rather than a mere sign of fundamentalism. His own analysis shows that the Islamic fundamentalists were very much 'modern' and they tried to mobilize the community repeatedly with the support of political power. He does not consider the fact that 'Muslim tradition' is also constructed by the changing conditions. We argue that the controversies around narratives of literature and history provide opportunities for a community to refashion itself not only in terms of the so-called traditional values but also the modern ones.

Patriarchies, Communities and Colonialism

Charu Gupta's analysis (2000:91) of the 'dirty' Hindi Literature in the late colonial north India reviews Susie Tharu and Lalitha's article. She argues that the Victorian sensibility did not solely determine the indigenous perceptions about the

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[31] The term *castiest crisis* is formulated following Etienne Baliber's concept 'racist crisis' (1993). Baliber, while theorising racism in the contemporary France, considers that it is not merely the structural changes in the society that create crisis but crisis also depends on the way it is perceived, defined and formed by the racists. In other words, he theorises how the rhetoric of crisis adds a much-needed mechanism to defend and legitimise racism.

question of woman and aesthetics. Secondly, the charges of obscenity in the colonial period were across gender lines and not merely due to prejudice towards women. Therefore, according to Gupta the issue of obscenity was central rather than that of gender. She discusses how the 'Hindu publicists' (2001:1-29) re-constructed patriarchy by means of othering the Muslims. For this re-construction of Hindu patriarchy, she does not hold the colonial power and the Victorian values responsible. She mentions the conflicts between several castes, middle class literary groups and social reformists over the question of woman that ultimately defined patriarchy in modern times. She disagrees with the assumptions of the present day scholars that the colonial rule successfully established hegemony by means of the Victorian values of sexuality and patriarchy. She indicates the lack of finality in the establishment of Hindu identity formation around patriarchy, sexuality and incompleteness of the colonial discourse. As an extension of such analysis of patriarchy and sexuality, we need to examine the dynamics of the then prevailing social relations between Ganika community and the other communities especially the Brahmin community if we are to understand colonialism, the middle class patriarchy and its relation to the "new" notion of morality which resulted in the proscription of works such as *Radhika Santwanam.*

The relationship between the Ganika community and the Brahmin community in the Madras Presidency underwent drastic changes during the colonial period. The changing values of art, dance, and other forms of cultural practices indicate these changes. Susie and Lalitha consider the anti-nautch[32] movement as the offshoot of the progressive, middle class and upper caste social reformation. It was this middle class and its 'aesthetic' sensibility that was responsible for engendering new notions of purity, morality and human values. But it is important for us to note that among the educated middle class, there were differences of opinions as far as reformation of the Ganika community was concerned. Some of these differences surfaced in the context of nautch reform. The middle class social reformists who considered nautch as an obscene and low art form attempted to reform it or abolish it. But the conservatives objected to any kind of reformation. Though the conservative forces within the upper castes harboured the

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[32] The term *nautch* was used by the British to refer to the *Devadasi* tradition in India.

notions of purity/pollution, they did not feel that reformation of the nautch tradition was required. For example, historian V. Ramakrishna (1983) explains the debate around nautch reform as perceived by Venkataratnam, a social reformer and the president of the Metropolitan Temperance and Purity Association in the Andhra region. Ramakrishna notes:

> The critics of nautch reform put forward the theory of "recognised outlet for human passions", and that, in case the system is abolished family life would be threatened with destruction. The opponents of Venkataratnam held the view that his efforts were bound to fail as he was seeking to remove the Himalayas. Some others opined that there is a necessity for the maintenance of a caste devoted exclusively to the performance of fine arts (Ramakrishna, 1983:138-139).

Venkataratnam was a contemporary of Vireshalingam Pantulu and was instrumental in pioneering the 'social purity' movement with the goal of achieving social progress. The anti-nautch sentiment was at the heart of this movement. The conservatives were against Venkataratnams anti-nautch movement as well as reform movement. Ramakrishna points out,

> The native press lodged its protest against the system of having common schools for girls of the general public and the children of nautch girls. They feared that such an arrangement would lead to the corruption of the children of the general public (ibid, 1983:140).

Even those who pressed for the abolition of the nautch system raised it as a question of purity and pollution. The twin questions of obscenity and morality were the main reasons for the anxiety of the middle class literati, which attempted to impose the new cultural practices against the polluting effects of the nautch.

Yet, social reform was not confined to the Brahmin community alone. Several other communities also attempted to reform themselves in the last decades of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The social reform attempt by the Ganika community was a test case to understand the refashioning of various communities during the colonial period. The idea of reformation had caught the imagination of the enlightened few of the Ganika community. The discourse of the non-Brahmin movement in the Madras region created awareness among the Ganikas about their social status in the society. The process of reformation was informed by a critical engagement with the dominant communities such as the Brahmins. One such instance of critical engagement

was the case of Bangalore Nagarathnamma. She was one of the important activists who constantly encountered the reformists. Let me give a brief summary of her biography. This is important because her zeal for the welfare of the Ganika community is closely connected with her career and popularity as Carnatic singer and dancer.

Bangalore Nagarathnamma[33] was the daughter of Puttulakshmi and Vakil Subba Rao, natives of Mysore. Not much is known about Subba Rao. Puttulakshmi was his mistress and Nagarathnamma was born on 3rd November 1878. But Subba Rao chose to abandon his mistress and the newborn child in a very early stage of their relationship. When Nagarathnamma was one and half years old, her mother, by then a destitute, found patronage under Giribhatta Timmayya Sastry, a noted Sanskrit scholar in the court of the Maharaja of Mysore. Thimmayya Sastry taught the child Sanskrit while her mother took care of her music tutelage. At the age of five, the ceremony of dedicating her to God was performed. By the age of nine, Nagarathnamma was proficient in Sanskrit and Music. By 1893, she had established herself as a musician and scholar of repute in the Royal Court of Mysore. Nagarathnamma moved to Madras in 1903 when she was twenty-five years old. C. S. Rajaratna Mudaliar, a wealthy merchant of Madras, was her patron in Madras. She settled at George Town in Madras. Her departure from the Royal court of Mysore ended her dancing career and in Madras she was well known as a singer as well as a *harikatha* performer.

Bangalore Nagarathnamma was extremely confident about certain things. Two instances give ample proof of this. Her intervention during the campaign for anti-nautch and her efforts to publish Muddupalani's work are good examples of her social activism.

In 1910, Bangalore Nagarathnamma attended the *Khanta Bhera,* a festival of music at Rajamundry. There, Kaviraja Saarvabhauma Krishnamurthy Sastry in his exposition, said that a man called Muttu Palani had translated the Tirupavai into Sanskrit in the eighteenth century. Nagarathnamma who knew Muddupalani's work drew attention of the speaker to his ignorance. She said that the translator was a woman and

her name was Muddupalani and not Muttu Palani. Since then she decided to publish the 'literary' works composed by members of her community so that people would at least know them. She hoped that this would bring to light the cultural achievements of *her community,* which is neglected in the contemporary society. Nagarathnamma did not choose Tirupavai but a highly original classic work namely *Radhika Santwanam* for publication. It was a great success and thousands of copies were sold within a short period.

The publication of Muddupalani's classic work caused a furore in the society. The social reformers out rightly condemned it. Many of them denounced it as 'obscene' and labelled its author as a fallen woman. Nagarathnamma defended this great literary work, but to no avail. The western educated reformers put pressure upon the colonial government to ban this book. The British authorities considered it as a pornographic work and imposed a ban on the circulation of it in 1911.

Vireshalingam Pantulu and Nagarathnamma seriously debated the issue of obscenity in relation to *Radhika Santwanam.* When Vireshalingam condemned Muddupalani's work as 'disgraceful and inappropriate' for women, Nagarathnamma shot back,

> Does the question of propriety and embarrassment arrive only in the case of women, and not of men? Is he implying that it is possible for this author [Muddupalani] to write about conjugal pleasures in minute details and without reservations because she was a courtesan, but it would not be possible for respectable men? Then my question is: Are the obscenities in this book *[Radhika Santwanam]* worse than the obscenities in *Vaijayantivilasam,* a work that Pantalugaru personally reviewed and approved for publication? And what about the obscenities in his own work *Rasikajanamobhiranjanam?*[34].

Interestingly, no one from the Ganika community objected to the publication of Muddupalani's work.

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[33] Vidya Sundari's *The Life of Bangalore Nagarathnammal.* On Line. Sangeetham. Bnrammal. 2nd March, 2003.

[34] Malathi's "A Brief Historical Perspective and Women Writing in A.P." Online. Tuliks. Racavitrulu. 5th March, 2003.

Nagarathnamma was highly critical of the Brahmins when the reformation movement tried to abolish the *Devadasi* system, because the Brahmins who were the greatest patrons of *Devadasis* were unable to continue this age-old practice due to the newly acquired western education and values. The newly educated members of the Ganika community who began to feel that the *Devadasi* system should be abolished supported them. By 1930s, the practice of temple *Dasis* was withering away. Very few women were being dedicated to temples. If, for Nagarathnamma, the literature and practices of the Ganika community were a matter of pride, the newly educated members of the community considered them to be a matter of shame. For example, in 1926, Muthulakshmi Reddy, a noted gynaecologist of Madras and the first woman member of the Legislative Assembly fought for the abolition of the *Devadasi* system under the influence of nationalism. She was from the Ganika community. Her mother Chandramma was a courtesan of Pudukottai. Muthulakshmi Reddy, being highly articulate and forceful, began a systematic campaign to abolish the entire *Devadasi* tradition. In the year 1932, the Raja of Bobbili, Sir Shwetachalapati Ramakrishna Bahadur Varu Ranga Rao, became the Prime Minister of Madras Presidency. His friends organized a public function to facilitate him in a manner befitting a Raja, by organizing a nautch party. Muthulakshmi Reddy criticized this effort and raised a public debate. She wrote long letters to The Hindu and The Mail (English newspapers) and attacked her friends who attended the party.

The *Devadasis* of Madras who were against the abolition of the system came together under the leadership of Nagarathnamma. They formed the *Madras Devadasi Association,* with Nagarathanmma as its secretary. Other notable members included Veena Dhanammal and her daughters, T Rajalakshmi and T Lakshmiratnam, Salem Meenakshi, Salem Thayi, Salem Lakshmi and Mylapore Gowri. Thousands of appeals, some printed and others handwritten poured into the Legislative assembly of Madras presidency. The members of the association argued:

> Our institution is similar to the mutts presided by *sanyasis* for the propagation of religion. We can be compared to female *sanyasis* attached to respective temples. We marry none but God and can become devotees of God (ibid)

They quoted from *Shaiva Agamas* to substantiate their scriptural origins. According to them Lord Shiva said:

> To please me during my puja, arrangements must be made daily for *shudda nritta* (dance) which should be danced by females born of such *[Devadasi]* families and the five *acharyas* should form the accompaniments. Since these Agamas are revered by every Hindu, however modern and educated they are, what reason can there be for our community not to thrive and exist as necessary adjuncts of temple service? (ibid)

The above remarks are another classic case of retrieving tradition in modern space. They considered the legislative act to ban *Devadasi* system as uncivilised and discriminatory. They did not support Muthulakshmi Reddy's proposed abolition of *Devadasi* tradition. According to Nagarathnamma, abolition of the *Devadasi* system was unjust. She argued,

> In proposing this legislation, the legislators attempt to do away forever with our sect. Such legislation is unparalleled in the civilized world (ibid)

The *Devadasis* felt that if they were given a proper education they would certainly be able to acquire high status in the society. They implored:

> Give us education-religious, literary and artistic-so we will occupy once again the same rank, which we held in the past. Teach us the Thevarams of the Saivite saints and the Nalayaram of the Vaishnavite acharyas. Instil into us the Gita and the beauty of the Ramayana and explain to us the Agamas and the rites of worship (ibid)

According to the followers of Nagaratnamma such a religious training would inspire the *Devadasis* to model themselves after female saints like Maitreyi, Gargi and Manimekalai and the women singers of the Vedas. They opined,

> We might once again become the preachers of morality and religion. You who boast of your tender love for small communities, we pray that you may allow us to live and work out our salvation and manifest ourselves in *jnana* and *bhakti* and keep alight the torch of India's religion amidst the fogs and storms of increasing materialism and interpret the message of India to the world (ibid).

Nagarathnamma drafted the above appeal along with the other members of the *Madras Devadasi Association.* Though this proposal of Nagarathnamma looks traditionalist from present day point of view to the progressives, it was also an attack on the Brahmins' attempts to monopolize Vedas and Agamas. She criticized the social exclusion of her community members from modern education. She condemned the reformists for their elitist ideas. There were many who supported Nagarathnamma. Kalpana Kannabiran has

discussed in detail the anti-abolition movement led by Ngarathnamma and others. According to Kannabiran there were several organizations that opposed the bill against abolition of *Devadasi* system in the country. However, Kannabiran is of the opinion,

> The positions that the anti-abolitionists like Nagarathnammal and Doraikannammal for instance took, were certainly not 'brahmin' positions, nor can they by any stretch be called a 'set of prostitutes set up by their keepers'... Their own radicalism and sensitivity to issues is comparable to the radicalism of the non-Brahmin movement, but they were located outside it and in opposition to it" (Kannabiran, 1995, WS-67-68).

Nagarathnamma's efforts to prevent the abolition of the nautch system failed. In 1927, a bill was introduced to abolish the nautch and in 1947, it became the law.

The Devadasi community was experiencing the changed conditions of the society and struggling for survival during this period. It was not only trying to refashion itself under the colonial rule and the new values brought to it by the new education but was also trying to assert its visibility in the public, in relation with other communities. Several communities in the colonial period came under the influence of modern/western education and consequently post-enlightenment values were internalised and employed by all of them for different purposes. These communities translated the modern values according to the social needs of the community. These values became grand narratives through which society and culture were interpreted and understood. It is in such a context that Nagarathnamma published *Radhika Santwanam*. Nagarathnamma found it necessary to project the "great" works from her community and reveal the cultural and literary greatness of her community. A sense of community awareness and the assertion of the self-identity are the motivations behind the publication of *Radhika Santwanam*.

We need to consider one more point here. It is related to how Lord Krishna was illustrated in the work and the general reaction to such illustration when Nagarathanamma published the book. In the work, Lord Krishna is presented as a mere human being who is vulnerable to worldly matters. As Susie and Lalitha note, Nagarathnamma's publication of the book was a subversive and radical act for that time because the book projected Radha and her sensuality as the central focus and Krishna as

pleasure-seeking man. As a matter of fact, the earlier version of the book edited and published by Venkatararsu and Brown did not give much place to highlight these 'subversive' and 'radical' aspects of the work. Instead such books were "trimmed, recast and critically mediated to conform to the Vedic ideal before they were re-circulated" (Tharu and Lalitha, 1993: 210). These editors excised not only descriptions of eroticism but also details about Muddupalani's lower caste origins. According Susie and Lalitha, quite contrary to the earlier version the present edition published by Nagarathnamma highlighted Krishna and Radha differently from conventional literature in which,

> the man is the lover and the woman the loved one. Krishna woos and makes love
> to Radha…Radha is depicted as waiting for Krishna and even longing for him, but
> the narrative has as its focus on his pleasure (Tharu and Lalitha, 1993: 206).

However, in *Radhika Santwanam* "woman's sensuality is central" (ibid:206). In this work Radha is portrayed as "a complex, psychologically rounded character" (ibid: 206). Also, she encourages the liaison between Iladevi, another mythical character, and Krishna. This work depicts Krishna as though he is a human being who is not beyond love and sex. Therefore, the publication of such work, without editing certain "sensitive" parts, was "startling and unusual" for that time[35].

In this dissertation we shall discuss literary controversies keeping in mind what we have learnt so far from the above discussions. Hence we shall locate the root causes of controversies not in the contents of a particular literary text but in the society. We use the temporal categories like colonial and post-colonial as mere signs of weighing the changes

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[35] Historically that was a time when the Brahmins were increasingly becoming restless for the 'wrong' interpretations of *their* Gods by other social groups. One such instance in the history of modern India was an objection raised by the Shri Vaishnavas against too much attention given to Lord Krishna's sexual pranks *(Krishnalila)* by the Christian missionaries in the early nineteenth century. Such emphasis on sexual pranks of Hindu gods formed the fundamentals of oriental studies of the western scholars, especially of the British missionaries. In order to prevent such misrepresentations of *Krishnalila,* Hinduism was reconstructed on the lines of *Ramarajya.* Jurgen Lutt (1995) has worked on different constructions of Lord Krishna in the nineteenth century and the reformation process in the Hindu religion. He considers that Virasaivites were instrumental in reforming and redefining the Hindu religion then. According to Lutt it was due to such reformation process and emphasis on *Ramarajya* that instances of projecting Lord Krishna as signifying sensuousness gradually withered away. Such reconstructions were necessary for the Virasaivites because the Protestant missionaries, who came to India after 1813, repudiated Hinduism for promoting 'sensuality'. Sensuality was seen as vice of Hindu religion and society and this provided a justification for missionary activity to level accusations against Hinduism.

rather than as the ultimate indicators of judging or measuring our theoretical formulations.

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Chapter II

Battle of Wills:
Secular Intellectuals and the Champions of Community Sentiments

In this chapter, we shall deal with the question of representation, the views of both proponents and opponents of literary bans and their arguments for or against the same. The chapter argues that both those who are in favour of and those who argue against the 'controversial' text, not only construct a 'self' of the respective group, but also the 'other'. These constructions reflect on their respective cultural and literary locations. Hence, it is not only interesting but also sociologically productive to analyse the 'battle of wills' between the two groups involved in a literary controversy. Literary controversies serve as the best examples of gaps and contradictions in the received categories of creativity, literary imagination, freedom of expression and community. This chapter is an attempt to understand how multiple representations affect the relationship among the writer, literature and communities in the context of literary controversies. We intend to open up several contentious issues that are not usually addressed in the process of representation but are generally reduced to 'literary' by both the proponents and the opponents of ban.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section of the chapter talks about the relationship between Kannada literature and its literary controversies indicating that Kannada literature is not a smooth and uncontested domain and that it is very much a part of the community's imagination. The second section will reveal how the Viraśaiva narratives are subjected to different interpretations and appropriations. This section intends to show the long-term differences between the secularists and the communitarians over the narratives of Viraśaivism. The third section of the chapter will give an account of literary controversies in connection with the Viraśaiva community. The fourth section tries to theorize the construction of the 'self' and the 'other' by the secularists as well as the communitarians. The fifth and the last section of the chapter is an attempt to

formulate certain hypotheses, which will be examined in the subsequent chapters to understand the complexities of literary controversies and the Viraśaiva community.

I

Literary Controversies and the Kannada Literature

The history of modern Kannada literature is generally perceived only from a 'literary' point of view. For example, G. S. Amur's *Essays on Modern Kannada Literature* (2001) traces the history of Kannada drama, poetry, novel and short story from *Navodaya* (the new dawn) period to *Navya* (the Modernist) period. 'Literary' history here is confined to descriptions about evolution of genres and literary stages/movements in modern Kannada literature. As a result, modern Kannada literature is viewed as an evenly unfolding integrated corpus of knowledge. It is autonomous, linear and continuous. *Navodaya* literary movement (1890-1940) is described as the 'renaissance' of Kannada culture and literature. *Pragatisheela* (the Progressive, 1940-60) is explained as an embodiment of socialist ideology. *Navya* (the modernist, 1970-80) is seen as an 'individualist' literary movement. While women writings (1980s onwards), for Amur, are an 'exclusive' domain of women, the Dalit writings (1980s onwards) are important for they foreground Dalit's 'experiences' and their social problems for the first time in Kannada literature. The literary history of the kind written by Amur not only canonizes literature but also focuses only on the already canonized writers.

However, the Kannada literary history cannot be constructed by way of representing only a few writers and the so-called literary movements. It is a site of contesting literary articulations. The Kannada literature and its relationship with the general public is a complex phenomenon. Writers and readers, who constitute the general public, do not belong to a single community. They come from different communities with different social and cultural backgrounds and experiences. Obviously, their ways of writing, reading and interpreting literary texts are determined not only by aestheticism, but also by their social and cultural location. We can go a step further and argue that the much-acclaimed notion of literary taste itself is embedded in the larger social and cultural contexts. The chronological history of Kannada literature has failed to acknowledge these

social and historical contexts and differences. It does not even historicize a literary text enough. Instead, it de-historicizes literary meanings, which are masked within a terrain of aesthetics, literary sensibility, imagination, etc.

In the generally accepted literary history of Kannada, the 'ancient' and the 'medieval' Kannada literatures[1] occupy an important place. In a way, the very idea of modern Kannada literature is crucially dependent upon the conceptions of these periods. For instance, the vacana literature of the twelfth century and the Dasa literature[2] of the fifteenth century have found a permanent place in the histories of Kannada literature. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, new readings were provided to the vacana and the Dasa literatures, thus making them relevant to modern times. It is during this time that the old Kannada texts were found, collated and anthologised. In this process of modernizing the medieval texts, only a few texts of vacanas and Dasa songs were selected and categorized. They were re-interpreted as imbued with modern values of rationality, secularism, and democracy. This was inevitable since the vacanas used to be exclusively associated with religious communities and the liberal and secular intellectuals of the Brahmin as well as the Virasaiva community interpreted these texts along the lines of modern aesthetics[3]. Such a move is symptomatic of a shift away from the communitarians' 'traditional' hold on the songs of Purandaradasa[4] and vacanakaras[5].

Successive literary movements in Kannada literature after the *Navodaya* movement have drawn inspiration from the vacana and Dasa traditions. However, studies

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[1] The periodisation of Kannada literary history is a modern phenomenon. It follows the general pattern of tracing the evolution of Indian literatures into ancient, medieval and modern period. Such periodisaiton has generated a lot of debate on which literary works belong to which period. Aijaz Ahmed has discussed the politics of periodisaiton (1998).
[2] Dasa literature was produced during the medieval period by Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa, etc., the devotees of Lord Vishnu.

[3] While the Brahmins identify Purandaradasa as their community icon, Kanakadasa is associated with the Kurubas, the shepherds by profession.
[4] Special issue of *Prabuddha Karnataka* (The Kannadal Literary Journal of Mysore University: 1919) carried an article by V.G. Kulakarni which argued for the study of the *Dasa* tradition especially the study of the songs of Puranadaradasa from literary point of view.

[5] We shall discuss the modernization of vacanas in the early twentieth century in the third chapter.

on these two traditions from different perspectives in the modern period have also generated literary controversies and debates on many occasions. These controversies are related to clash between different social groups as well as religious communities. Even though the controversies initially began at the individual level, they were indeed community centred. In literary controversies, debates around controversial texts centre on the authors and their intentions. Authors are recognized, received, read and criticized in terms caste, gender, history, religion and so on. Modern Kannada literature has witnessed several such controversies and debates, where the writers were accused of bias and prejudices. The authors, in such cases, are usually identified with a particular caste/community and are accused of serving personal/community interests.

A look at some of the literary controversies of the twentieth century would exemplify the contentious issues in Kannada literature. The following controversies clearly demonstrate that the evolution of Kannada literature does not signify a linear progression; nor does the literature exhibit humanism or liberal values:

1) In 1912, the Jain community of Belgaum filed a petition in the district magistrate court against staging a Kannada play namely *Sangeeta Basaweshwara Nataka. Shri Kadasiddheshwara Prasadhika Konnur Karnataka Sangeeta Mandali,* a professional troupe of Karnataka, performed this play. The Jain community alleged that the play caricatured Bijjala who, they thought, belonged to their community. After hearing the petition, the district magistrate served a ruling to stop the performance. This prohibition annoyed the Viraśaiva community. *Mysore Star,* a bilingual daily of the community severely criticized the ruling and carried out consistent attack against it. One year before this incident, the Brahmin community also had demanded a ban on the play in Dharwad on the ground that the play contained some objectionable references to the Brahmins. But the district magistrate had not banned the play then and allowed the performance after censoring some parts of the play[6] which were allegedly anti-Brahmin.

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[6] More details on *Sangeeta Basaweshwara Nataka* controversy are given in the next chapter, p. 117.

2) In 1919, some leaders of the Viraśaiva community lodged a complaint with the district magistrate court of Dharwad against an article written in a Kannada weekly namely *Shubhodaya*. The complainants felt that the contents of the article were highly objectionable because they distorted the image of Basava and Allama. The Brahmin community was accused of spreading hostility towards the Viraśaiva community since the writer of the article and editor of the paper happened to be Brahmins. The controversy was well known as the *Shubhodaya* controversy[7] and it generated a lot of heat between the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas. This controversy was seriously taken into consideration by the Viraśaiva scholars like Halakatti, Siddaramappa Pawate and Hardekar Manjappa who felt a dire need to prove their worth in the modern world and reconstruct the community image in tune with the changing times.

3) An article on Basava in a Marathi newspaper *Sakula* was in controversy in 1934. The Viraśaivas were angry because the article 'caricatured' Basava's image. It was written that Basava hatched a conspiracy against Bijjala. This point angered the Viraśaivas and they lodged a complaint against the newspaper in the Bombay high court. The court, after hearing both sides, ordered the editor and the writer of the article to tender apology for 'hurting the sentiments' of the Viraśaivas.

4) In 1934, two Kannada plays of Shri Ranga, a Brahmin playwright of the early twentieth century, namely, *Harijanwara* and *Prapancha Panipattu* were in the eyes of the storm. *Harijanwara* satirizes and condemns the conservative rituals of the Brahmin priesthood. This satire was severely objected by the Brahmin community in northern Karnataka. There were many protests against Shri Ranga. On another occasion, *Prapancha Panipattu* angered the Viraśaiva community. Siddappa Kambali, a Viraśaiva educational minister in the then

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[7] This controversy is examined elaborately in the next chapter.

Bombay government, threatened Shri Ranga that if the parts of the play which caricatured the Viraśaivas were not deleted, his career as a teacher would be in danger.

5) *Jaratari Jagadguru*[8] is a Kannada novel written by Basavaraj Kattimani in 1952. As soon as this novel was published in the same year, it landed up in controversial because, the *Mooru Saavira* mutt of Hubli took objections to the depiction of a Viraśaiva guru in the novel. The mutt burned copies of the book publicly and there were many threatening calls to Kattimani.

6) Masti Venkatesh Iyengar's Kannada novel *Chennabasavanayaka* landed up in controversy in 1958. The Viraśaivas did not take note of the novel till the government of India recognized it. The controversy aroused when the Central Sahitya Akademi decided to translate the novel into all the fourteen Indian Languages, which are accepted in the constitution as national languages. However, the Viraśaivas alleged that the 'character' of Rani Virammaji, the protagonist's mother and the queen of Bidanur, in the novel is portrayed with the deliberate wicked intention to show her as a woman who does not care for morality. This portrayal, it was accused, depicted the Viraśaivas as cowards. They demanded the Central Government's intervention in order to stop the proposed translation. S. M. Vrishubhendraswamy reminisces that the copies of the novel were burnt publicly at places like Shimoga, Gadag, Bellary, Kodagu, etc. (1999:35). The Government of India, under severe political pressure, had to ask the Sahitya Akademi to give up the proposed plan of translating the novel.

7) The serialization of Vishukumar's Kannada novel *Karavali* had to be dropped from a Kannada daily Kannada Prabha in 1969 due to controversy around it. It triggered off social and religious tension in coastal Karnataka between the

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[8] Jaratari means saffron silk dress usually worn by religious heads or pontiffs.

Muslims and the Mogaveeras. The Mogaveera community (the fishing community) attacked the *Kannada Prabha* press in Bangalore demanding an immediate withdrawal of the serial. It was said that the novel hurt the sentiments of the fishermen community for it depicted an "unimaginable and unacceptable" marriage between a woman of the Mogaveera community and a Muslim man. Much before this, Vishukumar's short story *Devaru Helida Kathe* (Story Told by God) had invited the wrath of the Brahmin community. This was because the story was accused of containing anti-Brahmin descriptions.

8)   In 1984, the psychoanalytical book on Ramayana that hinted at a possible relationship between Seeta and Lakshmana in *Ramayanadalli Seethayana* (Seetayana in Ramayana) by Polanki Ramamurthy, a noted critic and an English professor of Mysore University, was led to controversy. Brahmins of the two Hindu organizations i.e. R. S. S. (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) and the V. H. P. (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) lodged a case against Polanki Ramamurthy, demanding an immediate ban on the book. As a result, the state police confiscated the copies of the book. Some members of the Hindu organizations even tried to assault the writer. The proponents of the ban accused that the author has deliberately illustrated the relationship between Seeta and Lakshmana in bad light.   In the book, Seeta is portrayed as expressing her inner love feelings for Lakshmana when Rama had gone out. This episode in the book was condemned because it was against the popular belief about Seeta's fidelity to Rama.

9)   In 1984, the Muslims were up against Saara Aboobkar for writing a novel, *Chandragiriya Teeradalli* (On the Banks of Chandragiri). Certain details in the novel were found objectionable because they were against polygamy and the custom of *talaq.* To put it in other words, the novel "throws light on the system of *talaq* and reconciliation" (2003:7). Sara was accused of

misrepresenting the Holy Koran and the Muslim activists threatened her with dire consequences.

10) K. S. Bhagawan's English version of a Kannada work namely *Shankaracharya mattu Pratigamitana* (Shankarachaya and Conservativism) was found 'dangerous' in 1989 by the Joint Director of the Prosecution for 'containing' anti-Hindu elements. The Sub-inspector of Vaiyalikawal area (in Bangalore) was directed to take action against the writer on charges of hurting the sentiments of the Hindus and fostering communal disharmony in the society. It was alleged that the writer twisted the historical facts about the Shankaracharya by describing him as a *Goonda* (rowdy-sheet).

11) The *Maarga–I* (Path-I) controversy in 1989 was about a research work by M. M. Kalburgi, the Kannada professor of Karnataka university, Dharwad. The Viraśaiva community was angered by his research findings. Kalburgi was made to apologize publicly for 'wild' imaginations supposedly made by him in the name of research about the Viraśaiva women saints of the twelfth century. The community leaders argued that M. M. Kalburgi deliberately distorted the image of Nilalochane (the second wife of Basava) by describing her as sexual and sensuous *{Kamada Aatura)* and Nagalambike (sister of Basava) as the wife of a lower caste man.

12) *Mahachaitra* (Great Spring) is a Kannada play written in 1984 by H. S. Shivaprakash. In the mid 1994, MM and her organisation *Basava Dal* launched an attack on the play. They demanded immediate withdrawal of the play from the Kannada textbook prescribed in Kuvempu and Gulbarga Universities. Many members of the Viraśaiva community held demonstrations, *rasta roko* agitation and *dharnas* in the northern part of Karnataka, especially in Gulbarga and Bidar. The main objection was that the writer portrayed Basava as an escapist and Akkamahadevi as a mad woman who walked around the streets of Kalyana. The play was withdrawn from the syllabus later.

13) In 1995, the Vishwakarma community took objections to a Kannada textbook prescribed for high school students. They demanded the removal of a story *Oduva Ata* (The Game of Reading) from the textbook. Shivarama Karant, one of the seven Jnanapeetha awardees in Karnataka, wrote the story. The main objection of the community was that some parts in the story demeaned the community's traditional profession as artisans. The syllabus committee heeded to the demand by withdrawing the textbook.

14) The Ganiga community (oil-pressers) in Karnataka raked a controversy in 1995 around a Kannada short story *Kappu Holeyallondu Belli Nouke* (A Silver Boat in a Black Stream). The story appears in an anthology of Kannada stories written by Udyavara Madhava Acharya was prescribed for the first year B.Com Students in Mangalore University in 1995. The story was accused of hurting the sentiments of the Ganiga community[9]. Though there were no public protests, the community appealed to the university to withdraw it. The university withdrew the book in three months due to the controversy.

15) The *Basava Deepti* controversy arose with the publication of *Basava Vacana Deepti* in 1996. It is a compilation of revised version of Basava's vacanas by MM. The controversy was around changing *ankitanaama* (authorial signature at the end of each vacana)[10] of Basava's vacanas. Various religious organisations of the Virasaiva community and several other intellectuals severely criticised her of tampering the vacanas. The government of Karnataka has imposed a ban on its circulation. Even today her religious conventions or discourses meet with strong opposition from the community in the northern parts of Karanataka due to this controversy.

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[9] I could not ascertain the precise reasons for the controversy.
[10] Details of *ankitanaamas* are given in the fifth chapter, p.209

16) *Dharmakaarana*, a Kannada novel written in 1995 by P. V. Narayana, a Brahmin writer, was in the eye of the storm when the Karnataka Sahitya Akademy chose the novel for its annual award in 1997. The ABVM launched an agitation against the author and his book. The organization and others alleged that P. V. Narayana portrayed Akkanagamma, the sister of Basava, as a prostitute. They demanded that the Karnataka Sahitya Akademy should withdraw its decision to confer the award to the novel. Subsequent developments forced the Akademy to drop the award and later on the State Government banned the book.

17) In 1997, the State Government was forced to withdraw a ballad on *Kittur Chennamma,* the queen of Kittur in the late seventeenth century, from second year pre-university Kannada textbook. In the ballad there was a reference to a Brahmin's name. The Brahmin community gave a representation to the government against the ballad because it made fun of the Brahmin.

In all the above controversies, education, literature and media, which are part of the public consciousness, have come under severe attack and criticism. The main contention between the secularists and the communitarians is not only related to the 'religious' matters but also about the questions of history, community identity, public space and so on. For instance, the *Chennabasavanayaka* controversy indicates a tension over the question of history; the *Oduva Aata* controversy symbolizes the dynamics of community identity and the *Chadragiriya Tiradalli* controversy illustrates the social and religious aspects of the Muslims. Even though we typify the controversies into religious, community identity or social, all the above-mentioned issues, due to their overlapping nature, affect each controversy. Except the *Karavali* controversy, other controversies have not resulted in any kind of clash between two communities. The clash between the Mogaveera community and the Muslim community, in the context of *Karavali* controversy, indicates the social relationship between the two at the time of novel being published. The bone of contention in all the other controversies is between the writer and the 'affected' community.

In all these literary controversies, the secularists and the communitarians are antagonistic to each other's interests and concerns. The secularists see no merit in opposing the communitarians, as they are taken for granted as representatives of irrationality, but are often forced to get involved in the controversies because when their integrity, scholarship and freedom of expression are seemingly at stake. Literary critics and literary historians in Kannada literature discount these aspects as aberrations or intrusions into the general order of the history of the Kannada literature, not worthy of dealing with.

II

Institutionalisation of Viraśaivism in the Kannada Public Sphere

The Kannada public sphere has always had a love-hate relationship with Viraśaivas. This is evident in its habit of both accepting as well as resenting certain aspects of Viraśaivism. In a short span of time, the community has demanded the State Government of Karanataka to constrain the writers from hurting the sentiments of the Viraśaivas, several times. *Maarga-I, Mahachaitra, Basava Vacana Deepti* and *Dharmakaarana* controversies have revealed the community's resentment over the 'misrepresentation' of their religious icons and values by the Kannada creative writers. The community has expressed its strong will to 'own' and monopolize the knowledge of Viraśaivism for itself. Any literary endeavour that runs against their beliefs and values of Viraśaivism that they cherish is objected as 'unwanted interference' into its 'internal' affairs. But this is a paradox. The Viraśaiva community, on the one hand, possesses its history and literature as its valued treasure and on the other, it tries to universalise it **as a** significant part of Kannada literature. This paradox of showing sectarian attitude as well as transcending sectarianism indicates the community's modern dilemma. We will get back to the dilemma of the community in the next two chapters.

Both the Viraśaiva as well as the non-Viraśaiva writers have fore grounded the diverse traditions of Viraśaivism, especially of vacanas. A few among them, the communitarians, try to homogenize the community by re-producing the narratives around the icons such as Basava, Allama, Siddharama, Chennabasavanna, Akkanagamma, etc.

But the secularists have expressed dissent at the monopolistic tendencies of the communitarians. They have tried to highlight the critical traditions within Viraśaivism in order to avoid appropriation of Viraśaivism by the communitarians. Therefore, the vacanas are no longer considered literature belonging exclusively to the Viraśaiva community. As a consequence, there are multiple and often conflicting interpretations of vacanas and Viraśaiva *puranas*. However, it is an interesting part of history to know how the narratives of vacanas and of the twelfth century movement have been constructed and claimed by different social forces, which are sometimes antagonistic to each other. This movement has also been averred as a secular movement, which paved way for establishing a casteless society. There are also works like A. K. Ramanujan's *Speaking of Shiva* (1973) that claim that the process of individualization started during this period. It is very clear that such works satisfied the social needs of certain social groups of Karnataka. This could be one of the reasons why different communities of Karnataka claim the vacanas for various purposes. The notions of nationalism, equality, religious harmony, casteless society, democracy, etc mark their claims through vacanas. For example, in the first half of the twentieth century, vacanas were seen as representing the secular culture of Karnataka and they were projected as an integral part of the Kannada literature. As the idea of Karnataka arose there was a need to seek help from the Viraśaivas to consolidate the notion of Karnataka for it was the majority community in the northern parts of the state. Hence, the Viraśaiva and the Brahmin intellectuals employed vacanas for mobilizing the people for the cause of unified Karnataka. Thus, history of Viraśaivism is, on the one hand, considered a 'religious' past that cannot be tampered with, and on the other, it has been constructed as a shared history of all the communities living in Karnataka. Similarly, since the early twentieth century, different social groups have constructed the twelfth century religious movement and the vacanas on the basis of their own vantage points[11]

The process of transformation and naturalization of the vacanas in the consciousness of the Kannadigas began during the colonial period and it was accelerated

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[11]In the forth chapter we shall give a detailed account of how vacanas are appropriated by different cultural traditions, which are traditionally antagonistic to each other.

after independence. The academic as well as the non-academic institutions laid more emphasis on the vacana tradition. The Viraśaiva hagiographies and other works of metaphysical nature, as earlier, continued to be recognized as part of Kannada literature. But the vacanas were to displace them soon as the 'authentic' sources of the Viraśaiva history. However, the institutional efforts to study the Viraśaiva literature with special reference to vacanas have not ended up in producing a single/monolithic intellectual tradition. Multiple approaches and concerns have marked such endeavours. That apart, the hard work done by individuals, voluntary associations and religious organizations resulted in the creation of different intellectual traditions. These intellectual traditions have provided different ideological readings of the vacanas.

The Centre for Kannada Studies in the Karnataka University is the foremost academic institution, which promoted scholarly studies on Viraśaiva literature on large scale between 1950 and 1970s. The majority of Kannada scholars in this Centre hailed from the Viraśaiva community and they worked relentlessly to produce scholarly literature on Viraśaivism. M. M. Kalburgi's *History of Vacana Publication* (1990)[12] mentions the pioneering contribution of the university to Viraśaiva studies in the 1960s. The work done in the *Kannada Adhyayana Peetha* (Centre for Kannada Studies (1960-80) is considered as the third stage in the history of the modern Viraśaiva Studies. During this period, eighty works on vacanas were published and out of them the Peetha published forty. This period witnessed not only path breaking research and discovery of new Viraśaiva texts but also new insights, added to the earlier studies. Under the guidance of R. C. Hiremath, a massive research project of collection and publication of vacanas was taken up in the year 1962 for which many Viraśaiva scholars worked. The names of M. M. Kalburgi, J. S. Kulli, Pundit Nagabhushanashastri, V. R. Koppal, and Mevundi Mallari are prominent in this research project. The *Peetha* published many more anthologies of vacanas of Cheiinabasavanna, Siddharameshwara and other Sharanas. This project helped in ascertaining the accurate number and authorship of the vacanas. The *Peetha* was also instrumental in continuing the legacy of previous Viraśaiva scholars in

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[12] This book traces four stages of studies on vacanas from colonial period to post-colonial period. Descriptions of other stages are given in the third chapter.

establishing the vacanas as poetry. Apart from the vacana studies, scholarly works on *Shunya Sampadane* (Attainment of Nothingness) contributed to a new dimension of the Viraśaiva Studies. *Shunya Sampadane* is an anthology of vacanas compiled in four different versions by four scholars during the fifteenth century. They identify Allama Prabhu as the cultural icon in their works and there is less focus on Basava. It is important to notice here that Allama is seen as the guide and philosopher of Basava in *Shunya Sampadane.* In the following chapters we will see that some of the Viraśaiva sects are indeed uncomfortable with such articulations. However, the authors of the modern narratives on *Shunya Sampadane* are not as categorical as their medieval ancestors as far as this particular issue of highlighting Allama is concerned.

Let us now look at some other efforts that are taken up in the public sphere of Karnataka. This includes several writers who were interested in what they believed as the secular values of the vacana movement and its poetic quality. The secularists are not happy with the sectarian, revivalist and communal manipulation of the vacanas by the religious and political leaders. Therefore, inclusion of vacanas in the educational curriculum was a major step towards popularising them. When they were selected keeping their educational value in mind, the religious overtone was played down. The moral, devotional and literary aspects were highlighted in the curriculum. An anthology of vacanas published in 1979 is one such work that illustrates the process of overlooking the religious dimension. '*Vacana Kammata*', (The Workshop of Vacana) "a representative collection of 'vacanas'"[13] was prescribed for Kannada textbook of the undergraduate students of Bangalore University in 1979. As the chief editor of this book, G. S. Shivarudrappa, a well-known poet and critic, writes in the preface to the anthology that the vacanas were edited and prepared with a focus on devotional, literary and linguistic aspects. The edition was designed with the aim of emphasizing *distinct* expressions and constraints of each vacanakaras. There are sixty vacanakaras of *different social backgrounds and ages* in the anthology. Nowhere in the preface is it said that the

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[13] This book was edited by K.Marulasiddappa and K.R.Nagaraja, the well-known critics in Kannada and was published under the centrally sponsored scheme for production of books and literature in regional languages at the University level with the assistance of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi.

vacanas exclusively belong to the Viraśaivas. When we go through the edition, we learn heterogeneous articulations of the vacana movement. That is, there are different vacanakaras who popularised the vacanas and their values in the twelfth century. The focus on different vacanakaras has minimized excessive focus and privileging of a certain group of vacanakaras.

Such attempts to popularise and deviate from monolithic constructions of vacanas have put the history of the Viraśaiva movement under severe examination. Ambivalences and contradictions found in the movement and in the life of its pioneers have come under scrutiny. We do not say that the secular writers studied and produced literatures on Viraśaivism only with the intention of contesting the religious forces or the communitarians. But the efforts of the secularists can be seen as unravelling multiple dimensions of the Viraśaiva movement and vacanas, which are quite contrary to the essentialist/romanticized notion of the communitarians.

A. K. Ramanujan's translation of the vacanas in *Speaking of Shiva* is another attempt that does not mask the vacanas in a metaphysical framework. His ideas about the vacanas disclose the subversive, radical and poetic aspects of the vacanas. His translations of vacanas of different vacanakaras acquire a special significance for his emphasis on the 'individualist' and 'subjective' aspects of the vacanas. His engagement with the Kannada literary modernism allows him to read vacanas as literary expressions of an experience of the 'self'. He considers them as the personalized experiences of vacanakaras. He points out,

> Even the few given conventional stances of bhakti are expressed in terms of deeply felt personal relations; the loves and frustrations of bhakti are those of lover and beloved (e.g. Mahadevi), mother, and child, father and son, master and servant, even whore and customer (Ramanujan, 1972:53)

The concerns of the vacanas are with "subject rather than the object (of worship)", he points out (ibid: 53). The Bhakti movements of India are analogues to European protestant movements. Like the concerns of the Christian Protestant Movement, the vacana movement too was against priests, rituals, temples and social hierarchy. And this

opposition is articulated in terms of direct, individual, original experience of the vacanakaras. For Ramanujan, while the classical and folk traditions depersonalise literary expressions, vacanas stand as good examples of personal expressions. In short, the self-reflexive aspects of the vacanakaras are more exciting for Ramanujan. Nowhere does he consider vacanas as divine and sacred. His beginning remarks on vacanas as literary 'lyrics' drift away from the essentialist and religious aspects attributed to them by the communitarians. His emphasis on 'individualism' in the vacanas reflects on the modernist movement in the Kannada literature of his days.

State Patronage and Viraśaivism

The Viraśaiva community emerged as the single majority community after the unification of Karnataka. It is not surprising that the literature and the tradition of the dominant community attracted a lot of state patronage. The institutional attempts to study Viraśaivism are indeed a result of the State Government's interest in it. The State patronage to the Viraśaiva Studies is not less significant. The erstwhile Government of Mysore published a commemorative volume on Basaweshwara in 1967 on the occasion of his eighth birth centenary. The birth centenary was celebrated at the national level. The committee formed to oversee the celebrations included many Viraśaiva ministers as its members. The volume has articles on the life, philosophy and literature of Basava. Basava's ideals are compared with that of other world religions and philosophers. Also included are the translations of Basava's vacanas and his contribution to the cause of social justice and an egalitarian society. Hence, we can safely conclude that if the scholarly work on Viraśaivism has sculpted Basava as 'secular' leader and the 'founder' of the Viraśaiva community, the Government of Karnataka has projected him as the state icon. This apart, the government of Karnataka has been supporting various projects related to Viraśaivism. It has published a complete volume of vacanas in 1988 under the editorship of M. M. Kalburgi.

Debates and contradictions about the historical truth about the twelfth century Shiva Sharanas continued to persist and the discovery of new literature on Viraśaivism fuelled the debates and contradictions to some extent. The debates were more related to

intellectual questions than any thing else. For example, they were about the issues related to exact authorship, originality, number and period of vacanas or about the hagiographies of vacanakaras. Such debates were confined to the academic circles. But several Viraśaiva mutts, apart from the state patronage, within the community continued to appropriate the Viraśaiva literature for their own religious purposes and created a very different 'history' of the Viraśaiva community. The Viraktha mutts[14] of the Viraśaiva community played a leading role in the preservation and perpetuation of Basava cult. They played an active part in the revival of Basava cult and they are still the propagators of the ideals of the Shiva Sharanas. In our view, these differences and conflicts are indications of certain unresolved questions on the Viraśaiva history, religion and literature in the colonial period[15]

The relationship between the Viraśaiva religion and politics needs a special attention here. The 'cohesive' conditions (Manor: 1989) of the community during the 1950s and 1960s have a dialectical relationship with political power of the Viraśaiva. In Karnataka, it was the Viraśaiva community, which dominated the political scene from 1956 to 1972. According to J.P. Shouten, the Viraśaiva gurus were influential in determining the outcome of elections in Karnataka. He writes,

> There are more Virakta gurus—and some of the Gurusthalada tradition too—who are known for their political influence. Especially in the fifties and the sixties, it was not unusual that the results of elections were determined by the propaganda of some mighty gurus among their followers. The Virakta monastery of Chitradurga and the Gurustalada matha at Sirigere had an age-old conflict and their competition played a major role in regional political elections (Shouten, 1991:274).

In the field of education too, the mutts undertook the responsibility of providing education to the community. The educational institutions set up by the mutts were built on the principles of vacanas[16] Educational initiatives not only created an awareness

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[14] Viraktha mutts belong to Virakta tradition, one of the two monastic traditions of the Virasaiva religion. More information on these traditions is given in the next chapter, p. 145
[15] We have discussed this point in the next chapter.
[16] We are not assuming that these institutions have truly adhered to the ideals of Vacanas like equality of caste and gender, justice and good faith. Our intention here is to reveal how the educational institutions for their own legitimacy deployed the Vacanas.

regarding the importance of education among the Viraśaivas but also encouraged the youngsters from various sub-caste groups of the community living in the rural areas to be educated.

The Communitarians and the Iconisation of the Viraśaiva Mystics

The differences between the secular writers and the communitarians in the institutionalisation of Viraśaiva Studies is about the emphasis on particular aspects of the Viraśaiva legacy rather than in the structure as a whole and the functions that they perform. The differences over the interpretation of tradition, religion and the notion of freedom have brought the two parties into conflict. For instance, MM's novel *Kranti Kalyana* (The Kalyana Revolution, 1973) highlights the mystical poems of Basava. She wrote the novel with the sole purpose of disseminating the ideals of Basava and propagating the religious beliefs of her organization. In the novel, she glorifies the achievements of Basava and she calls him as Jagadguru (the guru of the world). This novel gives a vivid picture of the ritualistic and caste-ridden society of the twelfth century in the context of a marriage arranged by Basava between a lower caste man and a Brahmin woman. It also gives a brief sketch of the *indomitable courage* of three followers of Basava-Haralayya, Silavanta and Madhuvarasa- who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their convictions for the casteless society. The whole novel is centred on Basava. Great care has been taken to portray Basava as the sole leader of the Viraśaiva social revolution, throughout the novel. There is more emphasis on the greatness of Basava and his ideals. It is through such glorification that the novel essentialises the Viraśaiva history. In other words, Basava and his followers are illustrated in the novel as flawless characters and their ideals are romanticized. As a result, we do not find any critical engagement with some of the social and political questions raised by the Viraśaiva movement. In 1984, MM's organization *Vishwa Kalyana Mission* produced a Kannada film on the life history of Basava, titled *Krantiyogi Basavanna* (The Revolutionary Saint Basava). MM wrote the screenplay, songs and dialogues for the film. This film also projects Basava as a revolutionary man with extraordinary powers to

appeal to the minds of anybody. Such illustrations of Basava in the novel and the film very well go with MM's goal of spreading the religious beliefs of her organization[17].

For many Viraśaivas, Basava is the undisputed God[18]. Hence the vacanas are also seen as religious doctrines. This religious dimension attributed to the vacanas by the Viraśaiva seers is also supplemented by the acceptance of 'literariness' of the vacanas. When supplemented by the 'literariness', the vacanas acquire more significance. They are regarded as the most undisputed as well as undisputable writings in the modern period.

The narratives of Viraśaivism are not contained only in the textual tradition of Viraśaivas. The folk traditions have also contributed immensely. But the folk narratives are ignored systematically for constructing the dominant form of Viraśaivism. Ignoring the folk elements and other popular beliefs about the Shiva Sharanas was not only a matter of the middle class taste, aesthetics and sensitivity but also a gesture of marginalisation of anything that challenged the established beliefs of the mainstream Viraśaivism[19]. The textual knowledge of the Shiva Sharanas has always exhibited a strange ignorance of such folk epics. Daniel D' Attilio, a professor in the University of Wisconsin, has pointed out that the Karnataka University and the subsequent scholarship on Viraśaiva literature have obscured the wide variety of literary and folk traditions of the Viraśaivas. His research work "Challenging Current Virashaiva Historiography: C. P. Brown's Study of the Role of Folklore and Aradhya Brahmins in the Evolution of Elite

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[17] Religious ideas of Mathe Mahadevi and her organizations are explained and discussed in the fourth chapter.

[18] H. Tipperudraswamy's novels such as Jyoti Belagide (Kannada--*The Light That Never Was*, 1983- on the life history of Nijaguna Shivayogi), Kartharana Kammata (Kannada-- *The Maker's Mint*, 1989, on the life history of Basavanna) also come under this category. These texts popularise the philosophy of Shivayogi and Basavanna. *Paripurnadedege* (Kannada—Towards Perfection, 1959, on the life of Allama Prabhu) got him an award from both State as well as Central Sahitya Akademies.

[19] *Manteswamy*, a folk epic is an example for this. Manteswamy is believed to be the leader of a tribe in the southern Karnataka. In the epic, Manteswamy goes to Kalyana to test the true devotion of Basava and his wife Neelambike. He puts them to several ordeals before accepting that they are true and dedicated devotees of Lord Shiva. In addition to this, he exposes the hypocrisy of the Shiva Sharanas who were parasites on Basava and lived on *dasoha* (the divine offering of food).

Virashaivism in Telugu"[20] draws our attention to the ignored area of Viraśaiva study and the contemptuous attitude of the elite Viraśaivas towards the folk narratives of Viraśaivism. According to him, the centralized perceptions of Viraśaivism in the current academic circles have systematically neglected its folk roots and their dissemination in the regions outside Karnataka like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Though there exists more than three thousand Viraśaiva mutts in Karnataka, not all of them are functioning and among the functioning mutts only a few enjoy high stakes in the religious life of the Viraśaivas. They are very active in organising seminars and conferences on Viraśaiva literature to which literary scholars and writers are usually invited. The Viraśaiva seers and the leaders of the community are proud of vacanas. They think that vacana literature belongs to the Viraśaivas alone. Notwithstanding such a claim, the very process of institutionalisation and the projection of Basava as the cultural icon of Karnataka have turned the vacanas to a public treasure. The Viraśaiva political leaders and the seers are more concerned with not only the religious tenets of the vacana literature but also with 'more than life size' personality of vacana*karas*. They also admit secular values of vacanas in order to project that their community/religion is the only 'true' secular religion of Karnataka.

The above-mentioned variety of Kannada scholarship of the Viraśaiva seers and their followers has not gained much attention from the secularists because the latter do not consider them as creative writings and dismiss them for being religious and communal.

The Modern Narratives and Viraśaivism

As we have observed in the preceding section, studies on Viraśaiva literature, especially on vacanas, have provided a ground for producing, disseminating and legitimising both secular as well as 'communal' constructions of Viraśaivism. If the religious leaders and their followers produced the 'divinely' picture of the Shiva

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[20] "Orientalist Scholarship on South India Reconsidered: A Panel Commemorating CP Brown's Birth Bicentenary". Online. aasianst.org. sasia. 19th April, 2004.

Sharanas, the secular scholars and writers of Kannada literature have expressed deep concern and unhappiness over any kind of deification of vacana*karas*. The role of religious organizations and caste associations in the fields of education, social reconstruction, spirituality and politics has come under severe suspicion and interrogation in recent times. Intellectuals, scholars and other prominent persons of the community have criticized the Viraśaiva seers and their organizations for manipulating the Viraśaiva masses and exploiting the sentiments of the masses in the name of religion. Ownership of huge property and its mismanagement by the mutts has generated an ill feeling in the minds of many intellectuals. The seers are blamed for fostering communal feelings and dividing the Viraśaivas in the name of caste and religion. Their claim of the moral upliftment of the Viraśaivas is condemned because of the gap between 'words and deeds'. They are also criticized for distorting the 'true' values of vacanas and the ideals of twelfth century Shiva Sharanas; for becoming ritualistic; for practicing priesthood etc. that are believed to be against the values of vacanas and vacana*karas. A* very good example of such criticism is *Jar atari Jagadguru,* Basavaraj Kattimani's novel in Kannada.[21] It attempts to lampoon the aristocracy and moral degradation of a Viraśaiva seer. Many mutts have become the centres of corruption and unlawful activities. The gap between 'words and deeds' on the part of the Viraśaiva seers are taken to task by several writers and scholars. New interpretations of vacanas attempt to contest and expose the religious manipulations of Viraśaiva literature. In the face of the accusations, the seers have to relentlessly fight to prove their relevance and significance in the modern period. They need to project the social and political power of the community as well. They introduce the corporate culture in the religious places mainly by investing huge sums in the field of modern education. In this effort they have to deploy all the available strategies of the private sector to augment money and keep the business going. This is seen as contradictory to the vacana ideals by some of the intellectuals[22]

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[21] Reference to this novel is already made while mentioning literary controversies in Karnataka. For details refer p. 57.

[22] Four letters by eminent Marxist activists and creative writers in *Basava Maarga* (2004), a journal devoted to the propagation of vacanas and ideals of Basava, strongly criticise the Viraśaiva mutts for their moral corruption. Kamala Hampana, a woman writer, is worried about the increasing number of mutts in the name of Dalits. She does not find it necessary to establish mutts for Dalits since the existing ones have become centres of immorality. K.S. Bhagawan, whom we have already discussed earlier, thinks that mutts have produced slaves and slavery. Another creative writer and critic Chandrashekar Patil is opposed to the

The Kannada literati have accepted Kannada novels and plays that draw materials from the Viraśaiva movement enthusiastically. The revolution—religious, social and political—led by Basava during the twelfth century has thrown up questions that are relevant to contemporary society. That is the reason why various writers are attracted to the vacanas and who read the movement with greater interest and curiosity.

P. Lankesh's *Sankranti* (1973), H. S. Shivaprakash's *Mahachaitra* (1986) and Girish Karnad's *Taledanda* (1993) are the most important Kannada plays that have re-interpreted the twelfth century movement to address the present problems and issues. Certainly, they have deviated from the usual path of romanticizing the movement and deifying the Shiva Sharanas. They have all accepted that the contemporary social and political life has led them to re-think the movement. In other words, contemporaneity of the Viraśaiva movement is more important to them than deifying or iconising Basava. First step towards this de-deification is that, in all these plays, Basava, as the cult figure, is not given prime importance. Yet he becomes one of the means for addressing several questions related to social, religious and political problems in Karnataka. Though all these playwrights have gone back to the same twelfth century movement for their themes, the ideologies have been different. G. S. Amur has noted the roots of these different themes as,

> The Gandhian ideology with its probing questions regarding Truth and Ahimsa provided the intellectual context for Lankesh's play. Shivaprakash approached his subject against the background for the dangers posed by dictators to the lives of ordinary men and women. Karnad's play has been the result of his response to the Mandal and Mandir agitation of the late eighties of the last century, which rocked the Indian society (Amur, 2001: 254)

Written in different time periods, these playwrights have shown that the Viraśaiva movement and the vacanas do not signify a singular meaning. Let us examine these three plays to understand how they have portrayed the Shiva Sharanas and presented the vacana movement.

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increasing number of mutts which do not have moral principles. K. Ramdoss, a Marxist, condemns caste-based mutts for they seemingly foster casteist feelings rather than work for communal harmony in the society.

Lankesh's *Sankranti* is a well-known literary text in Kannada literature. This play criticizes the futility of dogmatic ideals and focuses on the inner self of the human beings. Lankesh draws our attention to the fact that despite the radical ideas present in the vacana movement the cultural differences and social hierarchies did not disappear; on the other hand, they continue to persist.

His play revolves around the love affair between Rudra, a lower caste man and Usha, a Brahmin woman. Rudra is enamoured by the sophistication of Usha and she is attracted by his crude but honest nature. This love story is presented against the background of the religious and social upheaval of the twelfth century Karnataka. This play does not deal directly with the famous incident of the Viraśaiva movement, i.e., the marriage between lower caste man and the upper caste woman, but with a similar event.

The problem, around which the play revolves, starts with the conversion of Rudra as a Viraśaiva. He tries to acquire the new, civilised qualities of speech and behaviour and consequently Usha loses interest in him gradually. She does not want Rudra to lose his basic instincts. She is simply thrilled to touch an untouchable. One day Usha ridicules Rudra for his mindless conviction about his new religion and following Basava blindly. She abuses Rudra's new caste and criticizes his 'civilized' behaviour. She questions his trust on Basava. Rudra is enraged by her remarks and 'seduces' her. This event causes tension between the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas. Taking advantage of such tense situation, a group of Bralimins kill a Brahmin and put the blame on the Sharanas. Fearing that the situation will go out of hand, Bijjala takes personal interest to solve the problem. But he has no option but to punish Rudra for daring to touch and 'seduce' a Brahmin girl. Before punishing Rudra, a trial is conducted by him to know the truth about their relationship. At a crucial moment in the trial Usha refuses to accept the new Rudra as her beloved and announces that he has indeed, raped her. Bijjala pronounces 'death punishment' to Rudra.

Amidst all these incidents the play unfolds several subplots, like Rudra's father and his inability to abandon smoking and drinking despite being a Sharana; Bijjala's

responsibility to maintain communal harmony to sustain his political power etc. Nowhere in the Play is Basava portrayed as a supernatural being; on the other hand, he is shown as a common human being who is incapable of preventing the king from punishing Rudra. Differences between Bijjala and Basava over social and religious revolution, as depicted in the play, indicate the complexities and difficulties involved in the social transition envisaged by Basava.

Bijjala's dilemma in accepting the social cause of the Viraśaiva movement depicts his accountability to all the religions in order to maintain communal harmony so that his political power will not be in danger. Being the head of the state, he cannot openly support one religion at the cost another. Ujja, Rudra's father is reluctant to give up his habits of smoking, eating meat and taking liquor. This reluctance to give up the 'bad' qualities exposes the incongruity between the vacana movement and the ideals propagated by Basava. The main reason for this was that the movement failed to recognize the social and cultural differences between the upper caste Sharanas who developed the ideas of casteless society and the lower caste Sharanas who were still exploited by the upper castes. This play is in the form of a debate and places the *individual* between two choices. Basava, placed between the establishment on one hand and the revolution on the other, suffers because he knows that the revolution is defeated by the strength of the establishment.

Mahachaitra (Great Spring) by H.S. Shivaprakash depicts the tumultuous social upheaval that is a sequel to the social revolution for equality and humanity initiated by Basava in the twelfth century. Interestingly, nowhere in the play does Basava appear. His personality is narrated in the conversations of the characters. However, the hopes and aspirations of Basava are present throughout the play. The writer is more interested in portraying the hopes and despairs of the lower class Sharanas than that of others. It concentrates on the heroic fight of the Sharanas from the low, labouring castes—both men and women—at a time when the movement was losing the battle for equality. Emphasis is laid on the views of the lower caste Sharanas such as Turugahi Ramanna, Ole Shantaiah, Hendada Maarayya, etc. In the course of the play, we see the social

antagonism between the Sharanas and the Brahmins. The Sharanas express their aspirations, hopes and frustrations at the turn of the incidents due to which they are put into trouble by the king and the orthodox Brahmins. Shivaprakash makes use of vacanas, myths, legends and folk literature to construct the social, religious and political situation of the twelfth century Karnataka. He devotes the drama to "the crores of working people". According to the author, this play focuses on the sociology of the struggle in the twelfth century Karnataka. In an interview to the newspaper, *Deccan Herald* (1st July, 1995), during the height of the *Mahachaitra* controversy, he opines, "The entire play shows how the artisan Sharanas had to defend themselves against the onslaught of the priestly and merchant classes. For me the sociology of the struggle is more important..."

Girish Karnad's *Tale Danda* (Punishment by Beheading) re-examines the structure of the caste system of India. Picking up historical-cum-political background of the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement for his plot, he moulds his theme of *Tale-Danda* to serve his present needs. In a preface to the play Karnad writes,

> I wrote Tale-Danda in 1989 when the 'Mandir' and the 'Mandal' movements were beginning to show again how relevant the questions posed by these thinkers [Shiva Sharanas] were for our age. The horror of subsequent events and the religious fanaticism that has gripped our national life today have only proved how dangerous it is to ignore the solutions they offered.

In this play, in one instance, Basava arranges a congregation of poets, mystics, social revolutionaries and philosophers at the *Anubhava Mantapa* (the Hall of Experience)[23]. They oppose idolatry, reject temple worship, uphold the equality of the sexes and condemn the caste system. But events take a violent turn when they act on their beliefs and a Brahmin woman marries a 'low-caste' man. The play deals with a few weeks during which a vibrant, dynamic society plunged into anarchy and terror.

The voices of the working class or the lower castes deployed in *Sankranti* and *Mahachaitra* have a decentralizing effect. They are more concerned with the present than with the past. One can interpret these two versions as a battle between the 'profane' and

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[23] In this place, Sharanas of all castes and creeds assembled to debate and discuss issues of several kinds. It was a central meeting place for all the Sharanas.

the 'sacred'. The blending of the present with the past helps the writers to universalise the problems of the present and address the reasons for such problems. For these writers, divinity of Shiva Sharanas is not important, which explains why they have not portrayed the Shiva Sharanas as supreme and significant sources. Prahlada Agasanakatte, while analysing these plays, points out "these writers have shown keen enthusiasm in the act of *'murthybhanjakatwa'*" (Agasanakatte, 2001:27).What he means by *'murthybhanjakatwa'* is that these writers have indulged in the act of destroying the supernatural or metaphysical idol of Basava constructed by the Viraśaiva communitarians. He describes the process of *'murthybhanjakatwa'* in the three dramas as such,

> Basava of *Sankranthi* is feeble and uncertain and Basava of *Mahachaitra* is emotional, feeble and timid. In *Tale Danda,* the play literally beheads Basava. For Karnad, politics, power and its implications become important themes to frontalise his ideas about the twelfth century movement. Therefore, the movement led by Basava and his religious ideals are weak, vague, absurd and uncertain (2001:25' 27).

There is no glorification of Basava or his achievements in the plays. The appropriation and re-telling of an existing text becomes an inversion of the 'original' text and the contestation of the 'values' attributed to it. It is seen as a counter-discourse to the dominant vision of society and culture. Given the complex social existence and multiple reading 'publics', these kinds of plays, which are contrary to the monopolizing gesture of certain individuals or organizations, are perceived by the communitarians as threats to the 'organic' knowledge.

It is worthy analysing why the plays cited above focus upon the *revolution at Kalyana* at the heart of which lies the issue of an inter-caste marriage and the question of inter religious conflict. It is important to note here that all these plays are written after the sixties of the last century. The modernist authors are either socialists, social democrats or with a background of some version of Marxism. Self confessedly they were searching for answers to the contemporary problems in the vacana movement. The three plays raise three issues. The questions of caste, of class and religion constitute the central theme of the plays. The authors, as we will see in the following pages, firmly believe that they are well within their poetic justice while 'using' the narratives of Viraśaivism. It seems to us

that the modernist readership is also excited to read such plays for its radical symbolism. But the Viraśaiva communities cannot afford to allow the secularists to treat their religious icons as ordinary mortals. For them, the twelfth century Viraśaiva saints are not only the ancestors of the community but also of divine origin. They are incarnations of various members of the divine court (the *Kailasa*) of Lord Shiva. .

We have mentioned only a sample of vacana resources and their use in the modern Kannada writing. We picked up only those plays that are recognized for their radical ideas. Indeed there are hundreds of literary texts based on the Viraśaiva movement, which include plays, poetry, novels and short stories. Books for children and women were are also written during the modern period. If we consider the research works, creative literature, historical narratives, compilations and philosophical treatises and the other materials produced and circulated in the modern period, we can safely conclude that no literature belonging to other communities in Karnataka has received such a wide attention. All these put together constitute what one may call the 'vacana' discourse in Karnataka.

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III

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Battle of Wills: The Literary Controversies

From 1989 to 1997, at least on three occasions, the Viraśaivas expressed their resent over three literary texts viz., *Maarga-1* (1989), *Mahachaitra* (1994) and *Dharmakaarana* (1997). The Viraśaiva communitarians, in the context of these controversies, have criticized the works for their authorial 'ill' intentions, 'misdirected' notion of freedom of expression, 'misrepresentation' of history and 'wild' imaginations about the twelfth century Karnataka. These controversies and the debates that followed represent the ongoing and unresolved debate between individual rights versus community identity and the 'secular' versus essentialist interpretations of Viraśaivism in **a** democratic country like India.

The *Maarga-1* Controversy (1989)

When *Maarga-1* controversy arose in 1989, the secular literati held that the Viraśaiva fundamentalists are mainly responsible for the controversy. The

fundamentalists were compared to Ayatolla Khomenie, the 'fundamentalist' leader of Iran and they were depicted as "Khomeinies of Dharawad" (Virabhadrappa, 1989:20-28). The comparison was in reference to the controversy around Salman Rushdie's English novel *The Satanic Verses* in the same year. In the heat of the *Satanic Versus* controversy, the *Maarga-1* controversy in 1989 assumed the question of community identity for the Viraśaivas. Before we examine the contentious issues in the controversy, let us narrate the controversy in detail.

M. M. Kalburgi is a renowned name in the field of Kannada research. Born in a Viraśaiva family, he has extensively worked on Viraśaivism. He has collected compiled and edited several medieval Kannada literary works. He has also published an index of several inscriptions. He was the director of *Basava Peetha* of Karnataka University. This *Peetha* was established with the intention of promoting research on Viraśaiva literature especially vacana literature. He was the chief editor of *Samagra Vacana Samputa* (Complete Vacana Volumes) published by the Karnataka Sahitya Academy of the Government of Karnataka. He is conferred with the Kannada Sahitya Akademy award thrice for his contribution to research field in Kannada literature.

Maarga is a collection of research papers on the Viraśaiva literature. However, three articles in *Maarga-1* angered certain sections of the Viraśaivas of the northern Karnataka. Two religious mutts of the Viraśaiva community viz., the *Mooru Savira* mutt of Hubli and *Brihan* mutt of Chitradurga raised strong objections to these articles and demanded the State Government to take severe action against the writer. These three articles were:

a) "Nilalochaneya Badukinalli Ondu Thiruvu" (A Turning Point in the Life of Nilalochane),

b) "Nilalochane" and

c) "Nagalambike, Nilambikeyara Maduve" (Wedding of Nagalambike and Nilambike).

In "Nilalochaneya Badukinalli Ondu Thiruvu", Kalburgi refers to *Basavaraja Ragale* the hagiography of Basava written by Harihara in the thirteenth century. Using the evidence from vacanas as well as this hagiography, Kalburgi sketches the life history of Nilalochane (also known as Nilambike), the second wife of Basava. According to Kalburgi, most of the vacanas of Nilalochane depict her *viraha* or the pain of separation from Basava, implying at the possibility of a strained relationship between Basava and her. His argument is based on a popular myth. The myth runs as follows: One day *Sangamadeva* (The Lord Shiva) disguised himself as a Jangama[24] and visited Basava to test his devotion. He not only demanded for hospitality but also for a *veshya* (a prostitute). Basava, who could never afford to disappoint the Jangama guest, could not find one in the entire city of Kalyana for the Shiva Sharanas were already with them in the guise of Jangamas. He confided about his helplessness with his wife Nilalochane. She understood Basava's helplessness and agreed to serve the guest. Pleased with her devotion to the guest and her husband, Lord Shiva, could not continue with the game of disguise. He revealed his true identity and disappeared after blessing her. When Basava came to know that it was Lord Shiva who visited him, he felt both ecstatic and pained for not being fortunate to be blessed by Lord Shiva. But from that day onwards Basava worshiped his wife as his mother. He considered his wife as the mother of the world (Goddess Parvathi). According to Kalburgi, many vacanas of Nilalochane are the expressions of her pain over this separation from Basava. However, Kalburgi is struck by her fidelity to Basava and admires her as a *model* for Indian women.

In another article "Nilalochane", Kalburgi raises some doubts about the exact identity of her father. While doing research on Nilalochane, his initial guess was that she must have been the sister of Bijjala, the Jain king, in whose court Basava was a minister. He examined several myths related to her to find the exact identity of father. The more he inquired into her past, the more mysterious it looked and innumerable versions posed serious problems to him. It was difficult for Kalburgi to conclude the identity of her parents. For example, if some myths mentioned Siddharasa as her father, the other myths

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[24]The Jangama is a travelling religious teacher, ideally free and pure. To the Virasaivas he is the lord on the earth, and *linga* and guru are other aspects of Him.

did not mention anything about Siddharasa. In such circumstances, Kalburgi considered *Singiraja Purana* as a reliable source. According to this mythical work, written in the seventeenth century, Nilalochane was the adopted sister of Bijjala and her father was Siddharasa. Kalburgi concludes that the hagiographies deliberately conceal some facts about Nilalochane's parents. However, he does not elaborate on what was concealed.

His third article "Nagalambike, Nilambikeyara Maduve" is about the marriage of Nilambike and Nagalambike, the sister of Basava whose son was Chennabasavanna, one of the important figures in the Viraśaiva history. Kalburgi informs us that that identity of Chennabasavanna's father is shrouded in mystery. Besides this, the identity of Nagalambike's husband's identity is also found to be still unclear and vague. He assumes that Dohara Kakkayya, belonging to lower caste, was her husband. In the same article he attempted to demonstrate that Nilalochane was the sister of Bijjala. According to Kalburgi these facts were important, for they testified Basava's integrity. Kalburgi was thrilled by the radical decision taken by Basava in marrying a Jain woman and according to him, Basava set a model for others for inter-caste marriages.

When these articles appeared in 1985 itself in *Sadhane,* a literary journal of Bangalore University, there was no controversy. A few Viraśaiva scholars criticized Kalburgi for his wild guesses. In 1980, Siddhalinga Swamy of *Tontadarya* mutt, Gadag, said in a public meeting that Nagalambike was married to a lower caste man called Dohara Kakkayya. This also did not result in any objection. Conflict arose when Vrishabhendraswamy, Kalburgi's colleague in the Kannada department of the Karnataka University, alleged in 1989 that it is unbecoming of a Viraśaiva to distort the images of Viraśaiva saints. Though Kalburgi's self-confessed intention was to foreground the secular values of the movement, it backfired. The communitarians declared that Kalburgi deliberately distorted the personality of Nilalochane by describing her as sexual inciter (*Kamada Aatura*) and Nagalambike as the wife of a lower caste man. They accused that calling Nilalochane as a Jain by birth is contrary to the historical truth. They claimed that Nilalochane's vacanas should be understood in terms of spirituality, as they expressed her desire to be one with Basava. Her desire was pure and sacred. They were very clear about

Nagalambike's marriage also. According to them, Nagalambike was not married to a lower caste Kakkayya. Citing the *Singiraja Purana*, a seventeenth century hagiography of Basava, in support of their claims they argued that a Sharana called Shivadeva was her husband. This hagiography, according to them, provides a vivid description of Shivadeva's marriage with Nagalambike.

Kalburgi was accused of imposing psychological theories of Freud on the Shiva Sharanas. *Akkana Balaga*, a Viraśaiva Woman's Organisation in Davanagere, brought out a booklet, titled *Dr. Kalburgiyavara Tiruvu Muruvina Vakramaarga* (Dr. Kalburgi's Perverted Logic 1989) which is full of criticism against Kalburgi. This booklet considered Kalburgi's research 'blasphemy'. It had a picture of Nilambike worshipping the *ishtalinga* on the cover page.

Siddappa Langoti, the editor of *Basava Belagu*, carried out a systematic attack on Kalburgi (1989). He condemned Kalburgi for taking leniency in distorting the history of Sharanas. According to him, Kalburgi's mere speculations over the Shiva Sharanas depicted them in bad light. In his opinion, such baseless imagination not only disfigured history but also was also largely untrue. According to Langoti, such distortions of history hide insights into the Viraśaiva past. He recognized the right to express, but cautioned against the misuse of freedom of expression, which hurt the feelings of any community. He criticized Kalburgi's arrogance and irresponsibility in carrying out research despite several criticisms in the past.[25]

The marriage alliance between Dohara Kakkayya and Akkanagamma, as believed by Kalburgi was strongly condemned. According to Kalburgi, *Varnasankara* was quite common before the revolution in Kalyana. But Patil Puttappa, a journalist, retorted that Varnasankara did not exist before Basava and there were no historical evidences (Puttappa, 1989:16, No. 1740 and 1989:12, No. 1745). In other words Puttappa was not ready to accept that marriages between lower caste and higher caste families were a

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[25] *Shivanubhava*, a quarterly journal in Kannada meant for disseminating the philosophy of Basava, carried several articles (1985) condemning Kalburgi's 'wild' imagination in the name of research.

common affair during the twelfth century. He argued that such marriages were not accepted till Basava began the revolution in Kalyana. According to him, it was Basava who brought about revolutionary acts of *Varnasankara* between lower caste and higher castes. He pointed out that Kakkayya could not have been Akkanagamma's husband because there was no evidence to show that they both met in Bagewadi. Kakkayya decided to meet Basava when he heard about the movement and was attracted to Basava's philosophy of social equality (Puttappa, 1989:17, No. 1748). According to Putttappa, he met Basava for the first time in Kalyana and he was from Malawa country.

The *Maarga* controversy did not end in battle of words. There were several life-threats to Kalburgi and a huge mobilization of the Viraśaivas tried to put pressure on Kalburgi. The communitarians demanded the State Government to ban and confiscate the book immediately. The communitarians were so enraged with Kalburgi that despite Brihaiimatha Jagadguru's (religious head of *Brihan* mutt, Chitradurga) consolatory words to the gathering on the day of the meeting in the *Mooru Savira* mutt (20th March, 1989) that Kalburgi belonged to 'us' and that he did not write articles deliberately, the public was impatient and frenzied. They demanded severe punishment to Kalburgi. One among the gathering suggested that one litre of kerosene was enough to burn Kalburgi. This controversy ended with an apology from Kalburgi to the Viraśaiva community in the presence of heads of two monasteries[26]. In the second edition published in 1995, Kalburgi deleted the 'controversial' sections of his article without giving any reason for such deletion.

However, many writers, intellectuals and literary organizations supported Kalburgi and defended his freedom of expression. For example, Sadananda Kanavalli remarks sarcastically,

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[26] Dr. Viranna Dande has documented the incidents of the controversy in his *Kavimarga* (1989), a quarterly journal published from Gulbarga. I am thankful to him for sending me a copy of the special issue on the controversy.

> The agitation against the book was started by great intellectuals with the support
> of the religious gurus, aided by the money power, and supported by the 'innocent'
> followers who did not know the in and out of the agitation (Kanavalli, 1989:14).

B. V.Virabhadrappa alleged that Vrishabhendraswamy's professional jealously with Kalburgi was the main source of the controversy (Virabhadrappa, 1989:22). According to Virabhadrappa, Vrishabhendraswamy held Kalburgi responsible for the defeat of his candidate in the election for presidential post for the district level Kannada Sahitya Parishat. He also points out that Kalburgi's sincerity and commitment as a researcher gained him jealous colleagues in the Centre for Kannada Studies. According to him, the above factors resulted in Vrishbhendra Swamy calling for a *religious war* against Kalburgi.

The *Akhila Karnataka Kannada Teachers' Association* of Mysore strongly upheld Kalburgi's scholarship. Forty-two writers held a press conference in Bangalore and supported the individual's right to research. They strongly condemned 'violence' of the Viraśaiva communitarians in order to force a writer to abide by their dictates. They urged the State Government that neither Kalburgi be removed from *Basava Peetha* as demanded by the Viraśaiva communitarians nor should Kalburgi's resignation to the Chief Editorship of the vacana volumes being published by the Government, be accepted. *Kannada Sahitya Parishat, Karnataka Press Academy, Karnataka Women Writers' Association, Bandaya Sahitya Samiti* and the Karnataka college teachers' associations supported Kalburgi's right to expression. The Eighth *Bandaya* (the rebel) literary conference held in 1989 passed a resolution that any attempt to ban the book should be prevented and Kalburgi's freedom of expression should be protected. The *Gulbarga Dalit Sangharsha Samiti* urged the government to give full protection to Kalburgi and release the *Maarga* volumes without delay.

Rhetoric of Research, History and Community

Through out the *Maarga-1* controversy the most dominant feature of the debates was a line drawn between 'research' and 'imagination'. Research was perceived as objective, scientific and true to the facts. It is not imaginary or subjective. H. M. Nayak,

the well-known Kannada professor and a critic, distinguishes between the *Satanic Verses* controversy and the *Maarga* controversy. He points out,

> Salman Rushdie's work is a novel. It is based on imagination. It is accidental if the characters and incidents in the novel resemble real life. In some contexts, they might have been created deliberately. In such circumstances, one may not have an opportunity to rectify the mistake. But it is not true in the case of Kalburgi's paper. If he has arrived at wrong conclusions in his research, others have the *freedom to rectify them* (italics mine, 1989:33).

He was not at all happy with the rhetoric of the communitarians as well as their interference in the academic matters. He held that there was no need for 'fundamentalists' and non-academicians to 'interfere' in the academic research. Kalburgi also endorses the responsibility of research in searching for the truth. He ends his article on *Nagalambike, Nilambikeyara Maduve* thus,

> Research means arriving at relevant and *accurate* decisions with the help of *empirical* evidences. If different evidences are available tomorrow, a researcher has to revise the research findings. This is the utmost task of a researcher because *truth* is greater than the *researcher* (italics mine, 1989:238-252).

While Nayak valorises the notion of truth Kalburgi moralizes the role of researchers as seekers of that truth.

In fact, the communitarians' notions are not in any way different from that of other scholars. For all of them are trained in the same tradition of empirical research. They are eager to establish the historical truth and construct a tradition of Viraśaivism. They also did not go beyond the notions of true history, sacred facts and objectivity and did not even address certain elementary questions like how the twelfth century religious world comprehended the world, what was the symbolic order represented in the ancient works, how do we understand the worldview of the twelfth century vacanakaras? Expecting both the parties to have problematised the 'origins' and raised the question of 'intervention' into and representation of Viraśaivism in successive centuries by various scholars and hagiographers including the colonial scholarship would be farfetched. In this particular sense the secular as well as the communitarians speak the same language of Orientalism. However, the complete dismantling of the symbolic universe presented and

handed down by the secular scholars is unacceptable to the votaries of the community sentiments. This, in our opinion, cannot be understood invoking a simple opposition between the secular and the 'fundamentalist' forces.

The *Mahachaitra* Controversy (1994)

The *Mahachaitra*[27] controversy was another controversy, which created a furore in the public realm in Karnataka. The controversy, once again, raised the question of Viraśaiva history, literature and religious beliefs. H. S. Shivaprakash wrote the play. He is a poet, playwright and critic. He was the editor *of Indian Literature.* He belongs to the Viraśaiva community and is the son of Shivamurthy Shastri, one of the Viraśaiva scholars. Shivamurthy Shastri was a poet in the Royal court of Mysore and was one of the leaders of the Karnataka Unification movement. He believed in the Sanskrit lineage of the community and published several books related to the Renukacharya tradition[28] and *Shaiva Siddhanta.*

From 1984 to 1994 i.e. for ten years, *Mahachaitra* was performed many number of times all over Karnataka. Once the performance was sponsored by the Basava Samithi, a literary organ of the ABVM, on *'Basava Jayanthi'* (birthday of Basava) in Bangalore. It was also prescribed as a textbook in the Kannada Department of Mangalore University during 1986-87. Signs of trouble surfaced only when it was prescribed as a textbook for the undergraduate students of Kuvempu University and Gulbarga University in 1994. Once again the play was criticized for distorting the sacred image of the Shiva Sharanas.

In the mid 1994, MM and her organization *Rashtriya Basava Dal* along with the *Basava Dharma Peetha* of Kudalasangama mounted an attack on the play. They demanded an immediate withdrawal of the play from the two universities. There were many demonstrations, *rasta roko* agitations and *dharnas* in the northern parts of Karnataka, especially in Gulbarga and Bidar to pressurise the Government authorities to

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[27] For more details about the play, refer pp.75-76 of this chapter.
[28] This tradition believes that Renukacharya was the forerunner of Basava and he was one of the five founders of the Viraśaiva religion.

withdraw the play from the university syllabus. Large number of rural masses were mobilized from neighbouring villages of Gulbarga and demonstrations were conducted in the premises of the Gulbarga University. Many Viraśaiva seers and organisations gave moral support to the agitation but did not participate in the demonstrations directly. Even Sharana Basappa Appa of Gulbarga, the head of the prestigious religious mutt in Gulbarga, did not evince any interest in the controversy except showing moral support to MM's agitation. This controversy evoked reaction in the state assembly also. Bhimanna Khandre, a Viraśaiva member of the state legislature, demanded that the book should be immediately withdrawn from the syllabus and the author should be brought to book.[29]

When the State Government delayed in taking any action, he condemned the government and wondered if the Central government could ban the English novel, why should the State Government delay in banning *Mahachaitra*? Owing to pressure from many quarters and considering the consequences for the forthcoming *Panchayat* elections, the government, headed by Veerappa Moily, formed a three-member committee to look into the matter and give recommendations. Following the committee recommendations and after many deliberations, the government directed the two universities to withdraw the textbook 'temporarily'. Initially, the universities were reluctant to heed to the pressure of the government. But later on due to sensitivity of the situation and due to a lot of pressure from the government, both the universities decided to withdraw the book after the first year as it was prescribed for two years. However, the agitators persisted for the withdrawal of the book immediately forever. In the end, the university syllabus committees had to give in. The play was completely withdrawn from the syllabus the very next year (1995). Deccan-Herald (14th March, 1995) reported that the sudden withdrawal of the textbook put thousands of students in a quandary if they should study the text for the exam or not.

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[29] Assembly proceedings of this controversy are gathered from the official report of the Karnataka Legislative Council Debates (eight session). Vol. CCXLV (No. 1 to 5), 1994.

Some dialogues in the play were found objectionable by MM and others agitators. MM's reservations about[30] the play are serious. According to her, the play was sacrilegious to the Viraśaiva community and it advocated crime and free sex. She was against prescribing the distorted history of the twelfth century Shiva Sharanas to the students. Now let us consider a few 'objectionable' dialogues in the play between two characters i.e. Mukundabhatta and Aadinathaiah. Mukundabhatta is a Brahmin who detests the vacana movement led by Basava. In a conversation with Adinathaiah, a Jain, he talks about Basava and says:

> His mother did not have a child for a long time and then...(Shivaprakash, 1994:34).

Adinathaiah replies with surprise:

> Oh that means…something suspicious? Do such things happen in your community too? (ibid:34).

According to MM the above dialogues are sacrilegious for it weaves certain suspicion around the birth of Basava. Continuing their conversation, Adinathaiah, says,

> A lady used to wander on the Kalyana streets shouting 'Lord Shiva is my husband, Lord Shiva is my husband' (ibid:34).

The lady referred in the conversation is Akkamahadevi, the Viraśaiva woman saint. Such dialogues were considered by MM as contemptuous 'loose talk' and deliberately inserted in the name of the characters. Elsewhere Madivala Machideva, a Sharana from the washing community, in a fit of anger says, "We are not slaves of Basava" (Shivaprakash, 1995:26). For MM it was unimaginable to think that Madivala Machideva, an ardent follower of Basava, could talk about Basava in such a light manner. MM blamed that the author humiliated the religious icons of the community in the name of creative freedom. In a review of the play, she wrote proudly about Machideva's sacrifice in safeguarding the wealth of vacanas when Bijjala's soldiers attacked Machideva and his companions near Murugoda in Belguam district (MM, 1994:7). Shivaprakash, according to her, is

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[30] MM's objections are documented in the journal *Kalyana Kirana*. For her analysis and criticism of the play see *Kalyana Kirana* (1994-95) Vol.22, No. 11; Vol. 24, No.8, .9, 10 and Vol.25, No.3.

insensitive to the loyalty of Machideva and portrayed him as disrespecting Basava. Another instance of the controversial part of the play, according to MM, is a conversation between Nilambike and Bijjala about Basava's end. Nilambike feels:

> Do not worry too much. Irrespective of who was the Emperor, Basavarasa's tale would have ended in water (ibid: 74)

This dialogue, it was accused, intended to show that Basava was an escapist and he committed suicide by drowning himself at *Kudalasangama,* the confluence of two rivers viz., Malaprabha and Ghataprabha. MM contended that Neelambike was an intellectual and a dedicated wife to Basava and she could not have had such feelings about her husband. A religious belief of the Viraśaivas also needs to be explained here. Usually, divine beings are not believed to have an ordinary end to their life. Their end is believed to be a death by wish. That is, the divine beings and the seers have the powers to end their life only when they desire so. Since Basava was not an ordinary person, MM could not digest the idea that he ended life by drowning himself in the river water.

She cited several 'inaccuracies' in the play and the author's lack of 'historical sense'. According to her, in the play, Basava's wife Gangambike and his sister accompanied him to *Sangameshwara* (another name for *Kudalasangama)* when Basava left Kalyana because of caste turmoil in the town. However, according to MM, no literary account mentioned that Gangambike and Akkanagamma accompanied Basava to Kudalasangama. She held that both stayed back in the town and fought bravely against Bijjala and his army. MM believed that Akkanagamma was a brave warrior and protested the Lingayath religion till her death[31]. Mahanta Shivayogi of Chittaragi-Ilakal blamed the present education system for such controversies because the education system is insensitive to the feelings of the communities and it inculcated 'false' historical sense among the public. He called the public to oppose any false propaganda against the Viraśaivas. He considered the portrayal of lower caste Sharanas in *Mahachaitra* objectionable because Shivaprakash tarnished the image of Basava by using the so-called perceptions of the Dalit Sharanas (Shivayogi, 1994:15). Like the *Maarga* controversy,

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[31] However, it is still a contentious issue if Akkanagamma fought against Bijjala or not.

this controversy was also region specific. The intensity of the controversy was high in Gulbarga and Bidar.

Shivaprakash denied all the charges and believed that his play was the voice of the marginalized Sharanas. He was supported by many Progressive and Dalit organizations such as *SFI, DYF1, Karnataka Rajya Madivala Sangha, Kannada Desha Paksha* and *Dalit Sangarsh Samiti.* They supported him for highlighting the working and artisan Sharanas in the play. *Deccan Herald* (18th Feb. 1995) reported that a rally was taken out in support of the playwright from Ravidra Kalakshetra to the Basaweshwara circle in Bangalore in protest against the government's decision to withdraw the textbook. An effigy of **MM** was also burnt in the procession.

Mob Mania, Literary Creativity and the Secularists

G. S. Shivarudrappa, a well-known Kannada poet and literary critic, criticized the controversy because it exhibited 'mob mania'. He said, "The present situation appears like a mob mania, a confusion born out of misreading the book..." (Deccan-Herald, 1994). Shivarudrappa, who has been very consistent in supporting the freedom of expression of a writer since 1950, considered the agitation against the play as yet another instance of 'fundamentalism'. Some Viraśaiva religious heads also joined the secularists in condemning the 'fundamentalist' attitude of certain sections of the community. A religious head of Gurustala sect, Shivacharya Swamy (1995:12) appealed to the readers not to confuse history with literature. *Mahachaitra,* according to him, was just a literary play and not a history. For him, a meaningful dialogue between various intellectuals like Shivaprakash, Girish Karnad, Lankesh, Kalburgi and Tipperudraswamy, was a rational way of examining the contentious issues related to the play in particular and Viraśaivism in general. He condemned coercive tactics of MM and other organizations in pressurizing the State Government to take action against the playwright. He described the agitation as a *Stone Age* tendency in the modern period. H. S. Shivaprakash also made distinction between literature and history in order to show that his play was fictional and did not contain any historical fact. In an interview to Deccan-Herald, he said,

Mahachaitra is a play, not history. In our culture, the sacred memory of Basava has several aspects to it. Persona of Basava is not a mere matter of history. He is also a cultural and mythical personality. Above all, Basava is a symbol of creativity; inspiration in our culture... Creativity need not be a replica of history. It is a matter of recreation of history (18th Feb. 1995).

For Shivaprakash the play did not intend to represent an accurate history and it should be considered as a literary work. He held that the 'fundamentalists' mistook literature for history. P. Lankesh, a renowned journalist and a Kannada writer analysed the play in his *Lankesh Patrike* and held that it indeed was a bad writing (1995:7-8). He blamed Shivaprakash for writing such a tasteless drama. He pitied students who had to read such a mediocre play for their examination. However, he did not spare MM for *unnecessarily* making it a religious issue. G. Rajashekar, a critic in Kannada, in the *Afterwards* to *Mahachaitra,* points out that the contemporary religious leaders had drifted far away from the 'original' ideals of the vacana movement. He felt sorry for their ignorance and failure to understand Shivaprakash's noble cause in the play.

The *Dharmakaarana* Controversy (1997)

Dharmakaarana, a Kannada novel written by P. V. Narayana in 1995, triggered a controversy in 1997 when it was chosen for the annual award of Kannada Sahitya Akademy. The author of the novel is a Brahmin and teaches at Vijaya College in Bangalore. He is an acclaimed scholar on the vacana literature. He has a doctoral degree for his research on the Viraśaiva *puranas* and the vacanas. The Viraśaiva scholars have duly recognised his contribution to the Viraśaiva studies.

This novel depicts the last few days of Basava in Kalyana just before the Viraśaiva movement. In the novel, the marriage between a lower caste man and a Brahmin woman arranged by Basava and his followers rakes up the question of *varnasankara* (caste pollution). The Brahmins who dislike and oppose Basava are against the marriage. Around this episode of 'unholy' marriage, the novel illustrates the socio-political and economic life of the people in Kalyana. It is also depicts the subtleties of politics mingled with religion. Religious rivalry between the Jains, the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas is illustrated vividly in the novel. This rivalry explodes into religious conflicts

in the end during the marriage incident, which eventually goes out of Basava's control. Basava is compelled by his followers to leave the town for his safety because there are rumours that he may be either imprisoned or killed by Bijjala's soldiers. The novel ends in Basava's exit from Kalyana and he spends his last days in Kudalasangama. Basava narrates the incidents in the novel. The novel can be seen as an autobiography of Basava. Basava is not portrayed as an incarnation of Lord Shiva. He is a human being with immense integrity, determination and commitment.

As soon as the State Sahitya Akademy announced its annual award for the novel, the Viraśaiva communitarians demanded the State Government to withdraw the award and ban the novel immediately for it deliberately hurt the sentiments of the Viraśaivas. The most controversial part of the novel was once again the portrayal of Akkanagamma's personal life and her sexuality. In one instance Basava recalls his childhood in the Brahmin *Agrahahara*[32] and the ordeals that he had to undergo as a young boy. His childhood was full of bitter experiences. Once he was forced to make an unavoidable choice of either abandoning his sister Akkanagamma or face excommunication from the Brahmin community for the Brahmins suspected that Akkanagamma had an illicit relationship with somebody in the *Agrahara.* The suspicion was developed because they could not know who was responsible for her pregnancy. But Basava, being a truth-seeker and affectionate brother to his sister, left the place protesting the moral degeneration of the Brahmins. He developed a unique courage to oppose the Brahmin hypocrisy and orthodoxy at an early age. In the novel, he reminiscences that it was stories like *Jabali-Satyakama* that infused truth and determination in him. Then, he narrates the story. He draws on a puranic version of *Jabali-Satyakama* story[33] to show how Satyakama's honesty and truth had profound impact on him during his childhood.

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[32] Agrahara is a residential place of the Brahmins. This place is traditionally forbidden for the non-Brahmins.

[33] The story of Satyakama in the novel goes like this: Satyakama wanted to become the disciple of a Guru, When he approached the Guru, he was asked to reveal his father's identity. Satyakama could not tell because he did not know who his father was. The teacher told him to ask his mother about his father's identity. Next day, Satyakama confessed to the teacher that he did not know the exact details about his father since his mother slept with many men. The teacher was impressed with his honesty for he did not hide the truth about his birth and ultimately he accepted Satyakama as his disciple.

The story of Satyakama and its connection to Basava's childhood was strongly objected by the communitarians. According them the story was a deliberate choice. Since the story was narrated after the Akkanagamma episode, it created an impression that Chennabasavanna, the son of Akkanagamma, was born out of wedlock like Satyakama and Akkanagamma was a *Jabali* (the prostitute mother of Satyakama)[34]

This time it was the ABVM, under the presidentship of Sharana Basappa Appa of *Sharanabasaweshwara* mutt, Gulbarga, which initiated agitation against the author and his novel. Writing about the intensity of the agitation, an English magazine *Family* reported,

> The Veerashaivas took their protests to the streets, the author's life was threatened and a member of the House [Member of the legislative Assembly] who is a Veerashaiva created anarchy in the House by tearing a copy of the book (1997:60).

The ABVM condemned the novel as blasphemous and formed a Ganachara[35] committee to set right the denigration of Chennabasavanna and prevent false propaganda against the

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[34] In actual textual traditions, there are different hagiographies that give different pictures of Chennabasavanna's birth. There is no single authentic evidence to show the true identity of his parents. For instance, *Shivatatwa Chintamani,* a sixteenth century purana, indicates that Chennabasavanna was born out *of Prasada* (by a divine grace). *Prabhulinga Leele,* a fifteenth century hagiography of Allama Prabhu, shows that Chennabasavanna was born out of the *Prasada* of Dohara Kakkaya, a lower caste Sharana. Halagedeva's *Shunyasampadane* (fifteenth century) and other myths like *Gururaja Charitre* (sixteenth century), Bhairaweshwara Kavya's *Sutraratnakara, Proudadevaraya Kavya* (sixteenth century) illustrate that he was born out of Lord Shiva's *Prasada.* But there is an ambiguity about the concept of Prasada and lot of ink is already spilled over the exact meaning of it. It is Singiraja's *Amala Basava Charitre* which illustrates that he was the son of Shivadeva or Shivaswamy. Majority scholars accept Singiraja's work, as the authentic version to know Chennabasavanna's parents since it does not create any ambiguity in anybody's mind.

[35] Ganachara is a regulatory principle to realise and implement the ideals of the Virasaiva religion. It is one among the five principles of Virasaivism propounded by Chennabasavanna. These principles are also called as *Pancacara* (five principles of conducts). The Sharanas of the twelfth century established these five principles to govern the life and behaviour of the Virasaivas. The five principles are: Lingchara, Sadachara, Shivachara, Ganachara and Bhrtyachara. K.Ishwaran, a sociologist, explains, "the principle [Ganachara] embodies the injection against the exploitative aspects of the Brahminical socio-religious arrangement" (1983:105). Ganachara implies not listening to slander about Lord Shiva's principles of conduct. It aims at strong loyalty towards one's own tradition and community. According to the principle, the devotees should dissociate themselves from people who indulge in objectionable practices. Ganachara is a way of injecting discipline and conduct into the *Bhavis* (non-believers in Lord Shiva) who distort the image of Shiva Sharanas or Lingayath beliefs. Non-believers of Shiva or Linga are considered as *Bhavis.* In other words,

Viraśaiva icons. Four prominent Viraśaiva scholars i.e. Chandrashekar, B. Virupakshappa, R. Rachappa and G. P. Shivaswamy prepared a list of allegations on behalf of the ABVM to highlight the mistakes committed by the author. A copy of the list was sent to the State Government along with a demand to ban the novel. Some of the allegations and justifications for the same are as follows:

a) Even though the historical studies have proved that Akkanagamma is Basava's younger sister, in the novel, she was portrayed as the elder sister of Basava. They cited *Basava Purana* (a hagiography of Basava) to prove that Akkanagamma was Basava's younger sister. Hence, they held that P. V. Narayana was not well informed about the Viraśaiva history.

b) According to the Viraśaiva puranas, Basava rebelled against the orthodox ritual of *Upanayana* (initiation) at the age of eight and left his parental home for Kudalasangama. But in the novel, such rebellious act of Basava was not portrayed. They alleged that the author concocted false stories and tried to prove that his version of Basava and Akkanagamma was true. It was charged that the author deliberately wanted to show Basava as an escapist who fled Bagewadi (his birth place) along with his sister to save his skin and he was not a revolutionary. The novelist intentionally did not highlight Basava's revolutionary ideas against Brahminism. This was interpreted as Brahminism of the novelist. Several evidences were cited from the Viraśaiva hagiographies like Harihara's *Basavaraja Ragale* and Singiraja's *Amala Basava Charitre* to prove that Basava left Bagewadi at an early age protesting Brahmin orthodoxy and moral decline.

c) The most serious charges levelled against P. V. Narayana were related to Akkanagamma's personal life and her sexuality. In the novel, she is depicted as an unmarried woman for a long time. However, this was unimaginable and far from the fact for the Viraśaiva communitarians because the Brahmins in the twelfth century

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non-Lingayaths or non-Virasaivas who do not wear Linga and do not worship Lord Shiva are *Bhavis*. Brahmins and Jains were considered as Bhavis in the twelfth century.

were too orthodox to keep a woman unmarried for a long period. Besides this point, Basava, as the narrator in the novel, illustrates the 'unfortunate" episode in her life. As explained earlier, it was held that the novelist inserted the *Jabali-Satyakama* story to malign integrity and moral life of Akkanagamma. They produced evidences to substantiate that Akkanagamma was married at an early age and they pointed out that the Viraśaiva hagiographies and research done on the Viraśaiva literature by Halakatti, Hiremath, Shrinivasmurthy, Kalburgi, etc. in the modern period have proved this point.

d) In the novel, Basava is portrayed as wearing the sacred thread even at the age of thirty. Against such depiction, the ABVM argued that Basava could not have worn the thread till that age because he was against rituals and he abandoned Brahmin community to join the Viraśaiva religion at an early age. But the novelist, they accused, wanted to show that Basava was a wise and intelligent Brahmin who led the Viraśaivas movement. The ABVM wondered, could Basava not be wise without being a Brahmin? Were not the lower caste/class Shiva Sharanas such as Allama Prabu, Siddarama, Madiwala Machayya, Nuliya Chandayya and Ambigara Chowdayya wise and intelligent? Then they questioned why these Sharanas were not given importance in the novel. The ABVM thought that the novelist was a Brahmin to the core and he ignored the lower caste Sharanas deliberately.

e) The ABVM alleged that Basava's wives, Gangambike and Neelambike, were not portrayed in good taste in the novel. Their characterisation in the novel was just like any other common woman with no strong commitment and sincerity. Both were portrayed as visiting several temples to pray for children. According to the ABVM, the Sharanas were against the static symbols in the temples and therefore, they did not visit any temples in their life except worshipping *istalinga.*

1) The ABVM was angry over the characterisation in the novel. Basava was illustrated as an inefficient administrator. Against this, Bijjalla emerged as an able and proficient king. They could not digest that Basava was shown as an ordinary and irresolute

minister who escaped social responsibility while Bijjala proved to be the central character with his pragmatism and shrewdness.

g) According to the ABVM, the temples, mentioned in the novel, did not exist at all and the author imagined falsely that the Shiva Sharanas were polytheist.

The above points were invoked and circulated constantly by the Viraśaiva leaders as well as the politicians. The Viraśaiva legislators in the upper and lower houses of the State Assembly cut across party lines in denouncing the novel. They demanded a ban on it in chorus. Bhimanna Khandre of the Congress (I) party made a lengthy and rhetorical speech against the writer and the 'immoral' contents of the book. He declared that humiliating Akkanagamma was *humiliating (he whole womenfolk in India.* According to him, "The bad portrayal of Akkanagamma violates the respectable position held by the women in India."[36] He threatened the legislative assembly that he would self-immolate and warned that the assembly would be responsible for a 'bloodbath' if action was not taken against the novelist and the novel. Except a CPI (M) legislator G. V. Shrirama Reddy and Virappa Moily, who was the chief minister of Karnataka during the *Mahachaitra* controversy, all the other legislators favoured action against the author. Vishwanathareddy Mudnal, the vice-president of the ABVM went on hunger strike for seven days demanding an apology from the writer[37]. The whole controversy and the debates centered on the question of women's 'chastity' and 'distortion' of history.

The controversy around the novel did not erupt when it was first serialized in a Kannada magazine *Maardhani* in 1995 or when it was published in the same year. But the storm was kicked off when the Karnataka Sahitya Akademy decided to confer its annual award to the novel in 1997. As soon as the news spread about the award, the former Vice-President of India B. D. Jatti and other Viraśaiva personalities like Ko.

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[36] Assembly proceedings over the *Dharmakaarana* controversy are available in the Official Report of the Karnataka Legislative Council Debates, March 1997.

[37] Mudnal's fast unto death was reported in *Kannada Prabha,* a Kannada daily in Karnataka, on 23rd,March 1997.

Chennabasappa and H. Chandrashekar, urged the then chief minister J. H. Patel to prevail upon the Akademy to withdraw the award. When the situation seemed to go out of hand, Leeladevi R. Prasad, the then minister for Kannada and Culture wrote a letter to the president of the Akademy to withdraw the award. On 26th March 1997, the politicians of all parties in the assembly demanded a ban on the book. On the same day, the minister ordered[38] for the confiscation of the copies of the novel. The government's decision to withdraw the award and to ban the novel was taken keeping in view of the 'law and order' problem. For the government's decision, the minister said,

> A novelist has no right to distort history and in any case we had to take the
> necessary steps to prevent a law and order situation *(Frontline,* 1997:44).

But in June, the government revoked the order as per the High Court directions. Once again the Viraśaiva organizations and the political lobby began mounting pressure on the government. Ultimately, the government banned the novel due to the political uncertainty during this period. Disappointed with all these 'unfortunate' happenings and in protest against the president of the Karnataka Sahitya Akademy, Shantarasa's lack of strong determination in this matter, P. V. Narayana rejected the award. In a letter written to the president of the Akademy, Narayana gave the following reasons for rejecting the award,

> Controversy about my novel *Dharmakaarana* has created chaos in the literary
> world. Giving in to the pressures of the ministry, you have recommended
> reconsidering the award. You were reported in a newspaper that the novel did not
> deserve award and you have not denied the reports. Not to give vent to violence, 1
> reject the award (Kannada Prabha, 1997:5)

Later on Shantarasa resigned his post protesting against the Government's interference in the affairs of the Akademy.

The author categorically denied all the allegations levelled against him during the controversy. He said that he did not write anything against the Shiva Sharanas and his

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 The gist of the government order goes like this:
According to I.P.S. section 295A, the distorted history portrayed by P. V. Narayana in *Dharmakaarana* has hurt the Virashaivas and the followers of Basava. Since it was ill intentioned and since the situation has become tense, it is declared that the government will confiscate the copies of the novel under C.R.P.C. section 95. This order carried the signature of the secretary of the department of Kannada and Culture on behalf of the governor. A copy of the order was given to me P. V. Narayana from his personal collections.

novel was based on solid evidences drawn from the Viraśaiva puranas **and** historical materials.

Earlier, the Viraśaiva communitarians challenged the notions of 'freedom of expression' as understood by the secular writers like P. V. Narayana. They seemed to respect an individual's right of expression but they were against the excessive use of freedom in the name of 'creativity'. They were of the strong opinion that one's freedom or liberty should not hurt the sentiments of any community. Sharana Basappa Appa, admonished,

> Writers like P. V. Narayana take consolation in writing bad literature [*Dharmakaarana*] in defence of caste system and they are scared to face those who opposed the caste and the *Varna* system (italics mine. In a report sent to the State Government).

Here, Basappa Appa meant Shiva Sharanas who opposed the *Varna* system. He was particularly hurt to see that the radical image of Basava, who challenged Brahminism, was portrayed as an 'escapist'. He went to the extent of saying that it was P. V. Narayana's malicious intention to speak against those [Shiva Sharanas of the twelfth century movement] who spread the universal truth and democratic values. The freedom of expression, he opined, was necessary for only those who deserve it, others like P. V. Narayana simply did not deserve it. Hence, he opined, only the virtuous people should have the freedom of expression and not the vice. The press statement of the Mahasabha accused the writer of using 'creativity' to destroy the history of Sharana movement. A personal letter[39] written by Basavaraj Patil to P. Lankesh compares P. V. Narayana to *Khomeine* for writing lies in the novel and described Narayana and Shivaprakash as *goondas* who caused mental torture to the public. He condemned Lankesh and others, who were opposing banning of the novel and supported an author's right to express, as the *mafia gang* in the literary world.

As usual, this time also many organizations expressed their solidarity with P. V. Narayana and condemned the religious bigotry of the Viraśaiva community. This

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[39] P.V.Narayana gave this letter to me.

controversy was described as the height of religious fundamentalism in the state. Feelings of strong resentment over the highhanded behaviour of the Viraśaivas were described as indicators of communal disharmony and blatant violation of individual rights.

Creativity and Freedom of Expression

During the *Dharmakaarana* controversy, Lankesh, in an editorial to *Lankesh Patrike,* wrote,

> *Dharmakaarana* as a novel and as a literary text is a bad work. P. V. Narayana
> does not know how to narrate an incident, characters and events (1995:3).

Nevertheless, he also condemned the ugly face of religious 'fundamentalism' showing its ugly face frequently and harassing the creative writers. A seminar (on *Dharmakaarana and Abhivyakthi Swatantrya*) organised by *Samudaya,* a left organization, in April 1997 defended the writer's right to express[40]. Few others criticised the unnecessary publicity given to the book and questioned the decision of the Sahitya Akademy to confer an award to the book. They also denounced opportunism of Bhimanna Khandre and Vishwanath Reddy Mudnal for taking political mileage out of the controversy. They were compared to *Khomenie* (K. V. Subbanna, 1998:96; Gayatri Nivas, 1994:1; Panditaradhya, 1994:6). In Udupi, *Mateeyavaadi Virodhi Vedike* (Forum Against Communalism) took a procession and condemned the 'fundamentalists' for suppressing the writers' freedom of speech and democracy. In a pamphlet[41] brought out by the forum, the state's inability to handle the controversy was criticized in strong words. It condemned the government's inability to safeguard the plurality of Indian life and its partisan way favouring one community. It blamed the government for joining hands with the 'fundamentalists'.

IV

Understanding Representations

Construction of the *self and* the *other* by the secularists and the communitarians in the context of the above literary controversies show how identities are inscribed and contested and on what terms. Construction of the self and the other is a process related to

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[40] Proceedings of the seminar are reported in *Kannada Prabha*, 20th, April 1997.

[41] 1 am thankful to P.V.Narayana for providing me a copy of this pamphlet.

the location of each group. Moreover, this process is part of marking one's cultural, social and literary locations distinct from others. In the present context, the construction of self and the other is dependent upon a set of binaries such as individual versus community; secularism versus fundamentalism; freedom of expression versus coercion, modernity versus tradition, etc. In other words, it is the battle between "the horses of instruction" and "the tigers of wrath" (Mendus, 1993:104). Mendus discusses the battle between these two forces in the context of *The Satanic Verses* controversy. According to her, battle between the two parties symbolises the forces of light (self of the authors) and darkness (the other of the authors), between rationality and bigotry, etc. The horses of instruction claim rational and secular self against the communitarians. The tigers of wrath construct themselves as the protectors and the preservers of the community sentiments. For them, liberal writers become the other because they do not honour the sentiments of the community. This construction and contestation of self and the other is grounded on some general notions about secularism, freedom of expression, creativity, history, tradition, etc. Besides these, there are already some models (several literary controversies at national and international level) available to formulate a series of distinctions/binaries. Paradox is that in the process of constructing the self and the other, both the parties share and reproduce certain values of the above-mentioned notions from their own locations.

Viewed in the above perspective, what is being today posited as an opposition between the freedom of the artist and the sentiments of a community is an artificial one, for the realization of both are part of the same processes, where one is contingent on the other. The notion of artistic freedom as an absolute quality was in fact part of a romantic myth born in the nineteenth century Victorian period that valorised the artist as a rebel against 'society', enjoying the anger of those in authority. Therefore, the secular self is imbued with the belief that a creative writer is a literary genius who transcends the boundaries of cultures, traditions and politics in search of ultimate truth. S/he is constructed as some one who can go beyond them in the high moments of creativity. Therefore, usually furore against a literary work is seen as an attempt to constrain such creativity and control the freedom of expression. For them, fundamentalism is the sign of *ignorance* and *arrogance* because the communitarians lack minimum knowledge of

literary aestheticism or criticism. Any demand on ban or confiscation of a book by the communitarians is condemned for their 'primitive' (Hema Anthony, 1997:61) nature and uncivilized manners. The secular authors project their writings as 'progressive', 'secular' and 'transformative'. It is taken for granted that the secular forces construct their self as signifying progress and the other as symbolizing conservatism. This construction of the self does not originate spontaneously. As we have discussed in the previous sections, it is the continuation of differences already existing between the secularists and the communitarians.

In many cases, the cause of disagreement between the secularists and the communitarians is always at the discourse[42] and material[43] level. At the discourse level, any constraint on literary freedom is seen as the result of essentialist attempts to restrict 'literary creativity', 'literary autonomy', 'imagination', etc. Their discourses of literature are meant to defend freedom of expression, 'truth' and literary creativity. In their view, freedom of expression embodies claims of progress and 'truth'. Therefore, any infringement on 'progress' and 'truth' is construed as violation of human rights and imposition of authority. The assumption underlying here is that literary creativity is possible if it is imbued with freedom. Similarly, creativity is justified as preceding and predetermining factor of any literary work. The literary creativity is wise, thoughtful, responsible, artistic and rational. These notions differentiate an author from the communitarians who 'lack creativity' and exhibit 'irrationality'. They are described as unthinking and archaic. The secularists, despite holding different ideological perceptions of literature among themselves, safeguard the sanctity of literature in terms of imagination and creative freedom. Authorship of a writer is conflated with autonomy of literature and both are inseparable. It is quite common to hear a writer/critic saying, "I

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[42] By discourse I mean to say a body of knowledge produced on certain subjects. Discourses claim certain truth effect and shape one's consciousness. In the process, they also come under scrutiny and get transformed.

[43] The division between discourse and material is not conceptualised in autonomous sense. They overlap each other. However, they demonstrate two different practices of the two contending parties.

don't like the work. But that does not mean to say that a writer's freedom of expression and autonomy should be curtailed". In such statements, liking or disliking a literary work presupposes that a literary work is essentially distinct, subjective, autonomous and self-explaining. Along with these constructions prescriptions are liberally offered for particular ways of discursive practices. These practices decide what is literature and what is not. In all these practices certain literary boundaries are drawn. His/her literary creations are privileged as distinct from other forms of literary works.

Ironically, the communitarians too invoke the same notions of 'freedom of expression', 'authorial intention', 'literary autonomy', etc. They grind their axe against the creative writers for hurting their sentiments. A writer is accused of prejudices and harbouring heartedness towards their community. Though the communitarians are not against the fundamental right of a writer's expression, author's intention or literary autonomy, they would like to define them in their own terms. They would like to decide if the writer has violated fundamental right of expression or not. Such decisions will be taken in terms of 'tradition', sanctity and group identity. In other words, metaphors of kinship, devotion, religion, community, morality, ethics of sexuality, etc. are employed extensively to create a sense of community.

Not that the communitarians are unable to distinguish between the creative and the discursive texts. They seem to be more wary of the 'bad influence' of literary works on the readers. The question of history and creative literature may be valid in certain sections of the society. But novel is a literary genre that can be read by any common person. For instance, a novel such as P. V. Narayana's is in the realistic mode and 'common people' may not be able to make these distinctions. Though not said in so many words, this was the cause of the anguish over the novel. Secondly, it is important to recall here that the agitation started when Sahitya Aacademy decided to confer an award on the novel. The communitarians could not stomach the State recognition to a 'sacrilegious' book.

The communitarians try to prove their point against the misrepresentation of the writers by constructing the past to suit their interests. It is the 'sacred' and 'untainted' past, which appeals to the communitarians. For them, there is not much difference between history and literature since it is the question of its influence over wider and diverse readership that matters the most. As MM remarked, "It is not advisable to read a literary work as just literary. It is also not possible" (MM, 1995:17). To her, Basava was not just an imaginary figure but also a "spirit who has become part of crores of people."

Competing and challenging notions of 'freedom of literary expression' and 'imagination', as understood by both parties, paradoxically indicate that the terms of debate are the same, but the ensuing defences and offences will be determined by respective ideological positions and concerns of each group and the ways of articulating them. Besides the ideological differences, the ways of articulating them are also different. The communitarians employ religious beliefs, caste sentiments and common heritage to realize their demands. Mobilization of huge masses is a crucial factor for them. And it is a common feature in all the controversies to see large number of Viraśaivas supporting the religious heads and politicians to agitate against the literary works. Politics of number, manipulation of power and coercive mechanisms determine the differences between the secularists and the communitarians. If the governing body of the state is unwilling/hesitant to act against the author or the book, the communitarians will try to demonstrate its mass power to pressurize the state to act swiftly. In order to mobilize the masses and manufacture the consensus, the communitarians employ the available discourses of religion and history selectively. This is a strategy to sentimentalise the 'damage' done to the psyche of the community. Sometimes such pressure tactics might resort to violence too. On the other side, the secularists who are against ban or censorship might lack the mass power or they might think it is irrational and uncivilized to resort to violence. In such circumstances, a creative writer is rendered helpless and a minority. S/he will be a feeble voice and is vulnerable to compulsions. A writer will feel oppressed. S/he might fail to protect individual rights. Ultimately s/he is forced to approach the legal authorities to defend individual rights.

Moving Beyond the Literary Discourse

In the above literary controversies, narratives of history, literature, discursive practices, institutionalised power blocs, social and individual equations, political calculations, courts of law, legislative bodies or parliaments, voluntary organizations and social movement, etc. have proved a point that we cannot afford to subscribe to some totalised, essentialist and monolithic notions of literature, Viraśaivism and the Viraśaiva community as conceptualised by the secularists as well as the communitarians. Therefore, if we do not seriously examine the inter-relationship of the above mentioned factors we might not be able to analyse and address the problems generated by the literary controversies. Hence, we need to consider the following tentative hypotheses for any fruitful understanding of literary controversies:

a) **The Question of History and morality**

The questions of history and morality are the two central concerns around the literary controversies. The anxiety that certain literary works may change the 'normal' state of society and culture or threaten the cherished beliefs of a society shape the dissent of the communitarians. In all the three controversies discussed above, the questions of chastity of women and of the factual history have become the centre of intense debate not only in public platforms but also in the governing bodies of the State Government. It is the woman's sexuality around which the notion of morality is constructed. It is quite obvious in all the controversies that the question of sexuality was repeatedly referred to exhibit the 'sensitivity' of the situation. Religious beliefs, moral values and history are conflated with the sexuality of women in constructing the 'sensitivity' of the issue. The 'sensitivity' is constructed by the communitarians to appeal and convince the people. Legislative representatives like Bhimmanna Khandre and N. Tippanna, in the context of *Dharmakaarana,* were very vocal in emphasizing the significance of woman's chastity in society. According to them, a woman's chastity stood for the dignity and pride of any society. They argued that anything against her and her chastity would not be in the interest of welfare of society and nation. The secular forces that opposed the 'fundamentalists' did not try to understand this crucial point of sexuality in the

controversy. It is not only the past that the communitarians wanted to define and control, the sexuality of a woman was sought to be dominated and subordinated by employing the discourses of society, nation, shared history, casteless society, etc. In all the three controversies, female sexuality was "endlessly pursued, frequently recast and reformulated" (Chitra Panikkar, 2000) in the guise of history and sacred scriptural tradition. Therefore, it is pertinent to understand the historical perspective of the Viraśaiva literature and scriptural tradition upheld by the communitarians.

Even though the *Maarga* controversy began due to personal equations and personalized perceptions of research, debates around the controversies were the culmination of existing narratives of Viraśaiva literature, Shiva Sharanas and the twelfth century movement. These narratives were selectively manipulated to foreground particular historical aspects during the literary controversies. However, both the secular forces and the communitarians do not give sufficient attention to the lineage of the historical narratives and their distinct trajectory in the past. To put it in other words, many issues running through the contemporary rhetoric of the Viraśaiva communitarians are the products of historical processes through which not only the narratives but also the community itself is imagined as a homogenous community in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

The question of Chennabasavanna's birth, his father's identity, Nilalochane's relationship with Basava and Bijjala were contentious issues in the colonial period. The reappearances of these constructions and unresolved questions of authentic history of the Viraśaivas were the consequences of colonial discourses and modern imaginations of the community in the colonial period. Therefore, there is a necessity to examine similar kinds of controversies raised before (especially in the colonial period) and to see how the Viraśaiva community responded to such controversies by invoking history and imagining their identity. The next two chapters will dwell on how the Viraśaiva community grappled with similar kinds of literary controversies in the colonial period and the historical urgencies behind it. The purpose of this discussion is to compare and contrast the behaviour of the communitarians and the secularists of the present day with the past.

This will help us understand at what historical moment the secular and communitarian perspective of Viraśaivism evolved and the historical circumstances for such evolution.

b) Negotiating with the Internal Matters

In all the three cases, a religious mutt or a religious organisation has initiated the agitations against the literary works. However, the imagination of the secular forces about the Viraśaivas community accords an always-already homogeneous community internally. This normative definition of the Viraśaivas community needs more nuanced examination. Therefore, there are two points to be explained here.

i) It is clear from the preceding discussion that not all Viraśaivas and religious organizations were against the writers in the controversies. For instance, several religious organizations of the community did not show much and solidarity to MM in the *Mahachaitra* controversy. A letter written by B. G. Shashimatha, S. S. Juktimatha and Basavarajappa to *Kalyana Kirana* (3rd Dec. 1994) regretted the indifference shown by the Viraktha mutts to the 'noble cause' of MM. They compared the Viraktha leaders to politicians who were pretentious and hypocritical (1994:32). Such lack of unanimity, highlighted by them, indicates the differences and tensions among the Viraśaiva mutts and the Viraśaiva leaders. The differences are the result of unresolved problems of power relations between religious and secular forces on the one hand and between several mutt traditions on the other. Therefore, it is vital to understand these differences before we examine why the Viraśaiva mutts and their heads do not share unanimity and what are their imaginations of community identity. This point needs to be explored because these differences are veiled and a singular identity of community is constructed during literary controversies by both the secularists and the communitarians, of course for different purposes.

ii) Several religious mutts of the community, spread over different regions of the state, have become very active in mediating and sensitising the Viraśaivas about their social, religious and political life in Karnataka. Since the mutts and the Viraśaiva associations, playing a crucial role in constructing and sustaining the identity of the community, have

different pedigree, their perception of identity of the community and their engagement with it also differ. Their perception and engagement with the narratives of Viraśaivism and the community history are also intertwined with the questions of overall social and political equations in the society. As a consequence of heterogeneous religious practices, beliefs and institutions, the Viraśaivas have not developed a unified and monolithic internalisation of the value-system. They have not identified themselves with one single religious organization or institution. Therefore, each religious organization or institution seeks to manufacture consensus for its existence, relevance and sustenance. Along with this, they attempt to gain hegemonic influence over the general life of the Viraśaivas. Sometimes the mutts or institutions have also behaved in antagonistic manner for gaining hegemonic influence. They have shown the tendency to monopolise the power to define and set the terms of textual traditions of the community. They have always given prime importance to have control over the narratives of Viraśaivism because identity of the community, very crucially, revolves around them. Since the narratives of Viraśaivism continue to perform certain essential symbolic and material functions, we need to understand what gets ignored in the fight between the communitarians and the secular forces 'correct' interpretations. The communitarians, especially the mutt leaders, have not remained merely 'religious'. They are actively engaged in the process of manufacturing consensus for their 'rightful' claims over the narratives of Viraśaivism and we cannot stereotype them as 'irrational' and 'primitive', as the secular forces described them and ignore their influence in forming the community identity.

c) **The contours of Contexts**

We need to understand why do literary controversies arise *only* under specific circumstances and with regard to *certain* texts. Since the ideas of purely creative literary work and the pure reading are proved to be myths, it is important for us to look at the conditions of production and reception of literary texts. Therefore, so far we attempted to raise certain questions regarding the two very different reading communities and the differences existing between them. However, we need to understand that the differences are not merely textual but encompass wider social and political issues. These wider issues include sets of relations between authors, readers and communities as well as the social

context of writing and reading. As David Aers notes, literary practices, criticism or historiography of literature cannot ignore the complex relationship between individuals (writers/readers) and communities. He points out,

> The generation of meaning and individual experiences cannot be understood apart from the social relations of specific community, its organizations of power manifest in the prevailing arrangements of class, gender, political rule, religion, armed force and not infrequently, race. So any reading that hopes to have relevance to a particular text must include an attempt to relocate it in the web of discourse and social practices within which it was made and which determined its horizons (Aers, 1988:4)

Aers's arguments suggest the necessity to extend the dyad of individual and community to encompass social, economic aspects and so on. We need to consider a complex relationship between individual, communities and narratives. In addition, we need to be more specific and sensitive to the differences between several literary controversies in terms of historical specificities and the discourses. To put it in other words, we need to historicize and contextually understand the literary controversies.

d) The Public Space and the Community

Interestingly, it is found that demands for censoring or banning a literary text usually arises when the state institutions recognise a literary work. That is, literary controversies that we examine in this dissertation arose either when an award is conferred on a literary work by a 'state funded' 'autonomous' literary academy or in the instances of a literary text prescribed as a textbook in the higher education. In all the controversies, the literary works have become controversial when the public institutions of State Government have recognised them. Let us recall that *Maarga-1* controversy has a background of Kalburgi's tenure as the chief editor of prestigious vacana volumes commissioned by the State Government. *Mahachaitra* controversy was raised when it was prescribed as a textbook for the under graduate students in two universities in the Virasaiva heartland. *Dharmakaarana* controversy was triggered off when the Karnataka Sahitya Akademy decided to confer the annual literary award to it. This shows the community's anxiety over its image in the public space. Also, the Virasaiva community is conscious of and sensitive to legitimising any text, ideas, history, narratives related to **it**

if they are not dangerous to their beliefs. Therefore, it is revelatory to probe into why the community feels agitated or feels 'under seize' in the public sphere.

e) **Secular** *vs.* **Communitarian**

The dichotomy of secular versus communitarian, as we have already stated, needs further elaboration. The secular interpretations of vacanas or the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement gives us the impression that the secularists form a unified group cutting across caste and religion. Besides this point, the secular interpretation of the vacanas is not a post-colonial phenomenon. Narratives of vacanas and the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement were re-written within the framework of liberal humanism and secularism in the colonial period. The trajectory of the secular interpretation of Viraśaivism in the colonial period is the story of translation of 'Viraśaiva identity' into modernity. Therefore, it is pertinent to ask what we mean by secular interpretations and what are their implications on the conception of Viraśaivism in the past and the present.

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Chapter III

Colonialism and Formation of the Viraśaiva Community

In the previous chapter we observed that literature, history and religion are sites of conflicts in post-colonial Karnataka. The Viraśaiva community is very sensitive about its beliefs and its memories of history. Vacanas and the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement are more than literary or historical memories for the Viraśaivas. Therefore, literary controversies around the narratives of Viraśaivism are not only due to the community's agitation over the literary texts. It is also true that the community tries to lay forceful claims over the narratives of its history, literature and religion. The central aim of the community is to possess monopoly over them and resist any challenges to such monopoly. The narratives are central to its identity and the Viraśaivas have constantly re-written them in accordance with the requirements of the community.

The narratives of Viraśaivism do not have a linear progression in the history. They have come under constant transformation, more so in the colonial period. The Viraśaivas have found the narratives an effective means of re-configuring their community identity in the modern world into which they gradually made their presence in the early twentieth century. We argue that the historical imaginings, literary narratives or religious moorings of the community in the colonial period were part of refashioning the identity of the Viraśaivas and the community. Themes, images, metaphors, memories and symbols served as prime cultural resources for the Viraśaivas to imagine a modern identity. The modern identity of the Viraśaivas was premised on the issues of region, history, literature, caste, etc. In the next two chapters, we shall try to examine how the Viraśaivas, as an emerging community[1], engage in the process of constructing the community identity and participate actively in refashioning its history and religion. This will be done by analysing literary controversies in the colonial Karnataka. In the present

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[1] The term 'emerging community' is used to imply the beginning of upward mobility of a community in social, political, economic and cultural spheres in the colonial period either in competition with other dominant communities or in collaboration.

chapter, we examine a historical context of *Shubhodaya* controversy. This controversy and the debates around it are good instances to understand the Brahmin-Viraśaiva rivalry set in terms of modern values. In fact, anti-Brahminism is inherent in the history of Viraśaivism. Hence, it is interesting to see how the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas competed to construct different identities of Viraśaivism during the colonial period. We also try to understand how the Viraśaivas had to face the paradox of resolving its internal differences, besides traditional rivalry with the Brahmins.

The chapter is structured in the following manner. The first section of the chapter will delineate two controversies around a Kannada drama and an article in *Shubhodaya* newspaper related to the Viraśaiva icons. The second section traces the history of the narratives of Viraśaivism documented by the western oriental scholars. This historiography will equip us to understand how the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas, trained in oriental scholarship, clashed against each other and the implications of such encounter on the representational politics. This section will also show how the local Viraśaivas received the 'oriental' knowledge. The third section illustrates the internal contradictions and what they meant for the imagination of Viraśaiva identity. The fourth section will give details about the religious conflicts between two monastic traditions of the community. The fifth section maps the emergence of new perception of Viraśaivism, which heralded a new shift in imagining a secular image of the community. The sixth and the last section discuss the post-*Shubhodaya* controversy circumstances, which haunted the memories of the Viraśaivas.

I
Entering into Modernity through Narratives

An article on Basava and Allama by R. Shrinivasacharya titled "Allama, Basavana Vrithantavenu? " (What is the chronicle of Allama and Basavanna? 18th April, 1919) in a Kannada weekly newspaper *Shubhodaya* triggered off a controversy in the cultural domain of Karnataka. Many Viraśaiva scholars objected to certain parts of the article. They accused the writer of tarnishing the image of Basava and Allma Prabhu in the article. Siddharamappa Pawate, an eminent Viraśaiva scholar and a legal expert, was

the most vocal in condemning and carrying out a systematic campaign against the article and the writer. He filed a defamation case in the first class magistrate court of Dharwad against the writer and the editor of the newspaper. Later the case was taken to the Bombay High court too. In the writ petition, Pawate demanded the cancellation of license to the newspaper on the ground that the article was in excess of freedom of expression and hurt the religious sentiments of the community. The article was seen as a challenge to the community's self-identity. Though there was no public disturbance, this controversy was an occasion in which the Viraśaivas tried to come together for a brief period to encounter the challenges to the community from the outsiders. This controversy became a question of self-respect for the community. The contents of the article are as follows[2],

> Historical records of Allama indicate that he was a *Shudra*. The name 'Allama' is the symbol of a Muslim god. He is more connected to the Muslims. Chitrakalladurga's Muragi Mutt has been collecting donations from the Muslims in the name of their kinship with the Muslims . .. Allama went to Kalyana in order to assist Basava, a minister under Bijjala, who was converting many people into his new religion. He fed the followers of his faith. Allama went to his place with a liquor pot on his back, true to his previous caste ... We can confidently say that Basava spoilt the sacred Viraśaiva faith instead of developing it. With the desire to become the king, he harbored *Minda-Punda* Jangamas and built a secret army. He fed one lakh and ninety thousand Jangamas. This patronage of Basava was not out of *Bhakthi* but out of his desire to become the king. He was a conspirator but not a true devotee. Mythical beliefs and descriptions about Chennabasava and others are utterly wrong (1919:3. Italics mine)

Describing the Shiva Sharanas as *Minda-Punda*[3] enraged the Viraśaivas. Pawate and other Viraśaivas condemned the article for defaming Basava as a conspirator and deriding the caste background of Allama. The article was seen as disrespecting and hurting the religious beliefs of the 'whole' community. The Viraśaivas adored Basava and Allama and therefore, distortion of their image was objected strongly. *Mysore Star*[4] carried debates around this controversy regularly. In an editorial (20th June,1919) an attack was launched on the article and the writer. In the editorial it was argued that religious feelings

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[2] The original article was not available to us. Therefore, we have reproduced a part of the article, as it appeared in *Mysore Star,* a Kannada-English bilingual newspaper in the Mysore region. We have translated this part from Kannada into English.

[3] *Minda jangama* means a mendicant who has not renounced enjoyment and sexual passion (probably belonging to one of the *Tantra* schools); *punda* means somebody who is mischievous,

of the Viraśaivas were hurt beyond imagination by the article. The editor warned the community,

> ... silence over this issue might spell doom to the community. Derogatory views against our religious icons should not be tolerated. That too the writer of the article belonged to the Brahmin caste (p.4).

The fact that the writer of the article belonged to the Brahmin community fuelled the controversy. The writer was denounced for the 'excesses' he committed in the article. The article was seen as an intrusion into the coherent narrative structure of Viraśaivism.

There were many efforts to involve the Viraśaiva religious heads in the campaign against the article since religious mutts were very important centres of social and religious activities of the Viraśaivas. For instance, Aratala Rudragowda, a prominent Viraśaiva leader, expressed his anger in a letter (18th April, 1919) to *Tontadarya* of Gadag *{Tontadarya* mutt) about the defamation of Shiva Sharanas in the article and sought his support in the campaign. In the letter, he strongly felt that the wrong doers should be punished. He quoted *Viraśaiva Chintamani,* an ancient puranic text in Sanskrit, to show that the Viraśaiva tradition advocated punishment to anybody who hurt the sentiments of the Viraśaivas. He appealed to the *Tontadarya* to donate Rs.3000/- to bear the legal expenditure and promised him that he would inform the public everyday about the expenditure in a newspaper everyday.

Following the hearings of the petitioner and the respondents, *Mysore Star* reported, the Dharwad magistrate court passed an order and asked the editor as well as the writer of the article to tender an apology for hurting the Viraśaiva community. At the same time the court also suggested the Bombay Government (since the jurisdiction of the court came under the Bombay Presidency) to file a case once again in the higher court, if found necessary. Another editorial in *Mysore Star* (20th Sep. 1919) cautioned that the Viraśaivas should not be satisfied with a mere apology of the editor but should persuade the Bombay Government to move the Bombay High Court. It maintained,

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[4] *Mysore Star* was published by a Viraśaiva, Yajaman Veerasangappa. Veerasangappa began publishing this newspaper in 1882. This was one of the very few newspapers, which was taking pro-non-Brahmin positions. It was a very influential mouthpiece of the Viraśaivas.

> ...though the court had recorded the defamatory remarks in the article, it did not do anything good to the nation; it did not make any reference to the humiliation caused by the writer to the Viraśaiva community (1919:4).

This editorial also urged the Viraśaivas to realise that other communities (especially Brahmin community) were against the religious beliefs of the Viraśaivas. It reminded them of the Brahmins' unwillingness to recognise the Viraśaiva right to hold *Adda Pallakki* (a palanquin procession) honouring religious figures in 1917. In such hostile conditions, the editorial interpreted the *Shubhodaya* article as rubbing salt into the wounds of the Viraśaivas. The editorial mentioned about a recent resolution passed in a convention organized by the ABVM (1919) seeking a delegation to urge the Bombay Government to move the High Court and redress the loss of the community image. The delegation was comprised of eminent Viraśaiva scholars such as Y. Virupakshayya, Siddaramappa Pawate, Tammannappa Chikkodi, G. Paramashivaiah, and P. G. Halakatti. The Mahasabha appreciated Pawate for being a 'true Virasaiva' in protecting the image of the community. The Mahasabha reminded the Virasaivas of their duties to sacrifice one's life for protecting the Virasaiva religion. The editor of the above article ((20th Sep. 1919) reminded the Virasaivas of the glorious past when the Virasaivas sacrificed their life for protecting the Virasaiva religion and urged them to exhibit the courage now. The editor was proud of the fact that the term *Vira* signified bravery and therefore, the Virasaivas should do anything for community's sake. A report on the Mahasabha meeting, mentioned above, in *Mysore Star* (in the same issue) suggested that every true Virasaiva must go to all places to mobilize opinion to persuade the Bombay Government to move the High Court. But the appeal to the governor of the Bombay presidency was not admitted. The Bombay Government declared that it would not interfere in the religious or caste matters of the community.

A biographical sketch of Hardekar Manjappa[5] by Alur Venkatarao has recorded a few details about the *Shubhodaya* controversy. It seems that the court sought the opinion of Alur, a renowned scholar, founder of the Karnataka History Congress and a Kannada

activist, on *Varnashramadharma.* It is not clear what the court wanted to know on the subject because Alur has not elaborated on this point. It could be on the status of *Shudra* for the article considered Allama as *Shudra.* Alur, an ardent Madhwa Brahmin, wrote that the case went against the Viraśaivas for the court considered his opinion on the *Varnashramadharma* (Alur, 1989:141). Ahir's version is quite contrary to the contention of the Viraśaivas **that the** editor of the newspaper and the writer of the article were required by the court to tender an apology.

Pawate, later on in *Basava Bhanu* (1922), accused Kashinatha Shastri of Gurusthala tradition for master planning the denigration of Shiva Sharanas publicly in complicit with the Brahmins (Pawate, 1922: 69). He blamed Kashinath Shastri for writing sacrilegious articles in the name of R. Shirnivasacharya and Shantappa Hammige. Shantappa Hammige was a Sanskrit Scholar and was closely associated to Kashinatha Shastri. He wrote *'Basavaadinijatatwa Darpana'* (1923) in which he asked two hundred questions to Pawate and sought answers from him. Some of these questions challenged the claims made by Pawate regarding the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement and the origins of the Shiva Sharanas[6]. An article by *Obba* Viraśaiva (anonymous Viraśaiva) in *Mysore Star* (25th, January, 1920) severely criticized another article, which appeared in *Sampadhabhyudaya,* an economic journal edited by a Brahmin scholar. The article in *Sampadhabhyudaya* alleged that Pawate moved the court against the *Shubhodaya* out of his bias for the Viraśaiva community and hence it was communal. In a reply to this article, the Viraśaiva contested the allegations that Pawate was biased and drew upon many examples from Sanskrit works to prove Basava's superior status in the world religion and explained how Basava was revered highly in the past and how Pawate's case was in line with the expectations of the Viraśaiva tradition to safeguard the dignity of the community and its image. However, the writer was silent on the subject of Allama.

Many Viraśaiva scholars levelled several charges against the indifference shown by the Gurusthala followers in the controversy. In a public meeting on the occasion of

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[5] Hardekar Manjappa is famously known as *Karnataka Gandhi* for his simple and saint-like life. He was also a freedom fighter. He did commendable work for the reformation of the Viraśaiva community.
[6] For discussion on these questions refer pp. 152-156 of this chapter.

Basava Jayanthi (birthday of Basava) at Mydaragi (May 1920), many speakers appreciated Pawate and appealed to the public to stand by him at that crucial juncture. They condemned the Gurusthala followers for their indifference in this issue. They regretted that the community was unnecessarily caught up in the internal conflicts when the 'outsiders' were trying to tarnish the image of the community and take advantage. In a letter to *Mysore Star* (25th, April, 1920) Yagati, a Viraśaiva scholar, condemned the hostility of the Gurusthala leaders in not supporting the noble cause of Pawate. He warned that the Guru mutts would lose respect if they continued to practice discrimination against their own people and if they did not support Pawate. He was certain that antagonism within the community would disturb the unity of the Viraśaivas. Drawing an analogy of Pope's removal from the Church by Martin Luther in the fifteenth century, he cautioned that if the Gurusthala leaders continued to behave in partial and indifferent manner, the Viraśaivas would be forced to remove them. He mentioned two hagiographies viz., *Basava Purana* and *Prabhulinga Leele* in support of his claims that Basava and Allama were sacred icons of the community and the article in the *Shubhodaya* deliberately intended to distort their sacredness and divinity (Yagati, 1920:4). He regretted that the Viraśaivas lacked self-respect, dignity and community consciousness. He attributed such woeful condition of the community to selfish intentions of 'some people' (undoubtedly referring to Kashinatha Shastri) and personal rivalry with people like Pawate. He called for developing courage like the national congressmen[7] who were bold and courageous in asserting themselves. He considered that the *Shubhodaya* article and the controversy was a black spot in the history of the Viraśaivas.

The *Shubhodaya* controversy became a mirror to see the self vis-à-vis the other for the Viraśaivas. They wondered unity and progress of other communities and regretted their state of condition due to internal divisions. A letter in *Mysore Star* by an unknown person *Yatharthavadi* (29th Feb. 1920) felt bad about the internal rift within the

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[7] The Viraśaivas described the National Congress Movement as the Brahmins' movement and they were unwilling to join them. In the first few Viraśaiva Mahasabha meetings, the community tried to focus more on the reformation of their religion and society. Political issues, like *Swadeshi* movement, which was strong during the first decade of the twentieth century, were not at all discussed or any resolution regarding the political freedom was not passed. The Viraśaivas did not join the Swadeshi movement precisely for the same reason.

community. In the letter, the Viraśaivas were blamed for being constantly at war with one another and forgetting the responsibility of forging unity in the community. The writer exhorted them to learn the lesson from other communities to show solidarity and unity. It was warned that a *third party* would benefit if the internal conflicts between the Virakthas and Gurusthala followers continued and suggested that the community should strive for gaining maximum benefits from the reservation policies* and the social welfare measures of the governments. The writer advised that the Viraśaivas could not afford to ignore such benefits. Several decades later Jawali, the writer of biography of Pawate, blamed the *Panchacharya*[9] mutts for not supporting Pawate's cause in the *Shubhodaya* controversy (Jawali: 1988,24). He accused that the Pancacharyas showed indifferent attitude to Shiva Sharanas and their views were similar to the Brahmins and since there was no support from the Pancacharyas, Pawate suffered defeat in the case (Jawali, 1988:25).

The *Shubhodaya* controversy attracted widespread attention. There were many Viraśaiva meetings in Mysore, Bellary and western Karnataka which passed a resolution that Pawate's efforts to fight against the writer of the *Shubhodaya* article was not acceptable to them and the article in the paper was neither defamatory to the Viraśaivas nor to the Viraśaiva icons. The resolution was sent to the Bombay government with 173 signatures in it. But the editor of *Mysore Star* (20th March, 1920) denied that such resolution was passed anywhere in the state. However, the editor wrote that if such meeting had taken place anywhere that would cause an incalculable harm to the interests of the community.

The *Shubhodaya* controversy has to be compared and contrasted with another controversy that erupted in the year 1912 around a play on Basaweshwara. This comparison will be helpful to understand how the community reacted when the Viraśaivas were accused of hurting the feelings of the Jains. The details of the

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[8] In the Mysore region, the State Government had appointed Miller Commission to give recommendations on providing reservations to the backward classes in education and government jobs. The commission considered the Viraśaivas as backward class and they were enlisted for reservations.

controversy around the play are as follows: The first musical drama on Basava namely *Sangeeta Basaweshwara Nataka* was written in 1909 by Amarashastri Hiremath.[10] Shivamurthy Swamy of Kanabaragimatha commissioned Hiremath to write the drama. This play heavily drew resources from *Basava Purana* for its theme. It dramatized the life of Basava and his miracles. It became very popular wherever it was performed because it propagated "devotion and renunciation".[11] *Shri Kadasiddheshwara Prasadhika Konnur Karnataka Sangeeta Mandali* performed the drama for the first time in 1909. It was also performed in several places like Bailahongala, Gokak, Konnur, Athani, Rabakavi, Mudhol, Halagali, Bagalakote, Bijapur, Gadag, Dharawad, Hubli and Belagaum from 1909 to 1912. The drama was published in 1912. In a foreword written to this drama, Gurusiddhaswamy Savgaum Konnurmatha points out that the drama intended to serve the Kannada language, work for the welfare of the society and reform the Viraśaiva religion.

In December, 1911 the Bombay Government banned the performance of the play. When the drama troupe landed in Belagaum for performance, a few people from Jain community objected to the performance on the grounds that the drama disrespected their religion and their king (Bijjala). They feared that such dramas might lead to communal tension. In an article by *Nishpakshapathi* (impartial. 11th, March, 1912) in *Mysore Star,* banning the drama was severely condemned. The writer questioned the rationale behind banning it and wanted to know why it was banned now even though it was performed several times in several places in the past. The writer recalled a similar controversy in the past when the Brahmins demanded a ban on the drama due to its anti-Brahmin theme. That time, the government did not ban the drama but removed only those parts, which were objectionable to the Brahmins. But this time the government, due to heavy pressure from the Jains, went to the extent of confiscating the play and banning its performance. The writer expressed surprise if the situation continued like this, one day *Basava Purana* itself would be banned by the government. It was proposed in the article that the

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[9] Panchacharyas constitute a caste of the Viraśaiva community and they believe that the five Acharyas established Viraśaiva religion before Basava revived it in the twelfth century.
[10] S.R.Gunjal, a well known librarian, considers this drama as the first musical drama on Basaweshwara (Gunjal, 1999:27).

Viraśaiva community should take the matter seriously and appealed to the government to withdraw the ban. Throughout the article, the writer addressed Basava as a divine propagator of the Viraśaiva religion. It is significant to note that the question of internal conflict was not an issue in this context. Why did internal differences become so visible in 1919?

There were many such controversies all over India. In fact, instances of conflicts between the communities and the religions over books, articles and pamphlets were quite common. Censoring or banning a provocative article/book by the government was not uncommon. The government acted upon banning or confiscating only when there was a demand from a community or there arose a law and order problem. Otherwise, anti-government pamphlets, speeches or books were the ones, which were targeted by the government. Inter-religious controversies between Muslims and Hindus; between Hindus and Sikhs; between Hindus and Jains; between Hindus and Christians were quite common due to controversies. We come across controversies among several Hindu faiths too. Due to the social and religious disharmony, both the British government and the local princely states kept vigilance on the local media and literary works. The Government of Mysore was one among the first of the native states in India to enforce a law, which sought to regulate and control the publication of newspapers, books, etc. Many people were opposed to such interference of the government. But there were a few who wanted the government to retain powers to check scurrilous writings which tended to bring animosity between different sections and communities and also engendered hatred against the government. The Government of Mysore had taken large-scale action against many newspapers and periodicals by withdrawing their licenses. In order to prevent the controversies, the government made it mandatory that the name of every editor should appear in every issue.[12] The two controversies, outlined above, clearly demonstrate that there were different versions of the twelfth century movement and the Viraśaiva religion. Therefore, the *Shubhodaya* controversy was not just an indicator of conflict born out of heterogeneous and contradictory narratives of Viraśaivism but also an

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[12] The editor has discussed the controversy in detail in *Mysore Star* (1912).

indicator of the community's proclamation and assertion of its social and political position in the modern public space of Karnataka, which were sought to be realized by claiming control over the narratives of Viraśaivism. Since the public space was characterized by competition and unequal social relationships, the Viraśaivas had to constantly mark the differences with others to form identity and safeguard their interests. For this purpose, the Viraśaivas transformed the vocabulary of community and its identity in tune with the modern period.

The concerns of the Viraśaivas in the *Shubhodaya* controversy were to safeguard the community's image and encounter the Brahmins' power of mediating the community. The Brahmins gained the power by recuperating their dominance in the modern condition. Modern conditions not only created opportunities for upward mobility of the communities but also did not alter social equations and patterns. The Viraśaivas, opening up themselves to newer conditions, had to face the modern conditions whose terms were already set by the Brahmins. However, the *Shuhhodaya* controversy was not merely about the conflict between the Viraśaivas and the Brahmins. It is also important to note the processes that were underway *within* the community. The new literate group in the community had begun demanding a unified community and a progressive vision for the community. They were not happy with the present condition of the community. Their enthusiasm to reform the community, they feared, would be defeated by the internal rifts and the external challenges. The period between the *Sangeeta Basaweshwara* controversy and the *Shuhhodaya* controversy indicates the culmination of imagination of the community identity in terms of modern values of universality, liberalism, individualism and democracy. The new Viraśaiva middle class felt that if the community matters were not addressed urgently the *third party* (the Brahmin community) would take advantage of the disunity among the Viraśaivas. On surface the *Shubhodaya* controversy was seen as the result of the Guru-Viraktha-Brahmin rivalry. But if we examine the social transformations underway during that time, the *Shuhhodaya* controversy seems to be a consequent of the Viraśaiva community's struggle to come to terms with conflicting

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[12] More information on the press law in the Mysore region can be gathered from *History of Legislature: The Mysore Representative Assembly,* Vol. III (1924-1940). Ed. T.Hanumanthappa, 1988.

narratives of Viraśaivism on the one hand and the rigid religious and social *practices* in the community on the other.

The debates around the origin of Viraśaiva religion, invocation of Basava and Allama in the modern period, unresolved issue of authentic textual tradition, internal social division, external challenges and an implicit desire for upward social mobility, etc. indicate the Viraśaivas' ambivalent position in the newer conditions. Therefore, the following discussion will historicise the narratives of Viraśaivism and examines how the Viraśaivas employ them to create community consciousness, resolve the internal conflicts and encounter the hegemonising designs of the Brahmins. Narratives and social realities are intricately connected and they exhibit dialectical relationship in the case of the Viraśaiva community. It is obvious in the *Shubhodaya* controversy that the 'traditional' rivalry between the Viraśaivas and the Brahmins are not only explained in terms of social realities or power relationships but a rational is provided to legitimize the rivalry by invoking the narratives of Viraśaivism. Another point to note here is that the Brahmin" Virasaiva rivalry is constructed as traditional and the internal differences of the Virasaivas are attributed to modern realities. Therefore, the hisotircization will help us understand why the Virasaivas, despite social inequalities within, imagined an integrated and a cohesive group. The central issue to our discussion, therefore, is the role played by the narratives of history and religion in imagining the new community identity and the Virasaivas' attempt to camouflage the internal contradictions within the new identity.

II
Colonialism, Orientalism and the Viraśaiva **Community**

The western oriental scholars were the first to produce modern historiography (roughly from 1800) of the Viraśaiva community, its religion and literature. Initially, the British officers, civil servants of the British administration and the Christian missionaries showed keen interest in understanding the religion, philosophy and social practices of the Viraśaivas and their community. They initiated the modern methods of documenting a much more varied and detailed body of official information about the Viraśaivas through massive projects such as the census, gazetteers and land surveys. They were

comprehensive compilations of information on regional social groups, customs, rituals, religious beliefs and theories of origins. Many ethnographic accounts, theological works, historical facts and literary works were collected and documented by the western orientals from different parts of the then Karnataka. The western orientalists claimed much higher standard of scientific accuracy and finality. The information, thus collected and documented, was used for several bureaucratic, administrative, legal and religious purposes.[13]

There were many surveys and travel writings in the early nineteenth century by Buchanan, Murray Hammick and Mark Wilks related to the southern part of Karnataka. The British government, after dethroning Tippu Sultan and annexing the Mysore region, commissioned Buchanan to collect and record the economic situation, social life, religious practices and popular beliefs of the people in the region. According to Shouten, Buchanan collected details about the Viraśaiva castes during his travels between 1800 and 1801 in the southern parts of Karanataka (Shouten, 1991:128). Buchanan relied on oral narratives, traditional documents and Sanskrit-Kannada Viraśaiva works (mainly *Basava Purana*) for gathering facts about the Viraśaivas. His main informant was a head of Ujjani mutt who was also a religious head for the Ikkeri chieftains in the eighteenth century. Buchanan's documents reveal the social and professional structures in the community then. According to his accounts, there were many divisions of labour among *Shivabhaktas*. *Shivabhaktas* was the term used by Buchanan to identify the Virasaivas. There were many sub-castes of the Virasaivas in the Mysore region. He mentioned the existence of two types of sects among *Shivabhaktas* viz., Virasaivas and Ordinary

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[13] Bernard Cohn has rightly noticed that the amount of information collected by the British officials was put to practical purposes of administration. He points out,

> This information was needed to create or locale cheap and effective means to assess and collect taxes, maintain law and order, and it served as a way to identify and classify groups within Indian society. Elites had to be found within Indian society who could be made to see that they had an interest in the maintenance of British rule. Political strategies and tactics had to be created and codified into diplomacy through which the country powers could be converted into allied dependencies (Cohn, 1996: 283)

Shaivas[14]. The first sect was constituted of Jangamas and Banajigas, while the second sect was comprised of artisans, cultivators, etc.

The accounts of Mark Wilks and Murray Hammick during 1820s reveal interesting aspects of the "Jangums" in the Mysore region. Both the English scholars had consultations with "some intelligent Jungum priests" (Wilks and Hammick, 1980:830) in order to gather details about the community. They found out the anti-Brahmin feelings of the Viraśaivas. They recorded,

> … the Jungums condemn as useless and unmeaning the incessant detail of external ceremonies, which among the Brahmins of every persuasion occupies the largest portion of their time and forms the great business of their lives. (Wilks and Hammick, 1980:830).

And they considered,

> *Chen Bas Ishwar*, a native of Callian in the Deckan, the reputed founder of the sect in the eleventh century, to have been only the restorer of the ancient true belief (italics mine. ibid).

A striking point here is that Chennabasaweshwara is mentioned as the founder of the Viraśaiva sect. Owing to lack of historical facts, they could not decide if the Viraśaivas constituted a separate religion or not. Another point to be noted here is that there were several beliefs about the exact founder of the Viraśaiva sect in early eighteenth century and these differences did not emerge suddenly in the twentieth century.

According to R.N.Nandi, a well known historian,

> The first historical sketch of the Lingayat sect appeared in H.H.Wilson's essay on the religious sects of the Hindus, which was published in two consecutive issues of the Asiatic Researches (vols. VI-VII) between 1828 and 1832 (Nandi, 1986:167)

However, Wilson could not continue that task since he found it very difficult, as there were very few texts or historical facts available to him. Before abandoning the task, he collected the manuscripts of Sanskrit *Basava Purana* to sketch the life of Basava and understand the features of the Viraśaiva community as delineated in it.

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[14] For information regarding these sects, 1 have relied on Gunjal's article (2000) on Buchanan.

Wilson Mackenzie, the first General-Surveyor of the East India Company, also carried out a remarkable job in recording the details about the local traditions and knowledge systems. He comimissioned Devachandra, a Jain, to write the history of the then Karnataka. Since Devachandra did not know English, he wrote 'Raajawali Kathasaara'[15] in Kannada. In this historical documentation, Devachandra, while narrating the twelfth century religious life, depicted Basava as a wealthy man who amassed huge wealth due to his high political power as the Prime Minister in the court of Bijjala. Basava, according to Devachandra's accounts, used his position and power to convert large number of lower caste and upper caste people into his religion. Bijjala and other Brahmin colleagues did not like these conversions. They thought that Basava conspired to kill the king. Basava eventually succeeded in getting the king killed and before this incident happened, he fled to Kudalasangama. The general notion that the orientalists consulted only Sanskrit texts and the Brahmins for constructing an image of India seems to be overstated in the context of Devachandra. The western scholars conducted ethnographic studies on the non-Brahmins and they collected details about the local knowledge traditions, which were not in Sanskrit language. A classic example to illustrate this point is C.P.Brown and his works on Viraśaivism.

In 1840, C.P. Brown[16], a Postmaster General in the present day Andhra region, published a small write-up on the Viraśaivas titled, "Essay on the creed, customs and literature of the Jangamas" (1840, 1988). In the article, he dealt with the question of the origin of the Viraśaiva sect with greater focus on the Jangamas. His details about the community give us sufficient evidence to show that there were mainly two sects viz., Basava sect and the Renukacharya sect among the Viraśaivas. And both the sects held different views about the origin of the Viraśaiva religion. While Brwon was full praise for the Basava cult, he did not like the Aradhyas (of Renukacharya sect) because they had incorporated certain Brahmin rituals like *Sandhyavandane* (adoration of the Sun usually during evening) and they kept distance from the common people. He referred *Siddhanta*

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[15] This book is edited by B.S.Sannayya (1988).

[16] Brown is praised highly by the Telugu literati for his contribution to Telugu literature and he was the first to prepare a systematic dictionary of Telugu-English.

Shikamani in Sanskrit to record the textual beliefs of the Aradhyas. According to the Aradhyas, Brown noted, Revanaradhya, Marularadhya, Eko Ramaradhya and Panditaradhya were the precursors of Basava. They respected the Vedas, "which as they assert prove their authority as Brahmins" (Brown, 1998: 94). He found them fond of Sanskrit texts like *Vedas,* the *Bhagavad Gita, Nilakanta Bhashyam* and *Agamas.*

Brown drew on various hagiographies of Basava written in the thirteenth century to construct Basava's life history. For this purpose, he consulted several communities apart from the Viraśaiva community. According to him, Jain myths depicted Basava as an escapist who fled Basava Kalyana for self-protection, while other myths mainly *Basava Purana* illustrated Basava as a divine incarnation. He considered Basava as "staunch opponent of every Brahminical principle" (ibid: 85). Basava's rebellious attitude in abandoning the sacred thread of the Brahmins at the young age and his attack on the orthodoxy of all religions are compared by Brown to the Christian 'Protestant' movement of the west in the sixteenth century.

He showed keen interest in the Viraśaiva sect for its anti-Brahmin tradition. His interest in the non-Brahmin community was mainly due to his differences with the western oriental scholars. He always held that the western oriental scholars were partial in collecting and concentrating only on the Brahmin texts to understand India. He was also not happy with the local Brahmin experts who gave wrong picture of the Viraśaiva community. They misled him with false information about non-Brahmin local traditions. They were, Brown felt, prejudiced towards other literatures and traditions. His discussion and subsequent differences with H.H.Wilson on the history of the Viraśaiva community inspired Brown's research and scholarship on the "non-conformist and anti-Brahminical Viraśaiva sects" (Peter, 2001:124). Peter L. Schmitthernner, a historian, who has done a commendable study on Brown and his ethnographic works, points out,

> Contained in *desi* literary traditions of Kannada, Telugu, and Tamil speaking peoples, the tenets and lore of these sects had previously been little examined by European scholars. The study of these traditions had certainly been discouraged by most Brahmin pandits, who viewed Virashaiva works as heretical and inelegant. But through several Virashaiva assistants that he hired after returning

to India, Brown was able to procure numerous Virashaiva-based texts and he would examine most closely those composed in Telugu. Within two years of returning to India, he would publish extensive articles on the Viraśaivas and their principle text, *Basava Purana*. While this scholarship would enhance his reputation among European Indologists, it would also adversely affect his already tenuous association with conservative Brahmin scholars. (italics in the original. ibid: 124).

Brown found religious beliefs and practices of the Viraśaivas much more palatable than those of mainstream Brahminic religious traditions. Peter continues,

Before he had begun conducting any research on the Virashaivas, his Brahmin associates had informed him that much Virashaiva literature was 'full of the grossest depravities' (ibid: 212).

Brown compared the literatures produced by both Viraśaivas and Brahmins. After much deliberation, he came to the conclusion that the Brahminic literature itself was much more offensive than the other literatures. He remarked,

Brahmins frequently allege that the Jangams are a depraved sect, who is guided by Tantra or heretical books. But we should not incautiously believe this. The Jangams are in all respects opposed to licentiousness, which is the main spring of the Tantras ... The Jangams adore the *linga* and abhor *may a*, the goddess of Delusion (venus or Kali, as Devi) who is expressively the goddess (yoni or Bhoga Malini) of the Tantriks (Brown, 1988:101).

He expressed disagreements with the Viraśaiva informants about the origin of name of Allama as believed by the Viraśaiva informants. He thought,

Considering that this creed arose in the west of India, in a country bordering on that inhabited by the Syrian Christians, it has sometimes occurred to me that every possibly some of the tales regarding the Basava may have borrowed from legends current among the Syrian Churches. Both chronology and geography seem to strengthen this suspicion; and it is worth of notice that the name Allama, which resembles the Syriac and Arabic name of God, is attributed by them to their deity. The word Allama seems to be foreign (ibid: 106).

However, Brown' views about Allama were strongly disapproved by the Jangama informants who believed "no Jangama had ever been known to embrace Christianity or the Mohameddan faith" (ibid: 106). Brown showed that the Viraśaivas were very law-abiding and admired their "considerate and decent behaviour ... toward the female sex" (Peter, 2001:213). What strikes our attention is his focus on the 'folklore' traditions of the

Viraśaivas. Apart from the written text *Basava Purana,* Brown based his construction of the Viraśaiva community and religion on the folklore traditions[17].

Brown's researches and collection were done in collaboration with the local experts. According to Peter, Brown's study on Viraśaivism was a collaborative 'project'. A few Smartha Brahmins like Vireshalinga Shastri and Mallikarjuna Panditharadhya of Rajamundry (Andra region) assisted Brown in accessing the Viraśaiva works. Peter opines that Brown's ethnographic study shows us how the communities were competing each other for representing their respective literatures and traditions.

In the sixties of the nineteenth century, the attention of Christian missionaries was drawn towards the sect. However, there are marked differences between the British Empire and the missionaries in the construction of local traditions and cults. Missionary movement is generally seen as an aspect of colonialism. But one has to distinguish the activities of the Church and the British administration. Both had their own reasons or agendas for wanting to understand, study or in some way represent the orient. We have,

> ... to draw the distinction between the Orientalism which one might describe as the ideology of empire and the attitude and activities of the nineteenth century evangelical missionaries who were also involved in representing and having a different kind of colonialism over the orient (Oddie, 1994:29).

Rev. W.J. Wurth was one such Christian missionary who has done a remarkable survey of the Viraśaivas. He was a Protestant priest of the Bassal Mission and a close associate of the Viraśaivas in Dharwad. In 1853, he translated Bhimakavi's *Basava Purana,* a late thirteenth century Kannada work translated from Sanskrit work *Basava Puranamu,* into

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[17] Daniel D' Attilio of University of Wisconsin has studied Brown's works on the folklore traditions of the Viraśaiva community. In his research paper "Challenging Current Virashaiva Historiography: C.P.Brown's Study of the Role of Folklore and Aradhaya Brahmins in the Evolution of Elite Viraśaivism in Telugu" (paper presented as a part of commemorating C.P.Brown's birth anniversary) Attilio argues that Brown's contribution to studies on Viraśaivism should be taken seriously because he highlighted the religion's folk underpinnings and revealed the central role played by *Aradhya Brahmins,* a caste of Brahmins who have adopted part of the Viraśaiva doctrine and culture, in the development of its elite form. They lived chiefly in Andhra Pradesh where they constitute the highest section of the Viraśaiva community and they are also found in Mysore. He thinks that as long as Brown's studies are neglected, our understanding of Viraśaiva history is likely to remain skewed. *Orientalist Scholarship on South India Reconsidered: A Panel Commemorating CP Brown's Birth Bicentenary.* Online. *Aasianst. Sasia.* 21st, March, 2003.

German. Its abridged version was published in the eighth issue of the *Journal of the Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society* in 1865. In the same issue, Wurth provided a fuller translation of the *Cennabasava Pur ana,* a late sixteenth century hagiography of Chennabasavanna. In a postscript to the purana, Wurth remarked sarcastically that Basava and Chennabasavanna did not fulfil their promise to reappear from the west and preach the Viraśaiva religion anew. Instead, Christian missionaries appeared from the west to propagate Christianity. The translation of the two *puranas,* though fragmentary and based on unedited manuscripts, promoted further critical study of the sect and its sacred literature. Publication of various other hagiographies such as *Virupakahsha Purana, Chennabasava Purana,* Lakshmisha's *Jaimini Bharata,* appeared in *Bibliothica Carnatica* (Basavaraju, 1995) during this period.

In 1875, Rev. F. Kittel, another missionary activist of the Basal mission and pioneering force behind the Kannada-English dictionary, discovered and translated seven Lingayath[18] legends "taken from the *Anubhav asikhamani,* a popular Lingayath composition in Kannada (Canarese)" (Kittel, 1875: 211). They were published in the *Indian Antiquary* in 1875. An annotated catalogue of all the Viraśaiva texts in the fourth issue of *Indian Antiquary* is useful as it critically examines the dates of the texts, the type of literary composition, etc. Drawing upon his acquaintance with the Viraśaiva literature, Kitell observed that the earliest literature of the sect was in Sanskrit and probably Telugu. Kittel, in "Ueberden Ursprung des Lingkultus in Indien" (1876), in German, argued that worship of Linga, stone form of Lord Shiva, was transferred to the south India from the north India. Aryans were instrumental behind the origin of Linga worship. According to him worship of Linga existed in the Veda period also. His views about the worship of Linga and its origins were contrary to other western thinkers such as Stevenson, Lossen, W.German who argued that Shaivism first originated in the south India and later on spread to the north India. Kittel opined that the Linga worship was as old as the Aryans. Such scholarly work gave ample evidence for the Viraśaivas of the late nineteenth century to argue that Shaiva works had Vedic origins. The Viraśaivas subscribed to this theory very enthusiastically because they could attribute antiquity to their religion as far

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[18] Kittel uses the term Lingayath instead of Viraśaiva.

back as the Vedic period. K.M.Mathew, who has done doctoral thesis in Kannada on Kittel, wonders that Kittel considered the name 'Allama' as derivative of Islamic word 'Allah' (Mathew, 1994:95). The debates about the exact source of the name of Allama ignited heated discussion now and then. The *Shubhodaya* controversy was just a tip of an iceberg related to such conflicting and different versions of Allama.

A brief note on the Viraśaiva religion appeared in A.Barth's *Religions of India* (1881). Barth was of the opinion that it was very difficult to reconstruct the history of the sect on the basis of unhistorical texts and hagiographies, but he knew that they contained valuable historical information. He believed that Basava's sister Nagalambike was a mistress of Bijjala, whom he described as the son-in-law of Basava. Barth's brief note on the sect was followed by other short sketches, which appeared in the *Early History of the Deccan* (1897)[19] documented by R.G.Bhandarkar, a well-known philosopher. His theory of Viraśaivism was based on the Sanskrit works like *Siddhanla Shikamani, Basava Pur ana* and *Prabhulinga Leele*. His views on Basava and his revolution were premised on the evidences drawn from Dharani Pandita's, a Jain poet, *Vijjalarayacharite* and Wilson Mackenzie's historical accounts. He took up the problem of origin of the Viraśaiva sect for serious investigation in 1913. He discussed his new findings in his monograph *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*. He believed that the sect was founded a hundred years earlier than Basava. He attributed the establishment of the religion to the efforts of the Aradhya Brahmins who were supported by the trading classes. According to him, the Aradhyas were disaffected *Smarta* Brahmins who had fallen from the royal and aristocratic patronage with the development of temple landlordism and a corresponding devaluation of domestic rites of the householder prescribed in the *Smrtis*. However, the ritualistic practices of the Aradhyas did not change much even after joining the new faith. They exhibited Brahminical rituals.

Certain parts of the Bombay and the Mysore Gazetteers (1897) on the twelfth century Viraśaiva history became contentious because the Viraśaivas raised objections to

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[19] Second edition of this was published in 1985.

the false information about the community and its history. Both gazetteers recorded that Basava's influence increased when Bijjala married his sister. During the revolution, Basava fled and with the help of his numerous followers he defeated the king. His followers killed Bijjala later. Basava instigated his followers and ultimately he could not control them. Consequently, they all went out of his control and committed the murder. It was also written that Basava appointed Jangamas to high positions and spent large sums of King's fortune to support and keep them.

J.F. Fleet, whose essay on the Managoli and Ablur stone inscriptions were published in 1899, reconsidered the problem of founder of the Viraśaiva religion. These two inscriptions belonged to the eleventh century. The Ablur stone inscription disclosed the name of a person called Ekanta Ramayya, who towards the end of the twelfth century brought about the revival of the worship of Shiva. The Managoli inscription gave evidences of existence of Kalamukha sect, a Shaiva sect and revealed details about Basava. But it was not sure if Ekantha Ramayya was Basava or not. Fleet argued that the real founder of the sect was Ekanta Rama and not Basava. He based his opinion on the inscriptional references to the anti-Jain activities of Ekanta Rama. However, his findings suffered from certain limitations because none of the Ablur records mentions for once either the term Viraśaiva or the term Lingayat. Therefore, Fleet's theory that Ekanta Rama established the Viraśaiva religion was ignored as baseless. There were many doubts raised about the authenticity of the inscriptions[20]. Fleet's study, however, brought useful inscriptional data to bear on the anti-Jain activities of the Shaivites of Karnataka, during the latter half of the twelfth century. We can also find many instances of anti-Jaina attitude of the community in the early hagiographies of the thirteenth century including *Basava Purana.*

Encouraged by inscriptional references to Ekanta Rama, later scholars set themselves to assess the relative roles of Basava and Ekanta Rama in founding the Viraśaiva religion. Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari's *Caste and Tribes in South India*

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[20] Fleet discovered these two stone inscriptions in the late nineteenth century. Halakatti accepted the authenticity of these inscriptions in the beginning but later on he doubted if Ekantha Ramayya was really Basava of Kalyana or somebody else. For this information see Jeerige K. Basavappa (1939).

(1909) and later Nicol Macnicol's articles on the community in *India Theism* (1915), equated Basava with Martin Luther and Ekanta Rama with Erasmus. Thurston and Rangachari, like their predecessors, gave details about the social structure of the community. They pointed out at the unequal professional groups, which constitute the present Viraśaiva community to show that the sect was pressed back into the framework of caste system though it was formed to override such a system, and that the degeneration started about the seventeenth century. According to them,

> As the Lingayats, or Panchamasalis, they styled themselves, increased in importance, number, and wealth, elaborate forms of worship and ceremony were introduced, rules of conduct were framed and a religious system was devised on which the influence of the rival Brahmana aristocracy can be freely traced. Thus, in course of time, the Pachamasalis became a closed caste, new converts were placed on a lower social footing, the priests alone continuing as a privileged class to dine freely with them (Thurston and Rangachari, 1987:249-50)

Basing their arguments on the local expertise, field works and excavation of Managoli and Ablur stone inscriptions, the two hesitatingly arrive at the idea,

> We have at least met with an epigraphic mention of the Lingayath founder, Basava. This is eminently satisfactory, but is somewhat upsetting, for the inscription makes Basava a member of the Kasyapa gotra (ibid: 244).

The confusion in deciding the *gothra* (zodiac) of Basava was also closely associated with the contentious issue of caste of Basava. They could not definitely arrive at a conclusion that Basava belonged to Kasyapa gotra and hence he was a Brahmin. Nicol Macnicol's treatment of the subject is impressionistic and does not show his familiarity with the sources. He concluded his study by holding that the chief purpose of the Viraśaiva movement in the twelfth century was to overthrow Buddhism and Jainism.

In 1915, R.E.Enthoven contributed a long note on the Lingayats[21] in the eight volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.* Enthoven carefully studied the social structure of the Lingayaths to show that the priests and traders together known as the Panchamasalis constituted the highest social stratum among the Lingayats. They are entitled to all the *astavaranas* (eight decorations) of a full Lingayath. However, Enthoven

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[21] Enthoven also uses the term Lingayath.

noted, the inessential workers including some untouchables who did not have the right to any of these decorations, but still they were known as Lingayats.

In the light of the above discussion, we can notice four main contradictory and paradoxical points: a) differences over the exact founder of the religion, b) projection of the Basava cult and the Renukacharya cult as the only two dominant religious and scriptural traditions of the Viraśaiva community, c) the radical and subversive elements of the community in accepting monotheism and discarding rigid Brahminical rituals, d) existence of caste distinctions, rituals and professional hierarchies. Thus, colonial ethnographic and sociological materials differed widely on several aspects. Amidst these paradoxes and contradictions, the new class of English educated Viraśaiva elites felt a profound impact of the forces of modern discursive practices inaugurated by the colonial system. With exposure to the ideals of democracy, equality and secularism, it had to engage modernization actively in order to stake claims socially and politically. Modern English education, new political vocabularies, British government policies on agriculture, village *panchayath* system, centralization of political powers and consequent changes in the social and cultural life of rural and urban areas determined the contours of the Viraśaiva community's engagement with modernity. Educated Viraśaivas, very few then, felt the pinch of professional hierarchy in the public life especially in the newer forms of print technology, government jobs, legal system, etc. The counterclaim to 'Brahminhood' of the Viraśaivas in the 1880s acted as an equally formative influence on the Viraśaivas. In order to cope with the changing situation and achieve the desired goal of social, political and economic mobility, the Viraśaivas gradually began to mobilize the resources for overall growth. This mobilization was intended to raise the consciousness of the rest of the community.

III

Revolving around the Contradictions of Viraśaivism

K. Ishwaran, a sociologist, explains the three stages in the evolution of affiliations of Viraśaiva community and politics in the modern period. They are 1) the fragmented stage, 2) the unitary stage, and 3) the individualistic stage (Ishwaran, 1983:123-25).

A very low level of social mobilization characterizes the first stage. This is because the community is fragmented into a larger number of un-coordinated sub-groups/sub-castes. The primary aim of the politically and socially conscious community leaders is to eliminate this fragmentation by forging a coherent community and political power. Such political power itself was perceived as a pre-condition for the social cohesion of the community. Ishwaran considers such community affiliation as *genuine communal politics* because it was directed towards the overall community welfare, development and progress. At this stage, according to him, individual welfare was relegated to the background.

In the second stage, the increasing politicisation of the community resulted from the rise of a small middle class within the community. This led not only to an increase in the political resources of the community, but, as well, to a greater sense of political competition between groups within the same caste group. In this period, the Viraśaiva community, mediated by its middle class sensibility, became politically modernized in the sense that it displayed a modern political culture, characterized by democratic type of politics, involving the party organization as well as pressure-group mobilization. The overall thrust of this political development was to establish a cohesive community and political power by moving into the broader society.

The third stage indicated the dissolution of the community sense under the pressure of increasing individualism within the caste group. We find at this stage a shift from pre-modern politics to a modern politics of a liberal type. In this stage, according to Ishwaran, the community was oriented towards aggressive individualism. What he meant by individualism was that the leaders of the community became more self-centric and they ignored the interests and welfare of the community. To put it in other words the Viraśaiva leaders wore the communal garb to promote self-interest.

Ishwaran's ideas of three stages can be broadly summated into three time periods: a) late nineteenth century, b) early twentieth century and c) post-independent period. For our purpose, it is the first two stages that are relevant for understanding the changes in the

community's social and political life. The above discussed controversies and the emergence of new middle class intelligentsia in the community can be categorized under the first stage. However, we cannot understand the second stage if we do not make sense of the first stage for the second stage is also intertwined with the first stage.

It was only after 1870s that the Viraśaivas were aware of the importance of reconstituting their religion, culture and literature in the modern period. They responded and contributed to the heterogeneous and conflicting narratives of Viraśaivism in ambivalent manner. While the Brahmin intellectuals' historical traditions and habitual familiarity with textual learning and wisdom coupled with social and economic privileges facilitated them to scribe a new, modern history of their community (Geetha, 1994) and Karnataka, for the non-Brahmin Viraśaivas history and past were to be scripted 'newly'. The Viraśaivas also used sections of colonial discourses in putting forward their own interpretations of their history and the community. It was a historical inevitability for the Viraśaivas to rediscover and reshape their history and literature to erase what they thought misrepresentations and contradictions. The Viraśaivas felt the need to prove their worth against the 'misrepresentation' of both western scholars and the Brahmins. The feelings of the Viraśaivas were all the more sensitive on scripting their own history. The contours of the new consciousness among the Viraśaivas began to emerge in the form of new interpretations, selective appropriations, modifications or even a total rejection of the 'old' and 'unacceptable' beliefs, histories and literatures. Besides the oriental knowledge, they relied on the traditional knowledge systems for proving their worth. Kumkum Chatterjee, a historian, considers the deployment of traditional knowledge system as non-positivist approach. In the context of Bengal history she points out,

> ... the 'modern practice and consciousness of history during this period was equally intertwined with an awareness of other non-positivist forms of commemorating the past in moulding and shaping a rejuvenated Indian nation. The tension between rational history, or *itihasa* and other narratives of the past as embodied in myth (*upakatha*), epic and folklore (*kimbadanti*) is plainly evident in popular middle-class consciousness in Bengal and possibly elsewhere as well (Chatterjee, 1999: 194-195. Italics mine).

The constructions of the Viraśaiva self-identity through the narratives of history, religious beliefs, ethnographic accounts, hagiographies, etc. cut across the knowledge boundaries.

In other words, the Viraśaivas did not hesitate to draw sources and approaches already available to them in diverse fields such as history, philosophy, literature, anthropology, ethnography, census and so on. However, they did not accept the oriental knowledge or local textual tradition of Viraśaivism as they were. They put them under constant scrutiny and chose only those parts of history and religion that suited their idea of modern community. Journals, magazines and newspapers[22] became the mouthpiece of the Viraśaivas and they were instrumental in making effective interventions in the policy-making machinery and knowledge producing bodies. They intended to consolidate a sense of unity among the Viraśaivas.

Community consciousness also paved way for creating social boundaries and certain understandings of religion. But what is most interesting is how a specific understanding of religion and certain social claims became the foundational principles of the community. For the Viraśaivas, a modern identity was created in the following manner: a) adoption of 'authentic' scripts as unique to the community, b) canonization of certain historical, religious and literary works into a rigid and totalised system, c) the use of existing and constructed narratives of history, religion and literature to fix certain ideologies into the community's collective imagination, d) drawing boundaries in terms of religious and social taboos to mark inside/outside, self/other and protection against the external challenges, etc.

The initial efforts of Viraśaiva leaders like Yajaman Virasangappa (Mysore), Giliginji Gurusiddappa (Dharawad), Aratala Rudragowda (Dharwad), Sirasingi Lingaraj (Belagaum), P.R. Karibasavashastri (Mysore) and Varada Mallappa (Sollapur)[23] in the 1880s awakened the community consciousness. They were the first ones to realize the importance of government jobs, English and Sanskrit education. The modern consciousness of the Viraśaivas to construct a collective imagination can be roughly

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[22] S.S. Bhusareddi and Madhu Venkareddi have identified the Viraśaivas' venture into print media as far back as 1860. They have mentioned that Hucchyya Sangayya Vibhuti started the first weekly of the Viraśaivas in Kannada in Dharwad under the name 'Chandrodaya'. For more details on this see *Virashaiva Niyathakalikagalu,* (Viraśaiva Periodicals, 1995).

[23] All these people belonged to the merchant and the landed class.

traced back to 1871 when the Mysore and the Bombay census reports considered the Viraśaivas as *Shudras*[24]. The consecutive census reports in 1881, 1891 and 1901 also considered the Viraśaivas as *Shudras*. The Viraśaivas strongly objected to such low social profile attributed to them in the state census. As an alternative to the Shudrahood, they claimed Brahminhood. In other words, they demanded that they should be considered as Viraśaiva Brahmins.

There were a series of debates between Virasangappa and the Brahmin pundits over the issue of Viraśaivas' claims of Brahminhood. Virasangappa and his close associate Asthan Vidwan (court poet) P. R. Karibasavashastri launched a scathing attack on Hassan Railway Master Palalli Ranganna, a Brahmin, who contended that since there were many lower caste people in the Viraśaiva religion, the Viraśaivas could not be Brahmins. In reply to Ranganna's contention, Karibasavashastri quoted several Sanskrit *Shlokas* of Shaiva works like *Neelakantabhashya, Shrikarabhashya, Shankar asamhita, Skandapurana* and *Agamas* in support of 'Brahminhood' of the Viraśaivas![25]. He contended that the lower caste people like Hajams (barbers), Dhobis (washerman), etc. did not come under the *Varna* system so Ranganna's accusation that they belonged to the Viraśaiva community was absurd and baseless (Karibasavashastri, 1882: 26-27). For Karibasavashastri, there was no ambiguity that the Viraśaivas were equal to Brahmins. His dispute over being categorised as *Shudra* was more than merely a question of the place of the community's place in the *Varna* system. It was also a struggle over the meaning of being a modern community.

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[24] These census reports were preceded by the survey conducted by the British administration in 1860. According to Shouten,

> The British administration undertook a legal unifomization in the territories under its control; starting in 1860. Every caste had to be classified in the varna system in order to deicide which rules were applicable concerning family law and religious privileges. In 1879, the Bombay High Court declared that the Lingayatas were sudras: which caused severe agitation among them (Shouten, 1991:74).

[25] The debates between the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas over the issue of Brahminhood are available in the special edition of *Mysore Star Correspondence*. Yajaman Virasangappa edited and published this special issue of *the Mysore Star* in two volumes. The first volume contained commentaries, discourses, replies and articles by P.R.Karibasavashastri and the second volume was written by Virasangappa. These editions also contained edited version of correspondences in the *Mysore Star* over the past few years. The *Mysore Star* was begun by Virasangappa to contest the Brahmins* opposition to Viraśaivas' claims of Brahminhood.

It is not possible to say that the state recognition of the Viraśaiva community in the form of census enumeration compartmentalized the community identities and they became rigid. The census enumeration did not have any impact on the social acceptability of other castes by the upper castes of the Viraśaiva community. Besides such social animosity, the Viraśaivas had to contend not only the state reports but also the mediation of the census by the Brahmins. Despite the enumeration processes of the state, the Viraśaivas tried to maintain their own social boundaries. For instance, the elite sections of the community were not ready to accept certain lower castes/classes into their social domain. In order to defend and sustain the status of Brahminhood, the above castes (Hajams and Dhobis) were excluded from the *Varna* system. In an another article (28[th]July, 1882), Karibasavashastri denied that Nonabas and Hajamas belonged to the Virasaiva community. He advised them not to emulate the Viraśaivas and pretend to be like Virasaiva Brahmins. He believed that caste of a person was to be decided by birth but not by action. Therefore, he exhorted Nonabas and Sadarus to give up their efforts to become Virasaivas. This exclusion of castes who did not come under the *Varna* system continued in the first decade of the twentieth century also. For instance, when these two castes were included in the Virasaiva community in the 1901 census[26], it was strongly objected to by the Virasaivas on the ground that their inclusion would pollute the community. An article in *Mysore Star* (22nd April, 1915) was written against these castes that chose their own *Pithadishas* (the pontiffs) for their mutts without the permission of the head mutt[27].

Owing to caste enumeration in census and the consequent social humiliation, the Viraśaivas supplied a complete scheme to the census authorities during the census of 1901 in the Mysore region. The scheme proposed that all Viraśaivas could be sub-divided

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[26] In this regard, James Manor points out, "census up to 1891 could list Nonabas and Sadars-agrculturist groups which were at that time heavily Lingayath-as members of the Vokkaliga category. As the finer nuances of 1901, the Sadars and Nonabas were removed from the Vokkaliga ranks and listed as Lingayaths" (Manor, 1977:37).
[27] It is a tradition that the authority to appoint a successor or a new religious head to a branch of the *mula* mutt (head mutt) rests with the head of that mutt. A branch mutt is given institutional legitimacy by the head mutt. And the branch mutt is expected to be accountable to the mula mutt regarding religious matters as well as matters related to property, wealth of the mutt, etc.

into four groups viz., Viraśaiva Brahmana, Viraśaiva Kshatriya, Viraśaiva Vaishya and Viraśaiva Shudra.[28] Such classification was based on the previous appeal of the Viraśaiva to return as Viraśaiva Brahmins. In 1891, a delegation of Viraśaivas met the Maharaja of the princely Mysore in Harihara and appealed to him that their registration as Viraśaiva Brahmins be accepted.[29] The appeal of the Viraśaivas for official recognition was redressed by His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore by,

> ... passing orders to the effect that the Lingayaths should not be classed as Shudras any more than any other non-Brahmins, but should be separately designated by their own name, and that while they were at liberty to call themselves Viraśaiva Brahmins, they should specify the name of the particular and well-known sub-division of which each census unit belonged (Edgar Thurston, Rangachari K.1909: 253, Basavalingappa Jeerige, 1933: 114-115 and Shivamurthy Shastri, 1938:58).

Shri Viraśaiva *Matha Samvardhini Sabha* (established in 1904) expressed its gratitude to the Mysore government for considering the Viraśaivas as a 'religion' than as a 'caste'[30]. Such classification of the community was intended to accommodate the lower castes within the 'larger' Viraśaiva community. The resolution of the census question was essential for the community because they had to accommodate certain subaltern castes who were engaged in an acrimonious battle with the elite castes to be accepted as part of the community. Thus, the Viraśaiva leaders found out an easy way out to retain the purity in the community but still represented themselves as larger than any other community and retained the powers to decide the community affairs. By accommodating them in the

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[28] The *First* Viraśaiva *Mahila Parishat* and the annual meeting of the ABVM (1909) proposed a plan to chart out who constituted these four Varna divisions. According to the plan, Jangamas and Aradhyas constituted Viraśaiva Brahmana; Desai, Deshpande and other chieftains formed Viraśaiva Kshatriya; industrialists and merchants came under Viraśaiva Vyshyas and the remaining castes were Viraśaiva Shudras.

[29] The Viraśaivas carried out a systematic campaign for creating awareness of their social and religious status in the society. For instance, Nanjundaswamy, a religious head of *Ganjam* mutt of Bangalore circulated several hundred copies of pamphlets among the Viraśaivas and in an appeal he urged them to send applications to the Maharaja to their claim for Brahminhood. An original copy of this appeal is available in B.C.Veerappa's work *Bangalore Nagarada* Viraśaiva *Mathagalu: Ondu Samskritika Adhyayana* (2001).

[30] The subsequent enumerations became a site of public contention between the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas. For example, in Mysore, the Brahmins declared that the Viraśaivas should not carry *Nandidwaja* (a religious banner with a bull on it; symbol of various Shaiva communities) procession, if they wanted to be recognised as Brahmins. Parading with this banner was the custom of a certain group of lower castes, called right hand caste. The logic behind the Brahmins' opposition to such procession was that, if the Viraśaivas wanted to be Brahmins, they lost all privileges of their former status among the right-hand caste.

Viraśaivised Varna system, the leaders sought to possess the power to represent and mediate the lower castes also. We do not know, due to lack of historical evidences, how the lower castes of the community reacted to such "accommodative" strategies of the community.

The dynamics of exclusion and inclusion was supported by their scriptural traditions. During 1880s, there were many who did not accept Basava's radicalism as outlined by Brown and other oriental scholars. Basava's revolution and his tirade against the Brahminical had not been accepted with enthusiasm and it was not part of the popular consciousness among the Viraśaiva s. But Basava was an incarnation of Lord Shiva in their imagination. He was adored as one of the revivalists of the Viraśaiva religion. If there were any misinformation about Basava, the Viraśaiva literati did not hesitate to contest. But the contestation was never in terms of Basava's revolutionary ideas or his anti-priesthood ideas. For example, in yet another article in the *Mysore Star Correspondence,* Karibasavashastri strongly contested the views of Shrinivasaiah and Ramaswamyshastri (both Brahmins) that Basava plotted conspiracy against Bijjala and he founded the Viraśaiva religion after removing him. Karibasavashastri did not accept that Basava founded the religion and yet, he strongly contested that Basava was a conspirator. One more example of such misrepresentation-contestation phenomenon was a historical account in the *Hindu Charitre Darpana* (translated into Kannada from English in 1882) published by the Bombay Government. In the book, Basava was depicted as a traitor who hatched conspiracy against Bijjala to remove him from his power. In the book, Basava was illustrated as belonging to *Smarta* (Shaiva Brahmin) background. Karibasavashastri strongly criticized such depiction (25th August, 1882). He denounced that such misrepresentation of Basava was based on a non-Viraśaiva text namely *Prakavya Maalike[31]* written by a Jain writer and first collected by Wurth. This book was condemned for it misguided the public and contained distorted details about Basava. Virasangappa blamed two Brahmin Munshis i.e. Munshi Shrinivasaiah and Ramaswamyshastri for misleading J.Garret about this book. Though Basava was given a prominent position in the mainstream Viraśaiva tradition during the last decades of the

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[31] *Prakaavya Maalike* was published in 1867 by J.Garret, the then Director of Education in Mysore.

nineteenth century, there was general disapproval to accept him as a revolutionary fighter, champion of the downtrodden and founder of the religion.

People like Karibasavashastri could not entertain anything that went against the claims of Brahminhood. He was agitated whenever Basava was highlighted as the champion of the downtrodden and portrayed as the crusader against the *Varna* system. Though considered as an incarnation of Lord Shiva, such portrayal of Basava went against the claims of Brahminhood by the Viraśaivas. If the Viraśaivas wanted to prove that they were as superior and pure as the Brahmins, they had to subscribe to the notion of purity-pollution. But since Basava's image as the champion of the poor and the downtrodden was also in circulation, the Viraśaivas had to prove their worth as Brahmins ignoring and marginalizing narratives of Basava's radicalism. For instance, a review of an ethnographic report, brought out by the Indian government in 1904, by Karibasavashastri[32] clearly demonstrate that the Viraśaivas practices the *Varna* system in the community. He found the contents of the report contrary to their claims of Brahmin status. He listed eight factors from the ethnography, which were found contrary to the fundamental beliefs of the Viraśaivas. These eight points were: a) Lingayath sect was simple, b) there were no caste discriminations in the past, c) Lingayaths had accepted the legitimacy of the Vedas but they did not agree with the new Brahminical interpretations of the Vedas by Brahmins, d) it was not yet decided that Viraśaivism was Shaiva sect of the ancient period, e) there were many historical evidences to show that Basava was the founder of the sect, f) an inscription found in Bagewadi's Managoli village and a stone inscription found near Ablur indicated that Basava and Ekantha Ramayya were both Shaiva Brahmins and the Viraśaiva sect was established by them and it was not existent in the ancient period, g) there were no caste discriminations in the food habits and h) widow remarriage was acceptable and Basava fought for the emancipation of the women (Karibasava Shastri, 1925: 15). Karibasava Shastri denied all these points and justified the *Varna* system in the community. He believed that a) the concept 'Lingayath'

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[32] Karibasavashastri's response to the report was published in *Upanyasa Sangraha. Upanyasa Sangraha* was a compilation of discourses on religion and social issues given by several Viraśaiva scholars between 1901 to 1914. These discourses were collected, edited and published in 1925 by Sirisi Gurusiddhashastri.

originated during the reign of *'Turukaru'* (Muslims) and this concept did not find reference in any Viraśaiva *Shastras* or puranas. Therefore those who wore Linga could be described as Viraśaivas but not as Lingayaths (ibid:20), b) Viraśaiva sect was very much grounded in the tradition of the *Vedas* and the *Agamas* and the Viraśaivas recognized the importance of Vedas (ibid: 26), c) the origin of the Viraśaiva sect should be proved on the grounds of *Veda-Agama-Puranas* but not on the grounds of inscriptions or any other historical fact (ibid: 39), d) Basava did not advocate widow remarriage anywhere (ibid: 43). Other articles in the book by Sutturu Shantaveera Shasthri (1908) and Ingalagundi Shantappa Edehalli (1914) also expressed similar views.

The claim of Brahminhood cannot be represented as 'sanskritising' desire of the Viraśaivas. When the Brahmins were not ready to attribute the status to the non-Brahmins, the latter tried to achieve equality by exhibiting antagonism towards them. This antagonism was articulated in terms of caste, religion and classical textual tradition. Sometimes all the three were conflated and identity of the community was constructed around them. Several ancient Shaiva *puranas, Kavyas* were collated, edited, trasnalted and published to prove and justify the worth of the Viraśaivas. Sanskrit and Kannada Shaiva works of the ancient period such as *Shatakas, Virashaiva Linga Pujaavidhi, Thrishashthi Puraathana Charitre, Basavesha Vijaya, Prabhulinga Leele* were translated from Sanskrit into Kannada and published during this period[33], Vaarada Mallappa, Aratala Rudragowda, P.R and N. R. Karibasava Shastri and Siddaramappa Pawate, in the north Karnataka, were Sanskrti scholars and began their own printing presses for publishing and popularising the Shaiva Sanskrit and Kannada works of the ancient period to create community consciousness among the Viraśaivas.[34] These ancient texts were related to hagiography, devotion, rites, initiation ceremony, marriage rituals, methods of worshipping Lord Shiva, a guru, Shatstalas, agriculture, etc. The Viraśaiva imagination of the glorious past was very much part of their experiences in the modern world.

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[33] Shivamurthy Shastri (1938) and Chidananda Murthy (2001) have given a list of books published by Virasangappa in 1885.
[34] S.M. Angadi, who wrote the biography of Aratal Rudragowda, mentions that Rudragowda started *Virashaiva Vilaas Press* in Hubli in 1903 to popularize the ancient Sanskrit works and create awareness among the Viraśaivas about their glorious past. Rudragowda also published a survey of Viraśaivism in 1909.

Establishing printing press, publishing books in the western style, new consciousness of time, etc. symbolized that Viraśaivas were part of the modern imagination. Shouten notices the contours of modern imagination of the Viraśaivas as such,

> Partly as a result of the troubles with the censuses, the Lingayatha elite made serious endeavours to improve the prestige of the community. In 1904, the All India Viraśaiva Mahasabha was founded: an organization for the promotion of the interests of all Lingayaths. …. The Mahasabha played an important role in the emancipation process of the Lingayath caste. The leaders claimed a glorious place for their community in the history of India and they usually tried to demonstrate that lofty Viraśaiva tradition was closely connected with the most orthodox Sanskrit schools of philosophy. In this view not much importance was attached to Basava and his twelfth century revolution; but, rather, Viraśaivism was claimed to date back to the earliest phases of history (Shouten, 1999:75).

The President of the ABVM annual meeting (1904) Lingappa Jayappa Desai declared that the Viraśaiva religion existed much before Basava. He mentioned *Siddhanta Shikhamani* and quoted Brown's ethnographic evidences in support of his declaration. However, he also expressed a note of anxiety about the dissidences within the community over the question of and founder of the religion. According to him, the Lingayath religion existed much before Basava's birth. The President of the fourth Viraśaiva Mahasabha (1909) Rao Bahaddur Basappa Mallappa Vaarada also pointed out that the Lingayath religion could be traced to the lineage of Renuka, Daaruka, Gajakarna, Ghantakarna and Vishwakarna several centuries before Basava. Renukacharya was believed to have given sermons to Agatsya *muni* (saint) on *Shaiva Siddhanta* during Lord Shri Rama's period[35]

IV

The Guru-Viraktha Rivalry and the Contours of Community Identity

The Viraśaivas could not overcome the paradoxes in their imagination of the community identity and its past. They could not boast of complete control over the narratives of Viraśaivism. The western historiographers, ethnologists, anthropologists and missionaries, who claimed higher standard of scientific accuracy and finality, could not alter the structure of social patterns and religious practices of the Viraśaivas. The rivalry between the Gurusthala and Viraktha traditions in the community also supplemented the contradictions and paradoxes. The rivalry between these two monastic traditions was

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[35] For more details see Presidential Speeches in the Viraśaiva *Mahasabha* (1983).

characterized by institutional, textual, religious and social differences. Before we discuss the impact of this rivalry on the new image of the community, let me explain their lineage, philosophy, religion and ritual practices[36].

These two traditions have opposite viewpoints about the origin of Viraśaiva religion. The Viraktas adhere to an ideal of Viraśaivism that is rather 'sectarian' in nature. They emphasize inner experience of the individual than external ceremonies. The tradition venerates the account of Basava who rejected societal mores in favor of devotion. They are of the firm belief that Basava was the one who established Viraśaiva religion in the twelfth century. Their social distance from any established community characterizes their religious and mutt activities. As the term 'Virakta' (the one who has renounced the worldly matters) denotes that a Viraktha should renounce the world and devote their lifetime in spreading the ideals of Viraśaivism.

The Gurusthalins adhere to an ideal of Viraśaivism that is more 'ecclesial' in nature. They attribute an antiquity to the movement that far predates the twelfth century. In ancient past, the five great Viraśaiva teachers—Revanaradhya, Marularadhya, Ekoramaradhya, Panditaradhya and Vishwaradhya—established, respectively, the great monastic centers in Balehalli, Ujjain (both in Karnataka), Srisaila (Andra Pradesh), Kedara and Kasi (both in Uttar Pradesh). They did not act in radical distinction from the social context around them but rather sought to accommodate themselves to that context. The priests of the sect do not dissociate from the social contexts. They are involved in performing rituals and ceremonies to realize the spiritual needs of the devotees and followers. Since they carry out the rituals, they encourage learning Sanskrit. Ritual activities all differ in both sects. While Virakthas follow relatively flexible rituals, Gurusthalins observe relatively complex rituals.

Both traditions developed a monastic culture over several centuries. There are mainly five religious centres related to Gurusthala tradition. The location of the five centres and the names of the founders are: a) Balehalli (formerly Rambhapuri) in

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[36] For information on these two traditions, I have relied on the work done by R. Blake Michael (1983).

Chikmagalur (established by RevanaradhyaX b) Ujjain in Bellary (established by Marularadhya), c) Kedar (established by Panditaradhya), d) Shrisaila (established by Ekoramaradhya) and e) Benaras (established by Vishwaradhya). The first two pontiffs are in Karnataka. Kedar and Benaras centres are located in Uttar Pradesh and Shrishaila centre is in Andra Pradesh. There are many mutts in several places affiliated to one of the five head mutts. These five mutt, also known as Panchacharya mutts, claim to be of immemorial age and they traced the history of their founders many thousands of years back, sometimes to primordial times[37]

The Viraktha mutts are mainly three (Shouten, 1991: 202): a) *Murugharajendra* mutt in Chitradurga[38], b) *Tontadarya* mutt in Gadag and c) *Murusavira* mutt in Hubli. They are all *mula* mutts (head quarters). Each of these mutts has several *shakha* mutts (braches) spread all over Karnataka. The head quarters have greater resources and prestige and it trains preceptors and other functionaries for the branches. The precise details of the relationship between headquarters and branches are not available, especially with regard to the number of braches attached to the headquarters. In return to the help rendered by the *mula* mutt, a *shakha* mutt is expected to pay some financial tributes to the former. These mutts claim their origins in the twelfth century. For instance, the *Murugharajendra* mutt claims to have the direct lineage of the pontifical seat of Allama and the *Taralabalu* mutt of Sirigere was supposedly founded by a disciple of Marulasiddheshwara, another Preceptor.

Function of these two mutt traditions underwent changes and these changes were related to their functions and traditional authority. Many aspects of these two traditions overlapped with the socio-religious transformations during the colonial period. M. Chidanandamurthy (1984), a Kannada critic, has traced the transformations of the mutt traditions in the modern period. He points out that though the two traditions are antithetical, there are instances of the Gurusthala head assuming the responsibility of the

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[37] Pandit Kashinatha Shastri always held this view and was proud of the antiquity (1931). See *Speeches by Pandit Sri Kashinatha Shastri* (1969).
[38] The mutts, mentioned here, form the mainstream mutt tradition of the community. They claim exclusive authority over defining and deciding the community matters.

Viraktha mutts sometimes (Murthy, 1984:25-27). While some Viraktha mutts have remained loyal to the classical ideals of ascetic renouncement, some others have become active organizations of social work and education. A typical feature of the modern Viraktha mutts is that many of them shifted their headquarters to the towns. The ideal of world renunciation is still recognized by the religion but active social and political engagement is regarded to be important too.

A few instances of conflicts between the two traditions would reveal more about their hostile relationship during the early twentieth century. An appeal to the Viraśaivas by Charamurthy in *Mysore Star* (May, 1932) expressed deep anguish over the recent rivalry in the religious life of the Viraśaiva community due to differences between the two traditions. Charamurthy regretted that new Viraśaiva mutts did not give respects to the Gurusthala heads. Without consulting the *mula mutt* of the Gurusthala tradition for any religious matter, new mutt heads functioned according to their own customs and beliefs. And they did not recognize the traditional powers of the Gurusthala mutts. Therefore Charamurthy lamented,

> In recent times, internal conflicts have increased and several leaders have come up in the society. Disunity among the Niranjana Peethas [of Viraktha tradition] and the Aacharya Peethas [of Gurusthala tradition] is against the spirit of true religion. In such critical situation, some have gone against the wishes of the Gurusthala Peethas by appointing their own religious heads without the permission of the mutts. Some have established Viraśaiva *Tatwapracharaka Sangha* [association for disseminating Viraśaiva philosophy] to misguide the people by spreading false notions about Basava and others. It is unfortunate to notice that Shri Mrithyunjayaswamy of Dharwad is encouraging such anti-religion activities through the young Viraśaivas studying in his hostels (Charamurthy, 1932:4)

He requested the Viraśaivas to respect the Gurusthala mutts and work for the unity of the community. In the above remarks, Charamurthy disliked deviant attitude of the Virakthas and is not ready to validate anything that is different from the normative purview of the Gurusthala tradition. For Charamurthy, the traditional authority rested with the Gurusthala tradition and social-religious life of the Viraśaivas ought to be still organized around this authority.

Kashinatha Shastri of the Gurusthala tradition who initiated tirade against the Viraktha tradition and the new class of reformers who advocated the Basava philosophy in 1910s. He wrote commentaries and discourses on Renukacharya, *Siddhanta Shikhamani* and other Sanskrit works to prove that the Viraśaiva religion existed prior to Basava. The head of Rambhapuri mutt supported him. In a preface to a compilation of speeches by Kashinath Shastri, the manager of Panchacharya Press, who published the speeches, writes about the active part played by Kashinath Shastri towards reclaiming the traditional authority of the Gurutsthalins ever since his return from Varanasi in 1917. The manager admires,

> Panditji [Kashinath Shastri] rose to the occasion; toured all over the parts inhabited by Veerashaivas & delivered cogent reasonable and sastraic speeches and disabused the minds of Veerashaivas regarding Basava and the Viraktas and instilled into them devotion to Panchacharyas and the real tenets of Veerashaivism. Thus, with marvellous power he dealt a death-blow to the influence of Viraktas and restored glory and eminence to Dharmapeethas (1969:ix).

Kashinatha Shastri advised his followers not to respect the Shiva Sharanas. He made it mandatory for his followers that they should not visit the Viraktha mutts and took promise from them that they would not worship the Shiva Sharanas (Shouten, 1991:218). This anti-Viraktha and anti-Basava campaign angered the Viraktha followers and disappointed the reformers. Following this controversy, both sides engaged in blaming each other.

The role of these mutts in the overall development of the Viraśaiva community is immense. The most important area in which the mutts are active is education. The heads of these mutts realized the importance of educational initiatives and made a considerable contribution. The Viraśaiva reformists also contributed a lot in enlightening the importance and relevance of education and they turned to these mutts for broad support and investment. Thus, the mutts provided modern education apart from imparting traditional knowledge in the Gurusthalas. The mutts founded a number of schools for Sanskrit education[39]. For example, Chitradurga's *Shri Brihan* mutt helped Deputy

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[39] For more details see B,V, Shiroor (1994) and also (1998).

Chennabasappa, the education officer in Dharwad during 1860s, to improve education in Dharwad and its surrounding areas. *Sri Jagadguru Gangadhara Samskrita Pathasale,* attached to the *Mooru Savira* mutt in Hubli was the earliest to establish modern Sanskrit school in 1901. The mutt also provided boarding and lodging facilities. While the Viraśaiva students were given boarding and lodging facilities in the school, other caste students could only take advantage of the lodging facilities. The *Murugha* mutt of Dharwad established *Prasada Nilaya* (the house where food is served to the devotees) for the community students in 1917. This mutt also built hostels for the students of the community. The *Siddhaganga* mutt of Tumkur started a Sanskrit College in 1938. The *Naganur* mutt of Belgaum started hostels in 1943 for more than 200 students. The *Sharana Basaweshwara Mahadasoha Peetha* of Gulbarga was active before 1918. It had established a library by 1918. In 1934, it started a school for girls. These mutts belonged to the Viraktha tradition. Some Gurusthala mutts also followed this example. Thus, the *Taralabaalu mutt* of Sirigere founded student hostels in Chikkamagalur in 1913 and Davanagere in 1923. The *Sutturu* mutt of Mysore started hostels for the first time in Mysore in 1940. These mutts had at their disposal rather large incomes and considerable capital from their extended landed properties and devotees and they invested a part of it on modern education.

Another possible cause of the rift between the two traditions could be, as Chidanandamurthy notices (2001:178), over the rights of punishing or pardoning the devotees. Many a time, the mutts used to take the responsibility of resolving the conflicts and reconciling the differences between individuals or communities and they had power and authority to punish the guilty, if found guilty. According to Chidanandamurthy, increased visibility of the Viraktha mutts in the public life, their efforts to expand the popular and institutional base by relaxing certain rigid practices raised the question of their original religious functions. The heads of the *Panchapeethas* (five pontiffs) were not ready to concede their rights (related to appointment of heads, punishing or pardoning a devotee) over their follower devotees to the Viraktka mutts and they resented the

deviation of the Viraktha mutts from traditional functions. The portrayal of Basava heritage and twelfth century vacana tradition as radical, subversive, anti-Brahminic and revolutionary by some Viraktha mutts[40] and the reformists was strongly challenged by the Gurusthala tradition and the votaries of *Varna* system in the community. Chidanandamurthy believes that these differences developed between 1850-1900.

Thus, the modern spaces occupied by the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas were grounds of battle for the two. The contests between the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas were frequent. Most of these contests were centered on both 'traditional'[41] and modern status of the two communities. The Brahmins, beginning from Ranganna to Shrinivasacharya to Alur, appropriated the contradictory narratives of Viraśaivism and mediated them on their own terms to contest the Viraśaivas who challenged the Brahmins. The Viraśaivas, on the other hand, tried to conceal the internal differences and fight the Brahmin hegemony. An obvious point made by them is to hide differences when they found the Brahmin mediation 'illegitimate'. These mediation-contestation processes were more pronounced and loud in the *Shubhodaya* controversy.

V

New **Waves in the Perceptions of Viraśaivism**

Non-Brahmin backward class movement for reservation in education and government jobs in the Mysore and Bombay Presidency, non-Brahmin Brahmin movement of Tamil Nadu and Ezhava movement in Kerala, home-rule movement led by Tilak and Annie Besant[42] and later on the nationalist movement under the leadership of

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[40] Not all Viraktha mutts were ready to accept the radical ideas of Basava and the twelfth century movement. The Viraktha mutts continued to function with elite and hierarchical notions of Viraśaivism. For instance, many Viraktha heads were not ready to accept non-Jangama as the head of their mutts. Hanagal Kumaraswamy, who was instrumental in establishing the ABVM and *Shivayogamandira* in Bijapur, believed that only Jangamas were eligible to become the pontiffs of Viraśaiva mutts. B.C.Veerappa, who has researched on the Viraśaiva mutts, notes that Shivayogi Basappaswamy of *Toiadadevara* Mutt did not agree with Hanagal Kumaraswamy and he was ready to accept non-Jangama as the pontiff (Veerappa, 2001:162).

[41] The term in inverted commas' indicate the distinctions that the Viraśaivas made between tradition and modernity to legitimise their claims and their activities. We are very well aware that the traditional aspects were interpreted in accordance with the tracks of the time and they signify modern imagination of the Virasaivas.

[42] This does not mean to say that everybody accepted the home-rule movement. Since the Brahmin leaders led the movement, the Viraśaivas looked upon the movement suspiciously. In an editorial '*Brahmanaru Mattu Itararu*' (Brahmins and Others), the editor of *the Mysore Star* condemned the Brahmin demand for

Gandhi, unification movement of Karnataka, Russian revolution, the first world war, economic progress of Russia and Japan, emergence of Marxist and socialist thoughts and the promotion of vacana literature as radical and democratic gradually changed the self perceptions of the Viraśaivas and their nationalist feelings. Nationalist feelings of the new middle class English educated Viraśaivas were directed towards uniting, reforming and creating awareness among the Viraśaivas for the common cause of social justice and joining the mainstream national life. At political level too, a notable number of Viraśaivas had begun to show their allegiances to the National Congress party by 1935. In the formal arena as well as in the public sphere, the idea that the Viraśaivas were upper-caste Hindus with a glorious tradition of warriors and kings became dominant. Thus, a new interest emerged to restructure the existing images of Viraśaivism devoid of Sanskritic influence and tradition. The reformists like M. Basavaiah, Halakatti, Hardekar Manjappa, Basavanal, Bile Angadi, etc. projected Basava as the leader who strove for establishing an egalitarian and democratic society way back in the twelfth century. The Gurusthala tradition and its identification with Sanskrit tradition and practice of *Varna* system were castigated as 'orthodox' and conservative. Shouten very well documents this religious and social rift among the Viraśaivas,

> In the second decade of the twentieth century, we find that the Lingayaths were gradually more inclined to deny any allegiance of the orthodox Hindu lore. Now that they were apparently not recognized as high caste Hindus, they tended to stress their own socio-religious system alongside Hindu orthodoxy or even opposed to Hinduism. The question arose in the community whether they were Hindus at all; and some leaders insisted on an official recognition as a distinct religion like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Jainism. Instead of the former focusing on the Virashaiva Sanskrit tradition, a new orientation towards their own Kannada heritage arose. Basava was honored again, not always as the founder, but at least as the reviver of the Lingayath religion. His anti-Brahman standpoint, in the preceding age mostly withheld out of shame, was again defended as a necessary and honorable reaction to the circumstances of his time. The vacana literature was rediscovered, mainly because of the enormous efforts of P.G. Halakatti. He collected the manuscripts of the almost forgotten vacana from all over the Kannada-speaking country. His editions of vacanas created a new awareness of the tradition. However, not all Lingayaths were in favour of the new orientation. Particularly those who were connected with the five 'pontifical seats'

home-rule. He wrote: "There are only a few lakhs of Indian literates opposing the domination of the British and they have occupied lakhs of jobs in India. How can it be a crime if the crores of non-Brahmins demanded a share in them? The intention behind the self-rule and opposition to the English domination is born out of the Brahmin's self-interest. If the home-rule ideology is to benefit the whole Indian continent, no body should oppose the non-Brahmins' progress" (2nd Jan. 1917).

of the Panchacharyas preferred the Sanskrit tradition to the Basava trend. Notably Pandita Kashinatha Shasthri and his company (Shouten, 1995:77-78).

The new middle class reformists believed that Kannada society, since the beginning, was progressive and radical. Now it was high time for them to bring back that ideal society and rewrite the history of Viraśaivism. It was P.G. Halakatti who made constant efforts to set right the 'wrongly' interpreted Viraśaiva religion by the Western scholars, the Brahmin pundits and the Viraśaiva conservatives. His ambitions to reform the community and popularise vacanas were also supplemented by the others' attempts to iconise Basava as a public figure. 'Publicisation' of *Basava Jayanthi* was a part of projecting the image of Basava as the religious and cultural icon of Karnataka as well as the Viraśaivas. For the first time in 1913, Hardekar Manjappa[43] and Mruthyunjaya Swamy of Chitradurga mooted the idea of celebrating the birthday of Basava during the month of April publicly. It was begun on a small note in Davanagere in the same year. Subsequently the celebration grew as the most prestigious and religious festival of the Viraśaivas. *Basava Jayanthi* was planned on the lines of *Ganeshotsava* and *Shivaji Jayanthi* in Maharashtra and *Raamotsava* in Tamil Nadu.[44]

The reformation of the community coincided the emergence of non-Brahmin backward class movement for reservation. From 1910 onwards, the Viraśaivas and other non-Brahmin communities launched a strident and uninhibited campaign for social justice through communal representation and vehement attack on the Brahmins who were opposed to such communal representation[45]. This movement was more forceful in the Mysore region. We have evidences to show the non-Brahmin backward class movement

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[43] K.Raghavendra Rao writes, "He [Manjappa] popularized Basava's teachings as a pre-figuring of Gandhism and Gandhism as a re-activation of Basava's ideals" (Raghavendra Rao, 2000:57).

[44] Even as Manjappa tried to find out accurate details about the exact date of Basava's birthday, he was discouraged by Chandrashekar Shastri not to waste time on the irresolvable issue of Basava's birthday and advised him to celebrate the Renukacharya Jayanthi. Manjappa, at that time, did not understand why Shastri gave such advice. Regarding this conversation see G.S. Halappa (1966)

[45] There are many documentations and studies on this movement. Notable among them are a) James Manor's *Political Change in An Indian State: Mysore (1917-1955),* 1977, b) G. Thimmaiah's "Emergence of the Backward Class Movement in Karnataka" 1993 and c) *The History of Karnataka Legislature (Mysore Assembly).* Vol. I, 1908-23.

in the southern Maharashtra (Bombay presidency) too[46]. The attack on Brahminism and the struggle for reservations by the Viraśaivas quickly grew into a radical critique of caste and religion of their community. For instance, M. Basavaiah, the non-Brahmin movement leader, opposed vehemently the proposed plan of the Viraśaiva Mahasabha (1909) to adopt the *Varna* system within the community (Deveerappa, 1985:15). He challenged the elitism and orthodoxy of the Mahasabha. Tammanappa Chikkodi, freedom fighter, alleged that "the Viraśaiva Mahasabha was founded in order to satisfy individual interests and the Mahasabha was meant for the elite of the community" (Jayavanth Kulli, 1983:27-28).

The histories of the community written by the western scholars, local Brahmins and the Viraśaivas who believed in the *Varna* system were condemned as irrational, conservative and inimical to morals and social justice believed by the Shiva Sharanas of the twelfth century. The reformists were spreading the democratic and egalitarian ideas of Basava and his concept of devotion. The justification for reformation and progress of the community was not completely grounded on the discourses of modernity but were grounded on the narratives of tradition. But the point of departure for the orthodox and the reformist forces was on the ground of 'correct' interpretation of the tradition and a debate on what tradition really meant. Gradually the attack on religion and orthodox social practices within the community were turned on the Gurusthala/Panchacharya tradition. The Viraktha seers and the pontiffs, despite their own internal hierarchies, discriminations and disputes, took advantage of the changes in the social and political turn to attack the Gurusthala tradition. Sanskrit works such as *Siddhanla Sikhamani, Agamas, Vedas* were sidelined. The Viraktha mutts inducted many lower castes into the Viraśaivism. It is said that in the 1920s the Balehalli pontiff derided the teachings of Basava, on the ground that they led to the induction of low castes into the Viraśaiva

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[46] Neil Chalsworth has done work on the backward class movement in the southern Maharashtra region. He says, "Non-Brahmin movement in the Bombay Presidency (especially in the south) was entirely political, in contrast to Jyothiba Phuley's range of social interests. This non-Brahmin movement demanded the reservation of half the public service appointments given to Indians for 'the backward classes'. This demand by the urban intellectuals was always complemented by the rural elite, who were rich peasants. But this non-Brahmin movement was sporadic, dislocated and always narrow in outlook and impact". (Chalsworth, 1985:280).

community[47]. The *Muruga* mutt, whose pontiff was Jayadeva Swamy, opposed castiesim on the ground that it was retrograde and inimical to the Basava tenet that caste distinction should not be observed among the Viraśaivas. The votaries of *Varna* system in the community had for a long time seen the anti-Brahmin feelings and non-Brahmin movement as efforts to champion the community cause and protect their interests. However, they soon felt the threat emanating from the reformists and the Viraktha mutts to their own social position. With the relentless campaign of the non-Brahmin movement and the opposition it evoked, the different ideological streams became distinct, highlighting an ambivalent relationship between the votaries of the *Varna* system and the reformists. It was precisely due to such public rise of Basava and increased enthusiasm of the Basava followers, there was a hostile reaction from the Gurusthala followers which reached climax in the *Shubhodaya* controversy.

VI

Continuing with the Contradictions

Any historical incident or an event does not disappear with the passage time. It will leave its own marks, which will be either remembered or forgotten eventually. But it would definitely impact our worldview, our imagination, patterns of socio-political structure, etc. The *Shubhodaya* controversy left unforgettable and unfortunate memories for some Viraśaiva scholars. Pawate and his supporters found it difficult to forget the controversy because it exposed the lack of collective will and imagination while the Gurusthala scholars referred back to it to criticise the Basava tradition. A classic debate between Siddharamappa Pawate and Shantappa Veerabhadrappa Kubusada in 1922-23 will illustrate the intensity of this recourse to this historical event. The debates also show that the rivalry between Gurusthala tradition and the Basava cult continued to fracture collective identity of the Viraśaivas. following the *Shubhodaya* controversy. The confusions and contradictions about the Viraśaiva tradition, religion and history continued to persist and they were intensified.

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[47] In an interview, the present editor of the *Pachacharya Prabha* opined that the Viraktha mutt became powerful because they converted many non-Viraśaivas into the Viraśaivism. This interview was conducted by me on 21st, Dec. 2001 in Mysore.

Pawate believed in Basava's doctrines and was a follower of Tilak and Annie Besant. He gave several discourses on vacanas and demonstrated the *Vedic* roots of the Viraśaiva religion. Shantappa Kubusada belonged to the *Panchaacharya* sect; he was a Sanskrit pundit and a close associate of Kashinath Shastri. Kubusada's *Basavadi Nijatatvadarpana*[48] contains two hundred questions, objections, and doubts challenging Pawate to establish and justify the truth about the origins and history of Basava and other Shiva Sharanas. He made use of many anthropological, literary and historical accounts, especially the works done by Fleet and J.Garrot, in support of his questions and doubts. He quoted extensively from *Basava Purana, Prabhulinga Leele, Kaadasidheshwara Vachana, Singiraja Purana, Chennabasava Purana* (all in Sanskrit) to highlight the contradictory views about Basava and his divinity. He pointed out at the contradictions inherent in the narratives about Basava's birth. According to him, *Prabhulinga Leele* in Sanskrit showed that Basava was born in Bagewadi but *Basava Purana* illustrated that Basava was born in Ingaleshwara (Kubusada, 1932:10)[49]. Kubusada asked why such contradictions exist and what they exactly meant. He was curious to know why there were several versions of Basava's *Linga dikshe* (ritual initiation of Linga) in both these *Puranas* (ibid: 15). He asked Pawate to prove who exactly gave *dikshe* to Basava. Kubusada was not sure about Basava's death. So he asked Pawate to throw more light on the exact manner of Basava's death (ibid: 25). Kubusada was curious to know if it was only Basava who got salvation in the end or his wives were also blessed with it (ibid: 25). He was more inquisitive about the exact identity of Chennabasavanna's father (ibid: 26). This question over Chennabasavanna's birth and the exact identity of his parents is still unresolved and haunts the contemporary Viraśaiva imagination. Kubusada continued and enquired if some Viraśaiva *puranas* gave several versions about Chennabasavanna's birth, some others did not mention his father's identity at all. Therefore, Kubusada wondered how to trust *Singiraaja Purana*, written in the sixteenth century, which depicted that Shivaswamy was the father of Chennabasavanna (ibid). Question over Chennabasavanna's birth was also linked to the question of his mother's relationship with

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[48] This book was first published in 1921. However, I have referred the fourth edition of the book published in 1932.

Bijjala. Kubusada sought Pawate's response to J.Garret's views on 'Prakaavya Maalika' which recorded that Nagalambike was the wife of Bijjala and naturally, Chennabasavanna's was his son (ibid: 26). The reason for raising the question of Chennabasavanna's birth was to know if he belonged to the Jain community or a true Viraśaiva. Kubusada also cited *Hindu Charitre Darpana* to show that Nagalaambike was married to Bijjala (ibid: 27). Kubusada questioned the etymology of Allama's name. He wanted to know if the name, Allama was Sanskrit or Persian. He suspected if the Virakthas were the true Viraśaivas as they resorted to bloodshed in the twelfth century movement and killed several non-Lingayaths and murdered Bijjala (ibid: 31). He made sarcastic comments on the tradition of devoting a Jangama's wife to Linga before accepting her as one's wife and the justification given for such tradition in some vacanas (ibid: 45-46). Through out the book, Kubusada highlighted the inconsistencies in the doctrines of the Shiva Sharanas; ambiguities existing in the Virasaiva hagiographies and contradictions arisen between the vacanas and the puranas. He criticised the new consciousness of the reformists and the Viraktha followers who had begun to popularise the values of vacanas.

Siddaramappa Pawate gave replies to these questions in his work *Basava Bhanu* (1922). He refuted all the allegations and doubts raised by Kubusada. However, there is coherence and consistency in his replies. He was arbitrary and rhetoric in his replies. His responses did not correspond to the questions asked by Kubusada. But he was very categorical in stating that Basava was not a Brahmin but a true Lingayath. According to him, Basava was a true devotee of Lord Shiva and he had thousands of followers who adored and followed him. He also quoted many Sanskrit *shlokas* from Vedas, Upanishads and several Shaiva works in support of his defense. He denounced Kashinath Shastri for encouraging the sacrilegious works on Basava and other Shiva Sharanas. He was of firm belief that Basava was the incarnation of Lord Shiva. Therefore, according to him, Basava was God on earth. Through out his defence he used *Shri* as prefix to Basava. It was a mark of high respect that Pawate wanted to give to Basava. He opined: a) Shri

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[49] Though the debate took place in 1922, it was published in a book form in 1932. We have referred the 1932 publication.

Basavesha did not render initiation to any low caste people. In fact he did not perform any rituals because he was against any rituals that reinforced priesthood (Pawate, 1922:122); b) Shri Basava did not build any army of Minda Jangamas (Jangamas with sexual desires) against Bijjala because it was not at all necessary (ibid,: 121); c) Shri Basavesha did not instigate or hatch conspiracy against Bijjala. Bijjala was killed by the Shiva Sharanas because his sins had reached the ultimate point and there was no other option but to route out the sins in the society (ibid:111); d) Shri Basava had great knowledge in Sanskrit and since he wanted to awaken the religious consciousness among the common people he used popular Kannada language. He was not ignorant of Sanskrit language (ibid: 125). Pawate projected Basava as a great scholar who was a versatile in both Sanskrit and Kannada.

Pawate's replies were followed by counter-questions and replies to him by another Viraśaiva scholar Sirsi Gurusiddha Shastri in a book titled *Basavadhwanta Diwakara* (1923). Gurushiddha Shastri was also a close associate of Kashinath Shastri. Encouraged by Kashinath Shastri, he edited a newspaper *Panchacharya Prabhe.* In *Basavadhwanta Diwakara* Gurusiddha criticized his chaotic style of answering questions asked by Kubusada and challenged the validity and truth in Pawate's replies. He also asked several questions highlighting the contradictions and absurdities in Pawate's defence.

Kubusada's book angered the Viraśaivas. A Viraśaiva meeting in Gadag (1922) vehemently condemned and passed a resolution to ban *Basawadhwanta Diwakara.* The meeting blamed that the book contained worthless and meaningless questions that spoilt the society[50].

We have seen in the *Shubhodaya* controversy that it was the local communities, which challenged each other and resolved it through the colonial legal system.

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[50] The contents of the book were discussed in the meeting and it was said that Shantappa Kubusada wrote this book on the advise of Kashinatha Shastri. For more details see a report written on the resolution by Bharamagowda Police Patil in the *Mysore Star,* 12th Feb. 1922, p.6.

Introduction of colonial legal system by the British had, in principle, promised to be secular and impartial in delivering judgments. Therefore many modern communities in the urban centres had to rely on the modern legal system for redressing their problems. In such colonial context, the 'indigenous/traditional' ways of resolving the legal problems between them were inadequate and unviable. Moreover, the controversy was not just confined to ritual or religious matters. There were factors contending one's belief in modern history and modern legal system. We have already alluded to the controversy over the *Sangeeta Basaweshwara Nataka* controversy and the Viraśaiva community's anger and appeal against banning the play.

The *Shubhodaya* controversy clearly established a fact for the liberal reformists of the community that there was a necessity of a strong ideological base for the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement and the ideals it stood for. The terms of debate in the *Shubhodaya* controversy were inadequate and inappropriate for the reformers like Halakatti to imagine a secular Viraśaiva identity. The reformers could no longer associate the Shiva Sharanas with divine qualities or talk about their miracles. They found it unconvincing and ineffective to debate Viraśaivism exclusively in terms of religion, as done by the Gurusthala and Viraktha traditions. The internal rivalry between the Gurusthala and Viraktha tradition and the traditional rivalry between the Viraśaivas and the Brahmins could not be resolved on the grounds of tradition or rituals. Modern values such as Universalism, liberalism and individuality, in whose domain the Brahmins had already made significant interventions and achieved pan-Indian approval of being secular, had to be appropriated in order to realize the formation of identity on secular grounds. Therefore, the reformists tried to re-write the community history within a modern critical tradition available to them. Interventions in the *Shubhodaya* controversy fostered shared feelings among the Viraktha sect followers (especially Basava sect followers) and the reformists in all the four regions of Karnataka.

Though the trial around *Shubhodaya* controversy proved to be a setback to Pawate and others, its importance for the Viraśaivas laid in the exposure of certain ideologies behind the denigration of Allama and Basava. The *Shubhodaya* controversy widened the

gap between the two sects. The 'loss of image' in the controversy prepared the ground for more systematic way of projecting Basava and other Shiva Sharanas in the coming days. Immediately after three years of this controversy, P.G.Halakatti published the first anthology of vacanas (1923) to give a rationale and a strong ideological base to the Viraśaiva community to come to terms with changing circumstances, ambivalences and contradictions in the community that we witnessed in the *Shubhodaya* controversy. He heralded a new shift in the conception of Viraśaivism.

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Chapter IV

Crushed by English Poetry?
Making of Vacana 'Poetry' and the Viraśaiva Community

Vacanas have occupied a very significant place in the cultural map of modern Karnataka. Scholars in Karnataka and elsewhere consider them as compositions of high literary value and immense significance. Both Kannada as well as non-Kannada scholars have contributed greatly to the popularity of vacanas. In fact, the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement is also known as 'vacana movement' because it is the general perception that the vacanakaras, also known as Shiva Sharanas, composed vacanas to convey their ideals of a casteless and egalitarian society based on the principles of dignity of work and equality. The vacana movement has attracted lots of critical attention and creative engagement by many scholars and creative writers. We have already discussed some of the literary works *(Sankranti, Mahachaitra and Tale Danda)* and shown how the plays have interpreted the movement for expressing their concerns and addressing problems of the contemporary period. We have also dealt with some relevant questions raised by these plays for comprehending the nuances of literary manifestations around the themes of history. They have proved that certain essentialist assumptions about the movement and vacanas cannot be taken for granted. Even the literary controversies, discussed in the previous chapters, are centered on some of the important icons of the movement. We have demonstrated that Shiva Sharanas are not mere historical personalities. They are significant cultural symbols of Karnataka to both the secularists and the communitarians. For both the groups the movement signifies a revolution for freedom, individuality, democracy and equality. For some others it also indicates religious reformation against orthodoxy. Over the last one hundred years, countless number of scholarly works is produced on several sides of vacanas and the movement.[1]

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[1] Social scientists, creative writers and linguists have always been interested in exploring the vacanas. They have studied vacanas from different perspectives such as: religion (Kumar Swamiji: 1967), sociology (K. Ishwaran, 1983) literature (Chennavira Kanavi: 1967, A.K.Ramanujam: 1972 and G.S.Shivarudrappa and et.al.: 1983), philosophy (M.Yamunacharya: 1967), gender (Vijaya Dabbe: 1998), linguistics (Giraddi Govindaraju: 1997) and Dalit politics (Javarayya: 1991). Besides these, there are studies discussing if vacanas contain anti-Vedic and anti-Brahminic elements (K.G.Nagarajappa: 1985) or reflect Vedic impressions (T.N.Mallappa: 1967 and A.M.Sadashivaiah, 1967).

In this chapter we discuss that the 'discovery' of vacanas in the early twentieth century (roughly from 1920-1950) signalled a new shift in the representation of the Viraśaiva history and the 'collective' self-representation of the Viraśaivas. This shift reflects the changing equations between communities; between Sanskrit and Kannada; between history and myth and between the nationalists and the conservatives. It is important to understand the shift because the present day conflicts between the secularists and the communitarians are the result of this shift that took place in the colonial period.

The chapter is sequenced in the following manner. The first section is devoted to look at four stages of modern history of vacana publication so as to trace the crucial periods in which the vacanas acquired cultural-literary significance and institutionalisation in Karnataka. The second section briefly talks about the role of nationalists in the cultural domain of Karnataka and their relationship with vacanas. The third section discusses the nationalist moorings of Halakatti and his efforts to orient Viraśaivism towards nationalism. The fourth section deals with the relationship between pan-Indian nationalism, Kannada nationalism and Viraśaivism. The fifth section illustrates the challenges to Halakatti's nationalist interpretation of vacanas and his efforts to overcome the challenges as well as manufacture consensus. The last section of the chapter examines the historical conditions that necessitated projection of vacanas as part of Kannada lyrical poetry by the Viraśaiva nationalists.

I

Publication History of Vacanas

In the Kannada academic circles, it is a general belief that the vacana tradition of the twelfth century was rejuvenated in the early twentieth century. The whole eighteenth and the nineteenth century are seen as 'dark ages' in the history of the vacana tradition because the tradition was completely forgotten until Halakatti's pioneering work in replenishing the popularity of the vacanas. M. M. Kalburgi's work on the publication history of vacanas in the modern period is one such attempt in which we come across the discourse of 'dark age'. *Vacana Saahitya Prakataneya Itihasa* (The History of Publication of Vacana Literature, 1990) edited by Kalburgi gives details about the

publication history of vacanas from the late nineteenth century to 1970. In an introduction in to book, Kalburgi notices the lack of interest in the vacana tradition in the early twentieth century and how it required to be regenerated. He gives credit to Halakatti in replenishing the forgotten wealth of the Kannadigas. Though we cannot provide accurate historical reasons for amnesia about vacanas in the eighteen and the nineteenth centuries, it will be revelatory to see different stages and academic studies on vacanas.

Kalburgi has divided the modern publication history of vacanas into four stages, which, spans more than hundred years (1883 to 1989). The first stage, from 1893 to 1923, is identified as pre-Halakatti period. The second stage (1922-1950) is called the Halakatti period because Halakatti, as said in the beginning, did a pioneering work in establishing the vacana studies on modern lines. The third stage (1950-1970) is associated with the *Dharawad Kannada Adyayana Peetha* (The Centre of Kannada Studies, Dharwad). This phase represents the institutionalisation of vacana studies. The fourth stage (1970 on wards) is called the *Mutt* period. The Viraśaiva mutts took initiative in promoting and popularising Viraśaivism in this stage.

In the first stage, there was an overemphasis on *Shatstala*[2] philosophy of vacanas. Marishankara Dyavru, a Vyshya Shetty, was the first to publish the vacanas of Akhandeshwara in 1883. Basava's vacanas were first published in 1889. It was edited by Marishankara Dyavru and published by Koneri Shetru. Later on, some vacanas were included by R. Narasimhacharya in *Kavi Charite* (History of Poets, 1909), one of the earliest literary histories of Kannada literature in the modern period. Early publications of vacanas had many shortcomings. They were published in prose style and they were not studied with academic or scholarly interest. According to Mallapura, vacanas were vague and unclear in these early publications. These vacanas, he writes, were published to create an awareness of Viraśaivism among the Viraśaivas and they were full of

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[2] Different scholars have understood the concept of *Shatsthala* differently. Venugopal, a sociologist, explains them as such "the doctrine consists of six planes which are successively attained by the Jeeva in pursuit of 'merger' with Shiva. These planes are respectively Bhakta, Mahesha, Prasadi, Pranalingi, Sharana and Aikya. These six planes roughly correspond to the six levels of the Kundalini doctrine of Rajayoga" (Venugopal: 146). Lingayaths believe that *Shatsthalas* are their original contribution to **the** Hindu religion.

metaphysical elements of the *Shatsthala Siddhanta* i.e. the doctrine of six stages of salvation.

Hiremath considers the second stage as the age of Halakatti. This stage is called by his Halaktti's name because he heralded the 'golden period' of vacana studies in the early twentieth century. He evolved a systematic and scientific study of vacanas during the 1920s and laid a strong foundation for the vacana studies. Hiremath says that Halakatti set a model for others. Halakatti travelled widely in the northern parts of Karnataka during 1901-1920 and collected, classified, collated and edited the vacanas. In 1923, he published them in *Vacana Shastra Saara–I.* He emphasised *Shatstalas* and moral elements of the vacanas. Up to 1950, he collected several vacanas of Basava (1926), Akkamahadevi (1927), Ghanalingi (1927), Devara Daasimayya (1928), Hadapada Happanna (1929), and Mereminda Deva (1950). He also gathered many manuscripts of several Viraśaiva *puranas* and Kavyas. His collection of manuscripts runs into more than 10,000 pages. There were also others who supplemented Halakatti by collating and editing the vacanas. S.S.Basavanal's contribution to the vacana studies is worth mentioning here. He was the younger contemporary of Halakatti and was mainly responsible for *poeticising* the vacanas. If earlier vacanas were printed in prose style and printed in the linear fashion, Basavanal re-wrote them in the modern poetic style. He showed *lyrical* elements in them. He also discovered many new vacana compositions. Hiremath also mentions observes that several other scholars like B. Shivamurthy Shastri, S.S. Bhusanurmath and Uttangi Chennappa have done commendable job in establishing vacana studies.

M. V. Shiroor calls the third stage as *Dharawad Kannada Adhyayana* stage. In the post-independence period the *Dharawad Kannada Adhyayana Peetha* (the Centre for Kannada Studies, Dharwad) was in the front in promoting Viraśaiva studies in an unprecedented manner. From 1960 to 1980, the *Peetha* published eighty works related to Viraśaivism. Out of eighty books, forty books were on vacanas. M. S. Sunkapur, L. Basavaraju, Veeranna Rajur and S. Vidya Shankar did a remarkable work in this direction. Viraśaiva mutts and the university establishments institutionalised the studies

on vacanas with the generous support of the Government of Karnataka. Many more vacanas were discovered and added to the existing repository. Another milestone in this period was the inclusion of vacanas in school and college syllabus.

In the 1970s onwards, the Viraśaiva religious institutions vastly promoted the Viraśaiva studies. *Thontadaarya* mutt (a Virashaiva mutt in Gadag of northern Karnataka) established the *Viraśaiva Adhyayana Samsthe* (Viraśaiva Study Centre) in 1975 for the purpose of promoting and propagating Viraśaiva works. The mutt has published forty-five scholarly works on vacanas, which together run into about six thousand pages. Besides this mutt, *Murugha* mutt of Dharwad, *Sutturu* mutt of Mysore, *Mooru Savira* mutt of Hubli, etc. have done a memorable job in advancing research and publishing anthologies of vacanas.

The history of vacana publications by Kalburgi's is based on the teleological notion of the evolution and growth of vacana literature. It neatly and unproblematically traces the history of publications, even though there are overlapping interests and "the incidence of interruptions" (Foucault, 1972: 4) in all the four stages. The linear and coherent progression of history of vacana publication as depicted in Kalburgi's work overlooks the historical contexts in which these publications appeared and the socio-political imperatives resulting in publications. What lends credence to such historiography is the tendency among a section of the Viraśaiva intelligentsia to construct their community's identity around the vacanas by publishing them in many numbers. Therefore, we intend to move beyond the notion of 'coherence' and the teleological model of the above work in order to look at a series of gaps, ambiguities, contradictions and histories that eventually resulted in what we today recognize as the vacana tradition of the twelfth century.

The popular belief that vacanas are Kannada lyrics is the consequence of modern perspective on vacanas in the colonial period. According to Giraddi Govindaraju, a critic in Kannada, the evolution of vacanas as poetry is a recent phenomenon. He says, "Vacanas had to cross many anxious moments before they were considered commonly as

poetry" (Giraddi, 1997:1). He points out that several scholars contributed towards making vacanas an indispensable part of Kannada literary history. Basavanal published the new vacana forms with exclusive literary and linguistic annotations in 1952 under the title *Basavannanavara Shatsthalagalu.* Introducing this work, Rahamat Tarikere, a Kannada critic, points out,

> Vacana literature had been imprisoned in the communal framework of classical or religious tenets. Basavanal did not discard this framework completely. He showed for the first time that vacanas could be read as literary works going beyond the religious framework. This was a decisive departure from the earlier practices of reading vacanas. It was natural for the Navya scholars to see vacanas as poetry in the 70s. But in Basavanal's context, it was no doubt a 'revolutionary' step (Tarikere, 1998: 76).

Therefore, the first two stages are very significant in the modern history of vacanas because it was during these stages that we come across a new shift in the representation of Viraśaivism and the collective imagination of the Viraśaivas.

II

Crushed by English Poetry?

Social transformation and political orientations in India during the colonial period was the product of the native middle class literati's exposure to modernity unleashed by the British colonialism. The discourses underlying modernity, social transformations and the political interests of the English educated middle class male were forming a larger "social consciousness" (Sudhir Chandra, 1994)[3]. There are many other scholars who have drawn our attention to the forming of a social consciousness among the Indian intelligentsia as part of "nationalist discourse" (Ashish Nandy, 1988; Partha Chatterjee, 1994; Sudipta Kaviraj, 1998). The social and nationalist consciousness was characterised by resurrection of the past, an identification of modernity in tradition, nostalgia for tradition, its achievements, modernisation of language/literature and a zeal for social

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[3] Sudhir Chandra traces the history of social and cultural discourses of several native reformists/intellectuals in the colonial period. Me considers that the native intellectuals were very much under the influence of English education and the western knowledge. He uses 'English poetry' as a shorthand or synecdoche to denote the entire range of western intellectual influences on the native intellectuals. It also symbolises, according to him, the hegemonic hold exercised by British colonialism. For an analysis of Chadra's concept of social consciousness and colonialism see Vijay Boratti's article "The Brahmin Community and the Secular Self (2002)

reformation. The nationalist consciousness of the middle class also tells the story of one's entry into modern spaces marked by citizenship, secularism and discourses of civilisation. Better position in social-political hierarchy, the role of English education facilitated the middle class in mediating the local tradition to the west on the one hand and modernity to the natives on the other. It is in the process of mediation that only selective aspects of culture, community and language were constructed as 'traditional' against 'modernity'. Simultaneously the middle class nationalists circulated authoritative discourses of modernity and tradition indicating what kind notions of family, sexuality, individuality, literature and language have to be inculcated among Indians. We see,

> ...how the English educated class sought to achieve 'progress' according to modern universal norms, attempting therefore, a cultural re-equipping and recreation of the individual and the family. It also dwelt on recasting of social identity arising out of a confrontation not only with 'tradition' but also with certain forms of the modern (Padikkal, 2001:2).

However, the obsession of the nationalists with tradition, modernity and social reformation was not universal and unified throughout the colonial period. The process of social reformation and nation building underwent changes. Social reformation in the colonial Karnataka, witnessed two stages, viz., early social reformation and later social reformation. The early social reformation (the late nineteenth century) was focussed on debates pertaining to going abroad, sea voyages, widow remarriages, education, etc. It was more oriented towards economic and political mobility of several communities. Second stage of social reformation (roughly from 1920 onwards) was very much under the influence of nationalist politics of Gandhian type. In this stage, retrieval of the Hindu tradition (especially *Varnashramadharma*), social reformation, cultural re-grouping was tempered with the discourses of rationality, Universalism, secularism, democracy, liberalism, etc. They were more influenced by the Gandhian wave of social and political reformation. By 1920 onwards, extended sobriety and self-retrospection had found a place in the intellectual endeavours of the middle class nationalists.

Modernity, nationalism and secularism did not remain the sole assets of the middle class Brahmin intelligentsia forever. In the late colonial period, due to the entry of several non-Brahmin communities into the modern space, they were sites of struggle

between the Brahmins and the emerging[4] non-Brahmin middles classes. A close attention to the discourses of modernity and nationalism indicates that the middle class nationalists were addressing their specific caste/communities. The struggle between the communities, therefore, was "for equal spread of power over culture" (Aloysius, 1997:15) and it was waged to achieve the position of ideological influence in the society. However,

> ...the interests of various castes/classes, structured in hierarchical relations, as a process of building their respective hegemonies had to be fought in terms of a struggle between various forms, i.e. the common discourses of literature or culture. They can compete for their respective hegemonies at the ideological level only if there exists a common framework of meaning shared by all the forces in the struggle and if there is no recognizable common framework, one has to create it. In this struggle, the interests of various forces will consist of antagonistic and appropriative efforts in which each group presents itself as the authentic representative of the "people" and of "common interest (Vijay Boratti, 2003: 20)

In the present context of our study, vacanas provided the common framework for the Brahmin and Viraśaiva nationalists to represent the "common interest". Re-writing the vacana history and thereby Viraśaivism became part of intellectual exercise of the Brahmin as well as Viraśaiva nationalists in the 1920s. Viraśaiva scholars like Halakatti, Hardekar Manjappa, Bile Angadi, Basavanal and the Brahmin scholars like Masti Venkatesh Iyengar, M.R. Shrinivasamurthy, R.R. Diwakar, T.S. Venkannaiah, thus, were active participants in the nationalist discourse. But they always exhibited differences over what should make a nation and what is nationalism. The differences were always premised on the social background and ideologies of each individual. We will discuss this aspect in the later part of the chapter.

Within the larger body of the Viraśaivas existed a class of people exposed to English education and with membership of the emerging professional class represented the winds of 'progress'. It is this class that thought of social reform as well as the new literary forms. Efforts to shape new language and a desire for new literary form were indicative of the changed political needs that required a new language. As the consolidation of the individualism progressed, the search for new forms of articulations

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[4] The term 'emerging community' is used to imply the beginning of upward mobility of a community in social, political, economic and cultural spheres in the colonial period either in competition with other dominant communities or in collaboration

was foregrounded by the emergent middle class of the Viraśaiva community. This was not always welcomed by the majority of the community who still continued with the conventional ways of perceiving the world. Though they did not see any threat from modernity, the educated class was sure that the community identity was under seize. Their efforts were to culturally re-equip the community through reform. This move was obviously resented by others. Nevertheless, the differences were articulated taking recourse to the tradition and of course, highlighting certain phases and elements in the Viraśaiva tradition. In the next section, we discuss the secular discourse of Viraśaivism, articulated by Halakatti and others, which was the product of and participant in nationalist discourses.

III

Foregrounding the Vacanas and Occupying Secular Spaces

Pakirappa Gurubasappa Halakatti was born into a poor Nekara (weaver) family[5]. But his father always encouraged him to excel in education. Halakatti's college education began in St. Xavier College of Mumbai. After his B.A., he joined L.L.B. and became a legal practitioner in 1904. By this time he had already acquired a lot of interest and curiosity in vacanas. He was a committed journalist and a renowned legal-practitioner[6]. Being a Gandhian, he developed nationalist feelings towards India and Karnataka. Both pan-Indian nationalism and Kannada nationalism went hand in hand. He spent lot of time

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[5] Halakatti's autobiography was first published in 1964. But I have referred several biographies such as Shantarasa's *Halakatti Nudipurusha* (1982), *Fa.Gu. Halakatti* (1996) by Devendrakumar Hakari, *Vachana Gummata Fa.Gu Halakattiyavaru,* (1998) written by G.S.Siddalingaiah, *Dr. Fa.Gu. Halakattiyavaru,* (2000) by Siddappa Langoti. These biographies are all in Kannada originally and I have translated them into English.

[6] Halakatti started two journals namely *Shivannbhava* (Experience of Shiva) in 1926 and *Navakamataka Patrike* in 1927. In the inaugural issue Halakatti writes,

> The purpose of Shivanubhava was to discover social history, politics and religious tenets of Virasaiva society. Since a long time, many saints, seers, religious leaders of Virasaiva community have enriched religious life in Karnataka. It is necessary for the Karnataka people to cherish their values and works. Likewise, we should also remember brave kings and dynasties who emerged in the past and promoted Virasaiva religion. This journal was meant for religious and cultural dissemination and no commercial interest was involved (Halakatti, 1926:1).

He started *Navakamataka Patrike* in 1927 and it was devoted to discuss the socio-political and economic matters of Karnataka and nationalist politics.

and energy in mobilising the Viraśaivas for Karnataka's unification movement. His diverse public life made him an active participant in all the important political and religious events in the colonial Karnataka. Such participation shaped his scholarship on Viraśaivism.

He was introduced to vacanas for the first time when he came across two Viraśaiva *pur anas Prabhulinga Leele* and *Ganabhashya Rathnamaale* in Veerabhadrappa Halabhavi's (well-known judge of Dharwad magistrate court during that period) house in 1905. Halakatti was impressed by some 'beautiful' (Halakatti, 1982:8) vacanas in Gubbi Mallararya's *Ganabhashya Rathnamaale*. He wondered why the Viraśaivas ignored such precious wealth of literature. Since then Halakatti began collecting 'only' those vacanas which he considered important and relevant. He was not happy with the existing narratives of Viraśaivism as elucidated in Viraśaiva hagiographies like *Basava Purana, Prabhulinga Leele* or *Singiraja Purana.* He found nothing significant about Viraśaivism in *Basava Purana* and *Chennabasava Purana.* They were full of miracles, exaggerations and fanciful episodes without any *realistic* aspect. And they were opaque and inadequate to explain the real history and worth of the Viraśaiva icons (Halakatti, 1982:12). He doubted if they could command respect for the Viraśaiva religion and community. Till the discovery of vacanas, the most popular texts available and revered by the Viraśaivas were *Nilakanthabhashya* (Commentary on Nilakanta), *Shiva Geete* (Song of Shiva), etc. The Viraśaivas worshipped and devoted themselves to the Advaita philosophy of Nijaguna Shivayogi (probably of sixteenth century) as propounded in *Kaivalya Vallari.* But, according to Halakatti, none of these texts propagated the value and relevance of *Shatstalas,* the philosophy of Linga and egalitarianism of vacanakaras. Therefore, he developed a deep interest in the unexplored world of vacanas, which contained the philosophy of *Shatstalas, istalinga,* etc. For him, an investigation into the world of vacanas simultaneously meant *re-writing the history* of the twelfth century movement in particular and Viraśaivism in general. He always advocated that the vacanas were the real religious and philosophical wealth of Viraśaivas. His emphasis on the relevance of

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vacanas was to obliterate some of the misconceptions[7] about the Shiva Sharanas who composed the vacanas. In a preface to the first edition of *Vacana Shastra Saara* (1923, 1983), he expressed his regrets over the contemporary indifference to the existence of vacanas and attributed such indifference to the existing misconceptions. He wrote:

> In recent times there have been some derogatory remarks made against the Lingayath sect and its followers on the basis of a few Jain and Lingayath *Puranas.* But I believe that vacanas will obliterate such false perceptions (ibid: 14-16)

Two points are noteworthy in the above remarks: a) vacanas contained all elements to obliterate misconceptions and b) misrepresentations of Virasaivsim by the western scholars and the Brahmins. In Halakatti's opinion, the existing scholarship on Viraśaivism was inadequate and represented wrong interpretation of vacanas. He remembered how he felt humiliated during his school days, when his schoolteacher told the students that the Viraśaiva community did not have a history of its own and they did not boast of brave warriors or kings like the Marathas or Rajputs. Since then Halakatti set an aim in life to restore the reputation of the Viraśaivas. He sought to reinterpret the 'misrepresented' history (ibid, 1982:13) and religious doctrines of Viraśaivism with the help of vacanas. But the journey for Halakatti was not smooth. He had to face several problems and obstacles. His autobiography (1982) will help us to understand the circumstances in which he began exploration of vacanas. In the autobiography, he reminiscences,

> It was very difficult to carry out research on Viraśaivism during those days. It was like travelling in a rudderless ship without any control over it. I felt that the Viraśaiva intellectuals and religious heads were dragging society in various directions aimlessly. There was no co-ordination among them.
>
> Many eminent Viraśaiva leaders and intellectuals together established Sanskrit schools in various places like the Brahmins. The Viraśaiva society spent a lot of money on these institutions. *Vyakarana* [grammar], *Kavya* [poetry], and *Nyaya* [law] were taught in these institutes. (Halakatti, 1983:18-19).

He found the atmosphere congenial to any kind of scholarly study on Viraśaiva works. He thought that the attitude of the Viraśaivas to their scriptural heritage was Brahminical.

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[7] We have already discussed some of these misconceptions about vacanakaras in the previous chapter. See Chap. 3, pp. 152-156.

Since, the Shaiva works in Sanskrit were already accepted and gained legitimacy as 'the' authentic source of the Viraśaivas, he felt a strong urge to change the prevailing perceptions of Viraśaivism. The excessive importance accorded to Sanskrit education by Viraśaiva scholars and religious heads was not agreeable to Halakatti. He felt that the *Kannada* heritage of the Viraśaivas was ignored. Amnesia about the Kannada heritage went along with caste conflicts of the Viraśaivas in the modern period. He points out that the caste conflicts among the Viraśaivas was over social supremacy and status. He mentions some Viraśaiva castes like Kurushettis, Banajigas, Saadarus, Nekaarars, Ganigars, Panchamasaalis who indulged in such conflicts. He points out that the Viraśaivas practiced *chaturvarna* and identified with Sanskrit heritage proudly. He wrote,

> They [the Viraśaivas] held that everybody should wear the sacred thread. Those who advocated the Brahmin ritual of sacred thread in the Viraśaiva community, later on, came to be knows as Panchacharyas. In opposition to them, Virakthaashramis practiced their own beliefs (ibid: 21).

He resented conflicts over petty issues and meaningless rituals of different sects of Viraśaivas. He pointed out that each caste in the Viraśaiva community struggled to prove its worth on the basis of their respective *Shasthras.* (ibid, 1983:21). There was reluctance on the part of the conventional scholarship to accept vacanas as the sacred scriptures of the Viraśaivas. If the Gurustala tradition defended *Siddhanla Shikhamani* (Sanskrit) as the sacred text, the other group (a few Viraktha believers and reformists) believed that the vacanas in Kannada were the beginning source for understanding Viraśaivism. For the reformists, any emphasis on Sanskrit heritage of the community seemed conservative and orthodox. The Gurustala and some sections of the Viraktha traditions, which gave importance to rituals and priesthood, were thus perceived as conservative. In all these debates and controversies, Halakatti regretted that no body took the Shiva Sharanas and their ideals seriously (ibid: 22). He was certainly not happy with the hair splitting arguments about the Sanskrit origins of the community. He was sad for his contemporary scholars were ignorant of their rich vacana tradition.

The significant part of Halakatti's autobiographical accounts is his location as an internal critic, but deliberately positioning himself *outside* the tensions of the Viraśaivas in the name of caste, rituals and religion. Dissatisfied with the affairs of the community,

he tried to project himself as a non-participant in the affairs. It is this non-participation, which signifies the journey of a modern Viraśaiva identity. Halakatti's biographical sketches in the subsequent years, mentions before, tell us the journey of "the secular (read: upper-caste) self, its origin, its conflict with tradition, its desire to be modern" (Vivek Dhareshwar, 1994: 115). Being modern also meant, in principle, dissociation from caste affiliations because caste markings indicated pre-modern/primitive tendencies". Halakatti and Hardekar Manjappa, active participants in the national movement, always dissociated themselves from the non-Brahmin Backward Class Movement. This dissociation from caste/community-based movements was one way of engaging with the Brahmin secularists who had already occupied the secular space and had proved to be hegemonic. That is why, Halakatti never addressed the Viraśaivas as a caste. The Viraśaivas, though constituted of several castes, always formed a unified community and religion in his imagination. He found the discourses of nationalism and Kannada unification movement very useful to transcend sectarianism.

However, the Viraśaiva nationalists had to face a paradox: paradox of occupying secular space as well as religious reform. While the secular image of the Viraśaivas was grounded on universal values, religious reform exhibited concerns for the community characterised by othering the Brahmins and non-Viraśaiva communities. Thus, the secular Viraśaivas were oscillating between the sacred and the secular spaces. Halakatti too treaded on this paradoxical path. As many nationalist scholars, Halakatti was also a

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[8] There were many conceptions of caste system in India. The westerners looked on 'the natives' as pagans, primitive and backward peoples. According to Michael Roberts, who has worked on the caste system of the Karava community in Shri Lanka, "The perplexing system of caste was equated with ...backwardness and was regarded with abhorrence" (Roberts, 1982: 141). The native intellectuals, in the late colonial period, were very much under the influence of such oriental constructions. There were many who considered modern caste system as the most primitive nature of the Indians and they thought that the caste system hindered growth and progress of the Indians. However, oriental construction of caste system was not at all pervasive and universal. There were many nationalist models which upheld *Varnashramadharma* as an an alternative to modern caste system. The most influential among them were Gandhian and Arya Samaj model. The *Varna* system, during the later colonial period, went contrary to the sentiments of the non-Brahmins, especially Virasaiva nationalists. *Varnashramadharma* was seen as another strategy of the Brahmins to hegemonies the rest of India. For instance, Hardekar Manjappa had differences of opinion with Gandhi because Gandhi upheld the *Varna* system (Shivananda Shettar, 1989:218). Manjappa believed that the Varna system was the foundation of Indian caste system and he opposed any kind of caste hierarchy among the Hindus. He fought against the Arya Samaj is in Bidar, Gulbarga and Rayachur **who were** converting the Virasaivas into Arya Samaj in the name of the *Varna* hierarchy (Linganagowda **Patil,** 1989:173-175).

product of two civilisations, two cultures, and two very different ways of perceiving the world. Modern education shaped his subjectivity to appreciate the values of liberal humanism. In the same time he was proud of searching and consolidating the tradition inherited by him as a Viraśaiva. However he did it by using the scientific methodologies introduced by the Western scholars. Like many others he too tried to blend the best of the west and the east. His attempts to demonstrate the universal significance of vacanas represent precisely this dilemma. Being a Kannada activist, Halakatti regretted his community's obsession with Sanskrit heritage; as a Viraśaiva, he regretted his community's inability to come out of religious and social problems and as a nationalist, he hoped that the community would mark itself as a nationalist/secular by moving beyond caste/community sentiments. His unhappiness over conservatism of the Viraśaivas was not the outcome of his aversion to traditional knowledge or system. His attempt to develop alternative ways of perceiving 'tradition' by retrieving vacanas of the twelfth century was, paradoxically, determined by his sense of modernity. Now, let us see how Halakatti's secular self is inextricably linked to the progressivist and nationalist discourses and the infinite contradiction/paradox within which he was caught.

Imagining Secular Community around Vacanas

Halakatti was the first to involve in an intense collation, classification, edition, translation and publication of vacanas of the twelfth century Sharanas. In order to prove their relevance and importance for the Viraśaivas and other Kannadigas, he worked hard to give a rational and intellectual clarity to the vacanas. The earlier publication of Basava's vacanas, *Basavannanavara Vacanagalu* (1889), according to him, did not lead to any systematic scholarship and it was unknown. Moreover, the publication considered vacanas as mere doctrines of religion and devotion. The acknowledgments on the cover page of the book contain aspects of Nigamas, Agamas, Upanishads, Smritis, Shivapuranas, Shastras and mysteries of Viramaaheshwara, etc. Interestingly both Basava and Renukacharya are given due reverence in the front page of the book. Since the book was published with the aim of creating an awareness of Viraśaiva religion, there was no systematic attempt to produce scholarship of vacanas.

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By 1920, Halakatti had collected at least one thousand and more palm-leaf manuscripts containing the vacanas of Basava, Allama, Siddharameshwara, Akkamahadevi, etc[9]. Initially, he found it a difficult task to refine them and give a formal look because "ideas expressed in the vacanas were novel and could not be found in any other Hindu ideas" (Halakatti, 1982:8). He had to take much trouble to copy them for further examination. Later on, he carried on this task with the help of two assistants. In 1923, Halakatti published his first compilation of vacanas namely '*Vacana Shastra Saara'*. As the title of the book indicates, vacanas were considered as classical texts of the Viraśaivas. This anthology contained vacanas of various Vacanakaras. These vacanas were classified into *Shatstalas,* the six planes meant for the attainment of ultimate salvation. He considered *Shatstalas* as pillars of Viraśaivism.[10]

The modern sensibility of Halakatti did not discard the traditional means of propagating the values of vacanas. He intervened in all the modern as well as traditional spaces for popularising the vacanas. He always explored various possibilities of Popularising vacanas. He used every means available at hand in almost every field to achieve his mission. Such intervention was imminent since the Viraśaivas had begun to occupy slowly wide variety of spaces such as music, education, law, administration, agriculture, politics, language, religion, region, etc and their identity as Viraśaiva community was inextricably tied to these multiple spaces. He appointed a music teacher, P.V.Patil, to convert vacanas into songs so that the common people would also enjoy and realize the significance of vacanas for the growth of music (Langoti, 1980:36). Whenever, the clients as well as the young legal practitioners approached him for legal advice, he would show great eagerness to collect information about vacanas from them, if they are available in their regions, and also apprise them of the importance of vacanas for the overall growth of Viraśaivas.

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[9] In the first edition of the compilation, Halakatti recorded his gratitude to those who provided manuscripts of vacanas to him. For Basava's vacanas, he owed gratitude to a person called Chennabasappa Patil Kuchabala. He found Allama Prabhu's vacanas in palm-leaf scripts obtained from Shivalingappa Manchaali of Dharawad. However, it was Basava who occupied a special place in the vacana anthology published by Halakatti in 1923. Nineteen vacanas of different vacanakaras praised the greatness of Basava and they were given special place in *Vacana Shastra Saara*

[10] The six planes were: a) Bhakthi (devotion), b) Mahesha (Divine Power), c) Prasada (Grace) d) Pranalinga (The Linga in the life), e) Sharana (self-surrender) and f) Aikya (Oneness with Lord Shiva).

He selected only "pure, important and vital" vacanas. We do not have any clue to the vacanas excluded by him as unimportant and impure. The manuscripts of vacanas procured by him did not "originally" belong to the twelfth century. They belonged to different periods and were composed by different vacanakaras. They were not found only in Mysore or Dharwad. There were many vacanas and vacanakaras from the erstwhile Nizam States of Bidar and Gulbarga[11]. But Halakatti brought all vacanakaras of these disparate regions and periods under one collection thus unconsciously erasing the differences among them. Even though Halakatti accepted the fact that they were produced in different times and for different purposes, he did not want to deviate from the main task of producing a unified vacana text for modern use.

However, uniqueness of Halakatti's work lies in attributing didactic and moralistic elements to *Shatstalas*. It was a first ever attempt of its kind.[12] The identification of vacanas as moralistic and didactic contained the features of Universalism. Like *Esope 's Tales* or the tales of *Panchatantra,* Halakatti tried to construct the values of vacanas as transcendental and unique. The moralistic elements of the vacanas do not contain reference to any sect or community. They can be applied to anybody and for any context in order to inculcate virtues in one's life. Similarly any discussion of the moralistic elements need not entail any discussion of Viraśaivism in its religious form. It was these moral values through which Halakatti attempted to transcend the fears of being sectarian and project vacanas as containing universal values. One or two examples from vacanas

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" While he did not find the manuscripts of these vacanakaras in any other region, he could discover several copies of vacanas of Basava, Allama Prabhu, Akkamahadevi, etc. in many other places. Halakatti interpreted this as enough proof of their popularity all over Karnataka. The vacanakaras of the Nizam region such as Anathiyalinga, Kanakada Naachilinga, Kumara Sanga, Niranjanalinga, etc. were less familiar to the people of Mysore and Dharwad regions.

[12]He described the following moral principles under Bhakthi category[12]: Seek liberation from worldliness, destroy egoism, seek protection of God, be virtuous, speak the truth, be merciful, be not angry, be chaste, be charitable, be gentle, be humble, keep good company, be pure in mind, have faith in god, worship with pure heart and meditate upon the Linga. Under the category of *Mahesha stala*: Be firm, face difficulties, be fearless, there is one god, god is universal, do not believe in expiatory ceremonies, do not sacrifice, do not believe in astrology, devils and omens, do not believe in caste, and do not believe in Veda, Shastras and puranas. Under the category *of Prasada stala:* Work without desiring anything in return, submit yourself to God and do not mortify the body. Under the *Pranalinga stala* category: The nature, behaviour and the realisation of the God through Prana linga. Under the category of *Sharana stala:* Knowledge of God, the state of Sharana, the environment of the servant as holy. Last one is the *A iky a stala* with one sub-category i.e. the state of final absorption.

translated by Halakatti will explain this process of universalising vacanas on par with other religions. Under the category of *Bhakthistala*, 'mercy' is lifted to the highest degree of human virtue. A vacana of Basava preaching mercy goes like this,

> What is that religion wherein there is no mercy? It is mercy that is wanted for all creatures. It is mercy that is the root of religion. Kudalasangama Deva wants not that which is not merciful. (Halakatti, 1922:10)

Maheshastala contains a vacana, which speaks about the universal God. An example for this is as below,

> Ah, wherever I look, there Thou art, O God! Thou Thyself art one with a universal eye. Thou Thyself art one with a universal mouth. Thou Thyself art one with universal arms. Thou Thyself art one with universal feet. O Kudalasangama Deva. (ibid: 38).

Halakatti's concerns were directed towards elevating the community above the micro/sectarian interests. He achieved it by popularising vacanas at pan Karnataka level. He translated the vacanas into English as part of elevating the universal values of vacanas to the world[13]. He considered the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement as a 'religious' movement. According to him, out of this 'religious' movement emerged a unique social revolution emrged. He highlighted the vacanakaras' ideals to fight against untouchability, communalism and national disintegration. According to him, the anti-Jain and the anti-Brahmin elements of the Viraśaiva *puranas* gave a wrong perception about the community. These elements, Halakatti held, went contrary to what he wanted to project through the vacanas. Therefore, he emphasized the importance of vacanas by means of comparing and contrasting them with other religious beliefs of both India and other countries. Thus, his justification of vacanas and vacanakaras (mainly Basava) was not just aimed against rational theology of Christian religion or the ideal of Christ as constructed by rationalist Christian discourses of the nineteenth century[14]. He examined many other Hindu faiths and found limitations in them. He considered various streams of thought like Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, etc. as background for re-

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[13] For the translations see *Indian Antiquary* (1922).
[14] We have already discussed in the previous chapter some of the rationalist Christian discourses about Virasaivism while discussing Wurth.

writing vacanas. But none of them were convincing because Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj adopted Christian doctrines to address Indian religious and social issues (Halakatti, 1982:29). In Arya Samaj, Halakatti found only repudiations of other societies and no significant moral elements. Therefore, he evolved his own theory of religion informed by *Shatstalas*. He demonstrated that the greatest of all religious thoughts were available in the vacanas. The main reason for evolving his own theory of religion could be because vacanas were specific to the region of Karnataka and they were distinct due to the *Shatstala* doctrines. However, there is contradiction in such comparative study of Halakatti. This contradiction is found in his dilemma to dismiss or ignore other religions completely. The contradiction is obvious in his comparative study of vacanas and the Christian religion. He tried to convince the public that vacanas were no less significant and they were as important and valuable as the world religions.

He demonstrated that certain convictions and values found in the vacanas were similar to those in Christianity (especially theosophical society) and they were produced much before the Protestant movement of the sixteenth century. We may recall here that Brown made such comparison in 1840. Enthoven and Rangachary's ethnographic work on the Viraśaiva community in 1909 unambiguously accepted such comparisons. But if we go into the history of ethnographic works on Viraśaivism, it was not vacanas on whose grounds the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement was compared to the Protestant Movement. It was *Basava Purana* on which the western scholars drew the 'radical' and 'revolutionary' picture of Basava. Brown did not mention the existence of vacanas anywhere in his essay. Halakatti's reference to the Protestant movement accorded a progressive dimension to the Viraśaiva history and literature. Like the Protestant movement, the vacanakaras opposed the monopoly of scriptural tradition; they abandoned priesthood and adopted the concept of *Jangama* and *istalinga* and they rejected puritan and ritual traditions. Several other scholars followed Halakatti in comparative study of Basava and his social movement. Such comparisons were across time, language, religion and region. One of the aims of such comparisons was to let the outsiders know the significance of the Viraśaiva religion. For example, Vyakarana Thirtha Chandrashekar Shastri of Hubli wrote in *Mysore Star*,

> Vacanas should be studied from comparative perspectives. In order to show the value and significance of vacanas to the outside world, they should be compared to Kabirdas, Bible, Kanakadasa, Kuran, Madhwa, Ramanuja and *Puranas* so as to find out if there are any similarities between them (Shastri, 1931:5).

Chandrashekar Shastri laid special stress on the vacanas of Basava. He appealed to the Viraśaivas to donate money generously so that the literary scholars could accomplish the task of popularising the vacanas outside India.

For Halakatti vacanas embodied values of tolerance and non-violence besides with religious instruction. He noted,

> In vacanas there are no conflicts on the basis of Dwaita or Adwaita. They [Vacanakaras] did not show interest in such conflicts. But they gave importance to Man's religious and subjective reformation (Halakatti, 1982:14).

According to him, such sublime and secular attitude was possible for vacanakaras because they were "rational" and "self-retrospective" (Halakatti, 1982:16).

Halakatti revealed Bhakthi as another important aspect of vacanas. True devotion as opposed to ritual practices was one of the features of vacanas. In his next compilation of vacanas, '*Naitika mattu Bhaktiya Vacanagalu*' (Moral and Devotional Vacanas) in 1927, Halakatti highlighted the value and importance of devotion as delineated in vacanas.

During the late colonial period, the concept of Bhakti was given a new currency in India. The resurgence of the concept of Bhakti in the scholarly works owes much to the retrieval of the Bhakti movement (13th-- 16th century) of medieval India in the colonial period. The retrieval of Bhakti movement served the purpose of showing the world that India, especially Hindu religion, was the place of many faiths. The medieval Bhakti movement was understood as a protest movement within Hindu religion. It was given a prominent position in the modern literary and cultural life of India because of its enriching contribution to spiritual, literary and religious traditions. Several Bhakti saints like Meera Bai (Rajastan), Sant Tukaram (Maharashtra), Kabirdas (UP), Tulasidas (UP), Chaitanya (Bengal), Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa (both Karnataka) and Sufi saints from

many parts of India were associated with Bhakti movement. These saints belonged to several professional communities who rarely had a direct relationship with the Brahmin community. The colonial Indian intellectuals were attracted to the philosophy and doctrines of Bhakti. The retrieval of this movement by the colonial intellectuals:

a) To show the glorious and radical Indian past,

b) To demonstrate to the colonial masters the co-existence of the diverse traditions in India,

c) To achieve national integration.

Reference to Bhakti movement was not without contradiction. If we closely examine the colonial discourses of the Bhakti movement, emphasis on the anti-Vedic, anti-priest and anti-Brahmin factors strikes our attention. The retrieval of the Bhakti movement also served the purpose of criticising the contemporary Brahmin hegemony and glorifies the contribution of the non-Brahmin Bhakti saints to spiritual, mystical and religious growth. A distinguishing feature of this retrieval was the identification of Bhakti saints with particular communities as well as the demonstration of their ability to transcend sectarian feelings through the powers of Bhakti.[15] That is, universal concerns of the saints were highlighted in a romantic mode to demonstrate that though the Bhakti saints lived in specific regions, belonged to specific community and were influenced by their specific professions, their doctrines of Bhakti were interpreted as universal and radical. For instance, in Karnataka the Kuruba community showed a lot of interest in retrieving Kanakadasa and his *keertanes*. He was constructed as a radical saint because he was able to show the Brahmin priests that Bhakti was greater than priestly rituals, caste discriminations, class divisions, and orthodox rituals. The retrieval of the Bhakti movement was part of the larger nationalist imagination. Being part of such nationalist imagination, Halakatti also included Basava and other Shiva Sharanas in the medieval Bhakti movement even though the Virasaiva movement happened much before the

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[15] Recent work by David Lorenzen (1987) has challenged the conventional interpretations of the Bhakthi movement (as libratory, radical and subversive). He argues that the contemporary followers of Kabir use Kabir's teachings—whatever their original intent or function—in order to reject the marginality assigned to them in the hierarchical caste order.

medieval period. Another reason for interpolating moral value with devotion was to clear the misconception that the vacanakaras violated their own preaching by immoral practices[16]. One such gap between the words and deeds of the vacanakaras was anti-Brahmin elements in the vacanas. Halakatti always tried to clear such contradictions, because on the one hand he argued that vacanakaras were not sectarian and they fought for equality of all, on other the other hand he had to respond to anti-Brahmin elements in the vacanas, which were contrary to Universalism as claimed by Halakatti. A vacana containing anti-Brahmin elements exemplifies the debates around universal versus particular,

> Your destiny does not allow you to look forward. You are like an ox that turns ceaselessly round and round the block of wood in the oil mill.
> O mortals, be not ruined in vain, but worship the Linga ceaselessly.
> Our Kudalasangama Deva is not pleased with those thread-bearers that repeat the 'mantra' of cutting the necks of other creatures (Halakatti, 1922: 39).

This vacana, translated by Halakatti, criticises the meaningless rituals of the Brahmins and denounces them because they recited the *mantra* and at the same time committed violence. The thread-bearers (referring to Brahmins) are caricatured as blind oxen whose action is meaningless. In a footnote Halakatti gives the meaning of 'cutting the necks of other creatures' as "those Brahman priests who wear the sacred thread and repeat the liturgy which accompanies animal sacrifice"(1922:39). The vacanas as cited above, acquired significance for the Virasaivas because its target was the orthodox Brahmins who lived in the modern period and practiced caste discrimination. When such anti-Brhamin vacanas were criticised, he showed that the vacanakaras did not criticise all Brahmins. He always contended that that Basava did not preach anything against the Brahmins but he revolted against those Brahmins who practiced caste discrimination in the name of rituals and scriptures. Halakatti was sure that Basava and other Shiva Sharanas were protestant, liberal and radical social reformers who fought for the sake of the liberation of the downtrodden and women. For this noble cause, they did not hesitate to criticize conservatism. He was of the opinion that vacanas contained many elements of Veda-Upanishads but vacanakaras never hesitated to criticize the social evils in society

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[16] For more details on the accusations hurled against the vacanakaras see an article *Vacnagala Vivechaneyu* (Thinking about Vacanas) written by *Orva Yatharthavadi* in Mysore Star (March, 1932)

be it Hindu or Jaina. What is interesting to note in *'Naitika mattu Bhaktiya Vacanagalu'* (1927) is that Halakatti did not mention the *Shatstalas,* they carried the name of Viraśaiva religion. Once again the main concern of Halakatti was to free the vacanas from communal markers. Thus, Halakatti, through out his intellectual career, carried out this dilemma of including and excluding the doctrines of *Shatstalas*[11] and highlighting only selected vacanakaras as radical and revolutionary.

Another aspect of Halaktti's contradiction was his persistent identification with the Hindu identity. He was very certain that the Viraśaivas belonged to the Hindu religion and the Viraśaiva religion was an integral part of Hindu religion. This emphasis on the Hindu identity was directed against the Muslim identity. The articulation of Hindu identity could have been due to the religious circumstances existing then and the majoritarian Hindu norms and visibility of Hindu nationalist discourses in India. Halakatti even went to the extent of saying that Viraśaivas were another "stream within the Hindu religion" (Rahamat Tarikere, 2000:54). He was proud that "Vacanakaras were rationalists in the Hindu religion" (Halakatti, 1982: 16). Therefore, he had a task of promoting Viraśaivism as an integral part of Hindu religion but as a secular voice within that religion. Besides this, there was a 'danger' of religious conversions and temple entry movements of the Dalits all over India at that time along with simultaneous social reformation of other caste/communities. The Viraśaiva elite was quick enough to respond to the dangers of conversion, especially conversion of Viraśaivas into Islam or Christianity ... However, with regards to their Hindu identity, the Virasaivas differed from their Tamil counterparts who led the Dravidian self-respect movement in Tamilnadu. Unlike Periyar Ramaswamy, the leader of the self-respect movement, Halakatti, Hardekar

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[17] The second edition of *Vacana Shastra Saara* (1932) contained *Shatstalas.*

[18] *'Deendar Anjuman Episode'* in 1926 is revealed the anxiety of the Viraśaivas about the 'dangers' of religious conversions and their desire to identify themselves as Hindus. This episode awakened religious feelings among the Viraśaivas. Their feelings were directed against the Muslim community. Deendar Anjuman, a Muslim who proclaimed himself as the incarnation of Chennabasaveshwara, collected contributions, donations from Virasaivas and converted some of them into Islam. His conversion activities were seen as 'threat' to the community. Therefore, the community leaders found it necessary to safeguard their interests from outside influences. *Mysore Star* carried many letters and appeals to the Viraśaivas to be careful about Deendar and warned not to succumb to his tactics and fake miracles (Mysore Star, 1926:4 and Yogindar Sikand, 2002).

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Manjappa and other Viraśaiva reformists did not pose a serious challenge to Hindu nationalism. They thought that it was not necessary to the Viraśaiva community to sever its relationship with the Hindu religion. This was also a reaction to the efforts of quite a few members of the community to form a minority religion and asserting a separate identity of Viraśaivism. Halakatti never entertained any such of creating an alternative to Hinduism. The upper castes within the community were not ready to give up their privileged position in the Hindu religion and the social status they were enjoying.

Vacanas and History

It is a well-established fact by now that most of the nationalist scholars were working with in the framework of the positivistic, objective, impartial, scientific rationality. Hence, authenticity of the past was accepted only if it was verifiable by empirical details. The dichotomy of history and fiction had already been accepted as two opposed discursive practices. Scientifically verifiable details of the past formed history, while mythical world constituted fiction. Religious moorings in the myths were, thus, seen as metaphorical. In place of myths, historically verified 'past' was recognized by the historiographers. Historicizing a community's past acquired utmost significance for the local communities because it gave a scientific and rational explanation of the experiences of the past. The Viraśaivas had already realized the importance of their history and had made several attempts to construct their history. In the previous chapter we discussed such endeavours in detail in the context of Viraśaiva-Brahmin conflicts over the question of Brahminhood. However, during the 1920s, the nationalists considered the history of the community constructed by their predecessors, as unscientific and irrational. Vacanas, Halakatti believed, would give a 'true' picture of the community, its history and religion. The consciousness of history in Halakatti was marked by his constant efforts to distinguish twelfth century history or *itihasa* from other narratives of the past, i.e. myths and folklore. Thus, he was engaged in two tasks at a time i.e. displacing the community's past as narrativised in the Virasaiva *puranas* and consolidating it through vacanas. Ablur and Managoli stone inscriptions were really boons to him because they were already recognized as empirical evidences to show Basava's life history, though many expressed doubts about their accuracy and adequacy. Establishing Basava as a historical figure

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automatically involved establishing him as the *author* of vacanas. But the recovery of the life history of Basava was not in the usual mode of mythical or fictive character, but literally as a subject of history. Subsequent researches on the twelfth century Karnataka convinced Halakatti that vacanas were the authentic sources to understand the twelfth century Viraśaivism and the life history of Basava. According to him,

> We can trace the true history of Basaweshwara in his vacanas. His broadmindedness and virtues are very clear in every vacana composed by him (Halakatti, 1942:6).

Thus, the construction of the life history of Basava did not accord much importance to *Basava Purana*. He was seen as embodying humane qualities. In the post-colonial period also, as we have already noted in the first chapter, the three plays also highlighted the 'human qualities' of Basava rather than deifying him.

For Halakatti, there was a 'break' in the continuity of vacana tradition. He believed that during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Viraśaivas forgot the vacanas and ignored the Sharana revolution. This glorious past was one of radicalism and fight for equality and brotherhood. The 'historical break' was not caused by colonialism alone but was also the result of "importance accorded to Brahmin rituals and beliefs" (Halakatti, 1982:38). Halakatti held that the Muslim and Marathi accounts of the local Viraśaiva chieftains and their kingdoms in the northern and the middle Karnataka did not give adequate and correct information (Halakatti, 1982: 75-76). Therefore, his constant attempts to prove the truth and historicity of the Shiva Sharanas paved way for researches on the history of Viraśaiva kings, queens, kingdoms, saints and poets. Halakatti demonstrated the 'true' essence of Karnataka in the glories of Viraśaiva kings and queens (Keladi rulers) who fought for protecting the "Hindutwa" (Halakatti, 1926:2). Kings of Keladi, Swadhi and the queen of Kittur, thus, became the cultural icons of not only Virasaivas but also Karnataka. Halakatti believed that these icons stood for bravery and patriotism and the modern Viraśaivas should emulate them.

Vacana Tradition, Kannada and Nationalism

Early decades of the twentieth century were also a moment of producing history: a history of/for nation and of/for Karnataka. Halakatti and others fostered a sense of Kannada nationalism. The Kannada nationalism intended to unite the Kannadigas scattered in four different regions for the unification of Karnataka[19]. But it was not antagonistic to Indian nationalism. Invocation of Kannada nationalism required invention of a historical past. Mere invention of a historical past was not enough. It was to be recognized by others as 'true' and representative. Halakatti did this by employing the vacanas. Employing vacanas served two purposes. One was to convince the Viraśaivas the importance of Kannada and Karnataka and another was to demonstrate that the Viraśaivas were not confined to only caste feelings. He tried to prove the worth of Viraśaivas by highlighting the contribution of vacanakaras in enriching the 'Kannada culture' with Hindu orientations. Thus, the relationship between vacanas and Kannada made it possible for Halakatti and others to imagine a secular space that cut across religious and community feelings.

Halakatti did not find it necessary to standardize or modernize Kannada language like his contemporaries such as B.M.Shrikantaiah nor felt a need to incorporate folk elements in Kannada poetry like Bendre.[20] Therefore, he did not bother to highlight the artistic or aesthetic qualities of vacans. Instead he projected the vacana movement as the most radical and progressive movement that happened in the history of Karnataka. By upholding the vacanas as expressions of the radicalism, he projected the distinct place of the Viraśaivas in Karnataka's history. He was very proud that vacanakaras composed vacanas in *simple Kannada* and according to him the vacanakaras were very popular among the masses. He was impressed by the vacanakaras' attempt to create love for one's

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[19] For Halakatti's views on the unification Karnataka see *Halaktti Nudi Purusha* (1982) edited by Shantarasa. Shantarasa has edited Halakatti's speech on Kannada unification. Halakatti gave the speech in the eleventh annual meeting of the ABVM (1933).

[20] B.M. Shrikantaiah and Da.Ra. Bendre are highly regarded as the pioneers of the Navodaya movement. While the former is known as the moderniser of Kannada poetry, Bendre is famously known for bringing folk elements in his poetry.

region and language, eight hundred years before the modern nationalist feelings emerged in India. He imagined the existence of a united Karnataka in twelfth century. He admired the vacanakaras for spreading the Viraśaiva religion and Kannada culture. In fact, Halakatti was inspired by them work for mobilising the Viraśaivas for the cause of freedom of India and unification of Karnataka. In his presidential speech in the annual gathering of the ABVM (1933), Halakatti asked the Viraśaivas to emulate the vacanakaras, their values and actively participate in the overall growth of Karnataka and Kannada.

There were many who felt like Halakatti. For example, R. B. Alabala's article in *Shivanubhava* (1927) compares the vacanas to Wordsworth's poetry, which is well known for its 'simple' and 'uncomplicated' diction. Alabala is proud that Sharanas used a simple Kannada to reach to the common people six hundred years before Wordsworth thought about simple diction (Alabala, 1927:13). This emphasis on language was to prove that the Shiva Sharanas lived, thought and composed vacanas in day-to-day language in order to reach to the ordinary people. Since the old Kannada was associated with Viraśaiva *puranas* that were generally inaccessible to the average readers, vaeanas in "simple" Kannada were considered as appropriate alternatives to understand the doctrines of Viraśaivism. Halakatti always held that vacanakaras simplified Vedas, Agamas and Upanishads and they were easily understandable through the vaeanas.

Halakatti was not alone in the task of popularising the vaeanas. There were many Brahmin secular scholars who were attracted to vaeanas. For instance, B. M. Shrikantaiah's idea of 'standard' Kannada accorded a prominent place for vaeanas and vacanakaras. T.S.Venkannayya, A.N.Krishrao, Kapataral Krishnarao were other Brahmin scholars who were instrumental in establishing and institutionalising vaeanas and the Viraśaiva *puranas* as an integral part of Kannada literature. Halakatti's other contemporaries like M. R. Shrinivasamurthy, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar and R.R.Diwakar were prominent Brahmin scholars who made valuable contribution to the growth of Viraśaiva studies, especially vaeanas. R. R. Diwakar's *Vacana Shastra Rahasya* (1936) was a notable contribution to the philosophy of vaeanas. Shrinivasa

Murthy's *Vacana Dharma Saara* (1944) is considered to be a veritable interpretation of vacanas. He also wrote *Bhakthi Bandari Basavannanavaru* (Basavanna, the Wealth of Devotion) in 1944. He used vacanas as analytical categories to pass wrote excellent commentaries on *Basava Purana* and *Singiraja Purana.* He was invited by the Viraśaiva mutts to give discourses on the Viraśaiva *puranas* and vacanas. Masti translated Basava's vacanas into English (1935) under the title *Sayings of Basava.* All these scholars recognized Viraśaiva literature, especially vacanas, as a valuable contribution to *Hindu religion and society.* This wide circle of scholars and their common interest in the Viraśaiva literature paved way for the acceptance of vacanas by the general public and the gradual decline in importance of Shaiva works in Sanskrit. By 1930s, vacanas emerged as grand narratives of Viraśaiva religion, history and literature. For instance, Hardekar Manjappa wrote *Basava Charitre* (history of Basava) in 1924 on the basis of vacanas.

The preceding details pose a peculiar situation. As communities, the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas were somewhat hostile to each other. But while claiming the glorious past of Karnataka, even Brahmin scholars were eager to project vacanas as part of the history of Karnataka. Then, how do we account for our own outlining in the previous chapter of the hostile relations that shaped the Brahmin and non-Brahmin discourses of the time? A close look at the affairs of the time would tell us this is no big contradiction. The Brahmin scholars were not only interested in giving an objective history of Karnataka but also eager to prove that they no longer represent the orthodoxy of the community. Moreover, as the hegemonic group they had the cultural power to provide leadership to all communities of Karnataka. As for as the Viraśaivas were concerned, they were happy to see their texts in the cultural map of Karnataka for they also desired to show that they too were secular and not at all sectarian. This peculiar but unsustainable logic brought the several intellectuals together in the larger project of national freedom and linguistic identity of cultural nationalism. But it was proved to be a fragile coalition and collaboration because at times these scholars were at loggerheads, which need to be understood in the background of their community beliefs and practices. Masti Venkatesh Iyengar's translations of vacanas are a representative of the difference existing between

the Viraśaivas and the Brahmins regarding what should constitute the cultural imagination of **India,** Hindu religion and Karnataka. In the next part we will discuss the differences existing in the nationalist discourses of Halakatti and Masti[21].

The Politics of Representation

In 1930s, the Viraśaiva community had made very significant interventions in political and social spheres predominated by the Brahmins. People like Halakatti were moderate in their views about the Brahmin dominance. He always believed in the politics of consensus. His relationship with the Kannada writers of the time was premised on the idea of Karnataka. Therefore, he did not articulate caste differences with the Brahmins but visualised a unified Viraśaiva community, Hindu religion and Karnataka. This point has already been explained in the preceding discussions. Like Halakatti there were many Brahmin scholars who avoided the language of caste and developed a vision of unified nation-state. However, as said earlier, they differed regarding what should go **into** the making of nation-state. Masti's views about vacanas are the best example to notice the differences[22].

In the first edition (1935), Masti's idea of nationalism accommodated the ideals of vacanas. He believed that nationalist feelings were very much part of the Indians in the twelfth century. He noted,

> Its history indicates that the national soul was awake at the time and was struggling to be freed of much evil that ruled society in the name of religion. The mind of the nation thus struggling to be free is well reflected in the life and thoughts of the leader of the social movement—in his noble character and earnest faith and in his sincere devotion to truth (Masti, 1935:64).

In the above remarks, Masti constructed Basava as a national figure and his vacanas carried what he stood for in his life. In the later version (1983) he gave a different set of

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[21] Born into a Tamil Iyengar family, Masti is well known as the 'father of short stories' in Kannada. Also he wrote novels, plays, and poetry. His novels and research publications connected with Virasaiva religion and community were controversial and the Virasaiva community considered him as anti-Virasaiva writer.

[22] He has given a long review of the twelfth century Virasaiva movement in the introduction to the translations of Basava's vacanas. The translation were published twice in 1935 and 1983.

reasons for translation. He wrote that since vacanas preached goodness of heart, monotheism and compassion for the poor, he found it necessary to translate and popularise them. He also highlighted the moral and didactic features of the vacanas and he was impressed by their universal values. Unlike the Viraśaivas, he did not consider the doctrines of *Shatstalas* as something to be proud of. He did not have doubts about the fact that the Viraśaivas were part and parcel of the Hindu religion and the Viraśaiva movement attempted an internal reform of it. For him *Sanatana Dharma* of the ancient period signified Hindu religion [23]. Masti considered Basava a Brahmin, who later on renounced his Brahminhood. According to Masti, the name Basaweshwara with *Ishwara* as the suffix was, "merely the sanskritised form of Basavanna" (Masti, 1983:1). He held that the vacanas of Basava were relevant in modern times for they do not preach atheism. He considered them as India's answer to the West whose excessive rationality and modern style of life encouraged atheism. He was sure that the vacanas of Basava could retrieve one's faith in God. He was angry with Communism of his day, which, according to him, was responsible for the loss of faith in God. According to him communism need not necessarily deny the existence of God because Marx's ideas about God was relevant during his days but not 'now'. In India we always had ideas of an egalitarian society, which was well articulated in vacanas, much before Marx conceived them.

The most important point that he makes in the introduction was the way he dealt with the vexing issue of caste system. He detested the modern caste system. But he feels, "the caste system had no doubt taken shape originally with a good purpose" (ibid: 4). According to him, in the past, the system of caste held the people together with its own way of life and practices. By practices, he meant indirectly referring to the *Varna* system "different professions assigned to communities in the past" (ibid) But he resented the contemporary politics based on caste. He noted, "Each man has a vote and his vote is claimed by his leaders on grounds of caste" (ibid: 5). He wished that the earlier system of caste (that existed prior to Basava.) would prevail in India and called for present leaders

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[23] There were many Brahmin intellectuals who argued for Sanatana Dharma because they identified themselves with it. In this regard, Peter van der Veer notices "In the nineteenth century the term Sanathana Dharma came to stand for "orthodox Brahminic Hinduism", a specific "ideological" formation intended to protect "traditionalist" values from attacks by reform movement, such as the Arya Samaj" (der Veer, 1996: 294).

to strive for the retrieval of this past. He complained against great teachers like Basava, Guru Nanak, Buddha and Raja Ram Mohan Roy for adding a separate sect to the already existing sects and castes. However, he had faith in personalities like Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Vivekananda whose ideas did not lead to separate sects. He strongly believed that vacanas could lead to a casteless society. He hated any misuse of vacanas for casteist purposes. In the second edition Masti seemed to be positive abut the future of Hinduism. He called for safeguarding Hinduism and for that purpose, he found vacanas very relevant. He wanted to safeguard Hinduism because he felt that there was a challenge to the "true spirit of Hinduism and past caste system" (Masti, 1983: 3).

A brief comparison between Halakatti and Masti will clearly reveal the differences that we are trying to understand. Kannada and Karnataka helped Halakatti and others to mask the caste hierarchy prevailing among the Viraśaivas. As said earlier, Halakatti never considered Viraśaivas forming different castes but visualised a united Viraśaiva community. He viewed such community in positive terms and imagined something that belonged to the past. That is why, he always spoke against internal caste conflicts of the Viraśaivas in the modern period and called for developing a strong unity for the ulterior motive of serving the nation. This sense of strong unity did not address the issue of caste practices and castiesm of the Viraśaivas against the lower classes/castes and they were always excluded from the public debate. We do not have any evidence to show that either Halakatti or Manjappa endorsed the caste movement of Ambedkar. It seems they were more bothered to secure a legitimate space for the 'united Viraśaiva community' in the national scene rather than addressing the others.

Masti did not translate any vacana that criticised the Brahmins. Like Halakatti he also avoided any reference to caste politics and caste discrimination as social institution. Masti avoided reference to modern caste system by means of "disavowing it publicly and politically" (Pandyan, 2002:1137). His disavowing and conspicuous silence on the political assertions of the non-Brahmin backward class movement and the non-recognition of caste politics "proscribes and stigmatises the language of caste in the public sphere"(ibid:1738). Masti's insistence on safeguarding Hinduism and retrieve

Sanatana Dharma incarcerates caste into "past system with good purposes" (Masti, 1983:4) and consequently, caste politics of his days is mystified. He understood caste practices or problems of the contemporary period as a social institution that had undergone changes for the worse and hence something needed to be done to retrieve the originality of the caste system but never as something that persisted in terms of consolidating itself vis-à-vis colonial imperialism and other caste/communities. His translation may be understood as pragmatic exercise to subsume, in the first instance, the anti-Brahmin sentiments of the Viraśaivas into the larger national movement and later on into the Hindu religion. In the second instance, he sought to retrieve the ancient Hindu religion based on the past caste system with hierarchical social and professional structures as its base.

The instance of Masti signifies the modern Brahmin's ability to represent the other i.e. the Viraśaivas and at the same time subsume them in his narratives. Even though Halkatti had appreciated his translation (1931:156:158), Masti was not always received well by the Viraśaivas with enthusiasm. On many occasion, they were enraged by his writings. For instance, Masti's novel *Chennabasavanayaka* (1956) landed up in a controversy in 1958. The Viraśaiva community carried out protests against the novel when the Central Sahitya Akademi decided to translate the novel into fourteen languages of India. The main objection to the novel was that it ridiculed the Viraśaiva queen *Veerammaji* of the eighteenth century Bidanur. It was accused that the novel depicted the Viraśaivas of Bidanur and the Viraśaiva queen as cowards and held them responsible for the establishment of the British rule in the region.

V

Challenges to the Paradigm Shifts

The new ways of interpreting vacanas and Viraśaivism pioneered by people like Halakatti had their critics with in the community. Such critics were unhappy with Halakatti mainly because they obviously thought that the divinity attached to the sacred Shaiva texts and the Varna system would fade away due to the new conception of history and Viraśaivism. Secondly, it might land Viraśaiva narratives in the midst of masses

opening the floodgates of interpretation. Thirdly, they were uncomfortable with mapping the historical lineage of the modern Viraśaivas to Vacanakaras. We can notice one or two such attempts, which challenged and questioned the reliability and authenticity of Halkatti's research on history.

An anonymous letter in the *Mysore Star* by *Orva Mathabhimaani* (Feb. 1932) criticised Halakatti's obsession for vacanas. He warned against giving too much importance to vacanas ignoring the Viraśaiva *puranas*. He opined that due to vacanas many contradictions have arisen in the Viraśaiva community. According to him, vacanas went against the ethos of *puranas* and therefore, prioritising vacanas would affect divine status of the *puranas*. He suspected if the Shiva Sharanas composed the vacanas at all! This suspicion arose because the writer thought that there was not a single commonality that could be found between *Basava Purana* and the vacanas of Basava. The writer drew comparison between these two texts because both were revered by the Viraśaivas. However, the recent emphasis on vacanas was not in good taste, according to the writer. He noticed several contradictory views about Viraśaivism, if vacanas were given priority. For instance, if Basava's vacanas condemned adultery, violence and evil *Basava Purana* was full of hostility and animosity. *Puranas* depicted violence around Bijjala's death, while vacanas preached non-violence. Similarly, Allama Prabhu's vacanas could not be compared to *'Prabhulinga Leele'*. He advised not to publish vacanas which would spoil the Kannada society and literature. He praised the contribution of Virashaiva scholars such as Nandimath, Veerasangappa and Vaarada Mallappa who had done extensive work on Viraśaiva works in Sanskrit and thus popularised the religious tenets of Viraśaivism. He wanted Halakatti and others to follow their path because they had a very clear vision for the welfare of the community. A note by the editor of *Mysore Star* invited responses from the readers to the letter.

Yet another anonymous article titled *Vacanagala Vivechaneyu* (Reasoning Vacanas) in the *Mysore Star* by *Orva Yatharthavadi* (a realist.) rejected the vacanas out rightly. The article stated that,

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..they [vacanas] are responsible for the division of the Lingayath community. In every village one can see conflicts among the Lingayaths. Vacanas justified sinful rituals of devoting ones own wife to Jangama. They contain abusive and uncivilized words for many lower caste devotees also composed them. The inferior culture of these lower caste Sharanas has spoiled the beauty of Kannada language (Yatharthavadi, 1932:3)[24].

A small write up by Shri Siddharama Shivacharya (1938) of *Shankara Sanskrit College,* Yadagiri, severely denounced the attempts to change the Viraśaiva community into a casteless society on the basis of vacanas. He warned Halakatti and other reformists against spoiling and misleading the innocent people with false knowledge of Viraśaivism, social reform, equality and anti-Vedic sentiments (Shivacharya, 1938:11). Interestingly, for *Yatharhavaadi* as well as for Shivacharya, the caste pollution, conflicts and the impurity of language caused by Vacanas is disturbing. The letter signals towards the tensions among the different sects of Viraśaivism in those days due to such literature. Another interesting point that we notice here is the relationship between language and caste. Both the writers opine that 'bad' and "unrefined' language used by the lower caste Sharanas spoilt the Kannada language and the Viraśaiva social system. Such views went contrary to B.M.Shrikantaiah's appreciation for vacanas and his idea of standard Kannada.

Halakatti probably was wary of these comments. We do not have any record of Halakatti's responses to the issues raised by the above-cited critics. It is also important to note here that these criticisms were from Mysore while Halakatti was active in the northern part of Karnataka. However he who had once demonstrated that many vacanakaras new Sansktrit as a response to those who denounced that they were ignorant of Sanskrit language, now found himself in an awkward position to defend vacanas composed in 'simple' and 'understandable' Kannada. He did not deny the criticisms and the allegations but justified them by attributing a noble cause to the Vacanakaras. In a preface to *Hosa Paddhatiya Basaweshwarana Vacanagalu* (New Version of Basava's Vacanas), Halakatti wrote that Basava was always immersed in the welfare activities. Basava showed to us the world of fishermen, washer men, hunters, warriors and cultivators. He enunciated sublime philosophy in his vacanas by using their language.

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[24] 15th, March, 1932.

What Halakatti wanted to prove was that the metaphors of dog, rabbit, fox, crow and chameleon in Basava's vacanas symbolized the good and the bad aspects of human life. According to him, Basava excelled in using such common words for the noble cause of exhibiting love and compassion for the poor. A close look at these debates reveal the upper caste bias regarding Kannada Literature, its tastes, and notions of tradition and purity of linguistic forms etc. Even Halakatti could talk about the egalitarian caste less society and defend high culture taste in the same breath and depict Basava as a patron of lower caste Sharanas. One can see a patron-client relationship operating in Halakatti's concept of low/high culture.

Manufacturing Consensus

The discourses of Kannada were ways of securing hegemonic influence. But this hegemony was possible for Halakatti due to his moderate approach. This moderate approach implied manufacturing consensus among different sections of the society in Karnataka. As Mark J. Smith points out, "It [hegemony] is an attempt by different classes, alliances and social forces to achieve 'political, intellectual and moral leadership in order to win the active consent" (Smith, 2002:68). In order to win the active consent from different sections of the society, Halakatti could not discard Viraśaiva *puranas*; could not dissociate from the religious leaders and could not fail to take other sections of the society into confidence for popularising vacanas and obtaining their acceptance to his endeavours. He appreciated and endorsed the contributions made by non-Viraśaiva scholars like Alur Venkatrao, Kapatral Krishnarao, M.R.Shrinivasamurthy (Halakatti, 1982:76) and Masti Venkatesh Iyengar (Halakatti, 1931:156).

Though he was not happy with internal conflicts of Viraśaiva mutts, he could not oppose them for he needed their patronage for his mission. He was in constant touch with the religious heads in his effort to gain legitimacy for vacanas and popularise them. In his autobiography, he has given several accounts of his visits and conversations with several religious leaders apprising them of the value of vacanas. Once when the prominent leaders of the community visited him at his home, he got an opportunity to appraise the importance of vacanas to Hanagal Kumaraswamy, Jangina Murigayya, Ve.Mu.Buddayya

Swamy Puranikmatha and Revanasiddashastri. These Viraśaiva seers admired the valuable knowledge hidden in the vacanas and encouraged Halakatti to go ahead with his endeavour. Gradually, many Viraśaiva mutts gave importance to vacanas and religious discourses on vacanas for the purpose of developing Bhakti among their followers. Since Viraśaiva mutts were the centres of learning and scholarship, Halakatti could not prevent deification of Basava. For the Viraśaiva religious heads, vacanas justified worshiping Basava in the form of *DwithiyaShambu* (second incarnation of Lord Shiva).

Eventually, vacanas became part of 'commonsense' of the public sphere in Karnataka. They were no more treated as the exclusive treasure of Viraśaivism but as the wealth that any Kannadiga should be proud of. Who will not be? That too when much before many societies desired to be called as 'civilised' the Kannada community witnessed a social revolution for a just society in Karnataka? Hence, vacanas were included in the school syllabus as well, the ultimate gesture of legitimacy given by Government institution. Inclusion of vacanas in the school syllabus was a milestone in popularising of vacanas. By the time Halakatti passed away in 1964, Karnataka University had already taken up the task of popularising and encouraging studies on vacanas and Viraśaiva literature.

VI

Vacanas as Kannada Lyrics

Converting vacanas into poetry is a significant part of the modern history of vacana tradition. Kannada poetry was another discursive space in which the Viraśaiva scholars made a very significant and deliberate intervention. The history of this intervention is relevant for us to show the disagreements in the late colonial period over the 'literary sensibilities' of vacanakaras, especially Basava, and the efforts made to overcome the disagreements. The credit for initiating the debates on the literary value of vacanas in the Kannada literary circles must go to S. S. Basavanal, an important Viraśaiva scholar and a Kannada professor. He was instrumental in interpreting vacanas from literary and linguistic points of view. As a Kannada scholar, he sought to edit vacanas along the lines of modern poetic style. He divided vacanas and re-structured

them on the lines of formal features of modern poetry in English. He paid attention to rhythm, alliterations and meter.

Basavanal did not ignore the efforts of his predecessors in popularising the vacanas. He used Halakatti's new anthology '*Hosa Paddhathiya Basaveshwarana Vachanagalu*' for this literary task. He thought that the literary and linguistic aspects of vacanas could obliterate the popular notions of vacanas as divine texts. He took up the task of freeing vacanas from communal clutches. In the preface to *Basavannanavara Shatstalagalu* (1952), he consciously avoided any reference to the contentious debates around Viraśaivism. This was an attempt to overlook the religious controversies during that time. Once again Basava's vacanas were chosen for the task.

Basavanal was aware of the criticism against vacanas that they (especially vacanas of lower caste Sharanas with 'indecent' words in them) had spoilt the 'beauty' of Kannada language. There were many doubts raised about the original authors of vacanas. Therefore, his first task was to firmly establish the authorship of vacanas and to *purify the language* of the vacanas. While doing so, he did not discuss any contentious issue around the question of authorship. He ignored them and reiterated that Basava was the original composer of the vacanas. He drew inspiration from the modernized Bible of the 'original' Hebrew language and several adapted versions of Shakespeare. He found many similarities between vacanas and Confucious's *Analects* and Tomas A. Kempis's '*Imitation of Christ*'.These two works were not considered as part of literature for a long time. But in the modern period, they were considered as poetry. Such comparisons were necessary for Basavanal to prove that vacanas could also become popular and famous like the writings of Confucius and Kempis. A comparison between other mystic poets of India and vacanakaras was also drawn by Basavanal to show the significance of vacanakaras in the history and culture of Karnataka. Mystic poets of the medieval period like Tukaram, Kabir, Mira Bai and Sufists like Baba Kuhi and Jilji were compared to vacanakaras who, according to Basavanal, lived and popularised Bhakti and mysticism much before the mystic poets (Basavanal and Shrinivas Iyengar, 1940:21-26).

Since rhyme was seen as the core of poetry during his period, Basavanal laid special stress on the rhythmic qualities of vacanas. In accordance with the English rhyme scheme, he restructured vacanas by dividing them into many small lines so as to minimize its prosaic structure. Metrical and grammatical variations in vacanas were highlighted. He added punctuations such as comma, exclamatory mark, colon, and quotation marks to make them more meaningful. His main intention was to make vacanas "melodious and meaningful" (Basavanal, 1998:85). An example of a vacana re-written by him is as follows:

> Alas, my Lord,
>   Why made you me—
>   this thing of nought,
>   a vain travailer here,
>   bereft of grace?
> Have you no pity, Lord?
> Alas, you have none!
> Listen, then, and say,
>   Were it not better done
>   a tree, a plant to create
>   than wretched me,
> O Lord, Kudala Sangama! (Basavanal, 1998:42).

Despite these efforts, we find some kind of hesitation in him to consider vacanas as poetry in true sense of the term. He was aware that he needes more accurate and factual data before comparing the twelfth century 'poets' with the modern poets. He was moderate in his claims and admitted that the vacanas could be read from multiple perspectives. He was aware that one could restructure them according to one's own understanding (Basavanal, 1998:85). Even Kuvempu, the first Jnanapeeth awardee in Kannada, was not ready to accept Basava as a poet. He held that "though literary elements are found in vacanas we need to give attention to the great life of Basavanna" (Kuvempu, 1983:39)[25]. According to him, Basava was not a poet in the sense we define a poet today and he did not intend to write literature. But Basava, Kuvempu appreciated, definitely rejuvenated Kannada literature in the twentieth century and he is a *Karmayogi* (saint of action).

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[25] Kuvempu wrote "Vacanakara Basavannanavaru" in 1949 for a Kannada journal *Prabhudda Karnataka*. This article was included in an anthology *'Vibhuti Puje'* (1953).

Basavanal was not alone in the task of converting vacanas into lyrics. There were many others who felt strongly that vacanas should be included in school curriculum as part of 'moral education'. Such inclusion was intended to dispel,

- ...the clouds of communalism among our pupils, developing in them the divine spark of the universal religion (Hunsanal 1942:40)[26]

A major success was achieved in changing the perception that vacanas were mere moral doctrines when they were included in school and college curriculum for now they were seen as part of Kannada poetry. Vacanas were no longer considered as 'religious' but were appreciated for their literary and linguistic beauty. This does not mean that literary and linguistic dimensions of vacanas completely replaced the religious overtones of vacanas. But surely, this literary approach was a way-out for the reformists to 'rescue' the vacanas from religious moorings of Virasaivism.[27] By 1970s, at the height of the Navya literary movement, vacanas had been established firmly as an integral part of Kannada poetry. When read closely, Basvanal was not merely engaged in the task of poeticising' vacanas. His demonstration of poetic features in vacanas included criticism of the blind rituals and beliefs of the Brahminic order (Basavanal, 1998:83). He upheld the greatness of Lord Shiva and *istalinga* as revealed in the vacanas (Basavanal, 1998:89).

The 1940s did not witness the sort of high pitched and heated debates that the previous decades had witnessed over religious status of the vacanas. The nationalists had

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[26] Hunsanal gives many suggestions to include vacanas in educating the public (1942). He suggests: The instruction of vacanas should be both direct and indirect. They should be properly grouped and graded in accordance with various forms. They can be grouped into 1) The Narrative vacanas that have direct bearing upon the life of vacanakaras, 2) the vacanas of morality, and 3) the reflective vacanas. Further they can be divided into the Poetry section and the Prose section. The narrative or the descriptive vacanas should be taught to the lower classes. The students should be able to understand easily the lives of vacanakaras. The moral elements of vacanas should be studied by the middle school students. That is, the ethical maxims of Virasaivism should be explained indirectly through the lives of the great vacanakaras.

[27] Parallel to such literary phenomenon in Karnataka can be found in Tamilnadu too especially in the debates between the non-Brahmin Shaivites and the progressive intellectuals. A.R.Venkatachalapathy's article on the relationship between the Dravidian movement and the Shaivites points out how, during the 1940s, the classical texts of the Tamilians were defended by S.S.Bharati and Sethu Pillai on literary and aesthetic grounds rather than on religious or Shaivite terms (1995:767). According to him, it was the conflicts between the Shaivite Vellalars and the progressive non-Brahmins over the ancient texts of Tamilnadu that resulted in the shift of Tamil texts from classical and religious status to literary texts.

more or less made their position clear vis-à-vis the conservatives. Gradually the critique of conservative Shaivism in the community lost much of its sting and the versions of the secular, literary and scholarly intellectuals came to stay. But it cannot be forgotten that it was not achieved through either negotiation or by consensus. It represents a nexus between power and knowledge. The efforts of scholars such as Halakatti were not exceptions to this fact. Their high rhetoric of nationalism was always already contaminated by the methodologies provided by west, which they did not bother or were unconscious of it. But it should be noted that in their ignorance scholars like Basavanal and Halakatti were unable to understand the objections and resentments raised by conservatives. That leaves a space for ambiguity, a space of non-resolution. In our considered opinion, such gaps lead to literary controversies in Karnataka in recent times. Though Halakatti and Basavanl had different approaches to the Viraśaiva history, literature and vacana literature, we have to notice a common concern in both. Both tried to clear off the contradictions inherent in the community, its history and literature re-writing the vacanas vigorously. However, their nationalism, evolved through their critical engagement with the Brahmin tradition, paradoxically developed a discourse of 'patron-client' when it was a case of accommodating subaltern vacanakaras. As shown in the preceding discussion, it was always Basava who stood at the top of all the vacanakaras. He was represented as the leader of all the vacanakaras and consequently there was not much scope for the lesser-known vacanakaras. If there are any references to lesser-known vacanakaras, the highlight will not be on their contribution and their perception of the overall Virasaivism. They are quoted and discussed to demonstrate the democratic nature of the movement led by Basava. The enthusiasm of Halakatti and Basavanal to show the mysticism of the vacanakaras in comparison with the Bhakti poets of the medieval period overlooked the criss-crossing and overlapping feature of several religious faiths. One such comparison, as shown in the above discussion, was between the vacanakaras and the Sufi saints. This comparison implied that the vacana tradition and the Sufi tradition were two totally different schools of thought. The antagonism between the Viraśaivas and the Muslims, aggravated by the *Deendar Siddiq* episode in 1926, resulted in compartmentalizing the Virasaiva and the Islamic traditions into two *independent* traditions even though we come across several overlapping features of both traditions.

Historical, social and economic factors determining the interaction between the two traditions were reduced to romantic notion of communal co-existence. Rahamat Tarikere has noticed such reductionist narratives in the history of Karnataka (Rahamat, 1998:66). He has demonstrated the relationship between Allama and Sufi tradition in medieval Karnataka. He shows that there were interactions between the vacana tradition and Sufi traditions in the medieval period. According to him, both traditions influenced each other in more than one way. For instance, many 'temples' of Allama Prabhu in Kodekal, Maadyala, Jeerolli, Hebballi and Ashturu were constructed on the models of Muslim *dargas* (Muslim religious place). Many mystics who were influenced by Sufism carried the names like Fakiresha, Bhadruddin (Bhadreshwara) Khadaralinga, etc. However, any reference to such interaction with Islam, while examining the vacanas of Allama, was completely marginalized by the Viraśaiva scholars. The *Shubhodaya* controversy and the *Deendar Siddiq* episodes arc the classic examples of reluctance of the Viraśaivas to accept the living traditions associated with Allama Prabhu and Sufism.

The literary controversies, discussed in the second chapter, centre on some of the issues that we examined in the last two chapters. The communitarians, who belong to the upper caste/elite sections of the community, share some of the convictions of the nationalists regarding iconising Basava and other Shiva Sharanas. The secularists also echo some of the essentialist ideas of the nationalists regarding the radical dimension of the vacanakaras. These two forces who constantly spill over into the Viraśaiva past, however, seem to serve several practical purposes which are briefly discussed in the second chapter while explaining the secular and communitarian interpretations of the twelfth century movement. Variety and conflicting interpretations, which went out of control of Halakatti and Basavanal, however, did open up several possibilities of dominance and contestation.

It is very clear that there is no unanimity about the perception of the past. This lack of unanimity is also found in the perception of the present and its conditions. The contemporary conditions in the socio-political spheres of Karnataka have resulted in the 'crisis of Viraśaivism and the Viraśaivas'. The nature of this crisis and the causes will

form part of the next chapter. But what is conspicuous here is that the crisis is viewed in accordance with ideologies of the observers and they project their understanding of the present onto the past. It is this lack of unanimity about the past and the present that triggers off the controversies. What is more, certain group identities are presented as the only possible 'Viraśaiva' identity and considerations of personal/party interests and power are rationalised as a concern for the whole community, literary or religious. If the secularists construct a homogenous Viraśaiva community to expose the "fundamentalism", the communitarians imagine a monolithic community identity to put pressure on the author in question and the state. Therefore, it is important to shake ourselves out of discarding the communitarians as 'communal/primitive' forces and thereby fail to understand the active role they are playing in the contemporary socio-political life with the historical imaginations constructed in the colonial period.

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Chapter V

Understanding Collective Interpretations and Literary Controversies

The literary controversies are always around the questions of 'correct/true' interpretations or 'misinterpretation/distortion'. We have already shown that a linguistic/literary community gets divided into two groups viz., secularists and the communitarians. The secularists criticise the communitarians for misinterpreting their creative works. According to them, the so-called spokespersons of the communities are ignorant of subtleties of literary works. They stake claims of scholarship, competence and ability to interpret history and recreate it imaginatively. The creative works, according to them, need not follow factual history because they attempt to depict 'human nature' in all its faces and they symbolise 'universal values'. That is, creative literature cannot afford to be sectarian and cannot serve the interests of any particular community. In turn, the communitarians accuse the creative writers of misrepresenting/distorting *their* history and hurting the religious sentiments of the community. They also do the act of interpreting creative writings. From their point of view, an act of interpretation is intended to *establish* what they believe to be the truth. They try to establish the truth by means of collective, institutional and scholarly processes. In fact, they are not much interested in 'aesthetics' of literary texts in the way the creative writers are. They try to circulate and establish their interpretation as the correct reading of the controversial text[1]. They always imagine that they represent the sentiments of the majority of the community. Interpreting, thus, has not remained an act of individuals. Collective/Social interpretation has become a means of defining the future norms of interpretation and excluding anything against their conventions of interpretations. In the post-colonial period, the communities have

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[1] Recently, the Right wing forces have tried to establish their version of religion and history. In 1999, they destroyed the paintings of famous painter M.F. Hussain. A Saraswati portrait by the painter was accused of showing the goddess Saraswati in semi-nude posture. The Right wing activists claimed that a Muslim should not distort Hindu goddesses and hurt the religious sentiments of the Hindus. Monica Juneja, who has written an analysis of this controversy, points out that, this controversy was an attempt by the Hindu forces to reclaim the public sphere for monopoly (Juneja, 1997:155-158). In 2003, another section of the Right wing activists destroyed the properties of the famous *Bhandarkar Research Institute* in Pune protesting against the distortion of Maratha history by James Laine in his book *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India.* In both cases, the Right wing forces projected themselves as the sole representatives of the Hindu popular sentiments.

found it necessary to act collectively, enunciate the principles of interpretation and to consolidate their powers to ultimately set the terms for discursive practices. There are some efforts to understand and theorise the phenomenon of collective interpretation. One such effort is done by Stanley Fish. Fish describes the collective interpretation as part of *interpretive communities* (henceforth IC). In the following discussion, we shall examine the founding principles of IC as outlined by Fish and see if his notion of IC is viable to analyse and understand the relationship between literary controversies and communities.

We probe into *Vacana Deepti* (1996) and *Dharmakarana* controversies (1997) in order to test Stanley Fish's notion of IC. This chapter constitutes seven sections. In the first part we shall explain what is IC. The section elaborates the relationship between collective interpretation and the Viraśaiva community. In the third section, we attempt to delineate the *Vacana Deepti* controversy to demonstrate how the Viraśaivas have interpreted the vacanas collectively in the context of the *Vacana Deepti* controversy. The fourth section examines the religious implications on the controversy. The fifth section will focus on the *Dharmakarana* controversy. In this section, we delineate the differences between two sections of the Viraśaiva community who are actively involved in the act of interpretation. In the sixth section we shall examine the socio-political and economic changes in the public sphere of Karnataka affecting the general life of the Viraśaivas. This section discusses the community's efforts to consolidate itself strongly, to act collectively and negotiate the new reality and experiences. The seventh and the last section is devoted to the analysis of crisis in Viraśaivism and the identity politics of the Viraśaiva community in the light of the new realities and its attempts to safeguard the 'traditional' power of interpretation. We assume that the act of interpretation is symbolic of the community's power structure and relations.

I

Reading the Interpretive Communities

Stanley Fish's notion of IC is useful to understand how the reading communities are formed to receive and appreciate literary or classical works in a particular way. IC designates a community of readers who share a particular reading 'strategy' or "set of

community assumptions" (Abrams, 1993:271). Fish proposes that their interpretation in effect, 'creates' all the seemingly objective features of text as well as the "intentions, speakers, and authors" that may be inferred from that text. IC does not signify a collective of individuals but a bundle of strategies or norms of interpretation that we hold in common and which regulate the way we think and perceive. According to Fish,

> Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around. If it is an article of faith in particular community that there arc variety of texts, its members will boast a repertoire of strategies for making them. And if a community believes in the existence of only one text, then the single strategy its members employ will be forever writing it (Fish, 1988:327).

In the above notes, Fish seeks to account for the variety as well as the stability of reading/writing processes. For him, an interpretation of a literary text is not unique, individualistic or idiosyncratic, but shared and pre-determined. The validity of any reading, however, obvious it may seem to a reader, will always depend on the assumptions and strategies of reading that s/he happens to share with other members of IC. Fish sees IC as an "engine of change" (Fish, 1990:150) with corporately held agreements, learned concepts and beliefs, and that these beliefs are not nested but subject to "challenge and revision under certain circumstances" (ibid: 150). He points out,

> The assumption in each community will be that the other is not correctly perceiving the 'true text', but the truth will be that each perceives the text (or texts) its interpretive strategies demand and call into being (Fish, 1988:327-328).

However, he does not confine IC to 'sovereign' status of the readers but admits the possibility of constant changes in the ways of reading and interpreting. IC and its members are not static or rigid but are free to interact and transform the entire system. Fish recognizes the instability of IC because,

> ...interpretive communities grow and decline, and individuals move from one to another; thus, while the alignments are not permanent, they are always there, providing just enough stability for the interpretative battles to go on, and just enough shift and slippage to assure that they will never be settled (ibid: 328).

IC will leave certain recognizable signs to read a text in a particular manner. Therefore,

> ...the very existence of the 'marks' is a function of an interpretative community, for they will be recognized (that is, made) only by its members. Those outside will be deploying a different set of interpretive strategies (interpretation cannot be withheld) and will therefore be making different marks (ibid: 329).

The above remarks dismantle the existence of universal readership and thus deny a unified meaning. Fish is aware that different kinds of ICs exist because of differences in the ways of interpretation. He does not argue that 1C is formed around a particular literary form or text. His emphasis on the discursive practices of 1C goes against the traditional distinctions such as emotive and scientific language, form and content, description and interpretation, intrinsic and extrinsic, etc. He points out that it does not matter for IC if a text in question is a literary work or a historical work; if the work indicates truth or not for it is a matter defined and decided by IC.

Fish makes reference to a religious text to build a theory of IC. He shows the significance for religious institutions/individuals in forming IC of their own. In this connection, he says:

> Indeed, it has always been possible to put into action interpretive strategies designed to make all texts one, or to put it more accurately, to be forever making the same text. Augustine urges, just such a strategy, for example, in *On Christian Doctrine* where he delivers the 'rule of faith', which is of course a rule of interpretation (ibid: 326).

Any deviation from the accepted rules of interpretation seems "to be figurative" (ibid: 327). A reader is right in reading a text only if s/he is successful in showing "the reign of charity" (ibid: 327). A set of directions to read a religious text will always be available to the readers so that they can demonstrate "the reign of charity" and demonstrate "God's love for us and our answering responsibility to love our fellow creatures for His sake" (ibid: 327). What he means is that the rules of interpreting (in the disguise of "rule of faith") the religious texts are considered and usually obeyed by the readers (can be followers or devotees too) and in a way they, as readers, are not free to make their choices.

However, Fish's notion of IC has limited use. It does not help us to know the reasons for a possible gap within a community. For example, the tensions between the several ideological interests within IC cannot be reduced to mere reading strategies or interpretations. In the 1980s, Fish was subjected to mounting criticism from numerous theorists. Vincent Leitch quotes Edward Said who showed the limitations in Fish's theory of IC. According to Edward Said IC is acceptable up to a certain point. He qualifies it by saying,

> If, as we have recently been told by Stanley Fish, every act of interpretation is made possible and given force by an interpretive community, then we must go a great deal further in showing what situation, what historical and social configuration, what political interest are concretely entailed by the very existence of interpretive communities (Leitch, 1995:40)

Fish's theory isolates a reader from social structure and reduces the process of interpretation to aesthetic activity. And there is not much scope for understanding the 'politics of interpretation'. Even if there is a focus on the process of reading/interpreting a text, we have to concentrate on the political orientations of any reading or interpretation. Hayden White has noticed the politics of interpretation in connection with the interpretation of historical narratives. According to him,

> This "politics" has to do with the kind of *authority* the interpreter claims vis-à-vis the established political authorities of his society, on the one side, and vis-à-vis **other** interpreters in his own field of study or investigation, on the other, as the basis of whatever *rights* he conceives himself to possess and whatever *duties* he feels obliged to discharge as a *professional* seeker of truth (italics in original, White, 1982:113).

He considers that the act of interpretation indicates some sort of authority over other kinds of interpretation. The question of authority, hence, will help us to understand the power relations between several interpretive communities. To put it in other words, IC lives in a world of unequal power relations. While a few ICs may be able to establish their interpretations, some other might fail. In addition to this factor, collective interpretation of texts become necessary if a community finds that it has to read its scriptural history anew in tune with the new requirements. Therefore, there is a need to

understand what the new requirements of a community are and why it feels the urgency to realise it requirements.

Another limitation in Fish's notion of IC is that he does not consider a reader/writer as part of a social community placed in particular hierarchical relations. We may note that a community functions through certain institutions and organisations. These institutions and organisation also contribute to the interpretive acts of IC.

In the context of our dissertation, the space of religious organisations and caste associations present the Viraśaivas with a very crucial domain for negotiation. They act as facilitator for the Viraśaivas to negotiate with the personal as well as community problems or crisis. They perform the function of securing and sustaining community interests. A collective imagination is necessary for the Viraśaiva seers and religious leaders to consolidate their organisation/institutional base and exert influence on the functioning of the society generally. One way of realising the collective imagination for them is to critically engage with the discursive practices. The discursive practices involve interpreting literary or historical or religious texts. Therefore, a caste institution or a religious organisation finds it effective and influential to select a particular text and interpret it in a particular way. In order to get its interpretations a wider acceptance and legitimacy, it employs its organizational or institutional apparatus. Therefore, an act of interpretation and institutional base share a dialectical relationship. An organization or an institution may give legitimacy to interpretive activities of its members or the members may use institutional support to gain legitimacy for their interpretive activities. Therefore, IC implies institutional or organisational base but the latter need not always be IC.

II

Collective Interpretations and the Viraśaiva Community

As we know the hierarchical structure of the Viraśaiva community has resulted in multiple textual traditions. Since there is no consensus on what textual tradition really constitutes the community and since there are differences over perception and resolution of internal conflicts and differences, each religious organisation or corporate association

interpret the Viraśaiva literature from different vantage points. Therefore one can safely argue that though the Viraśaiva community can be considered as IC it has its own internal dissenters.

We have already noticed that the Viraśaivas have developed monastic tradition since time immemorial. The two monastic traditions of the community i.e. Gurustala and Virakta mutts[2] have both played a crucial role in determining the religious life of the community. These two mutt traditions have their branches spread all over the state[3]. However, in recent times several sub-castes of the community have established their mutts, with specific caste labels, either as alternatives to the above mentioned mutt traditions or as their branches. The mutt traditions have rendered the modern Viraśaivas their own specific caste and regional identity. They are also centres of power in negotiating with internal and external factors. They have not remained as mere religious centres but have become enunciatory domains for political articulations and social changes. The political orientations of the mutts are recorded by Shouten as such,

> There are more virakta gurus — and some of the gurustalada tradition too—who are known for their political influence. Especially in the fifties and sixties, it was not unusual that the results of elections were determined by the propaganda of some mighty gurus among their followers. The virakta monastery of Chitradurga and the gurustalada matha at Sirigere had an age-old conflict and their competition played a major role in regional political elections (Shouten, 1991:274).

The influence of the Viraśaiva mutts is also extended to educational field.[4] Public education has been one of the powerful vehicles to promote their mutt traditions and customs.

However, the interests of various social groups and the Viraśaiva mutts within the community have not just co-existed in a harmonious condition. There are many clashes

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[2] For information on the emergence, socio-geographical details of these two traditions refer chapt. 3. pp. 142-145.

[3] Chandrashekhara Narayanapura has given a detailed index of Viraśaiva mutts of these two traditions (2002). According to the index, there is large number of Guru as well as Viraktha mutts besides other kinds of mutts like *Sharanastala* and *Dasoha* mutts.

[4] For more information on the role of Viraśaiva mutts in the promotion of education in Karnataka see chapt. 3,pp.146-147.

among them to gain hegemonic influence. But these clashes have occurred in terms of a *common* discourse of Viraśaiva literature, especially vacanas. Each social group, caste-association and mutt of the Viraśaivas tries to present itself as the authentic agency of the Viraśaiva people and their 'common interest'. Therefore, any analysis of collective interpretation by the religious organisations or caste associations should entail an analysis of the mutual or antagonistic perspectives of Viraśaivism. The analysis may reveal why and when do mutual or antagonistic perspectives and interpretation of Viraśaivism arise and decline. In other words, we need to consider how these organisations and associations, despite different pedigree and traditions, share identification with the common narratives of Viraśaivism and simultaneously articulate differences.

III

The *Vacana Deepti* Controversy

In a book releasing function two years ago[5] in Bangalore, the former director of Karnataka Development Authority and a well-known Kannada writer, Baraguru Ramachandrappa, called for a comprehensive study of vacanas from a literary point of view. While emphasizing the social relevance of vacanas, he cautioned about the contemporary attempts to appropriate vacanas for communal purpose. He pointed out that the fundamentalists misused the vacanas for sectarian purpose and the literary analysis must work against the fundamentalist forces in Karnataka. His cautionary words and suggestion were made in the background of a series of literary controversies that arose in Karnataka recently. We have already examined some of these controversies in which the Viraśaiva community demanded for a ban on three literary works. The *Vacana Deepti* controversy is one such 'sectarian' incident mentioned by Baraguru. A distinguishing feature of the *Vacana Deepti* controversy is that vacanas, taken as literary as well as religious narratives, became the common ground for several social groups to justify their differences and foreground their interpretations as correct and authentic. Before examining these differences, let us have a bird's eye view of the controversy.

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[5] *Vijaya-Karnataka*, a Kannada daily, reported the proceedings of the function (Oct. 2nd, 2002).

Basava Vacana Deepti (1996) is a compilation of Basava's vacanas revised and edited by MM under the pen name *of Basavatmaje* (daughter of Basava). The controversy around this compilation arose because MM changed the *ankitanaama* of Basava's vacanas. *Ankitanaama* signifies a devotional signature and it is the name of God worshipped by vacanakaras. It is a tradition among the vacanakaras to end his/her vacana with a specific *ankitanaama.* It is believed to be the "authorised pen name" (Sangamada, 1996:71) of vacanakaras. According to Chidanandamurthy,

> *Ankitanaamas* are the names of respective *ishtalingas* of each vacanakara and these names were given by their [vacanakaras] respective gurus (Chidanandamurthy 1998:76).

Basava's vacanas carry *Kudalasangamadeva*[6] as *ankitanaama.* Similarly Allama Prabhu's vacanas contain *Guheshwara* as the *ankitanaama*[7]. MM replaced it with another *ankitanaama* namely *Lingadeva.* For MM, the reason for changing the *ankitanaama* and revising vacanas included rewriting the narratives of vacanas. She believed that rewriting vacanas would automatically include rewriting the history of Lingayaths[8]. She found it necessary to rewrite vacanas because they were "contaminated by the casteists" (MM, 1998:14) and it was a "historical necessity" (MM, 1997:33) to correct the mistakes done in the past. For instance, she blamed her predecessors for contaminating the vacanas of Chennabasavanna by attributing wrong vacanas to him and according to her, this has amounted to several controversies around his life.

Many literary scholars, religious heads and intellectuals all over Karnataka were shocked to witness her 'audacity' to tamper the signature of the divine figure. It was reported in a journal *Basava Belagu* (1997) that the religious heads of *Chittaragi* mutt (llakal), *Gurubasaweshwara* mutt (Hulusuru) and *Hiremutt* (Bhalki) and *Rashtriya Basavadal* of Solapur registered their protest against MM for changing the *ankitanaama.*

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[6] Kudalasangama is the name of a place in Bagalkote, a town in the northern Karnataka. There is also a temple by that name. It is a holy place for the Viraśaivas. Basava spent his formative as well as last days after the Revolution at Kalyana here.

[7] A few *ankitanaamas* of the other vacanakaras are as follows: Akkamahadevi-*Chennamallikarjuna;*Devara Daasimayya—*Ramantha;* Aydakki Maarayya—*A mareshwara Linga;* Maadara Chennayya—*Nijaatma Ramaramanaa*; Muktaayakka—*Ajaganna.*

They boycotted the convention of Lingayath Sharanas organised by her at Kudalasangama. The journal also carried several letters condemning MM. Jagadguru Shivamurthy Shivacharya Mahaswamy of *Sirigere* mutt condemned her "pride, selfishness, narrow mindedness" (1997: 46); B.V.Virabhadrappa, a literary critique, accused MM of "forgery" (ibid: 68); M.R.Pampanagowda considered MM's new anthology a "literary crime" (ibid: 63); Giraddi Govindaraju, an English professor and a critic in Kannada, called her a "black spot on any society" (ibid: 54); for Maate Sharanaambike, a woman religious guru, the anthology was nothing but "murder of Basavanna" (ibid: 58). The then President of the Karnataka Sahitya Akademy and its members such as Lingadevaru Halemane, Fakir Mohammad Katpadi, K.B. Siddayya and Rajashekar Niramanvi collectively condemned the cultural and 'literary crime' committed by MM. They held, "she shattered the cultural values of Karnataka" (ibid: 65). The then Chief Minister J.H.Patel, in a meeting in the Lingayat heartland Bidar, promised the gathering that MM's book will be banned and that "she will be jailed" (MM, 1997:80). Owing to growing pressure from various mutts and the Viraśaiva followers, the Karnataka Government banned the anthology and passed an order that no body should publish, circulate or sell it in any form in the public. The Department of Kannada and Culture ordered for confiscation of the anthology twice on the grounds that MM hurt the religious sentiments of the Viraśaivas. Very recently, after seven years of the controversy, a Viraśaiva-Lingayath meeting organized by the ABVM deplored MM in strong words for replacing *Vachanaankita.* A resolution was passed in the meeting demanding an immediate legal action against the "guilty"[9].

A review of *Vacana Deepti* by Siddappa Langoti, the editor of *Basava Belagu,* would gives us a vivid description of the 'crimes' committed by MM. He lists the crimes. According to Langoti, MM,

a) abridged the vacanas of Basava and considered the abridged versions as original,

b) rearranged some parts of the vacanas,

c) added new words to the original ones,

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[8] MM uses the term 'Lingayath' instead of Viraśaiva. We shall explain her predilection in the following discussions.

[9] "Veerashaiva seers vow to work together" in *The Hindu*, 2nd, 2003.

d) changed the lines of the vacanas randomly without giving any reason,

e) deleted the Sanskrit *shlokas* in the vacanas, and

f) retained the original name *Kudalasangamadeva* in some vacanas and replaced it with the new name Lingadeva in some other vacanas.

Langoti accused MM of changing the name deliberately because she was selfish. He points out that MM lacks philosophical clarity and she is confused over the philosophy of Linga. He considers her justification for the new anthology as full of irrational and irresponsible scholarship (Langoti, 1997:66). He denounces her religious practices as hypocritical and pretentious. He writes that she did not practice what she preached. He condemns that her orthodoxy and ritual practices were against what Basava stood for. He criticises her book *Basava Dharmada Samskaragalu* (Rituals of Basava Dharma) in strong words because it gives guidelines for several rituals to be observed by a Viraśaiva. He questions, why MM needs to construct *Gadduge* (a sacred tomb) for Lingananda Swamy, her guru, spending money indiscriminately and lavishly (ibid: 31), Since Basava was against any kind of static monument and extravagance, Langoti feels that it is not necessary to build any *Gadduge.* Another article by Shivasharanappa Wali in the same issue points out,

> ...the identity of Basavanna rests on the *ankitanaama.* It is the core of all vacanas.
> It cannot be replaced/substituted because it is the main source to trace the history
> of twelfth century Shiva Sharanas (Wali, 1997:33).

Wali condemns MM's arrogance for distorting the divine identity of Basava and considers it as treason to the nation, because tarnishing a national figure is a crime (ibid: 34).

The *Vacana Deepti* controversy was both literary as well as religious. For instance, Giraddi Govindaraja and Pampanagowda members of Karnataka Saahitya Akademy were agitated over the violation of 'literary' norms by MM, whom they consider as an influential religious leader. For Jagadguru Shivamurthy Shivacharya Mahaswamy and Pujya Maate Sharanaambike, MM's compilation was a sign of religious corruption and distortion of history.

What strikes us in all the above-cited condemnations is a strong criticism of MM's irresponsibility and lack of accountability to the society. They *also* subscribe for certain essentialist conception of vacanas. For both proponents and the opponents of the anthology, vacanas symbolise history, literature as well as religion. However, for the opponents of *Vacana Deepti,* any change in the *ankitanaama* was nothing but going against the wishes of divinity. The modern history of vacana tradition, as discussed in the previous chapter, clearly demonstrated that vacanas were newly collated, compiled and edited by several scholars. In this process, many vacanas came under severe scrutiny and they underwent several changes. But MM's new anthology created uproarious scene. This raises an obvious question -Why was this so? For this we may have to find an answer considering the institutional and organisational factors.

MM was least perturbed by oppositions to her new anthology. She persistently held campaigns and religious discourses for creating awareness about the importance of her new compilation and provided justification for changing the *ankitanaama*. She asked the Lingayath devotees not to panic about the government's decision to confiscate *Vacana Deepti* (MM, 1998:6). She condemned the then minister of Kannada and Culture Leeladevi R. Prasad for her prejudices, because it was under the Department of Kannada and Culture that the order of confiscation was issued. MM thought that the minister avenged MM's agitation against *Mahachaitra* in 1994. According to MM, it was a long cherished revenge on the part of the minister. The author of *Mahachaitra,* H. S. Shivaprakash, is her son-in-law. They both are from that Lingayath community but their religious belief did not accept that Basava was the founder of Lingayath religion. MM's suspicion was that the minister took revenge on her for disseminating Basava's philosophy of monotheism and considering him as the founder of the Lingayath religion. Nevertheless, MM considered her encounter with the minister as the encounter between truth and tradition (ibid: 2). MM thought that she stood for truth. She declared that she would discover the truth and she would not be cowed.

MM's criticism on the minister took on the old religious debates of the origin and founder of Virasáiva religion. She holds that since Leeladevi did not believe in the

Basava cult, she did not have any right to exercise her power to interfere in the religious matters of Basava followers. MM's attack on the minister was not just intended to expose her interference but also to show the Viraśaivas that there was an ill intention behind her decision to confiscate the anthology. This encounter at the personal level was supplemented by MM's religious discourses, speeches and commentaries justifying the relevance of *Vacana Deepti*

IV
Rewriting Vacanas and the Dynamics of Religious Intervention

MM published *Vacana Deepti* even while the *Mahachaitra* controversy had not yet subsided. The *Mahachaitra* controversy clearly demonstrated her influence, popularity and power as a Lingayath guru and she could convince the other Lingayath organisations that her initiative against the play was legitimate, valid and inevitable. Now, with the support of her followers, she thought she should realise the 'dream' of rewriting the vacanas, which was still unrealised for a long time. She had already begun re-writing and compiling the vacanas by the time the *Mahachaitra* controversy broke out.

The *ankitanaama* was changed according to the wishes of her guru Shri Lingananda[10]. She reminisces that it was her guru's wish to revise and refine vacanas (MM, 2000:5). Lingananda Swamy was not happy with the previous editions and scholarly works on vacanas. He appreciated the earlier interpretations and praised Halakatti and the Karnataka University who collected and published a large number of volumes. But he was not happy that as the volumes failed to know the 'genuine' and the 'corrupt' vacanas. He thought it was high time that the vacanas be provided with a proper intellectual and theoretical interpretation. He wanted to re-write the vacanas on the basis of the philosophy of *Ishtalinga.* He had been advocating the significance of *Linga Tatwa* (the Linga principle) for a long time. He also wrote a book on *'Linga Tatwa Darpana'* (on the philosophy of Linga) in 1966 that was translated into English by Shrikanta Alli as

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[10] His biography, written by MM, reveals that he was a Marxist before coming under the influence of Basava and the Lingayath religion (MM, 2000:4). MM is happy that Lingananda look a wise decision in 1956 to become the follower of Basava otherwise he would have become a Communist leader.

Mirror of Ishtalinga and later on by S.M.Angadi as *Emblem of God* (1973). We do not know if re-writing the vacanas for Lingananda should necessarily involve changing the *ankitanaama.* The philosophy of *ishtalinga* left long lasting influence and impression on MM and it was obvious in every aspect of the new anthology. We shall explain the concept of *ishtalinga* as understood by MM.

MM writes a long introduction to *Vacana Deepti* wherein she explains the concept of *ishtalinga* and how the new *ankitanaama* contained the philosophy of *ishtalinga.* In the introduction, she regrets for assuming that Basavanna was one among many Viraśaiva saints and not realising that indeed he was the one who established the Lingayath religion (MM, 2000:6). She expresses her anger against Chidanandamurthy, H. Tipperudraswamy and Go. Ru. Chennabasappa (well-known names in the Kannada research field and all the three belong to the Lingayath community) for propagating false ideas that Basava was just a propagator and not the founder of the religion. According to her, Basava is the symbol of devotion and social reformation (MM, 1998:6). She believes that the Lingayath religion is distinct from the Hindu religion and the Lingayaths do not believe in it because it is caste-ridden and priesthood pervades in every walk of life. She upholds the concept of monotheism of Basava and according to her it is the greatest contribution to the philosophy of religion. The practice of monotheism is symbolically represented in the worship of *ishtalinga.* Worshipping the Linga is the most important component of the Lingayath faith.

In addition to the reasons substantiated in the introduction, she, at another occasion, held that the term Lingadeva signified monotheism (ibid: 6-7). Since Basava preached monotheism, it is inevitable that we should make sincere attempts to understand it through his vacanas. According to her, in the contemporary period, under the influence of the Brahminism, which is polytheistic, the Viraśaiva gurus also preach worship of many gurus and Gods. It is against this polytheist practices that she wishes to uphold the greatness of Lingadeva (ibid: 7). Also, she argues that the change of the *ankitanaama* is in accordance with Basava's own wish. She writes in several editorials of *Kalyana Kirana* that she received divine inspiration from Basava in her dream to change

ankitanaama of his vacanas! The divine wish and inspiration is to show that her efforts to reveal the truth are altogether in a different level than mere academic exercise but envisaged a new world.

Assured of a reading public and followers MM believes in 'collective thinking' (MM, 1996) and her purpose was religious. The notion of collective thinking is possible if there is a commonly shared and accepted idea of vacanas. For her a collective/community exists not only in the past but also in the present. The collective thinking is inevitable to share and disseminate the idea of the Holy Scriptures. She borrows the idea of 'collective thinking' from her predecessors. These predecessors are Buddhists, Christian saints and Sikh gurus. Like one thousand Buddhist monks, in the ancient period, who spread Buddhist ideas after trained in it for six months, she also has plans to train her followers and spread Lingayath religion. She does not have to imagine a new community for this purpose. There is already a community of followers who adored MM. Therefore, she seeks to teach the reading public the ways of understanding and appreciating the vacanas compiled by her.

Ishtalinga and the Vacana Deepti

It appears that MM's idea of Linga and Lingayath is based on her differences with the term Viraśaiva and the philosophy of Viraśaivism. In her opinion, Viraśaiva and Lingayath are distinct terms. Viraśaivism, in her view, means the classical religion based on the *Shaivagamas,* which are revered by the orthodox Viraśaivas. Lingayathism means the religion established by Basava. The distinction of Lingayathism and Lingayaths lie in the concept of *ishtalinga.* The ethics of Lingayathism, she opines, provide opportunity to everybody to access *ishtalinga* on equal terms without any discrimination. Basava introduced wearing Linga, according to MM, and it was a significant feature of his movement in the twelfth century. *Ishtalinga* provides the devotees with a personal cult form equal for all. Therefore, according to her, Lingayath religion upholds humanism and equality. It is precisely this humanism and equality that she wants to propagate. That is why, she emphasises the significance of *ishtalinga* as propounded in the vacanas.

The inconsistency of MM, exposed by Langoti, in retaining the original *ankitanaama* for some vacanas and replacing it in other vacanas are due to MM's belief that Basava went through two important stages of enlightenment in his life. She explains these stages, as such,

> I have retained the name Kudalasangama for some vacanas which were written when Basavanna believed in the Saiva tradition before establishing the Lingayath religion. But I have replaced it with the new Ankitanama to designate the change in Basavanna's notion of Lord Shiva and a new awareness of *Ishtalinga* after establishing the Lingayath religion (MM 1996:5).

These two stages in the life of Basava, according to MM, depict his journey towards realising the *Almighty* (Linga). In the first stage, Basava gave up the superstitious beliefs and left for Kudalasangama. During this stage, he worshipped *Kudalasangamadeva*, another name of Lord Shiva and used it as *ankitanaama* in his vacanas. He believed that Lord Shiva was the creator of the cosmos and that he was the God. But later in his life, he realised that Lord Shiva was one among the three (Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara). In the second stage, that is, when he was twenty one year old, Basava realised that he was under the false notion of God assuming a form. Awareness dawned on him that God is formless, universal and nameless. *Ishtalinga* is the symbol of the formless God. Therefore, the vacanas written during this later stage carry 'Lingadeva'. Basava, therefore, preached the notion of *ishtalinga* and he founded the Lingayath religion. While Lingadeva signifies the moving and immortal object, Kudalasangama symbolises static image of God. While Kudalasangama is confined to a fixed geographical area, Lingadeva signifies the universal. These two stages, hence, show Basava's journey from *ekadevata upasane* (monodeitism) to *ekadevopasane* (monotheism). Therefore, MM writes *Kudalasangamadeva* whenever Basava addressed Lord Shiva, but whenever the Creator of the cosmos is remembered, it is replaced with Lingadeva. She also points out that the term Lingdeva is not her coinage but it is a term found in many vacanas. She blames others for ignoring this aspect and falsely attributing significance to the static image of God. She is highly critical of A. K. Ramanujan's translation of vacanas in *Speaking of Shiva* because he did not understand Basava's vacanas in their true sense. She thinks that A. K. Ramanujan was 'ignorant' of the significance of *ishtalinga*. She does not accept '*The Lord of Meeting Rivers*' as an appropriate translation of Basava's *ankitanaama*. She

argues that Ramanujan failed in his translation because he **did not** understand **the** meaning of concepts like Creator, God or Almighty (MM, 1997:21).

According to MM, the new anthology of vacanas is an attempt to set right several distortions inserted into the life history of Basava. Therefore, she selected only those vacanas that give a true and authentic picture of Basava's ideas. The agenda before MM is very clear: to circulate an idealised and perfect image of him.

She criticises L.Basavaraju, a well-known scholar on vacanas for he believes that vacanas preached polytheism and that they were written by lower caste Shiva Sharanas who practiced different customs, rituals and religious traditions. In *Kalyana Kirana* (MM, 1991:11-13), she writes that vacanas, that preach polytheism, were surreptitiously included and they cannot reveal anything genuine about the Lingayathism. She does not give recognition to 'strange' lower caste Gods/Goddesses. She believes that worshipping strange Gods is meaningless. Since, she is an ardent follower of monotheism, established by Basava, she dismisses several local deities and village Gods/Goddesses as insignificant. Let us not forget that even the vacanakaras themselves rejected the village/lower caste deities. However the lower castes worshipped their own deities and continued to write vacanas. If we today consider these vacanas as part of the Viraśaiva tradition they may affect the very idea of monotheism, the basis of the religion. People like MM find them contrary to the very basis of Linagayathism and that is why they are against the kind of research people like Basavaraju are pursuing. It has a contemporary political agenda as well. The lower caste vacanakaras and their vacanas are the strong and unpleasant reminders of the caste hierarchy prevailing within the Lingayath religion. These vacanas question and demonstrate the fact that the Lingayath religion could not resolve the question of caste. They render the concept of egalitarian casteless society envisaged by the Viraśaiva movement into mere rhetoric. They have raised many questions about ritualistic doctrines as laid down by Chennabasavanna, the *Shatstala Brahma*. MM cannot afford to allow this happen. Paradoxically she invokes folk tradition to project Basava as the cultural ideal of all times. She draws our attention to various folk

songs[11] and compares them with Virasaiva puranas, which were written by 'Brahmin writers' like Palkurike Somanatha, Bhimakavi, Harihara, etc. She holds that the Virasaiva puranas do not highlight the revolutionary ideas of Basava but the folk songs admire Basava and his revolutionary ideas. These folksongs, according to her, contain rich details about Basava, his contribution to the philosophy, his devotion to Lord Shiva and his revolutionary ideas about caste system. The idea behind highlighting the folksongs is to show that Basava is very popular among the folk people of all creed and sects. They have all accepted Basava as their cultural icon.

MM defends *Vacana Deepti* by rejecting the previous editions of vacanas. According to her, the earlier compilations of vacanas lack scholarship and strong conviction towards Lingayath religion. For example, she does not accept the vacana volumes edited by M. M. Kalburgi and published by the Karnataka Government. This is because many unknown vacanas, whose authorship is suspicious, are included in the name of Basava. For instance, she blames the editor for his irresponsibility in mistaking Gabbi Devaiah's vacana for Basava. She strongly objects the fact that vacanas, preaching Brahmnism, are included. She wonders that when Basava fought against Brahmanism and ritualistic priesthood how can one include Brahminical vacanas. That is why, she did not include any vacana that is Brahminical. Is she de-constructing the nationalist discourses of Halakatti and Basavanal? We do not answer this question but leave it for future research.

Freedom of Expression and Collective Imagination

The controversy around *Vacana Deepti* was not about 'freedom of expression' or 'violation of individual rights', which is the normal case if a novel or a drama is banned or censored. In the instance of this controversy, the opponents of *Vacana Deepti* did not see MM as an embodiment of institutional power with a large following. MM also did not justify herself in terms of individual right. The central point of the controversy was about 'unnecessary interference' and distortion of the authorial intentions. The literary

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" She publishes the folksongs in her journal. These folk songs, praising Basava, were collected by B. S. Gaddugimatha for his Ph.D. in Gulbaraga University (1963).

community, which is usually agitated whenever a writer's freedom of expression is curbed, was silent on the issue of MM's freedom to re-write the vacanas. The literary community also joined hands with the Viraśaiva mutts in opposing MM.

The controversy brings in several important points relevant for our discussion. Firstly, the question of freedom of expression does not figure here for MM cannot project her as a mere individual. Secondly the public saw the whole controversy as an 'internal matter' of the Viraśaiva community. But a few creative writers joined the opposition and raised question of authorial intention, a reading practice upheld by them. Thirdly, MM deviated from the commonly accepted beliefs about vacanas and dared to change the *ankitanaama* which was a shock to the lakhs of believers and for the middle class intellectuals of Karnataka.

Even after four years of publication of *Vacana Deepti,* the controversy still continues to surface. One reason could be that MM continues to propagate the philosophy of Lingadeva through her new anthology. A recent incident in Basava Kalyana would give us a clear picture of the on going controversy. On 31st, April 2002, the Bidar District administration imposed a ban on public meetings in Basava Kalyana on the occasion of a proposed annual religious convention namely *'Kalyana Parva'*, organised by MM. On 12th, Feb. 2003 also, a huge procession was taken out against MM in Basava Kalyana to oppose her entry into the town for inaugurating the annual *Kalyana Parva.* There are many Virasaiva mutts in Basava Kalyana who are opposed to the idea of Lingadeva.

Despite widespread opposition to *Vacana Deepti,* MM has not withheld the anthology and has not stopped campaigning. Even though some activists of Rashtriya Basava Dal requested MM to withdraw the anthology (MM, 1997:94), MM was firm in her conviction and did not consider their request on the pretext that she did not want to go against the wishes of Guru Basava. She is resolute that changing the *ankitanaama* was not at all a "crime" as many would love to believe. So, she has not apologised to the public even though the opponents demanded so (ibid: 84).

The Viraśaiva community and the Organisational Apparatus

How do certain kinds of interpretations become part of commonsense and gain institutional legitimacy? To answer this question it is productive to examine the versions produced by the voluntary or non-state initiatives. The non-state initiatives played a central role in producing and circulating certain kinds of narratives. The religious mutts and community institutions, which have become centres of power, have significantly contributed to the multiple interpretations of vacanas. Many Viraśaiva mutts have established their own educational institutions, libraries/archives, research centres, spiritual centres and social welfare institutions. They conduct cultural programmes, competitions, seminars and conferences in collaboration with the literary community, educational institutions, and government bodies for disseminating the values of vacanas across region, community and language. Each mutt formulates certain general religious and moral principles that become binding on all the followers of that mutt. A common body of practices or a distinguishable ethos is accepted and normalised in such mutts. Since the state is not supposed to interfere in the religious life of the Lingayath community directly, these centres are free to circulate or propagate their ideas and practices among the followers. These days, many of them have realised the value of modern technology like media (both print and electronic) to disseminate their beliefs, ideas and principles. As a result, the upper strata of the community do not always need State apparatuses to accredit, legitimise and canonize the Viraśaiva religion and literature.

MM has been trying all along to popularise *Vacana Deepti* through her religious organisations namely the *Rashtriya Basava Dal,* and the *Lingayatha Dharma Mahasabha* (henceforth LDM). She established the *LDM* to spread the Lingayath religion. The Mahasabha was floated as an alternative to ABVM. One of the aims of the LDM is to popularise and spread the ideas of vacanakaras. There are many branches of *Rashtriya Basava Dal* across Karnataka, which are invested with this mission. *Vishwa Kalyana Mission* (World Welfare Mission) is another wing of MM whose task is to disseminate their ideas across the world. In 1984, the then chairman of the mission, Lingananda Swamy produced a Kannada film on Basava titled '*Kranthiyogi Basavanna*' (Basavanna,

the saint revolutionary). Dialogues, screenplay and songs for **the film were** written by MM. In that film, vacanas are used extensively. However, they are used without changing the *ankitanaama.* The mission has many spiritual centres like *Basava Mantapa* and *Basava Gangotri* in and around Bangalore. As the names of **the** centres indicate, the cult of Basava is now dominant and the former devotion of MM for Akka Mahadevi is relegated to oblivion. MM is now organising *Sharana Mela* (The Sharana Festival) every year. The first *Sharana Mela* took place in January, 1988. She has written many books on vacanas, Lingayath rituals, novels, poems and history of Lingayath religion. Some of her books have also been translated into English. Besides these, *Kalyana Kirana* is the mouthpiece of MM's ideology,

It is **not** only MM who has been defending and preaching the significance of *Vacana Deepti.* Her followers are also carrying out campaigns for the new anthology, According to Mathe Kasturidevi, MM's ardent disciple, MM redeemed the declining Lingayath religion by restoring belief in Lingadeva. Kasturidevi believes that the post-twelfth century period witnessed a gradual degeneration of the glorious tradition of Basava. During this period, she argues, communalism and selfishness crept into the Lingayath religion. The subsequent religious heads, the literary community, research scholars, politicians, intellectuals and social workers created fragments in the Lingayath society. But, she believes, it is MM who rejuvenated the Lingayath religion. In several religious discourses, she quotes vacanas of *Vacana Deepti* to apprise the devotees on **the** importance of *ishtalinga*[12]. There were many poems written in praise of MM and her relentless efforts to lead the Lingayath community in the right path[13]

V

The *Dharmakarana* Controversy and the Akhila Bharata Viraśaiva Mahasabha

Unlike the *Mahachaitra* controversy, the *Dharmakarana* controversy in 1997 started when the ABVM raised voice and started an agitation against the novel.[14] The Mahasabha is not a religious organisation but an association. Like several other

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[12] For more information on Kasturi Devi's views see *Vacana Bala* (the power of vacanas) (2003: 36-42).
[13] For the poems see *Kalyana Kirana* (Sep. 2000)

associations[15] of the Viraśaiva community, the Mahasabha is too proud of its corporate nature. Any Viraśaiva can enrol as a member of the Mahasabha. It was established in 1905 with the goal of working for the overall development of the community. It played a major role in the progress of the community during the colonial period. Unlike, the *Rashtriya Basava Dal*, the ABVM claims the constituency of *all* members of the community irrespective of caste/class. It has several sub-branches all over Karnataka and it works to sustain unity and achieve the overall growth of the community. When compared with the *Basava Dal* and other such organisations, the ABVM is relatively flexible, secular and modern. A point to notice here is that the mutts, the corporate institutions and caste associations do not exist mutually an exclusive and autonomous space. They indeed depend on each other for the resources of self-definition and other identification. The fact that several Viraśaiva mutts have supported and recognised the ABVM speaks about the mutual relationship.

The ABVM has a love-hate relationship with the MM. The *Vacana Deepti* controversy widened the gap between the ABVM and MM.[16] During the *Dharmakarana* controversy, the ABVM was very active in mobilizing, representing and shaping the opinions of the Viraśaivas to press the Karnataka Government to take action against the author and the novel[17].

The said controversy was not just confined to the question of interpretation. The author's caste background was also invoked to sensationalise the issue. But the very fact that it could produce a marketable feeling of oneness among some sections of the Viraśaivas is significant. In our considered opinion, the controversy signifies the conventional divide between the Brahmins and the Viraśaivas in Karnataka and the

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[14] For details about the novel and its theme, see chapt. 2, pp. 91-96.

[15] *Viraśaiva Sahakara Sangha* (Viraśaiva Co-operative Society) is another association that acts, as a facilitator for the urban Viraśaivas to cater to their financial and domestic needs. They are found mainly in towns and cities.

[16] In my conversation with a sub-editor of *Basava Patha* (a Kannada journal devoted to the dissemination of Basava's ideals) he informed me that MM's act of changing the *ankitanaama* is indeed a grave mistake. According to him, MM is after fame and since she has nothing much to offer to the society she creates disturbance in the society. The conversation was held on 21st, June 2002.

[17] For information on the objections raised by the Mahasabha refer chapt. 2, pp. 91-96.

antagonism is maintained in/by discourses of caste. Since the author is a Brahmin, his writing is seen as deliberate attempt to tarnish the image of the Viraśaiva icons.

As part of the ABVM's agitation against the novel, a committee was set up for *Ganachara*[18]. The committee was comprised of Vishwanathareddy Mudnal and Bhimanna Khandre to oversee the activities of the committee. The committee proposed to punish those who reproached Shivachara[19] and Shiva Sharanas. In order to avoid any misgivings about Ganachara[20], the committee justified its relevance with modern notion of *Satyagraha,* propounded by Gandhi. Mudnal pointed out that Ganachara could not be constructed as an act of fundamentalism for it meant only the protection of religion. He held that it is a mechanism to bring the wrongdoers back to the right path. Its intention is not to go for 'blood bath' but to achieve its goals through non-violent means. They pointed out that non-violence should not be taken as weakness of the Viraśaivas. Self-sacrifice is also a way of conducting the Ganachara and therefore, Mudnal observed fast unto death to pressurise the government to ban the novel. The committee called for sacrifice of one's life, if inevitable, to protect the Viraśaiva religion. The plan of action under the principle of Ganachara was intended to protect the religion. Here one can see how the conventional principle is reinterpreted and put to use to achieve an immediate goal. It is a strategic, pragmatic move to reinforce Viraśaiva principles in modern times. We need to consider it as an invention rather than a revival of the past and in that we differ from Vasavi's analysis discussed in the introduction. The ABVM considered P.V.Narayana as a *bhavi* because he is a Brahmin but his novel for his writing offended the Viraśaiva beliefs[21].

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[18] For more information on Ganachara, see chapt. 2. p.93.

[19] It means that one should dedicate one's deeds to society on the basis of the belief that the world is a reality and Shiva is a real. One is not expected to speak against Lord Shiva or Linga.

[20] In the Viraśaiva hagiographies of Basava, Chennabasavanna and A llama Prabhu, the term Ganachara is depicted as a tool to punish those who do not respect Lord Shiva or Linga. The term entailed some sort of 'violence'.

[21] The Virasaiva Mahasabha of Manwi taluq passed a resolution endorsing the formation of the committee in its meeting held on 29th, March 1997.

It is revelatory to compare the views of ABVM with MM's views[22]. Also, important to note here is that she did not take any lead role in the controversy and did not directly participate in the agitation. However, she condemned the ignorance of P.V.Narayana about the Linga and Lingayathism. She pointed out that the Lingayath religion was premised on the strong ideals of the vacanas and the philosophy of *ishtalinga.* She cautioned that those who propagate ideals of Viraśaivism did not have the right to use vacanas towards their goal. She did not have any doubt that P.V.Narayana followed the doctrines of Viraśaivism. Her notion of Lingayathism was against Virashaiva hagiographers like Harihara, Raghavanka or Palkurike Somanatha, on whose evidence the ABVM made allegations against the novel. According to her, these medieval poets exaggerated the lives of Sharanas and they did not give accurate and honest details about their noble thoughts, their ideals of devotion and religion. She listed some of the loopholes found in Viraśaiva puranas as such;

a) Basava and Allama Prabhu were depicted as the incarnations of Shivaganas (the members of the divine court of Lord Shiva at Kailasa.) But Basava who fought against metaphysical beliefs, was against any conception of heaven or heathen. Allama Prabhu was a step ahead and did not spare the Shiva Sharanas who gave importance to metaphysical notions.

b) Basava was a worshipper of Lord Shiva in his childhood but when he realised the significance of the Linga, he became the worshipper of Lingadeva. Since Harihara, Bhimakavi and Somanatha believed in Lord Shiva, they failed to comprehend Basava's concept of God. They inserted Shaiva philosophy into the biographies of Basava.

There is also a general belief among the academicians that the medieval poets institutionalised the religion, which originally stood against any kind of institutionalisation. K. Ishwaran, a sociologist, is one among them. He has also discussed the origin and the contemporary state of the religion. He too does not use the concept

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[22] MM also demanded ban on the novel. For her views on the novel see, *Kalyana Kirana,* Vol.31, No.1, 2000.

Viraśaiva anywhere. He says that the post-twelfth movement witnessed a steady institutionalisation of the religion and many Lingayath seers propagated the religion all over Karnataka. It was during this institution-building stage that the medieval poets inserted many unwanted doctrines into Lingayath religion. During this period many vested interests subverted the original objectives of the vacana movement (Isahwaran, 1983: 80). He cites an example of Harihara who popularised the doctrine of Divine Incarnation in his hagiographies of Shiva Sharanas. Ishwaran says,

> So far as the Sarana tradition is concerned, there is no scope whatsoever for the concept of Divine Incarnation, for the simple reason that the central Sharana notion of the personal Linga is directly antithetical to such a concept (Ishwaran, 1983:71).

Like Ishawaran, there are many who distinguish between the Linga traditions as opposed to the Shaiva tradition.

MM wanted to demonstrate that the contemporary religious leaders as well as the creative writers grossly misunderstood Basava and his followers. In contrast to MM, the members of the ABVM did not highlight the contradictions between vacanas and the Viraśaiva puranas. They quoted several puranas liberally to show the misrepresentation of Sharanas in the novel. ABVM, unlike MM's religious outfits, could not afford to use the religious terminology beyond a point. Its operational sphere is the Kannada public sphere which makes the ABVM to use the vocabulary of civil society and nation. This dimension emerges very clearly in its employment of terminologies in defence of religious sentiments. The ABVM opposed the novel in terms of 'dignity of women', 'authentic history' 'distortion of historical truth', community sentiments and the 'unity of the Viraśaiva community' to mobilise opinion against the novel.

Collective interpretation of the Viraśaivas did not bother about the intentional or authorial fallacy. It was their interpretation that defined the intentions of the author. What mattered to them was the challenge posed by the novel to the received beliefs of the community and the anxiety of losing control over the narratives of Viraśaivism. Obviously the challenge is posed by the secularisation of these narratives that bring out

the internal differences thus breaking the monolithic constructions of Viraśaivism. There are new challenges thrown open by new socio-political realities in Karnataka. Therefore, the question before us is why a politically strong community such as the Viraśaiva community is so anxious and oversensitive to narratives in public sphere in the background of changing realities. Here we need to examine the political scenario as well as changes in the social relations between the Virasaiva community and various other social groups in Karnataka over the last thirty years in order to understand the anxiety and sensitivity of the Viraśaivas.

<div align="center">VI</div>

Emergence of New **Social Groups and the Public Sphere**

Examining the controversy around M.F. Hussain's paintings in 1997, Monica Juneja observes:

> Reading, viewing, listening do not subject consumers of a work to the omnipotence of a single aesthetic message that they absorb and which conditions them. Rather these acts make it possible to reinterpret or redefine intended meanings, also to question, defy or resist them. Works of art then, assimilated by different individuals and communities, absorbed through the filters of multiple identities, enter into a field of exchange and dialogue within a space in which contesting interpretations can be played out and engage critically with one another (Juneja, 1997:155).

Juneja demonstrates how the Right Wing Hindu forces are desperately trying to claim their monopoly over the public sphere now being 'infiltrated' by different castes and social groups. The Right Wing monopoly over the public sphere is translated into the ultimate determinant of the question of sexuality and social relations. This monopoly, Juneja feels, is characterised by two factors: cause as well as effect. That is, the Right Wing forces feel unable to handle the question of caste stratification and conflict within Hindu society, causing its particular definition of 'Indianness' to disintegrate under force of its own contradictions and repressions. The effect of this disintegration results in the reaction of the Hindu forces to suppress plurality and "to destroy the public sphere within which multiple perspectives and identities can find expression, engage with, contest, subvert and replenish one another" (ibid: 157).

Let us recall *Maarga-I, Mahachaitra, Vacana Deepti* and *Dharmakarana* controversies in the light of above explanation. They signify the crisis of the Viraśaiva

<div align="center">224</div>

community in the contemporary period. It is the result of changing social, political, religious and literary equations between the Viraśaiva community and the emerging subaltern forces in the public sphere in Karnataka. As we argued in the introduction, it is not that 'crisis' is out there in the socio-political realms, it is also the result of certain kind of formation. The Viraśaivas feel 'under seize' due to the societal transformations and they construct a discourse of 'crisis' to give vent to their anxiety. Now, let us know more about the societal changes that have created an anxiety 'community under seize' for the Viraśaivas.

Politically there is a sea change in the balance of power between different caste groups, especially after the 1970s, in Karnataka. The political rise of new identities has significantly altered the perceptions about literature which no more can be seen from aesthetic perspectives or high culture is unrelated to the society. As rightly pointed out by Tejaswini Niranjana, the political changes such as the politics of Emergency in 1977, followed by the popular victory over the Congress in 1977 and the emergence of women, Dalit, peasant and tribal movements resulted in changing the discourses of literature and culture in Karnataka. These shifts have been the consequences of entry of a new group of writers in Kannada literature. She points out,

> This period [1970s] is marked by the widely successful leftist Samudaya theatre
> movement, the predominantly non-Brahmin Bandaya [Revolt] writers' movement,
> and a self-conscious resurgence of women's writing (Niranjana, 1994:145).

Apart from the 'progressive' forces, the emergences of Dalit and feminist discourses have affected the general perception of Kannada literature. Naturally, the above changes have altered the ways of reading vacanas and perceiving Viraśaivism. They wrought in fundamental changes in the readership, production and consumption of Viraśaiva literature. This change gets reflected in the 'literary movements' of Kannada.

The first conference of the *Bandaya* Kannada Literary Movement in 1979 evolved a manifesto to resist any form of exploitation and oppression of the subaltern by the upper castes in society. The Bandaya writers were fascinated by the social ideals of Lohia

Socialism and Marxism. They emphasized on the social commitment of the creative writers. The first conference brought several non-Brahmin writers, including the Dalit writers, together. They criticized the discriminations based on caste, class, gender and religion. The newly educated people from the non-Brahmin communities supported the Bandaya writers immensely. They were for social justice against any form of oppression. Due to this social base, despite its theoretical ignorance and ideological inconsistency, the Bandaya literary movement and its *shudra* voice caught the imagination of the backward classes of Karnataka.

It is not out of place to mention how a remark on Kannada literature by a Dalit politician (1972) created furore in the Kannada literary circles. B.Basavalingappa, the civil administration minister in the Devaraj Urs government, described the Kannada literature as *Boosa* (the fodder), obviously referring to the shallowness of the 'aesthetic literature' and the upper caste blindness to social suffering and exploitation. The whole lot of upper caste creative writers were angered by his remarks and created an acrimonious scene. The *Boosa* controversy was so intense that it created large-scale social and administrative disturbance and culminated in the demand for Basavalingappa's resignation from the ministry. Throughout Karnataka, colleges and universities observed *bandhs* for and against the minister. In many places like Kanakapura, Mysore and Bangalore, the agitation turned violent and the police had to resort to *lathi charge* to disperse the pro-and anti-Basavalingappa supporters. The supporters were obviously Dalits. Many Kannada literary pundits like Jaware Gowda and Beechi condemned Basavalingappa for his 'irresponsible' remarks on the Kannada literature. The Kannada literary world was vertically divided into two groups: the conservatives and the progressives. There were many progressives who justified Basavalingappa's remarks. They tried apprising the public of the Dalit ideology behind Basavalingappa's remarks and criticized the castiesm of the upper caste writers for blaming Basavalingappa.

The first Dalit writers' conference was held in 1976. The *Boosa* controversy was the inspiration for this conference in many ways. Under the leadership of B. Krishnappa,

a new platform for the Dalits called *Dalit Sangharsh Samiti* was floated[23]. Basavalingappa inaugurated its first public meeting[24]. These political circumstances and platforms were also responsible for Dalit writings to emerge gradually in Kannada literary world. Another distinguishing feature of this period was the emergence of women writing in Kannada literature. The new writers opposed the oppression, questioned the accepted norms of life, asserted their social identity, condemned patriarchal structure, re-examined the mainstream Kannada literature from Dalit and women's perspective, and fought for social justice and equality.

The emergence of Dalits in the social and political scenario marks a new beginning in the social and political history of modern Karnataka. They disrupted the established discourses of society and culture. Changes in the policies pertaining to education, government jobs, land reforms and various other initiatives by the government in this decade enhanced the self-confidence and self-consciousness of the subaltern classes and communities. Devaraj Urs who represented the Congress party could win the state elections in 1972 by the tacit support of hitherto marginalized sections of the society. The Backward classes except the Viraśaivas and the SC/STs supported Devaraj Urs. He was successful in breaking the stronghold of the Vokkaligas[25] and the Viraśaiva community by means of his pragmatic politics of building alliance with the subaltern sections. A commission was set up with the chairmanship of Havanur to reconsider the reservation policy in the state. This commission was known as the *Havanur Backward Class Commission.* The Commission not only considered the Viraśaivas as forward community but also included several new communities to the backward classes. Many lower caste/class groups of the Viraśaiva community came under reservation. In this connection, Mahesh Tippashetti observes,

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[23] Many branches of the Samiti were opened across Karnataka. They addressed the problems of Dalits like landlessness, caste violence, education, etc. Above all, they tried to create an awareness of Dalit identity through the reformation activities.

[24] In 1999, a silver jubilee function in memory of twenty-five years of *Boos a* controversy was held. In the function, a seminar was organized which discussed social transformation, cultural life and challenges for the Dalit movement in future. Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti, 2000, published the proceedings of the seminar.

[25] Vokkalinga community is the second largest non-Brahmin community in Karnataka. While the Viraśaivas constitute 17% of the total population in Karnataka, the Vokkaligas are 14%.

When Devaraj Urs implemented the recommendations of the Havanur report in the name of social justice, many professional sub-castes of the Virashaiva community like Madivala, Jeera, Hoogara, Mali, Hadapada, Ambigera Kumbara, Bovi were considered as backward castes (Tippashetti, 2000:2).

The political interventions of the Congress government increased the internal dissidences within the Viraśaiva community. The move by the Congress government rigorously politicised the lower caste groups in Karnataka, a move the upper castes found very hard to stomach. Tippashetti notices that a decision to implement the Havanur commission report has made the lower and economically disadvantaged groups to rethink their social origin and redress their problems. They still identified Basava as their guru but severed their allegiance with the upper caste mutts. As substitution to the mainstream mutts, they floated their own mutts and caste associations in villages and towns.

The upper caste Viraśaivas were unhappy for they were forced to give up quite a few of the comforts and benefits enjoyed by them earlier and share the resources with the lower sections of the community including the Dalits. They strongly opposed the *Havanur Commission* and pressurized the government not to implement the recommendations. Bhimmanna Khandre opposed the recommendations of the commission and burnt the copies of the report in the state assembly (ibid: 3). The then president of the ABVM, J.B.Mallaradhya, severely criticized the recommendations of the commission. He strongly argued for the continuation of backward class status to all the Viraśaivas. He held a series of press conferences in 1977 as part of campaign against the *Havanur Commission.* But Urs did not give much importance to them. He exploited the anti upper caste feelings of the lower caste groups and succeeded in his effort. He introduced a series of reformist measures for the disadvantaged sections of the society. He also actively supported the revival of caste associations especially of the artisan and service castes. He channeled money and resources to their caste associations. Awakening the consciousness of the disadvantaged groups was the vocabulary of politics then. The ordinary voters were exposed to the advantages of political power and processes.

The singular achievement of the Devaraj Urs government, widely appreciated by many is land reforms. Land redistribution helped the disadvantaged groups a great deal and gave a decisive blow to the upper caste monopoly over the land. The Viraśaiva community is one among the worst affected for they had to loose their traditional hold on the agricultural land.

Thus, the overall picture of the 1970s was one of transformation and change. The upper castes felt the force of the competition in the areas of government jobs, education and politics. The entry of the subaltern sections into the modern spaces, encouraged by the state for its own reasons of legitimacy and convenience, went a long way in checking the Viraśaiva dominance in the politics of Karnataka. This change in the public domain has a lasting impact on the ways in which the Viraśaiva identity has come to be constituted in the contemporary period.

In the religious sphere too, the upper caste Viraśaivas had to make room for the emerging caste associations and religious organizations. In 1988, Basavalinga Swamy established *Ambigara Caudayy Mutt* in Naagaralu village of Bagalkote district. Ambigara Caudayya was a Sharana and a contemporary of Basava. Though he did not belong to an untouchable caste, it is certainly not a caste of the pure category of 'twice-born' Hindus. He was a ferryman by profession. He was one of the leaders in the twelfth century Viraśaiva movement and composed several vacanas. The *Ambigara Caudayy Mutt* was established with the aim of propagating the ideals of the twelfth century Sharanas. Shri Basavalinga Swamy converted many people of danga sect into Lingayath religion and appointed Gurubasava Swamy as the head of the mutt. These people conduct religious functions and rituals in this mutt. Every year they celebrate the *Jayanthostava* of Ambigara Caudayya[26].

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[26] For more information: see, Chadrashekahra Naranapura's *Karnatakada Viraśaiva Mathagalu* (Viraśaiva Mutts of Karnataka, 2002, p. 676).

The changing scenario awakened at least a few religious heads of the Viraśaiva community. In the heat of pro and anti Mandal agitations in 1990[27] Shri Mahanta Swamy of Chittaragi mutt (Ilakal) declared in 1994 that a Dalit would succeed him as the *mathadisha*. The left organizations, Dalits and progressive intellectuals welcomed this declaration. But the pontiff of the *Mooru Savira* mutt took strong objections to the move. The head of this influential and wealthy mutt, Gangadhara Rajayogindra Mahaswamy, categorically rejected the proposal of Mahanta Swamy and laid exclusive claim to take decision in this regard since the Chittaragi mutt came under his jurisdiction. Many Viraśaiva devotees denounced Mahanta Swamy's declaration as cheap gimmicks. However, not all mutts are hostile to the Dalits. There are many other Viraśaiva mutts, which are ready to accommodate the Dalits in their mutt system.

VII

The Crisis in Viraśaivism

The new wave of the Dalit-Bandaya movements provided a new framework for the understanding of the Vacanas. There are numerous proposals on the importance of and justification for rewriting the history of Viraśaivism and the vacana movement from perspectives of the subaltern. Now the focus was on the lower caste vacana poets as well as women poets and their contribution to Viraśaivism. Several studies revealed the contradictions and tensions between the upper caste devotees and the lower caste vacana poets. The subaltern social groups retrieved this critical tradition to expose the religious discrimination and exploitation of the mainstream Viraśaivism. In this regard, Chandrashekar Patil, a poet, critic and playwright, observes,

> The *Navodaya* and the *Navya* writers in Kannada emphasized on the literary merits of vacana movement, now—in the context of Dalit and Bandaya movements—there are efforts to analyse the multiple aspects of vacanas. In such studies it is natural that the life and personality of central figure of the movement, nature of his proposed concepts, inevitable strengths and limitations of the period's social conditions will be focused (Patil, 1996:13).

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[27] The agitations were between the upper castes and the backward classes over the reservation policies recommended by the Mandal Commission and implemented by the V.P. Singh government.
[28] This controversy is documented in *Basava Belagu* (1994, Vol.8, No. 4) and *Paramjyothi* a home journal of *Mooru Savira* mutt (1994, Vol.27, No.1).

Dalit movement and writings have not confined to only projecting their "own" culture and experiences or creating alternative cultural/social systems. They have actively intervened in the traditional spheres of the upper castes. As we have already discussed, in the context of *Maarga* and *Mahachaitra* controversies, the Dalit organizations have supported Kalburgi and Shivaprakash. In all these occasions, they have productively used the values of vacanas to speak back to their Viraśaiva masters.

L.Basavaraju, an erudite Kannada scholar, relentlessly researched on vacanas and Viraśaivism and contested the communal/religious appropriation of vacanas by the religious heads and the politicians. As Mogalli Ganesh, a Dalit writer, points out "Basavaraj u unmasked the communal garb around vacana tradition through his well researched works" (Ganesh, 1993:6). In an interview for the *Lankesh Patrike* in 1993, Basavaraju explains that he was uncomfortable and unhappy with the communal framework within which vacanas were read and understood. He found it necessary to reinterpret the vacanas in order to dismantle the communal framework. He blames the rigidity of the mutts and seers for communalisation of the vacanas. According to him, the Dalit-Bandaya movement may be traced back to the twelfth century vacana movement for the vacana literature was initiated, produced and popularised by the lower caste Sharanas and not by the upper castes. In this sense the twelfth century vacana movement was secular. Vacanas of Madara Chennayya, Dohara Kakkayya, Samboli Nagideva, Ganesha Masanayya and others truly represent the vacana movement. He believes that some of the lower caste Sharanas lived before Basava. They enriched the vacana literature much before Basava. In his views, Basava was the follower of his elder contemporaries such as Madara Chennayya and Dohara Kakkayya. Basavaraju does not subscribe to the mainstream deification of Basava but emphasizes the values and beliefs of lower castes expressed through the vacanas.

Another instance of identifying Virasaiva icons with lower castes is Mahadev Banakar's research on *Marulasiddheshwara Charitre* (History of Marulasiddheshwara). Banakar's research shows that Marulasiddheshwara, a lower caste Sharana belonging to the cobbler's community, established the *Ujjani Peetha*, one of the religious centres of

the Gurustala tradition. Many Gurustala Viraśaivas challenged and opposed his views. They believed that Marulasiddheshwara did not establish the *Peetha*[29].

There are other works, which have focused on lower caste women Sharanas too. H. L. Pushpa has written on women vacanakaras whose ideas, beliefs and ideals are not at all researched properly. She points out that a) their vacanas highlight the value of work, b) they criticize superstitious practices and opportunism, and c) they give ample details about woman and her place in society. Molige Mahadevi, Amuge Rayamma, Sule Sankavva, Urilinga Peddi and Mukthayakk are some of the lower caste women sharanes whose contribution to the vacana movement is appreciated (Pushpa, 1993:101-116)[30]. B.M.Puttaiah, a Kannada critic, has written about the *aalkshita* (ignored) vacanakaras (1999). He criticizes the commonsensical view that vacana movement was radical. According to him, such perception about vacanas has kept the mainstream vacanakaras as the main source of reference and has ignored the contribution of thousands of lower caste Sharanas. Lakshman Telagavi, a history professor in Kannada University, considers Madara Chennayya, Dohara Kakayya and Madara Dhulayya as the first Dalit writers in the literary history of Karnataka (Telagavi, 1999:97).

The overall academic scholarship in the post 1970s attempted to secularise and democratise the reading of Vacanas. Basava as a sole cultural icon came under interrogation after such scholarly work. It has made a small but steady beginning in destabilizing the dominant institutions and discourses of Viraśaivism. Many lower caste Viraśaivas have strongly challenged the mainstream Viraśaiva mutt system. Dalits writers productively used the vacanas of the downtrodden to oppose the dominance of the upper caste Viraśaivas. Polytheistic traditions of the Dalit Sharanas have been posed against the monolithic tradition of Viraśaivism. All these have resulted in decentring the twelfth century vacana movement with Basava as its central figure. The subaltern consciousness

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[29] Banakar narrates this incident while speaking against *Dharmakarana*. For more details see, the official report of eighty fourth session of Karnataka legislative council, March, 1997, pp. 179-180.

[30] On another occasion she discusses the folk elements in vacanas (Pushpa, 2003: 61-70). She says that the Dalit sharanas like Allama Prabhu, Devara Dasimayya, Kannada Kayakada Ammidevayya, Bahurupi Chowdayya, etc. reflected their traditions and professions in their vacanas.

(within and outside the community) that forwards the notion of equality and casteless society propounded by vacanakaras is consolidating itself with the active support of the secular forces 'causing' displeasure for the upper caste Viraśaivas.

Negotiating with the Changing Situations

What are the implications of these developments on those upper caste Viraśaivas who have been enjoying social and political dominance in Karnataka? How have they responded to the changing situations? How do they respond to the new situation?

Interventions of the subaltern sections into the narratives of Viraśaivism have resulted in two kinds of responses from the dominant Viraśaivas. They either attempted to appropriate the new interpretations or whenever they found it a difficult task they suppressed such interpretations. All the upper caste groups came together in this effort. As Baraguru Ramachandrappa rightly points out,

> In recent times, there has been a consolidation of caste formations in the social sphere. The weaker sections have come to regard the social principle of uplifting those who are oppressed because of caste as their right…But it is an irony that even as the low castes are getting organized to fight for their rights, the upper castes are strengthening their organizations (Baraguru, 1997)[31].

Baraguru made these remarks in the context of *Dharmakaarana* controversy. According to him, the reactionary behaviour of the upper caste Viraśaivas was due to the emergence of subaltern consciousness. He said,

> In recent times such controversies have become common and they are the outcome of unilateral attempts by certain castes to gain an upper hand. Conspiracies are being continually hatched to spoil the social sphere through caste arrogance and self-glorification. By getting organized, the powerful castes are not only trying to reestablish their social status, which is under threat in the new situation, but also trying to gain political clout (ibid).

Since the Viraśaiva mutts have begun accepting patronage from hitherto marginalized social groups, the upper caste Viraśaivas have become restless. The crisis felt by them is

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[31] Baragur's opinions appeared in *Deccan-Herald*, 21st, March, 1997.

so acute that a recent convention of the Virasaiva seers in Kudalasangama[32] passed a resolution that it was high time for the *Viraśaiva-Lingayath* community[33] shed its internal differences and to unite for the social and the political interests. Through out this convention the trope of 'community under seize' was employed to articulate the situation in which the Viraśaivas were caught. It was reported in the Hindu (2nd, June, 2003) that,

> A larger number of swamis of different sub-sects of Veerasaivism on Sunday pledged to bring about unity and amity among the people of various castes and sub-castes within the Veerasaiva-Lingayath community.

Rambhapuri Jagadguru emphasized the need for unity among the sub-sects of the community, which, according to him, was on the decline both *politically* and *socially*. He urged the Viraśaivas, to rise to the occasion as one community and regain its lost glory. He strongly felt the need for bigger representation in the *power corridor* for the Viraśaivas. The convention ended with a decision to sort out the internal differences and chalking out plans to re-emerge socially and politically.

MM's insistence on monotheism is also in a way a response to the subaltern consciousness. The middle classes of Viraśaivas no more worship Basava or Lord Shiva alone. They worship non-Viraśaiva gods and goddesses too. Lord Ganesha, Lord Venkateshwara, Lord Raghavendra, Lord Ayyappa, Lord Manjunatha are some of the gods worshipped by the urban middle class Viraśaivas. They participate in the religious and spiritual programmes organised by the non-Viraśaivas. They visit several temples of non-Viraśaiva faith. In the rural areas, they worship local deities of various kinds. The Brahmin priests still hold the monopoly over important ritual ceremonies in temples. The criticism of the 'secular' forces against the corruption of spirituality, manipulative religion, deceit and extravagance of the Viraśaiva mutts has added salt to the injury. They allege that the Viraśaiva mutts have remained immersed in their ritual jamboree and internal squabbles.

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[32] This religious convention was held in June, 2003.

[33] Both Gurustala and Viraktha seers attended this meeting. These leaders strongly urged the Viraśaivas and politicians to unite and resolve the internal differences so as to encounter the social and political crisis of the community in the contemporary period.

Decline in religious belief has caused a severe concern and anxiety in people like MM. That is why, MM denounces the polytheism of Hindu religion and urges the youth to emerge as a "one religious force" and to practice monotheism (MM, 2003:8). She believes that orthodoxy and superstitious elements in the Hindu community have made the path easy for other religions to attract the Viraśaiva youth and convert them (ibid: 8). Her conviction is that Linganananda Swamy's philosophy of monotheism and the notion of *Ishtalinga* can present such hazards to the community.

Studies on vacanas from Dalit perspectives and persistent interrogation of monopolistic hold of the Viraśaiva mutts have proved it difficult for the Viraśaivas and the community to regain control over the discourses of Viraśaiva religion, literature and history. That is why, regaining control over the narratives of Viraśaivism is very important for people like MM. It is through the narratives of vacanas that she has tried to shape the collective imagination of the Viraśaivas. The three literary controversies discussed in the first chapter are the symptomatic of this anxiety, crisis and response of the community to the present situation. In all the three controversies, the leaders of the community have made persistent efforts to regain and reinforce the centrality of Basava for Viraśaivism.

The Viraśaiva seers also have tried to represent themselves as the champions of the downtrodden. For instance, MM was angry with H.S.Shivaprakash for using Dalit Sharanas for his narrow ideologies in his play. According to her, Dalit Sharanas could never speak lightly about Basava because they were his *followers* and they *adored* him. An article by Kumara Kakkayya Pola in *Kalyana Kirana* (1994:13) condemns the ill treatment of the lower caste Sharanas in the play. *Pola* describes Shivaprakash as a traitor for presenting Madivala Machideva and other followers of Basava in a low taste. In his opinion, the portrayal of Dalit Sharanas in the play is against the popular beliefs about Basava. *Kalyana Kirana* published vacanas of Allama Prabhu, Madivala Machideva and

Dohara Kakkayya who praise the greatness of Basava to show that Basava was beyond any criticism because he championed the cause of the downtrodden[34]

The Viraśaiva mutts and religious leaders have not been totally against Dalit or subaltern articulations. As discussed in the Mahanta case just before, the Viraśaiva seers have begun to take initiatives to promote studies on the Dalit traditions of the vacana movement. Many mutts are open to the idea of including Dalits into their mutt system. However, the dominant Viraśaiva mutts recognize other Viraśaiva heads from the lower castes background only if the latter do not pose any kind of threat or challenge to the authority of the mainstream mutt tradition. The mainstream mutts still would like to hold or renew their power and authority to define and decide the community matters.

The core dispute and disagreements between the proponents and the opponents of the ban on the 'controversial' texts were not settled by text because it was the 'interpretive' angle of the interpreter, which was disputed, disagreed and condemned. One danger in these interpretations was that the vacanas were treated as a mere collection of proof-texts for their respective claims of 'right' interpretation. Such treatment rendered the vacanas to atomistic and ahistorical status. Consequently the interpreters foiled to consider the literary and historical trajectories of the vacanas as discussed in the previous chapters.

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[34] *Basava Mattu Dalilodaya* (1984 and 1991) contains several articles that demonstrate Basava's fight for the emancipation of Dalits.

Chapter VI

The Roads Taken and Not Taken

A dissertation on literary controversies can only raise issues that may help us formulate what sorts of questions can be productively asked through literary controversies in order to theorise the contemporary culture for a better understanding-This is so because several contexts and nuances of literary controversies are not simply available for analysis because the mainstream literary history never records them. Rather, it treats them as 'trivial' matters of no significance to literary analysis. As researchers we have to tread a different and difficult path not only to collect the data dispersed in newspapers, journals, archives, personal collections, temple records, libraries maintained by mutts etc, but also had to look into diverse histories of literature and the Viraśaiva community to identify and record the details of literary controversies. Therefore, it may be safe to say with regard to this dissertation, to borrow a phrase from George Luckacs "the journey is ended but the way begun." (George Luckacs, 1971).

Conceptual Framework

Let us recapitulate some of the main arguments foregrounded in the earlier chapters to arrive at certain hypotheses. Towards this end, we need to first recall the conceptual assumptions on the basis of which, the empirical details are discussed in the dissertation. The central focus of the thesis is that the literary controversies arose in Karnataka from time to time around literary texts related to the Viraśaiva philosophy; history and literature. And they are not isolated and sporadic incidents. They must be considered as important cultural signifiers. Hence, the analysis of literary controversies has to go beyond the conceptual vocabulary such as the dichotomies of individual versus community or freedom of expression versus coercion. It is also necessary to rethink the 'commonsensical' perceptions of literature as imaginative and creative in order to have a better explanation of literary controversies in relation to the wider social processes. This is inevitable because the framework of comparative perspective in the discipline of Comparative Literature is found inadequate to analyse the issues opened up by the

literary controversies. Indeed, the perceptual bases of literary controversies and their complex relationship with communities today require theoretical and empirical elucidation with nuances. This dissertation is a modest effort to comprehend the socio-political dynamics of literary controversies and their significance for the contemporary culture of Karnataka. We also, probed into the question of formation of the Viraśaiva community during modern period as well as its religious *avatars* in the post-colonial times.

The conventional but institutionally popular text centred-approaches of 'Literary Criticism'[1] privilege the literary form and it is interested only in fixing *the meaning* of the literary text. They consider literary text as an autonomous entity that has its own constitutive elements. They resist the use of any 'predetermined' theory in the reading of the literary text. They refuse to consider the social milieu in which the text itself is being written and they dehistoricise meanings. Therefore, we have formulated our questions bringing together the insights drawn from cultural studies, postcolonial studies, post structuralism and critical theory.

We began with the theoretical formulations of the four scholars who discussed literary controversies from different perspectives as a point of departure. We attempted to develop, extend and modify the framework provided by them so that literary controversies can be studied productively. We accepted the meaningful insights provided by them and furthered the discussion by way of providing a critique for their theoretical understanding. The purpose of bringing in these four thinkers is to confirm our assumption that a literary text *per se* is not solely responsible for a literary controversy. The contents or descriptions in a literary text were merely used to raise larger questions of narratives, communities, democracy and citizenship.

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[1] The term Literary Criticism as it is used here refers to all formalistic approaches to literature that are interested only in textual analysis of literary works and those theories which, do not consider the social, the historical and the political aspects of writing. Most of these theories come from the Anglo-Saxon anti theoretical traditions such as New Criticism, Practical Criticism, and the Chicago School, etc.

Language, Identity and Literary Controversies

Literary controversies include several aspects. In the context of Karnataka at least two aspects are significant among the many. They are related to the formation of the Viraśaiva community during the colonial period and its efforts to maintain the identity of the community in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. Secondly, the Kannada literary controversies represent the attempts of the upper castes of the Viraśaiva community for domination and the lower caste groups' struggle for existence and their resistance to domination. In our view the community's identity took specific shape in the tension between those who dominate and the dominated. Apart from this, other communities adjacent to the Viraśaiva community also determined and continue to determine the identity of the Viraśaiva community. All through the dissertation we grappled with this complex issue. Hence, if the literary controversies constitute our main text, formation of caste identities and their relationship to narratives and the state are sub-texts running through the thesis as we have pursued it.

As indicated earlier the *Shubhodaya* controversy provided a context for the Viraśaivas to rethink their "social identities" (Saberwal and Jayaram, 2003: 546), while *Maarga, Mahachaitra, Vacana Deepti* and *Dharmakarana* controversies demonstrated the community's dominance over the emerging social forces and its resistance to any interference into its 'internal' domain. Assertion of an identity inevitably involved both domination as well as resistance. The double-edged identity politics of the community may be explained as follows.

While consolidating the community identity, the Viraśaivas have "reaffirm[ed] and renew[ed] the boundaries" (ibid: 548) of the community. Renewal of social boundaries implied excluding or including certain social groups from the mainstream cultural domain in which the Viraśaiva community occupy a dominant place. In the third chapter we have demonstrated that the upper caste/class Viraśaivas were very reluctant to accommodate Hajams and Dhobis because they belonged to lower strata of the society. Not only that, the upper caste/class Viraśaivas even invoked the *dharmashastras* to claim Brahminhood for themselves. Sanskrit heritage of the community was conveniently

invoked to draw the social boundaries between them and the Brahmins on one the hand and the lower caste Viraśaivas on the other. This fact of inclusion and exclusion also applies to the post-colonial period. Therefore, the simultaneous assertion of identity as opposed to Brahmins and the will to dominate the subaltern social groups within the Viraśaiva community is a crucial factor in the politics of identity of the Viraśaiva community in Karnataka. If we go beyond the obvious binaries we soon realise how the upper caste groups desire to dominate the rest in the community presents a complicated picture of the formation of the community identity in the early twentieth century. No doubt anti-Brahmanism played a pivotal role in the shaping of the community. But we cannot ignore the other differential social signifiers. The elite/upper class Viraśaivas and the mainstream religious heads used the literary controversies to mask several contentious issues such as caste discrimination, conservatism and elitism within the community in the name of so called 'larger' and 'common' interests of the Viraśaivas. The Viraśaivas, who contested the Brahmanism, tried to address their own pro-caste practices within the framework of Hindu religion. Their anti-Brahmin position was to hide their own pro-casteist practices within the framework of the *Varna* system.

The formation of identity of the Viraśaiva community is a dialectical process. The 'coming together' of and the 'tension' between the insiders and the outsiders of the community is a process through which, the community identity gets established. To put it differently, the question of identity involves two cultural understandings. One is the imagination of its members from inside and second, what it looked from outside to others. While the elite Viraśaivas constitute the so-called inside force, the non-Viraśaivas are considered as the external forces. The encounter between these two forces has to be worked out in the Kannada public sphere[2]. One cannot brand these forces in terms of conservative and avant-garde.

The fourth chapter reveals the discursive realm of the above-mentioned process. Both the Viraśaivas and Brahmins intellectuals participated in the act of imagining the

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[2] The dichotomy of inside and outside is imagined by the Virasaivas. It is the consequence of an imagination of "who are our friends, who are with us, and who are our foes, who are against us" (Saberwal and Jayaram, 2003: 546). Such imagination is also a part of the process of reaffirming and redrawing the caste boundaries.

'Viraśaiva identity' by re-writing the Viraśaiva past and literature in the colonial period but for different purposes. It is very clear from the actions as well as the writings of the mainstream Viraśaivas that they did not like any interference of others including the lower caste Viraśaivas into the internal matters of the community. The defining castes of the Viraśaiva community obviously belonged to the upper strata of the community. No other castes in Karnataka indeed, wanted to interfere in the internal matters of Viraśaivas, but the problem is arisen due to the 'double' belonging of the community narratives especially of vacanas. They are on one hand *belong to all;* the people of Karnataka, a fact in which the community takes pride-yet they are the *exclusive treasure* of the community. Hence, the spokespersons of the Viraśaiva religion insist on *their* interpretations and meanings. The community leaders take pride in projecting the vacanas and the great mystic saints of twelfth century Viraśaiva movement as belonging to Karnataka; but they also claim that the saints belong to 'us' too. Therefore, no one has right to interpret them the way they want it. While interpreting the vacanas and the Viraśaiva history one must consider the feelings of the majority in the community for they *allowed* others to have access to vacanas. Roughly this is the point the community leaders were making in the context of literary controversies. Literary controversies have provided ample opportunities for them to continue the hegemony over several Viraśaiva sects as well as homogenize the community in the modern period that is crucial for the democratic politics. The 'anti-Brahmin and pro-subaltern' identity of the Viraśaiva religion is produced and reproduced time and again to galvanise community. This cannot be said as either revival or continuation of the twelfth century legacy. Instead, the past images, metaphors and tropes were selectively put to a new use in the context of literary controversies.

We argue that the Viraśaivas like to sustain their anti-Brahmin discourse through the literary narratives. Though the Brahmins are not in direct confrontation with the Viraśaivas in the post-colonial Karnataka, the anti-Brahmin discourse is necessary to continue their 'traditional' leadership of the suppressed social forces. The opposition of the Viraśaivas to Brahmanism is also intended to deny the Brahmins' right to influence the 'inside'.

The changing nature of the Viraśaiva identity becomes **clear in** the differing responses of the community to Brahmanism. The anti-Brahmin discourse of the Viraśaivas of the post-colonial period shares similarities and dissimilarities with that of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The Viraśaivas claimed Brahminhood in the early twentieth century in their effort to contest the Brahmin hegemony. Any reference to the subaltern sections was conspicuously absent in their claim. They even prevented certain caste groups from identifying with the upper caste Viraśaivas. As we have already seen the caste practices and socialisation patterns were clearly incommensurable[3]. But the post-colonial situation renders a different picture. The nationalist moorings of the Viraśaiva scholars in the late colonial period forced them to establish and institutionalise Viraśaivism as secular, egalitarian and casteless and they did it by way of inventing the twelfth century vacana movement and projecting the idiomatic expressions of the mystic Sharanas of the time as vacana literature. From then on the majority of Karnataka has seen the Viraśaiva tradition as a progressive religion, sensitive to social, caste and gender discriminations. The Bandaya, the Dalit and the women writers have been quite at home with the Viraśaiva religion. The postcolonial response to Brahmanism stems from the above mentioned context. The issue of caste system figures prominently in this anti- Brahmin discourse of Viraśaivism.

While delineating the invention of tradition by the Viraśaivas in the colonial period, we confined our study to illustrate the Brahmin-Viraśaiva rivalry. We did not look into the relationship of the Viraśaiva community to communities other than Brahman community in detail. For example, *Okkaligas,* another non-Brahmin community that collaborated with the Viraśaivas in claiming backward class status in the colonial Mysore region, began mobilizing its community way back in 1905 with the establishment of the *Okkaligara Sangha* in 1905. As the demand for the unification of Karnataka arose the differences between the Okkaliga community and the Viraśaivas surfaced for they are the two majority communities of Karnataka. The bitter rivalry continued in the postcolonial period, in the vote bank politics of 'our' democracy. These two communities continue to have love-hate relationship in Karnataka. The tension between the Okkaligas

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[3] Nonaba and Hajam castes were prevented from identifying themselves with the upper caste Virasaivas.

and Viraśaivas has a history of its own and it was a significant aspect that determined the politics of Karnataka.

The post emergency developments in the early 80s affected the Viraśaiva community more or less in the same way they affected other upper caste communities in Karnataka. The decline in the political power that the Viraśaivas enjoyed for twenty years after the independence has made the community more anxious and many times the community was forced to beat a retreat. Though the community attempted in vain to come back to power it did not yield any fruits. The identity politics of the Viraśaivas could be further explored focusing on the community equations between Viraśaivas and other non-Brahmin communities for we focused only on the material relevant for our study of literary controversies. Future research could take up the whole gambit of caste formation in the modern period in Karnataka for study.

The contestations of the secular reading public, writers and the Kannada literary circles on the one hand and of the Viraśaiva leaders and monastic traditions during the literary controversies are clear examples of arbitrary and fragile relationship between narratives and communities. No community can exist with out memory, history and narratives of its own, yet narratives may not 'mean the same thing' to all, a fact that turns the relationship between narratives and communities precarious. Hence, the communities plead, assert for, lay claim on, try to possess and insist on *their* interpretation of narratives in the fear of loosing control over the narratives.

Let us not forget that literary controversies are the public articulations on the nature of democracy and citizenship. A careful examination of the debate would reveal that the communitarians and the secularists take two different positions on democratic set up of the country. If the secularists refuse to give any space for religion and communities in politics in the Kannada public sphere the communitarians resist such 'hijacking'. On the secularists' part, a crisis has set in the domain of literary criticism. They have not yet come out of the conventional notions of 'genuine' literary interpretation, authentic

experience (*anubhava*) and expression of creative writing, etc[4]. Therefore, they have not yet thought of evolving a new parameter or criterion for understanding and evaluating the impact of literary controversies. In this situation the agenda of the debate gets divided in to the secular and the religious or of freedom of expression and community sentiments on which the futile debates can go on for ever with out stop and with out any sort of resolution. For years, what we see in the debates over literary controversies is an impasse of meanings, an impossibility of a dialogue, a breakdown of communication between the Viraśaiva leaders and the secularists. For the above reason a new look at the literary controversies is required to set the fresh problematic for the literary controversies. To put it differently new questions need to be asked in order to arrive at productive answers.

The secularists and the media imagine and manufacture the always-already 'homogeneous Viraśaiva community'[5]. Lack of information and adequate conceptual vocabulary could be responsible for such an imagination. However, our analysis of the literary controversies in the dissertation has clearly demonstrated that the whole Viraśaiva community did not stand against the writers and the community could not boast of a unified identity consciousness. In fact, many Viraśaivas challenged coercive mechanisms adopted by the communitarians to put pressure on the writer and the state. Neelagunda Swamy, for instance, opposed the principle of Ganachara in the context of Dharmakarana controversy. He questioned the integrity of Vishwanathreddy Mudnal who went on hunger strike in the name of Ganachara[6]. In the context of *Mahachaitra* controversy also, people like Shivacharya Swamy did not agree with the coercive mechanism of MM[7]. Several Viraśaiva writers and readers criticized the communitarians.

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[4] For an analysis of crisis in Kannada literary criticism see Tejaswini Niranjana's "Whose Culture is it? Contesting the Modern" (1994).

[5] Rekha Pappu has mapped the way media recorded the controversies around the *Satanic Verses*. She has tried to explore different moves of the media that 'fixed' the identity of 'Muslim Community' and 'Islam' (Jodhka, 1999:2962). Similar studies are available on the western production and circulation of 'Islam'. Edward Said's *Covering Islam* is one such significant text in this area.

[6] For his views on Mudnal and the Ganachara see "Mudnalara 'Fatwa'" (Kannada—'Fatwa' of Mudnal) in *Kannada Prabha* (a Kannada daily) 25th, March 1997.

[7] For details on Shivacharya Swamy's differences with MM, see chapt. 2, p.90.

That apart the degree and the level of participation of different Viraśaiva organizations also differ from controversy to controversy. These are all indications of the heterogeneous interests operating within the community. However the internal differences should not be confused as support for the secularists. The internal opposition/differences are matters of organizational or institutional differences between several mutts and the Viraśaiva Mahasabhas over the question of secularism and democracy. Any secular or liberal position of a Viraśaiva mutt, therefore, needs to be understood in terms of its relationship with other mutt traditions in Karnataka, be it Viraśaiva or non-Viraśaiva.

Authority to represent the 'concerns' of the community is grounded on the self-legitimacy accorded to the actions of the communitarians. The self-legitimacy of the communitarians is validated invoking the idea of a need for 'community integration', in the face of misrepresentation of the narratives of the community. This explains the deployment of religious vocabulary and images to mobilise people from within. For an instance, MM's theory of *ishtalinga* and the ABVM's anti-Brahmin feelings in the *Dharmakarana* controversy are some of discourses that are foregrounded in defence of their actions. The strategic use of mass force to pressurize the state government is also a program intended towards integrating the divided community and securing the much-needed agreement for a coordinated activity in future. Crucial in such efforts are the Viraśaiva concepts and ideas, which specify how one should act and define the course of action and dictate interpretive norms.

As a matter of fact both the secularists and the communitarians think similarly on many ideas of language and literature. Both use the same worn-out, outdated but institutionally powerful and established ways of reading. The differences show up on the twin questions of creative freedom and historical truth. The communitarians refuse to believe that narratives are not history whereas the creative writers insist that creative writing goes beyond the factual truth of history. In our opinion, this fact opens up several possibilities for future research, especially, from the perspective of New Historicism.

While analysing the conflicts, we were not able to collate information on the involvement of several small literary societies, reader's clubs, amateur theatre groups, art circles, groups of social activism, and the Viraśaiva social/community organizations that raised the temperature of debates. The material is scattered in various places and we leave this very interesting task to future researchers.

Efforts to integrate and defuse the crisis in the community, as shown in the previous chapters, are not individualist but have involved institutions. The Viraśaiva politicians, scholars, readers, religious heads and community elders played a significant role in this regard. The mutts, educational institutions and several civil organizations also participated in the debates and agitations around controversies with enthusiasm. The efforts have proved to be futile since the community is constituted of several social groups whose interests and ideologies differ and clash with each other. Symbols, images, legends, myths and the folklore of the community, nevertheless the claims of being part of a common heritage and history, are not uniformly internalised among all members of the community. The lack of unified internalisation corroborates with the heterogeneity of the community, which has rendered the controversies a web of complexities. Our study is an endeavour to explore some of these complexities.

While discussing the community formation in the colonial as well as in the post-colonial period, we concentrated on the narratives of Viraśaivism. It may give a feeling that we have reduced social transformation of the Viraśaiva community to the level of narratives. We are very much aware of the other crucial factors, which played a crucial role in the formation of the community identity in the modern period. One such important factor is religious practices of the Viraśaivas and the religious observances. The religious practices such as initiation ceremony, rites of worshipping, marriage rituals, local fairs, etc. play a crucial role in marking the differences between the Viraśaivas and the other communities. The religious practices have some sort of institutional and organizational legitimacy. The main centres of the religious practices are Viraśaiva mutts. There are about 1089 Viraśaiva mutts existing in the contemporary Karnataka spread across twenty-seven districts (Naranapura: 2002). These mutts have their own variations of

religious practices due the influence of local culture, as well as the locally shaped doctrines of the mutt tradition.

Our study like any other would be is limited by its focus on the 'contexts' of literary controversies. We did not discuss how the Viraśaiva community might behave in other contexts as a community. The assumption here is that the hypotheses arrived at the internal and external tensions that shape the community identity and that give meanings to it may hold good and help in the analysis of the Viraśaiva community on the whole. For example, census enumeration is still a contentious issue for the community for it has triggered off controversies whether the Viraśaivas are Hindus or they constitute a non-Hindu minority. Some sections of the community like MM and her followers strongly argue that Lingayathism is a minority religion of Karnataka like the Sikhism and the Jainism. Many others in the community feel that it is detrimental to the interests of the community to disassociate form the Hindu religion. The claims and the counter-claims around the census enumeration have led to re-visiting the narratives of Viraśaivism around history, literature and religion. The best example that testifies this point is a recent work by Chidanandamurthy *Viraśaiva Dharma: Bharateeya Samskriti* (2000)". We can draw a parallel for the census controversy in the colonial period also. As we have discussed in the first chapter, the census inventory in the late nineteenth century turned out to be an historical opportunity for the Viraśaivas to seek equality on par with the Brahmins in the modern period and they sought to achieve equality by claiming the status of Brahminhood. One of the avenues in which they could achieve equality was the domain of tradition.

Interestingly, as if history takes a full turn, the kind of rivalry between the Viraśaiva community and the Brahmin community seen and repeatedly invoked at the discursive level in the early twentieth century is conspicuously absent in the late twentieth century. Now it is the rivalry between the Viraśaiva community and the new subaltern forces, which occupies the major part of our analysis in the firth chapter. The

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new social energy released by the subaltern groups has staked claims in all spheres of the public domain. The subaltern construction of Viraśaivism has been largely responsible for the anxiety of the upper caste/class Viraśaivas. The democratic participation of the new social forces in the public domain, so far the monopoly of the uppers castes, has challenged their secular claims. However the latter has either conveniently ignored or confronted such challenges. Therefore, it would be revealing to probe why the Viraśaivas struggle to hold on to the anti-Brahmin discourses and conveniently ignore the democratic claims of the subaltern sections in the globalisation period.

All through the study, we consider the Viraśaiva community as located in a specific 'region' (Karnataka). Therefore, our analysis of literary controversies is microscopic in its scope. However, the self-fashioning of the Viraśaiva community in our opinion, is a local as well as a global event. In other words, we need to explore the impact of globalisation (that in a way started with colonialism) on the perceptions of Viraśaivism and the changing nature of the community identity. The Viraśaivas are exposed to the larger dynamics of urbanisation, secularisation, and corporatisation. Besides the "net effect" (Satish Deshpande, 1998:277) of these larger dynamics on identity politics, there are at least five other factors that seem to be crucial in influencing the community. Satish Deshpande, while examining communalism, lists five crucial factors, which are having a large-scale impact on reshaping communalism. These five factors can also be extended to understand the behaviour of the Viraśaivas in the post-colonial period. These five factors are: new Economic Policy since 1991, globalisation, realignments of caste-ethnicity axes, the emergence of the 'new middle classes' (probably he meant Dalit middle classes) with a transformed socio-political profile and a new rationalisation of the Indian nation-space. Though we considered these five factors to analyse the formation of the Viraśaiva community in the context of the colonial period, we have yet to assess the impact of them in the contemporary period or to explain the present.

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[8] This book contains fascinating accounts of history of the Viraśaiva religion in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period. The author brings together several narratives of the Viraśaivas to prove that the

State, Religion and Literary Controversies

It is not our contention in this dissertation that literary controversies are mere symptoms of religious, literary or political crisis alone. The intervention of the state in resolving the clash between the secularists and the communities is no less important. However, in the dissertation, we could not concentrate upon the relationship between the communitarians, the secularists and the state. There are many studies in the social sciences to understand and theorise the community conflicts with focus on their religious aspect and their relationship to state.[9] These studies have raised the question of state, its role in representing the religions and communities and in responding to the community conflicts. Let us summarise some of the arguments put forward by Ashish Nandy and confirm if his arguments can be handy to us in addressing the problems of communities confronting the state in the context of literary controversies.

Ashish Nandy, in an article "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance" (1992), splits religion into two categories: faith and ideology. He defines faith as such,

> By faith I mean religion as a way of life, a tradition which is definilionally non-monolithic and operationally plural (Nandy, 1992: 70).

He continues,

> By ideology I mean religion as a sub-national, national or cross national identifier or populations contesting for or protecting non-religious, usually political or socio-economic, interests (ibid).

According to him, the modern state always prefers to deal with religious ideologies rather than with faiths. He sees religious ideology and secularism as opposed but kindred ideologies of the modern world, whereas faith is an Indian worldview in which tolerance and a fluid definition of the self provide an alternative to the boundedness of these ideologies. What Nandy does here is to develop a neat binary opposition of faith and ideology and the state's partial engagement with ideology at the expense of plurality. It is very clear that he favours faith rather than ideology and feels that the reasons for state

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Viraśsaivas were Hindus in the past and remain Hindus in future.

failure in combating communalism lies in its refusal to engage with faith which is tolerant to other faiths.

But the above conceptualisation of religion assumes that faith is not at all influenced by religious ideologies and survives without being affected by history. Such kind of conceptualisation is contradicted by the very efforts of MM who mobilised the Viraśaivas and lower castes from both urban and rural areas to demand ban on *Mahachaitra.* It is not acceptable, for at the level of religious organisation at least in Karnataka, the Viraśaiva mutts, in context of the four controversies from 1989 to 1997, have been able to 'manufacture consent' among major religious leaders and political activists from different parts of Karnataka. Nevertheless, the 'less-known' and the 'less-hegemonic' Viraśaiva mutts of different regions and of different social practices, have not participated in the process of 'manufacturing the consent' blindly. They have also contested the major religious mutts and their traditions. The fifth chapter has borne ample evidences to this effect. In the context of *Vacana Deepti* controversy, different faiths of the Viraśaiva religion, have opposed the religious ideology of MM. Therefore, we cannot study the controversies, having religious connotations, and the social problems that they generate within the framework of state versus community dichotomy. The fifth chapter has given us ample accounts to show that despite the fact that many controversies arose simultaneously with the state recognition to a particular work of art, it is *not the only reason,* which may cause a controversy. The *Vacana Deepti* controversy is a clear indication to this fact. The controversy revealed that community conflicts or mobilisations are also expressions of contestation and negotiation among communities and different faiths. In this controversy, the main contention of the opponents of the book was directed against the efforts to hegemonies other views and opinions of other sub sects of the Lingayath community by MM who possesses certain institutional/organisational powers. For this reason, we decided to explore more on the complex ways in which the narratives of community and state intersect and deviate. We need to sufficiently account for the different conceptions of the state about Viraśaivism and the Viraśaiva community before embarking on the state-community confrontation.

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[9] Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli: 1998; Ashish Nandy: 1992 and Veena Das: 1998

Given the number of controversies related to narratives of Viraśaivism, as discussed in the dissertation, over the last one century, the resolution of the controversies seems to be temporary in nature. The manipulation of literary works, institutionalisation of literary conventions, strengthening of religious identities and the questions of representation, knowledge and power continue to haunt the Kannada society and culture. The dissertation presented so far is a step towards addressing a few of these issues. We hope ours is a small help in understanding the literary controversies that may arise else where in future.

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