The relevance of Lord Basaveshwar’s philosophy in Modern Era

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Abstract:

The research article mainly focuses on life of Lord Basaveshwara, his social reforms and the relevance of social reforms in today’s scenario. Before 12th century, the region faced social degeneration, political instability and spiritual decadence, caused by the evils of Brahmanical, social order, which was based upon hierarchical structure. In such scenario, Lord Basaveshwara brought the drastic change in various facets during twelfth century and stood against the social evils of the traditionalistic society. He fought against the inhuman practice of caste system, which discriminated people based on their birth and certain rituals in Hinduism. He started practicing the socialistic norms and became the guiding path to others. His experiences are in the form of vachanas and those create a cultural harmony and preach practices like obedience, modernity, living together on equal front.

Keywords: Basava Philosophy, Social equality, Kayaka, Dasoha, Anubhav Mantap, Vachanas

Objectives:
To understand the life of Lord Basaveshwara
To understand his social reforms
To analyze the relevance of those social reforms in today’s scenario

The great revolutionary, a born progressive activist, a socialist Lord Basaveshwara from Karnataka brought the drastic change in various facets during twelfth century and stood against the social evils of the traditionalistic society. He lived divine life without any hatredness and fear. His philosophy strikes a balance between inner world and outer world which he referred as Antarang and Bahirang. Arthur Miles has referred Lord Basaveshwara as modern thinker. He was a preacher of love, oneness and equality. We talk about the human rights in this twenty-first century, but these human rights were being enjoyed by Sharanas (Citizens of welfare society) in twelfth century only.

Highlights of Basaveshwara’s life history

Lord Basaveshwara is also known as Basavanna, who is very well known in the world for his great concern for the humanity. He was known for his humanity, spirit of dedication and devotion. His journey which started from his birthplace Bagevadi from Bijapur district of Karnataka to Kudalsangama to Kalyana is a true learning for a human kind. During 1131AD he was born to the family of Madarasa and Malambika.

He was revolutionary at the age of 8 years where he revolted the traditional thread ceremony and left home for Kudalasangama from where he was educated in all respects. He was against the caste discrimination and that became the reason for him to quit his Brahmin caste and he embraced Veerashaivism. He is the first one to introduce Veershaivism in Karnataka. Veershaivism provides a social thought which is ultimate to humanity. His believed in Veerashaivism which stands for the values like, liberty, equality and fraternity.

During the time of ruling of Kalchuri King Bijjala in Kalyana (1157-1167, AD) Basaveshwara, because of his highly intellectual personality, he was appointed as a karanika (Accountant) in the initial stage, in the court of king Bijjala and later he became the Prime minister of Bijjala after proving his administrative ability.
At this stage, Basaveshwara looked around the socio-economic status of the society, where most of the static, superstitious and anti-social elements were ruling. There was much gap between haves and have-not and rich people were harassing the poor. Untouchability was rampant and sex discrimination made the lives of women very pathetic. Basavanna revolted against all these evils and he himself started practicing the socialistic norms to bring about drastic change in the society. Hence, he became the guiding path to others in bringing the change. He scripted his practical experiences in a novel form of literature called –Vachana (poetry). This innovative literary form is the main contribution of “Sharanas” through which they expressed their revolutionary and reformist ideology in a very simple Kannada language. His life and his experiences have been looked as a source of inspiration by millions of people from nearly eight hundred years.

Basaveshwar’s vachanas teaches the mankind how to lead a good life, make it useful for the society and how to create a beautiful society. His experiences teach mankind to face the challenges with courage.

Some of the life teachings mentioned in his vachanas are:
1. Don't be under any body's obligation
2. While eating allow others to share one's food
3. Equality of men and women
4. Utilize one's material possessions for achieving spiritual goals
5. Let pursuit of righteousness be the basic aim of one's lives
6. Feel that God is the witness of whatever is done, have a good grounding in conventional formalities and practice them in one's daily activities
7. Do not give room for arrogance
8. Tell the truth and do as one says
9. Be compassionate towards the entire mankind.
10. Try to get on in life through self-effort without having the illusory feeling that “the mundane world is entirely in God’s hands and nothing to do with human”, helps live radically and be always smiling.

All these vachanas are helping the people to form a stable country. Basaveshwara’s vachanas teach people how to behave in society, how to judge relationship between men and women and dignity of laborer. By and large the vachanas written by Basaveshwara creates a cultural harmony and preaches practices like obedience, modernity, living together on equal front. Free from all clutches of social will. His vachanas have broadly five fundamental principles, inner analysis, analysis of social pathology, zeal behind the formation of an ideal society, pursuit of truth and welfare of mankind. These principles are relevant in current scenario as well. Here the attempt is made to understand the relevance of these social reforms in today’s scenario.

Equality in Society
Basaveshwara believed in 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. According to Basava, ‘Right action is good caste, bad action is low caste’. His concept of wearing personal Linga, brought new sense of equality among people. Through the presence of Linga on the body, the untouchables were elevated to high status. Education and learning are stressed for all people rather than being the preserve of the high castes (J.P. Schouten, 1995).

His accepted fundamental principles for social equality are
1. All men are equal which we still consider and fight for equality among all
2. No man is superior or inferior either by birth sex or occupation whereas an individual is known by his work
3. Each one should follow a profession of his / her own choice which in today’s scenario, we call as passion
4. All kayaks are honorable professions; no Kayaka is either low or high.
5. Varnas (or castes) and Ashrama (class) 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. In today’s scenario, women are also demanding to participate in spiritual rights.

Analysis of social pathology
Basaveshwar as a spiritual physician felt and realized the importance of emotional integration. He was also of the opinion that the emotional integration only will bring the political stability, social cohesion and economic prosperity. He also tried to generate the spirit of emotional integration by refusing the artificially created caste systems. During all his life time he practiced to eliminate caste system and bring equality among mankind for which he suggested intercaste marriage and dasoha as solutions to these problems.

Zeal behind the formation of an ideal society
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. He established a forum, called Anubhav Mandap for divine and intellectual discussion to find solutions for social problems. People from all walk of life and belonging to all castes and creeds participated in it. The Anubhava Mantapa was a regular institution which has no parallel in the spiritual history of mankind.

Pursuit of truth and welfare of mankind
Basaveshwara rejected the caste system and preached for equality of women. He strived to have self purification and self development of every individual through vachna which summarises the INDIAN PENAL CODE.

Do not Steal, Do not kill
Do not Utter Lies, Do not Lose Temper,
Do not Detest Others, Do not Glorify Yourself,
Do not Blame Others. These alone will Purify Within and External

Relevance of social reformation in today’s scenario
Social Values
He was the man who rejected the priesthood of Brahmins in the society. He also rejected the temple worship and icon worship. He preached and practiced “work is worship”. His emphasis was on devotion. The people, who believe in Basaveshwars philosophy, were known as Lingayats. All these Lingayats do not believe in orthodox funeral process. They believe in Lingaikya i.e believes that after death they will go straight to unite with GOD and there will be no return to the world.

Emancipation of Women
According to Shivamurthy Shivacharya Swamiji, emancipation of women or the spiritual equality is another “important dimension in the humanitarian aspects of Shivasharana”. According to Veerashaiva Philosophy of which Basaveshwar was the champion, men and women differ only in physiological level but they are one and the same in metaphysical effect. (Shivamurthy,1985). Shivsharanas made Veershaivism a universal religion whose base was equality and expressed active concern for the interpersonal cooperation. One of the greatest contributions of Basaveshwar was recognition of woman’s individuality and her rights. Women were not allowed to work shoulder to shoulder with men. They were not allowed to recite mantras and offer prayers. They were restricted from worshiping God. They were not allowed to undertake pilgrimages. The movement of Basaveshwara not only granted equal rights for women in all these aspects but also raised her status to
motherhood and divinity. Schoten highlights the elevation of women in Lingayatism. In the words of Siddaramdeva—the associate Shiva Sharana of Basaveshwara “Women is not Maya (illusion) but, woman is really DIVINE”.

Kayaka-Work Doctrine
Basaveshwara’s concept of Kayaka (Work doctrine) emphasis on the spirit of dedication in work. It explains the dignity of labour. Every work is equal and each individual should work for his livelihood. All the caste orders of society were replaced by a word “Kayak”, a spiritual view of labour. As Carlyle says “Work is Worship”, but Sharanas say “Kayakave Kailas” i.e. “Work is the Abode of God”. The difference is “Kayaka does not encourage amassing of wealth or hoarding of money. It is not motivated by profit”. Kayaka is to be done in the spirit of Daasoha sharing the earnings with society by feeding the Jangamas i.e. philosopher preachers. Basaveshwara’s ‘Kayaka’ theory insists on the honest discharge of occupational responsibilities (Jadhav, 2014).

Anubhava Mantapa - An Academy of Experiences and the first parliament
Geetha and Palekar states that Anubhava Mantapa was one of the democratic structures, in which both men and women were participating in discussions and deliberations. Their ideas were expressed through their Vachanas (literary poems).

‘Anubhava Mantapa’ - the academy of socio-spiritual experiences was an outstanding work of Basaveshwara where the people from all class and levels had a chance to speak on their real life situations which was allowed for open discussion and the same was recorded in the literature form referred to as ‘Vachanas’. The greatest contribution of the Anubhava Mantapa was not just discussing but it engaged people to practice the preaching in real life and utilized for the welfare of humanity. It was a place where these Vachanas were recited and philosophical discourses held. After deliberations they used to reach the conclusions embodied in the work SHUNYA SAMPADANE. The Sharanas for socio-spiritual pursuits conveyed these guiding principles to society at large. Late Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, renowned philosopher and former president of India has termed Anubhava Mantapa as “The First Religious Parliament of the world”. He had generated a great sense to uphold the human values and rights. ‘Anubhava Mantapa’, a forum setup by Basavanna which was open for all castes, for all men, for all seekers of knowledge, truth and God (Palekar, 2002). For the first time women were given a chance to express their views – socio economic political in the Anubhav Mandapa. This forum represents today’s conference rooms in the corporate world where the discussions and transfer of knowledge happens for an objective in course.

Vachanas
Basaveshwara and his associate Sharanas started and enriched a literary form that had a universality of appeal, the Vachana or Brief Prose — Poetry lyric. Vachana literature committed to social upliftment and self realization was simple enough to be understood by the most ignorant and great enough to be admired by the sophisticated. Hiremallur K Ishwaran (1997), a reputed Kannada Sociologist says, aim of vachanas was to turn the hierarchy- ridden society towards equality. D. R.Nagraj, a prominent Kannada literary critic and cultural theorist claims that, “anti- caste philosophy was the fundamental stance of the vachanas movement”

Dasoha (Sharing) – This principle emphasizes that the earning which is in excess than required to satisfy the physiological needs of individual should be shared through distribution to the wellness of society. In today’s world, it refers to social corporate responsibility. Hence we could say that Basava Philosophy is a universal work which has relevance to every discipline related to society.

Conclusion
During twelfth century Lord Basaveshwara brought the revolution in various facets and stood against the social evils of the traditionalistic society. Being India’s first thinker, he became the social reformer. Basaveshwara has contributed immensely towards the well-being of society and overall
development of human relations. His philosophy which came into the form of vachanas and it is easily understood by common man. He was a preacher of love, oneness and equality. He was the promoter of women emancipation. Basaveshwara has contributed immensely towards the well-being of society and overall development of human relations. Basaveshwara at the very young age of 8 years began to show his spirit of rationalism as he rejected outright the performance of upanayan ceremony, a ritual that was in vogue in Brahmin caste and he embraced Veerashivism, which stands for the values like liberty, equality and fraternity. He was a guiding path to Society and gave importance to dignity of labor. He practiced “work is worship” rather than icon worship. His movement granted women equal rights. His preachings “Kayakve Kailas” highlights one’s discharge of occupational responsibilities, he had set up a forum “Anubhav Mantap” which is referred as First Parliament, gave women also chance to express. This forum represents today’s conference rooms in the corporate world. We talk about equality, human rights, system without any differentiation based on class in twenty first century, but Lord Basaveshwara addressed these issues in 12th century. His vachanas creates a cultural harmony and preaches practices like obedience, modernity and living together on equal front.

References: