

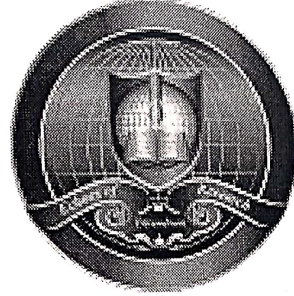
# Echoes Of Research



**Peer reviewed Multi-Disciplinary Research Journal**

**Government College for Women  
Thiruvananthapuram**

ISSN 2348 – 2680



# ECHOES OF RESEARCH

VOLUME 9

Govt. College for Women  
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2020



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# AKKA MAHADEVI-THE MYSTIC SAINT

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## *Abstract*

*Akka Mahadevi, a Veerashaivate Kannada poet who lived in the first half of 12th century is one of the foremost feminists, and spiritual icons in the Indian history. She was a saint, highly intelligent poet, a revolutionary and a mystic who occupied a prominent place in the Veerashaiva Bhakti movement. Her life was a message to the society that body is not a prison of the mind or soul, but the ground of intelligence, creativity and enlightenment. This paper aims to throw light on the life and contributions of Akka Mahadevi.*

The Veerashaivates were social and spiritual revolutionaries in Karnataka during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. They opposed orthodox Hinduism and its practices such as temple worship, performing rites, rituals etc. As per Veerashaiva tradition, one can become a Veerashaiva by wearing Ishtalinga on the body and he or she would be considered equal to other Veerashaivas in all respects. This was the doctrine of Veerashaiva Movement. Mahadevi Akka is considered as a heroic inspirational Woman in Karnataka and Kannada literature. In a period that witnessed the stiffness of the Varna-Jathi order and the women's role being reduced to the status of reproducing caste, Mahadevi stood out from the male-controlled society and did things according to her inner feeling. Akka is worshipped and respected by the Veerashaivates, and at the same time considered as a symbol of rebellion and defiance.

Vachanas or the lyrical compositions of the Veerashaiva mystic saints of Karnataka opened a new era in the history of Kannada literature named as Vachana-Yuga. People belonged to various caste and communities composed Vachanas in their own dialects. The Kannada literature before the 12<sup>th</sup> Century was essentially court poetry composed in a language heavily loaded with Sanskrit and metres borrowed from Sanskrit. Vachana is essentially a mass literature in the spoken language containing individual expression of the writers. More than 216 Vachanakaras,