

## The Role of Sharanas and Anubhavamantapa in the Rise of Women Bhimabai S Malashetti

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### ABSTRACT:

Women are given only a secondary role to play especially in the indian society. Right from the birth discrimination between a boy and girl is found in almost every household. Basaveshwara was probably the after Buddha to recognize and realize the individuality and rights of women and he launched a social revolution for their emancipation. The vachana movement started by Basveshwara for emancipation of women was a movement for self respect and dignity. The vachanas (sayings) of Basveshwara speak about liberty, equality, fraternity, dignity and respect which the human rights ensure and which ultimately contribute to the common good. Women were given patronage at the Anubhava mantapa among whom Akka Mahadevi received highest praise from Basavanna. There were women followers with their respective vocations. All Sharanas, including Basaveshwara, accorded mothers position to woman, we evidence of Basveshwara's broad view of women in his treatment of his wives, and a good number of sharanes (women saints) who participated in the religious discussions at Anubhava Mantapa. Married women also took part in the movement. There were also women devotees of lower background.

### KEYWORDS:

Women emancipation, Vachana movement, Life satisfaction, women position, social life, environment.

### Introduction:

12th century in the history of Karnataka and Kannad Literature is a period of transition and an important epoch. It was during this period that a new religion cropped up. It was known as Lingayatism. Lingayatism means a religion the members of which wear a 'linga' or lingam', an icon of lord Shiva, their body. Such a cult of worshippers had their own philosophy of the life. In order to popularize there philosophy life. They introduced a new form in world of Kannada literature known as Vachana. The word Vachana literature literally means a saying. Such Vachana were in vogue during the 11th century itself. But during the 12th century the

Vachana movement gained momentum. Basaveswara is regarded as the pivotal personality of the Vachana movement. He was born in a Brahmin family in Bagewadi, an Agrahara (a village donated by the king of the learned Brahmins exclusively for their stay) of Vijayapur district. His parents were Madarasa and Maadalaambike/Maadalaambe. Being disgusted by the Agrahara culture of his birth place he refused Brahmanism and went away to Kudalasangama and soon become tired of the temple culture that was in vogue there. Then he travelled to a city of Kalyana where the king Bijjala of Kalachurya dynasty ruled. It was cities where monarchy prevailed. Basavanna became a clerk in the secretariat of king Bijjala and then he was promoted to the position of the Finance Minister. They were the youthful days of the Basavanna. In Kalyana Basavanna witnessed the ignorance, superstition tyranny of the king, merciless exploitation carried out by the pontifical section of the society, exploitation of women by men that were eating into the bones of the society. He was greatly moved by the pitiful predicament of the society and thought of bringing a new wave of reformation. During those days the minds of the masses were muddled as they were sans any learning and light of letter in their life. He dreamed of an egalitarian society. In order to materialize his ideology, he introduced the concept of 'Ishtalinga' (wish fulfilling linga tied around in the neck by a devotee) which he made all his followers to wear and called them the 'Bhaktas' or 'Sharanas' irrespective of their castes. Apart from this, he introduced principles like 'work itself is heaven' (Kayakave Kailas). 'Practice what you speak' (Nudidante Nade), gender equality etc. In addition to these he also introduced the concepts like 'the grand house' (Mahamane) where all the devotees used to eat together, distribution of the wealth, food etc. earned from honest labour (Dasoha). He was also instrumental in founding the 'Hall of experience' (Anubhav Mantapa) where all the Sharanas used to meet in the evening discuss whatever public or private problems they faced. The findings and the resolutions, they arrived at after discussion, were documented in the form of Vachanas.

Vachana means a well worded or pithy statement; it is promise given or an oath taken by an utterer. Therefore, the Vachana Literature is regarded as the supreme literature. The writers of such vachanas were the Sharanas. They never believed in the caste system, sectarianism, cultism etc. They were also against superstition and vainglory. They followed the path of equality, rationality, monotheism, truthfulness, distribution of

wealth, eating together and living in the earning of honest labour–Kayaka.

During the Twelfth century the Sharanas who dreamed of an ideal and egalitarian society formed a platform called Anubhavamantapa (hall of experience resembling our contemporary assembly where enough discussion regarding the implementation of new rules and laws taken place). The architect behind the formation of this Anubhavamantapa was Basavanna. In the hall various elderly and experienced persons assembled and discussed the way to evolve a social system, life style etc. based on absolute equality. The Anubhavamantapa underscored the individual freedom and respect, and there by paved way for the individual development. The main object of the members of Anubhavamantapa was to shear of the bad qualities of wickedness from the personality of the individuals. This does not mean that only the virtuous, respectable and socially elite people were allowed the membership of Anubhavamantapa. There were members like Sankavve who led her life by practicing prostitution, Marayya who led his life by selling the wine, Urilinga Peddi who was a notorious robber. The Sharanas of the Anubhavamantapa welcomed these and many such other persons of socially lower rank and refuse. But once such persons entered the Anubhavamantapa there was a sea change of their lives. They were also transformed into valuable like personalities, Thus, the Anubhavamantapa took the most wicked persons into its fold and advised them most affectionately and changed them completely. This assembly never discriminated among the members on the basic of their caste creed or profession. Allammabrabhu was the first and founder president of such an honorable center. In the Anubhavamantapa women were also treated equally with men. For instance, we may quote some names of famous women's saints like Akkamahadevi, Muktayakka, Aaydakki Lakkamma, Amuge Rayamma and many others. They underscored inner purity of the personality. Here are the words of Jedara Dasimayya, who belonged to the earlier phase of the vachana Movement regarding the equality of the man and women.

#### **Views of the sharanas about women:**

According to Sharanas the soul does not discriminate as regards gender or sex. Soul is basically the same; it is only, which appears as man and women. The veerashaiva view of man and women can be best understood by the following vachana of Devara Dasimyyaan elderly contemporary of Basaveswara;

**"If breast and appear: they say it's a woman**

**If bread and moustache appear: they say it's man**

**But the soul within; is neither man nor women, look Ramanatha"**

Allamaprabhu the presiding deity of the Anubhav Mantapa, about the socio-religious aspects of human life evolved by Basaveswara exalts women as under; "They say that women is an allurements: No, One, she is not so. No no, it is not so, the real allurements is the unstable appetite of mind O lord Guheshwara"

All Sharanas including Basaveswara unanimously shared the view. Siddharama notable Sharana of Basaveshwara's time, upholding the nobility of womanhood proclaimed; "Women is just not a female sex, Women is not a demoness even. Women is the very embodiment of good; Kapilasidha Mallikarjun"

They accorded not only mothers position to women, but they also treated women equal to Goddess Parvati, the life stories of some the Sharanas (women Sharanas) give a good impression of the position of women in the movement. Highly unconventional women saints like Akkamahadevi not only found prominent place in the movement but also it's most accomplished female mystic and poet. Mukhtayakka was another profound philosopher who could develop her in the company of the devotees. A completely new phenomenon was the participation of married women in the movement. Among them Nilamma was the most brilliant and independent thinker, Mahadeviyamma was also a very influential teacher and poet. Both have advantage of the privileged position in the community, but there were also a women devotee of the lower back ground. Low caste women like spinners, rice producers and sweepers were allowed to participate in the discussions and share experience in the spiritual path. Ayadakki Marayya wife Lakkamma was one such example who participated in the discourses at Anubhav Mantapa.

### **Promotion of women rights and Anubhavamantapa:**

Anubhav Mantapa played a significant role in the promotion and protection of human rights. It was Basaveswara, who rose to the occasion to save humanity from the evils of society by establishing Anubhavamantapa. Anubhavamantapa was the manifestation of the sublime vision of Basavanna, a centre for propagation of its ideas regarding the new society, religion and philosophy."

Hence, the Anubhav Mantapa was institution established

by Basaveshwar to give a new life to society. The formation of Anubhavamantapa was an outstanding work for Basaveshwar. It was an assemblage of superhuman of the time, common from the length and breadth of the india, holding discussions and implementations for the welfare of the humanity. Men and women irrespective of casre, colour, creed, rank, position and occupation participated in the deliberations of the Anubhavamantapa. Anubhavamantapa played an important role in bringing renaissance and humanism. It may be noted that the Anubhavamantapa assured all among other things 'dignity of individual', and human rights are part and parcel of human dignity."

Anubhav Mantapa considered advancement of knowledge as a fundamental right of all persons. It was an august in which discussions were held relating to every aspect of the life covering social, religious, spiritual, economic, philosophical, cultural and literary fields. All issues concerning both social and individual life, right from social reformation through the creation of equal opportunities upto self realization was discussed. "Basaveshwar and other Sharanas of the Anubhav Mantapa accepted the fundamental principles that may be summarized as follows";

1. All men and women are equal
2. No man is high or low either by birth, sex or occupation
3. There is no discrimination between men and men and between men and women
4. Women as equal rights with mento follow the path for self-realization
5. Each one should follow a profession of his own choice
6. Women must also take up a kayak
7. All Kayskas are honorable profession, no Kayaka is either low or high
8. Vamas (castes) and Asramas (stages) are to be discarded
9. Self development to be achieved through Kayaka.
10. Renunciation and dwelling in the forest are ruled out as cowardly tendencies to
11. escape from life
12. inter caste marriages and free dining should be encouraged
13. Untouchability has no place in society.

14. Every man is free to think on all spiritual and social subjects.
15. Reason and experience are the only guiding lights for free thinking and spiritual advancement.
16. The language of people should be the medium for imparting spiritual and secular education
17. All men have equal rights to participate in spiritual discussions to acquire spiritual knowledge and to follow the same path of realization.

The above principles indicate that Anubhav Mantapa was established on the principles of liberty and equality, gave adequate opportunities to all and made everyone feel that existence was recognized and that full justice was being done to him, It also makes clear that promoting respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedom was the major concern of Anubhav Mantapa.

Basaveshwar who pleaded for the equality of women, revered Akka Mahadevi, Whose rational and courageous outlook that endeared her to the womenfolk of the present day, is a sublime example of character and devotion, every one bowed before her in reverence of her spiritual attainments, Sattyakka, Muktayakka, Akkanagamma, Neelambike, Gangambike, Molige Mahadevi, were women of sterling character and a remarkable spiritual status. Sometimes they surpassed men in keenness of perception and soundness of argument.

This clearly reveals the independence the women enjoyed and the equal a role and position they had with men in the Anubhav Mantapa. The Anubhav Mantapa established by the Sharanas, under the leadership of Basavanna, performed the task of organizing social behavior into stable patterns and it provided a basis for the integration society.

### **Conclusions:**

Basavanna also known as Bhakti Bhandari Basavanna, Basaveshwar “Vishwaguru”, though grown up in an orthodox Hindu religious household he rejected many practices in Vedic society. He established the Anubhav Mantapa, which attracted many saints from throughout India and Sharanas raised a new wind Veerashaiva faith and Basavanna philosophy. Kalyana achieved great eminence and fame in Metaphysical world due to the activities of these Sharanas. The Anubhav Mantapa became the epicenter of all religious revolution under whose aegis issues concerning to all the

aspects of life were discussed frankly and conclusions were drawn.

The movement Basavanna initiated through Anubhav Mantapa became the basis of sect of love and faith. It sought to inspire ideals of social and religious freedom. Basaveshwar did not start his movement for emancipation of women in a vacuum; it was a movement for human rights. It meant a movement for self respect and dignity.

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