

**THEME OF ANTI SUPERSTITION IN THE STORY OF ANNA BHAU SATHE
'MARIACHA GADA' (MARIACHA'S CART)**

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Anna Bhau Sathe , (1 August 1920 – 18 July 1969) a social reformer, folk poet, and Dalit writer from Maharashtra, has handled every genre of literature skilfully such as novels , collections of short stories, plays, a travelogue, screenplays, folkloric narrative styles like powada and lawani and so on . Anna Bhau Sathe is the rarest of the rare example in Marathi literature of those who has contributed the brilliant literature without any formal education. His writings are not only considered as a genre of literature, but also as a way of life. It is not just a matter of ideas and fantasy but a collection of every part of real life. Before his arrival as a literary figure in Marathi literature, the literature was limited to the white- collared people where imaginary and metaphysical world was the centre point of their writings. The problems and perceptions of common men were absent in the literature. Anna Bhau Sathe effectively portrayed the common man and his sorrows, plight in Marathi literature. Sathe wrote first handed experience in his novels and celebrated the fighting spirit in their characters who work against all odds in life. *He was true socialist in his personality where was fine blending of a philosopher and activist. So upliftment of downtrodden rural people is the recurrent theme of his writing. His life philosophy inspired many people to fight against social evil practices.*

Anna Bhau Sathe was born in a neglected, untouchable, backward society and he described all the misery, injustice, humiliation and poverty as he suffered. He represented people's grief, pain, helplessness, injustice, oppression which had no place in the literature. So his literature is not based on fantasy but huge reality can be seen in his literature. The protagonist of his literature is seen as an ordinary, poor, untouchable, backward class. It has to be said that each of his literary works is a step towards the progress of the society. He was very much sensible about the poor, illiterate people and hindrances in their development. One of the main reasons for

the decline of rural life is superstition, a cultural practice, strongly believing in unrealistic, imaginary, unachievable, irrational and baseless world. Anna Bhau Sathe wrote different stories and in each story he conveyed a unique social message. He sincerely attempted to generate social awareness in rural minds in against of superstition. It is his appeal to eradicate superstition in the age of science. So he deserves to be taken as a social reformer.

The story, 'Mariai's Cart', (Mariaicha Gada) strongly opposes superstition. This story impresses the reader to reject superstition and live by adopting a scientific approach. A variety of characters in this story play an important role in conveying the message of eradication of superstition very impressively. The protagonist of this story, Nana Patil, a youth, stands up against superstition and opposes traditional orthodoxy and superstition.

The majority of superstitious people in the village oppose Nana in different ways. They are not in position to accept scientific views and they go up against of the person who tries to imbibe rationality. Despite the opposition of the majority of the villagers, the clever Nana uses his various tricks and techniques to achieve his goal without any bloodshed or violence.

In a small village, there was an epidemic of diarrhoea. Every day people were dying from this epidemic. Everyone in the village was worried about the disease. It is referred the Mariai's disease. The village elders were concerned about Mariai's illness. Everyone was thinking about how to handle this. Superstitious people thought that this was the wrath of the goddess Mariai who is dissatisfied and result is in dying people. People have not been able to get out of this cycle of superstition because of this misconception that has been ingrained in their minds for years. If we want to get out of it, we have to please Goddess Maria. There was a traditional belief that one should go on faste in the name of the goddess and on the last day, one should make a cart named after the goddess (Mariaicha Gada) and leave it on the outskirts of the village with great worship. Pulling out the carriage of the goddess out of the village means bidding farewell to the disease. Everyone was thinking in the same direction.

There was a young man named Nana in that village. He was not a believer in this orthodoxy and superstition. He was rational and an ardent believer in scientific views. He used to struggle for the children of the village for their education and strived for modernity. But four old men from the village were strongly opposed to Nana. Among them are Satwaji, Keru, Bhau

Babaji and Mhatarba. The four of them used to sit at the centre place of the village and discuss various topics. These four seemed to be Nana's number one enemy because he would turn their every orthodoxy into spoil.

Once the discussion was going on, many people from the village gathered and going ahead talking about this epidemic. Everyone started voicing their opinions. One of the conformist, Satwaji said, "Villagers, Mariai has entered the village, it is very bad. Mariai's cart has entered this village". "We need to observe for three Fridays." In the meantime, someone asked, "What does it mean to observe three Fridays?" Satwachi replied, "Turn off the wheel. If this wheel stops, the wheel of Maria's car will stop means Mariai will stop to stretch its arms." Nana said, "I don't agree with that. Then turn off the grinding mill." People denied stopping the wheel of grinding mill. Nana said quietly, "Don't run off the wheel. We should all sweep the village. Only cleanness, medicine and doctors can cure the disease." After a long debate, as a middle way, people agreed to observe three Fridays as well as and sweeping the village and giving medicine to the people. Nana was in position to go Taluka by a bullock cart to call on the doctor. Satwaji objected to Nana taking the bullock cart. Nana replied bluntly, "There are sixty coaches in a train with four wheels each. There are 240 wheels in a train. First turn off the wheels of the train, so that I will not take the bullock cart." No one can stop the train. All left helpless and Nana went to Taluka in a bullock cart and came with a doctor and medicine. As a result, the epidemic was brought under control in the village. Some of the elders assumed that that occurred due to observing by three Fridays. And proclaimed Mariai's cart must be rung and bid farewell at the border of the village. Nana was healed and Mariai was ready to be laid out of the village.

People decorated the village. There was a crowd in front of the temple of Mariai. Namya Mahar was standing open in the crowd by holding a Neem tree branches in his hand. Parata's old lady was standing with her hair loose. Marai was about to have in the body of the old lady.(Angaat devi yene, is a term in Marathi language. It literally means, being possessed by the spirit of a Hindu female demigod like Durga Mata and Mariai.) Mariai's cart had left the village at around noon. Nana stopped the cart and asked which village border was going to ? Namya, who had been possessed by the goddess, said that it would go to this village, Shirte. Nana said, "If this cart is left on the outskirts of the village of Shirte, the Mariai will enter the village of Shirte and

there will be the onset of vomiting. All the people who had married the girls in Shirte village protested against taking Mariai's cart towards Shirte village. Seeing this protest, it was decided to take Mariai's cart towards Padli village. The people who were the guests in the village of Padli vehemently opposed the move of Mariai's cart towards the village of Padli. Mariai's cart stopped moving in two directions. It was decided to take towards this village Khubi as the third direction. The people whose guests were in Khubia village shouted loudly and the cart stopped moving towards Khubia village too. As a last resort, it was decided to take the cart to Bichut. And the same thing happened. The people whose guests were in this village, rioted. At last, Mariai's chariot would not go in all four directions. Everyone was fighting so that the cart would not go in the direction of their guest's village. The people went to kill the person who had been possessed by the goddess. And he fled out. In this way, Mariai's cart did not leave the village. Everything left unchanged.

Nana handled the issue very skilfully and cunningly. He exposes the absurdities in the argument of those who spoke in favour of the preservation of this superstition and at last succeeds in convincing them of the foolishness of the continuation of this illogical practice. Through this story, Anna Bhau Sathe revolted against superstition and showed how progressive , scientific and new approach to life prevails upon the old, unscientific and superstitious approach and appealed to undertake a scientific approach .

Works Cited :

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