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## Progressive Thoughts of Basaveshwara on Social Justice

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### Introduction:

Basaveshwara was the founder of Virasaiva religion. He was not only a religious reformer but also a socio-economic, political and cultural reformer of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. His Vachanas guided many people not only in the 12<sup>th</sup> century but in present time also. The Greeks argued that emotions were permanent, and affected every society. Discrimination, injustice, domination every, were problems that affected both the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and continue to be visible today. Basaveshwara emerged as in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to preach against scourge of the discriminations made on the basis of caste, creed, occupation and sex.

### Reforms of Basaveshwara:

The religion which Basaveshwara practiced and propagated is called Virasaivism. 'Vira' generally means a hero. Virasaivism insisted that its followers should develop single minded devotion to one God, Shiva. This did not, however, mean that they should show disrespect to other gods. To them, Shiva is supreme. The term 'Vira' also suggests the zeal with which the new movement was propagated. The term Lingayata or Lingavanta is also used to describe this religion. Lingayats are those who wear a Linga on their body.

### Anubhava Mantapa:

The 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 Anubhava Mantapa at Kalyana. Basaveshwara, Allama Parbhu, 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, Akka Nagamma, Gangambike, Rani Mahadevi, Sambhavi Devi took part in the deliberations of the religious academy.

The Anubhava Mantapa was democratic in its outlook because it was mainly based on democratic principles in its nature and functioning. It accepted the principle or fact that the individual is rational. Every person has the capacity of taking decisions. In the Anubhava Mantapa, every individual had equal status with others. It was based on the principle that no man or a class or a group should be strong enough to wrong others, and each man can judge for himself as to what is best for him.

### Kayaka and Dasoha :

**Basaveshwara** was a great devotee of Shiva. He spent the time in worship and rendering humanitarian service to the people. He was able to bring about many reforms, relentlessly in order to wipe out superstitions practices and belief that were deep rooted in society.

Basaveshwara believed in the goodness of human nature. He wanted to build a society consisting of devotees of Shiva. The society should have the concept of work as sacred, the fraternity and equality of men and inter-related ideas of individual and social welfare. Basaveshwara gave a practical demonstration of an ideal society through the concepts of Kayaka (Work is Worship) and Dasoha (Service to Society). Both these concepts provided material, social, economic, spiritual and moral prosperity and laid stress on contentment and peace of mind for the people.

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. 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.

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.

#### **Emancipation of Women:**

Basaveshwara wanted to establish a society, based upon the democratic principles like, liberty, equality and fraternity. He wanted to give more and more opportunities to women to come out of family bondages and equal position on par with men. Women should participate in religious and spiritual spheres on equal footing. Exploitation and discrimination of women on the basis of sex was strongly condemned by Basaveshwara. Basaveshwara expounded his concept of equality out of his own experience. He was essentially a humanist and fought for humanity. According to him, "The spirit within the body knows neither difference of male and female nor that of master or servant."

The religious teachings of Basaveshwara exerted a magic spell on hundreds and thousands of people and they voluntarily came into the fold of Virasaivism. Basaveshwara accorded religious equality on woman. Woman was entitled to undergo the process of "Linga Diksha" on par with man. She was allowed to wear and worship 'Linga' even during her course period. Basaveshwara despised woman's susceptibility to pollution. He declared that the "Linga" worshipper has no religious taboos. He insisted that one ought to worship 'Linga' by oneself. No one can have a deputy in this regard. Basaveshwara and Shivasharanas had heralded an age of honour, economic and social equality for women. Because of them till today also many Virashaiva women equally participated in many fields.

#### **Eradication of Untouchability:**

During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Basaveshwara led a religious revolution in order to kill the demon of caste and creed which threatened to rule the destiny of man. Basaveshwara rejected the ritual, tradition, Vedic Brahmanism which exploited the downtrodden and ill-treated with them. He was an essentially humanistic and fought for humanity. According to Basaveshwara the spirit within the body knows neither the difference of male and female nor that of master and servant. This common humanity implies that all men have an equal right.

In the Anubhava Manatapa where without considering high and low participated in the discussions. The very untouchables, whom the high-born had kept at a distance, were provided with equal opportunities to participate in the deliberations of Anubhava Manatapa. It gave an equal status to all persons. Hence it was an outstanding aspect of Basaveshwara's achievements "It was the laboratory of Basaveshwara's own preachings. He taught equality and so the Anubhava Manatapa was open to all without distinctions. Old and young, rich and poor, men and women, high and low king and servants, were all there equal."

Basaveshwara proclaimed that those who love all living beings should be treated equally mentioned in one of his Vacana. Based on the above principles Basaveshwara tried to establish equality among all human beings by kindling divinity hidden in them. He regarded divinity as an equalizing factor. He tried to eradicate untouchability by giving freedom of worship to low caste people.

Vachana Sahitya: Basaveshwara stands out as one of the most outstanding personalities in the history of India. He was not only a socio-religious and economic philosopher but also a great literary scholar. His period is also called Vachana Yuga, because along with him, other Shivasaranas also wrote Vachanas. Instead of Sanskrit Kannada become a popular mass language of the people. His life and teachings have been a source of inspiration to millions of people in South India for the last nearly Nine hundred years, and influenced and molded their lives and continues to do so even to this day.

Basaveshwara rightly chose the people's language, Kannada, to communicate his ideas. He and his associates expressed their ideas in the unique prose poetry style known as Vachanas (sayings). Literature of this lucid does not exist anywhere else, or in any other language. The devotees expressed their own spiritual and political experiences, to provide solutions to intricate problems in all walks of life. They became the literary medium of the medieval Virasaiva saints. Basaveshwara with the zest of a social reformer and the zeal of a prophet, caught in the net of practical politics, was not a perfect being but a man whose whole life was a struggle towards self-perfection. This struggle is strongly present in his poetry. But above all, there is a very characteristic mixture of harshness and tenderness; of almost rude assertiveness and extreme loving-kindness.

Basaveshwara's message is a universal message that proclaims the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men. Irrespective of religion, caste or sex. This Universal message embraces one and all and is enshrined in the simple sayings called Vachanas. Vacanas of Basaveshwara reach out to touch each and everyone, scholars and common man alike. They guide us through the numerous doubts and turbulences we all face in our daily life.

#### **Conclusion:**

Thus Basaveshwara's teachings have a great significance in the modern times. Removal of untouchability, abolition of caste evils, equal status for women, equal respect for all professions, dignity of labour, uplift of the masses—all these which appear modern conception were brilliantly envisaged by the great Basaveshwara eight hundred years ago. But his thoughts more relevant to this 21<sup>st</sup> century to solve our present problems and maintain the peace and prosperity in the country and keep the basic values of Indian culture, like truth, non-violence, compassion for all living creatures, the supreme importance of spiritual values, tolerance and work in a spirit of dedication regardless of the results. But fortunately for Karnataka and for the world, Basaveshwara left behind him a veritable treasure of poignant prose lyrics and these have kept the vision of Universal Man alive through the centuries and will continue to do so till the dream is realized.

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