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Rethinking Anna Bhau Sathe: A Social Reformist and Voice of Dalit Anguish

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Abstract :

Dalit literature has been come forward as a dispute against inequality and suppression of the down trodden by the upper class it was truly inspired by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and subsequent to him numerous Dalit writers portrayed the miserable life of Dalits so closely and proficiently as to figure out social interest and prefer customs of freedom for these people. Through his writing Anna Bhau Sathe lift up a voice for the rights of Dalit so he wrote about the anguish, agonies, sufferings and exploitation of Dalit. He gives the wake up call to Dalit community by portraying different Dalit characters throughout his supreme writing. His almost all characters faces the problem of torture, sufferings struggle for bread and butter as was the once a major problem available in the society. Thus, Anna Bhau Sathe wrote about all these worst experiences in his literary writing as Dalit anguish.

Keywords : Dalit, Dalit Voices, Exploitation, Discrimination, Caste Struggle and Humanism.

Introduction :

Dalit literature is a literature written by exploited people about their own lives. It considered as a social and literary phenomenon which talks about defeats and victories of suppressed. This literature emerged in the 1960s in Marathi. Regarding to Dalit literature Gail Omvedt, in her book Dalit Literature of Maharashtra wrote as, "Annabhau Sathe used all the forms of art and that was the beauty of his writings and if as movement Dalit literature emerged during the era of 1960-70 it was because of Annabhau Sathe." (<https://velivada.com>) She further said, "He was truly the founder of Dalit literature." (Ibid) Anna Bhau Sathe, without any formal education, becomes one of the leading literary figures in Dalit literature in Maharashtra. He was a self-educated swam deep into the ocean of literature to bring out many literary unique diamonds.

It is hard to classify his stories in any beliefs as they have worldwide humanistic flavor. He wrote more than thirty five novels and ten collections of short stories. In addition to short stories and novels, "he also wrote a travelogue on Russia, 10 ballads, 12 screenplays, and a play in the Marathi language." (<https://www.celebrityborn.com>)

Objectives :

To study Anna Bhau Sathe as a Dalit writer and real reformist

To study the voice of anguish

To study Dalit agonies and their voices represented in Anna Bhau Sathe's work.

Research Methodology :

This present research contains the collection of primary and secondary data, which has been collected from books, journals, other e-resources. The researcher has used a thematic, interpretative and evaluative method to assess Anna Bhau Sathe as a Dalit writer and real reformist

Anna Bhau Sathe and Dalit Literature :

Anna Bhau Sathe was born on 1st August 1920 in Wategao, Sangli district (currently a part of Satara district) of Maharashtra. Regarding the story of Anna Bhau Sathe's birth, Shankar Bhau Sathe wrote in his book My Brother: Anna Bhau Sathe, "When Anna Bhau was born in Vategaon; on the other side Fakira robbed Belgaum treasure. On the way of Vategaon, Fakira came to his sister's house. It was night when Fakira shouted, Valubai! Is there anyone in the house? Fakira's voice heard by an old lady and said, who? Bhau is not in the house. Fakira recognized her voice and began to say, Hey you, Akka ...! What are you doing here? And where did Walubai goes? The old woman said, Fakira..! Valubai is having a baby boy! Being heard the news of newly born baby...he becomes very happy and gave her some Turki rupees for caring newly born baby and mother." (Landage, 2020 p. 9) It is said that Anna Bhau took his first



Bal Ghutti (first lesion) from the British treasury, which is why the characters expressed in his literature is rebellious and straightforward. As he was born in Dalit community, he knows very well aware about Dalit sufferings and their problems. Anna Bhau Sathe walked several hundred kilometers from Wategaon to Bombay with his father in search of bread. At the age of eleven, Anna Bhau arrived in Mumbai where he worked as, "a porter and did the dishes in hotels. He became a waiter and a domestic help and the keeper of the dogs of a rich man. He also went from door to door selling goods. He shined shoes." (Kashyap, 2019) In order to live in the vast metropolitan city there he worked all kinds' odd jobs. In the journey of Wategao to Mumbai Sathe family and Anna Bhau received painful experiences as well as noble experiences too. At the same time Anna Bhau has closely observed two movements in Mumbai. One is Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's anti-caste movement and other one is the movement of communist. Regarding to this Yogesh Maitreya wrote in his article The sound and fury of Anna Bhau Sathe's words: An icon of Maharashtra's Dalit literature that, "This was a time when (then) Bombay had a robust social, political and cultural life. This was also the time when Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar launched his anti-caste movement and gave voice to the struggles of millions of 'untouchables'. This was also the time when the Communist movement in Bombay - led by Brahmins - came into prominence." (Maitreya, 2017, Online).

As came in contact with communist leader Comrade Shripad Amrut Dange and Comrade Randive, Anna Bhau Sathe becomes the lifetime member of CPI. As a result of this, Anna Bhau understood that there was a conflict between Labour Party of India which is founded by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Communist Party of India. Being as a communist Anna Bhau works a lot for workers and to make awareness among the labors. Once, he inaugurated the First Dalit Sahitya Sammelan (First Dalit Literary Conference) held on 1958 in

Mumbai. In the inaugural speech, Anna Bhau Sathe proclaimed "The Earth is not being protected on the divine hood of Cobra but palms of workers, labourers and depressed masses" (Suryavanshi, Online) Emphasizing the importance of Dalit and working class people in global structures unlike most Dalit writers of the period. His work was influenced by Marxism rather than Budhism. He said that Dalit writers are entailed with the responsibility of liberating and shielding Dalits from the existing worldly and Hindu tortures as the long standing conventional beliefs can be destroyed instantly. Therefore, Anna Bahu Sathe has become an icon to Dalits, and especially the Mang community.

Voice of Dalit Anguish: A Study :

Anna Bhau Sathe's has valuably contributed towards social revolution. He took part in the labour movement. In 1944, he has founded Lal Bavata Kala Pathak with the help of Shahir Amar Shaikh, D.N. Gavahankar. At that time Tamasha was used as a weapon of awareness. "Annabhau used Lal Bavta to bring the struggles of the labourers to the audience and to make them aware of the importance of freedom. His popularity grew by leaps and bounds. He reached out to the remotest of the villages of Maharashtra with the troupe. He urged the people to be ready for freedom and to fight for their rights. People started addressing him as Shahir Annabhau Sathe and Lok Shahir." (Kashyap, Online) He had active participation in the movement for a united Maharashtra, contributed through his socially relevant writings; writings which gave respect to women and thus empowered them.

Anna Bhau Sathe's character in the award winning novel Fakira not only regain his individuality but also teach humanity and the worth of pardon, a path towards much desirable and shared harmony of the society. Fakira shows the actuality of Dalits living on the, boundaries and subjugated and concealed not only by Britishers but upper caste people also. Fakira make us to remember Shamakolam (vidharbh Robin Hood) who give up

his entire life for the poor and browbeaten and fought for the rights of unprivileged. Like other character of Anna Bhau Sathe Fakira accept the socialist ideology as a part of life and struggles for the rights of these people. Fakira is the central character of the novel. He is the elder son of Ranoji who had sacrificed his own life to bring Jogani to Wategaon. Fakira is the first hero of any novel in Marathi that belongs to a lower caste society. He is a brave historical character. 'He is well built and has blackish complexion, greenish eyes, straight nose, wide forehead and fresh expression on his face.' (Sathe, 1959, p.29)

Anna Bhau Sathe's poetry also reflects the suffering defenselessness and disgraceful life of lower classes and Dalit castes in the society and gives a voice to subjugated classes and Dalits to break the boundaries of class and caste of the society. Here he was very much inspired by Ambedkar. In the poem Take the Hammer to change the world Anna Bhau Sathe calls for unity to fight against oppression and envision, a society without exploitation almost on the similar lines as well. Take a hammer to change the world is an aggressive call to the Dalits for unity. Sathe's intention here to attack on extremely entrenched mentality of Indian people, which was the root cause of Dalit misery as Dalits were tortured as inhuman beings and underprivileged from rights in this poem he recommend Dalits to fling off of the chains of slavery and support them to rebel against oppression and subjugation. He also suggests them to follow the ideology of Dr.B.R Ambedkar and struggle for basic rights. 'Take a hammer to change the world so saying went Bhimrao! Why the elephant is stuck sitting in the mud of slavery? (Sathe, 1998) Bhalchandra Fadake also writes, "Anna Bhau Sathe could give expression to pains of Dalits. Anna Bhau Sathe, Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul are the true sculptors of Dalit story. The generation of story writers like Yogiraj Waghmare, Bhimrao Shirwale, Pundalik Dhongade, Yogendra Meshram, Ashok Lokhande, Dangale, Daya Pawar, Madhav Kondvilkar etc. are following essentially the story

of Sathe, Kharat and Bagul.' (Fadake, 1977, p.180)

Bhima in Smashanatil Sone in short-story of Anna Bhau Sathe's struggles to live a life for his livelihood he collects gold from the mouth of skulls in grave and in this work he loses his fingers. The very gloomy and miserable condition of this character shows that he is unhappy not because he lost his fingers but he is worried about tomorrow's starvation. The fight between Bhima and foxes in graveyard is tear-jerking. Here problem is same man and animal is at an equal stage when it comes the matter of hunger and livelihood. Bhima tells the story of hundred other people who are worried about their daily bread and butter and this is one of the serious social problems indicated by Anna Bhau Sathe. Story represent sun happy situation of a Dalit, Bheema he arrive from a village to Mumbai in search of job but he does not find any due to his lower caste so he lives in graveyard and digs and buries dead bodies for his livelihood. He starts digging graves at midnight and finds gold buried with the dead body. Poverty and starvation are responsible for his pitiful condition. Sathe very boldly writes about sorrowfulness, annoyance, denunciation, scarcity, joblessness, rebel for liberty from the fetters of class and ethnicity and conditions that lead people to do unusual jobs is common descriptions in Anna Bhau Sathe's work. The typical mindset of high class about downtrodden people is responsible for this which needs to be changed and poor and lower class people should be treated equally. Then only it's possible to destroy the gap between these two classes.

Anna Bahu Sathe focused on such issues which are genuine which needs to be discussed at various level and gap between upper and lower caste and poor and rich be vanished from the society through which the development of nation is possible. Sathe's sultan desires that he wish that he could take bellyful of food and for that he struggle. Here it is again a problem of basic need that is to quench the 'hunger' through the struggle and fight it becomes possible to Dalits to take the food and for it the whole Dalit



society has to work hard and even they have to fight for this basic need the problem of starvation is the serious problem for Dalits which remains unsolved at that time and this harsh reality of our society is truly represented by this great man Anna Bhau Sathe. Kombadi Chor Ramu struggles for livelihood so he becomes thief as no alternative leftovers for him. Sathe's work gives voice to these fighting spirits and awakens the people make them aware about these serious issues of Dalit people. A famous Marathi writer P. K. Atre describes the stories of Anna Bhau Sathe as "the stories of the people dying to be alive. He further says that the people in Anna Bhau Sathe's stories are not timid. They become ready to take revenge of their insult and they don't sit quite until they defeat the injustice." (Atre, 2015. p. 63).

In the story Walan there is a crisis between new and old generation the efforts old and new age group is exposed. In the story old Dalit woman Chima symbolizes old generation there is a new generation person who rejects to eat beef the story Sapala is based on Mahar people's condition. They entrapped high caste villagers by not removing carcass. The central character gives advice to Mahars for not doing their traditional work. Sawala Mang is rather diverse in its theme in which Dalit Sawala Man intimidates upper caste Rajaram Patil with sword because he tortures Kashi for dowry. Sawala bring back Kashi's worth and home. In this way Anna Bhau Sathe's stories awaken the spirits of dalits and spread the message to lower class people that that social change is possible by denying the imposed things by upper class people. Here Sathe disseminates Ambedkar's thoughts. His writing also contributes towards producing class awareness among workers in society. In another ballad, Mumbaicha Girani Kamgar (Mill Worker of Mumbai) written in 1949, Sathe focuses the unhappiness of factory workers and capture the differences between the rich and poor in Mumbai. Anna Bhau Sathe's stories are true depiction of Dalit pains, miseries, sufferings, anguish,

inequality, exploitations and struggle. Sathe gives description of social tribulations in his stories. He takes communist ideology and therefore his stories render social picture. Sathe's some of the stories portray world of untouchables. The theme of his stories is mixed with varieties of rural life to city slums. He took multiplicity of characters for his short stories. His writing style is genuine, as he shared the heart touching experiences about a particular section of the society which is always inspirational that inequality should be vanished from the society and every human being be treated as a human only this is the very beautiful unique as well as universal message which he left for us to read and understand and one should act there. However, Anna Bhau Sathe's stories are very hopeful about social change. His elegiac intellect cannot be harmonized by anyone. He was best in his writing style and was truly a legend.

Conclusion :

Anna Bhau Sathe was a social reformer, poet, novelist, and great writer of Maharashtra. He is also known as the founding father of Dalit Literature. Most of his noteworthy writing focuses on the Dalit struggle, Dalit anguish and downtrodden people. Not only literary writing but he contributed a lot towards social awakening during India's Freedom Movement, the United Maharashtra Movement and the Goa Liberation Movement. Thus, he worked ceaselessly with desire to change the world and marginalized society.

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