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LINGAYATS.

Lingayats,¹ properly **Lingvats** or *Ling* Wearers, are returned as numbering 75,212 of whom 39,571 are males and 35,641 females. They are chiefly found in the Alta, Gadinglaj, and Shirol subdivisions. Of the whole number 27,148 or more than one-third are in Gadinglaj on the south-east bordering on Belgaum. The Lingayat sect rose to importance during the twelfth century. Basav, the founder of the sect was the son of an *Árádhya* or Shair Bráhmaṇ of Ingleshvar near Bágevádi about twenty-two miles south-east of Bijápur. The worship of the *ling* as a home or shrine of Shiv

¹ According to Jain traditions Basav started his new religion because he had been put out of caste for taking food from the hands of a woman in her monthly sickness.

² Madras Journal of Literature and Science, II. 146.

leading doctrines of Basav's faith was that nothing could make the **bearer of the *ling*** impure. To the true believer the observance of ceremonial impurity in consequence of a woman's monthly sickness, a birth, or a death was unnecessary. In practice the Kolhápur **Lingayats** are little less careful to observe ceremonial uncleanness in connection with monthly sickness, births, and deaths than their Bráhmaṇic neighbours. Another of Basav's leading doctrines was that as she wore the *ling* the **Lingayat** woman was the equal of the **Lingayat** man ; that therefore she should not marry till she came of age ; that she should have a say in the choice of her husband ; and that she, equally with the man, might be a *guru* or **Lingayat** teacher. **Lingayat** women in Kolhápur are married in their childhood, they have nothing to say to the choice of their husband, and except that the widow's hair is not shaved and that she is not stripped of her bodice, her position differs in no way from the position of a widow in a Bráhmaṇic Hindu household. According to the theory of the **Lingayat** faith the wearer of the *ling* is safe from all evil influences, neither stars

nor evil spirits can harm him. In practice Kolhápur **Lingáyats** consult astrologers and fear and guard against evil spirits little less constantly and carefully than their Bráhmānic Hindu neighbours. The chief points of difference between a Kolhápur Lingáyat and Bráhmānic Hindu is that the **Lingáyat** worships fewer gods, that he has fewer fasts and feasts and fewer ceremonies especially death ceremonies and purifying ceremonies; that both men and women wear the *ling* and neither man nor woman the sacred thread; that both men and women rub their brows with cowdung ashes; that as a rule men shave the whole head, and that neither a widow's head nor a mourner's lip is shaved; that **they neither eat animal food nor drink liquor**; and that they show no respect to Bráhmans and show high respect to Jangams their own priests. In having a *ling*-binding, an initiation for priests, and a purifying ceremony for all instead of the sixteen sacraments or *sanskárs*, **Lingáyats** differ both from Bráhmānical and Jain Hindus. In their respect for life, in the strictness of their rules against the use of animal food and liquor, and in the little regard they show to the dead the **Lingáyats** are like the Jains.¹

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learned and fittest among his Maris or attendants is raised to his seat. Unlike Bijápur **Lingáyats**, Kolhápur **Lingáyats** have no Ganácháris or monastery managers, Mathpatis or Lingáyat beadles, and Chalvadis or Mhár standard-bearers. In Kolhápur the heads

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The **Lingáyats** of Gadinglaj in the south speak correct Kánarese. The home tongue of the rest is a somewhat impure Kánarese spoken in a Maráthi tone. Out of doors most speak a fairly correct Maráthi.

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So large a body as the **Lingáyats**, including persons of almost all callings differ considerably in appearance, height, and colour. Still, except that they are slighter and cleaner, **Kolhápur Lingáyats** as a class differ little from **Maráthás**. The men are dark-brown and the women are often fair and handsome. Their houses are simple and clean and are occasionally two-storeyed. They are divided into several dark and ill-aired rooms, a cooking and a store-room, a sitting and office room, and bed rooms. Near the cook-room are niches in the wall with folding doors where pickles and sun-dried pulse and rice called *sándge pápad* are kept. A portion of the centre hall is set apart as a shrine where the **Jangam** is worshipped. No one but a **Lingáyat** may go into the cook-room or into the **Jangam** shrine. **Lingáyats** have a great dislike to leather. They allow no leather in their saddles; no shoe may be brought into the inner part of the house, and if any one touches a shoe he must wash.¹ The privy, if there is a privy, is at some distance from the house. Cattle are not kept in the house but in a separate shed. A **Lingáyat's** house goods

include cots, low wooden stools, boxes, iron or brass tripods to hold dining plates, and metal and earthen vessels required for family use. Few have vessels enough for a caste feast. Givers of caste feasts borrow the public vessels from a monastery. Silver vessels are used by the rich, brass and copper vessels by middle class people, and wooden and earthen vessels by the poor. **Lingáyats never use animal food or spirituous drink.** Their daily food includes rice, millet bread, pulse curry, vegetables, and milk, whey, curds, butter, and clarified butter. No one but a *ling*-wearer may touch or even see a **Lingáyat's** food. On holidays and at small parties they have rich dishes. Their caste feasts are plain. The two chief dishes are **kuggi** that is wheat and milk boiled together and seasoned with raw sugar and **holagis** or roly-polies, that is wheat cakes stuffed with gram flour and raw sugar. A caste feast costs about 6d. (4 as.) a head. A **Lingáyat** when alone or one of a small party sits to eat on a low wooden stool and generally eats his food off a brass plate set on an iron or brass tripod. Except in travelling when metal plates

are not easily got and leaf plates are used, **Lingáyats** never use leaf plates. At dinner, before he eats a **Lingáyat** holds his **ling** in his left hand and bows to it. At caste dinners the guests sit on matting instead of on stools, and except Jangams lay the plate on the ground not on a tripod. At caste dinners before guests have sat to it, *tirth* or holy water, that is water in which a Jangam's feet have been washed, is poured over the guest's hands. The guests sip the holy water, shout *Har Har Mahádev*, and begin to eat. In eating the right hand is alone used. The small waterpot which must never touch the lip is raised in the left hand. Women dine after the men. They sometimes sit on stools, never on mats, and generally lay their plates on the ground. Among **Lingáyats** a young married couple never talk together in the presence of

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elders. Except a few who grow short topknots the men shave the whole head and face except the moustache and eyebrows. They mark the brow with white ashes called **vibhuti** literally the great power.¹ The ashes which are rubbed on the brow are specially prepared by the Jangams or priests. **Pure cowdung is dried and burnt and the ashes soaked in milk for six or seven days** and rolled into balls about the size of a mango. Before they are used, the Jangam purifies the ball by sprinkling it with sacred water and saying texts over it. They cannot be sold by the person who gets them from the Jangam, and they cannot be passed to any one else. Virakt or unwed Jangams wear a loincloth hung from a waistband and ochre-coloured shoulder and head cloths. Laymen and married priests generally wear a somewhat scrimp waistcloth, a headscarf

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between the feet. **Lingáyat** women are also more careful than Bráhmán women always to draw the upper end of the robe over the head. Like the men, women mark the brow with white cowdung ashes. Except that the women wear no head ornaments, the ornaments worn both by men and women are the same as those worn by Marátha Bráhmans. On holidays Lingáyat women dress and adorn themselves richly.

Lingáyats are a quiet satisfied class wishing neither change nor power. Few are in the service of the State and almost none are messengers, constables, or soldiers. A large number of **Lingáyats** are weavers, several are retail dealers, and some are husbandmen. In Gadinglaj and in the Kágál State a few rich traders have large dealings with Belgaum, Dhárwár, and other Kánarese districts. A few estate-holders or *jágirdárs* and proprietors and *inámdárs* as the Desáis of Terni and Bhodgaon, are **Lingáyats**. Except the priests no Lingáyat lives on alms, and few are labourers. A **Lingáyat** rises early, marks his brow with ashes, and goes to the monastery to pay his respects to the lord or *svámi*. He works till

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go in the morning to the monastery to pay their respects to the *svámi*. The three watchwords of the **Lingáyat** faith are the *ling*, the *Jangam* and the *guru*. The *ling* is the stone home of the deity, the *jangam* is the human abode of the deity, and the *guru* is the teacher who breathes the sacred spell into the disciple's ear. All **Lingáyats** both men and women from childhood to death wear hung to a string passed round the neck a small slate-stone *ling*, a double disc with a small pea-like knob on the upper disc, hid under a betelnut-like coating of cowdung earth and marking-nut, and wound in a cloth or laid in a silver or rarely in a gold box.² A **Lingáyat** is very careful not to lose his *ling*. In theory a man who

¹ When a **Lingáyat** layman pays his respects to his head priest, he prostrates himself before him ; and when he meets an ordinary Jangam he places both his palms on his head and the head on the Jangam's feet. Neither the head priest nor an ordinary Jangam does or says anything. When a **Lingáyat** layman meets another **Lingáyat** layman, both of them join their hands, raise them to their heads and say *Sharanáarth* probably from *sharanáarthi* that is asking refuge. When two Jangams meet they salute each other like laymen. Laywomen do not salute each other ; but if she meets a Jangam woman a laywoman salutes her as a layman salutes a Jangam. Like laywomen Jangam women do not salute one another. Before he starts on a journey a **Lingáyat** prostrates himself before his gods and elders and his younger relations prostrate themselves before him. In a bargain a **Lingáyat** buyer strikes the four

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loses his *ling* is degraded and cannot again become a *Lingáyat*. In practice if the *ling* is accidentally lost the loser has to give a caste dinner, go through the ceremony of *shuddhi*¹ or cleansing, and receive a new *ling* from the teacher or *guru*. Jangams or *Lingáyats* priests are as much respected by *Lingáyats* as *Bráhmans* are by *Bráhmanic* Hindus. They marry and bury *Lingáyats* and conduct almost all *Lingáyat* rites and ceremonies. The Jangam is succeeded by his son or near kinsman, or if he has no near kinsman by a disciple. The head Pontiff of the *Lingáyats* is the *Ayya* or teacher of the *Chitrakaldurga* monastery in north-west Maisur. He is greatly respected and when he visits Kolhápur is received with enthusiasm.

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When a *Lingáyat* is on the point of death he is advised to distribute money in charity and present a Jangam with a cow. His body is covered with sacred ashes. If he is well-to-do, the dying man performs the *vibhutiville* or ashes and betel-giving at a cost of £2 to £2 10s. (Rs.20 - 25). This rite is believed to cleanse the sin of the performer and is generally performed by old men and women. If a performer survives the rite he or she

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member of the family. *Lingáyats* are bound together by a strong fellow-feeling. Social disputes are referred to the *svámi* or monastery head whose decision is generally accepted. An appeal lies to the head of the *Kadáppa math* or monastery on a hill six miles south of Kolhápur, who is the head Jangam of the province. Kolhápur *Lingáyats* have not begun to make much use of State schools, the total number of *Lingáyat* boys in the Kolhápur schools in March 1883 was 1478. Girls are seldom sent to school. The *Lingáyat* faith seems to keep its hold on the minds and affections of the people. They may have to be a little more careful than formerly in the punishments they inflict for caste rules, and with this exception the influence of the priests shows no sign of declining.

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