

SOCIAL REFORMER: BASAVESHWARA

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 20th February 2026 Accepted: 01st March 2026 Published: 07th March 2026 Keywords: Basaveshwara, Kayaka, Vachana, Literature, Anubhav mantap, Kaykave Kailas	There are many types of problems in society. Social reformers are needed to improve these problems. If there were a society without problems, it would not have been possible to create social workers. Morality is much better than material unity. However, unfortunately, moral unity is very rare in today's society. Saint Basaveshwara Maharaj has emphasized moral unity through the teachings of true humanism. The need to reform religion or the need for a new religion gives birth to a social reformer or a religious founder. When Basaveshwara was born, such was the situation in society. There was a lot of caste discrimination in society.

Plagiarism Check Report:

Date of Report: March 01, 2026

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How to Cite: Telsang, Hanamant Bhimrao, & Parse, Priyanka Pandurang. (2025). SOCIAL REFORMER: BASAVESHWARA. *IIP: World Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IIPWJHSS)*, 2(1), 380-384.

INTRODUCTION

There was high meanness. There was a lot of discrimination between men and women. Compared to men, women had a very low status in society, the social status of women was degraded.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To understand Basaveshwara's thought of opposing caste discrimination.
- 2) To understand Mahatma Basaveshwara's thought of equality between men and women.
- 3) To understand Basaveshwara's work in destroying untouchability in society, creating social equality.
- 4) To understand the work of the Shudra people during Basaveshwara's time.

RESEARCH METHOD

Historical research method and descriptive research method have been mainly used to write in this article. In this historical writing method, by describing it accurately, this historical writing method has been used. Similarly, various scientific methods and techniques have been used in it.

Primary and secondary sources and materials have been used in these articles. To get more information for this article, many research papers, references, books, newspaper clippings, news, magazines, websites have also been used.

Gender Equality - During the time of Basaveshwara Maharaj, the condition of women was very miserable. During this time, there was a practice of offering boys and girls to God in the society. It was a practice to call the girls offered to God as Devadasis. These Devadasis could not run their own business, they had to serve the deity throughout their lives. These Devadasis were offered to serve the deity. Immediately, Jogatini, Murali, and Devadasis were physically exploited by the people in the temples. The practice of polygamy was prevalent in the society, and the society had imposed many restrictions on women. For example, women had to walk barefoot while walking through the village. That is, the condition of women in the society was very miserable. During Basaveshwara's time, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Jainism and Shaivism were prevalent in Karnataka on a large scale. The society had completely lost its originality by getting entangled in its narrow beliefs and unnecessary rituals.¹ When Basaveshwara was born, there was a lot of inequality between men and women, caste and caste in the society. But Basaveshwara studied this caste system from the beginning and opposed the caste system. He advocated equality between men and women and established social equality by opposing the caste system. When it came to the occasion of Basaveshwara's Upanayana, his elder sister Nagakka should have undergone the Upanayana Sanskar first.² That is, at that time, the Upanayana Sanskar was rejected for women and it was believed that the marriage Sanskar was the Upanayana Sanskar. Therefore, it was believed that they did not need to undergo a separate Upanayana Sanskar. Since Basaveshwara had undergone the Eastling Dharana Sanskar in his childhood and he needed only one religious Sanskar, he rejected the Upanayana Sanskar that differentiated between men and women.

Opposition to caste discrimination -

During the time of Basaveshwara, inequality in society had increased. Society was divided into four varnas. At that time, the Brahmin class had the task of performing all kinds of religious rituals, the Kshatriya class had the task of protecting the society, the Vaishya class had the task of starting trade for the society, while the Shudra class had the task of serving the above three classes. The highest level of caste discrimination was reaching this last Shudra description. The Shudra class was not allowed to enter the temple, if an animal or cattle died in the village, these Shudra people had to do the work of dragging it. There was such a sense of touch in the society. If people of the higher caste touched them, it was considered unclean. Shudra men and women had no right to education. On one occasion, a shoemaker named Haralaya offered salutations to Basavanna, this time he returned to Haralaya and offered salutations three times and this incident changed Haralaya's life. To repay this debt, he and his wife Kalyani Amma had prepared his own thigh skins and his footwear for Basavanna. Due to Basava, people from all the Dalit classes like Haralaya Chambhar, Channaya, Kakkaya Dhor, Ketaiya Burud Nagorao Kamble, Uriling Peddichor, Shiv Nagamayya Mahar took initiation into the Ishtalinga. While advocating equality, Basaveshwara taught the society about equality through many examples in the society.

The land of Shivalaya and Mahar Wada is one for both II

Achaman Shauchya is the sole source of both I

There is no pure opposite II

How can any profession determine a person as high or low? On the contrary, everyone's karma is his work. Only if his work is bad, that person is considered a clanless person. Otherwise, no honestly done work can be of light quality, teaches Basaveshwara. Basaveshwara's promise is this.

He who kills is vile

He who eats meat on the road is a Shudra

He does not belong to this caste

He takes refuge in the Kudal Sangama

He loves animals

He is a true clansman. ³

Anubhav Mantapa -

At that time, Anubhav Mantapa was a kind of parliament-like institution. In the past, King Janaka had a large assembly of scholars. This had the form of Anubhav Mantapa. But Anubhav Mantapa was a more democratic type of institution. It included a total of 770 men and 70 women. The extent to which men participated in this Anubhav Mantapa. Similarly, women participated here. In fact, this Anubhav Mantapa was unique. In this, the caste of the person was not asked. Anyone who had taken the Eastling initiation could become a member of this Anubhav Mantapa. Men who became members of Anubhav Mantapa were called Shivsharan, while women were called Sharani.

In the 12th century, inequality was widespread in society. At that time, Mahatma Basaveshwara established Anubhav Mantapa and appealed for equality in society and started the work of keeping every person away from the narrow-minded attitude and the bondage of caste religion. ⁴

With the rights given to women, both the Anubhav Mantapa institution and the Lingayat religion gained a very large and widespread form. Many promising women like Bontadevi alias Nijadevi, Satyavati, Sutakatnari Remava, Rayamma, Shivpriya, Mahadevi, Rechamma, Danamma Mukhtayakka, Shivpriya, Mahadevi, Padmavati, Veeramma, Lakamma became writers in Anubhav Mantapa. Prostitutes were also allowed to enter the Anubhav Mantapa here. This verse was composed by a prostitute named Sule Sankavve. ⁵

Women composed verses in the Anubhav Mantapa. At the same time, people of many castes composed these verses. Everyone was treated equally in this place. Machidevi was a washerwoman by caste. She had accepted the job of washing clothes. However, she had imposed five rules on herself. Such as washing the clothes of unscrupulous people, not washing the clothes of hypocrites, thieves and prostitutes, not washing the clothes of people who are hungry, not washing the clothes of drunkards and those who lust for other women. The Brahmins Haralaya Chambhar and Madhuravaya were in this Anubhav Mantapa. Sharan Kakkaya was originally from Ujjain, he belonged to the Dhor caste. Hadapada Apanna was Basavanna's assistant, he belonged to the barber community. These verses were written by Basavanna's other assistant, Raisa Manchanna and his wife Amugi. Marul Shankardeva was a sharan who came from Gandhara. Shantarasa was the keeper of the Anubhav Mantapa. Uriling Peddi was an untouchable Shiva sharan. Mahasharan Channaya, who came from Tamil Nadu, belonged to the Mang caste. He had actually gone to Uriling with the intention of stealing, seeing Uriling Dev giving Eastling initiation to Surya, Peddi wanted to take Eastling initiation. He insisted on Uriling Dev and took Eastling initiation. Ketayya from the Burud community was a member of Anubhav Mantapa. In short, Anubhav Mantapa was a major center that destroyed caste differences and gender differences in the society at that time.

Shrampratishta - Kayak -

Basaveshwara gave great importance to the dignity of labor at that time. Labor is indispensable for man. Labor was called Kayak. It is considered as sacred as Kailasa, that is, Kayak means labor, if it is as sacred as Kailasa, then there is no reason to consider it as high or low. Therefore, among the Kayakas, there is no difference in the level of the priest performing religious rituals and the work of a leatherworker making footwear, but both of them are sacred and equal. In this way, philosophy was behind the Kayakas. That is, there was equality in the Kayaka work.

At that time, the work of the Shudras was considered inferior in the Chaturvarnya system. However, Basaveshwara had a work that established equality in the society in this regard. In this regard,

Basaveshwara says.

By heating iron, a blacksmith became a blacksmith, by sewing clothes a weaver I

By reciting the Vedas, a Brahmin, then who is born from the ear?

Basaveshwara did not accept caste and class. It is said to us that one should not ask about the origin of the river and the clan of a sage. Thus, Basaveshwara Maharaj says,

Bhuini's Sut Vyas, Mangini's Markandeya I

Manduka's daughter Mandodari Berad Putra Agasti I

Kashyap the blacksmith Kaudinya the barber, the clan caste

The superiority of the clan caste does not diminish, so one should not ask about the clan caste.

Dasoh -

Dasoh means charity.⁶ Basaveshwara gave special importance to the Kayakas. But there are some people in the society who are not able to work. For example, sick people, small children, old people have to depend on others for their livelihood. At this time, it is appropriate to spend the money that is more than reasonable on these people in the society. This same promise is given in Jainism through the principle of non-graha. In this regard, Basaveshwara says,

Tasubhar Kanaka, a thread in a garment I

It will come in use today or tomorrow II

Then do not spend money elsewhere without serving I

Kudal Sangamdeva reminds me of your feet II

In the concept of Dasoh, Basaveshwara advocated equality in society. At that time, the responsibility of the Dasoh department was with Nilambike. That is, a woman had this responsibility. Charity is done with a noble intention. For this, there is a feeling of compassion. But charity can also be associated with a reputation and maturity. There is not necessarily a noble feeling behind charity. At some point, charity is done to make one's name famous in the society. Kings and Maharajas used to do charity with this intention. There are few disinterested donors like Karna. Basaveshwara had directly implemented the philosophy of Dasoh in his life. At his house, his wife Nilambike was shouting at a thief who came to steal jewelry. At that time, getting angry with Nilambike, he did this work by being patient with her situation.⁷

By entrusting the responsibility of Dasoh to his wife Nilambike, Basaveshwara achieved two things. He kept himself away from this, placing such great responsibility and trust on his wife, a woman, and also brought together the principle of equality between men and women in Dasoh. At the same time, Basaveshwara took his sister along with him in this. He has written a verse about Basaveshwara. Basaveshwara's sister Akka Nagamma says,

Basavanna, you have come to the world of death,

The light of devotion spread in all ten directions II

Basaveshwara's sister had devoted herself to Basaveshwara's work. One of his wives, Gangavika, was also completely dedicated to Basaveshwara's work. He ran an education center for women, while his other wife, Neelambike, was given the very important responsibility of Dasoh.

Basaveshwara was born in a high caste. But he knew the suffering of the lower castes. From the experiences he had in his life, he thought about equality. He made a unique experiment like social equality.

He advocated equality between men and women. The concepts of Anubhav Mantap, Dasoh, Kayak are Mahatma Basaveshwara's gift to the society.

CONCLUSION:

1. We understood the idea of Basaveshwara opposing caste discrimination and internalized the idea that we should oppose caste discrimination.
2. We got information about how Basaveshwara presented the idea of equality between men and women in society.
3. It helped us understand the work done by Basaveshwara for the Shudra people in his time.
4. We understood the work he did for social equality during Basaveshwara's time.

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