



**A CONFLICT OF CLASS STRUGGLE AND OPPRESSION OF THE  
MARGINALIZED IN THE MARATHI MOVIE  
'SAIRAT' BY NAGRAJ MANJULE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The present research paper aims to depict the conflict of class struggle and oppression of the marginalized in the Marathi movie, 'Sairat' by Nagraj Manjule. The present movie is the depiction of epic love between the Protagonist Parshya and Archie. Both the lovers belong to the different caste. Their love is not socially accepted and welcomed. They become the victim of the class conflict. The director of the movie has very minutely presented the clash and conflict of casteism in the progressive Maharashtra state. True love never believes on the boundaries of religion and caste. It is just like 'Sairat' (wild and passionate) in its nature. But the social hierarchy never blossoms and accepts such love. Inter-caste marriage becomes the bone of contention for the rise of class conflict and oppression of marginalized at the end of the movie.*

**Key Words:** *Oppression, Marginalized, class, conflict, caste, untouchability, downtrodden, humiliation, discrimination, revenge etc.*

**Introduction:**

Najraj Manjule is a young director who revitalized Marathi cinema with his debut film 'Fandry', a searing indictment of caste. The present movie 'Sairat' revolves around a love story of a boy from a lower class and girl belonging from a higher class society. The movie was appreciated and got accolades for his projection of social and political reality of two caste or community in Maharashtra state. The movie is a box - office hit and a rare achievement of any lower caste director in Maharashtra. The film was selected for the 66<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival under its Generation 14 plus section. Rinku Rajguru (Archie) was awarded a National Film Award; Special Jury Award (Feature Film) at the 63<sup>rd</sup>



National Film Awards for her effective portrayal of a lively girl who defies societal norms but ultimately has to face the wrath of her family.

The researcher in this paper attempts to critically analyze the conflict of class struggle and oppression of the marginalized people in the society. The movie *Sairat* is based on the minute observation of socio-political and class struggle of contemporary Marathi families. The story of the movie is the burning issue of Indian politics of casteism. The director has keenly portrayed the conflict of casteism and its worst effects on today's generation.

At the outset of the movie, the director has depicted a scene of cricket match where the local village team plays a cricket match. At the end of the match the local political leader Tattya Saheb Patil distributes the prizes to all the winning teams. The place is ground of the cricket match. But the political leader like Tattya Saheb uses it for their political purposes. Tattya Saheb Patil addresses a speech to a large gathering of youths about the upcoming elections. Tattya Saheb Patil takes a support of local wine dealer Chagan Chaudhri for election. The political leader like Patil has a perfect support of local wine dealers in the elections of the village. Tattya Saheb Patil in his speech uses abusive words against the opposition political leaders. He strongly proposes that the opposition political parties should first take care of their women and children before entering into the politics. This is the abusive remarks against the lower caste and marginalized people in the village.

The present movie '*Sairat*' is an epic love story of Parshya and Archie. Parshya in *Sairat* belongs to a lower caste just like Jabya in *Fandry*. The director has keenly portrayed a theme of class conflict through the romance of a budding teenagers belonging from two different castes. A love affair between a lower caste boy and upper class girl is always prohibited and supposed to be a social crime. Such kind of love affairs are immoral and a blot to upper class Maratha Patil families in the Maharashtrian societies. The family members never give or accept their illicit love relationship.

In this movie the director Najraj Manjule has depicted a typical love of protagonist of the movie Parshya and Archie. Parshya is the cricket team's captain and bright student of the village. He constantly watches Archie since few days. In this movie Archana (Rinku Rajguru) is the daughter of the influential local Maratha politician. Her father is the sugar-cane factory owner and landlord. Prashant is from a poor fisherman's family and belongs to Pardhi community. Their love is forbidden, but the teenagers embody *Sairat* or ordour- they are untamed wild and passionate. They at first make contact at a well where the youths of their Bittergaon town come to bathe and swim. Archana with her friends reaches at the well. She kicks out all the out caste boys from the well. But the protagonist Parshya plunges into the well regardless of his caste and creed. He shows his gesture of brave heart, and a sign of rebel.



The director has further developed a romance between the two teenagers in the college. The lower caste protagonist Parshya perfectly falls in love with Archie. But the close relative of Archie takes an objection of their love. He strongly condemns their socially prohibited love. It clearly reflects that the main objective of the director is to depict the valley of caste and untouchability between two communities. But the truth is that love never knows the boundaries of caste. It is beyond the boundaries of caste and religion. Love is never kept and locked into the four walls of caste. It rebels against the casteism and untouchability and accepts its own path.

Further the director makes the audience to think and take a note of the friendship among the protagonist Parshya, Langdya and Salya. All these three friends have no religious or caste boundaries. They are just like one family member. Now the question is when a friendship can be accepted among two religious friends like Hindu and Muslim then why there is a taboo or ban on inter- caste relations. Today even inter-caste relations are forbidden in the villages. There is no social acceptability for it. The director has successfully raised the difference and unacceptable relationship between inter –caste in Maharashtra state. Maharashtra is the state which has a glorious legacy of social reformer like Dr. B R Ambedkar, Rajeshree Shahu Maharaj, Mahatma Fule, Anna Hajare etc. But still it has failed to root out the class conflict and casteism. The people are still rigid and orthodox minded about class and caste. The producer aimed to change the orthodox class conflict and political system in the society.

The movie also focuses another burning problem of Indian education system where discrimination often takes place. The director has portrayed the exploitation and humiliation of lower caste teachers in the college. The college is governed by the local political leader Tatyaa Saheb Patil. He exploits the lower caste teachers in the college. Tatyaa Saheb Patil is an upper class Maratha political leader who orders the Head authority of the college to collect money from college teachers in order to celebrate his son's Prince's birthday. Here the upper class political leader exploits the teachers for their economic and political purposes. Even the miserable and pitiful condition of college teachers reflects the strong hold of casteism. The movie also highlights the humiliation of college teachers by political leader Tatyaa Sahib Patil.

Prince in this movie is the son of rich political leader Tatyaa Saheb Patil. He has depicted as a very rude and arrogant in his behavior. He does not follow the rules and regulations of the college. His arrogance and rude behavior is displayed in front of the teacher in the classroom. He loudly talks on mobile phone while teaching in the class room. His teacher informs him not to talk on the mobile phone. But the higher class rich dad's son Prince does not listen to the teacher. On the contrary he slaps his teacher in front of all the students. What does it implies and suggests? Is this the respect of teachers? Is it the teaching of ancient holy teaching to students? The director projects whether the teachers have lost dignity and respect? Elite class people like Prince and his father Tatyaa Saheb Patil uses political power



to humiliate and exploit the subordinate people in the society. Teachers from lower- middle class are merely puppets in the hands of higher class political leaders.

Further the director has also highlighted the draw- backs of Indian education system. The role of the teacher is very important in the lives of the students. Teachers are the treasures of knowledge and there teaching is further guidance for the students. But in this movie the teachers praises and appreciates the vulgarity of love between Parshya and Archie. As the protagonist Parshya narrates his insult and beating by the upper class political leader to his teacher. His teacher instead of giving good suggestion to his student Parshya, he appreciates his act of love and romance. The teachers remarks like, “you have slept with the Patil’s daughter, you have done well, now forgive her”. These derogatory remarks are the insult for the teacher’s profession. This is also the humiliation of true love. The teachers advise is wrong and against to morality.

The first half of the movie is about their love in the college. It is the second half of the movie that twists the tale of casteism. The parents of Archie (a dashing and bold girl) are against to their love. Their love is not between the two socially accepted casts. They belong to inter-casts. At the middle of the movie both the protagonist’s lover decides to elope from their village. Archie and Parshya elope in the city of Hyderabad where their new tale of life begins. Sairat is one of those rare Marathi movies which depict a conflict of class and oppression of the marginalized in the society. The movie has created the ripples of positive changes in the Marathi Theater. It touches to all the aspects of casteism and exploitation of untouchability. The movie has certainly made awareness and compelled the youths of Maratha community in Maharashtra to take a notice of these issues seriously. The movie addresses the issue of casteism which becomes a major hurdle and wall in the love life of Archie and Parshya.

The major issue of class conflict is symbolically depicted in the movie. The protagonist Parshya dances in the birthday party of Prince. His beloved Archie also dances at her balcony of her mansion. Parshya dances in the yard of Archie’s house. The dance of Parshya in the yard suggests his degraded status and Archie’s dance in the balcony suggests the superiority of her caste. This scene has a symbolical significance in the movie. The horror of violence and victim of casteism begins when Parshya and Archie are fond in the car while making their love. The servant and relatives of Archie’s parents beats both of them very seriously. They prohibit both of them to meet to each others. The girl Archie does not believe in the caste system. She initiates the love at first. She is projected intelligent, strong- willed and resourceful. She rides her wealthy father’s tractor and her brother Prince’s Royal Enfield Bullet. She does not believe in the rigid cast system.

The movie makes the audience laugh, love and dance, cry and at last think over the serious issue of cast difference. The director has projected the hard hitting reality of caste where true love never successes. He has also projected a picture of slum family’s life in the metro cities



through the characters of Archie and Parshya. The life in slum families is worst and difficult to survive. Both Archie and Parshya get married after arrival in the Hyderabad city. Archie an elite class girl finds difficult to adjust in the slum societies after their marriage. She is born and brought up in a luxurious family. The slum area lacks the basic facilities of sanitation. It highlights the miserable and pitiful life of the downtrodden and out- caste people of the society. They at every stage of life have to struggle for their survival. Some of the families in the slum area are boycotted and excommunicated by the society.

The life of Parshya's parents becomes very worst after their elopement. His family members are casted out of the village and no other village accepts them. The father of Parshya begs, pleads and cries for the village chieftains to accept his family and do not push into the living hell. This is by far the most touching scene in the movie. The father of Archie i.e. Tattyasaheb Patil compels the Parshya's family to leave the village. The sister of Parshya does not get married due to cast- out of their family from the village. The researcher critically analyses the uncommitted sin of Parshya's family. Parshya's sister does not have committed any crime but she is rejected and out- casted from the society. This is the harsh reality of casteism and class struggle in our society.

In the Hyderabad city, a bunch of hoodlums tries to molest the Protagonist Archie. She becomes a victim of inhuman cruelty. Parshya and Archie are rescued from the torture and torment of hoodlums by the kind help of a woman in the city. The woman provides them a shelter and food. Both of them gets a good job and well settles in the city. But Archie does not feel comfortable with Parshya. She longs for the luxuries life style which her parents used to provide to her. In Parshya, she found a companion who understands, loves and cares her, and yet she feels unhappy and shackled and discontent with him. This is the conflict of mind and discontent of material life.

In Sairat the issue of class struggle and oppression of marginalized is harshly depicted in the end of the movie. Caste and class are the foundation of our society and discrimination is in the air we breathe. The director has practically witnessed the cruelty of class struggle and oppression of marginalized people in his family of Jeur village of Solapur district, Maharashtra. He has a bold endeavor to depict the oppression on dalit families in Maharashtra state. The end of the movie is unexpected, shocking and tragic. Parshya and Archie start a new life in Hyderabad city at the end of the movie. On the contrary, the family member of Archie never forgets the humiliation and disrespect of their family in the village.

The father of Archie i. e. Tattya Shaeb Patil loses the election in the village. He faces a great defeat in his political career. He considers that his defeat in politics is due to his daughter's elopement with lower caste boy Parshya. He always keeps his wounds green. At one day, Prince the brother of Archie with his relatives visits Archie's house in Hyderabad. They kill both the lovers Archie and Parshya in their house of Hyderabad. Both the lovers fall in the





pool of the blood. The ending of their life is tragic and shocking to all the audience. It creates a pity and fear in the minds of the spectator. Parshya and Archie becomes the victim of class and caste conflict. Thus, the movie is the perfect narration of class conflict and discrimination of marginalized people in the Maharashtra state.

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