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11. Vachana Culture and Education for Modern Life

Dr. Nalini Avinash Waghmare
Department of History
Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune

Introduction : Basaveshwara, popularly called as Basavanna, Basava, hischarismatic personality, lived in the middle of 12th century in Karnataka. The vachanas (promissory) composed by Basava in Kannada themselves speak of his multi-dimensional personality. He was a free-thinker, a philosopher, a religious revolutionary, a mystic, an exemplary prophet, a poet, a social reformer, an organizer of the first order, an able administrator, a democrat, a humanist, a realist, a social scientist, and above all he was a man who sought, all through his life, harmony in thought, word and deed. The contributions of Basava to Indian thought are varied in nature and universal in character.¹

Indian society is infected with coniferous maladies such as caste and class distinctions. Consequently, the great principles viz, equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice enshrined in the preamble of our constitution are not being implemented fully and effectively. Lord Budhha was the first great spiritual leader who raised the banner of revolt against casteism. After Buddha, Lord Basaveshwara who was not only a great spiritual leader but also a social revolutionary created a great history in attempting to annihilate caste system and his message of social and economic equality throughout the length and breadth of the country.²

The religion which Basaveshwara practiced and propagated is called Virasaivism/ Lingayat³The spirit of the Lingayat movement was democratic in the sense that people of all castes and callings had access in the shaping of society and religion. The discussion and discourses, the dialogues and debates were conducted in the religious academy called AnubhavaMantapa at Kalyana.⁴ Basaveshwara, AllamaParbhu , Chennabasava, Siddharama, Madiwala Machideva, Bacarasa and a host of other saints were discussing

the fundamentals of Virasaivism—thus evolving a new faith. Even women saints alike Akkamahadevi, Satyakka, AkkaNagamma, Gangambike, Mahadevi, Sambhavi Devi took part in the deliberations of the religious academy.⁵

Basava was probably the first after Buddha to recognize and realize the individuality and rights of women and he launched a social revolution for their emancipation. Some of Vachanas related to women are as follows:⁶

The mother who gives birth

Is she Maya?

The wife who is a sexual partner

Is she Maya?

The daughter who is the outcome

Of Love, is she Maya?

How peculiar is this Maya?

It is not in my limits to exorcise this Maya;

You alone know, Lord Kudala Sangamadeva (B.V.15)

Basava is giving an example of the importance of women's role at home:

One who still can stand where burnt the hearth.

But could you stand where burnt the earth?

When the bank, thirsty, drinks the stream,

And the fence turns around to graze,

The wife at home to thievish ways,

And mother's milk to poisonous cream

And all seems part of a crazy dream

To whom should I complain, O Lord? (B.V.26)

The concept of Kayaka (work) may be said to be a signal contribution of Basava to his practical philosophy. Kaya means the body. Kayaka means honest manual labour.⁸ The Kayaka concept has its universal application. Basaveshwara denounced undeserved earnings through unlawful and dishonest means. The following Vachana of Basaveshwara makes it clear:

The sinner's wealth serves not a

Worthy cause

Only to expiate his sin!

A dog's milk serves only a dog,

Not for a five-fold bath.

Mark, Sir! The wealth you render any one

But our Kudalasangama's Sharanas,

Is given in vain!⁹

Basaveshwara gave a practical demonstration of a welfare state in Kalyan Nadu and showed it could be achieved. One could equally call it Socialism based on "Work according to your capacity and receive according to your needs". This principle was very much embedded in the concepts of 'Kayaka' and 'Dasoha' advocated by Basava and other Sharanas. In this there is no element of force, exploitation or expropriation. The principles of 'give and take' or 'live and let live' which form the very core of social life originate and spring from within and when they get transformed into practical life, natural socialism is established which cannot be so easily undone against one which is trust from outside or from above. We may call it socialism which is at once both economic and spiritual.¹⁰

It is needless to say that the economic revolution brought out by Kayaka Dasoha is worth emulating by all nations of the world.¹¹

In this Vachana too Basava calls his devotees to have a determined steadfast mind in their pursuit of spirituality. He says one should have great courage to cast aside another's wife or property.

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,

'I will not have another's wealth';

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,

'I will not have another's wife';

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,

I will not have another's god:

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,

Linga and Jangama are one

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,

Prasada is the Truth

Lord Kudalasangama disdains

Such men as have no constancy. (B.V.676)

What we observe from the above Vachanas is, wife is seen as a part of one's property. This does not mean Basava equated women with property or chattel. Basava used it as a simile to convince his idea according to the belief of his times.

According to Basaveshwara, the spirit within the body knows neither

the difference of male and female nor that of master and servant. Hence he considered that all are equal in the eyes of God. Basaveshwara revolted against the caste and in the following Vachana he said :

“On the same earth stands
The outcaste’s hovel
And the deity’s temple!
Whether for ritual or for rinsing
Is not the water, same?
To one who knows himself,
All castes coalesce as one,
Even as salvation’s sixfold path
Leads but to the same end.
He that knows Thee verily
Knows THEE but as ONE
My Lord Kudalasanagama”¹²

This clearly indicates that Basaveshwara strongly condemned caste system. Thus in 12th century under his leadership started a movement for abolition of untouchability.

According to Saranas there is no line of demarcation between mundane world and the world of gods. They viewed life in its entirety. They considered mundane and spiritual aspects of life, as two faces of same coin. One will have to make one’s life fruitful by achieving perfection in both of these.

Behold !between the worlds
Of mortals and gods
There is no difference !
To speak the truth in world of gods.
To speak untruth, the mortal world.
Good work is heaven,
Bad work is hell,
And you can witness it,
O, Lord Kudala Sangama¹³

Says Basavanna. If we achieve purity in speech and actions that itself is the world of gods, otherwise it becomes world of mortals. They thought these are not two separate physical worlds existing on earth and in sky.

Findings:

- Basaveshwara’s message serves a beacon light for all who are struggling to materialize his dream of a classless and prosperous society.
- Kayaka is thus simultaneously a spiritual category, a social justice category, and an ecological sustainability category. “Wealth without Work” was also one of the seven social sins according to Gandhi. Establishing work as worship can be revolutionary a force in our times as it was eight centuries ago in the time of Basava for creating a just, sustainable society which enhances human dignity and expands human potential.
- Work Importance was attached to a sense of duty rather than the rewards a work had to offer, the values of industry, selfless service, devotion to work and freedom of thought were emphasized. These values are of importance to us even today.
- Basaveshwara preaching is a solution to these problems even today. He advocated that women should be made strong and independent. Only then her status will improve. The attitude of men towards women and realization of social and moral responsibility towards women is given in Basaveshwara’s philosophy, which is very necessary in the present world.
- Basaveshwara fought against casteism, idolatry, sacrificial rites, untouchability and inhuman treatment of women. He used a common man’s media-Kannada and expressed his sentiments directly and in a simple style, which was easily intelligible to the illiterate and ignorant people. In his views and ideas he was far ahead of his times.

Conclusion: Such a way of life which was formulated and based on religious practice and health of society was maintained. Such a code of conduct which was essential part of education for life was carved out by Anubhava Mantapa¹⁴. This was an open university. All problems pertaining to mundane and spiritual aspects of life were discussed here. To put it in the modern technical terms of education Allama Prabhu was Chancellor of this University. Basavanna was its Vice Chancellor and Chennabasavanna the Register, Principles of education for life formulated here were expressed in the form of Vacahanas (saying) typical prose poetry genre. Vachanas which were approved after scrutiny were stored in the library of Anubhava Mantapa by the Librarian Vachana Bhandari Santarasa. Life education was imparted to people by propagating Vachanas through existing Maths

in the nook and corners of the country. Medium of instruction was people's language Kannada. This was model of education for life, evolved by Vachana Culture. People irrespective of caste, creed and sex were receiving such education. Mathas used to play a main role in propagation of such education of twelfth century till the modern system of education was introduced. Then people used to receive education through religious centre. Even people of other faiths were imparting education in their own way through religious centres. But the education evolved by Vachana culture was unique, distinct and total in approach. This Vachana culture is still guiding the modern generation to adopt moral, spiritual, religious values in one's life for the success of life.

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Footnotes

1. R.C.Hiremath(ed), Basavannanavara Vacanagalu, Karnataka university Dharwad, 1968.p.35.
2. Article by .T.V.Narayana Basava and Dalitodaya Basava Journal vol.4.issue, April 1980, Basava Samithi Bangalore, pp.1-6.
3. M.Chidananda Murthy, Basavanna, National book Trust, India, 1991, p.32.
4. V.S.Caharantimath-Anubhava Mantapa And Veerashaiva Culture, BasavaSamithi, Bangalore 1995, pp.17-25.
5. C.R.Yaravintelimath(trans), Vachanas of Women Saints, BasavaSamithi, Bangalore, 2006, pp.5-35.
6. See for detail Nalini Waghmare, Historical Importance of Basaveshwara's Vachana Shastra, Ekvira Publicity, 2015, pp.185-195.
7. H.Deveerappa(ed), Vachanas of Basavanna, AnnanaBalaga, Sirigere, 1967, pp.11-12.
8. H. Thipperudraswamy Makers of Indian Literature Basaveshwara, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1975.p.34
9. H.Deveerappa, (ed) Vachanas of Basavanna, op.cit, p.73.
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13. H.Deveerappa, (ed) Vachanas of Basavanna, op.cit, p.
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