Vachanas as Caste Critiques

Orientalist Expression of Native Experience

Ph.D. thesis submitted to

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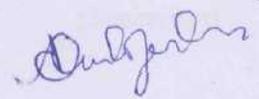
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Declaration

I, Dunkin Jalki, do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **Vachanas as Caste Critiques: Orientalist Expression of Native Experience** contains original research work done by me in fulfilment of the requirements for my Ph.D. degree in Cultural Studies from the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore, and that this report has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma in this or any other institution. This work has not been sent anywhere for publication or presentation purpose.

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Certificate

Certified that this thesis entitled **Vachanas as Caste Critiques: Orientalist Expres-**

sion of Native Experience is a record of bonafide study and research carried out by

Mr. Dunkin Jalki under my supervision and guidance. The report has not been submit-

ted by him for any award of degree or diploma in this or in any other university.

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My journey as a PhD student has been a prolonged one: almost 10 years of wandering and two doctoral researches. I left the first one unfinished and the second one has bore this dissertation. Here I'm writing the "Acknowledgments" wondering how I can even say 'thanks' to all of them who have walked along with me, taught me to walk, given me strength, tolerated my nonsense…

Technically, the period of four years that I spent doing my first-incomplete PhD in EFLU (formerly CIEFL), Hyderabad, is a loss of four years. But the lessons that I learnt are worth the years I lost. Many people helped me in all aspects of an eventful life in Hyderabad: from my first acquaintance with spoken English, table tennis, 'caste politics' to those daily doses of lectures in feminism, studies in homosexuality, cinema studies…! Thanks to all my teachers and friends over there: Mahasweta Sengupta (my doctoral supervisor of the first and unfinished PhD), Susie Tharu, Satish Poduval, Satya Narayana, Jayasrinivasa Rao, Jai Kumar and Balasubramanian. A special thanks to D. Venkat Rao. Had I found his support and friendship while I was in Hyderabad itself, probably I wouldn't have come to Bangalore.

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Contents

Introduction

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COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN TRADITIONS

After nearly three decades of scholarship and research, inspired largely by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), on the ways colonial structures of representation and interpretation affected Indian social and cultural life, it is becoming increasingly clear that we need a deeper theoretical grasp of the phenomenon of colonialism in order to understand how Indian traditions changed, mutated or simply withered when confronted with colonialism. The dissatisfaction with existing characterisations of colonialism arises, in part at least, because all the attempts to theorise colonialism have invariably focused on "the contingent circumstances rather than the nature of the phenomenon",[1] or have "looked for the implications of colonialism in the same way that one tries to understand the implications of a prejudice or a political position" (Pathan 2009: 10). The problems and challenges that this under-theorisation of colonialism poses to an understanding of Indian traditions, especially their pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial careers are immense. This dissertation argues that in order to understand what exactly was involved in the process of colonisation of culture we need to investigate not only how Indian traditions interacted with different elements of colonialism but also how Indian traditions began to perceive themselves as a result of such

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[1] See (Balagangadhara, Bloch, and De Roover 2008: n.1). This article presents an acute criticism of contemporary theorisation of colonialism. See also (Cooper 2005) for a general survey of the contemporary debate on colonialism.

interactions. This dissertation takes up one such tradition, namely, the *Virashaiva* or *Lingayat* tradition, for closer study.

In order to formulate the theoretical difficulties and methodological challenges involved in this task and to situate my undertaking in relation to some dominant contemporary trends in post-colonial scholarship, I will begin by discussing, in Section I, the works of two important scholars, Sheldon Pollock and Nicholas Dirks.[2] I choose these two scholars as they can be made to represent the two dominant positions in colonial studies that are of interest to the problems we are tackling. One position (call them constructivists) considers entities such as religion, tradition, caste, communalism and Hinduism as colonial constructs;[3] and the other (call them continuists) holds that that India had structures and forms (social, cultural and literary) that are similar to their European counterparts and that pre-date the advent of British colonialism.[4] In section II, I will give a brief sketch of the *Lingayat tradition* and the problems in our modern understanding of the vachanas. Section III will outline the structure of the dissertation.

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[2] It is necessary to clarify at the very outset here that Pollock does not see every entity that Dirks says is constructed as existing in pre-colonial India.

[3] The following are some well-known examples. On the colonial construction of the caste system (Cohn 1987) and (Dirks 2001); on Buddhism (Almond 1988); on communalism (Pandey 1990); on nationalism (Bayly 1998); on the unified entity called 'India' (Kaviraj 1992) and (Inden 2001); and on Hinduism (Dalmia and Stietencron 1995), (Sugirtharajah 2003) and (Oddie 2006).

[4] *Continuism* or *Continuists* is not a recognised English word. I use it here, however, for the lack of a better word. By 'continuists' I refer to those scholars whose writings tend to emphasise a similarity between past and present concepts or entities, while talking about pre-colonial and post-colonial India. Here are some well-known examples: (Pollock 1989; 1993; 2006), (Velcheru Narayana Rao, Schulman, and Subrahmanyam 2001) and (Perrett 1999). Through a series of case studies, Subrahmanyam (2001), for example, insists that South India generated indigenous early modern state formations during the late 17th and 18th centuries.

I. Studies in Colonialism

Edward Said (1978) was the first to note that colonial attempts to understand non-Western cultures and traditions inevitably ended up producing stereotypes about them.[5] Although many post-colonial scholars have subsequently repeated this observation, there has been as yet no attempt to understand why the colonial understanding of non-Western or, in our case, Indian traditions, were stereotypical. How the stereotypes are taken over by Indian traditions? What are the effects of this process on Indian traditions? It is one of the main arguments of this dissertation that by understanding the nature of stereotypical understanding, we can hope to gain deeper insights with respect to how colonialism impacted on Indian traditions or, to put it another way, how Indian traditions began to mutate when confronted with colonial stereotypes. Consider the picture that has endured since the days of colonialism and which underlies most scholarship on India, no matter what school they belong to or what method they subscribe to. (Let us not worry at the moment whether this picture is a stereotype or a collection of stereotypes or something else.) It is generally thought that Indian culture is synonymous with 'Hinduism,'[6] which is predicated on an inherently unjust caste system. This picture has been at the core of a narrative – a meta-narrative, in fact – of social backwardness, as evidenced in corruption, caste violence, degraded status of women, poverty and other such problems rampant in India today. Whenever this story is recounted,

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[5] "Consider how the Orient … became known in the West as its great complementary opposite since antiquity. … [A]n internally structured archive is built up from the literature [produced by the West] that belongs to … [its centuries of] experiences [of the Orient]. Out of this comes a restricted number of typical encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation. … [T]hey [then] shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West" (Said 1978: 58). See also (Bhabha 1994).

[6] In these chapters where I am talking about the ways we talk and the words we use in charactering Indian traditions, it is difficult not to use *scare quotes* around every other word. Similarly, as per the general convention, Indian words should normally be in italics. However, a thesis that focuses on Indian traditions should find a way to curb the urge to italicise every Indian word and every time it appears. Hence, in order to avoid disturbing the flow of the text, I have applied scare quotes and italicised a word only when (a) it is used for the first time and (b) to re-draw our attention to the use of the term.

the only redeeming factor that often comes to the rescue of India's pride is indigenous movements against these social evils, such as Buddhism and the *bhakti* movements. These movements are supposed to have arisen periodically to fight against the oppressive social structures inherent in or created by Hinduism.

The 'Lingayat movement' of the 12th century Karnataka is generally considered one such *bhakti* movement. There is unanimity among scholars of different persuasions that it was a movement of low- and out-castes, self-consciously anti-Brahman and anti-caste-system, its leadership provided by the politician/saint Basava. This dissertation seeks to understand colonialism and its impact on Indian traditions by focusing on the way we have come to understand this movement in the 20th century. Today when we talk about this movement, we repeat a story that has been told and re-told over the past 150 years. A significant part of this story is about its founder, Basava and his many 'progressive' actions, such as, for instance, his protest against his *upanayana* (initiation ritual) or a marriage he had organised against caste rules. Basava is thus seen as a founder of a progressive 'protest' movement (popularly known as the *vachana* movement) in the image of Martin Luther. This dissertation questions the epistemic and empirical integrity of this account and the picture of the Lingayat tradition that it constructs by unravelling the mechanism that underlies the interaction between this tradition and the cognitive and other aspects of colonialism. Although it is too large a task to demonstrate within the space of this dissertation, I want to suggest that the mechanism of that interaction is generalisable. That is to say, the mechanism in question can be used to understand the colonial and post-colonial trajectory of many of the Indian traditions. If that turns out to be the case, then this dissertation will have made an important contribution to the understanding of the impact of colonialism on Indian traditions.

This dissertation will argue that the image we inherit of India and its traditions consists of a collection of stereotypes (to be understood in a specific sense, which I will elaborate in chapter 5). We need to problematise this image in various ways. As I shall argue later on, this is a *composite-image*. A key question that this dissertation asks is: Where do the heterogeneous elements that constitute this image come from? In a way, it is not difficult to show that the components of this image have come from various texts of the tradition, such as puranas, kavyas, legends and the vachanas. This means that this image is an assortment of stories, legends and so on, which today seem to pass for histories and theoretical descriptions of Indian traditions. So we need to further ask: How does one make sense of this process? Or, more precisely: How did *purana*, which is fiction, come to describe or designate events in the world?

Drawing on S.N. Balagangadhara's work on stories and stereotypes, this dissertation argues that Indian stories that were consistent with Western stereotypes about Indian traditions were selected as *true-accounts* of the traditions. This study is a part of and builds on the larger project of the *research programme*[7] that has developed around the works of S.N. Balagangadhara. This research programme,[8] to see it from the van-

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[7] I use the term 'research tradition' in Imre Lakatos' sense, a notion that was later developed by Larry Laudan. Here is a brief excerpt from Laudan's description of what he calls a 'research tradition'.
> Theories represent exemplifications of more fundamental views about the world…. I call the cluster of beliefs which constitute such fundamental views 'research traditions'. Generally, these consist of at least two components: (1) a set of beliefs about what sorts of entities and processes make up the domain of inquiry; and (2) a set of epistemic and methodological norms about how the domain is to be investigated, how theories are to be tested, how data are to be collected, and the like. … Associated with any active research tradition is a family of theories. Some of these theories, for instance, those applying the research tradition to different parts of the domain, will be mutually consistent while other theories, for instance, those which are rival theories within the research tradition, will not. What all the theories have in common is that they share the ontology of the parent research tradition and can be tested and evaluated using its methodological norms. Research traditions serve several specific functions. Among others: (1) they indicate what assumptions can be regarded as uncontroversial 'background knowledge' to all the scientists working in that tradition; (2) they help to identify those portions of a theory that are in difficulty and should be modified or amended; (3) they establish rules for the collection of data and for the testing of theories; (4) they pose conceptual problems for any theory in the tradition which violates the ontological and epistemic claims of the parent tradition (Laudan 1996: 83-84).

[8] I cannot obviously give a full exposition of the research programme here. The relevant parts of Balagangadhara's theory on stereotypes and stories will be explicated in chapter 5. Here is a small list of

tage point of my thesis, grew out of the arguments made in Balagangadhara's *The Heathen in His Blindness…" Asia, the West, and the Dynamic of Religion* (1994). It sets itself the task of developing theories to understand *cultural difference*: what makes differences between human groups into cultural differences? What makes a difference, any difference, into a cultural difference?

To survive in the world, human beings have to learn to go about with their environment, which consists of both the natural and the social environment. As Balagangadhara points out, over a period, they master a particular going-about, learn to preserve it and pass it on to the next generation. This learning, thus, is also a learning to learn or a meta-learning. Cultures, in this perspective, are to be understood as configurations of learning. What makes a culture distinctive is the way one configuration of learning begins to be dominant, subordinating the rest. More concretely, or historically, it is Balagangadhara's claim that religion created a particular kind of learning process to be dominant in the West. The identity of the West as a culture, with its different domains, morality, politics, and law, is thus to be understood as the dynamic articulations of the mode of learning generated by religion.

Since religion generates a particular attitude and a particular way of looking at the world, Western culture embodies this attitude and perspective. One of the conse-

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important works done in different domains by this research programme. On the question of tradition and culture, see: (Balagangadhara 1994; 2005; Balagangadhara and Claerhout 2008), (Narahari Rao 1996, 2002); on communalism, secularism and toleration: (Pathan 2009), (De Roover 2005), (De Roover and Balagangadhara 2008, 2009); on colonialism and orientalism: (Derde 1992; Dhareshwar 1996; 1998; 2009; Balagangadhara 1998; Balagangadhara and Keppens 2009; Balagangadhara, Bloch, and De Roover 2008); on politics, government and democracy: (Ashar 2007; Balagangadhara and De Roover 2007); on ethics, morality, experience and actions: (Balagangadhara 1987; Balagangadhara 1988), (Narahari Rao 1994; Dhareshwar 2009); on the caste system and Brahmanism: (Gelders and Derde 2003). This research programme is also organising several international conferences. The *Rethinking Religion in India* cluster of international conferences needs a special mention. The first conference in this cluster was held in New Delhi in January 2008. For more information about this conference cluster see, http://www.cultuurwetenschap.be/conferences/RRI/index.php (accessed September 17, 2009). The papers presented in the first two conferences will be shortly published in the forma a book: *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism* (Routledge, forthcoming). For a discussion of various works and projects of this research programme one can also refer to the following internet discussion forum: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TheHeathenInHisBlindness/ (accessed September 22, 2009).

quences of this attitude is that the West perceives other cultures as pale and erring variants of its own self. Thus we have here a solution to the puzzle of orientalism, namely, why orientalist description had the peculiar characteristic it did. This research programme argues that theories in different domains of the human sciences share the orientalist perspective. However, this claim gives rise to one of the most difficult problems of the research programme: what is distinctive about the British colonisation of India such that orientalist descriptions of Indian traditions given by the West came to be accepted by Indians as their self-descriptions? What mechanisms are set in place in colonialism that makes this possible and more importantly perpetuate this phenomenon? Why does colonial discourse, which embodies this perspective, persist in an India that is supposedly *post*-colonial?

It is Balagangadhara's argument that Western descriptions of Indian culture are constrained by the limitations of the Western *cultural experience*. The research programme therefore seeks to go beyond these constraints and develop alternative descriptions of Indian culture and the West, precisely by using orientalism to understand more concretely how religion shapes a particular way of understanding non-Western, non-religious other, such as Indians and their traditions. Since it is one of the claims of this research programme that religion does not exist in Indian culture, it has to offer an alternative to the orientalist characterisation of Indian traditions as religious. It, therefore, seeks to develop a conceptually sound theory (or a set of them), which answers questions concerning some central aspects of Indian culture and its way of going about in the world. Looking at Indian traditions, such as Buddh*ism* or Lingayat*ism* (to use these unities tentatively) as essentially intellectual, the research seeks to reconstruct the problems they had set themselves to solve. Do those problems continue to be relevant to us

today? If yes, how can we access their solutions in such a way that they will be relevant to the 21st century?

Attempts to answer these questions should first clear the ground by investigating how these traditions interacted with the cognitive structures of colonialism, what changes were wrought when these traditions accepted the descriptions generated by colonialism. Thus the task that this dissertation undertakes can be characterised as ground clearing in nature. It does not talk about what the Lingayat tradition is or what the vachanas are. It investigates the impact of colonial stereotyping of the Lingayat tradition and the way it was negotiated with. Stereotypes, as this research tradition understands them, are not *descriptions* of the world. They are rather *heuristics for social interaction* of one culture, namely, Western culture. (More about stereotypes in chapter 5.) This means, an inquiry into what stereotypes are and how they function, should help us figure out how colonialism interacted with or affected Indian traditions.

One of the cognitive advantages of this line of inquiry is that it can tackle the problem of the interaction between colonialism and Indian traditions as a single problem by framing the following question: What *happens* when stories *meet* stereotypes? This dissertation not only raises this question but also attempts to answers it. The distinctiveness of the approach I am taking might emerge more clearly, if I set it off against the constructivist and the continuist, each of whom offers a distinctive position on how to study the colonial past.

Let us begin with the following blunt but thought-provoking claim by Sheldon Pollock: "As I have tried to argue in various forums for some fifteen years – though it will seem breathtakingly banal to frame the issue in the only way it can be framed – we cannot know how colonialism changed South Asia if we do not know what was there to be changed" (Pollock 2004: 19). The banality of this claim presumably comes from the

fact that this assertion implies an obvious question: how do we find out what was there in South Asia (or India) before the advent of colonialism? Researches on colonialism have not developed any theoretical steps to find out what existed in pre-colonial India. The one way 20th century scholars seem to have solved this problem is by postulating the existence of the same or similar entities and processes in all cultures as in the West. Most scholars do it by default as it were, without any explicit justification. It is therefore to the credit of Pollock that he has explicitly thematised the problem and taken a stance, thus making possible a productive debate about how to understand cultural difference.

Let us begin by considering how Pollock deals with the difference between South Asia and Europe. When the talk is about plurality of culture*s*, the minimal presumption is that one is reflecting on the experience of the differences between two or more cultures, either on the basis of intuitively experienced differences or formally developed theories. However, Pollock does not say anything explicitly with respect to this issue and keeps the concept *culture* as a somewhat stable or self-evident entity and focuses on what he calls "its subsets" (Pollock 2006: 2). It is not clear, what he means by culture as a *meta*-entity. What properties make it a *meta*-level entity, or distinguish it from its subsets? What is the relation between culture and its subsets? There is no answer in Pollock to these questions. An answer to some of these questions is however important for understanding Pollock's project. By not providing a clear answer, he prompts us to rely upon a reconstruction of his arguments. He claims that a "rough-and-ready understandings of" culture's subsets, such as, "'culture,' 'power,' and '(pre)modernity'" have "proved adequate for organizing this historical study." He further declares that "[t]here should be nothing problematic about using the term 'culture' to refer specifically to one of its subsets, language, and especially language in relation

to literature." But he is pretty much emphatic in saying that, "[w]hat should be problematic, however … is claiming to know and define [the subset of culture called] 'literary'" (2006: 2).

To divide a culture into different subsets, to discuss whether a culture includes every element of its subsets or not, to talk about how something can include elements from two different cultures, minimally, we need a theory of cultural difference. Pollock seems to have no theory of culture or a theory of culture that he presupposes does not help him to solve these problems. Not surprisingly therefore, when Pollock compares two cultures[9] to enumerate similarities and differences between them, he argues that except the 'factors peculiar' to South Asia and Europe the other major cultural issues like, "nature, control, and dissemination of literacy" are universal factors. We can reformulate it thus: India and Europe are similar in terms of *culture* (issues like, nature of literacy etc.),[10] and the differences they have are the differences in the culture's subsets ('factors peculiar to…').

Similarly, the two major linguistic shifts (from Sanskrit and Latin to vernaculars), that constitutes the core research problem of Pollock's works, are not posited as specific to their cultures, but there are specificities to them which separate them from each other. This means that the two cultures are different in whatever ways, but not culturally. Hence, the driving force behind his project is to show how two cultures have more *similarities* than *differences*. The differences shown are differences in the broad similarities that they share. This leads him to compare Java (of Indonesia) to England and ask: Can we have a creditable account to explain the abandonment of transregional in favour of regional languages and such transformations "as a unified spatiotemporal

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[9] As in the following instance: "As in South Asia, the nature, control, and dissemination of literacy crucially affected the creation of vernacular European literary cultures; and, as in South Asia, literacy in western Europe had a specific history, infected by factors peculiar to that world" (Pollock 2006: 439).
[10] See the excerpt from Pollock's work in footnote 9, above.

process connecting Java to England from the beginning of the second millennium through the following three or four centuries"? (2006: 482). From the perspective of this mode of argument, both Europe and India had a polity or a religion. What distinguished India from Europe is the way people related to these entities and the way these entities related to each other.[11] In a context where the West still stands for the progress and advancement, this will recast Indian culture into a *pale* and *erring variant* of the original or the advanced Europe.[12] The hierarchy may sometime be simply reversed, making India the archetype model of something.[13]

One way of understanding colonialism is to see it as an educational project of the West. The West sought to find out whether all human communities posses some of the products that it had – religion and morality, for e.g. – and gift them to those who lack them. Understood thus, colonialism is a product of one culture, a product of European Semitic culture influenced and justified by its civilising mission. To this extent, the phenomenon of colonialism cannot even be separated from cultural impact. Contemporary approaches to colonialism gloss over the cultural differences between India and Europe and hence they cannot view colonialism as a product of a specific culture. By implication, then, these approaches render colonialism into a mere name given to any kind of domination and nothing else. Every culture or nation is thus capable of colonising another culture. Though there is an advantage to this approach – it will not

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[11] "In all these features—chronology, polity, the localization of the global—the southern Asian and western European cases show quite remarkable parallels. We will then be in a position to consider the factors that make them different and give one the character of a vernacularization of necessity and the other a vernacularization of accommodation" (Pollock 2000: 607).

[12] As Said points out, "the Orient and the Oriental, Arab, Islamic, Indian, Chinese, or whatever, become repetitious pseudo-incarnations of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West) they were supposed to have been imitating" (1978: 62). See also, (Balagangadhara and Keppens 2009). For some examples, see Chapter 4, below.

[13] "What is immediately clear from the history we have followed in the course of this book is that Hindutva is a perversion of India's great cosmopolitan past, while the many new subnational movements (as in Assam and elsewhere) represent an entirely new, militant vernacularism", that Indians have borrowed from the contemporary Western forms of "cosmopolitanism and vernacularism" giving up its home-grown models that were far superior and egalitarian (Pollock 2006: 575).

demonise European countries while exculpating their colonies of all their misdoings –
it, nonetheless, will fail to distinguish between colonialism and other forms of violence.
This clearly has serious implications for our understanding of colonialism. It is the inescapable consequence of this position that even though colonialism can have an impact on a culture, it is not necessary for it to have a *cultural* impact in order to be colonialism. In other words, colonialism itself is not a cultural phenomenon. Since this is
not stated as such or argued for explicitly, something like it has to be the presupposition
of much recent work on colonialism. This is the reason why we today loosely use the
term 'colonialism' by appending it to a political position or a bias: Brahmanic colonialism, Indian colonialism in neighbouring countries and so on. Another important and
equally problematic consequence of this perspective is that every change in a tradition
comes to be seen as a consequence of colonialism, for their approach leaves them with
no resources to distinguish between internal changes in a tradition and changes that are
forced upon it by colonialism. Consequently, one cannot talk about entities mutilated
by colonialism that exist in India: how do we determine that the mutilation in question
is caused by colonialism? Naturally, something may undergo changes owing to various
reasons, which may have nothing to do with colonialism or anything external.

A *continuist* call for a probing into what existed in pre-colonial India runs into
some further methodological problems, seen from the constructivist position. Let me
explain. One of the putative effects of colonialism was the replacement of some 'x' that
was Indian with its European variant: it replaced, for example, an Indian style of writing fiction or writing about the past with European novels and historiography, respectively. This means that our tools of understanding Indian past – the social sciences, in
short – are colonial products. This in itself, however, is not a problem. But what if these
tools are still embedded in the colonial framework? How will we then find out what

existed in pre-colonial India? That is to say, if it is the case that the ways of understanding "what was there in India to be changed" is itself still embedded in colonial framework, can our account of "how colonialism changed them" be accepted unproblematically? How should one distinguish such an account of colonialism from colonialism's self-description of the changes it brought about in India? Is not colonial discourse's story of the reform of Indian traditions such a self-description of colonialism?

Will the constructivist argument itself solve these problems? As I mentioned before I choose Dirks to represent the constructivists. So, let us see if Dirks' arguments about caste as a colonial construct solve these problems. If something, say caste, is 'constructed', then one should at least show what materials went into its construction. "What orientalism did most successfully in the Indian context" says Dirks, "was to assert the pre-colonial authority of a specifically colonial form of power and representation" which is developed into a full-blown "politics of caste" (1992: 61). The problem with this claim is that it will make sense only if one understands first concepts like authority, power, representation and politics of caste. Instead of starting by explaining these concepts, Dirks, on the contrary, proceeds to claim that it seems *plausible* because we can notice an amplification of a particular kind of caste discourse in the mid-19th century besides the beginning of the use of caste identities in formulating colonial attitudes and implementing policies (1992: 66).[14] Soon, Dirks continues, "the ubiquitous reliance on Manu," his *dharmashastra* and such other texts to talk about the caste system were gone. And orientalism gradually became "empiricist rather than textual." Analysing M.A. Sherring's writings published in 1872, Dirks argues, "[c]ollection of the kind of empirical information assembled by Sherring, and sharing the increasing formalization of his information, soon became the centerpiece of an official colonial

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[14] Since theories are *underdetermined by facts*, one can almost always prove that a given theory is *plausible* by showing a correlation between a set of facts and a theory.

sociology of knowledge" (1992: 67). This claim, again, will make sense only if one were to explain what 'empirical information' is and how it can become colonial knowledge. The only example of 'empirical information' that Dirks provides is anything but 'empirical' and 'information.'

> [Sherring] begins his opening series of paragraphs with the following assertions … : "Caste is sworn enemy to human happiness"; "Caste is opposed to intellectual freedom"; "Caste sets its face sternly against progress"; "Caste makes no compromises"; "The ties of caste are stronger than those of religion"; and "Caste is intensely selfish" (1992: 67).

Whatever 'caste' refers to in these assertions, these sentences are at best stereotypes and not 'empirical information'. For a sentence to contain *empirical* information, it should describe the world and also quantify its descriptions.[15] Sherring's claims do neither. Nevertheless, Dirks soon declares: "If the ethnographic survey announced the preeminence of caste for colonial sociology, it was the decennial census [of 1871] that played the most important institutional role not only in providing the 'facts' but in installing caste as the fundamental unit of India's social structure" (1992: 68).

Such arguments inadvertently mystify colonialism by turning it into a miraculous power, which transformed the increased circulation of caste discourse into a hierarchical and therefore immoral entity, called the caste system, and that too within a period of a few decades. One of the problems with this argument is that it invariably ends up psychologising the issue, rendering colonialism into an exceedingly large psychological machine that not only generated an illusion (say about caste) but also sustained it over a period of time and eventually turned it into a material reality. Dirks approvingly cites Edward Said in support of his argument: "The pasts of the colonized … were erased as soon as conquest made possible the production of new forms of knowledge that endowed colonialism with natural legitimacy" (Dirks 1992: 75). This leaves

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[15] See my discussion of stereotypes in chapter 5 for further information.

us in the dark about the process that transformed the imaginary (or conceptual) entities into real ones.

This constructivist position – which says that the 'x' that existed in the pre-colonial past either does not exist today, because it was destroyed and a new entity has been constructed on the model of its European variant, or that it exists in some vitiated form – raises many questions that it cannot answer. Among them the most crucial is: How to find out what 'x' was? This deceptively simple question may prod us to think that we can discern what existed in pre-colonial India merely by analysing pre-colonial writings, such as the vachanas. Post-colonial scholarship is replete with such studies. The idea underlying this approach is that an 'x' that existed elsewhere also existed in India in some or other form. This means, one can look for the vitiated or (traces of) an-nihilated entities in Indian society and talk about what colonialism might have done to this culture.[16] Another rationale for this approach is the belief that a 'good amount' of data is sufficient to explain what existed in India (or a culture in general).[17] Underlying this belief is an untenable conviction that there are 'theory-neutral' facts, which one can 'collect' and begin to 'compare' them. Facts and comparisons, as we know by now, are 'theory-laden'. Hence, what exists in pre-colonial India in some sense is not free of the theory that we accept to be true. This raises questions about the theories that are as-sumed true when one talks about what existed in India or compare two cultures. I am not discrediting this method of research but only trying to point out that in order to talk

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[16] Both Perrett and Pollock take this route, though in a different context. They first note the absence of historical consciousness in medieval India and then talk about lack of evidence to talk about this issue. This however does not stop them from asserting that historical consciousness existed in ancient India, which was subsequently routed out by a set of notions developed by the Mīmāmsā (Pollock 1989: 610) or "the [ancient] Indian philosophers' rather different conception of knowledge" (emphasis author's Per-rett 1999: 317).

[17] As C. Herbert asserts, "[n]o amount of individual particles of observed data will suffice to represent a 'culture' until one has a theory of their systematic interrelations" (quoted in Derde 1992: 163). Or as Nelson Goodman has shown so powerfully, one cannot talk about differences and similarities between any two object without a theory. Similarities/differences, he argues, are always relative to a theory (Goodman 1970).

about India or to compare it with Europe, one invariably needs a theory and such a theory, in order to be a *theory*, needs epistemological justification.

Any research that tries to overcome these problems should, I suggest, retain the term *colonialism* to talk only about one kind of cultural project undertaken by the West and not collapse it with all forms of violence. In my view, colonialism is not simply an alien political rule (which we can call *imperialism*) but *colonisation of a culture*. Hence, the suggestion that it is conceptually important not to separate the study of colonialism from the study of its *cultural* impact. Accordingly, my research strives to understand colonialism by investigating the mechanism that is in operation when Indian traditions interact with colonial structures, especially, but not only, cognitive structures. And instead of focusing on what colonialism *destroys*, I will be concerned with what colonialism *creates* when it comes into contact with Indian culture. This claim needs some elaboration, especially since, superficially viewed, it might be mistaken for a constructivist claim (of the kind I just criticised).

As we just argued, understanding colonialism is, in part at least, to understand the way it structures the functioning of traditions. If it destroys or transforms something, then colonialism refers to a particular mode of destruction/transformation of a culture. The mode of destruction will tell us what pre-colonial items were prone to colonial destruction, why, how much and in what precise way. This in turn will give us clues about what existed in India before colonialism. For, this will shed light on the cognitive and functional properties of what existed in India before colonialism. Only through this conceptual reconstruction of historical material, one can arrive at the present and talk about whether something that existed in the past still exists or it exists in some 'mutilated' form. Strictly speaking, the metaphor of 'mutilated' or 'deformed' entities – which tends to hypostatise conceptual entities – is quite misleading. It is not

clear how to understand the 'deformation' in question. How is a 'deformed/mutilated' entity different from a 'normal' entity? The 'deformation' and 'mutilation' in question, I suggest, can be made sense of only as involving reference to an entity or a new function of an existing entity, whose ontology may look *unfamiliar* and *peculiar* from the perspective of existing theories. We do not need elaborate philosophical discussion to point out this much: we can talk about new entities in the social sciences in a very limited sense. No new entity as such could possibly have come into existence on account of a colonial rule of around two centuries. Many new entities can be postulated and are postulated, as hypotheses to understand/experience the world. Such postulated entities have had and will have some effect on Indian society, but this does not imply that they will come into being as a real entity in India.[18] By 'new entities' that colonialism has created I do not refer to the entities that colonisers postulated in a bid to understand Indian culture such as the caste system or Hindu religion. By 'new entities' I mean the new functions of existing entities or entities formed out of some new permutations and combinations. Both such entities not only perform new functions – as they acquire new properties – but also, as a result, expect new attitudinal relationships from the people they come into contact with. This dissertation mainly talks about one such new entity, which I will call *stereostory* (see chapter 5), that colonialism created and about the quasi-epistemic relation between Indians and this new entity (see chapter 2 and 4), which I will term *diagnostic attitude*. These are the core issues that my investigation of the Lingayat tradition hopes to address empirically and conceptually. In what follows, I will first outline how I plan to access my questions through modern vachana scholar-

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[18] Cf. Karl Popper's 'Oedipus effect', "the influence of a prediction upon the event predicted" (Popper 1974: 139); Ian Hacking's 'looping effect', which talks about how 'the classifications of people affect the people classified' (2002; 2006). But, these *effects* cannot be seen as evidence of some entity coming into existence. To give a simple and also simplistic example: the oracle affected Oedipus, but the oracle itself did not live an ontologically independent life like the one we attribute to the constructs such as Hinduism and the caste system.

ship and then describe how those questions will be taken up in the different chapters that follow.

II. Vachana Interpretations and the Colonial Impact

The vachanas are a body of work and a form of writing in Kannada that are usually recognised as part of a movement called the vachana or Virashaiva or Lingayat[19] movement of the 12th century. This body of work has come to be treated, in the 20th century, as the most prominent body of 'Literature' produced in Kannada. Among the many reasons for the contemporary popularity of the vachanas, the most prominent one is that they have come to be regarded as one of the earliest indigenous expressions of a 'subaltern' revolt against 'the caste system.' This interpretation, dating back to the colonial period, has been dominant in modern Lingayat studies. The contemporary consensus that the vachanas articulate anti-caste thinking is evident in the following two excerpts typical of modern Lingayat scholarship: D.R. Nagaraj, a prominent Kannada literary critic and cultural theorist, claims that "anti-caste philosophy was the fundamental stance of the vachana movement" (1999: 183).[20] According to Chidananda Murthy, one of the important epigraphists to do substantial historical work concerning the vachanas and the 'Virashaiva movement', "Kannadigas should be proud of the fact that historically eight centuries ago … [a movement against the caste system] was carried out by the vachana-composers in Karnataka" (2004: 726-7). This view has the sup-

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[19] The terms Lingayat and Virashaiva have been in the centre of long disputes in the 20th century. The term 'Virashaiva' supposedly implies 'heroic' (vīra) Shaiva, which is said to be an allusion to their militant defence of their faith. This term fell out of favour in the second half of the 20th century, and 'Lingayat' acquired wide currency. In the dissertation, I will use these two words interchangeably.
[20] All translations from Kannada, used in the dissertation, are mine unless specified otherwise. They have been routinely compared to other available English translations in order to enhance their quality.

port of the most popular Western scholars from Karl Marx[21] and Max Weber[22] to the
most recent ones, such as Sheldon Pollock. This popular view nevertheless has to solve
some puzzles which it itself creates. Chidananda Murthy, who has done so much to es-
tablish the vachanas-as-caste-critique interpretation, observes with a tinge of regret that

> the character of Basavanna that Bhimakavi [a 14th century 'poet'] draws
> is mainly a bhakta, always favouring bhaktas. He is a miraculous person
> too. … However, if we try to understand the character of Basavanna, as
> a leader of a huge social movement, who tried to do away with social
> inequalities, through Bhimakavi's work it will be a disappointment. In
> his avidity to draw Basavanna as a bhakta, the picture of the revolution-
> ary Basavanna is completely obscured. The reason is this: *people who
> came after Basavanna understood his bhakti but not his revolution. …
> The characterisation of Basavanna's life as a social leader does not
> emerge effectively in Bhimakavi*, nor in *any recent*[23] *Virashaiva work.*
> For such a picture, we have to go back to the vachanas of Basava (2004:
> 371 emphasis mine).

It seems therefore that the occasional reflections on Lingayat literature and tra-
dition we may find in the pre-(British) colonial period differ from the modern writings
in one very significant way. The pre-colonial writings, which comprises of kavyas and
puranas, view the Lingayat tradition as anything but a reform movement against the
caste system.[24] This claim raises an important historical question. Why is it that only
modern scholars view the Lingayat tradition as an anti-caste tradition? Why do only

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[21] In his June 25, 1853 contribution to the *New-York Daily Tribune*, Marx wrote, "Hindostan is an Italy
of Asiatic dimensions…. Yet, in a social point of view, Hindostan is not the Italy, but the Ireland of the
East. And this strange combination of Italy and of Ireland, of a world of voluptuousness and of a world
of woes, is anticipated in the ancient traditions of the religion of Hindostan. That religion is at once a
religion of sensualist exuberance, and a religion of self-torturing asceticism; a religion of the Lingam and
of the juggernaut; the religion of the Monk, and of the Bayadere."
     Admittedly, it is not clear what Marx means by 'religion of the Lingam'. However, in a footnote
added to the word "religion of the Lingam", the editors of *Marx Engels Collected Works Vol. 12* write
the following. "*Religion of the Lingam* – the cult of the God Shiva, particularly widespread among the
southern Indian sect of the Lingayat (from the word "linga" - the emblem of Shiva), a Hindu sect which
does not recognise distinctions of caste and rejects fasts, sacrifices and pilgrimages." *Marx Engels Col-
lected Works* is available at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/ 1853/06/25.htm (accessed
March 11, 2009).
[22] Weber describes the Lingayats as "a type of particularly sharp and principled Protestant reaction to the
Brahmans and the caste order" (cited in Aho 2002: 92).
[23] The 'recent' here refers to late 20th century writings.
[24] I need not take on the burden of proving this point here. This view that the Lingayat tradition was not
seen as a reform movement by the pre-colonial scholars is a point often repeated in 20th century scholar-
ship on Lingayat tradition, as we will further see in the next chapter.

modern scholars view Basava as a social reformer? Why do they claim that only the vachanas give a clear picture of the anti-caste dimension of the tradition and not the kavyas and puranas? It is important to note that the vachanas give a picture of the tradition that corresponds with the modern image of the tradition as an anti-caste movement. Thus there seems to be a quite strong compulsion to uphold this modern image of the Lingayat tradition. However, until the State government of Karnataka brought out a mammoth collection of all the available vachanas (i.e., over 20,000 vachanas) in 14 volumes in 1993, no one had access to all these vachanas. If so, whence the common-sense belief (at least of the scholarly community) that the vachanas stand for anti-caste-system?

Several other contradictions emerge when we examine the historical trajectory of this stance amongst its proponents. Hardekar Manjappa (1886-1947), a well-known freedom fighter known as 'the Gandhi of Karnataka' (Raghavendra Rao 2000), portrayed Basava in his *Basava Charitre* (1926) as the only person after Buddha to have fought against the caste system. What is noteworthy is that this was a radical and a conscious shift in his arguments. In some of his speeches delivered in 1903, for instance, talking about inter-religious conflicts and the caste system, he argued that 'Lord' Rama and his teachings would deliver us from the bane of the caste system (see Manjappa 1966: 538, 578).[25] Why did he then shift to Basava and the Lingayat tradition? Manjappa argues that "the necessities of the present" compelled him to do so (see Manjappa 1966; more about him in later chapters).

Manjappa's inability to provide justification for his change in stance seems to indicate that he was simply echoing the dominant opinion of his age. It is significant therefore to investigate how or why this becomes the dominant opinion of the time.

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[25] In his autobiography, Manjappa writes that for a long time, almost until 1910-11, he had thought that the Arya Samaja was the best solution to social problems of his time and society (Manjappa 1966: 20).

P.G. Halakatti (1880-1954), another pioneer and perhaps the most influential person in

modern Lingayat scholarship, also expresses similar views. In an autobiographical

piece entitled "Atmacharitre" and published in the silver jubilee edition of the

Shivanubhava journal in 1951, he elaborates his reasons.

> 1890-1896: … people were not aware of Virashaiva culture then. They
> were ignorant of its history and writings. …
>
> 1897-1904: Nothing much happened with regard to Virasaivism in this
> period too … One day I took out a copy of *Basavapurana* from the
> college library, and read it. It had no information of any importance, but
> only some stories about the miracles of Basavanna. … How will this
> information satisfy a student pursuing higher studies? How will
> anybody take pride in their society when they do not know about [its
> greatness]? … The first *Virashaiva mahasabhe* (1904) undertook
> several resolutions concerning social and educational issues but none
> concerning Virashaiva dharma and culture. …
>
> 1904-1920: … [After explaining how this period was full of internal
> conflicts within the Virashaiva community, he writes] in such a situa-
> tion, it was clear that research on Virashaiva literature was necessary
> (Halakatti 1983: 10, 12-13, 22).

More than a century before Halakatti and Manjappa, discussion on that 'unique

Indian social problem' called the caste-system had been led by orientalist scholars. This

notion of casteism received particular attention from the late-19th century social re-

formers. Halakatti and Manjappa's efforts to constitute (or continue) a practice of the

critical appreciation of the vachanas was in line with their attempts to find local solu-

tions to national problems, such as the caste system. This created a context for *re*inter-

preting one's tradition. An understanding of this context should make clear the neces-

sity and relevance of portraying Basava as a reformer who fought against the caste sys-

tem and other social problems. I argue that the constitution of vachana and Lingayat

studies in the 20th century was rooted in the emergence of a Lingayat and Kannada lan-

guage's stake in the growing anti-colonial nationalist movement, which took over from

the colonisers the task of reforming Indian traditions.[26] Writing a 'history' of India (and her traditions) was understood here as a way of cultivating nationalism among Indians to fight both internal and external problems: the caste system and colonialism, respectively. More importantly, as Chapter 3 will illustrate, colonial scholars and their view of the Lingayat tradition had prepared the conditions for the birth of modern Lingayat scholarship.

The above discussion foregrounds a point of heuristic significance: pre-modern writers do not see the vachanas as formulating an anti-caste position while 20th century scholars do so because of their needs of the present. The significance of this observation becomes clearer when we understand it in the light of the constructivist argument provided by Cohn (1987), Dirks (2001) and others, that the notion of caste is a form of 'colonial knowledge'. If caste is a form of 'colonial knowledge', how could the vachanas possibly have talked about the caste system at all? We have one possible answer to this question: *colonial framework* – which has somehow permeated into our consciousness even after colonialism as an alien political/administrative enterprise had ended – *has conditioned the modern reading of the vachanas* as caste critiques.[27]

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[26] According to John and Karen Leonard, "[t]he Telugu language and communication through the vernacular were powerful shapers of … [the regional ideology in Andhra]. In Andhra, Indian nationalism had an anti-priest, anti-orthodox, anti-ritual and anti-authoritarian stance which was unusual" (John and Leonard 2007: 341). This phenomenon was not just unique to Andhra as these scholars claim, but was common across India in the 19th century.

[27] Many 20th century scholars make this point, but few explore its full import. My intention in the dissertation is to probe deeper into the implications of this argument. Here is one of the most explicit statements of this point. Commenting on colonial missionary interest in the vachana-like writings of Kabir, Akshaya Kumar points out that missionaries translated Kabir into many European languages, beginning with an Italian translation. But, why did Kabir's writings attract them? "What prompted them all the more was their assessment that his teachings were closer to Christianity in terms of their reformatory rhetoric. Thus, though the *desi* Kabir was not the chosen official subject of the *margi* orientalists, yet his translation into European languages begins as early as the latter half of the eighteenth century…. [Commenting on these translations] David Lorenzen observes that though Marco's translations are 'accurate', yet he seems to lend a 'decidedly Christian twist to the translation…. For instance … *mukti*, a highly culture-specific term has been translated as *gloria permanente*—an expression patently Christian" (Kumar 2009: 165-166).

III. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation will therefore dig deeper into the problem with the following question: Can we ascertain something about this framework by looking into what it tried to elicit from the vachanas?

Today we portray the Lingayat tradition as the product of a revolutionary movement against the caste system and its scholarly leaders, such as Basava, as a revolutionary leader of the movement.[28] This popular *image* of the tradition, as noted earlier, was forged from a motley collection of elements from the tradition. Today, we have not only grown accustomed to take this image for a veracious history of the tradition but also to make it an issue of political, rather than intellectual, controversies. Modern vachana scholars' claim that this image that can be drawn (only) from the vachanas has grown so dominant at the present time that it creates a serious problem for any research that intends to question the image in question. The vachanas and their 20th century interpretations (the *image*) are linked so inextricably today that any attack on the latter will be taken as an attack on the former and the entire tradition. This transforms vachana interpretations into a 'true' account of the vachanas, which has at least two consequences. The first is that the vachana interpretations are now impervious to any criticism: after all, how can the 'original' and the 'true' be criticised. The second, which is a direct consequence of the first, is that any attempt to criticise vachana read-

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[28] Reflecting on this modern development, Tejaswini Niranjana writes, "[a]ttempting to assimilate Saivite poetry to the discourses of Christianity or post-Romantic New Criticism, these [modern] translators [of the vachanas] reproduce some of the nineteenth-century native responses to colonialism. Accepting the premises of a universalist history, they try to show how the vachanas are always already Christian, or 'modernist,' and therefore worthy of the West's attention. Their enterprise is supported by the asymmetry between English and Kannada created and reinforced by colonial and neo-colonial discourse. This is an asymmetry that allows translators to simplify the text in a predictable direction, toward English and the Judeo-Christian tradition and away from the multiplicity of indigenous languages and religions, which have to be homogenized before they can be translated" (Niranjana 1992: 180).

ings flares up controversies. (A brief analysis of two such recent controversies can be found in appendix IV.)

As a result, a conceptual analysis (as in chapters 2, 4 and 5) or a historical analysis (as in chapter 3 and 4) to problematise the claim that the vachanas are the evidence to argue that there was a vachana movement and it fought against the caste system may seem like a direct attack on the tradition itself and hence controversial. Therefore, I begin in **chapter 1** by first severing the long supposed link between the vachana texts and their interpretations. I do so by offering a statistical analysis of the vachanas, which will enable me to show that *no matter what one assumes about the caste system (real, invented, collection of stereotypes) vachanas cannot be read as embodying an anti-caste-system argument*. This done, I can raise the following question: Whence vachana interpretations and what sustains them? This chapter also provides a reconstruction of 20th century writings on the Lingayat tradition. This inquiry about the object-level theories held by modern scholars about their objects and domain of inquiry demonstrates that their vachanas do not bear out the interpretations attributed to them.

If modern interpretations of the vachanas that glean an anti-caste-system philosophy from them are not based on the vachanas themselves, the inquiry here will be able not to be overwhelmed by the extant stakes with which modern vachana interpretations are associated with in contemporary Indian politics.

As a first step towards answering the question about the sources of modern vachana interpretations, **Chapter 2** sets itself the task of explaining in detail the composition and the structure of the modern image of the vachana tradition. This image is largely based on traditional stories. These stories are collected around a meta-story that talks about a problem that is allegedly unique to Indian culture – the caste system. Of the many questions that this claim raises, the one that interests my investigation is the

following: what holds the different stories together? It is an *attitude*, as the chapter explains, that provides, as it were the, the glue that holds together the stories and other elements that go into the *image* of the tradition in question. I call this the *diagnostic attitude*. Since modern vachana scholarship comprises of the meta-story about casteism and a diagnostic attitude, there are two aspects to it: one, the vachanas and the vachana-composers are seen as embodying all the qualities that make them progressive in a revolutionary way. Two, holding such a view itself has come to be considered progressive. The meta-story is a story about how Indians systematically violate norms in society – norms related to every aspect of quotidian life, from dining and dressing to the celebrations of festivals and management of social relations. This story about Indian culture is also a story about the Lingayat past and it provides unity and intelligibility to modern vachana scholarship. In the last part of the chapter, I discuss how we have approached the vachanas such that they seem to support the interpretations placed on them. Modern approach to the vachanas treat them as literature, where every vachana is a sign and hence available for multiple readings, within the broader outline of the (meta-)story about the Lingayat past. It is not that there are no vachanas that are incompatible with this story. Such vachanas are either rendered Brahmanical and hence are considered to be outside the spirit of the vachana movement, or they are explained away as exceptions.

The next chapter, **Chapter 3**, explores formation of a progressive history of the Lingayat tradition. Exploring the question of historical formation of modern native writings concerning the vachanas, which developed besides a demand for a history of the Lingayat past (which is a topic for the next chapter), this chapter tries to show that modern vachana scholarship borrowed its framework from colonial scholarship that historically preceded it. This process took the path of accumulating European stereo-

types about the tradition that lead to the development of a history of the Lingayat community in the 18th and 19th centuries. If this account holds, it raises several questions about the role of stereotypes in the formation of Lingayat history.

Chapter 4 does not dwell on these important questions directly. It focuses on a contingent development: the demand for history that characterises the early-20th century Lingayat scholarship. The demand for a history of Indian traditions is not idiosyncratic to the Lingayat community. This demand resounded across India in the late-19th and early-20th century. If history of the Lingayat tradition is constructed largely out of traditional stories, this chapter argues, this demand is better understood as a demand for a story or a story-like function from history. An advantage of this approach, I claim, is that it casts new light on controversies that revolve around historical claims about Indian traditions, such as those around Babri Masjid or Ram-Sethu. However, a more detailed demonstration requires that we first develop the approach more thoroughly, which is a task for the next chapter. This chapter concludes with a brief analysis of some recent controversies that Karnataka has witnessed.

There are many questions and problems that chapters 1 to 4 have raised and **chapter 5** seeks to answer them. One of the key questions that the previous chapters raise is about those multiple stories about Basava that seem to have disappeared in the 20th century. Over a period of time, the Lingayat community has selected a few specific stories as 'true' stories, which are today representative of their tradition. Of the many important questions that this scenario raises, the chapter focuses on the mechanism of such a selection and the logical and historical compulsions that make the selection inevitable. The selection of a story as true gave them a new lease of life. They now take a form, which is in essence a combination of Western stereotypes about Indian traditions and stories from those traditions. These modern true-stories are neither theories nor his-

tories of our past. Moreover, since they are a strange combination of stereotypes and stories, they seem to behave like both stereotypes and stories. I call them *stereostories*. A dual set of properties makes stereostories impervious to criticism, as they play the dual role of theories as well as stories. If we try to arrest them as stories, they escape the net as theories and if we try to catch them as theories, they deceive us as stories.

The concluding chapter summarises the important theoretical and methodological findings of the thesis and explores some of the implications and limitations of the arguments developed in the thesis.

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Chapter 1

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THE VACHANAS AS
CASTE CRITIQUE

> The *Nara-kavi*s and the *Vara-kavi*s have read several Shastras,
> Agama and Purana, have learnt several words, but do not know
> the way we have arrived and the way we live. They however
> weave words and create poems, sing in the royal gatherings.
> Siddhamallappa's master, Guru-Shiva-siddheshwara-prabhu is
> laughing at such asses called poets.
>
> - Siddhamallappa #970[1]

…:ː…

Recently, Kannada literary and cultural critic N. Manu Chakravarthy claimed that literature and other works of art across human communities, like the vachanas, have expressed some 'truths' about human life, say about colonialism and post-colonialism, which are beyond the grasp of all the known branches of human knowledge. More importantly, he claimed, "the social scientific method of reading literary and art works is superficial and impertinent. Images and tropes that literature or works of art use are not even accessible to social science theories. When the vachanas or other such literary writings try to go beyond these theories and express something different, they look like dead archival material to be used as instruments/tools to these theories.

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[1] "ನರಕವಿ ವರಕವಿಗಳು ಹಲವು ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ ಆಗಮ ಪುರಾಣಗಳ ಓದಿ, ಬಹುಮಾತುಗಳ ಕಲಿತು, ಬಂದ ಬರವು ನಿಂದ ನಿಲವು ತಡಿಯನರಿಯದೆ, ಒಂದೊಂದನೆ ಪದ ಪದ್ಯವನು ಮಾಡಿ, ಆಸ್ಥಾನದ ಸಭೆಯೊಳಗೆ ಕುಳಿತುಕೊಂಡು ಹಾಡಿ ಪಾಡುವಂತಹ ಕವಿಗಳೆಂಬ ಕತ್ತೆಗಳ ಕಂಡು ನಗುತಿರ್ದಾತ ಸಿದ್ಧಮಲ್ಲನದಾತ ಮೇಗಣಗಿವಿಯ ಗುರುಶಿವಸಿದ್ಧೇಶ್ವರಪ್ರಭುವೆ" -Siddhamallappa (Rajoor 2001: 450, v. #970). Siddhamallappa is a 17th century vachana-composer. Nine vachanas composed by him are available today. Apart from the vachana quoted here, his vachanas #968 and #969 also deal with the same theme.

This is the problem of social science theories" (Chakravarthy 2009: 32). Chakravarthy seems to be unhappy here over the approach of social sciences, which, he thinks, use vachanas as mere tools and nothing but dead archival material. For the sake of convenience, let me call it a 'symptomatic reading of the vachanas'.

In modern Kannada scholarship, the monopoly of literary critics and practioners of cultural analysis and their approach to adjudging a reading of the vachanas (and other so-called *literary* texts)[2] as good/bad or as pertinent/impertinent has gone unchallenged. Let us analyse how this approach judges a reading of the vachanas as authentic or inauthentic. In the first instance, it insists on treating the vachanas as poetry. When one reads the vachanas as poetry, one reads them as 'images and tropes'. As images and tropes, it is implied, the vachanas signify something else, or they should be read as standing for something else. However, technically speaking, reading the vachanas as images/tropes removes all constraints on their interpretation, allowing everyone (including the social scientists) to interpret them to 'suit' their own 'interests'. Therefore, a second strategy to introduce an ad hoc constraint on vachana interpretation becomes necessary. The constraint that Chakravarthy proposes is the 'pertinence' (*prasthutate*) of the vachana interpretations. If so, let us ask, 'pertinence' to what? The article in which Chakravarthy writes about the vachanas, deals also with the caste system, historiography and de/colonisation. Thus, one can discern that it is some kind of *pertinence to social issues*. A legitimate and useful interpretation of the vachanas is then one that is politically pertinent to our time. This gives rise to, or justifies and sustains, some kind of instrumentalist approach to the vachanas, warding off any other approaches (say by different social sciences) by rendering them invalid on no other ground than that they are not endorsing a *politically pertinent view* of the vachanas. It renders social

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[2] And in some larger contexts, a tradition or an entire culture.

scientific attempts to analyse the vachanas as mere philosophical cacophonies that –
even if they are conceptually sound – thrive at the cost of being socially and politically
futile and sometimes even dangerous.[3] The approach to the vachanas that Chakravarthy
advocates *nevertheless commits the same error* that it attributes to social sciences: us-
ing the vachanas as instruments and tools.[4]

    This approach, which I call the instrumentalist approach, views writings like the
vachanas as tools for political struggles. If so, how is the literary approach to the va-
chanas more apt than the social scientific approach? This problem is solved by forging
a link between a politically pertinent reading of the vachanas and the original message
of vachana-composers, which is seen as embedded in the vachanas. The vachanas thus
necessarily embody their composers' message. This has multiple implications. First, if
it is the case that the vachanas represent an anti-caste-system movement then the va-
chanas are necessarily anti-caste-system literature. The instrumentalist approach to the
vachanas assumes this picture of the Lingayat tradition: that it is an anti-caste-system
movement. As I will argue later, this picture itself is never disputed. Disputations al-
ways take place at the level of the vachanas and usually revolve around the question
whether the vachanas portray (or are they sufficient sources to give an accurate picture
of) the revolutionary anti-caste-system movement that they are part of. Second, if the
vachanas necessarily embody their composers' message, one can 'understand' them
only if they are (a) symbols (or carriers) of the original intention of their authors. If we
add to it (b) the dominant modern notion that the vachanas are products of a revolution-
ary social movement we obtain the following result. A valid interpretation of the va-

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[3] Why do I call them dangerous? Consider the possibility of interpreting the vachanas as propagating a
higher status for the Brahmans in society. Even if this interpretation is empirically and logically sound, it
will be considered an insidious argument. For, this argument will go on to strengthen the Brahman com-
munity in the present period, which is seen as a negative development.
[4] See further for an analysis of similar comments by another important contemporary Kannada scholar –
Rahamath Tarikere.

chanas now is the one that successfully and in a useful way discovers the original intentions of the vachana movement, which are embedded in the vachanas. This in turn ensures two things: one, vachana-composers are now necessarily cast as revolutionary reformers of evils such as casteism.[5] Two, the vachana texts are sufficient to illustrate the revolutionary dimension of the movement. Using the vachanas as political tools is therefore consonant with their authors' intentions. To the extent that social sciences can do this, they are as valid as literary or cultural approaches to the vachanas are. But, can the social sciences do this without compromising their domain preferences and identity? Can, say, philosophy or economics see the vachanas as symbols and then analyse them to find out how the vachana-composers fought the caste system?

The intention of this dissertation is to unpack this complex phenomenon or at least some aspects of it, which has grown rather deep and abstruse over the last hundred years. The process of unpacking will form the core of chapters 2 to 5. But, that is possible only if one breaks open the defensive mechanisms of this scholarship. Modern vachana scholarship has seen the birth and the domination of two strands of interpretation: reading the vachanas as poetry (literary approach) and reading them as a critical exposition of evils of the caste system (cultural studies or cultural analysis approach). As I said before, the view that the vachanas are anti-caste tracts fits well with the (instrumentalist) demand that a reading of the vachanas should be pertinent to the exigencies of the present. This interpretation has been practiced and sustained by literary and cultural critics in Kannada over the last century. Of the two strands, the former has sustained the latter. That is to say, the way we approach the vachanas has sustained what we deduce from them. I further propose that the supposition that the vachanas should be treated as a piece of poetry and that they have to be read as such, functions as an al-

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[5] 'Casteism', a relatively new term/concept, is generally used to refer to loyalty or emotional inclination towards a caste, or simply to mean caste awareness or caste consciousness.

ibi, as a screen that repels any probing of the vachanas. Hence, any further probing into the vachanas has to first deal with this screen-like behaviour of the assumption.

The Vachanas as Archival Evidence

Modern scholars unanimously agree that there is hardly any historical evidence to speak of with respect to the period that is identified with the vachana/Lingayat move- ment: roughly, the period from the 12th to 15th centuries. Let us take this suggestion se- riously. After all, the kinds of sources available for scholars working on different as- pects of the vachana movement are limited to the traditional written literature, oral lit- erature, inscriptions and other records, such as the writings and records of European travellers, missionaries and colonial administrators.[6] By literature I refer to the kavyas and puranas written by different 'poets' belonging to the Jaina, Lingayat and other tra- ditions. What information can we draw from these different sources? One may simply claim that literature does not directly function as evidence of the actual world, and put aside all this literature. Philosophy will certainly support this claim.[7] Nevertheless, let us briefly discuss some of the major problems involved in utilising literature as direct knowledge of the actual world.

One of the major problems involved in using kavyas and puranas as historical source is that they do not describe people's day-to-day life. The puranas about vachana- composers, like *Basavapurana* or *Prabhulingaleele,* do not deal with any aspects of the

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[6] For a lengthier discussion of this problem see Dunkin Jalki (2004).

[7] Here are some random examples. "[W]orks of literature cannot function directly as evidence about the actual world, since they are 'only stories,' and not true ones at that. 'I read it in a novel,' is never per se good evidence for a claim about the way the world is." However, literature's perennial claim about cog- nitive value has some plausibility. What is needed is an understanding of whether works of literature really have a "cognitive function, and if so, how they exercise it?" (Sirridge 1975: 453). Many people have tried to answer these questions, see for e.g., Brian H. Baxter (1983), Albert William Levi (1966), and H. Gene Blocker (1974).

life of their protagonists, except their *adhyatmic* ('spiritual') achievements. Even when a kavya describe some of the problems faced by its characters in life, the information available is insufficient and usually indistinguishable from details such as 'divine' intervention in the life of the character.

Mahadevaiah's work (1999) on Harihara, a medieval Kannada poet, has a section that translates into "Ragale*s* as the biographies of Sharanas." This section claims, "Harihara's *ragale*s[8] not only depict bhakti, but they also talk about certain aspects of the life of the Sharanas." Subsequently in the same section, he goes on to elaborate on his claim: "At the beginning of a ragale we find information about the bhakta's place, parents, birth and childhood, and then the information about the bhakta's occupation, devotion, interests, valour and adventure."[9] Nevertheless, he goes on to substantiate these claims with examples from the actual texts and soon it becomes clear that these kavyas talk of anything but the social life of the time. We do not get any significant details suggesting the social life of certain caste communities that would help us to talk about the caste system or the social status of certain caste communities. One of the major problems in accepting whatever minimal biographical details of the vachana-composers that we can elicit from this literature as historical data is the fact that there is no one standard opinion among the poets themselves. Details regarding Akka Mahadevi, for instance, vary from poet to poet. Therefore, contrary to his initial claims, Mahadevaiah concludes,

> The details recorded in these *ragale*s are limited to bhakti in the lives of
> the Sharanas. Several historical details are missing in these writings.

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[8] A type of *kāvya* in Kannada that follows a specific prosody format.
[9] "Harihara in his *Mahadeviyakkana Ragale* provides plenty of details about Akka's life besides her great bhakti: Akka Mahadevi's birth, childhood, her parents, place, her youth and her search for her god Mallikarjuna, her marriage against her wishes, her marital woes, the ill treatment by the king and his minister, the problems that Akka's parents suffered because of her, and finally Akka renouncing her family and going in search of her god. Similarly, other *ragales* also give biographical details of their protagonists" (Mahadevaiah 1999: 8).

> Moreover, it is clear that Harihara did not intend to write a life history of these people (Mahadevaiah 1999: 8).

S.C. Nandimath, a major 20th century Lingayat scholar, writes about similar problems in his article "Managoli Shasana" published in 1963. In the context of a well-known argument at the time, Nandimath mentions three claims put forward by its interlocutors: (1) Puranas and kavyas written on Basava do not maintain one single opinion while giving historical accounts of his life. (2) Bijjala's inscriptions (that are available in plenty) do not mention Basava's name although he was said to be the finance minister in Bijjala's kingdom. And (3) Basava's contemporary scholars who have written many important Kannada kavyas and puranas have been silent about him (Nandimath 2007: 70). For instance, on the issue of Basava's *dikshe* ('ordination') there are multiple views. Even modern vachana scholars have agreed that long back. As Kalburgi writes, every vachana-composer has his own story, none has written a history (Kalburgi 2004: 150).

Inscriptions on vachana-composers are our chief sources in determining the chronology of events related to their life and their tradition. In this context, it is worth noting that there are no inscriptions commissioned by vachana-composers themselves (Kalburgi 2001). However, it appears, as though, a few inscriptions belong to the close associates of some of the vachana-composers. Writing on the same topic, S.R. Gunjal discusses the details of nine available inscriptions that talk about a certain Basava. He points out that "it is still to be found out whether the name *Basavanna* in these inscriptions refers to Basavanna of Kalyana" (Gunjal 1967: 267). Chidananda Murthy (2004a: 200-264) in one of his essays entitled "*Shasanagalali Holeyaru*" ("Holeyas in Inscriptions"), says as much. Thus, even inscriptions do not seem to have much to tell us about

the life of vachana-composers, let alone the social history of the time. They give us ei-
ther brief character sketches or references to the donations and gifts made.

Our oral literary tradition comprising of kavyas, myths and legends has been a
major source of information about these vachana composers. Since oral kavyas are no
different from the written kavyas discussed previously, what are left to discuss here are
myths and legends. Utilising myths and legends as historical records has always been
problematic. As Rahamath Tarikere observes at length in his *Karnatakada Sufigalu*
(1998), we cannot ask historical questions about myths and legends about Sufi and
other bhakti saints and their place in the life of the people. A saint like Yamanurappa is
just a person who would come to their help when they were in distress. We cannot ask,

> whether he is a Sufi or a Yogi. Where did he come from? What was his
> religion? These are meaningless historical questions as far as these tra-
> ditions are concerned. … These communities live by transforming a
> person from a distant time, space, religion and culture into a person of
> their own place. … If not, they would not be able to construct such col-
> ourful myths. Therefore, to understand such myths we need a different
> kind of vision [and not history]. Otherwise, modes of living of these
> people would be rendered senile. … Historians, especially European
> historians working on Sufi saints suffer a great deal while working with
> the myths, which keep altering continuously. [George Weston] Briggs,
> who has written an interesting book on the *Natha* tradition, slips into the
> conundrum of solving the time of Guga peer's existence. According to
> the poems and stories about Guga peer, he fought with kings from
> Ghazni Mohammed to Aurangzeb. Historically speaking, these kings
> belong to different historical periods form the 11th to 17th centuries of
> the Common Era. What period did Guga belong to then? This is a head-
> ache generated by historiography's longing for precision (Tarikere
> 1998: 3).

If these arguments hold, we are left with nothing but the vachanas and European
writings as sources that talk about vachana-composers. Modern vachana scholars, espe-
cially native Kannada scholars, rarely talk about European writings on the Lingayat
tradition. There is a noticeable absence of detailed historical research on European en-
counters with and European writings on the Lingayat community, both in Kannada and

in other languages. The earliest references to the Lingayat tradition and its practices in European writings that I have found belong to the mid-17th century. The first detailed research article on the Lingayats was published in 1840, by C.P. Brown (1840a). Hence, even so far as the European writings contain any information about the Lingayats, they will cast light only on the last two centuries of developments in the Lingayat tradition.

In this context, the assertion that the vachanas talk about the caste system is often made with the emphasis on the following claim: *the vachanas are sufficient evidence for the claim that the vachana-composers took an anti-caste-system stance.*[10] This claim comes mainly (though not solely) from the realisation that other available materials do not have much to offer for a historical reconstruction of the vachana movement. Consequently, if we follow the suggestion to refrain from reading the vachanas symptomatically, there is then neither a vachana movement nor a revolutionary Basava, which are so central to modern vachana scholarship. This leaves us with only two mutually exclusive options: either to give up the notion of the vachana movement and the revolutionary Basava or to read the vachanas symptomatically.

Furthermore, vachanas too are not historical material per se.[11] Therefore, one has to see them as tropes and metaphors and labour to extract a criticism of casteism. This is a task of elucidating the revolutionary dimension of the vachana movement

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[10] Modern vachana scholarship is replete with the following kind of assertions: "Even a cursory reading of vachanas shows that there is a tendency of questioning and protesting [against] the deep-rooted values of caste, as it existed then" (Nagabhushana Swamy 2007: 2 in the editor's "Introduction"). The popular (or 'less-scholarly') writings on the vachanas make extravagant claims. As an example, see the following assertion. The vachanas are "the first available Dalit literature …, the literature produced out of [the] utterances of illiterate, low caste … [individuals who were] involved in Karnataka's first ever social-religious revolution under the leadership of Basava" (Shetty 1976: 56).

[11] As Punekar insists repeatedly, vachanas are instructional writings. "All these prose writings [of the bhakti writers] can be called, for the lack of a better term, 'upadesha kavya.' … It is wrong to call them 'free verse' [authors' English word]. Without understanding their purpose we cannot talk about their characteristics [*lakshana*]". He also argues that the vachanas cannot be understood outside of their philosophical contexts. "The context and the manner in which the vachana-composers criticized the Kalamukha*s* or Kapali*s* is different. Outside the context, we cannot repeat the same criticism today. To see our history outside of its context in a piecemeal manner thus is futile" (Punekar 2004: 207, 215).

from the vachanas themselves. However, suppose this modern reading is unsustainable, the question then is, how can one fault this reading? Whether one likes it or not, I submit, the modern interpretations of the vachanas that see them as anti-caste poetry can be faulted only by analysing the vachanas themselves. Admittedly, if one can show that the entity casteism is suspect one can in turn prove that the long supposed relations between the vachanas and the caste system too is suspect. However, this second route – which has to take the responsibility of dismantling not one entity called casteism but many allied entities, which are collectively seen as Indian social evils, like Brahmanism – is not a viable possibility within the context of the present thesis. I take the former route because not only is it a more manageable task for a dissertation, but also it demonstrates a central flaw in our perceptions of the vachanas and other such Indian traditions.

To repeat, since this is an important point, the claim that the vachanas are the sole archival evidence for any argument about most of the important issues attributed to the tradition – namely, the socio-political condition of the time, biographical details about the vachana-composers' lives, the achievements of the movement, like conversion and other modes of uplift of the downtrodden and so on – can be called into question only by re-reading the vachanas. This dissertation shows that the readings of the vachanas as caste critiques can be faulted even if we read the vachanas as poetry or images and tropes. It will do so by offering statistical analysis of the vachanas and by analysing the readings of the vachanas by some eminent vachana scholars of our times. In the next section, however, we will analyse vachana interpretations for some logical problems they contain. This will also establish the centrality of the reading of the vachanas as caste critiques, which will then be subjected to the statistical analysis in the section that follows.

I. Logical Inconsistencies in Vachana Theories

One cannot take the reasoning and the propositions of an unsound argument seriously. If modern vachana scholarship is inconsistent, it is unsound, and the arguments that it puts forth, therefore, cannot be taken as descriptions of the vachanas. This section will argue that modern vachana scholarship is inconsistent. However, not without an attempt to see if this inconsistency can be removed somehow.

Seen from a particular level of abstraction one can find multiple and contradictory readings of the vachanas. To begin with, here is a sample of such mutually exclusive views: While the dominant 20th century view finds an anti-caste position in the vachanas,[12] some thinkers dub a few vachana-composers, especially upper caste (or non-dalit) composers, Brahmanical.[13] In addition, the general opinion holds that the Lingayat tradition initially fought against casteism, but gradually became a caste itself.[14] According to another variation of this argument, while the early vachana-composers were credited with fighting against the 'institutionalisation of religion', the later vachana-composers, on the contrary, institutionalised the 'Lingayat religion', by building *matha*s, compiling the vachanas and instituting 'the Lingayat practices and rituals' and by turning it into a caste itself.[15] The vachanas are both religious and secular writings.[16]

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[12] I could almost mention every 20th century scholar here, but for the purpose of reference here are some prominent names: (Uttangi 1962; Chidananda Murthy 2004b; Dande 2001; Ishwaran 1997a; Kalburgi 1988; Kalgudi 1997; Nagarajappa 1991).

[13] See (Nagaraj 1999: 135). See also noted dalit thinkers like (Malagatti 1999) and (Nagarajappa 1998: 52). Nagarajappa goes to the extent of arguing that the very philosophical stance of the vachanakāras might have contributed to the fostering of social violence in society (Nagarajappa 1998: 53).

[14] See V. Munivenkatappa (2000), William McCormack (1963: 59), K.G. Nagarajappa (1998: 47), T.R. Chandrashekhar (2004: Chap. 3). One may recall here the controversy around Mathe Mahadevi's *Vachana Deepti*. Mahadevi sought to re-edit Basava's vachanas since she found them "contaminated by the casteists" (cited in Boratti 2005: 28). For more examples, see further in this chapter the section "The Plight of Vīraśaivism".

[15] D.R. Nagaraj even goes to the extent of saying that the institutionalization of Vīraśaivism happened between 1420 and 1520 of the Common Era (Nagaraj 1999: 129, 135). "The anthropologist J.H Hutton

While the vachanas are *shastra* for some, most scholars consider them *kavya* and a few consider them *shastra-kavya*.[17] Vachana-composers, it seems, have both fought for the causes of women[18] and have patently disregarded them as well.[19]

The truth of one of the variables in these postulates depends on the falsity of the other. Logically, two mutually exclusive views on anything cannot be true simultaneously. If so, only one of these interpretations can be true. However, 20th century vachana scholarship houses diverse and mutually exclusive views about the fundamentals of the vachanas, without giving rise to any significant intellectual controversies. Vachana scholarship has witnessed countless controversies in 20th and 21st centuries. But, the topic of those controversies have hardly been intellectual issues. Even when an intellectual question has given rise to a disputation, it was solved not through some intellectual arguments or research but rather by curtailing all such intellectual activities.[20]

Let me anticipate an objection here. It can be strongly argued that though it is evidently true that one particular statement in a vachana cannot mean two things, in the course of a vachana it is surely perfectly possible for inconsistent views to be expressed and in the whole corpus, it is not merely possible it is well nigh inevitable. That is, it is

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and the sociologist Max Weber, consider Lingayats to be the example par excellence of a religious group becoming a caste ... this, – in spite of the fact that Lingayat ideology explicitly rejects the caste-ordering of Indian society. Srinivas falls somewhere close to Weber in regarding that Lingayats were agents of Sanskritization" (McCormack 1963: 59-60).

[16] Though secular is secularized religion (see Balagangadhara 1994), here secular is understood as something that is not religious. William McCormack (1963: 59) considers Basava's vachanas secular, but in a footnote adds, "What is true for Basava in this respect holds to a somewhat lesser extent for other Lingayat twelfth-century saints who wrote vachanas. Principal among these was a woman saint, Akkama[ha]devi ... Channabasava, and Allama Prabhu ..." (1963: 70, Fn. 1).

[17] For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Giraddi Govindaraj (1997). Nagarajappa writes that the vachanas, which were a revolutionary literature in the beginning, subsequently became mere poetry (Nagarajappa 1998: 47).

[18] For Shivarudrappa's and Maate Mahadevi's views see, (Vasanthakumar 1988: 357, 466; Imprapur 2001; Michael 1983).

[19] Most of the writers who have identified themselves as feminists make this observation. Imrapur's work is an interesting case. She tries to give evidences for both views. However, concludes (without giving any evidence) by saying that though several vachana-composers call women 'maya' and a hurdle for their ādhyātymic achievement, this was not their final or intractable attitude towards women (see Imprapur 2001: 42-47).

[20] For example, the following question that rose during a recent controversy: Do the vachanas proscribe meet eating? (For some brief discussion of such controversies, see chapter 4 as well as appendix IV.)

perfectly possible for instance, that vachana-composers (taken as a whole) both fought for women's causes and disregarded them – depending on which vachanas one looks at. Both interpretations can be valid. This line of argument will certainly claim that it of course cannot be true that, say, "the vachanas in general favour women" and, simultaneously "the vachanas in general disregard women". It is a banal point that is hardly worth making. On the other hand, the statement "the vachanas frequently favour women" and "the vachanas frequently disregard women" can both be valid simultaneously. These are not mutually exclusive views.

This line of argument gives rise to several problems. If we were to accept these, what I call, multiple and incompatible interpretations as simultaneously true, we have to see the vachanas as a collection of discrete writings, penned by people largely unrelated to each other and not as a product of a tradition, with a conceptual and cultural unity. Either of these approaches (viewing vachanas as a collection of discrete writings and as having a conceptual and cultural unity) is plausible, but only one of them can be right, not both. If the vachanas share any commonality as a tradition, 20th century vachana scholarship is cognitively uninteresting. Furthermore, to argue that the vachanas represent an anti-caste movement one has to see the vachanas as having a conceptual unity. It cannot be the case that they, as a whole, represent a movement against, say, the caste system and also support it. One cannot entertain the claim that the vachanas represent an anti-caste-system movement and also argue that a part of them denies the caste system while another part supports it. That means if we accept that the vachanas are not a unified entity, it is not clear how could on accept modern vachana scholarship that sees the vachana tradition as a social movement as valid.

If the vachanas are a cluster of discrete writings, we have to treat claims of each vachana-composer or a collection of them as unrelated to other vachana-composers.

The situation obtained here is such that we cannot even take one single vachana-composer for analysis, but must analyse individual vachanas. The interpretations of the vachanas also have to be considered severally. Put simply, we have to take a single vachana and see which one of its diverse interpretations is 'better' than the rest of the interpretations. But, 'better' in what terms? The only way such an interpretation can be judged better or valid would then be entirely subjective to the reader in question. Simply put, a reader selects any interpretation as better than the other that s/he 'likes'. This is not only an odd situation that 20th century vachana scholarship leads to, but in turn this is the only (though odd) way we can appreciate this scholarship. If we take the 20th century approach to the vachanas seriously, a project on the vachanas, like this one, remains largely unjustified. Are we in an aporetic situation? All that one can do in such a situation, and this is what is happening in the 20th century, is to write 'practical criticisms' of individual vachanas and hold our picture of the progressive vachana movement undisputed. The only constraint on such 'practical criticisms' is their 'political usefulness', or at least their a-political nature, as we noted at the beginning of the chapter. That is, the constraint is that a reading of the vachana should be consistent with the picture of the progressive vachana movement or at least that it the reading should not contradict this picture.

A Way Out …

One might argue that one should not take these contradictions literally. One has to take into account what is meant rather than what is being said by these theories. Here is an excerpt from Rahamath Tarikere's recent take on Basava and his vachanas. Tarikere seems to be concerned with understanding Basava and is using modern scholars' works

as examples to show how complex the task is. However, his argument sounds more like

an apologia for modern vachana scholarship.[21] According to him, the multiple readings

of the vachanas are inevitable for three important reasons.

> (1) Basavanna did not propound his ideas scientifically and logically as
> a philosopher, like Karl Marx or any experienced scientist. He wrote va-
> chanas like a poet, which were a response to different issues and relent-
> less fights of his life. … Hence, there is no consistent thesis here, as one
> can find in a philosophical text. What we can see here is different and
> contradictory voices and struggles of a poet and an activist. (2) Diverse
> people have tried to understand Basavanna over the last 800 years: from
> Allama, Harihara, the composers of *Shoonysampadane* and *Manteswami
> kavya* to P.G. Halakatti, A.K. Ramanujan, P. Lankesh, [H.S.]
> Shivaprakash. (3) The peculiar nature of our caste society and a unique
> feature of the Lingayat community do not allow us get a uniform under-
> standing of the Basava and his philosophy. People's understanding of
> Basava has not only come from a scholarly understanding of his vacha-
> nas. It has come from their struggles in society, and the way they have
> used Basava in those struggles. … Therefore, it is impossible to obtain a
> uniform picture of Basava and his philosophy in our society (Tarikere
> 2008: 65).

One way of understanding this defence of modern vachana scholarship is to say that

disregarding contradictions that are apparent at the surface level we should strive to un-

derstand what modern scholars mean. That is to say, one can only talk about various

uses of a concept (say, caste) and not a history of a concept itself. In this sense, we can

only talk about how people from Basava to Tarikere have used a unit of idea according

to the need of the day. There is a continuity of the usage of the vachanas and not a con-

tinuity of ideas found in the vachanas. Will this view, if it holds, deliver us out of the

problem created by the logical inconsistency discussed previously? It will, I think, un-

der one condition. First, let us take note of difficult situation that we get into if we ac-

cept this view.

Tarikere, one could say, is merely warning us, and perfectly sensibly, against

expecting too great a degree of consistency, in the texts that try to understand the va-

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[21] Cf. Manu Chakravarthy's remarks analysed at the beginning of this chapter.

chanas and also vachanas themselves. That is to say, if one expects a 'great deal of' consistency from these texts they would simply crumble under the pressure. Does not that mean, then, in consequence, his views are appeals not to ascribe any continuity to Basava's writings or thoughts? If so, effectively this means that we will never be able to say that Basava talked about the caste system. For, we have to treat all exemplifications of an idea, to put it in the words of Kuukkanen (2008: 360), "as irreducibly different and unique." To use Kuukkanen's explanation in our context, there would not be a concept of (say) *caste* shared by vachana-composers, Tarikere, and the author of this dissertation. "Instead, we should give proper names to each, the lack of which can here be illustrated only by calling them by different letters, A (which appeared at time1 or context1), B (which appeared at time2 or context2), C (which appeared at time3 or context3), and so on. Calling all these concepts … [by any name, 'caste' for e.g.] would be misleading because, on the holist view, they aren't the same concepts. Naturally, one could try other strategies such as numbering ('caste1," "caste2," "caste3,' and so on), although even this raises the question why one would want to give the impression that they are instantiations of", say, the same entity called 'caste'. This means, Tarikere's project that began as a way of rescuing Basava's vachanas ends of denying the very possibility of engaging in a meaningful discussion.

Alternatively, the argument that one should (or can only) talk about various uses of a concept (say, caste) and not a history of a concept itself, will deliver us out of this conundrum if we find a way of gleaning that *which is meant* from that *which is being said*. That is, if we show that that there exists a proposition that all modern scholars working on the vachanas would accept as 'true' about the vachanas despite several differences that they share, we can argue that they are consistent at a particular level of abstraction. Put differently, this is to argue that there is a logical claim in these multiple

arguments that is common to all the vachanas, despite apparent differences at the surface level. If so, we need to begin by clearly distinguishing the propositional content of these discussions, where the consensus is elicited, from the surface level contradictory arguments.

This requires we somehow get at the commonly acceptable/accepted proposition. One way is to convert the theories into atomic propositions and then see which one gets more votes in its favour. This exercise poses one practical problem. The number of propositions one has to analyse increases to such a great extent that it is not humanly feasible to handle this task, even with the help of computation machines. A more feasible way is to work our way through the vachana readings, *somehow*. Having done so, I propose here one solution to our problem. Let us begin by noting that almost every modern scholar who praises vachanas as anti-caste-system poetry also laments that the vachana movement failed to achieve the aims that it began with. If this is true, it means that there is a consensus among modern scholars on *'something'* that the vachana tradition has achieved or has failed to achieve. In other words, it is this 'something' that is referred to, whether explicitly or not, in modern vachana scholarship. That common 'something' or consensus is the idea that the vachanas take an anti-caste-system position. If we reduce this consensus to its fundamental proposition, it looks somewhat like the following statement: an 'anti-caste-system stance' (or 'pro-women stance' and the like) is the defining element of the vachana movement. This proposition is consistent with both those who argue that vachana-composers succeeded in achieving this ideal and those who argue to the contrary. We thus arrive at the dominant reading of the vachanas of the modern era: *an anti-caste-system stance is a significant feature of the Lingayat tradition.*

The verdict then is simple. To the extent that modern vachana scholars accept this proposition, their interpretations of the vachanas are consistent, at least from this abstraction level. Let us ask in the next section if the vachana texts uphold this modern interpretation placed on them.

II. Statistical Appraisal of Vachana Theories

Despite the ambitious title, the task that this section sets itself is quite modest and simple. I offer two kinds of statistics and a few observations about the vachanas and their modern interpretations, with the help of the statistics that I offer. One is a nearly exhaustive list of the vachanas (indicated only by their serial numbers) that talk about caste (or actually, jati and kula) and Brahmans (see appendix II.a). The other is a list of the words that, at the present, are generally considered as referring to the caste system (see further). The list of the words that I offer is not an exhaustive list of the words that occur in all the available vachanas but in the vachanas of one important vachana-composer: namely, Basava. There is only one point that I want to prove with the help of these statistics: whatever the concepts caste system and Brahmanism may refer to, the vachanas do not simply talk about them, or they at least do not talk about them in any consistent and unambiguous way.

However, before presenting the statistics, let me say a few words by way of justification of the use of statistics. The call for this justification comes from the fact that scholars in cultural studies as well as and more generally in humanities look at statistics with suspicion, more so when one uses statistics vis-à-vis literature. It has been my experience so far that wherever I have presented this research work in workshops and conferences in India, questions have been raised over the use of statistical accounts. It

has been a charge that I read the vachanas symptomatically, whereas they are poetic/fictional pieces. However, I hasten to add, it is not my purpose here to defend the use of statistics in literary or cultural studies. In this particular case of the vachanas, statistical enumeration of words occurring or not occurring acquires great significance in the context of my argument that the vachanas do not talk about the caste system or casteism.[22] Further, if we go by the arguments of modern vachana scholars that the vachanas are our only sources to talk about the Lingayat movement then the statistical enumeration of the relevant words/concepts should take priority.

Let us begin then by asking, what does 'reading the vachanas symptomatically' (that is 'as archival material') actually mean? Instead of going into some philosophical discussion about this issue, let me simply illustrate a typical symptomatic reading of the vachanas here. The following are Ramanujan's opening remarks in his introduction to his much acclaimed *Spiking of Siva* (1973: 1): "Basavanna was the leader of the medieval religious movement … of which the Kannada vachanas are the most important texts." With reference to a particular vachana by Basava, he writes that it represents "the whole extraordinary body of religious lyrics called the vachanas". This vachana, he asserts, "dramatizes several of the themes and oppositions characteristic of protest or 'protestant' movement called Vīraśaivism". Since Ramanujan uses a vachana to demonstrate the themes and oppositions characteristic of the Lingayat protestant movement,[23] we can say that he uses the vachanas as symptoms of social reality. But he also

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[22] I say "caste system or casteism" because some of my readers/respondents, off late, have started conceding that the vachanas do not talk about 'the caste system' (caste as a system), but they talk about caste consciousness or caste based discriminations. I disagree with this view. The vachanas do not talk about any of these things. That is to say, the words that the vachanas use such as *jati*, *kula*, *kula-mada*, *jati-sootaka* cannot be understood as references to what we today call casteism/caste based discriminations and so on. I use the word 'caste system' and 'casteism' interchangeably in this dissertation, unless otherwise suggested.

[23] Here is a more explicit pronouncement of this view: "[B]hakti religions like Vīraśaivism are Indian analogues to European Protestant movements. Here we suggest a few parallels: protest against mediators like priest, ritual, temples, social hierarchy, in the name of direct, individual, original experience; a religious movement of and for the underdog, including saints of all castes and trades…, speaking the sub-

insists that the vachanas are literature.[24] If so, the anti-symptomatic reading sentiment is internally inconsistent. In fact, all our major modern vachana scholars draw their ideas concerning the vachana movement from the readings of the vachanas that use them as archival resources. With this we return to the question, what makes some contemporary scholars reprimand some symptomatic readings as 'superficial and impertinent', which turn the vachanas into 'dead archival material'? It seems the main objection is against only those readings of the vachanas that are considered 'impertinent' to some social matter or other, as we briefly discussed earlier. I will not defend this claim here. However, let me point out this much: if we presume the truth of this claim, it becomes clear that we cannot break the anti-symptomatic reading sentiment just by showing that it is conceptually untenable.

The notion that one cannot use fictional pieces as historical sources is valid only in one sense. Fictional writings do not designate events in the world. However, they can be used as historical sources, provided one reads it not as a direct description of the world but as mere symptoms. Every text is a product of a culture and hence one can read the traces of culture in a text. In fact modern literary and political movements like post-colonialism, feminism, cultural studies, dalit studies all have read literary texts as a product of their culture. The interpretive strategies such as 'reading against the grain' and 'symptomatic reading' are based on the assumption that a literary text contains ab-

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standard dialect of the region…; a religion of arbitrary grace, with a doctrine of the mystically chose elect, replacing a social hierarchy-by-birth with a mystical hierarchy-by-experience; doctrines of work as worship leading to a puritanic ethic; monotheism and evangelism, a mixture of intolerance and humanism, harsh and tender" (Ramanujan 1973: 53-54).

[24] A.K. Ramanujan contributed immensely to the popularisation of the vachanas internationally as modernist poetry. His *Spiking of Siva* (1973) briefly explains the context and philosophical underpinnings of the vachanas that provides general framework for understanding the vachanas, besides providing translations of the popular vachanas. Early in the book, he declares, "Vachanas are literature, but not merely literary … a religious literature, literary because religious." Hence, when he translated them he believed that "[o]nly the literal text [of the vachanas], the word made flesh, can take us to the word behind the words." True to his belief, subsequently when he analyses the vachanas, he unhesitatingly leaves the Sufi and Tantric elements out as a mere influence, as something external to the original form of the vachanas. "Here, we omit other parallels of, and influences on bhakti, like the Muslim Sūfi mystics, the esoteric cults of tantra and yōga in their Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina versions" (Ramanujan 1973: xii, xiii, 21 fn. 12).

sences and omissions that are an indication of what the dominant ideology seeks to contain or marginalise. Seen from this angle, we arrive back at the same contradiction: the symptomatic reading of the vachanas has come from those scholars who also insist on reading them as poetry.[25] How do we then unravel the paradoxical intertwining of the two items that engender the reading of the vachanas as anti-caste-system poetry: instrumentalist approach to the vachanas and the anti-symptomatic reading sentiment?

For the sake of argument,[26] let me assume that the vachanas are signs/tropes or a literary piece and that they *may* well point to the anti-caste-system stance of the Lingayat movement. I will also leave the disputable topic of casteism unproblematised. However, despite conceding all these points, I claim that it is still possible to show that with the available vachanas one cannot establish that they articulate an *unambiguously* (or *consistently*) anti-casteist position. In fact, no one in modern vachana scholarship has been able to put forward a consistent argument picking up passages from the vachanas that illustrate their anti-caste-system position. I will support this radical claim with the statistical account later in the chapter.

Small and Non-representative Samples

Let me begin with the popular assumption that the vachanas represent a movement against casteism. If this argument were to hold, we may reasonably expect that 'caste' must have been the common agenda of most of the vachanas, if not all. It can hardly be the case that the vachanas are part of a movement against the caste system without

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[25] There is in fact more to it. The same texts are at times read as both fiction and as histories in modern India. Since I try to explain this modern development in the final chapter, I will not go into it here.
[26] Every time I concede something just for the 'sake of discussion', I am reminded of Robert M. Pirsig's following remarks. "To reach him you have to back up and back up, and the further back you go, the further back you see you have to go, until what looked like a small problem of communication turns into a major philosophic enquiry" (*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Bantam, 1975, p. 64).

caste forming the central focus of their attention. Hence, if I can demonstrate that the focus of the vachanas is not caste, then the argument that they are caste-critiques is proved untenable. It is an accepted principal in philosophy that empirical evidence alone cannot determine whether a theory is acceptable or not. My attempt here is neither to argue for this insight nor against it. The argument here is perfectly simple: there is hardly any evidence for the 'theories' under consideration here. That is, modern vachana scholarship will fail in this empirical test since its arguments are based on an extremely small and non-representative sample.[27]

The confident assertion of modern vachana scholarship that by *going back to the vachanas* one can recover the revolutionary elements in the Lingayat tradition and the vachanas has the backing of innumerable works written during the 20th century. Such works do not present the actual data the conclusions are based on, or the way they have been derived. If statements about the vachanas' anti-caste-system stance are the résumé of a research that has already drawn such conclusions based on certain statistics, how well was the information acquired and summarized? Is there evidence within the vachanas themselves to validate this reading? A positive answer to all these questions will not settle the problem. It only raises another question: How many vachanas are needed (out of a mammoth collection of more than 21,000 vachanas) to satisfactorily propose the argument that the vachanas make a particular argument, say about abolishing casteism? However, I have given a rather exhaustive statistical survey of some aspects of the vachanas, which are appended to this dissertation (see the four statistics tables provided in appendix II**)**. This exercise is not an *erratum* of 20th century

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[27] My arguments here are rather methodological in nature than epistemological. That is to say, the objections I am raising *here* are not about some deep conceptual problems that the theories of the vachanas run into. Much has been written about the role of methodology in scientific research. The consensus (in philosophy of science) leaves no room for a normative prescriptive methodology. However, even a general suggestion that 'a researcher should not take a small and non-representative sample for analysis' or 'one must understand a thinker in his context' is a methodological remark. My contention here is that the theories of the vachanas under consideration here violate even these basic methodological injunctions.

vachana scholarship. An *erratum* will accept modern vachana readings but seek to point out some (rather innocuous) mechanical failures in vachana scholarship. My study has larger goals that however need to first disentangle the vachanas from their modern interpretations.

Modern vachana scholars base their argument on a highly selective and a very small number of vachanas. In order to understand the nature of the samples, let me begin by presenting the following details, of which the last two details are a finding of my exhaustive survey of all available vachanas.

- The total number of vachanas published by the state government of Karnataka so far: 21,696. (My statistical analysis includes an exhaustive reading of all these vachanas.)
- The total number of the vachanas that apparently *talk about*[28] Brahmans: 195.
- The total number of the vachanas that apparently talk about jati, kula and related issues: 795.

By any standard, 195 and 795 out of 21,696 vachanas (which is a meagre 1 and 4 percent of the total vachanas, respectively) are not at all sufficient to justify the argument that the vachanas deal with Brahmans and caste issues, let alone arguing that the entire corpus criticises either of the two. Let us focus on the vachanas that contain some reference about Brahmans. What complicates our task of deducing an anti-Brahman argument from these 195 vachanas is the fact that a considerable number of these vachanas make positive remarks about Brahmans while many vachanas do not make much sense to us today, both linguistically and (more importantly) philosophically. That leaves approximately a third of the 195 vachanas that say something against Brahmans. Even here, sometimes the Brahmans they criticise are mythical characters and not contempo-

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[28] When I say they 'talk about' Brahmans or caste, I mean they contain one or more words which is generally considered to refer to some aspect of the caste system, in the *post-colonial Indian context*. See further for a chart stating the division of such words referring to caste into three types.

rary people. Thus, an argument that the vachanas take an anti-Brahman stance can only claim support from not more than sixty odd vachanas.

Let us analyse the vachanas of Basava, the most popular vachana-composer, and see if our foregoing macro-level claims hold true even at the micro-level. There are two arguments that I make. First, vachanas make little criticism of Brahmans. Among those 1414 available vachanas of Basava only 29 talk about or in practice *merely refer* to Brahmans (see appendix II, table 3), and amongst these 29, there are only 10 (the first 10 rows in the table 3, in appendix II) where Basava apparently 'criticises' Brahmans. Second, even the minimal criticism that they make cannot be construed as a criticism of Brahmanism and thereof casteism. Though the vachanas which talk about some mythical figures (row 11), seem to be a criticism of Brahmans, they are not.[29] Note the table in the appendix carefully. No vachana criticises Brahmans for anything directly associated with the issues of casteism. Hence, in no way do these criticisms of Brahmans amount to a criticism of casteism. If so, we can easily put aside the argument that the vachanas criticise Brahmans, especially in as much as this is construed as a critique of casteism, as completely untenable.

Can we say the same about the position of the vachanas on caste problems in general? Here too, we face similar problems. Only 4 percent of the total vachanas (i.e., 795 out of 21,696 vachanas) talk about caste issues. While some of them do not make sense to us both philosophically and linguistically today, others make positive or non-judgemental comments about caste. That brings the number of vachanas that seem to take an anti-caste stance to a more or less negligible 1.33 percent of the total vachanas. Is this small amount of the vachanas enough to argue, as modern vachana scholarship has been doing for over a century, that the entire corpus of the vachanas criticise

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[29] The 'Brahman' who is being talked about in these two vachanas (row 11) refers only to Lord Narayana (Vishnu), and Lord Shiva (see, Appendix #II, Table 3, row 11).

casteism? Whatever theory of evaluation should one use to answer this question posi-
tively?

Let us move further with the following question: How many of these 1.33 and
0.33 percent vachanas (on anti-caste-system and anti-Brahmanism, respectively) do
modern vachana scholars analyse before formulating their argument? The table below
shows the works of four well-known Kannada scholars (who have put vigorous efforts
in their works to uphold the anti-caste-system stance that they believe is in the vacha-
nas): M.M. Kalburgi, D.R. Nagaraj, Chidananda Murthy and H. Tipperudraswami. The
table displays the works of these respective authors along with the number of vachanas
they cite in support of their argument. It would be very striking to note that these au-
thors who have been so influential in connection with vachana literature so far, have
referred (and have cited) such a small number of vachanas.[30] The figures in the table
become more striking if we realise the following: the works of Kalburgi considered
here are three of the four volumes that comprise the entire corpus of his published
work.[31] And Chidananda Murthy's *Sthavara: Jangama*, the fourth volume of his com-
plete works, is a collection of his lengthy articles on various issues related to the Lin-
gayat tradition.

Author	Work	No. of vachanas being cited
M.M. Kalburgi	*Marga 1: Samshodana Prabhandagala Sankhalana* (1988)	02
	Marga 3: Samshodana Prabhandagala Sankhalana (1998)	02
	Marga 4: Samshodana Prabhandagala Sankhalana (2004)	04
D.R. Nagaraj	*Allama Prabhu mattu Shaiva Pratibhe* (1999)	01
Chidananda Murthy	*Sthavara: Jangama* (Complete Works Vol. IV) (2004)	04
	"Vachanakaarara Drushtiyalli Varna, Jaati, Samaanate, Matantara" (2003)	60[32]

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[30] *Note:* The following statistical data is only meant to be indicative of the problem and does not offer a
substantive picture of the problem under discussion.
[31] The absence of *Marga 2* is only because this volume has no article on the vachanas vis-à-vis casteism.
[32] Let me also add here that among the 60 vachanas that he quotes, there are two kinds of repetitions: he
quotes different parts of the same vachanas in different contexts and same vachanas are cited in support
of different claims in the article.

| H. Tipperudra Swami | *Vachanagalalli Veerashaiva Dharma* (1969)[33] | 00 |

Converting these numbers into percentages with relation to the total number of vacha-nas would yield some strange percentages!

Let us turn instead to another kind of problem in the next section. To sum up this section, I tried to show so far that argument about the vachanas' anti-caste position though claimed to be a conclusion drawn from facts, is based on a negligibly small data sample. This raises serious doubts about the credentials of their argument. Neverthe-less, we need not hastily discredit their work. After all, one may justifiably argue that they have read all the vachanas though never considered it important to present data statistically. Hence, I just want to draw the following two conclusions from the forego-ing discussion. (a) There are no grounds to believe that the modern view of the Lin-gayat tradition is based on readings of the vachanas. This raises a crucial question: What else is it based on, then? Any attempt to answer this question has to bear in mind that, as discussed earlier, the modern scholars reject the writings and documents other than vachana poetry of the time, as they believe that they do not represent or con-ceal/miss the revolutionary dimension of the tradition. (b) Nevertheless, it appears, that modern vachana scholars did refer the vachanas, albeit a very carefully chosen, small number of them. After all, any one can choose 25 vachanas out of some 21 thousand and present them as arguments with respect to all manner of causes: vachanas are pro-Brahman, anti-women, anti-animal rights, environmentalist, pro-vegetarianism and such like. One cannot invalidate such readings by providing one or several counter ex-

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[33] Though Tipperudra Swamy does not quote any vachana, he confidently asserts, "Basava proved that given a chance even those who are disdained as poor, dalits and untouchables can become Shiva-Sharanas. … The solution that the *sharanas* provided to untouchability was not just a social principal that merely preached that there is no harm in touching the untouchables. They tried to get at the roots of the problem. [They preached] that human beings are all equal; this is not just a social truth but also a reli-gious truth" (Tipperudra Swamy 1969: 308).

amples from the vachanas themselves. More so because the defence of such reading
practices is firmly based on the universal right to textual interpretation.

Inappropriate use of Samples

Now, let us take up the vachanas in which, as modern vachana scholars believe, there
are references towards the caste system. What are the vachanas saying actually about
'casteism' whenever they use a word that supposedly refers to some aspect of casteism?
We have come across this issue earlier while discussing Basava's views on Brahmans.
Here we will analyse Basava's vachanas on the issue of caste in general. This will give
us a fair sense of another problem inherent in modern vachana scholarship. There are
around 60 vachanas of Basava, which employ one or more of these following words,
which are generally considered today as referring to some or other aspect of the morally
corrupt casteism.

> Type 1.   jātibhēda, kīlujāti, holle, holati, holeya, sūtaka (caste distinction,
>   lower caste, polluted, holeya, holeya woman, pollution, caste
>   pollution, lower/other caste)
> Type 2.   kula, kulaja, holaba, shūdra, mādiga, holagēri (caste/community,
>   good caste/community person, holeya, shudra, Madiga, holeya's
>   locality)
> Type 3.   shwapachanaka, hāvādiga, hādariga, bandikāra, dāsiputra (dog meat
>   eater, snake charmer, promiscuous person, servant's son)

By common consensus, the existence of these words in the vachanas is a symptom of
the existence of caste discrimination in Indian culture as well as of a critical take on it
by the vachanas. I divide these words into three types here so that we can include all
those words that even marginally refer to casteism. Strictly speaking, only the first type
of words is present in the post-colonial discourse on casteism as signifiers of casteism.
The second type of words is classificatory in nature and their ability to signify casteism

depends on the context in which they are used. The third type of words is included in the list for the sole reason that some of them refer to contemporary constitutional categories of lower castes in Karnataka. The last two words in the list, which now appear archaic, supposedly refer to the then lower castes and their members.

A careful study of those vachanas of Basava where one of these words features yields the results that follow. These should enable us to find out the context in which the vachanas use these words. (For a sample list of the contexts in which these words are used by some other representative vachana-composers, see appendix II, table 4).

Context 1.   There is no kula among sharanas and Shiva bhaktas and wherever there is a linga: 770, 418, 453, 568, 732.

Context 2.   Those who believe in linga/sharana/Kudalasangama are *kulaja* or should be treated like *kulaja*s, which by definition includes *sharana*s: 286, 589, 590, 591, 595, 657, 715, 718, 719, 720, 1215.

Context 3.   A bad person is holeya/madiga: 582, 591. Even a person who does not believe in linga/sharana/Kudalasangama is a holeya/shudra: 142, 582, 596, 1335. Those who do not greet (respect) an ajāta are holeyas: 605.

Context 4.   There are four vachanas or parts of the vachanas that at the literal level, at least, are using the caste related words in a derogatory way, which may easily be interpreted as a pro-casteist remark. Since this claim may seem controversial, I would like to quote some of those vachanas here.

- "ಸೂಳೆಗೆ ಹುಟ್ಟಿದ ಪ್ರಾಣಿಗೆ ನಿಜಗುಣ ಸಜ್ಜನವಪ್ಪುದೆ?" (#128)
  Is a form of behaviour that is quintessentially right, suitable for an animal born to a prostitute?

- "ಹೊಲೆಯರ ಮದ್ದಳೆಯಂತೆ ನುಡಿವ ಡಂಬಕ ನಾನಯ್ಯಾ" (#313)
  I'm a deceiver (or an ostentatious person) who speaks like a Holeya's drum

- "ಹೊಲತಿ ಹೊಲೆಯನು ಹೋಗಿ
  ಹೊಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮಿಂದಡೆ
  ಹೊಲೆ ಹೋಯಿತ್ತಿಲ್ಲ, ಕುಲ ಹೋಗಲಿಲ್ಲ.
  ಕಂಬಳಿಯೊಳಗೆ ಕೂಳಕಟ್ಟಿ ಕೂದಲನರಸುವರೆ?
  ಇಂಥ ಡಂಬಕರ ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗಮದೇವರು ಮೆಚ್ಚರಯ್ಯಾ." (#1152)
  holeya woman and holeya man
  when bathe in dirt
  pollution didn't go, kula didn't go.

does one look for hair in the food packed in *kambali*[34]?
Kudalasangama deva will not like such ostentatious persons.

- **"ಜಾತಿಯಲ್ಲದ ಜಾತಿಯ ಕೂಡಿ**
  ಅದರ ಪರಿಯಂತೆ, ಸಂಗವಲ್ಲದ ಸಂಗವ ಮಾಡಿದಡೆ ಭಂಗತಪ್ಪದು, ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗಮದೇವಾ."
  (#1284)
  if one commixes with non-jati jatis, and make unworthy relations,
  destruction/disaster will not miss him/her, Kudalasangama deva.

The vachanas of *context 1* are simply saying that there is no kula among sharanas. However, scholars infer the following claim from these vachanas: to become a sharana one has to give up casteism or sharanas should not practice casteism. For instance, consider Chidananda Murthy's reading of Sidda-rameshwara's vachanas. Siddarameshwara, according to him, says that even if a Lingayat person "is a shudra ('chaturvarni'), he is beyond the four varnas, or he is one who will not accept the hierarchy preached by the four varnas". This line of argument inevitably leads him to conclude that, "among the four varnas, whether a Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra, one who does not accept its hierarchies is a Virasaiva. … [T]he consciousness of varna system has been inherited traditionally; vachana-composers refer to it in their vachanas. Jatis were the reality of that period" (Chidananda Murthy 1985: 69-70). This argument presumes that the caste system pre-exists the vachana movement.

My contention is simply this: to read the vachanas of *context 1* as anti-caste vachanas, one has to make several additional empirical assumptions. We will return to this point in the next subsection. The vachanas of *context 2* seem to be saying that all those who follow Lord Shiva belong to 'good kula', or they should be treated like the one born in a 'good kula'. Whatever that may mean, one can safely say that it is not talking about the problem of casteism. However, an indication of the new status of the people who 'converted to Lingayat*ism*' is found in these kinds of vachanas. This is how

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[34] *Kambali* is a rug made from the sheep's hair.

the Lingayat movement is supposed to have fought against caste hierarchy, by providing an equal or better status to all those who embrace it. But, such a reading is possible only if one has sources other than the vachanas to enable one to understand what the movement had offered to the new converts. For, the vachanas say nothing explicitly about the issue.

Two terms that occur in Basava's vachanas, jati-bheda ('caste differentiation') and kilu-jati ('inferior caste') may tempt us to grant a certain self-explanatory power to the vachanas in the matter of casteism. The problem, however, is that these two words appear *only* in two vachanas of Basava: #142 and #418. Furthermore, the context in which these words are used seems to be saying that all those people who do not believe in linga are kilu-jati: "entahavanadadenu, linga muttadavane kilu-jati" (#142). Nor is vachana #418 is using the term to say anything about casteism: "ajāta has no kula, jāti bheda and sūtaka". If, the term 'ajāta' means 'a lower caste person' as Chidananda Murthy reads it (1985: 126), vachana #418 should be saying that 'there is no caste to a lower caste person'. One has to further read this sentence as saying 'that (some) people are not part of the caste hierarchy'. This assertion should then be interpreted as saying some castes are not even considered worthy of representation in the caste hierarchy. Only then can Chidananda Murthy quote this vachana in justification of his claim that "every vachana poet has spoken up against the notion of pollution" (1985: 133). However, the number of assumptions and unfounded inferences that have gone into making this reading of the vachana plausible are noticeably high. As an example, consider the meaning 'a lower caste person' accorded to the word *ajata* by Chidananda Murthy. According to standard Kannada dictionaries and commentaries on Indian philosophy, the word *ajata* means 'not created', 'not caused', Shiva or Sharana.[35] If we read the va-

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[35] See the Kannada-Kannada dictionary *Kasturi Kosha*, ed. J.A. Kavali (first pub. 1957).

chana with one of these meanings in mind, the claim "*ajata* has no kula", simply means that a Lingayat person (a Sharana) or Lord Shiva has no kula. Or, to get a little more philosophical, this sentence can also mean, 'one who is not born has no kula'. These translations not only make more sense but also make far fewer assumptions than the translation that Chidananda Murthy suggests. Besides, it is not clear where Chidananda Murthy draws this translation of the word *ajata* from, which diverges completely from its standard translations.

This brings us to the vachanas of contexts 3 and 4. Modern vachana scholars either gloss over these vachanas or, as is usually the case, they simply misread them. Read carefully, these vachanas seem to be saying that only Lingayats are good people, and by not believing in linga/Kudalasangama one becomes a Holeya or Shudra. How could one claim that the insistence on following linga contributed to the annihilation of caste? M.M. Kalburgi writes that the worship of (*ishta*) linga did away with the varna distinction (2001: 186). He goes on to quote a similar vachana (without mentioning the vachana-composer) in support of his claim, which says that it is not *aachara* (good practice) to eat food, whatever the food might be, without first offering it to linga (Kalburgi 2001: 187). If we grant this reading, we have to accept as well that the vachanas were perhaps highly 'casteist', unless it is conclusively explained what being a sharana or following a linga means. Why, otherwise, should followers of linga be 'good'? What makes a person who does not follow linga 'bad'? Did a social movement that had set out to do away with an oppressive caste hierarchy in practice enforce another system of hierarchy? How is a stratification based on the beliefs of people (belief

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"When the word [ajata] is used as a prefix in vedantic creation theories, it indicates a philosophical or experiential position that the world was never 'created'. The classic formulation of this position can be found in Gaudapada's *Mandukya Upanishad Karika*, chapter two, verse thirty-two." http://sri-ramana-maharshi.blogspot.com/2008/08/ajata.html (accessed May 11, 2009).

in linga/Shiva) judged better than a stratification based on occupation or birth (if one sees castes as occupation based distinctions)?[36]

This shows that modern readings of the vachanas that see them as caste critiques, gloss over the second pattern of the vachanas, which proclaim that 'those who believe in linga are *kulajas* or they should be treated like kulajas'. If we were to agree with the standard reading that the vachana-composers were busy fighting against casteism then by the same logic they were also establishing a new hierarchy, where the linga believers held a higher status. In other words, they were only replacing one hierarchy with another one. This makes the vachanas seem self-contradictory as they seem to be both criticising and asserting social hierarchy. This much is clear from the foregoing discussion; modern vachana scholarship entirely fails to explain such assertions, which abound in the vachanas.

Let us conclude this section with the following observations. To reiterate, in order to read the vachanas of *context 1* as anti-caste vachanas, one has to make several empirical assumptions to their analysis. One such assumption is the existence of an untoward and morally corrupt social system in India. When one defines the 'vachana movement' as a (partially successful) indigenous movement against social evils like the caste system, one assumes that Indian society is infested with the evil of casteism and it is desirable to rid India of this evil. Further, the presence of casteism in society is also a sign of its moral degradation, which may find expression in various different ways. Persecution of women or poor people are but two of these ways. Therefore, the standard story prevalent amongst academics always portrays the vachana movement as a

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[36] One may contest the logic of my argument here. Surely, it is characteristic of human societies and of human 'ideologies' to seek to do away with one oppressive hierarchy while establishing another at the same time. Are not Soviet Russia and communism instances of it? Even if this is true, I want to know if modern vachana scholars are aware of the fact that their arguments actually cast the Lingayat movement itself as casteist. My own hunch, which I do not develop here, is that this contradiction is a result of viewing the vachana tradition as a social movement, which, I think, it was not.

colossal fight against all kinds of evils in society. If so, no wonder modern vachana scholars have found something said in the vachanas against every conceivable 'immoral' practice human beings have known. Of the two basic assumptions that underwrite such views – Indian society is morally degraded to the core and the Vachanas are documents that reveal this fact and the fact that vachana-composers fought against moral corruption in society – the latter one supports the former. One can make the first claim because the vachanas as texts are intelligible enough to us today. I have shown in the forgoing statistical discussion that this assumption is ungrounded. This assumption however plays a role of uniting contradictory views into one unit, which we will discuss in detail in the next chapter.

Epistemic Nature of Claims about Vachanas' Anti-Casteism

If the argument so far has succeeded in showing that the dominant reading of the vachanas is not supported by the vachana texts themselves, it raises an interesting philosophical problem. What is the epistemic worth (or truth-value) of the statements of vachana theories that seem to talk about the world but fail to make any point? Are they false statements? Let us take an example of a statement like, 'Basava's vachanas express his anti-caste-system philosophy.' If our argument so far has proved (or if we assume for the sake of argument) that the vachanas do not talk about casteism, then technically the above statement about Basava's vachanas is false. Would the persons making this statement then be lying? They would be lying if, when they made the statement, they were aware that the vachanas did not talk about casteism. Considering this the actual case would raise a problem. Why have so many people lied for well over a century now? Attributing bad faith is an easy but also a cognitively uninteresting an-

swer here. Moreover, scholars who have read vachanas as anti-caste literature have explicitly claimed that they want to *understand* the vachanas. Therefore, one has to make certain additional assumptions, whether disputable or not, to the foregoing, if one wishes to establish whether these scholars are acting in good or bad faith. We will give up this uninteresting enterprise. It is not a conscious attempt, then, to misrepresent the fact, which one is aware of (i.e., a lie). There are two other possibilities besides lying in bad faith: (i) They do not know it is false and think it is true. (ii) They disregard the veracity of the statement. As Harry G. Frankfurt would say, such descriptions are something that their authors are merely making up, concocting them out of whole cloth; or, if they got it from somebody else, they are repeating it quite mindlessly and without any regard for how things really are. They are not even concerned whether their statements are correct (Frankfurt 2005: 30).[37]

The point (ii) runs into the same problem as the consideration that it might be a lie. So, this too is uninteresting. I am more inclined to argue the first point, albeit in combination with some other characteristics of the latter. It is true, more often than not, that they do not know it is false, and think it is true. However, this is what this dissertation has to account for, even when proved problematic or false, scholars continue to defend their readings of the vachanas. This has also caused the proliferation of such readings. Hence, our answer needs also to go into the depth of the sources of proliferation of such 'false' statements. It also has to answer why scholars consider false statements to be true.

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[37] Frankfurt further remarks: such a scholar's "statement is unconnected to a concern with truth: she is not concerned with the truth-value of what she says. That is why she cannot be regarded as lying; for she does not presume that she knows the truth, and therefore she cannot be deliberately promulgating a proposition that she presumes to be false: Her statement is grounded neither in a belief that it is true nor, as a lie must be, in a belief that it is not true. It is just this lack of connection to a concern with truth—this indifference to how things really are—that I regard as of the essence of bullshit" (Frankfurt 2005: 33-34).

Before we take up this huge question, here is another related problem. More than the presence of contradictory claims about the vachanas, what is more puzzling is that modern scholars render this logical inconsistency into a strength or an inevitable property of the vachana tradition. Rahamath Tarikere's aforementioned article is an example. According to him, Basava did not produce a consistent philosophy, but lived a life of an activist, fighting and responding to different issues at different times in a way that suited the occasion. Accordingly, not looking for a consistent philosophy in Basava's vachanas – which is akin to treating the vachanas as inconsistent – is the right way of understanding him. This will, I suggest, do an injustice to Basava. In a sense, this also means that anyone can render anything as an analysis of the vachanas, by merely arguing that it corresponds to some concern of a vachana-composer under consideration. What gives this kind of extreme flexibility to these theories? Let us begin by taking note of the fact that, if the multiple arguments about the vachanas were to be simultaneously true, then the question about their flexibility would not arise. Only because they co-exist despite being logically contradictory, does this question surface. One way of solving this problem should then be to search for the condition under which all contradictory arguments can be simultaneously true or at least appear to be true.

Here is one such possibility: if all the minor readings (call them r_1, r_2, r_n) are subordinated to a dominant reading (R), whose truth has been assumed, one may grant this 'flexibility' of interpretation. The truth of the r_1, r_2, r_n would then be grounded in the truth of R. In this case, r_1, r_2, r_n suffer attacks and modifications but the truth of R always remains unquestioned. This raises yet another question: What makes R or the truth of R unquestionable? Let us apply this situation to the question of the vachanas. More concretely, the flexibility of the modern vachana theories might be because the multiple readings of the vachanas are subordinated to one dominant belief or idea.

What is that belief/idea? I submit it is the idea that the vachanas are an anti-caste-system poetry. This is the topic for the next chapter. In what follows in this chapter, we will closely analyse modern vachana theories.

III. Casteism and Brahmans: Object Level Theories of Modern Vachana Scholars

The view that the vachanas take an anti-caste stance and criticise Brahmans is so dominant and hegemonic in modern times that scholars have rarely laboured to justify it. The audacity with which this argument is presented sometimes itself casts doubt on its probability. Excerpts from two major scholars will give us a fair idea of this scenario. First, Kalburgi's statement that sweeps across the length and breadth of Indian culture: "India is a land of a *culture of discriminations* (*bedha samskruti*) – class discrimination, varna discrimination, and gender discrimination. In a society infested with a culture of discrimination only experiments of spiritual welfare can take place, and not social welfare." But, he continues, vachana-composers not only emerged and survived in such a society, but they successfully undertook both kinds of welfare activities (Kalburgi 2001: 21 emphasis added). Second, a remark from a reputed Kannada sociologist Hiremallur K. Ishwaran, according to whom,

> intentions of the vachanas were three fold: (1) social change, (2) establishment of practice and philosophy, and (3) spiritual development. Of these three, social change was important for the Sharanas. Their aim was turning the hierarchy-ridden society towards equality (Ishwaran 1997: 118).

How will these scholars justify such drastic statements that make claims about the history of more than two thousand years and the geographical space that crosses well beyond contemporary political boundaries of South Asia? In the context of this question, it is worth noting the circumstance in which Kalburgi makes the aforemen-

tioned claims. His claims appear in his "Prastavane" (introduction) to *Basavan-nanavara Vachana Samputa*, the first of the fourteen volumes of the vachanas published by the state government of Karnataka (India) in 1993. These fourteen volumes contains nearly all the vachanas available. Until the publication of this mammoth collection, vachanas were not available in one single publication or even in a few archives. They were scattered across South India in private collections of people and *matha*s and small collections of the vachanas brought out by minor or unknown publishers. That means claims about the vachanas' anti-caste stance were made without even reading all the vachanas available. Even after its publication, no one seems to have attempted to go back to the vachanas and verify the sort of all-encompassing statements made about them throughout the 20th century; a task that this dissertation undertakes. Keeping this issue in mind let us see in detail the arguments that modern vachana scholars proffer.

Vachanas on Casteism

Introducing the vachanas and the philosophy of Basava's vachanas to the English-speaking world, Theodore and Hakari write, "[a]fter the Aryans brought their religion into India … [it] became alive with movements of dissent, protest and revolt against the orthodoxy of this [Aryan's] religion. Mahavir and Gautama were the spearheads of such movements. … Caste based on the doctrine of *Karma* became the bone of contention" (Theodore and Hakari 1965: 4). Casteism, as they explain, is an embodiment of all that is negative in Indian culture and the vachana movement led by Basava stands for the opposite. This stance is typical of modern Lingayat scholarship.

The caste system, as per the textbook histories, is an essential component of the Aryan religion (Hinduism). *Conceptually*, the caste system is a social hierarchy, based

on one's birth and occupation. That is, people of certain castes are deemed lower in so-

cial status and are subjected to exploitation and humiliation. *Empirically*, this system

was sustained by a priestly class (Brahmans), who collaborated with the ruling class.

Caste hierarchy divides society into lower and upper castes, or pure and impure castes,

and those who find themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy have to submit to all

kinds of exploitation. Because the caste system has both these empirical and conceptual

angle to it, the exploitation also takes both cognitive (i.e., psychological or 'epistemic')

and physical forms. The lower castes, thus, not only have to undergo a psychological

humiliation but also several kinds of empirical exploitation – namely, economic, politi-

cal, physical exploitations. The fight against such a monstrous caste system began with

Mahavir and Gautama and continues to this day. If such is the nature of the caste sys-

tem – that it has survived all such fights for over more than two millennia – what would

be the best way of fighting it? The fight should at least attempt a holistic critique of the

caste system; that is, it should attack every aspect of the system.

This is what the vachana-composers are supposed to have done. Like a few

people before them, they criticized the caste system as they found it immoral and op-

pressive. But, what makes their fight unique is that they not only attacked casteist prac-

tices, but also the very basis of these practices – the cultural beliefs and principles.

They not only preached a philosophy of caste equality but also tried to implement them

in practice. So the importance and uniqueness of the vachana movement lies in the fact

that it was (or was at least an attempt at) a reform of practices and a reform of ideas.

"Our saints … applied the teachings of the philosophy to the practical affairs of the

world and refused to make difference between man and man, only on the ground of

caste or profession or birth" (Pawate 1969: 13). Let us take note of some important as-

pects of their fight against the caste system as understood and explained by modern Lingayat scholars.

The caste system, it is said, is closely tied up with occupations. Vachana-composers chose to attack this aspect of the caste system by attacking both its philosophical and practical facets. Therefore, vachana scholars point out that the vachana movement in general and Basava in particular, "clearly says that jatis are occupation based distinctions; they do not come by birth" (Dande 2001: 194). Underpinning this argument is the important fact that a majority of vachana-composers belong to the 'lower castes' of today. Furthermore, a majority of them wrote vachanas using their occupational words and identify themselves by their occupations.[38]

The following few lines, taken from a longish vachana of Basava (#590), has often been cited to highlight the views of vachana-composers concerning the relations between the caste system and occupations.

> [One became] a blacksmith by heating, a washerman by beating
> A weaver by laying the warp, a Brahman by reading the Vedas.
> Is anybody in the world delivered through the ear?
> This is the reason, O Kudalasangama deva, a *kulaja* is one who has realised *linga-sthala*.[39]

According to the dominant and contemporary interpretations of these lines, one becomes a Brahman or blacksmith only by profession and not by birth. And by preaching

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[38] Here are two random examples of vachana-composers who identify themselves by their occupations. Their vachanas also use terms and analogies from their respective occupations. Ambigara Chowdaiah**:** Ambiga refers to a boat operator. The *kayaka* of Chowdaiah, supposedly, was to ferry people across the river. Okkaliga Muddanna**:** *Okkalu* means threshing. Muddanna, a native of Jolada Hala, was a farmer.

[39] Here is the original Kannada text:
"ಕಾಸಿ ಕಮ್ಮರನಾದ, ಬೀಸಿ ಮಡಿವಾಳನಾದ ಹಾಸನಿಕ್ಕಿ ಸಾಲಿಗನಾದ, ವೇದವನೋದಿ ಹಾರುವನಾದ
ಕರ್ಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಜನಿಸಿದರುಂಟೆ ಜಗದೊಳಗೆ? ಇದು ಕಾರಣ ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗಮದೇವಾ ಲಿಂಗಸ್ಥಲವನರಿದವನೆ ಕುಲಜನು."

I have used the translation of Menezes and Angadi (Deveerappa 1967: 193), with a few changes. Below is their original translation:
> You are a blacksmith if you heat, a washerman if you beat
> A weaver, if you lay the warp
> A Brahmin, if you read the books
> Is anybody in the world delivered through the ear
> This is the reason, O Kudala-sangama-deva,
> A kulaja is one who has realized linga-sthala.

this philosophical insight, the Virashaiva faith taught the dignity of labour and refused to look down upon people merely on account of their profession (Pawate 1930: 13). Basavaraj Kalgudi argues, "through this vachana Basavanna tried to suggest that there is no link between an occupation and caste … the line 'is there anybody in the world delivered through the ear' talks about the innate equality of human beings" (Kalgudi 1997: 221). According to Kalburgi, these lines of the vachana show that the vachana-composers denied the hierarchy based on occupations (Kalburgi 2004: 160). Chidan-anda Murthy cites this vachana in support of his argument that the vachanas take an anti-caste stance (Chidananda Murthy 2004b: 727).

The works of R.N. Nandi, a well-known Marxist historian, which Chenni (2004) recommends as conceptually the most sound understanding of the Lingayat movement, provide a much more complex and a considerably more elaborate argument in favour of this aspect of the movement (Nandi 1975; 1986; and a Kannada trans. in Nugadoni 2004). Nandi (1986) takes the classical route of explaining how the caste sys-tem emerged in the ancient India. In keeping with his Marxist/leftist leanings, he postu-lates a market economy centred development of the caste system. In short, he argues that one cannot explain the emergence of anti-caste movements like the Lingayat movement without explaining the impact of the changing economy on the priestly class (which includes Brahmans and Buddhists and Jaina monks) and their control over the economy. In the pre-Gupta (*c*. 600 BCE – 300 CE) form of the "city-based market econ-omy", all groups of priestly class were associated either with the ruling (Kshatriya) or with business (Vaisya) communities. The socio-economic pattern gradually began to change during the Gupta period (4th and 5th centuries), having a telling impact on this city-priest-economy confederation. A localised exchange economy began to replace long distance trade and the big Indian cities started disintegrating. These shifts forced

the priestly class to migrate towards the southern regions of India, in search of new sources of income.

A new economic system came into existence in the new places where the immigrant priestly class made their habitation, for two important reasons. In the earlier city-based economic system, the clients of the priests (the rich and educated) had a dominant role in the relationship between the two. Now, in the new economic systems, small and emerging local rulers formed the new clientele of the priests. Therefore, the hierarchy of relationships now turned in favour of the priests. This resulted in the emergence of temple complexes associated with the bhakti cults and monastic establishments patronised by the political authorities because they provided the small and nascent kingdoms with religious legitimacy. The priestly class' desire for wealth coupled with their increasing power over the ruling class resulted in the exploitation of the poor peasants through control of agricultural lands (Nandi 1986: 156). Peasant rebellions against this new despotic system were quelled strategically by popularising the notion of 'bhakti', which gave an ideological and conceptual basis for the idea that service to priests (guru) and kings was as meritorious as worshipping God.

A similar development took place in southern India, in the early part of the second millennium. In today's North Karnataka region, local markets called *sante* developed into new economic centres, facilitating the export of artisan and merchant's products to places like China, the Middle East and later to Europe. One needs to understand the Lingayat tradition as an egalitarian movement based on the increased connection of producers with the new urban centres. This movement however started degenerating once the rich merchants and Vedic Smarta Brahmans joined the movement, and soon gained a privileged position in the movement based on their superior social status. Jha summarises Nandi's point very succinctly in his presidential address to the 66th History

Congress, at Shantiniketan: "smartas, who joined the Virasaiva movement in large numbers, retained their superiority, and undermined its fraternalism and paved the way for the growth of the Brahmanical caste system among its followers. Not surprisingly, the Virasaivas, in the later phase of their movement, preached loyalty to the varnash-ramadharma, as is evident from the works of Bhimakavi and Sripati Pandita (both of the fourteenth century). The latter even held that only the performance of caste duties and Vedic rites could purify a person and prepare him for final liberation" (Jha 2006: 26, n.136).

Commenting on Nandi's views, Rajendra Chenni argues that lower castes were able to participate in the movement because it took an egalitarian view with regard to occupation. "The vachana movement freed kula-occupations from the hands of social hierarchy and developed a labour-culture that would uphold it." He further asserts, "we can see this in the vachanas of none other than Basavanna himself" (Chenni 2004: 34).[40] Chenni however does not mention which vachana he has in mind.

This argument, as is evident in R.N. Nandi's work, retains the 'orientalist' notion of a golden past of India (when there was no caste system), its corruption by (Brahman) priests and the unsuccessful attempts to reform it (by the movements like bhakti traditions). The problem with this argument is not just that it borrows its arguments from the orientalist account of Indian culture, but rather that this account has no historical basis. Nandi conveniently assumes the veracity of this account, without however taking the trouble to prove it.[41] George Berkemer, in a review of Nandi's work, notes that even though his argument "relies rather heavily on economic arguments for explaining the newly emerging social order, Nandi never explicitly states, what factors could have caused the downfall of classical society, nor does he attempt to approach the

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[40] O.L. Nagabhushana Swamy expresses a similar opinion in (1997: 4-5).
[41] Of course, I am also not taking the trouble to prove the contrary. I am simply stating that this argument 'has no basis'.

problem analytically" (Berkemer 1989: 348). One can examine many important aspects of Nandi's argument. Let me point out briefly one important problem in his arguments, which is pertinent to arguments of the chapter. Even though he offers an economy-based view of Indian history, halfway through his explanation he conveniently slips into the European version of Indian history: the domination of Brahmans and the resultant degeneration of Indian culture. Like other modern vachana scholars, he thinks that the Lingayat tradition was a revolutionary movement in the beginning but that it soon degenerated: "The large number of *smārtas* who joined the [Lingayat] movement could neither shed their notions of superiority nor share their privileged position with non-brāhmana members of the sect. Notwithstanding, therefore, the professions of fraternal equality by the *vachana* composers the majority of the Vīraśaiva works seem to preach loyalty to the brāhmanical caste order" (Nandi 1975: 41). If this are what Nandi's views about Indian past, Chenni's (2004) assertion that they are conceptually the most sound understanding of the Lingayat movement does not hold good. Nandi's arguments are the same old arguments about corrupt Brahmanism and their negative influence on Indian culture. Therefore, my criticism of modern Lingayat scholarship, which I offer in this and other chapters, is equally applicable to Nandi's arguments.

Most of the arguments in modern vachana scholarship, in the absence of verifiable and adequate historical material, take the form of historico-biographical claims and assumptions about the anti-caste activism of vachana-composers. Every action of a vachana-composer is read as a statement against casteism. That is to say, in order to understand the vachanas, modern vachana scholars resort to historico-biographical details about their life. However, 'evidence' in favour of these claims, as discussed earlier, comes from 'literary' works. This means, as claimed by many vachana scholars, the

historico-biographical claims in question depend, in turn, on our interpretations of the vachanas, among other 'literary' writings.

It is generally argued that vachana-composers like Basava not only criticised the caste system but also embodied anti-caste views in their own lives. They waged a philosophical attack on the caste system and also reformed life ethics in an attempt to institute harmonious co-existence in society, by inculcating new practices that incorporated the radical new ideas they had preached. Among the various new practices that the Lingayat tradition developed, as an alternative "to the vaidik practices", the "ashtaavarana" practice was important (Kalgudi 1997: 47). Such reforms gave an access to women and dalits to the movement. Especially, "the introduction of the use of *Bhakti marga*, purity of soul and action, and use of vernacular languages, we see that the entry of women into the field of religion became easier" (Mullatti 1989: 6).

A noteworthy achievement of the tradition was an *inter-caste marriage*. Basava not only proposed a new way of understanding inter-caste marriage, but also went on to organise an inter-caste marriage between the son of Haralayya, an untouchable, and the daughter of Madhuvayya, a Brahman. King Bijjala did not approve of the marriage. He summoned both Haralayya and Madhuvayya and had them blinded or executed without any trial. This was "not a simple matter between the king and the two accused", asserts Hardekar Manjappa. Such an inter-caste marriage was unheard of in the whole of Karnataka (Manjappa 1966: 73). What inspired Basava to hold an inter-caste marriage? Scholars note different motivations behind the organisation of the marriage. Here is Chidananda Murthy's opinion:

> Basavanna and the Sharanas of his time had not only realised that the notion of hierarchy among the castes can be eradicated through uninterrupted inter-caste marriages, but they also went ahead to organise one such. … The mindset that worked behind this move was not only highly progressive, but also revolutionary (Chidananda Murthy 2004a: 10).

According to Kalburgi, the marriage should however be seen as inspired by Basava's 'new economic policy' rather than purely as an 'anti-caste move'. He writes, Basava had realised long before what Marx asserted centuries later: namely, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Kalburgi 1998: 67). Hence, he organised a marriage between classes, in order to break through its strong barriers. One may wonder why marriage or alliance between classes would be an expression of class struggle. On the contrary, they are really alliances! Thus, they are better character-ised as class *collaboration*. The only way one can make sense of this contention is to believe that classes were divided strongly like castes and an alliance between classes, like an alliance between the castes, would work towards building bonds between classes which were absent in society. Be that as it may. The implication of Kalburgi's claim is that vachana-composers, such as Basava, had already anticipated the emer-gence of the Marxist as well as the feminist movement. If so, all that one can say is that India had its own 'modernity' and enlightenment and had them much before even Europe could dream of.

An anti-temple movement is another important aspect attributed to the vachana movement. Vachana-composers fought for a "freedom from temples" (Omvedt 2008: 49), because, temples in the 12th century were a concentration of "wealth, luxury, he-gemony and the domination of priests" (Chidananda Murthy 2004a: 49). That made them a "centre of exploitation. … The temple had become the sovereign power, con-trolling almost everything, from priests to prostitutes, gifts receiving to money lending. ... Rich people were building temples, as a way of spending their money earned through iniquitous ways. … Poor people were unable to build temples. Therefore, Basavanna stood for them, and said 'I am a poor, what can I do'" (Kalburgi 1998: 282-283).

Here too, the fight against temple domination had two dimensions: practical and philosophical. The vachanas, such as Basava (# 821) heralded a new philosophy of worshipping god without going to a temple.[42] On the practical side, even to this day, the Lingayats "essentially reject the temple system, instead of going to temples they prefer to receive teachings from a specific *guru*" (Ikegame 2007: 30).

The fight against the caste system also took the form of a wholesale conversion from lower castes into the newly formed 'Lingayat caste'. "In a society which was suffocating in the clench of the varna system, only dalit community seems to have benefited much from the [vachana] movement." For, people from "holeyas to vaishyas accepted this new faith [Lingayat faith] and got rid of their 'lower' status" (Shetter 1977: 35). Conversion to Hinduism, it is commonly held, is impossible since the entry into the caste system is based on one's birth. The Lingayat movement, as a contrast, built a social structure, which was not "based on membership by birth alone, but by conversion, training, and discipline" (Chekki 1997: 62). The Lingayat movement thus "attracted converts from all castes including Harijans, but over the centuries it became a congeries of small, endogamous *jatis*" (Kumar 2001: 161). The easy entry into the Lingayat sect was possible because, the "Virasaiva saints – unlike exponents of other kinds of Hinduism … – do not believe that religion is something one is born with or into. … With such a belief, there is no place for conversion in Hinduism…. Bhakti religions proselytize, unlike classical Hinduism" (Ramanujan 1973: 27).[43]

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[42] The temples, according to dominant versions of Indian history, have played a very important negative socio-economic role in the past in India. For a summary of this dominant view, see (Veluthat 2009: 61-82).

[43] For a detailed summary of arguments about Lingayat conversions, see (Chidananda Murthy 1985: 81-86).

Vachanas on Brahmanical Oppression

According to theories of casteism, caste oppression is affiliated to Brahman domination.[44]

> For, to be born a non-Brahmin was to be sentenced to a lifetime of
> bondage to ascriptive or hereditary barriers, insults and humiliations. It
> was against these blatant evils that Basaveshwara and many other Vira-
> saivas reacted vehemently. The Virasaiva movement protested, chal-
> lenged and waged a relentless crusade against the social evils perpe-
> trated by the Brahmins. In its early years, the movement was involved in
> militant and aggressive encounters with the Brahmins. It challenged not
> only the legality of existing norms and values in which all non-
> Brahmins were encased but also the legitimacy of these was challenged
> (Bali 1979: 238).

Vachana-composers had understood the impenetrable nature of the caste system.
"Therefore, rather than holding to the implausible ideal of eradicating the whole sys-
tem, they worked towards reducing the inequality between different castes. … As they
found out soon, an easy way to break up a system is to break up its symbols. Brahman
was the symbol of the caste system. Vachana-composers therefore undertook various
methods to break up the caste system" (Chidananda Murthy 2004a: 233). Chidananda
Murthy writes extensively in defence of the claim that the vachanas criticise Brahmans.
Rather exhaustive set of arguments ranged at various levels have fallen into the ar-
moury of modern vachana scholars in continuation of the defence. Here is a summary
of those arguments extracted from (Chidananda Murthy 2004a: 234-240):

a) Vachana-composers denied the famous dictum that a Brahman is the guru of all
the varnas.[45]

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[44] Halakatti, the first prominent 20th century vachana scholar, began his career with the observation that
the vachanas, as they have been generally considered, are not Brahman-bashing literature: "The western
scholars who did not understand Lingayat *mata-tatva* [principles?] gave birth to this misconception. And
those indigenous Brahmans and Lingayats who did not understand Lingayat dharma followed the west-
ern intellectuals" (Halakatti 1999: 18).
[45] In evidence, Chidananda Murthy cites Basava's vachana (#600), which quotes the Sanskrit saying
"varnanam brhamano guruh" ("brahman is the guru in a varna") and then says that "varnanam guruh" is
Kudalasanga.

b) They preached the equality of the Brahmans and the untouchables.

c) They proclaimed that human beings are all equal and that there is no space for a distinction such as caste distinction amongst them.

d) They repeatedly proclaimed that the status of a Holeya who becomes a bhakta is higher than the status of a Brahman.[46]

e) In traditional Lingayat writings, Lord Shiva comes to the house of lower caste vachana-composers, such as Madara Channayya, to dine with them. Through such portrayals, vachana-composers conveyed a sense that god himself has demonstrated the greatness of Holeya bhaktas.

f) Vachana-composers repeatedly showed the different meanings attached to the term Brahman. They thus helped people shed the wrong conception that the term Brahman only refers to a (superior) caste. Chidananda Murthy cites the example of Urilinga Peddi's vachanas, which often try to demonstrate that 'Brahman' is not simply a term that indicates castes.

g) Furthermore, the vachanas assert that people do not become holeyas or Brahmans by birth. A wicked person is a holeya and a good person is the one who belongs to a good caste.

It is significant that whenever the sources of these arguments are mentioned, they are some or other well-known vachana. When the sources are not explicitly mentioned, I suggest that it means that such an argument is part of the common parlance, which does not require to be accounted for.

Let me conclude this section with the following observation. Modern vachana scholars generally end their positive description of the Lingayat tradition with this observation. A movement that supposedly fought against the caste system, they say, unfortunately became a caste itself. In the words of Pollock, "[a]t the start, the social and political project of the movement was self-consciously anti-Brahman and anticaste, and, more broadly speaking, counterhegemonic and even antinomic; their leader, Basava (1132-86), may have inspired or even led an insurrection against the regional overlord in the name of low-castes and untouchables" (Pollock 2006: 433). According to Russell and Lal, this is a normal, though regrettable, development that finally every social movement has to face. In their own words, even though, the "founder of the [Lingayat] sect thus took as his fundamental tenet the abolition of caste, but, as is usual

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[46] The Vachanas are replete with this claim or its variants. For an example from Basava's vachanas, see the appendix II. d.

in the history of similar movements, the ultimate result has been that the Lingāyats have themselves become a caste" (Russell and Lal 1916: 244).

Many reasons are attributed to this failure, from the incapacity of the people associated with the movement, the reinforced hold of traditional Hinduism on the Lingayats in the post-Basava era, to the faulty grounds on which the movement was built (Chekki 1997: 59; Das 2005: 165),[47] or the institutionalisation of the Lingayat religion (Bali 1979: 257). As Rudolf Heredia avers, Lingayat leaders of Basava's period, including Basava himself, built their success on the "the initial advantage of mobilising a group on the basis of caste." This initial advantage, however, boomeranged subsequently. The caste based mobilisation "eventually become a constraint in using such caste consciousness against the caste system itself." This has been a problem with all reform movements, says Heredia. "Reform movements have often been absorbed, and reformist sects in Hinduism, like the Lingayats, have often ended up as other castes" (2000: 44).

Rowena Robinson gives some sociological reasons for the failure of the movement to live up to its own ideals. "After the sixteenth century, the subcastes which developed within the Lingayat fold showed a tendency to become sub-castes. These developments did not occur all of a sudden; there were many transitional developments … [and] the following 'lapses' occurred: (a) endogamous ties were generally retained by the sub-castes; (b) in spite of its 'monistic' leanings, the Lingayats retained or developed some pantheistic beliefs and practices; and (c) the sub-castes became hypersensitive about their status." Nevertheless, Robinson moves on, "there are important differences within the Lingayat fold. There is a pervasive positive feeling among Lingayats about the sanctity of work. … [A] strong puritanic ethic which has given rise to

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[47] "Despite the radicalism of Basava, all his followers did not obey the prescriptions made by him after his death. Even during his lifetime fissures had appeared within the lingayats and Virasaivism, unfortunately slowly became a past of institutional religion" (Das 2005: 165).

a large entrepreneurial class among Lingayats. … [A] very considerable relaxation regarding the ritual pollutions …, a total absence of the sacrificial cult … [and] a considerable simplification of rites" in the Lingayat community. Further, Robinson continues, there is a great unity in the Lingayat community, unlike "the orthodox Hindus" who are divided into "Dwija and the Shudra" (Robinson 2004: 144).

To some, the failure of the Lingayat tradition to hold on to its founding principles is a natural course that all 'religious movements' take. Das approvingly cites Max Weber's comments on this issue: "religious movements of expressly anti-Brahmanical and anti-caste character that is, contrary to one of the fundamentals of Hinduism, have been in all essentials returned to caste order." Then he adds, the "Lingayat [tradition] is not an exception" (Das 2005: 165).[48]

IV. Three Readings of the Vachanas

If the arguments about the vachanas come neither from the vachanas nor from the other documents of the time, where do they come from? How do modern scholars glean their readings from the vachanas? With these questions, in this final section, let us go through some samples of typical vachana analysis done by modern Lingayat scholarship. Selected below are the vachana interpretations by four prominent contemporary scholars: D.R. Nagaraj, Chidananda Murthy, Basavaraj Kalgudi and a European scholar, R. Blake Michael.

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[48] See also David N. Lorenzen's comments in his (2004: 12-13). Lorenzen is here commenting on Weber's claim, which he cites before reflecting on it. "In the course of time the sect can be recognised either as a single caste (sect-caste) or as a caste with subcastes of different social rank." According to Lorenzen, "The only actual historical example Weber gives for this process is the sect of the Lingayats who, he claims, illustrate the gradual development from a socially heterogeneous sect to a 'caste with subcastes'…. In order to support their later versions of this same basic transition from sect to caste, Dumont and Pocock both give the same Lingayats as their principal example Mandelbaum discusses the Jains, Lingayats, and Sikhs in the same context. None of them present a clear example of a single sect gradually developing into a single caste, although the logic of the argument indicates that this should be the simplest and most frequent case."

D.R. Nagaraj

D.R. Nagaraj's posthumously published *Allama Prabhu mattu Shaivapratibhe* (1999)

tells the story of Allama Prabhu, one of the most prominent figures among the 12th cen-

tury vachana-composers, and the Shaiva and *tantric* traditions that he is generally asso-

ciated with. The question about the philosophical stance of the vachanas is a resolved

issue for Nagaraj: "anti-caste philosophy was the fundamental stance of the vachana

movement" and he continues, "Allama was not only aware of it, but he had also ex-

pressed his consent to it" (1999: 183). Chapter six of his book offers practical criticism

of selected vachanas. The very first vachana that Nagaraj takes up is about, as the title

to the section specifies, caste pollution (jāti-sūtaka).

Nagaraj reads Allama's following vachana (#50) as "one of those rare vachanas

where Allama makes a social criticism in a metaphorical way."

> If the one who is superior in kula builds a house in the holageri
> See the way kula is not spoiled
> While his kula members refused to see his face
> Those who had (good) kula joined hands with him
> When he is enquired, upon learning that he has lost his kula,
> See Guheshwara, the way/path has been lost.[49]

"I have chosen this particular vachana for analysis", he says, "as it is one of those rare

pieces where the author tries to explain how exactly the selected vachana is criticising

casteism." According to Nagaraj, this vachana does it by inverting the accepted values

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[49] ಕುಲದಲಧಿಕನು ಹೋಗಿ ಹೊಲೆಗೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮನೆಯ ಕಟ್ಟಿದಡೆ
ಕುಲ ಕೆಡದಿಪ್ಪ ಈ ಪರಿಯ ನೋಡಾ
ಆತನ ಕುಲದವರೆಲ್ಲರು ಮುಖವ ನೋಡಲೊಲ್ಲದಡೆ
ಕುಲವುಳ್ಳವರೆಲ್ಲರೂ ಕೈವಿಡಿದರು
ಕುಲಗೆಟ್ಟವನೆಂದು ತಿಳಿದು ವಿಚಾರಿಸಲು
ಹೊಲೆಗೆಟ್ಟು ಹೋಯಿತ್ತು ಕಾಣಾ ಗುಹೇಶ್ವರಾ.

of society. "For instance, if Brahman is the symbol of superiority, he is a symbol of destruction and sins" in Allama's vachanas, as in this vachana (1999: 182). According to Nagaraj the fourth line of this vachana ("ಕುಲವುಳ್ಳವರೆಲ್ಲರೂ ಕೈವಿಡಿದರು") means: "All *holageri* people become those *who had kula* (kula-ullavaru)."[50] In all, the author devotes a page and a half of analysis to this vachana. And he ends this analysis with the following claim: "without romanticizing and sanctifying the *hole* (pollution), Allama says even *hole* lost its *hole*ness. B Both Brahman*ness* and *hole*ness, according to Allama, are a status of *dvandva* [uncertainty/binary?], and one has to go beyond them" (1999: 183).

A literal reading of the vachana however will not yield this reading. It is not clear how the sentence, "those who had kula joined hands with him" could mean "all *holageri* people become people with kula". Probably therefore, the author asserts, more than once, that the vachana should be read metaphorically: "Allama makes a social criticism in a *metaphorical way*." A metaphor, as we know, is a direct comparison between two seemingly unrelated things, which gives no clues about whether it is making a comparison or just stating a fact. That means one has to read each sentence of this vachana as referring to something that is not obvious at the linguistic level. That is, one has to read the vachana as a whole series of *signs*.

The only point that I want to make here is that the reading ascribed to this vachana is not evident in the text itself. This raises a difficult question: What is the source of this interpretation? If the words like *hole, holageri, kula* and the incident related to it (somebody building a house in a *holageri*) are metaphors, how can one read a social critique in it, and a social critique of what? I will leave these questions unanswered un-

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[50] This phrase kula-ullavaru (those *who have kula*) is still used in various forms in the everyday spoken Kannada, and it means *one who belongs to a good family*, or, in short, *a good person*.

til we develop the apparatuses required to answer them. For now, let us continues with our analysis of vachana interpretations.

Chidananda Murthy and Basavaraj Kalgudi

> One who slays is a Mādiga, one who eats polluted things (*holasu*) is a Holeya
> What is kula, what is his kula[51]
> Only the Sharanas of our Kudalasanga
> Who wish good to all living things are *kulaja*s.[52]

This vachana of Basava (# 591), and more importantly its first line, is perhaps the most cited vachana as *evidence* for the claim that Basava argued against the caste system.[53] Let us analyse how two of our eminent scholars, Chidananda Murthy and Basavaraj Kalgudi, have read this vachana. Chidananda Murthy derives the following argument from it:

> The word Holeya, which denotes a caste, had become an abusive word, by 12th century. [Sharanas argued that] if the word Holeya has to be used as an abusive word, then not only those who live in 'Hola-keri' are holeyas, but also a person who commits a wrong action (such as, scolding one's mother, throwing thorns on the road, killing a Brahman or a cow) should be called a Holeya (Chidananda Murthy 2004a: 232).

Basavaraj Kalgudi too says as much, when he argues that this vachana shows a novel way of explaining the notion of pollution that Basava and the other vachana-composers had developed. The notion of pollution is being considered here at the subjective level ('one who slays is a Madiga') rather than at the level of a caste community (Madiga

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[51] Menezes and Angadi (1978: 193) translate this line as, "Where is the caste here – where?"
[52] Here is Kannada text of the vachana:
ಕೊಲುವನೇ ಮಾದಿಗ ಹೊಲಸು ತಿಂಬವನೇ ಹೊಲೆಯ
ಕುಲವೇನೊ ಅವದಿರ ಕುಲವೇನೊ
ಸಕಲಜೀವಾತ್ಮರಿಗೆ ಲೇಸನೆ ಬಯಸುವ
ನಮ್ಮ ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗನ ಶರಣರೆ ಕುಲಜರು.
[53] Some examples: B. Virupakshappa (1993: 1-2); K.R. Durgadas in (Nugadoni 2004: 44).

caste is lower in status). Instead of admonishing an entire caste community as slayers/Madiga based on their accidental birth in the Madiga caste group, Kalgudi asserts, Basava turns the table here and declares that one becomes a Madiga not because of one's caste community membership but one's unethical actions, like killing. Hence, pollution is now radically turned into something which is transitory and could be obliterated (Kalgudi 1997: 209).

Yet again, I would say, the interpretation of this vachana is not apparent in the text. Such an interpretation can be offered only if one allows for a certain state of affairs as a background assumption. One has to presume that Madiga in Basava's society refers to a 'lower caste', and that a lower caste person is lower in social status. According to our accepted theories of the caste system and Indian culture, somebody becomes a 'Madiga' by birth. Therefore, one who is born in the Madiga caste community is a Madiga. While the term Madiga in the former instance refers to a community, in the latter instance it is a derogatory term. If so, to make the argument that Chidananda Murthy and Kalburgi make, one has to say that there is in some sense an identity relationship between a Madiga and a slayer. According to these modern scholars then Basava is using the word Madiga to refer to a person who is immoral, the one who slays. Basava then says that instead of being a Madiga, one should become a sharana.

The expression "one who slays is a Madiga" and other similar expressions are still commonplace in Kannada, even though they increasingly sound rustic and politically incorrect to our ears. It would be unjust to take such commonplaces as having some deeper implications. Moreover, what seems to be just an abusive epithet is regarded here as a 'representative slogan' of the vachana tradition. It is a matter of commonsense, that an abusive epithet should not be understood literally. Probably, the va-

chana-composers' way of speaking, untouched by political correctness, has led our scholars to read them incorrectly.[54]

There is a contradiction in the way modern scholars interpret the vachanas, that I want discuss here. (If not explained, it may look like a rather neat little linguistic knot that I have tied myself in here.) Analysing the D.R. Nagaraj's interpretation of the vachana (and also in the next chapter) I have tried to show the tendency of modern critics to regard the language of the vachanas as metaphoric. Now, I am disputing the habit of taking some vachanas or rather their parts too literally. The truth is of course that readings of any literature have to be aware of both literal and figurative modes but this is not what we are discussing here. My criticism points out a rather deep-seated problem. Modern vachana critics take the sentences that seem to take an 'anti-caste-system' stance literally and the rest, especially those that seem to diverge from their picture of the vachana movement, metaphorically. Let us continue this discussion, at the risk of diverging from the original discussion about the interpretation of Basava's vachana #591.

Consider the following instances of Menezes and Angadi's translations of Basavanna's vachanas (Channaiah 1967).

i.   "ಎಂಥವನಾದದೇನು, ಲಿಂಗ ಮುಟ್ಟದವನೆ ಕೀಳುಜಾತಿ"[55]
        Whoever he be, without the Linga's touch
        He is a man of base degree (Channaiah 1967: #142, pg. 47).

ii.   "ಜಾತಿಭೇದವಿಲ್ಲ, ಸೂತಕವಿಲ್ಲ"[56]

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[54] Let me show how Kalgudi's reading of the vachana in question is untenable, with the help of a thought experiment. This experiment will provide a contrast case that will help us to determine whether the phenomenon at hand is adequately defined or not. (I am placing this thought experiment in a footnote because it may be seen as anachronistic, which is muddling the 'modern' and the 'early modern'.) Presume that the Prime Minister of India is delivering a speech at the Red Fort in Delhi on Independence Day. In the course of the speech the Prime minister says, with the best of intentions of course, "one who indulges in terrorism is a Muslim" (in accordance with Basava's saying that "One who slays is a Madiga") followed by "patriotic people are Hindus". Would this be acceptable to us? If not, are we not attributing some absurd arguments to Basava?

[55] Transliteration of the Kannada text: "entahanādadenu, linga muttadavane kīlu jāti".

No difference of caste, no taint (#417, pg. 135).

iii.   "ಶ್ವಪಚನಾದದೇನು? ಲಿಂಗಭಕ್ತನೆ ಕುಲಜನು"[57]
What if he be a low-born man
Provided he is
A Linga-bhakta, he is well-born (#656, pg. 217).

iv.   "ಆವಕುಲವಾದದೇನು? ಶಿವಲಿಂಗವಿದ್ದವನೆ ಕುಲಜನು"[58]
What signifies what caste they be?
He who has Shiva Linga is well born. (#717, pg. 237).

If we carefully observe these translations, we can note a discrepancy. Wherever the vachana seems to be talking against 'kula/jati', the term 'kula/jati' are (confidently) translated as *caste*, rendering the vachanas into an unambiguously anti-caste-system literature. Let me explain. The claim "jātibhēdavilla, sūtakavilla" (#418) is translated as "[n]o difference of caste, no taint". However, wherever the vachana seem to be using the term 'kula/jati' to say "anybody who is not a linga-bhakta is a keelu-jati/kula" the phrase "keelu-jati/kula" is translated as "a [man of] base degree". 'Keelu-jati', on the contrary, literally would mean *inferior-caste*. Similarly, in situations where a vachana seems to be saying that a linga-bhakta is a 'kulaja,' the term 'kulaja' is been translated as 'well-born', whereas it could well have been translated as 'good-caste' or 'upper-caste'. And wherever vachanas seems to be saying that "one who is not a bhakta of linga is a lower-caste person", it has been muted completely.[59]

Why is this hesitation or embarrassment to translate some parts of the vachanas literally? Why do these parts look offensive to us? What is interesting is people *unhesitatingly* use such vachanas in day-to-day 'ordinary circumstances'. If we carefully observe, on the contrary, this hesitation can be seen only when these vachanas are used in some specific circumstances. The two such circumstances I have noticed are translation

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[56] Transliteration: "jātibhēdavilla, sūtakavilla".
[57] Transliteration: "shwapachanādadēnu? lingabhaktane kulajanu".
[58] Transliteration: "āvakulavādadēnu? shivalingaviddavane kulajanu".
[59] The discussion here is just indicative of a problem and not its explication. This is not the place to develop this discussion.

and interpretation of vachanas. What happens in these circumstances that people suddenly find the same vachana or certain phrases from it objectionable or opprobrious? Do people experience vachanas differently in these contexts?[60] The suggesting here is not that scholars over hundred years have done this consciously. Somehow, our ways of understanding the vachanas, the frameworks we have accepted have led to a much deeper problem. The discrepancy briefly discussed here is indicative of that problem.

Finally, let me make a quick attempt to examine the vachana under discussion. Modern Kannada critics have hailed the vachana tradition to be one among the finest literary milestones of Kannada literary tradition. If so, from the perspective of modern readings of this vachana, the sentence "One who slays is a Madiga, one who eats holasu is a Holeya", looks quite 'ordinary'. Why are the actions of murdering and eating polluted foods mentioned together? They obviously do not serve the purpose of matching the rhyme of the sentence: koluva – Madiga vs. holasu – Holeya. It would not be an exaggeration if I were to say that modern readings of the vachanas thus render them into average literature, even in terms of literary quality. If the word *holasu* means meat,[61] it solves the problem to some extent. The sentence then means 'one who butch-

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[60] For a useful discussion of problems in our translation of the vachanas see (Niranjana 1992).

[61] 'Holasu' literally means 'pollution' or 'the polluted.' However, the word is used to refer to meat dishes in some parts of Karnataka. I am told that it is a common expression around *Malenadu* region of Karnataka, especially among certain castes, to say that 'I have had *holasu*' so I will not do this or that action, importantly 'religious' activities like pooja. In a mammoth ongoing fieldwork project undertaken by the Centre for the Study of Local Cultures (Kuvempu University, Karnataka, India), several castes have been interviewed since 2006. In their interviews of the Lingayats, they have spoken to a semi-literate, sixty-year-old man belonging to a certain *Kumbala Kudi Saadaru* 'sub-sect'. In his conversation with the interviewer, this person elaborates on this vachana. According to him, the word *holasu* in the vachana refers to meat (*non-vegetarian* food). In Basava's times, he says, only Madigas used to eat meat and the vachana refers to that practice. However, everybody eats meat now, he contends. Meat eating is often used by these village interviewees to distinguish between communities with common occupation but different origin. For example, the difference between barbers of Telugu origin and non-Telugu origin (like *Hadapada* community), they say, is that the former do not eat meat while the latter do. When these people try to distinguish themselves from other castes, they take up meat-eating habits as a demarcation. For example, some of the interviewees distinguish themselves from Brahmans on the basis that even Brahmans eat meat while they do not. These people generally consider meat eating as *pollution*.

A caste called Seva-Reddy was reinitiated into the Lingayat community by the Muruga-rajendra matha of Chitradurga's swami and was renamed as Shiva-Reddy. One of the main reasons given by the interviewees for seeking this re-initiation is that they were lagging behind in society and were considered

ers an animal is … and one who eats meat is …'. In a sense, this reading of mine may make the meaning much more 'ordinary' (just an everyday tale of butchering folk) and much less 'poetic'. After all, as we know, taste cannot be debated. My reading, however, certainly makes the vachana more 'meaningful' and accessible. As a result, we can now raise a new and far more interesting research question: Why did the Lingayat tradition comment on food habits in such strong words? As a matter of fact, vachanas make more comments on food habit than on jati and kula.[62]

R. Blake Michael

R. Blake Michael, a clergyman and a professor of World Religions, who has worked extensively on the Lingayat tradition, is not shy of claiming that the Lingayats "have often invited comparison with Protestant Christianity due to their anticlericalism, aniconism, antiritualism, egalitarianism, and their positive evaluation of inner-worldly vocation" (1982: 605). Talking about one of the well-known arguments about the vachana movement's 'revolutionary' views about occupations, he writes, the Lingayats "rejected a hierarchy of occupational groups based on birth and substituted a more egali-

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polluted because of their meat eating habits. The swamiji suggested they should give up this practice and get re-initiated. They accepted the offer, stopped eating meat, and again started wearing the linga. And the word they use to talk about the 'problems' created by meat eating practice is 'holasu', 'kolaku' and 'a/shuchi' (pollution or polluted, dirty and un/clean, respectively): "ನಾವು ಮೊದಲು ಮಾಂಸವನ್ನು ತಿನ್ನುವಾಗ ಬಹಳ ಕೊಳಕು ಅನಿಸುತ್ತಿತ್ತು, ಈಗ ಲಿಂಗ ಕಟ್ಟಿಕೊಂಡ ಮೇಲೆ ಸ್ವಚ್ಛ ಶುಚಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದೇವೆ ಅಲ್ಲದೇ ಊರು, ಹಟ್ಟಿ ಕೂಡ ಶುಚಿಯಾಗಿದೆ."

Almost a year after writing this chapter and the footnote I came across the following different version of the vachana in question: "ಕೊಲ್ಲುವವನೇ ಹೊಲೆಯ. ಅಡಗ ತಿಂಬುವವನೇ ಮಾದಿಗ/One who slays is a Holeya. One who eats meat (ಅಡಗ) is a Mādiga", quoted by the Kannada translator of the Tamil work *Tirukkural* (Tiruvallurar 2007: 144). This raises a new question. Why did this version not acquire the prominence that the other version quoted in the main text has acquired? For an answer to this kind of problem, see my chapter 5.

[62] One of the principles of good arguments is not to make more assumptions than the minimum needed and not to make ad hoc assumptions. If we take these two principles seriously, they would favour the alternative reading I have provided here. My reading explains the meaning of the vachana better than the existing explanations and makes fewer assumptions and that too without making any ad hoc assumption. (For more on the assumptions behind modern interpretations of the vachanas, see the next chapter.)

tarian social structure—one based on moral and ethical behavior rather than on birth."

He continues his arguments before quoting a vachana of Basava (1982: 606):

> In fact, the Lingāyat-s often roused the Brahmans' ire by their conscious violation of caste strictures. Those who followed many occupations which would be considered polluting by Brahmans were fully acceptable to Lingāyat-s. This fact is obvious from the number of early Vīraśaiva adepts (śarana-s) who came from such castes as washermen, barbers, and scavengers. For example, in the *Śūnyasampādane* as well as in *other texts portraying events in twelfth-century Kalyāna* [emphasis added], Madivāla Mācayya is depicted as a washerman; Hadapada Apanna, as a barber; and Marulu Śankaradēva, as a simpleton and a scavenger. All these occupational groups would be considered as dangerously unclean in Brahmanical society. For Lingāyat-s, *at least in theory,* these groups were all acceptable as equals in the faith. This supersession of hierarchical attitudes and caste-determined behavior finds expression in the words of Basava, the reputed twelfth-century founder of the movement.
>
> > Of one who eats food blessed by you, where ever he be,
> > What is the caste?
> > Of one who is fit for your service, O Master,
> > What is the caste?
> > Of one who is drawn to your bosom, O God,
> > What is the Caste?
> > O Lord of the Meeting Rivers.

Let us analyse Michael's claims in the context of the vachana he cites. If we accept the translation of the vachana that Michael provides, this vachana is full of rhetorical questions. As we know, one can derive a statement from a rhetorical question. Thus, the questions that the vachana asks yield the following statements:

1. One who eats food blessed by Shiva, wherever he be, has no caste.
2. One who is fit for the service of Shiva has no caste.
3. One who is drawn to Shiva's bosom has no caste.

This would be, perhaps, how Michael too would convert the questions into statements. However, to say 'one has no caste' is not a positive ascription in the vachanas. Rather, it is a positive description to say that one belongs to a good caste. As noted earlier,

Basava does not in fact state anywhere that one should give up jati or kula.[63] He says

one should give up *kula mada* (kula ego).[64] Therefore, it is more appropriate to translate

'What is the caste?' as 'belongs to a good caste' rather than as 'has no caste': "One

who eats food blessed by Śiva, wherever he be, is a *kulaja* or belongs to a good caste."

Whatever our preferred translation of this vachana may be, it is not clear how one could

read "suppression of hierarchical attitudes and caste-determined behavior" into this va-

chana.

An answer to our question perhaps lies in a modern development that Michael

bemoans.

> [M]uch of the study of Vīraśaivism has grown out of an explicit effort to
> compare Protestant Christianity to other religious movements around
> the world-an effort which has often terminated in an implicit evaluative
> comparison tilted in favor of Protestantism. An example of a discussion
> of the Vīraśaiva-s as sectarian Protestants can be had early on in the so-
> ciology of religion-namely, from Max Weber's *Religion of India*…. He
> observed that the Lingāyata-s "represented a type of particularly sharp
> and principled 'protestant' reaction to the Brahmans and the caste or-
> der." … [F]ollowing his lead, an alarming number of authors have
> found it profitable to discuss the Lingayata-s with less-than-careful ref-
> erence to Protestant Christianity in general and to the Calvinist Puritans
> in particular. … Quite lyrically has R. E. Enthoven … described them as
> "a peaceable race of Hindu Puritans." Less carefully has Will Durant …
> allowed the upper case to betray an implicit comparison when he de-
> scribed the Lingāyata-s as "the most Puritanic sect in India." Similarly
> did S.C. Nandimath … unflinchingly speak of the Vīraśaiva-s' spiritual
> endeavors as "the pilgrim's progress towards realization" (Michael
> 1982: 607).

How will Michael justify his own reading of the vachanas and the explicit comparison

of the Lingayat tradition to Protestantism in the face of his remark that such a compari-

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[63] For more information, see appendix #II, Table c, and an earlier section in this chapter entitled 'Im-
proper Samples'. Importantly, see Basava's vachanas #591 and #657. The vachana #591 ends by saying
"only the sharanas of Kudalasanga, who wish good to all living things are *kulajas*." The vachana #657
asserts that only a bhakta of linga is a *kulaja*.

[64] Importantly, this injunction is characteristic of all significant Indian texts from Vedanta, Adi Shanakra
to Bhakti saints. As an example, one can refer to Shankara's *Vivekchudamani*. The habit of attributing
this injunction only to Bhakti literature has become an ill-founded fashion in the 20th century, which
shows our withering knowledge of our own traditions.

son is tilted in favour of Protestantism? Here is how he justifies it. A "[c]loser analysis of the Viraśaiva" ideals, he believes, "will show that such comparison is warranted; but it will also show that … it is not exactly equivalent to the so-called" Protestant ideals. What kind of analysis is he talking about? Where do we draw the line between justified and unjustified comparisons of the Lingayat tradition to Protestantism? Michael does not answer these questions. The only answer that one finds in his writings is that Lingayat ideals and ethics are "rather distinct from that accepted by their larger social context—Brahminical Hinduism" (1982: 609, 616). Let me conclude by repeating a question that this chapter has tried to raise. Is it possible to derive an anti-caste-system stance from the vachanas, given all the limitations discussed earlier in the chapter? If not, where have these readings come from? Why do scholars hold on to these arguments?

In sum, a serious problem crops up when we analyse these vachana interpretations. There is a clear disjunction between the interpretations that these authors endorse and the vachanas that they quote. The arguments do not seem to be inferred from the text of the vachanas but are rather imposed on them. There are two possibilities: either these scholars are not able to see this disjunction or there is something else supporting and sustaining these interpretations, rendering them intelligible, which is invisible at the surface. I would argue that both these points are true. Modern vachana scholars do not see the disjunctions in their own interpretations of the vachanas and that is so because the colonial discourse still structures thinking in modern India (as we argued in the previous chapter). The literary and cultural analysis approaches to the vachanas not only cover up the disjunction but they also justify them.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that the dominant 20th century reading of the vachanas – that they are anti-caste poetry – has one central problem: it does not deliver what it claims. Many arguments were put forth to substantiate this claim. This 20th century reading does not hold because, as a theory it is internally inconsistent. It suffers from two important problems: logical inconsistency and a problem in what it takes or does not take as 'facts'. A glaring example – for the latter part of the claim – is the way the vachanas are used as facts in justification of the claim that they take an anti-caste-system stance. While some vachanas (in fact, as small an amount as less than 4% of the total vachanas) are taken as evidence to prove this claim, a majority of the vachanas are nonchalantly ignored or not considered. Furthermore, this means that the multiple interpretations of the vachanas that contradict each other offer the same vachanas as proof of their interpretation – leading to a familiar difficulty that is sometimes referred to as a problem of 'underdetermination of theory by data'.

A way out of this difficulty is to reduce the evaluation of these multiple theories wholly to some non-evidential considerations. Accordingly, the chapter sought to ask if, in the first place, these theories are rivals or not. We found out that though they look contradictory from one abstraction level, they simply agree on the proposition that is more fundamental to them: the vachana movement is an anti-caste-system movement. To this extent, these multiple theories are epistemologically equivalent. The chapter also tried to contest the belief that the vachanas are *evidence* that these theories are built on. This raised a crucial question: what is the status of the idea that the vachanas are anti-caste-system poetry? It is primarily an idea. As an idea, and because it is an idea, it is capable of structuring our experience of the world and give a shape to social reality.

As an idea, it should have, at least in part, a logic that structures it. Unravelling this phenomenon needs that we have some idea of what the logic is and how it functions. What other concepts inform it and its perspective and judgments in understanding the Lingayat tradition? What conceals the preconditions of this idea? How did it become the idea it is and have the social shaping power that it plainly has? These are some of the questions that will guide the chapters that follow. The next chapter deals with the first of these questions. If modern vachana scholarship cannot claim the support of historical material or the vachana texts, it will ask, how have they survived? What is the condition/assumption under which this argument looks plausible? In order to tackle these two questions, the next chapter will discuss two components of this scholarship: a *true-story* and an attitude.

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Chapter 2

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A STORY AND
AN ATTITUDE

They play with the beauty of a vachana's composition
[Therefore] they do not understand the secret given by Guheshwara

- Allama Prabhu #497[1]

…:∶…

The event of the revolutionary inter-caste marriage that Basava supposed to have organised in the 12th century is an important element in modern understanding of the Lingayat tradition. However, this story cannot stake a claim for historical authenticity. The revolutionary marriage is mentioned for the first time in a work dated 1672 and the full story of the marriage is found only as late as the middle of the 18th century. Notwithstanding these facts, a recent vachana scholar J.P. Schouten avers that we should accept this story, despite the serious doubts about its historical and factual authenticity, because the core of this story "fits well in our picture of the twelfth century Vīraśaiva community at Kalyāna" (Schouten 1995: 50).[2] This claim invites one to ask

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[1] "ವಚನದ ರಚನೆಯ ರಂಜನೆಯ ಲೀಲೆಯನಾಡುವರು
ಗುಹೇಶ್ವರನಿಪ್ಪ ಗುಪ್ತವೆಂತೆಂದರಿಯರು." – ಅಲ್ಲಮ ಪ್ರಭು (Mallapura 2001: 136, v. #497).
The vachana can also be translated thus: "Those who play with the beauty of a vachana's composition | will not understand the secret given by Guheshwara."
[2] This attitude, that despite doubts about historical and factual authenticity about various aspects of the Lingayat tradition an author can use it *somehow* as a fact that is historical enough, is strange but not uncommon amongst modern vachana scholars. Sheldon Pollock, a reputed scholar, also expresses similar

for explanations on various accounts. Firstly, this claim has a logical problem. If there is no adequate historical warrant for accepting a well-known story/legend about the Vīrasaiva community, on what historical basis should one accept the "our 'picture' of the twelfth century Vīraśaiva community at Kalyāna"? Schouten does not clarify this.

As I will argue in the dissertation, it is such stories that have *constituted* 'our picture' rather than simply being one additional element within an objectively derived picture. Thus if these *elements* themselves are not historically grounded, how do we understand the claim about the historical veracity of the larger 'picture'? Clearly, we need to reconsider the composition and the nature of the 'picture' in question. What is this 'picture'? Where has it come from? Or, to borrow a question from postcolonial and feminist scholars, whom does this 'our' in 'our picture' index? Secondly, we have to understand the relationship between stories (like the story of inter-caste marriage) and the larger 'picture' that Schouten refers to. In what sense is a story acceptable if it fits into the schema of the larger 'picture'? Obviously, the acceptance that Schouten talks about is the acceptance of the 'story' as '*historical*' or as 'true'. Does the 'picture' then authenticate all the elements that fit in its schema as 'historical'/'true'? What is meant by 'historical'/'true' in this context?

This chapter is not an attempt to answer these questions, but to show that these questions can be legitimately raised. That is to say, we will explicate in detail the nature of modern vachana scholarship that raises these questions. This chapter will undertake this task by looking at two important components of this scholarship: a *true-story* and an attitude.

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opinion in his work. "Although many historical questions persist regarding the true character of this project [the vachana movement], the transformation in vernacular literary culture it effected is not open to dispute" (Pollock 2006: 433).

I. Two Components of Modern Vachana Scholarship

The True-story

In a sense, modern vachana scholarship has not contributed anything new to our knowledge about Indian society, except providing some more 'evidence' in favour of a hypothesis. The *problems* that this hypothesis talks about are much older than the vachanas themselves. The earliest formulations of these *problems* are also older than modern attempts at understanding the vachanas. The *problems* in brief are these: *there is a caste system in India; it is unethical, corrupt and oppressive; it should be criticised and done away with and the vachana movement was an attempt to do that*. If this is the gist of modern arguments about the vachanas, then even if one were to prove that the vachanas did not criticise casteism, or even that they supported casteism,[3] the argument about the Indian caste system remains intact. Then what relations do these two arguments – one about the caste system and the other about the vachanas' anti-caste-system stance – share? As we said, the arguments about the caste system can exist independently of our understanding of the vachanas as caste critiques. But, is the reverse of the argument also true? Alternatively, will the argument that the vachanas are anti-caste-system literature hold even when the argument about the caste system of India is proved false? Obviously, the answer is an emphatic 'No'. If there is no caste system in India, the vachanas could not have criticised the non-existent caste system. This exercise, which may look trivial, brings one important issue to the fore: the argument about the vachanas' anti-caste stance is true only when accounts about the existence of the caste system

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[3] I am not saying that the vachanas support casteism, but merely entertaining this possibility for outlining my argument.

in India are accepted to be true. In other words, modern vachana readings look plausible only under the assumption that there exists a social structure in India that has some morally deplorable features.

Let us call this notion of the morally deplorable Indian caste system a *true-story*. There is some justification for the neologism *true-story*: it is a *story* because, as I hope to demonstrate later in this and the 5th chapter, in the context of the vachanas, it is taken directly from the stories,[4] legends and such like and it is *true* because it is used, considered, treated as a fact or as a verified history. Let us begin by reflecting on a special relationship that the vachana readings share with this true-story. We will do so by raising a question: When vachana readings are criticised, what role does this true-story play in the resultant differences of opinion, a potential if not actual controversy? This story about the Indian caste system functions as the dominant reading,[5] call it R. All the minor readings of the vachanas (call them r_1, r_2, r_n) are subordinated to the dominant reading R, which is the story about the caste system. It does not matter whether the minor readings r_1, r_2, r_n are directly compatible with the R, or not. It is enough that R gets more importance over the minor readings r_1, r_2, r_n, such that all the differences occurring at the level of minor readings are finally negligible. That is to say, the final objective of the r_1, r_2, r_n is grounded in (or is subordinated to/is a search for) the truth of R. Since the truth of the story (about the Indian caste system) will be presumed and attacks and modifications will always take place at the object level of r_1, r_2, r_n, the truth of R remains unquestioned and as a consequence one obtains enormous flexibility in vachana scholarship.[6]

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[4] I use the word 'story' in this dissertation as a concept and not in any pejorative sense. More about it as the argument develops.

[5] Or, call it the meta-story that is presupposed in the interpretations of the vachanas. This meta-story then functions as the horizon of object level histories, such as the different interpretations of the vachanas. More about this in chapter 5, below.

[6] For more on this flexibility and its practical utility see chapter 5, below.

Thus the story about the caste system that vachana scholars have imbibed, I claim, protects the vachana scholarship from easily disintegrating. This story is instrumental in assuring the coherence and integrity of the vachana scholarship and in determining its identity. The disagreements amongst vachana scholars do not flare up into controversies of any importance because they are committed to, or would agree on the notion of, the caste system vis-à-vis the vachanas. The disagreements remain at the level of differences about the literary interpretations or historical details of the vachana-composers and their 'vachana movement'.

Presuming that the story of the existence of the caste system in India (R, that is) has had many consequences, we can ask questions about its epistemic nature and functional properties. How does it function in India? A popular explanation is the constructivist thesis about the caste system that Ronald Inden (1986), Bernard Cohn (1987) and Nicholas Dirks (2001) have popularised. The constructivist thesis argues (albeit, with many qualifications) that the notion of caste is a colonial construction. This argument however is underwritten by an agreement that the caste system "defines the core of Indian tradition, and caste is today the major threat to Indian modernity" (Dirks 1992: 56). This argument miraculously transforms a colonial experience of India – that is what the notion of the caste system originally was – into a 'major threat to Indian modernity'. This transformation will make sense if it can be shown that colonial experience of India is a theory about India and then argue that theories have consequences in the world. But then, Western theory of India will have direct consequences on the way we (Indians) go about in the world, only if this theory somehow becomes our theory too. This is tantamount to the argument that one can make somebody else's (read, European) experience one's own. Whether this has been shown adequately or not, the notion

of the caste system has been understood as a theory of Indian social reality in the modern period.

Without entertaining any of these difficult presumptions, it can still be shown that the story of the existence of the caste system in India continues to have its impacts on our social and cultural world. I want to claim that in the process of converting European experience of India into our working tools for going about in the world, we have turned an alien experience into a set of stories. This claim will make more sense to us when we discuss the function of stories in Indian culture in chapter 5. For now, all that we need to bear in mind is this: when Lingayat scholars borrow/inherit the Western experience of Indian culture, they inherit or make sense of it as a story and also as a true description of their cultural world. More appropriately put, their understanding takes the form of a true-story.

The term true-story, which conjoins two contradictory terms, and therefore it is an oxymoron, raises many questions. It is a commonsensical yet conceptually sound claim that a story is a *story*. It does not have the same status as a statement, because, as a statement, a story does not make assertions about the world.[7] What do I mean by a 'true-story' then? Admittedly, this also raises a whole set of questions about a story, its functions and properties. These questions are no doubt important. We will take them up for discussion in the fifth chapter. For now, let us take a close look at this true-story and its content.

20th century writings on the vachanas, its composers, and the Lingayat tradition are characterised by a *thick* story. It is a story about, what has come to be called in the

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[7] For an overview of the discussion around this debate, see H. Gene Blocker's "The Truth about Fictional Entities" (1974). See also, Albert William Levi (1966), M.J. Sirridge (1975). There are also arguments against the popular claim that the terms 'true' and 'false' can only be applied to the statements and propositions. See, Marcia Eaton (1980).

modern period, the 'vachana/Lingayat movement' of the 12th century. In one of his articles, Rajendra Chenni writes:

> Despite all our attempts, we [i.e., modern Kannada scholars writing on the vachanas] have little literature which can be scientifically called history. Most of the writings *re-narrate the same story* in a systematic way, the story that everybody knows. That means, the attempt of vachana-composers to bring about equality in society…, the resultant tension and the unrest and finally the Kalyana revolution and the exit of the leaders of the vachana movement from the scene [are nothing but a history imagined by the Kannada community]. Except quoting a few vachanas in support of this story, scholars do not seem to have done anything more. A major part of their writing has been spent in singing the glory of the commendable intentions of the vachana movement. These writings try nothing more than to redescribe the fierce movement against the caste and varna systems in the contemporary jargon [of the social sciences] (Chenni 2004: 24-25 emphasis mine).

Chenni does not stop at that. The old stories in comparison with the new stories, he further claims, are at least "more creative than these [scholarly] writings [of the 20th century]." He also asserts that "the modern Kannada sensibility has understood the vachana movement through the fictional writings of our time, such as *Sankranti*, *Mahachaitra*, and *Taledanda*" (24-25).[8] When Chenni himself starts writing about the vachana movement, he resorts to another story, a relatively less-known story, about the economic issues of the time, which we briefly noted in chapter 1. Chenni's observation that modern vachana scholarship is nothing more than a story is nevertheless important. Here is a bare outline of this modern true-story:

> Conditions before the Basava Era were grim. Because of the existence of the caste system, the higher castes enjoyed enormous privilege, authority and social opportunity. The lower castes, on the contrary, were deprived of all privileges. Religious institutions, together with the ruling classes and the merchant associations, exploited the labour class, lower castes and women. Temples had become the centre of exploitation. Thus in every respect, the period before Basava was highly unstable.
> Basava's experience in life was bitter. Very early in his childhood, he realized the exploitative nature of Brahmanism and at a tender age, he refused to go through the thread ceremony (*upanayana*), which initiates a per-

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[8] These three are well-known Kannada plays of the late 20th century authored by P. Lankesh (published in 1973), H.S. Shivaprakash (1995) and Girish Karnad (1990) respectively.

son into Brahmanism. He left home, went to Kudalasangama and studied under a guru. He grew up to be the finance minister of King Bijjala of Kalyana. In that position he groomed thousands of sharanas, while also trying to fight the caste system in several ways.

Basava's determination to fight Vedic religion, and the long-standing unhappiness of the people formed the vachana movement, which quickly became a revolution against the political and religious orthodoxies of the day. Basava inspired and even led the lower-castes and untouchables in an insurrection against regional overlords. The movement's outcome was far-reaching and of immense social importance. At least, until the end of the movement untouchables were not only encouraged to become Lingayats, but were treated on equal terms against the norms of the caste system. Women were allowed to take part in the religious, cultural and literary activities on par with men. It was at this time that Basava took the unprecedented bold step to arrange for an inter-caste marriage between an untouchable and a Brahman. The King Bijjala, who was not happy with these developments in general, took serious objection to the inter-caste marriage and punished the families of the bride and the bridegroom. This turned the social revolution into a civil fight in the state and finally led to the assassination of the King.'[9]

Thus the social and political project of this movement is perceived as self-consciously anti-Brahman, anti-caste, and counter-hegemonic. However, the Lingayat tradition, the story continues, gradually became a caste by itself, thereby reversing all the achievements of the indigenous reformers.[10]

The Diagnostic Attitude

(a) The Question of Truth and Falsity

The second component of modern vachana scholarship is an attitude, which I will call in this dissertation the 'diagnostic attitude'.[11] It is an attitude of assessing a tradition

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[9] We should remember that this is a story and we cannot question its details, loose threads, hanging plot etc., as if it is a theory (more about it in chapter 5). Further, whatever reasons, it seems this story can be easily given historical authenticity, as some of the historical discussions do, which we discussed in the previous chapter.

[10] For more information see chapter 1, section 2.

[11] The choice of the phrase 'diagnostic attitude' is determined by a word vogue in Kannada: *chikitsaka buddhi*. For a brief note on its usage and translation, see chapter 4, below.

and its various aspects in terms of 'truth' and 'falsity'. It is my hunch that one of the ways Indians responded to colonialism and internalised the colonial way of understanding a culture was by altering their attitude towards their own culture. We have enough grounds to argue that the practice of predicating truth and falsity of practices and traditions, which I call the new 'diagnostic attitude', came through Christianity/colonialism.[12] I, however, do not go on to *historically* prove this claim here, but rather use it as a hypothesis. This means that I will simply treat this attitude as a significant ingredient in modern vachana scholarship, which has contributed immensely in shaping our understanding of the vachanas. In chapter 4, I hope to attempt at establishing the colonial routes of this attitude. The strength and success of my predictions based on this hypothesis that this and the following chapters offer will prove the cognitive productivity of this hypothesis.

Let us begin by taking note of a very curious fact. The Lingayats enjoyed a very cordial relationship with the British. The British throughout the 18th and 19th centuries conspicuously held a positive view of the Lingayat community. According to European scholars of this period, the Lingayats were comparatively the most progressive Indian community. One of the important qualities attributed to this community was that they were a distinctively anti-caste community in India. What is mysterious is that this relationship was not based on any pragmatic associations, such as political, military or economic transactions between the two. We will analyse this relationship and its consequences in chapter 3 and 5. For now, it is enough if we bear in mind that the British and the Lingayats enjoyed a very cordial relationship and as a result, the British had a very positive opinion of the Lingayat community.

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[12] It may also have other sources about which no research has been done.

Understanding people or their practices in Christian cultures meant understanding their beliefs (Balagangadhara 1994).[13] One method of accumulating the beliefs of people was through the method of observation and interview. Therefore, disciplines such as anthropology proliferated during the colonial period. The other was to find a place where the belief system of a people was encoded. Was the assumption that a variety of beliefs must entail a belief system a cultural quirk, or was it rather a well-explicated methodological step? Whatever our answers to this question might be, history tells us that the colonial search for the encoded belief system of a people led indologists and orientalists to the search for 'texts'.[14] Thus excavating the native texts to find out their beliefs became a dominant practice during the colonial period.[15] That meant the importance of a community now rested upon the merit of their texts and practices.[16] This created a problem for the Lingayat community. On the one hand, the British view of the Lingayat community was positive. On the other hand, their view of Lingayat texts was negative.

> In all hagiology we find that the fables invented in successive centuries
> become gradually more marvelous. Accordingly though the legends of
> the Basava Puran[a] are wild enough they are out heroded by those of
> later date…. It must however, be acknowledged that in a redundancy of

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[13] "Unsatisfactory as to their information, questionable as to their authenticity, and undetermined as to their authority, extracts from the Puranas are yet the only sources on which any reliance can be placed for accurate accounts of the notions of Hindus" (Wilson 1839: 63).

[14] As Lata Mani notes, "while Islamic law could be generated from the Koran, no equivalent primary text existed on which a 'Hindu' law could be based. Thus was begun a protracted process of invention, codification, and transformation" (1998: 16). The "tradition of exploring Indian thought in its original sources and contexts of understanding" began "towards the end of the Age of Enlightenment, through the scholarly works and programmatic activities of the British 'Orientalists' in Bengal" (Halbfass 1988: 62).

[15] "Brahmanic texts, both vedic origin stories and the much later dharma texts of Hinduism's puranic period, provided transregional and metahistorical modes of understanding Indian society that clearly appealed to British colonial interests and attitudes" (Dirks 1992: 60).

[16] For instance, see how Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough writes about her understanding of a certain native Indian 'progressive movement' called the Ongole Mission.

> Much seemed to me explained when I found that the nucleus of the Ongole Mission was formed by men who, long years before the missionary came to Ongole, had become dissatisfied with the cults of the Madiga village, and had carried on a search for truth by listening to the teaching of Hindu Gurus. They took the first step out of polytheism into theism by learning from their Yogi teachers that there is one God and that He is spirit. This represented spiritual gain of a high order. But what was more valuable than this, perhaps, was the receptive attitude, the thirst which cold not be quenched, when the Gospel of Jesus Christ came to these men, there was a gratitude in their hearts that formed a tremendous impetus toward Christian activity (Rauschenbusch-Clough 1899: 5).

> nonsense as well as in dirt the [Maha] Bharata beats all the Saivite stories. There we find the very sublime of puerility: braminical legends compared to which *Jack and the Bean Stalk* are nothing at all. … Objectionable as many of the Saivite legends are, they purity itself when compared to the braminical writings. The great prophet of the bramins is Vyasa, and this venerated saint's description is of his own miraculous birth is a master-piece both of filth and folly (Brown 1840a: 165).

The Lingayat kavyas and puranas, thus, did not contribute towards the positive European view of the Lingayat community. This created a discrepancy between the European view of the Lingayat community and their traditional texts. European scholars continued to struggle to account for this discrepancy. As Walter Elliot puts it,

> The history of this [Lingayat] revolution is contained in two works, called the Basava Purana, and Vijala Cheritra, or Bijalenkin Kavya, the one the text-book of the Lingayats, the other of the Jains. But in both there is such a preponderance of supernatural agency, and so much legendary lore intermixed with historical facts, that it is difficult to separate the truth from the fable (Elliot 1837: 20).

Similar thoughts occur in the introductions written by Mackenzie to his collection of Lingayat texts. He approvingly cites the opinion of Wilson, another colonial scholar.

> "All though the literature of Hala Kanara," observes Mr. Wilson, "consists in part of translations from Sanskrit, and [an] extensive class of works, which are neither derived from Sanskrit nor the work of Brahmanical caste. They are composed by priests of a particular branch of the Saiva faith,—that of the Lingamites,—and relate to the actions and doctrines of the founders and teachers of the sect. The schism originated in the twelfth century…." These are legends and Puranic stories, excessively absurd and mostly insipid, though many of them are highly characteristic, "indicate a state of religious practice and belief, almost as foreign to the genuine Hindu creed as to common sense and morality (*The Mackenzie Collection* 1829, February: 132).

These kinds of citations, which could be multiplied indefinitely, draw our attention to a curious issue. European scholars faced a severe problem of matching the positive views of the Lingayat community they had and the "excessively absurd and mostly insipid" Lingayat texts. Furthermore, the difficulty was to match the contrasting values:

'history', 'historical facts', 'revolution', and 'truth' that the Lingayat community had come to represent, with the 'supernatural agency', 'legendary lore' and 'fable' of their texts. C.P. Brown's words express the dilemma that was troubling his contemporary European scholars. In his bid to compare Lingayat stories with Vyasa's *Bharatha,* we get a closer look at the problem they were facing.

> The Jangams are indeed set free from believing such legends but their own hagiography, though not dirty like that of the Bramins, is full of absurdities: in *apology for which they acknowledge that many of these tales bear marks of fiction* (1840a: 165 emphasis mine).

The Basel Mission, which worked closely with the Lingayats in Dharwad region for about three decades from the 1830s, took immense pains to correct their attitude towards their tradition. The missionaries, who wished to make them aware of the difference between Christianity and their own tradition, told them stories from the Bible and the miracles of Christ. The Lingayats offered them in return much more fantastic stories from their own puranas.[17] The missionaries tried to teach them that Christian stories were true and Indian stories were false.[18] The Lingayats soon learned to make

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[17] Consider the remarks of Elijah Hoole, a pioneer missionary who worked in Bangalore and Madras region in the 19th century, as an instance:

> How are Hindoos to be converted? Miracles would not be successful; for they would refer them to the art, by which their jugglers every day perform their wondrous feats. The extraordinary relations of sacred History fail to excite their astonishment; for their own books record most marvellous events, with which the truth of things will bear no comparison. … It must then be one of the purest and greatest triumphs, the world ever witnessed, when the Hindus shall bend to the yoke of Christ. And the conclusion to which I have arrived is, That whilst an improved system of education, and the diffusion of general knowledge, may have their share in preparing the way for some change in their religious system; the truth will only be ultimately successful, in the hands of men of irreproachable conduct, residing among the people, and so setting forth the doctrines of Christianity by public preaching and conversations, that its light may strongly contend and contrast with the widely prevailing darkness of heathenism (Hoole 1829: 134-135).

[18] "A Brahmin, who had seen us in Curadagoade and half wants to cast his lot with ours, interrupted me and asked how one could be sure that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd and the door to the sheepfold? Could not a Brahmin argue equally that Krishna is the same, and a Lingaite say the same about Basava? But someone made a comparison for him between Christ and the hindu Deities. Christ had a divine birth, he had lived a divine life, acted divinely, and at the end had given his life for the sheep. The hindu deities came to steal, to strangle and to kill. Since they themselves have committed murder, adultery, prostitution, theft and all the other possible crimes, they have not only given their followers a bad example but themselves deserve to be damned. As proof of this assertion someone brought a passage from the Anubharvamruta in which it is said that the Deities are sinners as human beings are. The Brahmin had no ade-

this distinction in their own stories. The missionaries conceded that there were true sto-

ries and some 'good' teachings in the Lingayat literature too.

> When I got to the monastery I found the Guru, Gursitappa, the *shastri*
> and others waiting for me. Gursitappa wanted to see my watch, and
> asked me to repeat my lesson on geography. Then I reminded the Guru
> that he had promised to repeat the poem he had sung yesterday, and ex-
> plain it to me. When he had finished, I said with a laugh, "So you come
> together with such elaborate ceremonial for the sake of stories like that?
> In my country they are the kind of little stories boys might tell!" That
> seemed to be a bit too frank; they became somewhat red in the face –
> but none of them showed annoyance at the liberty I had taken. "Perhaps
> there is some deep wisdom hidden in this story?" I asked – half seri-
> ously, half joking. The *shastri* laughed, and the Guru said, "Yes, of
> course! The story shows that holy people have great power over the de-
> ity." I asked if that was all, and the Guru said, "Yes, that is the wisdom
> of this story, which the common people do not understand." I said, "If
> that is all the wisdom it teaches, that is not much. I hope I could find
> more in your *shastras*, if I could study them with your *shastri*" (Jenkins
> and Jenkins 2007: sec. 1.19).

The missionaries then tried to teach them the *normative* differences between the Chris-

tian doctrines and the 'good' teachings available in the Lingayat 'shastras'. For exam-

ple, the missionaries told them that Basava and other saints were 'good' persons, but

were not God to deserve worship. At times, it seems, to convince the followers of, say,

Basava that he was not worthy of veneration, scholars and missionaries did not shy

away from disparaging his personality.[19]

The message of all such remarks was perfectly simple. Despite being a good

person, Basava had his human weaknesses. He was a human being and, like all other

human beings, he too was a sinner. The difference, if any, was only in degree and not

kind. Hence, to worship Basava and 'saints' like him meant indulging in 'idol worship',

which according to them was a sin. The Lingayats, however, did not stop offering pooja

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quate answer to this, and our people were happy that we had held the field" (Jenkins and Jenkins 2007:
sec. 2.10).

[19] Otherwise, we would not be able to account for the condescending comments about Basava, of the
following kind, in the middle of growing positive opinion about the Lingayats. "Though a married man,
he reputedly cohabited with his own sister Nagamma, and by her had a son named Chenna Basava"
(Taylor 1860: lxxxvii).

to their saints but learned to justify their action in different ways. Basava, for instance, was rendered into a morally upright historical personage who was worthy of worship, like Jesus Christ of Nazareth. When native scholars were employed to collect and explain or re-present their own texts to colonial scholars, they were trained precisely in this method of understanding a text. As an attitude towards texts, I would say, this was new to the natives.

> The plan adopted by Sir William Jones and other Sanscrit scholars, in order to come at the contents of the Puranas with the least possible waste of their own time and labour, was the employment of Pandits to extract such passages as, from their report, appeared most likely to illustrate Hindu mythology, chronology, and history… (Wilson 1839: 61-62).

By the 20th century, the discrepancy that we noted between the European view of the Lingayat community and their texts had disappeared. Modern views concerning both the Lingayat community and Lingayat texts not only resonate with each other, but they also complement each other. If so, when and how was this discrepancy resolved? This is an important question, which will be discussed in chapter 3. Let us focus on the attitude in question.

Diagnosing the Diagnostic Attitude

The attitude, as the foregoing discussion shows, was one of moralising a tradition and its different aspects, such as the texts of a tradition. More concretely, it was an attitude of judging a text to be morally good/bad, or to be true/false.[20] Whether this attitude existed before or it emerged during this period is not that important a question for this dis-

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[20] It is in this context that the colonial translators named the Kannada version of the Bible 'satya-Veda' (true-Veda). This name is still in circulation today in Kannada. The significance of this term should be understood in contrast with the (Hindu) Vedas, which were obviously false-Vedas, as they symbolise the worship of false gods, or idol worship.

sertation. What I am concerned about is that this attitude undoubtedly played a very active role during this period. By the beginning of the 20th century, writing histories claimed much of their time than *purana*s of Basava. It is a different matter though that their 'histories', even to this day, as Chenni points out, are a "re-narration of the *same stories*".[21] The native scholars were perhaps so ashamed of their purana stories that they shifted their loyalty from puranas to history. That there were some strong reasons for them to favour some stories and some form of stories over others tells us a great deal about the modification in their attitudes towards their tradition.

The fourth *Virashaiva Mahasabhe* of 1908 passed a resolution to write an *itihasa* (history) of its ancestors that would serve to remind them about the "philosophers, sharanas, pandits, brave people and other such great souls" of the Lingayat community. This, they thought, would lead to the birth of more such people in the community and the community would develop (1910: 55). Later in the *Sabhe* (conference/congress), reflecting on this resolution Tammappa Satyappa, an invitee, insisted that "because such a history has still not been written, the Lingayat people are not at all aware of the past achievements of their community, and hence the Lingayats neither have self-respect (*swabhimāna*), nor does their existence in India have any value today" (1910: 55). He further elaborated on some of the consequences of the lack of such a history: they had been pulled down from their superior position into the shudra status. They were in a depraved condition because they had become impious, careless about education and so on. According to Satyappa, one had to distil such a history from the puranas written by the pundits. He decrees, "history is not just a religious text", but a record of the following items: the condition of religious, ethical, social, political and industrial institutions; inter- and intra-national business; the status of the arts; the travels of the

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[21] Does this suggest our failure to write historiography or something else? Let us keep this question aside until chapter 4.

people in the nation; people's attitude about their own and other religions and so on. In sum, he proposes, '*history should prepare people to choose between good and bad, it should teach them to plan according to the necessity of the time and nation. History is not a collection of astounding and super-human incidents*' (1910: 56). Having declared thus, he goes on to discuss whether his community had done things that would find a place in such a history. He then takes up the worthiness of the past of a community, of his community, for discussion (1910: 57). Towards the end of his speech, he mentions the sources at their disposal for writing such a history: the first two places in the list go to the Vedas, Agama, Upanishad, Smriti, Puranas and similar literature in Sanskrit and vernacular languages. Third in the list are Buddhist and Jain texts, for their polemical references to Lingayat scholars. Inscriptions, letters and other documents take the fourth place. Fifth and finally, kavya, folk literature, and coins feature in the list.

II. Reading a Vachana as a Poem and as a Symbol

Let us reflect on some of the findings presented in chapter 1 in the light of discussion so far in this chapter. Only a small selection of the vachanas was used to represent what all the vachanas are supposed to be about. This created the impression that only these vachanas give us the best description of the tradition, which in turn justified the selection of a small number of the vachanas as representative of the tradition. The vachanas that can be interpreted to give a picture contrary to the dominant description of the tradition or Indian culture – and this is an important claim that this dissertation makes – were either interpreted in such a way that they were rendered consistent with the 'true-story' or they were simply overlooked. Therefore, the vachanas that were ignored did

not pose any threat to the modern understanding of the vachanas. They rather remained a challenge to our abilities to show how they suit the dominant description.

This intriguing phenomenon requires explanation on three counts: What were the criteria for selecting the vachanas? How was the challenge met? What was the conception about the vachanas that made this phenomenon possible or worked as a catalyst in the process of the selection and interpretation of the vachanas?[22] The answer to the first question is straightforward. The criterion for selection was the *true-story*. Chapter 5 will provide the conceptual elaboration and empirical support that this straightforward answer needs. An answer to the third question also answers the second question. The challenge was met by employing a particular conception of the vachanas, that is, by reading the vachanas as literature that involved converting them into symbols. Reading the vachanas as literature implied that a license to the interpretation of the vachanas depended on the ability of the critic and not on the texts themselves.[23] In what follows in this chapter we will elaborate on our answer to the second and third question.

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[22] An easy way of answering these questions is to impute some motives to 20th century scholars or to predicate this phenomenon on their ignorance. However, modern vachana scholarship is, to use a description from another context, a "macro-policy, a cooperative result of the activities of multiple agents" spread across a vast geographical area and period of over a century. One cannot impute lack of intellectual abilities to such a large number of scholars belonging to multiple generations to account for such a macro-policy. This problem cannot be solved at the individual level or by treating the entire gamut of vachana scholars as an individual agent. Moreover, pragmatically speaking a series of different 'reasons' can be discerned in modern vachana scholarship: from non-availability of the entire collection of the vachanas to difficulty in understanding all the vachanas – a difficulty attributable in turn to a range of reasons from their difficult language to lack of research in the area. This generates a difficult question: which of these was the 'true or real reason' for such a narrow selection of the vachanas? Balagangadhara and De Roover (2009), help us reject the ascription of agency to vachana scholarship as a whole when they say, "we lack a clear understanding of the relation between an agent and his/her motive, let alone possessing a social psychology of collective agencies. In the absence of such knowledge, if one explains the policies of the colonial state as though it had 'motives,' one commits category mistakes: one ascribes a common-sense conception of the relation between motive and act (attributable only to individuals) to collective or supra-individual agencies."

[23] Thus, one can now measure the brilliance and the dedication of scholars in terms of, say, how many vachanas s/he brings to the witness box to support the reading that claims that the vachanas are anti-caste-system poetry.

History of the Vachana Analysis

Both conceptual and empirical factors have shaped the 20th century interpretations of the vachanas. Conceptually, the modern approach to the vachanas must be explicitly placed at the beginning of a new understanding about the Indian traditions that began during British colonialism in India. Empirically speaking, there were two major historical compulsions within which modern Lingayat scholarship emerged. Here is an elaboration of those two historical compulsions.

(i) In the 19th century, with the emergence of the first generation of native scholars trained in Western education, a new way of literary interpretation of texts established its monopolistic access to Indian literature.[24] The literary appreciation/criticism of vachana literature was also a part of this new trend incorporated by the native scholarship. This approach has progressed undeterred to this day. In literature, the existence of diverse interpretations of the vachanas was taken positively. Plurality of interpretation was considered a positive sign of the richness of the domain under consideration. Possibly, this is because, literary interpretation does not distinguish between a claim of mere plausibility and one of truth-value. Let us consider two interpretations: 'the vachanas critique the caste system', and an interpretation that negates this. If these two interpretations can be accorded a status of being mere *plausible meanings* of the vachanas, they can co-exist despite being incompatible. By plausible meaning, I suggest the signification of a term or sign which is at least hypothetically possible. It is possible that vachana-composers would have talked about the caste system, like 20th

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[24] One of the reasons for this development could be the use of English literature by the colonial education in training the Indians. Some of the "humanist functions traditionally associated with literature", such as, "the development of the aesthetic sense or the discipline of critical thinking" were considered essential for the natives to learn (Viswanathan 1989: 3). It is these two new skills, or a coupling of them – an aesthetico-critical thinking – that the natives, I propose, have pressed into the service of understanding the vachanas, thus rendering them poetry.

century scholars. Literary criticism need not problematise the plausibility of this hypothetical situation. This allows several different interpretations to co-exist harmoniously. That is the strength of literature and literary criticism.

(ii) The possibility of the co-existence of diverse and incompatible interpretations received additional support from those political movements that appropriated the vachanas for their use. Such political applications correlate the interpretations of the vachanas to an interpreter's context. Since individuals will have diverse necessities, diverse interpretations are justified. This nexus in literature between diverse contexts - and diverse interpretations inevitably made way for contradictory interpretations of the vachanas.

Let us trace the development of these approaches through history. The writings of B.M. Srikantia, the most influential Kannada poet and scholar who, as per dominant opinion, single-handedly shaped the 20th century Kannada literary scene, illustrate this phenomenon lucidly. In a speech delivered in the annual meeting of the Vidyavardhaka Sangha of Dharwad (Karnataka) as early as 1911, B.M. Srikantia asserted the following: "It is English literature which should uplift the decayed Kannada literature. It is English literature which should cleanse the Kannada literature from the defects it has imbibed from Sanskrit literature."[25] Srikantia gives a detailed description of those defects in his speech. Let me summarise the six defects that he describes at length, in his own words: (1) Kavya in Kannada is full of old and purana stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. There is no one to write poetry in Kannada about the everyday

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[25] Srikantia is neither unique nor the first one to take this stance vis-à-vis traditional Indian literature. Scholars of his and the earlier generation in other languages have said as much. Bharatendu Harish-chandra (1850-1885), who "ushered in the modern period of Hindi literature", held similar opinions. See Sudhir Chandra (1983). Srikantia's concerns thus reflect the general spirit of the age. Here is one other important Kannada scholar expressing similar concern. Hattiyangadi Narayanarao in his speech written for the Kannada Sahitya Sammelana of 1918 hoped that following English poetic style will usher in a large number of necessary changes in Kannada literature. Importantly, he hoped, people will start writing about the issue of national, social and historical importance than 'spiritual' issues. Narayanarao is one of the first three scholars who worked towards popularising this view by translating English poetry (of the Romantic period) into Kannada (Narayanarao 1993: 1).

incidents of life. (2) Kavya is dominated by the rigid and formal rules about its struc-ture. People have surrendered their freedom for formal rules. (3) Besides the subject and rules of the form, its spirit is also ancient. (4) Kannada poets do not know how to describe nature. They deform it by removing its ear or nose, or by adding a horn or a tusk. (5) Kannada kavya suffers from the overuse of Sanskrit grammar and language structure. Kannada poets do not use simple Kannada. (6) The form of kavya in Kannada is always verse, whereas people prefer plays and vachana-kavya (free verse?). No Kan-nada poet has ever thought of using day-to-day spoken language, even two thousand years after we have ceased to use Sanskrit as a spoken language (Srikantia 1983: 250-252).

It is not difficult to note that modern writings on the vachanas are formed within the shadow of these broad instructions that Srikantia advances as issues of urgency for the entire Kannada literary world. When scholars repeat such views endlessly, one be-gins to realise that these are not grand historical co-incidences, but have a pattern and form an unmistakable continuity with colonial writings on India. As proof for this claim, it is possible to mark out a *beginning* of this understanding in colonial scholar-ship, a *transition period* in scholars such as Srikantia and its endless reproduction in the subsequent period. Today, it is not a matter of contention to propose that Srikantia's concerns were misplaced. Srikantia was clearly expressing orientalist views on the In-dian traditions in general and its literature in particular.

We can compare Srikantia's views, for more clarity, with the views of E.P. Rice. While Srikantia was a native Kannada scholar, Rice was a European scholar who did work on the Kannada language and wrote the first full-length history of Kannada literature. He also has an important role in laying the foundation for future work on the vachanas. According to him,

> No section of the population of India can afford to neglect her ancient heritage. In her literature, philosophy, art, and regulated life there is much that worthless, much also that is distinctly unhealthy; yet the treasures of knowledge, wisdom, and beauty which they contain are too precious to be lost (Rice 1915: chap. Editorial Preface).

After suggesting what Kannadigas should do with their literature, Rice proceeds to suggest what is the treasure of knowledge in Kannada, and why.

> Basava, indeed, taught that men of castes, and even outcastes, were eligible to enter Lingayat community. … The scriptures of the religion are in Sanskrit, and consist of the twenty-eight Saivagamas, the earlier portions of which are said to be applicable to all Saivas and the later portions to relate especially to Virasaivas. There is also an ancient Sanskrit work, called Sivagita, to which a high place is given. By the unlearned the *Basava-purana* and *Channabasava-purana* are treated as authorities for their religion; but the learned do not give them this place (1915: 50).

About a decade before Rice, R. Narasimhacharya in his *Kavicarite* (1907) had included the vachana-composers and the vachanas in his history of the poets in Kannada. However, as Govindaraj (1997) points out, *Kavicarite* had also included several other works that we do not consider kavya today. P.G. Halakatti and others who worked on the vachanas between the 1920s and 1930s called them *Shastra* (roughly, theoretical treatise). S.S. Basavanala and K.R. Shrinivas Iyengar's *Musings of Basava*, a translation of the vachanas of Basavanna and Akka Mahadevi published in 1940, began the contemporary habit of writing the vachanas as verse.

Subsequently, this borrowed style became the dominant practice. With A.K. Ramanujan's entry on the scene, in the 1970s, the vachanas were finally rendered the 'modernist poetry'. The modernist tools of line-brakes of various kinds – enjambment, end-stopping, caesura – are now used to accentuate meaning or the linguistic structure

of the vachanas and also to create an aesthetically pleasing form. The vachanas until

then were usually written like prose pieces with linear lines.[26]

Studies in Myths

In order to make sense of some of the developments in the history of vachana analysis,

we need to observe analogous developments in the West in a somewhat related area,

the study of *pagan* myths. The developments in this area represent the way the West

has shaped its knowledge of pagan traditions. One should note two important issues

here: the emergence of research interest in pagan cultures and the methodological tra-

jectory of such research inquiries. The former induced Western interest in pagan texts

(reflected in the growth of studies in myth) and the latter made them read pagan texts

(or myths) as symbols.

As many scholars have pointed out, interest in pagan stories grew alongside the

growing Western interest in alien countries and cultures. The study of myths was

"taken up because it was thought of as a key, variously, to history, to linguistics and

philology, to religion, to art, to the primitive mind, and to the creative imagination"

(Richardson and Feldman 1972: xxi). In the words of the late 17th century scholar, Ber-

nard Fontenelle, who wrote an essay entitled "On the Origin of Fables" (1724),

"[f]ables are the first histories of all peoples, and they arise from the depths of human

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[26] Here is E.P. Rice's perceptive observation on this bygone practice. "One of the beauties of Kanarese is that all the pauses and intonations, which in English are represented by punctuation, are expressed by the vernacular idiom itself; so that no well-constructed Kanarese sentence requires any marks of punctuation whatsoever. Nevertheless, most modern Kanarese books are disfigured with all the cumbrous apparatus of Western commas, semicolons, inverted commas and marks of interrogation and exclamation. The re-sult is, that there is growing up a slovenly mode of writing, in which the sense is no longer clear without these alien aids. Another evil tendency appears in books rendered from Western languages by incompe-tent translators. Complicated sentences are reproduced in facsimile, in which one adverbial clause is sub-ordinate to another, and that to a third. Such a mode of expression is wholly foreign to Kanarese idiom and destructive to good writing – a native Kanarese sentence, however lengthy, being always simple in structure and pellucid in meaning" (Rice 1915: 104). Though these words are about the linguistic struc-ture of the "Kanarese books", it can be easily extended to their philosophical dimension as well.

nature through the activity of psychological laws we recognize from our own experience – a combination of curiosity, speculation that is wide of the mark in proportion to our ignorance, and love of what is imaginatively striking". Or, as Giambattista Vico wrote in his, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* (1725), "the first science to be learned should be mythology or the interpretations of fables ... the first histories of the gentile nations" (quoted in Hendy 2001: 6, 9).

In what sense do myths form the 'first histories of the gentile nations'? As Balagangadhara explains, generally the 18th century Romantics had argued that the origin of religion, especially the primitive or the heathen religion, had to do with the fact that heathens had

> hypostatised natural forces into gods with human and semi-divine attributes and embellishments,[27] and thus inventing their pantheon. Not yet capable of rational and abstract thinking, the Early Man used the fanciful imagination that he was endowed with. This was at the root of those fantastical creations and absurd stories that constituted his religious world. These mythologies – as some philosophers suggest to this day – are the products of 'mythical thought', standing opposed to which is the 'rational' or 'scientific' thought.[28]
>
> The Romantics from Herder through Schlegel and beyond accepted this Enlightenment legacy. They accepted the identification of the living heathens with the Ancient pagans. Consequently, the rediscovery of India and its culture meant a discovery of an ancient culture, which was contemporaneous with the modern one. The ancients were living in another part of the world. These ancients, as writer after writer testifies, represented the childhood of Man. Thus, as Romantics projected the image of India, India was the cradle of the world civilization. ... Irrespec-

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[27] As late as 1876, *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Greek History for the Little Ones* by Charlotte Yonge explained that ancient Greeks had made strange stories since they were not trained in the knowledge of God like the Israelites.

> I am going to tell you the history of the most wonderful people who ever lived. But I have to begin with a good deal that is not true; for the people who descended from Japhet's son Javan, and lived in the beautiful islands and peninsulas called Greece, were not trained in the knowledge of God like the Israelites, but had to guess for themselves. They made strange stories, partly from the old beliefs they brought from the east, partly from their ways of speaking of the powers of nature sky, sun, moon, stars, and clouds as if they were real beings, and so again of good or bad qualities as beings also, and partly from old stories about their forefathers. These stories got [so] mixed up with their belief, and came to be part of their religion and history … that nobody can understand anything about art or learning who has not learnt these stories (Yonge 1875: 11-12).

[28] "The Christians, as Henry Murray has reminded us, drove home the notion that *myth* meant pagan fables and pagan religion and was therefore, as a word, exactly equal to *false*, while *gospel*, meaning Christian religious stories, was exactly equal to *true*" (Richardson and Feldman 1972: 3 italics authors').

tive of what any single thinker said or did not say, each of them [Romantics] had accepted the framework of a universal history of humankind. Whether they liked it or not, there was a consensus that the European culture had matured. One may mourn the absence of innocence and spontaneity of childhood; one may long to rediscover the absence of affectation and deceit in the childhood; but it remains incontrovertible that this is how an adult looks back. By calling the Indian culture the childhood of Man, the Romantic thinkers did not go beyond or against the Enlightenment tradition – but merely extended it with a fanciful twist.

The same reflections are applicable to the appellation 'cradle of civilization'. To use that with respect to a culture long dead and gone, like the Greek or Roman, might be construed as a way of paying homage, tribute, or just acknowledgement to the contributions of the past. What does it mean when used to characterise a living culture? It can only mean that those who live in this culture are still in their cradles – and have been there during the last thousand years – unlike their European counterparts (Balagangadhara 1994: 123-124).

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), in his brief preface to his, "On the Wisdom of the Ancients," offers four reasons for allegorizing the ancient stories. The following two (the second and the fourth) of four of his reasons are important for us here. (a) Some of the ancient stories are so "absurd and stupid upon the face of the narrative taken by itself, that they may be said to give notice from afar and cry out that there is a parable below". (b) These stories serve paradoxically not only "to disguise and veil the meaning" but "also to throw light upon" them (quoted and explained in Hendy 2001: 4). It is clear now that understanding pagan myths, stories, or fables helps one to appreciate the pagan mind and pagan culture or religion. Bacon's methodological reasons construe pagan myths as that which is "absurd and stupid upon the face", but seems to have a parable "below". That is to say, they paradoxically throw light upon the meaning that they disguise. What should myths be if they ought to satisfy both these conditions?

As Hendy notes, August Schlegel had recommended *symbol* as the candidate capable of doing this. According to Tsvetan Todorov, "if we had to condense the romantic aesthetic into a single word, it would certainly be the word 'symbol.'" Symbol, says Todorov in his reflections on Goethe, "is productive, intransitive, motivated; it

achieves the *fusion of contraries*; it is and signifies at the same time; its content eludes reason; it expresses the inexpressible" (quoted in Hendy 2001: 36 emphasis mine). By the 18-teens, Hendy notes further, for various key theorists – Schelling, Friedrich Creuzer, Coleridge – symbol had become that which participates in some transcendent religious reality.

But why symbols? There was at least one important reason. As per the general opinion of the time, pagans were not mature enough to express their ideas in clearer terms. This justified (or led to) the association of myth with poetry and poetry with the childhood of a civilisation. Myths, therefore, have to be understood as symbols. Two crucial points can be noted from this foregoing brief discussion.

(i) Understood as symbols, figuring out the meaning of myths now rests on the person interpreting it and not so much (or not at all) on the people who have produced it. This means that the interpreter gets privilege over the producer of the symbol. Western scholars can now show the hidden meaning in Eastern practices and texts, seen as a symbol, which has eluded the Eastern mind for centuries. They can now show and convince themselves that, as promised, God had after all blessed every human community with the truth. It is a different story, though, that some of them did not understand it and even lost it over the ages. Speaking about the works of a Tamil bhakti saint, *Sivavakki-yar*, Elijah Hoole writes, "Hindu Mythology or the system that it is if indeed that may be called a system … abounds in the grossest absurdities and most evident contradictions." But, then, he adds, the

> intelligent and curious reader … will not be displaced to find a few extracts, and translations from Tamul works, illustrative of the works of the notions of the Hindoos on some most important subjects … displaying the degree of traditional light which has been preserved amongst them for ages, perhaps from the Patriarchal times; and the intricate paths and windings of error on divine subjects, into which the human mind has deviated, when not favoured, as in the ancient church, with contin-

ual revelations; or, as under the dispensation of the Gospel, with a full manifestation of the 'whole counsel of God' (Hoole 1829: 285).

It is this notion that led European scholars to say that Indians are so ignorant that they even fail to distinguish the good element in their own tradition from the immoral and the corrupt element.

(ii) Reading a story as myth and a myth as a symbol has a theological overtone. Furthermore, if as Richardson and Feldman note (1972: xxii), all the important modern approaches to myth come from the studies of myth of the period between 1680-1860, we are still expressing the same 300-year-old legacy of theological assumptions in our attempts to analyse aspects of Indian traditions, symbols and myths.

Reading Symbols

We see a similar approach to the understanding of Indian traditions employed during the colonial period in India. On the one hand, Indian literature was excavated and ana-lysed in depth and, on the other, it was denigrated as mere fictions of immoral minds.[29] As we saw briefly earlier in this chapter and as we will see again, in chapter 4, there were different kinds of responses from the natives to this approach. Native scholars 'agreed' and tried to reproduce it in their own way. This means that they uncritically accepted the colonial view, but tried to argue that part of their literature was useful, if not the whole of it. This approach suited the requirements of Nationalist politics. It par-tially criticised the colonial approach to Indian texts, but also partially accepted it. Thus

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[29] "When once Men are delivered up to Superstition, there is no Opinion so wild but they may fall into it. These same *Brachmans* [Brahmans] have imagined seven Seas: One of Water, one of Milk, one of Curds, a fourth of Butter, a fifth of Salt, a sixth of Sugar, and in fine, a seventh of Wine; and each of these Seas has its particular Paradises, some of the for the Wiser and more Refin'd, and the rest for the Sensual and Voluptuous; with this difference, that the first of these Paradises, which unites us intimately with the Divinity, has no need of any other fort of Delights; whereas the rest are stored with all imagin-able Pleasures" (Banier 1739: 139).

was born the argument that the vachanas, unlike some other literature, are not useless myths and fictional literature, but is the best literature in Kannada, both in terms of its literary qualities and moral status. This also meant that they had to condemn some part of their traditional literature as *useless myths and fictional* and, as we saw in the previous chapters, they did not hesitate to line up the works of poets such as Harihara, Bhimakavi and others as not only inferior to the vachanas but also as shadowing the revolutionary dimension of the vachanas and the vachana movement.

One of the important aspects of the colonial approach that Indians borrowed was to treat Indian traditions and their various aspects such as literature, practices and rituals as symbols. The availability of multiple readings of the vachanas is an outcome of reading them as symbols. Once they were seen as symbols, the onus of understanding them rested on the brilliance (and probably, the degree of anti-casteist sentiments) of the interpreter in question. This also meant an interpreter would choose from the multiple possibilities of an interpretation. Hence, such a choice was necessarily subjective and context-bound. One chose what one was capable of seeing and what one needed. Something which is 'context-bound' and 'subjective' is necessarily a pluralist and horizontal notion, that is, it becomes sensible to speak of 'context-bound' and 'subjective' only when there are many *contexts* or many *subjective preferences* and we are able to distinguish each *context* or a *subjective preference* from another of its species. Furthermore, both *contexts* and *subjective preferences* should be such that a *context/subjective preference* does not have a derivative relationship with another of its kind.[30] When this happens within the outer limits of an overarching framework – the true-story in the case of the vachanas – two things are inevitable: one, it is inevitable

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[30] For an elaborate theoretical discussion on this issue see B. Narahari Rao (1994).

that interpretations (say, of the vachanas) multiply infinitely and, two, the diverse inter-

pretations look simply like minor variations within the dominant framework.

Aspects and Consequences of Reading the Vachanas as Symbols

When native scholars asserted that there is indeed some native literature (the vachanas)

that is morally upright and useful, contrary to the dominant colonial view, a conflict

was created where there was none before. This conflict did not threaten to bring down

the whole edifice, the edifice of an understanding of Indian traditions built by colonial

scholarship. That is, irrespective of whether Kannada intellectual were able to retrieve

the vachanas as morally worthy or not, colonial and orientalist knowledge of Indian

traditions and texts would have remained intact. Nevertheless, since it was a conflict it

had to be resolved. What is interesting is, colonial scholarship not only taught and

compelled the natives to assert that there were indeed some morally upright and useful

native literatures, but it also showed a way out of the resultant conflict. I want to claim

that treating the vachanas as symbols resolved this conflict. The natives seemed to have

adopted the symbolic reading of their literature such as the vachanas due to some of the

inherent advantages involved in this approach. I am not however saying that Kannada

and Lingayat intellectuals of the 19th century consciously chose the option of reading

the vachanas as symbols. But my reasoning, if holds, explains why this approach

gained so much popularity and looks today to be firmly grounded and almost natural.

Relativism, Skepticism and Anti-Grand theory Sentiments as Conflict Resolvers

The multiple readings of the vachanas technically speaking should have created a con-flict. Disagreements on the meaning of the vachanas, if they arise, cannot be settled ob-jectively. In other words, one cannot do both: accept that the vachanas can be inter-preted as symbols as well as strive to arrive at a common interpretation. One of the im-portant ways that one can settle such a conflict, either before it arises or after, is by adopting some form of relativism.[31] Modern vachana scholarship solved such conflict in question at two levels. Firstly, as we see in Tarikere's defence of multiple vachana readings, it explained why multiple readings of the vachanas are inevitable. Secondly, by finding a consensus on the *true-story* beneath the conflicting views on the vachanas, it was shown that the two views are compatible on the most crucial issue even though they differ at object-levels – the levels closer to the objects of interpretation, the vacha-nas. This resolved the conflict by showing the possibility of accepting seemingly in-compatible views. If the conflicting situation did not yield to this form of relativism, vachana scholarship resorted to a cruder but emotionally and politically pregnant form of relativism. This form of relativism, which is also the most common form of resolv-ing conflicts in the 20th century in general, tries to answer the following question: What happens if we start by conceding that two readings of the vachanas are indeed in con-flict and are exclusive? The problem will then be that one cannot make use of the va-chana tradition as a whole in political struggles. For, if it turns out that the vachanas are an inconsistent body of literature, which at times fights against casteism and at other times supports it, one cannot draw it out to speak for one's own political struggles, like the struggle against casteism.

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[31] The aim of relativism, says Bernard Williams, "is to take views, outlooks, or beliefs that apparently conflict and treat them in such a way that they do not conflict: each of them turns out to be acceptable in its own place" (1985: 156).

According to Tarikere, a society cannot accept a body of knowledge like Marxism as the medicine prescribed by a physician, but should alter and extend it to suit its requirements. This is how, says Tarikere, the vibrant Kannada society received Basava's ideas as well, by changing and altering it to suit its needs of the day (Tarikere 2008: 66-67). This form of relativism relativises the interpretation of the vachanas to the political interests of a person or a community. In order to fight a battle for an issue of social justice, then, one has the license to gloss over the real issues pertaining to the vachanas.

What aggravated this problem in the 20th century were the anti-grand theory sentiments of the post-World War period. The dominant philosophies after the world wars, namely post-modernism,[32] feminism, post-colonialism and post-structuralism, have persistently denigrated 'grand theories'. One of the first advocates of this idea, C. Wright Mills, an American sociologist known for his *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), isolated grand theories as the 'impediment to the progress of the human sciences.' By 'grand theory', he meant 'a systematic theory of the nature of man and society.' Quentin Skinner notes that Mills shared this attitude with most of his contemporaries in the English-speaking world of his time (Skinner 1985: 3). This skepticism was 'expressed in the form of two related claims that enjoyed widespread support.' One of the two claims was a "positive injunction to abandon the study of the grand philosophical systems of the past" and take on the task of "'empirical theories' of social behaviour and development." The philosophers of the day held that "there was nothing systematic

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[32] Jean-François Lyotard, for instance, asserts, "I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences" (Lyotard 1984: xxiv). Later in the book he adds, the "breaking up of the grand Narratives leads to what some authors analyze in terms of the dissolution of the social bond and the disintegration of social aggregates into a mass of individual atoms thrown into the absurdity of Brownian motion. *Nothing of the kind is happening …*" (1984: 15 italics added). I am no expert on the French society that Lyotard is commenting on. But, if to talk about Karnataka and India, then I can show that 'breaking up' of the 'grand narratives' has both intellectual and practical repercussions in the society.

for them to tell us about the substantive moral and political issues of the day" (Skinner 1985: 4). As against the grand theories, one of the important demands of the day was for a "hermeneutic approach to human science … [which is an] attempt to recover and interpret the meanings of social actions from the point of view of the agents performing them" (Skinner 1985: 6). What was the 'point of view of the agents' that was being referred to here, if not a form of relativisation of the 'meaning' of an action to its performer?[33]

To conclude this subsection, let me draw your attention to one of its important consequences. These developments unjustly safeguard a scholar from all kinds of criticisms. Any failure in the 'correct understanding' of the objects referred to through the signs is merely a subjective failure of a scholar/a generation in the 'correct' deciphering of the sign. We will develop this claim in chapter 5 with more empirical support and also discuss some of its practical consequences.

If we take the conception of the caste system as *originally* an experience that characterises colonial scholarship, we need to say how Indian scholars inherit this conception. How did Indian scholars make the European experience of Indian culture into their own, into a set of workable propositions? My answer is, they turned them into a *story*, or understood them as a *story*. Thus is formed the *true-story*. The vachana readings then are basically an attempt to interpret the vachanas in such a way that they will be consistent with the true-story. The success of an author here depends on his/her abil-

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[33] As Frankfurt in his short book on 'bullshit' asserts, "[t]he contemporary proliferation of bullshit also has deeper sources, in various forms of skepticism which deny that we can have any reliable access to an objective reality, and which therefore reject the possibility of knowing how things truly are. These "anti-realist" doctrines undermine confidence in the value of disinterested efforts to determine what is true and what is false, and even in the intelligibility of the notion of objective inquiry. One response to this loss of confidence has been a retreat from the discipline required by dedication to the ideal of correctness to a quite different sort of discipline, which is imposed by pursuit of an alternative ideal of sincerity. Rather than seeking primarily to arrive at accurate representations of a common world, the individual turns toward trying to provide honest representations of himself. Convinced that reality has no inherent nature, which he might hope to identify as the truth about things, he devotes himself to being true to his own nature. It is as though he decides that since it makes no sense to try to be true to the facts, he must therefore try instead to be true to himself" (Frankfurt 2005: 64-66).

ity to use literary theories, social sciences, philosophy and such like in proving the relations between the vachanas and the true-story.[34]

That makes the vachana readings merely '*beautiful* literary interpretations.' Kuhn describes this problem with an excellent analogy. "To solve a jigsaw puzzle", says Kuhn,

> is not, for example, merely 'to make a picture.' Either a child or a contemporary artist could do that by scattering selected pieces, as abstract shapes, upon some neutral ground. The picture thus produced might be far better, and certainly be more original than the one from which the puzzle had been made. Nevertheless, such a picture would not be a solution. To achieve that all the pieces must be used, their plain sides must be turned down, and they must be interlocked without forcing until no holes remain. Those are among the rules that govern jigsaw-puzzle solutions. Similar restrictions upon the admissible solutions of crossword puzzles, riddles, chess problems, and so on, are readily discovered (Kuhn 1962: 38).

Thus the vachana scholarship in the 20th century has produced interpretations that are perhaps 'far better and more original than what they were originally intended to mean.' But, in the process, we have lost a sense of the problems the vachanas were discussing and the answers that they were formulating. Consequently, we have also lost access to the cultural and cognitive world of the vachanas.

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[34] S.N. Balagangadhara's notion of 'ideology' provides a conceptual elaboration of this ability. According to him, 'ideology' merely means the following: 'the ability to...'. Ideology, he says, merely 'enables'. 'Enables to do what? (Or, ability to do what?) The answer to this question depends on what that ideology is about. That is to say, we have to speak about ideology of 'something' whenever we speak about 'ideology'.' He then develops this notion in relation to terrorist acts. "While terrorism is not itself an ideology, it exists by virtue of an ideology. By presenting criminal actions as morally praiseworthy, this ideology performs the central function of any ideology: it enables one to lend legitimacy to actions that are otherwise considered illegitimate. The ideology itself does not provide the required justification; if it could, it would be an ethical, political, social or economic theory or even a religion. Instead, the ideology of crime merely enables such a justification, where and when necessary" (Balagangadhara 2008).

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the two components of modern vachana scholarship: the true-story and the diagnostic attitude. The colonial framework we have inherited makes vachana scholarship take the form of or appear as a true-story. Together with the true-story, the attitude in question – that evaluates traditions and their different aspects in terms of 'truth' and 'falsity' – has shaped modern vachana scholarship. Some of the points made in this chapter need more clarification. The notion of story is used here more as a commonsensical notion. Hence, it has raised several questions that seek clarification about the properties and functions of the story. More importantly, we have to see if the properties and functions of a story are relative to a culture. Some of the claims regarding the relationship between colonial scholarship and the true-story need more empirical (see chapter 3) as well as conceptual support (see chapters 4 and 5). The juxtaposition of the true-story and the attitude too raise some interesting questions. Do they generate and sustain each other? Does this attitude convert stories into (apparent, if not real) descriptions? Or, does it just facilitate a process of turning stories into apparent descriptions?

We will take up these questions for discussion in the final chapter. For now, let us just note that the story that is held to be true and an attitude that views stories to be true/false make a lethal combination. For judging stories to be true or false implies that one gives importance to stories considered true over the false stories. If so, whenever a selection of stories takes place, the true-story is automatically privileged. This gives an air of authenticity to the true-story over all other stories available in a tradition. Choosing one story as true is to valorise one community, associated with that story, or one

way of looking at the world as the *only* correct way. The implications of this phenome-

non may range from the comic to the tragic, sometimes one becoming the other.

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Chapter 3

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THE LINGAYATS AND THEIR TRADITION THROUGH HISTORY

T his chapter traces the developments that culminated in the formation of what I call modern vachana scholarship. Besides, this chapter also provides empirical support to some of the important arguments of the dissertation. The chapter has three main sections. The first section illuminates the early European views concerning the Lingayat community. These views were largely positive, as we have already noted. The second section discusses the development of these early European positive views concerning the Lingayats into full-fledged research scholarship, in about a century's time. The third and the final section is a genealogy of modern vachana scholarship, the way it emerged as a British colonial legacy. These three sections represent three chronological periods in the development of the 'true-story'. Seen from another angle, the three sections are an investigation into three aspects of modern vachana scholarship. The first section deals with the puzzling Lingayat-British relations, which thrived in the absence of any formal associations between the two communities. The second section deals with the way a positive and progressive history of the Lingayat community took birth amidst the positive European views of the community. The third section deals with the way native Kannada scholars negotiated with the emerging European version of history of their community. As a whole, the chapter is a reflection on the developments that

have shaped the Lingayat tradition and the community since the days of European travellers' visits to India.

I. On European Views of the Lingayats and Lingayat-British Relations

The Lingayats and British shared a very cordial relationship until the early-20th century. Colonial rulers and intellectuals not only took a benign view of the Lingayats but they also fostered their interests in various ways. The Lingayats, for instance, seem[1] to have enjoyed a very high rate of success in court litigations throughout the 19th century (see appendix III). As some of the Lingayat writings suggest, this was possible on account of their friendly relations with the British. At the root of the friendly relations lay a positive view of the Lingayat community. Mysteriously, this positive view seems to have originated very early. My research is able to trace it as far back as the second and third decades of the 18th century. Even this early-18th century reference to the Lingayats talks about them as an anti-Brahmanical community. The historical importance of the document in question can only be understood if we place its author, Sartorius (John Antony Sartorius?), in his historical context. The unnamed editor of *Notices of Madras and Cuddalore in the Last Century* (Schultze 1858: vii), the book in which Sartorius's account appeared, writes: "It was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that the Protestants of Europe began to turn their thoughts to the establishment of Missions to India; and the honour of having done so, belongs exclusively to Frederick IV of Denmark". The editorial introduction continues:

> At that time, Europe reposing from controversy, began to feel the genial
> effects of a revival of practical religion, commencing at the University
> of Halle, as a centre, and radiating over every part of the continent. Un-

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[1] I say 'seems' because of lack of historical primary data related to this issue. My analysis here is mostly dependent on the reflection on this legal success of the Lingayats available in their subsequent writings. See appendix #III.

der its influence, and guided by the advice of Luetken, a friend of
Spener and Francke, Frederick resolved to found a Mission at the Dan-
ish Settlement of Tranquebar. On the 9th of July, 1706, Ziegenbalg ar-
rived at that place, and in 1709, he was joined by Gruendler. In 1719,
Benjamin Schultze, passed through London on his way to India, and was
presented to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and to
Archbishop Wake, its President (Schultze 1858: vii-viii).

Sartorius worked with Benjamin Schultze as a missionary. He "was the first missionary sent from England to India by an English Missionary Society". He rose in position to assume the charge of "the Vepery (Madras) Mission" from 1728 to 1737 (Westcott 1897: Chapter 1). In his account of a Journey to Tranquebar in 1733, he observed:

In the furthest Court resides … a chief priest of … [a sect] called Vi-
raseibam or Linga-taranam, because they all wear and worship the Lin-
gam, called also Vira-pattiren. … He admitted that there is but one God,
and that it is our duty to honour and worship him; for, except the Lin-
gam, they worship no images nor deities. Of the Supreme Being, he
spoke very reverently, and with some feeling. When I asked him why
they worshipped God under so obscene an image, he could not or would
not give any other answer than that the custom had been handed down
to them. What I said of worshipping God in spirit, and of His glorious
and divine attributes, he listened to in silence and approved, and ap-
peared to be impressed by it (Schultze 1858: 133-134).

We should take my claim of a positive assessment of the Lingayats with some qualifications here and not in an absolute sense. By the standards of European views of other Indian castes and communities of the time, this view was quite positive.[2] Besides, one also has to understand the European image of the Lingayats in contrast with their image of the Brahmans. That some kind of rivalry existed between the two communi-ties is not a secret. European and later orientalist scholars' bid to explain this rivalry,

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[2] Just consider a randomly selected European views of other Indian traditions from the 18th century. An-
toine Dubois says, he has seen "nothing but pride, self-conceit, duplicity, lying, and every kind of un-
natural and anti-Christian vices" among the Brahmans. He then says, a "Hindoo, and above all, a Brah-
min, by his institutions, his usages, his education and customs, must be considered as a kind of moral
monster – as an individual placed in a state of continual variance and opposition with the rest of the hu-
man race" (quoted in Hough 1824: 6).

however, took the familiar route of orientalism.[3] We will keep returning to this theme

in the chapter. For now, let us examine the European positive image of the Lingayats.

The positive views expressed by Sartorius in 1733 did not change in the subsequent

years. The occasional criticism of the Lingayats[4] – for instance, Sartorius's remark that

'they worship obscene idols' – withered away without much support.[5] The following

claims of a missionary reflect the dominant stereotypical opinion of the Europeans from

the days of Sartorius to the early 20th century:

> Lingaites are the most important community in a Missionary point of
> view … because they are all united by the exclusive worship of the
> Linga, and by the same numerous priesthood of Jangams, who have a
> regular system of hierarchy amongst themselves, and exercise a very
> powerful influence and close supervision over all their followers by
> means of frequent visits to their houses and families. As wandering
> mendicants, also, they constantly keep up the connexion and intercourse
> between the Lingaites of the various parts of the country. To this well
> adapted institution of a Sudra priesthood, to be supplied from every
> class of the people, … no doubt the rapid and extensive spread of Lin-
> gaitism, even to the present day, and its great tenacity, are to be ascribed
> (South India Missionary Conference 1858: 93).

The above paragraph, needless to say, is full of positive descriptions of the

community: "Lingaites are the most important community"; "they are all united…" etc.

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[3] If a scholar who studies the orients is an orientalist, my suggestion here is not that all studies of the orients necessarily leads to orientalism. My claim is historical rather than conceptual. That is, my claim is, "[t]o the Westerner, however, the Oriental was always *like* some aspect of the West; to some of the German Romantics, for example, Indian religion was essentially an Oriental version of Germano-Christian pantheism" (Said 1978: 67 italics added). What does Said mean by this remark? Here is Balagangadhara's explanation of this remark: "That is to say, in the Western descriptions of other cultures, the 'otherness' of the latter has disappeared. Better still, 'non-Western' cultures appear to differ from the West only as pale (or erring) imitations of the great original the latter is. Orientalism is constrained to describe non-Western cultures not merely in terms of the Western culture. It also effaces the differences between the two while doing so. A limited vocabulary and imagery are the consequences of this constraint. It requires noting that this formulation merely characterises Orientalism as a constrained thinking of the Western culture" (Balagangadhara and Keppens 2007: sec. 1.2).

[4] Jacques de Coutre, a Netherlander in Portuguese India, in his account of his life and adventures in parts of the Portuguese and Spanish empires including southern India between 1592 and 1623 gave a series of negative but fantastic pictures of India. Some of the practices that he ridiculed as 'barbarism of the idolatrous' were hook-swinging, sati and Lingayat burials (Rubiés 2000: 381).

[5] Despite the decrease in the negative opinions about the Lingayats, some negative remarks about Basava continued undeterred. But, as we noted in the previous chapter, one of the important purposes of making such odd negative comments about Basava was to show that he was nothing more than a human being after all and one ought not to worship him.

Over a period of two centuries, the number of such positive descriptions, often taking the form of positive stereotypes, about the Lingayats multiplied extensively, until it hit a declining curve in the 1920s with the emergence of native Kannada scholars. The repeated acknowledgment of the British favours to their community by the early 20th century Lingayat leaders stands witness both to the favourable time they relished under the British rule earlier in 18th and 19th centuries and its decline under the Mysore government in the 20th century and its replacement with a certain trend in native scholarship. Before we talk about this trend, we need to examine the long historical developments that contributed to this phenomenon. Let us run through the historical incidents that provide additional information in favour of these claims.

The North Karnataka region fell into the hands of the British in 1817-18, when it was "conquered from the Peshwa by a British army from Madras under Thomas Munro." Munro had "clearly considered the expatriate Maharashtrian elite in the Karnatak as interlopers", and went on to ignore them while selecting "men for positions in the revenue administration of the British districts, and relied instead on Deshastha Brahmans brought in from the Bellari district of Madras" (Roberts 1971: 250-251). Until 1836, this region was under the direct rule of the Government of India, and when the issue of handing it over either to Bombay or Madras government was discussed, Mountstuart Elphinstone's "senior councillor, Francis Warden, sought to give a stronger basis to the Bombay claim [over this region] by emphasizing sectarian as against linguistic divisions." He specially mentioned *Lingayat interests* in his report: "the Deshasthas who had been introduced into the administration from Madras were more alien to the lingayat cultivators than the Chitpavans and other Brahmans." The Bombay claim was upheld based on this consideration (Roberts 1971: 252). This favouritism towards the Lingayats continued on a stronger note in subsequent years. The

bond had grown so strong that the British officials even lamented that though they

"wished to bring *lingayats* into government service" it "could not readily be effected"

because, from

> 1836 entry to government service had depended on the possession of a certificate of competence from an annual examination committee composed of the Collector aid official and unofficial Indian members. Although the excess of passed candidates over vacancies left a margin of choice to the Collector, his choice was still limited. *Lingayats* rarely appeared for examination. In 1839 Townsend noted, 'one lingayat passed an examination last year and I immediately gave him a position in my Duftur, another who qualified himself this year has been appointed to a similar situation under Mr. Campbell. No others except Brahmans have yet passed the examination' (Roberts 1971: 254).

The reports of the *Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe*, established in 1904,

and the speeches of Lingayat leaders made on different occasions in the early 20th cen-

tury, as well as many other documents, repeatedly acknowledge such British favours

with gratitude. The 5th Sabhe, held in Bellary in 1909, passed a resolution in honour of

the British government: "Because of the British rule [in the country] we have been re-

ceiving encouragement and facilities for the development of our community. This help

is increasing by the day. We, therefore, express our loyalty and gratitude to British, and

pray unto god that they live long in the Indian continent" (1910: 222). In his presiden-

tial address delivered in the 7th Sabhe, held in Nippani in 1912, Rudragowda Chan-

naveeragowda Artal asserted:

> We have long been victims of privilege and prejudice. The priestly class have always professed to rule us and to have a monopoly of learning in its higher and sacred branches. Even to-day in some of the native states and particularly in Mysore they have not the sense of shame to pretend to these things…. Happily for us, we have in India the British Government which rightly feels that the other classes, the non-priestly classes have been very much wronged by the arrogance and selfishness of the priestly class, and which is too civilized and enlightened to countenance any of their pretenses and which is pledged as a sacred duty to raise other communities hitherto condemned to ignorance and slavery to the same level and standing as the priestly class. … Now or never! We want the just and benign government to last a long, long time before we can

be equal to other classes. … *Whatever little defects there may be in the British rule this is the best we can have.* … Let us not meddle with politics, then, and let us beware that we are not seduced to it by men whose only object will be to make a cat's paw of us. Let us, therefore, be loyal to the British Raj in thought, word and deed (Artal 1912: 4-5 emphasis mine).

Besides the warmth of the British views concerning their community, the Lingayats had concrete reasons for their deep trust in the British administration. As mentioned earlier, one of these reasons was the greater success they enjoyed in court litigations in the 19th century. If not all, a surprising majority of the cases that the Lingayats fought in the 19th century and the pleas they made to the British, Bombay and Mysore governments were *apparently* resolved in their favour.[6] Like in the Marathi speaking places of the north, says Revayya Virupaakashayya,

here in Kamatagi, Kalaadagi, Haveri, Shimoga, Mysore etc., [of the south] there have been conflicts between *bhatta*s [Brahmans/Brahman priests] and our *matha*-heads for rights and endowments. They have been taken to the higher courts of law and the courts have decided them in favour of our community (Revayya Virupaakashayya 1912: 3).

The Mysore government increasingly became indifferent to the demands of the Lingayats in the early 20th century. This was also the period when the Lingayat community turned introspective and started accumulating grievances. While it acknowledged the British favours with gratitude, it did not hesitate to admonish the Mysore state openly. "Even if the [Princely] Mysore government discriminates against us until the end, we will continue raising our voice … since we hope there is no place for such discrimination in the British government" (*4ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe, Bagalakote* 1910: 28, see also 23 ff).

Let us conclude this section by raising a difficult question. The cordial relationship between the Lingayats and the British and European benign view of the Lingayat

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[6] For more on this see the appendix #III.

community raises a puzzle: as noted earlier, it thrived in the absence of any commercial, military or political associations between the two. If so, what promoted and sustained this relationship? What explains the benign European view of the Lingayat community? How or why did it emerge? If the relationship itself had no empirical groundings, a historical analysis of the relationship alone will not help much in understanding it. We need to tackle this question at a conceptual level, unravelling the 'ideological' underpinnings, if any, of this relationship. We will therefore return to this question in chapter 5, equipped with more tools and instruments and with more preparation to handle it.

II. From Travelogues to Research Articles

Two research articles by C.P. Brown on the Lingayat tradition mark the carry-over of early European positive views concerning the Lingayats into academic research on the community. This section will take account of Brown's contribution and the legacy he left behind, and the different stages in the development of the history of the Lingayats in the 19th century.

Charles Philip Brown, the colonial Telugu scholar, wrote a full-length research essay on the Lingayat community entitled, "Essay on the Creed, Custom and Literature of the Jangams" (Brown 1840a), in 1840. In the same year he wrote yet another essay entitled, "Account of the Basava Purana;-- the Principal book used as a Religious Code by the Jangams" (Brown 1840b). His interest in the Lingayats must have begun very early in his career. In his editorial introduction to *The Wars of the Rajas, Being the History of Anantapuram*, a Telugu text published sometime between 1750 and 1810, he writes, "[t]hese names denote that the family were Lingavants or Vira Saivas (Jangams)

the sect who wear the image of the lingam, in a box the size of a walnut, on the neck. These are considered by bramins as heretics. The creed arose about A.D. 1160" (Cole and Brown 1853: 15 see the footnote). His "Essay on the Language and Literature of the Telugus" (1839), also reveals his positive views concerning the community. He writes in the article, "[a] superstitious monotony, far from pleasing, and imitated from the Purānas occur in the commencement of every (padya-cāvyam) poem" in Telugu. However, the "Jangama books alone deviate from this routine, and are for this particular reason much disliked by bramins". In a footnote appended to this sentence, he writes, "[t]he Jangamas refuse even to write *Sri Rama* at the commencement of books and letters. Indeed they discountenance every one of the braminical superstitions." Later in the essay, he adds, the "Jangama or Saivite literature is as remarkable for innocence as that of the Bramins is for vice" (Brown 1839: 362, 367).

His two essays published in 1840 are very important in the development of a new scholarship concerning the Lingayat tradition. Their historical importance, as Brown himself points out, is two fold: first, these were the first full-length research articles on the Lingayat community.[7] Second, these articles testify to the fact that the European positive view of the Lingayats was not a coincidence but had some deeper reasons. The references about the Lingayats until Brown were limited to some isolated events mentioned in colonial writings such as diary entries, travelogues or anthropological writings (like that of Francis Buchanan), where the Lingayats were just one of the communities that the author was talking about. Such writings discussed a community not because of any particular importance it had but because it was a part of the geographical area, where the author had come to stay or was passing through. Brown's essay 'more or less' marks an end of the occasional negative views concerning the Lin-

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[7] Scholars working in the area recognize that this article is the first full-length research article on the Vīraśaiva community (Cf. Chekki 1997).

gayats. It is not that after Brown, scholars and commentators stopped making negative comments about the Lingayats. The negative comments became less common and more importantly, the positive views apparently took on a formal and 'official' look. Brown's article stands witness to both this new change and the old ways of talking about the community. We can observe these two changes in Brown's corrective tone:

> Dr. Francis Buchanan, the Abbe Dubois, and Colonel Wilks have given short notices regarding the Jangams, which are summed up in Professor Wilson's Essays on Sects, in the seventeenth volume of the Asiatic Researchers. But the information collected regarding the Saivites being far from sufficient … [I] resumed an enquiry regarding the Jangams, the only saivite sect who deviate from brahminical usages (Brown 1840a: 143).

It may not be clear in his quick remarks what he meant by "short notices" and "far from sufficient". Did he mean the earlier scholars spent fewer words on the Lingayats compared to his own writings? This was however not true. Buchanan had more to say about them than Brown. A basic knowledge of the works of Buchanan and Dubois would however solve this problem easily. Unlike Brown, Buchanan[8] and Dubois[9] had negative views concerning the Hindus as a whole.[10] One of the inspiring reasons

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[8] He travelled across Karnataka and described many Lingayat 'sub-castes'. He is not only short, but also quite ungenerous in his descriptions. He calls a Malaya Curubaru "a rude tribe". The way he talks about Basava's sister is also a point to be noted: "Baswana's sister now became pregnant, without having been married. She alleged, she had been impregnated by *Iswara;* and, as a proof of her veracity, the child came from her back, in place of being born in the usual manner. The child was called *Chinna Baswana*" (Buchanan 1807: 265).

[9] Jean Antoine Dubois, a Jesuit missionary from Mysore, was famous for his harsh views on Hindus. In his "Letters on the State of Christianity in India", he puts forth his "decided opinion" that conversion in India is almost impossible. One of the reasons by which he supports his claim was the "bad character of the Hindoos, but especially of the Brahmins … upon the nature of their superstitions and the inveteracy of their prejudices" (Hough 1824: 2). Dubois' views were so harsh that Rev. James Hough, who was a chaplain to the East-India Company, on the Madras establishment, wrote a reply to him. In the letter, assessing the impact of Dubois' Letter, he concludes: "after perusing and re-perusing the Abbe's Letters, with that attention which the importance of the subject demands … I have arrived at conclusions diametrically opposite to those which he has drawn" (Hough 1824: 4). Though Hough's reply was intended to show that conversions in India were possible, as against Dubois' despair, it is worth noting that Hough was also critical of Dubois' extremely negative views of the Hindus.

[10] Thomas R. Trautmann contends that Brown had a deep contempt for Hinduism as a whole (Trautmann 2009: 244-246). That might be true. However, I would say, his deep contempt for Hinduism in fact made him look for a ray of hope amongst the depraved Hindus, in the form of anti-Brahman sects. After all, as Trautmann notes, Brown was a "committed Christians in the Orientalist ranks" and like all missionaries, he too was a reformer. I would say that while his Christian faith assured him that God had bestowed His

behind Brown's research article on the Lingayats was that even though they were one of the important "anti-braminical worshippers of Siva", they had been neglected by European scholars, such as "Colebrooke, Wilson and other learned writers", who had amply illustrated the "Braminical creeds prevailing among the Hindus, as well as those of the Jainas and Buddhists" (Brown 1840a: 143).

Brown was not the first person to separate the Lingayat tradition from 'Hindu-ism', and more specifically from the "Brahminical creeds". Quite a few thinkers before him had done so, albeit in passing.[11] The importance of Brown in the history of modern studies in the Lingayat tradition owes much to his role in constituting the Lingayat community as a domain of inquiry in (the then nascent) social sciences. The practice of looking at the "literature of the jangams" as the literature of the Lingayat community, rather than as, say, ethical treatises of a school of philosophy seems to have acquired scholarly sanction with Brown.[12] Let us look closely at his essay on the creed, custom and literature of the Lingayats.

Brown's essay begins by dividing Indian society into two broad segments: "Brhamanical creeds prevailing among the Hindus, as well as those of the Jainas and Buddhists" and "anti-brhaminical worshippers of Siva" such as the "Jangamas, Vīra-śaivas, or Lingadharis." Much has been written about the former group, says Brown. However, the literature available with regard to the latter group is "far from sufficient" and information regarding certain key issues has "remained very uncertain for want of sufficient enquires made in the peninsula of India" (1840a: 143). Brown proceeds to

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truth upon the heathens, his missionary zeal made him look for the reminiscences of this truth in the hea-then culture.

[11] I would say that many more thinkers, who might have said the same, seem to have disappeared in the moth-eaten rags of the archives, challenging my abilities to dig through them, but not without leaving a faint trace here and there.

[12] Rahamath Tarikere makes similar observations about modern Kannada scholarship on the Lingayat tradition. Modern vachana scholars, he observes, have *Lingayat-ised* every tradition that has preserved memories of its transactions with vachana-composers, adding them into the growing repertoire of the Lingayat tradition (Tarikere 1998: 72-73).

divide the Lingayats "into two sects: one is semi-braminical high-church, called Aradhyas. The other is anti-brhaminical, and called Jangama." Henceforth, Brown's focus in the essay will be on the Jangama sect and the Aradhyas will only provide a quick reference to the Brahman sect, in general, in order to draw a contrast between Brahmanism and the anti-Brahman Jangamas. He offers a "brief outline of the history" of this sect "to enable us to understand the present state of the Vīraśaiva sect … [as] narrated in their poetic chronicles". The history that Brown outlines is well-known to us today, popularised by 20th century Kannada scholars: A "Saivite bramin" called Basava grew up on a diet of revolutions by refusing to wear the "brhaminical thread, because the rites that confer a mark of *initiation* require the adoration of the sun in the manner prescribed by the Vedas" (1840a: 144). Thus was born an autochthonous revolutionary, who grew up to become "the resolute opponent of every brhaminical principle." The list of Brahmanical principles that Basava refuted is long. Let me summarise them in Brown's own words (1840a: 146 ff.).

Brahmans, he says, inculcate adoration of many: goddesses, subordinate beings, cows, hawks, monkeys, rats and snakes. They use fasts and feasts, penance and pilgrimage, rosaries and holy water. In contrast, Basava renounced all these. He set aside the Vedas and declared that there is one sole deity. Brahmans literally declare themselves gods upon earth. They hold women to be inferior to men and pariahs to be utterly abominable. Basava abolished these distinctions. He taught that all men are holy in proportion as they are temples of the great spirit; that by birth all are equal; and among those whom the Jangama books describe as saints, we find not a single Brahman but many pariahs and many women. Should one wonder about the sources of Basava's ideals, the answer is self-evident: "an observation of the Christian faith in the

neighbouring country of Malayala may have led to his seeking a better creed" (1840a:

145).[13] The contrast, which runs through the essay, must be clear by now:

> the braminical writings [portray women] … in a manner abhorrent to
> European feelings. But in the Jangama books we find a very different
> temper. Here we find woman raised to her proper station in society, such
> as she holds among Christians. …[T]he considerate and decent behav-
> iour of the Jangams towards the female sex, is a very pleasing peculiar-
> ity which entirely divides them from other classes of Hindus (1840a:
> 146).

This particular framework and views continued without any major shift that

would alter the argument of Brown's essays of 1840. However, one has to wait until the

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[13] It will be interesting to note here that many scholars have found striking similarities between parts of
the Lingayat tradition and Islam. "In the sixth/twelfth century there arose two sects in the South which
clearly revealed the influence of Islam. They were the Lingāyats and the Siddhāris. The Lingāyats wor-
shipped one God" (Sharif 1966: 1402). See also the following writings that talk about similarities be-
tween Islam/Sufi and Lingayat traditions: (Dejagow 1993), (Ejasuddin 1984), (Chandraiah 1984). Siddiq
Hussain, the founder of Deendar Anjuman, who was born in 1886 in Ballampet in Gulbarga (Karnataka)
was dedicated to the spread of Islam. He claims that the "special features" of the Lingayats made him
work among the Lingayats. He asserted that "the truth of his version of Islam as a fulfilment of the es-
chatological hopes of the Lingayats" (Sikkand 2004: 156, 157). What was interesting about his

> appeals to the Lingayats is that in exhorting them to convert to Islam he did not repudiate the le-
> gitimacy of the Lingayat scriptures or deny that they might also be of divine origin. On the con-
> trary, he accepted that these scriptures were true and had a certain validity…. [H]e claimed that
> the Lingayats were 'actually Arab by race' and so 'are neighbours and, in matters religious, very
> close to the Muslims'. In effect, he sought to present the Lingayats as a people Muslim in origin,
> whose own real history they had forgotten…. Thus, he claimed that the founder of the Lingayat
> community, Basava, was himself a Muslim and that he actually preached Islam. As evidence for
> this he cited the fact that the colour of the flag of most Lingayat monasteries (*muths*) is green,
> and claimed that Basava himself recited the Islamic *kalmia* on his deathbed (Sikkand 2004:
> 159).

Note the talk about similarities and the evidence that he procures: the green colour of the flag of
Lingayat monasteries. Rahmat Tarikere notes many such, what he calls, 'surface similarities' between the
Lingayats and Muslims. Nevertheless, he rightly notes that these similarities have misled secularist
scholars into talk about the syncretism of Lingayat and Sufi traditions rather than to understand the com-
plex relations between the two. Let me just briefly mention here the four similarities the Tarikere dis-
cusses in detail in his work (1998: 72-104): (1) Both the traditions have a long practice of Guru-Shishya
(teacher-student) relations. More importantly, there are similarities in the pattern of these relations as
practiced in these two traditions. (2) There are similarities in the way Sufi spiritual schools/places called
Khanakhas and Lingayat mathas are structured and the way they function. (3) There are similarities in
the architectural style that these two traditions have practiced. They both follow some specific variations
of the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. (4) They also share similarities in the patterns of names.
    We can add two more similarities to the list. (5) Like Islam, the Lingayat tradition has militantly in-
sisted on worshipping one god (monotheism). (For some reference to this feature of the Lingayat tradi-
tion see chapter 3.) (6) There are some significant similarities in the burial practices of the two traditions:
"A.L. Basham (1954), in his book *The Wonder That Was India*, mentions … [w]ith reference to the prac-
tice of burial of the dead among the Lingāyats … that it is possible that Basava was influenced by what
he had heard of Islam" (Chekki 1997: 113). Tarikere observes that these similarities point towards a very
deep relationship between the two traditions. It would be interesting to see what future research will tell
us about these issues.

entry of native Kannada scholars to see another lengthy and detailed study of any aspect of the Lingayat tradition. However, passing references and general discussions of the Lingayat tradition continued at a higher pace than in the days before Brown.

Emergence of a History

The references to the anti-Hindu nature of the Lingayats found since the early decades of the 17th century seem to converge gradually into a history of the Lingayats. Technically speaking, one cannot prove much on the bases of the scanty literature available. However, it is surprising that this scanty literature itself shows a clear progress from the account of a meeting with a seer and a report about the community he represents, to crude ethnographical accounts, to a history or at least an outline of a history of the Lingayats by the mid-18th century. More importantly, I propose, there is a close relation between the European positive views concerning the Lingayats and this nascent history. Those who spoke in favour of the Lingayats as well as those who criticised them based their arguments on this history. While the majority saw Basava as a reformer who fought for the oppressed, some were able to see an oppressor in Basava or at least a person with many follies and carnal desires.

In fact, in Buchanan's writings one can already see this history taking shape. In his bid to understand Basava, as we saw earlier, he (almost unnecessarily) broaches the topic of his sister and her 'unnatural' pregnancy. This history had started taking a definite shape in the early decades of the 19th century. There is a long description of the Lingayat tradition in "Some Remarks on Mission Labour in the Canarese Country", written by J. Kies, a Basel missionary stationed in northern Karnataka**:**

> Ramanooja appeared in the south as a successful propagator of Wishnuism. He first drew over the Belala Rajas, in the southern part of the present Mysore country, and also some princes of Telingana to his opinions…. In opposition to this, Basawa, the prime minister of the Tain prince at Kallyana, (N.E. of Sholapoor,) with his nephew Channabasappa, appeared in the beginning of the twelfth century as reformers of Sivaism [Saivism] (Kies 1849: 106).

What is worth noting in this essay is the way Basava is placed on the map of Indian 'religions', in contrast with Ramanuja. The gazetteer published in 1855, *A Gazetteer of Southern India* (1855: 52), continues on the same note.

> [T]he worshippers of Shiva [religion in Masulipatam] somewhat outnumber those of Vishnu; the later are for the most part of the sect of Ramanujulu, a reformer who lived in the south. Among the former are to be found the Jangams, a sect which originated in Mysore about 700 years ago, and at first was bitterly opposed to the whole Brahminical system, but this bitterness has passed away. The Mahomedans are for the most part gross idolaters, and saint worshippers; utterly ignorant of the Koran.

Around the same time, William Taylor, another colonial scholar, took up the task of describing the Lingayats and Basava with far more details and passion. Taylor's descriptions place high premium on the minute details of Basava's life. After becoming the minister, he says, "Basava fed daily one hundred and ninety-six thousand *Jangamas*. He confined his patronage entirely to the *Ashti-varna* class; or those who wore one of the eight distinguishing marks of the religion of *Siva.* He made no other distinction, from the *Brahman* down to the *Pariar* ..." (Taylor 1850: 84). Taylor in his multi-volume work published in the 1860s – *A Catalogue Raisonné of Oriental Manuscripts in the Government Library* – describes this history in even greater detail. The "ferocious sect" called "*Vira Saivas* or *Lingadharis*", he says,

> arose at *Kalyana pura*, the capital of the northern *Chálúkyas....* From a remote time, ascending to near the commencement of our common era, the ruler and people of town were *Jainas*…. At a date somewhere about A.D. 1000, the ruler of *Kalyana-puri* was named Bijjala or Bizzala. From some adventitious and recommendatory circumstances, detailed in

the *Basava puranam*, he took one *Basava*, a man of low caste and obscure origin, to be his Minister of State; which individual, in the judgment of his followers, was an incarnation of *Nandi*…. The Minister of State took offense at the pride of caste and the ascendancy of *Brahmans*, and resolved to break the bonds of the one, and degrade the pretensions of the other. He was a *Saiva* of high notions, directly the opposite of the *Jainas* as to the female energy. … *Chenna Basava* wrote a supplementary *puranam*,[14] containing more legends of the class, and keener lampoons on the Brahmans. He also drew up a regular treatise, borrowing much from the *tatva* system, and embodying the so-to-say theology of his clan. The *Prabhu linga lila* though chiefly panegyrical of *Allama*, is also dogmatical, and there have been some later works exegetical" (Taylor 1860: lxxxvi-lxxxvii, lxxxviii).

Here is an excerpt from another gazetteer, *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1908: 307),

published forty years later.

The population of the District [Dharwar] consists largely of Lingāyats…. It is generally supposed that the Lingāyats date from the twelfth century, when a religious reformer, Basava, of Kalyani in Hyderabad State, first brought into prominence this sect of Siva worshippers…. In origin the movement was anti-Brāhmanical, and caste distinctions were entirely ignored by the earlier converts.

Finally, see also the comments of J.N. Farquhar. Writing in 1915, he declares:

In the twelfth century, at Kalyān in the south of the Bombay Presidency, Basava, the prime minister of the state, founded a new śaiva sect called the Vīra Śaivas, i.e. the heroic, or excellent Śaivas. No Brāhman was allowed to act as priest in the sect, and the members renounced caste altogether; but the old poison has crept in amongst them again, and they demand recognition for their caste distinctions in the census papers (Farquhar 1915: 301).

These excerpts mark a difference that sets the tone for a way of talking about

the Lingayats, which went on to usurp a dominant position in the 20th century. In order

to bring the difference to the fore let us contrast them with the following two com-

ments. The first one is typical of the pre-Brownian way of understanding the Lingayats.

The latter is typical of what is currently the dominant mode of describing the Lingayats.

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[14] I have removed the original diacritical remarks to maintain the consistency of the text.

Introducing the "*Panchama Cumbharu*", Buchanan says, they "wear *Linga*, [they] are

an original tribe of *Karnáta.*" A page later, he introduces another Lingayat sect (accord-

ing to him, i.e.) called Vokkaligas:

> There are many of the *Woculigas*, or *Sudra* cultivators of Karnata ex-
> traction, who wear the *Linga*. In this neighborhood these are of the fol-
> lowing tribes: *Cunsa, Gangricara, Sadru,* or *Sadu,* and *Nona.* But many
> of each of these tribes worship *Siva* without wearing his badge …
> (Buchanan 1807: 26, 27-28).

Now compare Buchanan's views with the way Brown introduces the Lingayats:

> The Vira-Saivas are divided into two sects: one is semi-braminical high-
> church, called A'ra'dhyas. The other is anti-braminical, and called Jan-
> gam. The Aradhyas claim to be descendents of saivi bramins, and be-
> tween them and the Smartas there is a certain degree reluctant inter-
> course: founded upon the rites of initiation (upanayanam) which both
> parties use (Brown 1840a: 143-144).

Without placing a high premium on the differences, we can note that these two

sets of excerpts exemplify two kinds of understanding of the Lingayat community and

tradition. The former paragraph is dry and factual in its tone, with a tinge of negativity.

The latter does something more than merely talking about the community. It identifies a

population, the Lingayats, by the history of their community: 'the Lingayats are those

who belong to the twelfth century reformer, the Basava of Kalyana'. This history has

been narrated as if it were an achievement of the community, which bestows upon it a

higher status than the other communities.

A Tree Full-Grown: On the Eve of the Emergence of Native Lingayat Scholarship

References to the vachanas are conspicuous by their absence in colonial literature. As

we will see in the next section, native scholars claim to this day that colonial scholars

and orientalists did not talk about the vachanas. No doubt, this claim is indeed true. But, the problem is that this claim has also come to mean something more. It supports the claim that modern vachana scholarship is *indigenous* in many senses of the term. Importantly, it is indigenous in the sense that it is a product of the labour of native scholars. Native scholars exclusively undertook the discovery of the vachanas, their interpretation and popularisation. Though it is true as such, it also supports another implicit assumption, namely, modern vachana scholarship is also untainted by colonial and orientalist leanings. Hence, my claim to the contrary, that this scholarship is native expression of Western experience of Indian traditions, faces a challenge. In order to survive the challenge, my argument needs more empirical than conceptual support. The task of what follows in this section is to provide such an empirical reinforcement.

One thing that we noted all through this chapter is the way European writers locate Christian elements in Lingayat practices and precepts. Besides other things, the militant insistence on offering pooja only to Shiva, which is a common factor in the Lingayat tradition, was highly regarded by European writers as (a strong form of) monotheism.[15] By the 19th century, European scholars located several resonances between different aspects of the Lingayat tradition and Christian doctrines. For instance, William Taylor, a colonial writer, says, "in the first outset of the *Vira Saivam*, there is a distant resemblance to the community of goods, and fellowship of Christians, after the day of Pentecost. One dogma of proof, which the Jangamas term *anubhavam*, is similar in name and nature, to what divines term, the experimental evidence of religion. The

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[15] Dalmia writes that the central and unquestionable status of monotheism in Christianity resulted in an "unconditional rejection of not only the many gods of Hinduism, as of course all forms of image-worship, it meant as well that monism of Śankara, and the concept of the impersonal Brahman of Vedānta were to be condemned outright as erroneous" (1997: 343-344). This of course is not correct. Colonial missionaries did not reject Indian traditions wholly. Though they had a negative view of Hindu traditions as a whole, they favoured traditions like the Lingayat tradition over other traditions. Moreover, one of the reasons for this favourable attitude towards some traditions, such as Lingayat tradition, was based on their apparent monotheistic nature.

final bearing of the temptation of Allama, harmonises with apostolic precepts…." Tay-

lor does not stop there; he has something more to add:

> but then, this is brought out through a long series of luscious, sexual de-
> tails, adapted to produce quite opposite effects on votaries: just as
> Richardson's Pamela might become guide to Squires Booby (*ait* Field-
> ing) so as to dispense with marriage. I do not know that it is important
> to mention such coincidences; but as they occurred to me in the progress
> of my work, I do so, with the addition that, when brought to the test of
> 'fruits,' the one system is seen to have had good supernatural aid, and
> the other one bad supernatural aid; and the later under a principal of imi-
> tation: conformably to a keen remark of a French writer, to the effect,
> that 'there is no vice which does not assume the semblance of some vir-
> tue, and even derive aid therefrom.' We all know that counterfeits imply
> genuine originals, and that if there were no diamonds of pearls, there
> would be no paste imitations (Taylor 1860: lxxxviii-lxxxix).

Clearly, these comments were not an unconditional praise of the community. The pro-

gressive nature of the Lingayat community was only in comparison with other Indian

traditions and not Christianity itself. Even though the Lingayats had Christian elements

in their religion, they were not *quite Christian.* This can be further noted in the fact that

the same aspects – say the presence of priests – were denigrated when they were part of

one community (say the Brahmans) and appreciated when they were part of another

community (say the Lingayats). Consider the following colonial missionary opinion:

> Lingaites are the most important community in a Missionary point of
> view: not only because they form one-fourth part of the entire popula-
> tion, as the census shows, or, as I have reason to believe, considerably
> above that; but more so, because they are all united by the exclusive
> worship of the Linga, and by the same numerous priesthood of Jangams,
> who have a regular system of hierarchy amongst themselves, and exer-
> cise a very powerful influence and close supervision over all their fol-
> lowers by means of frequent visits to their houses and families. As wan-
> dering mendicants, also, they constantly keep up the connexion and in-
> tercourse between the Lingaites of the various parts of the country. To
> this well adapted institution of a Súdra priesthood, to be supplied from
> every class of the people, in which I perceive an imitation of the Jain
> Clerus, no doubt the rapid and extensive spread of Lingaitism, even to
> the present day, and its great tenacity, are to be ascribed (South India
> Missionary Conference 1858: 93).

It is no surprise that gradually many more aspects of the Lingayat tradition were generously seen as resembling some or other aspect of Christianity. To understand the nature of such a positive view one should compare them with the way European scholars criticised Brahman priests for centuries on end (see Gelders and Derde 2003). One of the direct contrasts drawn between the Lingayats and Brahmans was that while the latter dominated and oppressed the entire Indian population, the former is comprised of one of a few Indian sects that revolted against the Brahmans. It is my conviction that, the Lingayats were seen as intelligent and progressive precisely because they were seen as one of the earliest anti-Brahman communities. C.P. Brown gave voice to this view in his lengthy research articles published in the mid-19th century. Brown picked up the scantily expressed views of his predecessors and set the foundation for a scholarship that found its followers in the coming decades and more importantly in post-colonial India.

The positive traits ascribed to the Lingayat community increasingly came to be associated with its revolutionary historical background. Over a period, the accumulation of positive views about the community around its revolutionary past engendered a full-fledged, though expedient, history of the Lingayat community. By the end of the 19th century the Lingayat tradition had already acquired all those properties which were sufficient to make it an *almost but not quite* 'true religion', in the image of Protestantism: a Martin Luther (Basava), a Bible (initially the puranas and other writings and later the vachanas), revolution against the superstitious and oppressive (pseudo) religion (Basava's revolution against Brahmanism), and so on. By the time native scholars started writing about the vachanas, their tradition had thus come to be known by the progressive history associated with it. By the time Edward P. Rice published his *A History of Kanarese Literature* in 1915, these aforementioned elements were fitted to-

gether to form a complete picture of the Lingayat tradition. Rice's book has every aspect of the modern picture of the Lingayat community as we know today: the superiority of the Lingayat religion, literature, the importance of the vachanas and also a selection from the vachanas which supports Rice's views. Here is a brief overview of the way Rice's *A History of Kanarese Literature* (1915) portrays the Lingayat tradition.

"way into the treasure of India's past"

In the editorial preface to his book, Rice begins by mapping different Indian literature.

> No section of the population of India can afford to neglect her ancient heritage. In her literature, philosophy, art, and regulated life there is much that worthless, much also that is distinctly unhealthy; yet the treasures of knowledge, wisdom, and heavy which they contain are too precious to be lost. Every citizen of India needs to use them, if he to be cultured modern Indian. …[W]hile the heritage of India bas been largely explored by scholars, and the results of their toil are laid out for us in their books, they cannot be said to be really available for the ordinary man. The volumes are in most cases expensive, and are often technical and difficult. Hence this series of cheap books has been planned by a group of Christian men, in order that every educated Indian, whether rich or poor, may be able to find his way into the treasures of India's past. … The purpose is to bring the best out of the ancient treasuries, so that it may be known, enjoyed, and used (Rice 1915: chap. Editorial Preface).

This mapping is important, he says in the "Preface" to the first edition of the book, because, even a "[f]ifty years ago very few, even of the Kanarese people themselves, had any idea of the range of Kanarese literature, or of the relative age of the books which constitute it." The second edition of the book, published in 1921, was revised considerably and the account of Lingayat literature was "extended and largely rewritten."

Let us list the different aspects included in the account that this book provides.

i. Basava's revolution:

Basava, indeed, taught that men of castes, and even outcastes, were eligible to enter Lingayat community. … The scriptures of the religion are in Sanskrit, and consist of the twenty-eight Saivagamas, the earlier portions of which are said to be applicable to all Saivas and the later portions to relate especially to Virasaivas. There is also an ancient Sanskrit work, called Sivagita, to which a high place is given. … [T]he unlearned [treat] the *Basava-purana* and *Channabasava-purana* … as authorities for their religion; but the learned do not give them this place (Rice 1915: 50).

The Vaishnava Revival was a revolt against unsatisfying character of the *advaita* teaching of Sankaracharya (Rice 1915: 75).

ii. Basava's writings:

To Basava are attributed some prose works expository of the Lingayat faith, viz. *Shat-sthala-vachana*, or "Discourses on the Six Stages of Salvation"; *Kalajnana-vachana,* "Forecasts of the Future"; *Mantra-gopya, Ghatachakra-vachana* and *Raja-yoga-vachana* (Rice 1915: 53-54).

iii. The vachanas:

The Lingayat propaganda was aided by a large number of writers who flooded the country with tracts commending the new creed. These tracts are called *Vachanas*, or "Sentences," and form a unique feature of Lingayat literature. They are in easily intelligible (sometimes even alliterative) prose, requiring no learning to understand. To this fact is doubtless due, in considerable measure, the popularity of the movement. We may perhaps compare the effect produced in England in the fourteenth century by Wycliffe and his preachers and MS. Gospels. In form, the vachanas are brief disconnected paragraphs, each ending with one or another of the numerous local names under which Siva is worshipped. In style, they are epigrammatical, parallelistic and allusive. They dwell on the vanity of riches, the valuelessness of mere rites or book-learning, the uncertainty of life, and the spiritual privileges of the Siva-bhakta. They call men to give up their desire for worldly wealth and ease, to live lives of sobriety and detachment from the world, and to turn to Siva for refuge. They are seldom controversial, but almost entirely hortatory, devotional and expository. They are still recited by Lingayat acharyas for the instruction of their followers. … The vachana literature began in the time of Basava, to whom are attributed six works of this sort; and it continued to be produced through the next three or four centuries. Only a few of the vachanas can be accurately dated, a great number being anonymous. In these cases one author is distinguished from another only by the divine name which he invokes. Many of the tracts bear identical

titles, the most common of which is *Shat-sthala-vachana* (Rice 1915: 56-57).

The book also gives a selection from the vachanas of Sarvajna[16] on caste[17] and "ignorant worship"?[18] His selection of course suits the history he recounts.

Other Bhakti Literature

Along with the consolidation of the European conception of the Lingayat tradition, we also have to take into consideration a parallel development: the emergence of the interpretation of bhakti traditions and literature as progressive and anti-caste. My research does not say when this notion emerged and how exactly it developed. It only notes a certain kind of development in the 19th century. There had always been an implicit colonial idea that the religion that the biblical God had given to all human communities must be preserved in the heathen India in some or other fashion, even though it degenerated gradually.[19] Though this view had slowly started dwindling, it took a new, subtler and inexplicit form in the 19th century, in the form of the 'construction of Buddhism' (see Almond 1988). This was also the time when bhakti literature found its pride of place in European views concerning native Indian religions. Much has been written about the former topic, so let me say a few words about the latter topic. I will

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[16] According to the popular opinion, he was a mendicant saint-poet of the 16th century, known for his triplets, also called *vachanas* in Kannada. However, he is not considered a vachana-composer of the Lingayat tradition.

[17] "When light enters Pariah dwelling, is it also outcaste for that?
Oh, talk not of 'high caste' and 'outcaste.'
The man on whose homestead God's blessing doth shine
Is surely a noble of lineage divine. Sarvajna" (Rice 1915: 73).

[18] "The foolish who bow to a wayside stone,
And are hot aware of the One God alone—
These we should only for Pariahs own. Sarvajna" (Rice 1915: 74).

[19] "A modern Tamul Author, partially enlightened by a knowledge of the Bible, speaking of the degree of information on divine subjects displayed by the Hindoos, observes, 'It is evident that the ancient Hindoos held the existence of one Supreme God…yet it is equally evident that when the sects took rise, they embraced the notion that the Supreme does not at all superintend the affairs of this world, but has under him certain inferior deities; these they worship…'" (Hoole 1829: 310).

not go into the details since they are not relevant for our argument. All that I want to

highlight is the newfound interest in bhakti literature for the reasons that will be impor-

tant for our argument here.

Here is a view from Elijah Hoole's *Personal Narrative of a Mission to the*

South of India from 1820-1828 (Hoole 1829). As was typical of European scholars,

Hoole's appreciation of the works of a Tamil bhakti saint begins with a criticism of

Hinduism as full of 'superstitions, idolatrous worship, grossest absurdities and most

evident contradictions'. Hence, he says, it needs an *intelligent and curious reader*[20] "to

find a few extracts, and translations from Tamul works", which display a degree of

"traditional light which has been preserved amongst them for ages … [on] divine sub-

jects, into which the human mind has deviated, when not favoured, as in the ancient

church, with continual revelations; or, as under the dispensation of the Gospel, with a

full manifestation of the 'whole counsel of God'" (1829: 212, 285). After all, is it not

blasphemous to say that God's words, conferred upon every human community, suc-

cumbed to the heathen ignorance over time? Hoole no doubt knew his theology well,

hence he adds, "[g]eneral as the influence of Hindooism amongst its votaries may seem

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[20] Seemingly, European authors were ready to attribute these qualities to Muslims, if not Christians, but not to Hindus. Edward Washburn Hopkins, for instance, traces the influence of Muslims on Bhakti saints. India has taken much from the Mohammedan, he claims. "The foundation of the new [Indian] empire was not laid till the permanent [Muslim] occupation of the Punjab and annexation of Lahore in 1022-23. In the thirteenth century all Hindustan acknowledged the authority of the slave sultan of Delhi. Akbar died in 1605. By the end of the century the Mogul rule was broken; the Mahratta princes became imperial. It is now just in this period of Mohammedan power when arise the deistic reforming sects … were surrounded with deists and trinitarians. Here, then, we draw the line across the inner development of India's religions, with Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, and perhaps even Basava. In the philosophy of the age that succeeds the epic there are but two phases of religion, pantheism for the wise, a more or less deistic poly-theism for the vulgar (in isolated cases may be added the monotheism of certain scholastic philosophers); and so Indic religion continued till the advent of Islamism. Nevertheless, though under Mohammedan influence, the most thoughtful spirits of India received monotheism and gave up pantheism … and the circle that comprises Kabir, Nanak, and Dadu, were united in that they stood against encircling polythe-ism. They were religiously at one in that they gave up the cult of many divinities, which represented re-spectively nature-worship and fiend-worship (with beast-worship), for the worship of one god. Therefore it is that, while native advance stops with the Mohammedan conquest, one may yet claim an uninter-rupted progress for the higher Indic religion, a continual elevation of the thoughts of the wise; although at the same time, beside and below this, there is the circle of lower beliefs that continually revolves upon itself. For in the zooelatry and polytheism that adores monsters to-day it is difficult to see a form of relig-ion higher in any respect than that more simple nature-polytheism which first obtained" (Hopkins 1896: 784-785). (I have altered some spellings of the proper nouns to match the modern spelling.)

to be, it is not universal in its sway." No doubt, the heathens themselves were not able to perceive the grace God had bestowed upon them. "[T]he deluded and ignorant Hindoo attributes to those passages we would select [see below] as excellent, either in doctrine or morals, no authority superior to that of others, which are absolutely false, and to the last degree absurd." Hence, "Hindoos [after all] are an immoral people, notwithstanding the beautiful precepts scattered in their books…" (1829: 313, 322).

Hoole is making these claims with reference to a Tamil bhakti saint-poet Sivavakkiyar and his writings.[21]

> There have been writers in the Tamul language, and it may be in the other languages of India also, who, probably without any knowledge of Christianity, have boldly attacked and exposed the national superstition; the most eminent and popular of such writers in the Tamul language is the author of Siva-vakkiam, a work of some antiquity, and very generally known. Ellis, who, when writing on these subjects, appears almost to have fancied himself a Hindoo, says, concerning this work, 'It may be doubted whether it is entirely orthodox: the author of it eschews alike the figurative mythology of the Puranas, and the mystical philosophy of the Upanishats; he denies the efficacy of all religious ceremonies, whether prescribed by the Smritis, or invented in more recent times; derides the notion, that the Almighty could have made an inherent difference in his creatures (as in the Hindoo system of caste); and, finally, with the doctrine of metempsychosis, rejects most of the dogmas believed by the various sects of the Hindoos' (1829: 300-301).

Writing two decades later, Henry George Briggs had discovered a certain Sahajanand Swami (born 1780), who, he says, "commenced his crusade against the Walab Kul." Sahajanand Swami, better known as the Gosiji Maharaj, "boldly denounced the irregularities they had introduced into their forms of worship, and exposed the vices which characterized the lives of their clergy, nor were such opportunities lost in assiduously

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[21] Very little is known about Sivavakkiyar. He might have lived as early as 9th century or as late as 15th century. He is one of the prominent Tamil siddhas. "His *Pātal* or 'Song' consists of 527 stanzas written in a rough … idiom. Disdainful of the vedic as well as the orthodox shaiva religion, he sings powerfully of the need to seek God within and not by means of outward ceremonies and observations" (Heehs 2002: 285).

spreading his own system of faith—which Bishop Heber[22] denominates from the result

of his conference at Naríad as 'a strange mixture of a pure theism and Hinduism'"

(Briggs 1849: 237-238).

Hoole cites some extracts from the Tamil verses of Sivavakkiyar. These Tamil

verses of Sivavakkiyar, he writes, "illustrate the distaste and contempt for idolatry, and

its accompanying superstitions, which have grown up in the midst of Hinduism, among

some of the natives themselves; and prove that amongst the heathen there is a degree of

knowledge and truth contending with ignorance and error" (Hoole 1829: 302-303). Or,

as he introduces the author and his work,

> The Kural of Tiruvalluver is a poetic work on morals, of great merit as a
> literary performance, and highly esteemed amongst the Tamul natives,
> for the beauty of its language the truth of its sentiments…. The author,
> Tiruvalluver … evinces a singular degree of freedom from many of the
> strong prejudices of the Hindoos, although he frequently illustrates his
> positions by allusions to the mythology and doctrines of the superstition
> of his country. Mr. Ellis, in his unfinished work on Kural … has given a
> poetic version in English of some parts of this work (1829: 311).

Compare these introductory remarks with the selection of Sivavakkiyar's verses.

> Believe not the idol of the temple, apparent to the eyes, to be God, nor
> lift up to it their hands.
>
> What, O wretch, is caste? Is not water an accumulation of fluid particles?
> Are not the five elements one, and the five senses one?
> Are not the several ornaments for the neck, the breast, and the
> feet, equally gold?
> What then is the peculiar quality supposed to result from differ-
> ence in caste? (1829: 301, 302).

The introductory remarks about the poet and his selected verses undoubtedly resemble

20th century commentary on and selection of the vachanas. This can be determined

through an experiment. Replace Sivavakkiyar's verses with similar vachanas and retain

Hooley's commentary as if they are a commentary on the vachanas. The resultant entity

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[22] Note carefully that this book also mentions another European writer who has expressed the same ar-
guments towards 'religious' traditions of India!

will not look odd or forged. Let alone disturbing us, the result will not even surprise us.

It is more likely that it will disappear in loads of the 20th century 'critical appreciations'

of the vachanas. This, I submit, is an indication of the probability that modern vachana

scholarship has been formed within the limits of orientalist discourse on Indian tradi-

tions. As a further example, note the kind of remarks Hoole makes about the Tamil

verses. These following remarks and the choice of the verses resemble the treatment of

the vachanas by modern vachana scholarship. According to Hoole, some of the main

ideas that these verses present are: (1) the futility of a certain habitual way of doing

pooja ("How many prayers have I repeated in a vain worship." "Believe not the idol of

the temple…"). (2) Denial of the pooja to Shiva, Vishnu etc ("It is not Ari (Vishnu), it

is not Aren (Siven), it is not Ayen (Bruma)…"). (3) Denial of caste. (4) Denial of future

birth ("So a man, once dead, is subject to no future birth").[23] (5) The futility of reading

the Vedas and similar literature.

Here are a few verses that are cited in the book as evidence for the aforemen-

tioned four main ideas of Sivavakkiyar:

> Though you read without interruption the four Vedas, and all the Shas-
> tras, you shall not thereby obtain a knowledge of God. …
>
> Though you read the four Vedas without any inaccuracy,
> Though you daub yourself all over with holy ashes, God will not appear.
> …
>
> What, O wretch, is the lofty idol? ... What, O wretch, is the thread
> wound round the baked earthen pot (in idolatrous worship)?
> Know that they are all as perishable, as exquisitely wrought silk? …
>
> Hear, O ye (Brahmans) in whose mouth is the Veda,
> Who kindle a fire, and pour into it clarified butter, who take pleasure in
> bathing daily in the water:
> Reflect and discern the fire and the water (the evil and the good) that is
> within you:

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[23] "One of the absurdities of the Hindoo system, ridiculed by the author from whose writings the preced-
ing extracts are made, is the doctrine of metempsychosis, or of repeated births of the soul" (Hoole 1829:
307).

Then shall ye approach the immeasurable splendour (1829: 303-304).[24]

Finally, let us also take a look at the way European scholars, or rather Basel missionaries talked about a Lingayat sect called the Kalagnanis and 'disciples of the Guru Nudi'. Here are two lengthy excerpts, the first from the proceedings of the *South India Missionary Conference*:

> Our youngest station in the southern Mahratta country is *Guledagudda*, which was commenced in 1851. Most of the members of the Christian congregation there formerly belonged to a sect who call themselves disciples of the 'Gúrú Núdi' or 'Word of the Teacher.' The founder of it lived about three hundred years ago at Kodekall, near Shorapore, on the banks of the Krishna. Having been bornn as a Lingaite at Humpi, he made himself acquainted with the Shastras of the Mohammedans and travelled through the country as a preacher of 'one God,' and the way of the 'caste-less.' The Shastras which are ascribed to him contain a curious mixture of Védantic pantheism and some Mohammedans ideas and prophecies, combined with the tradition and Kalagnanas of the Lingaites, the chief point of which is the expected re-appearance of Chanabasava, one of the chief founders of Lingaitism. This popular prophecy … has dressed up in a way which, to a superficial eye, exhibits some very striking resemblances to our Scriptural prophecies regarding the second advent of Christ. For instance he says that, 1260 years after the time when the Mohammedans received power from God, the expected Gúrú will come from heaven on a white elephant in order to punish an annihilate his enemies, and to gather his faithful ones into a paradise on earth. … To their surprise the [Guru] Nudi disciples found the same prophecies in some Christian tracts which they had obtained…. This made some of them anxious to get acquainted with us Missionaries. In 1847 one of their number [*member*?], with this intention, came to *Bettigherri* [Betgeri, Gadag district], my former station. … These are the chief features of the origin an outward history of our Mission in the southern Mahratta country (South India Missionary Conference 1858: 90-91).

The second one is from Joseph Mullens' *Missions in South India* London (1854):

> Throughout the southern Mahratta country there is extensively spread a flourishing sect of Hindus, termed Lingaits. They belong chiefly to the trading and manufacturing classes of the community, who are by far the most intelligent and independent of the people, and have learned in some measure to think and act for themselves. The Lingaits, like other

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[24] The words in the parenthesis are the translator Elijah Hoole's. Notice his words "the evil and the good" (inserted in parenthesis) for "fire and the water".

sects of the kind in other parts of India, have given up their reverence for the common idolatry of the country, and secretly adhere to a higher system of religion, which teaches amongst its prime doctrines the unity of God, and that all men are of one caste. Numerous verses are current among them to the effect that: He who worships wood and stone as God shall fall into the lowest hell. On this ground in their own assemblies they eat together, through belonging in public to different castes that are forbidden to do so. … Whether from conviction of the love of power, individuals among the priests occasionally from separate schools amongst the adherents of the doctrines. The most important of these schools is termed the Nudi sect, and its followers are distinguished as Nudi Lingaits. Their system is laid down in a collection of books which are called Guru-Nudi. This guru, who was probably acquainted not only with the literature of the Lingaits, but also with Vedantism and Koran, seems to have founded his school about three hundred years ago. … His system contains a mixture of brhaminical, Lingait, Vedantic and Mahomedan doctrine, and is distinguished by a belief in the resurrection of the body. These sects greatly resemble the Kortta Bhojas of Bengal, and the sect which was founded by Sundara Das in Orissa. Belonging to the most intelligent of the community, accustomed to varieties in religious belief, and separated in a measure from the debasing superstition of the ancient idolatry, it is evident that the adherents of sects like these are much more open to the gospel, and are naturally much better prepared to appreciate its ennobling doctrines, than the idolaters who never think at all. Accordingly it is among them, especially among the Nudi Lingaits, that the German Missionaries in Dharwar and the London Missionaries at Belgaum find that Christianity is making the most rapid progress" (Mullens 1854: 41-42).

Mullens also cites Wurth's opinion:

On one conversion, a Lingait priest, with two hundred of his followers came to visit Mr. Albrecht at Dharwar. …the whole company attended public worship, behaving in the most proper and orderly manner. They brought with them a number of Christian books which they had previously received, and assured the missionary not only that they constantly studied them, but were convinced that they were true, while their own books were false. They even asserted also their full belief in the Lord Jesus and called themselves his disciples (Mullens 1854: 43).

This, then, was what preceded the emergence of indigenous Kannada scholarship concerning the vachanas. With that, the focus also shifted to a considerable extent from the Lingayat community and the tradition to the vachanas. However, the conceptual structure of the colonial views of the Lingayat community and 'its history' was re-

tained. What we see in the 20th century, I propose, was nothing but this oriental conceptual structure dressed up in a new and native garb. There are, nevertheless, two major noticeable changes: firstly, the colonial description of the Lingayat community and tradition was now thrust upon the vachanas, and secondly, the references to similarities between Christian ideals and Lingayat teachings were now *more likely to be* an implicit and unintentional presumption rather than a crude and straightforward assertion. Angus Stewart Woodburne notes, "[t]here probably never was a period when the bhakti marga was more influential" than during the national movement (1923: 391). Similarly, the vachanas assumed pride of place in Kannada scholars' understanding of their past during the nationalist movement. Indian/Kannada scholars of the 20th century explicitly talk about the Lingayat tradition as an anti-Brahmanical tradition, more out of (I would say) a 'political necessity' than driven by intellectual discovery. The colonial arguments about the Indian traditions, which were uncritically accepted, served as background information in 20th century interpretations of the vachanas.

III. Historical Beginnings of Modern Lingayat Scholarship

Let us move a few steps back in time and take a fresh look at the developments from the other side of the fence, as it were. We will dig through the early interactions between Lingayat scholars, the colonial administration and European scholars.

Anxieties and Grievances

A common thread that runs across the writings of early scholars who wrote on the Lingayats and their tradition is an anxiety or dissatisfaction about what they see as the

status of the community and its followers. The Lingayat tradition, according to these authors, was in dire condition during their time. People in general and the Lingayats themselves had forgotten the precepts of their sect, their past achievements and heroes.

This anxiety can be seen as early as the days of Deputy Channabasappa (1833-1881), who was probably the first native to speak publicly about the Lingayats and the Kannada community and about improving the status of both the communities. Underpinning his concerns were a set of grievances pertaining to issues that he thought were responsible for the depleted conditions of both the communities. His writings are the right place to begin understanding these grievances and concerns that haunted (and keeps haunting) many more who came after him.[25] He begins by accepting that "in the Karnataka region the Lingayats are one of the largest communities, and also the richest. The rest of the people" he adds, are comparatively, "poorer and inferior [*kanishta*]". However, he regrets that in comparison with the Brahmans, the Lingayats do not get the same respect in society. The reasons according to Channabasappa were that "they do not have Kannada, English and other education, and are not clever enough to avail government jobs." He immediately gives examples of their ignorance. The Lingayats "do not know why the English government replaced the Peshwa government. They do not know that under the English government people of all castes are equal." This, he concludes, "is their mistake."

> Their condition should improve at least in the future and they should be
> able to join government jobs. It is in this respect that Shri[26] has estab-
> lished a boarding school for Lingayat boys in Belgaum, where they will

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[25] Native literature of this time is replete with such concerns. Writing about similar developments in Tamil speaking regions, Stuart Blackburn (Blackburn 2003: 15) writes, ""ideas of a lost antiquity and purity, buried under layers of foreign cultural domination, were inflected through nationalist and Dravidian sensibilities in the 1870s and 1880s in Madras. These Tamil constructions of folklore and the nation were expressed in the language of loss, mixing claims of buried history with forgotten texts and disappearing traditions." One of the dominant ways these concerns were formulated was by invoking "the vanishing village as an image of personal and cultural loss."

[26] Probably, Chennabasappa is referring here to the then head of the Chitradurga matha.

be provided with food and clothes and will be given English education
(From a letter written in 1868, Channabasappa 1993: 94).

Chennabasappa's letter postulates some empirical facts – the lack of representation of the Lingayats in government jobs – as problems, or as the cause of a problem: the lack of respect for them in the community. More than sixty years down the line when Halakatti gave vent to his anxieties, he sounded exactly like Chennabasappa. One example from Halakatti would suffice here: vachana-composers, according to him, "were the true social reformists. Therefore whenever they found a practice which was against [Lingayat] principles, they criticised it" through their writings, such as the vachanas. The present situation, however, is different. "Today the Lingayats have lost respect for these works. This is very sad". But, "it is necessary that Kannadigas should understand their arguments, a little bit at least", and therefore, he says, he set out to write books on vachana-composers and the vachanas (Halakatti 1923: 20, 21, 7).

This anxiety resounded even in the *Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe*s. Here is an excerpt from the invitation letter of the sixth *sabhe*.

> [I]n the past our society was flourishing in every field … [but gradually] dharma was forgotten, a disregard for education, underdevelopment in industry, laziness in business increased and we reached the present wretched condition. The leaders of our community took pity on this situation and explored many different ways of repairing it. One such important task was of organisation of these kinds of forums to enhance the awareness of our community (*6ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe, Belgaum* 1912: 12).

T.H.M. Sadasivayya, Halakatti's contemporary, had stronger opinions and was more vocal about these issues. In a lecture delivered in 1922, in the *First Universal Religious Conference* held at Madras, he began by saying,

> The religion I have turned to deal with is one of those forgotten religions which, having survived their glorious past, are now like so many precious gems of the 'purest ray serene,' lying hidden in the dark unfathomable depths of the ocean. They only require some enthusiastic and

venturesome mariners to be brought to the broad day-light for the further edification of this world of ours (Sadasivayya 1968: 1).

This lecture was subsequently published along with another of his lectures on the same topic. These two lectures give us a clearer picture of the nature and composition of the anxiety of early native Lingayat scholars. Even though these lectures were delivered in the early-1920s, they are no different from the views expressed on the same topic throughout the century by Lingayat scholars. It is therefore useful to quote him at some length.

> I shall presently advert to the various causes that have belittled the importance of the study of this religion and have hushed up all reverent enquiry by veiling its true and radiant aspect. As no work, so far written, contains a true account of this religion I have ventured to call this humble attempt of mine, "An unwritten chapter in the Religious history of India." It is only intended to serve as a finger-post to a forgotten and a mystic religion and I leave the task of exploring it to the great scholars of my country. Now coming to the history of the [Vīraśaiva] religion … I must say that some of the writers have now and again made sincere attempts to give a true account of Vīraśaivism to the best of their light, although unable to fully divest themselves of their leanings and prepossessions. But in nine cases out of ten it has been the unfortunate victim of gross misrepresentation and misinterpretation which have marred its true shape in the eyes of those who are credulous enough to take for gospel truth whatever is set down in the historical accounts. … *When I say this I am voicing forth the common opinion prevailing in my community* (Emphasis mine Sadasivayya 1968: 2, 6).

In a speech delivered in 1923, Siddharamappa D. Pawate writes,

> At the beginning of the twelfth and at the end of the eleventh Century, there appeared a number of saints in the Karnataka who revived the Shaktivishistadvaita Philosophy based upon the vedic scriptures and Shaivagamas. … As this faith has for its text only the devotion of Shiva, it throws open the doors of knowledge to every worthy one, irrespective of sex and caste. … The sayings of these saints are in the vernacular and are in no way inferior to the dicta of the ancient Vedic Rishis (Pawate 1930: 12).

In a work by Kashinatha Shastri, the anonymous "Preface" writer says,

The history of Veerashaiva religion and philosophy has long remained a
sealed book. Feeble attempts have been made, here and there, by a few
modern writers to give it some shape. But that is not enough …. In other
words, a true orientation of this branch of history and philosophy is yet
to be done. But we need not despair. There are signs of social con-
sciousness among the Veerashaivas. The old antipathy shown by some
classes of people towards the Veerashaiva religion is being gradually
shaken off (1931: Preface).

To this day, the original anxiety as well as a sense of urgency towards drawing

the attention of the people towards what is obvious, but "has long remained a sealed

book" continues. As an example consider Kalburgi's remarks in his editorial preface

("Prastavane") to Basava's Vachanas entitled *Basavannanavara Vachanasamputa*,

Basavanna lived in the Kannada speaking land, wrote in Kannada lan-
guage. And because of these limitations he has not got the recognition
due to him. However, in Kannada no other person has been written
about as much as Basavanna (Kalburgi 2001: 19).

Resolutions and Solutions

The community not only continued to accumulate grievances, but also took time now

and then to stop and look back and reassure itself about its greatness and to take resolu-

tions to solve existing problems. Such initiatives of the community give us further in-

sights into the causes of their apprehension.

Ramanujapuram Narasimhacharya (1860-1936) is reputedly the first native

Kannada scholar to pen a literary history of Kannada literature. His *Karnataka Kavi-*

charite, written in 1907, is a compilation of "chronology and literary contribution of

one thousand and one hundred Kannada writers from early times to the 19th century. It

is said that no other Indian language except Sanskrit has a history of its literature writ-

ten with such accuracy and comprehensiveness. He handled thousands of manuscripts,

most of them in palm-leaf books. Rare Sanskrit and old Kannada works were discov-

ered [and] preserved in bound volumes in [the] Mysore Oriental Library by him. Kavi-charite in three volumes is [an] invaluable source material for students of Kannada literature and Karnataka history" (Kamat 2004). This book also includes vachana-composers and the vachanas in the list of Kannada poets. However, its publication had created a controversy. Narasimhacharya was criticised for not being honest in portraying the history of vachana-composers. Comparing his work with a similar work written by Shantaveerayya, it was said, "it would become clear that the author of *Karnataka Kavicharite* has been unfair to the *Vīraśiava* religion, because he belongs to a different religion" (excerpted in Narasimhacharya 1961: 21). In response to these accusations Narasimhacharya wrote,

> The Vīraśiava editors of the *Vibhakara* (30th June 1922) and the *Vīra-śiavadharmaprakashike* (July 1922) have made some ungracious remarks about me, no doubt, under a misapprehension. They attribute motives to me and are pleased to say that being a man of a different faith I suppressed the names of Vīraśiava authors of *vachanas* simply because I was envious of their fame. I can only say that the question of faith has no place in the republic of letters and that no Vīraśiava writer has worked as hard as myself for revealing to the world the wealth of Vīra-śiava literature in Kannada. I did not give the name of some Vachana-composers because I did not know them (Narasimhacharya 1961: xiii author's translation).

The anxiety in the Lingayat community about the lack of popularity of its literature and their past achievements, which we discussed earlier, seems to be one of the main reasons behind this controversy. Two drastic steps were taken to solve this problem: the encouragement of the community to take control of preserving, excavating and popularising the past of the community and to make the Lingayats increasingly aware of these findings.

The establishment of the forum called *Shri Veerashaiva mata samvardhinee* (probably in 1903) was one such strategy. It was established "[t]o encourage the study of these [Lingayat] shaastras … in the presence of Mudukudore's Shri Mallikarjuna

Swaami", because, as its 10th anniversary report ("Shri Veerashaiva mata Samvardhi-

nee Sabhaa. Muduku Dore. 10^{neya} Varushada Charitavu") claims,

> [Lord] Shiva spread the Virasaiva *siddhanta shastra* on the earth so that
> he could save people who are immersed in the distressing world, by giv-
> ing them the true heaven. … All the learned[27] people are well aware that
> the study of these shastras in the Virasaiva community has continuously
> decreased over the ages due to various reasons (1913: 1).

The chief aims of this forum, as the 10th anniversary report makes clear, were (1913: 2):

> (1) To make the Lingayats follow the shastras in their day-to-day life.
> (2) To encourage them to study the Lingayat shastras and *sidhanta* (doctrines?).
> (3) To make available the facilities required for publishing Lingayat sidhanta
>   and useful Lingayat works.

The 10th anniversary of the forum was celebrated publicly by inviting some of the emi-

nent leaders of the community and other important leaders and government officers of

the time. K. Chennabasappa, the welcome committee president, reiterated the need for

popularising the teachings of the Lingayat saints and the necessity of knowing and fol-

lowing the shastras for the betterment of the community in his speech (1913: 3). Many

more speakers who addressed the forum on the occasion expressed similar concerns.

The Veerashiava Mahasabha organised in 1904 and its annual congress also had

similar aims and probably put them into practice rather more vigorously.

Vachana Scholarship as an Indigenous Product

What one cannot miss in these apprehensive remarks is a specific kind of self-assurance

evinced by Lingayat scholars from time to time. This specific self-assurance is partly

based on a claim that I mentioned earlier – the claim that an understanding of the va-

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[27] The author uses the word *prjnaavantaru*, meaning people who are aware or conscious.

chanas and their revolutionary dimension is the contribution of indigenous scholarship. What makes the claim so significant? Let us look at what constitutes the claim now. First, the claim proposes that European scholars did not talk about the vachanas. Second, it suggests that Kannada scholars before the 20th century also did not realise the importance of the vachanas. Since we would keep returning to the second claim throughout the dissertation, I will not go into its details now. In what follows in this section, I will elaborate on the first claim.

Historically speaking the first claim is partially true. European scholars who incessantly wrote about Indian traditions, especially Brahmanism, remained rather less vocal as far as other communities are concerned. In the case of the Lingayats, however, they were quite generous. They had a positive opinion about the Lingayat tradition and at times favoured the community in administrative issues. As a result, the Lingayats enjoyed huge success in court litigations and *apparently* availed a high percentage of government jobs in the 19th century. However, the British were not very positive about Lingayat literature.[28] Even when they wrote about Lingayat literature, they were largely blind to the existence of the vachanas. As Kalburgi correctly observes, "the editing and publishing of books in India was first started by the Christian priests. But surprisingly these priests who published Brahman works such as *Pampabharata* and *Adipurana*, Virasaiva works such as *Basavapurana* and *Chennabasavapurana* and *dasa kirtane*s, did not publish the vachanas" (Kalburgi 1998: 408). Below are some historical facts in favour of the claim that the British ignored or were ignorant of the existence of the vachanas.

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[28] For some of their ignominious remarks about Virasaiva saints like Basava see chapter 4.

(i) Scholars like Rev. Ferdinand Kittel (1832-1903), who compiled the first full-fledged[29] dictionary of Kannada language, published in 1894, and did so much for Kannada language and literature (see Havanur 1974), had nothing much to say about Lingayat literature. Kittel's article "Old Kanarese Literature" (re-published in 1874) is supposed to be the first article about Kannada literary history (see Kalburgi 1988: 426-436). This article divides Kannada literature into four different bodies of 'religious' literature: Jaina, Lingayat, Shaiva and Virasaiva literature. Under the heading "Lingaita literature", however, he did not mention the vachanas or its composers, except a work entitled Akhandeshwara Vachanas.

(ii) H.F. Moegling (1811-1881), a Basel Mission pioneer in South India, came to Karnataka in 1836 as a missionary and later worked towards compiling a mammoth six volume *Bibliotheca Carnataca*, a collection of traditional Kannada literary texts, published in the 1840s (Anderson 1998: 464). Surprisingly, he too found only Lingayat kavyas and puranas but not the vachanas.

(iii) Even as late as 1915, writing the history of Kannada literature, E.P. Rice gave only a cursory importance to the vachanas. According to him, "[t]he scriptures of the [Lingayat] religion are in Sanskrit, and consist of the twenty-eight Saivagamas … [and a] Sanskrit work, called Sivagita". The "unlearned" people, on the other hand, give importance to "the *Basava-purana* and *Channabasava-purana*" as the "authorities for their religion; but the learned do not give them this place" (Rice 1915: 50). And a third type of literature that existed in this tradition was propaganda literature. "The Lingayat propaganda was aided by a large number of writers who flooded the country … with tracts commending the new creed. These tracts are called *Vachanas*" (Rice 1915: 56).

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[29] I say full-fledged dictionary because Rev. William Reeve was supposed to have compiled a *Karnataka-English Dictionary* between 1824 and 1832 (Hausmann 1991: 2524).

(iv) Kalburgi cites an interesting incident. P.G. Halakatti, who led the modern study and publication of the vachanas, had sent the manuscript of his now well-known work called, *Vachanashāstrasāra Vol. 1*, for publication to the Basel Mission press at Mangalore. But the manuscript was returned to him unpublished, and as Kalburgi recounts, the reason given was that they do not publish works related to other religions. He was told, "the ideas related to god in his book resemble their own" (Kalburgi 1998: 408).

Discovered or Inherited? A Problem

The modern approach to the vachanas emerged amidst these anxieties as well as the self-assurance discussed previously. However, the so-called modern approach mystifies certain things related to the vachana interpretations, which this chapter intends to bring to the surface. Every modern scholar who has penned something on the vachanas and their progressive outlook treat the claim that the vachanas take an anti-caste position as a self-evident fact that needs no further proof. Yet, surprisingly they also decry the ignorance that 'ordinary people' show of this reading. These 'ordinary people' have either forgotten the past glory and the contemporary relevance of their tradition or they are just not aware of it. Therefore, 'ordinary people's' knowledge of their tradition or of their past is erroneous. As in the following excerpt, Halakatti's contention is not so much that people do not remember Urilingadeva and Urilingapeddi,[30] two prominent vachana-composers, but their understanding is problematic. The people of the village where Urilingapeddi's *matha* is located, he regrets,

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[30] Urilingapeddi was Urilingadeva's shishya. He is one of the 'lower-caste' vachana-composer of the Virasaiva movement, who went on to become the *acharya* (head) of the matha in Kandhara village (Karnataka). There are four mathas of Urilingapeddi in Bombay-Karnataka region. It is not clear whether Halakatti is talking about the people around any one specific matha or all the four mathas.

think about themselves as untouchables, and also behave like untouchables! It is unfortunate that the *matha*s of great people like Urilingadeva and Urilingapeddi have come to be known as *matha*s of untouchables. What else is the reason for this if not our ignorance of the history of great people of Vīraśaiva society? (Halakatti 2003: 198 n.4).

Here are a few more examples:

Many scholars of this [Lingayat] religion have written many treatises. It is strange that neither the followers of this religion nor others know anything at all of those treatises (Kashinatha Shastri 1931: 26).

The village people in Karnataka do not even know who Basavanna is, what period he lived in, what he wrote, [but] when they have difficulties they say 'Basava-Basava' (Chidananda Murthy 2004a: 42).

These scholars, however, never try to elaborate upon the ignorance they find in 'ordinary people'. When and how did this ignorance emerge? There are no answers to such questions. A few scholars, however, like Halakatti, admonish European scholars for having contributed to this amnesia. Here is another and lengthier excerpt from T.H.M. Sadasivayya's 1922 lecture:

By remarkable irony of circumstances we are learning of ourselves, of our religion, philosophy and literature not from our own scriptures, which are lying undisturbed in the dark corners assigned to them, but from the foreign travelers and missionaries. To the credit of the European scholars it may be said that they have unearthed for us some of our most precious works which were lost to us and where their accounts of the different sects and communities are based upon the literature possessed by the respective sects, they are fairly accurate. But where no literature of a particular sect was accessible to them they had naturally depend upon a superficial observance of the manners and customs[31] of the sect in question and upon the willful and scurrilous misrepresentation of the then-educated people, who were naturally consulted. A Lingayet is proverbially noted for his conservatism in the matter of preserving the sacred books. … Hence it is very unlikely that those who were engaged in collecting information about this community had any access to their rich and vast literature. Naturally the querists had to rely upon the account given by other people …. The Lingayet, with his characteristic robust individualism has dissented from the bulk of the present day Hindus in his different conception of the caste system, and in his non-

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[31] Allusion is perhaps to Brown's essay which has these words in the title, 'Essay on the Creed, Custom and Literature of the Jangams.'

observance of some of the various rituals and ceremonies as laid down
in the Grihya Sutras. Hence it is no wonder that the orthodox and con-
servative section of the Hindus regarded him [Basavanna?] as an out-
right heretic and represented him as such to the European writers. Abbe
Dubois, Dr. Francis Buchanan and Col. Wilks were among such writers.
This mistake which was being invariably repeated by the succeeding
writers, was first pointed out by C.P. Brown who has some good things
to say about this religion, though some of his postulates are too palpably
unfounded to need refutation (Sadasivayya 1968: 6-8).

It is not just 'ordinary people' and modern day scholars,[32] but even scholars of

the pre-colonial past have been dragged to the witness box to confess that they have

failed to appreciate the revolutionary dimension of the vachana movement, unlike their

20th century counterparts. Hardekar Manjappa has a long list of such convicts: "Re-

nowned poets such as Singiraja, Palkurike Somanaradhya, Bheemkavi, [and] Shadak-

sharadeva" (Manjappa 1966a: 6). Chidananda Murthy takes on one from the list and

tries to explain the composition of ignorance of pre-colonial Lingayat scholars:

> [T]he character of Basavanna which Bhimakavi [of the 14th century]
> draws is mainly a *bhakta*, always favouring *bhaktas*. He is a miraculous
> person too. … [However] if we try to understand the character of Basa-
> vanna, as a leader of a massive social movement that tried to fight the
> social inequalities, through this [Bhimakavi's] work it will be a disap-
> pointment. In his avidity to draw Basavanna as a bhakta, he has rendered
> obscure the picture of revolutionary Basavanna. The reason is this: *peo-
> ple who came after Basavanna understood his bhakti better and not his
> revolution*…. The *characterisation of Basavanna's life as a social
> leader does not emerge effectively in Bhimakavi*, or any recent Virasaiva
> work. For such a picture we have to go back to Basava's vachanas
> (Chidananda Murthy 2004b: 371 emphasis mine).

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[32] As an illustration of her claim that the present day Lingayat scholars "display an unquestioning rever-
ence for the traditions of the past" and have "a happy indifference toward looking carefully into various
inconsistencies", in the traditionally inherited accounts of the Lingayat past, M.P. Samartha gives exam-
ple of Hardekar Manjappa. She says, he "seems to be in complete agreement with the poets in their pres-
entation of Basava's upanayana ceremony. The poets portrayed Basava as extraordinarily perceptive at
the age of eight about the crucial religious questions of his time. They uphold the view that the boy's
rejection of the upanayana was grounded on his solid arguments based on scriptures" (Samartha 1977:
335, 335 n.3).

Finally, Tarikere, as we noted in the first chapter, goes to the extent of suggesting that Basavanna himself "did not propound his ideas scientifically and logically as a philosopher, such as Karl Marx or any experienced scientist".[33]

That means, neither the lay people nor pre-colonial scholars – and probably, not even a vachana-composer like Basava himself – were aware that the vachanas take an anti-caste stance. How do we comprehend this intriguing situation? The one possibility is to say that these pre-modern scholars, probably including Basava himself, were nescient of the system they were part of, as they were unaware of the existence of casteism. The other possibility is to say that casteism is a modern construction, *à la* Nicholas Dirks. If so, pre-colonial scholars could not have understood what did not exist in their time. The second possibility rules out the very idea of a revolutionary Lingayat tradition that fought against the caste system. The first possibility, on the contrary, raises a significant question: how did modern scholars become conscious of the existence of casteism? The only possible answer is that vachana scholarship, which regards the vachanas as anti-caste treatises, is a product of modern times. This point raises a further question. Are these new ideas inherited or discovered? If inherited, where did they originate? Who were its precursors? In trail of an answer to these questions, let us go through the history of the earliest known Lingayat scholar Channabas-

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[33] There is probably a logical necessity behind such claims. Conceptually speaking, successive theories ought to preserve theoretical relations and referents and explain success of predecessor theories. This is one of the tests for a new theory, which will decide if it is acceptable over its rival theories or not. The theories of the vachanas under revision here do not pass this test. Consequently, they get into, what is called, the 'reference-failure' problem. For, there is no unanimity in 20th century scholarship on the references of the words in the vachanas or rather there is an explicit disagreement about it. The concepts jati and kula mean different things to different scholars, making it difficult for us to, and for them, to decide what they are talking about. There are various theories in logic regarding the consequences of reference-failure. But, whatever theory one adopts, this much is clear that when the reference-failure occurs in an utterance, the utterances loses propositional content or has propositional content which is not *truth-evaluable*. As a consequence, "the worse the consequences of the relevance failure, the stronger will be the assumption on the part of the interpreter that the speaker intends her to assume whatever proposition is required to avoid that failure" (Simons 2002). This is a general argument about what is called reference-fixing or reference-failure problem in logic. See further (Nola 1980) and sections 8.1.3 and 8.1.4 in Balagangadhara (1994).

appa Dharawada, albeit with the risk of looking like an odd diversion from the main argument.

In 1830-31, a peasant uprising known as *Nagara insurrection* broke out against British revenue policies and the ill treatment of the revenue officials at Nagara in the Princely Mysore state. Besides economic policies, Nagara insurrection also combined other issues such as anti-upper casteism as its agenda (Assadi 2007: 312). The Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III suppressed the Nagara insurrection. The British government conducted an enquiry and since it found the king guilty of 'maladministration' and 'misgovernment', it took over the administration of Mysore in its hand. The Princely Mysore state thus came under the direct administration of the British in 1831. This direct administration of the British, supposedly, ushered in the process of modernisation in this region. The activities of the missionaries under direct British rule did yeoman service in the spread of English education and the development of modern Kannada literature.

Let us make this case a little stronger. One of the consequences of colonial attempts to spread English education and the development of vernacular literature is the emergence of 'concerns' about Kannada language and community. Writings of Deputy Channabasappa (1833-1881),[34] is the best illustration of this nascent concern. His writings, as we saw, raise concerns about two issues: the depressed conditions of the Kannada language community and the Lingayat caste community. Such grievances and concerns were new to Indians. It is not difficult to show that the language as a marker of a community was not the way of living that Indian traditions knew or followed. It was a cultural marker of the West, and came to India with the British and we made it our own with the linguistic division of states in post-independence India. As Sheldon

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[34] Deputy Channabasappa (or Channabasappa Dharawada) is the earliest among the modern Kannada and Lingayat intellectuals.

Pollock (2006: 473) notes, "nowhere in South Asia before colonialism did the emotive and naturalizing trope 'mother tongue' find expression. Nowhere do we hear a discourse of friendship or love toward the vernacular; there is nothing comparable to what Dante called the 'natural love of one's own speech,' or to the passion the Convivio exhibits on the question of vernacular attachments."

Let us give some credence to this claim. In the second half of the 19th century, the Mumbai Province re-organised its education sector by dividing it into three divisions. A School Inspector was appointed to look after each of these three divisions. The southern division that had comprised the four main districts of the Mumbai-Karnataka region came into the hands of William Allen Russell in 1864. Like Walter Elliot,[35] Russell too was of the opinion that this region comprised of Kannada speaking people (Havanur 1974: 76-77). The status of the Kannada language and its speakers, as Russell puts it in the 1843 *Report of the Board of Education, Government of Bombay*, was not very encouraging:

> The Canarese language has never been taught and cultivated in this Division, as Gujarati and Marathi in theirs…. While in the other Divisions, the means for good vernacular education are ample in this Division, Canarese books (and masters are only in course of preparation. The vernacular of most of the masters is Canarese and those whose vernacular is Marathi, generally speak Canerese also. Still it is unfortunately true that very few, even the native Canerese themselves can teach their mother tongue in a scholarly manner, most of them cannot even write it respectably to dictation. Many of them even know Marathi, better than Canarese at least for school purposes … their confusion of two languages, and the absence of two languages, and the absence of proficiency in either puts the Southern Division scholars, I fear, some years behind those of the other tow Divisions.[36]

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[35] B.P. Indira writes in her unpublished dissertation, "Walter Elliot started a Kannada school at his own expense. … Under his direction *Esope's fables* and a *Book on Arithmetic* and a *Book on School Administration* were written and printed in the Mission Press. They were the very first books published in Kannada." Then in a footnote she adds, "Walter Elliot was an Assistant Collector in the Dharwad Division. When a Marathi School was started in 1826 he protested and wrote a Memorandum stating the language of the region was Kannada and he started a school in 1831 and administered it at his own expenses for three years. In 1835, the Bombay government recognised Kannada as the language of 'Southern Maratha Province" (Indira 1993: 28-29, 29 fn.6).

[36] Excerpted in B.P. Indira (1993: 37). See also (Havanur 1974: 76-77; Govindaraju 1998: 25).

Russell did not just pen a report but also started working on the 'problems' that he had pointed out. His efforts in acquiring a Kannada printing press not controlled by the Missionaries and his role in the translation of the Marathi textbooks into Kannada and their publication are noteworthy achievements. More importantly, he started a teachers training college, called Normal School, at Dharwad in 1856, which was later shifted to Belgaum in 1861. Initially Channabasappa worked here as a teacher, and later became the principal of the college in 1864, the year Russell was appointed as the School Inspector. In a span of a few years, several people joined hands with him in his work, such as Channabasappa, Shanta Kavi, Vallabha Mahalinga Tatti, Galaganatha, Basavarya Kitturu, M.P. Poojaara, Keshavasharma Galagali, Kannada Vamana, Venkata Rango Katti, Turamuri, Huilugola Bhujangaraya, Gangadhara Madivaleshwara and others (Banakar 1986: 109).

Russell argued that people should receive education in their mother tongue. And the first thing that he did as soon as he was appointed School Inspector was to start several Kannada schools. He established twelve schools for girls between 1866 and 1867 and gave importance to the education of children of agricultural labourers (see Amur 1983: 21; Mysore State Gazetteer 1965: 158, 722; Sisir Kumar Das 1991). He is supposed to have said on many occasions that there is no other language livelier than Kannada. He even established a prize for anyone who worked for Kannada from his/her own income.

Russell later appointed or played a major role in appointing Channabasappa as the deputy inspector of schools of Belgaum district. By then Channabasappa had considerable training and reputation working with Rev. F. Ziegler, helping him in his work of composing an English-Kannada dictionary (Malwad 1970: 232-237). Historians of Kannada linguistic unification trace the early attempts for unification to Russell and

Channabasappa. They opened Kannada schools and instructed the authorities and the teachers to use Kannada language as the medium of instruction (see, Basavaraja 1984). It is in this intellectual atmosphere – where talk of the degenerating condition of Kannada was very much in the air – that the first generation of native Kannada and Lingayat scholars grew up.

"It is Inherited"

We do not have anything specific to suggest that Lingayat scholars, like Channabasappa, discovered rather than inherited the ideas about the 'depressed' condition of the Lingayat community and the necessity of its progress. We, however, get clues to suggest that they could have inherited those ideas from the colonial scholarship. I make no radical claim when I assert this, but just place the claims of a recent Lingayat scholar in context. In his editorial introduction to a book on Basava, Mrithyunjaya Rumale, a known vachana scholar, accepts that the intellectual predecessors of the 20th century views on the vachanas are European scholars. He, however, makes this point as a matter of pride. His argument begins with an attempt to establish the difference between modern and traditional ways of looking at the vachanas or Basava:

> In the modern period, we have understood Basavanna in four different ways: as a Virasaiva in religious terms, a Sharana in social terms, a revolutionary in political terms and a vachana-composer as far as literature is concerned. Only his contemporaries saw this multi dimension of Basavanna's personality in the 12th century and not the composers of kavyas, puranas, inscriptions and even later vachana-composers. For in the post-Basava period, he was recognized only as a religious person. This shows the religious outlook of those people. In the eyes of vachana-composers, poets and purana-writers *of the post-Basava period*, Basavanna's importance is limited to the realm of Virasaiva religion. It seems, as in the 12th century, Basavanna reached every realm of the society again only in the 20th century. Therefore, in the history of our un-

derstanding of Basavanna, 20th century scholarship is extremely impor-
tant" (Rumale 2004: xxii-xxiii emphasis mine).

Where did modern interpretations of the vachanas come from? Rumale answers this

question when he talks about the intellectual traditions that informed the modern under-

standing of the vachana tradition: "Because of revolutions in Europe, we understood

the developments in Kalyana as 'kranti' and Basavanna as a 'kranti-yogi' ... and this is

a speciality of this century", the 20th century. He does not stop at that:

> Since the post-Basava days up until the modern period, Basava has been
> understood in the puranic and spiritual framework. However, the West-
> erners [for the first time] noticed the positive influence that Virasaiva re-
> ligion has wielded on the society. They [the Westerners] have studied
> Virasaiva society rather than Virasaiva religion (2004: xxv).

Rumale is perhaps the first writer to talk about the intellectual inheritance of

modern vachana scholarship so explicitly, albeit sketchily and without giving sufficient

historical data. Rather than helping us understand the consequences of it, if it is true, his

writing may distract us if we do not pay sufficient attention to his assertions. Below are

a few examples of such assertions: *One*, Rumale fails to note that hardly a handful of

modern vachana scholars are aware of the pre-20th century European writings on the

Lingayat tradition. *Two*, most of those writers who had taken note of European writings

on the Lingayats had a negative opinion about them. How do we explain these phe-

nomena? *Three,* Rumale fails to note the initial anxiety and the confidence of the early

Kannada vachana scholars, which we discussed earlier in the chapter. *Four*, and finally

and more importantly, Rumale mentions the issue of intellectual inheritance not as an

innocuous historical fact but as a gallant achievement. What does this show: Rumale's

lack of knowledge or a disregard for the developments in the area of studies in colonial-

ism and orientalism? Is he not justifying orientalist understandings of Indian traditions?

Did Indian scholars of the last eight centuries from the 12th century onwards (excluding

the 12th century vachana-composers, of course) fail to make sense of their own tradition and past?

Rumale gives a small list of European and missionary "research, reports, travelogues" which talk about the Lingayat tradition.

> The first Western writing on Virasaivism is "The Open Door to Hindu Paganism" of a Dutch priest Abraham Rogerius,[37] published in 1651. Then comes the writing by an Italian rich person, Pietro Della Valle, dated 1663. [Philippus] Baldaeus, Ziegenbalg and Paulinas [Carmalite Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo?] wrote between 17th and 18th centuries. Then come Abbe Dubois, Worth, Rev. F. Kittel, Francis Buchanan and C.P. Brown (Rumale 2004: xxvi).

If taken as true this provides clues to part of an answer: part because it only answers the question with respect to the location of the sources of such ideas (colonial thinking). However, it does not answer how the experience of European scholars in turn became the native expression.

Epilogue

Let us return to the question of *discrepancy*, the discrepancy between the European positive view of the Lingayats and their negative views concerning traditional Lingayat texts, which we discussed in the previous chapter. In the 20th century, our views about both the Lingayat community and Lingayat texts are coextensive with each other. However, as we noted so far in this chapter this discrepancy was not solved until the emergence of Kannada scholars in the 20th century. This leaves us with the following question: how was this discrepancy solved? The native Kannada scholars of the 20th century seemed to be in complete agreement with the European views about the entire

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[37] Abraham Rogerius's "work was almost the first one to give Europe some idea of 'Brahman religion'", as Balagangadhara observes.

corpus of their kavyas, puranas and the tradition and hence tried to rescue at least some

of them, especially the vachanas and their composers, from the abyss. They did so by

showing how the vachanas embody all the positive values attributed to their commu-

nity. As an instance, see an excerpt from a prominent 20th century Kannada scholar,

A.N. Krishna Rao.

> Writing a life history of Basavanna is a challenge even to this day. … In
> this book, I have kept aside the controversial issues that have evoked a
> lot of discussion in the past. A discussion is not a purpose of this book.
> … My goal is to show how Basavanna belongs to the ranks of the lights
> of the world, like Christ, Mohammed and Buddha. I have followed the
> same ideal even while selecting the vachanas of Basavanna. I have not
> selected … the vachanas with foreign words and those that are contro-
> versial. I have selected only those vachanas that people of all religions
> can read and understand. I will take up the task of comparing them with
> the religious texts of the world in my next book (Rao 1981: 6).

In short, then, the 20th century interpretations of the vachanas and other writings tried

not to refute the European interpretations of their tradition but, as it were, to fill the gap

between the European positive view of the Lingayat community and their negative

views about the Lingayat texts.[38] One of the ways the Lingayat community chose to

accomplish this task was to write a history of their past, of Basava, of the vachana

movement. The business of history writing and a demand for a history of their past, be-

came an obsession for the Lingayat community in the 20th century, as we will see in the

next chapter. But, why will a community take this task so seriously? Our answer to this

question should talk both about *compulsions* and *advantages* that underwrite this task.

We can see the uncritical acceptance of the Western experience of India as scientific

descriptions of their traditions as logically leading to a situation that finally becomes a

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[38] Thus are these protest movements, like the Lingayat movement and bhakti movements, came to be
considered as progressive and as a match for Christianity: "At a later time a number of philosophers and
theologians arose in India who … ultimately gave to the land a definitely theistic philosophy and theol-
ogy. Nor was this reform merely an advance movement of thought. It was essentially religious and
touched the deepest chords of the human heart. The movement is universally known as the bhakti move-
ment, and is the best parallel to the Christian religion existing in the world today" (Manilal C. Parekh in
his article in Stauffer 1927: 12).

compulsion to project a particular kind of past or to interpret the vachanas in a particular way. However, what were the *advantages* that the Lingayat community had while writing the 'gap-filling' histories of their community so incessantly? The term 'advantage' is quite misleading here. The advantage in question is not a political benefit or at least it is not merely a political benefit. The one way to get at this 'advantage' is to ask, what did a 'history' or a demand for it mean to these early Lingayat scholars? The next chapter is an attempt to answer these questions.

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Chapter 4

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THE LINGAYATS AND THEIR TRADITION
IN THE MODERN PERIOD

The English … have a habit of writing history; they pretend to study the manners and customs of all peoples. God has given us a limited mental capacity, but they usurp the function of the Godhead and indulge in novel experiments. They write about their own researches in most laudatory terms and hypnotize us into believing them. We in our ignorance then fall at their feet.

M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (1909: Chap. X).

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We noted in the previous chapter that 20th century vachana scholarship suffers from a lack of historical grounding. We went back into the past in order to see how this scholarship has emerged and found that *somehow* a 'history of the Lingayats' has come into existence, chiefly based on European views and the Lingayat puranas and kavyas. The Lingayats, like their contemporary Indian scholars, accepted this history as a scientific account of their past. "The British told us", reminds Kirtinath Kurtakoti, a well-known Kannada scholar, "You, Indians do not have historical consciousness. We [Indians] were not in a condition to deny such a value judgement. They said, 'you are very poor', we said 'yes'; they said 'you are ignorant', we nodded. Similarly, when they said 'you are people sans historical consciousness', we again accepted the judgement. We should immediately have asked, 'what is so wrong with not having historical consciousness?'" Continuing further, Kurtakoti notes, "we accepted the supe-

riority of the West from the moment they entered India." Hence, "neither during the colonial period nor in the post-colonial period were we able to" raise fundamental questions about the European descriptions of India (Kurtakoti 2003: 120). One of the consequences of this uncritical acceptance of European history of the Lingayat tradition as a valid description is a continuous reproduction of a history of the Lingayat tradition based on the colonial model of history writing. However, as we will discover in this chapter, this way of describing the problem addresses it only partially, which seeks to understand the natives rather negatively and passively. The other part the problem can be addressed with the following questions: When Lingayat scholars were constructing a history of their past what were they constructing and why? Why did they want to write a history of their past in the first place? What were the consequences of the newfound practice of history writing?

We now know that colonialism had a deep impact on Indian traditions. It is however not clear to us what was the role the natives played in the whole process. The line of enquiry that I suggest here may go on to make some modest contribution towards a better understanding of this intriguing problem. This chapter presents the *present* of the Lingayat community, continuing from where we ended in the last chapter. It reflects on different facets of the newfound habit of Lingayat community in the early 20th century to write a history of their tradition.

I. Discontents of the Present and the Demand for a History

Let us begin with an incident that will put the struggle of modern (late 19th and early 20th century) Lingayat scholars to construe a history for themselves into perspective. In the early-20th century, Hardekar Manjappa (1886-1947) began to realise, through a

process that I will explore below, that the writings of Basava could contribute to re-dressing the contemporary problems of his society. He set out to popularise Basava and his vachanas, spending much of his life studying the 'Lingayat movement' and publishing booklets and articles on various aspects of it. Today, he is justly regarded one of the pioneers of modern Lingayat studies. Manjappa made his first bid to popularise Basava in 1913, by starting the celebration of Basava jayanti. However, he faced a major difficulty in deciding the date of Basava's birth. Manjappa was not alone in this task. Many people around this time attempted to establish Basava's date of birth. One of the popular customs of the time was to celebrate the birthday on the day of *Mannettina Amavasye*, a festival in which the farmers in Karnataka offer puja to an ox. Manjappa did not like the suggestion. He was adamant in his insistence on establishing the exact historical date on which Basava was born. A scholar he consulted on the subject, however, disappointed him by pointing out that Basava's birth date was not available in any of the existing literature. Manjappa, therefore, decided to seek help from the *jyotishya* scholars to write Basava's *jataka* (horoscope) based on the 'planetary movements' described in the Basavapurana of Bhimakavi, a 14th century Kannada 'poet', at the moment of Basava's birth (Manjappa 1966b: 24-25). Apparently, several of his contemporaries had taken the same route, and had arrived at different dates. Manjappa took the lead in securing the consensus of these different people on a particular date (Channaveerashastri 1993: 10). Even though it is not clear who exactly arrived at this date, Basava *jayanti* is now celebrated in the month of April or May, based on the lunar calendar like many other Hindu festivals.

Manjappa's scrupulous efforts to introduce a new practice into the Lingayat tradition, the celebration of Basava *jayanti*, however, took a long time to attain popularity. The present popularity of the Basava *jayanti* owes much to the work of subsequent

scholars, who reinforced the new practice with far more vigour. Recollect the incident

of a dialogue between villagers and Kattimani mentioned in the "Introduction", where

Kattimani insists that the villagers should offer puja to the historical Basava of Kalyana

and not to an ox. Offering puja to an ox, he insists, is idol worship and superstitious.[1]

One way of characterising these two incidents and the general atmosphere that contrib-

uted to it is as a continuation of the colonial project of reforming Indian traditions. Giv-

ing Indian traditions a history played a major role in these developments.

It is a well-known fact that in the eyes of European travellers, orientalists, and

colonial scholars, the absence of history writing in India came to be seen as a reason for

the stultification of its culture.[2] Indian scholars continued to raise the absence of history

as a matter of great national shame after the colonisers left. Nevertheless, it is not clear

why the absence of something should be a matter of shame. More importantly, why did

Western scholars see or valorise only certain kinds of absences in India – absence of

history, nationalism, conception of truth, morality and so on? Let us focus our discus-

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[1] "There has been since colonial times an intellectual tradition in India that has often equated idolatry with the practices of the superstitious. Intellectuals of the Left belong, on the whole, to that tradition" (Dipesh 2002:22).

[2] Here are two random examples from colonial writings (for more examples see Gottlob 2006):

> Now I ask—What great man has appeared in the vast countries comprised between the country of the Samoides and the Gulf of the Ganges … Persia … [and] China? … It may be replied that we know not the great men that have appeared in Central Asia and in India, because India has no history; but I will ask—Why has it no history? It is because, as I have already shown you, that when man does not regard himself seriously, and has no importance in his own eyes, he takes no note of what he does, because what he does scarcely belongs to him, and seems to be done of itself, so that no one can feel either shame or glory. Man, not believing himself worthy of memory, abandons the world to the action of the forces of nature, and history to the gods, who fill it alone. Hence the entire mythological chronology of these ancient countries. The reason why they have no history in India is precisely the reason why they have no great men (Cousin 1856: 205).

> Early India wrote no history because it never made any. The ancient Indians never went through a struggle for life, like the Greeks in the Persian and the Romans in the Punic wars, such as would have welded their tribes into a nation and developed political greatness. Secondly, the Brahmans, whose task it would naturally have been to record great deeds had early embraced the doctrine that all action and existence are a positive evil, and could therefore have felt but little inclination to chronicle historical events (Macdonnell 1900: 11).

sion on the absence of history in India.[3] Colonial commentators had a practice of writing history, and sought it out wherever they went. Therefore, perhaps, they assumed that their cultural way of relating to the past was the only 'legitimate' way one could relate to the past. I say 'legitimate' because a strand of European/orientalist scholars did see puranas and kavyas as Indian historical writings, but regarded them as insufficiently historical and also immoral in nature.[4] Colonial and orientalist scholarship has generally characterised Indian culture with the aid of such stereotypical absences and deficiencies.[5]

Ever since Edward Said (1978) brought this to our attention, many post-orientalist scholars have shown that the Western understanding of Indian culture, especially in the 19th and early-20th centuries, is replete with stereotypes, and negative stereotypes at that. A stereotype can be expressed as a lack. The stereotype 'Indians are corrupt' can be expressed as a *lack/absence*: 'Indians lack moral integrity', 'absence of moral consciousness in India'. (More about stereotypes in the next chapter.) As such, one of the ways Western negative stereotypes came to portray India is to see it as a motley assortment of lack and absences. This is an uncontroversial observation and has

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[3] Al-Beruni, the famous Muslim traveller who came to India in the 11th century, also noted the absence of historical writings in India. "Unfortunately the Hindus do not pay much attention to the historical order of things, they are very careless in relating the chronological succession of kings, and when they are pressed for information are at a loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling" (Sachau ed. 1888: 10-11).

It is useful to note here is that scholars who have noted the absence of historical consciousness in India from the days of Al-Beruni to colonial thinkers, belonged to (a) Semitic cultures and (b) cultures where historiography has been a salient feature.

[4] Puranas were seen as a historical but Brahmanical form of history which the Brahmans "the gods terrestrial, [used] to lay claim to the whole Indian world. They have absorbed into their own system the ancient religions of the older inhabitants of the country, by the ingenious and easy process of turning the more primitive gods into Avataras of Vishnu, or incorporating them as Demons with the host of Shiva", says Moegling. He subsequently sets out to write a historical account of the people of Coorg drawing information from the *Kaveri Purana* (Moegling 1855: 12).

[5] John Jesudason Cornelius writes in his "Nationalism in India's Life and Thought" (in Stauffer 1927: 16) about his shocking discovery of "the alarming extent to which the current opinion of the West covers the negative aspects of Eastern life. To an average American, India … appears as a big negation; her philosophy as illusion, her religion renunciation, her society caste-bound, her industrial ambition reactionary, and her politics obstructive. Little if any is his knowledge of the creative aspects of oriental national life."

been discussed at length in post-Saidian scholarship.[6] What needs more elaboration are some contingent developments. Indian scholars took it to be a fact that India lacks historiography and *a history*.[7] This acceptance, as we said earlier, led to two developments: either Indian scholars vehemently defended themselves, claiming that they too had a history, or they ceaselessly strived to write a history of India. As Kurtakoti observed, "historical thinking, which had just been introduced to us Indians, swiftly gained control over us" (Kurtakoti 2003: 121).[8] Early Lingayat scholars, like Hardekar Manjappa and P.G. Halakatti, and other scholars of their period[9] took the latter route and demanded a *history* of their past, their community and their traditions.[10] "We shall be simply glad and amply repaid", said M.R. Sakhare, "if scholars hereafter will devote their labours in the direction of studying Lingayatism and its literature *historically and*

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[6] As Dipesh Chakrabarty points out, it is with "reference to [these] 'absences'" that the project of Subaltern Studies was announced. He also notes that this "tendency to read Indian history in terms of a lack, an absence, or an incompleteness that translates into 'inadequacy'" can still be found in the writings of his fellow Indian historians (Chakrabarty 2000: 31, 32).

[7] According to R.C. Majumdar, an important, if dated, Indian historian of the 20th century, "[o]ne of the gravest defects of Indian culture, which defies rational explanation, is the aversion of Indians to writing history. They applied themselves to all conceivable branches of literature and excelled in many of them, but they never seriously took to the writing of history" (Majumdar 1952: 7).

[8] Ashis Nandy, an influential opponent of the role of historical consciousness, suggests that 'millions of people still live outside 'history,' and their understanding of the past is different from that constructed by historians.' See his famous essay, "History's Forgotten Doubles" (Nandy 1995).

[9] Manjappa, Sakhare and Shastri were writing at more or less the same time (early decades the 20th century), and with approximately the same concerns. Chekki provides a list of scholars who belong to this generation: these are "some of the outstanding scholars who belonged to the first generation of indigenous researchers. … P.G. Halakatti, S.D. Pawate, V. Bileangadi, V.C. Yagati, V.B. Halabhavi, S.C. Nandimath, M.R. Sakhare, S.S. Basavanal, Kumaraswamiji, R.R. Diwakar, M.R. Shrinivas Murthy, … P.R. Karibasava Shastri, Chennamallikarjuna, B. Shivamurthy Shastri, Buddhayya Puranik, Hardekar Manjappa, Uttangi Chennappa, and others. Among these indigenous scholars, P.G. Halakatti is aptly recognized as the founding father of the study of vachana literature" (Chekki 1997: 115).

[10] Reflecting on a similar situation, Ashis Nandy correctly points out how, in the early part of the 20th century,

> the favorite lament of many Bengali thinkers was: Bāngālī ātmavismrta jāti – the Bengalis are a people who have forgotten their self. By this was meant that the Bengalis did not have a self based on history, that the traditional depositories of Bengal's awareness of her selfhood and past – its myths, folkways, shared and transmitted memories – were no longer legitimate to the important sections of the Bengali elite. It was this westernized elite, not the whole of Bengal, that felt it was ātmavismrta, truly orphaned without a proper history. It was now looking for a different kind of construction of the past, the kind that would not humiliate them vis-à-vis their historically minded rulers (Nandy 1995: 59).

arrive at truth, which should be the aim and end of their work" (Sakhare 1942: 439

emphasis mine).[11]

This importunate demand for *a history* of the Lingayat community, loaded with

several social and political expectations, began self-consciously by justifying itself.

> The history of the Veerashaiva religion and philosophy has long re-
> mained a sealed book. Feeble attempts have been made, here and there,
> by a few modern writers to give it some shape. But that is not enough
> …. In other words, a true orientation of this branch of history and phi-
> losophy is yet to be done. But we need not despair. There are signs of
> social consciousness among the Veerashaivas. The old antipathy shown
> by some classes of people towards the Veerashaiva religion is being
> gradually shaken off (Kashinatha Shastri 1931: "Preface").

Interestingly, the history that was sought to solve some of the problems of the commu-

nity, itself faced opposition from within the community. Reflecting on his history of

Basava, Manjappa complains,

> Some people even think that it is wrong to see Basava as a historical
> person! Basava for them is an incarnation of Nandi and does not belong
> to the human race. To write about him from the perspective of an objec-
> tive researcher I visited places like Bagewadi for the collection of mate-
> rial. I gave talks in Vijapura, Bagalkote, Gadag and such other places to
> convey my ideas to people and to understand the pattern of their dis-
> agreements, and then …,

and then, when Manjappa started writing his *Basava Charitre* (1926)[12] he wrote it, he

says, in "a way which would meet all the objections" of the people (Manjappa 1966a:

44). He does not explain what new way he adopted. However, one can note two impor-

tant developments in his subsequent writings. *First*, in his *Basava Charitre* he imports

all purana stories about Basava – from his 'miraculous' birth to his 'miraculous' death.

Like those of Manjappa, all early instances of historical writings unhesitatingly used

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[11] M.R. Sakhare was the chairperson of the reception committee of the first All-Indian Non-Brahmin Conference held at Belgaum on 28th December 1924. This was the first time that the different Non-Brahman organisations of South India were united under a single All-India body (Mitra 1924: 499).
[12] This book, as its author claims (Manjappa 1966a: 77 ff), is the first historical work on any aspect of the lingayat tradition. Manjappa, as Raghavendra Rao notes (2000: 57), "virtually inaugurated scientific re-search on the theological, moral, philosophical and historical dimensions of his own Lingayatism".

purana stories along with historical facts. Today, the trend is to disassociate them as much as one can. Modern historians, at least modern Kannada scholars writing on Lingayat tradition, generally hold stories (or fiction) to be the opposite of what a historical narrative is.[13] This often finds expression in the form a lament that erstwhile scholars have written no history of the tradition.[14] This raises an important question: What did 'history' refer to according to Manjappa and his contemporaries? *Secondly*, Manjappa wrote about some contemporary social problems in India – such as casteism and depraved status of the Lingayats – all through his life. He believed in and advocated the relevance of the vachanas and their teachings in overcoming these problems. He also wrote *Basava Charitre*, the first writing on Basava that claimed to be a history of Basava and so different from traditional kavyas. It is also unmistakably different from a traditional kavya or purana in various ways: its texture, narrative form, the tone and the treatment of its subject. Let us pause here and ask if we can give a satisfactory account of the differences between a kavya and the newly written history? This task requires a theory of Indian kavya besides a conceptual hold on the properties of historiography. I will, therefore, take a relatively easier route and ask, whether the history that Manjappa and the subsequent vachana scholars wrote satisfied the necessary properties of a historical narrative. If not, how else do we characterise it?

On the Attempts to write a History of Basava

Let us glance through the accounts of Basava's life, provided by Indian scholars over the last hundred years. We will focus on the way Indian scholars have recounted an in-

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[13] "According to modern historiography, traditional narratives about the past, as found in epics or myths, were unscientific and unhistorical" (Mehta and Pantham 2006: lvi).
[14] For some examples see further as well as my chapter 1.

cident associated with Basava's life by some Kannada kavyas and puranas: Basava's thread ceremony, or his upanayana ritual. Before we see a few random excerpts from different Indian scholars who describe this incident, we need to establish first the importance of a necessary property of historical writings, which historical writings of Indian historians of that period lack.

"Few historians today would argue that we write *the* truth about the past" (Munslow 1997: 1). Though we commonly hear such statements nowadays, it is still not clear what they mean in practice. Admittedly, we do not usually falsify names and dates. So we should not take Munslow's claim as a licence to give up attempts to determine the veracity of historical facts like the exact date of a contract signed, or the correct name of a poet who is only known by her pseudonym. If we remove dates and names from the list of units that a historian works with, what remains are the following: events and their causes and effects. Put simply, what remains are events and the links between them. Is it a case then that a history does not or cannot tell *the* truth about events and the links between them? If we answer this question affirmatively, we will fail to say what makes a historical account different from, say, a work of fiction.[15] It would not be a very revolutionary statement, I believe, to say that the only viable distinction between historical and fictional narrative is this: while historical narrative tries to be objective, fiction does not. Holding on to this distinction does not necessarily call for a nuanced theory of truth or objectivity. The commonsense meaning of these words

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[15] There is already a huge problem that historiography is yet to solve. What is the object of history? It is generally accepted that everything is potentially the object of history. But by implication this also suggests that nothing in particular is the object of history! This problem threatens to erase the distinctness of history as a discipline. Can this problem be solved by talking about an approach that is unique to history? I read Reinhart Koselleck's following claim as suggesting that history, if it has to retain its distinct identity, needs to workout a distinct approach: "history conceived as ubiquitous can only exist as discipline if it develops a theory of periodization; without such a theory, history loses itself in boundlessly questioning everything" (Koselleck 2002: 4).

will be sufficient for our purpose here. We can then say that history should be a search for truth, even if we will never be sure if it has been found.

What is at stake in distinguishing history from fiction is the very identity of historical writings and even historiography (the reflection on history writing). One would fail to distinguish between a fictional and a historical narrative. Whether our ideals allow us or not, we have to settle on this much: we can change anything but not the facts and their veracity, if a historical narrative is to have any credence. Summarising the 20th century developments in the field of history of philosophy Georg G. Iggers writes that the assumption of "reality" – that is "a correspondence theory of truth holding that history portrays people who really existed and actions that really took place" – has been one of the fundamental assumptions of "historical writing from Herodotus and Thucydides to Ranke, and from Ranke well into the twentieth century. Precisely these assumptions have gradually been questioned in recent historical thought." However, some of the basic assumptions including the assumption of "reality" remained intact. "Nevertheless they shared two key notions with the older historiography", he says. One of the two key notions important for our discussion here is "the affirmation that history dealt with a real subject matter to which the accounts formulated by historians must correspond" (1997: 3).

We need not deny the fuzziness of boundaries between historical writings and fiction. The inability to draw a demarcating line between the two is not a licence to collapse the two. On the contrary, we need to argue for the existence of two separate entities called history and fiction. If history, the product of historiography, exists, it should have features or properties that distinguish it from fiction. Hence, it is said, "[h]istorical knowledge, as it is usually described, is derived through a method … that flows from its techniques in dealing with the traces of the past. The most basic function of the his-

torian is to understand and explain in a written form, the connections between events and human agency in the past" (Munslow 1997: 3). To repeat, we are not asking here if such an explanation of "the connections between events and human agency in the past" can be produced or not. Human history is evidently replete with such attempts. And the very fact that the discussions about such explanations, in the 20th century at least, have revolved around 'narrative, emplotment, structure' etc., show that the veracity of the factual elements as the basic units of the historical narrative is taken for granted. Only then can one talk about the connection between these factual elements, which produce explanations. The 'this happened, *then* that' structure, which a historian accepts, is the evidence for two things: one, that there is a practice of writing a history as distinct from fiction and, two, a distinction between history and fiction is that the former takes the veracity of the factual elements as one of its basic characteristics. In a story, the sequence and the veracity of events can depend on the author's requirement and choice. In history, they have to have 'evidence', references, etc. "What, then, is the relationship of history to its closest neighbour, literature? The bottom line seems to be one of referentiality. I take this to mean the accuracy and veracity with which the narrative relates what actually happened in the past" (Munslow 1997: 4). Or, as Jenkins puts it, discussing recent developments in the philosophy of history, "For what is at issue in historiography—and indeed what can only ever be at issue—is what can be derived and constructed from the historicised record or archive" (Jenkins 1995: 16). Hayden White makes the same point with greater force. He writes, "[u]nlike literary fictions, such as the novel, historical works are made up of events that exist outside of the consciousness of the writer. … Unlike the novelist, the historian confronts a veritable chaos of events already constituted, out of which he must choose the elements of the story he would tell" (cited in, Hughes-Warrington 2008: 391).

The problem that I am raising here is related to the basic issue that is usually taken for granted while writing or talking about a historical narrative: the issue of 'what *actually* happened in the past'. My contention is that historians and scholars writing on Basava advertently or inadvertently fail precisely to respect this basic rule, *in some contexts*. The constraining clause 'in some contexts' points at a problem that I want to discuss here. However, before we come to this problem, let us go through the excerpts reproduced below from various accounts of the incident of Basava's initiation ritual.

(i)

> The child was named Basava on the 12th day; and his education commenced in his fifth year. … But nothing more is known about his life till he was eight. As soon as he reached that age, Madarasa [his father] thought of performing his *Upanayana*, according to the practice in the family. He consulted the elders and the *Purohits*, and fixed a day for celebrations. What transpired is well described in the fifth canto of Singirajapurana. "Basava listened to all that was said about the need for *Upanayana* and said: 'My gurus have already performed some initiatory religious ceremonies for me, and you are now going to initiate me into different rites and a different devotion. I cannot agree to this'. … This was a moment in Basava's life fraught with tremendous consequences; for the decision of the boy of eight would decide whether Veerashaivism would revive into its pristine glory or suffer extinction. It was the moment of Karnataka's spiritual revolution (Manjappa 1966a: 32-33).

(ii)

> Thereafter, when the time for Basaveshwara's upanayana came at his eighth age, he told his parents that he will not undergo the upanayana and become a *karma-kaandi*, but take *shiva-deekshe*. He went on to have *shiva-deekshe* through Jaataveda Swami and was initiated into Vīraśaiva dharma (Channaveerashastri 1993: 18).

(iii)

> Shree Basaveshwara was born in a brahmin family, to Madarasa and Madalambe in 1131 AD in Bagewadi. Madarasa was the chief of Bagewadi, now known as Basavanna Bagewadi [which] is in Bijapur district, Karnataka, India. It is observed that Basaveshwara was an incarnation of Nandi the vehicle of lord Shiva, as Madalambe gave birth to a son after observing the Nandivrata. Basaveshwara had a sister Akkanagamma and a brother Devaraja. … [The] Upanayana was done when Basava was eight years of age. He was made to wear the sacred thread called Janivara and worship the holy fire reciting [the] "Gayatri" mantra and

perform many complex rites. Soon after this, both his parents died and was looked after by his grandmother. Basava was in no way convinced by the Upanayana ceremony and the subsequent strict observances because they were administered by the persons who had no true insight. This made him revolt against the ritualism. At the age of 16 years Basava discarded the Janivara and broke away from the brahmanical religious traditions. He then proceeded to Kudala Sangama, then the Shaivite stronghold.[16]

(iv)

We have to remember that in the lives of great religious teachers, we have usually the element of supernaturalism, particularly the miracles. We may however state the facts, based on historical evidence. 12th century A.D is accepted by all as the time of Basava. … Basava was a precocious child. He was given to religious musings. The turning point in his life came at the age of eight, when his parents were preparing for Upanayanam of their son. It was the initiation ceremony to invest him with the sacred thread. All the relatives had assembled for that important ceremony including Basava's maternal uncle Baladēva, the Prime Minister to King Bijjala. The stage was set for initiation. Basava surprised all those who had assembled by flatly refusing to undergo the ceremony. He stated that he was already initiated by the grace of God into the true faith namely Vīraśaivism. He stated that he had discarded his old faith. The ceremony was abandoned. Basava began to preach about his faith openly. He left his house (Sadasivaiah 1967: 21).

(v)

Basava reached his eighth year and Mādirāja, like any orthodox Brahmin father, made all [the necessary] arrangements for the initiation ceremony. However, the boy revolted. He declared that he was not interested in such rites and that he would not wear the sacred thread. He even threatened to run away from home. But finally he apparently agreed, with great reluctance, to undergo the ceremony, for there are records of an upanayana for Basava dated in A.D. 1113-14 (Parmeshwaranand 2004: 106).

(vi)

Basava was born in a Brahman family. He refused to wear the scared thread at the age of eight and declared himself a special worshipper of Lord Siva. Afterwards, he stated that he had come to remove caste discrimination. He drew the attention of his uncle Baladeva, who was the prime minister of the king of Kalyana, Bijjala, and gave him his daughter Gangavathi in marriage (B.K. Ravindranath in Singh et al. 2003: 889).

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[16] Published on the website of the Florida Chapter of the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America, a.k.a., FLVSNA. http://flvsna.org/default.aspx (accessed March 12, 2009).

The problem in these descriptions, that we discussed earlier, – which I will state here before expanding on it – is that while some factoids[17] are treated indifferently some are valorised. Let me anticipate an obvious objection by stating quite clearly that this problem is not unique to Lingayat or Indian situation. If one were to collect five historians' accounts of the death of Charles II, for instance, not one might agree with another about what took place. There are usually a large number of different emplotments regarding any 'historical event'. Historians have no choice but to select those for which they can find corroboration. This is, in fact, in the very nature of history-writing. The only way historians can deal with this is by themselves indicating the strength or weakness of the evidence: "Legend has it that….but there is no hard evidence to support it". "He may possibly have done this but we cannot be sure." "According to one account, he….but the person who relates the story was extremely biased" and so on. This is where the issue that I want to point out lies. In the different narratives of Basava's upanayana given above, writers present the factoid (not *fact* but a factoid, see footnote 17 below) that Basava rejected his *upanayana* without fail. They are simply indifferent to the rest of the incidents they describe. This is not an issue of how honestly the historians in question present their material.

The difference between this problem, which is common to history writing in general, and the problem in histories of the Lingayat tradition, which I will describe below, will become clear as we develop the argument. Let me mention at the outset that, in fact, vachana scholars do acknowledge the differences of opinion and the difficulty of arriving at a clear picture about Basava and actions ascribed to him. The essay of M.P. Samartha (1977), where she points out this problem and then tries to overcome

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[17] I use the word factoid here to suggest that what are asserted here as facts are unverified 'fact-like' 'information' that are picked up straight from legends and stories that are otherwise considered unhistorical.

it, may gives us some handle on the underlying *important issue.* According to Samartha, "followers of the Virasaiva sect in particular display an unquestioning reverence for the traditions of the past. So far, even the more detached scholars of the field seem to have a happy indifference toward looking carefully into various inconsistencies." Hence, she purports to "challenge the traditional view" about Basava's rejection of the upanayana, as "one-sided" and arrive at a "more comprehensive and plausible account" by "critically comparing [different] sources" (Samartha 1977: 335). But the history that she presents after all these considerations is a story that *kavi* Harihara of the 14th century has narrated.

> Moreover, Harihara, a close contemporary of the saint, gives an entirely different account of Basava's departure from home. He does not subscribe to the upanayana story at all. On the other hand, he recognizes that Basava did wear sacred thread. But there was a gradual realization on the part of Basava that Siva Bhakti (devotion to Siva) and karma (ritualistic actions) were opposed to each other and were bound to clash. When he came to the full awareness of this fact, Basava tore the sacred thread, renounced everything and walked eastward to Kudala Sangama Kshetra. This story seems to be more plausible not only because of the discrepancies in the previous stories but also because it is more in keeping with Basava's character as evidenced by various other incidents of his entire life recorded in the hagiography (1977: 341).

This is quite characteristic of Indian scholars who have written on Basava. Some, like Samartha, pick any one version of the story from a host of other stories from the traditional kavyas and puranas and present it as the most plausible history. Some view the "various inconsistencies" as a sign of the inability of pre-colonial Indian scholars to understand Basava (see chapter 1). Many scholars simply gloss over it. Western scholars generally simply refer to Indian authors[18] in support of the story about Basava's rejection of the upanayana or they refer to legends.[19]

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[18] Here is a random example: Rowena Robinson quotes certain Srinivasamurthy (Robinson 2004: 138-139).
[19] Another random example: "He protested against wearing the sacred thread which identified him as a Brāhmaṇa. According to some sources, he even refused to undergo the initiation ceremony of being in-

Admittedly, as said earlier, it is not difficult to defend these narratives of Basava's upanayana as 'sufficiently' if not 'perfectly' historical. Many scholars like Samartha or A.K. Ramanujan[20] accept that there are inconsistencies in the modern accounts of Basava's life. Nevertheless, what Samartha says about Ramanujan is more or less true of entire body of vachana scholarship: "In spite of Ramanujan's awareness of the problem, he sets aside many controversies and discrepancies related to this saint's life. His purpose is to present the sayings of Basava and therefore he settles for a generally accepted version of Basava's life" (1977: 335 n.4). We can now raise the question: why is there a consensus on some incidents about Basava's life and an indifference towards some other incidents? This question assumes importance when we notice that these incidents come from more or less the same sources: Kannada kavyas or puranas or legends. That means these incidents – which are today presented as historical incidents – do not derive any *weightage* from their sources. What is this consensus based on? How is it obtained? It is in this context that I claim that there is a cognitive gain in not considering these accounts of Basava's upanayana as 'sufficiently historical' accounts. If they lack a necessary property of historical writings, then they should be treated accordingly: that is, as something other than historical-writings.

What follows in this chapter is not an attempt to answer the questions raised above. It is important that we first establish the importance of those questions – which, as I said, ask for an alternative approach to the accounts of Basava's life – before we answer them. We will, therefore, begin with the following question: How should these

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vested with the thread (upanayana), which was obligatory for every Brāhmaṇa boy. Another version, more probable, is that he discarded the sacred before leaving his parental home. Apparently, Basava preferred a personal relationship with the godhead, not determined by the traditional prerogatives of his high priestly class" (Schouten 1995: 2).

[20] "The biography of Basavanna has many contradictory sources: controversial edicts, deifying accounts by Virasaiva followers, poetic life-histories, pejorative accounts by his Jaina opponents mentioned in the vachanas of contemporary and later saints... it is not surprising that he should have been praised as a prophet by followers and condemned as a zealot and conspirator by his enemies, of whom he had many" (Ramanujan 1973: 61).

accounts be characterised if not as a history? Reflecting on this question needs some stage setting, which we can do by expanding on some important points from the preceding discussion. What Samartha does when she wants to 'challenge the traditional view' about Basava's rejection of upanayana, as a 'one-sided account' is to present one specific legend/story about Basava as a 'more comprehensive and plausible account'. This also suggests, were she to write a longer history of Basava, she would simply select from legends as one would select from facts and fit them together into a *picture* (see the following quotation). This connects us with two other points discussed in the previous chapters: the *picture* that Schouten talks about (chapter 2) and the function of the idea that the vachanas are anti-caste poetry (chapter 1, section II). The question that we asked Schouten can now be put to Samartha. What is the criterion for the selection of legends as historical? The criterion of selection, as she explains, is simple:

> One has to look for other historical evidence pertaining to the religious and social atmosphere of the time and especially to the vachana tradition in order to get a comprehensive picture of Basava's struggle and departure from home. It was a time when the anti-ritualistic movement was popular and was being preached by reformers like Revanasiddha, Marulasiddha, Panditharadhya, Ekorama and Vishvaradhya who were both the precursors and contemporaries of the Virasaiva movement. So, even though Basava was brought up in an orthodox Brahmin family he could have shared in the anti-ritualistic tendencies which were in the air (Samartha 1977: 341).

The demarcation she presupposes is this: there is, on the one hand, historical evidence that pertains to the religious and social atmosphere of the time and, on the other, there are proto-historical legends and stories. The problem that crops up in writing a history of, say, Basava, where there are more stories and less historical facts, can be solved if we select stories that look like history or that which fit in the ambience of historical writings. This is the only way in which we can understand Samartha's choice of *kavi* Harihara's story of the *upanayana* as 'more historical' than other versions of the

story available in the tradition: Harihara's story must somehow look 'more historical' than other stories. This raises a new question: what makes a story look historical? We will come to this question later. For now, since we have some clarity on how a history of Basava is generally written, let us reflect on one of the lead questions of the chapter: How should we characterise Indian historians' accounts of Basava's life, if not as a 'history'? Here is my answer: if purana stories or selections from them become *the* histories of Indian traditions, then, to get a better hold on such history, we should see them as a new kind of story, which combine stories from the tradition and some properties of history, but as stories nonetheless. They are, to borrow a concept from my chapter 2, true-stories.

As we see, all historical accounts necessarily have to juggle what comes from tradition with 'properties of history'. Does that mean there is nothing new in what I am saying? There is a very popular way of understanding traditional (Indian) stories about Basava as 'accounts' of real Basava's actual life. These accounts might mythicise, theologise or fictionalise Basava's life. But they are nonetheless an attempt to write a biography (hagiography!) of Basava. From this perspective, a modern attempt to write a history of Basava has to establish a version of the truth from different stories about him. What else can it do? In this sense, all history writing is what I call a 'true-story'. This perspective believes that the 'properties of history' are not in the material itself; they relate simply to the thoroughness with which the historian explores the material and to the honesty with which he or she then presents it. Of course, the historians will inevitably have a purpose of their own as well. So to some extent historians are also always inevitably appropriating the material they find to another purpose for which they write. One way of attempting to counterbalance that – and the way that has become general in history-writing in recent decades – is precisely this emphasis on 'story-like' nature of

history, which does not try to make 'false' claims for what historical writing can achieve, and precisely does not claim that it is a representation of 'truth'. What one has to do is distinguish between "truth" and "veracity" (telling the truth as one sees it). It is the latter, not the former, that is the crucial property of history.

Let me state it clearly that this is not the sense in which I talk about 'true-stories' in the context of India/Lingayat tradition. To understand the context in which I talk about 'true-stories' we have to consider a different possibility: What if purana stories, say about Basava, are not 'hagiographies' or 'accounts' of some incidents that took place in the world? What if stories from Indian traditions are just 'stories', *somewhat* like the story of Harry Potter and his schooling in Hogwarts? Put logically, what if stories in India are those entities that do not contain truth-value? Can one still treat them as facts and reconstruct a history of India? Can we draw a history of the West 'directly'[21] from the story of Potter's fight with Voldemort? What is happening in the Indian context is an attempt of this kind. Histories of Indian traditions, say of Basava and Lingayat tradition, are constructed out of 'stories' that are not about some incidents in the world.[22] Accordingly, to get a better sense of histories of Indian traditions in question, I said, we should see them as a *new* kind of story, which combine stories from the tradition and some properties of history, but as stories nonetheless. The word *new* in this context means a new variety of stories that is added to the existing corpus of stories in India. (Chapter 5 will discuss both the nature of Indian stories and the 'newness' of this *new* kind of stories.)

Keeping this discussion in mind, let us return to Samartha's essay. She presents the supposed fact that the 12th century was a time when the anti-ritualistic movement was popular and was being preached by different reformers as 'historical evidence'.

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[21] That is, without reading this story as a 'mark of…', 'symbol of…', but simply as containing some factual elements that just needs to be picked and rearranged.

[22] This is an insight provided by S.N. Balagangadhara. We will discuss his argument in the next chapter.

This 'historical evidence' then seems to function like a sieve, which is used to sift out traditional stories and legends. The sifted stories then are presented as or used in the construction of a 'history' of the vachana movement. The question now is, where has this 'historical evidence' come from? What is its epistemic nature? Since the epistemic nature of a conclusion (such as, Basava rejected his *upanayana* as a mark of his anti-Brahmanism) depends on the epistemic nature of the premises (which posit a link between Brahmanism-rituals-caste system), the premises must be epistemically prior to and sounder than the conclusion. If so, the history of India (or Basava) constructed out of Indian stories, as in the case of Samartha, cannot lend epistemic support to the 'historical evidence', which talks about the caste system. The question then is this: where does this 'historical evidence' derive its epistemic validity?

Let us, in the next section, strengthen some of our findings so far. We will continue in the next section with our account of the 20th century Lingayat community. The suggestion that 20th century history of Basava or the Lingayat movement should not be seen as a history will guide our inquiry. When early Lingayat scholars and the Lingayat community took exception to historical accounts, say, of Basava or demanded for historical accounts of their past were they referring to 'historical accounts' as such or something else? Put differently, what was the demand for a historical account a demand for? How was 'history' supposed to solve the problems that Manjappa saw in his society? Furthermore, what were the problems and their nature that Manjappa found in his society?

History as a Diagnostic Attitude

As Manjappa explains, the problem was quite complex. "Several renowned poets like Singiraja … [and] Bhimakavi have written about Sri Basava mahātma but", Manjappa regrets, "according to their extraordinary bhakti and knowledge in the puranic style. However, in today's world where bhakti of that kind has dwindled and a *cikitsaka buddhi* holds sway, the great works of those poets *do not help us to understand and appreciate* the greatness and the achievements [*karyakrama*] of Basava" (cited in the editor's introductory note Manjappa 1966b: 333 emphasis added).[23] The term 'chikitsaka buddhi' needs some explanation here, as it is an important phrase running through the dissertation. A *chikitsaka* is a physician and *chikitsa* is treatment. *Buddhi* is intellect or attitude. The phrase *chikitsaka buddhi*, which is yet to find a place in the dictionaries in Kannada/India, is used largely as a positive expression. It refers to an attitude of questioning, of diagnosing, which only occasionally, under some circumstances, takes a negative stance. It usually refers to a modern attitude where one problematises everything that a tradition holds or purportedly holds as unproblematic. Manjappa's use of the word is largely positive, though, I would say, tinged with a slight sense of loss. Manjappa is not entirely happy that the age of *bhakti* has ended and an era of *chikitsaka buddhi* has arrived. He does not see history – say, a history of Basava – as something good in itself. It is rather a solution to the challenges that the new *chikitsaka buddhi* has posed. But, there is also an unmistakable sense in his writings that the past is not entirely rosy. The caste system, after all, existed in the past, as in the present. Basava fought against it and so should we. Writing a history of Basava will be a part of the struggle. The *chikitsaka buddhi* itself may also contribute to the fight, since it questions

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[23] I have occasionally used A. Mylar Rao's translation of *Basava Charitre* (K. Raghavendra Rao 2000) with minor modifications.

every accepted dogma of the past. I will use the phrase 'diagnostic attitude' as a translation of *chikitsaka buddhi* .[24]

How does Manjappa view his society? His society suffered from problems like casteism but it was so impoverished that it was unable to make use of its own resources to fight these problems because, he says, the context and people had changed. He says, that people in today's rational world, unlike in the past, do not accept a 'belief' or a principle without ample proof and argument, they prefer a 'diagnostic attitude' (Manjappa 1966b: 6). Did the popularisation of Basava, in such a situation, function as an act of (re)deploying traditional resources to fight social problems? Manjappa certainly seemed to think so. However, Basava had to be (re-) presented in a new form suitable to the modern period. What comes to Manjappa's rescue here is historiography: "Therefore", he says, "I found it necessary to write a *charitre* of that great man in a way which will suit the present time and conform to the style of *itihasa*[25] [history] writing" (Manjappa 1966b: 333). Our key to disentangling the relations between historiography and Lingayat scholarship then must lie in this chemistry between the tradition (Basava, the *bhakta*) and historiography (the historical Basava of Kalyana).

This faith in historical accounts was not confined merely to intellectual elites. 'Educated' lay people in the Lingayat community were also involved in stressing the urgent requirement for a history of their community, which would solve the current problems within their community. Those various leaders and elite of the Lingayat

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[24] I thank Dr. Tejaswini Niranjana for suggesting the term 'diagnostic' for 'chikitsaka'. R.V. Ganesh, in one of his writings, suggests 'analytical' for 'chikitsaka' (Ganesh 1996: 6).
[25] The term 'charitre' is usually used in traditional Indian writings as the equivalent of a 'life sketch'. Manjappa and Halakatti use the term charitre to mean (the western form of) bio-graphical sketches and itihasa for historical narratives. Needless to say, these terms had different connotations in the pre-colonial period.

community who spoke in different *Virashaiva Mahasabhe*s,[26] constantly demanded historical writings about their past. The fourth *Virashaiva Mahasabhe* of 1908 went a step ahead of the previous *Sabhe*s and passed a resolution to write an *itihasa* of its ancestors, that would "keep them reminded" of the "philosophers, sharanas, pundits, brave people and other such great souls." This, they thought, would lead to the birth of more such people in the community and the community would develop (1910: 55).

Later in the *Sabhe*, reflecting on this resolution, Tammappa Satyappa, an invited speaker, insisted that "because such a history has still not been written, the Lingayat people are ignorant of the past achievements of their community, and hence the Lingayats have neither self-respect (*swābhimāna*), nor is their existence in India of any value today" (1910: 55). He then goes on to expand on the consequences of the lack of such a history: the Lingayats have been pulled down from their superior position into the shudra status; they have lost hope and are impious, careless about education and so on. According to him, one has to distil such a history from the puranas written by pundits.[27] This is not quite like M.P Samartha's suggestion that stories should be selected from the puranas. Satyappa's suggestion is that history should refer to incidents of avatars, gods and *yugas* (from the puranas), should it turn out to be 'useful' to society. But, he also says that a history that talks about "astounding and nonhuman incidents" (*adbhuta* and *amanusha*) is not a useful history.[28] The question then is: what according

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[26] In 1904, Hanagal Kumara Swamiji founded the Virashaiva Mahasabhe and in the same year the first session of the mahasabhe was held at Dharwad. Sirsangi Lingaraj Desai of Navalgunda was the first president of the Convention.

[27] For some more discussion of this issue, see my chapter 2.

[28] This distinction between *purana* and *imaginary (fictional/fantastic) writings* was a characteristic of early Kannada writings, especially novels. Thanks to S. Jayasrinivasa Rao for drawing my attention to these Kannada writings, for procuring copies of the cited texts for my use and for translating them from the Kannada original. Below are two examples. For more examples and an interesting take on them, see Jayasrinivasa Rao (2001).

In a Kannada novel published in 1900, which claims to have "followed a new method in Kannada novel writing", writes the following: "In this novel, we do not have kings and queens or demons and demonesses capable of swallowing the three worlds. Nor are there beautiful girls who rival the beauty of

to Satyappa and his fellow Lingayats distinguishes the incidents of avatars, gods and *yugas* (from the puranas) from 'astounding and nonhuman' incidents?[29] What is the 'usefulness' of history being mentioned here, such that this *usefulness* is measured in inverse proportion to the use of *astounding* and *nonhuman* incidents? There are two points worthy of reflection here. One, history was the need of a new intellectual trend or the 'diagnostic intellect', which purportedly marked the modern period. Second, this history was to be *useful* unlike supernatural stories such as those found in the puranas. We have raised some important questions, I believe, and we can pause again to reflect on them.

History as a Story and the Quest for Writing a Correct and Useful History

Late 19th and early 20th century Lingayat scholars saw historical narratives as diagnostic and hence therapeutic devices. Hence, they insisted that historical writings should take up some constructive role in life and society. When they took to writing histories, they constructed them out of purana stories. This practice has become so dominant today that we hardly notice that what we think as a history of Basava is nothing but a

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apsara-s. We do not have charming princes with divine qualities who repeatedly invite praise. But we have characters that even the common man of this world can identify with" (Rodda 1900: sec. "Appeal").

D.R. Bendre, a *Jnana Pita* award winning Kannada poet of the 20th century, makes similar distinction in one of his prose pieces. Talking about what should Kannada literature contain, he says, "It does not need traditional *itihasa* and purana, nor does it need modern variety of imaginary stories and novels" (Bendre 1945: 106).

[29] "ಸತ್ತವರ ಕಥೆಯಲ್ಲ ಜನನದ । ಕುತ್ತದಲಿ ಕುದಿ ಕುದಿದು ಕರ್ಮದ । ಕತ್ತಲೆಗೆ ಸಿಲುಕುವರ ಸೀಮೆಯ ಹೊಲಬು ತಾನಲ್ಲ । ಹೊತ್ತು ಹೋಗದೆ ಪುಂಡರಾಲಿಪ । ಮತ್ತ ಮತಿಗಳ ಗೋಷ್ಠಿಯಲ್ಲಿದು । ಸತ್ಯ ಶರಣರು ತಿಳಿವುದೀ ಪ್ರಭು ಲಿಂಗ ಲೀಲೆಯನು." (A rough translation: "Not a story of the dead, nor of those who seethe in worldly miseries and snarl in the darkness of *karma*. It is not an opera of the uncultured and intoxicated braggarts, who want to pass time. It is for the true *sharana*s.") This stanza from Chamarasa's *Prabhulingaleele* (a 15th c. text) is said to be typical to puranas, kavya*s* and other writings of Lingayat scholars (Basavalingayya and Murthy 1934: 136, n.3). They usually claim to have written the poem neither about the ordinary and worldly people nor about the gods and goddesses. Who is this third category then? This particular stanza quoted above also claims that this is not a poem for those who want to read it for pleasure or to pass the time. What is it supposed to do then?

true-story merging a diagnostic attitude with the stories available in their own traditions. Our task, however, does not stop at pointing to this modern phenomenon. We need to unpack the process of the formation of true-stories and get a sense of its functions and properties. We will take up the issue in the next chapter. The task for what follows in this chapter is to show that this approach is not only fruitful but inescapable.

One way of understanding the demand that the writing of history should take up some constructive role in society is to say that it was based on an uncritical acceptance of the European colonial idea that India was inferior and deficient in almost every aspect. The logic of this proposition is not very difficult to see. Western writers saw India as lacking many things, including historical consciousness. Lingayat elite began by accepting this view as a fact and started writing a history of their past in compensating for the perceived state of inferiority of their community. Alternatively, writing a history of the past seems to be an attempt of the Lingayat community to recover something from their past that was denigrated as corrupt and immoral. Logically this line of understanding Indian culture opened up only one way of appraising Indian traditions: to argue that there is something in India (or its past) that is morally worthy. Satyappa's speech, like the entire corpus of Lingayat writings of this period, displays many examples of this approach. It was argued that the Lingayat tradition, as a matter of fact, was great at some point in the past, but its greatness was now lost. Therefore, they required a history to remind them of this past and its (lost) glory.[30] This attitude towards India too was borrowed from a European view of the Indian past, which held that India's glorious past was corrupted by the Brahman class.[31] This way of looking at the demand for history is not only plausible but also has much to contribute to our knowledge of this period and the way these early Indian scholars negotiated colonialism. Much of our

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[30] The proceedings of the Virashaiva Mahasabhes, of the first two decades of the last century, are full of this argument.

[31] For an elaborate discussion of this issue see Gelders and Derde (2003).

post-colonial scholarship, in fact, has taken this route,[32] though they do not see anti-Brahmanism as a colonial and orientalist view.

However, notwithstanding its cognitive productivity, there is something that this approach fails to explain.[33] Why did scholar after scholar early in the 20th century ask for a history of their past? Why did they then seem to be indifferent to what went into the history? Manjappa too, who insisted on knowing and recognising historically important facts, had, it would seem, paradoxically scant regard for what goes into a historical account. He constructed historical narratives out of entities like horoscopes that would today be considered completely unhistorical or a-historical. Thus, the components of a history that early Lingayat scholars and leaders demanded were stories and characters from the kavyas and puranas. Just as Manjappa's Basava is an incarnation of Shiva's Nandi, Tammappa Satyappa's history, as we saw in chapter 2, favoured the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas over inscriptions and letters.

Furthermore, the writing of history in India, not just histories of the Lingayat community, is marked by a conspicuous expression of a desire to write a 'better' or more 'accurate' history, and is further compounded by a 'realisation' that Indians are unable to write proper histories of their past.[34] In itself, this need not interest us. After all, progress in human knowledge is an outcome of a constant quest to better our knowledge of the world. However, the quest for writing a better history of the Lingayat

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[32] "Nationalist historians did not doubt the intrinsic value of the institutions of 'modernity' which accompanied colonial rule; they only emphasised the need to remove the exploitative nature of the colonial connection and to establish self-government as the necessary means for the full development of 'modernity'" (Chatterjee 1988: 6).

[33] One of the criticisms of Subaltern Studies writings, which often take this approach, is that it always views colonialism as a domination of the colonised by the coloniser. See, (O'Hanlon 1988), (Roy 2002) and (Richard M. Eaton 2000).

[34] Here is yet another pronouncement of this sporadically made but popular sentiment. Actually, these are the opening remarks of Sumit Sarkar's acclaimed work *Writing Social History*: "Our [Indian] historiographical essays tend to become bibliographies, surveys of trends or movements within the academic guild. They turn around debates about assumptions, methods, ideological positions. Through these, historians get pigeon-holed into slots: Neo-colonial … Subaltern [etc.]. The existence of not one but many levels of historical awareness attracts much less attention" (1997: 1). Dipesh Chakrabarty wants to "democratize historiography" (2002: 22)

past interests us for a different reason. There is, on the one hand, a disregard for factual accuracy while writing histories of Basava on the part of historians, as we noted previously, and, on the other hand, there is a demand for a *better* history. This seeming contradiction poses a hermeneutic challenge. Social scientists of late 20th century have understood the 'disregard for factual accuracy' as resulting in the failure to write a good history. Hence, post-colonial scholars (Subaltern Studies scholars, for example) have repeatedly termed the histories written by this (Manjappa's) generation of scholars as 'unhistorical' in nature.[35] Surely, this description is not satisfactory.[36] We not only need an objective (but not necessarily a positive) description of the attitude of Manjappa's generation towards history, but also an answer to seemingly simple questions such as why they took to writing histories of their communities in the first place. One way of solving this apparent contradiction is not to posit a link between the 'better-ness' of the desired historiography and factual accuracy. Factual accuracy of a historical account is an issue worth discussing in itself. But, the argument here is that the apparent contradiction will dissolve if the better-ness of a historical account in question turns out not be in direct proportion to its factual accuracy. What then makes a historical account better? As it is clear by now, historical narratives were seen as therapeutic devices, at least by this particular generation of Lingayat historians, which were expected to play a constructive role in society. If so, the 'better-ness' of a historical writings depends upon the efficiency with which it performs a constructive role in society. In fact, when Satyappa contended that the history that includes astounding and nonhuman incidents is a 'useless history' (*upayogavillada itihaasa*), he also said something more.

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[35] Such writings have been called mythical or puranic histories (see Ranajit Guha 1998) or unhistorical histories and so on. Not just histories but many more things that belong to this generation are considered thus: "Theoretical conceptions of the political are always secular. But political action by peasants during and after the nationalist movement often involved the agency of gods and spirits" (Dipesh 2002: 22).

[36] Recently, scholars like Prachi Deshpande (2007) have disagreed with such un-illuminating branding, but her own arguments also fail to say anything more about such writings.

In sum, the term history suits those works which give a true knowledge of covert *manovrutti*[37] of the communities as well as their highs and lows (*utkarsha-apakarsha*) and help the readers to choose what is right and give up what is wrong. It also applies to those works which induce strong feelings in their readers about the progress of their society by the correct deployment of strategies that suit the present time and the context of the nation. The works that are merely replete with astounding, nonhuman and inimitable issues (*sangati*) are not useful. Similarly, histories that merely talk about the birth and the death of political figures, the wars they had fought and their actions are also not useful (*4ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe*1910: 56).

There is something intriguing about what Satyappa says. Not only the inclusion of non-human and astounding figures but also the inclusion of inimitable issues (*anukaranakke ashkyavaagiruva sangati*) makes a history not useful. What is an inimitable issue? Why should its inclusion make a history useless? In order to understand this intriguing remark let us route our discussion through a seemingly unconnected question that a well-known Kannada writer raised so pertinently: 'What attitude should we take towards purana figures like Rama and Krishna?'

In his preface to a book on Shri Krishna, the popular purana figure from the Mahabharata, D.V. Gundappa asks a difficult question: How do we understand our *puranic* characters: as historical personalities or poetic personae?[38] His answer is one of the best reflections on this much-discussed issue that I have come across in my research so far.[39] In his own words,

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[37] Literally, business of the *manas*.

[38] It is a preface written to R. Vyasarao's translation of Bankim Chandra's Bengali work *Shri Krishna Charitra* (1886). The translation was published in 1965. The extended preface discusses various issues, especially how to read books on purana figures like Krishna. In Rabindranath Tagore's words, this book by Bankim Chandra "was the first ever attempt to establish Krishna's historicity... therefore Bankim had to take on both the jobs of demolition and construction. It takes a lot of labor and wisdom to decide what is not history before one attempts to decide what is history. In my opinion Bankim has completed the work of demolition to a large extent; he did not have time to attempt to build ... it is not possible to do so in one lifetime. Therefore that Bankim has initiated a small pathway through the dense forest of the Mahabharata is a matter of great fortune to us." (Cited in Shekhar Sen's "Bankim's Krishna-Charita: Some Observations." http://www.boloji.com/bookreviews/070.htm [accessed August 27, 2009].)

[39] For a conceptual discussion of this issue, see (Balagangadhara 1987). Balagangadhara's theoretical exposition of this issue, in fact, helps us to appreciate the depth of these insights of Gundappa.

If we think of an exemplary character [of our puranas] as a fictitious person, his ability to be an exemplar diminishes. After all, a poet can construct any kind of a character out of his imagination. … People cannot follow such characters. Hence, such an imagination cannot be exemplary to us. If someone has to become an exemplar in the world, he should be born as an ordinary human being and rise to great heights despite all kinds of worldly hindrances and limitations. A character like Krishna is a godly character. How can ordinary human beings ever live like him? …

If we think of a purana character as a historical person, then another kind of problem crops up. What is the evidence to prove that such a person really existed? Where did he live? What historical period did he belong to? How do we believe that he had four hands, that he lived for a thousand years [etc.] … ? As we ask for evidence to prove the statements of a plaintiff in a courtroom, we ask for evidence in the case of purana figures. How can we provide evidence in the case of a Lord Krishna or a Lord Rama? (Gundappa 1997: 485-486).

This raises the question about what attitude we should adopt towards purana characters like Rama and Krishna, especially if they are neither fictitious nor real historical persons.

According to Gundappa, a maha-kavi (a great poet) purports to convey a great *tatva*[40] to his readers. "But, his conviction is to make the *tatva* a personal experience to the readers", and not an external doctrine. A poet makes use of various literary tools like plot, characters, descriptions of context, figures of speech in order to make the *tatva* an experience. If a poet is to succeed in this, his words should have two specific strengths. "Firstly, it should make the reader recall his past memories (*poorva sma-*

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[40] Roughly, a *tatva* is a principle. But, strictly speaking, a *tatva* is precisely not a principle. A principle, in ethics, is a universal or universalisable prescription that one *ought to* follow. A *tatva* is more like a heuristic or a signpost. A signpost is useful only to those who choose to walk the path where the sign is posted, and intend to go to the destination to which the signpost provides directions. A *tatva* can be understood as an example set by an 'exemplar' (see footnote 42, below). Here is Akeel Bilgrami on the difference between an example set by an exemplar and a moral principle:

One is fully confident in the choices one wants to set up as exemplars, and in the moral values they exemplify. On the other hand, because no principle is generated, the conviction and confidence in one's opinions does not arrogate, it puts us in no position to be critical of others because there is no generality in their truth, of which others may fall afoul. Others may not follow. Our example may not set. But that is not the same as disobeying an imperative, violating a principle. As a result, the entire moral psychology of our response to others who depart from us is necessarily much weaker. At most we may be disappointed in others that they will not follow our example, and at least part of the disappointment is in ourselves that our example has not taken hold. And the crucial point is that disappointment is measurably weaker than criticism, it is not the paler shade of contempt, hostility, and eventual violence (Bilgrami 2003: sec. V).

rane). Secondly, it should offer him an example of a new [and a better] way of living." Gundappa elaborates on it with an example. Let us say that a poet wishes to reflect on a common human experience of a family feud over paternal property distribution among children. A kavya or a purana should help a reader recall such an experience from his or her own past life. It should then go on to describe what some purana characters did in a similar situation in their life. Dasharatha's children in the Ramayana, for example, happily give up their claim on their father's property. This story offers a new life model to a reader, which is worthy of imitation (Gundappa 1997: 486, 487).

But what is at issue is not just a model 'worthy of imitation' but a model or an exemplar which is imitable. Who or what is imitable? The answer is simple, even though it looks circular: that which can be humanly imitated is imitable. A character like Krishna or Rama, says Gundappa, is not imitable, or at least most of their actions are not imitable. Human beings cannot emulate Krishna's ability to woo a thousand women or Rama's supremely selfless character. In the lengthy discussion that follows, Gundappa brings home one important point: one should take an *attitude of learning* towards purana characters.

The attitude that Gundappa suggests one should have with regard to purana characters is also the attitude that Satyappa takes towards historical writings. This gives some clues as to the way Indian traditions would view stories: stories as learnables, as learning units.[41] My argument here is not only that Indians (especially of Manjappa's generation) viewed and treated historical writings too as a story but also that, as researchers, we will make a headway into the cultural world of Manjappa's generation if we treat their historical writings as stories, and their attitude towards historical writings and stories as similar.

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[41] For a detailed discussion of this issue, see (Balagangadhara 1987). A summary of this argument can be found in chapter 5, below.

Seen from this perspective, the 'better-ness' of historical accounts is a pragmatic demand for the improvement of the human situation that is placed on historiography. In order to be of service, then, a historical account in this context must fulfill two conditions. On the one hand, it has to be more than a mere historical empirical description. For, a mere historical description would not guarantee the 'good lessons' that a society needs. In short, an historical account should have exemplary persons like Basava. An historical account sans lessons results in a dry empirical record of events and persons. But on the other hand, historical accounts cannot be about a purana figure who has ten heads, or can lift an entire mountain and fly to altitudes, or one who is seen in the arms of thousands of women simultaneously. That is, an historical account should *not* have 'astounding and nonhuman figures', for they are not imitable and hence they do not teach.

This argument may seem a bit dubious. A narrative, in itself, whether it is a history or a story, will not 'guarantee' to function as 'learning units.' The argument here is not that a narrative has any such inbuilt ability to teach people but the attitude of the people is such that they use them as units of learning. There is also a suggestion here that there are heuristic gains in taking such an attitude towards a narrative, such as an historical narrative. A story, says Balagangadhara, functions as learning/teaching units in Indian culture, for the dominant mode of learning in India is imitative learning. It is a method of learning from imitable models.[42] Seeing the history that Manjappa's gen-

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[42] According to S.N. Balagangadhara, "exemplars are different from examples and, therefore, the process of learning through exemplars is not the same as learning through examples i.e. it is not some kind of inductive learning." Exemplars "are not examples because they do not instantiate anything". In a culture like India, where "the process of learning is such that its units are exemplars", he says, "stories can be used to teach". "Exemplars, as units of such a learning process, have a representational property and can be emulated. My claim is that the dominant mode of learning in India is mimetic or exemplary learning." If so, a "culture like India must now begin to appear in a different light: inundated with exemplars, it must be dominated by mimetic learning. Spheres such as morality, law, social organization, human interaction etc., belong to that of practical knowledge. Practical knowledge is cumulative perhaps to a greater degree than knowledge in the theoretical sphere" (Balagangadhara 1987: 86, 104, 89, 91, 98).

eration wrote or wanted to write as a story, a specific kind of story, I claim, will put things in perspective. The demand for history can then be seen as a demand for a story or a story-like function from history. Hence, I propose, implicit in the demand for better*ness* in historical writings is a demand that history should function like a story.

II. On the Controversies, in Lieu of Conclusion

A glance through modern Indian controversies makes it clear that what finally becomes a matter of contention is a historical fact. (For a brief analysis of two recent controversies see appendix IV). We ask for historical accounts, but when we have them, we cannot digest them. What is it about historical accounts that disturbs us so much? Historical accounts do not seem to solve any problems but rather create new problems. How do we account for this? The controversial historical facts in question are about a tradition. They portray tradition in a particular way. If so, our qualms with historical accounts and stories have to do with the way we perceive or want to perceive a tradition. The question then is what happened during the colonial period – presuming that these controversies are a modern phenomenon – that rendered the portrayal of a tradition such a hugely contentious issue? Talking about the controversies related to different Indian traditions in colonial and post-colonial India, Javeed Alam notes,

> What Islam could not do, colonialism did. It induced a rupture within the ontological basis of tradition. Received beliefs were no longer adequate. In unravelling the inner logic of tradition, the question of whether the change has been for the better or worse need not be asked at all. … The outlook entailed by Modernity, its categories for understanding social reality, and the knowledge acquired about it, forced a dialogue on

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Exemplars, says Akeel Bilgrami, "set examples to everyone by their actions. And the concept of the exemplar is intended to provide a wholesale alternative to the concept of principle in moral philosophy. It retains … the importance of being modest in one's moral opinions … while rejecting … any compromise in our conviction in them" (Bilgrami 2003: sec. V). More about this in chapter 5.

> tradition which is not internally related to its presuppositions in the way the dialogue of the Bhakti seers was. Now the interpretations that arise from this dialogue within tradition do not have a primordial affinity to one another as was the case before contact with Modernity (Alam 1999: 172).

What happens when, as Alam says, Indian traditions are understood through the outlook, categories and the knowledge about those traditions acquired from another culture? Alam notes two consequences, which "go to the very roots of what defines a tradition": "when validation is sought not just in a rational mode of argument but in terms of criteria external to tradition, tradition itself ceases to be lived presence: no more like stories we tell each other but instead the Story – that is, an account informed by historiography" (1999: 173). It is this process where our small stories about our pasts are replaced by the true-story about our past that one notices at the root of the Lingayat controversies.[43] Thus, Indian traditions are not just witnessing these kinds of controversies but traditions themselves are contentious issues in modern times.

This brings us face-to-face with a new problem. In the last few decades, many scholars have not only noted the negative role of history but have also tried to re-theorise Indian traditions. However, they have invariably taken the route of writing a history of India, a better or scientific history, like the Subaltern Studies scholars.[44] There is something paradoxical about such ventures. They take recourse to history writing after criticising it. This seems akin to fighting a fire by dousing the flames with kerosene. Implicit in the demand for better*ness* in historiography, as argued earlier, is a demand that it should function like a story. We have missed something very significant

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[43] And during the controversies like those around Ram-Sethu and Ayodhya issues.

[44] Or, as an example, consider the report written by a host of contemporary 'secularist' and leftist hisorians (of Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) during the Babri mosque controversy. The report is entitled "The Political Abuse of History", however it begins by claiming to "review the historical evidence to the extent it is brought into play in the communalization of society", and then goes on to pile up a host of historical facts against the claims made by, what they called, the "Hindu and Muslim communal groups" (Gopal et al. 1990: 76, 80).

by not paying attention to this demand. Mistaking the demand for a better history to be a demand for more accuracy or objectivity in history has resulted not only in its negative characterisation but also in producing *more historical* accounts. One can see this happening even more explicitly in the debates around controversies such as Ram-Sethu and Ayodhya. Secularist as well as Hindutva interlocutors in the debate have produced more and more 'historical evidence' in support of their respective positions. Recently, in Karnataka, a Hindutva scholar, S.L. Bhyrappa came up with a semi-historical novel – *Aavarana* (2007) – in support of the Hindutva opposition to the negative Muslim impact on Indian culture. The novel, which carried a lengthy list of historical writings in support of its claims,[45] largely talked about the putative destructive role played in India by Muslim invaders and their culture. The novel was vehemently criticised by the secularists. Not surprisingly, they culled out more historical material to justify their criticism.[46] Around a year later, Bhyrappa wrote a lengthy article in *Vijayakarnataka*,[47] a popular Kannada newspaper, where he turned his attention to the Christian conversions, which sparked off a lengthy public discussion on the issue of conversion. The interlocutors in the discussion, both scholars who supported his views and those who opposed them took the rather easy and by now a habitual way of digging out more and more

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[45] "Writer S.L. Bhyrappa has asked those criticising his latest novel 'Avarana' to first study the reference books based on which he has written it. … 'Avarana was not written just for the sake of art. That is why poetic diction has been deliberately avoided. When you are speaking about history, the language need not be emotional. And moreover, there are no strict rules for the novel form,' he said. The writer said that his latest novel was the result of his search for truth and there was no ulterior motive behind it. Often, Indian history has been distorted by scholars to suit their agenda or to please people in power. Studying history with a political perspective was nothing but doing injustice to the truth, he said." Excerpted from *The Hindu* report "Bhyrappa hits out at critics", dated June 05, 2007.

[46] Some random examples of writings which criticise the novel for distorting history: Manu Chakravrthy's "Masks of Untruth" in *The Hindu* June 08, 2007; articles in (Lankesh 2007); "Where is the novel?" *The Hindu* April 06, 2007; "Reinventing Hindutva" *Frontline* Vol. 24, Issue 18, September 08-21, 2007.

[47] "Intha Ghatane bere yaava Deshadalli Nadedeetu?" (Where else can such incidents take place?) *Vijayakarnataka* October 16, 2008. To sum up the discussion on conversion, which continued well over a month, the *Vijayakarnataka* published a reply from Bhyrappa (on November 20, 2008). Continuing the practice of extracting historical facts, Bhyrappa talked about the 'indigenous reform movements', offering it as an alternative for Christian conversions.

'historical facts' in support of their argument.[48] Not even one person paused to examine the vicious circle of succumbing to the production of historical facts.

Quite clearly, it is not that these debates enriched our historical knowledge of India's past. As we can infer by now from our earlier discussion, when the discussion is about a past with no archival records, such as the period of Ramayana or Basava or even the invasions of Muslim rulers, the many attempts that present evidence in support of their argument in fact present a selection of legends as facts. This intriguing modern phenomenon calls for a much deeper and informed understanding. The situation we have explored so far also compels us to explore the idea that a historical account functions as a peculiar kind of story in India. Let us turn, in the next chapter, to an understanding of the story of history – an understanding that will provide us with a framework to resolve all the puzzles we have been confronted with.

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[48] Here are some random examples: R.V. Ganesh (November 04 and 05, 2008), Suresh Nayka (November 08, 2008), S.R. Leela (November 10, 2008), Anantarama (November 13, 2008), Horeyala Doreswami (November 13, 2008) and others wrote in support of Bhyrappa. Barguru Ramachandrappa (November 03, 2008), Chandrashekhar Patil (November 06, 2008), Y.S.V. Datta (November 07, 2008), Indudara Honnapura (November 13, 2008) and others wrote against him.

Chapter 5

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STORIES, STEREOTYPES AND STEREOSTORIES

[I]n science we always try to explain the known by the unknown; the observed (and observable) by the unobserved (and, perhaps, unobservable).

Karl Popper (1963: 235)

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T he previous chapters have raised the following questions and problems, not necessarily in the same order. Some of these questions have been answered briefly, but they need more reflection. Some have been answered historically and await conceptual backing. Taken together, they also give rise to some new questions.

1. How would the transition from colonial experience to (post-)colonial consciousness take place?
2. Even though the caste readings of the vachanas do not provide empirical support for their claims, why do modern scholars see them as true claims about the vachanas? Alternatively, the stories about Basava have no historical grounds. Why are they nevertheless seen as historical?
3. What is the mechanism for selecting legends and stories as historical facts?
4. What happens when true-story combines with diagnostic attitude?
5. Are the properties and functions of stories relative to a culture?
6. How was the positive relationship between the Lingayats and British achieved? How was it possible for this relationship to generate the benign European view of the Lingayat community? What was this view based on and how did it sustain and perpetuate itself over the centuries?
7. How did the colonial image of the Lingayat community and its acceptance by the natives led to controversies and violence?
8. Why do we tell stories when we want to write histories in India? What explains the problematic relationship between historical writings and 'lay people'?

I propose an answer to these questions in this chapter and to some of the questions that will be raised in the course of answering these questions. Let me begin with a brief statement of my answer to the questions I have grouped together: the new development that these questions are pointing to or the phenomenon we need to grasp in order resolve some of the puzzles we have encountered arises as a result of the interaction between Western stereotypes and Indian stories. This answer, admittedly, makes no sense unless the framework implicit in are elaborated. In what follows, I set out the framework and show how it provides a conceptually unified treatment of the puzzles confronting us.[1]

A few words of explanation in justification of the structure of this chapter and its position in the overall organisation of the dissertation will be useful. The dissertation began with a problem, followed by an inquiry that turned up many more puzzles and has eventually led to this chapter which is promising (in the manner of a detective story!) to provide a solution to the problem and explain the puzzles. The choice of this structure is primarily a conscious methodological and logical (rather than simply presentational and stylistic) decision, because of the following two reasons; (i) I have pulled together many unsolved problems and puzzles from the preceding chapters with the intention of proposing a framework to resolve them here. However, before presenting the framework, it was necessary to draw out the problem with clarity and draw connections between phenomena hitherto considered unconnected. In fact, the significance of the problems – enumerated in the eight questions listed above – has gone unnoticed, I suggest, because they are perceived either as distinct moments in history or as lacking any particular pattern/coherence. The various issues raised through the thesis, nevertheless, do have a coherent pattern of explanation, as the theoretical framework I provide

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[1] That is, the puzzles that is raised in this dissertation. Testing the framework would require a separate study (in fact, many studies). This dissertation will only chalk out the framework and talk about is advantages over the existing ways of understanding the problems in question.

here should prove. (ii) The data that I work with – the modern interpretations of the va-

chanas – and more importantly the framework within which it is understood are so fa-

miliar to us, at least to those working on Kannada literature and the anti-caste-system

movements of India, that the problems inherent in them require a representation which

steadily prises them apart from old, familiar grids in order to see them in new light.

This is crucial to understanding them anew. Chapters 1 to 4, I believe, have success-

fully brought the problems to the fore, which can now be tackled in this chapter.

Let us, then, begin by getting a grip on the two concepts involved in the brief

answer stated earlier: stereotypes and stories. My discussion of these two concepts will

be very brief. I will only discuss those properties that are necessary for our own discus-

sion here.

I. Stereotypes and Stories

(1)   Stereotypes

Stereotypes are generally understood as a negative representation of the cultural other:

'Jews are dirty', 'Indians are corrupt', to give two examples that would probably be re-

garded by most people as stereotypes.[2] Hence, they are treated as undesirable, but with

an acknowledgement that stereotypes are difficult to get rid of. The commonly accepted

and politically correct attitude towards stereotypes implies that they are wrong or bad,

that they express prejudices about other peoples that may be harmful and by implica-

tion, therefore, we should try to combat and eliminate them. This stance takes many

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[2] As Edward Said, for instance, argued stereotypes demean Muslims by dubbing them terrorists (Said 1978).

different forms in commonsensical accounts as well as in social scientific theories. While some of these views have indeed been pointing at interesting characteristics of stereotypes, they leave several questions unanswered. Similarly, even though social psychological research is slowly moving away from the commonsensical notion of stereotypes towards recognising their cognitive indispensability and socially necessity,[3] it is far from explaining several fundamental questions. What are stereotypes and how do they function? If stereotypes are all about prejudice and wrong generalisations, why is it so difficult to eradicate them? Why do stereotypes continue to exist even though they seem to be uninformative as descriptions of a group of people? S.N. Balagangadhara raises these questions and goes on to answer them as well in his work on stereotypes.[4]

Balagangadhara's (2009a) research on stereotypes suggests that it is a mistake to regard stereotypes as providing descriptions of the world; instead, he suggests that we need to look at stereotypes as (disguised) heuristics for social interaction. Linguistically stereotypes take a form that lacks quantification. If we take those examples that are by commonsense stereotypes – sentences like, 'Indians are greedy', 'Blacks are lazy' – we notice that they *appear* to describe the world, but they cannot because they

[3] For a useful survey of the conventional approaches to stereotypes forming and the increasingly popular stance that 'stereotypes are formed in order to explain aspects of social groups and in particular to explain relationships between groups', see essays in *Stereotypes as Explanations* (McGarty, Yzerbyt, and Spears ed. 2004). Essays in this collection aim to 'advance new ideas about such topics as the importance of category formation, essentialism, illusory correlation, interdependence, social reality and stereotype consensus. They conclude that stereotypes are indeed explanations but they are nevertheless highly selective, variable and frequently contested explanations.' For such advancements in the understanding of stereotypes, see (Oakes, Haslam, and Turner 1994) and (Schneider 2004).

[4] I draw my augments about stereotypes from Balagangadhara's article on stereotypes (2009a) and the discussions and research done by various scholars on stereotypes in a project undertaken jointly by four nations – India, Sri Lanka, Belgium and the Netherlands – to study stereotypical images and cultural differences between Europe and South Asia. The Asia-Link programme of the European Union sponsored the two-year project, called Development of Human Resources and Strategies for education on the Stereotypical Images and Cultural Differences between Europe and South Asia (DEVHAS) (2006-2008). For project proceedings, its various reports, glimpses of individual work, development of ideas, related conferences and workshops and the achievement of the project, refer to the project website: http://www.devhas.org/forum/index.php?PHPSESSID=3fa72986bd24a12cc6a0803582e1fa02& (accessed July 22, 2009).

lack quantification. "That is to say", he says, "it is not clear how to interpret these statements, if they are taken to describe the world: are they about 'some' or 'all' (respectively, the existential and universal quantifier) of the objects under consideration? Unless quantified, no statement can describe the world."[5]

This hypothesis throws new light on many important aspects of the phenomenon, and it does so by proposing a criterion for the identification of stereotypes. Due to their linguistic form, stereotypes *appear* as though they are statements about the world. However, they are neither true nor false and therefore they cannot make a statement about the world.[6] This hypothesis proposes surprising answers and novel predictions about (just to give few examples) (a) whether stereotypes are present in every culture or whether their circulation and proliferation is greater in one culture (b) what has these to do with cultural differences and (c) why a stereotype useful to one social group may not be of any use to another group.

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[5] "The simplest examples of empirically irrefutable statements are so-called strict or pure existential statements. Here is an example of a strict or pure existential statement. 'There exists a pearl which is ten times larger than the next largest pearl.' [Or, simply, "there exists a sea serpent", which is Popper's own example]. If in this statement we restrict the words 'There exists' to some finite region in space and time [i.e., if this assertion is quantified], then it may of course become a refutable statement. For example, the following statement is obviously empirically refutable: 'At this moment and in this box here there exist at least two pearls one of which is ten times larger than the next largest pearl in this box.' But then this statement is no longer a strict or pure existential statement; rather it is a restricted existential statement. A strict or pure existential statement applies to the whole universe, and it is irrefutable simply because there can be no method by which it could be refuted. For even if we were able to search our entire universe, the strict or pure existential statement would not be refuted by our failure to discover the required pearl, seeing that it might always be hiding in a place where we are not looking" (Popper 1962: 264-265).
[6] In the analysis of stereotypes, Balagangadhara proposes a quantifier test to see if a given statement (a purported stereotype) lacks quantification or not. If we add the existential quantifier to stereotypes – i.e., sentences like, 'Indians are greedy', 'Blacks are lazy' – we get trivially true statements. "It is true that some people are greedy, some irrational, some lazy and some filthy. However, none of these properties is the exclusive prerogative of any nation or of any group, no matter how one defines such entities. In other words, adding an existential quantifier gives us statements, which are always true of every class of human beings. … If we add the universal quantifier, we get the opposite result. 'All blacks are lazy' is a false statement because it applies to every black person who has existed, who exists now, and who will ever exist in the future. Such and analogous claims are always false of every class of human beings". Quantification thus adds a truth-value to stereotypical statements and converts them into real descriptions of the world, which are either false or true. One of the achievements of this hypothesis on stereotypes then is that we can now identify the object that we are talking about (Balagangadhara 2009a).

Due to a specific reason,[7] stereotypes serve the function of action heuristics in Western culture, but they do so indirectly, because "stereotypes are disguised as descriptions of the world, the only way they can be action heuristics is if they are that *obliquely* and not directly." That is to say, despite the fact that stereotypes do not describe the world they appear to be descriptions of the world, for two reasons. First, their ability to fix their references in the features of the world. Even though stereotypes do not describe the world, they refer to the properties or aspects of the world the way *action heuristics*[8] do. The success of a stereotype as an instruction for an action greatly depends on its ability to refer to the world. However, since social sciences do not recognise stereotypes as action heuristics, their reliance on some aspects of the world is confused with a description of the world. Second, because of the domination of a particular kind of knowledge in the West (call it, *theoretical knowledge*), which demands descriptions of the world, *performative learning*,[9] which is the domain of human interactions, is cast as description of the world. When cast in terms of descriptions of the

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[7] This point is related to the fact that stereotypes are a crucial product of the domination of one specific kind of knowledge – theoretical or propositional knowledge. For an elaboration, see Balagangadhara (2009a) in the light of (Balagangadhara 1994). See further for some elaboration.

[8] In philosophy, heuristics refers to a rule of thumb whose use value is a reduction in the complexity of computational tasks. A task that an animal (including human beings) performs requires immense resources such as time, memory and attention. It has to collect data and process and filter it before taking a decision as to what is the appropriate task response in the situation in question. A rule of thumb in such a situation reduces the burden on resources and provides guidance to appropriate action. The use of heuristics simplifies the problem, making it computationally tractable. For more information, see Robert C. Richardson's "Heuristics" (1995). An *action heuristic* in the context of our discussion is a rule of thumb that guides human actions.

[9] The human animal needs different kinds of knowledge to act in the world, and two such knowledge types are (a) theoretical knowledge and (b) practical knowledge. In the western culture, when theoretical knowledge subordinates practical knowledge and recasts it in its own terms, says S.N. Balagangadhara, they take the form of stereotypes. Stereotypes serve the function of action heuristics in a culture where practical knowledge is not the dominant form of knowledge. The notion of theoretical and practical knowledge types is an important concept in Balagangadhara (1994). Both types of knowledge are present in every culture but any one of the two assumes a dominant role in a given culture and subjugates the other. This domination-subjugation pattern characterizes a given culture. According to Balagangadhara, while practical knowledge dominates Asian culture and characterises it, theoretical knowledge does the same in Western culture.

Can there be different types of knowledge, or is there just one knowledge, and different ways of, say, formulating it? Western philosophy has not left this question unattended. The most famous example is the distinction between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that' that Gilbert Ryle makes. For an interesting discussion of Ryle's views see, B. Narahari Rao (1994).

world, says Balagangadhara, 'performative learning takes the form of stereotypes. That is to say, knowledge about human beings and social groups is preserved and transmitted in Western culture in the form of stereotypes of people and social groups. Because of the dominance of a particular kind of knowledge (theoretical knowledge), these social stereotypes do not take the form of action-heuristics but appear as descriptions of the world. In other words, social stereotypes are *disguised* as descriptions of the world.'

Furthermore, stereotypes can function as action heuristics because they create a *horizon of expectation* before an agent. A stereotype opens up a series of expectations about the situation that the agent is in. This allows the agent to perform an action s/he deems appropriate in the *expected* course of happenings in the situation in question. '*If an Indian is lazy, then s/he may or may not do* x*, or may require* b *to do* x.' This is how stereotypes determine our *horizon of expectations* regarding human beings in a social situation. They do not literally tell us what to do, but they prepare us for what to expect and thus influence our actions to some extent. All axiological statements define the horizon of expectations of the actors in question. A stereotype is also axiological. It is axiological because, stereotypes mostly appear intimately related to ethical norms. A stereotype (e.g., 'Indians are dishonest') appears to be a description of properties (or actions) that transgress a norm (e.g., 'one ought to be honest'), or they appear to carry an ethical force (e.g., 'Rajputs are brave').

Because "cultural ways of learning are the adaptive strategies of human beings that not only enable them to survive, but do so as human cultures" (Balagangadhara 1994: 411), I argue, stereotypes are a survival mechanism of a culture, under adverse cultural conditions. Stereotypes are the ways a culture tries to overcome or escape from its limits, especially those drawn by another culture. What are its effects, then, on a culture that preserves knowledge about human beings and social groups as stories? How

does Indian culture, where one type of learning dominates, survive the limits and threats posed by Western culture, where another type of learning dominates?

(2)   Stories in India

India is a culture that preserves knowledge about human beings and social groups as stories, says Balagangadhara. By stories, I refer to all those stories that circulate in India in the name of puranas or legends, either in the oral or written form. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha* are stories, or a consortium of stories so are all those traditional legends and puranas about Basava's birth. Even a cursory glance at India's past would give a sense of the astonishing collection of stories that it contains. For every occasion, there is a story here. It requires no great research to say that these stories are not facts about the world but they are about – to deliberately use Thomas Babington Macaulay's negative remarks in a conceptual sense – kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long, and geography made up of seas of treacle and butter. What was Macaulay, the master of derision, criticising here: a cultural phenomenon or intellect of Indians? Even if we concede more than what Macaulay or any other orientalist scholar ever pleaded for – that Indians were intellectually imbeciles who produced nothing better than these fantastic stories – some questions remain unanswered: Why so many stories? What are they? And what are they for? Whether these are ill- or well-formulated questions, they at least beg us to look in a different direction than to see them as truth claims about the world that may enable us to defend Indians as intellectually sound, like any other average human community.

S.N. Balagangadhara's work on stories provides us with one such possibility. Stories, he says, function as units of learning in Indian culture. They do so by virtue of

their cognitive and functional properties. *Cognitively* speaking, stories are a way of representing the world, or, in a broad sense of the term, they are models of the world. As a model, stories portray, stand for, or represent a small part of the world,[10] or they are models of a situation. A model is neither true nor false. One can only talk about whether a model fits a particular situation or not. Similarly, as models, stories are neither true nor false. A story is a model because it is not about a specific historical action/incident, but a generic example of an action, which can be emulated. In emulation – the action can be modified and developed as well. The "'representational' aspect of stories makes them coextensive with other 'representational' products known to us like philosophy, scientific theories, etc. Of course, there are also differences between them: whereas theories claim to explain, stories make no such claim. Theories may justify some belief that you have, stories do not. Nevertheless, stories are pedagogical instruments in so far as they have the 'representational' (or cognitive) property."

In a *practical sense* too they are models. Stories model a situation of being in the world, and in that sense, they are a model of being in the world. "By describing a way of going about the world, they are a way of going about the world." Stories are pedagogical instruments, or in other words, they are units of learning, because of this property: i.e., they can be emulated (Balagangadhara 1987: 87, 88).

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[10] How do they do it? "Take, for instance, a group performing some ritual or the other, say, a rain ritual. When asked about the significance of their actions, one gets to hear a story. Such a story depicts a set of events which includes the performing of the rain ritual in conjunction with some other events. Now it is not the case that causal efficacy is attributed to the performance of such a ritual. That is, the members of the group do not believe that their singing and chanting in some specified fashion and the pouring of ghee into the fire altar cause the rains to come. They are not justifying this belief by telling a story" (Balagangadhara 1987: 87).

We may also recall here the famous remarks of Wittgenstein on Frazer's description of Tswana 'Rain Doctor'. He says, "[e]ven the idea of trying to explain the practice … seems to me wrong-headed. All that Frazer does is to make this practice plausible to people who think as he does. It is very queer that all these practices are finally presented, so to speak, as stupid actions. But it never does become plausible that people do all this out of sheer stupidity" (Wittgenstein 2002: 86). He further continues, "[b]ut surely this means that they do not actually think he can make rain, otherwise they would do it in the dry periods in which the land is 'a parched and arid desert'. For if we do assume that it was stupidity that once led the people to institute this office of Rain King, still they obviously knew from experience that the rains begin in March, and it would have been the Rain King's duty to perform in other periods of the year" (cited in Bailey 2001: 123).

Yet another aspect of stories, which is important for our discussion here, is that they "do not come with any explicit morals attached: they do not, for example, say that 'the moral of this story is...'. They are not structured as manuals for practical action either: 'do x in order to achieve y'". This remark about stories not being manuals of practical instructions has several implications. Stories can then teach only because of the kind of learning that occurs in India, and not due to any of their inherent properties. This rules out the possibility of stories functioning as learning/teaching units in Western culture, if it is true that theoretical knowledge dominates Western culture. This point, nonetheless, raises another important question: "What kind of a learning activity is required, if stories are how one learns? My answer is that it is mimetic learning. As stories, they are a set of propositions. What they depict are actions. Between these actions and those of one's own, what obtains is a practical relation of mimesis. Only as such can stories function as instructions for actions" (Balagangadhara 1987: 89). Stories combine both the cognitive ('representational') and the practical properties.

> They are not straightforward instructions; nor are they only representational. They entertain too: but not the way the "The Little Red Riding Hood" does. Understanding and imitation fall together: to understand is to imitate and to imitate is to understand. Stories are *oblique instructions disguised as representations depicting actions*. One learns while one is not aware that one is learning. Mimesis is a sub-intentional learning (Balagangadhara 1987: 89 emphasis added).

Similarities between Stories and Stereotypes

Let us note some crucial similarities between stories and stereotypes before we move on. Both stories and stereotypes share a cognitive property, according to the theory described so far: they both are neither true nor false, albeit for different reasons. In practical terms, both function as action heuristics and in that as oblique or disguised action

heuristics; however, in different cultures. Stories function as action instructions in Indian culture, while stereotypes perform the same function in Western culture. In a qualified sense, both stories and stereotypes appear to be talking about or representing the world. Stories appear so because they model a situation of going about in the world, and stereotypes appear so because they fix their references in aspects of the world. What happened, this chapter asks, when these two met during the two colonialisms? Cultural interactions (or conquests) are interactions (or fights) between peoples from the two different cultures in question. One way of understanding such an interaction between Indians and Europeans, during the British colonial period, is to redraw the map of interaction between them as an interaction between *our* stories and *their* stereotypes.

According to Balagangadhara, cultures are the ways of going about of a people and ways of *learning* to go about in the world, or to put it in technical language, cultures are configurations of learning. This is to say that a culture is a repository of practical knowledge about how to go about in the world. This practical knowledge of going about is stored as stereotypes and stories in Western and Indian cultures, respectively.[11] If so, now we can ask the question "What happened when Indian culture met Western culture?" in a different and a more productive way: What happened when stories met stereotypes? An obvious advantage of this reformulation can hardly be overstated. The latter question, unlike the former, can be formulated in the present tense as well: What *happens* when stories *meet* stereotypes? Thus, we can talk not only about colonialism

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[11] I am aware that I am treading on tenuous ground here. One may perhaps concede that stereotypes might not have existed in India at a certain period in the past, but don't they (the Indians, that is) use them today? Is not the arguments of this dissertation about 'Western culture' stereotypical? All I can say in my defence is this. This thesis and the research tradition that it belongs to, use the word/concept 'stereotype' in a specific sense, as explained above. Stereotypes, in this sense, are conspicuous by their absence in Indian culture in the past. In the present, Indians do use many stereotypes about themselves and others. The argument here is that most of them have come from the way the West/Europe has described itself, Indians and others. In my defence, I can point to the research done during the project mentioned in a footnote earlier in this chapter and Balagangadhara's article (2009a). Until the findings of this project are not shown to be wrong, my claims about Indian and Western culture vis-à-vis stereotypes stand justified.

but also about the way it has continued to structure our descriptions of Indian traditions in the post-colonial period. Let me state my answer to this question. When (Indian) stories and (Western) stereotypes meet, stories begin to spread stereotypes. More importantly, when they do so, they instigate violence and hatred among communities in India. This chapter addresses this question and elaborates my answer to the question.

II. Historically Speaking…

Missionary work in the Kannada speaking region had started as far back as the 14th and 15th centuries. Missionaries faced both the usual hostility and hospitality during the pre-East India Company and pre-Raj period. The noteworthy aspect however was the attitude of the rulers of the place towards the Christian priests. The Nayakas of (today's) central Karnataka as well as the Wodeyars of (today's) southern Karnataka region generally supported the missionary work, or at least took a 'neutral' position in disputes which arose between the missionaries and the local communities. The missionaries' relations with the Lingayat community during this period were much better than their relations with the communities of Gollas, Dasas and Brahmans. This relationship, I propose, grew into a very friendly and a positive relationship in the centuries that followed.[12] The relationship they shared during the tenure of the Company and the British government certainly strengthens such speculation. Orientalist and colonial writers saw this community as one of the most progressive communities in India. They attributed to the community such qualities as: anti-casteism, pro-women, pro-lower class and such like. This is what chapter 3 described in some detail. What it did not discuss explicitly was the fact that this characterisation took the form of a series of *positive stereotypes* of

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[12] For an overview of Missionary work in the then Karnataka region see Devadas Jayadev's doctoral dissertation, *Christian Missionary Work in Mysore (1648-1947 A D)* (Jayadev 1996). See also W. Strickland (1852).

the tradition. The occasional negative stereotypes disappeared *sans suite*, or when they existed, they functioned in a much more generalised context. That is to say, when the discussion was about Indian culture as a whole, the Lingayat community, like the rest of Indian culture, was seen negatively. When such views were localised and Brahman tradition stood for all that was negative in Indian culture, the Lingayat tradition was seen as a counter example. Here is a list of randomly selected European[13] positive stereotypes of the Lingayats:

Source	Dominant descriptions of the Lingayat tradition[14]
1. Francis Buchanan (1807)	• They deny the restrictions of caste/they have obliterated race distinctions.
2. M. Malte-Brun (1826)	• They observe great moderation in eating and drinking.
3. Walter Hamilton (1828)	• They reject the spiritual control of the Brahmans with signs of contempt and aversion.
4. Walter Elliot (1837; 1869)	• The Lingayat revolution abolished the distinction of castes, notions of purity and impurity. • It followed the strict Brahmin and Jaina rules of not eating meat etc, but it abolished their notions of purity and impurity . • They admit proselytes.
5. C.P. Brown (1839;1840a)	• Janagama books alone deviate from the routine superstitions. • The Virasaivas are anti-Brahmanical. • They have considerate and decent behaviour towards the female sex.[15] • They treat their widows with kindness and respect. • They do not worship idols. • They are anti-caste. • They look down upon idolatry and idolaters.
6. Stevenson (1846)	• The Lingayats are monotheists. • Siva worshippers (in general) are monotheists.
7. J. Kies (1849)	• Basawa and his nephew Channabasappa are reformers of Sivaism.
8. W. Taylor (1850)	• Basava made no distinction between the *Brahman* and the *Pariar.*
9. H. Bower (1852)	• Lingayatism can be summed up in three words, Guru, Linga, Jangama, i.e., veneration for the Teacher, love for the god, and

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[13] Actually, only the last stereotype, the one by Will Durant, is by an American; the rest are by European writers.

[14] I have retained the original spellings in the following excerpts.

[15] Some of these sentences may look archaic. That is so because I have retained the original phrasing and syntax from the works they are taken from.

	benevolence towards fellow worshippers.
10. Joseph Mullens (1854)	• The Lingayats are by far the most intelligent and independent of the people. • They have given up their worship to idols. • They secretly adhere to a higher system of religion. • Their religion teaches unity of God, • And that all men are of one caste.
11. A Gazetteer of Southern India (1855)	• The Lingayats look down upon the idolaters. • Initially they were bitterly opposed to the whole Brahmanical system.
12. South India Missionary Conference (1858)	• Guru of Kodekall, the founder of a sect of Lingayats, preached about having one God, • and a casteless society. • His teachings has some resemblances to the Scriptural prophecies. • Jangamas are (good) priests (of the Lingayats).
13. William Taylor (1860)	• Basava took offence at the pride of caste and the ascendancy of *Brahmans*. • [*Jangamas*'s term *anubhavam* is similar in name and nature to the notion of the *experimental* evidence of religion].
14. A.M. Robert Hunter (1863)	• The Jangamas hate the Brahmans.
15. Mary Frere (1866)	• The Lingayats are people with frugality and industry.
16. The Imperial Gazetteer of India. Vol. XI (1908)	• Basava is a religious reformer. • In origin the movement was anti-Brahmanical, • and caste distinctions were entirely ignored by the earlier converts.
17. D.D. Henry Whitehead (1916)	• The Lingayats are people of true faith and good character.
18. R.V. Russell and Lal (1916)	• The Jangamas are anti-Hindus. • They deny the authority of the Brahmans, the efficacy of pilgrimage and self-mortification. • They deny the restrictions of caste. • The Jangamas worship no deity other than Siva. • The Jangamas have now become a caste.[16]
19. Edward P. Rice (1921)	• Basava, indeed, taught that men of castes, and even outcastes, were eligible to enter the Lingayat community. • "Virasaiva Reformers" like Sarvajna wrote against the caste system.

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[16] I had claimed in chapter 2 that 'modern vachana scholarship has not contributed anything new to our knowledge about Indian society'. If we can extract the arguments of modern vachana scholarship in precise and clear statements, I doubt there will be any new claim about the tradition that colonial scholars have not already made. As argued in chapter 3, all that modern vachana scholarship has done is to place colonial claims about the Lingayat community and religion onto the vachanas. This shows, though in a limited sense, that our knowledge of the Lingayat tradition has not progressed since the days of colonialism. However, modern vachana scholarship can be defended against this criticism if it can be shown that these colonial claims listed above are historical facts and progress in knowledge does not mean we replace these facts with a new set of claims.

20. J.F Fleet (cited in Enthoven 1922)	• Their community started with a religious movement, which abolished caste distinctions, but it itself became caste
21. Will Durant (1935)	• Lingayats are the most Puritanic sect in India

To summarise, the Lingayats were seen as an embodiment of all that is good and all that is contrary to Brahmans and Brahmanism. The utterances collected here are stereo-types, because they have all the properties that we highlighted earlier in the chapter as characteristics of stereotypes. Let us take the first sentence for a brief analysis here: 'The Lingayats have considerate behaviour towards the female sex'. It is not clear whether all the Lingayats treat women kindly or only a few. If we add an existential quantifier to the sentence, we will obtain a trivially true statement: 'Some Lingayats treat women considerately', (i.e., 'at least one Lingayat treats women considerately'). This is true about any community that it will have at least one person who treats women considerately. If we add a universal quantifier to the sentence, we obtain a trivially false statement: 'All Lingayats treat women considerately.' We can find at least one Lingayat person from the past, present or future who treats women *in*consid-erately. Thus, this is an unquantified sentence and quantifying the sentence changes its meaning completely. Furthermore, this sentence implies a norm that 'one ought to treat women considerately.' Note further, this sentence also seems to describe the world. It seems to be saying something about the Lingayats, where as in actuality it is not saying anything about the Lingayats (about the world, i.e.) because it is an unquantified state-ment. 'Unless quantified', as we noted earlier, 'no statement can describe the world.'

These stereotypes attribute positive qualities to the Lingayats. What explains, can we ask, such positive views held by European writers about the Lingayats, which continue uncritically until this day? This is an important question, but of no immediate relevance to this thesis. Of relevance to us is the question about the consequences of

this positive attitude towards (or view of) the Lingayat community and the tradition.
One of the important consequences was that these positive stereotypes shaped the
scholarly understanding of this tradition in the modern period. The best word to de-
scribe this 'understanding' is *image.* The image of the Lingayat tradition today is
mainly a collection of the Western positive stereotypes of the tradition. Nevertheless,
on the one hand, this image seems to defy any attempt at its characterisation and, on
the other, stakes claims to be historical, both because it is 'authentic' and because it is
'politically correct'. What accounts for this complex structure of the image? Consider
the following two citations from two sources, separated from each other by more than
100 years.

> [T]hey [the Lingayats] are handsome, well built, powerful race, sober
> and industrious in their habits, and in general of peaceable demeanor ...
> remarkable for the punctuality with which they discharged their obliga-
> tions to government, but were on their part excessively tenacious of all
> interference regarding their castes, or their village management, and in
> perpetual litigation with their neighbours respecting disputed bounda-
> ries, or some other alleged invasions of rights or immunities (Marshall
> 1822: 129).

> One socio-religious movement in southern India, Virashaivism, stands
> out for its radical ideas and its institutional success. Founded by Basava
> (?1125-70), this movement centred on the worship of Shiva. It was an
> aggressive, proselytizing, and uncompromising sect that rejected Vedic
> authority, the role of priests, caste distinctions, and the rite of crema-
> tion, favouring burial instead. The Virashaivas also attempted to re-
> structure the place of women in society. They considered men and
> women equal; allowed widows to remarry; condemned child marriage
> and arranged marriage, and no longer classed women as polluted during
> their menses. Their strict moral code included vegetarianism and a ban
> on the use of liquor and drugs. The Virashaivas entered into competi-
> tion with the Jains, Buddhists, and orthodox Hindus. In order to main-
> tain their separate communal identity and to replace the Brahmans, they
> created their own priests and founded a number of monasteries as fo-
> cuses of religious authority. This system is still maintained today, as is
> a sense of separateness among the Virashaivas (Jones 1994, 11-12).

It is clear at the very outset that these two citations have used (and are built around) co-
lonial stereotypes of the Lingayat tradition. They also suggest how the pattern of colo-

nial views about the Lingayats has continued in the modern period without much altera-
tion. But more importantly these images,[17] though they are built around positive stereo-
types of the Lingayats, contain more then mere stereotypes. Consider these claims from
the two citations:

a) The Lingayats are handsome.
b) They discharge their obligations to government with punctuality.
c) They were in perpetual litigation with their neighbours.
d) This movement centres on the worship of Shiva.
e) The Virasaiva community entered into competition with the Jains, Buddhists,
   and orthodox Hindus.
f) This community founded a number of monasteries.
g) The Lingayat movement was founded by Basava (?1125-70).

Two of the above sentences, i.e. (b) and (c) are stereotypes, in our sense of the term.
Because, they do not tell us whether the claim they make is true about all the Lingayats
or just a few. There must be at least one Lingayat who did not 'discharge his/her obli-
gations to government with punctuality'. The sentence (a) does not satisfy one impor-
tant necessary property of stereotypes: it does not imply a norm. 'One *ought* to be
handsome', is not a norm. Hence, the sentence is not a stereotype. Likewise, the rest of
the sentences from (c) to (g) have some properties of a stereotype but not all that are
required. The claims (d), (e), (f) and (g) are either true or false. That is to say, these
sentences make sociological and historical claims, which can be empirically verified.
Thus, the *image* is more than a mere collection of stereotypes. S.N. Balagangadhara
calls such images *composite-images*.

   Let us get hold of this concept, namely, the *composite-image*. We should under-
stand Western positive stereotypes of the Lingayats alongside negative stereotypes of
the Brahmans. It is not that the Lingayats represented those normative principles that
'good and decent' human beings *ought to* have; the case is rather that they represented

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[17] Or, '*the* image.' The difference between the two, I reckon, is only a matter of style. Hence, I will use
both these words in the chapter as the syntax allows.

those positive values that Brahmans lacked. A careful analysis of stereotypes of any community will show that stereotypes work in groups or they are at least accrued around one central stereotype in a discourse.[18] In the case of the Brahmans, the central stereotype seems to be that they are priests: 'Brahmans are priests'. A priest stands for all that is evil in the protestant religious framework. A stereotype that Brahmans are cunning presupposes that they are priests. To comprehend why a priest has come to acquire the most negative connotation in Christianity, or more importantly, Protestantism, one must understand Christianity.[19] A stereotype such as 'Brahmans are priests' depends on a particular background framework for its functioning as an action heuristic and an apparent description. If Brahmans had not been thought of as priests then they would not have had so many negative characteristics attributed to them. This way of gumming tighter of diverse stereotypes creates an image, or more appropriately a composite-image of a community. The composite-image of the Brahmans portrays them negatively. This image, as its name suggests, is an abstract entity that exists, so to say, in the minds of the people, which finds expression in different human enterprises, such as attitude towards literature and tradition, understanding of the communities etc. Strangely, such an image is not only a conglomeration of different elements, but the life history of a composite-image in the world is a record of, among other things, the different elements that it goes on to acquire: historical facts, local incidents, stories, community memories etc.

One such element that the negative image of the Brahmans tapped and thrived on was an anti-brahman sentiment nursed by many communities for a long time. As Paula Richman recalls, anti-Brahman sentiment continued to

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[18] An observation that I think was first brought on board by Polly Hazarika, during an Asia-Link workshop. For more one Asia-Link workshops see footnote 3 of this chapter.

[19] For a brief discussion of this issue, see the later part of my chapter 3.

surface periodically in South Indian literature. Surveying anti-Brahmin and egalitarian movements in South India, Irschick reminds us that this strand of rhetoric played an important role in the writings of some of the Siddhars, a group of Tamil ascetics, the majority of whom lived between the fifth and tenth centuries. Ramanujan's translations of Virasaiva poems dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries reveal Lingayat contempt for traditional Hindu institutions, including the role of Brahmins (Richman 1991, 189).

The Western positive stereotypes and image of the Lingayat community and negative image of the Brahman community drew their durability and strength from each other. The table given above gives a summary of views held by different colonial scholars from the early 19th century to the early 20th century. Seen as a whole, these views confirm my argument that the Lingayats were seen as embodying those principles that were diametrically opposed to the principles that characterised Brahmans, according to colonial and orientalist scholarship. All other views about the Lingayats' 'monotheism', 'vegetarianism', anti-idol worship, or the idea that they treated their women and widows kindly have importance when seen as complementing the central idea that they were socially and 'religiously' more progressive than the Brahmans. It is in this sense that Walter Elliot writes, Brahmans and Jains were also vegetarians (like the Lingayats) but they (unjustly) followed the notions of purity and impurity (unlike the Lingayats). The Lingayats were progressive precisely because, even though they 'followed the strict Brahmin and Jaina rules of not eating meat etc., they did not use their dietetic preferences to discriminate against other communities as impure.

Let us now compare the above set of positive stereotypes of the Lingayats, the composite-image of the Lingayats that they generate, and the modern Lingayat story, that is, the *true-story* that we discussed in chapter 2. An uncanny resemblance between all three comes to the fore when one compares them. They all seem to be constructed out of elements from each other. Let us examine this resemblance more closely.

Lingayat Stories: Traditional and Modern

Let us recount the 'modern Lingayat *true-story*' that we came across earlier in chapter 2 and tried to examine it in chapter 4. Today when we talk about the so-called anti-caste movements or traditions such as Buddhism, Jainism and bhakti traditions, we repeat a story that has been told and re-told over the last 150 years. It is a narrative about Hinduism and the caste system. What is interesting is that this is not an account that, at least at the outset, denigrates Indian culture completely. It is also a narrative of India's indigenous movements against the caste system, represented by anti-caste-system traditions such as Buddhism and the bhakti traditions. Each of these anti-caste Indian traditions is today associated with anti-caste movements in Indian history.[20] The vachana movement of 12th century Karnataka is one such anti-caste bhakti movement. As discussed in Chapter 2, there exists a *dense* account of the Lingayat tradition. It is an account of its founder Basava's 'progressive' actions, which took a concrete shape with Indological and orientalist scholarship that began to perceive Basava as a Martin Luther of the 'Hindu religion' (see chapter 3).[21] Today, this (hi)story is characteristic of the 20th century writings on the vachanas, vachana-composers, and the Lingayat tradition.

Compare this story with the random collection of positive stereotypes attributed to the Lingayats listed earlier. A resemblance between the stereotypes and the modern true-story about the Lingayat past seems obvious enough. The modern Lingayat true-story seems to be an elaboration of the positive stereotypes. Nevertheless, there is more

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[20] Here are two random examples: David Lorenzen (1995), Sheldon Pollock (2006).

[21] This was pointed out by Tejaswini Niranjana nearly two decades ago in her *Siting Translation* (1992), which scholars, however, have neither taken seriously nor developed further. One of the reasons probably is the failure to understand the full import of this insight, due to the lack of a theoretical framework to handle it and its multiple implications and consequences.

to the modern Lingayat true-story than mere stereotypes. The story contains such things as historical facts. Basava's historical period, his tenure as a minister in the kingdom of Kalyana, some of his actions as a minister are such facts as find a place in the true-story. This is the contribution of the composite-image. To this extent, a modern true-story is also a composite-image, and vice versa.

Recall the claim of J.P. Schouten, discussed in chapter 2. Notwithstanding the lack of historical and factual evidence, he believes, one should accept the story of the inter-caste marriage organised by Basava, because the core of this story, he says, "fits well in our picture of the twelfth century Vīraśaiva community". We briefly answered some of the questions raised by chapter 2 in chapter 4. The chapter 2 raised a question with respect to the composition and the nature of the 'picture' that Schouten talks about. What is this 'picture'? Where has it come from? Who is this 'our' in 'our picture'? This picture is a composite-image of the Lingayat community created in and out of the European experience of Indian culture. The 'our' in 'our picture', then, refers to the European experience of India. These alien experiences exist in the world only as concepts, albeit as wrong and unproductive concepts, like the ancient and medieval belief of a *flat earth*.

This still leaves the following questions raised by chapter 2 unanswered. If there is no adequate historical evidence for accepting a story/a legend about the Lingayat community, on what other grounds should one accept "our 'picture' of the twelfth century Lingayat community at Kalyāna"? Schouten's claims amount to a contradiction. 'Our picture' of the twelfth century Lingayat community is not historical or a fact, yet it is history. What explains or dissolves this contradiction? How do we understand the claim about the historical veracity of the larger 'picture'? How do we understand the relations between stories, the story of inter-caste marriage and the larger 'picture' that

Schouten refers to, or the 'historical evidence' that Samartha uses to select legends as historical facts? In what sense is a story acceptable if it fits in the schema of the larger 'picture'? If this 'acceptance' is the acceptance of a 'story' as *historical*, does the 'picture' authenticate all those that fit in its schema as 'historical'? The next section is an attempt to answer some of these questions, especially the last three questions about the relations between stories and the composite-image.

III. Selection of Stories

What explains these links between stereotypes, composite-image and the modern Lingayat story? Our explanation should account for both sides of the way this link was established and functioned subsequently. There were Europeans on the one hand who consistently saw the link and acted accordingly and there were native Indian scholars who accepted the link on the other. For the former, undoubtedly, the link was part of their experience of Indian culture. We cannot say the same about the latter. They had a different relationship with the link in question. One way of understanding this relationship is to see it as an instance of perpetuation of cognitive structures of colonialism. The explanation that I propose here is the historical unfolding of an intriguing process. It is a process of the selection of Lingayat stories, which is somewhat similar to what literary critics, practitioners of cultural studies and others call the 'formation of canons'. This process accounts for both sides of the link. For unless accepted or believed by the natives, the European canonisation of Lingayat or Indian stories and the criterion to select stories for the canon would not have had the effect they had in India. The

process of canon formation according to scholars operates on some of the following

principles.[22]

1. A principle of exclusion: It excludes some items as not fit to be included in the canon, or, some items are included at certain junctures labelled 'x'.
2. Judgement and discrimination: It judges some items as unfit to be included and thus discriminates among the items. The 'x' is that which is deemed unfit to be included in the mainstream.
3. Authority: It exercises or functions on behalf of an authority, in selecting the items. Those that do not compromise with or vie with the authority have to face the axe of the authority.
4. Ideology: The canon emerges as the embodiment not simply of aesthetic preferences but of a selective ideology whose representatives are those who are in authority, usually, White, male and European.
5. Trans-historicity: A canon constitutes itself as or it appears as a trans-historical community of texts.

Much of what is said in the literary and other theories about canons are useful for my

purpose here. My own ideas on canon formation that this section will elaborate will

however address some of the concerns of the discussion on canon formation in general.

The process that I am talking about here partially accords with points (1) and (2), but

not (3). I said partially because I do not agree with some of the arguments with regard

to point (1). According to current reflections on canon formation, those texts that be-

longed to mass or low-classes/castes are excluded from the canon. For example, femi-

nists argue that women's contribution to literature, philosophy, science etc., is excluded

from the canons in those fields. These arguments do not help me in my argument, even

if they hold true. The exclusion of some Lingayat stories took place on entirely differ-

ent grounds. Point (4) about ideology is both vague and opaque and therefore cogni-

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[22] Our understanding of canon has mainly come from literary critics, which was subsequently borrowed by feminism, post-colonialism, cultural studies and other similar disciplines. Probably, therefore, our contemporary knowledge of canons mainly focuses on a critique of canons. There is hardly any reflection on its formation. Here is random collection of writings on the issue of canons that I have consulted for the discussion here: *Feminist Reflections on the History of Philosophy* (Chakravarthy 2009: 32); *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995); *Literary into Cultural Studies* (Easthope 1991); *Pleasure and Change*: *The Aesthetics of Canon* (Kermode 2004)*; The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon* (Krupat 1989); "A Sense of Canon: A Literary History" (Murphy 1994); *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theater and Gender* (Solomon 1997); "Formation and Transformation of a Canon" in '*Of Many Heroes*' (Devy 2009).

tively it is beyond my reach. To the extent I understand the claim there, it could perhaps be put in the way I explain its functions later. With regard to point (5), though it interests me, I do not have anything to say yet.

Europeans entered India with an expectation to find 'false religions' here. "This implied that the natives would be aware of the existence of the biblical God" (Balagangadhara and De Roover 2009). After all, the biblical God had promised that he would send his messengers to all nooks and corners of the world. However, the British also believed that Satan and his minions would have deceived peoples into a false understanding of this religion. Evil priests would have imposed their own fabrications as though these were God's will. This further implied three things: (a) to understand Indian culture one had to identify those false texts that the Hindus believed in and followed; (b) one had to deconstruct these texts to show that what they contain is ignorance and also, (c) to find out the truth hidden in the heathen texts, which the heathens themselves were not capable of discovering.[23]

Let me re-quote Elijah Hoole, who we met in chapter 3. He first criticises Hinduism as full of 'superstitions and idolatrous worship, the grossest absurdities and most evident contradictions'. However, an *intelligent and curious reader*, he soon asserts, will "find a few extracts, and translations" from these works, which display a degree of

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[23] Here is a curious example from Rauschenbusch-Clough's work on the 'Telugu Pariah' community. He appreciates some Hindu guru's attempts to "search for truth". However, people of the community of his time were so ignorant that they were not even able to recognise their own guru and his attempt to find truth.

It happened again and again that men and women told me. "Before I became a Christian I belonged to the Nasriah sect."
I naturally enquired what this sect was.
"The Gurus of the Nasriah sect came to us and said, 'Don't steal, don't worship idols, don't drink sarai.' It was a good religion, for they taught us that there is only one God."
"Did many Madigas belong to it?"
The answers were vague. One man said there were at least one hundred. The next man said there must have been one thousand. The third man said, "How can I know?"
I asked many questions. Who was this Nasriah? When did he live? Where in the multiplicity of Hindu cult was his teaching to be classed? I found a man who said he had been in Tiprantakamu at the annual feast of the Nasriah sect. Another said he had seen Sundramah, the last surviving disciple of Nasriah (Rauschenbusch-Clough 1899: 157-158).

"traditional light which has been preserved amongst them for ages … [on] divine subjects, into which the human mind has deviated, when not favoured, as in the ancient church, with continual revelations; or, as under the dispensation of the Gospel, with a full manifestation of the 'whole counsel of God'." However, "the influence of Hindooism amongst its votaries … is not universal in its sway." But, Hindus themselves are not able to distinguish between what is knowledge and what is not. They attribute "to those passages we would select as excellent, either in doctrine or morals, no authority superior to that of others, which are absolutely false, and to the last degree absurd." Hence, "Hindoos [after all] are an immoral people, notwithstanding the beautiful precepts scattered in their books …". Having said this Hoole himself goes on to weed out the Hindu texts which "have boldly attacked and exposed the national superstition", from those that are full of superstition (Hoole 1829: 212, 285, 313, 322, 300).

The European attitude towards Indian stories is to be understood in this context. One aspect of Indian traditions that Western missionaries of the colonial period realised very soon was the role of stories in this culture. As Rev. Layer wrote in 1837, "Stories … please people here very much – I just wish I were better at expressing them in their language." The missionaries resorted to telling stories about Christianity so that the ignorant heathens would understand it easily.[24] They selected particular biblical stories for specific social occasions and with specific pedagogic purposes. The stories that the missionaries told were assumed and insisted to be 'true stories' as against 'false stories' from Indian traditions. Let us take a 19th century case of a missionary worker in Karna-

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[24] "This morning I preached to a small group of travellers who had settled down to rest in front of a temple. They listened in a friendly way. Then about 20 people from the town visited me in my lodgings. I read and explained to them the story of the Son of God and the reason why he came into the world. Most of the people thought I was telling them pleasant fairy stories, like those that are told of their own Gods, beautiful and full of wonderful things, but of no real relevance to them. But in spite of this I am always happy to have the opportunity to speak in a quiet but clear way, and to tell these poor confused souls stories about the Lord Jesus. For where his name is known even only as a name – his name, like a salve poured out – souls have always been found later for whom the name of Jesus has been light and comfort and the dearest word that any human language knows. But anyone who has actually heard about this only saviour" (Jenkins and Jenkins 2007: sec. 1.40).

taka that may well illustrate the point that I am making. Layer was a missionary who belonged to the Basel Society, which worked from the 1830s onwards in the Lingayat dominant North Karnataka region. Layer and a few other Basel missionaries worked closely with a particular Lingayat group called the *Kalajnana* (or *Kalagnana*). The 'intention' of these missionaries was straightforward: they wanted to save the souls of the Kalajnana people from eternal damnation. But they soon realised that the task was not easy. The Kalajnana people welcomed the missionaries with a very pragmatic attitude: "You are the people from the West. Your preaching and the teachings in your books correspond to our prophecies exactly" (Jenkins and Jenkins 2007: sec. 1.8, 2.1). This Lingayat group, that comprised of "thousands of people of the same mind" (Mullens 1854: 46), even volunteered to join the Basel Mission church *en masse*. The missionaries debated the issue for years, but they hesitated to accept the idea of mass conversion as they saw a 'worldly attitude' among the Kalajnana people. They suspected that the Kalajnana people wanted to make profit out of conversion to Christianity. How would they, then, teach such greedy and ignorant heathens that Christianity is the only and the true religion? They told them stories and taught them how to differentiate between a true and a false story.

> The stone on which the statue sits is supposed to have been the carpet originally. Nobody could tell me exactly to what extent people worship the statue as a deity, and they couldn't give me an explanation [for their ignorance about this]. Just try to put yourself in the position of a Hindu living in darkness, whose mind is quite robbed of the correct criteria for distinguishing between truth and falsehood. From earliest childhood on it has been overwhelmed with hundreds of fables and stories like this, and has been driven into a corner with apparent proofs for the truth of superstitions. If you put yourself into this situation it will not be difficult to understand how the messenger of the Gospel has to fight to get past the terrible ramparts of Satan in these lands. There has to be a totally new structure in the hearts and lives of the people before they can turn away from the false gods to the true and living God and begin to love the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason it is necessary to work among them with great patience, always to approach them with pity in our hearts, and to be constantly permeated ourselves with the love of

Christ, praying and imploring Him as the guide of all hearts, and rec-
ommending them to His grace (Jenkins and Jenkins 2007: sec. 1.47-
1.48).

It is within this framework that Europeans understood, collected and interpreted Indian stories, and in turn, taught the same to the natives. For example, when native scholars were employed to collect and interpret their own puranas and other texts they were trained precisely in this method of understanding a text by European Sanskrit scholars, says Horace Hayman Wilson.

The plan adopted by Sir William Jones and other Sanscrit scholars, in order to come at the contents of the Puranas … was the employment of Pandits to extract such passages as, from their report, appeared most likely to illustrate Hindu mythology, chronology, and history… (Wilson 1839: 61-62).

Indian pundits, thus, were asked to analyse and arrange their texts around those categories and concepts that were European experiential entities and not Indian.[25]

Let us jump from the colonial to the post-colonial period now. Like any other Indian tradition, the Lingayat tradition *was* also full of stories. Over the ages, the varieties and numbers of such stories have dwindled considerably. This came to my notice while collecting small booklets on various 'saint poets', like Basava, published by various unregistered publications from north Karnataka. The Shābādi matha Book Depot of Gadag (Karnataka, India) is a striking example. Booklets on persons like Basava or Shishunala Sharifa that this publication has brought out until recently, or to be more precise, until the 1980s or so,[26] narrate stories about these personalities, which talk

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[25] European attempts to write the history of India also was based on the same framework. They wanted to give the natives a true history of their past, which lay 'buried under the purana rubbish.' Talking about his attempt to write or rather 'recover' the history of the Amma Kodaga Tribe of Koorg, Herrmann Moegling writes: "This is the indigenous priesthood of Coorg, it would appear. Their real history lies buried under Purana rubbish, thrown upon it by Brahmans. … [They] appear in this Kaveri Purana, as brahmans indeed originally, but degraded by the curse of the Rishi Agastya" (Moegling 1855: 24).
[26] There is a practical problem in determining the published year of these booklets. None of them gives details about its year of publication or the edition. I have used several unconventional ways to determine the year they are published, namely, to check the year of acquisition of a copy of the book by the library,

about their great deeds exemplifying their bhakti, humility, knowledge and such like. Books published in the late 1980s and later, have increasingly chosen other means to show the importance of their protagonists. Basava is now portrayed as a reformer. Instead of legends about him, we now get to read his teachings in bullet form. He is a reformer who has given us Moses-like commandments of an indigenous variety. One of the striking differences is the way a composition of Sharifa is explained. In the old texts,[27] the (usually) unnamed author would narrate a semi-biographical story of Sharifa in order to explain a *pada* (a kind of verse) written by him. The authors of the new booklets explain a *pada* of Sharifa or a vachana of Basava by showing how it enumerates one of the commandments that he gave us. Thus, the vachanas of a vachana-composer are now compiled under subject heads that indicate the precepts of their teaching. For instance, some of his vachanas will be listed under headings like 'rejection of casteism', 'salvation of women', 'protest against the exploitation of the poor' and so on.

More importantly, only two stories feature prominently in these new booklets on Basava without fail: the story of Basava's rejection of the *upanayna*, and the story about the inter-caste marriage that he supposedly organised in Kalyana. It is these two stories that have assumed a key position in our understanding of the Lingayat community and history in the modern period. Today, they are an essential, if not sufficient, component of the *modern Lingayat stories*. So much so, that they have been unconditionally accorded the status of *historical incidents* by modern scholars. Raising a doubt about their historicity today, may be the shortest way towards a controversy. Yet, I want to do so, not for the sake of flaring up a fruitless controversy, but with a hope that

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trust the purchasers' signature and date, if any, left on the books re-sold in the second hand book markets or to talk to the elderly people who lent me copies of these books from their personal collection.

[27] As said earlier, there is a practical problem in clarifying how old are the 'old texts'. Roughly, however, I can say that text published before late 1970s and 80s come under this category.

I may make a modest contribution towards understanding the extraordinary contributions of *atma-jnani*s like Basava and Allama to human knowledge.

We will begin by inquiring into the sources of these two (true-)stories. We will ask, from where do we come to know about these two stories? The only sources of these two stories are our pre-British colonial kavyas and puranas. (For a brief outline of these two stories, see chapter 2, and chapter 4 for some related discussion.) Bhimakavi wrote *Basava Purana* in the mid-14th century (probably in 1368?).[28] It was a 'translation' of a Telugu work on Basava. The Telugu *Basava Purana* talks about the punishment meted out on Haralayya and Maduvaya, for some reason. The book does not talk about an inter-caste marriage between their families. The first work to mention the inter-caste marriage is a 17th century work. And the full story of the inter-caste marriage is found only as late as the mid-18th century. A story that is today the cornerstone of the history of the Lingayat tradition, thus, was not available in its details until the 18th century and assumed importance only in the 19th and 20th centuries.

> But what happened exactly to Haralayya and Madhuvayya in that fatal year in the history of Vīraśaivism (probably the year 1167)? There is strong evidence that both devotees were indeed punished by king Bijjala. Already the Basavapurānamu of Pālkurike Sōmanātha, written at the beginning of the thirteenth century in the Telugu language, records that Haralayya and Madhuvayya were arrested and blinded by order of king Bijjala. The later Kannada version by Bhīmakavi (Basavapurāna, 1369) reiterates this; and so does the Sūnyasampādane (final version shortly after 1500). These works, however, do not relate the story of the marriage of Madhuvayya's daughter to Haralayya's son. The reason for the cruel punishment is sought in king Bijjala's violent and arbitrary rule and his hatred of the Vīraśaivas. The controversial marriage is mentioned for the first time in Śāntalingadēśika's Bhairavēśvarakāvyada kathāsūtraratnākara of 1672 and the full story of the marriage is found only as late as the middle of the eighteenth century in Cannappakavi's Saranalīlāmrta. It must be assumed that these later works have added many elements to the original account. Nevertheless, the core of the hagiography fits well in our picture of the twelfth century Vīraśaiva community at Kalyāna (Schouten 1995: 50).

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[28] According to scholars, this is the first work to use the word Virasaiva, to refer to a people, who were otherwise known as the Lingayats.

More interesting is the career of the story of Basava's *upanayana*. There are as many versions of this story as there are poets who have written about it.[29] According to Harihara, a mid-13th century poet, Basava underwent *upanayana* at a young age, but discarded it at the age of sixteen. Following Harihara, Chamarasa (c. 15) and Singiraja (c. 16)[30] write that Basava did have the *upanayana*. Palkurike Somanatha, a 13th century Telugu poet, was the first one to write that Basava outrightly rejected the *upanayana*. Following him, Bhimakavai (c. 14), Lakkanna Dandesha (c. 15) and many other poets say the same. However, while some of them think he refused the *upanayana*, some others just write that he did not have the *upanayana*. But in the 20th century, the number of different versions of these stories has alarmingly reduced to one version. The one version that is today considered the *most authentic history*, talks about Basava *rejecting* (I emphasise, *rejecting*) *upanayana* at the tender age of eight. Should we call it the canonisation of one of multiple stories, or the canonisation of one of the versions of the story? Besides being a process of canonisation it is also much more than that. The selected story has gone on to become the history of the community too in our case. This claim raises many new questions before us. What provided the criterion for selection of one version of the story over other versions? What provided the impetus for the selection? What are the action[31] and cognitive consequences of the selection? A

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[29] Consider what Sumit Guha says about certain "king-lists" that "began to be compiled [in India] at least two millennia ago, and were recopied, miscopied, and edited for centuries after. Furthermore, *alternative and divergent* king-lists *coexisted without any effort at comparison and authentication*. It is also worth considering why the various genres *were not uniformly produced* in the various regional languages that took shape between the Khalji sultanate (1290–1325) and the Mughal Empire (ca. 1550–1750)" (Sumit Guha 2004 emphasis mine).

[30] According to scholars, Singiraja "is significant not as a great poet, but as a synthesizer of the story of Basava in his … *Singiraja purana*" (Lal 1992: 4003).

[31] Probably, I should specify what I mean by 'action consequences'. Stereotypes, stories and stereostories all function like action instructions, as we discussed earlier. That is to say, they do generate actions in the world, and thus have action consequences in the world. One of the consequences of operation of a stereotype in quotidian life (in a culture where it works, the West) is to put restrictions on actions. When a stereotype defines the horizon of expectations and work as implicit instructions for actions, it only gives

Samartha might say that 'one has to look for other historical evidence pertaining to the religious and social atmosphere of the time and especially to the vachana tradition' (see chapter 4). This answer, however, is blatantly circular. If we have built our histories of the vachana tradition out of these stories, how can we use this history to authenticate the selection process that has engendered itself? Let us answer the first two questions here. We will take up the rest of the question subsequently in a separate section. For the selection of one story would hardly have any impact on a culture. Hence, before answering this question we have to first argue that the process of selection took place consistently over a long period.

Criterion of Selection

The criterion for selecting a particular version of the story, I conjecture, were European positive stereotypes attributed to the Lingayats. *Story that was maximally consistent with the dominant and positive European stereotypes of the Lingayats was selected as the true-story*.[32] What consistency am I talking about here? Let us route our explanation through the two entities discussed here: stories and stereotypes. The consistency can be

a finite (even if practically uncountable) possibility of 'appropriate actions'. The action instructions of a stereotype thus are insufficient and hinder one's going-about in the world. Similarly, stereostories too do not allow for much flexibility in actions. Now, what is interesting is to know what kind of actions do stereostories generate and how do they curtail actions. Since, they are made out of norms; a norm plays a major role in deciding what kinds of actions are permissible. Controversies can thus be seen as norm-governed actions. More about controversies later in the chapter.

[32] Ranajit Guha remarks in his "Small Voice of History" published in (Amin and Chakrabarty 1996: 1), that the function of the word 'historicity' is to "assign certain events and deeds to history. But who is it that nominates these for history in the first place? For some discrimination is quite clearly at work here … to decide why any particular event or deed should be regarded as historic and not others. Who decides, and according what values and what criteria?" This remark is not quite similar to what I am saying. But given my argument, this remark can be seen as obliquely pointing to a phenomenon that I am explaining. However, Guha's answer to his own question is, I would say, opaque and mistaken. He declares, "the nominating authority is none other than an ideology", which he names "statism" (see also Ranajit Guha 2002). This answer is opaque for it merely postpones an answer to the problem by shifting the discussion from historiography to state and nation. Any discussion about state and nation vis-à-vis India invariably has to confront the colonial observation that India is state-less, like it is history-less. If so, we will only be entangled into a new debate rather than solving the one raised before.

expressed as the presence of similarities, and a lack of contradiction between stories and stereotypes. Thus, the consistency in question is a relation between stories and stereotypes, such that stories can be expressed in stereotypes, and *vice versa*. If so, stories or the image they create of the Lingayat community can be added (consistently) to stereotypes as an extension.

The obvious next question is: What kind of similarities are we taking about? Or, similarity of what? Before we answer this question, let me point out a condition that such a similarity has to fulfil if it were to function as the criterion for selection of stories. This similarity, that stories and stereotypes in question have to share, should be of such a variety that it is 'easily' recognisable by agents, so that they will be able to compare and contrast stories in different social occasions and purposes of quotidian life.

Let us analyse the example of the story of Basava's *upanayana* before answering our question with respect to the similarity. In some or other way, this story should be susceptible to an interpretation that will make it a mark of Basava's social activism against the evil of casteism. The properties that it shares with stereotypes will not be sufficient here. It should have something else which even when 'misinterpreted' should not alter the constitutive properties of a story. A story I think does have such a component: its plot line. (Thus, the plot of a story is the criterion of selecting a story as consistent with stereotypes.) Even a *radical change* (if there is such a thing) in the plotline will not alter the functional and the cognitive properties of a story. In fact, this flexibility itself is a property of a story. We cannot make a formal distinction (i.e. a distinction at the level of linguistic structure) between stories and any other narrative account. What makes a story a story is its practical function and cognitive properties that are relative to a culture where practical mode of learning dominates. My claim therefore is that changes in the plot of a story need not make any changes in its practical functions

in a culture. This means that the story of Basava's *upanayana* should be altered in such a way that it will make him an Indian Martin Luther. Europeans or European stereotypes did not require the alteration of a story in order to fit it into their framework. An existing version of the story had the necessary plot structure that automatically made it a candidate to represent Basava as a social activist against casteism. The version of the story that says Basava rejected the thread ceremony, because he did not agree with the (caste or community) rituals, was the candidate we are talking about.

This is about one story. The burden that this puts on our shoulder now is to explain how this selection process was extended to the community/cultural level. Only if this selection process was adopted by generations of scholars and in a consistent way, can we argue that this selection had an impact on Indian culture and Indian scholars that this dissertation proposes it did. Additionally, this process of selection should be of such a nature that, besides being practiced by some, it should also not be objectionable to the majority within and across generations. This means, it should appeal to the commonsense of the majority. I have nothing much to say about the first question. About the second, I can point this much: if people in India were using stories as learning units, a change in the plot of some or all stories or valorisation of a selection of stories would make no difference, except probably evoking an empathic laughter. Furthermore, I can at least show that the comparison did take place mainly (but not only) at the level of the plot of a story.[33] All those stories which were maximally consistent with the European stereotypes were selected as 'true stories', i.e., as those stories where one can find rays of truth bestowed upon blind heathen by the biblical God. Let us reflect a little more on our move from the micro level of one Lingayat story to the macro level of Lingayat stories in general. The modern Lingayat true-story is not just a story about one incident

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[33] Let me mention a puzzle that this discussion brings to the fore here, even though I am not prepared yet to solve it. It raises a very important question here: where do these resemblances come from? Were they just coincidental or were there some other reasons?

about either an *upanayana* or a marriage but it combines many incidents, from the beginning of the 'movement' to its end, or from the birth of Basava to his death. How do we make sense of this complex story? To get a better grasp of this modern Lingayat true-story, let us ask, where does it come from?

A little familiarity with pre-colonial Kannada literature will make it clear that the modern Lingayat true-story is a potpourri of several stories available in the tradition. Accounts of Basava's rejection of the initiation ritual called *upanayana* and the inter-caste marriage he was supposed to have organised are just the two most important components of the modern understanding of the Lingayat tradition. As we said earlier, and will say again, various other things have gone into its formation. Probably the assassination of King Bijjala, or a 'civil war' in his kingdom and such other incidents are historical facts, which have survived as mass memory. Details of caste violence, temple-based exploitation,[34] friction between different classes are a direct imposition of European history onto the Indian past. One thing is clear, that we *have no historical evidence* to prove the latter (and sometimes even the former) components of this modern Lingayat history. Together these components have become one story in the colonial and post-colonial template.

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[34] Ronald Inden argues that "[t]he imperial temples of 'early medieval' India (eight to twelfth centuries) were quite different in their relationship to the political and social order from their 'late medieval' and modern (nineteenth and twentieth centuries) descendants." He also adds at the end of the essay, how "more utilitarian" historians would not agree with his argument and maintain, on the contrary, that Hindu "temple fulfilled the psychological, economic, and cultural 'needs' of Hindu society. What such studies almost never do, however, is to take seriously what the builders of a temple and those who worshipped at it had to say about the temple's purpose. This is solemnly dismissed as theology (into which the anthropologist, fearful of Comte's ghost, dare not enter) or as the mystical, irrational, and self-serving nonsense of Brahmana priests (which no materialist historian need pay heed to)" (Inden 2006: 192, 207, 208). Nonetheless, to add my reservation here, what Inden does is nothing but to postpone the emergence of evil in Hindu society to medieval period (13th and 14th century). He maintains that the "the collapse of Hindu kingship which led to the formation of 'castes' in something resembling their modern form … [or] the distinctive institution of Indian civilization does not appear until the thirteenth or fourteenth century, at the earliest; and castes are not the cause of the weakness and collapse of Hindu kingship, but the effect of it" (Inden 1986: 440). If so, the temple as the basis of exploitation began, according to him, in the 14th century and not in the 12th century.

This phenomenon is not unique to the Lingayat tradition and writings. Pre-colonial Indian traditions *in general* are full of stories. The hundreds of different versions of the *Ramayana* is a good example. More interesting is the fact that these different versions of the *Ramayana* even portray their characters differently.[35] There were *Ramayanas* where Ravana was more heroical than Rama. Nevertheless, in the modern period, we have gone on to standardise these stories. Consequently, our understanding of Indian traditions is limited to a set of strictly selected stories.[36] As we will explain later, today, the very possibility of many Ramayanas creates violent protests.[37] Basava can do anything *but reject* wearing the *janivara* ('sacred thread'), the mark of initiation into Brahman-hood, in our modern story about him.

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[35] See A.K. Ramanujan's "*Three hundred* Ramayanas*: Five Examples and three Thoughts on Translation*" in (Ramanujan 1999). Also see Paula Richman edited *Many Ramayanas* (1991).

This fact assumes immense importance in a situation like India where every community has its own puranas. The extensive fieldwork conducted by the Centre for the Study of Local Cultures (CSLC, based in Kuvempu University, India) has conclusively shown that in each purana the community glorifies itself. There is no universality to a story even though there is a shared lore. On an average, old people who have shared their views during the fieldwork interviews have recounted innumerable stories about their community and its various rituals. Young and educated people either have forgotten those stories (and resort to some textbook histories about their community) or recount only the dominant version of the story made popular by Television serials, textbooks and such like.

[36] In Nora's poetic words, "History's goal and ambition is not to exalt but to annihilate what has in reality taken place. A generalized critical history would no doubt preserve some museums, some medallions and monuments-that is to say, the materials necessary for its work-but it would empty them of what, to us, would make them *lieux de me'moire*. In the end, a society living wholly under the sign of history could not, any more than could a traditional society, conceive such sites for anchoring its memory" (Nora 1989: 9). But, I do not hold this process of selection problematic in itself but for the grounds on which such a selection takes place. After all, selection is inevitable for writing histories. One cannot write a history of every tide of a sea or every leaf of a tree that has fallen. The selection that I hold problematic is the kind of selection that is being discussed in this chapter: the selection of some Indian stories that are consistent with European stereotypes.

[37] Recall the protests against A.K. Ramanujan's essay "Three Hundred Ramayana's". Here are some random reports of the protests: http://communalism.blogspot.com/2008/03/many-rams-many-ramanayas.html (accessed August 5, 2009); T.K. Rajalakshmi's "Crying wolf" *Frontline* (Vol. 25, Issue 06, March 15-28, 2008); http://ibnlive.in.com/news/du-to-check-offending-references--to-ramayana/73921-3.html (accessed June 5, 2009).

Selection of Stories – Compulsions and Necessities

The selection of stories was/is not a historical accident. There is an important logical compulsion behind the selection of stories. The negative stereotypes and negative image of Brahmans cannot make use of a story that admires the intellect of a Brahman. So they have to inevitably select stories that they can make use of. Similarly, the positive stereotypes and positive image of the Lingayats cannot make use of a story that admires the intellect of a Brahman or one that seems to be critical of a Lingayat. Hence, only a positive story about a Lingayat can become part of the composite-image about the Lingayats. This means, only those stories that were compatible with the *maximum number* of stereotypes in question were selected as *true* stories. The process of selection was thus a process of recruitment of stories as candidates for, what I called in chapter 2, *true-stories* and historical accounts of a community. The history of the Lingayats that Schouten purports to write no doubt is to be carved out of traditional Lingayat stories. If he has accepted the European image of the Lingayat community, as progressive and anti-caste, which he has, then the stories that go into his history have to be selected within the limitations of the image that he, perhaps unwittingly, has accepted. We asked in chapter 2, whether the 'picture' about the Lingayats authenticates all those that fit in its schema as 'historical'? It indeed does so. The very process of selection of stories gives them an aura of authenticity, a certification of verisimilitude: *they are selected because they are true*. Selection in this case is also authentication, which honours historical writing's commitment to certainty, self-evidence and authentication.[38]

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[38] Historians who have noticed this process of selection in history have largely ignored it or have misconstrued its importance and implications. Sumit Guha, for example, points out the pre-(British)colonial habit of Indian scholars retaining *alternative and divergent* copies of a 'document' *without any effort at comparison and authentication*. However, when he reflects on the mutation of such writings he ascribes it to the influence of "imperial projects" whether an indigenous variety (Maratha imperial project) or the British colonial project (Sumit Guha 2004).

In sum, then, what happened under the aegis of orientalist and colonial scholars in the 19th and early 20th centuries was this: traditional stories that were selected as the true-stories went on to represent the Lingayat tradition.[39] They were selected within a pattern, or within a broad framework of the way the West understood Indian culture in general. This went on to create an image of not only different Indian communities and maintain the self-image of the West. Besides stereotypes, these images consisted of elements from various things: stories, myths, memories and even historical facts.[40] The modern interpretation of the tradition, which I proposed is an assortment of different traditional stories, nevertheless acquires an appearance of being a unified whole, because of the previously discussed reason. The mould of the cognitive framework, in which these images are cast, erases the distinctions between the various ingredients that go into making these images. Consider the modern Lingayat story about Basava. Despite the fact that it should be clear to a careful reader that this story is a combination of various unconnected elements – from facts to legends – Indian scholars over hundred years have seen this story as the true history of the Lingayat past. Since these modern Lingayat stories are a combination of Indian stories and Western stereotypes, I propose to call them *stereostories*.[41] In the next part of the chapter, we will discuss the properties and functions of these stereostories. Since they are a combination of both stories and stereotypes, they in turn combine the functions of both stories and stereotypes.

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[39] "Indian mythology, however, enabled Gonçalves to locate the early Hindu-Christian encounters around the time of the birth of Christ. Thus he interpreted the story of the battle between Hiranyakaśipu and Nrsinha (Visnu's avatāra) as a fight between Lucifer and the son of God. In his story the wooden pole from which Nrsinha appeared turns into a cross. [Diogo] Gonçalves [a Portuguese Jesuit, who served in the Malabar region in c. 16th India], in a truly baroque spirit, relished what can be termed Christian 'ethnographic' allegories which, to paraphrase James Clifford, have the propensity to generate parallel stories and repeat and displace prior ones" (Zupanov 2000: 216).

[40] "Actually, 'mythic', 'historical' and 'ethnographic' material is projected simultaneously on his [Fr. Jacomo Fenicio's] textual screen, with the result of effacing clear distinctions between them" (Zupanov 2000: 214). Fr. Jacomo Fenicio was an Italian Jesuit priest who served in the Malabar region in India, in the 16th century.

[41] A term suggested by Dr. Vivek Dhareshwar, my doctoral supervisor, who has also contributed much to the development of this concept. See, especially, his unpublished paper "*Adhyasa* and the 'I': On Some Aspects of Stereotypes" (2008). The discussion on this paper during the Asia-Link conferences was quite helpful.

IV. Cognitive and Functional Properties of Stereostories

Stereostories combine some properties of stereotypes, stories as well as composite-images. Hence, they perform some unique functions. We can identify stereostories through these functions and also distinguish them from composite-images, stereotypes and stories. Composite-images too combine some properties of these three entities. Let us begin with composite-images.[42]

Even though one can historically show the formation and the functioning of composite-images, it is still difficult for us to dwell on its cognitive aspects. Hence, we are not even able to raise pertinent questions about composite-images today. Even those questions that are raised about them have not yet been answered satisfactorily. As an example, consider the question raised in an earlier chapter: What holds those different elements that go into the making of a composite-image together and keeps them intact over the centuries? We should put this and other unanswered questions aside, I suggest, and focus on a functional property of composite-images, which is more pertinent for our discussion here. Stereotypes, as we discussed earlier, are oblique or disguised action instructions. They are not a manual of direct instructions. One of the reasons why they are *oblique* has to do with their nature of being pseudo descriptions of the world. They are *pseudo* descriptions in the sense that they do not describe but only appear to describe the world. Furthermore, this appearance is a consequence of the references of stereotypes being fixed in the properties of the world. A direct description of the world, such as a theory, gives direct instructions for actions, of the following kind. A theory

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[42] Most of these are still underdeveloped concepts, so the argument of this chapter should be seen as an outline of a hypothesis. But, then, every theory is a hypothesis. If a distinction between a theory and hypothesis has some advantages, then a theory is a hypothesis that is tested and provisionally accepted as a *comparatively* better explanation of the slice of the world under consideration.

about the world that tells us that fire burns also functions as a warning about the conse-quences of exposing bare skin to the fire. A composite-image too is a direct description of the world. For it includes all those things that can describe the world: historical facts and scientific insights, for example. Let me add here that to say something is a descrip-tion of the world is to point out one of its cognitive properties. This claim does not say whether a given description of the world is a valid description or not. The reason why I add this last remark is that composite-images are necessarily incoherent and partial de-scriptions of the world. Human knowledge is always partial, particularly because it is about one slice of the world. But composite-images are partial in another sense too. As a theory, they are not attempts to describe the world in a coherent way. Furthermore, they are necessarily partial and incoherent because they include various things that do not and cannot describe the world: stereotypes, emotions, value judgements and such like. Nevertheless, a composite-image is seen as a coherent image. As briefly discussed earlier, the presence of stereotypes – a dominant stereotype and a host of supporting and subordinate stereotypes – generates the impression that the composite-image is co-herent and whole.

Since a composite-image is a direct description of the world, it is also a direct instruction for action. When stereotypes come together to form the constellation called composite-image, they lose their oblique character and become direct instructions for actions. But, a direct description for action can be restated as an indirect instruction for action. Here is an example. Francis Warden must have said "favour a Lingayat for a government job, over a Brahman candidate." (For Francis Warden's role in our story, see chapter 3.) Notice that this is a direct instruction for action. The instruction here is not disguised. However, as Balagangadhara shows, the instruction can be made oblique by restating the linguistic formulation of instruction. "Why favour a Lingayat for a

government job?" "Because the Lingayats are progressive-minded people." The latter sentence is a stereotype. "This possibility tells us two things: (a) one can transform direct instructions for actions into disguised instructions for actions; (b) such a transformation is necessary when one has to 'justify' an action" (Balagangadhara 2009a). A composite-image, then, can take the form of a stereotype or at least it can hide behind a stereotype. After all, the gravity of a composite-image is in a stereotype, which foregathers various other elements around it. That means, the outer appearance of a composite-image is or can be disguised by or as a stereotype. Hence, though it is a direct description of the world and a direct instruction for action, it can appear as a disguised description or instruction. This explains why it is difficult to get hold of a composite-image. It performs its functions but in the guise of something else.

Stereostories

A stereostory is typically an Indian phenomenon. It requires the functional properties of stories that are culturally specific to Indian culture to operate in the world. Consequently, it is specific to Indian culture. Though it inherits most of the properties of a composite-image, it also acquires some new properties and a new functional ability from stories, which makes it far more powerful. Let us list the properties of stereostories below before subsequently taking some of them up for discussion with examples form 20th century Lingayat scholarship.

(1) In a sense, a stereostory is a smaller entity than a composite-image. The composite-image about the Lingayats contains many stereostories. Hence, synchronically seen, a composite-image about a tradition at any given time contains many stereostories. Furthermore, each stereostory relates to other stereostories (or, to its co-

stereostory) in a discourse in a 'rigid and perfect' way. (I will explain what I mean by "*a rigid and perfect way*" in the next section. See also point 6 below.)

(2) Stereostories are products of composite-images. Stereostories are seen to be true because they are partially true and that is because, like composite-images, they contain those elements that have truth-value: historical facts, incidents, scientific insights. More importantly, because they are partially true and are seen to be true, they become (i.e., they are seen as) descriptions of the world.

(3) They appear true for yet another reason, which is really a logical compulsion. The negative composite-image of the Brahmans cannot make use of a story that admires the intellect of a Brahman. So it has to inevitably select stories that it can make use of. Only those stories that are compatible with the maximum number of stereotypes are selected as candidates for stereostories. Selection of stories is based on the composite-image, which is seen to be true and is seemingly true. This means, using a composite-image to select a story itself creates the impression that the selected stories are also historically true. The selection process thus makes the stories seem historical. Stories are selected like one selects facts.

(4) Balagangadhara has argued that stories play a dominant role in Indian culture. If this is true then the circulation of stereostories in our society, which is an empirical fact, either points out the changed nature of our culture (where stories do not play their traditional role), or stereostories function like stories. While, technically both are possible, the latter seems more probable than the former. For if the culture has at all changed, our entire argument about stereotypes meeting stories and creating a new entity would not arise. Western stereotypes would have performed their autochthonic functions in Indian culture too. Therefore, we can claim that the only way that these composite pictures can circulate in Indian society, which has no use for stereotypes, is

in the form of, or piggyback on stories, or as stereostories. Put simply, European stereo-typical images about India took a new lease of life as stereostories in Indian culture. This is to say, cognitive aspects of colonialism took a new lease of life after colonialism as an alien rule ended.

(5) If stereostories contain both those items that describe the world and those that do not, then stereostories acquire a unique kind of flexibility. They can function like stories, which do not describe the world but pose like theories and *vice versa*. When we try to catch them as stories, they escape the net as theories and when we try to catch them as descriptions of the world, they deceive us by changing their identity. These preceding remarks also seem to be true about a composite-image, as it too contains both stories and pieces of descriptions of the world.

(6) Unlike stories, stereostories are characterised by a fixation on events. That is to say, a stereostory about an event, such as Basava's *upanayana*, attributes central importance to the event. This is required because the event that a stereostory mentions has a specific position in the chain of events it narrates. Such *event-fixation* in a stereostory and the (historical) importance the event acquires leads to the attribution of cause and effect to the events.

(7) Stereostories, we argued, select Indian stories and other elements and weave them into a seemingly coherent picture about India, which stakes claims for being its true representation. If so, stereostories present a partial view of Indian traditions. It is partial in two slightly different senses. One, it is an incomplete picture of Indian traditions, in the sense that it leaves out more than it represents. It selects a few stories from

a repertoire of traditional stories. Two, it stands for a modern phenomenon of loss of access to our traditions.[43]

V. The Role and Function of Lingayat Stereostories

Consider the following modern Lingayat controversies. In 1989, there was a state-wide protest against M.M. Kalburgi's *Marga*.[44] Allegedly, this book portrayed Basava's second wife, Nilambike, as a perverted woman. It is also said that the part of the book that created the controversy claimed that some of the women vachana-composers we know as 'punya-stri' (roughly, 'virtuous woman') were actually concubines. For similar reasons, the novel *Dharmakarana* of P.V. Narayana was banned in 1997. The novel allegedly defamed Akkanagamma, Basava's elder sister. Another telling instance is the delayed publication of Halage Aarya's *Shoonya Sampadane*.[45] It was edited and published in 1998 by two scholars: S. Vidyashankar and G.S. Siddalingaiah. In their editorial remarks these scholars claim that it had a story about Akka Mahadevi which seemed to transgress the boundaries of modesty and this might have been one of the reasons for the Lingayat *matha*s' reluctance to publish it (1998: sec. "Prakashakara Matu", iii). Re-

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[43] Cora Diamond (1988) will call it "Losing our concepts", or in the words of Pierre Nora (1988: 7), "We speak so much of memory [today] because there is so little of it left".

[44] "In April 1989, Hindu militants threatened to kill M.M. Kalburgi, an Indian historian, for writing a Kannada language book they claim blasphemes a 12th century saint. Kalburgi was given 24-hour protection by police in Dharwar in the southern state of Karnataka. A group of 43 Kannada writers and academics formed a committee in support of the book." http://www.pucl.org/from-archives/Media/freedom.htm (accessed September 24, 2007). A collective of scholars from Centre for Social Studies, Surat, wrote in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in support of Kalburgi during the controversy. They noted that in the case of "Kalburgi's persecution it is impossible to miss the cruel irony that it is the followers of the great radical saint Basava who are organising the witch-hunt. Have they forgotten that it was with ideas that Basava had exposed the pretensions and follies of the orthodoxy of his day? Have they themselves formed today the kind of orthodoxy that Basava had considered it his duty to defy and to reform? Otherwise they would have joined issue with Kalburgi in a spirit of honest enquiry, and not silenced him with the might of organised religion" Biswaroop Das et al. (1989: 1070).

[45] Written in the form of conversation, the *Shoonya Sampadane* is a collection of vachanas of some important vachana-composers of the time. Its authors have woven discrete vachanas into a cohesive structure around an available or a new story. There are four versions of the *Shoonya Sampadane*, composed between 15th and 16th century. The last of the four versions was (re)edited and printed by P.G. Halakatti in 1930. Halage Aarya's work, the second of the four versions, was published only in 1998.

cently, continuing its rather long career of book banning, the government of Karnataka banned Banjegere Jayaprakash's work *Aanudeva Horaganavanu*, which claims that Basava was a lower-caste Madiga, contrary to the dominant opinion that he was a Brahman. (For more on modern Lingayat controversies see, chapter 4, section II.2). In its report, the government said, the book is being banned because it anguishes a community, and is a threat to peace in society.[46] Can we propose a hypothesis that will explain these views or experiences as well as account for the controversies in question? The idea of stereostory that I have outlined here, I suggest, satisfies both these demands.

Notice that the aforementioned three controversial works propose or they can be interpreted as proposing an alternative account that diverges from stereotypes regarding the progressive and the modest nature of the Lingayats. In order to make sense of this claim, juxtapose the three accounts with the cluster of colonial positive stereotypes listed earlier. One frequent stereotype about the Lingayats is that they 'have considerate and decent behaviour towards the female sex', unlike Brahmans. The accounts of 'punya-stri' and the so-called indecent stories about Akkanagamma and Akka Mahadevi seem to diverge from the considerate and decent behaviour towards women that the Lingayats are supposed to have. Similarly, one can find in every modern Lingayat controversy one or other positive stereotype about the community playing the central role.

It may seem, however, the controversy about Jayaprakash's *Aanudeva Horaganavanu*, which claims that Basava was a lower-caste Madiga, contrary to the dominant opinion that he was a Brahman, may pose a serious challenge to my argument.[47] The

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[46] See the front-page report in *Kannadaprabha* July 24, 2007.

[47] The controversy around *Dharmakarana* may also raise similar doubts about my argument. In the novel, Basava talks about a difficult situation that he faced in life with regard to his sister Akkanagamma. She was accused to have an illicit relationship and the accusation grew stronger when she became preg-

positive stereotypes attributed to the Lingayats describe them as anti-caste and anti-Brahman. If so, how can a book that calls Basava a low caste *Madiga* instigate a controversy? The concept *stereostory* explains how the problem comes about. Stereotypes, we argued earlier, do not play a direct role in the Indian cultural context. They are a Western product and need the support of a Western way of going about in the world to function as action heuristics. If so, what actually instigates a violent reaction in the Indian context, when somebody writes about 'punya-stri' is not a stereotype about the Lingayat community's pro-women attitude, but a stereostory. Similarly, I claim, *Aanudeva Horaganavanu* too disturbs a stereostory about the Lingayats. The more important question to be asked here is not '*which* stereostory does the book disturb?', but '*how* does it disturb a stereostory?' My answer to this *how* is pretty straightforward: it disturbs the tight-knit composition of the stereostory in question and it also disturbs the identification of the Lingayats with the composite-image about them that portrays them in a specific way. Let me elaborate my answer with an example.

Jayaprakash's *Aanudeva Horaganavanu* created a longish discussion in magazines and newspapers in the Kannada. In one of those discussions in the Kannada newspapers, a certain C. Somashekaraiah asked, if we were to accept that Basava was a lower-caste person and that he married a daughter of a Brahman minister of Kalyana state, how are we to understand that an inter-caste marriage, which Basava was supposed to have organised, led to the revolution?[48] Note carefully the question Somashekaraiah asks. It draws our attention to an important point (point 2 in the previous section). If Basava turns out to be a low-caste Madiga, modern stories will have to do

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nant but the father of the child in her womb was not known. Basava had only two options: either to support her and seek the truth at the cost of excommunication from the Brahman society or to disavow her and save his skin. Basava chooses the former with a protest against the moral degeneracy of Brahmans and their domination. This incident, instead of being seen as an anti-Brahman action of Basava was seen as a defamation of Akkanagamma and Basava's escapism. For further details of the controversy, see (Boratti 2005).

[48] *Prajavani* May 2, 2007. See also, B.L. Venu's article in *Kannadaprabha* May 12, 2007.

without the incidents of his rejection of *upanayana*, and the importance attached to the inter-caste marriage, which is essential to its composition. One of the properties of a stereostory is that it is closely related to a co-stereostory in a composite-image, at a given point of time. In 20th century Lingayat scholarship, the legends (stories) such as Basava's rejection of thread ceremony and the inter-caste marriage he had organised are causally linked to each other in a 'rigid and perfect' way. These legends are not just an element in our understanding of Basava and the Lingayat movement today, but they are the centrepiece of that understanding. To imagine a Basava who was a lower-caste person by birth is to imagine a completely new 'history' of Basava and the movement he started. For, if he were a lower-caste person by birth he could not have rejected the *upanayana*. If he had not rejected the *upanayana*, and had remained an orthodox Brahman, he could not have preached what he did not follow: abolition of caste prac-tices. (See chapter 1 for an analysis of what we attribute to Basava and other vachana composers today.) If he had not thought of the abolition of caste practices, he could not have arranged an inter-caste marriage. If he had not done all these things, he could not have ever initiated a new caste-less community called Lingayats and led a revolution, the Lingayat anti-caste revolution.[49] Hence, (this is a point that I want to assert) accept-ing a seemingly innocuous story – in fact, not only innocuous but from certain points of view entirely desirable because it would make him heroic and revolutionary – about Basava's lower-caste origin is to bring down the entire edifice of colonial and modern Lingayat scholarship.

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[49] "Besides the Akkanagamma episode", in the case of the novel *Dharmakarana*, the Lingayat "commu-nitarians accused the novelist of concocting historical evidences. It was charged that the novelist deliber-ately wanted to show Basava as an escapist who fled Bagewadi (his birthplace) along with his sister to save his skin and *he was not a revolutionary*. The novelist intentionally did not highlight *Basava's revo-lutionary ideas against Brahminism.* This was interpreted as Brahminism of the novelist. Several evi-dences from the Virashaiva hagiographies like Hariahara's *Basavaraja Ragale* and Singiraja's *Amala Basava Charitre* were cited to prove that Basava left Bagewadi at an early age protesting against Brah-min orthodoxy and moral decline" (Boratti 2005: 35-36 italics mine).

This is not all. Accepting this seemingly innocuous and at times seemingly progressive story will also disturb the identification of the Lingayat community with the composite-image that portrays them as progressive because they belong to a tradition that has fought against casteism. Let us elaborate this point. Each of the components of the current stereostory about Basava is a signpost of the social value of the story's protagonist. In the 15th century, a poet could have written that Basava underwent the *upanayana* ritual and he could still have paid respects to Basava. A 20th-century scholar cannot consider Basava a social reformer and also say that he had the *upanayana*. That Basava rejected the *upanayana* or that he arranged for an inter-caste marriage are essential to show that he was a social reformer. Thus, what is at stake in the acceptance of an alternative story about Basava's birth is not just the integrity of the edifice of colonial and modern scholarship, but also the fact that the alternative story would not have the same social value as the existing story. To be a progressivist and a reformer and to be politically correct, *today it is more important that one rejects one's own Brahmanism than to take birth as a non-Brahman*. It makes perfect sense then that the story of Basava's rejection of Brahmanism (symbolised in his rejection of his *upanayana*) is more important than the story that he was a born non-Brahman and (and probably could not help but) led a movement against the caste system.

It is in this sense that I claimed, stereostories are causally linked to each other in a discourse, or in a composite-image of the Lingayat tradition, in a perfect way. They are also linked so rigidly that any alteration in their arrangement leads to social unrest. More specifically, the story of Basava's rejection of the initiation ritual and the marriage against caste rules that he supposedly organised are causally linked to each other. For the truth-value or the historical plausibility of one stereostory depends on the truth-value and the historical plausibility of the other. Thus, they together become necessary

parts of our modern interpretation. Unlike in the pre-colonial past, I believe, these stories today have become essential to show that the tradition was a social reform movement.

This is possible because of the way stereostories fix events. The events recounted in our modern Lingayat stereostory, for example, assume greater importance than what the narratives about those events were meant to convey. A story, on the contrary, as Kirthinath Kurtakoti a well-known Kannada scholar observes, functions differently. The events that a story narrates, say a *Panchatantra* story, fade out and only the instructions that it is to communicate are conveyed.

> The relationship between human beings and animals in *Panchatantra* [stories] fades out the moment the story is understood. Even when the story of friendship between the monkey and the crocodile that takes place below the *Nerale* [Jamun] fruit tree becomes tragic and the monkey fatally travels on the back of the crocodile, the structure of our emotions does not alter. When the monkey escapes saying it has forgotten its heart on the tree, even though we wonder at its wit, the colour of our emotional response does not change (Kurtakoti 1986: 51).

I read Kurtakoti as making a point that has a heuristic significance: if an imaginary relationship between human beings and animals that a *Panchatantra* story narrates does not fade away, the story will not be understood. Put differently, if one focuses on the plausibility of a story or the plausibility of the events that a story narrates its instructions will be lost.

Cognitive and Action Consequences of Stereostories

Let us pay attention to the action consequences of some of the properties of stereostories. The fifth property of a stereostory enumerated above suggested that modern Lingayat writings could function as both stories and objective historical accounts of the

past. This flexibility functions as the bulwark around modern accounts of (or stereosto-

ries about) a tradition. Hence, they are not subject to (an easy) refutation.[50] Modern In-

dian scholarship is replete with instances of this phenomenon. The way we have been

reading the Ramayana is a good illustration. While some stories of the Ramayana are

read as histories, some other are read as mere fiction and in that as a sign of Indian dis-

regard for historical narratives.[51]

Speaking about the report commissioned by the state government on

Jayaprakash's book, the committee president M.M. Kalburgi and Bargur

Ramachandrappa (a committee member and a well-known Kannada scholar), issued a

statement to the effect that "the issue is academic" and hence a consensus was not pos-

sible (*Kannadaprabha* July 18, 2007). The nature of the claims of these 'academic writ-

ings' is such that a consensus on them is not possible, or is not required. This is possi-

ble insofar as the claims in these writings are mere opinions and story-like. That seems

to indicate that modern writings on the Lingayat tradition may function like both stories

and theoretical descriptions of the world simultaneously. If so, this flexibility of mod-

ern work protects (Lingayat) scholars from intellectual differences about their argu-

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[50] I am not suggesting that this phenomenon of the bulwark around stereostories is idiosyncratic to them. Theories, as Imre Lakotas, has convincingly shown, are generally protected from refutation by what he calls a "protective belt" of auxiliary hypotheses or ad hoc stratagems that deflect potential empirical counter-instances to the theory. My dissertation has only outlined how stereostories resort to "face-saving" devices and explain away apparent anomalies. See, for some reflection on this issue, (Laudan 1996).

[51] Consider the example of the story of Shambuka. After (Lord) Rama returns to Ayodhya, several bad incidents occur in his kingdom, like the death of a child. Rama tries to find out the reason and comes to know that such incidents occur in a kingdom when it fails to follow *dharma*. A Shudra caste person is found in his kingdom performing penance, which is against some dharmic rules. Rama executes Sham-buka by beheading him. This story of Shambuka is often quoted in the 20th century to criticise Rama (and the *Ramayana*) as Brahmanical and casteist. This renders the *Ramayana* a historical account of ancient Indian social structure. For examples of such readings of the *Ramayana*, see (Richman 2001). Now con-sider the example of Ayodhya controversy. One of the dominant strands taken by the secularist scholars in the debate is to assert that the *Ramayana* is a mythology and cannot be considered a historical narra-tive. For a summary of both these views see Koenraad Elst's "The Ayodhya Debate: Focus on the 'No Temple' Evidence": http://koenraadelst.bharatvani.org/articles/ayodhya/notemple.html#_ednref1 (ac-cessed March 13, 2009); see also S.P. Udayakumar's "Historicizing Myth and Mythologizing History: The Ram Temple Drama": http://www.geocities.com/indianfascism/Babri/myth_of_ayodhya.htm (ac-cessed March 13, 2009).

ments. It not only protects differences but also curtails the possibility of taking differences seriously as intellectual differences, something to be investigated, argued about and refuted intellectually. Consequently, these differences soon take 'political' form and seek for state interventions in trail of political resolutions![52]

Does this explain why in the last one hundred years, contradictory claims about the Lingayat past have co-existed without resulting in *intellectual* controversies of any significance? I believe it does. Intellectual disagreements will not create controversies because the disagreement should dissolve when they are seen as stories. However, when seen as stories, if such stories disturb the composition of a stereostory, a *political* controversy erupts. Therefore, controversies on Lingayat issues in the 20th century have taken off not on intellectual disagreements but on issues that 'communities agonise over'. Let me elaborate. Sri Shivamurthy Murugarajendra Sharana of Brihanmath, Chitradurga (Karnataka) gave a call that non-vegetarians could also embrace 'Basava Dharma'. It is also worth noting here that the *swami* had announced that he had founded a new religion called 'Basava Dharma', based on Basava's precepts, and that this new religion was open to meat eating people as well. The claim that meat eating people too could become Lingayats flared up a controversy,[53] not so much because there was an intellectual disagreement about this issue. The interlocutors in the debate during the controversy were hardly discussing intellectual issues (see Jalki 2004). A disturbance in the image of the Lingayat community constructed around the stereotypes concerning their strict vegetarianism and their 'great moderation in eating and drinking', I claim, provided fodder for the controversy. Note carefully the comments of the

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[52] In a different but related context, what S.L. Bhyrappa does is use the novel, instead of historiography, to convey stereostories, especially about Indian Muslims and Christians. (For a brief discussion of his novel *Avarana*, see the concluding section of the chapter 4.)

[53] For reports on the controversy see, *Hindu* May 11, 2004; *Hindu* May 18, 2004; *Deccan Herald* May 20, 2004; (Jalki 2004).

then president of the *Veerashaiva Mahasabha* and former Minister of the Karnataka

government, Bheemanna Khandre. He had

> told the Murugarjendra Math Swamiji that … as the head of a [Lin-
> gayat] math, he should adhere to its traditions. The Murugarajendra
> Math had a long tradition of adherence to the philosophy and teachings
> of Basaveshwara. Mr. Khandre went on to say that the Mahasabha
> would condemn the moves of the Swamiji, which were aimed at pro-
> voking and hurting the sentiments of Veerashaivas and Lingayats. He
> should desist from such activities. In a statement, Mr. Khandre said …
> Murugarajendra Math Swamiji could not name his new faith after
> Basaveshwara who had preached ahimsa, he said. It was an insult to the
> memory of Basaveshwara to say that those who ate meat could join the
> new faith. Though Basaveshwara and the Veerashaiva or Lingayat faith
> did not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of caste, sex or col-
> our and all were welcome to adopt its customs, it was too much for any-
> one to say that there would be no bar on non-vegetarians to join a new
> order named after Basaveshwara, he said.[54]

The central issue of the controversy was not so much whether the Lingayat tradition

allows meat-eating or not. The contention was that the Swamiji was provoking and

hurting the sentiments of the Lingayats.

An explanation is required here about the difference between the co-existence

of different stories in the past (a kind of flexibility) and the flexibility at the present

time. The different stories of the past were not descriptions of the world. If they are not

descriptions of the world, and have no truth-claims, they were also not rival hypotheses.

Instead, a story is a model of the world and it is no surprise that different models of the

world co-exist. To comprehend the flexibility of the modern writings in question we

should bear in mind that they are primarily stories. Hence, they retain their flexibility as

stories. In addition, they are also used or understood as claims about the world, or more

precisely put, as histories of the past. This way of reading stories – as descriptions of

the world – leads to disputes, like the recent dispute about the Ram-Setu.[55] However,

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[54] From a report in *The Hindu* May 11, 2004.
[55] Ram-Setu, also known as Adam's Bridge, is a chain of limestone shoals, between the islands of Man-
nar, near northwestern Sri Lanka, and Rameswaram, off the southeastern coast of India. Geological evi-

when disputes arise, stories are seen as stories as such, or as opinions, which prevents them from being judged for their probative value.

Furthermore, since a stereostory is composed of Indian stories and is mostly used by Indians (because of its culture specific practical properties), it gives the impression that it is Indian in its sensibility and content as well. This appearance is only partly true (and partly false) but more importantly it has some adverse consequences. It is the former because it is part Indian and part Western. It is the latter for at least two reasons. Firstly, what came about as a Western (mis)understanding of Indian society now becomes an Indian understanding of India. (That is why they are, if you like, both Indian and Western). Secondly, stereostories spread stereotypes.

Let us discuss the second reason first. Even though stereostories spread stereotypes, because on the surface they seem Indian in sensibility and content, they spread Western stereotypes of India as Indian self-understanding. The Western experience of India is thus partially rendered India's self-description. This in turn obscures the fact that a stereostory spreads Western stereotypes, which otherwise would be immobile in a culture where they have no functional existence. This fact is concealed further because stereotypes are made to look (completely) Indian.

One way in which stereotypes acquire legitimacy is by virtue of the fact that stories acquire moral tags. When stories come with moral injunctions attached to them in the form of 'the moral of the story is…' they serve a pragmatic function.[56] If stories

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dence indicates that this bridge acted as a former land connection between India and SriLanka. The legend is that Rama built this bridge so that his army could go to Ravana's kingdom and defeat him. In 2001, the Government of India approved a multi-crore *Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project* with an aim to create a ship channel across the Palk Strait by dredging through a portion of this causeway. Several 'Hindutva' organizations opposed and are still opposing this project based on 'religious grounds'. They see it as the destruction of Rama's bridge, an historical monument important for Hinduism. (This information is extracted from the article, "Rama Setu: stop channel project", http://kalyan97.wordpress.com/2007/10/08/985/ [accessed March 31, 2009].)

[56] We cannot make a formal distinction (a distinction at the level of linguistic structure, i.e.) between stories from India and Europe, or even for that matter between stories and historical narratives. The distinction that European stories come with a 'moral' (in the form of 'the moral of the story is…') attached

are not direct instructions for actions, as Balagangadhara argues, they cannot directly

present a moral teaching as their message as well. In the Indian cultural context, the

function of stories depends on the context. Hence, a story can generate different actions

in different contexts, depending upon the requirements of the agents involved. When a

story posits a moral injunction as its teaching it acquires the preconditions of a moral

norm, namely, 'universalisability'.[57] Whether a story also functions as a moral norm or

a doctrine with this shift depends also on the agent involved in the context. This means,

a story has now acquired the potentiality of spreading a norm, whether or not it actually

spreads norms. If stories function as a means to spread norms in society and they do so

in the guise of stories, there are at least two consequences. One, as said earlier, they

spread norms but incognito. Two, they spread norms as stories, that is, they function

like stories in the Indian context while spreading norms. Let me explain. Stories we

said function as action-heuristics in the Indian context. Now, in their new avatar, they

use norms in the service of modelling and instructing actions. Thus, in short, stereosto-

ries use norms – like, 'One ought not to indulge in idol worship', 'One ought to be anti-

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to them and traditional Indian stories do not is not a formal distinction, which can be pointed out to a 'lay person' by demonstrating with a few stories. Stereostories do acquire the ability to come with a 'moral' attached to them, whether they do so in actuality or not depends upon the context, I think. To see a moral embedded in a story is (more appropriately put) an attitude. And one of my contentions, which I however do not make explicitly in the dissertation (see chapter 2), is that the Indians learned this attitude from their colonial masters and it played a major role in the emergence and shaping of stereostories. By which I suggest two things: an attitude that they imbibed from their colonial masters and the ('Indian') way they learned and employed in their life. If so, working with examples will help only if the examples of the stories are set within Balagangadhara's theoretical framework. It may seem that I can point out the avail-ability of multiple and incompatible versions of a story, say about Basava's upanayana, as an (empirical) evidence for my argument. However, different versions of a single story are not unheard in Europe ei-ther. A folk story like the story of Cinderella had many versions in the 17th-18th century Europe, if not in the present (Darnton 1985).

    My argument therefore is this. Though it is technically possible to deduce many histories from the stories available in a culture at any given time, only one history has been written about the Lingayat past. This is so because this history has to be located (so to say) at a point where the plots of stories and stereotypes intersect. That is, while stereotypes select the stories, stories too put a restriction on the kind of stereotypes that will be used in India and about Indians. (Don't we Indians approve of some stereo-types about ourselves, and reject some other!)

[57] "Universalisability suggests merely that if someone in particular holds a moral value, then he must think that it applies to all others (in relevantly similar situations). … If moral judgments are universalis-able, one cannot make a judgment that something is morally worthy and then shrug off the fact that oth-ers similarly situated might not think so. They (unlike those who might differ with one on [say] the fla-vour of ice cream) must be deemed wrong not to think so" (Bilgrami 2003: sec. iv).

casteist' – to guide human actions in Indian society. This cannot but spread violence in society.[58]

In sum, the interpretive structure of stereostories, visible at the outset, is Indian, because they use stories and facts that belong to Indian traditions. However, the stereotypes that generate this new interpretation and hold it together are not visible at the outset. Therefore, the intellectual world generally thinks that these interpretations of Indian culture and the unrest in the society that they engender are native to Indian culture. Does this explain the poverty of good and useful analyses of current Indian social and political problems in the social sciences? Though it is not hard to guess what my answer to this question would be, I leave it open in the dissertation, but with the hope of returning to it in the near future.

Production of Flawless Buddhas and Ambedkars

Let us recall our discussion of the banning of Jayaprakash's book from a previous section (and chapter 3). This banned book presented an account of the life of Basava, which was a digression from Western stereotypes of the progressive nature of the Lingayat tradition. In its report, the government said, the book was being banned because it hurt the sentiments of a community and was a threat to peace in society. The writings in the vernacular and English print media pointed out that accepting this new interpretation about Basava meant dissociating oneself from the established interpretations of the tradition. When stereostories function as interpretations of a tradition, because of their appearance, they come out as 'true' and authentic interpretations. As such, they are

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[58] It is my hunch that modern Indian 'identity politics', which underpins much of contemporary unrest, should be understood from this perspective. For a brief reflection on the *unrest* see the concluding chapter.

seen and used as raw material for historical descriptions of Indian culture. One of the outcomes of building a history out of these new interpretations is that personalities like Buddha*s* and Ambedkar*s* have been recast as flawless human beings. The consequences have ranged from futile controversies to curtailing of any intellectual enquiry of the writings and contributions of these flawless persons that breach the accepted images of them.

This draws our attention to a modern development. A Buddha or a Basava have been rendered saints, and some communities are dubbed progressive. Today, it is not at all possible to talk about them in any way that even slightly steps away from the modern interpretation (i.e., modern stereostories/true-stories). We have no clear idea what will upset the modern image of the tradition and create a controversy that will result in violent and non-intellectual controversies. Some other communities, like Brahmans, are rendered completely unjust and immoral. *One cannot say anything positive about this community and not be dubbed Hindutva-vadins and fundamentalists*.

It is a deep-seated orientalist interpretation of Indian culture that it is morally degraded to the core. The presence of the caste system is said to be both a cause for and the result of this moral bankruptcy of the culture. Many things follow from it. Being an honest person in this society means not just *not being casteist*, but also *fighting* against this evil. Does not this also mean then that post-colonial India will regard only those erstwhile scholars who have fought against the caste system as its *saints*? Since, all known instances of 'saints' and scholars who have fought for human good, have fought against caste, like our bhakti saints and Gandhi*s*, one also begins to suspect that we have invariably recast every worthwhile Indian scholar (or a 'saint', in short) as an anti-caste 'activist'. So it seems to me, at least, and so I have been arguing in the dissertation. We have understood our scholars and scholarship (say vachana-composers and

vachana scholarship) within the limits of the orientalist notion that fighting casteism is the most challenging task before every self-respecting Indian. These Buddha*s* and Gandhi*s* are great only because they have fought against the worst.[59]

Modern Lingayat controversies should be understood from this perspective. Any change proposed to these orientalist and modern interpretations of India and Indian traditions today results in violent protests. And we have seen thousands of them in the last one century.

Stereostories and Historical Writings

I proposed in chapter 4 that history, the way it functions in India, should be seen as a story, a special kind of story, not so much because they contain 'non-historical' legends and traditional stories but because they function like stories. Here I want to propose another and a more important reason to see histories in India as stories. The point I will make in what follows will connect us to our discussion of M.P. Samartha's notion of 'historical evidence' that is used as a criterion to select from various stories available in the tradition as candidates for a history of that tradition.

Stereostories also function as meta-stories[60] that provide broad guidelines (for the lack of a better word) about how to write a history. Because (a) they are seen to be true and as descriptions of the world and (b) they include everything that is available in

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[59] The way we have understood Gandhi in the last 60 odd years is quite interesting. Criticisms of Gandhi's 'activism' and philosophy have usually talked about how he did not fight casteism or at least did not fight it adequately. Both to accept Gandhi as a great personality of modern India and to deny him the status, he has to be understood in terms of his position on the caste system. Even Akeel Bilgrami, who has written such a theoretically rich piece on him, finds someway to argue that "for all his traditionalism about caste" Gandhi found "something offensive … within Hinduism". What else could that be but, "[t]he social psychology of the Hindu caste system", which is, "without a doubt the most resilient form of exclusionary social inegalitarianism in the history of the world". Its inegalitarian tyranny is of the kind that, even "the most alarming aspects of religious intolerance is preferable to it" (2003: sec. iv).

[60] I owe this notion of meta-story, as a function of stereostories, to Prof. J. Sadananda.

a society (stories, facts, stereotypes etc). Let us recollect an incident narrated in chapter 1. The stone inscription found near Siddhalinga Kallideva's temple at Managoli village of Basavana Bagevadi, early in the 20th century, raised a huge controversy. It was a controversy about the name of Basava's real father, among other things. Traditionally his father is known to be a certain Mādarasa or Mādirāja. The newly found inscription however called certain Chandirāja and Chandrāmbike as Basava's parents. The controversy was finally solved when Halakatti and Nandimath explained that the Basava mentioned in the inscription *could not be* the Basava of Kalyana because it is a fact that the real Basava was against the culture of constructing temples, whereas the Basava mentioned in the inscription had built a temple.

That Basava rejected the temple culture is a stereostory. As a stereostory, it is different from the stereostories about Basava's rejection of the *upanayana* and the inter-caste marriage he arranged. The ingredients of this story are not available as stories in traditional literature. It is an ethical/philosophical injunction often repeated in the vachanas. Consequently, in the 20th century this has not acquired the form of a story in any explicit way. That is to say, it is not recounted as a story in the way that the rejection of the *upanayana* is a story. But, it acquires the properties of a story as it is seen as expressed in Basava's actions. (For more information, see chapter 1). This further proves the fact that the modern historical accounts of vachana composers have no stories that are not available in the puranas and kavyas. That also means that every story it recounts today has multiple versions, as no writer of the kavyas or puranas has ever reproduced a story in all its details like another author.

Here is another example. In her work on Srisailam, Prabhavati C. Reddy raises a problem. In her own words, "I discovered that although the site's major Sanskrit text, the *Srisailakhanda* (*SKh*), provides a lively account of Srisailam, it is totally silent

about the role of Srisailam in both Siva's sacred history and religious developments in Saivism." Therefore, she asks, what she calls, the 'fundamental questions.' "Why does the *SKh* record the history of Bhramarambha so vividly and so extensively, while ignoring the history of Siva so totally? Why this imbalance in the portrayal of two deities who are connected through their spousal relationship, and whose temples are located within the same complex? And what historical factors created these surprising imbalances?" Let us grant for the sake of discussion that these 'fundamental questions' are indeed important. But, how does she solve them?

To explain her hypothesis, she begins with some 'facts' about the "revolutionary Saiva movement called Virasaivism".

> Founded on an egalitarian ideology, the Virasaivas opposed the brahmanical Saiva orthodoxy, including its caste system and ritualistic religious practices. In Srisailam, the Virasaiva movement created a constant struggle over temple custodianship between the Saiva orthodox Brahmins and the Virasaivas. By the 14th century, the Virasaivas succeeded in taking over the management of Siva's temple at Srisailam from the Saiva orthodox Brahmins. As the new patron priests of Siva's temple, the Virasaivas saw their influence grow immensely, and within a century or so, the ruling dynasties of Andhra recognized them as the local chiefs of the Srisailam region. … When they [Brahmins] commissioned the composition of the *SKh* in the 15th century, the Brahmins elevated the status of Bhramarambha to be higher than that of Siva by dedicating 19 chapters to the glory of the goddess, while limiting references to her counterpart, Siva, to only a few passages (Reddy 2005: 16).

Even if it were true that the composition of *SKh* was coloured by the rivalry between the Brahmans and the Lingayats, the point to be noted here is that the information about the rivalry has not been derived historically in Reddy's works. She draws this information from a stereostory about the rivalry between the two communities. In that, the rivalry in question is a rivalry over caste issues and Brahmanical orthodoxy. Where does this information come from? Reddy does not cite any historical documents from which she gathers the information that the "Virasaivas opposed the brahmanical Saiva ortho-

doxy, including its caste system and ritualistic religious practices." This is a stereostory. Based on this stereostory, Reddy writes, her history of *SKh*, of Srisailam and of India thereof, purportedly solves some 'fundamental questions'. It is in this sense that I assert that stereostories function as meta-stories about how to write a history.

VI. Projection of a Past, the Logical Compulsions

One of the understated findings of Chapter 3 is that the notion of the Lingayat movement is a colonial construction. The notion of the 'Lingayat movement', therefore, cannot be 'proved' historically or conceptually. By suggesting that the Lingayat movement is a construct or that it does not exist, one is not saying that those facts (historical persons, practices, texts, etc.) that went into its construction did not exist. What one is denying is that these (taken together) constitute a phenomenon called the Lingayat movement. In other words, the suggestion is that colonialism (or European/the West) not merely described the Lingayat movement wrongly, but that, because of their specific cultural experience, the European descriptions tied together a series of facts and made it into one distinct and unified phenomenon: the Lingayat movement. Hence, the Lingayat movement only exists in and as the European experience of Indian culture. This alien experience, however, has now become a way we (Indians) talk about our traditions. This is an instance of the perpetuation of colonial cognitive structures. The problem of determining the nature of the 'religious movement' is not unique to our understanding of the Lingayat movement. It is applicable to the way we have understood all those so-called 'religious movements' of India. Lorenzen expresses similar doubts

about these 'movements' that have occupied such a huge prominence in the 20th century, in his "Introduction" to *Religious Movements in South Asia 600-1800*:

> It is much more difficult, especially in a South Asian context, to specify what we mean by a "movement," since the degree and style of organization of popular religious groups varies enormously. Some are so loosely structured that they are perhaps better described as religious currents rather than movements. Their followers are difficult to identify and have no formal ties to other members of the group or to its leaders. Other groups have more defined and limited memberships (Lorenzen 2004: 3).

Lorenzen's view however has two problems, which characterises scholarship concerning bhakti and other such Indian 'religious' traditions. *Firstly*, it identifies the problem, but fails to explain it. Why do scholars repeatedly talk about 'Indian religious movements' even though it is obvious that there is no historical evidence to prove the existence of such 'movements'? *Secondly*, Lorenzen's arguments about such 'movements' is problematic. He only says that they are movements but in a weak sense of the term. His reasoning that the "degree and style of organization of popular religious groups" is diverse and hence we cannot call them movements is unwarranted. This problem is not unique to the study of 'Hindu religious movements'. Despite studying 'Hinduism' as a religion of India for well over 200 years now, scholars still claim that 'Hinduism' is so diverse a phenomenon that it is difficult to characterise Hinduism. Since when is diversity a problem for a theoretical characterisation? Cursory glances at other phenomena that have been 'adequately' theorised tell us that though 'diversity' is a challenge for theorising, it is not an insurmountable obstacle. The phenomenon of Christianity, spread over such a huge geographical area, practiced by so many people belonging to so many different ethnic, linguistic, cultural and political backgrounds, must be as diverse as 'Hinduism', if not more.[61] If so, the under-theorisation of Hinduism and its re-

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[61] I owe this point to a paper presented by Esther Bloch and Marianne Keppens entitled, "Diversity in Hinduism. What is the problem?", in "Rethinking Religion in India", a conference held in New Delhi, 10-13 January 2009.

ligious movements points towards two possibilities: either in the last 200 hundred years we have not grown intellectually at all as far as our knowledge about Hinduism is concerned, or probably the object of our theorisation, Hinduism that is, does not exist. Drawing on S.N. Balagangadhara's works (1994), I argue that the notion 'Indian religious movements' names the way Europeans experienced Indian culture and not an entity in the world. In this sense, 'the Lingayat *movement*' is a colonial construction. Thus, if there is a Lingayat or vachana 'movement' at all, then it took place in the late-19th and early-20th century, which converted the European experience of Indian tradition into a way native scholars talked about themselves and their tradition.

Calling the Lingayat movement a colonial construction raises many important questions. What are the ingredients that have gone into its construction? How was it constructed? What were its functional uses? Why was it constructed? How does this construction sustain and reproduce itself over such a long period? We have already answered some of these questions partially earlier in the chapter. To know what has gone into the construction of this notion one must analyse the Lingayat movement as a composite-image and as a stereostory. We will address another aspect of the process of construction here: the logical compulsion behind this construction.

Here is a brief initial formulation, which I will elaborate further. One way of justifying what is seen as true is by projecting a past: 'this was so since centuries'. Such postulation of the past that conforms to positive stereotypes is what gives birth to the idea of a movement, such as vachana or bhakti movements.

Let us begin elaborating this cryptic answer by repeating an old question: What has gone into the construction of the 'Lingayat movement'? In line with our argument so far, we can say that the components of the notion of the Lingayat movement can be divided into two: those that can justifiably claim to be a description of the world and

those that cannot; or those that make a truth claim about the world and those that do not. While theoretical insights and historical facts instantiate the former, stories and stereotypes instantiate the latter. Stories that went into the making of the Lingayat movement came from the puranas, kavyas, legends and such like (see Chapter 2). That is to say, not every story and legend was deemed fit to enter this construct. Only those stories that seemed 'true' and 'historical' were used. That means some stories were seen as true and some as false. This is a category mistake. Be that as it may. What concerns us here is the following problem: how is a distinction between true and false stories, based on a category mistake, justified? One cannot just go on to make this distinction randomly. One has to show what the criterion to judge something as 'true' was/is. 'True' in what sense? What is at stake in this distinction? There are two distinctly related criteria. Western stereotypes of the Lingayats were one criterion. As I showed earlier, only those stories that were consistent with stereotypes were selected as true-stories. There is another criterion: the projection of a true past. An answer to the questions asked above was provided *by projecting a past*. The 'true past' is the criterion to judge the 'truth' of the selected stories. Stories that do not correspond to the 'true past' are by implication 'false'.

Expectedly this answer raises many 'how', 'whence', 'why' questions. Let us discuss only one of these questions here: How did the projection a past provided justification for distinguishing stories as true and false or as history and fiction? To learn how the projection of a past works as a justification one has to understand some properties of history, the product of historiography. A history survives on the claim of being a true account of the true past, whether one acknowledges this or not. (For a discussion of this topic see chapter 4, section I.) It is a true account in the sense that it strives to contribute as accurate a picture of the past as possible to human knowledge, with all its limita-

tions. It is an account of the true past in the sense that it is talking about that which is believed to have happened. One cannot therefore claim to write a history of that which has not occurred (say, a history of Harry Potter's battles with Voldemort). Put differently, one cannot write a history of those entities whose existence cannot be historically verified.

A story about Basava's rejection of *upanayana* acquires the status of being true and a story that says the contrary becomes false, only if the first story corresponds to a true past. If it is true that Basava indeed rejected *upanayana*, the story about his rejection of his *upanayana* also becomes true, that is they become historical, if not a history. Thus justifying a story that is seen as true needs the projection of a corresponding true past. This true past then goes on to justify deeds in the present. Present deeds, like fighting against caste, criticism of Hindu superstitions, the distinction between true and false stories, etc. are all 'true' because this is how Basava/the Lingayat movement did it in the past: *'this was so since centuries'*.

How do we verify this conjecture? If one asks, why should human beings understand the 'true' past? Why can one not 'believe' in a 'false' past? This problem can be solved if and only if the 'false past' is associated with negative things, and if 'believing' negative things would lead to negative consequences. Originally, as Balagangadhara argues (2009b), this entire notion of 'true past' and the necessity of understanding the true past and the negative consequences of believing in a 'false past' were deeply Christian theological issues. Over the ages, these theological notions have been secularised into theoretical concepts. Therefore, the answer to the question "Why understand the 'true' past?" is this: so that one can lead a good life in the present. Thus, if European scholars found the true stories of Indian past, then this true past should at least show two things: what the British did in the colonial present was as good as or better

than what the Indian past was and it should also correspond well with the British criticism of the Indian colonial present. This will strengthen my story told so far.

Compare the modern Lingayat true-story (Chapter 2) with the self-representation of the European scholars and colonialism. Whatever the British opposed was also opposed by (this newly constructed historically true) Basava in the 12th century. Like them, he too opposed Brahmanism, temple domination, the caste system, oppression of women, exploitation of poor and such like. *Basava* (as constructed by Western scholars) *is an image of a person who can be as good as a human being can be, without being a Christian.* He is a Martin Luther, sans his Christianity. Now compare the European image of India of the pre-colonial and colonial period. According to Valentine Chirol in his classic *Indian Unrest* (1910), the main reasons for India's unrest was Brahmanism, which "as a system represents the antipodes of all that British rule must stand for in India, and Brahmanism has from times immemorial dominated Hindu society". Much of India according to Chirol has always been "a theocratic State," where "both spiritual and secular authority were consecrated in the hands of the Brahmans." Indian unrest in general had as "its mainspring … a deep-rooted antagonism to all the principles upon which Western society, especially in a democratic country like England, has been built up" (Chirol 1910: 32, 37, 5). Or as in his introduction to the same work Alfred Lyall said, while the British were "relying upon secular education and absolute religious neutrality to control the unruly affections of sinful men," Indian agitators combined "primitive superstition" with modern journalism and politics: "The mixture of religion with politics has always produced a highly explosive compound, especially in Asia" (Chirol 1910: xv).

A past was thus postulated that was in perfect conformity with the European stereotypes of India. One form that this past took was the notion of the 'vachana

movement.' The notion of the vachana movement and other Indian religious move-

ments in general, thus, is a European postulation of the past as it conforms to their

stereotypes. This raises another question, Why did the postulated past take the form of a

movement?[62] There is one dominant reason as I see it. The past was a glorious past.

This glorious past was also a comment about India's disgraceful present. The 'glory' of

this glorious past lay in the very fact that it was a revolution against the corruption in-

grained in Indian culture of the present. If the root cause of Indian corruption was the

lack of a true religion that is native to it, then the revolution, which is the sign of a posi-

tive element in the culture,[63] must also take place within the domain of religion, be-

cause the solution of the Indian problem lay in the introduction of a true religion. This

is not to say that bhakti or the Lingayat traditions were considered true religion. As

Elijah Hoole said about the Tamil bhakti saint Tiruvalluver, he "evinces a singular de-

gree of freedom from many of the strong prejudices of the Hindoos, although he fre-

quently illustrates his positions by allusions to the mythology and doctrines of the su-

perstition of his country" (Hoole 1829: 311). (See chapter 3 for more examples.) This

also explains why our pre-colonial scholars like Basava were seen as native Martin Lu-

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[62] There is a close relation between the way we are writing histories in the 20th century and the notions like 'revolution' and 'movement'. Commenting on the concept 'revolution', Reinhart Koselleck says, the "concept of revolution … [is] a flexible 'general concept' … [that refers to] something anywhere in the world. It almost seems that the word 'revolution' itself possesses such revolutionary power that it is constantly extending itself to include every last element on our globe. If this were so then we would have a political slogan whose composition assured its constant reproduction…. What is there in the world that could not be revolutionized—and what is there in our time that is not open to revolutionary effects? Posing the question to our concept in this way indicates the modernity of its content." He further writes, in the modern period, the notion, "revolution [has] became a metahistorical concept, completely separated, however, from its naturalistic origin and henceforth charged with ordering historically recurrent convulsive experiences. In other words, Revolution assumes a transcendental significance; it becomes a regulative principle of knowledge, as well as of the actions of all those drawn into revolution. From this time on, the revolutionary process, and a consciousness which is both conditioned by it and reciprocally affects it, belong inseparably together. All further characteristics of the modern concept of revolution are sustained by this metahistorical background" (Koselleck 2004: 44, 50).
[63] Koselleck again (2004: 50-51): "Characteristic of all prognoses made since 1789 is their incorporation of a coefficient of movement which is held to be 'revolutionary,' whatever the tendency out of which such prognoses issue. Even the state was swept into the grasp of 'Revolution,' so that it becomes quite understandable that the neologism *contrerévolutionnaire* was translated into German around 1800 as *Staatsfeind*, enemy of the state. Whoever had respect for the state had to be 'revolutionary,' anticipating the definition of the Left-Hegelian position (emphasis author's)."

thers. Like Luther, they all led the Reformation movements to free the Church/Hinduism from the hands of wicked priests that resulted in the creation of Protestant groups.

The argument that I have provided so far, if it holds, is just an outline of a possible answer. It tells us about the road that one has to traverse and about the road that one should avoid, if one wants to understand the reasons for the persistence of colonial cognitive structures and its impact on our understanding of our traditions and ourselves.

Conclusion

To conclude, let me repeat my hypothesis. Our (Indian) contemporary understanding of Indian traditions has taken a form, which is in essence a combination of Western stereotypes of those traditions and the traditions' own stories. These modern interpretations are neither theories nor histories of our past. And since they are a strange combination of Western stereotypes and native stories, they behave both like stereotypes and stories, and transmit negative views about one community and positive views about another. In other words, the only thing they tell us is that Indian traditions are unjust and discriminatory. In contrast, it is worth asking, what kind of image of the West they spread? This raises one important question: How do we resist this new phenomenon of stereostories and the violence that they seem to be bringing in their wake?

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Conclusion

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WHEN STORIES MEET STEREOTYPES…
BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me recapitulate the main arguments of the dissertation and discuss their consequences, implications and limitations. The account I have given, to put it succinctly, is an account of what happens when stories meet stereotypes.

The dissertation began by raising questions about contemporary theorisation of colonialism, with a view to investigating the relationship between colonialism and Indian traditions. The attempt was to formulate a new framework for understanding the way Indian traditions have been transforming themselves as a result of interactions with colonial structures. The two important questions that guided the discussion of the interactions were: why certain elements in a tradition were prone to modification or transformation, and whether the cognitive structures that came into being in that process persisted.

In order to study these issues in greater depth, the dissertation took up for closer examination the Lingayat tradition and modern scholarship on the so-called vachana movement. Do vachanas take an anti-caste position? Why do European and Indian scholars characterise vachanas as caste-critiques? The first question was answered in the negative with the help of a textual analysis. An answer to the second question was formulated by examining vachana scholarship as an instance of the continuation of colonial consciousness in the post-colonial period. The mechanism of

stereostories that we uncovered, as we saw, goes some way towards explaining why this scholarship has survived even though it is not supported either by a textual analysis of the vachanas or by historical research.

Indian accounts of their tradition or their past, whether cast in the colonial mould or not, have taken the form of a *dense* story. This story explains not just the incident that it narrates, but also places the incident in a context pregnant with political and cultural significance. Today when we talk about Indian anti-caste traditions, we recount such a *dense* story that has been endlessly repeated over the last 150 years. In the case of the Lingayat tradition, it is a story about its founder, Basava and his many actions, especially (i) a protest against the initiation ritual, (ii) a marriage against caste rules. Basava is seen as a founder of a reform movement in the image of Martin Luther. As the dissertation has shown, this modern understanding is an assorted collection of several stories available in the tradition, held together by a way of thinking which is derived from the colonial attack on Indian traditions. There is, however, something very intriguing here. Pre-colonial Indian traditions *in general* were full of stories. Recall the example of the *Ramayana*. There were not only hundreds of different versions of the Ramayana, but also different versions portrayed their characters differently. In the modern period, we have gone on to standardise these stories. Our understanding of Indian traditions today is based on a small subset of narrowly selected stories.

The major argument of this thesis is that this situation is the result of the interaction between Western stereotypes about the Lingayat community and the stories from the Lingayat tradition. This interaction is essentially based on Western stereotypes serving as organising principles for the selection and rejection of Indian stories. I termed the entity that results from this interaction *stereostories*. The Lingayat com-

munity was seen as one of the most progressive communities in India by Western and colonial writers, who attributed to it some progressive qualities such as being anti-caste, pro-women, pro-labour class and so on. This characterisation circulated in the form of a series of positive stereotypes about the tradition. Traditional stories that were maximally consistent with these positive stereotypes were selected as the 'true-stories', which contributed to the forming of a *composite-image* of the tradition. The modern image of the Lingayats, thus, is a *stereostory* that consists of elements from various sources: stories, myths, memories, historical facts, conceptual insights, beliefs etc, but is very crucially organised around the Western stereotype of the community as essentially 'progressive'.

The dissertation built on the analysis of stereostories to show that the interaction between Indian stories and Western stereotypes has resulted in a certain way of interpreting Indian traditions that has had some strange and disturbing consequences. The interpretive structure, visible at the outset, is Indian, because it uses stories and other structural features that belong to Indian traditions. But, stereotypes that generate this new interpretation and hold it together are not visible at the outset. As such, one generally thinks that these interpretations of Indian culture are native to Indian culture. This, I suggest, disguises the perpetuation of colonialism in the post-colonial period. Furthermore, because of this appearance, the modern interpretations seem 'true' and authentic, and are seen and used as raw material for historical descriptions of Indian culture. Yet another consequence of the invisibility of Western stereotypes that underpin modern interpretations of Indian traditions is that we are unable to see how these interpretations give rise to a chronic state of violence and controversy. Of the many implications of the argument developed in this dissertation, the last one – con-

cerning the violence that stereostories generate – requires a special mention, because of its particular interest in our present context.

Stereotypes and Violence

As we discussed in chapter 5, one of the consequences of stereostories playing a major role in history writing in India is that persons such as the Buddha or Basava are turned into flawless saints and some communities become essentialised bearers of 'progressive values'. Anything that tends, even unwittingly, to disturb the composite-image or any story about the tradition that does not conform to the stereostories in question immediately gives rise to *controversies*.

A stereotype, as we saw, is not a quantifiable statement and therefore, in some sense, it does not specify who or what is its subject.[1] A story, on the contrary, is always about some specific entity. When modern Lingayat scholars write that Basava rejected the *upanayana* ritual because he wanted to rebel against the caste system, they understand stereotypes about Basava and the Lingayats as a social-scientific explanation. In the process, they unwittingly modify the nature of both stories and stereotypes. The story in question now has a causal connection with the world and the events happening in it and the stereotype now acquires a specific subject. The story about Basava's *upanayana* now refers to an event in the world and is causally linked to many other events, such as Basava's childhood, his caste, education and his anti-caste activism. A stereotype such as 'the Lingayats are anti-brahman' now functions as or is treated and understood as a true statement about the Lingayats. If this is true, one can now raise problems about stereotypes and stories being incorrect proposi-

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[1] In a way, the stereotype 'Jews are Dirty' has Jews as its subject. However, since the sentence does not specify which specific Jew (or a collection of them) it is talking about, this stereotype sentence can be said to have no subject.

tions,[2] or as an unfair or incorrect portrayal of a people. Discussions on histories of Indian traditions provide us with the best instance of this phenomenon. Much of our histories of a Basava or Buddha are constructed out of Indian stories and European stereotypes. That means, a discussion on the issue, say, whether Basava made the grants for the construction of temples or not (see chapter 5) is indeed a discussion whether those stereotypes and stories that go into the making of this history are valid explanation of the issue with regard to the tradition under discussion or not.

Such discussions, as was argued in the thesis, leads to disputes as well as corrective measures. If a particular story about Basava, say a newly discovered or brewed story about his birth, is found 'wrongly' describing him or his socio-cultural world then that may lead to protests or they may also instigate measures that aim to either rewrite the story or to suppress it. If so, we can predict that, a few stories and stereotypes about the Lingayats must have met a premature death when they were considered incorrect propositions. This probably explains the conspicuous decline in the number and variety of stories about various aspects of the Lingayat tradition by the 20th century.

Furthermore, so far in my research, I have not come across any stereotype or story about the Lingayats that originated in the 20th and 21st centuries. All that we have is a recirculation of redacted pre-20th century products, whose growth seems to have ended at the beginning of the 20th century. One has only to examine European writings on the Lingayats from the days of the earliest works in the *Cambridge History of India*[3] series to contemporary writings to see that they repeat the same set of stereotypes that are found in colonial writings. Traditions in India, as was argued in chapter 5, have functioned and flourished through stories. There seems to be, how-

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[2] Note that stereotypes and stories are not a description of the world and as such cannot be problematised as incorrect propositions. (We have discussed this issue in some detail in chapter 5.)
[3] The original *Cambridge History of India* series was published between 1922 and 1937.

ever, something in the logic of stereostories that limits the generation of new stories. This argument, it will be noticed, contains a disturbing implication. This thesis has not explained why this happens – which will clearly require a separate study. Let me, however, raise a few questions to register the significance of the effect of stereostories. If Indian traditions do not produce new stories that will guide the actions of its followers in accordance with the present necessities, how will such a tradition survive? Will it invent new modes of guiding the actions of its members? Will such a process of reconstitution of a tradition go unchallenged or will it generate its own dynamic that will inflict further violence on its followers?

Definitive answers to these questions are not within our reach today, nor do I pretend to have provided any definitive answers to them in the dissertation. What I do claim to have exhibited in the thesis, however, is a way of analysing colonialism and its impacts on traditions that has the cognitive potential to throw light on a specific kind of violence and controversy that seem to have become so much a part of the life of traditions in post-independence India.[4] Perceived from another angle, my study could be seen as fleshing out an insight that is present in so many ways in many contemporary thinkers, writers as well as in ordinary people, namely, certain kind of violence in India is the product not only of our colonial past but also of a colonised understanding of our past.

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[4] We briefly reflected on such controversies in chapter 4, when we talked about the Babri mosque controversy and the recent debate about Christian conversions in a Kannada newspaper. See also appendix IV, below, for an analysis of two recent Lingayat controversies.

Appendices

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I. Glossary of Indian Terms

All meanings suggested here are mere indications of what to make out of these words rather than what they are. Most of them are conceptual terms, and their usage differs from a tradition to another tradition in Indian culture. If my arguments in the dissertation hold, it can be said in all seriousness that these words can be understood only when we build social sciences that come out of the shadows of colonialism and start understanding Indian traditions in conceptually sound and alternative ways.

addpallakki	a palanquin carried horizontally, on different occasions, such as a procession; heads of the Lingayat *mathas* use it as a status symbol
ajāta	lower caste person; unborn
ankita-nāma	pseudonym/penname; the name that a vachana composer uses at the end of a vachana
arivu	knowledge, awareness (some vachana-composers distinguish arivu from jnana)
bhakta	Devotee
bhavi	a worldly person, one who is not (yet) on the path of enlightenment
dāsi	servant, farmer woman, devotee
holasu	Impurity, nastiness, nasty matter, faith
holeya	holeya is both a name of a low-caste and a man belonging to that caste
holati	a woman who belongs to the holeya community
ishta-daiva	the personal deity of a person; usually, pooja not to all gods but one of the gods who one takes as his/her personal deity; (Dictionaries describe it as 'one's chosen deity'. It is misleading because the choice is not individual in most of the cases. It is either shared by a family and passed on from generations or inherited from one's teacher or husband, a patron etc.)
jangama	an internal section/caste among the Lingayats; members of Jangama section offer pooja in the temples and oversee the performance of rituals. Hence, they are seen as Lingayat priests.
jāti	Caste
Kūdala-sangama-	literally 'god of the meeting rivers'; Basava concludes his vachanas by invoking Kudalasangama towards the end of every vachana. It is

deva	a name of Shiva. Kudalasanagamadeva is Basava's *ishta-daiva*, which he uses as his *ankita-nāma*
kula	in modern translation, caste community.
kula-mada	kula pride
kulaja	of a good kula; a *kulaja* person is one who belongs to a good kula
linga-sthala	the Lingayat tradition talks about different 'sthalas' (stages, places) to be attained by a devotee, in order to attain a sthala which stands for the ultimate goal of human life – enlightenment (moksha). Linga-sthala is one of those stages, probably the final one.
mata	(religious) sect, faith, tenet, view, a way of thinking
matha/math	'monastery' (plural – matha*s*)
padodaka	water used for washing the feet of a venerable person, or a linga
sharana	a devotee of linga; Sharana's social status is above an ordinary follower of linga; a stage in the path towards enlightenment
swami	A Hindu religious teacher/leader/head; used as a title of respect
sūtaka	birth, production, impurity from childbirth
vachanakāra	a (male) vachana-composer (**vachanakārthi:** a woman vachana-composer)
vipra	a Brahman, a jnani, intellect

II. Statistics (Tables a, b, c and d)

a. Caste Words

Sl. #	Name of the Vachana-composer and no. of available vachanas	#Vachanas on Caste	#Vachanas on Brahmans
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 1[1]			
1	Basavanna 1414	81, 112, 135, 136, 138, 142, 263, 270, 285, 286, 306, 313, 343, 344, 348, 374, 418, 453, 521, 568, 575, 576, 582, 583, 587, 589, 590, 591, 595, 596, 601, 602, 605, 606, 608, 613, 628, 652, 654, 657, 710, 711, 715, 717, 718, 732, 770, 779, 869, 879, 895, 898, 934, 1130, 1152, 1153, 1194, 1196, 1284, 1335.	91, 103, 570, 575, 577, 582, 583, 585, 586, 587, 590, 592, 593, 595, 596, 598, 600, 602, 605, 606, 613, 620?,[2] 622, 624, 627, 671, 711, 716, 1130.
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 2			
2	Allama Prabhu 1636	3, 50, 148, 164, 326?, 382, 464, 584, 735, 747, 753?, 781, 806, 919, 952, 1127, 1197?, 1203? 1204, 1347, 1390, 1412, 1493, 1522, 1549, 1591?	33, 54, 948?
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 3			
3	Chenna basavanna 1763	42, 44, 72, 75, 119, 129, 143, 150, 159, 163, 166, 167, 168, 169, 200, 203, 223, 308, 326?, 391?, 502?, 544?, 567, 572?, 585, 590, 592, 597, 598?, 677?, 678?, 691?, 724, 759, 837, 840, 867, 909?, 916, 926, 930, 969, 971, 977, 978?, 1038, 1052, 1122, 1123, 1130, 1133, 1137, 1153, 1154, 1182, 1201, 1212, 1220, 1221?, 1229?, 1230, 1240, 1253, 1265, 1272, 1277, 1305, 1303, 1338, 1348, 1363, 1374, 1375, 1386, 1387, 1400, 1413, 1416, 1526, 1543, 1544, 1556, 1567, 1602, 1620, 1630, 1641, 1656, 1674?, 1677, 1679, 1683, 1692, 1706, 1720, 1755.	142, 144, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 159, 892, 908, 1018, 1402, 1567, 1571, 1587, 1588, 1600, 1620, 1630, 1674.
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 4			
4	Sidda rameshwara 1992	52?, 139?, 253, 466, 467, 494, 542, 548, 555, 592, 799, 984?, 1142, 1175, 1470, 1491, 1525, 1526, 1527, 1528, 1543, 1641, 1642, 1643, 1753?, 1814, 1850, 1933.	10, 1277, 1470, 1617, 1736, 1826, 1930, 1931, 1933, 1942.
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 5 (SHIVA SHARANEYARU)			

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[1] This refers to the title of the collection of the vachanas published by the state government of Karnataka. For the bibliographic details, refer the Bibliography below.

[2] I have put a '?' mark before those vachanas where it is difficult to show that they talk about caste or Brahmans. For example, Basava's vachana #606 talks about a 'chaturvedi'. This word today refers to a Brahman caste. Hence, it is possible to argue that this vachana talks about Brahmans. However, today, it is difficult to show conclusively that Basava was using this word to talk about Brahmans. In the table, I have sometimes mentioned such vachanas and placed a question mark before them and most of the time I have ignored such vachanas.

5	Akka maha devi 434	38, 114, 130, 175, 176, 184, 231, 259, 310, 339, 345, 346, 417?	
6	Akkamma 154	468, 483, 505, 526, 555.	555.
7	Amuge raayamma 116	591, 597, 608, 636, 639, 675, 702.	--
8	Aaydakki Lakkamma 25	--	--
9	Kaalavve, Urilingapeddi-yavara punya-stri 12[3]	733, 737.	734.
10	Masanamma 1	--	--
11	Kadira kaayada Kalavve 1	--	--
12	Kadira Remmavve 4	747.	--
13	Remamma 1	--	--
14	Rechavve 1	--	--
15	Kamamma 1	--	--
16	Lakshamma 1	--	--
17	Somamma 1	--	--
18	Gangaambike 9	--	--
19	Gajesha Masanayya's Punya-stri 10	--	--
20	Ketaladevi 2	--	--
21	Goggavve 6	--	--
22	Veeramma 5	--	--
23	Duggale 2	--	--
24	Naagalaambike 14	791.	--
25	Neelamma 288	949.	--
26	Guddavve 1	--	--
27	Bachikaayakada Basavayya's Punya-stri Kaalavve 2	--	--
28	Bontaadevi 5	1094.	1094.
29	Muktaayakka 37	1105, 1110.	--
30	Molige Mahaadevi 70	--	--
31	Raayamma 1	--	--
32	Rekamma 1	--	--
33	Satyakka 27	1209.	--
34	Siddha Buddhayya's Punya-stri Kaalavve 1	--	--
35	Soole Sankavve 1	--	--

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[3] The usual practice is to identify these women as a *punya-stri* (concubine?) of a particular man, often a well-known vachanakara. However, I have just used their proper names, except in those cases where there are two persons by the same name, or the proper name of the person is unknown to us.

36	Lingamma 114	--	--
37	Gangamma 1	--	--
38	Kurangeshwaralinga 1	--	--
39	Masanayya Priya Maareshwara[4] 1	1351.	--

SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 6, SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 1

40	Angasonkina Lingatande 11	--	--
41	Ambiga Chaudaiah 278	34, 43, 48, 67, 77, 111, 116, 118, 119, 120, 142, 143, 145, 146, 147, 148, 176, 178, 187, 201, 235, 257, 258, 260, 261, 262, 268, 282, 287, 289.	--
42	Agghavani Hampayya 4	--	--
43	Agghavani Honnayya 4	--	--
44	Ajaganna Tande 10	--	--
45	Anaamika Naachayya 5	312.	--
46	Appi devayya 1	--	--
47	Mallikarjuna 2	--	--
48	Amugidevayya 30	325.	--
49	Arivina Maritande 309	443, 446, 450, 482, 539, 603.	--
50	Rekanna 104	697, 710?, 727, 731.	--
51	Aadayya 403	808?, 845, 852?, 876, 905, 910, 998, 999, 1047, 1050, 1110, 1148, 1153.	1045.
52	Aanandayya 2	--	--
53	Aaydakki Maarayya 32	--	--
54	Gabbidevayya 10	--	--
55	Somidevayya 11	--	--
56	Urilinga deva 48	1220.	--
57	Urilinga peddi 363	1272, 1277, 1278, 1302, 1362, 1368, 1377, 1385, 1386, 1390, 1405,[5] 1412, 1473, 1479, 1502, 1514?, 1536, 1555, 1559, 1579, 1578, 1616.	1266, 1272?, 1342, 1368, 1383, 1390, 1473, 1495, 1535, 1538, 1547, 1571, 1616, 1620.

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[4] Both Kurangeshwaralinga and Masanayya Priya Maareshwara are the *ankita*s of vachanakarti*s*, whose names are not known to us.

[5] He uses the word 'deva-jati' in many vachanas. I have just mentioned one instance here, ignoring the rest.

58	Uliyumeshwara Chik-kanna 12	--	--
59	Echcharike kaayakada Mukta naathayya 11	1649.	--
60	Elegara Kaamanna 1	--	--
61	Enkanta Ramitande 7	--	--
62	Ketayya 74	1678.	--
63	Okkaliga Muddanna 12	1744.	1744.
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 7 SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 2			
64	Kambada Maritande 11	--	--
65	Ammidevayya 10	13.	--
66	Kannada Maritande 4	--	--
67	Karula Ketayya 8	--	--
68	Kalaketayya 11	--	--
69	Kaamaatada Bheemanna 4	--	--
70	Kinnari Brahmmayya 18	59.	--
71	Keelarada Bhiimanna 10	--	--
72	Koogina Maarayya 11	79, 81, 82.	--
73	Kotaarada Somanna 1	--	--
74	Kola Shantayya 103	116?, 118, 126, 140?	--
75	Gajesha Masanayya 70	249.	--
76	Gaanada Kannappa 10	--	--
77	Gaavudi Maachayya 11	--	--
78	Gupta Manchanna 100	295, 246, 354.	--
79	Gurapurada Mallayyaa 4	--	--
80	Guru basaveshwara 3	--	--
81	Guru bhaktayya 1	--	--

82	Goraksha 11	--	--
83	Ghattivaalayya 147	426, 461, 530.	--
84	Chandimarasa 157	628, 653, 674, 691, 699?	585, 653, 674, 691.
85	Jagalaganta Kaamanna 4	--	--
86	Jedara Daasimayya 176	721, 762, 774, 778, 779, 780, 804, 833, 853, 856, 867, 885.	--
87	Jodara Maayanna 5	--	--
88	Dakkeya Bommanna 90	891, 903, 933.	--
89	Dohara Kakkayya 6	983, 984, 986.	--
90	Talavaara Kaamidevayya 10	--	--
91	Turugaahi Raamanna 46	1042.	--
92	Telugesha Masanayya 7	--	--
93	Dashagana Singidevayya 4	--	--
94	Dasarayya 10	--	--
95	Daasohada Sanganna 101	--	--
96	Nageya Maaritande 99	1192, 1198, 1206, 1207, 1235?, 1256.	1198.
97	Nijaguna Shivayogi 16	--	--
98	Nivrutti Sangayya 3	1281.	1281.
99	Nuliya Chandayya 48	1329.	--
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 8 SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 3			
100	Panditaraadhya 1	--	--
101	Purada Naaganna 10	--	--
102	Prasaadi Bhoganna 103	13, 45?, 48, 80, 97, 99, 105, 107.	107.
103	Prasaadi Lenkabankanna 11	--	--

104	Bahurupi Chaudayya 66	148, 157.	--
105	Ballesha Mallayya 9	--	--
106	Baachi kaayakada Basa-vanna 30	210, 213?	--
107	Balabommanna 11	--	--
108	Baala sanganna 8	242.	--
109	Baahoora Bommanna 41	255, 275?	--
110	Bibbi Baachayya 102	--	--
111	Bokkasada Chikkanna 10	--	--
112	Bharitaarpanada Chenna basavanna 11	--	403.
113	Bhikaari Bheemayyaa 2	--	--
114	Bhoganna 22	426, 430.	--
115	Madivaala Maachi deva 346	451, 460, 466, 493, 517, 523, 557, 563, 568, 571, 573, 580?, 589, 596, 599, 605, 607, 616, 625, 630, 648, 660, 690, 691, 732, 748, 754?, 766, 776, 780.	475, 484, 523, 631, 663, 694, 731, 733, 742, 771.
116	Madivaala Maachi devara Samayaachaarada Mallikarjuna 5	--	--
117	Madhuvayya 102	809, 834, 835, 838, 888.	808, 878.
118	Manasanda Maaritande 101	912?, 974.	--
119	Manumuni Gummata-deva 99	1007, 1034, 1036?	--
120	Marula shankara deva 36	--	--
121	Marula siddheshwara 1	--	--
122	Malahara kaayakada Chikkadevayya 10	1127, 1130?	--
123	Mallikaarjuna Pandita araadhya 13	--	--

124	Mahaa deveerayya 1	1153.	--
125	Mulu baaviya Somanna 1	--	--
126	Maadaara Chennayya 10	1156?, 1157, 1158, 1161, 1162, 1164.	--
127	Maadaara Dhoolayya 106	1174, 1195, 1202?, 1216, 1219, 1262, 1268.	--
128	Maarudigeya Naachayya 1	--	--
129	Maareshwa rodeyaru 13	--	--
130	Mere mindayya 110	--	--
131	Medara Ketayya 14	--	--
132	Maiduna Raamayya 6	--	--
133	Molige Maarayya 820	1485, 1505, 1517, 1613, 1685, 1873, 1908, 1940, 2068, 2098, 2101, 2135, 2166?, 2237.	1694.
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 9, SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 4			
134	Rakkasa bommi tande 8	--	--
135	Raayasada Manchanna 10	--	--
136	Rechada Bankanna 1	--	--
137	Laddeya Somayya 1	--	--
138	Vachana Bhandari Shaantarasa 64	30.	30.
139	Varada Sankanna 1	--	--
140	Veera gollaala 10	90, 91, 93.	--
141	Veera shankara daasayya 1	96.	96.
142	Veda moorthi Sanganna 10		100, 103.
143	Vaidya sanganna 21	109.	--
144	Shankara dasimayya 5	--	--
145	Shiva nagamayya 3	--	--

146	Shivalenka Manchanna 132	180, 246.	--
147	Sangameshwarada Appanna 102	272, 286, 296, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 307, 309, 347, 361.	273, 281, 314, 324, 325, 326, 331, 343, 346, 351?, 356, 361.
148	Sakalesha Maadarasa 133	373, 478.	412, 488.
149	Sagarada Bommanna 91	--	--
150	Sattige Kaayakada Maarayya 10	--	--
151	Siddhaanti Veera sangayya 5	--	--
152	Sunkada Bankanna 108	625, 640, 673.	--
153	Sooji kaayakada Raami tande 10	--	--
154	Soddala Baacharasa 104	727, 776, 802, 809, 812, 816, 820.	778, 794, 812.
155	Hadapada Appanna 246	908, 1000, 1034, 1055, 1056, 1066, 1080.	--
156	Hadapa Rechanna 9	--	--
157	Haavinahaala Kallayya 102	1097, 1121, 1130, 1135, 1143, 1162, 1179, 1180, 1181.	1097, 1131, 1135, 1143, 1162, 1181, 1189.
158	Hunjina Kaalagada Daasayya 1	--	--
159	Hendada Maarayya 12	--	--
160	Hodehulla Bankanna 10	--	--
161	Akhanda Mandaleshwara[6] 1	--	--
162	Anugaleshwara 1	--	--
163	Apramaana Guheshwara 1	--	--
164	Ashwatharaama 1	--	--
165	Aananda Siddheshwara 2	--	--
166	Eeshwariya Varada Chennaraama 1	--	--

[6] The rest of the vachanas from serial number #161 to #214 are by unknown vachanakaras. They are recognised by the *ankita-nama*s at the end of a vachana.

167	Enkaantaveera Soddala 2	--	--
168	Ekoraameshwara linga 1	--	--
169	Kallayya devaru 1	--	--
170	Kurunga linga 2	--	--
171	Gargeshwara linga 1	--	1228.
172	Guruvarada Viroopaak-sha 1	--	--
173	Guru vishweshwaraa 1	--	--
174	Goheshwara lingadalli Prabuve Saakshiyaagi Basavapriya Koodala sangama deva 6	--	--
175	Chenna raameshwara linga 1	--	--
176	Jangama linga prabhuve 17	--	--
177	Jyoti siddheshwara 1	--	--
178	Tumbe yaachaleya Manahpriya Chennam-bakeshwara 1	--	--
179	Trailochana Manohara Maanikeshwara linga 7	--	--
180	Trilochana Shankara 1	--	--
181	Devadhwaja Mrutun-jayana Bhaavadollabha Muddanooresha 4	1266, 1267, 1268.	1266, 1268.
182	Nanjunda Shiva 24	--	1292.
183	Naacheshwara 1	--	--
184	Nihkalanka Chennamal-likarjuna Prabhuve 1	--	--
185	Nihkalanka Chenna-someshwara 1	--	--
186	Nijaguru Niraalambha Prabhuve 41	1313, 1317, 1319, 1322, 1326, 1328, 1334.	--
187	Nijaguru Shanta mal-likaarjuna 3	--	1337.
188	Nijamukti Raameshwara 1	--	--
189	Nirdhanapriya Raamesh-wara 1	--	--

190	Niraalaya Nijaguru shaanteshwara 1	--	--
191	Niraala priya Soddalayya 1	--	--
192	Basavannapriya Dhar-meshwara 1	--	--
193	Bheema bankeshwara 1	1345.	--
194	Markateshwara 1	--	--
195	Mahaaghana Prasiddha Prasanna Sangameshwara linga 1	--	--
196	Mahaalinga Veera-raameshwara 1	--	--
197	Mahaalinga Shashi mauli Sadaashiva 9	1351.	--
198	Varada Somanatha 1	--	--
199	Vishwapathi Vish-wanaatha 1	--	--
200	Vainipurada San-gameshwara 1	--	--
201	Vaidya naatheshwara 1	--	--
202	Shambu maareshwara 1	--	--
203	Shaanta veereshwara 93	1369, 1381, 1450.	1365?, 1381, 1389, 1390, 1395.
204	Shri guru Prabhun mun-ishwara 2	--	--
205	Shri basavalinga 2	--	--
206	Shri mukti raameshwara 1	--	--
207	Satya Karanda murthi Sadashiva linga 1	--	--
208	Sadguru Chenna mal-likarjuna 2	--	--
209	Sadguru Sambhu Someshwara 1	--	--
210	Sadguru priya Shiva siddha rameshwara 1	--	--
211	Sarveshwara linga 1	--	--
212	Siddha linga priya Baava prabhuve 1	--	--
213	Somabheemeshwara linga 1	--	--

214	Haatakeshwara linga 1	--	--
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 10, SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 5			
215	Kara sthalada Mallikaar-juna 4	--	
216	Kaada siddheshwara 500	23, 25, 28, 30, 33, 34, 45, 48, 50, 51, 86, 97, 98, 111, 113, 116, 119, 133, 140, 145, 146, 148, 157, 158, 159, 167, 168, 191, 193, 194, 195, 197, 202, 212, 253, 254, 263, 268, 270, 276, 279, 304, 311, 318, 319, 343, 375, 440, 453, 498, 499, 504.	65, 140, 146, 150, 254, 263?, 335.
217	Kushtagi Kari basaveshwara 99	505, 510, 511, 522, 523, 525, 527, 542, 557, 565, 569, 571, 572, 573, 374, 575, 576, 581, 583, 584.	--
218	Koodala sangameshwara 19	604, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 613, 614, 615, 617, 618, 619, 620.	605, 606, 613, 618.
219	Ganadaasi Veeranna 40	650, 651, 654.	625.
220	Guru siddha deva 101	700, 703, 706, 723, 725.	--
221	Guheshwarayya 43	780, 781, 787, 798.	773
222	Goni maarayya 9	812.	--
223	Ghana lingadayya 1	--	--
224	Chennayya 42	848.	--
225	Jakkanayya 778	866, 1214, 1274, 1336, 1377, 1382, 1383, 1385, 1480, 1517, 1605.	1416?
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 11, SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 6			
226	Tontada Siddhalinga Shiva yogi 701	22, 55, 156?, 157, 227, 231, 232, 255?, 454, 510, 515.	218?, 233.
227	Ghana lingi deva 66	731.	--
228	Gummalaapurada Siddha linga deva 18	--	--
229	Swatantra Siddha lingeshwara 435	791, 793, 834, 895, 957, 965, 985?, 1083, 1098, 1122.	873.
230	Immadi Gurusiddha swami 209	1420, 1421.	1349?, 1420, 1421.
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 12, SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 7			

231	Deshikendra Sanghana basavaiah 1242	196, 213, 214, 225, 282, 294, 297, 331, 344, 401, 446, 474,[7] 635, 662, 690, 705, 723, 724, 742, 779, 827, 929, 955, 1019, 1096, 1110, 1117, 1128, 1132, 1149.	443, 474, 635, 753, 809, 909, 1008.
232	Niraalambha Prabhudeva 14	1243, 1247, 1251, 1253, 1255.	1255.
233	Paran jyotiyaru 13	--	--
234	Basavalinga deva 36	1278, 1279, 1281, 1282, 1285?, 1293, 1296, 1298, 1301.	1293.
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 13, SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 8			
235	Baala sangayya 920	362, 668, 770, 834.	71, 334, 703, 709, 812.
236	Bomma gondeshwara 1	--	--
237	Bhikshada Sangayya 1	--	--
238	Madivaalappa 78	936.	--
239	Madveera swami 1	--	--
240	Mummudi Kaaryendra 125	1026, 1040, 1063, 1071, 1104, 1112.	1026, 1063, 1071, 1104, 1112.
SAMAGRA VACHANA SAHITYA VOL. 14, SANKIRNA VACHANA SAMPUTA 9			
241	Moorusaavira muktimuni 101	38, 46, 48, 52, 53, 54?	--
242	Madleri Shivalinga 23	110?, 112, 118.	--
243	Veeranna devaru (Karast-halada veerannodeya) 7	--	--
244	Veera sangayya 112	144, 164, 194, 204, 208, 217, 221, 232, 234?, 235, 236, 238, 240, 241.	240.
245	Shanmukha Swami 717	262?, 281, 301, 302, 323, 333, 335, 343, 352, 353, 399, 423, 466, 495, 483, 491, 492, 493, 513, 519, 532, 534, 537, 538, 540, 626, 795, 798, 853, 861, 865.	300, 323, 335, 355, 356, 358, 425, 516, 519.
246	Sangana basaveshwara deavaru 1	961.	961.
247	Sidda mallappa 9	962, 966, 969?, 970.	--

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[7] This vachana uses a phrase 'mitteya bhanda', which means a bonehead of the *mitte*. Mitte is the beads that the Brahmans wear. Therefore, the bonehead here *might* refer to the Brahmans.

248	Siddaveera deshikendra 1	--	--
249	Hemagalla Hampa 302	1035, 1047, 1064, 1065, 1067, 1068, 1185, 1193, 1204, 1205, 1216, 1229, 1238, 1243?	1065, 1188, 1204, 1228, 1234.

b. Reasons

	Basavanna's reasons for criticising Brahmans	Vachana #
1.	Belief in Brahmans ruined some people, or that they were deceived by Brahmans. (This statement is made not in general but about some specific mythical/historical characters like Goutama, Karna, Bali and a few others)	570, 622
2.	Brahman is not a true or good enough guru	600
3.	Brahmans are not bhaktas of god/linga	583
4.	Brahmans do not understand/believe in/remember Kudalasangama	585, 587, 598
5.	They do not know how to worship, they engage in some material rituals ("mugu hididu dhyanava madidaru"/"they meditate by holding [closing] their nose"	578, 588
6.	Their bhakti is not fruitful	592
7.	They are not (true/good) bhaktas	595
8.	Whatever they have read/learned is waste	582, 578, 587, 588, 592, 1130

c. Basava's Vachanas on Brahmans

I have selected Basava's vachanas because he is the most well-known vachana composer. These readings are all what is available to my understanding. Someone with a better hold on Kannada may improve on the table.

	What Vachanas say about Brahmans	Vachana #
1	Brahmans do not show respect to something (not clear what), so they are being criticised.	91
2	Brahmans do not follow what they preach, (the #585 seems to say the same with an example).	575, 585
3	Brahmans are low in status (reasons is not clear).	582
4	They read a Veda but do not help anybody, so they perish in the dark.	586
5	They do not have genuine bhakti.	592
7	It seems, the service of Brahmans is being criticised (reason is not clear).	593

8	Brahman's words are like 'the fox which said the world is turning, after eating *itti* (an intoxicating fruit).	577
9	Brahman is not a guru for the varnas; Kudalasanga (Lord Shiva) is guru.	600
10	A Brahman goes to kill another Brahman; he takes responsibility for a sin he has not committed. (?)	583
11	People who trusted Brahmans and gave away their possessions and life were 'ruined'. (This statement is made not in general but about some specific mythical/historical characters like Goutama, Karna, Bali and a few others. Furthermore, the last line of #570, and the penultimate line of #622 say that such charities are good, because those who give will be at profit both in their world life and in the life after that.	570, 622
12	If you see Brahmans, greet them.	103
13	I am not a brahman who does bad things, Kudalasangama helped me to shed my Brahman-karma and I am now clean.	716
14	One becomes a Brahman by reading the Vedas.	590, 613
15	A good bhakta is better than one crore Brahmans; the #596 seems to say the same in different words, that a Holeya or Madiga who becomes a bhakta is better than a Brahman; bhakta are all 'equal', whether s/he is a brahman or a Holeya; even if one reads four Vedas, and not do pooja to linga is not a Brahman, but a Holeya.	587, 595, 596, 598, 606, 627, 711
16	If a sharana becomes bhavi again, it is more heinous a crime than killing a Brahman.	671
17	Those people (even a brahman) who do not greet an ajāta is a holeya.	605
18	Incorrigible Incomprehensible vachanas	602, 624, 1130
Total vachanas		**28**

d. Contexts of Caste Related Words

Here is a sample of different contexts in which words related to caste appear in the vachanas of four important vachana composers. The table is not exhaustive. I have ignored minor and indiscernible contexts.

Context	Basavanna	Akkama-hadevi	Deshikendra Sanghana basavaiah	Jedara Dasi-maiah
There is no kula among shara-nas/jangamas, or the one who does not believe kula is a Sharana	770	176, 314	196, 662, 724, 779, 1019	778, 786
There is no kula among Shiva's bhaktas, or where there is linga	453, 568, 589, 732, 770		214	
There is no kula, jati, pollution	418			
Those who believe in linga/Sharana are kulaja or should be treated like kulajas, which by definition includes sharanas	286, 590, 591, 595, 657, 715, 718, 719, 720, 1215.			

A bad person is a Holeya/Madiga. Holeya and such other words used to indicate lower status, usually to criticise an action or others. Or criticising holeyas as holeyas.	582, 591	215,	213, 225, 344, 401, 635, 955, 1117,	763, 770, 781, 787, 861, 864, 875, 893
Even a person not believing in linga/Sharana is also counted to be a Holeya/Shudra	142, 582, 596, 605, 1335			787
Arivu [knowledge] removes kula-mada			297	
One who mingles with a Holeya is a bad person			331	
One who has belief in anya-daiva (other gods) is a bad person				744

III. Legal Cases and Government/State Resolutions

Here is a collection of references to and information about different legal cases and legislations passed by the state government bodies in relation to the Lingayats and their institutions, until the early decades of the 20th century.

1. "Majority of the legal cases fought in the courts of law belong to the people of our caste [the Lingayats]. If we look at the cases fought in all the *divani* and *faujdaari* courts of Southern Maharashtra, around 75 out of every 100 cases belong to the Lingayats. Out of jealousy and wrath, they wage legal fights and spend lakhs of rupees every year. They sell their lands and houses to meet the court and lawyer fees and awards [*inamu*] and become poor. This is such a pitiable situation! … If people learn [from their past mistakes] and solve their conflicts through *pancha*s they can avoid loss of money and reputation" (*1ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe* 1904: 11).

2. The 4th *Virashaiva Mahasabhe* took the following resolution on 29 December 1908: The government of Mysore has banned Shri Murugarajendra Mahaswami of Chitradurga from using *Addapallakki* and *Panchakalsa* honours and festival, through the legislations passed in May 1907 and May 1908. The Lingayat community should strive to regain these rites (*4ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe* 1910: 21).

3. On 13 January 1816, Krishna Raja Wodeyar III sent out a strict circular to all the concerned officers in the state, with the instructions that "all the titles and honours available to the Shringeri matha should also be available to the Murugha matha of Chitradurga." And following the circular, ameel-killedars of every taluk strictly instructed every villages and towns under their jurisdiction that *jagadguru* Murigarajendra mahaswami should be allowed to use "addapallakki, makara-torana, vyasana-tolu in nandi dhwaja, pancha-deevatige … and such other honours and titles" (*4ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe* 1910: 21-22).

4. In 1863, the deputy Superintendent Captain Cole ruled that until the Chitradurga swamiji takes permission from the court he could not use the titles and honours such as addapallakki. In 1867, the matha people appealed to Lewin Bentham Bowring, the then Chief Commissioner of Mysore, against Cole's decision. In 1869, Bowring ordained that the Chitradurga matha be entitled to make use of these honours and titles. "Prior to the British rule of India they were enjoying these honours and now during the British rule there should not be any obstructions" (*4ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe* 1910: 22).

5. After Lewin Bentham Bowring's decision in 1869, the Lingayat community seems to have had no problem until 1902. In 1902, Swami-ji (probably the swami of Chitradurgha matha) celebrated a festival in Davangere, in the usual fashion with all the titles and the honours. After the celebrations of 1902, the

Brahmans appealed to the government citing the decision taken by Captain Cole against such celebrations. The Mysore government ruled in favour of the Brahmans and stopped all the grants to the matha. Jayadeva jagadguru Swami appealed to the government against this decision in 1905. The Mysore government asked for all the old records of the matha in support of the Lingayat matha's claim that it has a long tradition of using these titles and honours. Meanwhile in 1904, followers of the Kudli matha also appealed to the government that they too have a long tradition of using similar titles and honours. Hence, they should also be allowed to use them now. On 24 May 1907, the Mysore government passed granted the permission only to the Shringeri matha (which is a Brahman matha) to use the *addapallakki* honour. The Kudli and Murugha matha were allowed to use other minor titles except the *addapallakki* title. The Lingayat community was not happy with this decision of the state (*4ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe* 1910: 23).

6. The collector of Dharwad, Malcolm Couper Gibb, ruled on 21 March 1905 that Lingayat gurus could use the *adapallakki* title. (Probably, this rule was restricted to the areas under Gibb's jurisdiction.) (*4ne Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe* 1910: 23).

7. "We have long been victims of privilege and prejudice. The priestly class have always professed to rule us and to have a monopoly of learning in its higher and sacred branches. Even to-day in some of the native states and particularly in Mysore they have not the sense of shame to pretend to these things when they are no longer believed to have a divine origin much less to have a monopoly of learning sacred or otherwise. Happily for us, we have in India the British Government which rightly feels that the other classes the non-priestly classes have been very much wronged by the arrogance and selfishness of the priestly class, and which is too civilized and enlightened to countenance any of the pretences and which is pledged as a sacred duty to raise other communities hitherto condemned to ignorance and slavery to the same level and standing as the priestly class" (Artal 1912: 4-5).

8. Below is an extract from Gurappa Saatappa Angadi's "Introduction" to (Revayya Virupaakashayya 1912: 1-2, 3):

"Our Virasaiva faith [*mata*] is an independent religion and it is evident from the ancient inscriptions and holy books [*sadgrantha*] that it is an ancient religion. It is an indisputable fact that other religious people have no control over the followers of this religion. However, at several place the obstructive [*kantaka*] *joyisas* [Brahmans/Brahman priests] have been bothering our people and cheating the innocent religious-heads of our mathas off their rights and endowments. Increasingly, nowadays, the reformed people and heads of the matha have decided to resolve this dismal situation. And they have been successful in taking these issues to the higher legal authorities (high courts) and teach a lesson to the *joiysa*s."

"Here [as against Marathi speaking places of the north] in Kamatagi, Kalaadagi, Haveri, Shimoga, Mysore etc., there have been conflicts between *bhatta*s [Brahmins/Brahmin priests] and our matha-heads for rights and endowments.

They have been taken to the higher courts of law and the courts have decided them in favour of our community."

9. Gurappa Saatappa Angadi's "Introduction" to Revayya Virupaakashayya's work (1912: 4) also gives an excerpt from a Kannada version of the Marathi original document, which talks about two significant legal victories of the Lingayat community. These decisions in favour of the Lingayat community were issued by "the court of Shrimaan Chatrapathi Maharaja samsthaana Karaveera", with the consent of the "governor Aaleshaan *saheb bahaddoor*". The legal cases mentioned here were with regard to the payment of some kind of money to the Brahmans when a family celebrates certain function like marriages.

10. The Mysore government had a practice of asking the convicted criminals to remove their religious symbols while serving a sentence in the prison. The Veerashaiva Mahasabhe appealed to the government to grant a special permission to the Lingayat convicts to wear a linga while serving the sentence in a prison. The government accepted the plea and granted the permission (*6th Akhila Bharata Virashaiva Mahasabhe* 1912: 70).

11. Chaudadanapura's Depury Collector S.K. Wodeyar visited the temple of Madhukeshwara in Banavasi and entered the temple. Brahman priests objected to this. The argued that the Virasaivas and Shudras are not allowed into the temple. They demanded a fine of Rs. 350 to undertake the cleansing of the temple. In the subsequent debate on this issue, P.G. Halakatti, who was a lawyer by training, argued in favour of S.K. Wodeyar. During the debate, the Brahmans also objected to the practice of pouring the *padodaka* of the Jangamas on linga (Chidananda Murthy 2004a: 464).

12. The excerpts cited so far shows a relatively friendly attitude of the British government towards the Lingayat community. In contrast, the Lingayat relations with the Mysore government, as evident in the above excerpts, were noticeably hostile. Let us see now how the British government treated other communities in similar matters, such as disputes involving honours and titles.

The "British turned out to be very reluctant to intervene in disputes involving honours". This was "typical of the British attitude towards caste disputes in the eighteenth century" (Brimnes 1999: 25).

"[I]n October 1716 dispute erupted again. This time the Beri Chettis, the merchant leaders of the left hand division, accused their commercial rivals from the right hand division, the Komatis, of performing the *naggarum* ceremony in front of the Chindadri Pillaiyar temple, although they had no right to do so. … The government insited that the disputes should be solved by the Indians themselves and ordered them to settle the matter by choosing a number of neutral persons as arbitrators. But, as the Komatis insisted on including persons from the right hand division, nothing happened. … In the meantime the government could do nothing but watch, as disturbances among the indigenous inhabitants increased. … The situation worsened on 10 December when the Chettis 'shut up all their shops, and call[e]d all the coolies from their work'. Then, at last, the government decided to intervene." It conducted a three-hour investigation in fu-

tile as nobody came forward to affirm under oath that Komatis have the right to carry on performing *naggarum* (Brimnes 1999: 62).

A dispute emerged in May 1809 between Paraiyans and Pallans (referred to in the records as 'Pullis' or 'Pullers'), when "a group of Pallans serving as Company *sepoys* used *panchacalasam* – five brass cups – on top of a funeral bier. The Paraiyans regarded this as their exclusive privilege and violent rioting followed. … [T]he government established a committee of inquiry". "Under the impression of renewed disputes, the committee on 5 July recommended that the left hand division in general be restricted to the use of an unornamental bier and explicitly forbidden to assume 'any marks of distinction whatever in their funeral Ceremonies'. For the first time the British administration clearly and unequivocally declared one of the parties as the offender in a ceremonial dispute between castes of the right and left hand divisions" (Brimnes 1999: 139, 140).

For similar cases and similar treatment of the problem by the British courts, see (The Lawyer's Companion Office 1915: 303, 576-579, 601).

IV. A Brief Appraisal of two Recent Controversies

The 19th century history of the Lingayat community, as we saw, was fraught with many activities, all intended to push the community onto the track of progress. They wrote histories of their community and hoped that this would help the community to regroup and to think about their collective progress. In contrast, in the 20th century, the community produced no new kavya, purana, or 'saints' and vachanas (considered) worthy of being part of the major vachana anthologies of the century.[8] Besides, noticeably a series of controversies plagued the community since the beginning of the 20th century. Such controversies, as many scholars have pointed out, are a modern development; a phenomenon belonging to the late-colonial period, which has become part and parcel of the very nature of modern life.[9] As we saw, history writing seems to have played an impor-

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[8] Kurtakoti points out that the production of all kinds of folk literature ended sometime around the 1850s. It is strange that the 'First War of Independence' (1857), the persona of Mahatma Gandhi, or even the Independence of India (1947) did not become material for our folk literature (Kurtakoti 1986: 70-71). It is not a surprise that the whole tradition of 'mystical' writings (anubhāva sāhitya), such as the Sufi writings and the vachanas, more or less came to an end sometime during the same time, at least in Kannada. It is highly suggestive that Shishunala Sharifa (1819-1889), a Sufi saint who wrote both in Kannada and Dakhani, and who was a Kannada teacher in the schools established by the colonial government, stands as the last person in this long indigenous tradition. As Eaton suggests, following Zinat Sajida, "until the twentieth century, when radio and cinema took its place, folk poetry of Sufi origin had occupied a dominant position in the folk culture of Deccan villages" (Eaton 1974: 119, and fn. 5).

[9] As a historical fact in support of this claim consider the issue discussed in chapter 2 and in the last section of chapter 3. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the British had a very benign view of the Lingayat community. However, their views of Lingayat kavyas and puranas were highly condescending, to say the least. It seems the natives not only provided information for these kinds of writings, but evidently they even accepted and promoted them instead of questioning them. But, as we noted and continue to note in this chapter, in a matter of decades something happened and this community raised objections even to the historical findings about its past. By the 20th century, new findings about Basava became matters of rabid controversy.

Here are some examples of European negative views of the Lingayat tradition and the past. King Bijala had ordered to punish a *sharana* named Madivala Machayya for killing a child. But, Basava, his minister, not only "declined undertaking the duty as it would be unavailing to offer any harm to the worshippers of Siva", but forced the king to humble "himself before the offended" Machayya (Wilson 1861: 227). The king "gave himself up to the charms of his beautiful bride and left all power in the hands of Basava, who employed the opportunity thus afforded him to strengthen his own influence, displacing all the old officers of state and putting in adherents of his own, whilst at the same time he sedulously cultivated the favour of the prince." He even goes on to describe how Basava dethroned the king and established himself and even got the king killed (Elliot 1837: 21, 22). Talking about a work called Mari Basava Puranam, Taylor says, "Chenna Basava was nephew to the elder Basava whose sister Nagamma having a son, without being married, the parentage of the latter was given by some to the elder Basava, by his own sister. In this case Chenna Basava would be both son and nephew" (Taylor 1860: 891). J.F. Fleet who argued that there is epigraphical evidence to show that Ekantada Ramayya was the true founder of Virasaivism (in his "Inscriptions at Ablur", 1998-99), dismisses Basava as "little better than a legend" (cited in Michael 1983: 313).

See also a concern expressed in some All-India Lingayat Conferences of the first decade of the 20th century: "Some ten years ago the All-India Lingayat Conference met for the first time to discuss problems, both religious and secular, which affect the life and standing of the sect. In 1905 the Conference

tant role in these two developments. We will focus here on the modern Lingayat controversies vis-à-vis history writing. The Lingayat community in the 20th century seemed uncomfortable talking about its past heroes, perplexed about who should and should not belong to its past, apprehensive about how it should represent itself, by turns overbearing and confused about how outsiders should see it. More specifically, these are some of the issues about which the community seems worried: whether Basava's real father was called Mādarasa or not; what is Basava's caste; whether Akka Mahadevi roamed the streets naked or not; whether meat eaters should be allowed into the Lingayat caste or not; whether Basava's name should be printed on *beedi* packets or not; whether a new religion called Basava Dharma should be founded; whether eggs should be served to Lingayat students in schools or not; which of the two words best described the community, Lingayat or Virasaiva; whether an award constituted in the name of Basava should be given to a Naxalite poet or not and so on.[10] In a general way, most (if not all) of these controversies appear to be confrontations between contradictory understandings of some or other aspect of the Lingayat tradition.

Not enough attention has been paid to what underlies these controversies. Generally, the 'modern' tendency towards 'moral-policing', human meanness, political interest and such like are held responsible for these problems.[11] The bare facts of the controversy, however, often point to a different tale about the underlying anxieties and perplexities. Noticeably, in these controversies it becomes everybody's duty to remind each other and oneself that one has to remember the past/tradition 'correctly'. This invariably leads to a debate about who is more correct in their knowledge of tradition. Although disputes about a tradition can be seen as disputes about the suitability and un-

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met at Bangalore, and the organization of the Mysore Education Fund was one of the results of the gathering. The Conference of 1913 met at Belgaum. There have been divisions of opinion on various questions, especially religious questions; and, in consequence the Conference has resolved to restrict itself to educational, economic and other secular problems; and all religious subjects are to be dealt with by the Sivayog-mandir, which is clearly under the control of the Jangamas" (Farquhar 1915: 302).

[10] Each of these issues has created huge controversies in the 20th century. For a brief discussion of such controversies, see (Tippashetti 1996).

[11] There are some conspiracy theorists who see a political motive and benefit behind what they call, these 'cooked up controversies.' The evidence they gave (in my personal conversations with them) looks convincing enough not to be neglected. However, even if they are right, it is difficult to see why cultural issues have become an easy prey to the political motivated. It is unlikely that political benefit will be drawn by all those who take part in a public agitation. What then motivates them, that too in the name of *a tradition*? It is some of these questions that such conspiracy theories will find difficult to answer satisfactorily. For an interesting view on the 'conspiracy theory of ignorance' (i.e., "the erroneous view that whenever something evil happens it must be due to the evil will of an evil power") see, (Popper 1962: 10).

suitability of the teachings of a tradition to a particular age,[12] one has to explain why a tradition like the Lingayat tradition that has been around for over a millennium should face endless disputes at the present time. I want to take up two recent Lingayat controversies for detailed examination in this section. The purpose is to understand what creates the controversies and the reasons for the enormous anxieties and perplexities that they create.

(i) Mahachaitra

H.S. Shivaprakash's[13] *Mahachaitra* attained pride of place in the history of modern Kannada literature soon after its publication in 1986, both for its literary qualities and for its dramatisation of the "revolutionary movement of artisans and socially marginalized people against Brahmanical supremacy that perpetuates the degrading caste system. Based on the 12th century movement in Karnataka that shook the foundations of a social order controlled by the privileged upper crust of the ruling class" (Bajeli 2007). The play opens[14] with the news of Basava's self-exile from Kalyana, deposed from the post of finance minister (or literally, treasury minister). Brahmans protest against the marriage of a Brahman girl to the son of a low caste artisan, which has taken place under the instigation of Basava. The marriage is forbidden, because it will bring disaster to society. The followers of the saint-poet celebrate the occasion as the harbinger of a new social order. The caste-class confrontation takes the form of a bloody civil war. The whole of society is at war against itself. Charges were levelled against *Mahachaitra* on account of the following three statements made by some characters in Scene 3: (i) Adinatheiah, the leading merchant, makes an angry remark about Basava's sister: "His characterless sister"; (ii) Adinatheiah's remark about Basava, "so a case of doubtful birth, do you say?"; (iii) the description of Akka Mahadevi as "a naked woman who stalked the streets of the city of Kalyana, shouting 'Shiva is my husband.

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[12] Most of the early Lingayat scholars found the old way of understanding the Lingayat tradition unsuitable to the modern age. Here is a random example: S.C. Nandimath writes in his 1921 article that he is happy about the current effort being made by scholars towards the investigation of the culture of their (Lingayat) ancestors and the introduction of a new culture which is more suitable to the present time (Nandimath 2007: 473). For an elaboration of such arguments see my chapter 1.

[13] He is a popular Kannada playwright and poet.

[14] There are two introductory sections, before the beginning of these actions in the play. The story as such begins in the third section. In the stage productions of this play, usually directors begin with the third section.

Shiva is my husband'". These statements were taken as disparaging remarks that dishonour Lingayat saints (Kumar 1997: 395-396). But, surprisingly these statements did not evoke controversy until a decade after their publication, when the play was prescribed as a textbook.[15] Given the fact that the controversy erupted not immediately after the publication of the book but almost a decade later and created heated debate among intellectuals and in the media, one is interested in knowing why these three issues suddenly flared up into a controversy.

From the late eruption of the controversy, scholars have inferred that the issue that triggered this controversy was not its characterisation of Lingayat saints but something else. Articulating this opinion, Kumar writes, "[t]he yardstick applied for the denouncement had nothing to do with its literary qualities, but because it allegedly hurt religious sensibilities" (Kumar 1997: 396). K.V. Subbanna, a reputed Kannada scholar, makes similar observations. He argues that the controversy was about the suitability of the play as a textbook. Another reason offered was that Basava's character, as it was portrayed in the play and in modern and traditional Kannada literature was weak.

The issue with the portrayal of the persona of Basava is not unique to this play. Let us take a very brief digression from our discussion of *Mahachaitra* to get a sense of the way this issue has been discussed Kannada. In her report on the proceedings of a workshop, Deepa Ganesh (2006) writes that the play *Taledanda* was a major subject of discussion among some of the doyens in the Kannada literary field. Special attention was paid to the question of whether Basava's character seemed weak despite the best intentions of its author Girish Karnad. Giraddi Govindaraj, an established literary critic, asserted that good historical people do not make for good literary characters: "Even in Harishchandra Kavya, Harishchandra comes across as a tame dullard. But look at the evil, villainous characters like Shakuni, Keechaka ... they make for such vibrant literary works!"

In response to Govindaraju's assertion that Kannada literary scholars have not done justice to Basava's character, K. Marulasiddappa added,

> Basavanna comes across as a satvika, a mild-mannered man, even in P. Lankesh's *Sankranti* and H.S. Shivaprakash's play *Mahachaitra*. With the non-availability of sufficient historical evidences, what we learn

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[15] It "was prescribed as a textbook for undergraduate studies of four universities in Karnataka at one or other time: Gulbarga, Kuvempu, Bangalore and Mysore Universities. It continued to be prescribed at Gulbarga and Kuvempu universities as late as March 1995. There was not a wisp of controversy about the play for the first nine years of its existence. It came under vicious attack only by September 1994, not [so much] as a play but [as] the textbook for undergraduates" (Kumar 1997: 396).

from the Veershaiva Purana is that he was a man of righteous anger. In fact, there are suggestions that he could have played a role in Bijjala's killing. It shocks us, because we have now constructed Basavanna as Gandhiji of the 12th century.

Marulasiddappa's contention is that Basava has been portrayed as a mild personality in the popular image of Gandhi, rather than as a militant revolutionary. However, he also rightly points out that the traditional kavyas on Basava and other Lingayat stalwarts do not portray them as flawless.[16] Here the situation gets a little complicated. Modern literature that portrays Basava (or the Lingayat tradition) as flawless seems paradoxically to have created controversies for allegedly disparaging his character!

The suggestions that the play *Mahachaitra* evoked controversy "in the State for its bold treatment of the caste system, which has been robbing a large number of people of their dignity and human rights in India over the centuries" (Bajeli 2007), makes a similar mistake. Evidently, the majority of the people, if not all, involved in creating the controversy were Lingayats, including well-known leaders like Maate Mahadevi.[17] The problem with such interpretings is that, if they are right, the Lingayat community seems inexplicably to attack those who portray them as a progressive and an anti-casteist community.

Early in the 20th century when the Lingayat community insisted on portraying itself as progressive, it had a specific reason for doing so. Its community leaders and scholars thought that such a positive portrayal of their community would solve some of the problems plaguing it: social backwardness, an inferiority complex, lack of representation in and lack of motivation to join government jobs and so on. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, we can see two things if we look back: writers over the last hundred years or more have constantly tried to portray Basava and other vachana writers positively and those who spoke during the aforementioned controversies have asked them to be more positive and politically correct. It seems the ideal that these writers have fed the people has now grown into a monster demanding their blood.

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[16] I must mention here that it is not clear in Deepa Ganesh's report whether the fact that Basava has become a Gandhi in 20th century literature from his pre-colonial image of a righteously angry man is regarded as a positive development or a negative one by Marulasiddappa.
[17] Maate Mahadevi's works were themselves embroiled in controversy for affixing a new name Lingananda to Basava's vachanas. For the details of the controversy, see (Boratti 2005).

(ii) "Aanudeva Horaganvanu"

H.S. Shivaprakash's *Mahachaitra*,[18] despite strong protest by the Lingayats, was not banned. However, in a little more than the span of a decade, the Karnataka government banned three other works on Basava: P.V. Narayana's *Dharmakarana* (1995), Maate Mahadevi's *Basava Vachana Deepti* (1996)[19] and recently Banjagere Jayaprakash's *Aanudeva Horaganavanu* (2007). The confusions surrounding the controversy were far more explicit in the case of *Aanudeva* than in that of *Mahachaitra*. Once again, the Rashstriya Basava Dal headed by Maate Mahadevi was in the forefront of agitations demanding the ban of *Aanudeva*.

According to most of the newspapers, *Aanudeva* was at the centre of a raging controversy for suggesting new theories about the circumstances of Basava's birth.[20] This controversy in the case of *Aanudeva* was doused by the banning of the book.[21] Initially, the controversy seemed to be about differences regarding historical facts: What was Basava's caste? *Aanudeva* suggests that he was a 'lower-caste' Madiga and all the different groups in the debate (those who agreed with him, those who did not and those who took an intellectually or politically neutral stance) referred back to (selected) vachanas and traditional literature as proof for their arguments.[22] The five-member fact-finding committee appointed by the State found that many points made in the book were baseless and the references to Basava's lineage and family members "highly derogatory," amounting to character assassination.[23] Even the Basava Sena's leaders ini-

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[18] Kalburgi's second volume of *Marga* survived the ban despite a huge controversy. "In April 1989, Hindu militants threatened to kill M.M. Kalburgi, an Indian historian, for writing a Kannada language book they claim blasphemes a 12th century saint. Kalburgi was given 24-hour protection by police in Dharwar in the southern state of Karnataka. A group of 43 Kannada writers and academics formed a committee in support of the book." http://www.pucl.org/from-archives/Media/freedom.htm (accessed September 24, 2007).

[19] For a detailed discussion of controversies around these two works, see (Boratti 2005).

[20] The book suggests that Basava was a Madiga and not a Brahman, as textbook history and popular opinion goes. We will not go into the details of the clues that he provides to strengthen the plausibility of this argument. Let us just note that the book presents this argument as a fact derivable from research; research that this book only hints at, but does not undertake. Such debates about Basava's birth were not new to the Kannada intellectual scene. For a similar controversy instigated by the stone inscription found at Managoli village of Basavana Bagevadi see chapter 5.

[21] Following state-wide protests, and agitations spearheaded by various Vīraśaiva organisations, the Karnataka State Government ordered immediate confiscation of the book, saying that this was being done to "maintain harmony in society," as "portions of the book would disturb peace and tranquillity and create unrest in the State" (*The Hindu* July 24, 2007).

[22] See for e.g., *Kannadaprabha* April 13, 2007.

[23] See the reports in *The Hindu* July 24, 2007.

tially took the same stance.[24] It was however not clear in these arguments what portions of the book were seen as defamatory and as a threat to the peace, which is not to suggest that the book was in actual fact guilty of either.

The majority of the articles and reports that the media carried, attempted to understand and explain the controversy and its participants, that is, those who were involved in *dharna*s, processions and other such public demonstrations both in favour of and against the controversial issue. The following oft-repeated claims give us a glimpse into the way the controversy was understood.

i. Basava explicitly denied his Brahmanism, so it is meaningless to talk about his caste.[25]
ii. The caste system was so strong that only a Brahman could have read the Vedas and not a Madiga. Moreover, because Basava explains the essence and defects of the Vedas in Kannada for the benefit of the lay people, he must have been a Brahman. If so, Jayaprakash's hypothesis is wrong.[26]
iii. The presence of protestors, who are unhappy to associate Basava with a lower caste, shows the deep-rooted nature of casteism. That is to say, this controversy has emerged because people are ashamed to see Basava as a lower caste person.[27]
iv. It is good to know that Basava was a Madiga and that such a great person came from such a low caste.[28]
v. Brahmanism is responsible for this controversy.[29]

Sifting through heaps of reports, articles and "letters to the editor" one can discern two explanations for the emergence of the controversy: (a) that the book insults Basava,[30] by denying the truth maintained by the Lingayat community for centuries, hence it is unhealthy for society and (b) that the vachanas have been misinterpreted.[31] Taken seriously, these two claims fail to explain why the book was considered defamatory. The second point about the incorrect interpretation of the vachanas, which is just an extension of the first claim, argues that new interpretations of the vachanas initiate controversies because they are seen as alterations to the accepted truths of a community. In-

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[24] See reports in *Deccan Herald* April 18, 2007; *Prajavani* April 21, 2007.
[25] See reports in *Prajavani* April 23, 2007; *Kannadaprabha* May 8, 2007; *Kannadaprabha* May 9, 2007; *Vijaya Karnataka* May 25, 2007; *Kannadaprabha* May 31, 2007.
[26] See reports in *Prajavani* May 2, 2007; *Kannadaprabha* May 26, 2007.
[27] See reports in *Kannadaprabha* May 5, 2007.
[28] See reports in *Kannadaprabha* May 12, 2007.
[29] The allegation came from the *Madiga Meesalati Horata Samithi*. See the report in *Prajavani* May 31, 2007.
[30] This was the argument of the Vishwa Basava Dharma Mahasabha. An association called Basava Samithi accused the book of committing the character assassination of Basava. See, *Prajavani* June 1, 2007; *Vijaya Karnataka* May 14, 2007, *The Hindu* June 11, 2007.
[31] See reports in *Prajavani* May 2, 2007; *Prajavani* May 22, 2007.

terestingly, the demand for banning the book was made on this ground.[32] According to the dominant understanding, the Lingayat tradition came into existence precisely by questioning the Brahman stronghold in religious and intellectual matters. Over the years, what began as a 'revolution' got mired in 'identity politics', gave up its founding ideals, and turned into a caste. According to one stream of intellectuals,[33] this transformation of the Lingayat *reform movement* into the Lingayat *caste* has resulted in various (unhappy) developments, including controversies.

One way of understanding this debate is to see it as a dispute about whether a tradition should be criticised or not. Lingayats, like Maate Mahadevi, who were at the forefront of the controversy, strongly opposed the criticism of a tradition and its practices. Some intellectuals, like some of the authors of controversial books and their supporters were of the opinion that tradition and its accepted and long held truths *should* be questioned.

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[32] Members of the Rashtreeya Basava Dal submitting a memorandum to the Assistant Commissioner demanded a ban on the book because it hurt Lingayat sentiments (*The Hindu* June 05, 2007). See also *The Hindu* June 11, 2007.

[33] Usually scholars who do not belong to the Lingayat community and Karnataka, including colonial scholars, take this position. Here are some examples of contemporary scholars who take this position: J.P. Schouten (1995); Rudolf C. Heredia (2000: 44); Sheldon Pollock (2006) and Gail Omvedt (2008: 51).

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