



A BASAWASWARA PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK IN ANUBHAVA MANTAPA

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Abstract

Anubhava Mantapa was the first parliament in history of mankind. Prabhudeva, a great Yogi of extraordinary achievement, was the president and Lord Basava acted as the prime minister. Chennabasava can be compared to the speaker while at the same time working as the editor, and compiler of Vachana literature. The only difference between the present day parliament and Anubhava Mantapa is that the members were not elected by the people, but were picked up or nominated by the higher authorities of the Mantapa; the necessary qualification expected being spiritual attainment. The problems tackled were of a various nature covering social, religious, spiritual, yogic psychological, economic and literary spheres. Members of the Mantapa and followers of the religion were given full freedom of thought, speech and action. They were allowed to put any questions or doubts to get them cleared in front of the congregation and a systematic program was launched to record and to preserve the dialogues that were going on in the House. These discussions reminded us of Dialogues of Plato, the great Greek philosopher. But they differ from the later in being characterized by a high type of mystic experience. As silent documents we can see even today the caves cut out of the brittle stony hillocks, in and around the city of Kalyana. The people of high caste, with their vested interests tried to impose on the ignorant masses the idea that the former are the issues of meritorious ancestry and that the latter are of sinful birth. Owing to their ignorance the low-casts and untouchables laboured under the delusion that they were born to be slaves because of the sins committed during and inherited from their past births. They believed that to strive to improve their miserable plight was a heinous sin and that to live where and as they lived was their life's purpose as well as its fulfilment.

Key words; Anubhava Mantapa Workshop, Kalyana Relationship with Peoples

Anubhava Mantapa

Criticized sharply the meaningless differentiation of human beings as high or low either on their birth or on their occupation. Unique preaching's of equality charged with the acceptance of the parenthood of god and the fraternity of humanity fascinated the tortured minds and consoled the gasping hearts of the oppressed and distressed masses. The burning zeal of Basava to place religion on a democratic basis, his

passionate love for God and his untiring energy in serving humanity added to the glory of Anubhava Mantapa The Lingayath religion, being reformative in its out-looking was more progressive than aggressive. It placed more emphasis on evolution by tergiversation or change of mind rather than on sanguinary revolution. So it is not to say that Basaveshwara and his followers were imbued with an antagonistic spirit towards any other community. But,

"Rev. N. C. Sargent aptly says, "Basava's aim was not to oppose or propose any religious or philosophical system; but to show people the existing social and religious evils and, if possible, to remove these evils from society".

The fundamental principles accepted Anubhava Mantapa

1. All are equal;
2. No man is high or low either by birth, sex or occupation.
3. Woman has equal rights with man to follow the path of self-evolution.
4. Universal brotherhood, Community approach (team work) and Practice before preach.
5. Each one should follow a profession of his own choice.
6. All Kayaka 's are honorable professions. No Kayaka is either low or high.
7. Varnas (or castes) and Ashrams (or stages) are to be discarded.
8. Renunciation and dwelling in forest are ruled out as cowardly tendencies to escape from life.
9. Inter-group marriages and free dining should be encouraged.
10. Untouchability has no place in the society.
11. Every man is free to think on all spiritual and social subjects.
12. Reason and experience are the only guiding lights for free thinking and spiritual advancement.
13. Language of the people should be the medium for imparting spiritual and secular education.
14. All men have equal rights to participate in spiritual discussions, to acquire spiritual knowledge and follow the same path of self evolution.

Divine Nature in Mantapa

In fact Basava did not believe in what is ordinarily called reformation, he believed in growth. He made a whole generation grow more and more towards the Vedantic ideal of the Unity of man and his inborn divine nature. He saw life steadily and saw it whole. His was

an integrated vision and so he could not tolerate any 'artificial division' of society in the name of religion. Resenting the artificial barriers that prevented the progress of individuals, he radically protested against such disharmony and disparity. He tried to establish perfect equality for he did not seek to level down all but to level up, giving opportunities to all without any discrimination of caste, creed or sex. His great object was to build up an ideal society where all individuals must have equal opportunities for religious pursuit or spiritual development, irrespective of their vocation in life.

He had to change the prevailing social attitude of estimating the worth of a man by his profession. He proclaimed that there was nothing high or low in occupations, it was honesty and sincerity that decided the merits of the means of livelihood, which is called 'Kayaka'. So Haralayya of lowly birth, a cobbler by profession, was recognised as the equal of Basava who was a minister of the State, because his spiritual progress was equal to Basavanna's. Basava firmly believed in such social equality; and so he provided equal opportunities to all in his new religion. But it must be remembered that all cobblers were not Haralayyas. Only those who could make use of the opportunities. and rose above the circumstances, with a spiritual bent of mind, were accepted into the fold of devotees.

They led a clean life by being pure in thought, word and deed. It was a remarkable achievement that Basava boldly threw open the same social and religious opportunities to all without any distinction of caste, creed or sex. There is a mistaken notion that Basavashwara converted all sorts of people into Veerashaivism. But he knew that only those individuals who could follow firmly the spiritual pursuit based on individual and social ethics would become Bhaktas. He was very fastidious

about the moral aspect of religion, and did not take anybody in just because he wanted converts.

Bhaktas and Deeksha

Thus those who could follow the path of Virtue were considered to be Bhaktas and were taken into the new faith after initiation called Deeksha. Once they entered the Veerashaiva order, Basaveshwara declared, their old Varnas and castes were automatically burnt, and a new life began. Untouchable converts like Haralayya, Nagamayya, Dhulayya were equal in all respects to Bacarasa, Shantarasa, Madhuvarasa who were converted from Brahminism. At one stroke he achieved social and religious equality and spiritual regeneration of the masses. Never before, we may believe, had religion assumed so deep an outlook and so vast an appeal. It is startling to find that even common people like Madara Dhulayya, an untouchable, Turugahi Ramanna, a herdsman, Jodhara Mayanna, a warrior and a host of others could attain the noblest heights in the spiritual realm and express their mystic experience in the Vacana form. Another achievement of equal importance was the emancipation of women. The age of Maitreyi and Gargi had ended long long before.

Women and Sudras had no right of access to the Vedas or any other scripture. In such circumstances, Basava boldly declared that there was no distinction in religion between man and woman. He threw open the doors of spiritual pursuit to everyone, man or woman, who would enter with a pure heart and earnest desire. Hence we come across several women saints like Akkamahadevi, Akkanagamma, Neelambike, Gangambike, Lakkamma, Lingamma, and Mahadevamma and others whose very names are associated with elevated spiritual attainments. Basaveshwara, simultaneously with the announcement that all have equal opportunities in religion, had to fight to

make religion free from scriptural and sacerdotal clutches. He asks: "What if you read the Vedas, what if you listen to the Sastras? What if you tell your beads or make your penance" and affirms: "Unless the deed obeys the word, Lord Kudala Sangama love not." This identity of word and deed is an essential qualification of the seeker Basavanna reiterates: I call not the apostles Of Veda and Shastra great, nor those who are shrouded In errors of illusion. Only those who have dispelled Maya or illusion are great this greatness can be achieved by one and all who are pure in body, mind and deed.

Linga and the Bhakta

Thus Basava was able to do away with temple-cult and priest-craft which had become the centres and means of exploitation. Worship is a personal communion between the devotee and the God. That is achieved directly in Ishtalinga as there is no mediator between the Linga and the Bhakta. To arrange to get worship done by others in temples has no virtue in it. Basaveshwara says: Indulging in love, eating one's food— Is that ever done by deputy; Oneself one ought to do All Linga's rites and ceremonies: Its never done by deputy O Kudala Sangama, How can they know Thee Lord Doing it for mere formality. Thus worship of God by agents is strongly condemned.

This religious rationalism gave people a new outlook towards life. It threw new light upon the Karma theory which had led men to fatalistic inertia that everything is the fruit of the past Karma, that man is a helpless puppet at the mercy of a perfidious. Destiny. Basavanna strongly rebelled against this defeatist outlook and infused new vigour and vitality to wipe out the past Karma and to mould his future with self-confidence by his present and future actions. Rationalist as he was, Basava upheld only the faith which assisted spiritual pursuits but not blind beliefs and superstitious customs. There were

many blind beliefs, firmly rooted in the minds of the large multitude, relating to astrology, omens—good or bad, and the influence of days, weeks, or stars. People at every step, for every petty cause, were habituated to look helplessly towards some supernatural power. They were too simpleminded to know the guiles and frauds of those who paraded in ostentatious garbs as priests and ascetics. Basava strongly reproved and tried to put an end to this religious exploitation.

Conclusion

His closeness to the common man has given a new tinge of folk vigour to his language. He uses proverbs extensively and some of his sayings themselves have become proverbs. Besides being a social and religious revolutionary he has also caused revolution in Kannada literature, by restoring the living language of the people to its central place. His mastery over the subtleties and possibilities of the language is unique and remarkable. He is a master in his word pictures, achieving the maximum visual impact with the fewest words. His figures of speech, the nuances of his words and images, and his choice of chiselled words are an integration of painting and music.

The special musical quality of his Vacanas cannot be translated into English. To that extent the Vacanas that are quoted here have lost their original artistic music-function, and have tried to retain only the meaning-function as far as possible. Even with this limitation it is possible to experience and realize to some extent, the beauty of expression, imagination, and emotional content of the Vacanas which are quoted in the body of the text.

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