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विचारांची प्रासंगीकता**

\* संपादक \*

**प्रा.डॉ. सिध्देश्वर रामचंद्र शेटकर**

सहयोगी प्राध्यापक व समाजशास्त्र विभाग प्रमुख  
संजीवनी महाविद्यालय चापोली, ता. चाकुर, जि. लातूर.

**Address for Correspondence**

**Mrs. Pallavi Laxman Shete**

Editor in Chief : Worldwide International Inter Disciplinary Research Journal (A Peer Reviewed Reffered)  
Principal, Sanskriti Public School, Nanded (MH, India) Email : shrishprakashan2009@gmail.com

**Dr. Rajesh G. Umbarkar**

House No. 624 - Belanagar, Near Maruti Temple, Taroda (Kh.) Nanded - 431605 (India - Maharashtra)  
Email - umbarkar.rajesh@yahoo.com, shrishprakashan2009@gmail.com Mob. No. 9623979067  
Director : Mr. Tejas Rampurkar (For International Contacts only + 91-8857894082)

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# MAHATMA BASWESHWAR: A SOCIAL REVOLUTIONIST DURING MIDVALE PERIOD IN INDIA

Research Student

**Suryakant D. Somwanshi**

PhD Scholar, School of Social Sciences, SRTMUN, Nanded.

Research Guide

**Dr. Deepak S. Dharwadkar**

Assistant Professor, Dept of Sociology, Toshniwal Arts, Commerce & Science College, Sengaoon

## ABSTRACT:

*Mahatma Basaweshwar was the founder of Veershaiva Movement which was originated in twelfth century. Mahatma Basaveshwar was a philosopher, statesman and the poet who were the disciple of Vedas and Puranas. He was against the atrocities on the people belong to lower cast or in other words the people belonging to the 4<sup>th</sup> Varna that is "Shudra". Mahatma Basaweshwar had dedicated his life for the upliftment of the people who were being discriminated on the grounds of Varnas'. He believed all the people were born through the same womb hence they should not get discriminated just because of their Varna. Varnas are nothing but the occupational functional groupings. He opposed the ritual ridden Vedic system, having a great concern on mankind. Mahatma Basaweshwar lifted the lives of untouchables by making them wear Linga on their body. Such action had elevated the social status of people and brought new sense of equality. His followers grew from all sections of the society. He formed the "Anubhava Mantapa" where all people assemble for discussions, share mystical achievement and present spiritual poems. The Veershaiva movement grew stronger as people from all sections of the society and across the kingdom became the follower of Mahatma Basaweshwara.*

**KEYWORDS:** Mahatma Basaweshwara, Basawanna, Veershaiva, Movement, Reform, Revolution, Untouchable, Discrimination

## INTRODUCTION:

The origin of "Virshaiva" movement was founded in twelfth century by Baswanna (Popularly known as Mahatma Basweshwar). He was a social reformist, Hindu Philosopher, Statesman, Poet and the follower of Lord Shiva. Baswanna, the student of Vedas and Puranas had spent ten years with his Guru in Kudlsangama. After the education he went to Kalyana Kingdom probably upto A.D. 1154 and he was there up to 1167, due to high intellectual personality the King Bijjala of Kalyana Kingdom had appointed him as Karanika (Accountant) in the initial stage and later he became the prime minister of the Kingdom.

The socio-economic status and the ill treatment for the lower caste people persist in the then society where most of the superstitious and unsocial group of people were sitting at the power position. Baswanna looked around and felt pity for the illiterate innocent lower category people. He spread social awareness among the people and rejected social discrimination based on gender, caste, class and creed. He believed that no person should be discriminated based on such anti social elements persists in the society. Baswanna believed that all are born out of the same womb, whether they are of high caste or untouchables and the soul is the same, therefore caste discrimination are of no use. Castes are nothing but occupational and functional groupings (Chikmath P. and Khutale S., 2017). He revolted against the ideas of Varna system exists in the society and he himself started practicing the socialistic norms to bring about the drastic change in the society. Hence, due to self



practising and making the change in social stratification he became the guiding path to others in bringing the change in society. On one day he reached the untouchable's colony and mix up with the people. He entered the house of untouchable devotee and took his food. The matter was reported to King Bijjala about his whereabouts. The furious King questions his reckless behaviour, Basweshwar stood firm and justified that human beings have no difference. The men are born out of same womb, in his popular Vachana he says;

“God, O God mark my prayer,  
I shall call all devotees of Shiva equal,  
From the Brahamana at one end,  
To the lowest born man at the other end,  
I shall call all unbelievers equal,  
From the Brahman at one end,  
To the untouchable at the other end,  
This is what my heart believer?  
In saying this should I have any doubt?  
Be it as small as a sesqumum bud,  
O lord Kudal Sangama,  
Chop off my nose so that,  
The teeth stick out!”

Here, his explicitly refers to caste stratification, with the Brahamana on top and the low caste untouchable at the bottom, which has lost its meanings among the devotees. Whether they are Brahamanas or untouchables, there is no difference since the real points is that they are world lings. In this way, the traditional division of the people into various castes in completely abolished (Shankareppa B. K., Astige S. B., 2014).

#### Social Revolution by Mahatma Basweshwar

Mahatma Basweshwar rejected the ritual ridden Vedic religion, having a great concern for the mankind Basweshwar started the revolution at grass root level. His revolution focused with the ill treated untouchables making them the awareness of their importance in social stratification and building the society. Mahatma Basweshwar elevated the social stratification of untouchables by making them wear the personal Linga. This showed the considerable change in social status of the people and brought new sense of equality. Because of the divine presence of Linga on their body, apart from upliftment in social status, the Linga dispels all ritual purity and impurity of the untouchables. The Linga Jangama (Wearing Linga) established the effectiveness which made it possible to all castes to join Veershaiva community. Many people belonging to low caste and untouchable were attracted by these teachings of Basweshwara and joined his movement for establishment of casteless society (Shankareppa B. K., Astige S. B., 2014). Mahatma Basweshwar propagated a religion in which everybody could participate. He even developed certain preference for devotees from upper caste people like Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishyas. The huge amount of followers increased after major political event. Spiritual seekers from other places showed their interest in the movement and often came to Basweshwar's house where they met with a warm welcome. Within a short period of time the Basweshwara's residence became the centre of a spiritual community with a great number of members. Devotees from many places, even from outside of the Kingdom, settled down in Kalyana (Schouten J.P.). Not only men but also women across the region and outside came to Kalyana. They were all Saivas (Worshippers of Lord Shiva). By joining the



devotional movement they became Virsaivas (ardent worshippers of Lord Shiva). The first aim of the movement was "Ardent worship of Lord Shiva". Mahatma Basweshwar rejected traditional temple cult, dominated by the Brahmana priest. Instead he propagated to worship of a small abstract symbol of Siva: the Linga, which every member of the community, male and female alike, wore on the body (Schouten J.P.). The new religion rejected every classical scripture, even the age-old Sanskrit writings and wrote small poems in Kannada language.

Mahatma Basweshwar formed the "Anubhava Mantapa" (Hall of Spiritual Experience) where the devotees in Kalyana assemble for discussions, share mystical achievement and present spiritual poems. Men and women from all sections of the society came together for the development of Virsaiva spirituality doctrine. The Virsaiva leaders attempted to build such community in which the spirituality could be practiced by everyone. The practice of spirituality required the utmost amount of discipline without affecting the daily routine life.

The mission of Baswanna has created a sensation equality among people belong to socially backward community. The orthodox people who believed in the Varna system organized themselves to oppose him. They tried to lower the image of Baswanna in the eyes of people and the King Bijjala. He was accused to use state funds for the maintenance of his followers. But at the time Basweshwara placed his entire accounts of the state before the King, all allegations proved to be wrong.

He promoted the inter caste marriages to promote equality from all walk of life, all casts and creeds. He has spread the following principles for social equality in the ritual ridden society.

1. All men are equal.
2. No man is high a low either by birth sex or occupation.
3. Each one should follow a profession of his own choice.
4. All Kayakas are honourable professions; no Kayaka is either low or high.
5. Varnas (or castes) and Ashrama (or castes) are to be discarded.
6. Inter group marriages and free dining should be encouraged.
7. Untouchably has no place in the society

Inspired by his teachings Madhuvarasa (A Brahmin) and Haralaya (An Untouchable) became bhaktas by wearing Linga and transcended the Varna System persists in the then society. The daughter of a Brahmin and the son of an untouchable married after accepting the Veershaivism. Soon after the incident the Basawanna's opponents grew stronger. The believers of orthodox traditionalists taken it as an extreme leap by Basaweshwara and pressurised the King Bijjala. Due to the vested interest the King Bijjala had no other option but to keep quiet. The innocent Haralaya and Madhuvarasa were mercilessly persecuted. They were chained to the legs of an elephant which dragged them to their death (H. Thipperudraswamy, 2017). The followers of Basaweshwara were enraged and pleaded for revenge and retaliation. The political undercurrent developed and grew stronger. The Bijjala's enemy took advantage of the situation, even the sons of Bijjala were the rivals of the thrown. The conspiracy was hatched and the King Bijjala was murdered by his political opponents. The political development was so quick that Basweshwara did not have time to settle down the situation. The followers of Basaweshwara left Kalyana and scattered in different directions.

## CONCLUSION

The Mahatma Basaweshwara was not only a social reformer but also a great mystic, statesman, poet. The Basawanna's life was dedicated to the people who were facing social discriminations due to so called "Varna System". He has played a significant role in changing the



dimensions of the society and brought change in the life of the people that were being left out by the society. Mahatma Basaveshwara has touched life of the people.

In the modern age, we might be equipped with understanding of the significance of the revolution but during those times Basaveshwara had gone through many challenges due to caste ridden social system. There were many philosophers observed by the mankind throughout the human existence such as Mahatma Gandhi, Karl Marx, Dr. B R Ambedkar etc. Who cast their rays illuminating the lives of all who came near them.

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C/o. R.G. Umbarkar, H.No. 624, Bela Nagar, Near Maroti Mandir,  
Taroda Kh. Nanded - 431 605 Maharashtra (India)

Email : [umbarkar.rajesh@yahoo.com](mailto:umbarkar.rajesh@yahoo.com)

[shrishprakashan2009@gmail.com](mailto:shrishprakashan2009@gmail.com)

Mob : +91-9623979067

