

TIMELESS SIGNIFICANCE: TENET OF LIBERAL HUMANISM AS FEATURE OF BASAVESHWARA'S POETRY

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 20th February 2026 Accepted: 01st March 2026 Published: 07th March 2026 Keywords: Timeless significance, liberal humanism, equality, truth, superstitions and karma.	This essay examines Mahatma Basaveshwara's poetry's enduring significance as a characteristic of liberal humanism. Deeply ingrained in spiritual devotion and human experience, Basaveshwara's vachanas transcend time and cultural barriers, embodying universal human characteristics like moral integrity, compassion, and the quest of truth. The study demonstrates how Basaveshwara's poetic vision, which emphasizes the intrinsic dignity of the individual and the ethical obligations to society, is consistent with the tenets of liberal humanism by analyzing a few verses. The examination highlights his work's timeless significance by showing that his poetry still has an impact on audiences today and provides valuable insights into morality and human nature. This study advances knowledge of how humanist principles are embodied in classical Kannada literature and continue to be important throughout.

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Liberal Humanism: The notion of liberal humanism is explained by Peter Barry in his book "Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory." The main focus of this literary and philosophical critical theory is the human being and his potential. In the 1970s, the phrase "liberal humanism" gained popularity as a colloquial name for the type of theory that preceded theory. In this sense, the term "liberal" refers to someone who is elusive and non-committal on political issues rather than politically radical. Humanism suggests a comparable set of negative characteristics, including as "non-Marxist," "non-feminist," and "non-theoretical." It also suggests that liberal humanists consider "human nature" to be something that is unchanging and expressed in great literature.

Timeless Significance in Basaveshwara's Poetry: Timeless significance of good literature is one of the tenets of liberal humanism. The theory of liberal humanism rejects the momentary or temporary values and asserts an everlasting human values. Peter Barry in his book, '*Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*' stated that good literature is of timeless significance. It somehow crosses the limitations and peculiarities of the age it was written in and thereby speaks to what is constant in human nature. Such writing is not for an age but for all time. In short, great literature is of timeless importance and speaks to what is constant in human nature and contains universal truths. Basaveshwara's poetry highly marked with timeless significance. Following examples from Basaveshwara's poetry evidences the statement.

Work itself is Kailasa
What is devotion without work?
If the mind becomes pure in honest labour
One can behold Kudala Sangam Deva. (Ramanujun,)

The above poem emphasizes the universal idea of *karma*. Karma is *Kailasa* (sacred abode of Lord Shiva) means work is God. Basavanna promotes honest labour to a sacred level by equating work with Kailasa. He asserts that sincere work performed with dedication is itself a spiritual path. He advises people that there is no need to go out to search God but do your work honestly and sincerely. He further sates,

Do good, and become good
Do evil, and become evil.
It is action that shapes a human being,
O Kudala Sangam Deva (Ramanujun)
Without doing one's own work,
One prays to God for results.
Without labor, there is no reward,
O Kudala Sngam Deva. ((Ramanujun)

The aforementioned instances highlight the moral obligations we accrue throughout the course of our lives. He criticizes the desire for material possessions, which causes people to lose sight of their moral principles. By reminding us of the consequences of our acts and urging us to pursue the path of virtues like honesty, love, compassion, and gratitude, it appears to be correcting the route. In the same context, Bhagwatgeeta emphasizes the principle, "कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।". It has a timeless significance as it is remarkable even in the present era.

One of the major themes in Basaveshwara's poetry is equality. Everyone agrees that all people are created equal. All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights, according to Article No. 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). They should treat each other with solidarity as they are endowed with reason and conscience (Morsink, 281). In actuality, though, individuals discriminate against one another on the grounds of caste, class, creed, religion, race, color, sex, and language. The scourges of Indian society that are preventing it from moving forward are casteism and religious discrimination. In his poetry, Basaveshwara appears to denounce such heinous caste and religious injustice and highlights the Basaveshwara in his poems seems to reject such ghastly discrimination on the basis of caste and religion and emphasises the universal idea of equality and solidarity. He says,

Ask not of caste, ask not of lineage,
Ask not of customs, ask not of doctrine.
A true devotee has only devotion,
O kudala sangam Deva
Pride of caste is futile.
Pride of religion is futile,
Even pride of devotion is futile,
O kudala sangam Deva. (Ramanujan)

Basaveshwara criticises the caste system and asserts that true spirituality is an internal journey. Since God created humans and castes are made by mankind based on their occupation, a man's devotion to God is more significant than his caste. Caste-based conflicts still occur today. The concept of truth is the remarkable feature of Basaveshwara's poetry. Truth is one of the crucial human values which has a timeless significance as it leads to maintain healthy relationships. Basaveshwara's himself is the proponent of truth. It seems through the following poem.

Speech without truth is a flower without fragrance
Worship without devotion bears no fruit
O kudal sangam Deva
The mind is a marketplace, thought is a trade
Truth alone is the profit (Ramanujan)
Knowledge without Truth is a lamp in darkness
Knowledge without devotion is dry wood
O kudal sangam Deva ((Ramanujan)

The above poems elevates the significance by using the simile. Even if a flower may seem lovely, it loses its most distinctive characteristic if it isn't fragrant. Similarly, words that lack honesty are meaningless and lifeless, even though they may sound beautiful or impressive. The picture implies that truth is a natural and essential component of communication rather than an optional embellishment.

Love is recurring theme reflected throughout Basavanna's poetry. It seems in the following example.

Worship without Love is empty,
Love itself is a highest dharma
O kudal sangam Deva. (Ramanujan)

Basaveshwara's poetry also emphasizes the everlasting idea of humanity by attacking superstitions and rituals. He says,

Food for the hungry, water for the thirsty,
This itself is service to Siva
O kudala sangam Deva.
Without feeding a poor man,
Why offer food to God?
Siva dwells in the hungry one,
O kudala sangam Deva.

The above vachanas of Basavanna powerfully reflects the humanity by emphasizing the concept of compassion and kindness. He respects each and every individual as he treats them equally to God. Additionally, he criticizes the empty and useless rituals and practices like offering food to God.

CONCLUSION:

The themes of love, the inner search for the holy, the rejection of strict religious rituals, inner spirituality, and the notion that self-awareness transcends time, location, and society all contribute to Basaveshwara's poetry's timeless value. These ideas are quite relevant in the modern world. His poetry encourages a direct, intimate encounter with God while challenging outward religiosity. People of many ages and cultures are inspired by it. In this sense, Basaveshwara's writings provide a timeless manual for intellectual and spiritual inquiry rather than merely a product of his day.

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