

Basaveshwara and His Contemporary Sharana's Monuments of Basavakalyana: A Historical Study

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Abstract

The Bhakti Saint Basavaveshwara, also known as Basavanna (1106–1167)) was a philosopher and a social reformer, who fought against social evils of his time such as caste system and the ritual practices of Hinduism. His teachings and philosophy transcend all boundaries and address the universal and eternal. Basava was a great humanitarian, who advocated a new way of life, in which divine experience was at the center of life and where caste, gender and social distinctions carried no special importance. The cornerstone of his movement was the firm monotheistic belief in God as the absolute and universal supreme Self-identified as Lord Shiva, and the equality and dignity of all individual beings irrespective of their social and gender status. A true visionary, who was born ahead of his time, he envisioned a society based on sound religious, moral and spiritual values, encompassing one and all. Besides serving the people as a great reformer and a great mystic, he also served as the Prime Minister of the Southern Kalachuri Empire in South India and originated a literary revolution by introducing Vachana Sahitya (Lit. vachana = sayings, prose). Basava is said to have been a mystic by temperament, an idealist by choice, a statesman by profession, a man of letters by taste, a humanist by sympathy, and a social reformer by conviction. Many great yogis and mystics of the time joined his movement, enriching it with the essence of divine experience in the form of Vachanas that define a new way of looking at God and life. Basava's path later gave birth to a new tradition (sampradaya), which became popular in the south as the Lingavanta Dharma or Lingayata movement. Other synonyms for Lingayata are Basava Dharma, Sharana Dharma, Vachana Dharma.

Keywords: Veerashaivism, Anubhava Mantapa, Social Transformation, Gender, Empowerment, Entrench, Lopamudra, Ghosa, Indrani, and Sachi.

Introduction

Basavakalyana is one of the five taluks of Bidar district, which is located at far north-east of Karnataka in India. While travelling from Mumbai to Hyderabad by National highway No. 9 after crossing Maharashtra border, we enter into Karnataka, this is where Basavakalyana region starts. Basavakalyan town is approximately 17 Kms from this border, on the highway, Hyderabad is approximately 180 Kms, Gulbarga the divisional place is 83 Kms, Bidar, which is the district headquarters, is situated 80 Kms north- east of Basvakalyan and Bangalore is about 743 Kms (461 miles) from Basavakalyan. Geographically Basavakalyan is located at 17.87o N 76.95o E, it has an average elevation of 2082 meters or 7287 feet.

According to 2006 India census, Basavakalyan had a population of 1,02,546, of which Males constituted 52% of the population, and females 48%. Basavakalyan has an average literacy rate of 62%, higher than the national average of 59.5% with 58% of males and 42% of female's literate. 17% of its population is under 6 years of age. Regarding language, Kannada is the administrative language and is spoken by the majority of the people. Hindi, Marathi, Dakhani Urdu are also widely spoken and Telugu too is spoken by some people.

Historical Background

Basavakalyan came to prominence towards the close of the 10th century AD. When the capital of the later western chalukyas was shifted here from Malakhed. It extended over a large area and attained great celebrity as the metropolis of an empire, and as a centre of wealth and prosperity, as a seat of learning, and as an abode of spiritual wisdom hallowed by illustrious saints like Basaveshwara, Allamaprabhu, Akka Mahadevi, Channabasavanna and Siddharama. Vijnaneshwara, the renowned law expert, and the author of the highly valued treatise on law known as Mitakshara, was at the court of great and renowned Chalukyanemperor Vikramaditya VI. Vijnaneshwara goes into raptures while describing the splendors of the capital city of Kalyana and exclaims that "no other city like Kalyana existed in the past or present and would never exist in future"

The great Sanskrit poet Billana who wrote the "Vikramankadeva charita" also adorned the court of Vikramaditya VI and he too sang the glory of this city in glowing terms. The Kalyani chalukyas ruled an extensive empire till the end of the 12th century with a break of a few years when Kalachuris had seized power. It was at this place the upsurge of the revolutionary sharana (Veerashaiva) movement led by Basaveshwara, Allamaprabhu and their associates took place. This attracted likeminded persons from various parts of the country.

The illustrious Sharanas who came from all strata of the society composed inimitable vachanas here and founded the Anubhava Mantapa where they carried on deliberations. This protestant movement, which aimed radical religious and social reforms, gained formidable popular strength. When the traditionalist and the imperial power headed by Kalachuri king Bijjala clashed with it and made violent attempts to suppress it, there was an upheaval which shook up the empirical authority and triggered a chain of social and political events.

Basaveshwar and His Philosophy Shaktivishtadwaitha

Basaveshwara said that the roots of social life are embedded not in the cream of the society but in the scum of the society. It is his witty way of saying that the cow does not give milk to him who sits on its back, but it gives milk to him who squats at its feet. With his wide sympathy, he admitted high and low alike into his fold. The Anubhava Mantapa, or the religious parliament, established by Basava laid down the foundation of social democracy. Basava believed that man becomes great not by his birth, but by his worth to the society. He believed in the dignity of man and the belief that a common man was as good as a man of status. He proclaimed that all members of the state were laborers, equating the intellectual laborers socially with the manual laborers. He set an example by practicing the ideals he preached and followed a rigid discipline. He emphasized the importance of self-purification. and tried to raise the moral standards of people in society. He also taught the dignity of manual labor. declaring work as worship. He insisted that every type of manual labor, including those menial tasks which were held in contempt by people, should be looked upon with love and reverence.

With his views on dignity of work and equality of people, he formed people's committees for various vocations such as agriculture, horticulture, tailoring, weaving, dyeing, and carpentry. People from all vocations and wakes of life participated in them and contributed their ideas for improving the lives of people socially, morally and economically. There were women also followers such as Satyakka, Ramavve, and Somavve with their respective vocations. Some of them composed their own vachanas, expressing the philosophy of Basavanna.

The movement initiated by Basava through Anubhava Mantapa became the basis of a sect of love and faith. It gave rise to a system of ethics and education at once simple and exalted. It sought to inspire ideals of social and religious freedom, such as no previous faith of India had done. In the medieval age which was characterized by inter-communal jealousy, it helped to shed a ray of light and faith on the homes and hearts of people. But the spirit soon disappeared after the intermarriage that Basava facilitated came to an abrupt end when the couple were punished for the same by the King. The dream of the classless society was shaken and Basava soon realised the meek picture and left for Kudala Sangama and a year later died. Many believe that it was through self-annihilation, because of the agony caused by the failure.

Basaveshwara's life and Contributions

Basavanna was born in the year 1106 into a Shaivite Kamme Brahmin family in the small town of Ingaleswar (Bagewadi) in the Bijapur district of northern Karnataka. He grew up in a strict, religious household, where he was made to wear a sacred thread known as the Janivara, which he did not accept. He rejected both the traditional Sanskrit scriptures and the prevailing Hindu rituals. At an early age he left Bagewadi and spent the next 12 years studying Sangameshwara, at the then-Shaivite stronghold of Kudala Sangama. There, he conversed with scholars and developed his spiritual and religious views in association with his societal understanding. His Guru was Játavéda Muni, also known as Eeshánya Guru. He believed in one true and perfect God and campaigned aggressively against untouchability, superstition, temple rituals and the dominance of priestly class. He believed that people should be shown the right way to reach God and preached equality of all people and castes. For his revolutionary work and exceptional ideas, he earned a great recognition in the 12th century Hindu society.

Basavanna started his career as an accountant at Mangalaveda in the court of Kalachuri king Bijjala, a feudatory of the Kalyani Chalukya. When Bijjala acquired the power at Basavakalyana, by overpowering Tailapa IV (the grandson of Vikramaditya VI, the great Chalukya king), Basavanna also went to Kalyana. With his honesty, hardwork and visionary mission, Basava rose to the position of Prime Minister in the court of king Bijjala, who ruled from 1162—1167 at Kalyana (presently renamed as Basavakalyana). There, he established the Anubhava Mantapa, a spiritual parliament to openly discuss Lingayatism, which attracted many saints from throughout India. He believed in the principle Káyakavé Kailása (Work puts you on the path to heaven, Work is Heaven). It was at this time that the Vachanas, simple and easy-to-understand poetic writings, such as the following, which contained essential teachings, were written.

“The power of knowledge destroys ignorance; The power of light dissipates darkness; The power of truth is foe of all untruth; The sharana's experience of God is the sole cure of worldliness; - Lord Kudala Sangamadeva Dont rob, dont kill, never ever liedont get angry, dont think negative about otherdom self-describe, dont tease othersthis is the way of self-respect, this is the way to get respected by the world. This is the way of impressing my Lord Kudala Sangam Deva.”

Through his revolutionary ideas and actions against social evils Basava stirred a lot of controversy. By allowing untouchables to have lunch with him and praising a marriage between a Brahmin woman and an

untouchable man, he invoked the ire of the orthodox members of society, who appealed to King Bijjala with complaints, allegations and accusations. The king did not want to offend the orthodox members of the society and invoke their displeasure. So he ordered the newly married couple to be harshly punished. Before punishing them, he asked Basava to agree with caste system. But Basava did not relent. He believed that the married couple were Lingayats and the rules of caste system are not applicable to them. The king was not pleased with his argument and proceeded with punishing the couple. After that unpleasant event, Basavanna left Kalyana in 1196 with heavy heart and marched towards Kudala Sangama. On the way he preached the people about humanity, morality, honesty, equality, individuality, simplicity, and the dignity of labor. In the same year on 30th July, he left the body and became liberated.

Socio -Religious Movement

The Socio-Religious Reform Movement Kalyan is the land of the revolution which was led by Basaveshwara and associate sharanas. There is a lot to write about Basaveshwara. He was a well-educated child born in Brahmin family in 12th century. In his early age he understood the evils in Hindu Society such as Hindu caste system, untouchability, absence of the right of education for the lower castes, absence of the liberty for women in social life and many more. Basaveshwara instinctively felt that these demons in Hindu society were responsible for its disintegration and downfall. After Buddha, Basavashwara raised his voice against Hindu caste and creed system, and he wanted to bring liberty, equality and fraternity among the people.

This movement initiated by Basavshwara through Anubhava Mantapa" became the basis of the religion of love and faith. It gave rise to a system of ethics and education at once simple and exalted. It inspired ideals of social and religious freedom, such as no previous faith of country had done. People from different castes, societies, locations, religions and age groups joined in Anubhava Mantapa, of whom approximately sixty were women.

Basaveshwara, born in an orthodox family, was well-acquainted with ritual-ridden, Vedic-religion and caste-ridden social order. A thinker as he was, he gradually realized the futility of both and revolted against them. He declared that mere elaborate rituals carry no meaning. The only emancipation of human being is unstinted devotion to God Siva. He also announced that the man-made segregation of human beings on the basis of caste and sub caste is also meaningless and that all are equal in the eyes of God. He also held that no profession is low or high. He practiced and advocated free inter course between different group of people including the so-called lowest class. Because of this, he incurred the wrath of the influential orthodox section of the society who prejudiced the mind of king Bijjala.

This led to a rift between the king and Basaveshwara, and the latter ultimately left the kingdom and went to his religious retreat Kudalasangama. Really speaking Basaveshwara did not intend to start any new creed. His sole intention was to eradicate superstition, to get rid of meaningless and cumbersome rituals and to maintain religious and social harmony based on devotion and compassion. He vehemently advocated the value of labor and declared that everybody should earn his livelihood through hard labor. On the religious side, Basaveshwara advocated the worship of Ishtalinga as against sthavaralinga which was worshiped in temples. For him devotion was an intimate relationship with God and it was totally personal. A pompous ceremony in the temples was not appreciated by him, neither did he appreciate the construction of temples. This stark simplicity and sincerity, compassion for all, and dignity of labour attracted a large number of people towards him. Thinkers like Allamaprabhu and Siddharama came and Akkamahadevi entered into his fold.

Another important feature of Basaveshwara's movement was his direct approach and preaching the people in their own native tongue Kannada. Through its extensive use in preaching and in composing what came into being are known as VACHANAS. Kannada stepped down from the throne of classicism and reached the common man. Along with Basaveshwara his numerous followers composed these vachanas which ushered a new era in the history of Kannada. In course of time the religion advocated by Basaveshwara assumed the nature of a creed under the name veerasaiva with its own doctrines and practices like ASHTAVARNA and SHATASTHALA of the eight covers or "aids to faith and protection against sin and evil" and "six stages of salvation" respectively.

Historical Monuments of Basaveshwara and His Contemporary Sharana's Chalukyas of Kalyana Fort

In the north of the town, there is an old, strong, spacious fort situated on rocky ground. It appears to have been constructed by the Chalukyas of Kalyana, was renovated and altered later. It has ancient gates. Inside, there are some small cannons, besides a big one measuring about 694 cms, in length which is popularly called as Nav-gaz. There are also several other cannons of which one is 435 cms, and another is 277 cms, in length. There is a shrine having no idol, but it is said to have been dedicated to goddess Lakshmi. This temple was closed during the Muslim rule covering it with stones. Later, it was discovered. The inner shrine and its roof are in good condition and it is adjacent to what is pointed out as a palace of Bijjala. At the top of the frame of the shrine, there is an idol of Ganapati. There is also a wheel which is called "Charka Mota" with the help of which buffaloes were used to draw water from the well. There is a wooden platform, which, it is said, was the court of justice of Bahamani period. On the walls of the fort, some Hindi and jaina icons can be seen. There is a single approach to the fort, which is from the south, "defenses of the fort are so cleverly arranged that it is almost impregnable against the war apparatus of those days. If one takes a walk along the glacis, the several tiers of fortifications, one above the other, present one an impressive sight" ("The Deccan Forts" by J. N. Kamlapur. Bombay, 1961, P. 99). Most of the bastions found here are circular in shape and a few are square or octagonal. Some of the bastions are still mounted with pieces of ordnance few of which are of extra ordinary size.

Basaveshwara Temple

Basaveshwara Temple is situated in the central place of the town. A large number of devotees from far and near visit this well-known place of worship. Every Monday devotees gather here for special worship. An annual fair is held under the auspices of Shri Basavaeshvara Devasthanam Samiti of Basavakalyan in the month of Vaishakha.

Purusha Katte

Parusha-Katte is located to the north of the Basavaeshvara temple. It is a stone platform. Parusha means philosopher's stone. It may be incidentally stated here that the Singiraja Purana mentions six extraordinary parushas (powers) of Basaveshvara. According to a tradition, this spot was hallowed by its use by Basaveshvara who used to sit here and give alms to the needy persons and also sometimes initiated his disciples into his creed and composed vachanas. Near this parusha-katte can be seen relics of a Chalukyan temple. Now a school is being run here by Shri Basaveshvara Devasthanam Samiti, Basavakalyan. An idol of Durga was discovered while digging the earth near this place. Close by there is a mosque

Prabhudevendra Gaddige

Prabhudevendra Gaddige. –Allamaprabhu Deva, the illustrious seer and associate of Basavanna, known for his profound spiritual attainments, is believed to have resided here. He presided over the deliberations of the renowned Anubhava Mantapa.

Tirupurantak Lake

Tripurantaka Lake – This is a well-known ancient lake situated about five kms from Basavakalyan town proper. It is associated with the hallowed memories of the sharanas of the twelfth century. On the bank of this tank, there is a temple of Ishvara called Tripurantakeshvara and Nandi. A Kannada epigraph which was found here, records that one Basava, a royal washer man of king Tailapa III, made a grant to Madivala Machayya. This inscription is now kept in the fort. There are many laterite caves near the lake, in which, it is stated, sharana saints used to meditate. Close by is a village called „Tiprant“ (derived from the word Tripurantaka). It has a small shrine of Hanuman.

Akka Nagamma’s Cave

Akka Nagamma’s Cave has some elegant stone pillars, Akka – Nagamma was the sister of Basaveshvara. Inside this cave, there is another cave which is said to be that of Channabasavanna who was his son. The local people say that this cave contains the Samadhi of Chalukya Ayyana and his guru.

Basava Mahamane

Basaveshvara Mahamane-ground, Arivina-Gavi and Arivina-Mane are pointed out behind Akka-Nagamma’s Cave. Mahamane means great Abode which was respectfully called so by the people. It is believed that Basaveshvara resided here. The words Arivina-Gavi signify the cave of knowledge where he is stated to have spent some of his time meditating in seclusion. Arivina-Means House of Knowledge. It is in the form of an old mantapa by the side of the Arivina-Gavi. It is narrated that numerous sharanas used to visit the Mahamane for spiritual guidance and blessings from Basaveshvara and that a large number of people were daily fed here freely. There is a temple of Ishvara and Nandi and a student’s hostel nearby.

Siddeshwara Temple

Siddeshwara temple is located Kms from Basavakalyana town on the way to Shivapur. As saint Siddharama is said to have taken his lingadeekshe here, it has also been called Siddharama temple. A shrine of Revanasiddha is also situated close by.

Basva Vana

Basava-Vana is near Prabhudevendra Gaddige. On the occasion of Basaveshwara Eighth Centenary Celebrations in 1967, 770 plants of different categories were planted here in memory of 770 Amara-Ganangalu who lived at the time of Basaveshvara. It is maintained by the Horticulture Department. There is an idol of Nandi here; A new spacious Anubhava-Mantapa is being constructed behind Rudramuni’s cave by the Basava Samiti, Bangalore. Its foundation-stone was laid by the late Maharaja of Mysore. The building is in the shape of huge shivalinga. The shikhara (tower) of this structure can be seen from a long distance. It is proposed to have a central library and a museum, and cottages for sadhakas and visitors. It is said that the renowned ancient Anubhava- Mantapa of the twelfth Century was situated about this place.

Sadananda Saraswati Matha

Sadananda Saraswati Matha with Peetha is the chief seat of Ananda Sampradaya founded by a seer and mystic named Sadananda. It is of Dattatraya Paramapara and has much following in Karnataka and neighboring States. A tradition says that Sadananda as a boy was an ardent devotee of God Vishwanatha of Varanasi and when he came to Kalyan in the course of his pilgrimage, he heard the echo of the Namasmarana of Datta and felt a spiritual urge to settle down here as a monk which he did. One Ramananada of Varanasi also came to Kalyana and became his disciple. Swami Sadananda is credited with having performed some miracles by his Yogashakti. A Veerashaiva householder built this monastery for the saint. Swami Sadananda Saraswati took “Jeevanta Samadhi” (got entombed as a living person) on a Vaishakha Shuddha Panchami. A monk of a particular order heads this institution by succession. The monastery has a temple which has many images.

Basaveshwara Statue in 108 Feet

A 108 ft Statue of social reformer Basaveshwara built at Basakalyan in Bidar District, Karnataka in India at a cost of over Rs.9 Crore by Mate Maate Mahadevi of the Basava Dharma Peetha unveiled by Former chief Minister Jagdish Shetter. Basaveshwara, who came to Basavakalyan, made it his karma Bhoomi and launched the Kayaka movement against social evils such as caste system.

Conclusions and Findings

By the above information it may be concluded that Basavakalyana is a historical place that embodies several monuments that reflect the cultural progress of this region under various dynasties. Some ancient structures that represent our rich heritage are the pride of Basavakalyan. Apart from these, Basavakalyan was a centre of learning and spiritual knowledge. It is also the hallowed land which engendered socio religious movement led by lord Basaveshwara and other Shiva Sharanas. This place also a great potential as a tourist attraction. This fact has been realised by the Government as well as other social and religious organizations. A 108 ft tall statue of lord Basaveshwara has been set up here by the efforts of Maate Mahadevi. Basavakalyana Development Board (BKDB) has established a Sharana Sahitya library and Sabha Mantapa in addition to undertaking a good deal of renovation work in the town. Basavakalyan is also a big business centre. A proof of this is the fact that there are thousands of lorries in this place. The day is not far when this place will be humming with tourists not only from India but even from abroad.

Basaveshwara is regarded as a great savior and divine figure who took birth to set the inequalities. With his highly progressive ideals which were not welcome by majority of upper caste people. But Basavanna decided to break the oldrigid shackles of the blind traditions of outdated religious beliefs. Basavanna was firm in reforming the society as a visionary and as epoch maker for him nothing was more important than the social reformation and social transformation.

He not only foresaw, but also lived and practiced the Hindu Code Bill’s spirit, envisioned by another great social reformer and humanist Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In 2015, India’s Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, unveiled the Basavanna statue on the banks of the Thames in Lambeth, London. Basavanna is also the first Kannadiga to have a commemorative coin produced in his honor in the celebration of his social reforms. He is also known as Bhakti Bhandari or Jagjyothi Basaveswara (literally, the Treasurer of Devotion) (Lord Basava). Basava Jayanthi is observed every year to commemorate the birth of Vishwaguru Basaveshwara, also known as Lord Basavanna

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