



THE CONCEPT OF WORK IS WORSHIP: THE ECONOMIC INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

Basaveshwara was the founder of Virasaiva religion. No man has a right to live on this earth without work. In other words, work or labour is a true way of worship of the universal God. That work which is in the interest of society, that is True and Pure is described by the great prophet Basaveshwara as "Kayaka" (work). Meaning the physical labour wherein all the three components Body, Mind and Soul are involved. He gave the slogan "Kayakave Kailasa" i.e. True work is the very abode of Divinity. Basava, did not discriminate between men and women, in their devotion.

Methodology:

Filed work and interview with Virasaiva followers.

Findings :

Yet the economic philosophy of 'Kayaka' (work) and 'Dasoha (service to society)' , 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. Most of Virasaiva followers adopt any profession without considering high and low even today.

Implications:

The Virasaiva outlook of economy is comprehensive and integrated allowing complete freedom to the individual to realize his potentials in the economic activities as also in other areas of life.

Introduction:

In the context of the social changes and religious awakening in modern India , the message of Basaveshwara acquires a special significance. Today Indian society, with its ideas of

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democracy & nationalism, and its emphasis on the spread of education and on a scientific outlook, is reshaping itself. It is influenced by the main current of world thought. Our thought-patterns are changing so radically that it seems impossible for some of our old values, institutions & customs, like castes and blind beliefs to survive. Basaveshwara lived Eight hundred years ago but he strikes as thoroughly modern and practical, and so his teaching has relevance today. The picture of Indian society would have been quite different if only that teaching had been followed. In the core of his religion, Basaveshwara anticipated many a modern prophet like Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, and Gandhiji. He may rightly call the prophet of a new era in Karnataka nay in India.

Purpose of paper:

Basaveshwara was the founder of Virasaiva religion. No man has a right to live on this earth without work. In other words, work or labour is a true way of worship of the universal God. That work which is in the interest of society, that is True and Pure is described by the great prophet Basaveshwara as "Kayaka" (work). Meaning the physical labour wherein all the three components Body, Mind and Soul are involved. He gave the slogan "Kayakave Kailasa" i.e. True work is the very abode of Divinity. Basava, did not discriminate between men and women, in their devotion.

Sources:

Basava and his band of fellow thinkers together called as Sharanas were backbone of the whole Sharana Literature which is popularly known as Vachana Sahitya.¹ This literature is multidimensional in nature. Its varied dimensions are social, religious, ethical and literary and they are directly projected from it; but the Economic thoughts that flow from the Vachana Sahitya in general and Basaveshwara Vachanas in particular are only derived ones, derived from the economic bearing the Vachanas have, so relevant and so meaningful not only to the life and living of those times but equally relevant and meaningful to generations and generations to come.

Methodology:

The study is descriptive and analytical one. By and large historical approach has been adopted in the description.

- Information from the literary and epigraphically sources, additional information have gathered through the fieldwork method. This method shall consist of the first hand

¹ Hiremath.R.C. (Ed), 'Bhakti Bhandari Basavannanavara Vachanagalu', Karnataka University Dharwar, 1965.(Kannada), pp.28-30.

survey and study of the various sites, places and institutions associated with Virasaiva followers. The Mathas or houses of Virasaiva community and other institutions have been examined from the historical point of view.

- A questionnaire method is also used in my research to get general information on Vachana Sahitya and Basaveshwara's concept of Work is Worship. The questionnaire focuses on the Vachanas impact on Society, so as to understand the nature of Vachana Sahityas and his philosophy of Work is Worship useful in social and economic life and religious life of the follower.
- Interview method has also adopted to get the more information.

Work is Worship: --

Basava's important faith was the dignity of labour or Kayaka According to Shivasharanas; every individual must indulge in some kind of work. He enunciated this principle through his philosophy of 'Kayaka'. According to which a person who does not work is not entitled to his bread. The work undertaken by a person should not come in the way of his 'Sadhane' (Striving for the ultimate attainment of Moksha). There is no high or mean in work or profession and one should not be selfish and think that the fruits of labour should be for himself. He laid great stress on action and 'work is worship' as enunciated in his Vacana 'Kayakave Kailasa'. i.e. Work is heaven. This is the significant contribution of Sharana to the culture of mankind.² Basava's structure of society appears still more wonderful to modern mind. The whole society was reconstructed taking into account the needs of each individual. The bread that a Sharana earns by the sweat of his brow is alone conducive to health. That is his real wealth.³

The prophet and leader Basava was the minister of a Kingdom; Gundaya was a potter; Appanna was a barber, Haralaya was a shoe maker, Kakkaya was a tamer; Ketaya was a basket-maker; Chaudaya was a ferryman; Madival was a washerman. This is to mention only a few There were, besides, traders, agriculturists and men of different business lines too many to be mentioned here. It is thus proved that Kayaka, the well-planned life, was quite practical and nothing was impossible.⁴

Basava treated all Kayaka equally and respected all 'Kayakavantas' men and women, in Basava society, were allowed to take up any Kayaka of their choice. Women devotees of the

² Phalaksha, Introduction to Karnataka History, Shashi Prakashana, Tiptur-1999.p.84.

³ Hunshal The Lingayat Movement, A Social Revolution in Karnataka, Basava Samithi, Bangalore, 2004, pp.106-107.

⁴ Nandikeshwara, History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion being an introduction to Lingadharanacandrika (Trans) by Sakhare M.R. 1942.pp-501-502.

movement emerged from different socio-economic backgrounds. Women would join this devotional path irrespective of the status of their caste, creed or class. The movement was equally open to common women also.⁵

Basava's 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'.⁶

The Kayaka principle accepted in the Anubhava Mantapa.⁷ This theme had the implications of socio-economic reforms for peace and prosperity; production leads to wealth; and that wealth is distributed satisfactory in the society by way of 'Dasoha' that way society lives in peace and there is no scope for any struggle or disturbance. It's for reaching effects cannot however be described here for want of space and in the context of the subject under study. The essential ingredients of this "Theory" could be briefly summarized thus⁸ :

- 1) None should remain idle and depend upon others for a living.
- 2) Should be engaged in an honest and productive work; there should be no dishonest method of earning.
- 3) Your earnings should be shared by others. 'Dasoha' is the easiest means to achieve this tenet.
- 4) Should not have any expensive and evil habits, save for other day but not hoarding.
- 5) No work should be treated as high or low. Dignity of labour is upheld and therefore equality is maintained.

Hence it turns out that the principles of 'Kayaka' at once envisaged a socialistic pattern of society where everyone earned his bread by honest labour, but made over the surplus value of his earning back to society. So that no one either hoarded his produce or accumulated what was left of his earnings beyond his strict requirements in the form of property.⁹

⁵ .C.Nandimath,Pavate and A.S.Adke-Sunyasampadane, Dharwar:Karnatak University, 1965-1972.p.38.

⁶ H. Tipperudraswamy, Makers of Indian Literature Basaveshwara, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1975.p 27.

⁷ Sri Basaveshwara, Eighth Centenary Commemoration Volume ,Govt of Mysore, 1967.pp139-144.

⁸ V.S.Charantimath, Anubhava Mantapa and Veerasaiva Culture , Basava Samiti Bangalore 1995. pp 30-31.

⁹ M.C.Shantimurthy, Tr. By G.B.Sajjan, The Economic Values of the Sharanas Worlds View, Basava Journal, Vol.5, No.4, June 1991, p.59.

Thus arts and crafts flourished and a new foundation was laid in the history of economics of the land. Basava was the first medieval prophet to preach that poverty is not a spiritual sin but it is a social evil. He collected all people belonging to different vocations and laid the foundation of a Brotherhood of labour. It is needless to say that the economic revolution brought out by Kayaka and Dasoha is worth emulating by all nations of the world.¹⁰

Findings:

1. In other words following the reorganization, the Virasaivas /Lingayat have come to be thrown about in major numbers in the frame of Karnataka and the minorities of them have been parceled out in the neighbouring states of Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andhara Pradesh, Maharashtra etc. The fact that the Lingayat community has become dominant, successful or significant in the territorial and political map of India is the result not only of the historical circumstances and accidents and opportunities but also of the various capacities, abilities, skill and achievements recorded by the community. In other words, at least partially if not substantially, the community has demonstrated that it has absorbed and practiced the philosophy of work handed down by Basaveshwara.

2. In terms of various professions or occupations, the members of the community have basically dominant in the fields of agriculture, trade, commerce, industry and banking but, with the spread of education and technical training among the members, they have increasingly taken to what is called the learned professions and technical or non-traditional careers of various types. They have been in increasing numbers in the professions of doctors, lawyers, professions, scientists, civil servants, legislators or Parliamentarians, political party leaders, judges, trade unions and so on. They also find in progressive numbers in the ranks of what is called martial professions such as in the army or the police. In other words the members of the community have dispersed themselves as widely and variously as the professions or occupations of the present day society permit or demand.

3. While Basava envisaged was a self-contained and self sufficient economy free from the clutches of caste, creed or sex. Therefore would be no distinction between the rich and the poor. The adoption and implementation of the concepts of Kayaka and Dasoha would serve as a panaceas for the eradication of poverty particularly for countries like ours wherein we have been thinking day and day out as reflected in our slogan 'Garibi Hatao' or 'Banish Poverty'

4. 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:

¹⁰ B.Virupakshappa –Basava And His Teachings, Basava Samiti Bangalore, 1994, p.24-25.

unemployment, inflation, poverty, starvation deaths, scarcity of essential goods, widening gap between rich and poor, class antagonism, so and so forth.

5. There is no gender discrimination for adopting the any profession in Virasaiva community.

6. Most of Virasaiva followers adopt any profession without considering high and low even today.

Implications:--While the economic thoughts of Basava and other Sharanas are lofty and quite relevant to the 12th century, how far they are relevant and meaningful today is a thing over which we have to ponder. No doubt, they are meaningful and equally relevant today in their essence, but if we attempt a literal application of those principles, we may find ourselves in wilderness. The modern society and its economic problems are highly, complicated. The fundamental principles of bodily labour, equal reward for physical and intellectual labour, no accumulation and retention of just what is needed for the day, no borrowing and lending for interest and a host of such other principles are to be taken now only in spirit. To apply them in practical life today, appropriate modifications in them to suit the present day times have to be made before experimenting with them. These fundamentals tempered by a religious fervour and reverence to human soul and dignity can act as polestars and beacon –lights to guide our day to day activities. It is this sense, that these and ideals are highly relevant and meaningful even today and they will equally hold good for tomorrow also. As such they cut across the barriers of time and space.

The Virasaiva outlook of economy is comprehensive and integrated allowing complete freedom to the individual to realize his potentials in the economic activities as also in other areas of life.

Conclusion:

Basava recognizes that social equality could not be achieved without economic equality. And Kayaka and Dasoha are the two pillars for economic justice and economic democracy. Kayaka literally means physical work or work done by the body. It embodies the principles of dignity of man, dignity of labour, and divinity of labour.

Work as worship becomes a revolutionary force in a period where the global economic system is based on the end to work. “Kayaka” in contemporary times can create new energies to end unemployment and inequality. Kayaka is thus simultaneously a spiritual category, a social justice category, and an ecological sustainability category. “Wealth without Work” was also one of the seven social sins according to Gandhi. Establishing work as worship can be revolutionary a force in our times as it was eight centuries ago in the time of Basava for creating a just, sustainable society which enhances human dignity and expands human

potential.¹¹

Kayaka is a duty by which each one has to maintain oneself, and render its proceeds to the welfare of the society as a whole. The Kayaka view of life is in conformity with the modern democratic principles of equality, justice, liberty and fraternity which are laid down by the Preamble to the Constitution of India. Importance was attached to a sense of duty rather than the rewards a work had to offer, the values of industry, selfless service, devotion to work and freedom of thought were emphasized. These values are of importance to us even today.

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¹¹ See for detail An Article by Dr.R.T.Jangam, *Basaveshwara's concept of Kayaka : A Critical Study* ,in Basava Journal, Vol.No.9, Issue No.2 Dec.1984, .Basava Samiti Bangalore, pp.45-50.