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Modern and Scientific views in the short story of Anna Bhau Sathe *Barbadya Kanjari*

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Anna Bhau Sathe (1920 -1969) was the leading, versatile and endowed Dalit litterateur, social reformer, folk poet in Maharashtra, India. He was a novelist, short story writer, poet, dramatist, an actor, performer, singer, ballad composer and what not. He has contributed thirty novels and twenty two collections of short stories. He was appreciated not only in India but also in many parts of the world. As a result, a number of his works were translated not only in all the fourteen Indian languages but Czech, Polish, German and Russian. His literary works provided the classical plots, socio-cultural, socio-political issues and progressive ideas. He has explored his approaches towards life through various genre of Marathi literature. His literature proposes casteless and classless society and induction of humanity, equality and justice. The focal point of his literature was Dalit and untouchable poor people who strike for their livelihood. His characters are the victims of inhuman social system and stood candidly in against of it. He explored grief, humiliation, injustice and exploitation which are an integral part of their lives. Besides it he exposes social evils which are nonscientific in the age of science and technology. His characters protest conservative social system and commence humanistic and scientific approach. His characters in his writings are the victims of ignorance, inequality, pride, bad habits and superstitions. His stories are very much optimistic about social change.

The present paper aims to explore the modern and scientific views laid in the work of art of Anna Bhau Sathe who would

like to breaks up the conventional ideas and superstition through the short story *Barbadya Kanjari*. Anna Bhau Sathe has come out of the conventional ethics of writing literature and innovated a new trend of writing which exposes true and real life and not artificial and fabricated literary world. *Barbadya Kanjari* is one of the stories which projects the theme of inter-caste and re-marriage and for that the protagonist violets the traditional rules of caste panchayat.

Barbadya Kanjari revolts against the existing social and judicial systems. *Barbadya Kanjari* shows the world of slum. Somehow *Barbaya* lives life by cleaning ears of people but his daughter, Nilli, runs away with somebody. His clan imposes fine on him and he is ostracized but he revolts against the clan.

Barbadya, belongs to scheduled tribes community, Kanjari, resides in Mumbai slum, working cleaning the ears of people. His physique is strong and dashing one. By cleaning the ears of people he tries hard to meet the two ends of his family, his wife and two daughters, Nilli and Dulli. Nilli, an elder daughter, is young, beautiful and bold one. She is an age of getting married. Many more boys of the area were mad in her beauty but she never entertained any one of them. If any naughty boy takes step to propose her, *Barbadya* becomes violent and beats such guys mercilessly.

One afternoon, Dallaram, a neighbour of the same community, comes to *Barbaya* and demanded Nilli as a bride for his son, Saidya. After the negotiation, the proposal is finalized into two hundred


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rupees as a dowry that is to be given to Barbadya in return of Nilli. Saidya and Nilli got married as per their community custom and tradition in presence of their caste panchayat leaders.

Newly married couple, Nilli and Saidya, lived happily together for some months. Later on Saidya's health was deteriorating gradually due to Tuberculosis. He was taken to a doctor who advised Saidya to change the atmosphere and get fresh air. But due to extreme poverty, he could not go anywhere. Dallaram had no house in his village and no money to stay anywhere where Saindyia feels fresh. And as a result, Saindyia passed away in his early age. Nilli, a young and beautiful girl, became a widow just after some months of her marriage. As the custom of the community, once a girl gets married has to live in in-laws' house permanently. Nilli also has to follow the custom willingly or unwillingly. She has to live her remaining life lonely in Dallaram's hut in absence of her demised husband for lifetime. No one thinks Nilli's passions and emotions seriously. Widowhood is one of the world's key problems in life of a girl who loses her life partner. Widows especially young widow's grieve both the loss of a companion and death of their dreams. Nilli passes days and nights desolately under the pressure of social taboos.

Widows in every society face multiple and conflicting mental and social challenges. Traditionally, widowhood in India has been characterized by certain distinct and deplorable social norms. For instance, in earlier times a widow was burnt alive on her husband's funeral pyre in a custom known as 'Sati'. Where a widow was not burnt alive, she faced a 'living death' – her head was tonsured, she lived outside the main house or in a dark room within the house, slept on a thin mat on the floor, cooked her own food before

sunrise, was not allowed to adorn herself, wear clothes or ornaments and had to spend her life in devotion to God. Apart from these practices related to widowhood, loss of husband has a social, cultural, economic, physical as well as psychological impact on a woman. A widow is often vulnerable to physical, sexual and mental abuse. The loss of her husband results in her withdrawal from reproduction and sexuality and debarment from the functioning social unit of the family. For the rest of her life she is supposed to remain in mourning. Young widows may have to face the additional humiliation of being sexually exploited. In India Sati was banned in 1829 and the remarriage of widows was permitted by the Widow Remarriage Act enacted in 1856. Apart from the life of destitution, misery, isolation, the early widows have to renounce sexual pleasure. Widows belonging to the lower classes or castes are more impacted by patriarchal norms. Nilli is one of the victims of the patriarchal society. Her youth began to bother her and her tender feelings made her restless. For how many years she has to stay in that position for the whole life, she was stunned by that question.

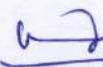
In against of Nilli's hut, Haidarya, a Muslim young boy, was residing. He had his eye on her and looking towards her passionately. When their eyes meet each other, both feel the same. Nilli fell in love of Haidarya and in a night they ran away secretly in order to get married. The news spread swiftly in the area. When Dallaram came to know the matter, he attacked on Barbadya's hut due to Nilli's betrayal. In both families there was a great tumult on the issue of braking up the social norms. According to Dallaram, Nilli's action was anti-social, violating social system, and it is a social offence which can lead to social ostracism and even inter-family /

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community violence. As a father of Nilli, Barbadya was held responsible for Nilli's misbehavior. He was attacked by Dallaram and his cousins and they hitted Barbadya brutally.

Caste and religion are integral parts of Indian society. Marriage within the same caste and same religion is the rule of land of the Indian society. Grave discrimination has been made on grounds of caste. There have been extremely stringent rules enforcing the same. Although we have come a long way in developing liberal perceptions, modern day society still has orthodox views and opinions inculcated within. To think of marriage between different castes and different religions is a difficult and socially unacceptable proposition. To every such marriage social stigma is attached making it difficult for the couples to survive.

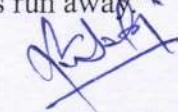
On next day, the community panchayat was called on to look into the issue of Nilli's misdeed. The meeting was held in the open space of the slum. Renowned arbitrators from different areas are called for to settle the dispute. One of the arbitrators spoke out to Barbadya : ' Tell Barbadya, Your Nilli has eloped with Haidarya. Do you agree with or not ?' Barbadya rudely replied , " Did I tell her to do it?" Barbadya's offensive defence seemed his impoliteness and arrogancy to the arbitrators. One more referee came forward and questiond , " "You bastard ! Did Nilli run away or not?" Barbadya , in same tone, strongly answered, " You and your family is bastard, you pig! You rascal! Hadrya died and went in hell, so my Nilli ran away."

Another referee leapt forward and asked , " Nilli has ran away. Do you agree ?"

Barbadya in defensive way , " Haidrya has died. Do you agree ?"

The referee , " Yes, agree."

Barbadya, " Yes, I too. My daughter, Nilli has run away."



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The referee ordered Barbadya for hundred pushups as a punishment.

Barbadya angrily asked , " You first tell me, why Haidarya has passed away?"

" If Haidarya had not been died, my Nilli would not have been run away."

And he demanded of hundred pushups to Dallaram.

An old referee came forward and asked, Barbadya what does he mean ?

Barbadya replied , " I shall not pay any fine."

And there was a great chaos between Barbadya and the referees.

Barbadya asked the referees, "What would your daughters have been done, when your son -in- laws had been died?"

The mob had no any answer. All of the referees kept quiet. Later on one of them ordered to cut off Barbadya's ear and said, "We shall cut off your ear, you will be excommunicated and debarred."

Barbadya roared in anger, "Go in hell, cut off my ear, I don't scare of it." One of the referees spoke out, "You surrender yourself before the Panchayat and pay the fine otherwise there will be the dire consequences."

Barbadya, " Don't threaten me , I will be have tea in the hotels, I will fetch water from lavatory tap , I expel all of you."

As per the custom and process of ostracization, one stray dog was brought, that was ritualized and its ear was cut off. One referee proclaimed, "Today onward Barbadya is ostracized, he is boycotted and debarred from any communal and familial business."

Now Barbadya was socially rejected and excluded from a social relationship or social interaction. He is rejected by individuals or an entire group of people. In that night, Barbadya couldn't sleep for long time. He protested strongly the organized public demonstration. It was the first time in history that Barbadya



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actively opposed the conventional and illogical customs which are inhuman and unjust in course of time without thinking its consequences. Being excluded or ostracized in view of other, Barbadya was not feeling himself guilty and repentant one. On the contrary, he thought it was his victory over irrationalism and conventionalism which are

grounded on agreements in society, rather than on external reality.

Notes

Barbadya Kanjari, Anna Bhau Sathe, Shramik Pratisthan, Kolhapur, 416002, 2010

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