
UNIT 12 AKKA MAHADEVI: CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL ORDER*

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit will tell you about the life and ideas of Akka Mahadevi, who was an early female poet of the Kannada Literature and an eminent personality in the *Lingayat* religion of 12th century India. This unit will describe and understand how and why she ostracized the social constraints on women. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the life of Akka Mahadevi and why she denounced the oppressive social constructs
- Characteristics of the Lingayat tradition
- Critique of social order and resistance to patriarchy
- Akka as a Feminist icon
- Feminist Epistemology of Akka
- Some Criticism of hers and of the Lingayat Tradition

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Akka Mahadevi was born in Udutadi, near Shivamoga in the Indian state of Karnataka around 1130. According to some scholars, she was born to a couple named Nirmalshetti and Sumati, who were both the devotees of Para Shiva.

She was a woman saint from Medieval India who claimed like many other 'enlightened' people of her time and age (in India) that differences like those of sex/gender, good fortune, wealth or caste (jaati) didn't matter in the quest for the 'Knowledge of ultimate reality'. She 'wrote' vachanas (sayings), free verses or prose-poems that talk of her quest for the 'Knowledge of ultimate reality' and the path to it. Her vachanas have been interpreted as important contributions to the Indian feminist and social epistemological tradition.

12.1.1 Early Age

Akkamahadevi was born as Mahadevi in Uduthadi to parents who seem to have already been ardent devotees of Shiva. Akka or sister was later added to depict the respect and sense of endearment with which the sharanas held her. Accounts suggest that a Guru, who blessed her with the Istalinga, introduced her to the worship of Shiva at a very young age. Thus, shunning the material world and its worldly men, she adopted her chosen god, *Chennamallikarjuna*, as her husband.

12.1.2 “Guru” in the life of Akka

At the age of seven or eight, Akka Mahadevi was initiated by her guru, Sri Gurulingadeva, and given the Ishtalinga. Some scholars are of the opinion that the name Gurulingadeva is symbolic and the Lord Himself was her Guru. However, in many of her vachanas Akka Mahadevi pays high tribute to her Guru, emphasizing his role in her spiritual progress.

Akka Mahadevi’s inherent spiritual temperament was nurtured with the blessings of her Guru. Although *Deeksha* is considered to be the spiritual birth of an individual, in the case of an evolved spiritual aspirant like Akka Mahadevi, it can be said that it was merely an initiation of the completion of her spiritual journey. The spiritual maturity of an ordinary devotee and a devotee of Akka Mahadevi’s stature can be likened to the lighting of a lamp. While a lamp lit with ordinary wicks takes time to catch fire, a lamp lit with camphor catches fire immediately.

For a disciple, the spirit of surrender to the Guru is of utmost significance in one’s spiritual progress. This noble spirit of surrender is expressed externally by worshipping the Guru’s feet in Lingayatism and Sanatan Dharma. This was visible in Akka’s adulation for her guru as well.

12.2 SPIRITUAL LIFE: MAHADEVI AS A SAINT

12.2.1 Marriage and Renunciation

Regarding marriage, there are disagreements among her numerous hagiographers. Some scholars, including *Harihara*, hold the opinion that she caught the attention of the local King Kaushika and was forced into a marriage with him, but on the condition that he would not disrupt her religious practice. Other scholars insist that she never married anyone except her divine lord Chennamallikarjuna. As per popular legend, the marriage did take place but as *A.K. Ramanujan* put it, the rivalry between the divine lover and the human love seems to have come in the way.

Akkamahadevi was unable to reciprocate Kaushika’s worldly desire for her as she considered herself betrothed to Lord Chennamallikarjuna. Kaushika’s advances towards her seem to have come in the way of her worship and hence, she is said to have walked out of the marriage. Many oral retellings and legends suggest that she walked out naked, renouncing all worldly desires, including her clothes, while others suggest that her hair grew out suddenly to protect her from the advances of Kaushika. Thus, began her journey as an ascetic-wanderer in pursuit of her divine lover Chennamallikarjuna.

On analysis of this incident in Akka Mahadevi’s life one gets an insight into the shackles of societal norms that bind individuals. Although her parents were Lingayats and were aware of the Linga pati, sarana sati (the Lord as the husband and the devotee as the wife concept), they found it difficult to accept that their daughter was going to practise it literally.

12.2.2 Mahadevi the Saint and entry in *Anubhava Mantapa*

Upon walking out from her marriage, she reached Kalyana and spent an important period at the *Anubhava Mantapa*, a stage for open discussion on different issues including reasoning and social change. There Mahadevi expressed her views boldly. The interactions that took place there are compiled in the 15th century anthology of vachanas called *Sunya Sampadane*. She was very open in her criticism of society and patriarchy and was extremely bold in stating her views through her vachanas. Her conviction earned her the honorific title, 'Akka', signifying 'elder sister'. The other notable saints of those times are Basavanna, Chenna Basavanna, Prabhudeva and Madivalayya, in whose company and argumentation, she accomplished development.

12.2.3 Arguments at *Anubhava Mantapa*

In the text of *Sunya Sumpadane* which gives a poetic account of the spiritual deliberations held in the *Anubhava Mantapa* by the Sharanas (saints of the Lingayat Tradition), provides a moving description of how Akka Mahadevi was put to an acid test by the Sharanas (poets of the Lingayat tradition) before accepting her into their fold.

Her exchange with *Allama Prabhu* is deeply insightful, not merely regarding her spiritual status, but also regarding her absolute surrender to her beloved, Chennamallikarjuna. Her entry into the *anubhava mantapa* is preceded by a series of questions by Allama Prabhu.

Akkamahadevi's response to these questions establishes her detachment from the world of desire. When Allama tries to ascertain why a woman who claims to have reached a state of union with the Lord would be conscious of covering her body, Akkamahadevi's response is one of absolute rejection and defiance to social conventions.

It is impossible to escape the power of her realisation:

What if the body is dark and withered, O Lord
What if the body is glowing and glittering, my Lord
After the inside is pure,
O Lord Chennamallikarjuna
What matters if
O Lord
How the body you love is?

Hearing the humbling response of Akkamahadevi must have brought about a change of heart in the sharanas who then allowed her entry into the *Anubhava Mantapa*. Basavanna, Allama Prabhu and Chennabasavanna also go on to honour the heights of her spiritual attainment and the brilliance of her words in their own vachanas.

12.2.4 Journey to Sri Sailam

Even with this acceptance and respect that she eventually received amongst the sharanas, Akkamahadevi pushed forth in her journey. Her search for the divine knew no limitations and it is well known that at an age of 25 ,emerging out of Kalyana, Akkamahadevi continued her journey in search of the divine and is finally said to have found union with her Lord Chennamallikarjuna in the dense forests of Kadali in the Srisaila mountains of Andhra Pradesh.

Mystical developments of the period gave a vent to bhaktins like Akka to protest against the existing systems in the society and come out of the relationships they were unwillingly pushed into. Akka sought to consummate her love with the divine. As she kept on pondering, Akka's idea of Chenna Mallikarjuna transformed from that of the *Puranic Shiva* to the nebulous Divine — the person who plagued her spirit. She saw the Absolute in all things. Each tree was the *kalpavriksha* (the heavenly tree), each shrub was the *Sanjeevani* (life giving medicine) each spot was a *teertha* (pilgrimage) each water body contained *Amritha* (elixir) and each rock was the *chintamani* pearl (pearl). Her very breath turned into the divine scent. His structure turned into hers. Having known the divine, there was nothing else to know. She turned into the honey bee that drank the nectar of Chenna Mallikarjuna, and broke down into it. What remained was – “Nothing, none at all"! This paragraph symbolizes her as a complete spiritual, mental and emotional unification with the Divine after which no other desire remained .

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What was the early life of Akka and what was the role of her first Guru?

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2. Describe Mahadevi's renunciation of marriage and journey up till Srisailam. What is the role of Anubhava Mantapa in this regard?

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12.3 MAJOR WRITINGS

Akka Mahadevi's encounters, both otherworldly and residential, spilled out as basic verses (vachanas) in Kannada. Set in casual language and loaded up with consistent with life comparisons, her vachanas infiltrate the inner voice of the peruser with their profundity of significance and melodious excellence. not only an emotional distillate, but also as a critique of the existing social order.

The total number of vachanas is more than 300 which are highlighted in *Yoganga Trividhi*, Her Vachanas are from where her ideas against patriarchy and social order can be seen.

Her brilliance came from the fact that she surrendered her social position and residential security for the company of Shiva. She battled to demonstrate that each spirit, regardless of sexual orientation, has a privilege to investigate and arrive at the Divine. She was a progressive, a social reformer, a vigorous aficionado and an extraordinary writer. Her vachanas are full of revolutionary ideas that we will look at coming sections.

12.4 INTELLECTUAL INSPIRATION FROM THE LINGAYAT TRADITION AND CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL ORDER -1

12.4.1 Impact of the Lingayat Tradition

Mahadevi's parents were both Lingayats. Hence, while studying Akka Mahadevi's life and her vachanas, it is imperative to understand the tenets of Lingayatism since she was born in a Lingayat family. Her vachanas suggest that her formative years were deeply rooted in its ideologies

The two important currents of Bhakti that impacted the lives of a very large section of society in the medieval Karnataka have been the 12th century **Virasaiva** (also known as Lingayats) and the 16th century **Haridasa** movement. Bhakti marga based on an intense and passionate love for the God was characteristic of the movement. Love and devotion are the most important means of spiritual perfection. A proliferation of poetic literature in the vernacular marked the movements. The path of devotion was expounded by the saints. These saints, some of whom were women, spoke and wrote in the regional language and their experiences were expressed through their mother tongue. By communicating in simple language, they tried to instill into the hearts of the people Bhakti which did not involve scouring the scriptures, instead it preached pure love and devotion to the God.

12.4.2 Social Value of the Vachans

The Bhakti movement that flourished across various literary cultures, gave rise to a distinct genre of expression in Kannada. This was the *vachana*, loosely understood as free verse poems or sayings, which arose within the Kannada literary tradition during the 12th century *sharana* (*Lingayat*) movement. Although

it did not develop with the exclusive intention of turning into a literary form, the language used by the sharanas, the content of their vachanas and the people they addressed through these vachanas, broke with the existing literary canon in Kannada and consequently, brought about a defining turn in Kannada language and literature.

Unity of Speech and Action: While the vachanas reflect various aspects of Bhakti, the vachana poets lay great emphasis on the unity of speech and action. This unity, they stressed, is central to the worship of Shiva. Thus, vachanas—these passionate dialogues in pursuit of union with the *ishtadevta* (sharana's chosen form of Shiva for worship)—not only break with the existing literary tradition, but also reject social divisions, hierarchies, formal structures of learning and worship, and pursuit of worldly pleasures.

What is important is that in a simple way, the movements exposed the degraded social institutions and values. It was through their writings that an expression of revolt against the existing social system was made. The Sharana (Lingayat or the Virasaiva) movement was vociferous expressing its views against the strongly entrenched equality, of sexes, caste system, superstitions and blind beliefs, meaningless rituals, animal sacrifices, pilgrimages and such other beliefs by which they provoked the people to assess and think of the socio-religious conditions. As such, the traditional beliefs and social systems came to be challenged. In a way, these movements tried to bring about an intellectual awakening in society.

12.4.3 Resistance to Caste and Religious Oppression

Scholars have different opinions on the way Lingayatism should be defined. Some consider it as an offshoot of *Saivism*, while others regard it as an independent religion. However, the focus here will be to understand the socio-religious ideals of Lingayatism. It can be said that the great philosopher and statesman *Basavanna* in Karnataka resurrected Lingayatism in the 12th c A.D. It was a time when Hinduism was at its ebb. Ritualism and caste rigidities were at its peak. The emphasis on the ritualistic aspect of the Vedas naturally empowered the Brahmin caste. Without the priestly caste, it was not possible for people to worship the Lord. It led to the practice of untouchability and the inhuman exploitation of the Sudras. After touching a Sudra, one was not just expected to take bath but also fast in order to atone for the sin! Under such apathetic circumstances, Basavanna issued a clarion call for reformist Lingayatism. It is noted that Basavanna's aim was the "*establishment of universal faith and brotherhood and the abolition of caste system. His object was not only to reform secular religion, but also to uplift man as a whole – socially, morally and in the matter of piety and devotion.*"

12.4.4 Sharana Movement and Anubhava Mantapa as an Argumentative Space

It is under the Lingayat saint-poet Basavanna that the sharana movement grew expansively, turning the city of Kalyana into an important center of interaction

and dialogue for the sharanas. At Kalyana, Basavanna set up the *anubhava mantapa* (hall of experience) with the intention of attracting the sharanas to hold important discussions around social, spiritual and political issues. Thus, it is no surprise that this period witnessed the flourishing of vachanakaras (vachana poets).

Even though there existed a broad similarity amongst the sharanas, each had their own spiritual experience and way of communicating their devotion, love, angst, struggle and journey to be one with the *ishtadevta*. One is struck by the vast differences in their pathways and the absence of a rigid religious doctrine in many instances. Each had their own language of intimation while reflecting on the social and spiritual realities.

For instance, Basavanna's vachanas are strong commentaries on the socio-political realities, while Allama Prabhu is mostly mystical in his vachanas and employs an esoteric language. Akkamahadevi's vachanas are astounding in their lyrical expanse and the force of devotion in them.

It is not surprising then that a significant number of women, with Mahadevi leading them, were a part of this 12th century movement, creating a fertile ground for the emergence of many women vachana poets. They criticized personal and social hypocrisy, corrected even their own husbands and in a sharane like Akka Mahadevi, we come across an intellectual and spiritual peak of the movement. The *anubhava mantapa* was a space where women came forward in discussion and debate and in the process gave birth to vachanas that present an account of their own spiritual struggle.

12.4.5 Symbol of Ishtalinga as a resistance to Brahmanical Oppression

Lingayatism or Virasaivism was an attempt to bridge the gap between the secular and the spiritual by the realization of spiritual ideals and their implementation in society. The Lingayats accepted and upheld the message of *jnana kanda* (imparting knowledge of the Self) from the Vedas but rejected the *karma kanda* (ritualistic aspect). To ascertain this and castigate the Brahminical superiority, Basavanna used the concept of *Ishtalinga*. The Ishtalinga is similar to the *Sivalinga*, but its worship does *not* require any mediator priest. The Guru gives it at the age of eight to a Lingayat child during the diksha (initiation) ceremony. Every Lingayat, irrespective of gender, wears it on the body and worships it. This worship is completely personalized; the person needs only devotion and faith in the Lord to be able to perform it. The same was championed by Mahadevi.

12.4.5.1 Pillars of Lingayatism

Lingayatism stands on three pillars: *Guru*, *Linga* and *Jangama*. They command equal reverence, as it is understood that, in essence (tattva), they are the same. They represent the same Supreme consciousness. A brief description of the three terms is as follows:

**Political Concerns
and Key Ideas**

- **Guru** is the spiritual guide who initiates the aspirant into the Lingayat faith with diksha. This is of paramount importance as during diksha, the Guru, with his grace, gives the aspirant the Ishtalinga to be worn on the body. The Ishtalinga, being a symbol of Divine Consciousness, is a reminder to the aspirant of the spiritual goal of life. Also, the Guru imparts the principles of Lingayatism on this occasion. So it is like a *second* birth – a spiritual birth. The Guru’s guidance becomes imperative for the spiritual maturity of the aspirant.
- **Linga** represents the Supreme Lord or Divine Consciousness. The aspirant is expected to treat it as Siva Himself. Just as Siva resides in the heart of a person in the form of Chaitanya (Consciousness), Siva is present in the Ishtalinga.(and not sivalinga). The Guru gives this Ishtalinga to the aspirant, who is expected to worship it regularly, keeping it on the palm of the hand.
- **Jangama** can be best defined as one who has overcome janana (birth), gamana (life), and marana (death). The specialty of the Jangama is that he does not stay in a particular place. Rather, he moves from place to place, preaching the ideals of Lingayatism and guiding spiritual aspirants..

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. What are the main writings of Akka knows as?

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2. What is the role of the LIngayat Tradition and how is it related with Akka mahadevi’s social and political ideas?

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3. Why is Lingayat tradition considered a resistance to Brahmanical oppression?

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12.5 INTELLECTUAL INSPIRATION FROM THE LINGAYAT TRADITION AND THE CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL ORDER-2: IMPACT ON MAHADEVI’S VACHANAS

Impact of the Lingayat Tradition on Mahadevi’s Vachanas

Akkamahadevi’s vachanas share all the characteristics of the Lingayat tradition and explicitly express the resistance to patriarchy as well as monarchy /kingship in the 12th century vehemently. She resisted the custom-ridden society which would suffocate the lives of women in the name of Vedas and Brahmanical priesthood, in general and men in the name of kingship in particular. She is deemed to be the first woman who has the traces of feminism or rather she is the archetype of feminism, as early as 12th century.

She not only resisted the patriarchal society but found a parallel society to establish woman’s identity: by deeming the Almighty as the eternal husband contrary to the earthly husband. She knew it very well that it was an arduous task to face the patriarchal society once a woman comes out of the wedlock.

12.5.1 Vachanas of the Women Saints as a Form of Social Resistance

The Vachanas composed in the twelfth century by men and women saints from across the society finds no parallel in literary movement or the impact and imprint it left on the society. The fact that this explosion took place in a caste-ridden twelfth century Karnataka society, in which all the shudra and untouchable castes were denied right to literacy, makes the vachana revolution even more amazing. They rejected the stereotypes and traits traditionally attributed to and assigned to women. Their very emergence in the movement was a social revolt. The spiritual path helped women to break out of all traditional stereotypes and as saints; they made the unacceptable, acceptable. They tried to break away from the shackles of tradition, orthodoxy and convention which sought to control women’s sexuality

A galaxy of saints numbering over 300, including women saints, enriched the Lingayat movement thereby revolutionizing the religio-social fabric of their times

12.5.2 Breakdown of Caste Hierarchies

The Virasaiva/Lingayat movement produced a community of saints drawn from diverse socio-economic back grounds from the upper castes to the lowest in the caste hierarchy. A large number of the Vachanakaras were from the lower strata and the artisan classes. The movement opened itself to all castes and trades. There were many who came from occupations such as tanners, farmers, wood cutters, rope makers, ferry men, cobblers, toddy tappers, basket makers and so on. It was such a collapsing of classes and occupations in the new community of saints.

All the Virasaiva Vachanas make it clear that there is no gender or caste differentiation and hence, the idea of pollution whether in the case of the female or of the untouchable is illogical or redundant

12.5.3 Smashing of patriarchy

True to the above presented tradition, Akka made a radical departure from established social norms, in her own fashion. Use of mystical vocabulary turned God into a husband. Hence, patriarchy and social constructs were smashed by women who sought the spiritual path, because they defied the very existence of their husbands by regarding only God as the husband.

*Take these husbands who die,
decay, and feed them
to your kitchen fires!*

12.5.4 Critique of Monarchy

The Sharanas like Akka defied the belief that the king is the master of the state. Instead, they upheld the view that the Almighty is the only master of the universe. Hitherto, the womenfolk of the time did believe that the husband is the master of one's homestead. Now, they realized that the Almighty is the only master and they need to sacrifice themselves heartily.

12.5.5 Nudity and defiance of social order

From the sublimation of worldly love, Akka Mahadevi passes on to transcendence. Reaching the heights of sexual transcendence, where gender differences have become meaningless, the saint, male or female, begins to go naked. While male nudity despite being unusual, may not have evoked the kind of reaction female nudity did. Akka went naked with her body covered only by her lengthy hair. Akka going nude and shedding all inhibitions was an act of defiance against the patriarchal notions concerning a woman's sexuality and attempts to control it. Besides it was a blatant refusal to submit to male demands. Nakedness is a way of protesting against the injustice, atrocities, oppressions

meted out. She resorted to the same means to protest against the institution of marriage.

She writes

To the shameless girl
Where is the need
for cover and jewel?

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12.6 FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Feminist epistemology: Akka's vachanas, have been considered an instance of an important contribution to the Indian feminist epistemological tradition because they helped create and understand new categories of Feminist inquiry. Akka Mahadevi defies the traditional feminine images by giving expression to her desire. Besides being a mystic, seer, poet, she is also seen as a social reformer. In a time when women were not even allowed to attend school, she became part of a learned group.

Dissolving of gender lines: In an important departure from her times, she sees men as posing a hindrance to the path of enlightenment and a challenge that she must overcome. This is important as many sharanas see only women as *maya*, an illusion to be distanced from in the path to spiritual transcendence. Akka presents a different picture without singling out either of them:

Maya haunts the ego of a man

In the form of a woman.

Maya haunts the ego of a woman

In the form of a man.

To this world of Maya

A Sharana's madness seems like Maya.

For a Sharana who has the love of Chennamallikarjuna,

There is no Maya, no madness, no ego.

This dissolving of gender lines is definitely creating a new category of Feminist epistemology and enquiry. Akka was ahead of her times in every way .

12.7 CRITICISM

The Major criticisms are as follows:

1. Women within Virasaivism had almost all the rights to a spiritual life with one notable exception. They were not conceded the status of a Jangama by which women were denied the conduct of priestly ceremonies nor become head of a Virasaiva mutt or religious organization. Despite the equalitarian character of the movement it is evident that it was not totally free from gender bias

2. Akka getting criticized by fellow women : Other Virasaivite women saints , were not very welcoming to the whole question of discarding of clothes in the spiritual path was. It was more or less negative. Akka Mahadevi seems to have faced criticism from her own sex in this respect.

3. *Shunya Sampadane*, i.e. a compilation of Akka’s writings were done by the royal kings much later after Akka’s death as Virasaivism became the *royal* religion. Some critics have pointed out that they may have only picked up vachanas with a suitable political agenda. Hence, no genuine pattern or real order to Akka’s works can be found now.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your progress with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1. Explain Mahadevi’s ideas on patriarchy, nudity, monarchy and other resistances to Social order like caste hierarchies.

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2. Describe Akka’s Feminist Epistemology.

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3. What are the major criticisms or limitations of Akka’s thoughts as stemming from the Lingayat Tradition?

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12.8 LET US SUM UP

The society in which Akka lived neither approved of her behavior nor her resistance very easily. However, she did not give up her attempts to change the

society. She faced very many challenges all through her life even for her basic necessities like food and shelter. She bore all hardships and achieved what she was passionate about: the mystic height in which she excelled even her male counterparts, namely Basaveshwara and Allamaprabhu. She expresses her arduous task thus:

*When hungry, alms are available in town.
When thirsty, ponds, streams and wells are there,
When the body catches cold,
There are cast off clothes to cover it with
And for bed to sleep in, deserted temples.
For my soul's companion
You are there, O Cennamallikarjuna!*

Thus the woman saint Akka Mahadevi documented her resistance to patriarchy and monarchy simultaneously: by practicing bridal mysticism after she came out of the palace of her earthly husband, King Kousika.

The Bhakti Movement emerged in different parts of southern India, and produced a number of women poets. History has many instances where women have broken stereotypical bondage of womanhood and taken to writing. Some of them wrote about the problems faced by women.. Akkamahadevi wrote nearly 350 vachanas in Kannada. She described how she broke the restriction imposed on her through her writings which became a formidable tool of critiquing the social order.

Having said this, the entire tradition of Lingayats and Akka are *not* free from some criticism which spring up mainly as women were not allowed to become heads of religious organizations even within the Lingayats. The second main criticism stems from the fact that Akka's choice of *discarding* clothes was seen as too radical and unnecessary by women themselves. Lastly, it is pointed out that Sunya Sampadane , the compilation of Akka's works might have their own *political* bias.

How do we re-conceptualize the role of feminism in India today? Can we envisage a dialogue between feminism and the Indian traditions without imposing the categories of one upon the other? This is a worthy pursuit as Feminist icons with revolutionary ideas like Akka Mahadevi must not be forgotten for their contribution to our intellectual tradition and history of resistance against all forms of oppression.

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12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Born in Karnataka to shavite parents
 - Guru giving her ishtalinga
 - Profound impact on Akka's later spiritual life

2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Marriage with Kaushika
 - Renunciation
 - Journey to Kalyana
 - Anubhava Mantpa as an space for discussion
 - Journey to Srisailam
 - Unity with the divine

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - 300 Vachanas
 - Full of revolutionary ideas
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - A critical response to ebbing Hinduism in 12th century
 - Vachans as having deep social value
 - Sharana movement
3. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Resistance to caste oppression
 - Symbol of Ishtalinga
 - Pillars of Lingayatism

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Breaking down of Caste Hierarchies
 - Vachans on Patriarchy
 - Vachanas on Nudity
 - Ideas on Monarchy
2. Your answer should highlight following points
 - New feminine images
 - New categories
 - Dissolving differences between men and women
3. Your answer should highlight following points
 - Women not given the status of Jangama
 - Women could not become head of a religious organization
 - Mahadevi was criticized by fellow women on discarding clothes
 - Compilation of writings – agenda being questionable.