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Female Characters In Anna Bhau Sathe's Novels

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Anna Bhau Sathe (1920-1969) was one of the foremost creative writers in Marathi literature. He was born in a poor family belonging to a 'Mang' Caste which is known to be one of the lower Castes in Maharashtra. He could not have any formal education. He attended school only for a day and a half. He had to struggle a lot in his life. He had to go to Mumbai in search of work. He had to do menial works. He worked as a mill worker. He was naturally drawn towards the values of the leftist ideology and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's thought. He became supporter participant in progressive movement for giving justice to the poverty stricken masses. He has written 31 novels, 20 collections of short stories, 10 powadas (a form of poetry in Marathi similar to a ballad).

Marathi novel had completed its journey for about hundred in English), 14 Loknatyas (a typical Maharashtrian folk-drama), a play and a travelogue. years when Anna Bhau Sathe started to write. During those times, novelists like N. S. Phadake, V. S. Khandekar, G. T. Madkholkar enjoyed a tremendous impact on Marathi novel. Majority of the novelists at that time belonged to middle class and only the middle class sensibility was reflected in their writings. They wrote about the lives, dreams, aspirations and desires of the middle class people. They couldn't write about the real life of the lower class people because they didn't have the first hand experience about the problems faced by the lower caste and working class people. Marathi novel could not cross the frontiers that were demarcated by writers like Phadake, Khandekar and Madkholkar even after Independence of India. However, there were some signs of changes in the field of Marathi novel with the attempts made by Vibhawari Shirurkar who wrote 'Bali' (1950) about a Mang Caste, B. B. Borkar who wrote 'Bhavin' (1950) about destructed life of a 'Devdasi'- a women who marries God according to the custom and has to face social oppression. Venkatesh Madgulkar wrote 'Pudhacha Paul' in 1950. As a result, the novels about dalits, oppressed and proletariats started to arrive in Marathi literature.

Anna Bhau Sathe realized that all his predecessors were writing about a typical middle class society. He realized that it was his life mission to write about dalits, laborers and oppressed. He gave a big jolt to the established society by portraying central characters in his novels and short stories belonging to the lower classes. There was the impact of the writing of the Russian writer Maxim Gorky and Communism on Anna Bhau Sathe. We also find the influence of the thought of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on the writings of Anna Bhau Sathe. He tried to earn respect for the class of people that was deliberately kept away for hundreds of years by the established Marathi writers. He wrote 31 novels in Marathi.

The novel **Chitra** (1951) shows how poor girls from village were brought to big cities like Mumbai and were sold to the agents in brothel during the World War II. Chitra's father had died before her birth. Her mother takes shelter at the house of her brother with little Chitra and Sona. The ruffians in the village always have close eye on the sisters in order to seduce them. Sona gets married but soon

after the marriage, her husband- a diseased person divorces her thinking that beautiful Sona is not a suitable spouse for an ugly and diseased person like him. After some days, Sona's maternal uncle tells the family members that he has arranged her marriage with a person in Mumbai. In fact, he manages to sell her in a brothel in Mumbai in order to earn money. After some days, he takes Chitra to Mumbai in order to do the same. Chitra is taken into the same hell of brothel. But now Sona firmly remains behind Chitra and keeps her away from the rascals like Laliya and General. Chitra manages to run away from the brothel and takes in Labour Camp and gets married with her friend Jaya- a mill worker turned leader of workers.

Vaijayanta (1959) is a novel about women working and dancing in 'Tamasha'- a popular folk art in Maharashtra. This is the first novel in Marathi throwing light on the life-problems of artists. In this novel, Anna Bhau Sathe depicts the realistic picture of sorrow, sufferings, pains, insults and social injustice faced by the Tamasha artists. He could do this because he had the first hand knowledge of tamasha as his close relatives as well as he himself had worked in tamasha. Vaijayanta is the name of the central female character in this novel who is the daughter of a tamasha artist Gajarabai. Gajarabai tries to keep Vaijayanta away from being a tamasha artist and away from hardships, insults and miseries. For this purpose she works on the stage even at her old age. One day, she is humiliated by a young and beautiful dancer Chandra due for her old age. Though she is unwilling, the insulted and starving Gajarabai decides to put Vaijayanta on the stage as an artist to take revenge on Chandra. Vaijayanta performs on the stage for a single day only in order to defeat Chandra and she becomes successful in her attempt to defeat Chandra. The tamasha contractor's son Chandulal and Abha Patil of Khundalapur try to possess Vaijayanta. Chandulal makes many plans to rape her. Vaijayanta resists the people like Chandulal and Abha Patil upto the end and finally gets married with her lover Uma.

Chikhalatil Kamal was published in 1969. The novel is based on the social and religious custom of 'Waghya' and 'Murali' in Maharashtra. 'Waghya' is the male servant of god Khandboa and 'Murali' is the female servant. Murali is married to God and then she is exploited by the society. In this novel, Anna Bhau Sathe presents the story of a Murali named Seeta who shows courage to break the shackles of tradition and custom and marries Bali a brave man belonging to a lower caste even though a Murali was not allowed to marry another person.

In **Chandan** (1962), Anna Bhau Sathe has presented the story of a poor and lonely young woman's struggle and suffering on the background of a slum area in Mumbai. Chandan, the central character, has to struggle a lot against poverty on one hand and the animal-like people in the slum area on the other hand. Chandan's parents die when she was a little child. Her maternal uncle brings her up and marries her with a poor young man Jagu at the age of twelve. She gives birth to a child at the age of fourteen. Jagu and Chandan come to Mumbai with their child in search of job. Unfortunately Jagu dies in the explosion of gelatin in the mine where he was working. There nobody to take care of Chandan and her child therefore Chandan has to do the labour work. The ruffians in the slum area named Gopal, Rangya, Dayaram, Zingarya and Tiger try to seduce her. Dayaram tries to rape but Chandan throws the can of acid on his body Chandan is sent to jail for two years.

Aawadi (1963) is the story of a rebellious woman character. It is based on the social problem of inter-caste marriage.

In **Phulpakharu** (1969), Anna Bhau Sathe has presented a photographic picture of the world of the children in remand home. The young boys who have come out of the remand home deceive

Rohini, a young girl, by telling lies that they would find a job for her in Mumbai. A film director promises her to give a role in a film and exploits her sexually. Rohini is forced to be a prostitute by a ruffian Gyan. The young boy Raja decides to marry Rohini even though he knows that Rohini is a prostitute.

Conclusion

The female characters in Anna Bhau Sathe's novels are totally different from the female characters depicted in the novels of his contemporary established writers. They come from the lower strata of the society. They belong to the working class, nomadic tribes, farmers, dalit and illiterate families. They have to face miseries, hardships, poverty and many challenges in the male dominated feudal society. However, these women face the challenges with courage. The female characters in Anna Bhau Sathe's novels are not timid. They do not weep but they fight bravely against the evil elements. They fight for their character, morality and self-esteem and freedom. The female characters in Anna Bhau Sathe's novels are fighting personalities. They do not surrender to the adverse situation and evil forces. Psychologically, they are very strong. They are ready die or kill in order to save their character and self-esteem and morality. Majority of the characters in his novels are rebellious. They revolt against the male dominated, feudal and capitalistic society. Some of the incidents in their lives may appear to be unrealistic to the traditional readers but these characters are not unreal. Anna Bhau Sathe has written about the people with whom he lived. These are the people seen by him around him.

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