



# The Concept of Ishta Linga and God in Basavanna's *Vachanas*

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**Abstract:** The paper focuses the concept God and worship of Basavanna's Vachanas. It deals elements as temple, God, love, Kayak belief and protection. It highlights the God is supernatural power and impersonal. Basavanna advocated the socio-political awareness through his Vachanas.

**Key words:** God, Ishta Linga, Prana, God, worship, vachana, Lord, belief and worship

**Introduction:** Basavanna was a 12th-century social reformer and established Lingayath as a religion. The paper focuses on God and worship in Basavanna Vachanas, Lord Basavanna was great social reformer and philosopher in twelfth century. The paper explores the important vachanas which are related folk language and folk communication.

As fulgent fire conceal in water

As sweet savour suffusing the plant

As fragrance freed from the unfolding bud

As love's promise in the burgeoning maid

Thy essence

My Lord, Kudala Sangama(Sadashiva Wadeyar 15)

God is in way potent when he becomes many in the act of creation. How He was before the world was formed? Did he exist at all? On cannot say that what is not patent does not exist. Heat is latent in waters, even before it becomes patent. The sweetness in fruit is not apparent in the juice of the plant. But the fruit could not be sweet if sweetness did not exist in the juice of the plant. The smell in the flower cannot be found in the bud; but it must have been latent in the bud before it become patent in the flower. Similarly, love becomes patent in a young lady though it must have been latent in her when she was a child, for something cannot come out of nothing. These example are given to show how God exists before the world is created.

I behold none but Thee

Wherever I lift mine eyes.

Thou art the form

Of the unbounded universe

Thine its eye and

Thou its visage;

Thine its shoulders

And its feet

O Lord Kudala Sangama!

The conception that the world is the form of Formless and that it is the limb of the Limbless is found in this Vachana.

Stupendous as the universe,

Dimension disdaining as the sky-spread

Vast as vastness art Thou

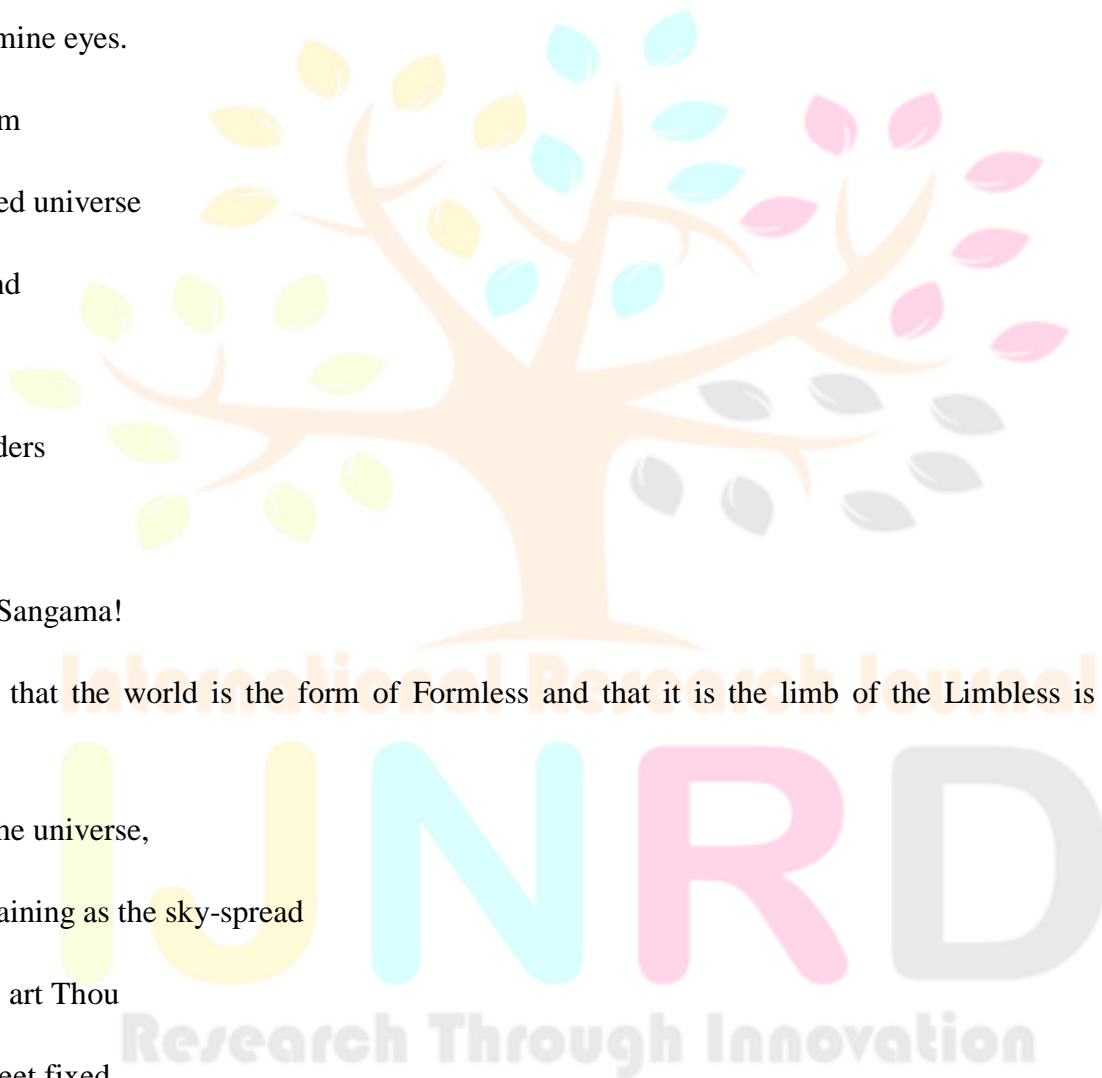
Firm Thy holy feet fixed

In fathomless depth beneath

Beyond soaring skies

Thy sacred crown

Thou art past understanding,



Invisible, unimageable.

But lo! They spark supernal I hold

In the palm of my hand! (Sadashiva Wadeyar 16)

This Vachana deals with an important aspect of Veerashaivism with reference to the technique of worship. Veerashaivism does not allow the worship of idols. Worship in temples is prohibited; but for contemplation of the Formless, some kind of medium is necessary to fix the mind upon. Mesmerist, for instance, practice by concentrating the mind on a black round spot against a white background. The Linga on a which Veerashaivas concentrate their mind at the time of worship serves this purpose, and much more. Just as a mesmerist gazes on the subject to influence him, the preceptor gazes on the discipline at the time of initiation( deeksha) and draws the spirit of the discipline into the Ishta Linga which the discipline has to wear and worship throughout his lifetime. This worship is only a means of concentrating on the subtler Lingas, known as Prana Linga and Bhava Linga. The following, which is necessary to explain these terms, is short extract from Maharshi Aurobindo's Kena Upanishad: "The ear hears the sound, the eye sees the form; but hearing and vision are particular operations of the life force in us used by the mind in order to put itself into communication with the world in which the mental being dwells and to interpret it in the forms of sense. The life force shapes them, the mind uses them, but something other than the life force and the mind enables them to shape and to use their objects and their instrument" (Sadashiva Wadeyar, 35)

The Veerashaivas call the life-force Prana Linga, and Parashiva Brahman, which directs the life-force, is Bhava ling. If the source of electricity can be composed to Bhava Linga, the current, the Prana Linga and the light in the bulb can be composed to Ishta Linga, while the bulb itself is comparable to the body. The presence of the Ishata Linga on the God is intended to remind the devotee to keep his body pure. The presence of the Prana linga is intended to keep the intellect of the devotee pure. This explanation gives rough ideas of what cannot be easily explained briefly, the conception of the three Lingas very often referred in the Vachanas. This Vachanas refers to the Ishta Linga (the gross Linga) having come to the hands of the devotee as the essence of the Absolute, Parashiva Brahman, for the purpose of worship, in a small though the Absolute itself is without limits.

Name many,

Thou art but one

Even as the chaste spouse

Knows none but her lord

Take heed and kneel not

To strange Gods

Or you face the frown of His wrath

Smiting off your nose and ear.

What manner of men-they

Who crave for crumbs

From frippery faith?

O Lord Kudala Sangama!n (Sadashiva Wadeyar, 17)

This Vachanas prohibits the worship of many Gods, a practice which prevailed to a great extent at the time of Basavanna and still exists to some extent amongst ignorant men. Basavanna declares there is only one God and not many, though the names may be many.

In vain oblations offer

And blessing beseech of

Marayya, Beerayya- devil and demon;

Kalayya, Doolayya and Ketayya,

On infant, maid and woman,

Heavy and child

Diverse gods in diverse places

Niched in plant, flower,

Tank and well;

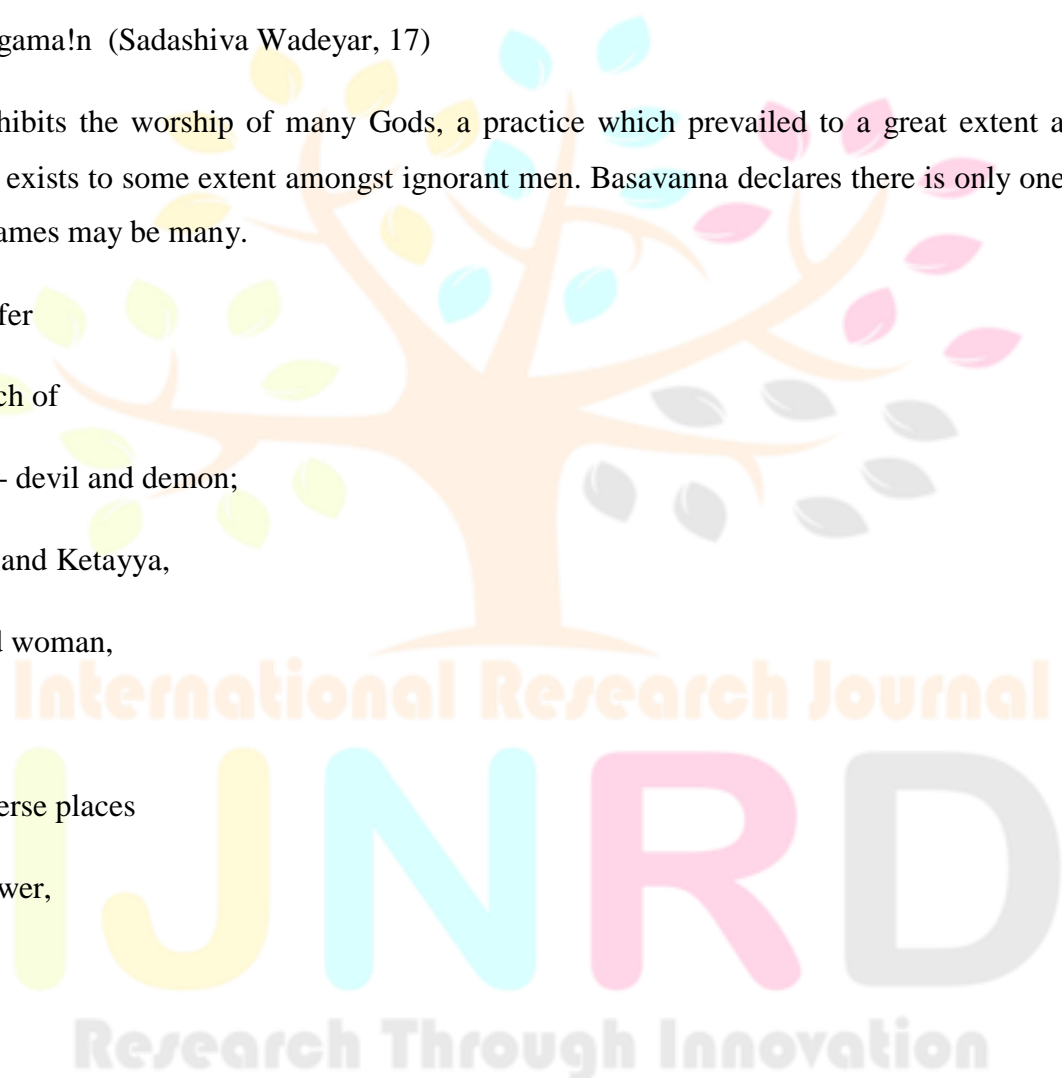
In town and hamlet

Dwell the dumb deities

Under the sheltering span

Of the banyan tree.

Pity them that supplicate



These seamy shapes,

While Thou remain,

The Bestower All ! (Sadashiva Wadeyar, 21)

The different petty gods and goddess referred to in the previous Vachanas are mentioned in this Vachana.

Basavanna's musings abound in poetry and similes solidify as in:

The Chakora' waits, intent

The moonlight's silver dawn;

The lotus heart is bent

Upon the splendid morn;

The bee's on the flower's scent

Even thus, for Thee, even thus,

My heart is tremulous,

O, Kudala Sangama Lord! (Sadashiva Wadeyar, 22)

As for the first factor, the following Vachanas of Basavanna a is significant

I don't know anything like time-beats and metre

Nor the arithmetic of strings and drum;

I don't know the count of iambic and dactyl

My lord of the meeting rivers

As nothing will hurt you I'll sing as love (Sadashiva Wadeyar, 23)

Surrendering to the free volition of the spirit, the vachanakara tried to become conscious literary artists to please princes and pundits. They regarded themselves as the instruments of Divine and yearned for the Lord to play upon them. The following vachanas of Basavanna illustrates this picturesquely:

“Make of my body the beam of flute

Of my head the sounding guard

Of my never the strings

Of my fingers the plucking rods

Clutch me close

And play your thirty two songs

O lord of the meeting rivers” ( Sadashiva Wadeyar 25)

No wonder the resultant literature transcendent the limitations of time and space and imbibed element of universality.

Their approach to language is equally significant. Their adoption of the common man’s language does not mean that they were indifferent to its higher aspects. The following Vachanas of Basavanna sums up a whole theory of words and meaning; containing the quintessence of their outlook on language.

“If you should speaks

Your words should be like a string of pearls

If you should speaks,

Your words should be like ruby’s radiance

If you should speaks,

Your words should have the spark of a crystal spear

If you should speak,

The Ling must nod approval

But if your deeds betray your words,

How can Lord Kudala Sangama Care for you? (Sadashiva Wadeyar, 25)

Here, the string of pearls denotes Coleridge’s ‘best words in the best order’; the lustre shed by the ruby indicates the radiance of meaning, and the crystal’s flash symbolizes the transparent effulgence of word-meaning combine. These three epitomize the main principles of poetics-eastern and western. But Basavanna adds one more dictum: the great God should not approval to these words and there must not be any dichotomy between words and deeds.

References:

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