



Chapter 9

Religion and Philosophy



Religion is faith or a system of faith and faith is belief. Philosophy is a system of knowledge with reasoning as its support. The discrimination between religion and philosophy marks the commencement of culture which is intellectual in character.

A study of Indian thought reveals the fact that the nation never experienced any struggle between religion and philosophy. India's civilisation started with the Vedas which are the perfect form of philosophy expressed in the perfect form of language and they are therefore, complete with reference to every aspect of civilisation. It is said that the Vedas have authorless language and they are therefore, free from the defects that may vitiate an author. The subject matter of the Vedas is *Brahman*, and *Brahman* is the reality behind all phenomena; without the Vedas, the *Brahman* cannot be conceived.

The denial of the validity of the Vedas by Charvaka, Buddha, Jainas and others gave rise to the necessity for defending the Vedas and accordingly, the systems of thought like *Nyaya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sankhya*, *Yoga* and *Purva-Mimamsa* arose.

Observing that these five systems did not adequately comprehend the infinitudes of the Vedas, Badarayana wrote *Brahmasutras* in which he showed the limitations of all other schools of thought and established both Vedas and the Truth as eternally efficacious. His system of thought is called *Uttara-Mimamsa*, otherwise commonly known as *Vedanta*.

This is the general background against which Karnataka's contribution to religion and philosophy can be studied. Philosophy and religion are like light and shadow. If you arrest philosophy, there is religion; criticise religion, philosophy appears. Karnataka was a state, in which religion and philosophy had free play throughout the ages and thus, the people of Karnataka were able to make the most distinctive contributions to both religion and philosophy. The Pre-Darsana period in Karnataka extended up to the introduction of Buddhism into the country. In the 3rd century B.C., during the time of Asoka, Buddhist ideas were introduced to the southern parts of India, perhaps through the medium of Pali and Prakrit because Kannada language had no literature of its own and was only a spoken language mixed with Sanskrit.

Buddhism and Jainism

The influence of Buddhism was mild in Karnataka although Asoka is said to have sent Buddhist missionaries to Mahishamandala (Mysore) and Banavasi (North Canara) about the 3rd century B.C. Many of the edicts of Asoka discovered at Koppal, Maski, Siddapur, etc. in Karnataka, are further evidence of the attempts made by him to spread the message of the Buddha in Karnataka.



**Buddha pada excavation,
Sannati, Gulbarga district**

Any influence that Buddhism was able to exert in the early history of Karnataka seems to have been confined to the general diffusion of the gospel of the sanctity of all life and a spirit of reverence to faiths other than our own, without making a creed and a sect of it. Rock Edict XII speaks, among other things, of 'an increase of the spiritual strength (*samvridhi*) of the followers of all religions. As proper occasions arise, persons of other religions should be honoured suitably and the followers of all religions should be versed in many religions and hold sound and righteous doctrines.'

The Darsana period of Karnataka commenced with the introduction of Buddhism. Around the 3rd century B.C., Buddhist monks began to spread Buddhism in the south and especially in Karnataka, but they were not very successful. Historians ascribe this failure to the fact that the Buddhists preached their ideas in Prakrit, and in Karnataka, Kannada was already a spoken language and the Kannadigas could not follow their preaching. The language of Buddhism was Prakrit and the abstruse philosophy of Buddhism was propagated by Buddhist *Bhikkus*. Kannada language already included much of Sanskrit and the Vedic culture was embedded in it, so Buddhism could not establish itself firmly on Karnataka soil.

Around 5th century A.D., Jaina preachers came down to Karnataka, but the language they used to address the people is not known. They made themselves intelligible to the Karnataka people because Jainism rejected Buddhistic Nihilism and taught that the Tirthankaras were perfect beings and above all, accepted the *Varnaasrama dharma* and the scheme of social organisation



**Jain Tirthankara, Gudageri,
Dharwad district**

of the Hindu religion. The Vaisyas and the Sudras were the first to be attracted by Jainadharma and they converted.

The distinction between the Vedic and non-Vedic traditions explains the reason for the wide divide between Vedantism, Buddhism and Jainism and other non-Vedic religions that had arisen as a protest against Brahmanical Hinduism. According to Vedanta, only the Vedic expression is able to present the absolute and perfect truth. The *Brahmins*, in ancient times, never attempted to present Vedic concepts in a non-Vedic language.

At the time when the Jain preachers were active in Karnataka, a sort of degeneration seemed to have crept into the fold of the Vedic people and they became divided as Saivas, Vaishnavas and other sects. Jain works were written in Pali, Ardha-magadhi and other languages and their thought was independent of language. As Jainism could be expressed in any language and in any form, the Jainas took full advantage, mastered the Kannada language and wrote works on Tirthankaras and Jainadharma for which they received the patronage of the rulers of Karnataka. Some rulers themselves became converts and even some *brahmins* became Jainas. As the Jaina authors were very active, works followed works and scholars succeeded scholars. They rewrote *Ithihasas* and *Puranas*, and introduced vital changes in them to suit their religious purposes. To make their religion popular, they even made it theistic and more attractive than other doctrines. Some of their works were confined to Jaina technique as was illustrated in *Samayapariksha* of Brahmasiva. Kundakundacharya was the author of *Dvadasamukha-pravachanasara* and *Samayasara*; the doctrine of *Syadvada* was spread by Samantabhadra, Simhanandi, Sumatideva, Kumarasena, Pujiyapadas and other saints. Akalanka established Jaina Sanghas all over Karnataka and Tondaimandalam, while Vajramandi founded *Dravida-sangha* at Madurai. Puspanandi, Toranacharya, Sripala-deva, Jinasenacharya were other great names in the founding of the branches of the Mula Sangha in Ganga, Chola and Rashtrakuta Kingdoms.

Vedanta

According to Badarayana's *Brahmasutras*, while the literary activities in Karnataka continued, major changes took place in favour of the revival of the Vedic culture. About the 9th century A.D., Kerala saw the rise of Sankaracharya, one of the greatest Vedanta thinkers who wrote a commentary on the *Brahmasutras* and pointed out the defects in all other systems of thought. Sankaracharya travelled all over India and established Advaita Vedanta. Sankaracharya established the way of knowledge, the *Jnana-marga*, and gave the most orthodox and authoritative interpretation of the *Upanishads*. His was a spiritual Monism linked with the doctrine of *Maya* or illusion and the distinguishing feature of his system was the interpretation of *Prasthanatraya*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Vedanta Sutras*, which

*Sringeri Matha, Sringeri,
Chikamagalur district*



stated that the material world was an illusion and that by passing from ignorance to true knowledge, liberation could be attained.

The philosophy is known as *Mayavada Advaita*, *Kevaladvaita* or Absolute Monism. Sankaracharya stated that, of the different kinds of *Bhaktis*, that which is identical with or based on *Jnana*, the knowledge of the soul's identity with the *Brahman*, is supreme and the highest form of *Bhakti*. With the rise of his philosophy, the opposition to Vedas in India practically disappeared and the Vedic culture was strongly revived. In recognition of the greatness of *Advaita Vedanta*, the then rulers of Karnataka gave Sankaracharya full support to propagate his doctrine and to establish one of his *mathas* at Sringeri. Among his many followers was Vidyaranya who, in the 14th century A.D., wrote many important works in Sanskrit to elucidate the intricate points of *Advaita Vedanta*. He was the founder and patron saint of the Vijayanagara Empire. Subsequently, many interpretations of *Advaita* followed through the medium of Kannada, of which Mahalinga Rangakavi's is regarded as the best.

In the 11th century A.D., Tamilnadu witnessed the rise of Ramanujacharya, another great Vedanta thinker who saw the great truth in the *Antaryami Brahma* of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. He adjusted the rest of the Vedas to it and, in terms of these ideas, interpreted Badarayana's *Brahmasutras* and strengthened his own position by using the experience of Dravida saints expounded in *Nalayira-prabandam* in Tamil. Hence, his position is regarded as *Ubhaya-Vedanta*. He showed a contradiction in Sankaracharya's conception of *Brahman* as *advaita*.



**Ramanujacharya,
Srivaishnavite
philosopher**

Sankaracharya established his chief pontifical seat at Sringeri in Karnataka and remained at the place for a long period, ministering to his followers and preaching his philosophy of Vedantic Absolutism (*Advaita*) stressing the unity of ultimate

reality, *Brahman*. He emphasised that one attains salvation (*moksha*) by means of *jnana* or knowledge. Devotion and love towards a personal God (*Isvara*) and the performance of ritualistic duties (*karma-marga*) are only a means that lead to *Sattva Suddhi* or purity of heart which is a necessary preliminary step towards attaining the realisation of the unity and identity of *Jiva* and *Brahman* (*aham Brahmasmi*) which is an ineffable experience. He elaborated this idea in all his writings, including his commentaries on *Upanishads*, *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.



**Sankaracharya, founder of
Advaita Vedanta**

On the other hand, Ramanujacharya, who lived in Karnataka for about 12 years, continued to stay at Melukote, the chief place of pilgrimage for Srivaishnavas in Karnataka, preaching his philosophy of Vedantic Theism and the religion of *Bhakti* and *Prapatti*, intense love and absolute self-surrender to God. The quintessence of his philosophy and religion could be described as 'Intellectual love of God' which he termed as *Bhakti Rupapanna Jnana* i.e., an understanding of God ripening into a love of God. He advocated the selfless performance of *karma* without any selfish motive but only with the object of serving God and humanity, which he called *Bhagavat Kainkarya* and *Bhagavata Kainkarysa*. Service or *kainkarya* was to Ramanujacharya, an end in itself. His philosophy of *Bhakti* and *Prapatti* opened the door of salvation to all, high or low, literate or illiterate, the lowest, the humblest and the lost. He derived great inspiration for his religion from the Alvars, the Vaishnava saints of Tamilnadu. The temple at Belur, built by Vishnu Vardhana, Melukote and other places served as the scenes of his activity.

Madhva, the propounder of the school of *Dvaita Vedanta*, was also the champion of *Bhakti* who stressed the distinction between God and the individual and stated that the individual was wholly dependent for his existence on the grace of God who was the Supreme Being with whom no equality could ever be established by the individual. He stressed the view that the knowledge of the distinction of things was a necessary preliminary to the understanding of God, man and the universe. His main purpose was to assert the transcendent and immanent majesty of God, in the *Atma* and in the world.

Sri Vaishnavism was an effort to liberate the life of the people, not admissible to social status by birth and by divine grace, from the nihilism of Buddhism. Ramanuja's Sri Vaishnavism is a form of Monotheism with faith in *Hari*, his two human manifestations being Rama and Krishna. It is a religion of love and prayer rather than of knowledge and works. The Alvar Saints interpreted the great *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, expressing them in simple language and pouring out inspired utterances and the sublime teachings contained in them. Salvation was open to all classes and therefore, simple and approved methods, a methodical and formal system of worship drew attention.

The distinctive point of Ramanujacharya's teaching was his assertion of the existence of a triad of principles i.e., the Supreme Being (*Isvara*), soul (*Chit* and non-soul (*achit*). These three principles have an eternal existence distinct from each other. Sankaracharya had regarded the separate existence of the spirit of man as illusory, but Ramanuja contended that the souls of men were eternally and essentially distinct from the One Universal Spirit. *Maya* or *Prakriti* was not the material cause *apadana-karana*, out of which the Universe was created. God himself was both the *karta* of the world and the substantial cause out of which the Universe was

founded; world and God stood towards each other like body and soul. His doctrine of *Vishishtadvaita* provided room for a personal God and for worship with a devout heart. His philosophy admits the three ideas of Unity; of Duality, involving the distinctness of the spirit of God and of man, and; Plurality, implying the spirit of God, of man and of the visible world, and all these are distinct from each other. The distinguishing feature of Madhva's teaching was that there are two eternal principles instead of the three of Ramanuja and these two are related as dependent and independent, soul and God. Buddhism and Jainism were reformist religions and were antagonistic to Vedantism, Brahminical Hinduism and its variants, Saivism and Vaishnavism, because they repudiated the infallibility of the *Vedas* and caste hierarchy and cultivated a deep repugnance to sacrifices.



Madhvacharya, founder of Dvaita Vedanta

Theism

Several variants of Saivism such as *Pasupatas*, *Kalamukhas*, *Lakula* and *Maheshvara* sects seem to have practiced their creeds in different parts of Karnataka before the 11th century A.D. *Kalamukha Saivism*, which was one of the most popular creeds in the country, was closely allied to *Kashmir Saivism* and the ascetics were great educationists and they constructed and became heads of numerous temples all over Karnataka. The several forms of orthodox Saivism, like *Pasupatas*, *Kalamukhas*, *Bhairavas* and *Vamas* were quickly overshadowed

by a revival of *Pasupata* variant of Saivism in the 12th century A.D., which received special impetus because of the zeal for social reform, the abolition of the caste system and the removal of social restrictions and barriers against which there was a great deal of antipathy. By the 7th century A.D., Saivism became the exaltation of Siva to the position of a Supreme Being, Infinite and Eternal. The Saiva movement, from the period of Sankaracharya onwards till practically the close of the 14th century A.D., was a movement

from Absolute Idealism to Absolute Theism. Saivism was exclusive devotion to a personal God as the presiding deity over three processes of disintegration, reintegration and maintenance of being perpetually recurring in an eternal cycle.

Basavesvara, another philosopher, cites in his *Vachanas*, a number of acharyas of great antiquity, whose doctrines constituted the foundations of his own religious investigation. Basavesvara had no regard for the ritualistic aspect of the prevailing religions of his day and he emphasised the importance of direct approach to divinity through the *sadhanas* of *Guru*, *Linga* and *Jangama*. According to Basavesvara, the *Jangama* is *nirlepa*, *nirupadhika*, *nirasrita*, *nishkarma* and *nirlampata*. The *Guru*, *Linga* and *Jangama* concept of Basavesvara bears a figurative resemblance to the Buddha *Dharma* and *Sangha*. The *agamic* aspect of Virasaivism includes *padodaka*, *prasada*, *vibuti*, *rudraksha* and *mantra*.

The Creative Period

The creative period in religion and philosophy in Karnataka is associated with Virasaivism of Basavesvara. The revival of unbiased and unconditioned spirit of criticism marks the beginning of the creative period in the civilisation of Karnataka. This was the spirit that kept Buddhism out of the land in the Pre-Darsana period. In the early Darsana period, this spirit seems to have been dormant and in that period, people seemed to take pleasure more in language than in thought. The critical spirit was kindled by the appreciation and adaptation of particular Vedanta thoughts in the later Darsana period. The philosophies of Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya revived the old Vedic sense.

Virashaiva Siddhanta was expounded in Karnataka and experts strengthened it with their devoted practice of the discipline in everyday life. This system is called Virashaivism because it is wholly devoted to Siva and the followers of this system are called Virashaivas, because they are completely devoted to and take joy in the system of thought which expounds Siva. The knowledge of

Siva is through a series of realisations which are marked by 101 stages. They are studied under six classes, in a progressive order. In the 14th century A.D., Srikarapandita wrote *Brahmasutra-bhashya* which is related to these teachings.

Other authors who can be mentioned in this connection are Prabhudeva (Allama Prabhu), Basavesvara, Chennabasava, Siddarama and AkkaMahadevi. They belonged to 12th century A.D. and are known as *Siva Saranas* and all of them have made significant contributions in thought and practice to *Virashaivism*. Of them, Prabhudeva was the eldest. He was the best of the *Siva Saranas* of his time. Detachment and wisdom were his hallmarks. He was a merciless critic of all faiths and practices, including Virashaivas. He appreciated truth wherever it was found and his criticisms were respected. He was the President of Anubhava Mantapa. However, Basavesvara was the most influential of the *Siva Saranas*. By birth, he was a *brahmin* but became a follower of *Virashaivism* by conviction. With great zeal, he taught that love and action were the essence of *Virashaiva* discipline. He was a great critic of non-*Virashaiva* ideas and a staunch defender of *Virashaivism*, but his criticisms were never destructive. *Bhakti* for him seems to be the language of absorption in knowledge and *karma* the life of knowledge. Basavesvara was the minister of Kalachuri Bijjala of Kalyana kingdom and at the same time, he was also the exponent of a system of thought. He had opportunities to see the value of knowledge that expresses itself in *Bhakti* as well as in *karma*. A reference to some of his statements in his *Shatssthal Vachana* reveals the rare greatness of Basavesvara both as a man and as a thinker. He says, "If a serpent carved on a stone is seen, they ask people to pour milk on it. If a real serpent is seen, they ask the people to kill it. If a needy *Jangama* comes, they bid him go, but to an inert linga which cannot eat, they offer food. What shall I say to those ignorant people who call themselves devotees, who at the same time worship Kudala Sangamadeva as well as other Gods?"

Vedic culture continued to shape the philosophical outlook of the

Vaidikas. Religion which is the longing to rise above the ephemeral things of this life to a life eternal; philosophy which is an attempt to understand the meaning of existence and the true values of life so that man can reach the land of light beyond the land of darkness; art which is the outward expression of the sense of beauty which fills the human heart - these were the essential elements of a life of culture and in all these aspects, Karnataka's contribution to Indian culture was immense.

The culture of the south, like the culture of the north, was essentially spiritual in character and in Karnataka, the two were harmonised. Religions widely differing from one another found a berth in Karnataka because tolerance was the characteristic quality of the religious minds of the people. Buddhism and Jainism came to Karnataka and flourished, and Jainism received more encouragement here than in many other parts of India. Christianity seems to have come to India within a hundred years after the death of Christ and established itself on the west coast. The contact with the countries of the west from the earliest times and familiarity with their religions might have determined the factors that made the people of Karnataka extremely tolerant and accommodating towards alien faiths. Islam also must have come into contact with Karnataka much earlier than the entry of Muslims into Sind, through the merchants from Arabia. The *srutis* and *smritis* were born on the plains of the Indus and the Ganges, with the inspiration received from the sublime Himalayas; but the greatest interpreters and expounders of the *srutis* and the *smritis* were born in Karnataka, and their theological systems and philosophical schools spread all over India. The Aryan mind rose to the utmost limits of human thought to contemplate the mystery of the universe and man's life in it and in the process, attained a refinement expressed in the Upanishads and the Epics which are not found anywhere else in the world. The much needed humanistic element was supplied by Buddhism and Jainism; and the three great teachers of the South - Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva took up Hindu religion and mellowed it further by stressing the element of *Bhakti* or devotion and spreading it among the masses. The philosophical approach of these great teachers may

be different and irreconcilable but the effect of their teachings on the masses was comforting, elevating and satisfying.

The Bhakti Movement

Ramanuja, Madhva and Basavesvara were the earliest saints who preached the doctrine of salvation by love and devotion or *Bhakti* fully propounded in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Bhagavata-Purana*. The way of love and devotion, *Bhakti-marga*, superseded the way of knowledge and works i.e. *Jnana-marga* and *Karma-marga*, in the minds of the masses.

The Bhakti School affirmed that intense devotion and submission of the soul to God was the only road to heaven. The phases of this devotion might be that of a master and servant, parent and child, lover and the beloved, or they could be, as some of the Vaishnavite saints preached, one of calm contemplation of the godhead (*shanti*), active servitude (*dasya*), personal friendliness (*sakhya*), a feeling of filial attachment (*vatasalya*), or tender regard of the beloved to the lover (*madhurya*). Saints all over Karnataka affirmed one or all of these phases of feeling as the infallible method of attaining *moksha* and the company of the Supreme Being. A good deal of Vaishnava literature teems with references to the conception of the relation of the bride and bridegroom as the type between Soul and God. According to Basavesvara, the essence of realisation is not mystical phenomena but an unfaltering, unbending and unending love of God, a reiteration of the attitude of personal devotion to a Supreme Power which has been expressed by all great philosophers and thinkers.

By about the 11th century, the stream of devotion that had flowed continuously through the centuries in almost every region of India, had displayed sufficient power to help humanity to overcome the rigidity of the caste system and to bring men and women of all classes together through common devotion. Christian mystics like St. John, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Augustine and St. Paul and Sufi mystics like Hafiz, Sarmad and Jalaludin Rumi, had poured out their hearts in intense love of God. The Saints of

Maharashtra, Karnataka and of north India did the same later. The Bhakti Movement in India seems to have brought about the greatest religious revolution that India has ever seen, greater even than that of Buddhism, and the followers of this movement lived and moved in an atmosphere of psychical and spiritual exaltation, contemplating, preaching and practicing the divine gospel of love. Karnataka was filled with wandering devotees who had abandoned all worldly possessions. Visions, trances, raptures and even miracles were of everyday occurrence, for there was the deep sense of realisation that salvation was not confined to a few but was open to all.

The *Pancharatra* of occult Vishnu worship, *Tantrism* of Siva occultism, the *Bhagavata*, indicating the true nature of the relation of gopis to Krishna, of the human soul to the Divine, Sandilya's *Sutras* and the Narada bhakti *Sutras* and the philosophical systems of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva and the mystic outpourings of Tamil saints and the *Bhaktas* of Kashmir Shaivism, all of it comprised the background against which Karnataka mysticism developed. This created *Vachana Sahitya* and *Dasa Sahitya* which acquired the finest religious quality, and devotees have sung *Vachanas* and *Dasa Kritis* for generations.

The Sufi mystics who had become familiar with Indian yoga through Abu Ali of Sind in the 9th century, had already developed the doctrine of *fana* and the extinction of personality in God and the continuance of the personality in and through the Creator. As the doctrine of Sufism is issued from a powerfully established faith in one personal God, that doctrine could bring to the devout worshipper, an assurance of deliverance from the difficulties of *Mayavada Advaita*. The need for some concrete center for the religious life of the common people soon made itself felt. To correct the unchartered freedom of the classical religion, the authority of the Guru and his guidance inevitably increased and thus, *Ishvara*, *Linga* and the spiritual leader, *Jangama* began to be recognised as the basis of faith.

Virashaiva Movement

Basavesvara was perhaps the best expounder of *Bhakti* among the Saivites and he was intoxicated with Sangamesvara. He is known in Karnataka as Bhakti Bhandari Basavanna. He says, "Oh God, have mercy on me, Oh *Ishvara*, let the happiness of the *Bhakta* be your happiness, that personality your personality, that breath of life be your breath, and his body a manifestation of your body." To his followers he said, "Our Kudala Sangamadeva is not a lover of music, not a lover of Vedas but he is a lover of *Bhakti*."

One of the greatest of the *bhaktas* and the most fascinating among the saints was Akka Mahadevi. This great saint was a contemporary of Basavesvara and Allama Prabhu and was born at Udatadi near Belagavi in a rich, aristocratic household but with a distinct predilection to religious mysticism. Prince Kausika of the Belagavi kingdom fell in love with Akka and married her much against her wishes. When Kausika violated the marital vow, she renounced the world at a very early age and became a wandering ascetic intoxicated with the love of God. She says, "I can beg for food when hungry, drink water from wells and tanks when thirsty, sleep on the verandahs of neglected temples but Thou art mine exclusively for *Atma Sanghata*." Like Allama Prabhu, she also visited the court of Basavesvara and shared in the mystic contemplation and discussions held at Anubhava Mantapa. After a few years stay at Kalyana, having gained knowledge and enlightenment in the company of Basavesvara, Allama and other saints, she made her way to Sriparavata where she meditated on Channa Mallikarjuna and became one with him in a state of ecstatic *Samadhi*.



Akka loved Mallikarjuna, accepted him as her Lord and said, "I love you and give myself to you. You have created *maya*, how can I overcome it and reach you without

**Jagajyoti
Basaveshwara,
Virashaiva
philosopher**

your infinite compassion, Karuna? I have loved you, since girlhood and dedicated myself in love for you; Thou art my beacon of light whether in happiness or sorrow.”

Many great saints followed Akka and their devotion and service to human brotherhood are phenomenal in Indian religious history. Their words are remembered and repeated and their songs of devotion have captivated the human heart. The sincere devotional utterances of the *Vachanakaras* were made in the language of the common people, a result of the Bhakti religious movement. The medium of expression was Kannada and the passion of the soul was a brief lyrical utterance, sometimes only two or three verses, a prayer or aspiration of intense devotion.

Haridasa Movement

The Haridasa Movement, like the Virashaiva Movement which preceded it, presented a galaxy of pure and pious representatives of all castes and creeds, born in humble circumstances. They struggled and strove for the cause of *Bhakti* and won it, not by their strength but by their humility. The movement was genuinely natural in character as borne out by the fact that it spread to all classes and touched all hearts, men and women of different communities. The Haridasa experience was of various kinds - *Svanubhava*, *Anubhuri*, *Atmanubhava*, *Bramajnana*, *Brahmasakshatkara*, *Aparokshagnana* and so on. The *Vachanakaras* called mystic experience *Anubhava*, but the *Haridasas* called it *Aparokshajnana*. There is only one God of all Gods who is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. Absorption in this *Sarva* is the final spiritual aim and the *Bhakta* achieves *Paramananda* by *Sraddha*, by devotion and contemplation. The *Diksha* of a Haridasa involved faith in *Sruti*, *Smriti* and *Purana*, vows against debt and against superfluity, contentment and observance of Hari worship regularly and exclusively on the days dedicated to Him; self purification and dedication to serve

Sri Manjunatha Temple, Dharmastala, Dakshin Kannada district



humanity through Hari. These were considered by Purandara and Vijayadasa as a difficult and tortuous journey of the spirit, for it was fraught with the difficult task of maintaining unremitting concentration on *Dhyana* of Hari.

The distinction between Vyasakuta, those who were well-versed in the Vedas and Darsanas with an intuitive presentiment of the manifestations of Hari, and Dasakuta who merely conveyed the message of Madhva through the Kannada language to the people, became inevitable.

An enormous volume of literature in the form of *kirtanas* was built by these saints and these became models of modern Kannada prose and poetry. The tradition of these saints was to sing these *kirtanas* to the delight of the people, walking from place to place on foot, with a *tambura* in hand, despising suffering, hardship and poverty and exhorting the people to live a life of truth, virtue and devotion to God. At the same time, they conveyed the difficult



Krishna Temple complex, Udupi, Udupi district

thoughts of the *Upanishads* in simple mellifluous, melodious prose which appealed to the human heart. The Haridasas who, like the Maharashtra saints, believed in the divinity of music as a *Sadhana* of self-realisation, regarded their own *kirtanas* and music as twin-born, with the result that all the Haridasas were proficient in *Raga*, *Tala*, and *Sruti* to make themselves eligible for the love of God. Haridasas are mostly of Madhva and Vaishnavite faith.

The best part of Haridasa literature was composed after the 15th century. Sri Vyasaraja (1417-1539 A.D.), Sri Vadiraja (1480-1600 A.D.), Sri Purandaradasa (1484-1564 A.D.) Sri Kanakadasa (1509-1607 A.D.), Sri Vijayadasa (1687-1755 A.D.), Sri Gopaladasa (1721-1762 A.D.) and Sri Jagannathadasa (1728-1809 A.D.) were some of the great names in the Haridasa movement.

Sri Vysaraja, one of the greatest of the Madhva Saints, was the

preceptor and guru to Narasaraja, Veera Narasimha, Krishnadevaraya, Tirumalaraya, and Achyutaraya of the Vijayanagara dynasty. He was the greatest exponent of the Madhva doctrine after the founder and was reputed to have vanquished heretics in debates. He is the author of three Sanskrit works, *Tarka-tandava*, *Nyayamrita* and *Tatparya Chandrika*, reputed even today as *Vyasa Traya*. He was for sometime the *Kulapati* at the Sanskrit University at Penukonda ruled by the later Vijayanagara rulers. Sri Purandara Dasa was the favourite devotee of Vyasaraaja and the compositions and *kirthanas* of both master and disciple are popular all over Karnataka for conveying the quintessence of Aryan, Vedic and Upanishadic thoughts in simple and easily understood melodious Kannada verses. Sri Vyasaraja and Purandara were the contemporaries of Chaitanya, Kabir, Tulasidas, Vallabhacharya and Ekanath, and like them, they propagated the doctrine of *bhakti* among the masses.

Sri Vadiraja belongs to Huvinakere, Kumbhasi (Dakshina Kannada district) and is reputed to be the founder of the Manjunatha Swamy temple at Dharmasthala, to have recognised the mode of worship at Udupi under the eight *Matadhipatis* and to have actually assisted the reconstruction of Sirsi Kingdom under Arasappa Naik.

Purandaradasa was and is the most popular Haridasa in all Karnataka and his innumerable compositions are sung by every householder, man, woman and child in sheer rapture and joy. Though born at Purandar Gadh,



Idol of Kanakadasa, Bada, Haveri district

Juma Masjid, Srirangapatna, Mandhya district



he renounced all his wealth and at an early age, sought the protection of Vijayanagara rulers at Hampi under the pseudonym Purandara Vithala. His compositions are popularly known as *Purandara Upanishad*. The language is poetic, adorned with rich imagery and metaphor and similes drawn from common life. Sri Kanakadasa, another great saint of Karnataka, belonged to Bada, Hangal taluk, Haveri District and, like Purandaradasa who was his contemporary, renounced the world for the worship of Venkatapati and preached the doctrine of Love. His works *Hari Bhaktisara*, *Mohana Tarangini*, *Nala-charitre* and *Ramadhanya-charitre* have considerably influenced religion and Haridasa thought and doctrine in Karnataka.

Islam

It was in the 14th century that Islam was first introduced into Karnataka. Since then, powerful Muslim kingdoms were established in the province, such as those at Bijapur and Sira, leading to the permanent settlement of a Muslim population in the land. Among all the south Indian provinces, it is only in Karnataka that Islamic religion and culture took root and flourished. When the Bahamani kingdom was in its heydays, the Shia rulers tried to emulate the example of illustrious Islamic rulers in building beautiful mosques, maintaining schools in them and encouraging men of letters and painters. The monuments at Golkonda and Bijapur testify this fact. After the battle of Raichur (1520 A.D.) when the Bijapur forces were defeated by the Vijayanagara king, there was a concerted attempt made for Hindu-Muslim unity.

Under Hyder and Tipu, the Islamic faith received patronage, but quite contrary to the generally accepted notion that Tipu was a bigot, he knew how to show respect to other great faiths. He showed reverence to the head of the Sringeri Mutt when it was disturbed by a Maratha force passing through the country. Though Tipu was a zealous Sunni, he respected the religious susceptibilities of other faiths. Muslim rule in Karnataka, though brief, has contributed some monuments with wonderful architecture and also a number of Urdu words to the vocabulary of daily language, especially in Mysore.

Christianity

Christianity was introduced quite early in India in the Malabar coast and in and around present Chennai. The earliest settlement in Karnataka seems to be in Kalyanpur near Udupi. In the 6th century A.D., a Christian bishop greatly influenced and inspired the Vedantic reformers by Christian teaching prevalent in the

west coast and in Chennai. In later times, when the Portuguese came to India, the Bijapur kingdom gave them refuge and the Vijayanagara kings extended patronage, with the result that Goa became one of the most influential centers of Roman Catholic influence in India. Francis Xavier, the disciple of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, and John De Britto made the west coast of Karnataka the scene of their labours. The Roman Catholics came into Mysore in the middle of the 17th century A.D.

A Kanarese Mission was established by them in the Coimbatore District. In the beginning of the 19th century, Abbe Dubois, the author of the *The Hindu Manners and Customs*, settled down in Srirangapatna as a missionary. The Roman Catholics own many flourishing schools and colleges at present.

The Protestant Missions, like the London Mission, the Wesleyan Mission and the Basel Mission, began to work in Karnataka in the beginning of the 19th century. Their service to Karnataka is invaluable. The people of Karnataka have to be grateful to them for first casting Kannada types and for their pioneering attempts in publishing Kannada dictionaries, anthologies, and classical works. Many educational institutions and hospitals were opened by the missions.

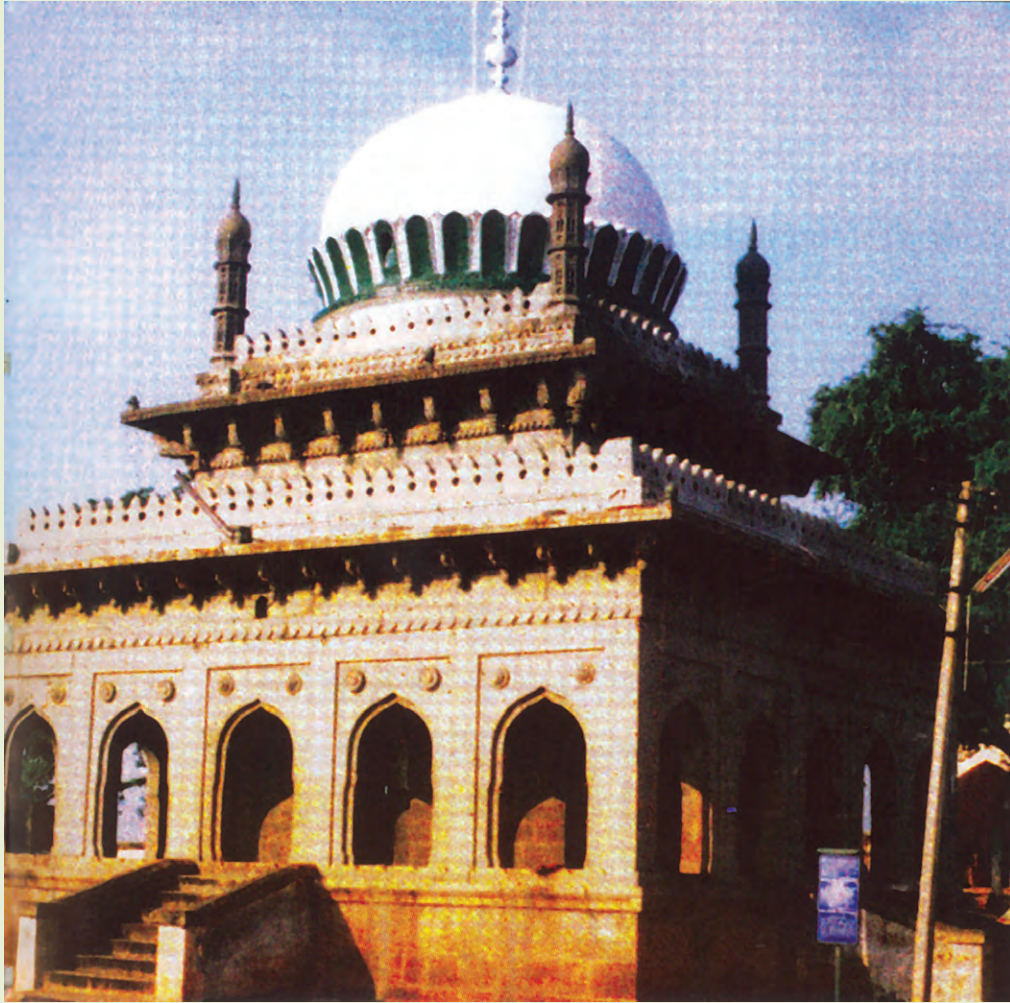
Side by side with the philanthropic activities of Christian missions, the work of proselytisation went on, specially among the lower classes in Hindu Society. The fervour of the missionaries and the silent work of proselytisation through hospitals and educational institutions integrated the diversified communities of Hinduism.

The spirit of tolerance was firm and constant throughout. When Jainism flourished in Karnataka, the Jain teachers were looked upon with the same respect as the teachers of the Vedic faith and the same regard was shown to the *Kalamukha* teachers later. In the face of vague surmises that Vishnuvardhana persecuted the Jainas, there are authentic records to show that he made grants to Jaina *bastis* though he was an apostate from the Jaina faith. In fact, the particular form of faith to which the ruler of

Collage of Christian Churches



a kingdom was an adherent, never interfered with his primary function of protecting all his subjects of whatever faith. The Vijayanagara kings conducted discussions between the various religious faiths in the same though less comprehensive way in which Akbar did in the north towards the end of the same century and the zealous Muslim ruler Tipu felt bound as a sovereign to protect Hindu temples and *mathas*. Religion has been a living force in communities and the communal consciousness has always expressed itself in a longing for synthesis and harmony. Karnataka has been a nursing ground for the most varied types of religious cultures.



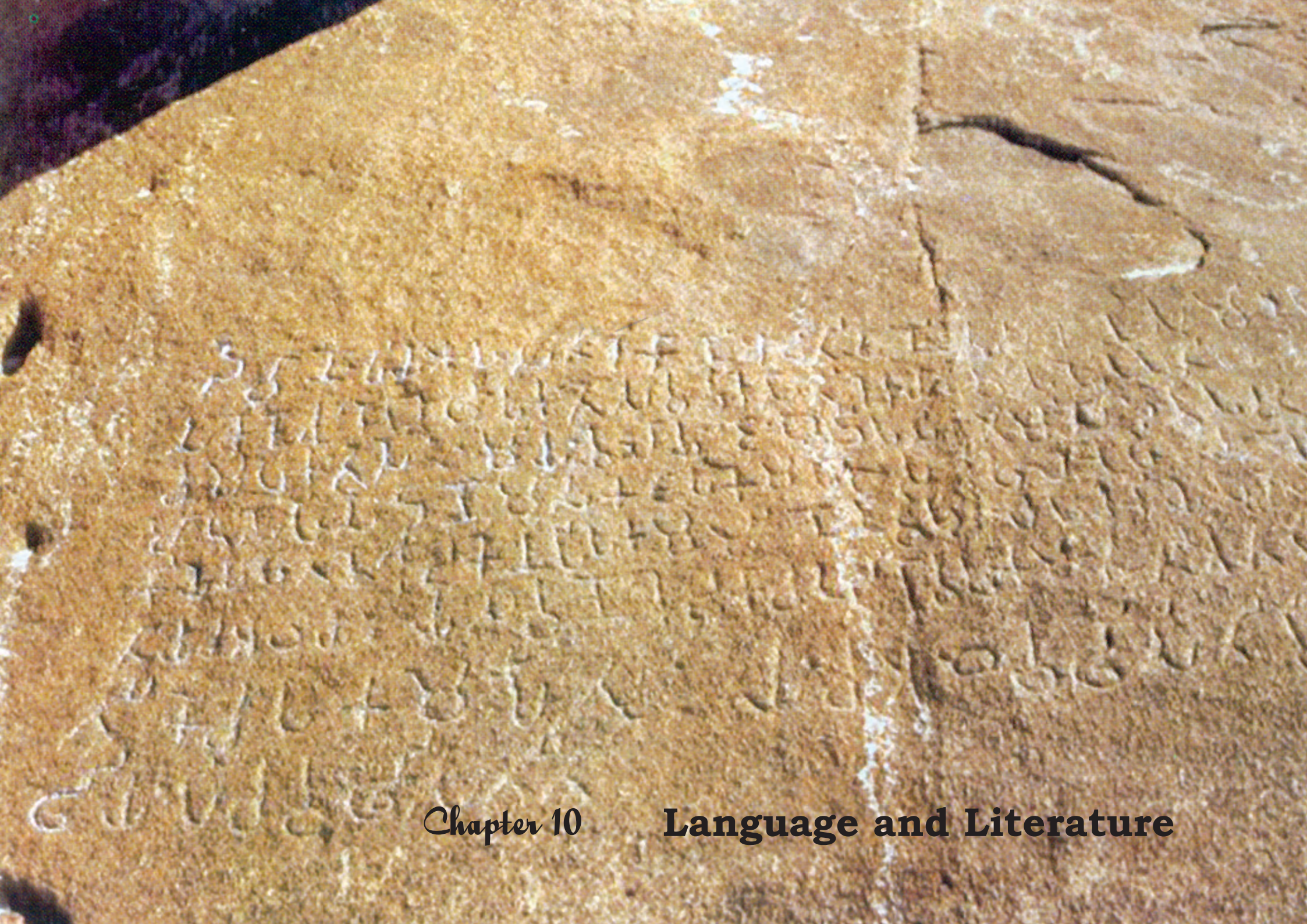
Sangameshwara Temple, Kudala Sangama, Bagalkot District



*Parshwanatha Temple,
Bijapur district*

*Chamundesvari Temple, Chamundi Hill,
Mysore*





Chapter 10

Language and Literature

