

## BASAVANNA AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS

**Dr. Shivakumar V. Uppe**

Associate professor, Post Graduate Department of Studies in History,  
Govt. First Grade College, Bidar, Karnataka.

### ABSTRACT

The philosopher and social reformer Basava, who lived from 1106 to 1167, was also known as Basavanna. He opposed Hinduism's ritual practices and the caste system, two social ills of his time. His lessons and reasoning rise above all limits and address the all inclusive and timeless. Basava was a great humanitarian who advocated for a new way of life in which divine experience was at the center of everything and caste, gender, and social distinctions didn't matter much. The firm monotheistic belief in God as the absolute and universal supreme Self, Lord Shiva, as well as the equality and dignity of all individual beings irrespective of social status and gender formed the foundation of his movement. He was a true visionary who was born ahead of his time. He had the idea of a society with good religious, moral, and spiritual values for everyone. He was a great reformer and mystic who also served the people. He was Prime Minister of the Southern Kalachuri Empire in South India and started a literary revolution by introducing Vachana Sahitya (Lit. sayings, also known as prose). According to legend, Basava was a statesman by training, a mystic by temperament, an idealist by choice, a man of letters by taste, a humanist by sympathy, and a social reformer by conviction. His movement was enriched by the essence of divine experience in the form of Vachanas, which define a new way of looking at God and life. Many great yogis and mystics of the time joined him. Later, Basava's path led to a new tradition (sampradaya), which became known as the Lingavanta Dharma or Lingayata movement in the south. Basava Dharma, Sharana Dharma, and Vachana Dharma are additional synonyms for lingayata.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Transformation, Epoch Maker, Veerashaivism, Social Movement, Vachanas, Mysticism, Saint Poet, Reformation, Progressive Attitude.

### INTRODUCTION

Basaveshwara, also known as Basavanna, was a saint poet, social reformer, and philosopher who stood up to gender, caste, and class inequalities as well as societal issues of the time. While advocating and practicing equality, he emphasized the dignity of labor, monotheism, and nonviolence. One of his many contributions to the revival of modern, tradition-bound society was his recognition of women's uniqueness and rights. His ideas and teachings transcend all boundaries and address the eternal and global. Basavanna was a well-known humanist who advocated for a new way of life in which caste, gender, and social differences were irrelevant and divine experience was central to life. The wife and husband were treated as equals in every way, and they shared the same social and religious responsibilities. The creation of the religious discussion and experience forum

AnubhavaMantapa was largely influenced by Basavanna.As a result, Basavanna's attitude toward femininity should become more apparent when the Mantapa's operation is examined more closely.Women were not regarded as inferior to men when it came to spiritual matters.Women's contributions to religious life were, as a result, not only warmly embraced but also highly valued and promoted.

The major works on Indian history and literature barely mention the twelfth-century Virasaiva or Lingayat movement, which altered Karnatak society and culture.Because the Lingayat movement's primary textual sources were in Kannada, Max Weber made little mention of it in his study of Indian religions.From 1106 to 1167, Basavanna, also known as Lord Basaveshwara, was a saint-poet, statesman, charismatic leader, and social reformer.He was a member of the Kalyani-Chalukya-Kalachuri dynasty when he lived.He was active during the reigns of both dynasties, but his power reached its highest point during the reign of King Bijjala II in Karnataka, India.

Basavanna was a 12th-century philosopher and social reformer who founded the Lingayat sect. He was born in the town of BasavanaBagewadi in Karnataka, which is 20 kilometers from Hungundtaluk.He was married to Gangambika, the daughter of the Prime Minister of Bijjala—one of the great Chalukya emperors—and was born in Kudalasangama.Some of Basavanna's works include Vachana, such as the Shat-sthala-vachana, Kalajnana-vachana, Mantra-gopya, Ghatachakra-vachana, and Raja-yoga-vachana.Basava held the belief that all human beings, regardless of caste, were created equal, and that all forms of manual labor were of equal value.Along with a group of other devotees, Basavanna took action against gender, caste, and class inequality.While advocating and practicing equality, he emphasized the dignity of labor, monotheism, and nonviolence.Members of this movement wrote thousands of lyrics (vachanas) in the people's language, Kannada.Basavanna is without a doubt one of the best poets in the vachana tradition.These contextual and universal goals of devotional poetry include social reform, the exposition and establishment of a code of conduct and a system of doctrines, and spiritual self-illumination.The Lingayats / Veerashaivas, a powerful political group in Karnataka, worship Shiva.The Lingayats are followers of Basavanna, a saint and philosopher from the 12th century who opposed traditional worship and the primacy of the Vedas.The people group's Veerashaivacult likewise reveres Shiva sculptures and follows other Hindu practices.The Veerashaivas believe that Shiva founded the community and that Basavanna was one of its saints, whereas the Lingayats consider the Veerashaivas to be Hindus because they follow Hindu customs.

### **His life and work**

Ingaleshwar (Bagewadi), a small town in the Bijapur district of northern Karnataka, is where Basavanna was born in 1106 to a Shaivite Kamme Brahmin family.He was forced to wear a sacred thread known as the Janivara, which he did not accept, as he was growing up in a strict religious household.He dismissed both the conventional Sanskrit sacred texts and the common Hindu ceremonies.He left Bagewadi at a young age to study Sangameshwara at Kudala Sangama, the Shaivite stronghold at the time.He met scholars there and developed his understanding of society as well as his spiritual and religious beliefs.Játavéda Muni, also known as Eeshánya Guru, was his spiritual guide.He opposed untouchability, superstition, temple rituals, and the priestly class's dominance, and he believed in a single, perfect God.He preached equality for all people, regardless of caste, and he believed that people should be shown the right way to get to God.He was highly regarded in Hindu society during the 12th century for his groundbreaking work and innovative ideas.

In the Kalachuri king Bijjala's court, Basavanna worked as an accountant at Mangalaveda, a Kalyani Chalukya feudatory.Basavanna also went to Kalyana when Bijjala gained control of Basavakalyana by defeating Tailapa IV, the great Chalukya king's grandson.Basava rose to the position of Prime Minister in the court of king Bijjala, who ruled at Kalyana (now renamed Basavakalyana) from

1162 to 1167. He achieved this position through honesty, hard work, and a visionary mission. He set up the Anubhava Mantapa there, a spiritual assembly to openly discuss Lingayatism that attracted numerous saints from all over India. He was a firm believer in Káyakavé Kailása, which means "Work is Heaven" and "Work puts you on the path to heaven." The Vachanas, poetic writings that are straightforward and straightforward to comprehend and include essential teachings like the ones listed below, were written at this time.

Lord Basaveshwara, also known as Basavanna, was an Indian statesman, philosopher, poet, Lingayat saint, a social reformer in Karnataka, and a leader of the Shiva-centered Bhakti movement in the 12th century. He was a member of the Kalyani Chalukya/Kalachuri dynasty when he lived. He was active under both dynasties, but King Bijjala II's rule in Karnataka, India, was when he had the most influence. Basaveshwara, more commonly referred to as Basavanna, was an Indian statesman, philosopher, poet, Lingayat social reformer in the Shiva-focused bhakti movement, and a Hindu Shaivite[4] social reformer during the Kalyani Chalukya/Kalachuri dynasty. Basaveshwara lived in the 12th century CE. Basava was active during the reigns of both dynasties, but his power was greatest under King Bijjala II in India's Karnataka.

Basava spread social mindfulness through his verse, famously known as Vachanas. He dismissed orientation or social segregation, odd notions and ceremonies yet presented Ishtalinga neckband, with a picture of the Shiva Linga, to each individual no matter what their introduction to the world, to be a steady indication of one's bhakti (dedication) to Shiva. He was a strong supporter of ahimsa but also opposed animal and human sacrifice. As the chief minister of his kingdom, he established brand-new public institutions like the Anubhava Mantapa—also known as the "hall of spiritual experience," which allowed people of all socioeconomic classes to openly discuss spiritual and everyday life concerns. The Lingayats are said to have been founded by Basava, according to traditional legends and hagiographic texts. However, contemporary research that relies on historical sources like the Kalachuri inscriptions asserts that Basava was the poet-philosopher who resurrected, refined, and reenergized a tradition that was already in existence. The Kannada poet Harihara's The Basavarajadevara Ragale is the earliest account of the social reformer's life and is considered significant due to the author's proximity to his protagonist. The Basava Purana, a sacred Telugu text written in the 13th century by Palkuriki Somanatha, provides a comprehensive account of Basava's life and ideas.

### **Role and influence of Basavanna as a Social Reformer:**

Philosopher and social reformer Basavanna fought against contemporary social issues like Hindu religious practices and the caste system. His ideas and teachings reach beyond all boundaries and speak to the eternal and global. A well-known humanist, Basavanna advocated for a new way of life in which divine experience was at the center of life and caste, gender, and social divisions were irrelevant. He fought against gender discrimination and socioeconomic prejudice as well as untouchability. Basavanna advanced reflection love, which dismissed Brahmin-drove sanctuary love and methodology for customized direct love of Shiva through strategies, for example, exclusively worn symbols and images, for example, a scaled down linga. Vachanas, Basavanna's poetry, was used to raise social consciousness.

In the Kalachuri king Bijjala's court, Basavanna worked as an accountant at Mangalaveda, a Kalyani Chalukya feudatory. Basavanna also went to Kalyana when Bijjala gained control of Basavakalyana by defeating Tailapa IV, the great Chalukya king's grandson. Basava rose to the position of Prime Minister in the court of king Bijjala, who ruled at Kalyana (now renamed Basavakalyana) from 1162 to 1167. He achieved this position through honesty, hard work, and a visionary mission. He set up the Anubhava Mantapa there, a spiritual assembly to openly discuss Lingayatism that attracted numerous saints from all over India. He was a firm believer in Káyakavé Kailása, which means "Work is Heaven" and "Work puts you on the path to heaven." The Vachanas, poetic writings that are

straightforward and straightforward to comprehend and include essential teachings like the ones listed below, were written at this time.

#### **Anubhava Mantapa:**

Basavanna was a firm proponent of a caste-free society in which everyone had equal opportunities to advance. He established AnubhavaMantapa, a Lingayata academy of mystics, saints, and philosophers that served as a clearinghouse for ideas on common human values and ethics, in order to carry out the noble goal. A large number of Sharanas, or people from the lower social strata, took part in the AnubhavaMantapa, which was led by another famous spiritual leader, AllamaPrabhu. Along with greats like Akkamahadevi and AllamaPrabhu, Basavanna participated in the AnubhavaMantapa. Basava caused a lot of extrovertism with his revolutionary ideas and actions against social evils. He angered the orthodox members of society by allowing untouchables to eat lunch with him and praising a marriage between a Brahmin woman and an untouchable man. As a result, they sent complaints, allegations, and accusations to King Bijjala. The king didn't want to upset the religious people in the society and make them feel bad. Therefore, he ordered severe punishment for the newlyweds. He asked Basava to accept the caste system before punishing them. But Basava didn't back down. He thought that the married couple weren't subject to the caste system because they were Lingayats. His argument caused the king to be unhappy, so he punished the couple. Basavanna left Kalyana in 1196 with a heavy heart following that unpleasant event and marched toward Kudala Sangama. He preached to the people about humanity, morality, honesty, equality, individuality, simplicity, and the dignity of labor while he was on his way. He was released from his body on July 30 of that same year.

#### **Contributions of Basavan Women Empowerment:**

Basavanna's extraordinary contributions to humanity are priceless. One of his many contributions to the revival of modern, tradition-bound society was his recognition of women's uniqueness and rights. It goes without saying that a society's cultural level is directly related to a woman's status in that society. In a progressive society, women's subjugation decreases as their status rises. The ideal society that Basavanna and the Sharanas envisioned in the 12th century was a significant step toward women's freedom. Examining the state of women at that time will better enable one to evaluate their epoch-making contribution. In the early Vedic period, there is evidence to suggest that women had the same rights as men. The wife and husband were treated as equals in every way, and they shared the same social and religious responsibilities. The intellectual and spiritual life of the community was heavily influenced by women. The Rigveda contains a number of hymns written by women. Vivavara, Apal, Lopamudra, Ghosa, Indrāni, and Sachi are among the hymn writers mentioned. It is possible to deduce, based on allusions in Dharma Shashtras, that women continued to enjoy independence and respect long after the Vedic period. But it only lasts a short time. The dark period of women's enslavement appears to have begun shortly thereafter. Manusmriti is kind to women in a few of his remarks. He says that the Gods are happy when women are honored; However, no sacred ceremony brings rewards where they are disrespected. However, some of his comments about them are almost as positive as the others. They are, in his opinion, morally repugnant beings. In this world, women are naturally attracted to men; Consequently, wise people never become vulnerable around females. Verse like this abound. Manusmriti asserts that a woman will never be able to survive on her own. She is protected as a child by her father, her husband as an adult, and her son as she gets older.

They are not permitted to recite Vedic mantras, go on pilgrimages, offer prayers, perform penances, or worship Gods! One of the many ancient and cruel practices of Hinduism that Basavanna fought against was this illegal treatment of women—the unwillingness to recognize her status as a human being—as

we will see in the following section. This kind of religion wouldn't last very long. In response to the degenerate Brahmanism's proclamation of class division, Buddhism and Jainism emerged. Although her salvation was not yet complete, it appeared to be on the horizon. Similar to the typical post-Vedic society, Basavanna was born into a civilization of the twelfth century that was rife with irrational faiths and beliefs. In this culture, women were treated like cattle and slaves. Basavanna was tasked with providing women with dignity and freeing them from their traditional shackles. The creation of the religious discussion and experience forum Anubhava Mantapa was largely influenced by Basavanna. It was primarily cared for by him, with assistance from Chennabasava and Allama Prabhu. As a result, Basavanna's attitude toward femininity should become more apparent when the Mantapa's operation is examined more closely. The Mantapa's membership was overwhelmingly female. By inventing the "LingaDeeksha" rite, Lingayatism made its doors open to people of all castes and creeds. Women were not regarded as inferior to men when it came to spiritual matters. Women's contributions to religious life were, as a result, not only warmly accepted but also highly valued and promoted. The dialogue between Akkamahadevi and Allama Prabhu is one of the best parts of the Shunya Sampdane.

- Through his poetry, known as Vachanaas, Basavanna raised awareness of social issues.
- He opposed superstitions and rituals based on gender or social status, but he did give Ishtalinga an image of the Shiva Liga to everyone, regardless of where they were born, to serve as a constant reminder of one's bhakti (devotion) to Shiva.
- He built the Anubhava Mantapa—literally, "hall of spiritual experience," which Allama Prabhu and Akka Mahadevi joined.

### **His Philosophy**

According to Basava, the scum of society, not the aristocracy, is where social life gets its start. In his clever way, he says that the cow gives milk to those who squat at its feet, not to those who sit on its back. He accepted everyone, high and low, into his fold with a lot of sympathy. The foundation of social democracy was laid by Basava's Anubhava Mantapa, or religious parliament. Basava accepted that man becomes incredible not by his introduction to the world, but rather by his value to the general public. He believed that a common man was just as good as a man of status and that men should be treated with respect. He declared that all state members were laborers, comparing intellectual laborers to manual laborers socially. He set a good example by living the values he preached and adhering to strict rules. He emphasized self-purification's significance and attempted to raise society's moral standards. Additionally, he instilled respect for manual labor, claiming that work is worship. He insisted that all manual labor should be treated with love and reverence, even the insignificant tasks that people disregarded.

He established people's committees for a variety of professions, including tailoring, weaving, dyeing, carpentry, agriculture, horticulture, and equality of opportunity for all. They were attended by people from all walks of life and professions, and they contributed ideas for social, moral, and economic improvement. Satyakka, Ramavve, and Somavve were female followers as well, each with their own careers. Some of them wrote their own vachanas to express Basava's philosophy.

A sect of love and faith was founded on the foundation of the movement that Basava started through Anubhava Mantapa. It gave rise to an education and ethics system that was both simple and high. It sought to inspire social and religious freedom in a way that no other religion in India had done before. It contributed to shining a light of hope and faith into the homes and hearts of people during the medieval period, which was marked by rivalry between different communities. However, the spirit vanished very quickly after the King punished the couple for their intermarriage, which Basava had facilitated. Basava left for Kudala Sangama and died a year later, realizing the meek picture and

shattering the dream of a classless society. Due to the agony brought on by failure, many believe it was self-annihilation.

- ❖ Anubhava Mantapa is a spiritual and social-religious school that was founded in 1989. It was open to men and women of all socioeconomic classes to talk about spiritual and everyday life issues.
- ❖ The title "Basava, the elder brother" was given to Basava later on.
- ❖ His point of view
- ❖ Basavanna's family practiced Shaivism throughout her childhood. He led the formation of the Virashaivas, or "ardent, heroic worshippers of Shiva," a brand-new devotional movement.
- ❖ This movement had its beginnings in the ongoing Tamil Bhakti movement from the seventh to eleventh century, specifically in the traditions of the Shaiva Nayanars.
- ❖ Basava, on the other hand, advocated devotional worship, rejecting temple worship and Brahmin-led rituals in favor of direct, individual worship of Shiva through the use of small lingas and icons.
- ❖ This strategy made Shiva's presence available to everyone at all times, regardless of gender, caste, or social class.
- ❖ His poems, like Basavanna 703, talk about a strong sense of gender equality and a strong bond with the community. They also talk about being a fellow "devotees' bride" when someone needs one.

#### **Role and influences of Basavanna as a social reformer:**

1. Philosopher and social reformer Basavanna opposed the caste system and Hinduism's ritual practices as social evils of his time.
2. His lessons and reasoning rise above all limits and address the all inclusive and timeless.
3. Basava was a great humanitarian who advocated for a new way of life in which divine experience was at the center of everything and caste, gender, and social distinctions didn't matter much.
4. He fought all evils, from socioeconomic prejudices and untouchability to gender discrimination.
5. Basava advocated devotional worship, rejecting temple worship and Brahmin-led rituals in favor of direct, individual worship of Shiva through the wearing of individual icons and symbols like a small linga.
6. Basavanna spread social mindfulness through his verse, prevalently known as Vachanas.

Above all else, he was a mystic with unparalleled practical knowledge of the universe. He thought that practicing was better than preaching or persuading. One can observe evidence of his respectable attitude toward women in his treatment of his wife, Nilambike, as well as a large number of women saints who attended theological discourses at AnubhavaMantapa. Several of these saintly women were married, while others were single. Basavanna, who was joyfully hitched himself, never expressed that having a spouse was an obstruction to profound fulfillment. Nilambike seems to have had a ton of opportunity. They were unquestionably loyal spouses who were always by his side and helped him fulfill his political and religious responsibilities. They also wrote their own vachanas and participated in the AnubhavaMantapa talks about their women. It is believed that he was also close to his sister Nagalambike.

An event that took place in Basavanna's later years sheds a lot of light on their elevated status as a result of his influence. After becoming disenchanted with the situation, Basava decides to permanently leave Kalyana. He set out in the direction of Sangama, where he intended to join Linga. He might not have thought it right for him to leave them behind. Consequently, he sends HadapadaAppanna to return his wives to Sangama. Nilambike wonders why Basavanna has asked her to go to Sangama when she gets the message. Isn't it possible that Kalyana is where she could find redemption? Linga is in the room, but she is also here. Additionally, Basavanna is always on her mind. She begins with her thoughts, but Basavanna is the only person she ever meets. She merges with Linga when she learns of her husband's tragic death just as she arrives at Tangadagi.

In contrast, it is believed that Nagalambike joined the army of the Sharanas to combat Bijjala and his followers, who were committing crimes in the name of religion. She is said to have fallen victim to a fight. As evidenced by their fully developed personalities and ability to think and act independently, Basavanna had motivated them to grow and develop. A woman is at her best when she is supported by her husband or parents. A new era of honor, social equality, and economic equality for women had begun with Basavanna. As a result of the gentle wind of change that was blowing, a lot more women developed to their full potential.

Ayadakkilakkamma was smart enough to tell her husband to come back and bring only enough rice for her and her husband to eat for a day, not more! Greed is not tolerated by Sharanas. It is believed that hundreds of women saints existed. Sadly, we currently only possess thirty vachanas. Akkamahadevi was the winner in every category. She was praised by Basavanna, Allama Prabhu, Chennabasava, Siddharamayya, and Madivalayya. In search of spiritual salvation, she left her home. After that, Kalyna could be reached via a number of roads. She moved in that direction as a result. Along the way, she had to overcome a number of obstacles. The idea of a woman seeking spirituality by expressing herself and leaving without protection was odd and unfathomable.

Ayadakkilakkamma was smart enough to tell her husband to come back and bring only enough rice for her and her husband to eat for a day, not more! Greed is not tolerated by Sharanas. It is believed that hundreds of women saints existed. Sadly, we currently only possess thirty vachanas. Akkamahadevi was the winner in every category. She was praised by Basavanna, Allama Prabhu, Chennabasava, Siddharamayya, and Madivalayya. In search of spiritual salvation, she left her home. After that, Kalyna could be reached via a number of roads. She moved in that direction as a result. Along the way, she had to overcome a number of obstacles. The idea of a woman seeking spirituality by expressing herself and leaving without protection was odd and unfathomable.

Only Basavanna has stated that women have the same right to religious initiation and redemption as men. Sociologists frequently trace Raja Ram Mohan Roy as the origin of the women's emancipation movement. Raja Ram Mohan Roy undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the cause of women in the modern era. It should be remembered that Basavanna's emancipation of women in the 12th century was more remarkable, but it was also a real pillar of religion. Not only did he anticipate the spirit of the Hindu Code Bill, which was envisioned by another great social reformer and humanist, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, but he also lived and practiced it. Basavanna is likewise the primary Kannadiga to have a memorial coin delivered in his distinction in the festival of his social changes. He is also referred to as Bhakti Bhandari or Jagjyothi Basaveswara (Lord Basava's translation: "Treasurer of Devotion").

Every year, Basava Jayanthi is observed to commemorate the birth of Lord Basavanna, also known as Vishwaguru Basaveswara. The Lingayat community in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh celebrates the festival with great enthusiasm. On this day, people meet, greet, and remember Lord Basavanna by reciting his vachanas and teachings. The message of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," or universal brotherhood, is the objective of the festival. Vachanas is the epitome of his message and provides a fresh perspective on life and God.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

A system of ethics and education that was both simple and high was developed by Basavanna. However, the spirit vanished very quickly after the King punished the couple for their intermarriage, which Basava had facilitated. Basava left for Kudala Sangama and died a year later, realizing the meek picture and shattering the dream of a classless society. Due to the agony brought on by failure, many believe it was self-annihilation.

The ethical and educational system that Basavanna propagated was straightforward yet lofty. Basavanna was a reformer who had genuine concern for the marginalized people who were crushed under the callous attitude of rigid, age-old, outdated customs, beliefs, and rituals that had bound the common people of his time (i.e., the 12th century) into the shackles of tradition reddened society under the guise of religious, societal restrictions. His yeoman service and contribution to the cause of social reforms such as caste eradication, women empowerment, which were risking the lives of many. He had to cross the opposition and non-cooperation of his upper caste fellows and was forced to put his own life at risk. However, as a visionary and epoch-maker, Basavanna was steadfast in his efforts to reform society. To him, nothing was more important than the social reformation and transformation he had envisioned. The divine Basavanna is regarded as a great savior.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Carl Olson (2007), *The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-historical Introduction*,
- R Blake Michael (1992), *The Origins of Viraśaiva Sects*, Motilal Banarsidass,
- Jestice, Phyllis G. (2004). *Holy People of the World: A Cross-cultural Encyclopedia*.
- Fredrick Bunce (2010), *Hindu deities, demi-gods, godlings, demons, and heroes*,
- Jan Peter Schouten (1995), *Revolution of the Mystics: On the Social Aspects of Viraśaivism*,
- SK Das (2005), *A History of Indian Literature, 500–1399: From Courtly to the Popular*, Sahitya Akademi,
- Edward Rice (1982), *A History of Kannada Literature*, Asian Educational Services,