

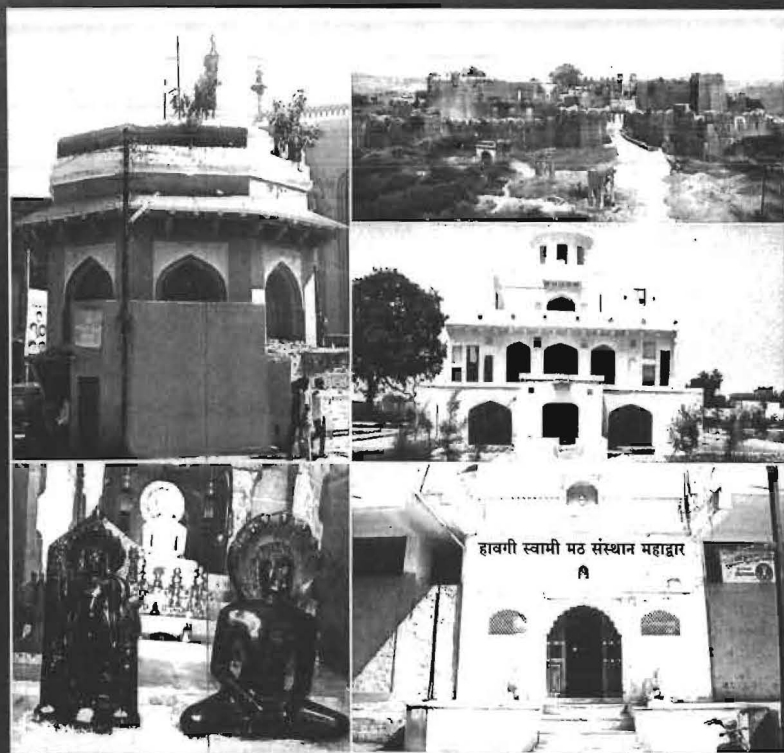
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A Mystic Saint of Virasaivism—Muktayakka



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Introduction: Muktayakka in her eminence as a great mystic Vachana writer comes next to Mahadeviyakka or Akkamahadevi. Like Mahadeviyakka, she too possessed unparalleled intelligence as well as spiritual enlightenment which enabled her to cross words with mighty mystic personality like Allamprabhu. She commands respect from the greatest of the great Sharanas. Basavanna, Channabasavanna, Allamprabhu and Siddharama and all other praise her.

To establish a new society free from the irrational notion of discrimination on the basis of caste, class, and sex in the mid dense darkness of 12th century a beacon of divine light dawned upon Karnataka in India in the form of Basaveshwara and Shivasharanas.² The timely emergence of Shivasharanas on the scene is described as follows, "Hindu society in spite of all its high cultural traditions and spiritual splendours has failed miserably to meet the needs and aspirations of the common people. It was at this hour of need Shivasharanas appeared on the scene."³

Vachana literature of the age of Basaveshwara form of unique feature of Kannada literature. Vachana is a new form literature contributed by the Sharanas and Sharaneyars. Vachana Sahitya ushered in a new epoch in Kannada literature. It made a unique contribution to the world's mystic thought trends.⁴ The term 'Vachana' is translated as 'saying', 'musing'. It is poetic prose with occasional alliteration.

The 33 Shivasaraneyu's rose, like the phonetic, out of their own ashes and breathed the fresh air of freedom; became conscious of their rights to seek their salvation, to work and worship along with their made counterparts, to share God experience with fellow devotees. They shed the vestiges of caste, creed and gender, and stood out as 'liberated souls'. Their Vachanas are an expression of their souls yearning for union with the absolute void. In the unprecedented harvest of Vachanas the Virasaiva women's share was in no way small. Both in

quality and in quantity the women's Vachanas were rated high.

In this era alone women grew up on the basis of equality with men religiously, spiritually, socially and educationally. During the revolution in Kalyana also they fought on equal footing with men. They also participated in were them as Gurus, Jangamas and religious heads of monasteries. They also granted Dixas Nilambike, Akkamahadevi, Gangambike, Satyakka, Lingamma, Danamma, Muktayakka, Rayamma, Bontadevi, Kalavve, Kalyannamma, Masamma, Akkamma etc. belonged to different profession and class. But they became the pillars on which the super structure of Virasaiva religion could stand. This is no mean an achievement.⁶

Brief Life Sketch of Muktayakka's (c.1160) : She occupies a very high position as a mystic. She was from Lakkundi and her husband was from Maslikallu. Ajaganna was her brother and guru.⁷ She was steeped in sorrow at the time of Ajaganna's death and Allamaprabhu consoled her by opening her eyes to reality as we know from shoonya Sampadane. 32 of her Vachanas with the signature Ajaganna Thande are available. These appear to be elegies for her brother and also her spiritual outpourings.⁸

Muktayakka is Ajaganna's younger sister. Ajaganna was a great seeker who practiced Sivayoga to such an extent that his life itself was a quintessence of Sivayoga. To Muktayakka, he was not merely a big brother but also a great guru. They hailed from lakkundi in Gadag Taluka of Gadag district [former Dharwad district]. Born in an agricultural family, both brother and sister rose to the pinnacle of spiritual attainment.⁹ Both wrote Vachanas.

She was awfully depressed caught up as she was in the polarity of light and darkness. At this juncture of mental derailment, she runs into Allamaprabhu, whose wanderings from place to place, brought him to her place. The meeting of Muktayakka and Allamaprabhu is one of the rarest moments ever experienced by great mystics.

Unlike Akkamahadevi, Muktayakka does not go to Kalyana to seek the grace of and communion with great Sharanas.¹¹ But Allamaprabhu the greatest of the great Sharanas himself goes to her, like the mountain going to Mohammad as it were, and tears off the film of illusion still bedimmed her vision. Certainly, she belongs to the group of rare women mystic who blazed the trail.

Sharanas having realized the importance of maintain purest possible mind and spirit have rejected dualism totally. It is reflected both in

their work and worship and interaction with each other. They are sensitive to the processes that go on within themselves, and they intuitively reflect on them. Muktayakka, who has reached the metaphysical height, has shown to the world the enigma of 'dark veil' covering the 'eyes'.¹² It is, she knows, because of clinging on to the 'unreal'. Here are her words for our meaningful reflection:

"I clung to the flesh And missed the truth; And so I am lost!
I clung to the mind And missed wisdom; And so I am lost!
I have let my will Be tremulous still : And so I am left forlorn!
I talked of wisdom And yet I fell To ignorance. Forgetting myself I was caught in this maze of you and ! Glorious Ajaganna, Having known supreme, Has over my eyes drawn a dark veil and gone.

Nothing can be realized if the 'dark veil' covers our eyes. In order to brush it away one has to control oneself and maintain steady mind. Allama has noticed that the whole world has become senseless because of its inability to control its flesh, its mind and its wealth. In other words, Sharanas lay stress on purity within as also without: the mind and the consciousness, the body and the deed.¹³

The literature of Virasaiva religion is rich and large in quantity. 'Shunyasampadane' is holy book of Virasaiva religion.¹⁴ It is a compilation of dialogues on religion, culture and philosophy at Anubhava Mantapa among the Vachanakaras and other members. A look at the two chapters of the Sunyasampadane devoted to Akka Mahadevi¹⁵ and Allama Prabhu on the one hand and Muktayakka and Allama Prabhu on the other hand. Tarty she rejected Allama Prabhu as, in any way, superior to herself and deflated any misconceptions or pretensions which he might have held on that point.

Becoming of a piece with the impenetrable
Through discourse with the saints on the Imponderable,
There can be no knowing and no forgetting;
There can be no joining and no forsaking... After one's Self has been lost in itself, Then there's no need to go advertising, 'I am a god; I am Godhead itself !-Muktayyakka¹⁶

Muktayyakka then did not perforce reject the norms of her society as had Akkamahadevi; but, forced by circumstances to take responsibility for her own spiritual advancement, she rose to the occasion, took command of her own life, and refused to be resubjugated to another's authority. Pointing out the unavoidable duality of any speech, even speech about non-duality, she challenged Allamaprabhu:

Saying 'I speak not', do you not speak?
 Saying 'I act not', do you not act?
 Saying 'I think not', do you not think?
 Saying 'I purge my mind', is that not a knowledge of purges?
 Saying 'I merge my body' is that not a body which merges?
 Saying 'I am free of senses', is that not a sense of pleasures?
 Saying 'I am just myself', is that not an ego which measures?
 Can we forget that we have known?

On just that point, I must be shown.
 If there be anyone of knowledge devoid of ignorance free,
 It's my dear Ajaganna-brother,
 guru, who else could it be? –

Muktayakka

Meeting Muktayakka's challenge with patience and wisdom, Allama demonstrated to her that the true guru is not the one who performs the most difficult feats of yogic practice, but the one who has overcome the self-imagined boundaries of disciple and teacher or relatives and absolute.¹⁷

Conclusion : The renaissance and revival of the Virasaiva religion during the 12th century was primarily responsible for liberating Virasaiva women in particular and Indian women in general from the bondage of male domination, by affording them the opportunity to come to the socio – economic forefront, by giving them a chance to become educated (prior to this, they were denied educational opportunities and were simply treated as outcasts) and by enabling them to make monumental contribution to the religious movement. The proceedings of the Anbhava Mantapa reflected and reveal that their contribution and participation which were equally important as those of their male counterparts. Akka Mahadevi and Muktayakka stand shoulder to shoulder with any of the male participants of the Anubhava Mantapa. Sunyasampadane's lesson two tells the story of Muktayakka's independent spiritual progress after the death of her saintly guardian brother. In fact, she became as bold as to teach those who would have presumed to teach her and to deflate the egotistic claims of those who would have placed themselves above her. Muktayakka's life teaches us to face difficulties in life bravely and live a true life with confidently.

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“इतिहास समजून घेण्यासाठी व्यापक सामाजिकतेचे भान, राजकारण नावाच्या मानवी व्यवहाराचे एक मार्मिक आकलन आणि ज्या देशाचा-समाजाचा लोकव्यवहार अभ्यासायचा त्या देशाच्या-समाजाच्या संस्कृतीविषयीची संवेदनशीलता असल्याशिवाय इतिहासाचे लेखन परिपूर्ण होत नाही.”

- डॉ. सदानंद मोरे