

RELEVENCE OF SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA BASAVESHWARA TO MODERN INDIA



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ABSTRACT

The Sharanas including Basaveshwara in 12th century launched revolution to lay the foundation of a society based on the principal of social equality establishing social equality is in face is of the major dimensions of humanism in Basaveshwara. Basaveshwara occupies a unique place in spiritual and social spheres. During the 12th century Basaveshwara led a religious revolution in order to kill the demon of caste and creed which threatened to rule the destiny of man born in a Brahmin family.

I. Introduction:

Basaveshwara set his own example by rejecting the ritual ridden Vedic religion in favor of Veerashivism, on emerging vibrant religion having a great concern for the mankind as a whole including the ill-treated, exploited and down trodden class of untouchables refusing to undergo the thread ceremony, Basaveshwara championed the revolution at the grass root level. His revolution rallied around the low caste people and created in them an awareness about the importance of their role in building the new community transcending barriers of caste and having equality of social status and opportunities in all spheres of human life. He regarded all persons including the high born priest and the low born untouchable as equal in the eyes of God and that they should be treated with equal justice and honors.

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II. Relevance of Social Philosophy of Mahatma Basaveshwara:

Basaveshwara wrote many poems (Vachanas) on this topic, in which he radically expresses his ideas. One of the most popular vachanas of Basaveshwara gives a good impression of the close connection between social values and spirituality in a situation of everyday life.

“O lord, let them not say!
To whom become he, to
Whom, to whom?
Let them say; he is ours,
Yes ours, ours!
O lord Kudal Sangama,
Let them say, a son of
Your house”¹

Basaveshwara does not want even a stronger to be respected on the basis of his background, his family or caste, but he hopes to be admitted into the same spiritual heritage.

In another Vachana Basaveshwara works out the theme of the meaningless traditional divisions in contrast with the only real difference between people, which he sees in their attitude towards devotion as his Vachana says;

“God, O God mark my prayer,
I shall call all devotees of Shiva equal,
From the Brahmana at one end,
To the lowest born man at the other end,
I shall call all unbelievers equal,
From the Brahman at one end,
To the untouchable at the other end,
This is what my heart believer?
In saying this should I have any doubt?
Be it as small as a sesqum bud,
O lord Kudal Sangama,
Chop off my nose so that,
The teeth stick out!”²

Here, he explicitly refers to caste stratification, with the Brahmana on top and the low caste untouchable at the bottom, which has lost its meanings among the devotees. Whether they are Brahmanas or untouchables, there is no difference since the real points is that they are world lings. In this way, the traditional division of the people into various castes is completely abolished. He explains the artificial divisions of castes in the following Vachana;

“The fetal seed cannot be implanted in the womb
Except after menstrual floc!
The function of semen drops is even the same
Lust, greed, anger, joy and
All other passions on the same
And hear the preaching of

The sacred wound, but what is the proof of
One's high birth,
The embryo is formed of the seven elements
It has the same birth in the same womb
The alliance of self and soul is ever the same
When, born in the same way,
None superior non inferior
What is the usefulness of caste that discriminates?
Between human beings, as it is so
One become a blacksmith by beating iron
One become a washer man by was hint clothes
One become a Haruva by reading the Vedas
Was any one ever born through the year?
They're fore one who knows the secret of the wings
O lord Kudal Sangam.”³

All are born out of the same womb, whether they are of high caste or untouchables and the soul is the same, therefore caste discriminations are of no use. Castes are nothing but occupational and functional groupings. By this Basaveshwara rejected traditional calcification into castes but another division between devotees and world Linga that remains is no less strict than the old one.

There is one earth under the street of untouchables and under the temple of Shiva, as the following Vachanas makes it clear;

“One water to use in the latrine and to sip
One community for these who know themselves
One results of liberation through the six philosophies
And there is only one about for those who
Know you,
O Lord Kudal Sangama”⁴

By the above Vachana Basaveshwara uproots the obvious Indian understanding that the temple is ritually pure and the settlement of the untouchables a polluted pluck and must be avoided from ritual point of view.

The temple is centrally situated, whereas the untouchables have their quarter's put side the village or town.

But the temple and the untouchable's settlement are both built upon the same earth.

Basaveshwara connects both extremes of the purity scale. Further he laments that it is the devotion of devotee to lord Shiva that makes any place pure and significant are not by its ritualistic symbol in the following Vachana.

“Sir will it is proper to call the colony of the
Untouchables a Holageri
The king should go and camp there
You should believe that house of one
Who wears the linga verily is heaven
It is said if Shiva devotee in the street of the untouchables
It becomes the Shiva world and the house where.
He stays a Shiva temple

Do not listen to the words of the hypocrites
There truly is the heaven where
Lord Kudala Sangama dwells”⁵

In this Vachana symbolism of linga is related to his egalitarian social views. The effect of Ling worship means a drastic change in social circumstances. The message of the Vachana is dear because of the divine presence in the Linga even the community of the untouchables can be elevated to the highest levels. Just as the Ling can have an upgrading function for the untouchable the reverse is also true and Basaveshwara makes this evident in a metaphorically interesting small Vachana.

“What kind of man he might be
Without the touch of Linga he is of inferior caste
But with the touch of Linga he gains a back grounded
Like the touch of the philosopher’s
Stone does change into gold
The lord Kudal Sangama does not like those
Who have all kinds of doubt this?”⁶

Basaveshwara attached great value to wearing the personal Linga, which changed the status of people considerably and brought about a new sense of equality among people. Because of the divine presence of Linga on their body, the whole community of untouchable elevated to the highest level the concept of Linga dispels all ritual purity and impurity.

“Can there be impurity, where the Linga is
Can there be discrimination of caste
Where the Jangama is if it tested by the devotee
Before offering it to a Jangama
The impurity of unholy utterance is sin
None else but Lord Kudal Sangama devotees
Have achieved the consummation of the triple unity”⁷

Thus, his concepts of Linga Jangama and Prasada clearly established the ineffectiveness and insignificance of pollution of caste, which made it possible of all castes to join Veerashaiva community, many people belonging to low castes and untouchables were attracted by the teachings of Basaveshwara and joined in his movement for establishment of casteless society.

“Our Madar Channayya is my father
Our Dohar Kakkayya is my elder uncle
Look, Chikkayya is my grand father
Our Kinnara Bommayya is my brother
Then how do you not know me?
O lord Kudala Sangam?”⁸

In this way, it is the low caste people that constituted his family pedigree. He describes and eulogizes his family ties in many of such Vachanas as follows.

The day of the servant in Channayyas house and the girl of the maid in Kakkayyas house they went both to the field together dung and then they made lye. A child was born to them that were me Lord Kudal Sangama is the witness to this.

In another Vachana when jealous persons jeered at his saying that he had no roots in the new religion since he had no relations there, he boldly answered as under;

“You say I have no kin why?

Nimbavva is my mother
She lives by fetching water
Channayya is my father
He fetches fodder for the rollway stable
You say I have no kin why?
I have a sister who cooks at kana
O lord Kudala Sangama
I but receive through your hands
The devotion my ancestors have hundreds”⁹

Basaveshwara measured the worth of a man by his conduct and character and not by this caste. He used caste concept in a new sense in his moral teachings. This can be explained through a series Vachanas.

“In a short Vachana he says;
He who kills is a pariah
He who eats impure food is an untouchable;
What is caste so to say?
What is caste?
The devotees of our Lord
Kudala Sangama
Who wish all living?
Creatures well
They are well born”¹⁰

An untouchable is one who involves in evil actions hearts other and is bad in his character. He who wishes good to other is a man on real caste. Character is vehemently emphasized as the main consideration for a man. Describing about the character of Madar Channayya an untouchable Basaveshwara says as follows;

“Good is the conduct
Good is the speech
Whichever way turn there is
Chenna the good;
He is good among the prophases
He is good among the purities
The good Chenna tasted the gravel first
And withdrew his had soon to
Let lord Kudala Sangama eat it”¹¹

Even the God eats the food as pure after being tasted by his devotee and to be real devotee on must have good conduct and good speech and everything good around him similar adoption of caste concept can be found in the Vachanas of some after authors as well Chennayya depicted all kinds of wrong doers as untouchables in the following Vachana;

“He who abuses his mother is an untouchable
He who answers his father back is an untouchable
He who abuses his father is an untouchable
He who abstracts the giving of money is an untouchable
He who cuts the troughs thorns on the foot path is an
Untouchable”¹²

Madar Chennayya, who was an untouchable by caste and about whom, Basaveshwara had a very high regard as a great devotee of the lord and whom he respected like his father and he formulated a Vachana adopting this new way of speaking about the caste;

“If action and word are in agreement
You are high caste, not untouchable
But is the word is good and the action had
The impurity is certainly not removed.
If you no knowing the right way act wrongly
By resorting to theft and adultery
Can you still have the body of a wellborn man?
Right action is good caste, bad action is low caste
So you must understand the meaning of both concepts
One should not sink to the level of the
Mark that o enjoyment of the delight of my own shoul”¹³

Another contemporary Sharana of Basaveshwara Dohara Kakkayya while processing Prabhudeva a presiding deity of Sunay Simhasana, says as following Vachana:

“Erasing the taint of being born
Within a wretched caste
He touched me, sanctified me and
He set them Linga on my palm
When the Linga came and touched me
Perished the dross in every limb of me
He lodged the Guru-in this body of mine
And in my mind the Jangama
Placing Prasad in my consciousness
At sight of Pradhus nod feet
Thanks to the grease of Basavanna
Who purged these triple planes?
I have been saved mark it Abhinava Mallikarjuna”¹⁴

These types of Vachanas tell how these Sharanas freed themselves of the taints of caste, of body and mind, of senses life and will of ignorance and forget fullness with the aid of Basaveshwara. Akkanagam’s transcendence is worth quoting in this connection.

“Basavanna has destroyed my taint of caste
Basavanna has effaced my taint of pried
Basavanna has effaced my taint of body and mind
My taint of breathes and will
Basavanna has shown the gate
Into the true abode of space less trance”¹⁵

Basaveshwar as a spiritual physician felt and realized the need for preparing the minds and hearts of people for generating the spirit of emotional integration eschewing artificially created caste barriers. He was fully convinced that the political stability, economic prosperity social cohesion and ideals of unity and equality could be achieved only through the spirit of emotional integration. He did not merely preach solution to do with the evils of caste system and practice of untouchables, but practiced them himself. He suggested inter and intermarriage as solutions to these problems.

As regards interlining Basaveshwar used to visit the untouchable's colony and mix up with the people. One day, while moving about in that area, Basaveshwar entered the house of an untouchable devotee Kambali Nagideva and took his food. This matter was immediately reported to king Bijjala that by his promiscuous inter course with the untouchables, Basaveshwara spelling disaster around. When reprimanded by the king for his reckless behavior, Basaveshwara stood firm and justified his conduct proclaiming that as human beings there was no difference between men and men or a low born untouchable and learned Brahmana.

According to Basaveshwara in the spheres of marriage and sharing of food and other things caste should not become a hurdle if any one tries to make use of caste as a weapon to prevent inter caste marriage dining he is not a true devotee of lord Shiva he is like an impure taking bath in pure water. He the following Vachana makes this amply clear;

“They say their owes of righteous
Living is infringed
By eating that the house of untouchable
And by wearing tier clothes
They look for caste in making meanings
How can I call them devotees?
How can I call them worthies?
Listen, o Lord Kudala Sangama
Their behavior is like that of an
Impure woman bathing impure water”¹⁶

He tells the people that even the lord takes food in the house of a devotion, even if he belongs to the caste of untouchables and wears their both and sees the human world, through untouchable devotees when Shiva himself does not discriminate, how many ordinary human beings do that ? Vachana by him makes this point very clear.

“You passed your time
Eating at the house of one
You earned your cloths at
The house of another so be not provides
Lo you subsisted on Chennayya gruel
So be not provide at all
O Lord Kudala Sangama
You sow what the human world was like
Through Siriyala”¹⁷

In another forceful Vachana, Basaveshwara beautifully explains how the traditionalism was shaken Lords taking food in Chennayyas house that was an untouchable;

“Because our Lord Kudala Sangama
At the low born Chennayya house
The Veda trembled in fear;
The shastra stepped aside
The tarka, unable to argue become dumb
The Agama swerved away from its path”¹⁸

This Vachana indicated symbolically the failure of traditional instruments like Veda, Shastra, Tarka and Agama to stand in the way of rationally conceived social revolution that was

taking place during that time. He goes even a step forward in another Vachana when he says that food is being cooked by a suapacha of a dead dog's meat by the very shade of a Brahmana it gets impure and cannot be offered to the Linga;

“The pot in which the superior cook food

Is a dog's skull, sir?

The low caste Svapachayyas act of covering

Food with slippers least the high caste

Samavadi caste eyes on it

Is a right one its Agama in practice?

None should see him preparing food

That the food seem by the

Corley is unworthy of offering to the Linga is the word

Lord Kudala Sangama Deva”¹⁹

Basaveshwara says that he even would wear the pan chewed by them wear the clothes caste off by them and guard their slippers. If only they are the lords devotees irrespective of fact that they are untouchables;

“Who so ever they be if

They were Shiva Linga

I'll eat the pan chewed by them

I'll wear the clothes east of by such

And live by guarding the footwear

Of those who contemplate our Lord Kudala Sangama

Without parting from him in body and mind”²⁰

No one can dare ask the caste of a person who goes wherever and eats wherever given by the Lord and loved and saved by the God. Blessing of the God is more importance for a man than where he lived and with whom he ate. Thus he says in the following Vachana as bellow;

“Do they ask the caste of one?

Who goes wherever he likes

And eats whatever is given by you

Do they ask the caste of one?

Whom you have loved and saved?

Our low born Madar Chennayya

Who is a shining badge on mankind?

If for grater them you questioners!

O Lord Kudala Sangama is my witness”²¹

This is how he castigates those who questioned credibility of an untouchable devotee about his impure way of living and eating. Devotion is the main force of purity and not the external visible aspects of its. He exhibits his restlessness when these low caste people shown apprehension in giving him food as he belongs to a superior caste in the following Vachana;

“Lord does not lay on me the burden,

Of abeing born in superior caste,

Look, Kakkayya will not offer,

Even the caste off food to me,

Even the buttermilk to me,

The reverend Channayya will not accept me,
Alas! Alas! Lord Kudala Sangama’’²²

In this way, Basavaeshwara brought about a very forceful revolution in the tradition-ridden society of 12th century and become the champion of the most oppressed class of people. In the Anubhava Mantapa, which he had established as a democratic forum of divine and intellectual discussion as a process of finding solutions to the social problems, he had accepted as fundamental among other things, following principles for social equality.

1. All men are equal.
2. No man is high a low either by birth sex or occupation.
3. Each one should follow a profession of his own choice.
4. All kayakas are honorable professions; no Kayaka is either low or high.
5. Varnas (or castes) and Ashrama (or castes) are to be discarded.
6. Inter group marriages and free dining should be encouraged.
7. Untouchably has no place in the society.
8. All men have equal right to participate in spiritual discussion, to acquire spiritual Knowledge and to follow the same path of self-evolution.

The Anubhava Mantapa was a regular institution. The deliberations that took place in it were sort of symposium where people from all walk of life and belonging all castes and creeds participated in it, on institution which has no parallel in the spiritual history of mankind. Social equality was a theme for pious or learned talk and men and women of all castes were admitted to the discussions of the Anubhava Mantapa, nobody bothered to challenge the new ideas. But as soon as Basaveshwara started putting into practice, what he preached the trouble started.

A Brahmin maiden daughter of Madhuvarasa was married to the son of Haralayya, a cobbler, both having embraced Veershaivism. This was taken by the traditionalists as an extreme leap by Basaveshwara and they poisoned king Bijjalas ears. Haralayya and Maduvarasa were cruelly executed, which provoked a violent reaction among the more headlong of Basava’s followers. The whole movement appears to have been drifted then on words about which there are controversial opinions. Traffic and it is to the great revaluation started by a great saint.

III. Conclusion:

Great humanists like Buddha, Basaveshwara, Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar appear once a while, to serve the humanity, with the spirit of dedication and devotion. That is why, it has been remarked that, ‘history is nothing but biography of such great souls or emancipators.’ If Basaveshwara heralded a new era of humanism in 12th century, Mahatma Gandhi opened a chapter of humanism in 20th century.

The research article mainly deals with the relevance of social philosophy of Mahatma Basaveshwara and conditions or environment, during which these great souls appeared on the scene. Before 12th century, the conditions prevailing in Karnataka were marked by social degeneration, accompanied by political instability and spiritual decadence, caused by the evils of Brahmanical, social order, which was based upon hierarchical structure. Such worst conditions called for an emancipator like Basaveshwara who made his timely appearance in 12th century hailing from a rich Brahmin family. Basaveshwara at the very young age of 8 years began to show his spirit of rationalism as he rejected outrightly the performance of upanayan ceremony, a ritual that was in vogue in Brahmin caste.

At the same time, he laments for having born in a rich caste, as one of his Vachanas makes it very clear;

“Lord does not lay on me the burden of being born in a superior caste looks Kakkayya will not offer, even the cost of food to me, look Dasayya will not offer even the better milk to me. The reverend Chennayya will not accept me, alas! Lord Kudala Sangama”²³ so he quits the Brahmin caste due to its irrational and in-human practices due to caste discriminations he embraces Veerashivism, which stands for the values like, liberty, equality and fraternity. Rejection of Upanayan ceremony reflects his reactionary and revolutionary zeal, which made him a relentless rationalist.

Hindu society, in spite of all its high cultural and spiritual splendors, has failed miserably to meet the needs and aspirations of the common people. It was at this hour of need that Basaveshwara appeared on the scene as a great savior of human race. Therefore it has been rightly remarked that, “Basaveshwara had come to the word in order to propagate and establish Shivacharya against Varnacharya.”²⁴

Indeed Basaveshwara emerged as a divine messenger to spread the message of love, liberty, equality and compassion. In this way to establish a new society free from the irrational nations of discriminations on the basis of caste class and sex, it is mid dense darkness of 12th century beacon of divine light dawned upon Karnataka in India in the form of Basaveshwara.

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