

Manifestation of Caste and Class in Anna Bhau Sathe's *Fakira* and Baburao Bagul's *Jenvha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti*

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Dalit literature, a social-literary phenomenon has been far diverse from that of the main stream literature in Maharashtra. It is the literature of those oppressed by cunning system, voiceless, speechless and exploited groups for centuries together. It is extensively on the increase since 1960s. Dalit literature deals with Dalitism in Indian society which is being discussed in myriads of specialized journals, academic studies, literary conferences, seminars, regular press reports and articles. Inspired with the charismatic leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar a lot of young Dalit writers like "Anna Bhahu Sathe, Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul N. R. Shinde, Daya Pawar, Waman Howal, Keshav Meshram, Arjun Dangale Yogiraj Waghmare, Bhimsen Dethe, Ravindra Hadsankar, Urmila Pawar dedicated themselves to the cause of depicting Dalit life closely, effectively so as to shape social sensibility and thereby finding emancipation of Dalits. Anna Bhau Sathe and Baburao Bagul are such visionary writers, like many others mentioned above, envisaged the future of Dalits and Dalit movement in most comprehensive way.

Anna Bhahu Sathe is a dominant literary figure in Dalit Literature in Maharashtra. A self educated/ lettered without any formal education and swam deep into the ocean of literature to bring out many literary unique diamonds. Being unlettered, yet

penned down many novels and plays in Marathi literature, is probably the rarest of rare example in the universe, unfortunately unexplored by the mainstream literary readers and critics. Annabhau Sathe is the founder figure of the most powerful Dalit novels and short stories in Dalit literature. Initially A. B. Sathe was influenced by communist ideology and his literature reflects most inclusive philosophy of Humanism. Anna Bhahu clarifies his literary stand and says, "The writers who concern society, society concern them. I have a lofty dream that my nation will prosper, be happy, and be descent." Sometimes it is difficult to categories his stories in any ideology as they have universal humanistic touch. Later Anna Bhahu Sathe left communism and attached to Ambedkarian ideology and wrote abundantly. He penned for the downtrodden, disregarded section, and the working class people. His stories project life of Dalits and workers. Anna Bhahu Sathe inaugurated the first Dalit Sahitya Sammelan (Literary Conference) held at Mumbai in 1958. In his inaugural speech he emphatically expressed two uniquely powerful ideas that the "*The earth is not balanced on the snakes head but on the strength of Dalit and working class people*". Anna Bhahu here underlines the supreme importance of Dalit and working class people in the world set up. Using the hindu popular mythological image of snake bearing the globe as the popular symbol to underscore a scything critic and strong rejection of Hindu ideology and thereby bringing in Dalit/human/workers hands as the

controller and supporters of this world is most powerful realistic, visionary analysis of the dalit condition. Sadly, neither the dalit nor the mainstream readers and critics dwelled upon Annabhau Sathe's this only one of its kind deliberation.

His second significant contemplation is, in fact, an appeal that, "The 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 cannot be destroyed instantly". These ideas of A. B. Sathe occupy the centrality of dalit ideology of Dalit literature. Baburao Bagul, the strong ideological think tank of Dalit movement and notable writers of Dalit literature. He believed to have changed the horizons of the Dalit literary world. He has copiously written most powerful short stories, novels, poems and many editorials. His 'Jenvha Mi Jat Chorli Hoti' (When I Stole Caste), Maran Swasta Hot Aahe (Death is Becoming Cheaper) are the revolutionary literary contributions of Baburao Bagul. The present research paper is an endeavor to study the manifestation of caste and class in Annabhau Sathe's milestone work 'Fakira' and Babural Bagul's 'Jenvha Mi Jat Chorli Hoti'.

'Fakira' the prize winning novel of Annabhau successfully depicts the social reality of how historically Dalits occupied the social periphery, and have been excluded from the core of politics and economy. It is the most encouraging, moving, realistic delineation of the dalit life, troubles, tortures, their exploitations by the upper caste so called authorities in the villages and yet the intact moral values among dalits, the strong fervor to live life and not to give up hopes are the aspects of novel 'Fakira'. Though the upper castes here have piled up inflictions, exploitation and torture Annabhau's characters love their country, India, is the notable aspect of Fakira. The story Fakira happens in Vategoan and has a rural setting. The people in Vategoan strongly believe and practice the tradition.

The story begins with a custom of 'Jogini' meaning 'a small yellow coloured bowl' possession of which means a matter of great pride and an honour of hosting the Jatra 'a religious fest' in the village. A hamlet 'Shigaon' has the possession of Jogini and with great delight, they are organizing the fest. Shankarrao Patil of Vategoan is highly restless with the fact and thought that there is no single combatant in Vategoan who could vigorously fight against Shigaon and bring the Jogini in vategoan. He reveals this secret worry to Ranoji the sturdy, young, active *angry-young-Mang*. Ranoji seriously ponders over Jogini and wants to risk it to snatch out the jogini to his village among all the people of Shigoan. It was as most dangerous and as risky as breaking Chakrayuvya. Seeing that unquestionably, in the fest all alert villagers would be ready with weapons and as per the traditional consensus if any outsider dares to take away the Jogini, and is caught within the boundary of that village he would be beheaded, but would earn great respect and glory if turns out to be triumphant in taking away the Jogini successfully. Hence arriving at any conclusion was an exceedingly intricate for Ranoji. He reflects on the worse thing if caught 'brutal death' but glory, proud and happiness for the whole village Vategoan if he turns out to be triumphant. Finally decides to fight and die rather than just think and leave it. Without informing his father Daulati, wife Radha, his sons Fakira and Sadhu. On the day of the Yatra- the religious fest Ranoji alone with great courage and perfect plan of taking Jogini away rides towards shigoan. There he finds his friend Bhairu whom

he entails a responsibility to inform Shankar Patil and Vishnupant from his village to march towards Shigoan to receive Ranoji with jogini. He spots the people vigilantly walking with the Jogini and in the vicinity of one narrow passage he dives in the flocks of the people and kills the most powerful person and taking advantage of the night vanishes from the scene and with the speed of lightening move about towards Vategoan. Meanwhile, getting the clue of Ranoji, a huge mob of shigoan villagers run with weapons ready to cut him. Ranoji by far goes beyond the boundary of Shigoan and enters the Vategoan area. But breaking the rule Shigoan villagers chase him, kill his favourite and faithful horse 'Gabrya' and beheads Ranoji: the warrior, unethically, violating the traditional rule.

Generally unaware and sloppy about Mangwada, the place where Mang community resides with their poverty stricken life, the entire village with immense respect for Ranoji and fire of anger in eyes and dogged determination of revenging Ranoji's death united. But after an apology and getting Ranoba's head back the matter is resolved and Ranoba cremated by the vategoan villagers. Later Fakira the elder son of Ranoji a young man with far superior skills than his father, muscular, sympathetic towards every troubled person, hence becomes the leader of the dalit and the village. After ten years the Shigoan's youth plans to attack and get back the jogini. Fakira had an inclination of the possible attack and he not only successfully retaliate the attack but let the youth go out of vategoan and then chasing him successfully cuts his hand from the wrist and completes the vengeance of his father's murder yet spares the youth, though legally Fakira could slain him he chose to teach him lesson by cutting his hand from wrist and earns reverence for his magnanimity for granting life to the youth. As Alexander Pope says, to err is human: to forgive is divine, Annabhau's character Fakira here teaches humanity and values like forgiveness by awarding life to the youth, sacrificing his rightful pray and the vengeance of his father's murder.

The novel also attempts to demonstrate the path towards the communal harmony and the strength of unity. How Vishnupant the upper caste, senior of the village supports the dalits and is closely associated with the feelings, and ups and down in the life of dalits. When British rulers had issued a regulation declaring Mang, Mahar, Ramoshi communities as criminals and imposing on them the regular attendance at the police station or to the village authority obligatorily, Vishnupant and Shankar Patil voice his abhorrence of it and question the new regulation. Fakira was defiantly against the law which declared the innocent Dalit community as criminal. It is a clear reflection of the internal politics as well as the sheer bias and prejudice of the British and upper caste community in the villages towards Dalits. Fakira dares to challenge it. The magnitude of Fakira's character is also studied from various incidents depicted in the novel where Fakira risks his life to save life of Sattu and others. Sattu is also a brave mang community leader who chopped an upper caste man Chaughule who was brutally bashing a pregnant Mahar woman and was not budging to any of the request made by the onlookers. As a result he had to leave his home since the police and the upper caste men were hunting for him with fire in eyes. Ever since, it becomes the mission of his life to counteract negative forces inwardly acting against dalits. Hence he becomes, the public- proclaimed- hero of dalits and he industriously brings to an end the dalit problem of torture and molestation

by the upper castes. To stop dalit exploitation by money lenders Sattu assailed many of them and burnt their diaries having the interest records, stopped feudalism, bully the torturous husbands, punished many of them to stand on one leg and thus unintentionally acquires the epithet the leader, the hero, of dalits masses. For the Upper castes Sattu became an eyesore consequently planned to grab him alive or dead and when he was in the men's saloon he was caught. Because the upper castes people also wanted to grab the governments prize of five thousand rupees for catching Sattu and thereby seeking revenge on him. Hence the upper caste villagers caught him and intended to hand him over to the police next day. Sattu through his friend, significantly, manages to send a message to Fakira. On having received a message from his friend Sattu, within no time Fakira attacks those villagers and with his only gigantic support Sattu once again becomes a free bird proving the dalit solidarity, power of truth, and heroism of Fakira.

The recurrent famines and epidemics: the nature's disastrous attack on humans, destroy the confidence of poor Dalits to live life and they are left high and dry. It is Fakira, taking lead approaches the Patil and Vishnupant requests them to intervene. The cruel British rulers ignore the Vishnupant's intimation about the unfortunate condition, extreme scarcity of food, and epidemics. Shankar Patil would promote them, 'don't give up, people must live'. Fakira was helpless but could not see the dying hungry people. He encourages some hungry supporters and plans to fight against the odd rather than dying meekly. Fakira makes an astonishing plan of raiding the food grains stored and getting rotten in the rich man's mansion and after winning a hard-hitting long battle, he distributes the food grains equally among all the Dalit families. Police approach Vishnupant, the Patil but he violently argues with the Prant-Police-In charge and justifies the act of looting grains for the sake of human lives.

The police were brutal and adamant and issued the order of compulsory attendance, Dalits declaring them criminal communities, everyday at Patil's place, and also removed Vishnupant –the supporter of the poorest. Once the new Patil insults Fakira at the time of attendance, and they were denied regular mobility which worsened the existing famine. The upper caste torture through British rule was another dimension to the issue. Heavy weight of insult as criminals was all too high to tolerate hence, as a vengeance; Fakira plans to ransack the British wealth kept under the surveillance of a Brahmin. He does not execute the job deftly like a thief but openly and bravely challenges the Brahmin to hand over the keys; villagers come to rescue the Brahmin who has a gun. Eventually, after the whole- night- war between Raghunath Brahmin, his supporters against Fakira and his team ends with the win of Fakira's paramount humanitarian spirit. Fakira wins the battle and distributes the fifty thousand rupees among them equally. Fakira here affirms that, 'all of us have to die one day but I desires to live and die as a lion'. He also pays to the blacksmith of the same village whom he had forced to cut the huge iron boxes containing the wealth. Every act of Fakira in this seminal work of Anna Bhau Sathe is highly balanced and free from any human weaknesses like greed for money, food, power of wealth or authority and caste or class and gender prejudices. Fakira launches his crusade for justice for the dalits. Protecting Sattu's life, raiding the British wealth and distributing it among the incessantly hungry dalit families, granting life to the man whom he could have legally (as per the accepted norms) killed, his battle against the upper caste feudalists of his own and many villages around reinstate

the dalit magnanimity, spirit of warrior, and an unquenchable vigour to life life with dignity are the exceedingly momentous values of the novel.

Annabhau's characters here represent a class of highest values, an inborn ruling, leading quality to initiate and sacrificing life for the principles and morals. The characters in general and Fakira in particular, do not kill anyone without reason. They do not impose extortion or torture innocents. Even the Patil and Khot who had been torturing them throughout, Fakira does not kill them but they meet their doom in an attempt to climb down a dangerous mountain cliff at night.

Overall the novel Fakira is a finest example of Dalit expression and a great lesson and model reflecting the rarest grit to live even in an utmost adversity. The Mang-Mahar unity is one of the most salient features of Annbhau Sathe's masterpiece novel 'Fakira'. In an entire plot of the novel Dalits stands unified to wrestle adversities of their lives. The misfortunes are tackled as an intimate group with deepest faith and belief. Fakira, the protagonist, distributes the looted wealth of Besadgoan equally among all dalits underscores the dalit brotherhood. Annbhau's heroes are morally upright and ideal individuals. They fight against injustice be it against them or be it even for others. Fakira, Sattu, Vishnupant, Ranba are all Annbhau's dominant characters stand apart as a class of their own in the entire Dalit literature and demand further deliberation by the critics. They demonstrate anger, rejection, rebelliousness, sacrifice for community and humanity hence are the epitome of morals and values. The fight against Britishers and pillaging their, actually Indian, wealth for the sake of poor peasants, workers is a huge venerable and courageous act they put on display.

Babrao Bagul a senior Dalit writer has abundantly contributed to the Dalit Literature through his excellent stories, novels, poems, editorials etc. Baburao Bagul's 'Jenvha Mi Jat Chorli Hoti' (When I Steal Caste), Maran Swasta Hot Aahe (Death is Becoming Cheaper), Sud (Vengeance), Kondi (Riddle), Bhumihin (Landless), Mukanayk, Pashan and Dr. Babsaheb Ambedkar's biography is an extensive literary works of Baurao Bagul. He, in true sense, supported Annabhau Sathe, Shankararo Kharat's projection of Dalits. Annbhau productively attempted to inspire and ignite the dalit youth and Baurao Bagul made them act. Baguls 'Jenvha Mi Jat Chorli Hoti' is the first collection of short story published in 1963 which earned him great name and fame and established him a writer.

'Jenvha Mi Jat Chorli Hoti' is an outstanding autobiographical painfully depicted Dalit story. The author gets a job at Udhana railway station in Gujrat and so proudly he wants to join the office hoping to resolve all financial crunches of the family. He joins the duty and at the outset only faces a question 'what is your caste? Baffled with an unexpected question author chooses to avoid it and shows an anger with the question. But due to his sophisticated behavior, mastery over both Hindi and Sanskrit language the people around him tend to think that he is an upper caste person. He is offered a room on rent and for some days the things went smoothly but suddenly one day a huge mob of people starts thrashing him. Ranchod Tiwari, the upper caste employee mistook him to be an upper caste Brahmin and pleaded him to rent his room. The author finalizes the room rent and occupies it, but through some source Ranchod discovered that author was not upper caste Brahmin, as a result they felt to be deceived and wanted to kill him. They catch the author at the railway station and start beating him cruelly. It was Kashinath, a

dalit, intervened in the matter ferociously attacked the mob and protected the author. Kashinath's brother is a Forman, an officer in railway; hence all of them were scared that through his Forman brother he might remove them from the service. The danger was completely over but the scar of the incident on authors mind is indelible. Author cannot forget the fact for getting better room with facilities he had to hide his caste which resulted in a most negative memory of his life. He had to hide his caste hence author calls it 'Jenvha Mi Jat Chorli Hoti'. At the end when Kashinath challenges the mob showing a big bright knife they all run away but the author is badly injured and abused, destroyed all the things in room and tore out all his certificates. When Kashinath questions him 'Jenvha Mi Jat Chorli Hoti' why and how did you tolerate the attack and got beaten up?

Baburao Bagul replies, 'I was not beaten up by them but by Manu'. The story ends with these words. The story is potentially a depiction of poisoned mindsets with the thoughts of untouchability- a social evil poisoning social psyche.

Close study of the works of Baburao Bagul reflects his belief that Ambedkarism and Marxism both the ideologies perpetrate social equalities and insist on emancipation and freedom. Same is also the rumination of Annabhu Sathe who personally was activist and practiced Marxist, though rejected it later, supported Ambedkarism. Both Annabhu Sathe and Baburao Bagul make the exploited man as the center of their art and his emancipation thereby taking him to a brightest future is the optimistic approach these authors nurture. They also have brooded over the dalit women; the triply exploited class of Indain society and have adequately projected the life of dalit women. Kashinath at the end of the story acts exactly on the basis of teachings of Fakira to retaliate and counteract for the emancipation of the weak dalits. Sathe and Bagul both are highly conscious in fostering their characters and do not attempt to run away from the grim reality of being dalit and keep that dalithood and consciousness alive as if it is a pre condition. But both make hard endeavors to emancipate the dalits from the shackles of the caste, culture, religion and the hindu dominant biases. But it is also the fact that Annabhau, the literary giant, is ignored by both the mainstream and more sadly and shockingly, by the Dalit thinkers, critics and authors. It would be enormously in the interest of knowledge of Indian society, dalits and history to hold both Baburao Bagul and Annabhau Sathe's literature to inspect the class- caste dimension in Maharashtra.

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