

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Anna Bhau Sathe a De Caste Writer: With Special Reference to the Novel *Makdicha Maal*

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ABSTRACT

Anna Bhau Sathe (1920–1969), celebrated Marathi Dalit author, social reformer, and participant in the United Maharashtra Movement, occupies an inextinguishable locus within contemporary Indian letters. Though he emerged from the Mang/Matang caste and devoutly pursued no formal education, his oeuvre—seventeen full-length novels, eleven anthologies of short fiction, a handful of folk-play scripts, various dramas, ballads, and lyric poetry—irreducibly shaped Marathi Dalit literature. Because his vision exceeds the limit of birthmark, critical parlance labels him “Dalit,” but he inscribed a durable proto-term within the corpus of “de-caste,” resisting scholar-categorisation. Sathe's texts approach the lived experience of his own caste in order, not to reproduce an autonomous archive, but to aggregate and project the protracted voices of social groups persistently subsumed under caste, labour, and electoral devaluation. Thematic energy therefore converges upon surging autonomy, quotidian dignity, and aggregate rather than individual exception. His protagonists, incessantly incarnating marginalized subjectivities, behave not as passive oblations but as ingenious resisters, systematically dismantling orthodoxy and composedly renegotiating the social. Sathe's prose, a diaphanous transcription of dialectal shrill, is reproached—misreading delectable—by critics as “obscene.” Nonetheless, the unsanitized vocabulary boasts a forensic vibrancy, marinated in the life-world, hence exercise of declarative authenticity. Dialectal fixities coexist with enormous social portability, an occasion to confront the formidable edifice of social script upon which the Republic is written. This paper therefore attends to the logic of Sathe's fiction within established Marathi canon, advancing his theorization through a calibrated homage of the novel *Makdicha Maal* (The Hillock of Monkeys),

supplied with unobtrusive English translation in twin column format for pedagogic availability.

Keywords: Anna Bhau Sathe; Dalit literature; de-caste writer; Marathi literature; resistance

FULL PAPER

Introduction

The novel *Makdicha Mall* (The Hillock of Monkey) was published in January 1963 which was written originally in Marathi. In the novel the writer depicts the havoc life of the downtrodden people of various castes and nomadic tribes. It has been explored in terms of this novel that the life of these people has never been bed of roses to lead. Their suffering, oppression and suppression is taken place at multiple level.

When the novel opens, a beggar comes on the Fondya hillock of Kalgaon, as usual he comes every year. He settles down on the hillock erecting his make shift tent. Every year different people of the various castes and tribes come on the hillock and live there for around four to five months. The beggars, the nomads, from different castes come and settle down. One by one hundreds of make-shift tents have been placed on this hillock, this year too.

Among these nomadic tribes, the tribes such as-Darveshi, Dombari, Makadwale, Saapgarudi, Turungwale, Bhanamatiwale, Gosavi, Phasepaardhi, Nandiwale, Shikaldaar and so on had come and erected their make-shift tents. However, each tribe had their own way of living style; each one would live keeping a proper distance taking the cultural notions from one another. Every tribe has its own way of talking, eating, living and rituals. The entire hillock was occupied by the nomads and tribals and as a result of this it was bustling with people. Thus, finally here comes on the plateau the Yanku Makadwala. As soon as Yanku appears on the hillock, Saidu Darveshi, Sakhya Makadwala, Balya Dombari et al become so happy as if a newlywed bride becomes happy after coming to her parents' home for the first time from her in-laws.

Yanku Makadwala is the protagonist of the novel, who is a very tall, hefty, and calm person by nature. He had just turned to his thirty fifth year of life; unfortunately,

he had lost his wife last year. He has a small daughter namely, Durga. Yanku had a very good habit to greet with Ram Ram whoever may come before him. He was an amicable person and he would never quarrel with anyone on the plateau. Thus, Yanku meeting and greeting to each and every person of the hillock was moving by and by to erect his own make-shift tent. He had a huge responsibility on his shoulder to raise Durga because she is just four to five years old. He had monkey called, Gangya. It was Gangya who would play different tricks and amuse people by his games and in exchange of his games people would offer money, the left overs like-bhakar, pickle and curry. Thus, Yanku would feed this to small Durga and he himself would eat the same food and pass the days.

Balya Dombari would go to perform dances of his daughter's village to village and get some food and money by this work. People would offer money to their dance skills and other attractive skills. The snake charmers would arrange the games of snakes especially the cobras; the people in the vicinity would offer him in cash and kinds. Saidu Darveshi would also do the same kind of work but by other means i.e. he would make use of his bear to entertain the people of the villages. Thus, in the evening all these nomads would gather on the plateau in the evening with their animals. In the evening the entire hillock would bustle with different sounds and screams.

In the novel there is a villainous character, Parbati who was fondly known as Parya in his friend circle. Parya was a very short tempered, villainous and a great addict to alcohol. He would keep on drinking day out and day out. He had two wives namely, Naabda and Aabda. They would sell some kumkum, black beads and other things related to women's make-up items. Parya had raised five pet dogs in view of hunting; apart from this, he would prepare wine at his home itself since he had his own liquor distillery.

In the village Kalgaon there were two goons called Galya and Balya who have extremely irritated the villagers by their mischievous activities. The duo would harass the young girls and women of the village by molesting and sexually assaulting. Galya and Balya had killed the Gunda Teli of the village as he had challenged the molesting of his daughter-in-law. Thus, this incident had flared rage among the villagers and they decided to kill Galya and Balya. But both of them could succeed to escape from the villagers and they settled in the deep forest of the village called Bhutacha Maal. Here, in this forest their atrocious activities started with a fresh enthusiasm. Both of them would take rest in the day time and begin with their underhanded business in the night. Killing, extortion, rape, loot and beating was the common business for them. They would behave like kings of the forest; but the

beggars and the nomadic people who were assembled on the hillock would offer some solace to the villagers as they would stay awake in the night. The villagers had a feeling in their mind that the beggars are the protectors for them.

Each one of every tribe would kill one or the animal for their dinner and it was their daily business. Someone would kill a hare or the other would kill squirrel, mongoose, fox, monkey and a peahen, etc. Killing animals and eating their flesh was a quite natural instinct for the nomadic people. They could not afford vegetables and fruits for their nutritional needs.

In the novel, Yanku and Parya became the great rivals to each other and the reason behind it was that Yanku killed one of the pet dogs of Parya as it had become mad. No one could catch the dog. All those who were chasing after it were tired. Yanku, who was going for hunting came near the Vetalba banyan tree. And at this juncture, the mad dog came directly on Yanku so as to attack on him. The people who were chasing the dog cried a and said, “Yanku, look...it is a mad dog.” (Anna Bhau 494) As soon as the villagers said so, he took out a bow and arrow and hit the dog. The dog died on the spot by the sharp arrow of Yanku.

The rabid dog could become the major reason behind their rivalry. However, throughout the novel Anna Bhau depicted his character as a bad man on the grounds of his atrocious despondence. The rivalry between Yanku and Parya lasted till the murder of Yanku. Many of the esteemed citizens of village tried to make Parya understand but he never listened any one of them. In this duel Parya lost his leg, but he never stopped hating Yanku.

One day the Gosavi people killed a monkey for their dinner and this news spread in the whole village like a wild fire. Thus, the Patil comes on the hillock in the evening and starts scolding them. The village people consider monkey to be a divine being; therefore, these people had become very angry as their feelings were hurt. The Patil came and spoke in a loud voice and asked in an annoying voice, “What should I do with you? Aara... You, being humans are killing the voiceless animals and eating them. You do whatever you wish” On this sentence of the Patil an elderly man kneeling before the Patil said, “Patil my neck is available for you to cut. I have been leading such type of helpless life since last eighty years. I’m surviving on whatever food I can get. Only we know how we live and how we die. Others cannot understand the way of our life. Living the life of a Gipsy is very tough. My five young sons died after eating something poisonous. (Anna Bhau Sathe 502)

Listening this shocking life of the old man the Patil too got sad and surprised. Once again, the Patil of the village requests them not kill any such animal and goes

back to his home. Anna Bhau somewhere in this novel said, “The nomads slept today thinking how to beg tomorrow. They slept forgetting their grief and agonies. They were departed from their grief just for a few hours.” (Anna Bhau Sathe 502) The writer very meticulously observes the sorrow and helplessness of these people throughout the novel. The novel highlights the theme of grief of the people who are away from the stream of progress.

The protagonist of the novel Yanku goes through many ordeals so as to lead his life and to save his daughter Durga. He had a challenge to save his daughter Durga from the danger of Galya and Balya. Parya had hired Galya and Balya to rape and sell her in the Red-Light area of Mumbai. Therefore, Yanku had a great challenge to protect Durga from these goons, Galya and Balya. Many attempts have been made by Galya and Balya to rape Durga, but all went in vain. Yanku fought with them with the help of villagers. On the contrary, Parya’s daughter was carried into the deep forest by Galya and Balya for alleviating their sexual need. In that night, Parya asks Galya and Balya while taking his daughter away from him, “where are you taking to my daughter?” On this Galya says, “your daughter is going to her in-laws; get lost.” This is how Galya and Balya, take two of Parya’s daughters to the forest. The fact of the matter is that Parya does friendship with Galya and Balya so as to teach lesson to Yanku, but the things goes against his plans. In a chaotic battle Parya’s leg was cut from his thigh. The outcome of his vengeance approach to Yanku could devastate his own life.

The character Vilas Inamdar is also one of the significant characters in the novel, who is a typical Patil of a village and leads the village. As a Patil of the village his sexual hunger or lust has not been alleviated. Inamdar makes attempts to seduce Durga, but fortunately she could succeed to escape from the clutches of Inamdar. But again, Parya made attempts to defile the image of Durga by spreading the news among all the beggars and in the entire village as Durga has been seduced by Inamdar. This event made Yanku very desperate and sad. He wished to kill Parya but he did not kill him. Durga had got engaged with Yemya, already. As a result of this news, the in-laws of Durga became angry and decided to break the marriage with Durga. Sakhya the would-be father-in-law of Durga blames Yanku that he had sent his daughter to the Inamdar so as to get her seduced and in exchange of this he got money from Inamdar. Thus, Sakhya came to Yanku and said----

“Yankya, you committed a Sin.”

“What wrong have I done?”

“You seduced my daughter-in-law”

“How, you pimp?”

“Do not call names to me else you will die.”

“Who will kill me.?”

“Me.....me....Sakhya” threatened Sakhya.

“Aara, but why?” Yanku shouted at him.

“You ruined the life of my daughter-in-law” said Sakhya in rage. “Tell, me a truth you committed sin by sending Durga in the mansion of Inamdar. That rich Patil seduced her” (Anna Bhau Sathe 542)

Thus, Yanku became helpless in this matter and he had to go through some tough time. But-it was Yemya who stood by Durga and Yanku firmly in this period of crisis. Yanku sends Durga along with Yemya so as to hide her from the ill sight of Galya, Balya and the Inamdar. Yemu and Durga lives in the jungle more than five days. They live together like love birds, but Yemu never touches to her body so as to keep her sanctity. This approach of Yemu can convey a message in the current age of live-in-relationship that Indian culture believes in the sanctity of a woman’s body. In our Indian culture pre-marriage sex was prohibited and Yemu and Durga are the true protectors of the cultural tenets of Indian culture. Though they had all freedom to do the sexual intercourse during their stay in the forest, but they did not do any wrong thing. In a true sense, Yemu was a great feminist. Yemu saves Durga’s life from the man who had come to her in order to rape and kill her, but Yemu kills him by his arrow.

At the end of the novel, in the night of the marriage of Durga and Yemu an armed robbery takes place. The goons of Galya and Balya comes with arms and ammunition on the hillock during the night. A fierce brawl takes place. Natha Patil and other villagers too take part in the battle in order to kill Galya and Balya. As it was a night, everyone runs here and there to save their dear life. In this brawl, unfortunately Yanku gets killed by Galya and Balya. The monkeys Gangya and Rangi too fight with the men of Galya and Balya in order to save their master Yanku. But it was a vain. As their master Yanku was killed in this battle, in the end Gangya jumps from the tree and dies on the spot. He jumped just to kill himself as he could not bear the sorrow of his master’s death. Since Gangya was dead his wife Rangi too becomes mad and bangs her body on the earth and ends up her life. Looking this heart wrenching incident Natha Patil, Saidu Darveshi and Balya Dombari starts shedding their tears. At last all of these three are buried on the hillock itself. As the two

monkeys died and buried on the hillock, itself, since then the hillock is known as Makdicha Maal 'Hillock for monkey.'

Finally, Durga says herself, "Bapa I am leaving for my in-law's house. I will not see to you, now. You will not see your Durga. You did not live even two days to see my happy married life. You did not live until my marriage. You did everything so as to live till my marriage Gangya and Rangi are really the lucky creatures. They could prove their honesty. They stayed up for your food. Those two will be always with you. Their bones will turn into dust along with your bones---But your Durga is going to her in-law's house. Bless her." " (Anna Bhau Sathe 586) Thus, the novel ends with a tragic note.

Conclusion:

The novel Makdicha Maal represents the life of the various nomadic tribes of Maharashtra and their dicey life. In the title of this paper, I used the word de-caste, which means the one who goes beyond a single caste. The intent behind using the word de-caste was that Anna Bhau Sathe though he was born in a Dalit Mang caste, he just not wrote and represented the life of his own caste. Anna Bhau represents the lives of many numbers of oppressed castes in terms of his writing. He goes beyond different castes and creeds and bring forth the beaten down people of the society through his writings. In the present novel Anna Bhau represents the castes and tribes who are even today out of the stream of progress. He made attempts to showcase their lives before the world with the help of his writing. Thus, the novel Makdicha Maal is one of the classics of Anna Bhau Sathe that represents the havoc life of nomads.

Works cited

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