

Are Sharanas' Intuitions Myths or Miracles?

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“Intuitive Mind is a Sacred Gift!” – Albert Einstein

At the outset, it can be confidently stated that the Veerashaiva Sharanas were the beneficiaries of intuitive cognition, a gift they had attained from rigorous practice of the *Shivayoga*. With this fact in mind, the question: What is intuition? pops up! It is the faculty of internal inquiry aimed at directly acquiring knowledge of reality without the benefit of conscious rational reasoning.

We all receive information primarily through two sources: (1) sensing and (2) intuition. The first one involves physical senses, namely vision, audition, touch, taste and smell. Sensing usually leaves its imprints in our memory bank. While intuition receives information through impressions, it is said to be a mental state.¹ Intuition has been defined as ‘naturalistic decision making’.² It is a cognitive process of making decision rather than based on conscious consideration of pros and cons of the action. Some philosophers have equated it with beliefs.³ Many psychologists treat intuition as ‘beliefs without conscious or introspectively accessible inferential etiology.’^{4a} The role intuition plays in life has been discussed.^{5a}

Intuition, it has been claimed, as the major player in the survival of the human beings through thinking even the mind cannot fathom.⁶ Gayle Goldwin writes: “This whole notion of instinct and intuitive wisdom was once and still is regarded as the essence of femineity. It is the super power that women of all ages across time have consistently relied upon for survival in the world ruled by masculinity.”⁷

According to Gopnik and Schwitzgebel “an inadequate understanding of the nature of intuition and its` application results in error.”^{4a} Intuition means an understanding unaided by conscious logical thinking. Sometimes intuition is confused and gets mixed up with instinct at different levels. “Intuition is when the mind takes in massive amounts of information and processes it so thoroughly.” Intuition is generally associated with insight. Intuition is not instinct, for the latter is hereditary and is subject to evolution. While intuition has its` origin in three E’s: education, environment, and experience. “Intuition is the instantaneous ability to unconsciously obtain pre-existing knowledge (implicit memory) to solve problems and make decisions responding to human needs.”

Intuition is most likely rooted in ancient instincts for survival and adaptation. There is no way our human ancestors could have survived without instincts. They could not have much consciousness before intelligence, group life and speech evolved.” Thus, instinct is innate while intuition involves unconscious decision making without worrying about the pros and cons. “Intuition is the inner voice that accompanies every human being. Our mind operates on dual tracks: instinctive mind and rational mind. What comes out of instinct is automatic, unthinking response; while intuition is a feeling.”

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At the outset it can be confidently stated that the Veerashaiva sharanas were the beneficiaries of intuitive cognition, a gift that they had inherited through the rigorous practice of Shiva yoga. The above narration tells us what intuition is. Sri Aurobindo connects the mind to intuition through two pathways: (1) mental intuition, which tries to fathom external world and (2) internal awareness, which tries to delve deep into the knowledge of itself.¹ Another version describes intuition as the 'highest intelligence', the all-knowing wisdom of the soul; the power of the spirit inherited by the soul by which it perceives the truth directly without the medium of any faculty.² However, modern philosophy states that 'intuition encompasses the ability to know valid solutions to problems and decision making.'³ This write up endeavors to illustrate how intuition empowered our sharanas to expound pronouncement of the cardinal thoughts, namely (1) Creation of the Cosmos, (2) Shaktivishistadvaita Principle and (3) Concept of **Shoonya** (Void).

Creation of the Cosmos:

The Veerashaiva philosophy states that before the cosmos came into existence, there was only the transcendent unsupported, eternal super-void or vast emptiness everywhere and there was neither mobile nor immobile beings, except **Shoonya**, called **Parashiva**. Shoonya in Veerashaivism is also called **Bayalu**, meaning nothingness without any support or boundless Linga; these words imply limitless vastness with nothing inside neither or nothing outside neither with names nor without names; neither with shape nor without shape; neither engaged in action nor engaged in inaction. The Linga with these attributes is called **Mahalinga**, which after becoming charged begins to vibrate. With this highly pent-up state, it undergoes **Pralaya** or **Big Bang**. This inference follows the physical laws of thermodynamics. This explosion reverberated by big primordial sound – "OM", heard across the entire cosmos and time began to roll on. The word OM is composed of two parts, namely "oo" means 'bindu' and "m" suggests creation. The big bang released tremendous energy and heat leading to the formation of various elements and billions of star-studded galaxies, cold space pockets and empty regions.

What was there before the creation?

“Neither the beginning, nor support,
Neither good nor bad traits,
Neither Shoonya nor non-shoonya,
Eternal non-describable Parashiva arose,
From nothing, Oh! Guheshvara (**Allama Prabhu**)

Akka Mahadevi expresses a similar thought.

Before there were neither wise men, nor unwise men,
Before there was neither emptiness nor non-emptiness,
You alone knew the twins,
You alone knew the past, the present and the future,
Oh! Channamallikarjuna.^{4c}

Supra Shaktivishistadvaita Principle

Before discussing this cardinal principle, which makes Veerashaivism the only world religion recognizing energy as the creating agent of our cosmos, it would be helpful to describe the origin of the term **Shaktivishistadvaita**.⁵ The word is composed of three parts: (1) **Shakti** (energy), (2) **vishist** (special) and **advaita** (non-dual). The Vedanthic Brahmin philosophers from South India, namely **Shankara**, **Ramanuja** and **Madva** introduced these terms into the parlor of Vedanthic thought; the advaita in particular owes its origin to Shankara (7th century AD) and Shankara just borrowed the Upanishadic stance that the world is created through the agency of Maya (illusion) and hence it is unreal. Shankara with his eloquent oratory has been considered as the savior of Hindu philosophy. His commentary on the Bhagvada Gita stands still as the first recorded expounding of this great work. The term **Vishista** is due to Ramanuja (11th-12th century). He agreed with Shankara on most aspects except that he qualified the nature of the soul; in that he accepted only the **saguna** aspects (positive attributes) of Brahman and considered Brahman as the same as personal God. To Ramanuja matter, soul and Brahman are real though the former two are dependent on Brahman. To be real, the soul and matter must be dependent on Brahman, meaning Brahman is their inseparable soul and the former have no existence of their own without the existence of the latter. Just as the non-physical human soul controls the physical human body, the non-physical Brahman controls the human soul and matter. A similar view was proclaimed in the 17th century Western philosophy (cf. The Three Musketeers write up). To Ramanuja Brahman is real and the world dependent on Brahman is also real. This is the qualitative difference between Shankara and Ramanuja. Just a word about Madva's viewpoint: he vehemently opposed and contradicted Shankara's proposition of advaita philosophy. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the word 'advaita' finds its mention in the Veerashaiva scriptures – the **Shivagamas**- which predate the Upanishads and the Vedantha thought.

There are subtle and substantial difference between the Vedanthic concept and the Veerashaiva philosophy of the Supra Shaktivishistadvaita principle. Conspicuous by its absence in the Vedanthic thought is the role of Shakti in the creation of the cosmos. In the Veerashaiva philosophy the part that Shakti plays is of paramount importance, for without energy no creation can occur. Since the cosmos is continuously expanding, it requires an eternal source of energy. According to the **Sukshmagama**, Maya (**illusion**) did not create the universe. It is the indescribable **sat-chit-ananda** - (truth, consciousness, and bliss) – the Divine – caused the cosmos.⁶ The Veerashaivas address the Divine as Shiva or **Sthala** ('stha' suggests source and 'la' means return to). Thus the Veerashaiva concept of Divinity incorporates within it the indescribable dynamic creative power. Just as the living beings can't or won't live without **jiva** or life force, the cosmos can't or won't survive without energy (**Shakti**). Veerashaivism believes that the individuals are not qualitatively different from one another. However, they become

different when the individual souls get clouded with impurity and tainted by individual actions in the phenomenal world.

Contrary to Shankara who advocated that world is unreal, the Veerashaiva sharanas believe that the world created by real Divine is indeed real and hence salvation must be achieved in this world and not in the hereafter. Veerashaivism believes that everything in the cosmos possesses consciousness, meaning matter possesses energy. Surprisingly, no other world religion advocates and accepts the proposition that all things in this universe possess energy. However, Einstein's energy equation $E = mc^2$ (E =energy, m = mass and c = the velocity of light) fully supports the Veerashaiva sharanas intuition.⁷ When the cosmic consciousness connects the spirit and the matter, the distinction between the two disappears and ***Mahalinga*** appears. The Mahalinga is Shiva, the transcendent reality, which is at once transcendent and immanent, static, and dynamic. The static aspect is Shiva and the dynamic aspect is Shakti according to the Veerashaiva philosophy.⁸

The following pithy saying by Allama Prabhu describes the nature of the transcendent **Shiva-Shakti dynamism**:

Pray tell me what does the convergence,
Of Shiva and Shakti mean?
Shiva is the supreme soul,
Shakti is the supreme consciousness,
Thus, endowed with dynamic supreme conscious energy,
Only the Linga can fathom the nature,
Of this sublimely mysterious Shiva-Shakti bond, Oh! Guhesvara.

Concept of Shoonya (Void/ *Bayalu*)

Shoonya has been variously described using terms such as pre-cosmos creation status, supra-conscious soul pristinely pure non-describable status, beyond human cognition.⁹ Since the Shoonya is undefinable, the Veerashaivas represent it as ***bindu*** (point) or zero (**0**).^{9b} The Veerashaiva philosophy states that the Shoonya is of four different types: (1) void/emptiness, (2) non-emptiness, (3) graceful Shoonya and (4) ***Nikal*** Shoonya.

It seems that the Vedas and the Upanishads have very little to say on or about Shoonya. It appears that Buddhism, in particular the Mahayana School of thought spearheaded by Nagarjuna, during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD postulated that everything in the universe was real and existed as void (nothing), meaning that everything was made of impermanent materials and as such has no real existence. As the void is the only thing that remains unchanged, it is Nirvana – free from bondage and rebirth. He further believed that the void was everywhere in the phenomenal world and the void could only be realized through experience and meditation.¹⁰ The advocates of this philosophy saw non-existent things as existent and existent things as non-existent things; yet they considered existent world as real though they preached everything was and is void. Replying to an alleged remark by a disciple, Buddha was reported to have commented: “So far as it is empty of self.”

There is a critical and substantial difference between the Buddhist and the Veerashaiva concepts of Shoonya. According to Nagsrjuna, Shoonya was an essential principle that had to be realized and experienced while living in the phenomenal world, for it is beyond description. ***Shoonyata*** – the state of shoonya – remains the same -Nirvana – forever. Buddhism considers all existence to be unreal. No wonder then that it has no place either for the soul nor for the creator in its philosophy!

However, Veerashaivism regards the world as well as the creator of the cosmos to be real and that shoonya is the creative consciousness. The Veerashaiva concept of the cosmic world is our sharanas gift to the world. For the Veerashaivas, the shoonya is not just an empty place; it is everything around us. It is a non-existent pristine state beyond the consideration and constraint of the limitation of space and time. According to Tontada Siddhalingeashara, where shoonya linga is, truth, knowledge and bliss pervade. Then comes Nikal linga sthala. With the dawn of knowledge of the shoonya, one begins to experience truth, knowledge and bliss. Next comes Mahalinga sthala, where one grasps the knowledge of shoonya, which leads to Sadashiva linga. This sthala causes the creation. Progressing further on this path, one climbs further on the ladder of the shatsthsa and to the union of the body with the linga. This union according to Akka Mahadevi's Yoganga Trivedi is shoonya. Thus, to the Veerashaivas: Shiva is shoonya and shoonya is Shiva.

In summary then:

“----- ,
Possesses neither form nor formless,
It is neither time nor timeless touch it,
Neither by sorrow nor by joy,
Beyond all sense of the twain,
Shines our Lord Guheshvara.”

“Nothing inside, nothing outside,
Neither foundation nor stomach,
There was nothing,
With no support for the movable,
With no names for the Creator or for the sustainer,
Arose unboned shoonya,
Oh! Mahalingaguru Siddhesvara prabhu.”

Shoonya Sinhasana

That the 12th century sharanas held the shoonya at the pinnacle of their philosophy is reflected by the fact that they constructed the Antubhava Mantapa – Hall of Experience – in Kalyana to deliberate, debated, dialog and discuss their common community concerns including religious-philosophical points. In a way, this building served as a pontificate. They had installed in it a throne called Shoonya Sinhasana. They kept it unoccupied for the right person to come by. When the great yogi, Allama Prabhu comes to the city of Kalyana; the sharanas found the suitable personage to occupy the throne. After Prabhudev left Kalyana for good, Channabava was selected

as the second occupant of this mythical throne. Sholapur's Siddharamesvara, became the third occupant after Channabavava quit to take care of political problems cropped up in King Bijjala's Kingdom.

The shunya that the Veerashaiva saints intuited was not just a mythical virtual fantasy! It was absolute reality that only the gifted souls could envision. Then this prompts a question: "How did the sharanas come to postulate the presence of the super-void in the cosmos?" They looked deep inside their souls and saw the void or *bayalu* the brightly shining beyond their wildest dream! Were they daydreaming? Not at all. To the sharanas, experience and truth meant more than simple preaching philosophical pronouncements. Remember their words: "Truth is heaven." They intuited the existence of the void in the cosmos during the 12th century, about 900 years before the discovery of the supra-extensive cosmic emptiness! This fact has been confirmed in the 21st century by the renowned astrophysicists. (see the narration on the cosmos elsewhere). To fathom how the sharanas intuited, one needs to see through the mind's eye! In summary then, the human intuition is the sixth sense that enabled the Veerashaiva sharanas to worship through work, to perceive the Divine light through Dasoha, to see the universe through a grain of sand, and to witness the splendor of the soul and to finally achieve the union with the Linga in the palm of the hand.

This intuitive proposition of the sharanas stands supported and substantiated by scientific confirmation.¹¹ Astrophysicist Szapudi states that cosmic microwave background (CMB) primarily composed of photons that originated with the Big Bang some 13.8 billion years ago is just reaching our planet and that there are extremely cold spots and vast cosmic voids in our cosmos as predicted by the Big Bang (*Pralaya*) theory. Whether we accept it or not, whether we believe it or not, the Big Bang (*Pralaya*) theory. Whether we accept it or not, the Big Bang theory, remains as an undeniable fact. Szapudi writes: "a vast expanse of space relatively devoid of matter in space and galaxies in the nearby region of the sky. The void could be the emptiest place in space, rare gigantic wasteland and relatively dense surrounding." Szapudi and his coworkers using the Panoramic Survey Telescope have provided the proof of the presence of the supra-void about 1.8 billion light years across from one end to the other. This makes the largest structure in the empty space (shunya) ever identified by humanity."

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