

Social Philosophy of Basaveshwara and Ambedkar: A Critical Appraisal

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ABSTRACT

The great socialists and humanists like *Gautama Buddha, Basaveshwara, Mahatma Gandhiji, Babasaheb Ambedkar* served the humanity with the spirit of devotion and dedication. The paper insights the significance of the great souls and personalities i.e. Basaveshwara and Babasaheb Ambedkar on the social philosophy. Indian society inspite of all its high cultural spiritual splendours has failed miserably to meet the needs and aspirations of the common people. Basaveshwara heralded a new era of humanism in the 12th century and Babasaheb Ambedkar opened a chapter of humanism through the constitution in the 20th century. Both the great reformers had put-in effort throughout their lives to eradicate social evils and always desired for the social revolution so that the downtrodden sections of the society would achieve emancipation from the age-old discrimination. They toiled for the welfare of the Indians and their glory was leading role to the whole masses. The present society is engrossed in casteism; communalism, inequality and etc. are hindering the growth of the nation. The need of the hour is to overcome the barriers that divide people, resolve conflicts, and bring unity in diversity. There is a sturdy requirement to understand the philosophy of both Basaveshwara and Ambedkar. Their missions and relevance of ideas, thoughts and ideals should be inculcated in proper perspectives for an attempt in removing the inequality, casteism, hatred, and effort in bringing liberty, equality, democratic values and humanistic ideals.

Keywords: *Basaveshwara, Ambedkar, Indian Society, Evils, Humanistic Ideals.*

INTRODUCTION

The great socialists and humanists like *Gautama Buddha, Basaveshwara, Mahatma Gandhiji, Babasaheb Ambedkar* have served the humanity with the spirit of devotion and dedication. The paper insights the significance of *Shri. Basaveshwara* and *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* on the '*Social Philosophy*'. They worked for the welfare of the Indians and their glory was leading role to the whole masses.

One of the great social scientist *K. Ishwaran* in his book titled '*Speaking of Basava*', opines that,

'It is worth recalling the contribution made by Basaveshwara towards liberating common people from the shackles of beliefs and blind faith forged by the priestly brahminical culture, on the basis of a revolutionary individualistic ideology. He has preached '*Veerashaiva Philosophy*' not only in India but also in other parts of the world through his writings, which are known for its clarity and thought provoking ideas'

Dr. D. R. Jatava in his book entitled '*Ambedkar and Humanism*', highlights Ambedkar's vision on humanism in various forms as great philosopher, social reformer, an emancipator as well as liberator for the oppressed people from slavery, oppression, economic exploitation, and untouchability. He mentions, Ambedkar relentlessly fought for the causes of the depressed and deprived of the Indian society, which makes him to develop his philosophy of humanism. It grew into a distinct ideological movement and action rising to develop their potentialities and personalities. This is how Ambedkar's dynamic and democratic humanism aims at liberating man from the odds of social malaise.

Objectives of the Study

- The main objective of the study insights, the significance of the great souls and personalities i.e., *Shri. Basaveshwara* and *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* on '*Social Philosophy*'.
- The study examines the relevance of these two great social reformer's philosophy and teachings in the contemporary Indian society.
- The study focuses to suggest the need to implement their simple yet powerful farsighted thoughts and fulfil their dream society.

Methodology of the Study:

The paper is prepared with the help of substantial secondary sources like articles, journals, scholar's thoughts, various websites and self-observations to comprehend the social philosophical thoughts of Basaveshwara and Ambedkar.

Basaveshwara Philosophy:

Shri. Basaveshwara, the philosopher saint with prodigious ideas of Karnataka state in India was a pioneer in starting a movement to work towards women's emancipation, to propound the dignity of labour and to establish an egalitarian society free from caste distinction of high and low. He was born in a place called Bagevadi in Vijayapura district of Karnataka in around 1131 A.D. His father, *Madiraja* or *Madarasa* was the chief of *Bagevadi Agrahara*, a place where scholarly Brahmins lived. As a boy, Basaveshwara was dismayed, by the caste inequalities that prevailed in the society and by the superstitious beliefs, which people blindly followed.

Basaveshwara held women in high esteem. The debating society '*Anubhava Mantapa*' (which attracted hundreds of saints and spiritual aspirants from all over the country) that he had established at Kalyan had many women members who voiced their opinions on various issues freely. He allowed his sister and wives to participate in the proceedings at '*Anubhava Mantapa*' along with other male members, which show his magnanimity. Basaveshwara was a vegetarian and asked his followers to come out of the shackles of superstition. He was against animal sacrifice and a man of peace. Instead of blindly following meaningless rituals, he asked them to lead a life of ethics. Though born in a high caste family and raised to the position of 'Prime Minister' in the court of the powerful Kalachuri ruler, Bijjala II, he freely mingled with the poor and downtrodden. Many of Basaveshwara's thoughts came forth in the form of '*Vachanas*', a unique kind of poetic prose in kannada literary tradition. These '*Vachanas*' are about love towards God, urge to lead a life of morality and opposition to caste inequalities and superstitious practices.

Ambedkar Philosophy:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a great nationalist, social reformer and prolific writer. He stood for social activities, which improved the cause of human progress and happiness. His phenomenal contribution was in making of the '*Constitution of India*'. He expressed the sorrows of the untouchables and tried sincerely to channel the activities of the depressed classes. In mobilising them, he created a sense of self-respect and pride in them. He dedicated his life to the cause of removal of untouchability and completely identified himself with the socially segregated section of the Indian society. He launched a life-long campaign for liberating them from their centuries-old enslavement and isolation. This crusade lifted him high from a mere ghetto boy to a legend in his own lifetime. He was born an untouchable and therefore had an intense yearning to see that the untouchables are placed better, socially, politically and economically. He wanted social reforms as of '*Right*' and hence, rejected social reforms received as charity and accommodation. He was for a total re-organisation and re-construction of the Indian society on two main principles: *equality* and *absence of casteism*. He boldly fought for the betterment of the oppressed classes and showed rare crusading spirit, carving out in the process an important place for himself among the prominent architects of modern India.

Philosophy of Social Justice

Indian society has witnessed two great humanists, Shri. Basaveshwara and Dr. Ambedkar. They believed that in the absence of social equality, humanism, economic and political equality or justice and welfare of women, no sort of independence would bring social solidarity. Basaveshwara wanted to establish a society, which is free from exploitation and oppression. His concept of '*Ideal Society*' had high ideals, which were to be realised through peaceful and non-violent methods. He tried his best to create new social and economic values and there would be full scope for the freedom, fellowship and equality. Basaveshwara's '*Vachanas*' addressed the common man in his own tongue and in a simple and natural style which was so appealing. This became befitting medium for expressing his thoughts leading to a new social order and philosophy.

Dr. Ambedkar's concept of social justice stands for the liberty, equality and fraternity of all human beings. Ambedkar stood for a social system, which is based on right relations between man and man in all spheres of life. His concept of social justice is closely connected with his concept of religion and morality. He was not anti-religious but on the contrary, he was religious minded self.

Ambedkar writes,

'It pains to see youths growing indifference to religion. Religion is not opium as Marx holds it. What good things I have in me or whatever have been benefits of my education to society, I owe to the religious feelings in me'.

The religion, which he conceived, grants equality and treats all its believers as equal. Ambedkar did not approve any type of hypocrisy injustice and exploitation of man-by-man in the name of religion. He stood for a religion based on universal principles of morality and is applicable at all times, to all countries and to all races. Ambedkar was of the opinion that,

'Man is the centre of his religion. He is a responsible being and is responsible for all his miseries'. He says, 'you must abolish your slavery yourself. Do not depend for its abolition upon God or superman. The sooner you remove the foolish belief that your miseries are predetermined, the better it is for you. Do not believe in fate. Believe in your strength'.

Both Basaveshwara and Ambedkar laid stress on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. Their deeds had a base of self-experience, self-dependence, self-honour and self-conscience to inspire the depressed classes for their upliftment. Both emphasized strengthening the national unity rising above caste, religion, language and etc. According to them, caste hinders the social and economic organisation of the society, so caste must be abandoned.

Ambedkar protested against the caste system as he himself had undergone sever humiliation under the system and denied his right to a dignified living. But in the case of Basaveshwara, being born in a high caste family and due to his scholarship and position in Bijjala's court he was held in high esteem. Still he sacrificed his position and even his life for the noble ideals, which held, viz abolishment of caste and establishment of an egalitarian society. Due to his support for an inter-caste marriage, he had to face the wrath of the royalty and meet a tragic end. Thus, Basaveshwara the great soul was the torchbearer for social reformers from ages.

If Basveshwara launched a socio-religious revolution, Ambedkar put forth a socio-political revolution and both of their intension was very much the same. Basveshwara's social justice philosophy stands on spiritual way and Ambedkar's stands on constitutional law. The social philosophy of Basveshwara and Ambedkar is still relevant though, both worked to eradicate the curse of untouchability with their alternatives of inter-caste marriage and inter-dinning, but still the germ of casteism is threatening the unity, integrity and solidarity of the nation.

Hence, it can aptly be said that, *'it is not the policy of the Government, that assists to eradicate such problems, but, it is the mind and heart of the man, that requires to be changed'.*

Philosophies of Basaveshwara and Ambedkar in the Contemporary Indian Society

In the contemporary Indian society, Basaveshwara's ideals and philosophy have the most special significance, which is full of hatredness and biased. In all the Indian social reform movements, Basaveshwara's philosophy that focuses on harmony, equality and brotherhood (goodwill & unity) holds a significant position. He tried to bridge the gap between the haves and have-nots. All these have made contemporary social reformers speak the language of Basaveshwara.

Even today, his struggle for social justice of the scheduled castes and other oppressed sections of society are relevant. Many other great people have propagated good things, but seldom implemented them in their life. Basaveshwara was an exception. The modern parliament and legislature are the models of the 'Anubhava Mantapa', launched by Basaveshwara with the help of *Allama Prabhu, Madara Channaiah, Madivala Machaiah and Haralaiah*, where serious issues of social relevance for the uplift of the downtrodden in the caste-ridden society were dealt with. Basaveshwara's fundamental principles '*Work is Worship*'; '*Service to Humanity and Equality*' did help in social transformation are followed even today.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was of firm belief that the two basic deficiencies in the Indian Society i.e. the complete absence of equality and lack in recognition of the principle of fraternity shall be biggest hindrance in achieving the *Justice, Liberty, Equality*, and *Fraternity* for unity and integrity of the Indian Union. Therefore, he warned in Constituent Assembly itself by saying-

"On 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into the life of contradictions. In politics, we will be recognizing the principle of one-man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reasons of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one-man one value. How long shall we continue to live the life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we shall be putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible

moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.”

The world is awakening to the importance of him as a great thinker and guide to the teachings of the Buddha, and to what happened because of him. Of India's great leaders, Ambedkar is the one who continues to shape history, whose relevance is refreshed in the current economic and social moment, and whose influence extends beyond India to speak to people subject to discrimination wherever they are found.

Thus, the teachings of Basaveshwar and Ambedkar bear a strong similarity to one other, who tried to usher in a casteless society. Indian society is good at celebrating the anniversaries of these great personalities and eulogise (praise) their contribution for ensuring social equality, but it does little to bring their teachings into practice. The study focuses to suggest the need to implement their simple yet powerful farsighted thoughts and fulfil their dream society of casteless and equality.

To Sum Up

Indian society in spite of all its high cultural spiritual splendours has failed miserably to meet the needs and aspirations of the common people. Basaveshwara heralded a new era of humanism in the 12th century and Ambedkar opened a chapter of humanism through the constitution of the 20th century. Both the two great reformers enhanced immense effort in their life to eradicate social evils. They always desired for the social revolution so that the downtrodden sections of the society would achieve emancipation from the age old discrimination treatment. They toiled for the welfare of the Indians and their glory was leading role to the whole masses. The present society that is still engrossed in casteism; communalism, inequality etc. are hindering the growth of the nation. The thoughts of Basaveshwara's 'Vachanas' are relevant for all time, as he fought casteism and disparity, today's populace should come out against such evil practises, which are still rampant in the Indian society. The need of the hour is to overcome the barriers that divide people, resolve conflicts, and bring unity in diversity. There is a strong requirement to understand the philosophy of both 'Sri. Basaveshwara' and 'Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar'. Their missions and relevance of ideas, thoughts and ideals should be inculcated in proper perspectives for an attempt in removing the inequality, caste, hatred, and effort in bringing liberty, equality, democratic values and humanistic ideals.

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