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A STUDY ON THE LINGAYATISM IN THE NILGIRIS



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ABSTRACT:

Lord Basava was the founder of Lingayatism. Ordinarily, one who wears a Linga on the person is called a Lingayats. People belongs to different regions in The Nilgiris speak Badaga language. There are Lingayats, Brahmins, Gowdas, Thorias living in The Nilgiris. Majority of the people are Gowdas. Lingayats are living in twenty villages and their population is considerably less. Badagas have shrines on the hills for certain ancestors especially for 'Hethaiamma'. The Lingayats are living in MerkunaduSeemai. Lingayats should pray thrice a day or at least twice a day. Lingayats can purify

themselves. Lingayats lead a discipline life. The Lingayats population in The Nilgiris is computed by using simple percentage method.

KEYWORD: *Basava, Lingayatism, Badagas, Population.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Lord Basava was the founder of Lingayatism. Lingayatism is an independent religion. By virtue of its own metaphysical theories it differs from Advaita, Dvaita and Visistadvaita of Vendanta. The philosophy of their religion is known as Saktivisistadvaita, where god is conceived to be qualified by sakti or cosmic energy. Ordinarily, one who wears a Linga on the person is called a Lingayatas. Regarding "Li" stands for a Sunya, the ultimate reality, the 'bindu' (nasalization mark) for the divine sport (lila) and 'ga' for conscious force. In this three-fold aspect lies the secret of the Linga. He who understands that secret is the God realized one. From such a conception of the Basava Saranas (saints) regarding Linga, it is clear that Lingayats identify Linga with supreme reality. What is the 'Istalinga' (worn around the neck) worn constantly by a Lingayats on his person.



2. THE BADAGAS

India is a developing country and people speak different languages are living here. In every state, there are many tribal in habitations and The Nilgiris in Tamilnadu is unique among them. There are nearly three hundred villages in The Nilgiris districts, people live in these villages are called Badagas. Badagas is the name of the language they speak. Badaga language does not have a written form. There are Lingayats, Brahmins, Gowdas, Thorias living in The Nilgiris. Majority of the people are Gowdas. Lingayats are living in twenty villages and their population is considerably less. Their population is nearly twelve thousand.

As is evident among the natives, the badagas were and are the most numerous. Majority of them continue to cultivators of the soil. It is held by some that they came from Northern point of Mysore several centuries ago as refugees to The Nilgiris. Their villages are called 'hatties'. Six distinct sub-sects are found among the badagas: they are Wodea, Adhikari, Kanakka, Haruva, Badaga and Tohera. All of them are Shaivites. All sects barring the converts are vegetarians. Generally they were deemed to be conservative.

They believe in female deity called 'Gangamma' Goddess of water, who is supposed to be present at every river and rivulet. Deification of an ancestor is a trait common to all tribes, as it is to the men on the plains. Badagas have shrines on the Hills for certain ancestors especially for 'Hethaiamma'. To the badagas 'Hethai' the mother-goddess is the most important of all deities. Numerous pastoral, agricultural, marriage and death ceremonies are also performed. Hocking views that badagas gods were known to be vengeful, "but never as Saviours".

3. LINGAYATISM IN THE NILGIRIS

Geographically, The Nilgiris districts are separated into four parts. The first part is Merkunadu Seemai that is Western Ghats; second part is Thodhanadu Seemai, third part is Kundha Seemai and the fourth part is Parangi Seemai. The Lingayats are living in MerkunaduSeemai. Among the Badagas, Lingayats are a small group living like other badaga people. But there are some differences. They are strict vegetarians. They wear Lingam, for the purpose of prayer and observe strict norms.

It is believed that some people belonging to Lingayats of Nanjanahalli, which was in Kadoor district of Mysore came and settled in Katary village. Then they spread to Thooratty, Nadwhatty villages. These people are called Kanakkas 'Kanaka' means one that looks after account.

Another group of Lingayats came from Malliganahalli, which was in Gundalpet Taluk (Karnataka). They settled in Sogathorai villages. From there, they spread to nearby places namely Sakkalaatty, Dhoddanny, Oranalli and Adigarati. They were known as Adigaris. 'Adigaris' means those who control and manage others. There is a good relationship between these two sections of Lingayats. They live in a peaceful atmosphere.

Lingayats live in nearly twenty villages in The Nilgiris districts. They lead a prosperous life. Monastery is important to Lingayats and it is called as mutt. Every Lingayats village has a monastery. People give more importance to monastery than temple. In monastery, there will be a swamiji and he is called as Guru.

Lingayatism is very strict. Those who want to follow this religion, find it very difficult. They have to perform pooja thrice a day or at least twice a day. Only after pooja, they have to take food. Consuming liquor and smoking are considered anachara (i.e.) bad conduct and such things are prohibited. Prostitution is considered as the greatest sin. They should not eat meat or any type of non-vegetarian food. They should not eat even eggs. They should not eat any food at hotels and houses belonging to people other than Lingayats. In The Nilgiris, the Lingayats follow these acharas very strictly.

There is a close contact between the guru and the public. Because of the god fearing character of the Lingayats, social crimes are notably absent.

4. BASAVA MOVEMENT

4.1 Basava Mutt at Katary Village

Katary is the biggest village among these. There are nearly 600 houses and it has two monasteries. In the beginning of the 20th century one basava mutt at katary village was founded by Siddamalleshwara Swamiji. He had a monastery Somahalli in Gundalpettaluk. Swamiji came all the way in bullock cart to Katary village and initiate hundreds of disciple. Many Lingayats came to the monastery from nearby village. Thus Lingayatism spread to nearby village. At the end of 20th century another monastery was built in katary village. Sri Siddalinga Swamiji was the president of the monastery. They celebrate Basava Jayanthi every year. Thus these two monasteries and swamiji's played an important role in spreading Lingayatism in The Nilgiris districts.

4.2 Basava Mutt at Kettipalada

In the recent years, another monastery was built at ketti Palada with the help of his disciples in 1989. The president of the monastery was Sri Basavaraja Swamiji. He was the disciple of Siddamalleshwara Swamiji. After visiting many states, he settled at this monastery. After the arrival of Sri BasavarajaSwamiji, Lingayatism gained strength and spread too many villages.

4.3 Basava Mutt at Sakkalatty Village

People started celebrating Basava Jayanthi in their villages. Disciple from Sakkalatty village wanted to build a monastery in their village. Siddamaldikarjuna Swamiji was the founder; many people were initiated to Lingayatism.

4.4 J.S.S. Mutt at Ooty

Jagath Guru Shri Shivarathri Rajendara Swamiji is the president of this monastery. Veera Shiva Sangam was started. A strong foundation was laid during this period. Thus Lingayatism gained foothold into many villages.

5. ECONOMICS STATUS OF LINGAYATS

In the beginning cultivable lands were very scant, hence people earned their livelihood by grazing buffalos and cows. People slowly started to bring more and more lands under cultivation. The main crop is potato and started growing tea in estates. Hence the tea planters have generally become rich. In terms of land possession Lingayats are marginal farmers. People cultivate crops like potato, carrot, cabbage, beans beetroot, radish and other vegetable in the bottom of hills. They earn more money by cultivating vegetables. At present, the number of educated among the Lingayats has gone up considerably. There are so many graduates and post graduates and this has fetched them employment. Nearly ten to fifteen persons in a village are working as teachers in different places. There are a few doctors, many engineers and professors in this community and work in foreign countries. Some of them have become the owners of tea factories, many of them work as government officials.

6. DOWRY SYSTEM

Dowry system is a social evil and because of this so many deaths took place in the past. But in Lingayatism there is no dowry system. Even the whole Indian community should take it from these

Lingayats. It should be spread to all parts of India. So far we have never heard any case of dowry problem in Lingayatism.

7. BASAVALINGA AND ITS NATURE

7.1 Nature and Meaning of Linga

“Linga” means Ishtalinga or Basavalinga. It is dealt with reference to its physical and psychological aspects, rather than to its metaphysical one.

Linga has many meaning, they are:

1. God, Parasiva, Spiritual energy, Nature and Omkara.
2. Mind and Soul.
3. Chitanya.

Linga firmly blends together man's spiritual and social life and it teaches the art of right living. The Lingayats firmly believe in the purity of mind and it will never be polluted as long as the Linga is won on the body. The Linga is believed to be fire, which burn all impurities of body and mind. Therefore, at all the times, Lingayats wear the Linga on their body.



7.2 Preparation of Basava Linga

Aragu, Resin, Ruma mastic, Amber, Cinnebar, Anjaam are powdered and mixed with heated geru oil at certain temperature. Then this pasty mixture is placed around kantsilt or sun stone or moon stone. Lamp black is coated around. Many of the components contain carbon molecules, which are positively or negatively charged therefore, this can be called the Black Diamond.

7.3 Size of Linga

The Linga should be of thumb size of the left hand i.e., starting mark of thumb in palm to the tip of thumb. In the middle brain of every individual, Paramatma resides in thumb in size portion. The bottom of Linga should be the middle portion of the palm.

8.OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to study the Lingayatism and their population in The Nilgiris.

9. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study entitled “A Study on the Lingayatism in The Nilgiris” is merely under taken to study about the Lingayats and their population in the study area. Even though there are different kinds of people in The Nilgiris. Lingayats differ from others and their effects on Lingayatism in The Nilgiris districts.

10. METHODOLOGY

10.1. Collection of Data

In order to study the Lingayatism in Nilgiris, primary data was collected from the people in various villages among badagas and Lingayats in The Nilgiris districts.

10.2 Tools used

10.2.1 Percentage Analysis

A simple percentage method is used to describe the primary data, the formula used for the

analyses. Number of the variables divided by the total number of variables multiplied by 100 is to be the percentage.

11. LIMITATIONS

The main limitations faced by the researcher for the present study are secondary data; the study covers one district. The studies give significance and cover only Lingayats among badagas in The Nilgiris. The rest of the tribes, other communities and religions are not given attention in this study area. Interpretations of data have their own limitation with regard to diligence, accuracy and reliability.

12. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Lingayats wear the Linga on their body. Katary is the biggest village among these. There are nearly 600 houses and it has two monasteries. Lingayats are living in twenty villages and their population is considerably less. Their population is nearly twelve thousand. Some people belonging to Lingayats are of Nanjanahalli, which was in Kadoor district of Mysore and another group of Lingayats came from Malliganahalli, which was in Gundalpet Taluk (Karnataka). The Lingayats are living in Merkunadu Seemai. They should not eat meat or any type of non-vegetarian food. Lingayats speak Badaga language and in Lingayatism there is no dowry system. Many Lingayats live above eighty years with good health.

13. SUGGESTION AND MEASURES

- Lingayats population is very low; they have to increase their population.
- Many Lingayats are in foreign countries they have to follow their religion.
- Lingayats have to take hygienic food in their well-wishers house and if necessary they can take food in hygienic hotels.
- Lingayats speak badaga Language there is no scripts, they must take steps to bring the scripts.

14. CONCLUSION

Lingayats believe in one god. Both men and women can do prayer. The initiation should be done only by guru. Lingayats can purify themselves. Lingayats lead a discipline life. Compared to other, the health of Lingayats is in good condition. The crime rate is also less. There is a good social harmony among them. Many Lingayats live above eighty years with good health.

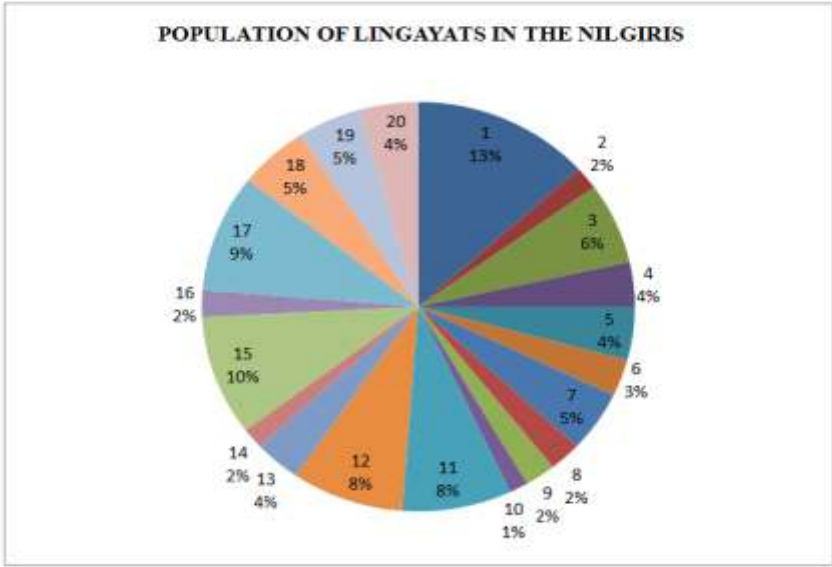
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POPULATION AND LITERATE OF LINGAYATS IN THE NILGIRIS
TABLE: 1

| S.no | Village Name | Popula tion | Per centage | Lite rate in % |
|------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Katary | 1620 | 13.3 | 90 |
| 2 | Ke ttyPalada and Dhoddanny | 213 | 1.8 | 91 |
| 3 | Thooratty | 790 | 6.4 | 70 |
| 4 | Naduhatty | 430 | 3.5 | 60 |
| 5 | Ora nally | 525 | 4.2 | 80 |
| 6 | Sa kkala tty | 346 | 2.9 | 70 |
| 7 | S oga thora i | 596 | 4.8 | 80 |
| 8 | Melo dya ratty | 294 | 2.4 | 70 |
| 9 | Kilo dya ra tty | 285 | 2.3 | 60 |
| 10 | Ko thanga tty | 165 | 1.4 | 70 |
| 11 | Dena du | 1000 | 8.2 | 80 |
| 12 | Thune ry | 1029 | 8.4 | 75 |
| 13 | Hitta kal | 436 | 3.5 | 80 |
| 14 | Que en Sola i | 207 | 1.6 | 65 |
| 15 | Chulligudu | 1170 | 9.5 | 80 |
| 16 | Be lla da | 254 | 2.1 | 60 |
| 17 | Ajjur | 1110 | 9.3 | 75 |
| 18 | Jee na tty | 627 | 5.2 | 70 |
| 19 | Kac chuchi | 593 | 4.8 | 60 |
| 20 | Iduko rai | 540 | 4.4 | 70 |
| | Total | 12230 | 100 | |

FIGURE: 1





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