

## 'NATURE' AND 'HUMANISM' IN THE POETRY OF BAHINABAI CHAUDHARI

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### Abstract

*When we speak of poetry, we naturally refer to the words chosen by the poet. We determine their quality by their words and thoughts. Ethical thoughts like essential nobility of man, austerity and domestic bliss only prove the linkages among our various literature and languages and suggest how the Indian ethos is shared by all, irrespective of region, social status and speech. Such a prominent poetess in Maharashtra Bahinabai Chaudhari talks about Nature and humanism and various concepts.*

**Keywords:** Humanism, Nature, Man, God.

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## ‘NATURE’ AND ‘HUMANISM’ IN THE POETRY OF BAHINABAI CHAUDHARI

- Dr. Smita Deshmukh

### Introduction:

Major characteristics of modern poetry are: open poetic form, free verse, borrowing from other cultures and languages, unconventional use of metaphors, metanarrative, fragmentation. multiple narrative points of view, use of colloquial idiom in place of poetic diction and biting irony. The thematic characteristics are ;breakdown of social norms and cultural sureties, nature as a romantic tendency, religion ,humanitarianism, stream of consciousness, overwhelming technological changes of the 20th century, existentialism, nihilism ,imagism, and surrealism.

Since antiquity poets have been considered to be inspired persons, and an intimate relation between poetry and inspiration has always been admitted. Without this inspiration no great poetry is possible. It may spring from what Tennyson calls, “unseen germination”; it may come on the spirit as Keats once wrote, “with fine suddenness”; it may be what Wordsworth feels, “spontaneous overflow of emotions recollected in tranquility.” In the course of ages only the verses to which inspiration has given fire and energy survive, and become a part and parcel of the great poetical heritage of mankind. It was the tradition of nature poetry that this tranquil state might be most easily inspired if the poet would go out into nature, observe the world around him, and translate those emotions and observations into verse. One can observe “enlightening and soothing ‘Nature’ and ‘Humanism’ in the Poetry of Bahinabai Chaudhari”.

### Review of Literature:

As far as the term “modern” is concerned, it refers to many poets, movements and many styles in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and 21st century. The term ‘modern’ also covers a broad range in the art world. It refers to literary works written since the onset of World War 1, [1914-1917]

and it also refers to many experiments in content and form. The term “modernism” refers an obvious break with the past traditions.

P.L. Deshpande, a prolific writer of Marathi literature rightly said that Bahinabai’s poems (*ovi*) are like farm of Basil plants and she has given butter of philosophy on the bread of life. Through her poems we can also find social life of her age. In those days women were illiterate and household work and farm was her only world in which she had to cope-up with the in-laws. The outer world was ignorant to them. Bahinabai got married at a very tender age of 13. Due to some family disputes they were in debts and had to face many financial difficulties and hardships, but it did not deter Bahinabai. At the early age of 30 she became widow, which was considered as an ill-fate. As a woman she had to depend on her husband to lead a life. She was very strong and along with her three sons and two daughters she faced challenges in life.

#### **Research Methodology:**

For the present paper a close study of primary and secondary sources is undertaken. As it is a literary research, the research design follows descriptive- exploratory model- a kind of close textual study. The data is collected both from the primary and secondary sources and put to critical scrutiny and the study is carries out by means of deductive and inductive methods of logic. The research paper is based on primary and secondary data which is based on the translation of *Bahinabaichi Gani* in English. Researcher has taken important poet of Maharashtra, India, with a view to integrate them in a single philosophical framework.

#### **Objective of Research:**

Bahinabai in her poetry depicts the essence of human life in simple yet effective language. The objective of present paper is to study how she depicts nature and humanism in her poetry to present her vision of life.

#### **Scope of the study:**

The present paper is based on the study of tha anthology of Bahinabai Chaudhari ‘*Bahinabaichi Gani*’ Suchitra publishers in 1952.

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Literature is a vast treasury and we can obtain material we require for the building up of our intellectual and moral knowledge from it. It stands the test of time and enlarges our views by “apprehending noble, subtle and profound thoughts, refined and lofty feeling”. ( Steiner 27)

The milestone in the history of poetry of *Khandesh* is the poetry of Bahinabai. Her poems have casted everlasting impression not only on the poetry of khandesh in particular but the modern Marathi poetry in general. This illiterate, hardworking village woman expressed the essence of her life through her poems. She has effectively delineated the culture of village life and the life of the farmers. At the same time she has depicted the philosophy of human life in simple words. Through her lines she has taught the wisdom of life.

When she was 9, Bahinabai, her immediate family and her husband had to leave their village because of a family quarrel. After a long journey and two years in a town where her husband performed religious services, the family arrived in the holy city of Kolhapur. There, Bahinabai heard the devotional verses of the *Warkari* saint Tukaram (c.1608-1650), this experience was to determine the rest of Bahina's life. She was of the age of eminent Marathi poets like Keshavsut, Kusumagraj, Tambe, and Govindagraj. Hence, she was very close to the nature and her love for it is reflected in her literature, prominently in her poems. Hailing from a farmer's household, most of her poems are based on farming, land, joy and sorrow of farmers, trees, animals and the nature.

She is also called as the '*Nisargakanya*' as appropriately said by the eminent Marathi writer Indira Sant) means nature's daughter. She derives philosophy of life from nature as if one removes sweet water from the coconut. She was so involved in nature that she used to say that,

“She could see heaven in the mirror of the Earth.”

Looking at the cotton seeds she says,

“God had sent her with clothes,

but man has made her nude,

for him to get clothed”

Her famous poem '*Khopa*' teaches how birds from the nature can weave their nest with the long paddy leaves so finely with their beak. In this poem she describes the skills of the '*Baya*' bird of weaving nest for its eggs. Here, she presents nature as a teacher and tells us that this bird takes so much efforts to weave a beautiful nest just with its beak, but man is gifted with two hands and ten fingers. So he has to work really very hard for his children and his livelihood instead of wasting time. This is how she was so close to the nature as if one with it and always found Mother Nature as the teacher of mankind. She says:

*“Beeya tarare bhuit,  
survey komb ale varhe;  
guhyarala shet jasa angavarti shahare.”* (p. 141)

(In the womb of the Earth, slept the seeds, covering themselves with sand sheets. They popped up germinating the sprouts, shows farms, emotions like goose bumps out.)

Once she was told that it was futile to plant *Gulmohor* trees; instead one should plant mango trees as it at least fills one's belly. To this she replies by saying that mango trees definitely satisfy one's belly but *Gulmohor* satisfies one's heart and soul. It shows her wide and deep poetic perception. Along with knowing nature keenly, she was a good observer that fathoms her poetic perspective when she says,

*“Oh royal farmer, walking barefooted,  
look under his feet, the thorns are bent.”*

Along with the nature it seems that Bahinabai was also very deeply aware of human nature. She was aware of the selfish and covetous nature of man. In her poems she says that don't chase behind venal desires as the exchange of souls is not a business of livelihood. This thought makes us dive deep into the sea of her philosophical approach. She gives the message of love which is precious and immortal. She explores the universal love of Earth and how she can fill the stomach or satisfy the hunger of the whole world. It can be compared to a woman's love. She says;

*“Ashi dharitrichi maya, are tila nahi seema,*

*duniyache sarva pota, tichyamadhi zale jama.*”(pg.105)

She is not only aware of the physical and the outer life but also very sensitive and emotional about psychological status. She sings about how one's heart, soul or mind is and praises that how God has made such a trivial thing in her famous poem, '*Man Vadhay, Vadhay*'. She talks about how a person's mind is like an animal in the farm, you cast it away a lot of times but it comes back again. She puts it in these words:

*“Man vadhay, vadhay, ubhya pikatla dhor;*

*Kiti hakala, hakala, Phiri yet pikavar.”* (p.128)

(Mind is fickle, like the animal in a crop; the more you cast it away; it turns back again to it.) She also says that mind is unpredictable; nobody can catch it; it flows along with the drift of the wind. She compares mind with bird and says that sometimes mind is so small like Popeye seeds and sometimes it is so big that it cannot even fit in the sky in following words;

*“Man evadha evadha, jasa khaksacha dana ,*

*Man kevdha kevdha, abhayat bi mayena .”*(pg.128)

While praising the qualities of mind she also focuses on the grey side of mind. She says that;

*“Man jahyari jahyari, tyache nyare re tantar”,*

*Are ichu saap bara tyale utare mantara.”* (p.128)

This means that, this cheerful mind sometimes becomes so cruel or toxic like poisonous snake that even the poison of the scorpion has remedy of mantras or medicines (may be herbal) but for the poison of mind there is no remedy at all. In this way very skillfully Bahinabai explains the qualities of mind. She meant that there is no way or any solution for a contaminated mind to get purified. She is not less than the eminent English poets like William Wordsworth, Robert Frost, Coleridge and other great poets who rendered the philosophy of life through the significance of nature. She was born at the time when Bhakti cult was at its peak and Maharashtra was flourishing with the abhangas and ovis of the great saint-poets like Tukaram, Namdev, and Janabai. Bahinabai became the disciple of Saint Tukaram and firmly believed in

the existence of God. Her advices not to try to find God in temple or anywhere else as he is in your own eyes, heart and soul. He is there where you look with your heart. She aptly explains the existence of God as:

*“Dev kuthe, Dev kuthe? Tujhya bubuya majhar;*

*Dev kuthe, Dev kuthe, abhayachya aarpaar.”* (p.186)

(Where is God, Where is God? In your eyes; Where is God, Where is God, Beyond the skies.)

She further says;

*“Are Devache darshan, Zale zale apsuik,*

*Hiridat surya baapa, daavi arupache rupa.”* (pg.113)

(It means, I could see God reflexively, the Sun in the heart shows face of God.) This shows that she is not the blind believer of God, in fact she sees God in the face of Sun who is the life giver and can be seen by our eyes.

*“Male Kayale gupit, kaay tuji karamat;*

*Are andharana keli, ujedachya varhe maat.”* (p.186)

(I got to know your secret; the darkness has conquered the vivid.) Though, she believed in God, she advocated practical life. She did not believe in any kind of superstitions or religious dogmas. **Findings:**

She was illiterate and still could understand philosophy of nature so well and expressed it in a very apt manner in minimum of words. The flow of her thoughts was like a boat sailing on soft waves of water reaching very smoothly to its bank. In the same way it seems that her poems have the ability to reach the readers heart and mind very smoothly but effectively.

#### **Conclusion:**

Bahinabai and her poems show the roots towards modernism. Such a genius personality and her wisdom were secret like rust on the metal. But it has to get polished again to shine brightly. This remark by P.K. Atre, such an eminent personality is an award in itself.

She had a versatile genius and she could think very wisely on every aspect. She had such an excellence of thoughts and their best ways of emission, which is beyond imagination. She had all the qualities of a prolific writer but unfortunately she couldn't reach the print media during her life time and hence remained unknown to the world. Bahinabai had all the qualities of a prolific poet but unfortunately she couldn't reach the print media during her life time. However, published posthumously, her poems touched the hearts of every sensible Marathi reader of literature. It must be pointed out that she has enriched the world of Marathi literature through her lucid but thought provoking poetry. Her extraordinary depiction of enlightening and soothing 'Nature' blended with humanism will remain peerless in the years to come.

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