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Basaveshwara's Concept of Kayaka and Dasoha Relevance to Modern Times

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Introduction: Basaveshwara was a great devotee of Shiva. He spent the time in worship and rendering humanitarian service to the people. Even as a minister his achievements were tremendous. He became famous as a good social reformer, an able administrator, a great thinker, and a tireless and talented organizer. He was able to bring about many reforms, relentlessly in order to wipe out superstitious practices and belief that were deep rooted in society.

Basaveshwara and his band of fellow thinkers together called as Saranas were backbone of the whole Sarana literature which is popularly known as Vacana Sahitya. This literature is multi-dimensional in nature. Its varies dimensions are social, religious, ethical and literary and they are directly projected from it, but the economic thoughts that flow from Vacana Sahitya in general and Basaveshwara Vacanas in particular are only derived ones, derived from economic bearing the Vacanas have, so relevant and so meaningful not only to the life and living of those times but equally relevant and meaningful to generations and generations to come.

If we take Basaveshwara's economic thinking we come to know first the Kayaka and Dasoha principles. Kayaka means every individual should take up the job of



choice performed it with all sincerity and not be burden on society. We should realize God through the work we do. Persons must share a part of his earnings with other members of society (Jangama) and the poor. It also implies that no occupation was inferior or superior to another.

Sources: To know true meaning and its implication we have to refer some sources which give more information about Kayaka and Dasoha. Siddhanta Sikamani is a work in Sanskrit, Vigamamagamas Kaivalyasara is another Sanskrit work written by Maritontadarya, Vacanalkottarasatsthala is written Cennabasavanna dealing with the topics dealt in earlier mentioned Sanskrit works. Other Kannada works Mahalingana Ekkotarasatsthala and Siddhalinga Ekkotarasatsthala. All these works are based on the Vacanas. In addition to these books there are Satsthala Vacanagalu of Basavanna, Cennabasavanna, Siddharamayya, Mollige Marayya, Ayadakki Marayya, Nuliya Cendayya and others which make detailed exposition of the doctrine. These Sivasaranas preached what they practiced.

Another important work is Sunyasampadane. The Sunyasampadane chronicles many other interesting and important saints whose stories are interwoven with the central plot narrative. The tales of three of these auxiliary figures are quite helpful in understanding Virasaiva notions about labour and Vocation. Lesson Twelve, which tells the story of Ayadakki Marayya, the rice gleaner and his wife Lakkamma, Lesson Thirteen, which deals with Mollige Marayya, the woodcutter and his wife Mahadeviyamma; and Lesson Fourteen, which focuses on Nuliya Candayya the rope maker, provide valuable insights into the economic ethic of Virasaivism.

Meaning of Kayaka : Economic equality as an essential condition of a good society is a common concept in contemporary world thought. Like in Western political



thought the concept of equality also finds expression in an Indian political thought. What is important for us here is the concept of equality as developed by Basaveshwara in the medieval period. Ideas about the principles like Kayaka and Dasoha form the core of Basaveshwara's thinking on economic equality. When we go through the



Basaveshwara's principles of Kayaka and Dasoha we find that Basaveshwara believed that true civilization consists not in the accumulation of commodities but a deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. The individuals who form a society must be industrious; otherwise the society will have to face an economic crisis. Basaveshwara said that refusal to work and resorting to beggary was a heinous sin. Thus in the new society which Basaveshwara living under the obligation of others as parasites was not living at all. Basaveshwara pointed out that "When I meet the real Saranas who seek not live on others, variably I look upon them as Kudalasangama himself". Again a noted author pointed out that 'Basaveshwara was the first medieval prophet to preach that poverty is not a spiritual sin but it is a social evil. It is not a legacy bequeathed to us through sin committed either by us or by our forefathers. It is rather an outcome of social conditions. Being urged by this motive he strove hard to set-right the economic conditions of then defunct society. He Welcomed all people belonging to different vocations and laid the foundation of a brotherhood of labour, the members of which were required to follow these rules:

1. Each member should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.
2. Each member should take to any work suited to his temperament.



3. Each member should earn only as much as his needs require, he condemned beggary, even if it is religious, as a curse to life.¹

Basaveshwara's main goal of life was not merely to bring about the economic upliftment but also spiritual advancement of the entire society. In this connection Basaveshwara's unique contributions to world philosophy are the concepts of Kayaka and Dasoha. In this regard the principles of Kayaka and Dasoha have special significance which aims at both –economic and spiritual advancement.

One could rightly call it a socialistic society based on the principle 'each according to his ability, each according to his needs'. This principle was very much embedded in the concepts of Kayaka and Dasoha advocated by Basaveshwara.

Many authors mentioned different definition about the Kayaka. As Mate Mahadevi stated " the physical labour wherein all the three components Body, Mind and Soul are involved. He gave the slogan " Kayakave Kailasa" i.e. true work is the very abode of Divinity.²

In another author Phalaksha mentioned that 'Kayaka means according to Shivasaranas every individual must indulge in some kind of work. He enunciated this principle who does not work is not entitled to his bread. The work undertaken by a person should not come in the way of his 'sadhane'. There is no high or mean in work or profession and one should not be selfish and think that the fruits of labour should be for himself. He laid great stress on action and held 'Work is Worship' as enunciated in his vacana 'Kayakave Kailasa'. This is the significant contribution of sarana to the culture of mankind.³

Now we shall try to examine the concepts of Kayaka and Dasoha.

The principle of Kayaka advocated by Basaveshwara provided both economic upliftment and spiritual attainment simultaneously. Kayaka was dedicated work. It was a new



outlook towards work. 'Kayaka' literally means physical labour or work of body. Kaya means body and Kayaka means work done by the body. In its wider sense as preached and practiced by Basaveshwara and a host of other Saranas it means an occupation , a profession , a vocation, labour, work , duty or any employment undertaken as a means of self realization. Kayaka enjoins that everyone must do a duty. Its underlying principle is that man should not live an idle life but be an earning member of the society. It is opposed to the idea of meditation in forest, running away from society; it is opposed to Sanyasa or renunciation, and it is opposed to beggary and dependence on others for a living'.⁴ It stressed that every one should engage in work. It meant idleness have no place in this system. It was a spiritual view of labour and not merely a materialistic view.

Basaveshwara upholds the concept of work as ennobling and purifying , no matter what type of work is done by whom in which context of society. According to his work should constitute the source of income or livelihood and livelihood should be thus earned by the sweat of the brow.⁵

It is evident that Basaveshwara's principle of Kayaka preaches that everyman was required to earn his living by his own labour. For doing this, he had to choose any work that he wanted to follow. This work so taken up each man is known as his Kayaka. It provides that every one ought to follow honest profession. It implies that an individual should not become a burden to society. To depend on another's work for one's existence or to beg, does not become a man. According to Basaveshwara one who lived by the sweat of his brow, be even a sweeper, was entitled to the highest respect if he but rendered his duty to society honestly. Hence Basaveshwara gave respect to every kind of work.

Basaveshwara gave spiritual significance to the principle of Kayaka. Thus any work that was undertaken



for the world's good shall be worship or Kayaka. It was only in this sense that the Basaveshwara said 'Kayaka' or dedicated work was paradise. The feature to be noted about Basaveshwara's concept of work is the fact that work is to be treated as a kind of dedication or a kind of spiritual or religious offering. The worker, regarded of his station in life, offers his work as sacred, offering to God and this enables and liberates the worker⁶. Hence the philosophy of work developed by Basaveshwara laid emphasis that every one in the society should engage in work which was mainly responsible for the progress of society.

The Brahmanical society considered the self-realization as the birth right of Brahmin only. But Basaveshwara broke this long standing evil and laid down that the self-realization could be attained by everyone. Basaveshwara declared that the work undertaken by an individual itself as a way to attain the self-realization. "Basaveshwara's message of Kayaka emancipated people from age-long social and religious superstitions and revolved them to self-reliance, self-confidence and spirit of freedom and free thinking".⁷ Hence people who suffered a great dissatisfaction for a long period found a great pleasure in the philosophy of work developed by Basaveshwara.

Basaveshwara's principle of Kayaka is opposed to Karma theory. The Karma theory dictates that each man's vocation is predetermined by birth. Man has no freedom to select any occupation he likes and one has to follow the hereditary profession. Basaveshwara condemned such practice. He advocated freedom of occupation and dignity of labour.

Basaveshwara not only a preacher but whatever he preached he practiced in his real life. So the above Kayaka system he not only advocated this principle but practiced, it as it can be seen from the society he built at Kalyana. At Anubhava Mantapa, met the saranas, both male, and



female, following different Kayakas or professions. Some of the Kayaka's followed by the Saranas of the Anubhava Mantapa were: pot-making, hair-cutting, cattle-grazing, rowing, farming, smithy, sewing, tailoring, basket-making, weaving, trading, carpentry etc. All the Saranas irrespective of their Kayaka enjoyed equal status. Appanna was a barber, Ramanna was a cattle-grazer, and so on, thus upholding the dignity of labour.⁸

To clearly understand the Kayaka concept of Basaveshwara. It has its own principles. Some of them mentioned below:⁹

1. Man should not live an idle but be an earning member of the society.
2. It is opposed to the idea of meditation in a forest running away from the society.
3. It is opposed to beggary and dependence on the others for a living.
4. Kayaka cuts at the root of traditional Varna or Caste order of society and the Ashrama or compartmental stages of life.
5. It's new outlook towards man and his labour and towards life and divinity.
6. It embodies the principle of dignity of man and dignity of labour which are quite alien to the traditional way of life in India imposed by the self-motivated preaching class.
7. All forms of labour must be looked upon as being equally dignified in as much as they are tantamount to the worship of God.
8. The labour may be physical or intellectual no one however, was example work for his daily bread.
9. There would be high or low among men, nor would any profession be considered 'polluting'. This would ensure a fellowship of equals among the Shivasaranas.
10. Duty must be do with complete sincerity.



11. The one engaged in 'Kayaka' must not take any more than his just wages.
12. 'Kayaka' is something that must continue all through one's life. There is no retiring because one has earned enough to sit back and live on the profits accumulated in the form of property.
13. 'Kayaka' should therefore be complemented by 'Dasoha'.

Hence it turns out that the principles of 'Kayaka' at once envisaged a socialistic pattern of society where everyone earned his bread by honest labour, but made over the surplus value of his earning back to society. So that no one either hoarded his produce or accumulated what was left of his earnings beyond his strict requirements in the form of property.

Basaveshwara's socialism finds expression through the Vacana:

Does not a crow on seeing a crub,
Call to its flock?
Does not a hen, on finding a morsel,
Call clacking to her brood?
If, being a bhakta, a man lacks loyalty
To his own faith,
He is worse than hen or crow,
O Kudalasangama Lord!¹⁰

Kayaka put an end to the laziness, promoting productive work and thereby build a strong and prosperous social order. In other words Kayaka Philosophy is not merely a matter of doing work for the sole purpose of earning wages but was a matter of principle that one shall eat only if one produces i.e., work shall be the basis of human life.

Basaveshwara was the champion of the poor. He declared that property was not a sin and that the poor man should not suffer from an inferiority complex. He instilled in the people a sense of self-respect. He went to the houses of even the poorest and mixed with them and never hesitated to dine with them. He behaved as if he was their servant. He wanted his people to take up a profession, work

and be happy, viewed from this angle, we could say without hesitation that he was a socialist in outlook.¹¹ For the Sarana the human body has been sacred and temple of God, Basaveshwara the leader of Sarana movement mentioned in one of his Vacana.

Those who have money
Temples to Siva; what can I build?
A poor man, Lord am I
Its pillars are my legs,
The golden pinnacle ; my head
Hear me, Kudala sangama Lord,
There is destruction for what stands!¹²

Dasoha : Another important principle is Dasoha. Since everyone earns his minimum requirement through Kayaka, he contributes the rest of his labour to society, insisted of using the same for the accumulation of personal wealth. Hence, Kayaka does not encourage the amassing of wealth; Kayaka is to be done in the spirit of Dasoha. Hence, there is an end to all exploitation and to all disparities of wealth. These two basic principles of Basaveshwara could usher in equality among all sections of society.

Meaning of Dasoha : As was mentioned earlier Dasoha is the other side of Kayaka. Dasoha by popular belief is considered as giving what you have to others who do not have and without expecting any return for the gift made. It is further considered to be feeding the poor, the destitute, the way-farers (Anna Dasoha=free feeding). This word which has been equated to charity is extended (Jnana Dasoha). One can go on adding different services. But etymologically the word Dasoha or Dasoham, a Sanskrit word, refer to the state of mind and personality of an individual Dasoham (Dasoham= I am the servant) means humility, servitude, denying egotism, etc. The Saranas who adhere to this principle firmly uphold this saying: soham is the internal egotism, sivoham is the external egotism. Dasoham (I am the servant) is non-egoistic disposition.



Moreover an important ingredient of Kayaka was whatever one earned he should retain whatever was needed and the rest be contributed to the society in the form of Dasoha.

Basaveshwara preached that no one should retain out of his earning more than what his needs required. "Kayaka does not encourage amassing wealth or hoarding of money. It is not motivated by profit. Kayaka is to be done in the spirit of Dasoha. The earning from Kayaka is to be dedicated to the preacher or Jangama who in his turn utilizes it for the good of the society. Kayaka is a duty by which each one has to maintain oneself, and render its proceeds to the welfare of the society as a whole. This is the comprehensive view of Kayaka."¹³

Everyone had to live on his own labour. But the full meaning of Kayaka was not this. It was more comprehensive. It provided that the work which an individual undertook should not be harmful to the society. It should fulfill the needs of the society. The fruits of labour must not be utilized exclusively for oneself but also meet the needs of the society. There through one's selfishness must vanish, making room for the global consciousness. Any work done in such absolute detachment shall become worship or Kayaka.

Hence the fruits of which are utilized in the service of Guru, Linga and Jangama was Kayaka. It did result in the good of the society. This clearly shows that Kayaka and Dasoha were inseparable. Following explanation gives us a very clear picture of the concept of Dasoha.

"Dasoha should not be confused with the traditional Brahmanical concept of Dana and Datti. While the concept of gift was either a part of an exchange transformation or part of an exploitative process. Dasoha represents the principle of community sharing and co-operation. It involves the principle that the individual should share spontaneously with the community a part of the earnings from his honest social labour (Kayaka). In more economic terms it also implies that surplus produce should be wasted by individuals but should be channeled into an

institutionalized process of resource transfer, resulting in redistribution of society's produce, while gift is inherited and becomes part of private property. Dasoha cannot become private property; its essence is to become socialized and communalized resources.¹⁴ This indicates us that every service must be rendered in the spirit of Dasoha and which rendering it there should be absolutely no sense of pride or ego.

We have to study the some salient features of Dasoha which give correct information to us. The salient features of Dasoha system included the following:¹⁵

1. The expenses of Dasoha should be met from the earnings of Kayaka. Dasoha cannot be done with corrupt money.
2. Whatever a person earns by way of Kayaka in excess of his needs should be spent what he does not consume.
3. Dasoha doesn't refer to the feeding of lazy and under serving persons but those social workers who are engaged actively in safeguarding all interests of society at large.
4. Dasoha undertaken by a person later completing Kayaka should not be motivated by selfish interests. Indeed Dasoha was not a matter of charity as no one could store more than one's immediate needs but was a matter of one's duty.
5. Dasoha is as continuous as Kayaka as Kayaka leads to Dasoha. Thus, Kayaka and Dasoha are inter-linked, continuous and external.

Dasoha system with the features referred to above was purely socialistic in nature and effect. It ensured equitable distribution of income among the masses while Kayaka ensured jobs for all. It was therefore the net effect of Kayaka Philosophy and the practice of Dasoha resulted in the establishment of a strong, stable, prosperous and egalitarian society. Dasoha took care of distribution and there was no accumulation. Basaveshwara was very much against accumulation of wealth. In one of his Vacana:



" If I should say
I want, this day, another day,
A single thread of gold,
A single thread of cloth,
Let Thy curse and the pioneer's curse
Be upon me!
But for Thy Saranas,
There is nothing that I know
O Kudalasangama Lord!⁶

Hence it is evident that Basaveshwara was full of dislike for hoarding of money. He was against hoarding of any kind. Every one should work honestly for tomorrow.

Dasoha principle does not mean that those who have should give to those who have not. All that is earned by Kayaka should be utilized for the progress and prosperity of the family, society and country with service. The idea behind this is elimination of Superiority and inferiority complex and promotion of oneness and brotherhood.¹⁷ It united the human beings in one category.

We should dedicate all that we have to society. And then what we receive back from society according to our needs will be life-giving. Basaveshwara also stressed the promotion of the collective interest. He emphasized the service of humanity. This makes us to view Basaveshwara as a socialist thinker. As a socialist thinker he encouraged the economic equality, equitable distribution of wealth, renunciation of property in favour of society and no room for exploitation.

As Basaveshwara gave divinity to work, Rabindranath Tagore also gave a spiritual significance to labour. It would be more relevant to note his view. " He is there where who tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off Thy wholly mantle and even like him come down on the duty soil."¹⁸

Basaveshwara denounced undeserved earnings through unlawful and dishonest means. The following Vacana 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 saranas,
Is given in vain!⁹

This message of Kayaka emancipated people from age long social and religious superstitions and restored them to self-confidence and spirit of freedom and free thinking. It is understood in the proper perspective it can shed a new light and pave the way to solve the problems of our scientific age.²⁰ Basaveshwara vehemently condemned borrowing and lending for interest and exploitation therefrom, which is very well reflected in the following Vacana:

The goods and chattels you have got,
Do neither lend nor hire
Except to Siva's devotees
It is well if they return,
If not, it is twice as well
If it is there, is Linga's food;
And Linga's food if here,
If what is Linga's goes to it,
There is no joy that it is come,
No sorrow that it is not come
Therefore, let nought be lent or hired
To any but Siva's devotees,
O Kudala Sangama Lord!¹

Basaveshwara was a socialist thinker par excellence. He advocated that the surplus one has, he must surrender it to the society in the form of Dasoha and this he must do very willingly and whole heartedly. His desire to do so must spring from within and if he does so, then socialism, which can not be shaken, naturally and automatically comes into existence and it can last long.

Significance of Kayaka and Dasoha in Modern Life:

1. Teachings of Basava have great significance for a democratic society of modern world. In a democratic



society sovereignty lies with the public. It has no place for kingship or imperial decision and group execution as well as various Kayakas followers participated in the Anubhava Mantapa. They have come to us in the form of Vacanas.²²

2. In a modern democratic society all men have equal rights in the pursuit of knowledge wealth and power. This was the case of the members of the Anubhava Mantapa. Rich and poor, married and unmarried and men of different occupations were all welcome with equal respect and rights.
3. In a democratic free thinking is the right of every person. Vacanas of the various Saranas are the outcome of free thinking.
4. In a socialistic society constructed by Basaveshwara there no monopolies and no privileges.

So Basaveshwara's thinking on related to the equality, liberty and fraternity. So his Kayaka and Dasoha even importance today to solve our present economic, social problems.

Conclusion : On the basis of all these things one can point out that Basaveshwara's thoughts were directed towards elevating the total life of man both individual and social not merely on the materialistic plane but on the plane of divinity making its sublime. What Basaveshwara envisaged was a self-contained and self-sufficient economy free from the clutches of caste, creed and sex. There would be no distinction between rich and the poor. The adaptation and implementation of the concepts of Kayaka and Dasoha would serve as prances for the eradication of poverty and practical social evils. Basaveshwara preached and practiced methods of hard work and self-sacrifice for the benefit of society. The concept of Kayaka and Dasoha were the firm foundation essential for the building up of a self-sufficient society. The concept of Kayaka dissolving the conflicts in



society, showed how individual interest and social interest, abolishing their mutual conflict should become complementary to each other. The concept of Kayaka expounded by Basaveshwara was a means of controlling passions, harmonizing emotions and intellectual aspects of life, disciplining the mind.

Yet the economic philosophy of 'Kayaka' and 'Dasoha', if lived in earnest by modern man, would rid the world of many of the ills which plague the human race today: unemployment, inflation, poverty, starvation deaths, scarcity of essential goods, widening gap between rich and poor, class antagonism, so and so forth.

Basaveshwara's Kayaka and Dasoha principles are relevant today, but if we attempt a literal application of those principles, we may find ourselves in wilderness. The modern society and its economic problems are highly, complicated. The fundamental principles of bodily labour, no accumulation and retention of just what is needed for the day, no borrowing and lending for interest and a hoast of such other principles are to be taken now only in spirit. To apply them in practical life today, appropriate modifications in them to suit the present day times have to be made before experimenting with them. These fundamentals tempered by a religious favour and reverence to human soul and dignity can act as polestars and beacon-lights to guide our today activities. It is in this sense that these ideas and ideals are highly relevant and meaningful even today and they will equally hold good for tomorrow also. As such they cut across the barriers of time and space.

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