

## SIDDHARAMESHWAR: AN INFLUENTIAL SHIVASHARANA IN THE VEERASHAIVA MOVEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The 12<sup>th</sup> century history of south India witnessed the radical religious and social reforms. It was only due to the spread of Veerashaiva sect led by Saint Basavesvara. Along with Allama Prabhu and other shivsharanas, Basavesvara propagated the reformist to spread in the region of South Maharashtra which was connected by geographical and cultural proximity as well as the same political umbrella. The contribution of many Shiva devotees from Maharashtra including Siddharameshwar of Sonnalige (Modern Sholapur in Maharashtra) played an important role in spreading the egalitarian movement of Veerashaiva.

### SIDDHARAMESHWAR: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Siddharameshwar was a Veerashaiva Shivasharana<sup>1</sup> who was contemporary of Saint Basavesvara. He attained the title of Karmayogi on the strength of selfless so characteristics of his historical figure, the study of his life and work is important in the cultural history of medieval Maharashtra as well as South India.

The Siddharama Charite or Siddharama Purana, a Kannada treatise written by Raghavanka a Hampi-based disciple of Harihar, a Kannada poet of the 12th century AD, is the only contemporary source of the life of Siddharameshwar.<sup>2</sup> The Vachanas or verses of, Mandya, Chitradurga districts in Karnataka and also in the district of Maharashtra like Solapur, Osmanabad etc. attested the work of Siddharameshwar.

Although, it is true that Siddharameshwar was a contemporary of Basavesvara, Allama Prabhu and other prominent Shivasharana, like other religious and political leaders of the Medieval period, historians have different views on his life time. Dr. Nandimath assumes that the period of Siddharameshwar was around 1160 A.D. while Dr. Bhandarkar has given 1127 A.D to 1167 A. who put his views on the basis of Ingalgi, inscription (Gulbarga District), Siddharameshwar must have been buried before 1209.<sup>3</sup> The Marathi and English texts published in Solapur on the basis of Ragavanka's work, claims 1088 to 1189 A.D was the period of Siddarameshwara. The eminent scholars in Maharashtra like Dr. Ramachandra Dhere, Gonvid Pai, accepted the same period given by Dr. Kotrashetty. In general, 1130 to 1180 is considered to be the life period of Siddarameshwara.

Siddharameshwar was born at Sonnalige, (Modern Solapur, Maharashtra) in the Kudavakkalinga Kunbi family. Mordi Mudaagowda was the chief or gauda of the Nadu (A administrative unit) his father and Suggaladevi was his mother.<sup>4</sup> According to tradition new born child as Dhuli Mahankala after the name of his family deity.<sup>5</sup> later on he became well known as Siddharama when he followed Nathasiddha tradition. However, from the inscriptions, his names are found as Ramayya, Ramnatha, Ramnathdev, Siddhanath, Siddharamnath, Siddharam, Siddharameshwar, Shivayogi Siddharam etc. even today the name Siddharameshwar is prevalent among the locals.

Siddharmeshwar was the supreme devotee of Mallikarjuna at Srisaila. In his early days, he was a cowherd and a native devotee. He went Srisaila and obtained vision of Mallikarjuna. In order to gain constant proximity to Mallikarjuna, he established the temple of Srisaila Mallikarjuna in Sonnalige. That is why Sonnalige or modern Solapur is mentioned in the inscriptions as new Srisaila or Siddarameshwara and his followers engaged in social work, Allama Prabhu, one of the patrons Shivsharana of the Veerashaiva sect visited Sonnalige. During this visit, Allama prabhu advised Siddharmeshwar to come to Kaylan and take initiation of Ishtlinga.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Siddharmeshwar went to Kaylan (Now Basvakalyan, the capital of later Chalukays) and took Istlinga initiation from Channabasveshwar.<sup>10</sup> This historic event mentioned by Dr. R.C. Hiremath, a Veerashaiva Scholar, as “Arrival of Siddarameshwara at Kalyana was a great event, and his initiation of Istlinga by Chennabasveshvara was a greater event in the history of Virasaiva religion. Siddarameshwara himself was having influence over the masses like that of Kings”<sup>11</sup> Later, Siddharmeshwar also held the post of Acharya of Anubhav Mantapa<sup>12</sup> established by Saint Basaveshwar at Kalyan. In the year of 1167, Kalyan had to undergo a political and religious upheaval which is commonly known as the Kalyana Kranti or Kalyan Revolution. After that Siddarameshwara returned to Sonnalige and took Yoga Samadhi or entombed himself alive while practicing Yoga. Today, Siddharmeshwar is considered as the village deity of Solapur and a big fair is held in his memory every year.

## **VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SIDDHARMESHWAR’S HISTORICAL PERSONALITY**

The sources like inscriptions and Vachanas or Veerashaiva literature reflects the various aspects of his historical figure. Siddharmeshwar was a saint poet of the Veerashaiva sect, he was also a great yogi who attained Ashtamasiddhi (eight types of siddhis or eight types of super human or super natural powers). He was a popular and active social worker. He was a humanitarian preacher as well as an influential Shivsharana which had an impact on his contemporaries. He was also the creator of the highest quality literature which has an invaluable place in the medieval Kannada literature’s.

## **YOGI KULA CHAKRAVARTI**

Due to Siddharmeshwar’s supernatural Power in Yoga, he seems to have been honored with Yogikulachakravarti, Yogiraj, Yoginatha. Siddharmeshwar himself has mentioned in one of his Vachana that 'Yogi should be like me'. His contemporaries were freely praised for his superiority in yoga. Siddharmeshwar is referred to as the Yogi of the Yogis by Mahavalinga Kalleshwar sect, M. Chidananda Murthy and Dr. Nandimath both have said that Siddharmeshwar was a follower of Pashupata Lakulisha Sampradaya in his early life. According to Dr. P.B Desai, Srisaila was a very famous place of Kalamukha Pashupata, so Siddharmeshwar must have felt the attraction of Srisaila region and it was here that he completed his yoga practice. Even through the primary sources like inscriptions, Siddharmeshwar’s yoga prowess has been mentioned. The inscription of 1256 AD during the reign of Krishnadev Yadav at Phadakanuru (Padiyakanur) in Bijapur district, Siddharmeshwar is referred to as 'Siddhendra Chakravarti' or as supreme sovereign among the foremost Siddhas.<sup>14</sup> In the Budarsingi inscription of 1257, Sonnalige means modern Solapur is mentioned as a ‘Yogramniya Kshetra’ or the land of Yoga.<sup>15</sup> Due to Siddharmeshwar’s authority in yoga, Sonnalige must have become famous in the field of yoga. From this discussion, it can be seen that Siddharmeshwar was a great yogi who attained Ashtamasiddhi in the practice of Yoga.

## **SIDDHARAMESHWARA: A CREATOR OF LITERATURE**

The period of Siddharmeshwar is considered to be the golden age of Kannada literature. Along with Basavesvara’s, his prominent associates like Jedara Dasimayya, Allama prabhu, Chennabasveshvara, Akkamahadevi etc. and number of common Shivsharanas laid also became an integral part of the social revolution by his literary Siddharmeshwar was a

Veerashaiva poet who wrote Vachanas Mishrastotra Tripadi, Basavastotra Tripadi, Ashtavarana Stotra Tripadi, Kaldnyana and Mantragopya etc. <sup>16</sup> In Vachana, he has Kapilsiddha Mallikarjuna as his signature or Mudrita while in conduct of Veerashaiva. In his literature, Siddharameshwar praises his adored deity Kapilsiddha Mallikarjuna of Srisaila (One of the holy center among the 16 Jyotirlingas) as well as Saint Basaveshwar and his guru Chennabasveshvara.

Among the literary works composed by Siddharameshwar, Vachana literature has a very important place. This Vachana literature created by the -five lines long. The end of each verse is in the name of the Guru or the adored deity of the poet which is called Mudrita or Signature. Siddharameshwar was one of the greatest philanthropists among his contemporary Veerashaiva saints. His Vachanas are also engraved in all the available inscriptions in Karnataka and Maharashtra. Although Siddharameshwar himself is said to have composed 68,000 verses, only 1400 of his verses could be available till date.<sup>18</sup> The Vachanas of Siddharameshwara are the revelation of his own experiences by witnessing his adored deity Kapilsiddha Mallikarjuna. They express spirituality, religion, karma and ethics. His personality also reflected from the Vachanas in a number of roles such as a faithful organizer, an active public leader, a humanitarian philosopher and a guide who advocates morality.

### **ACTIVE SOCIAL WORKER**

Due to Siddharameshwar's active social work, he has to be given a unique place in the contemporary Veerashaiva Shivsharanas. The social activities like creation of huge reservoirs, tanks, provision of food and education facilities, innovative experiments this inscription, it seems that the importance of Sonnalige was not reduced even after the life period of Siddharameshwara. Siddharameshwara is considered as pioneer of the mass weeding tradition, Raghavanka, his biographer also confirmed this event.<sup>19</sup> He also established a monastery and an Ashrama for the religious and educational purpose. Dr. sect, Basaveshwar is considered to be a symbol of devotion. Chennabasveshvara is considered to be the symbol of knowledge, Allama Prabhu is considered to be the symbol of asceticism, Akkamahadevi is considered to be the actual idol or symbol of Sharana Sati and Lingapati, while Siddharameshwar is considered to be the doer of karma. Siddharameshwar himself, however, was never proud of his social work. On the contrary, mentioning that this act was done in obedience to Kapilsiddha Mallikarjuna, Siddharameshwar in his one Vachana said, "People call me Dani by constructing lakes, wells, gardens, shelters, food pantries, but I am not a Dani, I have done this as you (Kapilsiddha Mallikarjuna) have said."<sup>21</sup>

### **INFLUENTIAL SHIVSHARANA**

Siddharameshwara's social and spiritual work signifies that he was one of the most influential Shivsharanas in his period. There is no doubt that the Veerashaiva Shivsharanas from Karnataka played an important role in the propagation of new religious and reformist thoughts in 12th century A.D. However, Siddharameshwar's area of work was Sonnalige or a modern Solapur. Therefore, the credit for the spread of the Veerashaiva sect in the area of Solapur, Sangali, Kolhapur a part of South Maharashtra and the frontier region of Marathwada including Osmanabad, Latur and Nanded undoubtedly goes to Siddharameshwar. The inscriptions available at Nilegaon, Toramba and Itakala from this area confirms it. The inscriptions

Siddharameshwara. Chennabasveshvara, the sectarian guru of Siddharameshwara, also praised him as 'such real Shiva-yogi'. Underlining her impenetrable relationship with Siddharameshwar, Akkamahadevi said, "Siddharama's Samadhi (mausoleum) became my Samadhi, because I am his darling daughter and he gave me blessings or Kripa Prasad out of compassion." Thus, Siddharameshwara played a significant role in the religious and cultural history of Maharashtra in



12th century. His thoughts, teaching and social activities have exercised deep influence on the generations of people from South Maharashtra as well as the part of north Karnataka.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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