

# ‘The Statesman - B.Basavalingappa’

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**Abstract:** B.Basavalingappa was one of the great political sagacious in Karnataka. He dedicated his political life serving for the upliftment of the depressed caste. Being an MLA, Minister, and leader of the opposition party, sacrificed his life for the integrity of the state by synthesizing with the principles of Buddha, Basava, and Ambedkar. He was an ardent Buddhist follower lived with self-respect and secular in politics. Thus, all through his political life, he did not visit any religious institutions like ‘Mata’ and ashramas in order to represent secular politics in the state. Suppose one would like to enumerate his contribution to the state such as the abolition of carrying ‘Night soil on the head’, implementing the policies like ‘land to the Tiller’, ‘decentralization of power in the local self-government and provisions for women candidates in panchayath presidency’, electing downtrodden and other backward caste members into the co-operative societies in order to get the benefit of the policies. These are some of his important political achievements had made him as ‘the savior of society’ in the eyes of Dalits and other backward caste and community. Another path breaking incident in Karnataka, during 1974 that the statement he made in a programme where he called Kannada literature is nothing but ‘Busa’ literature, due to this derogative statement, he lost his ministerial portfolio. However, this particular incident had a great impact on Kannada culture, with his leadership, untouchable (Dalit) people mobilized at large in order to formulate a cultural and political identity in Kannada politics. At this juncture, in 1974, he set the foundation for the vibrant organization called ‘Dalita Sangarsha Samiti’ (The Rebelled Dalit organization). On the backdrop of this, it is inevitable to remember his political ideologies. The present paper that would like to critically engage in his debates in the assembly of Karnataka in the perspective of present politics.

**Key Words:** Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, B.Basavalingappa, Depressed class, The council of Minister, Debates, Karnataka Vidansoudha, Save Earth, Save Ecology, Pourakarmika’s.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The trajectory of the social phase of Indian history has shown us that the number of great people had sacrificed their lives in order to establish a society with Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, gender sensitivity. Among them, Buddha stands on the top position, and he initiated a neo-sectarian cult against the established graded hierarchical caste system, and inequalities based on caste and gender in 2500 BC. His principle of ‘Panchasheel’ had a great impact on the barbarism, and his principle had transformed the barbarism into a humanitarian society. For example: ‘Angulimala’ who transformed from barbarism into humanism with the influence of Buddha’s teaching. In the same spirit, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, ‘Basavanna’ had initiated a movement by mobilizing the mass irrespective of caste, community, and gender under the realm of ‘Anubhava Mantapa’ that offers the ‘Lingadarane’ for all people without discriminating on the basis of gender/caste in order to establish an equalitarian society. On the same path, in the middle of the twentieth century, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar had synthesized the above two great social reformers principles in bringing up equality and socio-economic upliftment of the downtrodden society in the form of constitutional rules and laws. In the later decades of twentieth-century post-independence India, B.Basavalingappa followed the same path with the amalgamation of principles and democratic social vision of the preceding great social leaders in the context of Kannada society. As well as, in the meantime, he emerged as a powerful Dalit political leader who established an ideological foundation for the Dalit movement after Ambedkar in the context of Karnataka politics. On the backdrop of the above details, where the politics is considered as nasty things at the present time, I would feel that it is worthwhile to remember such a great humanitarian person like him.

## Attempting to bring Dalits and Adivasis into the mainstream discourse (B.Basavalingappa at Assembly 14<sup>th</sup> April 1972)

**B.Basavalingappa:** Honorable Ms.Chairperson of the Assembly, the present problems of the country that confronting has been horrendous in nature since independence. The downtrodden people of this country are living without a proper shelter for centuries. I strongly condemned that the bifurcation of these communities by naming them

as 'Harijan' from the upper caste, and also I demand that we should not divide their area where they reside from the city in the name of 'Harijan' colonies. I have been witnessing from the past 25 years that these areas where untouchables lives are kept away from the cities and in order to get political power in the present politics, they were divided and called as 'Holey' and 'Madiga'. Hence, I believe that if we continue the programme of distributing houses for them and allowed them to mingle with the other upper caste people would be ideal progress.

Another subject I would like to bring into a discussion that, 'according to the government policy, here after there should not be any categorized area/wards such as 'Harijan's colony, Lingayat's colony, Okkaliga's colony, and Muslim's colony. Therefore, in order to establish a secular society, the government had decided to provide a house/sites at the same place for all the people irrespective of caste and religion. I mean to say that the distributing site/house will be on the basis of side by side between two different castes/ religion. Hence, I must emphasize that to eradicate the caste discrimination and inequalities, we will try our best effort in whatever ways that we can be achieved.' At this juncture, it is worth to remember that how in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Basavanna initiated a social movement by establishing the 'Anubhava Mantap' (an experienced pavilion) through this, Basavanna had invited the people mostly from the lower caste in order to bring back the social equality. Like that, in a similar line, B. Basavalingappa as an ardent follower of Basavanna's principles has dedicated his political life for bringing back the secular social system.

Continuing his speech in assembly, 'we have reserved Rs.50 crores for constructing houses under the scheme of 'Janathagraha Nirmana Yojane' (house policy for the people). It also had a programme that, whether there is a corporation or not, the claimed letter which we distribute for the people regarding their allotment of the site, will implement step by step. And we are already working according to the programme. Along with that, I have clearly mentioned and set a rule for the scheduled caste and tribes within the policy that in distributing sites, there should be a relaxation of six years of installment as well as there will be a provision, of loans for these castes. This historical achievement, mirror, up to his responsibility of being a Dalit leader.

When he was administered as housing minister, he always demanded that wherever the housing board wards are newly created, there should be an equal percentage of provisions for the scheduled caste and tribes. And according to that, effectively he implemented in his administration. Along with that, he introduced 6 years of the loan in 3% of interest. The people who utilized these benefits, still remembering him. This is how he instigates a self-respect life in Dalit community.

### **Abolition of Carrying Nightsoil System (B. Basavalingappa at Assembly 26<sup>th</sup> July 1972)**

**B. Basavalingappa:** Honorable chairman, the first order I passed soon after became a minister is that the increased of the salary, for the people who are working as sweepers in the corporation according to the Pay Commission.' Till today they were paid about 20-30 rupees for a month. Despite serving around 10-15 years they were kept as temporary employees in the corporation. So I have passed the order to appoint them as permanent workers in the corporation. The elitist administration had exploited them by paying a meager salary and sidelined their social existence. Due to this reason, these workers are living like unemployment people despite having work.

At this stage, I would like to bring your attention that so far we did not bring any programmes for the upliftment of their life as well as an equal space in the social life. But, on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1959, late. Sri. J.B. Panth at the roundtable meeting of the chief ministers of all states had expressed his disappointment with anger for not abolishing this inhuman works till date, and he urges to the chief minister of all states should stop this tradition with immediate action. But, we had passed 25 years of independence and celebrating a silver jubilee, on the occasion of this event, the Indian government had initiated certain programmes for eradicating these problems. One of the important programmes under this scheme is to abolish the tradition of carrying nightsail on the head. According to this recommendation, the government of Mysore has set a committee under the chairmanship of I.P.D. Salappa to study the conditions and life situation of the corporation workers.

I am not a person to take credits of anything without doing work. My sincere effort is that the inhuman evil tradition should abolish as early as possible, and I would say that it should end by August 1973. However, we should acknowledge that in the past 25 years, we did not put any effort to resolve the problems of the scavenging community. During the freedom movement, M.K. Gandhi also had worked on creating them a social space in the society. Therefore, at least now, let us honestly work for it so that the government of Mysore would be the first state taking this project with the interest of the people. Through this project, we can do a survey of which are the places are having a connection with underground sewerage as well as at the same time we can also connect the houses which are not having this underground connection. And also I have instructed the concerned officers to take legal action against people who are not taking this connection. I know, some people might unhappy with this order because they thought that it was their 'Karmapala' and they would say that let these people continue this tradition. The overall vision of this great leader was to create an equal society which treats a fellow being as equal to them. In order to achieve his vision, he implemented a number of policies and programmes. For example; he was the first minister who seriously considers

the scavenging work and orders to all municipalities to supply the essential equipment for them such as clothes, gloves and so on. This initiation remains as the historical steps towards creating a secular society.

I would like to place him in the pan Indian Dalits context, B.Basvalingappa was one of the great leaders in the later decades of the twentieth century. At the time of his stubbornly demands in assembly for the abolition of scavenging tradition had initiated a vibrant debate in the parliament. The debates went to the extension to take up these issues in the court and interestingly, one of the central ministers from the Indira Gandhi government had come to Karnataka and approached atleast for a few hours of scavenging work. However, the opposition had raised in the parliament as well as in the assembly, Basavalingappa politely refused their demands and did achieve what he wants to do for his people. This is one important historical event that happened in our time had exhibited the stability and dedication of his life for the community. As ex-central and state minister V.Srinivas Prasad acknowledge that ‘the credit of abolishing the tradition of carrying night soil on the head should go to Basavalingappa’

#### **Demanding land for the untouchables (B.Basavalingappa at the assembly on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1979)**

**B.Basavalingappa:** Honorable chairman, specifically I would like to talk regarding the land sanctioning programme that set a rule in 1969 and implemented in 1970. According to that regulation, we are investigating the process that who was the administrators involved in this process and in what regulation they had followed in implementing the programmes since it introduced. The statistics that are available at present clearly indicate that the administrators who were worked under this scheme did not follow the regulation according to the policy. And they did not implement the 50% of the land for Dalits and Adivasis. So for approximately around 46,000 hectares of land had sanctioned to the Mysore district. Among it, around 5,378 hectares of land had sanctioned to Dalits and Adivasis, suppose I want to bring your notice that, while sanctioning land records we were kept in mind the police of ‘Bagar Hukum’ (land to the Tiller) and registered the land records to their name of respective place that was cultivating it for years. Under this policy, so far we sanctioned around 46,000 hectares of land in 1978. However, the policy did not achieve as it expected due to the dominance of some powerful and rich feudal forces in some places. Therefore, the government should initiate an alternative programme in bringing the policy into action. As well, the government is very keen on taking a decision regarding the land that which land can sanction for whom? Through these regulations, B.Basavalingappa somehow had transformed Dalits into landownership.

#### **No Provisions for Dalits to sell their Land (B.Basavalingappa at the Assembly on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1978)**

With all pride, ‘we brought the land distribution policy in order to improve the lifestyle of tillers of the land. We don’t have the rules for the tiller who cultivates for two years can sell their land. But for the Dalits, once they got the land from the government, there is no provision to sell that land to someone. The motto behind it is that the dominant upper caste people can easily manipulate Dalits and again they might become landless people. So for that, the government wants atleast for 15 years they should enjoy the benefits this policy and after a point of time once Dalit community becomes educated at the minimal level we could bring an amendment for this policy according to the opinions of the honorable members. As well, we clearly state that other backward community also should enjoy the benefits of this policy at least for 15 years. The sad reality of the present situation of Dalit is that they had sold their land by cheating politics in hands of upper caste and now they became landless agricultural labourers. Through these political activities, he tried his best in establishing economic stability as well as some amount of social status for the Dalits in Karnataka.

#### **Caution against using a term called ‘Harijan.’ (B Basavalingappa at the Assembly on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1985)**

**B.Basavalingappa:** I have listened to respected Patel’s speech as well as other dignitary members in the assembly. I had thought that not to talk but the speech which the respected members had delivered on the debates is conveyed that the people who drink alcohol are branded them as ‘Harijan’ as well these members/upper caste people using this term called ‘Harijana’ whenever they feel to address in a negative sense. The very terms itself has a negative connotation that inferior in nature. Therefore, no one should not use this term while addressing Dalits. This incident indicates that the true nature of Ambedkarite in B.Basavalingappa. A little explanation required at this juncture. The ideological motto behind in this demand that the term ‘Harijan’ which was coined and popularised by M.K.Gandhi has Hinduise graded hierarchy in nature as well it doesn’t have the political instinct rather; it impacts on the Dalits to accept the inferiority of their caste in the dominant society. In contrast, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar derived a term called ‘Dalit’ in order to mobilize as well as politicize the Dalit identity.

#### **B.Basavalingappa is above the caste. (J.H.Patel at the assembly on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1979)**

I do not consider respected Basavalingappa belongs to any particular caste. The creative thinker like him is fortunate to born in any caste. He does not have the caste in a way of his political carrier. Therefore, I would like to appreciate and congratulate him for being a secular politician in the assembly.

### **Demands for prohibiting liquor shop at the Dalit colony (Basavalingappa at the assembly on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1972)**

**B.Basavalingappa:** Honorable chairman, we have a decision that is no one should not entertain Dalits to drink alcohol and we are standing by this decision. As well, we don't have any objection of drinking for people who are from the rich and feudal background, you are most welcome to impose a tax on them and entertain to drink. But the cunning reality that you are doing by reducing the price of alcohol into Rs.5, Rs.6 and Rs10 and influencing Dalits to drink alcohol and ruining their entire family. This unethical practice should not be done by the government. What is the reason behind in it that the government itself is indirectly forcing to open/start a wine shop at the Dalit colony? We have been asking this question in the assembly as well as we have agreed with the suggestion of the chief minister that he says it should not happen hereafter in the Dalit colony. I demand that the government should initiate a board for the elimination of alcohol drinking. As well I to urge this government, should utilize money Rs.10 lakh which is reserved for Dalits in this budget in a fruitful manner such as opening some good shops other than the wine shops and help them overcome of poverty. Drinking habits played a prominent role in running the family of illiterate Dalits. Therefore Basavalingappa sensitizes it and had started a new orientation that if Dalit gives up the habit of drinking they would transform into respectable social life.

### **The emphasis for English Education (B.Basavalingappa at the assembly on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1987)**

**B.Basavalingappa:** Respected chairman, English become a world language, if our children did not learn the language, they would have to be sent for cowgrazing. Therefore, the government should change its attitude towards the language and let the government announce that everyone should learn English. In contrast, I would say that it's an idiotic mind that forced to study only Kannada as their language in the school. Respected chairman, according to the government order no E.D.28, M.H.S.83 date 13-03-1986, 'Kittooru Rani, Channama' residential school for girls regulation had instructed that along with Kannada English should be used as a medium of teaching at Dr.B.R.Ambedkar scheduled caste and tribe talented residential school for girls had sanctioned and strictly instructed to follow as in the Kittooru Rani Channamma' school's teaching medium. His political vision regarding the English language was that he understood the history which denied the education, property and wealth for the downtrodden people for centuries, therefore, in order to get all these privileges he sense that English education is the key to understand the discrimination of society and it helps them to overcome all these hurdles in the present society.

### **Why don't establish a Buddhist university? (Basavalingappa at the assembly on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1986)**

**B. Basavalingappa:** Respected Chairman, why don't we start a Buddhist University? Already we had sent out Buddhism from India. Why don't we bring back the native religion? Therefore, I request you on this occasion to start a new Buddhist university. The reason that makes this statement is, we don't want any forms of discrimination on the basis of caste, gender, and religion, we wanted to see the things in unity. Therefore, I would say that there should not be a monolithic religion like Hindu, Muslim or Buddhism as well Jainist; rather we should feel that we all belong to this country as well we should safeguard our ancient democratic tradition which is very much visible in Buddhism. The point that I am trying make is if we want to create a sense nationalism there must be an equal priority for all the religion of this country. Hence, I don't know whether you all agree with my vision or not?

As we all knew that Basavanna had initiated a new sect/religion in order to bring back the social equality. Despite having abundance supports for that new sect, due to some people who always oppose the equal democratic casteless society had infiltrated in the minds of ordinary people to revolt against such great social reformers and provoked them to kill him in this society. Therefore, I would say this society is completely controlled by some dominant hands. Hence, I strongly urge this session that we should do something to repair this hegemonic dominance in order to tribute the people who sacrificed their lives for the sake of establishing anequal society.

I don't believe in caste, as well I don't want to reveal my caste, even I don't know others which caste they belong, and I never give the priority for the caste. Overall I wanted to consider as a human being, then how do we create such an ideal society? Therefore, I personally feel that we should release ourselves on the clutches of 'Purohit's hands. As Basavanna rightly said 'for the sake of money, they worship, for the sake of gifts they deceived people, see the hedonistic life who wears the wealth of people', the literal meaning of these words, the Purohit group has been deceiving people by claiming false god. However, how do we safeguard society form these falsifying construction? Because our country has multiple religions such as Jains, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian and so on. On the other hand, there are theist and atheist. Therefore, Basvalingappa had felt that poverty is not the only things that hampering the Dalits, on the other hand, the graded caste structure had forced Dalits to live in a submissive condition.

In order to rescue from the cultus of above-mentioned dominance, Basavalinga had dreamt that to start a school and transformed it into a Buddhist center. Meanwhile, during the colonial time, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar was served as a judicial adviser for the king of Mysore with the help of that close intimacy, Ambedkar requested the king of Mysore to sanction piece of land in Bangalore. With the result of this request in 1955, the king of Mysore Sri.Jayachamaraja wodeyar had sanctioned 5 acres of land to establish the Buddhist center at the Sadasivanagar, Bangalore in Karnataka.

But after the demise of Ambedkar, that land left alone without prior leadership. With regard to this in 1964 Basavalingappa was appointed as trustee for the 'People Education Society' which was established by Ambedkar in Bombay. Later in 1984, Basavalingappa started 'Nagasena education trust' and named as 'Budha Bhumi' (the land of Buddha). In order to accomplish the dream of Ambedkar, Basavalingappa and K.H.Ranganath had traveled across the state for spreading the dhamma to the people. With all their effort, today there is a Buddha Vihara Bangalore which has meditation hall, library and an international level of a training center for the Buddhist monks. Like Ambedkar, Basavalingappa also had the vision of mobilizing people across the state and bringing them towards Buddhism. But unfortunately, his untimely death in 26-12-1992 had left the dream as a dream till date.

## 2. CONCLUSION:

Ambedkar understood the Hindu religion as the cradle of inequality. Therefore, he revolted against its hegemonic dominance, and he formulates the ideological constructions that education is the root of the progress and he emphasizes social freedom than the national freedom. on the same line, the true Ambedkarite B.Basavalingappa had attempted his best effort to bring back the social quality like Ambedkar. Therefore, I would conclude this corpus by saying that Buddhism can be an alternative religion in order to bring back the social equality in the present time. Hence, it is worthful to remember such great people in the dilemma of present politics.

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