



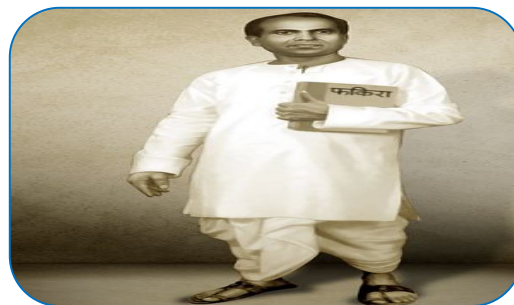
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITION OF DALITS IN THE LITERARY WORKS OF ANNABHAU SATHE

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ABSTRACT :

The foundation of Indian social order is based on verna system which has created hierarchy from higher to lower, and the lower part of this hierarchy is called 'shudra.' The shudra is considered as 'dalit.' The term 'dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'dal' which means to crack open, spilt, grind, broken and always refers to the unprivileged and marginalized group of people. Dalit literature has emerged as a protest against injustice and subjugation of the down trodden by the upper caste people. Inspired by Dr. Ambedkar many Dalit writers depicted the miserable life of Dalit so closely and effectively as to shape social sensibility and find ways of emancipation of marginalized communities. AnnaBhau Sathe depicted torture, anguish, suffering, exploitation and oppression of Dalit.



KEYWORDS : Dalit, subjugation, exploitation, caste-discrimination.

INTRODUCTION :

The foundation of Indian social order is based on verna system which has created hierarchy from higher to lower, and the lower part of this hierarchy is called 'shudra'. The shudra is considered as 'dalit.' The term 'Dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'dal' which means to crack open spilt, grind, broken and always refers to the unprivileged and marginalized group of people. According to Ghanshyam Shaha "Dalit includes those termed in administrative parlance as schedule castes, schedule tribes, and other backward classes" (Shaha 8). Traditionally Dalits are those who are placed at the bottom in the Hindu social order and they are treated as untouchables. Gangadhar Pantwane states, "Dalit is not a caste or religion. He is a man who is socially and economically exploited and on whom certain tradition and restrictions have been imposed". In short Dalits are mixed population of numerous castes and tribes which are deprived of human rights.

Dalit literature has emerged as a protest against injustice and subjugation of the downtrodden by the upper caste people. Although Dalit literature is accused of being propagandistic and negative in its approach, it has occupied a prominent place in the domain of Indian literature. It fights for the rights of marginalized communities and craves for justice and equality by rejecting age- old traditions and customs. It gives voice to the voice less people and evokes a sense of liberty against slavery. Dalit literature mainly deals with the problems of unprivileged people who are denied social respect and treated as in human beings. Inspired by Dr. Ambedkar, a great number of dalit writers depicted the miserable life of dalit so closely and effectively as to shape social sensibility and find ways of emancipation of marginalized communities.

AnnaBhau Sathe is an eminent dalit writer who never attended school yet he penned 35 novels, some short stories and poems. He depicts the miserable life of Dalits who are excluded from the core of politics and economy and occupied the social periphery. He states that “the earth is not balanced on the snakes head but on the strength of Dalit and working class people.” The Dalit were the rejected people who were forced to live at outskirts and were denied of fundamental rights. They were not allowed to draw water from the upper caste people’s well. They had no rights to accumulate wealth. They had to depend on the landlords and the upper caste people for living. So the upper caste people exploited them and molested their wives. They had to do all types of manual works. Dr. Ambedkar took pain to ameliorate the conditions of Dalit. He advocated them to educate, to unite and to struggle for their self-respect and dignity.

The Dalit were stamped as a criminal community as they, sometimes had to loot grains for living. Annabhau Sathe, an activist of Ambedkarite movement depicts miserable plights of Dalit in his literary works. His prize winning novel **Fakira** is an account of the tortures and exploitation of a community which is socially excluded and oppressed by the upper caste people, and the British rulers. Fakira is portrayed as a robin hood who loots grains from the British store houses and distributes it to the starving people. He does not consider his act of looting grain as immoral because he knows many people are dying of starvation while much food is stored in rich men’s house. He fights for the rights of his people like a lion, “I desire to live and die like a lion.” Fakira reminds us of Shama Kolam (vidharbh robin hood) who sacrificed his whole for the poor and oppressed and fought for the rights of unprivileged. Like other protagonists of AnnaBhau Sathe, Fakira adopts the communist ideology as a part of life and fights for the rights of his people.

Though AnnaBhau Sathe is always accused of promoting the communist ideology we can see glimpses of Ambedkarism in his literary works also. In one of the ballads entitled **Mumbaicha Girni Kamgar** he throws light on miserable life of factory workers and points out the disparities between the haves and the haves-not in Mumbai.

“There are divine looking high – rise buildings on Malabar hills, Indrapuri.
There is a colony of kuber, rich people enjoy all material comforts.
On the contrary, people living in Parel work hard day and night, eating whatever they get and sweat in out.”
As a factory worker Sathe himself experienced tortures and exploitation.

Cast-discrimination is deeply rooted in Indian psyche which causes sufferings of Dalits. Due to caste-discrimination the Dalits are treated inhuman beings and deprived of rights. In the poem **Take a Hammer to Change the World** Sathe vehemently attacks on the caste system which is prevailing in Indian society. He suggests the Dalit to throw away the shackles of slavery and encourages them to revolt against tyranny and oppression. He also suggests them to follow the principles of Dr.Ambedkar and fights for their rights.

“Take a hammer to change the world so saying went Bhimrao!
Why the elephant is stuck sitting in the mud of slavery?...
To break the chains of class and caste hold to the name of Bhim!”

The Dalit are denied social respect on account of caste- discrimination. Caste-system in India has enslaved Dalits and deprived them of rights. Dr.Ambedkar revolted against the long- cherished traditions and fought for the rights of unprivileged. Being an ardent follower of Dr..Ambedkar, AnnaBhau Sathe wrote about torture, anguish, suffering, subjugation and oppression of the marginalized people.

Short-stories of AnnaBhau Sathe exclusively deal with the problems of Dalits. In the short story **Smashanatil Sone (Gold from the Grave)** he depicts miserable condition of a Dalit, Bheema who comes from a village to Mumbai in search of job but he does not get it due to his caste. He lives in graveyard and digs and buries dead bodied for living. He starts digging graves at midnight and finds gold buried with the corpses. The verna system is responsible for the miserable condition of Dalits.

CONCLUSION:-

AnnaBhau Sathe's literary works exclusively deal with the problems of Dalit. His protagonists revolt against oppression and subjugation of the upper caste people. They fight for rights of their community. Neither communists nor Ambedkarites fully recognized the literary works of Annabhau Sathe. In fact he was truly a legend who lived for oppressed.

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