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The Vachanas

The *Vachanas*, a large number of which were composed at Basavakalyan (ancient Kalyana) in the Bidar district in the twelfth century, are a unique treasure of world literature (see Chapters II, III and XV). A few of them are cited here.

Basaveshvara attached highest importance to honest and diligent work and to dignity of labour. Every one must earn one's livelihood by upright means and should not be a parasite on others. He declared that work was worship (*Kayakave Kailasa*). He denounced the caste system and its inequalities. These two are among the many significant aspects of his teachings. Said he :

ಮರ್ತ್ಯ ಲೋಕವೆಂಬುದು
ಕರ್ತಾರನ ಕಮ್ಮಟವಯ್ಯಾ !
ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಸಲ್ಲುವರು,
ಅಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಸಲ್ಲುವರಯ್ಯಾ !
ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಸಲ್ಲದವರು
ಅಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಸಲ್ಲರಯ್ಯಾ,
ಕೂಡಲ ಸಂಗಮದೇವಾ.

(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 42, ಪುಟ 21)

(" ಬಸವೇಶ್ವರನ ವಚನಗಳು "

ಸಂ : ಫ. ಗು. ಪಳಕಟ್ಟಿ, ಬಿಜಾಪುರ, 1980)

ದೇವಲೋಕ ಮರ್ತ್ಯಲೋಕವೆಂಬುದು
ಬೇರಿಲ್ಲ ಕಾಣಫೋಕ.
ಸತ್ಯವ ನುಡಿವುದೇ ದೇವಲೋಕ,
ಮಿಥ್ಯವ ನುಡಿವುದೇ ಮರ್ತ್ಯಲೋಕ.
ಆಚಾರವೇ ಸ್ವರ್ಗ,
ಅನಾಚಾರವೇ ನರಕ.
ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ನೀವೇ ಪ್ರಮಾಣ
ಕೂಡಲ ಸಂಗಮ ದೇವಾ.

(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 846, ಪುಟ 109)

(" ವಚನ ಧರ್ಮಸಾರ "

ಎಂ. ಆರ್. ಶ್ರೀನಿವಾಸಮೂರ್ತಿ, ಮೈಸೂರು
ವಿಕ್ರಮವಿಜಯ, ಮೈಸೂರು, 1948)

This mortal world is
but the Maker's mint ;

Those who earn merit here,
earn also there,
And those who earn not here,
earn neither there,

Oh! Kudala Sangama Lord.

(Source : " *Shrikanthika* ",
S. Srikantha Sastri Felicitation Volume,
an article therein by H. Thipperudra-
swamy, Mysore, 1973, p. 284).

Behold! between the worlds
Of mortals and of gods
There is no difference!
To speak the truth is
world of gods;
To speak untruth, the
mortal world.

Good works is Heaven,
Bad works is Hell -
And you can witness it,
O Lord Kudala Sangama!

(Source : " *Vachanas of Basavanna* ",
translated by Armando Menezes and
Angadi, S. M. and edited by
Devesarappa, H.Sirigere, 1967, p. 78).

ಕೃಷಿಕ್ಯುತ್ಯ ಕಾಯಕದಿಂದಾದದೇನು ?
 ತನು ಮನ ಬಳಲಿಸಿ ತಂದು ದಾಸೋಪವ
 ಮಾಡುವ
 ಪರಮ ಸದ್ಭಕ್ತನ ಪಾದವ ತೋರಯ್ಯ ಎನಗೆ.
 ಅದೆಂತೆನೆ : ಆತನ ತನು ಶುದ್ಧ, ಆತನ ಮನ
 ಶುದ್ಧ,
 ಆತನ ನಡೆ ಶುದ್ಧ. ನುಡಿಯೆಲ್ಲ ಪಾವನವು !
 ಆತನಿಗೆ ಉಪದೇಶವ ಮಾಡಿದಾತನೆ ಪರಮ
 ಸದ್ಗುರು.
 ಅಂತವು ಸದ್ಭಕ್ತನ ಮನೆಯು ಕೈಲಾಸವೆಂದು
 ಹೊಕ್ಕು
 ಲಿಂಗಾರ್ಚನೆಯ ಮಾಡುವ ಜಂಗಮವೇ
 ಜಗತ್ಪಾವನ.
 ಇಂತವುಗಳ ನೊಡನೆ ನೆರೆನಂಬಿ 'ನಮೋನಮಃ'
 ಎಂದೆನೆಯ್ಯಾ
 ಕೂಡಲ ಸಂಗಮದೇವಾ.
 (ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 181, ಪುಟ 63)

("ಶ್ರೀ ಬಸವಣ್ಣನವರ ವಚನ ಸಂಗ್ರಹ,"
 ಸಂ : ಸ. ಸ. ಮಾಳವಾಡೆ,
 ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿ, ಹೊಸ ದೆಹಲಿ, 1969).
 (ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 35, ಪುಟ 191-192)
 ("ವಚನ ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ ಸಂಗ್ರಹ",
 ಸಂ : ಸಂ. ಶಿ. ಭೂಸನೋರಮಠ,
 ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ, ವಿದ್ಯಾ ಅಲಾಪಿ,
 ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು, 1968).

ನೆಲಹೊಂದ ಹೊಲಗೇರಿ—ಶಿವಾಲಯಕ್ಕೆ.
 ಜಲವೊಂದೆ ತೌಚಾಚಮನಕ್ಕೆ.
 ಕುಲವೊಂದೆ ತನ್ನ ಕಾನರಿದವಿಗೆ.
 ಭಲವೊಂದೆ ಪಡಂದರುತ್ತನ ಮುಕ್ತಿಗೆ.
 ನಿಲವೊಂದೆ. ಕೂಡಲ ಸಂಗಮ ದೇವನಿ,
 ನಿಮ್ಮ ನರಿದವಿಗೆ.
 (ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 378, ಪುಟ 360)

*Work on the soil, toil hard with
 your limits — consecrate to the
 Lord
 the food that you thus earn
 and share it with others.
 Show me O Lord, the feet of such
 a devotee as this—His body
 is pure, his mind is pure, his
 conduct is pure, the words that
 he speaks are holy.
 That teacher is great who
 has such a one as his
 disciple. His home is the
 veritable
 Kailasa. Enter ye into this and
 worship the Lord. I bow to such
 devotees. I place my
 trust in them—O Kudala Sangama.

(Source : Sri Basaveshvara Com-
 memoration Volume, edited by Wodeyar,
 S. S. and others, Bangalore, 1967;
 Article by the late Yamunacharya, M.,
 therein-pp. 73-74).

(N.B.—Some texts attribute this
 vachana to Channabasavanna also).

On the same earth stands
 the outcaste's hovel
 and the deity's temple!
 Whether for ritual or for rinsing
 isn't the water, same?
 To one who knows himself,
 all castes coalesce as one,
 even as salvation's six-fold path
 leads but to the same end.
 He that knows THEE verily
 knows THEE but as ONE—
 My Lord Kudala Sangama.

ನೆಟ್ಟಿಯೆಂಬೆನೆ ಸಿರಿಯಾಳನ ?
 ಮಡಿವಾಳನೆಂಬೆನೆ ಮಾಚಯ್ಯನ ?
 ಡೋಹರನೆಂಬೆನೆ ಕಕ್ಕಯ್ಯನ ?
 ಮಾದಾರನೆಂಬೆನೆ ಚನ್ನಯ್ಯನ ?
 ಆನು ಹಾರುವನೆಂದೆಡೆ ಕೂಡಲ ಸಂಗಯ್ಯ
 ನಗುವನಯ್ಯಾ.
 (ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 344, ಪುಟ 136)

ಕಾಸಿ ಕಮ್ಮಾರನಾದ, ಬೀಸಿ ಮಡಿವಾಳನಾದ ;
 ಹಾಸನಕ್ಕೆ ಸಾಲಿಗನಾದ ; ವೇದವನೋದಿ
 ಹಾರುವನಾದ.
 ಕರ್ಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಜನಿಸಿದವರುಂಟೆ ಜಗದೊಳಗೆ ?
 ಇದು ಕಾರಣ ಕೂಡಲ ಸಂಗಮ ದೇವಾ,
 ಲಿಂಗಸ್ಥಲವನರಿದವನೆ ಕುಲಜನು !
 (ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 589, ಪುಟ 287)

("ಬಸವಣ್ಣನವರ ವಚನಗಳು",
 ಸಂ : ಆರ್. ಸಿ. ಹಿರೇಮಠ,
 ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾನಿಲಯ,
 ಧಾರವಾಡೆ, 1968)

ವ್ಯಾಸ ಬೋಯಂತಿಯ ಮಗ
 ಮಾರ್ಕಂಡೇಯ ಮಹತಂಗಿಯ ಮಗ
 ಕುಲವನರಸದಿರಿಂಭೋ ಕುಲದಿಂದ
 ಮುನ್ನೇನಾದಿರಿಂಭೋ ?
 ಸಾಕ್ಷಾತ್ ಅಗತ್ಯ ಕದ್ದಿಲ
 ದುರ್ಮಾಸ ಮುಟ್ಟಿಗ ಕಟ್ಟಪ ಕಮ್ಮಾರ
 ಕೊಂಡಲ್ಮನೆಂಬ ಕುಪಿ ಮೂರು ಭುವನವರಿಯೆ
 ನಾವಿದ ಕಾಣೆಂಭೋ !
 ನಮ್ಮ ಕೂಡಲ ಸಂಗನ ವಚನವಿಂತೆಂದುದು

How in contumely call
 Siriyala, a huckster ;
 or Machayya, a washerman ?
 How deride and designate
 Kakkayya as cobbler,
 Chennayya as outcaste,
 and boast myself a Brahmin ?
 Wouldn't I a laughing stock be,
 with demeanour, so ludicrous
 'fore my lord Kudala Sangama ?

The blacksmith in his smithy
 smelting,
 The washerman washing clothes
 beating,
 The weaver at his loom, labouring,
 The Brahmin at his Vedas,
 engaging.
 All that's born unexcepting
 claim not the ear for begetting.
 None, but he to high-born
 conforms,
 who the Divine intimation
 informs,
 Lord Kudala Sangama.

(Source : Sri Basaveshvara Com-
 memoration Volume, edited by Wodeyar,
 S. S. and others, Bangalore, 1967,
 Article by T. N. Mallappa, therein
 pp. 94-95)

Was not Vyasa, a fisherwoman's
 son ?
 and Markandeya of an out-
 caste ?
 Oh ! Vain then to caste cling
 as no one can tell
 how your origins spring !
 Your own Agastya was a fowler,
 Durvasa, a cobbler
 and Kasyapa, a blacksmith !
 And mark this :—
 The sage Kaundinya was a
 barber—

ಶ್ವಪಚೋಪಿಯಾದರೇನು ಶಿವಭಕ್ತನೇ
ಕುಲಜನು.

(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 108, ಪುಟ 67)

("ಬಸವ ವಚನ ಸುಧಾ",
ಸಂ : ಮಾತೆ ಮಹಾದೇವಿ,
ಧಾರವಾಡ, 1972)

So the three worlds avow!
Low birth then as the world
would deem
is not the same in the Lord's
esteem!
True Shiva Bhakta is the one
HE'd name
for the well-born title's rightful
claim!

Lord Kudala Sangama.
(Vachana No. 90, p. 65).

(Source : "Thus Spake Basava",
English renderings of Basava's Vachana,
by Sunderaraja Theodore and Devendra-
kumar Hakari, Bangalore, 1965).

* * *

* * *

Allama Prabhu, a profound mystic, who has been compared to Socrates, had much spiritual influence on Basavanna and other *Sharanas*. Here are three of his *Vachanas* :

ಕಾಯದ ಮೊದಲಿಗೆ ಬೀಜವಾವುದೆಂದರಿ
ಯದೀಲೋಕ.

ಇಂದ್ರಿಯಂಗಳು ಬೀಜವಲ್ಲ, ಆಕಳಾಭೇದವಲ್ಲ
ಸ್ವಪ್ನ ಬಂದಿರಿಗಿತ್ತಲ್ಲಾ !

ಇದಾವಂಗೂ ಶುದ್ಧ ಸುಯಿಧಾನವಲ್ಲ, ಕಾಣ
ಗುಹೇಶ್ವರಾ.

(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 12, ಪುಟ 10)

The whole world knows not
what seed was there before
the body was
The senses are not the seed,
Nay, not the elements one by
one.

Delusions of Dream
Have swooped upon us.
Verify, because
No one understands,
There's no real peace,
O Guheshvara.

ಹೆಳ್ಳುಬೋಳಗೊಂದಂ ಪುಳ್ಳು ಬರುತ್ತಿರಲು,
ನೋರೆತೆರೆಗಳು ತಾಗಿರುವಲ್ಲಾ !

ಸಂಸಾರವೆಂಬ ಸಾಗರದೊಳಗೆ
ಸುವಿದುಃಖಗಳು ತಾಗಿರುವಲ್ಲಾ !

ಇದಕ್ಕಿದು ಮೂರ್ತಿಯಾದ ಕಾರಣ
ಪ್ರಳಯವಾಯಿತ್ತು, ಗುಹೇಶ್ವರಾ.

(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 47, ಪುಟ 22)

The froth and foam of a flowing
stream
Must touch the floating
drift-wood.
The pain and pleasure of the
World's ocean
Must touch the creatures that
sink or swim.
How can he that has taken a
form

Not perish, O Guheshvara ?

ಆಯುತ್ಸೆ ಉದಯವಾನ, ಪೋಯುತ್ಸೆ
ಅಸ್ತಮಾನ.

ಅಳಿದುವಲ್ಲಾ ನೀರಲಾದ ನಿರ್ಮಿತಂಗಳೆಲ್ಲವೂ !
ಕತ್ತಲೆ ಕವಿಯಿತ್ತು ಮೂರು ಲೋಕದೊಳಗೆ ;
ಇದರಚ್ಚು ಗವೇನು ಹೇಳಾ ಗುಹೇಶ್ವರಾ ?

(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 41, ಪುಟ 20)

ನಿಜವನರಿದ ನಿಶ್ಚಿಂತನೆ,
ಮರಣವ ಗೆಲಿದ ಮಹಂತನೆ,
ಘನವ ಕಂಡ ಮಹಿಮಾನೆ,
ಪರವನೊಳಕೊಂಡ ಪರಿಣಾಮಿಯೆ,
ಬಯಲಲೊಡಗಿದ ಭೂತನೆ,
ಗುಹೇಶ್ವರಲಿಂಗ ನಿರಾಲವನೊಳಕೊಂಡ

ಸಹಜವೆ!

(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 637, ಪುಟ 228)

("ಅಲ್ಲಮ ಪ್ರಭುದೇವರ ವಚನಗಳು",
ಸಂ : ಆರ್. ಸಿ. ಹಿರೇಮಠ ಮತ್ತು
ಎಂ. ಎಸ್. ಸುಂಕಾಪುರ,
ಧಾರವಾಡ, 1976)

* * * * *

Channabasavanna was hailed as Shatsthala-Chakravarti because of his marvellous mastery of philosophy of six-fold path of salvation. In the following *Vachanas*, he relates the attributes of a *Sharana* :

ಸಂಗವಿಡಿದಂತೆ ಸಂಗವಿಡಿದು ನೋಡದಿರಯ್ಯಾ;
ಶರಣ ಸಂಗ ಸೂತಕಿಯಲ್ಲ ನೋಡಯ್ಯಾ.
ಲಿಂಗಪರೀಕ್ಷಿತನು ಸಂಗವಂತನೆಂದೆನ್ನ ವಿರಯ್ಯಾ.
ಶರಣ ಮನೆ ಬಂದಂತೆ ಮಾಡುವ.
ಅರಸಿ ಸಕಲಾಗಮಾಚಾರ್ಯನಪ್ಪ ನೋಡಯ್ಯಾ.
ಅಹಂವಾಗದೆಯುಂದಿಲ್ಲ ನೋಡಯ್ಯಾ.
ಕೊಡಲ ಚನ್ನಸಂಗಾ, ನಿಮ್ಮ ಶರಣ ಸಂಗಿಯಲ್ಲ.
ನಿನ್ನಂಗಿಯಲ್ಲ.

(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 1268, ಪುಟ 570)

Sunrise and sunset are our
coming and going
We perish, alas! being made
all of water!

Darkness has shrouded the
three worlds.
Tell us, O Guheshvara, what
means this riddle!

He who, having known Reality,
The Hero, Vanquisher of Death;
The Glorious, embodiment of
the Most High,

The Blessed, who has attained
the Bliss;
The Perfect, who inhabits the
Void;

The Incarnation, self-begot,
Who has attained the perfect
poise Guheshvara.

(Source : "Shoonya Sampadana",
Vol. I, pp. 62, 63, and 118, edited by
Bhoosurmath, S. S. and Armando
Menezes, Karnatak University,
Dharwad, 1965).

If attachment is what he has,
Look not, dear Sir,
As if attachment it were.
Free from attachment's taint
Is a sharana Call him not
An attached one, because he is
Intimate with the Linga, Sir!
A sharana may well do
whatever his mind dictates!
His questing over, he is now
A Master of all scriptural lore!
There's nothing like: he can or
cannot do.

O Kudala Channasanga,
There's neither attachment nor
detachment for
thy sharana Basavanna!

ಅನೇಬುದಿಲ್ಲವಯ್ಯಾ ಲಿಂಗವೆಂಬಮಹಾಂತಂಗೇ;
ಅಳಿಯನುಳಿಯ ನೋಡಾ!
ವಿಂಚಿನ ಗೊಂಚಲಂತೆ ಮುಂದೆ ರೂಪಾಗಿ
ತೋರುತಿಪ್ಪನು.
ಶರಣ ನೋಡಲುಗೊಂಡಡೆ ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯನೇ ?
ಪ್ರಕೃತಿ ಗುಣ ಭನ್ನಭಾವಿಯಲ್ಲ.
ಕೂಡಲ ಚನ್ನ ಸಂಗಾ.
ನಿಮ್ಮ ಶರಣ ಬಸವಣ್ಣನ ಪರಿಚೇರೆ.
(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 1268, ಪುಟ 609)

(* ಪಟಿಸ್ಥಲ ಚಕ್ರವರ್ತಿ ಚನ್ನಬಸವಣ್ಣನವರ
ವಚನಗಳು *.
ಸಂ : ಆರ್. ಸಿ. ಹಿರೇಮಠ
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾನಿಲಯ,
ಧಾರವಾಡ, 1965).

There is no sense of 'I'
In the great One who is
But Linga: behold,
He neither lives nor dies!
It takes a form and shows
Behind him, like a lightning
cluster!
Is a sharana common, just because
He has put on the flesh?
He is not one to feel
The difference that pertains
To Nature's attributes.
O Kudala Channasanga,
uncommon is the way
Of Thy sharana Basavanna!
(Source : "Shoonya Sampadane,"
Volume III, pp. 68 and 69, edited by
Bhoonurmah, S. S. and Armando
Menezes, Karnatak University,
Dharwad, 1969).

Mahadeviyakka (Akka Mahadevi) was a unique figure among
the *Sharanas*. Divine love had filled her entire being. Her *Vachanas*
are distinguished by a radiant beauty of their own. Two of them are
given here :

ಆರೂ ಇಲ್ಲದವಳೆಂದು ಆಳಿಗೊಳಲು ಬೇಡ
ಕಂಡಯ್ಯ.
ಏನು ಮಾಡಿದಡೆಯೂ ನಾನಂಜುವಳ್ಳೆ.
ತರಗಲೆಯ ಮೆಲ್ಲಿದ್ದು ನಾನಿಹೆನು; ಸುರಗಿಯ
ಮೇಲೊರಗಿ ನಾನಿಹೆನು
ಚೆನ್ನವೊಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನಯ್ಯ ಕರಕೆಡೆ ನೋಡೀ
ದೊಡೆ.
ಒಡಲನು ಪ್ರಾಣವನು ನಿಮಗೊಪ್ಪಿಸಿ ಶುದ್ಧ
ಳಹೆನು.
(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 36, ಪುಟ 335-336)

I'm no helpless woman;
I utter no futile threats;
I'm nothing daunted—
I fear you not:
I shall dare hunger and pain;
I shall steal out of withered
leaves
a wholesome meal,
and on pointed swords
shall make my bed;
I'm ready for your sake
to dare the worst,
to die this instant;
the readiness is all,
O my Chennamallikarjuna!
(Source : "Musings of Basava,"
a free rendering into English by
Basavanal, S.S. and Srinivasa Iyengar,
K. R., Mangalore, 1940).

ಎಲ್ಲ ಎಲ್ಲವನರಿದು ಫಲವೇನಯ್ಯ.
ತನ್ನ ತಾನರಿಯಬೇಕಲ್ಲದೆ ?
ತನ್ನಲ್ಲಿ ಅರಿವು ಸ್ವಯವಾಗಿರಲು, ಅನ್ಯರ
ಕೇಳಲುಂಟೇ ?
ಚೆನ್ನ ಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನ, ನೀ ಅರಿವಾಗಿ ಮುಂದು
ದೋರಿದ ಕಾರಣ
ನಿಮ್ಮಿಂದಲರಿದೆನಯ್ಯ ಪ್ರಭುವೇ.
(ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 43, ಪುಟ 88)
("ವಚನ ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ ಸಂಗ್ರಹ",
ಸಂ: ಸಂ.ಶಿ. ಭೂಸನೂರಮಠ,
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ, ವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ,
ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು, 1965).

What profit is it to know
All that there is, unless one knows
one self? When consciousness
becomes
One's own possession in oneself,
What need to learn from other
lips?
As you, O Chennamallikarjuna,
Appeared to me as Consciousness
yourself,
Through you I knew yourself,
O Prabhu!
(Source : "Shoonya Sampadane,"
Vol. IV, p. 273, edited by Bhoonurmah,
S. S. and Armando Menezes, Karnatak
University, Dharwad, 1970).

