

# Panchacharas (Five Rules) in Veerashaivism

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

### Article History

Published Online: 07 September 2018

### Keywords

Veerashaivism, Lingayatism, Five Rules, Panchacharas

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## ABSTRACT

Veerashaivism or Lingayatism is most oldest religion in India. With the time, many of the philosophers were interpreted and analysed their views, so that best principles or code of conduct should be designed for Veerashaivas. As such, Acharas (Rules) or Panchacharas (Five Rules) are governing the ways of life of Veerashaivas. The paper described these Panchacharas.

## 1. Introduction

Veerashaivism or Lingayatism is the most ancient religion. It is one of the international religions. It is atypical, broad and coordinator. There is physical and spiritual pleasure in it. There is the satisfaction and entire light<sup>1</sup>. Veerashaivism or Lingayatism is the fair combination of philosophy and spirituality. It is the spiritual tradition of India.

## 2. Achara in Veerashaivism

In Veerashaivism, there are five rules, (codes of conduct). They are called Panchachar. They are Shivachar, Lingachar, Sadachar, Bhrutachar and Ganachara. As described in Veerashaiva web site (<http://www.veerashaiva.com>), 'Achara' means conduct, behaviour or attitude or manner of action towards others. Man, being a social animal, has to behave towards his fellow-beings with compassion, courtesy, empathy, love, and sympathy. Behaviour is, as it were, a mirror which reflects the man's image. What is becoming in behavior is honorable, and what is unbecoming is dishonorable. Consciousness of inward knowledge gives confidence to the outward behavior, which is the best to grace man in his actions. Man is not only the social animal but the self-determining intelligent animal, above all others. Achara' is proper conduct which is the perpetual revealing of man, for the integrity of man is to be measured not by his profession but by his achara and hence through his action. The moral man does not refer to one who has only the outward form or morality, appearing moral in the eyes of the world, but deep in his vices nor does it refer to him whose morality extends only to legal limits, nor do those who are proud of their morality, but to those who delight in purity, who are gracious, gentle and thoughtful, who being good at heart pour forth the fragrance of pure thoughts and good deeds. Such a moral man is termed Acharvanta or Lingavanta, for Achara is equated with Linga from the ethical point of view in Veerashaivism.

The Panchacharas are intended to convey the principles of religion and religious conduct in general, by these two psychological operations to the members of the community. These panchacharas or five codes of conduct are laid down for

the behaviour of an individual as a social being. These Panchachara are described as follows in brief.

### 1. Shivachara:

Every Lingayat should believe that the Shiva is the Supreme deity. He has not to worship any other deity. Lingayat should worship only Shiva throughout his life. The devotee has to maintain all throughout his life the faith and belief that Shiva is the only Godhead as the object of Upasana to the exclusion of other deities. Whatever devotional acts he performs, prayers he offers, and thoughts he thinks they must be all about Shiva and none else. This is Shivachara<sup>2</sup>.

Shivachar is the practice of treating all devotees of Parashiva as equal. There must not be any discrimination between rich or poor, elites or untouchables, higher castes or lower castes. During Basaveshwar's times, discrimination was condemned and equality of all gender and castes was emphasized.

### 2. Lingachara:

Lingachara is the worship of Shiva, through Linga. Linga is the symbol of Shiva. The worship of Linga is the worship of Shiva. Every Lingayat should worship the Shiva in the symbol of Linga and they should wear the Linga on their body throughout the life. The devotee should remain faithful to Linga and serve him faithfully throughout his life, as faithfully as the devoted wife has to serve her husband to the end of her life<sup>3</sup>.

Lingachara requires that every Lingayata or Veerashaiva should worship Shiva in the form of Ishtalinga which he always wears upon his body. The worship of Ishtalinga twice a day is the beginning of daily observances. The wearing of Linga was not universal amongst the Shaivas before Basava; he however made wearing the Linga universal. It was with the object of bringing home to its wearer, the fact that the Divine resides within him, in his own body he suggested that a Veerashaiva must always wear a Linga on his person. The Divine is not to be sought in caves and temples nor in sacred centers and places of pilgrimage. As one is apt to lose sight of this fact, Basava enjoined that everyone should wear it in order that it may serve as a constant reminder of the Holy presence within

himself. Prayers and contemplation grow into the worship of the higher modification of Shiva. Ishtalinga is the godhead to which the devotee should remain faithful. Lingachara is designed to develop the values of the character in the devotee. This prepares the devotee fit and suitable for the reception of moral values which condition the existence and welfare of society. The values of the character are discipline, self-restraint, respect for law, limitation of desires and willing cooperation. The practice of these virtues has now become urgent and imperative.

### 3. Sadachar:

Sadachar means good behaviour. Sadachar requires a Lingayat to follow a profession and live strictly a moral and virtuous life. He should earn money by moral behaviour in his profession. He should utilise his money for supporting his family. He should use surplus money for others in their needs. He should give money to his Guru for the propagation of religion and service of the public. Lingayats do not make difference among them. They should take all to be as respectable and good as Shiva. Character, right moral and religious conduct, should be the only criterion and consideration in the intercourse with other members of the community, and nothing else like a high or low profession should influence affairs of social life. This is Sadachar<sup>4</sup>.

Sadachara consists of the following components:

- Religious conduct and right moral character - nothing else like wealth, professional difference, status in the community, etc., - should be only the criteria to interact with the society.
- The Lingayat should earn living by doing honest work (Kayaka).
- The surplus wealth should be distributed to other needy persons (Dasoha).
- He/she should invite Jangama (holy person), who moves around to propagate the religion and preaches the right way to practice religion.
- Lingayats should respect one another and consider and treat everyone as equal.

### 4. Bhrutyachara:

Bhrutyachar is the devotee's attitude of complete humility towards Shiva and his forms of Linga. Lingayat should maintain attitude of humility towards his guru, Jangama and give them respect. The attitude of Lingayat in social behaviour and intercourse should be one of humility, modesty and respect for others, so also he should be kind to all animals and treat them

kindly. In short, he is a servant of the society and a friend of all animals.

Bhrutyachara is the devotee's attitude of humility towards Shiva and his devotees. Basava was a living example of humility and modesty. Mark his words, "There is none lower than me". He has to maintain the attitude of humility towards his Guru, who gives him guidance in religious practices; towards the Jangama who provides guidance in spiritual discipline and towards the Sharanas who are the spiritual associates. In short, the attitude of a Lingayata in social behaviour and intercourse should be one of humility, modesty and respect for others, so also, he should be kind to all animals and treat them kindly. This is Bhrutyachara, the conduct of a Lingayata as a servant of the society and as a friend of all animals. Basava condemned animal sacrifice and has expressed pity for the animals.

### 5. Ganachar:

Lingayats behaviour towards the community as a whole is called Ganachar. As a member of the community, he has to strive for its upliftment and development. Ganachara is a social conduct with an implication of "each for all Lingayats and all for each Lingayat". In other words, everyone in the community (or Gana) must avoid all that comes in the way of practice of spirituality. Ganachara is devotee's behavior towards community as a whole. He/she should not entertain the ill treatment of the Supreme God and Jangama, injustice among men, and cruelty towards other living creatures. As a member of the community, he/she should always strive for the betterment of community and its welfare. He/she should stand for justice against any human beings, and should fight against the injustice to anyone. Lingayats will not support killing/hurting other humans, animals but when a time comes need to protect himself with his society, and he should be ready for the same which is known as Ganachara.

### 3. Conclusion:

It is highlighted that every religion teaches morality and ethics and emphasize good behaviour among people. Veerashaivism is based on humanity, equality, fraternity and spirituality. When observed, there is unrest and division among people of all castes and religions in the name of rich and poor, male or female, lower classes or elites, etc. It has become a greater problem of India and it has also become threat to national integrity. Hence, the Acharas emphasize humanity and brotherhood among all the devotion to single god encourage unity among people. Further, love, affection and cooperation towards people and animals reduce violence in society. In this way, Acharas as are the ways for right livelihood.

### References

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4. Sakhare, Ibid, p. 329.