



DASOHA SUTRAS – UNDERSTANDING OF SHARNBASVAPPA'S OBSERVANCES

Dr. A. Kishore Kumar Reddy

Dept .of English & Foreign Languages

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad

ABSTRACT:

This paper examines Sharnbasvappa Appa's "Maha Dasoha Sutras" grounded on the concept, "Service to man, is service to God". The paper observes the fundamental plea made by Appaji for the recognition of God in society. The significance of this plea becomes apparent when his "Sutras" are read in the light of the concepts, viz., *Kayaka*, *Dasoha*, *Prasada*, and *Jangama*. The author highlights the problems faced by the contemporary man. The logic of Appaji's plea, involves asking his readership to cast off their pride and ego while performing deeds – for the sake of a better society. The author wants his readers to recognize not only humankind but the debilitating consequences of existing cultural and social norms that run like a guiding thread through much of his work in the areas of literature, education, and social reform. Drawing on the tantric elements and the *Acharas* illustrated in the work—this paper points to the 'Dasoha Concept' as a fundamental moral thematic in Appaji's work.

It is clear that the roots of present-day notions of 'sarvodaya' and 'absolute revolution' were nurtured in Karnataka, during early 11th and 12th Century itself by the distinguished reformist and poet -Basaveshwara. His realistic stance and process of founding of "Welfare state" prompted a fresh identity and status for each and every person sustaining in the society, regardless of caste, class, gender and creed. As a result, the foremost aim of *Vachana* movement, elicited by Basava was happiness of each and every one. He asserted this as "welfare of all". Basava, a reformist, appears to have questioned the prevailing social evils of the conventional society and called for a radical change in various aspects.

Basava may be identified has proclaimed two important socio-economic concepts. They are- *Kayaka* (Work-Divine work) and *Dasoha* (Distribution-Equal distribution). Following this, every person living in the society ought to do work of his preference and carry out it with all honesty. There is no differentiation in occupations. Each and every person of the society is a worker. Some may be scholarly laborers and others may be manual workers. Even the Teacher and *Jangama*, who were regarded as the superiors of the social order as well, must work. Here, it appears *Kayaka* is not just a work; however it is the mode of realizing the Almighty. It suggests the model of dignity of labour. In due course, it turns into a concept, "Work is worship".

Furthermore, *Kayaka* is identified with "Kailasa"- The Abode of Lord Shiva. This perception appears to have given a fresh movement and citizens of all walks of the social order seemed adoring their work and engaged themselves in a task of constructing a social order devoid of any feeling of caste, gender and class discrimination. Basava appears to have made it very clear that the concept of *Kayaka* must be followed by an exact income. The earnings should not be high or low. There must be an equal profit for equal labor. The laborer may lead his everyday life by his difficult earned wages. Nevertheless, the person is not to retain the profit or benefits or property for tomorrow. They ought to make use of the surplus income for the social order, the downtrodden and the needy. This concept is called – *Dasoha*.

Consequently, by promoting this doctrine, Basava provided the concept of equal allotment of material goods to the social order. For this reason, *Kayaka* and *Dasoha*, may be said have become the most important lively principles that were bestowed by Basava to the domain of socio-economics. It has been mentioned by Mahatma Gandhi that

It has not been possible for me to practice principles of Basaveshwara which he taught 800 years ago and which he also practiced. I have adopted few of them; I am yet to a seeker in this aspect and not an accomplished one. Eradication of untouchability & dignity of labour were among his core concepts one does not find even shade of castism in him. Had he lived during our times, he would have been a saint worthy of worship. If his followers practice his precepts you could uplift not just Bharat but the world.ⁱ

It is a well known fact that Basava is a major influence on the composition of “Maha Dasoha Sutras” by Appaji. The concept of *Dasoha* has spread extensively in “all the aspects of life in an institutional form and developed into Mahadosha” (*Maha Dasoha* vii). The *Sutras* mainly point out that the present-day individual often mixes together religion and spirituality as if they were one thing. At this point, it may be remarked that the *Sutras* nevertheless make it clear that this is not going to work. A spiritual pathway can subsist inside or outside a religious framework.

It has been noted in the “Maha Dasoha Sutras” that one of the mechanisms (required in advance) of liberation is devotion, which is conveyed in two viewpoints – *Bhrithyachar* and *Dasoha*. Indeed, these two topics are associated in the sense that the latter cannot be exercised without the former. The spirit of the *Bhrithyachar* is compassion, dedication, devotion or reverence. The individual ought not to be egoistic and devote oneself in the service of the Teacher, *Jangama*, other ardent followers of the Almighty and the social order in a modest and selfless mode. The action of being a *Dasoha* comprises in being humane and benevolent, but in a modest manner. The distinction amid being benevolent and *Dasoha* is that the former may be – although the latter must not be – performed with a sense of egotism and overbearing pride. The “Sutras” point out that *Dasoha* is to be far removed from being benevolent with a selfish purpose or with egotism.

It has been noted that the Kannada term *Dasoha* is, indeed,

a corrupt form of the Sanskrit compound *dāsōha* meaning ‘I am (*aha*) servant (*dasa*). But the Kannada word *dāsōha* means charity given with a sense of servitude. One who practices *dāsōha* must, in the first place, regard himself as a servant (*bhṭya* or *dāsa*) of *Jangama*, society, etc. Moreover, an effective *dāsōha* must fulfil one more condition: the food or money or other materials offered in *dāsōha* must have been earned in honest manner. If they are gained in a corrupt way or by methods, which involve violence, cheating, stealing, etc., they are not fit for *dāsōha*.ⁱⁱ

It is further stated that *Dasoha* is implemented in two modes. The first one is exercised in the *mathas* (monasteries), generally in the “form of ‘common kitchen’ (free food) and though this is done by the *Jangamas* of the *maḥa*, the

Jangamas themselves are helped financially and materially by the devotees. The *Jangamas* are engaged in promoting knowledge (*Jnyana-dāsōha*) alsoⁱⁱⁱ. One another form of *Dasoha*, practiced by the devotees in their homes comprises in providing food to the *Jangamas* and fellow devotees. This offering of food at times includes giving food grains, money and other material possessions to the *Jangamas*, which the latter are found using for the feed the poor and needy.

Hence, an individual who observes *Dasoha* enriches one's "self" – and spiritual excellence while concurrently carrying out social service. The "Maha Dasoha Sutras" represent the aspect of *Dasoha* as the core of Basava's doctrine that everything in this world is *Prasada* of Lord Shiva and must be offered to the fellow human beings, who are presumed to be God's several mouths in a modest way. The individual performing this in this belief has the fulfillment of being liberated from the sensation of indebtedness.

The *Sutras* emphasize that religion and spirituality can be corresponding or separate observations and practices. The *Sutras* point out that a spiritual mode is an inner voyage that starts with doubts about who an individual is, and about the essence and significance of his/her existence. It is obviously a method of self-contemplation and reflection. Following this, it may be asserted that the notion of religion, as traditionally defined, denotes to a set of faiths and beliefs about the basis and essence of the world, our association with the Almighty and his creation, and the basis of spiritual power. The individual can acknowledge those faiths and beliefs at face value or search and scrutinize his/her own experiences. The work mentions that a few religions do hold such questioning, while others put off with it, either explicitly or implicitly. At this juncture, it may be noted that, the reader needs to be clear about what he/she actually is doing in his/her everyday religious or spiritual life.

Even though the "Maha Dasoha Sutras" can be practiced "religiously," in various respects, it is not actually a religious conviction because the *Sutras* focus on making the reader question and work with the mind – a spiritual deed in nature. Nevertheless, the *Sutras* rely on the five *Acharas* (Lingachara, Sadachara, Shivachara, Ganaachaara and Bhrithyachar) that are to be perceived through logical analysis and reasoning, as well as through meditation. It may be regarded that the "Maha Dasoha Sutras" is a 'mind-science' rather than a religious conviction. In whatsoever manner one labels the principles laid out in

the “Maha Dasoha Sutras” by Appaji – as a religion or spiritual path – the body of knowledge that constitutes the “Sutras” is not intended to be a substitute for one’s own questioning process.

It is more like a well-resourced research laboratory where the reader can discover agencies of all types to evaluate his/her own understanding. Indeed, some “Sutras” by Appaji may be regarded as secular. Primarily, the “Sutras” are monotheistic in nature. Nevertheless, Appaji makes it clear that, there is a supernatural something inside and outside of an individual’s body and mind. There is only one ‘Being’ or force that has the power to control our experience, and that is the “Self”. Following this, the “Sutras” may be said primarily lead the individual to spiritually question about himself/herself.

Appaji, through his “Sutras” metaphorically points that many an answer must come from within the individual, as questions also come from inside. As they come from the same place – most of the individual’s questions are associated to something he/she is already familiar with. Every doubt will guide to a solution that will guide to more doubts and so on. At this point, the individual’s perception develops, his/her doubts become clearer and his/her solutions more meaningful. The “Sutras” in a poetical manner illustrate that this is how the spiritual way evolves.

One another important aspect that can be identified in the “Sutras” is discipline. At this point, the idea of discipline discussed by Appaji is not about the transformation of a bad boy or girl into a good one. It does not mean thrashing one’s body/mind with a stick or whipping it into obedience. And it is not a strategy to deny one’s life of enthusiasm or awareness. The idea of discipline in the “Sutras” seems to demonstrate several meanings that are not clear in contemporary “language” usage, because the “English” language has generated a European connotation for the term discipline. Primarily, it conveys the meaning of “to relax”, “taking your own seat” or “standing on your own two feet”.

Discipline is something which ought to be a heartfelt desire to perform a selfless action for the betterment of society. The disciplinisation of the “self” is a course of action – a trained body/mind to take its own stand while following a path of ethical conduct. Based on this, one may think that disciplining the body/mind is simply about following rules and enduring hardships. However, the

primary intention of disciplining one's "self" is to become aware of his/her actions, perceive them vividly, able to recognize those that are egoistic and those that are free from ego and pride. To be careful of one's each and every action and not to hurt others or oneself is the sign of a disciplined body/mind.

The "Sutras" mention that one has to examine and believe about what comprises a human or an inhumane action. They also mention metaphorically that the notion of discipline goes beyond just following a set of rules. It requires genuine discrimination, empathy, and honesty. Becoming a disciplined person means cultivating mindfulness and awareness so one can see his/her actions clearly and precisely. Being disciplined means one sees the full picture: he/she sees his/her thoughts and the intentions of those thoughts; he/she sees how his/her intentions develop and are then expressed in speech or actions; and he/she also sees the impact of his/her actions on oneself, on others, and on one's environment. When an individual applies mindfulness and awareness to this whole procedure, it means that he/she has dedicated his/her "body to the God present in ourselves"^{iv} and experiencing "divine company of God"^v.

As mentioned before Appaji's "Maha Dasoha Sutras" is based on the doctrine of monotheism. The key message that Appaji gives through his *Sutras* is to 'free oneself from egoism and egotism'. Every human being in this society is part of the divine and is related to the other. Thus, by serving the needy and destitute and becoming *Dasoha* (I am servant), one is considered doing a salutation and service to God, and the service is regarded as nothing but worship. As each and every human being is linked, serving the poor is equivalent to helping oneself and simultaneously serving God.

It may be noted that the concept of social service is the most visible aspect of the concept of service. The *Dasoha* being performed ceaselessly is an act of open worship that the individual does to God. Appaji highlights through his *Sutras* that altruistic service kills ego and assists the *Dasoha* to "merge with Linga" – the final step towards liberation. Appaji asks the reader to regard that motivation behind serving the fellow human being is very important. He mentions that an act of giving devoid of expecting anything in return and moreover without ego transforms into an act of worship the Almighty. There should be no concealed agendas behind the fine deed. Furthermore, Appaji points out that the act of serving the poor and needy with the motive of overcoming

guilt or a feeling of pity, or gaining recognition, or from a sense of duty is incomplete. He asserts that “Dasoha is nothing but meticulous practicing and adhering to truth and God externally and seeking revelation or self-actualization through the divine inspiration of internal spiritual experience”.

It may be stated that the “Maha Dasoha Sutras” highlights the “relationship between life here and life hereafter, the worldly life and spiritual life, against the tantric background”^{vi}. It points that the Shivasharanas had recognized the Shat-chakras in the body of a person in yogic terminology. The body is a vehicle that possesses six divine chakras. It is presumed that the spine and the human energy domain have ‘Chakras’, or energy centers, that vibrate at different frequencies. Each ‘Chakra’ presents with the prospect to set up a root association and to gratify a profound soul aspiration. Each frequency is said to hold the gift of a particular power that enriches the human being’s experience in the material world. The construction of the male and female principles at each place of ‘Chakra’ in the human body speaks of the inseparable state of male and female principles in all creatures. As the human being tunes into this power, he/she is internally empowered to deal with the specific life challenges of that energy center or ‘Chakra’ and as a consequence to live more whole, meaningful and fulfilling lives.

The *Shat-Chakraas* are *Moolaadhaara*, *Swadhistana*, *Manipooraka*, *Anahata*, *Visuddha*, and *Aagneya*. According a particular tantric tradition, the presiding deities and the elements of the Chakras are as follows: 1) *Moolaadhaara*: The presiding deity of this ‘Chakra’ is *Ganapati*. It houses the element –‘Earth’. 2) *Swadhistana*: The presiding deity of this ‘Chakra’ is *Prajapati*. It houses the element –‘Water’. 3) *Manipooraka*: The presiding deity of this ‘Chakra’ is *Lakshmipati*. It houses the element –‘Fire’. 4) *Anahata*: The presiding deity of this ‘Chakra’ is *Gowripati*. It houses the element –‘Air’. 5) *Visuddha*: The presiding deity of this ‘Chakra’ is *Jeevidu*. It houses the element –‘Space’. 6) *Aagneya*: The presiding deity of this ‘Chakra’ is *Sarveshwara*. It houses the –‘Soul’.

Above these Six Chakras, there lies a hole at the middle of the upper part of the head (skull). This hole is called *Brahmarandra* – the hole houses ‘pranava’ – shining bright – dwelling in a 1000 petal lotus – the sacred syllable “Om” is echoed there. The presiding deity of this hole is *Gurumurthi*, and the hole is

identified as *Sahasraram*. However, it may be noted that Appaji considers that there is a purusha and a Shakti respectively for every two units of chakra. Further, he mentions that "That is why every man is a composition of purusha shakti. That is why shiva is called Ardhanaarishwara. At Conceptual level, woman is not a woman and man is not a man. Half woman is present in man already and half man is present in woman already".^{vii}

Appaji describes that *Moolaadhaara* is purusha and *Swadhistana* is Shakti. And he mentions that at the second stage *Manipooraka* becomes purusha. *Anahata* becomes Shakti. At the third stage *Visuddha* becomes purusha and *Aagneya* becomes Shakti. Moreover, he describes that contrary to this among women, at first stage *Moolaadhaara* is Shakti and *Swadhistana* is purusha. At the second stage *Manipooraka* becomes Shakti and *Anahata* becomes purusha. At the third stage *Visuddha* becomes Shakti and *Aagneya* becomes Purusha.

Appaji in his "Maha Dasoha Sutras" mentions that

the finest among purusha shakti chakras present deep within us are at the third stage chakras. Here sharanasati lingapati becoming one or merging into each other then attain the stage of Swayambhu (self-actualization) and Sacchidananda or bliss and reap infinite happiness and bliss and finally attain self revelation by being completely free and independent or liberated. This stage is called sunyasthiti, Aiyakyasthiti i.e. self actualization by the veerashaivas.^{viii}

At this juncture, it may be observed that Appaji does not discuss or even mention about the *Sahasraram*, (a hole – located on the crown of the head) that is also identified as *Brahmarandra* or the source of divine light (a mystical light, said to be as bright as the sun) regarded as the final stage by many tantric traditions.

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ⁱ Please see, <https://pibkolkata.wordpress.com/2015/11/>

ⁱⁱ Cited from, <https://lingavatreligion.com/LingavatTerms/Dasoha.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Please see, Basavappa Appa, Sharana, *Maha Dasoha Sutras*. Tr. M. V. Kamath. Gulbarga: Serials Publications, 2006. p. 38

^v Ibid. p. 38

^{vi} Ibid. p. 20

^{vii} Ibid. 21.

^{viii} Ibid. 23