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HUMANISM IN BABURAO BAGUL'S  
*JEVHA MI JAAT CHORLI HOTI! AND MARAN SWASTA HOTA AAHE*

GHANSHAM SARDAR BAVISKAR

Asst. Professor, Department of English

RNC Arts, JDB Commerce & NSC Science College, Nasik

Email-chiusham5353@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

Baburao Bagul's writings cover the entire society and sensibly highlight the problems of casteism, sexism, classism, orthodoxy, illiteracy, superstitions, the cultural terrorism and the violation of human rights. In his literary works, he does nowhere romanticize and fantasize the life of the Indian masses and exaggerate the situations. He presents the ghastly social realities in the lives of Dalits. He does not indulge in fabricating the imaginary stories found in *sadashivpethiya* literature. While the literature written by the upper castes writers glorify fatalism, inequality, the myth of destiny, the idea of salvation and religious rituals to retain the social order, Bagul exposes these manmade evils to reinstate humanity and create an egalitarian society. The present research paper is an attempt to focus how Bagul puts forth the idea of new society free from inequality, casteism, gender oppression, exploitation, superstitions and poverty; with the firm trust in the rational education and the constitutional rights to create rational beings and nurture the human values and democratic principles in all which is must for the betterment of the entire civilization in India and all over the globe. Humanism in Baburao Bagul's Marathi short stories has its base in Babasaheb Ambedkar's revolutionary ideology. He depicts the downtrodden people's struggle for survival and their quest for identities to emphasize their participation in the human liberation movement for freedom, fraternity, equality and social justice. Despite the reality that Bagul has portrayed his characters as the victims in the caste institution and sexist patriarchy in his short story collections, *Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti!* and *Maran Swasta Hota Aahe*, he endows in them fighting spirit to cherish human values and spread humanity with the strong resolution to reinstate humanity in Indian society.

**Keywords:** civilization, humanist, Ambedkarism, constitutional rights, egalitarian society.

Baburao Bagul is one of the renowned writers in Marathi Dalit literature. He is regarded the pioneer writer of the Dalit literature. He is a well known short story writer, novelist, poet, a thinker and a literary critic. As a prolific writer, he strongly believes in Ambedkarism and has constantly engaged himself in projecting the greatness of the common people and their problems. He presents the heart rendering pictures of the grim

realities in the lives of the suppressed and oppressed people in the villages and the metropolitan slums of Maharashtra. He is a humanist primarily because he dedicated his writings to Ambedkarism and Buddhism which he disseminates in his writings. He regards the Varna system responsible for the unequal social order. In his writings, he attacks the Varna system and exposes the casteist mentalities of the upper castes people. As a thinker, and a Buddhist writer, he advocates the non-violent resistant movement, the religious conversion to Buddhism and the awareness of the constitutional rights to protest and fight against the religious bigotry and intolerance within the territories of Hindu society and its caste system. As a writer, he is truly accountable to the human beings and the human society to promote and strengthen the equality and wipe out the inequality to reinstate Buddha's *Dhamma* in order to promote Babasaheb Ambedkar's rational philosophy. He does not only spread awareness among the masses about the evils of the Varna system but also fosters human values which are must for the progress and growth of the human civilization.

Humanism is a guiding principle in the lives of the oppressed people in Bagul's short stories. Though, the Hindu religion denies them equal rights and degrades their positions, they never give away their hopes for the better world. Even in the worst situations in a Hindu conformist society, they confront the adversities and cherish the human values of love, pity, sympathy, affection, mutual aid and support which they offer to others who need it most in the critical events in their lives.

As a humanist, Bagul projects the humanitarian world of the oppressed people and strives to reinstate the human dignity, pride and respect to the oppressed people. He desires for a new society to free the world from inequalities and disparities existing in it. Nazaretha Miskita states, "Bagul wants the people to get freedom from the economic and social disparities and after destroying the unequal society, he desires for the new society to be created on the principles of freedom, fraternity and equality, so that the people would live with dignity, pride and respect." (63) (Trans. by the Researcher)

Despite the reality that Bagul's characters are the victims of Varna system and suffer from dilapidating conditions, they cherish human values and spread humanity. The universal values of love, affection, sympathy and cooperation are sensibly depicted in the short stories: "Gunda", "Pesuk", "Spardha", "Vidroh" and "Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti" from the short story collection entitled *Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti!*; and "Bhuk", "Maidanatil Manse" and "Mavali" from *Maran Swasta Hota Aahe*.

In the short story, "Gunda" (Rowdy), Bagul centres his attention on the African man with a criminal background. Though he is a rogue, he believes in humanity and has humanistic perspective towards life. He learns about the threat to his life from the gang leader and kills him. He leaves Singapore and settles in Mumbai. He never forcibly tries to sexually assault any woman. When a young widow, Jayantiben enters his hut and requests him for help, he understands the outbursts of her feelings, though not her language and feels greatly moved:

He stared at her like the eyes of a stone god while sitting in the charpoy. The tears rolled down her eyes non-stop and she went on muttering continuously. Ultimately, the way, the morning time perches the heart of darkness to give a way to the sun, her tears too perched his heart. He received a call from within his heart and went out to bring money. (Bagul, *Jevha Mi Jaat* 24)

Though, the African does not understand her language, he understands her feelings and goes out for money which he thinks, she needs badly. After arranging the money, he rushes to her house with a disturbing thought and feeling in his heart and mind, "Does she love me?" (Bagul, *Jevha Mi Jaat* 22) Upon noticing his presence in her hut, she begins to cry again and he gets the answer to his question and it changes his life completely. R. G. Chavare acknowledges, "The rogue in *Gunda* is cast off scornfully in the established social order. His mind pines for love. But he does not get it. In Jayantiben's presence, his heart felt desire is fulfilled. It reveals his true self." (230) (Trans. by the Researcher) As he gives her money, the people from different castes, places and religions begin the preparations of making the pyre for Jayantiben's mother: "The people from all the castes, places and religions had started making the preparations. The work of placing the dead body on the bier was going on." (Bagul, *Jevha Mi Jaat* 24) At last, the humanistic concerns, the African and the poor people feel for Jayantiben set the example of humanity and prove the fact that humanity still exists in society of diversities.

Bagul's next short story entitled, "Spardha" (Competition) projects the women cherishing the human values of love, passion and compassion in the utmost difficult circumstances in their lives. Yamuna, the old, upper caste poor woman feels love and pity for her step-son who has TB and brings Chandra, his wife to Mumbai. Her spirit to work in old age to support her poor son and his family exhibits her motherly love and concerns but after she brings Chandra to sell bananas, her business suffers miserably. Her conflict with Chandra culminates in violent clash and ultimately ends in love, the moment, she realizes Chandra has been struggling to save her step-son from tuberculosis. At the end, she admits her mistake and reconciles with Chandra. Her decision not to bring Chandra in any trouble displays her humanity. Through Yamuna and Chandra, Bagul demonstrates how women embody the universal feelings of love, passion and compassion and become the emblem of motherly love which guides the entire universe.

The short story, "Vidroh" (Rebellion) presents scavenger's concerns for a secular society. The central figure, Jai rejects the Hindu social order that propagates inequality, injustice, casteism, orthodoxy and superstitions in society. His rejection of the caste system and the traditional occupations is a representative act of educated Dalits who strive to create a casteless society, based on freedom, fraternity, equality and social justice. He denounces Hindu religion on the ground it makes him to hate his mother and even compels him not to eat the food made by her for the reason, she is a scavenger. He questions: "What culture is this! A son underrating his mother, hating her and even hesitating to eat out of her hands only because she is a scavenger! I have turned a rascal causing a lot of trouble to my mother all in the name of this culture that has given rise to the curse of untouchability in our society." (Trans. Katamble 80-81) He realizes his mistake that he had hurt his mother. He feels shame for himself and appeals his mother to forgive him: "Mother, pardon me. I apologise to you for my rude behaviour until now." (Trans. Katamble 81) He even feels love and compassion for his wife whom he has neglected since the day of the marriage and takes her in his confidence. The moment, he looks at her with love and respect, she feels elated and the anger she had stored in her heart for him gets vanished and she becomes normal. Jai's realization of his negligence of his mother and wife displays his sense of accountability, concern, love and compassion towards his family.

The short story, "Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti!" (When I Concealed My Caste!) highlights the fights of Dalits for their rights. The unnamed Dalit worker and Kashinath Sapkale represent humanists. They want to bring the transformative changes in a conservative society. They represent the ideal and revolutionary human beings. When the upper caste labourer Deva expresses contempt for Dalits, the unnamed Dalit worker rebukes him. He declares, "We are all the architects of the nation. Nobody is *dhed*, poor and a Brahman." (Bagul, *Jevha Mi Jaat* 83) When he is beaten to death for concealing his caste, he does not take revenge and file the police complaint against the assaulters. It signifies his grand nature that he feels pity for them and strongly condemns Manu, the originator of the caste system. Thus, his act of forgiving is in tune with the Buddhist principle of forgiveness and faith in non-violence. Sukhadev Dhanke supports, "the central character in this story does not burn with revenge but feels pity for the assailants. He should act violence but he becomes non-violent. The reason behind this might be, the people can be won with love and not violence and this is the Buddhist philosophy that does not permit the educated Dalit worker to act vengeance." (105) (Trans. by the Researcher) The other Dalit worker Kashinath Sapkale who works with him too has compassion and love for his fellow human beings. His strong desire to become a lawyer after leaving the job suggests his humanitarian attitude towards the depressed classes for whose cause; he would fight the injustice in the court.

The short story entitled, "Bhuk" (Hunger) is a universal commentary on women's love for the children. Through Bhagu, Thaku and Patil, the headwoman of the village, Bagul projects the Indian women, their disposition and also brings in limelight the picture of Indian society graphically. Even though Bhagu and Thaku are poor, helpless and powerless; they cherish human values and sustain love in society which is the essence of human beings and their humanity. Bhagu loves her children utmost and sacrifices her life for them. Her decision to enter the river and catch the fish when she is burning with fever displays her motherly love and concerns for them. When her children often go without food, Thaku, a Dalit woman offers food everyday to Satva which he shares with his mother and brother. As Satva is loved by Thaku, he expresses his desire to her mother and asks her for permission: "Mother, shall I go to Thaku aunt? She gives me *bhakli* (bread) everyday..." (Bagul, *Maran Swasta* 19) Satva's remark about Thaku displays her humanity.

In "Maidanatil Manse" (Dwellers of the Field) David, the rogue troubles the criminals but feels pity for the poor homeless people. The illicit liquor makers whip him to death cruelly and throw him in the bushes. When he comes in his senses, the pitiable conditions of homeless people he looks around deeply moves his heart and he desires to help them out:

While sitting on the high platform with his back to the high coconut tree, he witnessed the anguish of the dwellers of the field. Abdul's coughing in the deadly cold night and his rolling up and down the ground moved his heart. The cries of the pregnant beggar woman coming from the shrubs raised his heart beats. The poignant story emerging out of the quarrel of the aged couple, Zunkau-Supada made him restless to help them out and Sona's embracing a stranger in extreme freezing cold froze his brain and made it dumb and deaf. (Bagul, *Maran Swasta* 45)

David is loving and kind. He feels sympathy for the dispossessed people. When the tribe of *Phasse Pardhi* people finds out Sona, a tribe girl and Karim together, David rescues Karim from their violent attacks and saves his life. At last, when the beggar woman delivers a baby, David takes away the coverlets of the people and runs to save the woman and the child from the cold. His love and pity for the poor living in the open ground displays his humanity. He is truly a worshipper of humanity and a Christ like figure. Sukhadev Dhanke rightly points out, "David feels pity for the poor and their struggle for survival. He feels great love for people. He is like a Christ. He is a worshiper of humanity." (131) (Trans. by the Researcher)

Thus, however antagonistic and evil is the Hindu society and its culture, Bagul's characters rise above the Hindu scriptures and religion to stamp the reality that human beings are equal and humanity is the absolute and ultimate truth of the entire mankind. Bagul's men and women live with human values. Though, they are the victims of caste ridden society, they do live their lives with the universal human values of love, sympathy, affection and cooperation and shower it on others even in their own critical situations. The unnamed African man in "Gunda", Yamuna and Chandra in "Spardha", Jai in "Vidroh" and the unnamed Dalit worker and Kashinath Sapkale in "Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti"; and Thaku and Bhagu in "Bhuk" and David in "Maidanatil Manse" exhibit love, affection and sympathy for others. The unnamed Dalit worker and Kashinath Sapkale in "Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti" and Jai in "Vidroh" talk about humanity and oppose inequalities existing in society. They feel pity and sympathy for each other, the family members and the community. For them humanity is supreme and man is most important than religion, scriptures, conventions and traditions. In the loveless desert of Indian society, they are truly the emblems of love and humanity which the human beings need most than they need orthodox religions, scriptures, ritual, traditions and conventions in which stones are worshipped and human beings are disrespected, humiliated and treated worse than animals. However distressed they are, they love human beings and strive for the best of the entire mankind. Bagul's projection of the various issues and his treatment to the characters in his stories is quite organic and coherent. Through his organic treatment of the issues and characters woven in the fabric of his stories, he gives the electric shocks to the Varna system and brings in light the failure of the governments in implementing the Indian constitution properly and eradicating the caste system in its totality in the Hindu society. In his short stories, Bagul registers the voices of the marginality and raises the protest through the non-violent peaceful strategy which Babasaheb Ambedkar, a renowned international scholar and the architect of Indian constitution used for the revolution which is documented as the most non-violent, peaceful, bloodless revolution in the fight of human liberation against the religious anarchy and fanaticism in the entire globe. He voices the serious concerns for the violations of human rights of the downtrodden people in his writings and awakens their consciousness towards their wretchedness, miseries, pains, problems, enslavement and slavery in the caste institution. He strongly asserts, without education and resistance movement for freedom and equality; the depressed classes will never be able to overthrow the unequal social order. He believes in the greatness of the common man and gives them integral place in literature which was ignored in earlier Marathi literature. It shows his humanistic approach and concern for the common people.

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