

# Depriving cultural practices of Veera Saiva Lingayat community in Telangana

Devune Anil Kumar

Linguistics, University of Hyderabad

Email - 22haph24@uohyd.ac.in

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the deprivation of Veera Saiva Lingayat community culture in the village of Basar, which is located in the northern part of Telangana state. According to 2011 census, the population of Basar was 5,865 out of which 2,868 were male and 2,997 were female, out of this population, the approximate population of Lingayat community is between 120-130 with 25-30 houses. There are some changes in the practice of Lingayat culture in Basar. A clear difference can be seen in the practice of culture among the first, second and third generations. The first generation used to follow the culture very strictly by practicing every tradition of Lingayat culture. In contrast, the second generation has shown some changes in their cultural practices compared to the first. The third generation is at risk of losing the cultural practices of the Lingayat community. There are several factors for these changes including socio-economic, culture, education, attire, food habits and business which fall under socio, agricultural practices and economic activities respectively. The changes in the culture of the Lingayat community can be explained step by step through a comparative study of the first, second and third generations.

**Key Words:** Lingayat community, cultural change, socio-economic factors and comparative study.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The term culture is derived from the Latin word 'colere', which means 'to cultivate' and 'nurture'. Culture encompasses many aspects, such as religion, food, attire, language, marriage and these may vary from one cultural group to other. The word Culture is defined as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Edward B. Taylor). Cultural deprivation is a sociological theory which posits that certain groups within a society lack access to culturally related offerings. Cultural deprivation in Lingayat community is caused by several factors, including the loss of older generations, a lack of knowledge of traditional rituals among younger generations, the migration of people to towns for education and employment, the influence of other cultural practices. Linguistic factors also play an important role in cultural deprivation, restricting speech and leading to the loss of cultural knowledge through mother tongue.

**2. Objectives of the study:** This paper aims to look into the extent and causes of cultural deprivation in Lingayat community in the village of Basar, Telangana. It will analyse the impact on their identity, social cohesion, and assess existing preservation efforts, and come up with strategies for mitigating deprivation. By comparing generations, by exploring cultural institutions and making them aware, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of cultural challenges and provide valuable insights among the community.

**3. Methods and Methodology:** This research consists a mixed methods approach that is qualitative and quantitative research techniques to gain complete understanding of cultural deprivation within the Lingayat community in Basar, Telangana. Qualitative methods cover in-depth interviews with the people of Lingayat community, observations, and case studies among the Lingayat community. Quantitative research method covers survey among the Lingayat community to collect the data, and the analysis of the collected data. It also includes some interpretations, concluding with recommendations to address cultural deprivation and preserve Lingayat community culture.

**Community information:** The Lingayat community in Basar is in minority compared to other communities, with approximately 120-130 members. They are the devotees of Lord Shiva, there is a tradition of carrying ista-linga lifelong. The community selects one person as ‘Gurappa’, who encourages everyone to accept the ista-linga. The Gurappa visits the homes of community members on Guru-Poornima every year to receive offerings from each member. Languages like Marathi and Kannada are spoken in the families of the community, knowledge of rituals has been derived from these languages, Telugu and Hindi is spoken by community members with others to communicate, peer group at school. The community people invite ‘Jangam Maharaj’(priest) for all rituals, including birth and death. There is a “Sangam” consisting of a president and secretary, a person is appointed to pass-on the information about any ritual, program among the community. The president and secretary conduct monthly meetings with the remaining members of sangam. The sangam collects money once in a year from each member for the development of sangam and recently sangam has constructed a building on purchased land, which can be used to conduct any rituals and functions at low rental cost. The primary occupation of the community is agriculture, but the younger generations are increasingly shifting towards corporate jobs and many are going after business opportunities near the famous temple of Basar. The Lingayat community has its own traditional practices and own belief system for every ritual.

**Geography:** The village Basar is located in the Nirmal district of Telangana and shares border with Maharashtra, which is just 10 kilometres away. The Godavari River which divides Telangana and Maharashtra, flows through Basar.

**Food Habits:** The Lingayat community is a predominantly vegetarian community, with most of their food items are made from jowar, wheat, moong dal and urad dal. This community primarily prefers jowar roti in their food and prepares numerous food items based on rituals. Puran poli is often prepared by this community on festivals, while rice, pitla, and kadi are also common.

**Attire:** Lingayat community does not have a strict dress code, but it has traditional attire for both men and women. Men often prefer dhotis and white long-sleeved shirts, and they carry white cotton towel on their shoulders. In addition, they carry Ista-linga around their neck, which is considered essential. Women typically wear ‘Gol-Saadi’ and blouse, along with bangles, mangal sutra made with black pearls or gold, Ista-linga, and often they cover their head with dupatta.

**Birth:** In Lingayat community, after the birth of a girl or a boy, they are ready to take the ‘linga-deeksha’(ista-linga) ceremony performed by the Gurappa. For this, the parents will invite relatives, and the ‘kesa-kadi’ ceremony is performed by the maternal uncle after the few months of birth and a cradle ceremony also takes place.

**Death:** The Lingayat community follows a unique tradition during death. When a married male or female dies, community members make the deceased sit in dhyana-mudra position with the help of wall, by applying ‘veebhuthi’ to forehead. They will wait for all the relatives to arrive, and in the presence of family and relatives, bathe the deceased. The people wear new clothes for the deceased, perform harathi while singing songs. Community people make a temple-shaped carrier made of wood to take the deceased person to the burial ground. They then make the deceased to sit in the dhyana-mudra position in the carrier. After reaching the burial ground, In the pit, they make the deceased sit in the dhyana-mudra position and place the Ista-linga in the left hand. If a young unmarried boy or girl dies, they carry and bury the deceased in sleeping (shavaasan posture) position.

**Marriage:** The Lingayat community has a traditional marriage system that begins with matchmaking. The parents of both the sides fix the muhurtha (auspicious time) for the marriage with the help of ‘Jangam Maharaj’. Before the wedding, both families, along with relatives, meet for a ‘goad javan’ (a meal with sweets). One day before the marriage on the instruction of Jangam Maharaj, family members arrange for a ritual called ‘phool gadhi’ during this ritual the groom and the bride have to do prayers to the lord shiva, for this ritual there will also be a bhajan program. On the day of wedding the groom must wear a ‘bhashinga’ on his forehead, while the bride must wear it along with jewellery.

**Occupation:** Agriculture is the predominant occupation of the Lingayat community from many years, up to the second-generation people used to follow the traditional way of farming. Currently, people are facing losses in the agriculture sector. Many members of third generations are being attracted to business and corporate sector jobs based on their education. The Shri Gnana Saraswathi temple, located in Basar, is playing a key role in generating the economy for the community people, by establishing business.

**Ritual practices:** ‘Lingadeeksha’ is a significant ritual in the Lingayat community. The Gurappa, who visits the community, offers prayers to the lord shiva and then offers the Linga to each community member individually. The community members must tie the Linga around their necks and should carry it lifelong, and offer pooja every morning

after taking bath and apply vibhuthi to their bodies. Mahashivarathri is the most important festival for the Lingayat community. On the entire day of shivarathri people do fasting throughout the day and offer prayers to lord shiva with bhajan. They break the fast the next day after offering prayer and linga worship. Guru Purnima is another significant occasion during which, the community members offer their prayers to the 'Gurappa' by washing his feet and offer gifts to him.

**Comparison:** The founder of the community wanted Veera Saivism to be a religion to act against the caste system but with evolving time it was formed and mentioned as a subcaste which reduced its essence and prominence of formation. Lingayat community culture in Basar has changed from the past to present. If we talk from the point of birth, the girl or boy used to get the Lingadeeksha from Gurappa at the age between 1-5 years. It was prevailed up to the presence of grand parents of the present generations. Every person who belongs to Lingayat community always offer puja every morning after the bath by applying vibhuthi to the body like lord shiva, but unfortunately only first generation is following it strictly, people do not eat without doing morning puja to the linga, but the third generation has changed completely. Most of the people from third generation have forgotten the daily practice of doing Linga puja, the main reason is modernisation, more exposure to the outer world, and migrating to different place for education, jobs make it difficult to offer puja every day.

During death, the community currently follows the same process, with one change, the wooden carrier has been replaced with a steel carrier. Previously, people would go and collect wood, inviting a village carpenter to make wooden carrier for the deceased. Due the unavailability of carpenters and increased laziness among people in obtaining wood from the outskirts of the village, the Lingayat community Sangam has created a carrier in the shape of a temple with steel. The Lingayat community does not have a tradition of shaving the heads of sons and grandsons of the deceased person. However, due to the influence of other cultures, present generations are adopting this practice.

In Lingayat community on the day of Maha Shivaratri, people invite their Gurappa to instruct each individual on performing linga puja. This practice was prevalent until the first generation, but the third generation has shown little interest in it. People used to fast for the entire day while chanting the name of shiva and singing songs of lord shiva in bhajan. However, younger generations are not following the footprints of their elders.

The attire of Lingayat community has changed since the second generation. Men have stopped wearing dhotis due to modernity, and women have also stopped wearing Gol sarees. Food habits also changed by people getting attracted to tiffins in the morning instead of jowar rotis.

The Lingayat community is slowly changing its own culture due to exposure to the other cultural communities. They are gradually changing their own rituals as they pursue modernity. The second generation of the Lingayat community needs to take measures to preserve the community's culture and rituals by implementing initiatives and strict instructions to revive their heritage. The community's Sangam can discuss with all the community members about ways to celebrate rituals and share the steps followed by their father's generation and the community can start the preaching sessions of Guru Basaveshwar by the Jangam Maharaj. Elders in the family can teach cultural practices to younger generations to ensure they do not forget the community culture.

**Narratives:** According to the history, the separate religion called "Veera Shaiva Lingayat" was founded by the 'Guru Basaveshwar', he was born into a brahmin family in the village of Bagvedi, Karnataka. He refused to take upanayana at the age of 8 due to prevailing caste discrimination. Basaveshwara's uncle used to work under the king Bijjala, after few years Basaveshwara replaced his uncle and started working in the court of king. The king was impressed with the work of Basaveshwara, the king appointed him as a minister in the court. According to Basavapurana, after becoming the minister Basaveshwara started distributing gifts to the devotees of Lord Shiva, this made other people angry and they complained to the king. Bijjala gave permission to his soldiers to punish the devotees of Lord Shiva, this incident made Basaveshwara angry. He stood against the caste discrimination, and the Lingayat movement was started by opposing Brahminical caste system. Guru Basaveshwara founded the religion and welcomed people from various castes to join his religion by wearing a linga to the neck, he strongly supported and followed monotheism. Guru Basaveshwara married a Brahmin girl to a lower-caste boy, the upper caste people complained to the king Bijjala about this inter-caste marriage. The king Bijjala gave permission to kill both the fathers of married couple by hanging, this led to the movement between the upper caste and lower-caste. In this movement the lower caste people killed the king Bijjala and strengthened the inter caste marriage systems.

During the same time Basaveshwara strongly supported widow remarriages. Guru Basaveshwara was one of the greatest philosophers of 12<sup>th</sup> century, many scholars like Prof. Sanyamad wrote a book named “Basavannavaru Lingayat Dharma Samsthapakuru” it means Basaveshwara was the founder of Lingayat religion. Similarly, P. B. Desai’s book “Basaveshwara and his times” mentions the same. There is no evidence of the Lingayat community existing before 12<sup>th</sup> century.

**4. CONCLUSION:** The Lingayat community in Basar has undergone changes. The traditional practices are passed down to the younger generations. However, factors like modernization, globalization, and exposure to other cultures have influenced the community’s cultural practices, particularly it is evident in the younger generation’s reduced interest in daily rituals like ‘ista-linga puja’ and traditions like inter-caste marriages. To preserve the community’s culture, it is crucial to implement strategies, that address these challenges. This includes raising awareness about the importance of the cultural heritage and encouraging community members to participate in traditional rituals. The Sangam of the community can play an important role by organizing cultural activities and conducting sessions on the teachings of Guru Basaveshwara about the Lingayat culture and cultural practices. The promotion of understanding and inclusivity can help the Lingayat community to evolve while preserving the identity of the community.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Salagare, Mallappa. (2018). The Rise of Lingayat Religion and Its Founder. 10.13140/RG.2.2.29643.23845.
2. Komala, D. (2021). Lingayats and the Yearning for the ‘Language of the Gods’ in the 1910s–1940s. *Indian Historical Review*, 48(1), 108-130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03769836211009733>
3. Patil, S. H. (2007). Impact of Modernisation and Democratisation on a Dominant Community: A Case Study of The Lingayat Community in Karnataka. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 68(4), 665–684. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41856366>
4. Narasimhacharya, R (1988) {1988}. History of Kannada Literature. New Delhi: Penguin Books. ISBN 81-206-0303-6
5. Dr.M. B. Salagare, The Rise of Virasaivism in Bombay Karnataka, *Research Journal of Family, Community and Consumer Sciences*, ISSN 2320 – 902X, Vol. 5(6), 1-3, August (2017) Res. J. Family, Community and Consumer Science.
6. Hastings, Annette & Bramley, Glen & Bailey, Nick & Watkins, David. (2012). Serving deprived communities in a recession.
7. Juergensmeyer, M. (1979). Cultures of Deprivation: Three Case Studies in Punjab. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14(7/8), 255–262. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4367347>
8. Shok, D & Holkar, & Jamadar, Chandrakanth. (2021). Socio-Cultural Deprivation and Personality. *Compliance Engineering*. 11. 2020.
9. Mackler, B., & Giddings, M. G. (1965). Cultural Deprivation: A Study in Mythology. *Teachers College Record*, 66(7), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146816506600704>
10. Friedman, N. L. (1967). Cultural Deprivation: A Commentary in the Sociology of Knowledge. *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET) / Revue de La Pensée Éducative*, 1(2), 88–99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23768066>