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Conference on: *Uncovering Indo - Russian Discourse in the writings of Anna Bhau Sathe: An Author of
Masses*, organized by the Russian Centre for Science & Culture in collaboration with MGD Mission
Maharashtra at Russian Centre for Science & Culture, Mumbai on 4th October, 2017 and he / she presented /
published a paper titled: Raising the Voice Against the Colonial Power: Fakirathe Story of Rebellion.

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Raising the Voice Against the Colonial Power: *Fakira* the Story of Rebellion

Ganesh Chintaman Wagh

*Assistant Professor, Department of English, R.B. Narayanrao Borawake College, Shirampur,
Dist- Ahmednagar, (M.S.) India*

Abstract

In the present paper the researcher has tried to show how the novel of Anna Bhau Sathe *Fakira* talks about the injustice done to the outcast and downtrodden community in the village Wategaon and the characters try to fight against the injustices done to them. It is a fine piece of fiction which deals with freedom fight of the villagers against the colonial power and the rebellious attitude of the characters inside the novel. The villagers raise their voice against the colonial rule and demonstrate their agitation against the injustices done to them, which is the underlined theme of the novel. The present paper shows that the writer has made lively characters and how they show their spirit of freedom through their actions.

Key Words: Injustice, downtrodden community, freedom fight, colonial power

Introduction:

Anna Bhau Sathe, a well known social reformer was born in Wategaon in Sangli district of Maharashtra to a poverty stricken family of Matang Community (A community which belongs to Schedule tribe). Because of poverty he could not take formal education; still his pen has produced very reformative literature of the days. He was influenced by communist ideology and could be seen in his writings. Sathe shifted toward Dalit activism, following the teachings of B. R. Ambedkar, and used his stories to amplify the life experiences of Dalits and workers. In his inaugural speech at the first Dalit SahityaSammelan, a literary conference that he founded in Bombay in 1958, he said that "The earth is not balanced on the snake's head but on the strength of Dalit and working-class people," emphasising the importance of Dalit and

working-class people in global structures. Unlike most Dalit writers of the period, Sathe's work was influenced by Marxism rather than Buddhism. He said that "Dalit writers are entailed with the responsibility of liberating and shielding Dalits from the existing worldly and Hindu tortures as the long standing conventional beliefs cannot be destroyed instantly

"Despite lack of formal education, Anna Bhau Sathe wrote in Marathi 35 novels, one among which was *Fakira* (1959). *Fakira*, which is currently in its 19th edition, received a state government award in 1961. Anna Bhau Sathe wrote directly from his experiences in life, and his novels celebrate the fighting spirit in their characters who work against all odds in life. To generate social awareness, he organized stage performances of *powade* and *tamasha*, ethnic dances chiefly performed by women,

which are popular in rural Maharashtra. He produced 14 *tamasha* shows. In the late 1940s, the then Home Minister of the Bombay state government Morarji Desai had banned *tamasha* shows, but Anna Bhau Sathe courageously defied the ban by renaming them as *lokanatya*. People in Maharashtra conferred the epithet *lokshahir* on Anna Bhau Sathe. Anna Bhau Sathe decided to bring awareness among the masses against Brahminism which imposed untouchability and virtually compelled the deprived lot to take recourse to criminal and filthy occupations against the British Government which imposed the Criminal Tribes Act and subjected his community to harassment and against the forces of feudalism and capitalism which exploited his community and made life unbearable. He used his art and poetic genius in educating the masses". (<http://mulnivasiorganiser.bamcef.org>).

The novel *Fakira* deals with the customs and the rituals of the small village Wategaon which is situated in the vicinity of two major rivers of Maharashtra, known as Krushna and Koyna. The land is very fertile due to the soil of Krushna and Koyna, hence the bulk of the villagers are farmers. Cultivation of farming is well because of well irrigated land and fertile soil of the village. Another neighboring village is Shigaon, which provides ample opportunity in the growth of the plot of the novel. The activities in the village Shigaon helped to develop the theme of freedom fighting. The distance between the two villages is about five to six kilometers. The connecting road goes through dense forest and farms owned by the villagers.

Caste system is predominant in the novel which shows a typical pre independent India's Social structure. Socially upward class people like Kulkarni and Patil, who are considered to be important people in the village and they look after the village welfare and are administrators of the village appointed by the British Government. There are other casts like Sutar (Carpenter Community and Kumbhar (Potters) who live inside the village borders. The outcasts of the village live outside of village borders known as the downtrodden community. Their houses are surrounded by the old cactus trees and bushes. In these houses of the outcasts Daulati's house is most important. The other characters are Appa, Sawala Nana, Bhairu and Fakira's father Ranoji.

The novel is named after the protagonist Fakira, whose father Ranoji, sacrificed his life for the honour of the village. The villages celebrate the yearly Jogni festival that emphasizes the unity of the village Wategaon. Each village worships its deity as the protector of village. Stealing the jogni is the ritual of the village. When the procession goes in the village, it is believed that this deity eradicates all the evils in the village and brings happiness in the lives of villagers. While stealing jogni if the person is caught there is custom to kill him. Ranoji, Fakira's father is killed by Babu Khot, while stealing the jogni and Fakira was just nine years old when his father was killed.

The villagers are exploited by charging high taxes on them by the British. The writer has dexterously shown how injustices done to the villagers become the cause of their rebellion against the colonial power.

Common villagers are treated brutally by the white, British soldiers. British oppression could be seen in the exploitation of the villagers. British government has banned some downtrodden communities by labeling them as robbers. Many villagers are suffering due to the prejudiced views of British towards these downtrodden communities and there are many victims in the village those have been sent to different villages and towns as the prisoners. Sawala nana is also one of victims who is exiled as prisoner to Belgaon. The other villagers of Wategaon have to give daily attendance to the Police Patil of the village who is an authorized person of the British. The downtrodden communities are treated badly by the British authorities and have labeled them as dacoits and robbers. This treatment to the downtrodden community is one of the reasons of mutiny against the British power.

This injustice becomes the cause of rebellion in the downtrodden community. SattuBhosale is one of the victims of this injustice. He is close friend to Fakira, when he joined British Army; he saw visible discrimination because he belonged to the downtrodden community. He resigns the British Army because of discrimination and his self esteem does not allow him to be a slave. In the development of the plot of the novel we see that he joins Fakira for the noble cause of freedom fight.

Once there is a draught in the village Wategaon and all the village suffers from it, but mostly downtrodden suffer a lot. Due to contagious diseases many villagers have lost their lives. Police Patil communicates with the British authority and requests the authority to look after the villagers but there

is no reply from the authority. British government does not pay heed to the requests done by Police Patil by neglecting their duties and responsibilities. Many villagers died because of infectious diseases and starvation. Even in this critical condition of the villages, British government collected tax from the villagers. Because of this outrage Fakira beats Police Patil to show his protest against the British power. The government gets furious by this act of Fakira and sends police force to arrest Fakira. Fakira flees away from the place with his companions. When the police are not able to locate Fakira and his companions, government declares prizes on them.

The whole community of Fakira is put behind the bars and they are tortured badly. Women are dishonored; houses are burnt and destroyed, men beaten badly in the village. For the arrest of Fakira special officer is appointed and he brutally treats the common villagers. Fakira takes the revenge against the British power by looting Mathakari's wada where the tax is collected in the form of grain is kept. He distributes the grain to the common villagers. To teach the lesson to British power Fakira loots the British treasury of almost fifty Thousand and distributes among the common villagers. Fakira becomes the care taker of his community and tries to save them from British tyranny. In this way he becomes the freedom fighter and fights against the British power. As a result of this British government gets furious and declares huge prize for his arrest.

In the course of action of the novel SattuBhosale and Fakira plan to attack British Army camp but later they cancel it

because of the lack of human power. Fakira and his companions fight bravely against the British power and help the common villagers from the tyranny of the British. Finally the novel ends with note of arrest of Fakira and all his companions. The story of the novel Fakira is replete with many incidences which tell us about injustices done to the downtrodden community. Fakira not only helps his community but also he challenges the supremacy of colonial powers and their brutality towards his community.

Anna Bhau Sathe puts his views regarding individual rights and freedom very forcefully through this novel. This novel stands above all the literary creations of the era. Anna Bhau Sathe, very minutely observed the society and has beautifully narrated the bravery of all the characters who without any fear raise their voices against the British injustice. All the villagers stand with Fakira and bear the tortures done to them and take part in the freedom struggle. *Fakira*, in true sense is a freedom struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor. This novel is a fine piece of

narrative where we see all characters fight for their self identity and ultimately they raise their voices against the injustices done to them and become the cause of freedom fight against the colonial supremacy. The villagers raise their voice against the colonial rule and demonstrate their agitation against the injustices done to them, which is the underlined theme of the novel. The present paper shows that the writer has made lively characters and how they show their spirit of freedom through their actions.

Conclusion:

The novel *Fakira* is a fine example of Freedom fighting movement against colonial rule. All the characters including the protagonist raise their voice against colonial tyranny. Anna Bhau Sathe has very skillfully developed the theme of freedom fighting movement. The story of the novel is replete with many incidences which tell us about injustices done to the downtrodden community and rebellion of the villagers. It's a true saga of freedom fight against colonial power.

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