

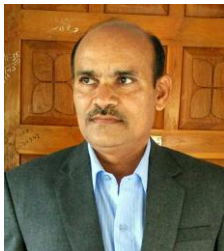


A THEME OF REVENGE IN ANNA BHAU SATHE'S SELECTED SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT

Anna Bhau Sathe (1920 – 1969) was a novelist, short story writer, poet and a social reformer. His some of the early short stories have been selected for this paper. These short stories present rural life with its odds and uniqueness. The life-style characterizes uniqueness of the rural folk. Though, the revenge is not prominent theme of Sathe's stories, it is there as an inseparable part of rural life. An analysis of revenge passion is explored in this paper. It is not easy to lead rural life in normal way. For the sake of leading full rewarding life, people commit crimes and in turn their crimes have not punished properly. The sufferers take revenge and restore their loss. Revenge is an elemental passion in human being. 'It is used to right a wrong by going outside of the law.' The characters in the short stories are not heroes or heroines in the traditional sense of term. They are ordinary persons still they struggle to take revenge. Sakhuba Khula, Keshavrao Chavan, Maruti Potaraj, Fula, Gajara, Rani and Bhau are ordinary persons and they take revenge on their offender. All the characters who take revenge want to live life in a strong way. While taking revenge they take care of not to be guilty of judicial and social laws.

Key Words: Injustice, Struggle, Exploitation, Revenge

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Anna Bhau Sathe was a social reformer, poet, writer and an activist. In spite of having no formal education, he wrote 35 novels and 15 collections of short stories in Marathi. He also wrote ten ballads (*povades*), and 12 screenplays. Much of his work have been translated into many Indian and as many as 27 non-Indian languages. He was born in *dalit mang* family. So he had firsthand experiences of life of downtrodden and rural folks. He was influenced by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. As he was social reformer, he organized stage performances through which he generated social awareness. For this purpose he used *powade* (ballads) and *tamasha* (later on it renamed as *loknatya*) People conferred

on him the degree of *Lokshahir*. So he is rightly called as *Lokshahir*.

His famous novel *Fakira* (1959) received a State Government in 1961. His novels *Vaijayanta*, *Aawadi*, *Makadicha Maal*, *Chikhalatil Kamal*, *Waranecha Wagh*, *Alguj*, and *Fakira* have been screened. The short stories selected for this paper are from the collection '*Nikhara*' and '*Khulanwdi*'. The setting and the background of the stories is rural. It is located in the western region of Sangli and northern region of Kolhapur districts in Maharashtra (India). So it is evident that the social and regional characteristics are bound to appear in his writings. Anna Bhau Sathe presents the picture of social

reality with its all virtues and vices. In social behavior many times, vices or guilty are not punished or their crimes not punishable according to laws. Those who are victims of injustice, they try to take revenge. Their revenge is the natural reaction against offenders. If aggrieved takes revenge, it is mental satisfaction for him.

Revenge is a kind of justice. It is taken wherever law is unable to give justice or in some cases for some crimes justice cannot be begged for. Whenever there is in the absence of law, revenge is taken. Usually, revenge is considered as a harmful action against injustice. "It is used to right a wrong by going outside of the law."⁶ When an individual feels that the law will not do justice, the revenge is taken. Revenge is basically a desire of restoring power. This power could be restored in a form of honour, dignity, wealth, sex etc. The lack of power is the motivating force for revenge.

Revenge has been one of the important themes of literature. From ancient to the contemporary literature, it aroused the curiosity among the readers. In Sathe's writings also the theme of revenge runs profusely however, the revenge is not the prominent theme in his short stories.

In '*Khulanwadi*,' a ten years old orphan girl is found in the village temple of Lord *Khuluba*. Sakhuba Khula adopts the girl and baptized her as Manjula. When she becomes of 17 years old, she becomes the attraction of all people. Youths become mad for her. Anandrao Patil of Kanegaon is one of them. He frequently visited Khulanwadi on the many pretensions. But his real purpose is to meet Manjula. Once he caught Manjula alone and tries to catch hold on her. He approaches to her and holds her sari. She loudly calls her father, he instantly comes and Anandrao Patil runs away. But Khuluba misunderstands and believes that she is seduced, molested. All villagers gather in temple after seven years to decide the fortune of Munjula. It is revealed that she is pure. All started to laugh for the misunderstanding. However, Khulu bawas not happy. He orders youths to teach a lesson to Anandrao Patil for his act. "Next day, Pilaji Khula cuts the right arm of Anandrao Patil and this discussion started in whole village. On the third day,

Police Party arrest Pilaji at dawn." (Khulanwadi, 15) While going to jail, Pilaji Khula requests Sakhuba to arrange a marriage of Manjula and he will be back for her marriage.

In this story, even though Manjula was not seduced, Khuluba wants to take revenge Anandrao Patil for trying to dishonor her. Accordingly, he executes his plan through Pilaji Khula. He punishes Anandrao Patil and restores his as well as his daughter's honour.

'*Vede Ware*' (i.e. Mad Wind) is a story of Gangu who is educated and cultured than all other girls in the village. Not only that she is beautiful but she is a daughter of a rich family also. When she becomes old enough for marriage, she ponders over the thoughts of marriage. She knows that she is the only educated and beautiful girl in the village. Obviously, it is impossible to find a match for her. In spite of all this, she has to marry and has to go to her husband. Then her freedom will be over. She will have to serve her children and the husband. So she says, "After the marriage, the happy-go-lucky life will not be in my lot like now. Really, marriage is suffocation for women...." (Nikhara, 37) Keshavrao Chavan, her father, starts to find a match for her because older women in the village advised Keshavrao, "Your daughter is now marriageable. Arrange her marriage quickly! Marriageable daughter means ember in a sleeve." (Nikhara, 37)

It was not easy for Keshavrao Chavan to find a suitable match for her daughter. He wants a 'rich and educated' husband for her daughter. However, he decides to value not for education and sophistication but to respect only to clan and wealth in the matter of marriage. He wandered a lot finding a match for his daughter but helplessly, he selects Police Patil's family for his daughter. The family was rich but the proposed bridegroom for Gangu was "slightly crazy and maniac.... It was not at all suitable for Gangu." (Nikhara, 38) He was illiterate. Keshavrao decides to give Gangu's hand to this illiterate person for the sake of wealth. In due course of time, the marriage takes place. Gangu's husband has contempt for education as he was not educated. Whenever, he comes across his educated wife, he becomes angry because of jealousy. He has a threat in his mind that his wife will overpower him.

So the tender and harmonious relation between the husband and wife does not take place. Gangu is mentally tortured by her husband. On the contrary, Gangu respects all relatives at her in-laws and adjusts every adverse situation wisely showing her utmost endurance.

Keshavrao is eagerly waiting for the happy news i.e. of her pregnancy from Gangu. Unfortunately, instead of the happy news, he gets unpleasant news that his son-in-law has beaten his Gangu. On this news, Keshavrao becomes furious and runs towards his daughter. He sees his daughter victim of her husband. He notices his charming daughter became dull and unattractive. He beats his son-in-law and brings his daughter back to his home.

Gangu starts to gather the lost charm and once again she starts to look charming with the careful and loving treatment of her mother. Physically, she becomes strong but mentally she becomes weak. Mentally, she is disturbed and loses herself somewhere. She gives no response on calling. It seems that something is troubling her. She is not happy with her parents also.

On one day at dawn, Gangu's mother comes to know that Gangu is not at home. Immediately, Keshavrao runs here and there to find her out but of no use. Gangu is nowhere - not in huts or no in farms. He realizes that she might have gone to her husband. Keshavrao goes to his son-in-law and demands his daughter back. But his son-in-law says that if your daughter is ready to come with you, you can take her happily. Keshavrao calls his daughter. She comes out and says, "I shall not come again." and Keshavrao goes back lonely.

In this way, Keshavrao takes revenge on his son-in-law for his loving daughter. The revenge is natural reaction. Because his daughter was something special – educated and cultured – for him. But Gangu's decision is practical for going back to her husband. Her decision had social and conventional value. The story shows victory of practical decision over natural reaction. Both – Keshavrao and his son-in-law won.

'Sud' (i.e. revenge) presents revenge taken on a landlord by using superstitions of people in supernatural elements like ghosts and other things. A cunning Maruti Potaraj knows that people believe

in supernatural elements and he plays a trick to restore his five acres land.

Nanchand Marwadi is the owner of a huge wealth and land. He is a small king. His family is also big. He lives in farmhouse with his big family and employed many servants and workers for land.

In spite of having every luxury at his feet, he is not happy and not leading comfortable life. There was a big ant-hill at a distance from his farmhouse. Once when children were playing and enjoying some edibles from the farm, they see flames of five to six feet long from that big ant-hill. Moreover, all the members of the family witness some terrible sounds, some fearful images with torches in their hands appearing in darkness. The threat is dancing in various forms across the farm. The farm becomes one of the enchanted places. Because of the fear Nanchand's family leave the farmhouse and shift to village for peaceful life. For few days, they enjoy peace of mind in village. Gradually, the life in village also starts to become troublesome. Suddenly, snakes use to appear in the house. Nanchand tries every possible attempt to overcome this problem but remains unsuccessful. He consults many known and unknown exorcists but everything was in vain. He is now ready to do anything to get rid of this problem. Helplessly, he assigns this work to Naik, the narrator of the story who does not believe in ghosts. Nanchand is ready to give away everything what he has for mental peace and blissful life of the family.

One day, the narrator happens to meet Maruti Potaraj who was sawing a big tree-trunk with Benaji Mahar. Actually, the narrator notices that Maruti's enormous body, big head, wide neck, long hair and clicked an idea Maruti as a ghost. Maruti asks whether Naik found the ghost. Naik replied, "I will find him out if not, I will shoot him." Maruti confused and unsettled when the narrator mentions about shooting the ghost. Maruti affirms, "Ghost is not crow. O, Naik, ghost cannot be killed by bullet." (Nikhara, 46) He tells that he is able to manage the ghost. The narrator asks how. Maruti replies, "Meet me one day." (Nikhara, 47)

In this way, Maruti Potaraj promises to manage to matter of ghost but he says, "My five acres of land is in the possession of Nanchand. I

want that land. If I get that land I shall manage that ghost, snake and all. I shall give the ear of that ghost in your hand." (Nikhara, 49) Nanchand is ready to give everything for this ghost. The narrator of the story approaches Nanchand with the proposal of five acres of land. Nanchand immediately accepts and the papers of that five acre land handed over to Naik. Naik then goes to Maruti Potaraj and says, "Take this paper and show me the ghost." (Nikhara, 49) He carefully goes through the papers and convinced that the papers are the same which he wanted. Maruti becomes happy. Naik wants the ghost so he asks about the same. Maruti gives his own ear and says, "Take hold of this ear. I am the ghost." (Nikhara, 50) Then he explains each and everything to Naik. He agrees that he did all these things for the sake of his five acres of land which Nanchand occupied. He promises that henceforward the ghost will not be seen.

In this way, Maruti Potaraj takes a revenge for his land. He teaches a lesson to Nanchand. Where law does not work tricks and beliefs work. It is immoral to possess ones estate. The lost wealth is restored and the revenge is taken.

'Nikhara' (i. e. ember) is about the revenge of a poor young girl Fula. She takes revenge on Ganguji Patil who tortured Fula and her family. And because of him her father Vithoba Danganre passes away.

Vithoba Danganre is poor and has a son Nama and a daughter Fula. His wife died twenty years ago so he reared up these two children. Now he is aged and solely dependent on his children – Nama and Fula. Fula is young and beautiful girl. She is now marriageable girl and Vithoba has been waiting for relatives to come for his daughter Fula. He is poor so he leaves everything to destiny. He used to sing devotional songs at dusk in front of his home.

Gungaji Patil also used to visit and join him in the singing devotional *abhangas*. However, Gungaji's purpose is to court Fula. He wants to bring Fula under his control and exploit her sexually. But Fula is straightforward girl. She declines all his attempts in this regard. Gungaji Patil thinks that if Fula will not agree with his demand he will ravish her forcefully. He is Patil and will manage everything

easily by the influence and money. So he firmly decided, "to ravish her. What will happen? Who will ask me? Vithoba is poor.... and I am Patil." (Nikhara, 53)

Once at evening, Fula was coming from the farm to her home. She had a bundle of firewood on her head and she was coming through the narrow path. Suddenly, Gungaji appeared before her. He asks her to obey his orders. Fula immediately apprehends his intention of ravishing her. Knowing the seriousness of the circumstance, Fula skillfully manages to throw a bundle of firewood at him and escapes herself and runs away towards home. Gradually, Gungaji recovers from the situation and he comes to know that she escaped safely.

Insulted and offended Gungaji, now wants to do something and revenge Fula. He comes to know that Fula has not reported the incident to anybody. So he musters the courage and after an interval, he again starts to visit Vithoba. He repeatedly visits Vithoba and use to sing devotional songs with him. Once he secretly puts forty grams of cannabis in Vithoba's sitar and goes away. Immediately police appear and catch Vithoba red hand for possessing cannabis. All the people gather. Police complete a post-mortem. Vithoba is declared as a convict and taken to village office followed by crying Fula and Nama. All the villagers gathered and felt sorry for Vithoba but they do nothing for him.

Nama Wani comes ahead from the crowd and requests police officer to scrutinize the case properly. He says that Vithoba has been innocent thoroughly in his life and he will not do such an illegal act. Police Officer reinvestigates the case and one police constable confesses Gungaji's crime. It was Gungaji who had put cannabis in Vithoba's sitar. But Gungaji was disappeared from the village. Police release Vithoba respectfully. But the effect of insult on Vithoba was so deep so that he becomes so restless. Because of this insult, Vithoba gives up food and water. As a result, he passes away within fortnight. Villagers said that a poor, innocent, and honest person passed away.

Fula was still crying on the thirteenth day of Vithoba's death. The funeral rights of the thirteenth day have been completed. But Fula was anxious to take revenge of her father. She comes to know that

Gungaji secretly use to come in his farmhouse during the night. Fula determines to revenge Gungaji. On the same night, she secretly comes in the farm of Gungaji Patil. Silence was everywhere. Fulasees that Gunga was in deep sleep and snoring inside the house. Fula latches the door from the outside and puts hay all around the house. She puts hay on the roof and ember under it. After doing this, she returns her home. The rest of the work is done by wind. After sometimes, the whole house was covered by flames. Next day, villagers recovered the burnt skeleton of Gunga. Fula said, "If he takes birth in this village again, I will turn him into ashes again in the same way." (Nikhara, 61) Villagers remarked that Vithoba's ghost did all this. Fula takes revenge of her insult as well as the death of her father. Life for the sake of life is the price that Gunga has to pay.

'*Rani*' (i.e. Queen) is the story about love and lust. Rani, Bhau Wrestler, and Maruti Ramoshi (Naik) are the three characters in the story. Rani, an orphan, is brought up by her grandfather. She loves Bhau wrestler. Even though, this love is secret, Maruti knows the fact. He also likes Rani and wants to possess her. He is a criminal and police are after him. Many criminal cases and complaints are lodged on his name. So he is absconding. People fear him.

Once on a market day, he comes in village market. He wants to see Rani and to take her with him. All the sellers in market feared to see Maruti Ramoshi in market place. They started to serve him in their own way. Bhau Pahelwan comes there sensing the evil intention of Maruti. Bhau keeps vigilance on Maruti.

Rani comes in market and she also comes to know Maruti's intension. Bhau and Rani understand the seriousness of the situation. At evening, Rani completes her household duties and she lights the lamp. Unexpectedly, Maruti comes there and orders Rani to accompany him. Rani tackles the situation skillfully. Rani goes inside and brings sickle. In the struggle, Rani slashes sickle on Maruti's hand. In the course of the time, a group of Bhau's people arrive. The quarrel ensues. Bhau blows Maruti's forehead by an axe and kills him. Police arrest Rani. Bhau also confesses the murder. Police arrest both Rani and Bhau.

Rani and Bhau take revenge on Maruti Ramoshi because he wanted to dishonour Rani. For restoring honour, the murder of Maruti was a must.

'*Bhural*' (i. e. temptation) shows a struggle between conventional bindings and natural needs. A natural need overcomes on a false conventional idealism.

Shivaji is a wrestler and his old mother Kamala wants him to become famous wrestler. She takes care of each and everything for that. However, Shiva shows no remarkable achievement in wrestling. After some years, his old mother Kamala becomes unable to carry on regular household duties because of growing age. So she wants Shiva to marry and bring for her daughter-in-law. Accordingly, Shiva marries a beautiful Gajara. Kamala believes that if a wrestler enjoys marital life, he will no more be a wrestler. So Shiva's older mother Kamala issues an ordinance for Shiva and his wife Gajara. She expected that the newly married couple, "should not talk, and should not laugh. Shiva will eat special food of a wrestler and Gajara will have to eat different food." (Nikhara, 89) Even she does not allow Shiva and Gajara to look at each other. She warns Shiva, "You should not enjoy married life, and otherwise you will be no more a wrestler. If you do not listen me, I shall strike my head and give up my life before you." (Nikhara, 89) In this way, she spoils the blissful marital life of the couple. And the complications in the family started. Nobody was happy. Gajara becomes restless.

Once when the couple finds privacy, they become romantic and about to enjoy marital life, suddenly Kamalabai comes in. Shiva runs away. The old woman becomes angry. She hits a trowel on Gajara's forehead and injures her. In this way, the old woman snatched away the happiness in life for the sake of false conventional idealism.

After two years living in Mumbai, Dhondiba comes to village. There was a noticeable difference in Dhondiba and other villagers. He was looking sophisticated than others. He happens to see Gajara. She is impressed by his urban outfit and appearance. Already she was fed up with her abominable life. She wants the way out from such unpleasant life. She tells her sad story to Dhondiba. She describes her life and says, "This is slavery."

(Nikhara, 91) She attracts towards Dhondiba and wants to run away with him to Mumbai. They both decide to run away to Mumbai. She firmly decides, "To take a horrible revenge on the old woman at any cost by meeting Dhondiba." (Nikhara, 91) She was tempted by two things – Dhondiba and Mumbai. And they run away. She takes horrible revenge on her mother-in-law and age old false idealistic conventions. Villagers visit Shiva and his old mother and blame them saying that they are responsible for the running away of Gajara.

The mother-in-law of Gajara does injustice against Gajara. She takes revenge by running away and enjoying the life with Dhondiba. Gajara restores her physical needs and this is revenge.

Sathe portrays the picture of rural life in his short stories. All the traits of rural life have been delineated minutely. Sathe exposes helping nature, generosity, morality, competition, struggle, injustice, revenge etc. in his rural stories. The persons appear in his stories are not outstanding or distinguished. They are real and down to earth. They struggle for livelihood and they have no high aspirations. They struggle and commit crimes for usual things. So their crimes and injustices are also not punishable. The victims themselves manage to revenge the offenders in their own way. By taking revenge, the victims restore what they lost – pride, honour, wealth, prestige, etc. The important thing is that they do this because they want to live life with all its strengths. They want to lead strong life. P. S. Nerurkar compares Anna Bhau Sathe and his stories with Jack London and his stories. While showing similarities in Sathe and Jack London, Nerurkar refers to Jack London's quotation, "If my stories are fierce, then life is fierce. I think life is strong, not fierce, and I try to make my stories as strong as life is strong." (Lokrajya, 1 Nov., 1993, p.31)

Khuluba takes revenge for Manjula's dishonor. He feels satisfaction by doing this. Keshavrao's loving daughter is tortured so he takes revenge on his son-in-law. His son-in-law also takes revenge by restoring his wife. Maruti Potaraj restores his five acres of land and takes revenge. He teaches a lesson to Nanchand. The lost wealth is restored and the revenge is taken. Fula sets Gungaji Patil and his house on fire and takes revenge of her

insult as well as the death of her father. Rani and Bhau take revenge on Maruti Ramoshi because he wanted to dishonour Rani. For restoring honour, the murder of Maruti was a must. Gajara takes revenge on her mother-in-law by running away and enjoying the life with Dhondiba. All the characters who take revenge want to live life in a strong way but sometimes it becomes fierce. While taking revenge they take care of not to be guilty of judicial and social laws.

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