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# Mahatma Basaveshwar

India is a country of sadhu and saints. Saint tradition is the spiritual splendor of our country. Religion was the main objective of the work of the saints. But the saints have also contributed a lot to the reformation of literature and religion-society. The saints born in different provinces of India have done noble and comprehensive work for the whole human race. Salutations to the great revolutionary saint, poet, religious reformer Mahatma Basaveshwar from Karnataka on the auspicious occasion of his birth anniversary.

काय वानू आता, संतांचे उपकार।

मज निरंतर जागविति।।

**Meaning: How can I describe the gratitude of these saints, who constantly wake me up?**

Many saints of different states have done the great work of continuously awakening the society and, while rendering the eternal truth, have inspired the society to walk on the right path through their literature and teachings. The gratitude towards the work of social awakening by saints is considered less. The egalitarian reform work of Saint Mahatma Basaveshwar, which took place in the land of Karnataka in the 12th century, is a beacon not only for India but for all the progressive reformers and activists of in the world.



Any great man, saint, or mahatma is born in any province, family, linguistic class, or caste; even then, his work motivates the benefit of society as a whole. Mahatma Basaveshwar was born into a Kannada-speaking family in Bagewadi, Bijapur district of Karnataka state. Yet, given his vast, comprehensive, and humanitarian vision and his egalitarian holistic work, it comes to mind that, their work has no dignity of the province, language, or caste. But his work has no limits on language, region, and time. Today, even after 800 years, his work is admirable and exemplary for the reformers of the whole world. This is the infinite, immense greatness of the work of Mahatma Basaveshwar.

"Equality" is the basis of their work, and "mercy" is the foundation of their work. Basaveshwar's ideas also influenced Mahatma Gandhiji. "I have to complete the unfinished work of Basaveshwar now," he had expressed such a resolution. Not only Gandhiji but also Marxist thinker Manvendra Nath Roy, great freedom fighter Jayaprakash Narayan, and great thinker Acharya Vinoba Bhave were also impressed by his thoughts and actions. Not only this, Arthur Miles, Sir James Campbell, and John Russell, these world-famous thinkers, also Praises Basaveshwar's revolutionary work and ideas.

Basaveshwar was not only a preacher of philosophy but also an active reformer. He struggled against caste discrimination and evil practices. By giving equal rights to women as men and so-called untouchables to touchable, he did the work of building an egalitarian society. The seed of many present-day reformers appears to be inherent in Basaveshwar's work.

### **Birth, Childhood, and Education**

There are many theories related to Basaveshwar's life. Basav Purana and Basavaraj Devar Rangle are considered the means of life character of Basaveshwar. Basaveshwar was born in 1105 (according to some people, 1131) in the village of Bagevadi in Bijapur district of Karnataka state happened, on the day of Akshaya Tritiya. His father's name was Madiraja and mother's name was Madalamba. His father was the chief agrahara of the village. His pious and cultured Shaiva Brahmin family enjoyed a special place and respect in the village. His parents, who were worshipers of Lord Shiva, named Vrishabha, Nandi, and Nandikeshwar, who were the vehicles of Lord Shiva, named him Basava (Taurus). According to another legend, on the orders of Lord Shiva himself, his vehicle Nandi incarnated in the house of Shiva devotees named Madiraja and Madalamba. Therefore, the child was named Vrishabha (Sanskrit), Basava in the Kannada language, as said in Basava Purana.

When Basaveshwar was eight years old, his parents decided to perform his Upanayana-Vratbandh (Janeu) rituals grandly as per tradition. Then Basaveshwar asked a question. Why are we doing the Vratbandh ceremony? After not getting a satisfactory answer to this question, he refused to do this ritual. Not only this, then why the Upanayana ceremony is only for boys? Why not my sister and other girls? By asking such a question, Basaveshwar, unanswered the whole Brahmavrinde. Basaveshwar's reformist approach and independent attitude can be seen in this way.

After the death of his parents, Basaveshwar, along with his elder sister Nagamma, left for Sriksheeta Kudalasangam at the confluence of the Krishna and Malaprabha rivers. Having received favor from Satpurush Jatvedmuni and Ishanguru, the officer of Kudalasangam, he practiced for 12 years under his guidance. He was disturbed to see the superstition, the unreal importance of rituals, and untouchability that flourished in the society and resolved to reward

the true Egalitarian religion. His marriage took place with Gangaambika, daughter of his maternal uncle Baldevji. His maternal uncle Baldevji was a minister in the court of Kalachuri king Bijjal. Seeing Basaveshwar's intelligence, he got him a job in the court of King Bijjal. Later on, Basaveshwar, based on his work, gained the trust of the king Bijjal and became the General Secretary of the court.

The capital of King Bijjal was 'Mangalwedha' (taluka place in the Solapur district of present-day Maharashtra state). From 1132 to 1153, Basaveshwar resided in Mangalwedha for about 21 years. In 1153, King Bijjal shifted his capital from Mangalwedha to Kalyan (near Bidar, Karnataka). Because of this, Basaveshwar had to leave Mangalwedha and move to Kalyan. From 1153 to 1168, Kalyan (today's 'Basav Kalyan' village) was the main workplace of Mahatma Basaveshwar. Here, he established the religious parliament 'Anubhav Mantap', and many Shiva Sharani got a stage through it. After Basaveshwar organized the inter-caste marriage of Shiv Sharanis in Kalyan, a lot of violence happened there. Due to this, Basaveshwar renounced the post of Minister, left Kalyan, and went to Sri Kshetra Kudalsangam. In 1169, on the day of Nag Panchami, he surrendered at the feet of Sri Kudala Sangameshwara and took Sanjeevan Samadhi.

### **Anubhav Mantap: Open religious parliament**

Soul experience had a special place in the overall work of Basaveshwar. Such a spiritual parliament, i.e. Anubhav Mantap, is open to men and women of all castes and religions. This was the creative imagination of Basaveshwar. Basaveshwar was not only a philosopher and thinker but a visionary religious reformer. Sivayogi Sant Allamprabhu (who was from the so-called Dalit society) was the president of this Anubhav Mantap. Shiva sharani from different places Kashmir to Afghanistan used to be attracted to this Anubhava Mantap. This was Basaveshwar's experiment to destroy the prevailing caste distinctions in society. when he was at

Mangalwedha felt that there should be a stage based on the establishment of equality for people of all spheres of the society, whose action he completed as soon as he came to Kalyan. Basaveshwar had practiced and recited many scriptures under the guidance of Guru Ishan at Kudalsangam. It also included 'Agam,' 'Shaiva Granth,' and 'Siddhant Shikhamani' texts of Veerashaiva ideology. Out of these, 'Siddhant Shikhamani' had a remarkable influence on him. From the one verse, i.e. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, or Antyaj, if all such people have devotion to Shiva and consider themselves Shiv Sharan, their caste should not be seen. Without any discrimination, respect should be given to Shiva Bhakti as proof. In the fire of Shiva-bhakti, all caste distinctions are burnt to ashes. Just as the water of the drains in the Ganges, instead of being in its previous form, it becomes the form of the Ganga. Similarly, all prejudices are destroyed by the devotion of Shiva. This idea is the main equanimity formula of Basaveshwar's Anubhav Mantap.

In Basaveshwar's Anubhav Mantap, the devotees of the neglected, weak, and oppressed sections of the society came together with great faith. Among them are washermen (Madiwal- Machidev), Burud (Ketayya), Dhor (Kavakayya), Mang (Madar Chanaiyya), Nai (Hapad Appana), Gadaria (Ramanna), Chamar (Haralayya), Tailor (Dasimaiyya), Teli (Kanaiyya), The goldsmith (bomayya), the kosti (timanna) consisted. Brahmin, Madhuvayya etc., and upper classes were also members of the Anubhav Mantapa. Along with men, women

of different classes also had significant participation. Akka Mahadevi, Akka Nagamma like great Shiva Sharanis and Queen Mahadevi of Kashmir, Remavva, Somavva, Somavva, who spin the yarn, Sanka like women were also included. The men of Anubhav Mantap were called 'Shivsharan' and the women as 'Shivsharani'. The Anubhav Mandap had more than 770 members from various provinces of India.

In the Anubhav Mantap, each member participated in the spiritual discussion of their own volition while leading a self-sufficient and simple life. The discussion here used to be about the method of self-realization. All the members took part in this discussion. This self-realized statement was called 'Vachan.' From this self-realized statement, 'Vachan Sahitya' was formed. Devotion to Shiva, self-sufficient living, virtuous character, and humanity were the 'Anubhav Mantap' members' four-point. To propagate and spread such virtues as Shiva-bhakti, kindness, virtue, non-violence, non-possessiveness in the whole society, And the aim of Anubhava Mantapa was to create an egalitarian harmonious, fraternal society. Each member used to participate in the discussion and read out their experience to all. After discussing it, such incidents were collected. This is the Vachan literature collection.

### **Basava Thoughts in Vachan Literature**

Vachan literature is not a means of entertainment. It is the invention of the self-experience of Shiv Sharan and Shiva Sharani. 'Arive Guru' means 'Experience is the Guru' is an ideal type of literature. 'God contemplation' and 'compassion towards society' are the two main aspects of this Vachan literature. With a sincere and devoted devotion to Shiva and a socially friendly role, superstitions, malpractices, obscene and out-of-date customs, discrimination, and untouchability of society have a wonderfully inexplicable philosophy we can see in Vachan literature. Basaveshwar is considered to be the crown jewel of Vachan literature. Kabir's couplets, Goswami Tulsidas's chaupaiyan, Sant Dnyaneshwar's Ovi, Sant Namdev - Sant Tukaram's abhang, and Words of Basaveshwar this is all-time and inspiring literature. Vachana literature is religious literature, and it is also a social commentary. In Veerashaiva literature, as much importance as 28 Agamas, 205 Approaches, the same importance has been given to 'Vachan' literature. Vachan literature is the soul of Veerashaiva's thoughts. The words of 213 such prominent figures as Basaveshwar, Allamprabhu, Channabasaveshwara, Akkamahadevi, Siddarameshwar, and Devar Dasimaya are considered 'Vachan Shastra' in the Vachan literature. It is not only spiritual science, but it is a life-useful science. The values, thoughts, and elements expressed in the Vachan are original and give timeless teachings. Comprehensive Thoughts and Elements of this Vachan literature show why Basaveshwar called 'Seer,' 'Vishvamanav,' 'Vishwa Manav Chintak' Basaveshwar's Vachan literature has inspired Gandhiji, Vinoba Bhave, Dr. Ambedkar, and many other thinkers.

The main feature of Vachan literature is that all this literature is in the Kannada language. There are 28 Agamas of Veerashaiva tradition, 205 approaches, Siddhant Shikhamani, etc.; this ancient literature is in the Sanskrit language. Basaveshwar wrote literature in the Kannada language with great courage. It was the insistence of Basaveshwar that common people should understand theology and thoughts, principles in their mother tongue, in their native language. He put his idea into practice by writing Vachan literature in Kannada. 'Anubhav Mantap' religious parliament established by Basaveshwar used the Kannada language for discussion purposes. For this reason, all the Vachan literature produced by the

brainstorming of Anubhav Mantap is in Kannada only. 'Vachan Literature' This is not only a hallway of the Kannada language but its soul.

Basaveshwar's religious thoughts expressed in the Vachan literature and devotion to Shiva's worship are based on five points Realism, Tendency, Rationalism, Scientific, and Behaviourism. Devotion should have the vision of knowledge; this was the insistence of Basaveshwar. Winner of Indian Dnyanpith, Dr. V.K. Gokak says- that Mahatma Basaveshwar was more modern than the modern thinkers.

Equality, harmony, humanity, oneness, and mercy these things have the main place in Basaveshwar's religious thoughts. What religion without mercy?" While asking such a question, mercy is the root of religion; mercy is required for all human beings, it has been preached. "If there is no God in the idol made of stone, soil, tree, metal, then the soul within you is God. know this. "Such a message is in the words of Basaveshwar for the innocent idol worshippers. "No one in the world is smaller than me, and no one in the world is bigger than Shiva" Basaveshwar's humble and modest nature can be seen in such words. 'Do not steal,' 'Do not kill,' Do not discriminate between human beings,' 'Do not praise yourself,' 'Behave with virtue' "Live life by working hard, don't eat for free" And keep the purification and purity of the soul with sincerity. 'Yagya-yag and do not do animal violence for it, these are the main ideas pearls of all Basaveshwar's Vachan literature. Apart from this, 'Jiva-Shiva Aikya,' 'Guru-Linga-Jangam,' and 'Shiv Shaktisamrasya' these thoughts are also an integral part of the Vachan literature. In a sentence, if the word is to convey the essence of Vachan literature, then Kayak Ve Kailas' (Work is worship), i.e. 'Labor is God, this is the message.



### **The feminine perspective of Mahatma Basaveshwar**

Mahatma Basaveshwar's approach to women is very liberal, humane, and can be applicable even in the present times; it is so. In ancient times, women had a good place. We can see that in Subhashit. Due to foreign invasion etc. women were confined in the house. Basaveshwar, after witnessing the neglect and plight of women in society, did the work of giving them an equal place with men. There was the active participation of 70 women in Basaveshwar's

Anubhav Mantap. They had the right to sit and participate in religious discussions like men. Out of these 70, 34 Shiv Sharanis have significantly contributed to Vachan literature.

With great courage, Basaveshwar changed many traditions prevalent in the society, which did injustice to women. Birth, Caste, Rajswa, Uchhishta, and Death were declared outdated. Widows were given a place in religious activities; women were given the freedom to participate in prayers and other programs during the menstrual period and encouraged remarriages. In the same way, by recognizing inter-caste marriage, he tried to build a harmonious society. Basaveshwar did his second marriage to an inter-caste woman.

Basaveshwar belonged to the Brahmin community, and his second wife, Nilambika, was a Kshatriya. Thus, Basaveshwar was a creative reformer. They used to say that a woman is not a Shudra but a Mahadevi. He made many illiterate women literates in the Anubhav Mantap. Basaveshwar conducted the first class of adult literacy in the world. Making women literate awakened their self-esteem and self-respect. Basaveshwar has persuaded the then society to give women the status of a co-religionist, companionship in the true sense. The great women saints like Akka Mahadevi, Rayamma, Sivapriya, Adaiyah Padmavati, Satavva, and satavva are the result of the work of Basaveshwar.

### **The greatness of the work of Mahatma Basaveshwar**

Chakradharswami of the Mahanubhav cult, Saint Dnyaneshwar, the founder of the Varkari sect, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, In the long tradition of Indian great men like Lord Mahavir, Lord Gautam Buddha Basaveshwar has an important place. 'Guru Granth Sahib' to Sikhs, 'Dnyaneshwari, Tukaram Gatha' to people of Warkari Sect, Tulsi Ramcharit Manas for Hindi speakers, and the value of 'Kabir's' couplet is extraordinary. The same importance has Basaveshwar's literature in South India.

Few people believe that Basaveshwar is the founder of the Lingayat religion, but this is not true. The Veerashaiva tradition is very ancient. Veerashaiva literature like 27 Agamas, 205 Approaches, and Siddhant Shikhamani are several centuries older than Basaveshwar. Basaveshwar gave new life to this neglected tradition. In the glory of the work of the Basaveshwar, Veerashaiva Sant Manmath Swami of Maharashtra from the sixteenth century said that Basaveshwara is the protector of the Veerashaiva sect.

The leading leaders of the society have done the work of Basaveshwar and the pride of Vachan literature. In Bijjal's court, from Karnik (Clerk) to the General Secretary, his work is a spectator of effort and Abhyudaya. Basaveshwar was a great human who preached such paths as Abhyudaya and Nishreyas. His work and preaching's have no region, language, and time boundaries. Because of this, Basaveshwar is such a vishwatmaka. He is the beacon of the whole human race.

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