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## CLASS-GENDER INTERSECTION IN ANNA BHAU SATHE'S *CHANDAN*

Vijay C. Thange

Associate Professor, Department of English

K. J. Somaiya College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Kopergaon Dist. Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India.

**Abstract:** Anna Bhau Sathe, being the inaugurator of the first-ever Dalit literary meet held on March 2, 1958, spoke extensively about literature and its role in society; about the author, and his responsibilities towards the masses. At the very beginning of the speech, he deliberated about the necessity of Dalit literary meet and hence coined the term 'Dalit Literature' for the first time in its history and so Anna Bhau is aptly considered as the chief proponent of Dalit literature. Dalit, as a word, he took it for class instead of caste, he spoke, "If we talk only about Maharashtra, there is a huge class of Dalits in this state. Though they are allied with other classes, their life is different from them. This class is now at the forefront of this country and their fight for justice influences the whole society. This class is the base of the social and cultural aspects of this country. However, the Dalit, who is being exploited and squeezed, is different and deprived. Furthermore, such a Dalit cannot find his clear reflection in today's Marathi literature. He is only expecting his crystal clear image to be reflected in literature and it is not bad to show him as it is".

**Key Words:** Class, gender, literature, dalit, oppression, labourers, exploitation, etc.

### 1. Introduction

Anna Bhau Sathe, for the first time in the history of Marathi literature, made a working woman as his heroine of the novel. Chandan is the protagonist of this novel; the whole story revolves around her. She is a young and beautiful widowed woman working on daily wages in Dayaram's company. Her youth and beauty, actually her traits, now have turned into her fierce enemies. Her husband gets killed accidentally under the debris of the mountain. However, the contractor declares him missing and thus denies any compensation to Chandan. Soon her financial condition deteriorates, and she had to move out of her house to earn her livelihood. She joins Dayaram's company and works there on daily wages. Her son, Raja, is an eight years old boy who is not happy with her coming late home. He asks about that and expresses his doubt about her character. Chandan is shocked to listen to Raja and explains her position:

Raja, I won't leave you at any cost, don't ever imagine that. I don't have any support in this world. I live only for you. I leave you at Pandu Baba so that I can earn our livelihood. Don't talk inauspicious things. Grow up as early as possible. I am not living the life of happiness. I am wriggling in the den of scorpions. I am alone. (My translation 29)

The author aptly delineates the restless mind of Chandan, her worries, helplessness, and above all, indomitable spirit and aspirations for Raja's future. Chandan's confidence and perseverance are significant factors in the successful progress of her life. She was put in danger by Tiger and Rangya and they were about to rape her, but the police came to her rescue, and she was saved. On another occasion, she was deceived by Paru and her mother. They locked her in a room; where Dayaram entered and tried to assault her sexually. However, Chandan did not give in easily and tried to save her from Dayaram. In an attempt to save her from the clutches of Dayaram and not finding any alternative, she attacked him with a can of acid from his room and threw it on him. Dayaram's one side got burnt and he became ugly. Chandan, with all her strength, together resisted Dayaram and showed her incorrigible nature which gave more importance to her chastity. She successfully retained her virtuosity, but landed in jail for her defend. Later on, she was saved by Dr. Jayvant from punishment and released from jail.

### Gopal's Evil Intention

Gopal, a ruffian, also had a bad intention on his mind about Chandan. He wanted Chandan as his mistress and entered her room at midnight. However, Chandan successfully drove him out without any harm to her. Nevertheless, Gopal threatened her to come back tomorrow again. She was devastated by his threatening and decided to commit suicide under a train with her son Raja. However, the train stopped near her, and the police caught her. Later in the Police station, she came to know that Gopal had committed a murder and was arrested by the police. She was relieved and came back her home. Chandan preferred death than to lose her chastity and became a mistress of Gopal. She did not value money more than her chastity and virtuosity. She preferred jail over Dayaram's money and a comfortable life. Though she lived in poverty, she never compromised her values and always led a life of honour and dignity. Even in jail also, she was haunted by Gopal's threats. She was not safe and secure in jail, also. Chandan expressed her helplessness and insecurity as:

How many days can I save myself? How many days can I struggle? I struggled, so I came here to jail... Am I happy and secure here? The sword of fear is still hanging on my neck here in jail... Even though one sword is broken, there is another one to attack me. I am alone. Raja is still a small child. He will take many years to grow up. What can I do till then? (My translation 112-12)

### **Chandan: An Empowered Woman**

Chandan, a representative of a single-parent mother, without any substantial means of livelihood, emerged as a woman of courage and spirit. Though she was not a tigress, she was also not a meek and mild lamb. She was a modest woman who believed in humanity. She helped Champa in her adverse situation and gave her five hundred rupees. Chandan liked the company of Dr. Jayvant and considered him as someone who cared for her. Jayvant also rescued her from jail by appealing in the high court, which resulted in the acquittal of Chandan. Chandan was overwhelmed when she came out of jail and tears rolled down her cheeks. Earlier Chandan had helped Dr. Jayvant when he was arrested on the false allegations by Chingi and Zingrya. Chandan, with the help of Champa and Rangya, saved Dr. Jayvant when he said that some of the people were like gods in this area. "I assumed that there are all ghosts in this area, but you two women have given me a new vision God is also there which I experienced. I witnessed God in you. I will never forget your help." (My translation 82)

Chandan was optimistic about her future life and never gave up her hopes and aspirations. She was always ready to help others despite her meagre income. She believed in goodness among the people and that is why Paru and her old mother easily deceive her. Paru was also a victim of a male-dominated world where she was quickly and somewhat willingly succumbed to the demands of Dayaram. Only for the sake of pleasing Dayaram, Paru deceived Chandan and locked her inside the room only to be devoured by Dayaram. Later on, Dayaram also deceived her by killing her old mother. Paru was Ganyawadar's<sup>i</sup> wife, but they were never on consenting terms. After Ganya's death, Dayaram took responsibility and started having physical relations with her. Paru was willingly physically pleasing Dayaram for the sake of money as she had no other means of income. Even she was pregnant with the child of Dayaram. However, when Dayaram killed her mother, she left him and started begging and one day brutally aborted the child of Dayaram from her womb. She completed the revenge of her mother's murder by killing the child of Dayaram in her womb. She also told the truth in court about Chandan's confrontation with Dayaram and admitted her involvement in the crime. Chandan was released from the court freely with the help of Dr. Jayvant and Paru's witnesses.

### **Champa's Fight**

Champa is another character from the novel, which is also a victim of societal Brahmanic Patriarchal set up. Her parents died when she was still a child. A woman took care of her and she grew up, she was handed over to a man who pulled her forcibly into prostitution. Her dream of marriage and family was broken and in prostitution itself, she got engrossed. Rangya, a driver in Dayaram's company, rescued her from a brothel house and let her stay in his own house in the slum area. Champa worked with Rangya on his truck and stayed with him as his wife. She was younger than Chandan and called her sister (Akka). She made Chandan aware of possible threats to her being a single woman. "It is challenging for a single woman to live a life of chastity. In one night she can be a whore." (My translation 8) Champa had witnessed and experienced the agonies of loneliness; she spoke the words of her own experience. Champa explained to Chandan that nobody willingly entered the racket of prostitution, but the situation around her made the situation so horrible that a woman saw no other option but to accept prostitution. She always made Chandan aware and warned her to stay away from the ruffians like Dayaram, Gopal and Tiger. "Men are very notorious. They are like ants stuck to jagary." (My translation 9) She advised Chandan not to be fearful of these ruffians and don't avoid looking at them. She asked her to look into the eyes of these ruffians. "The woman who does not look into the eyes of men is considered weak by men. They assume that she can be very easily taken into control." (My translation 14)

Champa's philosophy towards life is quite simple; she said that a woman had to be careful, and if she fell once, it was challenging for her to regain her character. "A woman once fallen is like a stone rolling from the mountain. It will stop only at the base of it." (My translation 14) Her advice was not only for Chandan but she made the entire women aware of the world and asked them to live a life of dignity. Champa was very upright and gained control over Rangya, a strong ruffian. She reprimanded him for helping Tiger and putting Chandan in danger. She chided so harshly to him that out of repentance, he called Chandan as his sister and truly helped her after that incident.

Champa helped Dr. Jayvant to come out of jail. Dayaram had asked Chingi and Zingrya to blame Dr. Jayvant for their child's death. Accordingly, Chingi and Zingrya accuse that Dr. Jayvant's medicine killed their son and hid a bottle of medicine in Champa's house. When Chandan told about Dr. Jayvant's plight to Champa, she handed over Chandan a bottle of medicine. Chandan and Champa, both gave the proof of a bottle in court and Chingi and Zingrya also admitted that a child died of a Zingrya's hard blow and not because of medicine. Dr. Jayvant was acquitted, and Dayaram was convicted and sent to jail.

## **2. Conclusion**

Anna Bhau's women characters are upright, ready to fight against injustice, and show an indomitable spirit and perseverance in the adverse situation. They are ready to sacrifice everything for their honour and chastity. His female characters are wise, brave, unselfish, dependable, and energetic. They are ready to fight with men, bureaucracy, and society. Anna Bhau's egalitarian attitude makes them at par with the male-dominated, patriarchal world, and they take cudgel against the gender-biased society and show an indomitable spirit.

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