

# Annabhau Sathe

September 14, 2022

**In news**– The statue of activist-author Annabhau Sathe was unveiled at the All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow recently.

## **Who is Annabhau Sathe?**

- **Tukaram Bhaurao Sathe, who later came to be known as Annabhau Sathe**, was born in a Dalit family on August 1, 1920 in Maharashtra's Wategaon village in Satara district.
- **Sathe belonged to the Matang community among Dalits.**
- In 1930, his family left the village and came to Mumbai. Here, he worked as a porter, a hawker and even a cotton mill helper.
- In 1934, Mumbai witnessed a workers' strike under the leadership of **Lal Bawta Mill Workers Union** in which he participated.
- During his days at the **Matunga Labour Camp, he got to know R B More, an associate of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar** in the famous '**Chavdar Lake**' satyagraha at Mahad, and joined the labour study circle.
- Being a Dalit, he was denied schooling in his village. It was during these study circles that he learned to read and write.
- Sathe **wrote his first poem on the menace of mosquitoes in the labour camp.**
- He **formed Dalit Yuvak Sangh**, a cultural group and **started writing poems on workers' protests, agitations.** The group used to perform in front of the mill gates.
- **Progressive Writers Association was formed** at the national level at the same time with the likes of Premchand, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Manto, Ismat Chughtai, Rahul Sankrutyayan, Mulkraj Anand as its members.
- The **group would translate the Russian work of Maxim**

**Gorky, Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy**, Ivan Turgenev into Marathi, which Sathe got hooked on.

- It not only had an ideological impact on him, but inspired him to write street plays, stories, novels etc. **In 1939, he wrote his first ballad 'Spanish Povada'.**
- Sathe and his group travelled across Mumbai **campaigning for workers' rights.**
- **Several of his works like 'Aklechi Goshta,' 'Stalingradacha Povada,' 'Mazi Maina Gavavar Rahili,' 'Jag Badal Ghaluni Ghav'** were popular across the state.
- Almost six of his novels were turned into films and many translated into other languages, including Russian.
- **His 'Bangalchi Hak' (Bengal's Call) on the Bengal famine** was translated into Bengali and later presented at London's Royal Theatre. His literature depicted the caste and class reality of Indian society of that time.
- In 1943, he along with Amar Sheikh and Datta Gavhankar, formed the **Lal Bawta Kala Pathak**. The group toured across Maharashtra presenting programmes on caste atrocities, class conflict, and workers' rights.
- He dedicated his most famous novel Fakira to Dr Ambedkar. In 1943, he was part of the process that led to the formation of the **Indian Peoples Theatre Association (IPTA).**
- He became **its national president in 1949. Sathe's work was influenced by Marxism**, but at the same time he brought out the harsh realities of the caste system.
- Famous Marathi poet **Baburao Bagul once called Sathe the Maxim Gorky of Maharashtra.**
- He was **immensely inspired by Gorky's 'The Mother' and the Russian revolution**, which was reflected in his writings.
- Russia used to have representative Indian literature translated into Russian. Sathe's novels like Chitra or his famous Stalingradcha Povada on the battle of Stalingrad battle were translated then. Sathe travelled to Russia in 1961 along with a group of other Indians.

- In his travelogue '**Maza Russiacha Pravas**' (**My Travel to Russia**), he writes that workers had come to see him off and how they wanted him to go and see slums of Russia and describe them after his return home.