

**‘SAIRAT’ : TRAGEDY OF CASTE DISCRIMINATION****DR. PANKAJA S. INGLE**

Assistant Profesora

Dept of English

Arts Commerce and Science College,

Amravati. (MS) (INDIA)

ABSTRACT

The modern technology has reached to the remote shores of Indian village as in the movie ‘Sairat’ we come across the three friends who are village dwellers and student of first year graduation are using internet and trying to search information about Archie on face book. At one side the modern technology has gripped the villagers and on other side we find the impact of age old custom of casteism still prevailing with equivalent vigor. India as a developing country has shown a remarkable change in many sectors. Women too are coming out of four walls and making careers in desired fields. But the deep rooted stigma of caste discrimination has such a strong hold that not even education technology scientific developments new political and social philosophies are able to root it out.

Introduction:

The story of ‘Sairat’ directed by Nagraj Manjule is a tragedy of hero and heroine who become victims of caste discrimination. My paper intends to present the heinous practice of caste discrimination practiced in India and how it becomes a responsible factor for ruining the life of innocents.

‘Sairat’ is the visual presentation of dreadful caste system prevailing in India. The director of the movie in a subtle way has depicted the discrimination done by upper caste to the lower caste. The critics say, “Though the film as a whole is an indictment of the caste system, the criticism here as the plot unfolds isn’t as direct as it was in Fandry; it is buried within the love story.” This caste system is deeply rooted in Indian soil since ages. People in the past followed this system so scrupulously that they even lost the sensibility of treating the lower caste people even worse than animals. Even after independence when India became democratic Dr B. R. Ambedkar gave constitutional rights of equality fraternity and liberty to all but it couldn’t remove the caste discrimination from the minds of the people.



The story of 'Sairat' is presented at the backdrop of rural India which is progressing yet is under the influence of caste system. 'Sairat' is altogether a study of gender discrimination, patriarchal influence, social injustice and a power play. And above all the foul air of casteism can be smelled throughout the movie. Archie (Achana Patil) is the daughter of a powerful politician of the village. She enters the movie driving a big gypsy, and goes to college driving bullet and she even drives a tractor too. The villagers as well as college students are mesmerized to see her driving like a man. The bold and beautiful Archie belongs to upper caste takes admission in first year graduation falls in love with Parshya (Prashant kale) a fisherman's boy from lower caste is already in love with her. She is impressed by him as he is a clever boy and had scored 72 percent in 12th class where as her percent is 55. He sends her a love letter by the motivation of his two friends Salim and Pradeep Bansode called as Langda. She accepts his love proposal and boldly calls him to her field where they exchange their mobile numbers. Parshya doesn't have his own mobile due to poverty but manages with the mobile phone of his friend Salim who runs a motor garage. Archie's mother restricts her not to be on mobile for longer hours 'as it is not good for a girl to be so bold'. Archie's ears don't respond to the words of her mother as the happy bells of love have shut her ears to the worldly pursuits. Archie's cousin Mangya threatens Parshya and attacks on him in college soon Archie comes to rescue him and warns her cousin to stay away from Prashya. She is a strong, bold and her superiority complex can be felt at every movement as compared to her Parshya appears timid.

There are several incidents in the movie which throw light on the caste discrimination and a cursory glance of the incidents will help the readers to analyze the view point of the movie.

There is an incident in the movie which depicts the treatment received by the teachers at the hands of upper caste people. Prince is Archie's brother and the son of Patil a land lord and a politician. He is not even a student still sits in Archie's class. He misbehaves in the class by taking on mobile while the English lecturer is delivering lecture. When the lecturer restricts him, Prince slaps on his face. After returning home Archie scolds her brother for this shameful act on the contrary Patil their father appreciates Prince that he has inherited this boldness from his grandfather. When the principal and lecture bring this matter to the notice of Patil he passes no comments and treats them in such a way as thieves caught and brought to the police station. They do not get slightest respect there. On the contrary the Patil advices the principal to give perfect introduction of Prince to the teachers so that no further misunderstanding should be raised. One of the members of Patil's political party tells the principal to collect the donation from staff for Prince Birthday. This episode throws light on the attitude of upper class people towards the teachers. The upper caste is valued more than the noble profession.

Drinking water of upper caste people from the house of lower caste people was prohibited. This custom was followed from ages. At least in city side it is subsided but in villages still it



is prevailing. Its instances can be seen in the movie. When Archie visits Parshya's home she demands water to drink and his mother and sister look with complete astonishment at her face as how a girl from an upper caste drinks water from their house. There is no verbal exchange in this regard but it is the skill of the director that he made the discrimination notify on the bases of the expressions. When Archie ask her friend whether she needs water to drink her friend makes faces and tells Archie to drink herself. One more incident in the movie when Mangya Archie's cousin visits Parshya's home an old lady offers him water and instantly Parshya's friend interrupts the old lady by telling her that Mangya is Patil how can he drink water of our house? To this the old lady comments why Patil are not thirsty? Don't they need water to quench their thirst? The director has very skillfully and subtly thrown light on the dim-witted customs prevailing in India and how people are blindly following it.

We feel sympathetic when Archie a free bird in caged and patriarchal pressures are induced on her when she is forcibly asked to wear a saree and cover her head to present herself in a desired code before the people came for matrimony. Archie for a while submits to the situation but she is a rebellious girl. She is not ready to offer herself to the designed codes for a girl by the society. She elopes from home and comes to Parshya's house. She openly tells him that she can't live without him and they both decide to run from the village as they know well staying back will ruin their life and her father who is a powerful politician can any time finish them off. The two faithful friends of Parshya accompany them in running from village. The villagers say that Patil's daughter has insisted Parshya to run with her. The Patil burns his whole field to search Archie as he gets the hint that they are hiding there. With much more difficulty they succeed in running out of village but the powerful clutches of her father caught hold of them and are taken to the police station. Where, Parshya and his two friends are imprisoned by putting false charge of kidnapping and raping Archie. When Archie gets to know of this dirty mind of her father she rushes to the police station and tears the paper of her signature which has put false cases on Parshya and his friends. She rescues them out. But this incident shows how even law can be taken in the hands of upper caste people. Law which is considered to be equal for all is also shown as a tool used by upper caste people for their benefit and how down trodden people are made victim by this upper caste people. Police stations are considered to be protectors of victims but than what if the police join hands with the powerful politicians. The upper class people to protect their chastity and keep the family name intact they are ready to inflict unlawful things to harass the weaker class. The director has projected this power game in the movie to show the prevailing caste system. We come across a dreadful event when after relieved from police station Parshya and his friends are bitten harshly by the men of Patil. We feel sympathetic towards them. The director has shown the realistic picture of the village how the rich and the powerful and belonging to upper caste treat the weaker section of society. The hero is coming up from poor family and he is not shown as a super hero who is fighting boldly with the men of Patil on contrary he is bitten very bitterly. When Archie sights this scene she protects Parshya and his friends and this time she successfully manages to run away with Parshya.



The story takes a turn when Archie and Parshya come to an unknown place Hyderabad. They have to face lot many difficulties to settle there. But now as city dwellers they are not facing the difficulties of caste discrimination. But the issue of survival for existence becomes more prominent. Somehow with strong determination and hard labor they succeed in getting a job in a company. They get married in court and a boy named Akash is born to them. Archie calls up her mother and tells that now they have to come to book a flat and now they are earning about 40,000 per month. She tells her mother about the activities of her small son she further enquires about her father and pleads her mother to talk to him and ask to forgive her. The patriarchal influences are shown so strong that Archie feels comfortable to speak with her mother but not with her father. Her father in rage of anger breaks all Archie's photographs and declares her dead and warns her mother not to take her name again in the house.

On other hand Archie Parshya are living a happy married life. Once she is decorating rangoli in front of her house and playing with her son Akash. A lady from her neighborhood takes Akash out to buy chocolates for him in meanwhile her brother along with three men come to her house she takes them inside her house and offers them water and enquires for everyone in her family .Prince her brother handovers her a parcel. Archie is overwhelmed to see the sweets and clothes send for Akash by her mother. She keeps tea for them and in meanwhile Parshya comes home he is shocked to see his brother-in-law and other men from village sitting comfortably in house and watching their photo album. He is scared to take tea for them but Archie forces him. Archie is so happy and hugs Parshya that now everything will be fine in their life as their families have accepted their relationship. She is preparing Poha an Indian snack for her brother Prince and the men. Meanwhile Akash comes home opens the door and enters the kitchen and finds his mother and father dipped in blood the innocent child understands nothing but goes out of the house weeping towards the neighborhood lady as he is walking his small legs leave the print of blood stains of his parents. There is no sound in the movie the cries of the child is also not heard and the movie ends on this pathetic note of Archie and Parshya murdered in the house and the innocent child weeping and going out of the house.

The end of the movie makes every viewer spellbound. He too becomes silent and gets into deep speculation for the reason of such a drastic tragedy. The hearts of the murderers have been so much burning in the fire of hatred for Archie and Parshya that it didn't even melt looking at the photographs of the baby, Archie and Parshya which were quite indicative and suggestive of their happy married life. So strong are the holds of customs and dreadful traditions of casteism that it made Prince an animal. The story of 'Sairat' is symbolic of the torture and discrimination done to the lower caste people. It is not that only Archie and Parshya had met a tragic end. The caste barriers have also stung both the families in its own way. Her father had lost the elections. The villagers did not accept his existence anymore as his daughter has eloped with the boy of lower caste. The most pathetic and touching event is

that the villagers don't accept the Parshya's family and they have to leave the village and take refuge in some other place. His father weeps bitterly and even beats himself before the panchayat and tells them his sad note that three matrimony alliances have rejected their daughter for marriage and that they declare that Parshya is dead for them now. The critics remark "Most importantly the movie's message, the social issues it addresses is infinitely great. Lower caste - Upper caste, lower class upper class indifference. Inter caste marriages, love story, marriage against parents will, moral policing by false Hindutva goons, Honor Killing, Jaat- Khaap panchayat issue". These all issues are handled by the directors very meticulously in the movie.

The tragedy of 'Sairat' is outcome of the heinous caste system prevailing in India. The critics say, "Sairat," directed by Manjule, is a love saga set in the backdrop of caste discrimination." The director Manjule has touched to this sensitive side of the society in a very delicate way. He has not narrated something new but definitely his skill lies in presenting an ordinary into an extraordinary way. The realistic projection have cached the viewer's hearts and made them think about the caste discrimination and its aftereffects. The movie has a strong social message to convey and here lies the success of the director and actors who contributed in achieving the desired effect.

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