



The Role of Vachana Philosophy and Human Rights

Dr. Jayanna C T

Assistant Professor

SJM. Arts and Commerce College

B D Road, Chitradurga 577 501

Mail: jayannact@gmail.com

Abstract

Vachana philosophy is the unique contribution made by the Sharanas to the Universal humanity. This philosophy has its significance not only in the past but in the present era of Globalization. These vachanas preach nature of simplicity, unsophisticated and elegant. But at the same time they possess noble ideas and highest truths of religion. The movement of Sharanas through vachana philosophy was a revolution against prevailing caste, class, general discrimination in their society. Vachana Sahitya is a collective creation, it is an experience came out of the mutual discussion and exchange of views among the sharanas. The Sharanas have put forth their idea in the form of Vachanas for the benefit of humanity. The some vachanas speak and uphold human rights. The other Vachanas speak and uphold social rights

The reasons for the growth of vachana philosophy can be described as follows :

- a) The social causes,
- b) Economic causes,
- c) the political causes
- d) religious causes and
- e) religious literature

a) Social Causes:

In the 12th Century there was no healthy social life. The classification of the Varanashrama system took its importance during this century. This has divided the society in an artificial and arbitrary manner. There were other religions such as Buddhism and Jainism. These religions were rigorous asceticism and they were silent about God. This could not attract the masses. The political instability has created a confusion in the religious field and social system. This has given rise to the degradation of moral life in the society.

These circumstances have led to the Sharana movement under the leadership of Sri. Basaveshwar. In those days, Varna was the deciding factor in determining superior and inferior classes of society, thus those who belonged to the superior Varna always remained a superior



class and those who belonged to inferior varna always remained inferior class. Even if some of the superior varna class were inferior class they were accepted as belonging. Thus the society was classified into three segments. There was a need to question this and create a class structure based on human quality and established a fourth system where even the people of inferior varna could elevate themselves to the upper class. Social mobility was inevitable people aspired for social classification not based upon birth as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, but a classification based on quality.

There was social discrimination when occupation becomes hereditary. There discrimination were ugly and cruel distortions. Those who did not do physical labour belonged to the Brahmin and Kshatriya classes and those who were engaged in physical labour were categorized as Vaishya and Shudra. Obviously there was a difference in the economic status of these classes, the situation was so grim that the Sharanas declared that Kayaka or culture of physical labour is above any kind of discrimination. A Brahmin is not born to read the Veda and Shastra; A Kshatriya is not meant to kill and be merry, Trading is not the monopoly of a Vaishya ; our good Kama Bhima does not consent without Examining the merits and demerit of a famer Sharana.

One of the many reform movements aimed against the supremacy of the Brahmins whose selfish exploitation of the lower classes led to the rise led to the rise of new sects essentially anti Brahminic in origin, is the Sharana Movement. The insistence upon the socio religious cult of Varnashramadharma by Hinduism led to the domination of Brahmins in society which resulted in the exploitation of lower castes and classes. The age long slavery of the Indian people can be traced to that source. Brahmanism as a socio-economic force exploited not only the untouchables but touchable like the Kshatriyas as well. In fact they were not only administrators but law makers also.

The spiritual verdict of a family Brahmin priest on any political or social matter was willy-nilly taken as a divine decree by Kshatriya Kings. The summary of social causes has expressed in the following Vachana by Sharana those who are well versed in the Veda, Shastra, purana, Agama etc are not great.

A rope-dancer is a master of sixty four lores. Is he then inferior? This is not the right criterion. It is quite different. All there are bead earning lores; therefore he is great who had realized virtue, Knowledge, religion, conduct and purity, my dear Lord Uralinga Peddi Vishveshwara. Uralingapeddi In this vachana the Sharana says that if a person is knowledgeable and experienced in Shastra, purana, Vedas can't be considered as a great person.

The rope dancer is well versed in sixty four subject then why he considering as inferior, this criteria can't be considered as a good ground for classification. These are the modes of earnings. The great person is he who has an experience of virtues, knowledgeable, good conduct and pure in heart. This Vachana says that discrimination should not be based on caste and the person should be differentiated on the basis of good qualities and bad qualities.

**b) The Economic causes :**

The ancient arrangement founded the division of castes on the nature of their work as Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra ended in division of working class and resulted in differentiation between man and man. Thus the graded society resulted into inequality. The concept of upper and lower castes on the basis of occupation emerged. There was lot of complexities in the human society. Human relationship stepped to the level of inhumanity. On the one hand the innocent people who will work hard from dawn to dusk and on the other hand, the upper strata of people who were leading luxurious life without sweat on their brow. The poor people who were deprived of all the amenities of life and the neglected were in large numbers and few people, who proclaimed the reserves as the upper class people they thought that all the amenities were meant for them and it was their right to enjoy them.

The primary task of the second caste category of Kshatriyas is to protect the people; and therefore they carry arms. The Vaisyas, who constitute the third layer, are expected to subsist by trading, lending money, tending cattle, and cultivating land. Finally, the Sudras have only duty; to serve meekly these other three castes. The hierarchy of the prescribed duties is even more highlighted if we take into consideration the rules for those bad times in which the traditional caste professions are not sufficient for subsistence. In most castes, there has been always some diversity of professions, because not all members could make a living by following the traditional occupation. However, the principles remains that castes are characterized by certain occupational activities; and this is especially conspicuous in the case of castes with religious functions, either high or low, and serving castes. The high religious function of Brahmanas. But castes with low religious functions such as manufacturing flower garlands or making mystic are like wise very specialized.

The untouchable castes are often also completely specialized in one profession, such as washing cloths or hair cutting. In the traditional caste society, as it is now a days still found in the villages, all castes are interdependent through their professions. It is an economic system which is based upon the exchange of services and gifts in kind. On the other hand, the system is not likely to give an impetus to social mobility, taking up another profession is not forbidden to the individuals; but the possibilities are very much restricted by the system. Especially higher ranked occupations are generally reserved for higher castes. Likewise, many trades and crafts are the monopoly of a certain caste, and cannot be undertaken by others.

It dictates that each man's occupation is pre-determined by birth. It says that man has no freedom to choose any vocation he likes and no freedom to think and act as he likes. The protagonist of the Karma theory advocate that one has to follow the hereditary profession; that a farmer's son should become a farmer, a barber's son on barber as preacher's son a preacher and so on. The history of India reveals that the karma theory has hampered the progress of society and has caused economic stagnation. The individuals who form a society must be industrious ; otherwise the society will have to face an economic crisis. Basaveshwara said that refusal to work and resorting to beggary was a heinous sin. Again a noted author pointed out



that ‘Sharanas were the first medieval prophet to preach that poverty as not a spiritual sin but it is a social evil. It is not a legacy bequeathed to us through sin committed either by us or by our fore fathers. It is rather an outcome of social conditions. Being urged by this motive they strove hard to set-right the economic conditions of then defund society.

They welcomed all people belonging to different vocation and laid the foundation of a brotherhood of labour. Uplifting the downtrodden who were subjected to the exploitation of the upper class, was the aim of the Sharanas. They took the responsibility of enlightening them. Their basic necessity was food and mental peace. A man can think about knowledge, science, religion – Spirituality only when his stomach is full.

The Sharanas were well aware that the economy plays a vital role in the overall development of the human beings. Accordingly the thought and deliberation in this regard lead to the concept of Kayaka and Dasoha. According to Sharana’s the fruits of work should not be for individual alone. They stated and followed that one should keep the income required for him and the remaining portion should be dedicated to the society at large. That was called Dasoha. As the work done with dedication is called Kayaka, dedicating the income earned from it without ego and with Dasohabhavana is called Dasoha, it is not easy to win body, mind and wealth. We have to give those three to another set of holy three – Guru, Linga and Jangama. Kayaka and Dasoha are not different. They are two faces of the same coin. One is the way of earning and another is the way of utilization. These are the principles of production and distribution of wealth.

The earnings of a person who earns for society, for country are more valuable than the one who earns for himself and his family. In the words of Aydakki Lakkamma a woman saint of 12th Century has presented the importance of Kayaka in a very special manner. One who is engaged in work Must even forget the Guru’s sight ; The Linga worship he must forget Even if the Jangama stands in front, The obligation must be snapped Since such work is as good as heaven Amareshwaralinga himself must do it. Most eminent themes of Sharana philosophy are Guru, Linga and Jangama. But one who, engaged in his Kayaka is excused to forget there trinities. And God is also included in Kayaka, so one can assume the status of Kayaka, so the Kayaka is very high obligation according to the Sharana’s.

c) The Political Causes :

The Basavana had an opportunity to serve as a clerk or junior accountant the royal treasury of Mangalavad province headed by Bijjala of Kalchuri Dynasty. The social evils like corruption, bribery and mismanagement in the administration made Basava to think and eradicate these evils. So he suggested and adopted certain principles like Kayaka and Dasoha which was accepted by superior offices and established Anubhava Mantapa which worked for the development of individuals alongwith society.



The political head were Kshetriya kings but the administrative power was retained in the hands of upper class people. These upper class peoples not only exploited the lower class people in respect to socio-economic aspect, but they had controlled the administrative power in them. And also exploited the Kshetriya Kings by making laws arbitrarily. Since the law making power retained in the hands of these upper class people. The lower class who are illiterate lost their power of legal enforcement. This how the gross valuation of human rights were cause to the poor class people. This was opposed by the Sharanas. They expressed their views in the form of Vachana which can be easily understandable by the common people. This how the political causes has led to the vachana philosophy. The following vachana of Akkamma speaks about political evils practiced in those days and how the law and order has to be maintained in the society.

“The body is the end for
Both right conduct and for disgrace
How can create another body
Through guru, linga and jangama
And unite with it as the pure one ?
If you see and speak to one
Who is without linga,
Corrupt in practice,
And a slayer of Jangama
You will burn in hell.
No doubt here,
As this is the command of
Aacharve Pranavada Raameshwaralinga”

In this vachana Akkamma mounts a fierce attack on evil mongers like tale bearers, guilty guileful shchers and double dealers who generate ill-will among people and breed such diseases as would corrupt both individuals and society. In this Vachana the Sharanas give more importance to good conduct and consciousness of an individual. If he fails in having these qualities and leads to inequality and corruption he should be punished. The law and punishment are part of the society.

d) Religious conditions :

The most ancient religious system that prevailed in 12th Century was saivism. It was supplanted from its rightful place by the advent of Aryans and was eclipsed altogether for a time in north India. However, it flourished without any set back in the south. We know the vedic religion is seen to have strongly influenced Indian life as a whole. Having subsumed the elements of other religious, it emerged as an eclectic, composite religion.

The vedic religion, based on animal sacrifices and other rites, giving rise as it did to a hierarchical social structure, was composed of four castes. It helped to shape art and religious



thoughts representing the four fold social division of course vedic religion, at and social structures down the centuries, faced challenges of more than one kind and passed through cataclysmic changes and it has been reborn times and again. Though a natural religion vedic faith has been subjected to revision from time to time.

e) Religious Literature :

The Sharana movement was also characterized by a specific kind of literacy suited for its ideals of propagating devotion among the masses. Sanskrit scriptures were, of course not useful for this purpose; for only the small upper caste of Brahmans was familiar with that sacred language. For the reason, the Sharana leaders expressed their thoughts from the vernacular language expressed their thoughts on the vernacular language of the region; Kannada, one of the Dravidian languages. Also the form was adopted to the missionary purpose. The foremost literature of twelfth century consists of vachanas; small poems in a free verse form, which could easily be memorized. The production of those poems grew to huge proportions.

The Religious literatures like Vedas, Shastras, Upnishads, etc were in Sanskrit language. The Sanskrit language literature was meant for upper class people. This literature knowledge was not known to the common people. The lower class people were kept away from education and they were even allow to hear the words of Sanskrit literature. So there right to knowledge and right to education was deprived. The Sharana philosophy was reply to these violations of human rights. Hence through the vachana, which was in the form of simple and common language of the people, they brought the awareness of human rights and duties. These are the reasons for the growth of vachana philosophy in 12th Century.

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