ANNABHAU SATHE: A SOCIALIST THINKER

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ABSTRACT

Annabhau Sathe was born in small village, he belonged to downtrodden community. People were living in poverty; there was injustice, discrimination and inequality in that society. It was difficult to meet two ends. So to earn his bread he left his native village and came to Mumbai, faced number of difficulties, tried several jobs and after long struggle resumed his duties as a mill worker. While working there, he realised the importance of the union and for the enlightenment he started to write ballads and songs for stage performances. As it was the effective medium for the upliftment of workers and masses in general. As he was rich in experience and well aware of social issues of the time. Whereas he had struggled hard and suffered too much in his life. He portrayed realistic life of the society of his times. His writing exposed the social and political situation. His folk-play (Loknatya) Bekayadeshir, drama: Inamdar and story: Khulwadi depict contemporary life. He was communist and was fascinated by the work of Lenin, he visited Russia. When he returned he was charged with Marxist philosophy. He advocated that philosophy in his poems, ballads, play, fiction and in short stories. The characters from his literacy work never wait for emancipation, nor do they beg for sympathy, they are discontent, unhappy that doesn’t make them slavish, but they are rebellious and they revolt against circumstances. The society which was divided in to two groups: ‘haves’ and ‘havenots’ make people revolt against circumstances. Hence, Annabhau Sathe’s entire life was a saga of struggle to survive in that society. It was full racial struggle and discrimination. He was true socialist in his personality there was fine blending of a philosopher and activist. So upliftment of downtrodden people is the recurrent theme of his writing. His life philosophy inspired many people to fight against injustice. He had a dream of society based on socialistic ideas: fraternity, equality and liberty. Thus he was true Marxist and his philosophy made a lasting impression on the masses.

Thinker: a philosopher who advocated socialistic philosophy. Downtrodden: people belong to lower strata of the society, the then called as untouchables who were living in poverty.

Keywords: Thinker; Downtrodden

Annabhau Sathe was born at a small hamlet named Wategaon in Sangli district of Maharashtra state. He was a creative writer and a poet. He lived in poverty in downtrodden society, which was called "untouchables" during those days. However in the same society there were many heros like Phakira, Sawala, Nilu, Piraji, Umaji, Sattu and Hindurao who were struggling against the circumstance and registered their rebel through various activities. Their revolt was against the injustice and exploitation of British Government. But during these days they were condemned by so called established people from Indian society, not only that but they were treated as criminals and neglected deliberately. Ultimately these people suffered in poverty, starvation and remained aloof from main stream of the society, though they were patriots. Annabhau Sathe made an attempt to expose these things through his writings. In one of the stories named Khulawadi he states “These people are not dead crops, but they are living beings of blood and flesh; they can even ride a notorious horse and one can not dominate them by sword”. These thoughts of Annabhau are not only realistic but also indicate fearlessness and
rebellious traits of his personality. These people have every capacity to obtain anything they need and whatever they deprived of. Prof. Dr. R. B. Mancharkar states "Annabhau's people (Characters portrayed in his writings) never wait for emancipation with hope, nor do they beg for sympathy, they are discontent and unhappy, but unhappiness doesn't make them mean and slavish, but they revolt against the circumstances, they take a gun or an axe to fight". This feeling of revolt is explicit in short stories, fiction and folk plays of Annabhau Sathe.

In his childhood Annabhau left his native (i.e. Wategaon) with his father: Bhaub, mother Valubai and his brothers and started towards Mumbai on foot to earn his bread and butter. However it was not easy task for him, it was an odyssey full of adventures and difficulties. In this regard Nanasashe Katate states one of his reminiscences - on his way Annabhau was hungry and he came across a mango tree it was blossomed with mangoes, being hungry he could not resist his temptation and he plucked few mangoes from the tree without the permission of the owner; the owner took it as an act of theft and caught Annabhau red handed and demanded that he wanted those mangoes to be put to the branches on they were; obviously it was adamant and foolish demand, thus hunger and poverty put him in this embarrassing situation. Later on Annabhau came across many such instances in his life, but he remained undaunted and in his writings tried to explain and interpret the struggle made for livelihood. He experienced all odd things in his life; he worked in a coal shop as a worker; in a stone mine as a labourer, and wandered door to door as a vendor and what not. He made every attempt to earn his bread that enriched him in experience. He was not common worker, but a creative writer. He composed ballads and presented in the meeting of laborers that gave him name and fame. His ballads, verses plays and stories were the replicas of contemporary society. His writings exposed the social and political situation of the time, and evoked the feeling of survival and struggle in the masses. His ballads, folk play Loknayta ‘Bekayadeshir’, drama named ‘Inamadar’ and a story ‘Khulawadi’ depict the contemporary life. He was a singer as well as an instrumentalist; he was expert in playing ‘Hali’ (a percussion instrument like side drum played with sticks) and he was a good athlete too. He worked hard and struggled for long time to earn his bread. He writes “No one dies while toiling” The statement is nothing but his life philosophy as he strongly believed in work; he worshiped it, respected it and valued it.

During 1935-36 due to communal riot many mills were shut; they were badly in need of workers to run the mills; at this juncture a mill supervisor approached Annabhau Sathe and requested him to join Morbag Mill accordingly Annabhau joined his duties as a mill worker in 1936. Soon he realized the importance of Workers Union and deeply influenced by the work of Union. Later on he joined workers union and tried his level best to integrate the mill workers; he actively participated in, boycott, bands, strikes and morchas of workers union. With songs and ballad he kindled the feeling of protest among the mill workers. He believed in Marxist philosophy and advocated it throughout the life. He was the cardholder of communist party. Marxism is expressed in all his novels - Vair, Chitra, Phakira; Stories like – Teen Bhakari, Chorachi Sangat, Kombadi Chor. He tried to eradicate poverty, exploitation, violence and injustice in the society there he enlightened masses through his writings. During this period Annabhau read many books on Marxism and on Russian Revolution. He was deeply influenced by the biography of Lenin who revolted against the king Zaar and established the state of workers in Russia. He had deep fascination to visit Russia: the land of communist leader Lenin. Once he had an opportunity to visit Russia and when he returned India, he was changed with socialistic ideas; and he presented a role model of socialistic society. The present paper is an attempt to state about socialism as it was conceived by Annabhau Sathe.

Though many a scholars have written about Annabhau’s literary works, the aim of research paper is to point out exact focus of his literary work and his thought. Annabhau’s entire life was a saga of struggle to survive in the society which was then full of racial discrimination. Dr. Raosaheb Kasabe writes, “Annabhau Sathe was a man of soil, who strongly believed in labour, and his commitment to labour cannot he ignored as he gave us life philosophy. He wanted to alter culture, and and the society around him” He was inspired and influenced by the thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Karl Marx. He was the man who advocated change and new ideology, as Dr. Janardan Waghmare rightly points out.
“Annabhau Sathe made an appeal to masses to break the shackles of injustice in his writings. He loved Marxism and rebellious thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar gave empaths to his struggle. Thus there was fine blending of these two personalities in his thoughts. So he severely attacked the people in established society, who exploited downtrodden, poor and people from low strata of the society. His works inspired union workers and inculcated the feeling of fraternity amongst them”.  

Dr. Gangadhar Pantavane writes in his article “Annabhau Sathe : Vidrohi Sahityacha Nirmata”. “He wrote to advocate socialism, Marxism and class struggle. He converted ‘Tamasha’ in to ‘Lokanatyay’, he made changes in the prologue (‘Nandi’) and in ‘Gan Gavalan’ which was formally full of amorous description, he replaced it with the dialogues of Peasants and Workers, which were full of rebellious ideas. Drama which is meant for masses is a folk drama, he defined it. He banished superstitions, bad conventions, outdated customs and fatalism from his writings and portrayed social reforms, class struggle.” It shows that Annabhau wanted to change the society. During those days downtrodden were treated in inhuman way by the people from upper strata of the society. The contemporary society was full of superstitions, fatalism and old conventions; at that time he was the only proponent of scientific outlook and rationalism. Prof. Machindra Sakate states in this regard, “The life of Dalit people was very difficult, there were many customs and conventions. Dalits were leading the lives of misery which was full of hardships and trouble. The customs like ‘Waghy-Murali’, ‘Potaraj’, ‘Devdasi’, and ‘Jogata’ corrupted the lives of Dalit people, they had lost their identity. He was well aware of the fact that Hindu religion and scriptures rendered Dalits in that state. It was then essential to eradicate ignorance from Dalit society and hence there was no alternative than to inculcate scientific outlook in the society. So Annabhau underlined this thought in his writings”

Annabhau has expressed his ideology in the stories like “Mariaicha Gaada”, ‘Sud’. He has clearly stated that to establish socialism there is no alternative than to adopt Marxist ideology; it is clearly mentioned by him in the preface to his novel : ‘Vair’ and in the presentation of the play : ‘Inamdar’. He cherished the dream of socialism throughout his life. Dr. J. R. Dabhole had once informal interactions with Annabhau Sathe at Karad, Dist. Satara (Maharashtra) when he stated that the cause of poverty is exploitation and Marxism is the only solution to change the society. To banish poverty and exploitation and to establish equality and fraternity in the territories of Maharashtra Marxism is needed. It is the only way of the well being of human race. Many people have realized this truth. Annabhau’s thought in respect of Marxism and socialism goes hand in hand with his activities. In this way he was true socialist of that time. His sincere desire for up liftmen of downtrodden is the recurrent theme of his writings. His life philosophy inspires the masses to fight against injustice. It is the only requirement that peasants, workers and labourers should come together to establish new society based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

REFERENCES

4. Ibid, P. 33.
10. Ibid, P. 420-421.