



Short Review Paper

The rise of virasaivism in Bombay Karnataka, India

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Available online at: www.isca.in

Received 2nd June 2017, revised 18th August 2017, accepted 25th August 2017

Abstract

The paper an attempt is made here to delineate the social and religious condition in Bombay Karnataka the days of Basava. The paper emphasis is laid on such features as will help us to appreciate the rise of great reformer who revived Virasaivism in the middle of the twelfth century. The great rival of Virasaivism was Jainism which it overshadowed. It deals the emergence of Virasaivism, principle of Basavanna and important saints in Bombay Karnataka.

Keywords: Virasaivism, Religion, Social, Spiritual, Democratic, Movement and Sharanas.

Introduction

Virasaivism is occupied the prominent place in the history of Bombay Karnataka. Bashaveshwar is the first to introduce Virasaivism in Karnataka. The most of the Virasaivism centre is in the north Karnataka. The leader of Virasaivism, namely Allam Prabhu, Basaveshwar and Akkamahadevi. Basavan Bagewadi is the birth place of Bashveshwar, which was once prevalent in Mumbai Karnataka, as evidence by the temple at Kudalasangam, in Bijapur and Bagalkote. Many of these temple and Mathas especially Mumbai Karnataka and elsewhere appear to have been taken over by the Virasaivism.

The most of the famous temple and Virasaivism mathas in Vijayapur, Balagavi, Dharwad and Bagalkote¹.

The Virasaivism culture of the Mathas flourished in the Bagalkote, Vijaypur, Gadaga and Dharwad, there are many famous mathas in Mumbai Karnataka, Siddarodha Matha, Hubli, Mallikarjuma Matha, in Vijayapur, Vijayamahatesh mathas at Ilkal, Bagalkote, Tontadarya Mathas, Gadaga, etc these famous mathas are influenced and principle of Virasaivism.

Virasaivism in the Deccan, Karnataka, southern part of the Maharashtra and Andrapradesh. The central idea of Virasaiva philosophy is that Lord Siva is indistinguishable from his sakti, that in the original state Siva alone existed and all the manifold world of matter and life existed in Him in a subtle form wholly indistinguishable from Him. He separated the living beings that were associated with different kinds of Karma and also manifested the material world in various forms so that the living beings might purge themselves of all impurities by the fulfillment of the Law of Karma and ultimately returns to the transcendental by the grace of God and became merged with him².

“The Basis of Lingayat state was ethical. Their socio-political state was based on broad on broad moral principles. In fact, a moral ideal was not only the background of Lingayat religion but also the backbone of its socio-economics and politics”.

The twelfth century constitutes a great land mark in the history of not only Bombay Karnataka but whole history of Karnataka. The twelfth century, it was signed a lively era of religious social and economic resurgence. This movement’s principles all merged into an integrated system thereby signaling a set of moral principles. This revolution brought by Basaveshwar, this was the religious thought was at the same time a revolt against the existing thought and way of life. This was in the nature of a movement that expressed itself in the form of dissent, protest and revolt against the orthodoxy of religions. The Sharana tradition was evident as early as 10th Century. It is also true that it was Basava who provided a concrete programme for the movement. There were among the Veerashivas of Balagavi District. They were engaged Shankaradasimayya and Jedaradasimayya in the 10th Century. In the 11th century, there were Veerabanijigas who were among the Virashivas of Belgaum District. They were engaged in commerce by land and sea. Basaveshwar encouraged this useful system among the Virashivas to such a social awakening and economic advancement. Basaveshwar constitutes a central figure and guiding spirit of the Sharana movement.

“To emancipate the depressed, the down-trodden, the despised and degenerated section of human society constitutes the alpha and omega of Basava’s thought”

Basaveshwar was a great protestant reformer who revolted against the existing social order in the name of man as the universal being stripped of all narrow consideration. Basaveshwar was unique among the various reformers of the world. So he revived a meaningful and humanistic religion. The

Virashaivism which was a decadent state was revived by Basava to make it more democratic principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, and also he provides a firm social thought which is ultimate to the humanity.

“Basaveshwar contains four main concept namely, humanism, secularism, socialism and democracy”. These concepts are important and relevant in the new millennium which is likely to witness increasing social and ethnic conflicts and cleavages based on caste, community, language, culture and religion.

Many other Sharanas in Karnataka are Allama Prabhu, Akkamahadevi, Muktayakka, Neelamma, Mahadeviyamm and Lakkamma, Neelambika used to participate prominently in the discourses at Anubhava Mantapa and made signal contribution to the societal process and the path of enlightened. The Karnataka history has witnessed a number of reformers who worked for securing social, political and economical rights for women.

Sharanas envisage a spiritual democratic society in which a king was not a symbol of power and authority. He was just like any other man engaged in his honourable work (Kayaka). Sharanas like Kondagoli Keshiraj, Basaveshwar, were ministers under the King Bijjala, and they worked like any other individuals. They considered spiritual power higher than material power. A large number of women were active participants in Anubhava Mantap; they composed Vachanas and submitted them for discussion, they had freedom to comment on the contents of Vachanas of others. Among the important Sharanas were Akka Mahadevi, Akka Nagamma, Neelambika, Gangambika, Bomantadevi, Rammeyve, Kalavve, Satyakka, Muktayakka and Lakkamma. Some of the Sharanas like Kalavve came from the dalit community and they exercised freedom of expression.

Bombay Karnataka has witnessed many social, political, cultural, religious, linguistic and agrarian movements at different period in the past. The social Reform movement launched and pioneered by several saints in medieval Karnataka was bloodless revolution intended to transform the dogmatic and feudalistic society into a humanistic and holistic one fraternity, dignity, equality and harmony. In the 15th century other religious saints are Shree Veerabhadreshwar, at Horti, Bijapur district, Shree Siddeshwar at Vijayapur, Shree Sharana Basaveshwar at Kalburagi, and 17th century Saints are Shiddharaoda Swamiji at Hubli, Shree Ajat Nagalinga Swamji at Navalgund and others are highly religious preachers in Bombay Karnataka region. They are all contributed Virashivism, are moral code with suited one and all without distinctions. They preached the moral virtues of compassion, humanity, tolerance, etc they implies loving meditation for its own sake. Truer knowledge is the knowledge of God and true love is love of God. It is by absolute devotion to God and not by Vedic study, meritorious work or austerity that Shiva is realized³.

The philosophy of Ajata Nagaling Swamji is devotion to God is a necessary step to Bhati. He professed and practiced true

spiritual universalism. According to Virasaivism Sakti of the Lord has manifested itself in two forms. Mahamaya or Urdhvamaya and Adhomaya. It is Mahamaya that evolve itself into the phenomenal universe. It does not produce any illusion in the substratum or abode of consciousness. It is the Adhomaya that hides the true nature of the self and limits the five powers of the Lord in the lower order of creation which consists of 30 principles or tattvas. It may be noted here that the world consists of 36 tattvas or principles according to Shiva philosophy. The world Maya used here not be mistaken for Mithya (Illusion) as advaitins characterize it. It may be taken as an intermediate agency of the Lord for the creation of the world and plurality of soul⁴.

Shivasharanas with universal outlook wanted nothing for themselves. They wanted everything for others in society. Believing firmly in “Serving others as the service of the Lord”.

Siva remaining unchanged in himself, appears in two forms- Linga (pure consciousness) and Anga (individual soul or Jiva). As the supreme Lord Siva is bifurcated as Brahma and Jiva so His Sakti (energy) is also bifurcated into two. Sakti is called Meheswari. One part of it, may be regarded as associated with Ling and the other with Jiva. According to Virasaiva philosophy Sakti and Bhakti (Devotion) are the two modes of different sphere of activity Sakti is Pravrtti; Bhakti is nivrtti. Siva's innate power is wholly responsible for the individual leading to final liberation is called Bhakti (devotion). In the reverse trend it is liberating. In reality there is no difference between Sakti and Bhakti.

“Shivasharanas made Virashaivism a universal religion. Therefore, they accepted the principle of equality and expressed an active concern for the interpersonal cooperation. In their outlook, grace was not a gift from above. But a merit earned by one's own efforts and conduct. The graced one has a duty to share the fruits of his grace with the society in the cause of universal welfare”¹.

The philosophy of the Sat – Sthala of Virasaivas is as follows. Sat-sthala are the six poises of the divine, on the double manifestation, as ling and Anga. Paratattva the supreme reality is conceived as both with form and without form. This ultimate is the Sthala (Stha- source and La-goal) the divine who is at the head of creation is called Siva. Inherent in Him there is a conscious forces- a Vimasa Sakti, self-involution and a state of self expression. In the former condition the supreme is unmanifest; in the other. He is manifest. That is to say the Parasiva remains formless or formless or formless according to the mood of His sakti. That is His Lila- Shiva who is Sthal become, in his divine play, two Ling and Anga, Shiva and Jiva. Sakti which is inalienable is Kala as related to Linga and Bhakti as related to Anga. Bhakti here means a spirit of self-surrender and worship.

Prof V K Gokak puts it “To Society petrified into castes and creed, he came as great deliver, preaching oneness and equality, equating the pariah with the Brahmin, and the bearer with the

prince. All were equal in the eyes of God and comparative greatness was one of proximity to God. Greatness did not depend on accident of birth or caste. He thought of human society as a democracy of souls with inherent respect and affection for all. Thus the Sharanas and Basava led revolutionary and democratic movement for the emancipation of the downtrodden⁵”

The Ling Siva with form (Sakala) is Isthalinga, attainable by the soul in the waking state, in the gross form, the tyganga. The Isthalinga further modifies itself into two: the Acara Linga practical, in which the tyagaling develops faith (Bhakti) and become Bhakti–sthala, the Gurulinga and the perspective in which tyaganga has strong faith and becomes Mahesa-Sthala.

Conclusion

We can say that the ancient Indians had thus, a very Nobel concept of life based on religion. The vedic ideas of Purusharta have a signifying and integrated approach to the myriad problems of life⁶. The fact that the concepts of Sharanas are followed even after 800 years now bear a testimony to the

valuable contributions of Sharanas on life and society. Their contributions will be remembered as long as humanity lasts.

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