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ANUBHAVA MANTAPA IN 12TH CENTURY

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Abstract:-Shivasharana movement opened a new milestone in the history of Karnataka. Basaveshwar was founder of the movement and Anubhava Mantapa was set up by him as forum to discuss different issues related to religious, cultural and social life. The principles of Anubhava Mantapa as expressed by various Shivasharanas emphasized for equality irrespective of gender or caste and gave significance to dedicated occupation as way of successful life. Hence, Anubhava Mantapa was regarded as first religious parliament in the world.

Keywords: Anubhava Mantapa , Milestone In The History , Shivasharana Movement

INTRODUCTION

Shaivism is the oldest religion in the world and Virashaivism is the evolutionary form of Shaivism¹. Virashaivism is believed to have been founded by one Renuka, the first of the 'five *acharyas*' or prophets. All the stories connected with Renuka tend to make him more of a mythical figure. But the same is not the case with Basaveshvara who is certainly a historical figure. He was undoubtedly a high official working under king Bijjala who usurped the royal throne and ruled over the Chalukyan territory in the middle of the twelfth century A.D².

In the twelfth century, Karnataka witnessed a renaissance remarkable for its religious fervor, social sanity and literary grace. The perennial philosophy involves the study of Reality at the bottom, with practice and morality at the top, with a consideration of metaphysical truth and at the focal with reconciliation of thought and action³. The Anubhava Mantapa was a platform to discuss the socio-religious and political views of philosophers, both male and females. It is highlighted that there were equal rights of expression for both men and women of all religions and castes in participation and discussion in Anubhava Mantapa.

Then unparalleled religious, social economical, cultural and literary revolution took place at Kalyan under the dynamic leadership of Basaveshwara, centre of all these activities is Anubhava Mantapa founded at Kalyana of Karnataka. Though Basaveshwar's total revolution was multi dimensional, yet religious evolution brought out by him was the basis for all this. Anubhava Mantapa was a forum of rational and free thinking where in all these subjects were discussed and history making discussions were taken. People come from every book and corner of the country attracted by a magnetic personality of Basavanna to take part in these discussions.

Anubhava Mantapa enabled people of different castes to develop a sense of brother hood. The members of this Mantapa used to call one another as brother and sister. For example, Basaveshwara was called by others as Anna (Brother) Basavanna and Mahadevi akka (Sister), one of the noted lady members of the Mantapa as Akka Mahadevi.

Shivasharanas stressed the need for providing equal opportunity to both men and women and put this creed into practice. The women saints of the day proved the fact that they were in no way inferior to men in intelligence and soundness of judgement. Women were given equal opportunities to participate in the discoursed field in the Anubhava Mantapa. They enjoyed equal status with men in that Mantapa. The tale and intelligence of many of the women members was demonstrated as well as appreciated. They also wrote their own Vachanas. Hence, they were provided with an equal opportunity which helped their personalities to blossom, prompted their capacity to think and act on their own.

“Basava advocated the cause of liberty and equality of women and proclaimed that an upright women has equal rights as per with man. Basaveshwara said that women with ability are eligible for salvation and have the right to share education administration, employment and the like along with men”⁴. Hence this clearly reveals that women were provided equal opportunities not only in religious or spiritual matters but also in social and other matters in the society with, men. In the Anubhava Mantapa, women participated along with men in religious discourses and many of them composed Vachanas. Basaveshwar through Veerashaivism and Anubhava Mantapa brought about change in social structure, so that woman could enjoy full equality with men in every sphere of life.

Anubhava Mantapa played a significant role in transforming the social cultural, religious, economic life of the people and society. The late Dr. R. R. Diwarkar defines thus: “The term “Anubhava” has to be explained in distinctively different meaning and content so as not to make confusion worse confounded “Anubhava Mantapa” which existed at kalyana, was regularly attended by the followers of the new faith, founded by Basaveshwara. In Sanskrit it means conveying of experiences to others. But in Kannada the term is quite different. “Anubhava” means commingling of the body and the Soul (spiritualism), as much as of man and the creator. But it is not generated by the five senses or of sensitiveness, It is metaphysical, ultra-mental, ultra sensitive and ultra corporeal. It is rather impossible to describe it in words”⁵.

Another important distinction this assembly has achieved is that it was open to all without any distinction of caste, social status, scholarship and sex. A pontiff to a plebeians, a scholar to a manual labourer, a rich man to a poor one, a house wife to queen or princess and a man to an ordinary house life, were allowed to participate without any restriction or pre-condition and reservation. There was no scope for dictation or authoritative finalite from any quarter and none needed to accept them at their face value.

The Anubhava Mantapa was democratic in its outlook because it was mainly based on democratic principles. One can find democratic principles in its nature and functioning. It accepted the principle or fact that the individual is rational. Every person has the capacity to think over the general problem of the community and is capable of making decisions.

The fundamental principles accepted by Basaveshwar and the other Shivasharanas of the Anubhava Mantapa may be summarized as follows.

- 1.All men are equal.
- 2.No man is high or low either by birth sex or occupation.
- 3.There is no discrimination between man and man and between man and woman.
- 4.Woman has equal rights with man to follow the path of self evolution.
- 5.Each one should follow a profession of his own choice.
- 6.Woman also can take up any Kayaka.
- 7.All Kayaks are honourable profession, no Kayaka is either low or high.
- 8.Varanas or castes and Asramas are to be discarded.
- 9.Self development is to be achieved through Kayaka.
- 10.Renunciation and dwelling in the forest are ruled out as cowardly tendencies to escape from life.
- 11.Inter group marriages and free dinning should be encouraged.
- 12.Untouchability has no place in the society.
- 13.Every man is free to think on all spiritual one social subjects.
- 14.Reason and experience are the only guiding lights for free thinking and spiritual advancement.
- 15.The language of the people should be the medium for imparting spiritual and secular education.
- 16.All men have equal rights to participate in spiritual discussions to acquire spiritual knowledge and to fallow the same path of self-evolution.

It also served as community dinning hall (Dasoha Mane). Therefore it is safe to say that discourses were not held at a single place, but a various centres in Kalyan fur various reasons like rain, sun, number of devotees, distance

and other exigencies. Anubhava Mantapa “Mahamane” and “Shivanubhava Goshti” suggest that they have interchangeable meaning of one concept that of discourses on divine experience and of mystic experiences as well. Several texts have extensively held on to this view.

Thus there is no credible reason to question the existence and flourishing of “Anubhava Mantapa” at Kalyan and it is also an incontrovertible fact that Basaveshwara founded it.

In Anubhava Mantapa every one was allowed to express his or her opinions freely without making any distinction low and high, man and woman. Allama Prabhu who presided over the discussions of Anubhava Mantapa was summing the end with his own remarks and guidance. Vachana Bhandari was editing these Ideas expressed in the form of Vachanas. Decisions of Anubhava Mantapa were put into practice through mutts existing in every village and town.

Enormous Vachana literature was created as a result of these discussions. The study of Vachana literature reveals that these discussions were based on rationalism, realism and scientific outlook. Allama Prabhu, a unique emperor of spiritual domain presided over these deliberations and Channabasaveshwara, the apostle of divine knowledge was the key figure to conduct these activities. Basaveshwara, of course was the very soul of Anubhava Mantapa. Shivasharanas who were perusing the path of spirituality through various Kayakas were taking part in these activities of Anubhava Mantapa. Activities of Anubhava Mantapa were conducted in Maha Mane, meaning great house i.e., the resident of Sri. Basaveshwara. Though this is fact, yet some people in the past questioned the very existence of such institution. There is no substance in this argument as there are clear evidence in the Vachans of Shivasharanas to prove the existence of Anubhava Mantapa.

CONCLUSION:

To sum up, Anubhava Mantapa established by Mahatma Basaveshwar was first religious parliament in the world. All problems pertaining to life were discussed here which were based on religion, equality and spirituality. The values evolved were put into practice by Shivasharanas themselves so that they might become a leading light to the world at large.

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