

Vishnu Sakharam Khandekar (1898-1976) has been one of the most powerful literary influences that have shaped the taste of two generations of Marathi readers. His writings represent the spirit of brooding over the social and metaphysical essence of man. His deep empathy forced him to write about the miserable and the downtrodden of the society. His philosophy of life was a balance between wealth and poverty, enjoyment and self-denial, poetry and action. He tried various forms of literature—novels, short-stories, essays, dramas, criticism, parables, even film scripts—in quest of this ideal synthesis.

Khandekar's style of writing is rich in imagination. His lyricism and delicate fancy are seen in the descriptions of the various moods and facets of nature, made more appealing by his nostalgic mode of writing. With nearly a hundred books to his credit, Khandekar was probably the first Marathi writer to be widely known outside Maharashtra.

Madhukar Dattatraya Hatkanagalekar (b. 1927), the author of this monograph, is an eminent critic and writer in both Marathi and English, and member of various regional and national committees for awarding literary prizes. In this monograph he evaluates the life and works of **V.S. Khandekar** mainly for the non-Marathi readers.



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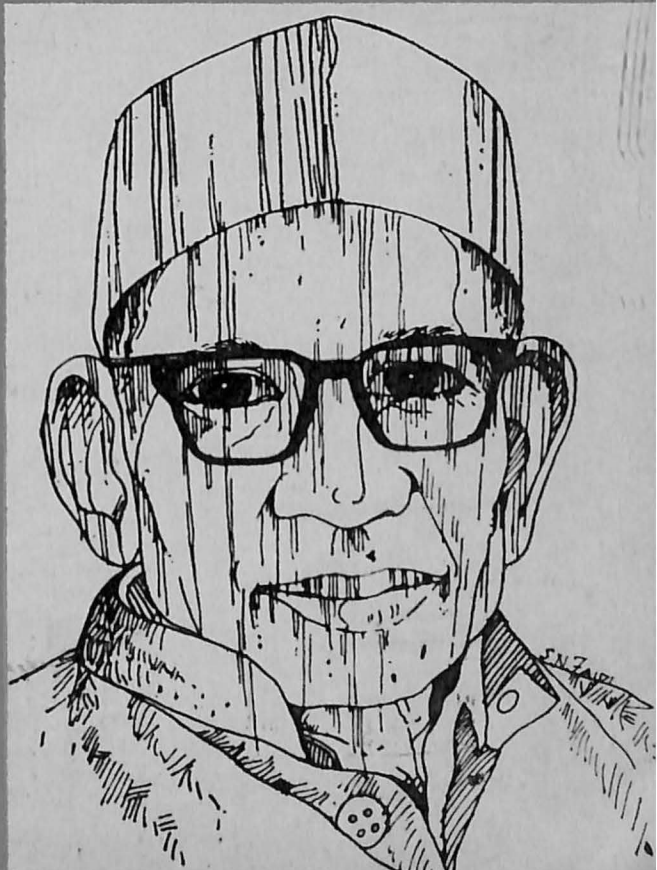
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V.S. KHANDEKAR

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From Nagarjunkonda, 2nd century A.D.
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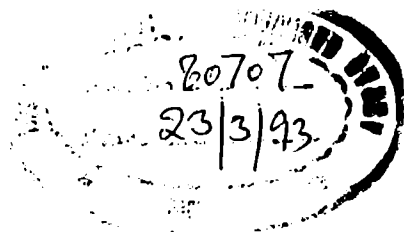
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Preface

Vishnu Sakharam Khandekar occupies a place of major importance in the history of modern Marathi literature. His active writing career extends well over half a century, starting in 1920 and ending almost with his last breath in 1976. He was a full and complete writer practising many forms of literature—novel, drama, short-story, personal essay, literary criticism, film-scripts, biography, poetry, parables, etc. He has nearly a hundred published books to his credit. He was probably the first Marathi writer to be widely known outside his language. His works were not only translated in Gujarati, Tamil, Hindi, Sindhi, Kannada, Malayalam and Bengali but as well loved by those readers as the authors in their respective languages. Khandekar's life was wholly dedicated to literature. He looked upon literature as a means to foster qualities of good life in the community. The observation of B.B. Borker, himself a noted poet, that "Khandekar was the last saintly person in Marathi literature" is very apt. He was distressed by the upsurge of material values in the post-Independence era and felt an alien. The post-Independence generations were rapidly weaned away from him but still he persisted with his dedicated efforts and brought out his *magnum opus* **Yayati** which embodies the essence of his thoughts and imagination as a serious writer of fiction. The novel which became the subject of a long debate is now accepted as the crowning achievement of a career dedicated to purposeful literature. Khandekar strove heroically to plough his own idealistic furrow, fighting against chronic physical disabilities and the whirligig of taste. His position in the world of letters is largely due to the uncompromising idealism which sustained and kept his efforts at an elevated pitch. Khandekar was the recipient of several awards including the Sahitya Akademi Award, Bhartiya Jnanpith and also honoured with the Padmabhushan. He was also the President of All India Marathi

Literary Conference. In terms of dedication to literature as an instrument of moral good, the life of V.S. Khandekar can well be compared with that of any other world figure in modern literature.

In every generation, in each field, people wish to accept some father-figure who represents what the generation would like to possess and knows that it has lost or is rapidly losing. Khandekar was this father-figure for the post-Independence generations of readers, not only in Marathi but in other languages too. He kept them aware, with secret and sad longing, of the loss of values and ideals. His worth and position as a writer is related to this fact and he tried very honestly to deserve it.

V.S. Khandekar had been one of the most powerful literary influences that have shaped the minds of two generations of Marathi readers. He has shown a keen awareness of the social problems of Maharashtrian society for over half a century. He has been truly a writer with a moral vision and a social conscience. As a public speaker, he held listeners spellbound. He untiringly preached broad-mindedness and tolerance in literature. He encouraged a number of young writers. He was one of those writers whose personality appears greater than their books.

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Background and Life

V.S. Khandekar's span of literary activities extended from 1919 when *Shrimat Kalipuranam*, his first piece of writing, was published, to 1974 when *Yayatj* came out. In the course of this half century, he was influenced by many changing forces and factors. Time and again, in his reminiscences and critical writings, he has taken stock of these in a precise manner.

During 1874 and 1920 Marathi literature had stabilised to a certain extent. It began to seek new forms of expression. In the decade 1920-30 new forms like the short-story, personal essay, lyric, character-sketches, dramatic monologues, modern drama were not only born but also made considerable progress. A tide of enthusiasm swept over writers and readers. In the field of political action and thought, several movements like the Civil Disobedience movement, the Salt March, Marxism and Gandhism were agitating the minds of people. Untouched by these, many writers were engrossed in a world of their own creation. It was a period of day-dreaming for the middle class. World War I had been long over and World War II was yet far away. The period of twilight was filled with pleasant idealism and romantic dreaminess. It was a stimulating period for young writers. Khandekar's literary character was moulded by the ideal of self-sacrifice set by G.G. Agarkar and the discriminating attitude to literature possessed by Haribhau Apte. Even though he possessed a rational outlook, social awareness and was a keen observer of modern life, a debilitating compassion prevented Khandekar from transferring the fire and pain of whatever he saw of life on to his writing.

He had a basic romantic strain which blossomed under the fireworks of Ram Ganesh Gadkari's romantic imagination and language. He knew that as a writer he could not have curbed his imaginative urges. He was destined to interpret reality through the colours of his imagination and his idealistic longings.

Khandekar in his many reminiscences has given a vivid account of the age which nourished him as a writer. As a school-going boy, he had read with great avidity the social novels of Haribhau Apte, the revolutionary poetry of Keshav-sut and the essays of Agarkar which made an ardent appeal for social reforms. He was fascinated by the highly figurative and graceful language of Kolhatkar and Gadkari. Under these irresistible influences, he produced poems, literary criticism and humorous articles. As he was imbibing these literary influences, he was, at the same time, waking up to the social reality around him in Shirode. He could see that the majority of people was living in utter poverty. He saw the problem of poverty in a vastly different light than the traditional. Poverty no longer appeared to him as the result of the bad deeds in earlier births, but as the outcome of man's cruelty to man. In comparison with this abject poverty, other social problems like women's education and remarriage of widows seemed to him to be less urgent and universal. It was during this time that he read about the Russian Revolution. A speech made by Mahatma Gandhi at the Benaras Hindu University in which he condemned the State Rulers for their pomp and finery at official functions, made a deep impression upon his mind. As a result of this awakening within him, he realized that literature was the product of one's own experience and not of any imitation. However, he mentioned in his address as the President of the Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan of 1941 that the four books to which the making of his literary personality could be traced were the *Ramayana*, *Arabian Nights' Tales*, *Sudamyaache Pohe* and the village of Shirode, which was like a book to him. The strains in his writing of Idealism, Romantic imagination, witty play on words and sympathy for the poor and love of nature must have been contributed by these sources. As he watched the death agonies of his father, he

was sustained from within by his reading of the *Ramayana*. He realized that suffering was of two kinds, one which made man helpless and the other which was man-made. The latter could be avoided and literature was one of the ways of overcoming it. Khandekar could own it to himself that he did not possess enough social and literary strength to understand the whole pattern of social ills presented by the small village of Shirode, much less to correct it. Yet the seeds of many of his short-stories and novels were lent to him by Shirode. He sought compensation for his defective eyesight in the exercise of his visionary imagination. He looked upon literature as the fulfilment of what he lacked in life. He described himself as a romantic realist and an idealist. He could see that poverty could not be removed by education alone. Some kind of struggle for equality was called for.

Vishnu Sakharam Khandekar was born at Sangli on 19th January, 1898. As his father worked as a Munsif (a subordinate official) in the Sangli State, his childhood was spent at Sangli where his early education was completed. At school, though not a rank-holder, or much interested in studies he was called a 'Scholar'. He was more interested in sports and drama. He, along with his school mate, Rambhau Joshi who later on became a venerable teacher of Physics and remained his close friend throughout life, used to stage mythological plays for friendly young audiences. Admission was given for bits of slate pencils. Young Khandekar naturally acted all kinds of roles. The rest of his leisure hours was devoted to the reading of historical and romantic novels like *Ushhkal* and *Kalikamurti*. Deval's popular social play on child marriage, *Sharada* was a great favourite of his and he knew it by heart. There was an incident of child marriage at Sangli which disturbed Khandekar deeply. From that time onwards, he developed a resentment against religion and traditions. He avidly mastered a collection of humorous and satirical articles, *Sudamyache Pohe* written by Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar. In fact, he was so fond of his plays that he knew them all by heart. Once, in order to watch the performance of his play *Vidhuparikha* Khandekar walked a distance of nearly twenty miles from

Sangli to Miraj and back. He himself wrote a small play, *Shani-Mahatmya*. In a way, Khandekar almost lived the stories of mythology, absorbing their morals. He wished to rediscover them in the context of modern life.

Khandekar passed his matriculation in 1913, standing eighth in the University. He went to Poona for his College studies and enrolled himself at the Fergusson College. He secured a scholarship there for himself but in order to meet expenses he had to undertake two tuitions for which he walked down to the city.

When Khandekar arrived in Poona, *Premśanyās*, a play written by the famous playwright, Ram Ganesh Gadkari, was the subject of much discussion then. Young writers adored Gadkari. One such young admirer was Khandekar's friend Banyabapu Kamatnurkar from Sangli. Khandekar, however was an admirer of Kolhatkar. The two often conducted literary feud on behalf of their masters. Finally Khambatnurkar introduced Khandekar to Gadkari one day but Khandekar could enjoy the company of Gadkari for a short period only. However, he treasured these precious memories of that inspiring period all through his life. Kolhatkar and Gadkari left a deep impress on his style and language.

In 1916 Khandekar was adopted by his uncle who owned lands in Konkan and Ganesh Atmaram Khandekar became Vishnu Sakharam Khandekar. However his hope that his adoptive father would support him for his college education was cruelly belied. He abandoned education and went to live at Sawantwadi and fought for the next three years with poverty, malaria and mental unrest.

He came to stay at Sawantwadi because he had become attached to his adoptive sister and fallen in love with the natural beauty of the coastal region. His sister thought that his prolonged attack of fever was due to his being possessed by an evil spirit which did not want the family line to continue. In that state of ill-health he read and wrote for relaxation. It was during this period that he wrote his first critical essay. It was a forceful rejoinder to an article published by the elderly critic, G.T. Madkholkar on "The school of Keshavsut" in the magazine *Navayug*. Later however, they met and became good friends.

Khandekar could have sat for the High Court Pleader's examination and set up practice at Sawantwadi but a life of service and sacrifice appealed to him more. In this respect he was greatly inspired by Agarkar who was his ideal. So he took up work as a school teacher at a school in Shirode in 1920. At that time the school had a strength of about sixty students. Khandekar's salary was Rupees twenty per month. An extremely dedicated teacher, he taught the boys not according to any fixed time-table but was available to them at all hours of the day. He infused in their minds ideas and generous feelings with the help of stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, preparing them for the task which was to change, nothing less than the entire world. He often would walk with them by the sea-shore, talking to them all the while and opening their hearts to unknown horizons. In the beginning, he faced opposition from the villagers and also a number of threatening letters. But he received courage and hope from the expression of affection shown by a student, Anna Kotnis, who, when down with typhoid fever while studying at a College in Sangli, wanted only his mother and his teacher Khandekar by his side. That he, a teacher, was remembered by a student in his last moments was enough motivation never to regret having taken up the profession which he had chosen.

During vacations, he travelled in order to collect donations for the school. In 1925 the school got its own building. The strength of the school had also increased greatly but the salary of the teachers still remained the same. It was very difficult to maintain a family, even of two people, with that small amount. At that time Akka, Khandekar's elder sister from the family in which he was adopted, was living with him.

During 1920-25 Khandekar wrote some articles. One was on the death of Gadkari, being a tribute to his memory. The other articles were humorous and satirical. His first short-story "Ghar Konache" was published in 1923.

Khandekar's friend, Shri Meghashyam Shirodkar started publishing from Sawantwadi a weekly called *Vainateya*. Khandekar was made the editor of the literary section of *Vainateya*. Khandekar ran three different columns, book-

reviews, social and political criticism and humorous articles. From 1925 onwards he began writing seriously and in 1926 Kolhatkar chose to introduce Khandekar in public as his adopted son. He became young Khandekar's literary mentor. Khandekar's short-stories got published in leading magazines like *Ratnakar*, *Yashwant*, *Manoranjan* and *Swayansevak*. The last was published from Goa.

By this time the school where he taught became well established. Then, at the instance of Kolhatkar and Akka, Khandekar got married to one Manutai belonging to the Manerikar family of Asoge in Belgaum District.

His first novel *Hridayachi Hak* (Call of the Heart) came to be written. He at the instance of the proprietor of the Karnataka Press, Shri Kulkarni and Sri Khanolkar, another friend of his wrote half a dozen plays also, but the manuscripts of five of those cannot be traced.

The period between 1929 and 1934 was good for Khandekar except for an incident which was to affect him later. In 1933, once, as he was returning from his evening walk from the Arawali hills, he was bitten by a snake. Immediate medical help was given and the danger to his life averted. But the residual poison began to produce white blotches upon his skin. He went and lived in Poona for a year under the care of the noted physician, Dr. Bhadamakar who was also his relative. But the year-long treatment did not bring any appreciable relief.

In 1935, he wrote his first film script *Chhaya*, which was awarded the 'Gohar Medal' for the Best Film Script in the following year. His increasing writing commitments left him little time for attending to his work at the school and the white blotches on the skin began to spread day by day. So he accepted voluntary retirement and settled down in Kolhapur and wrote six film scripts. He had lived in Shirode from 1920 to 1938. In this period, he had two close companions, one was the sea and the other the hills, called "Bhikedongari".

His first public lecture was delivered in 1921 at Panaji and was the beginning of a series of well received public lectures. He was honoured by being selected chairman of many important literary conferences. He used to make a

note in his diary of every striking bit that was seen by him or that had occurred to him during the course of the day. This turned out to be the seed of a short-story or a personal essay.

His character was moulded mainly by four influences. First, by his father who was loving, generous, honest and firm. Second, by his maternal grandfather Babakaka Mainkar who was a scholarly, tolerant and courageous gentleman and who was fond of conversation and recited portions from the Vedas in the early hours of the morning. Third, by his father's friend, Dr. Hari Shrikrishna Deo, Chief Medical Officer, Sangli State, who led a remarkably chaste life and in spite of his comfortable earnings, devoted his time to selfless, social service. This was the ideal which inspired Khandekar to devote himself to the school at Shirode. Fourth, by the purity of Dr. Bhadamkar's life. In addition, Agarkar's essays on social ills and the social satire in Kolhatkar's *Sudamyache Pohe* fostered in him an attitude of protest against social injustice.

Though he had to struggle against poverty for the large part of his life he was generous and always ready to help the needy who approached him for help. He was extremely fond of children. His only weakness was conversation. He could never resist the temptation to engage himself in vigorous conversation, which developed soon into public discourse. Once he got started, it turned out for his listeners a continuous flow of literary delight.

In Kolhapur he soon came to be acknowledged as a literary lion. He marched from one success to another, novels, short-stories, essays and film scripts flowing freely from his pen. He wrote fifteen novels and nearly seventy-five books. His novels were translated into Gujarati, Kannada, Hindi, Malayalam and Bengali. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi in 1960, and honoured with the Padma-bhushan in 1968. He was made a fellow of the Sahitya Akademi in 1970.

While he was working on his famous novel *Yayait* he fell ill. His eyesight, which was already bad, became worse. He could not write himself. He had to dictate the rest of the novel to complete it. He was awarded the Jnanpith

Award for it in 1974. Shivaji University, Kolhapur, conferred on him the D. Litt. Degree. Meanwhile his health was failing rapidly. He sustained himself on the strength of sheer will-power. He spent the last days of his life at Islampur, a place near Kolhapur, to live with his third daughter, Sulabha Kapadi. There on 2nd September, 1976, he breathed his last.

Novels

The norms of Marathi fiction were laid by the great Hari Narayan Apte who along with the historical novels, shaped the novel of social purpose and gave it an aesthetic form. Prof. V.M. Joshi, the philosophic thinker and Dr. S.V. Ketkar, compiler of the first Marathi encyclopaedia and an original thinker with sociological outlook, brought to the Marathi novel philosophic and sociological dimensions. Prof. Joshi through his novels like *Ragini* and *Shushilecha Dev* gave an exposition of the modern educated Hindu woman who was fast emerging. Dr. S.V. Ketkar boldly took up such unconventional social problems for treatment in his novels as the future of the progeny of prostitutes. His novels, although clumsy in style and form were nevertheless highly provocative. G.T. Madkholkar was another reputed novelist. His novels had the background of contemporary politics but dealt with man-woman relationship in a dignified sanskritized style which had a flavour of its own. P.Y. Deshpande, too, won a substantial following. His novels displayed reformist urges but were tinged with a mystical lyricism. This was a characteristic foreshadowing of the mode practised on a larger scale by Khandekar. B.V. alias Mama Warerkar who was mainly a dramatist, also wrote novels. The beginnings of realism were first seen in these novels which dealt with the industrial life in big cities. He also translated into Marathi the novels of the celebrated Bengali writer, Sarat Chandra Chatterji. After the initial period of major upheavals in political and social life, there followed a period of relaxed absorption of the spirit of idealism which was associated with fine aesthetic urges.

Khandekar provided an outlet for the spirit of idealism. Later on, Prof. Phadke was to indulge in aesthetic urges. Khandekar's idealism continued to be fed by the thoughtful writings which were being produced even up to the fourth decade of this century.

Phadake, in a way, was the chief rival of Khandekar. The former was a versatile writer and possessed a lucid, fascinating style. He had inherited the pure narrative tradition and was not influenced by the imaginative flourishes of the dramatic writings of the period. Most of his novels dealt with youthful and tender love which made an instant appeal to young readers. His command over the traditional aspects of the novel, such as plot construction, characterization, setting and atmosphere was evidently superior to that of Khandekar. Khandekar's strength lay in his idealism and his richly imaginative literary style. The comparison between the two is regarded as imperative.

Khandekar did as much writing as Phadake in all forms—short-stories, criticism, parables, personal essays, novels and film-scripts. Although, he has not written as many novels as Phadake did, yet he was more attached to the novel and the short-story than to other forms of writings such as literary criticism, personal essay, parables or film scripts. Confessing to the different purposes which prompted him to write, he said, "I write film-scripts for my livelihood, personal essays and parables for my delight, and criticism, short-stories and novels because I believe that human life can be served through these forms."

This belief of Khandekar was different from that of Phadake who was inspired by those English writers of fiction who valued craft and style more. Khandekar was wholly influenced by his study of native literary traditions and by his admiration for certain masters of his generation like Kolhatkar and Gadkari. He wrote of these influences, thus:

"When I was a school going boy, Kolhatkar was at the height of his reputation as a humorist and Gadkari had already made his appearance on the dramatic scene. These masters were adept in displaying the powers of imagination and fancy and made an instant appeal to

the romantic urges of young minds. Even elderly people were drawn to them more easily than to Deval and Haribhau Apte. At the tender age of ten, I was more fascinated by the wit and humour of Kolhatkar's *Mook-nayak* than the revelation of realistic life in Deval's *Sharada*. Gadkari lent a dazzling extension to this tradition which led me to believe that the best literature had to be loaded with the riches of language and fancy. When I left Poona in 1915 I had Gadkari's *Punya Prabhav* on the tip of my tongue.

"At the same time, I was keenly aware of my admiration for the novels of Haribhau Apte. I was fascinated by his skill of describing faithfully the joys and sorrows of ordinary people. However, I wished that he would write better in the style of Kolhatkar. I read the writings of Agarkar when I was studying in the college. These drew me towards the ideal of social service. I could have, despite difficulties, completed higher education and started work as a professor but I preferred to go to a small village with a population of not more than three thousand and work there as an ordinary teacher. All my novels up to 1938, up to the publication of *Hirava Chapha* were written in this small village. As I entered the spirit of village life, the subjects of my writing changed, ideas also changed and my literary values began to be shaken. I realized that the content of my writing was coming closer to that of Haribhau Apte while the form and the style were influenced by Kolhatkar and Gadkari. We distinguish between social values they are interdependent and interacting. I adopted not only the style and manner of Gadkari and Kolhatkar but also their material. Though I continued to change in course of time, I was never entirely free from that romantic tradition."

This self-analysis made by Khandekar is quite correct.

Hridayachi Hak (Call of the Heart) (1930) and *Kanchan Mriga* (Golden Deer) (1931) were the first two novels written by Khandekar. Their plots are weighted down by incidents and the style shows inordinate love of words and play on words. The characters express the flow of wit and fancy of the author. The fancy draws its nourishment from nature or from books. The characters are sentimental and high-souled. *Hridayachi Hak* is however not very realis-

tic and the dramatic events remind us of the romantic stage play. *Kanchan Mrig* appears less artificial in comparison. It deals with the differences between the life in cities and villages. Sudhakar, the hero, goes to a village as a teacher with the noble intention of bringing about a change in the rural society. There he falls in love with Sudha, a widow and faces bravely all the trials and tribulations subjected to him by a hostile community. Cities, as the author explains in the preface are but the dress of Mother India while villages are her flesh and bones. To run after the former and neglect the latter will be like chasing the golden deer as Seeta did in Ramayana. This novel has a better constructed plot and more realistic characters. His next two novels, *Ulka* (Bright Meteor) and *Don Druva* (Two Poles) came out in the same year, 1934. *Ulka* is the name of the heroine. Her father Bhausaheb is an idealist teacher. He has infused his idealism into his daughter. She is as bright as a meteor. The novel narrates the emotional entanglements of *Ulka*. It also brings into focus the gross materialism which the new Maharashtrian middle class was accepting. Another aspect of the novel is the gradual frustration that overcomes the idealist teacher. He finds that his attempt to awaken the masses is inadequate. In this novel Khandekar tries to go a little deeper in understanding the sources of misery in the life around. He presents three streams of thought; first, about the life of women, second, about the ultimate result of social service and sacrifice, and third, about economic inequality leading to revolutionary fervour. The style remains unchanged and the narration shows repeated use of symbols. The character of Bhausaheb is much more effective than that of *Ulka* which remains vague and is without any signs of development. In spite of these shortcomings, and mainly due to its extreme sincerity of purpose, the novel proved to be very popular.

Encouraged by this success, Khandekar brought out a bigger novel, *Don Druva* in the same year. It has the same elements of intellect and imagination but they are not properly fused as in *Ulka*. At this point, Khandekar must have been in two minds. During 1925-34, Prof. Phadake had firmly established himself as the new master

of Marathi fiction. Khandekar's talent and outlook was however different from that of Phadake. He could not accept Phadake's outlook of Art for Art's sake although he had to contend with it in order to continue and to prove his worth as a novelist. The opposition between art and life which is one of the many dualities presented in *Don Druva* stands for the rival viewpoints of Phadake and Khandekar. So, Khandekar had to oppose to an extent and also accept to an extent Phadake's viewpoint and practice. Since this conscious compromise was made, the novel failed to produce the impression of wholeness. In this novel, he has given more attention to the depiction of love. The dialogues here are not easy and natural. The turn of events in the plot is improbable. The presentation of characters also is not satisfying. Only a few beautiful and sparking aphorisms stand out in memory after reading the novel.

The novel presents the story of the disharmony in marriage between Ramakant, who is a dramatist and his plain-looking wife, Vatsala. He is handsome and worships beauty. He is drawn towards the beautiful actress Suranga. Vatsala leaves the house to work as a labourer in a cashew-nut factory. The grim reality of the miserable life of the workers comes as a revelation to her. She decides to cast her lot with them, turning down the offer of her husband to take her back. Khandekar sees the roots of social evil in a lack of scientific outlook. Freedom would come, if people free themselves from the shackles of ignorance. Cries of toiling villagers make the intellectual turn his gaze from his books to the stark reality of life. He knows that the society is fragmented by inequality. Gandhian Ahimsa is found to be inadequate to meet the situation when violence breaks out.

The novel *Pandhare Dhag* (White Clouds) published in 1939 was written during the period of disillusionment following World War II. This novel has a prominent place in the understanding of Khandekar's social analysis. White clouds are the symbol of the attractive but delusive ideals of the middle class intellectuals. Ordinary people look up to such clouds like Chatak birds in expectation of rains. Behind the bright white cloud there is a dark and menacing

cloud as well. It is menacing to all except Garuda, the king of eagles who brought nectar to the people on earth. The hero of the novel is Abhay, the one without fear. He represents the new generation. His friend, Narendra has just returned from the Spanish Civil War. He makes Abhay realise that the intellectual, in spite of his study of several books, fails to understand the great Book of Life. The theme and design of the novel is explained by Khandekar in the preface thus:

"The object of the novel is to depict the middle class in Maharashtra which is devoid of principles and ideals. Abhay is the representative of the poor, high-strung young generation of intellectuals."

The presentation in the novel is more objective and natural but it remains so only in the early part of the novel. In the later stages it becomes sensational. The depiction of Abhay's school days and domestic life through small incidents and the characterization of Akka, Dattopant and grandfather in simple and unadorned style, are the highlights of the novel.

His fifth novel *Hirva Chapha* (Green Champak Flower) was published in 1938. Some part of this novel was serialized in the magazine *Jyotsna* in 1936. It shows the influence of Prof. Phadake's craftsmanship of fiction and his aesthetic outlook. The dialogues become more natural and less cluttered with play on words and witticism. *Don Mane* (Two Minds) was published in the same year. Cast in a different mould, it attempts a psychological rather than a purely narrative treatment. It presents the course of life of three friends who were close to one another in childhood, were inspired by the same ideals but who, in later life, broke away in diverse ways due to circumstance and different dispositions. During this period, as Khandekar has himself stated, he was thinking a great deal about the conflict between the outward behaviour of man and the inner working of his heart, his seemingly cultured ways under social restraints and the inexplicable basic waywardness of his impulses. Around this time, Freud was making an impact

on Marathi literature which affected Khandekar too. In *Don Mane* religious idealism, romantic love and Satyagraha remain the raw material as in two earlier novels but these are treated from a psychological point of view.

Khandekar began writing film scripts in 1936 and began to publish these film stories in the form of novels. *Rikama Devara* (Vacant Shrine) (1939) is based on the script of the film *Devata* (Goddess) and *Sukhacha Shodh* (Search of Happiness) (1939) on the film of the same name. These novels are clearly adapted to the requirements of Indian films and so they seem to be a little loud and artificial, excepting the style, which is simple and lucid. *Pahile Prem* (First Love) (1940) and *Jalalela Mohor* (Blighted Blossoms) (1941) attempt a different experiment in the technique of narration. The theme of the former novel revolves round the idea that the first love is the real love. If it is frustrated, the heart is wounded deeply. The latter novel underlines the idea that family happiness is the result of well regulated physical pleasures. The story is presented through first person narrations made by different characters. This was certainly a new way of approaching the subject of love but it did not achieve the depth which it should have achieved.

Chrounch Vadha (1942) (Killing of the Chrounch) was dedicated to Ernst Toller and Stephen Zweig. It deals with the tragic contrast between renunciation and indulgence, intellect and emotion, poetry and action. It makes a plea for the proper blending of the contraries. This is brought out through the character of Dadasaheb Datar, a widower and a perfect representative of the cultured middle class. He has to deviate from his strict principles. He is critical of the irrational faith of Mahatma Gandhi. However, he cannot be free from the charge of inaction himself. His daughter, Sulochana is a sensitive girl. She is alive to the scene of social unrest. She is attracted to Dinkar, who is a leader of the masses. He courts imprisonment and extreme penalty for his political activity. It is stated in the introduction to the novel that the malaise of the twentieth century lies in its belief in reforms. This belief proves delusive. The so-called reforms do not enable us to become one

with the feelings and experiences of common men. They cannot prevent warfare and bloodshed. Brutal powers like Nazism and Fascism run through the world like crazy fire and consume innocent people like Toller and Zweig or the hero of the novel *Dinkar*, for example. In the *Ramayana*, the hunter wantonly kills one of the pair of crouching birds and brings upon himself the curse of the sage. Too much of individualism leads to limitless indulgence and the lust for power. Socialism and Gandhism cannot restrain the forces of individualism. *Chrounch Vadha* is regarded as the most significant novel written by Khandekar because it seeks to present the conflicting ideologies and practices that were agitating the life of Maharashtra during the first three decades of this century. The characters are adapted suitably to represent these ideologies and as a result fail to live their independent life. The construction of the novel, written at the height of Khandekar's creative powers, remains loose and defective. And yet it embodies successfully the different streams in the intellectual life of the period.

Ashru (Tears) (1953) expresses the bitter feelings which assailed Khandekar during the disturbed decade between 1942 and 1952. Shankar, the hero, is an idealist teacher in search of eternal values. He is confused by the contradictions around him. He wants to reexamine the traditional values. He finds that the middle class which is the custodian of traditional values, is torn between two urges, the one economic and the other cultural. The salvation for this class can lie in becoming selfless and in merging its identity with the rightful aspirations of the masses.

The novel *Yayati* (1964) which won him the coveted Jnanpith Award explores the entire range of carnal pleasures. In the opinion of Khandekar, these have increased rapidly with the inventions of science. They have brought pleasures within easy reach of common man as never before in history. The pleasure seeking of the many is contrasted with the self-denial of the blessed few. The latter are the true souls and can set examples for others. King Yayati represents the common man. He is prepared to purchase his pleasures at any cost. Kacha is his exact opposite. He shows a noble, calm and a lofty ideal of service. He is the

embodiment of the new man. He has a fully developed soul and can curb his passions. The mythical story of Yayati is given a modern significance. The pleasure seeking Yayati is not found in the epic *Mahabharata*. Such interpretation was put on him in later period which Khandekar has accepted for his own purpose. The characters of Yayati, Kacha, Devyani and Sharmishta stand out as human archetypes. Khandekar has made use of the ancient figure to convey his message. He has taken necessary liberties with the fable. For centuries, Yayati has remained in the popular mind as the most striking representative of the libertines. He asked his son to give him his youth because even though old, his desires were not fully satisfied. In Indian mythology there are other kings and sages whose indulgence has been disgraceful but it was Yayati who earned the distinction of being the arch libertine.

The moderns have to face the conflict between moderation, and unbridled indulgence. It is present in all fields—political, social, moral and economic. Do we accept the right of every person to take as much of happiness as he desires? Do we accept his right to accumulate as much wealth as he likes for this purpose?

Khandekar thought that the world in this century was hastening to its destruction. Man has invented the nuclear bomb and other weapons of destruction but he has not been able to conquer his mind. In this context Khandekar makes use of Shukracharya, the master of the devils, who was prepared to employ terrible strength to achieve trivial goals. This unreasonable destructive power can be contended by the pursuit of piety. So, Khandekar brings in Kacha. Kacha stands as an ideal that can transcend the persistent duality of existence. Khandekar was evolving the philosophy of compromise between indulgence and renunciation, carnal passion and religious virtue, brutal strength and meek holiness, worldly life and saintly life, the reconciliation of body and spirit. He wished to show that passion, love and devotion were stages in the gradual sublimation of the same inner yearning. He illustrated this through the love of Kacha and Devyani. Khandekar knew that passion was natural and desires for pleasure was a strong motive force in man but

he also felt that restraint and sacrifice were the fruits of human civilization and these could curb and control wild passion. He knew that passion cannot be curbed through fear and force. Khandekar always stood against the excess of indulgence. In spite of this lofty framework of philosophy, *Yayati* largely reads like the tragic story of an ordinary pleasure seeker. It fails to attain the stature of a Greek tragedy. But the novel does give us the feel of a meditative mind. The philosophic reflections may not be very original but the personality from which they originate is extremely honest and socially compassionate. Khandekar became restless at the prospect of human destruction through unsatisfied wants and desires. He wanted man to preserve the values of culture at all costs. Khandekar was like the young, high-souled Abhimanyu trying valiantly to break through the encircling doom.

Yayati was followed by *Amritvel* and *Soneri Swapne (Bhangaleli)* which were however left incomplete. *Amritvel* is woven around the idea that in the difficult journey of life, man requires the aid of selfless love. One cannot get it easily. Such love is a kind of immortal creeper which keeps one alive. The story, at one place, recalls a situation in Hamlet.

Khandekar was not inspired to write his novels to present his experience of life. His inspiration was literary and born of literature. He generally wrote in imitation of the works and style of Gadkari and Kolhatkar. In course of time under the influence of social idealism and real experience, he realized that his literary ideals fell short in many respects. The first two novels were largely literary. Signs of new beginnings were seen in *Ulka*. He was attempting to use characters for the treatment of social problems. This remained his purpose for the rest of his career as a novelist. Yet his novel could not attain perfect fusion of content and form. They leave much to be desired in construction, characterization and rational understanding of social problems. His novels therefore give the impression of construction and not creations. There is a lack of unity of construction and lucidity of expression, mainly due to an excessive fondness for play on words and for display of

fancy. His characters are conceived as types. They do not come fully alive. They remain inert moulds of ideas. They merely put on social significance and do not absorb it in the pores of their being. There is little evidence in his novels that he was interested in different kinds of men or personalities. As he did not concentrate on the principal characters in the story, he could not achieve unity of impression. The narrative became loose. It was cluttered with assorted ideas and epigrams. However, his writings as a whole show growth and development. His vision was enlarged. It was nourished by the best in Western literature and experience. This is seen in the many prefaces that he wrote. He wrote extensive prefaces to his novels explaining at length their themes. These western influences enabled him to resist the artfulness, not to say the artificiality of Phadake and to sustain his idealism and social awareness. It also chastened his style to a large extent. His novels present in their own way the currents and cross-currents, the ups and downs in the social and intellectual life of Maharashtra over a span of fifty years. He believed in guiding the life of society through the art of fiction. He did it with devotion and out of genuine sympathy and love for his fellowmen.

Short - stories

It will not be out of place to begin by summarizing the discerning assessment of the form of the short-story and the development of the Marathi short-story which Khandekar attempted in his critical writings.

The graph which he drew of the development of Marathi short-story was perceptive at many points. According to this graph the stories written in Marathi before the arrival of Haribhau Apte, were not really short-stories, they were old-fashioned tales. The stories written by Haribhau also failed to satisfy the essential requirements of a short-story. They were put together as short novels. They aimed at impressing a moral rather than presenting an intense experience. However, Haribhau, through the magazine *Karamanuk* and Gurjar through *Manoranjan* made Marathi readers take to the short-story. Gurjar lent dramatic and artistic features to the story. He set the pattern of pleasing romantic love stories. The loose nature of his stories is, according to Khandekar, a fault for which the practice of the age is largely responsible and that a fair assessment of any writer can be made only in the perspective of his age.

1920 marked the beginning of a new age in Marathi creative literature. The growing taste for light magazines helped the short-story to establish itself. Readers were introduced to the masterpieces of Maupassant and Chekhov and also to magazines like *Strand* and to Bengali writers like Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee. The modern short-story took shape in response to these circumstances. It became conscious of form, delicacy and lyricism. While dealing with the modern short-story, Khandekar referred to English short-

story writers and critics like Galsworthy, Elizabeth Bowen, Coppard, H. E. Bates and others. He believed that a poetic approach to the experience of life was the thing which brought about a revolution in the concept of the short-story. The new short-story enriched in Marathi by Diwakar Krishna, Manjrekar, Kamalabai Tilak and others became suggestive, restrained and capable of giving unity of impression. It was Diwakar Krishna who transformed the ancient tale into the modern well-made short-story, emphasizing its intimate connection with poetry. He found worthy followers in Waman Chorghade and Kusumavati Deshpande. In this context Khandekar pointed out very correctly that Phadake who was all the while conscious of the element of beauty, lacked poetic insight. He warned against confusing poetic insight with sentimental writing found in the stories of Y. G. Joshi or Datta Ragnath Kavathekar. Khandekar of course, was not oblivious of the merits of these short-story writers.

Khandekar was against giving excessive importance to technique. He did not want young writers to be guided and governed by books on the technique of short-story writing but wanted them to study the masterpieces and derive benefit from them, and above all, he wanted them to know that the greatness of a short-story depended upon the rich personality of the writer, on his poetic insight, and his passionate philosophy of life. He referred to Sean O' Faolain, the Irish story writer, for these views. Khandekar pointed out that restraint in art is to be understood and defined in the context of a people's identity and mould. Khandekar was prepared to appreciate the context of the modern age and its expression in literature and arts. He compared surrealism to a scene in the midst of an earthquake where things lose their normal positions and perspective. He could see that the new group of short-story writers led by Gangadhar Gadgil, P. B. Bhavé, Arvind Gokhale, and V. M. Madgulkar wrote in a different manner, with sentimentality drained out of their literary nerves. He thought that this was a welcome feature of the new story. He was however, not in favour of the so called "dark night of the soul". In his opinion, the pessimism in modern arts was a "numbness of the spirit".

Khandekar looked upon Rabindranath Tagore's stories as ideal Indian short-stories. He thought that the feeling in these stories easily becomes poetic. Their subjects and treatment remains true to Indian soil and Indian skies. He said that from selection of subjects to the bloom of style, Tagore's stories are thoroughly Indian and form one of the glories of our literature, and that Tagore's "Kabuliwala" "Atithi", "Post-Master" are superior to O' Henry's "Gift of the Magi" or Maupassants "Necklace" because the feelings in the latter are not as noble. Khandekar pointed out that Tagore was known to Marathi writers somewhat late. Diwakar Krishna alone could absorb his influence. Khandekar was a fond witness to the development of the short-story in Marathi right from its inception. In his criticism, he referred to English critics but maintained his independence. At the same time, he wished the Marathi writers to pay greater attention to the form of the short-story. He reminded them of the following view of H. E. Bates, the noted British short-story writer and critic, "The short-story will take its place as a form of literature most suited to the subtle and superior treatment of life. It will be the most flexible of literary forms. It can deal with endless variety of subjects, its brevity is its convenient virtue. Better than the novel, it can depict the restlessness and the cynicism of modern life."

Khandekar surpassed Prof. Phadake as a writer of short-stories. His first collection of stories *Navmallika* was published in 1929. It was received with great enthusiasm and the publication of his succeeding collection of stories was eagerly awaited by his readers. Very soon he established himself as the foremost writer of short-stories in Marathi. Khandekar published his first short-story in the year 1919 and continued to publish stories till 1976, producing a total of nearly two hundred pieces. Greater part of his writing career was taken up by the short-stories. Twenty-five collections of stories stand to his credit.

After 1941 almost for the next six years Khandekar did not produce a single short-story. The wild fire of the predatory instinct displayed everywhere during World War II benumbed his creativity. The stories written by Khande-

kar between 1925 and 1930 betrayed many signs of a novice in the field. They were a little formless and sprawling. The models before him were those of Haribhau Apte and V. S. Gurjar. The sense of form which was seen in the stories written by Diwakar Krishna was yet to be appreciated. Khandekar was unable to resist the temptation of a rich and florid style made current by playwrights like Kolhatkar and Gadkari. After 1930 Khandekar became increasingly sure of the form and technique of the short-story and tried to overcome the lures of a florid style. During 1931 to 1940, his short-stories matured in content and form. This was the high tide of his career as a short-story writer. He established his separate identity and refused to submit to the tyranny of technique very much in vogue then. He remained true to his leisurely, meditative mode of narration. The outstanding features of his talent as a creative artist, high-souled reflections and quicksilver, delightful fancy were in full bloom during this period. These stories afforded pleasure of a different and higher kind. After 1947, in the last phase, his stories tended to become a little prolix and more philosophical. They were filled with direct commentary on the changing and disturbing social scene around. His prefaces to his short-story collections became more expansive. However, the stories written during this period showed a greater variety of theme, more penetration and experiments in the mode of narration. They made considerable impact on the development of the Marathi short-story.

The first impression produced by his stories is that of an awareness of contemporary life and problems. Three stages can be marked in Khandekar's life and career. First, the pre-independence period, radiating idealism, high-spirit and hard labour, second, the period following World War II made dismal by debasement of human values, and the final period filled with the different vicissitudes of the post-independence era, changing leadership, progress in technical knowledge, social inequality, mounting poverty, unemployment, corruption and the breaking-up of the joint family. These are progressively reflected in his stories. He deals with such characters from the lower middle class society as the clerk, the teacher, the postman and the painter. He

treats of their privations and misery under the stress of hard realities of life. He deals with social pretence and the suffering of woman. Contentment and peace of life rarely appear in his stories.

Khandekar is always struck by the duality of life. Life divided into rich and poor, master and slave, pleasure and renunciation, true and false, passion and reason, flesh and spirit, Life and Death. As he wrote, "Life is not poetic, it is dramatic. Life is an unending conflict between the true and the false, the holy and the unholy, the gross and the subtle, the ideal and the practical. Life is an eternal struggle between the animal and the human instincts in man." Because his understanding is governed by the concept of duality, his stories acquire a simple and broad form. This leads him to draw bright paradoxical conclusions such as "Women are like fading flowers while men are hard stones", "Book turns man into a parrot, experience makes him an eagle." The titles of some of his stories are suggestive of this simple duality, "Flowers and Stones", "Woman and Men", "To-day and To-morrow", "Heaven and Hell", "Mountain and Vale", "Dream and Life", etc.

The characters in his stories belong to the lower middle class. Their growth seems to be stunted. They are oppressed by poverty and tradition. Khandekar looks upon them as "the products of a fragmented society." It is a sin to be born a human being, son! If you were to be born as a beautiful horse, they would have fed you from a silver pouch fixed to your mouth! If born a puppy, you would have played around on the costly sari of a movie actress. You were born a human being, struggled through poverty, passed the matriculation examination, this was your mistake!" (from: "The New World"). In order to bring about change in this situation, Khandekar's idealist young men dedicate themselves to social work, sacrificing love, higher education and the prospect of a bright and happy future. Many of these youths are teachers, social workers, artists, writers and newspapermen. Their idealism instead of making them strong-willed, tends to make them soft and sentimental. Khandekar's remedy for economic inequality, untouchability, casteism and superstitions is for everyone to culti-

vate broad-mindedness. Khandekar would like everyone to leave his narrow "nest" of selfishness and to fly out in the wide open space. That is why the impact of World War II was too great for his stories to assimilate. The people of ordinary calibre in his stories sustain themselves by worshipping the great. Many of these are eager to work but can not find the right way. Khandekar has described with great sincerity the depression and sense of futility which after independence, became the lot of those whose earlier lives had been shaped by idealistic fervour. All along, he remained loyal to traditional values. Stories like "Juna Kot", "Nandadip", "Puja", "Apaghat" emphasize the values of honesty, sympathy, service, sacrifice, reason and temperance. In the story "Juna Kot" we come across a boy returning a one rupee currency note which had been left in his coat by mistake. Khandekar saw that craving for power, property, honour and pleasure had taken the place of devotion to truth, selfless work and an attitude of complete surrender. These virtues have become butts of ridicule. Men, saddened by knowledge of these changes, are found in such stories as "Jeebha", "Parvati", "Prasad", "Manus", "Kalakar". These men pray for will power and reason to sustain society through the crisis. His stories do not deal with politics. Gandhism and socialism are brought in so far as they embody certain ideals and virtues. Stories like "Suryasta" and "Pani" take on colours of melancholy over the loss of these ideals after independence. After the death of Gandhi, many of his followers felt that the very purpose of their existence had disappeared and they had become outdated.

Khandekar's stories depict the discord between individuals, between parents and children, between young people in love, between husband and wife, and between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. However, the misunderstandings are always cleared at the end of the story. This can best be studied in such stories as "Cultured Moti" and "Kalavant".

Khandekar's stories are shaped more by ideas than by experiences. Incidents and characters do not always bring out these ideas creatively. On the contrary, ideas tend to

be discussed or explained at length and as a result the stories acquire the air of being contrived to suit the needs of ideas. In the story "Stree ani Purush" for example, the fact that the woman walks out of the house is not justified by the situation. The skeleton of ideas is barely fleshed by plot and characters. And yet his stories did go home to the reading public of the day because of their appealing ideas.

In his stories on love, Khandekar projects the conflict between physical and mental love. His favourite stories on this theme written by Western writers were, Chekhov's "Darling", Zweig's "A Letter from an Unknown Woman" as also "Badi Didi" by the famous Bengali writer, Sharatchandra Chatterjee where "True love has a close look at the real nature of the soul." Khandekar seeks to understand love in a comprehensive way as an attraction of the body as well as the spirit, of passion as well as piety, as loyalty in and outside the bond of marriage. "The passion of youth is like wine, pure nectar of love is attained when two minds liberated from the shackles of the body, unite," ("Lapwilele Ashru"). Many of Khandekar's stories of love seem to be written to counteract the stories written by Phadake who was then the most popular writer of romantic stories. He entertained his readers through appeal to the senses. Khandekar's appeal is to soulful qualities. To lift these qualities to their highest level, Khandekar has shown his young lovers as afflicted by leprosy, a disease which creates only repulsion for the body. Khandekar has also written some fine humourous stories like "Jambhahichi Shalatapasani", "Marx ani Freud", and "O Henryche Mat" in which his keen sense of observation, skilful presentation of characters and contrasts, careful construction and a bubbling sense of humour are in evidence.

One leading aspect of his stories is his delineation of the characters of women. Just as he is fond of describing the innocence and the emotional depth of woman, he also brings out the strong, suffering and stern features in a woman's character. For him, woman is not merely an object of enjoyment, she is a tower of strength. Above all she is a mother who lives only for the sake of her children. "Chandrakor", "Aai", "Sanjawat", "Bahuli" are to be re-

membered in this connection. Khandekar is aware that the life of an unmarried woman can be in a way dry and barren, though it has other compensations like success and material comforts. "Paradh" which is written with sincerity and simplicity expresses this awareness keenly. Khandekar's implicit love in the goodness of man is seen in his description of old people and children. His presentation of the minds of children, unable to understand the duplicity of the world of grown up people as also the minds of old people helpless to take in the experiences of a changing world, is quite convincing. "Madhyaratra" and "Buddhachi Gostha" are good illustrations.

The prefaces written by Khandekar to his collections of short-stories are yet another important feature of his writing. These prefaces contain the agitations caused in his mind by the changes in society over half a century. He was keenly interested in the Freedom Struggle, in socialism and the changes brought about by these in the political and social life of the land. He was deeply pained to see that the purity in public life had come to an end and the tendency to commit with impunity social sins was on the increase. He has often mentioned in his prefaces the story of 'Faust' where the hero barter his soul to the devil for the pleasures of the flesh. Unfortunately, very few of his short-stories embody the rational passion of his thoughts. This was probably because his personality and outlook as a writer was shaped largely by literary rather than real-life influences. His experiments in different ways of narration also produced an adverse effect upon his stories. Yet it has to be said that his short-stories mark, both in their strong and weak points, an important stage in the development of the Marathi short-story.

Essays, Parables and other Writings

Khandekar has been called the real father of the personal essay in Marathi not solely because he happened to write the first essay but because the Self which he expressed in his essay was richer in quality and more genuine than that of his contemporaries. It was not in imitation of English writers. His first collection of personal essays *Vayu Lahari* was published in 1936 and his last collection *Zimzim* was published in 1961. In between, ten more collections were published. When he first started writing essays, he had little idea of their form and shape. He wrote them as short articles. All these articles were written in the first person singular and were in the nature of free and frank self-communication. This self-communication was so skilfully conducted that the interest of the reader was kept fresh and alive all through. How should the personal essayist conduct himself? "Just as Lord Krishna endeared himself to the people in Gokul by his playfulness, the same playful fascination should radiate from the personality of the essayist." Such thoughts about the nature of personal essays have been expressed by Khandekar several times in his collections. He preferred to call this kind of writing not "personal essay" as Phadake did but as "short-essay". He looked upon the form as a mode of self-expression which did not require any technical skill.

A good essay is to be judged by the successful revelation of the writer's personality. No successful essay can be written until a degree of maturity and perfection has been attained by the writer. Any "I" cannot be interesting and significant. An immature writer makes a dull essayist. The personality of the essayist should be of myriad dimensions.

The essay may come close to a story but is without its severe concentration. The aim of the essayist should be to discover the uncommon element in the common routine of existence. It is not the scholarship of the essayist but his personality, not the subject but the attitude, and not the argument but the way of expression, which give distinction to the essay. When the personality of the writer blooms out with fine imagination and a new sensibility, a good essay is born. "It is like shaking a Parijat tree to bring down a shower of flowers," observed Khandekar. He translated some essays by Chesterton, Milne and Richard King in order to illustrate the flexibility of the form. Khandekar could give the freest possible expression to his personality in this form alone.

The chief attraction of Khandekar's essays lies in their free flow of meditation and musing. The subject of his essays range from "The Eyebrow" to "The Foot-wear". They touch upon various experiences from our daily life but maintain a core of seriousness. Yet the treatment is always fanciful and prevents the essay from being loaded with too much of philosophic thought. His essays read like pieces from his autobiography. His philosophic musings do not become heavy as they remain charmingly fanciful. "Darwin's theory that man is the descendent of the monkey is very true. Monkeys get wet every year during rains and plan to build houses to protect themselves. But after countless rainy seasons, no one has been able to see the house of a monkey. However, I couldn't manage my pair of spectacles without a case even for three months." ("*Chalishiche Ghar*—The House of my spectacles"). "A swing is the real teacher of man. It teaches us not to become worthless dust, though rolling in the dust. It also tells us not to stray from the earth in the fond hope of reaching heaven." ("*Manzdhar*"—Midstream). "Man's life is no better than a toy balloon and yet we are passionately attached to it. We are all ordinary creatures. The Mother Earth where we play and gambol is herself a balloon, getting colder every moment and so destined to burst any day" ("*Chandanya!*"—In the moonlight).

These are some of the examples of his fanciful observations.

Khandekar's essays contain not only philosophic musings but also ideas and comments expressed with the same delightful fancy about the ways of the society, its unjust order and its hypocrisy of various kinds: "Society loves the individual as the professional woman loves her customers. The love depends upon his use and his capacity to provide pleasure. ('Chakra'—Wheel), 'The desire to exhibit and display is an important feature of human civilization. Various thoughts like "beauty", "morality", "feeling", "scholarship", "generosity", "modesty", etc. are put on display. But this desire is not all bad. It can be looked upon as the self-centred individual trying to act as a member of the society. It again shows a craving for beauty, if not for truth. And is not beauty a fascinating form of truth? ('Pradarshan'—Display). "Some persons who are doing no work think that they have no use for society. This is not true. The fact is that because of the unequal and unjust social order, these persons do not get the opportunity which they deserve." ('Don Menbattya'—Two Candles). Similar observations are profusely and spontaneously scattered over several of his essays.

Khandekar's essays are studded with beautiful descriptions of nature. Descriptions like those of the Krishna river in floods ('Mahapur'—Great Flood), of evening ('Sayankal'—Evening), of mountains ('Eak Tap') remain forever etched on our mind. References are found in his easy to various writers and persons who have influenced him. There are references to Bhavbhuti, Balkavi, Tukaram, Agarkar, Haribhau Apte, Zweig, Ibsen, Shakespeare, Gandhi, Deval, Kolhatkar, Tame, Eliot, Sartre, Vyas, Gadkari, and to their works like *King Lear*, *Soubhadra*, *Macbeth*, *Don Quixte*, *Beware of pity*, *Rupanagarchi Rajkanya* etc. There are references to family members, to wife and children, references to his likes and dislikes, his foundness for drinking tea, reading, taking long walks and waiting anxiously for the mail. Such intimate references lend homely touches to these pieces. The style is strongly aphoristic. Khandekar felt that traditional sayings and moral observations are never true; at best they are "sweet half truths". But his pen effortlessly gives births to such aphorisms: "In practical life, it is advisable to lock

your safe as well as your mouth", "Imagination is like a rabbit and truth is but a tortoise", "Light is the companion of truth, not of beauty", "Jewels can be valued at a jewellers's shop but who has known the value of the Venus star?", "Time is a tremendous form of separation." It is interesting to know how Khandekar came to write these essays. He has made a note about it. "I was overwhelmed by different small ideas which came up plentifully. Some interesting experiences came my way while engaged in teaching or moving among men. These welled up to the surface of my mind when I relaxed on the sea-shore in the evening. They were enticing as they appeared in the forms of fancy. I couldn't give them a form. They couldn't be made into stories because they were so subtle. So they flowed as short-essays."

No other Marathi writer of short-essays has presented such a balanced, subtle, wide and deep flow of delightful thoughts and ideas. These essays are entirely original and unconventional. In fact, Khandekar has exposed the limitations of many things accepted as good by tradition. He has cast refreshing light on some popular and even philosophic concepts like those of "happiness", "sorrow", "property", "morality", "selfishness", "love" and the like. Khandekar was an essayist and a critic. So his short-essay becomes the reflection of his philosophy of life. It is also a poem in prose though some essays are overloaded with thoughts. It is something which Marathi literature can be proud of.

Khandekar's contribution to the form of parables or allegorical stories is quite characteristic. The distinction between a fable and parable and an allegory is not always clearly made. A fable is a short fictional tale in prose or verse that is designed to make a point quickly, clearly and sharply, with animals often acting out human roles (Aesop's Fables are the best known); parable is a short fiction which exists solely to convey a moral or spiritual truth; it may not be narrative in form. An allegory is a narrative in which the major character, scenes and objects depicted represent specific persons, institutions or human characteristics. Even though a precise distinction among these close narrative forms can not be made, it can be broadly assumed that a

parable aims at bringing out some universal observation of truth. The models before Khandekar were those of Aesop and Vishnusharma whom he described as friends of humanity, and Khalil Gibran whom he described as the twentieth century successor of Aesop.

The parable can be a deceptive form. It is difficult to distinguish between the parables written by a profound meditative thinker on the mystery of life and those written by a clever imitator who can play with words. Anant Kanekar, who wielded a versatile and mischievous pen, published a collection of parables which he first said were translations of Khalil Gibran. But when this collection received high acclaim Kanekar declared that the parables were not translations of Gibran but actually his own outpourings. This risk is always here with mystical writings. Khandekar's parables, however, are not pretentious and bear the stamp of his own imaginative flourishes though the nourishment is from old masters.

His first parable "*Sagara Agasthe Aala*" was written in 1931. It was about the movement inspired by Gandhi. Two collections of these parables, *Kalika* and *Mrigajalatil Kalya* were published in 1941. Two more collections followed—*Soneri Savalya* and *Vandevata*. He wrote nearly 150 stories of this kind. This form of the story held a special attraction for Khandekar's imagination, being a blend of free fancy, lyricism and philosophical musings. Suggestiveness forms the core of a parable which embraces the universal through dainty details. *Don Chritrakar*, *Parisa*, and *Gharate ani Dharanikampare* are examples of some fine parables. He kept on writing these stories even after 1941 but many seemed to lose their point and become prolix. In Marathi scarcely any other writer has practised the parable as successfully as Khandekar. In fact, it has remained his exclusive province.

In writing his parables, Khandekar, was inspired by the stories of Gibran and Tagore. He translated a few parables written by them. In this form he gave free scope to the aphoristic flair of his style, producing many brilliant, brief statements: "Awakening a person from his sleep is as great a disaster as breaking his heart", "Man is like a bee

looking out for fresh flowers'', ''Nothing can be as cheap in the world as advice''. Khandekar has also given a perceptive analysis of the form of the parable.

The prefaces written by Khandekar which were many and extensive have been taken into account in the chapter on literary criticism. Sometimes these are separately considered. He thought it a matter of duty to write prefaces to all his books. These were also written for representative collections of essays, poems and short-stories. His prefaces do not give only a formal introduction to the subject or the author but recommend them with endearing warmth and intimacy. In his prefaces, he has traced the development of different literary forms in Marathi and also attempted to meet the points made by other critics. His main intention was to make these prefaces vehicles to assert and explain his own literary credo. He, as it were, meditated in public through these prefaces about his understanding of life in general and his response to contemporary situation. This has been thought rather naive and innocuous by sophisticated modern critics but his sincerity does not fail to evoke a sympathetic response. His prefaces are his irresistible musings on life and literature.

The addresses which he delivered as president of different literary conferences were formal and more elaborate statements of his theoretical position in literature and also in life. Twelve such addresses have been collected under the title, *Abhishek*. These addresses are interspersed with witty and lively observations on the march of Marathi Literature over a period of almost half a century.

Khandekar could not succeed as a playwright but the film scripts that he wrote became very popular. His first script *Chhaya* won him the 'Gohar Gold Medal'. His last *Manasala Pankh Asatat* also won him a State Award. It was in 1938 that he went to Kolhapur to write film scripts. He wished to achieve the same social uplift through films which he was seeking to achieve through teaching in a small village. His film stories, barring a few deal with social problems. Through this new medium he desired to elevate the public taste. His *Chhaya* was the first serious, social film in Marathi bringing to light the gross and inhuman dis-

grace meted out to the innocent in an unjust society.

Jwala, his second script had a theme similar to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. However the film was not successful though the script was good. The story of the next script *Amrit* was depicted on the scenic background of Goa. It dealt with the gulf between the poor and the rich, of the ill effects of drinking and of the cruel ways of the money-lenders. The message was that sympathy and fellow-feeling is the nectar in the world of man. *Devata* and *Sukhacha Shodh* dealt with the themes of woman's suffering and removal of social misery as the source of happiness, respectively. *Lagna Pahav Karun* and *Sarkari Pahune*, two humorous scripts, were based on the writing of the Marathi humorist C.V. Joshi. *Sangam*, *Sonery Savali* and *Maz Ba* were in the tradition of Khandekar, of which the last was widely approved. *Badi Man* and *Dana Pani* were written for Hindi films. *Antaricha Diwa* and *Mansala Pankh Asatat* were the last scripts. A total of eighteen scripts stand to his credit. Khandekar, there is no doubt, gave social consciousness to Marathi films through his purposeful stories.

Literary Criticism

Khandekar was as much interested in appreciating and criticising literature as he was interested in creating it himself. At the beginning of his writing career, Khandekar had made his mark as literary critic. His bold critical barbs hurled from a remote place in the coastal area, attracted the approving attention of such stalwarts as Kolhatkar, Gadkari and Madkholkar. When he turned his attention to narrative fiction and essay, he kept on writing literary criticism in the form of full length studies of other writers, surveys of the development of literary forms like the novel, drama, short-story and comments on social and cultural situations. A part of his criticism appeared in the form of prefaces written to his own books and to the books written by others and in the form of addresses delivered from the platform of literary and other conferences. Fifteen books of literary criticism stand to his credit. Four of them are full length studies of authors—"Gadkari: Vyakti Ani Vangmaya", "Agarkar: Vyakti Ani Vichar", "Waman Malhar Joshi: Vyakti Ani Vichar", and "Keshavsut: Kawya Ani Kala". The rest are collections of critical articles, surveys and speeches.

The form of poetry engaged his life-long critical attention which covered the range of poets from old times like Moropant to moderns like Vinda Karandikar. He examined a rich and variegated field of poetry. He believed that the aim of criticism should be to promote literary excellence through explanation and appreciation and to discourage all that deviated from excellence. He believed that poetry was not meant for preaching. He looked upon poe-

try as an intoxication and not as a confession, as a lovely illusion, a dream within a dream, as a blend of feeling, imagination and philosophy and as reality decked out with the beauty of imagination. Khandekar did not confuse fancy with imagination. Though he agreed that fancy was not the soul of poetry, he regretted the trend to belittle fancy under the influence of Western poetics. He felt that fancy played a major role in Indian Literature. He regarded Kalidasa's *Meghadut* as an outstanding example of this role. It produced an enchanted world of mist and snow, frozen rivers, cloudy skies, creepers, trees and migrating birds. Khandekar believed that a true poet did not labour to produce poetry, that his genius assumed ever new forms like the evening clouds, and this kind of newness was the essence of all art. He believed that a poet's heart is more tender and sensitive than that of the ordinary man. Just as vapours descend down as dewdrops on earth, in the same way a poet's sensitive heart turns into dewdrops what he has gone through and experienced. These ideas may not strike us as new today but they seemed fresh when Khandekar presented them.

In the beginning, Khandekar set off as an honest and unsparing critic. The criticism of poetry which he wrote at that time attracted startled attention. *Tridal* was a collection of poems written by three members of a ruling family. It had a commentary and a preface by well-known scholars of the day. Khandekar could see that the poetry was worthless by any standard and that the scholars were dishonest in their approving recommendation. Khandekar castigated them in strong terms and reminded them of their responsibility as men who claimed to understand literature. Another collection *Motyaichi Mal* was treated in the same manner. Khandekar commented that "Just as you cannot suck out juice from a wooden mango-fruit in the same way you cannot get poetry out of words that are mechanically arranged." He did not hesitate to show to the amateur poets their rightful place which was far outside the domain of true poetry. His reception of the first collections of poems of the true poets whom he could judge very correctly was warm and generous. These collections were *Jeevan-*

sangit by Borkar and *Vishakha* by Kusumagraj.

Khandekar also examined the criticism written by other critics of established writers. His examination of Joag's "Keshavsut" was striking. In the case of Moropant, Khandekar took a firm stand that rules of modern criticism cannot be applied to ancient literature and every poet has to be seen in his right perspective. Moropant belonged to a different tradition. Within the tradition, Khandekar was fair to the merits of Moropant as a poet and also alive to his shortcomings. His examination of Joag's limitations as a critic of Keshavsut was even more accurate. While giving due credit to Joag's qualities as a critic, his industry, his patient collection of facts, his sense of fair play, his treatment of the subject by categories, Khandekar did not hesitate to point out that Joag's critical attitude is that of a householder and not that of an artist who should be swept off his feet by the revelation of beauty. It is the attitude of an extroverted critic and not that of an introvert. It therefore became narrow and not comprehensive. Khandekar's assessment of established critics and their subjects of criticism brings out the liberal and integrated basis of his own outlook as a critic. Keshavsut was his life-long companion and was loved by Khandekar for the pure intensity of his experience and the sincerity of his utterance. He, could, at the same time, appreciate a poet like Chandrashekhar for the orderly, almost architectural beauty of his composition.

Khandekar wrote prefaces to the first collection of many poets of different traditions and different generations. He selected the right kind of poets. He liked Borkar for the musical, imaginative qualities and the depth of feeling in his poetry whereas he discovered in the poetry of Kusumagraj qualities of idealism and vitality. However, he felt apprehensive about the excess of national feelings in his poetry. Khandekar could see the merits of the poets belonging to the "Ravikiran Mandal", a group which was active and popular during the forties and which turned the face of Marathi poetry to the West in many ways. It is to be noted that Khandekar was wary of the so-called poetry of national spirit. "Poetry of national or social feelings is useful but its composition tends to go against the natural

bloom of art", he remarked. However, he was not a hide-bound traditionalist. He could appreciate atheism also, provided it was deep and genuine. He greeted the new poetry written in his vein by Vinda Karandikar. Khandekar believed that poetry was an event and not merely a construction. There was a wave of folk-poetry around the forties. Khandekar reminded these poets that folk-poetry could not be made up merely by writing about country life and an excessive use of dialects proved an obstacle rather than help to it. He was not in favour of discovering precise correspondence between events in the personal life of a poet and his poems. He thought that poetry was not a description of actual events but was a dreamlike transformation of the events. The poet was to be true to his own imaginative experience and not to anything else. Yet Khandekar had instinctive sympathy for all efforts at social reforms and awareness of social responsibility. Khandekar's criticism of poetry was that of a poetic critic. He was not only sympathetic and imaginative but also unsparing and objective. As a critic he did not make any basic distinction between ancient and modern poetry. He received both with an open heart. He valued imagination as well as experience, metres as well as free verse.

As a critic Khandekar was more interested in drama. His childhood was spent at Sangli which was regarded as the Mecca of dramatic art. His literary gods were Kolhatkar and Gadkari, both celebrated dramatists. Young Khandekar had aspired to be a dramatist himself and had made bold to attempt a few dramatic pieces. One play *Rankache Rajya* was put upon the stage but it failed. So he gave up any hope of writing plays but his passion for drama persisted. It was reflected in his criticism. As president of the Drama Conference held in 1957 he observed, "I have been reading plays over half a century. I have read Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* or *Death of a Salesman* with the same relish as I had read *Sharada* or *Muknayak* in my childhood. I enjoy the performance of *Tuze Aihe Tuza Pashi* just as I had enjoyed *Shapsambram* once." Khandekar's dramatic criticism was the result of his total involvement with drama.

His dramatic criticism can be divided into three stages.

First, concerning the plays written up to 1920 and the stage productions up to 1930. This is the most prominent stage as it was the golden period of Marathi drama. Khandekar's attention is found to return to this period again and again. The second stage relates to the period from 1920 to 1945. Khandekar did not take the same degree of interest in this period. He wrote only about some plays, some playwrights and some performances. The third stage concerns plays written after 1945 about which his interest is even less, though he was aware of the fact that this period marked the regeneration of Marathi drama.

Khandekar's dramatic criticism is to be found in different collections of articles. His book on Gadkari naturally contains a detailed examination of his plays. The book *Marathicha Natyasansar* surveys the field of Marathi drama up to 1945 in two parts. In *Rangh Ani Gandh* he introduced to Marathi readers plays written by such Western writers as John Ervine, Rattigan and Maugham. He has also written about Shaw, Ibsen, Galsworthy, Earnest Toller, Pirandello and others.

His early criticism as seen in his article on Khandilkar's play *Menaka* (1929), is sharp and severe. He appreciated more the display of romantic imagination and language in the plays of Kolhatkar, Khadilkar and Gadkari than the realistic, natural flair of Kirloskar and Deval. He could feel the impact of Deval's popular plays like *Sharada* and *Sanshaykallol* but he did not think that they belonged to the tradition of Indian drama. In his opinion the qualities of Deval's plays were highly individualistic and lacked the dazzle and excitement of language and imagination necessary to attract young dramatic talent. However, he could not resist for long, the deeper appeal of *Sharada* and turned to the consideration of this play again and again in his critical writings. He had the fairness to modify his earlier assessment of the play. He insisted that the traditional plays should be judged both from the artistic and historical points of view. This judgement, he felt, has to take into account our cultural context, our social milieu, our traditional concepts of entertainment as also the influence of the West. It is only in this perspective that we can fairly appreciate the romantic comedy *Soubhadra*.

Khandekar was firm in his view that the period between 1898 and 1918 was the Golden Age of Marathi drama and Kolhatkar, Khadilkar and Gadkari were the architects of this age. However, he kept on reexamining the dramatic genius of each of these masters and the nature of their plays and their appeal to contemporary audiences. Khandekar had the greatest love and admiration for Kolhatkar who had been his Guru and mentor. His observation that Kolhatkar's major contribution to Marathi stage was the style of dramatic dialogues which he developed, is very acute. The style came down to *Sadaro a* in a lucid brilliance. Khandekar could detect correctly the peculiar qualities of Khadilkar's dramatic genius, the element of dramatic concentration, his comprehensive vision and his understanding of basic human passions and his general mastery over dramatic technique. Khandekar also noted the ability of Khadilkar to draw his spectators to the centre of the dramatic vortex. This is contrasted with the lack of this ability in Kolhatkar and Gadkari who allow their spectators to linger on the margin of dramatic conflict even by the end of the first act. He knew Khadilkar's limitation also. He pointed out justly that though Khadilkar could adopt the technique of Shakespeare, he was a stranger to Shakespeare's poetic genius which is the soul of his tragedy. Khandekar points out the many defects of Gadkari but also fathoms the depths of his intoxicating imagination and heart-rending emotional appeal. He makes us realize that Gadkari's style was not only a matter of language, it was rather the expression of a truly poetic vision. Khandekar comes down upon playwrights like Veer Vamanrao Joshi who struck a different path than that of the masters whom Khandekar adored. He found Vamanrao Joshi's *Ranadundubhi* rather crude. He could see that under the influence of Western realism embodied in the plays of Galsworthy, Shaw, Ibsen and Toller the Marathi stage had drifted away from the aura of imaginative romance characteristic of Kolhatkar and Gadkari. Khandekar later on was won over to realism but he tended to understand realism as social sympathy which made him accept many extra-literary standards in his judgement. He strongly disapproved the grow-

ing commercial tendencies of the stage and deplored its disgraceful humour.

Khandekar's dramatic criticism was the product of his inordinate love for the drama and the stage. It was not academic. His taste in drama and his standards of judgement were formed by the drama and the stage productions of his age. So persistent and continuous was his interest in drama that in spite of his failure as a dramatist, he was selected to preside over the Drama conference. His dramatic criticism consists largely of stray articles but it expresses his abiding passion for the stage and the problems connected with the drama as a form of literature.

Khandekar's full length studies of the lives and works of Gadkari, Agarkar, Vaman Malhar Joshi and Keshavsut reveal his love and respect for these stalwarts in the world of literature and social reform. Khandekar approaches his subjects with great industry, genuine sympathy and also penetration at several places. He becomes one with their lives. So much so that he cannot resist the temptation of waxing lyrical over their merits and achievements. This naturally leads to some disorderly presentation and a certain lack of proportion. No one can shower praise as generously as Khandekar does where praise is due, though his likes and dislikes both become intense.

Literature was a passion for Khandekar. This passion was illumined by his faith in certain values and ideals of life on the one hand, and his study of the masterpieces of the East and the West on the other. While creating original literature in his own right, Khandekar was constantly aware of the various literary traditions and their historical perspective, of the contribution by contemporary writers and influences of Western literature, in fact of the total literary scene. He was not much interested in theoretical criticism but in the factual world of books. At the same time his critical writing was not confined merely to the dissection of books. His critical interest was closely allied to his creative efforts. He was equally interested in the general problems of literature like, "What is the meeting point of experience and art in literature?"; "How to relate historical perspective with absolute criteria of art?"; "What is the

value of social content in literature?" and such others. Khandekar believed that criticism was not an inferior activity because it helped raise the general level of intelligent appreciation. It provided endless intellectual pleasure and carried its own higher responsibility. Khandekar's criticism is not academic. It is impressionistic and enjoyable like his personal essays. His judgements are governed by values of life rather than by criteria of pure literature. He could not accept any amoral literary values.

As a critic of literature, Khandekar has dealt with all possible topics and issues such as "experience", "morality", "values", "regional literature", "children's books", "literature of propaganda", "social aspects of imaginative literature", "professional writers", "scientific books", "folk-literature", "creative process", and many others. He has dealt with these a wide and sympathetic outlook. The arguments are based on extensive reading and deep thinking. The intentions are always pure and honest and clearly reveal his idealism and social concerns. These sometimes make him use even harsh and bitter words, but his criticism is generally sweet-tempered. It has no pretensions. It gives one the pleasant feeling of enjoying a walk in the moonlight. Nevertheless, he looked upon criticism as a purposeful activity. He believed that a "literary critic was like a physician" and "criticism was necessary to literature just as a municipal corporation was necessary to a town." He accepted the independent values of art but thought that values of life were overriding.

Khandekar's literary criticism belongs to the period after 1920. He started as a ruthlessly censoring critic but developed a more sober and constructive attitude later. His criticism was never tarnished by personal animosity. It was truly sympathetic and written without malice. It was based on a genuine concern for literature as a prominent factor in building up the cultural life of a people. It was steeped in appreciation and constructive suggestions. It was creative criticism but with a wide social awareness. Khandekar's preoccupation as a critic was ever to explore the relationship of life and literature. It was the criticism of a poet at heart, with alert social sympathies.

Conclusion

In the world of Marathi literature, Bhausaheb (as he was fondly called) Khandekar was an object of love and reverence and suprisingly, in later stages, also of faint ridicule and contempt. At the beginning of his literary career, he was the avowed disciple of Kolhatkar and a friend of Gadkari. He remained proud of this fact. Later he rose above his master who could never claim the same kind of popularity as Khandekar clearly did. However, critics gave more respect to Kolhatkar. Khandekar was admired as a gentleman writer of spotless character, as a writer who was devoid of all envy, who welcomed and encouraged young writers, and as a novelist, who was prepared to pay the price for his convictions. He was a born teacher and remained that in all capacities. He eagerly took all opportunities to explain to others all that he knew. He was at all times free, frank and unreserved. He never struck a superior pose. He extended help to friends in their hour of need. People knew him as a serious writer with a sense of social responsibility. No one was afraid of openly criticising him. He never thought of taking any revenge. They knew that he would never stoop to meanness. It was surprising but even his critics insisted that he gave them his blessings and encouragement. He was universally loved as a man, though there were severe reservations about his literature and his artificial style. Khandekar's popularity remained unaffected. When Khandekar started as a novelist, Phadake had already established himself as the foremost novelist. Phadake retained his popularity but Khandekar was also upheld by the readers with equal warmth. When critics declared that

Khandekar had become outdated, the readers continued to read his books as before. Khandekar belonged to the period before 1945 and yet his greatest novel *Yayati* came out fifteen years later and proved to be an all time best-seller. Khandekar's unbroken popularity baffled his critics. He kept his appeal unabated from 1935 to 1970. It crossed the bounds of Marathi knowing readers. He became equally well-known in other languages, in Gujarati, Tamil, Hindi and Bengali. His virtues evidently are greater than his defects.

Khandekar's love of literature was remarkable. It gave him the strength to overcome many odds in life, particularly his growing blindness. Reading, writing and thinking had become the be all and end all of his existence. He kept his reading up-to-date as a matter of duty. In his last days he depended on others to read out to him the latest books. He was equally well read in English and European literature. His effort to make himself familiar with new trend in the literatures of the world and form his judgement on them, was astounding.

Khandekar practised all the major and minor forms of literature—poetry, humour, drama, short-story, novel, essay, criticism, parables and even film-scripts—not to prove his versatility but because he was sincerely drawn to them. He did not do anything against his grain. He wrote a fine article in appreciation of the famous Russian short-story writer Chekhov and reproduced with approval the following remarks of Chekhov addressed to artistes of genius. "Real genius does not blow his trumpet. He stands away at a distance in the shadows. He is free from any desire to display. A genius values his creativity more than anything else. He sacrifices love, comfort, vanity for the sake of this creativity. He knows that the power of creativity can sway countless minds and at times mould them. A genius experiences that, within him, beauty assumes ever new and subtle shapes. A genius always tries to sublimate his passions. He does not seek physical satisfaction from a woman but only a rejuvenating sweetness. He is forever reading and thinking and struggling. Life is a compound of noble feelings and uncontrollable passions. Creative literature gives memorable expression to this compound." This is largely true in

the case of Khandekar himself.

Khandekar was active as a writer for half a century. Although plagued by ill-health he never made it an excuse for not working. That, in spite of his ill-health he should work for the good of society, was ample proof of his social concern and his implicit faith in literature as an instrument of social good. As Madkholkar said, "It was his guardian angel who did the writing for him even though he was confined to bed." All his writing was a confession of his spirit brooding over the social and metaphysical essence of man. It never turned into a wail of personal suffering. Khandekar was born and brought up in an average middle class family. However, his sympathies extended beyond this class. His deep sensibility forced him to write about the miserable and the downtrodden of the society and about those who felt helpless in every way. His readers therefore were not restricted only to the middle class. He won over his readers from different classes. Khandekar had given careful thought to why he wrote and for whom. His readership was not static and conservative as was assumed by his critics. His readers freely corresponded with him and conveyed to him their reactions about his books. Letters came from young and old alike and also from people of other provinces. There was one reader who proudly informed him that he had gone through his novel, *Don Dhruv* twenty-seven times! He responded to this correspondence with equal warmth. This continuous contact with readers gave him new ideas and plans for his writing. He was an idealist but he never wrote to project any particular ideology. He was mistaken for a "socialist", a "communist", a "sarvodayi" but remained a humanist all the time. He was a preacher but never wrote to propagate any fixed political or social ideas. He preached only the goodness of life. A sincere, passionate belief in the goodness of man and his divine origin was at the core of his preaching.

He appreciated technique as pleasing tidiness but not as a literary value. He did some experiments with technique but always as an artist, never as a mere craftsman. His philosophy of life could be put in very simple terms. Good life is a compromise and balance between wealth and

poverty, enjoyment and self-denial, poetry and action, brain and heart, body and spirit. The secret of human happiness lies in this compromise. He tried various forms of literature in quest of this ideal compromise. It was his pilgrimage for the attainment of material and moral salvation.

He created a new novel dealing with social problems in a serious vein, lifted the short-story from the old rut and set it on a new path, continued with greater lyrical charm and introspection the tradition of the short-essay begun by Mate, gave a creative dimension to literary criticism, presented a model for social films in his *Chhaya* and remained unrivalled in the field of parables. He was the centre of the literary world in Marathi for a long time which in itself is the highest honour that a writer can aspire for.

Khandekar had a definite philosophy of literature. His object was to influence the mind of man towards right—action through the medium of Beauty. In Maharashtra, around 1925, the two conflicting views, that art was for art's sake and it was for the sake of life were fiercely debated. Khandekar fought valiantly on behalf of the second view. However, he agreed that the artist's was a unique personality and had its own worth. He knew that literature which was produced, overlooking this uniqueness, was inferior. He did not approve of light-hearted pieces of a literature on contemporary problems nor was he in favour of literature of propaganda. In his view attempt at propaganda had an adverse effect on the quality of literature. At the same time he could not go with writers who turned their backs on the burning problems of the day in the hope of creating undying classics. It was his belief that literature achieved a touch of greatness only through the social awareness of the author and that the lode-star of literature was the trinity of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. These views can be contested and have been contested but the fact remains that the position occupied by Khandekar as a writer was entirely due to his preoccupation with the element of goodness in life. Khandekar's philosophy of life, his achievement in literature and the mode of his personal life were of one piece. The unity and accord in his life, art and belief never became weak or diffuse. This was the basic reason of the

reverence in which he was held by the public. B.B. Borkar has very rightly remarked that Khandekar was "The last of the sages in Marathi Literature". Borkar went on to observe with equal validity that "Infinite curiosity about life, a wonderfully subtle imagination, tender lyricism nourished by the beauty of nature, sincere compassion for the depressed and the downtrodden and deepest gratitude for the cultural heritage of man, these five streams made Khandekar's life and work truly rich, of these, compassion was the deepest stream." Therefore at the core of his novels was found the anguish and the helplessness of middle class individuals tormented by the opposite forces of pleasure and idealism, enjoyment and sacrifice, selfishness and selfless service, reason and passion.

Khandekar was an extremely engaging talker on the public platform and in private conversation and he often found it difficult to distinguish the one from the other. A man of many words but his words were neither irrelevant nor irreverent. They were always pleasing and made the listeners rejoice in the flow. His talk was replete with information, ideas and thoughts. It emerged out of a faith in knowledge and humanity. It came in a steady, unbroken stream. It was not a piece of elocution in the usual sense. It was simple, straight, without theatrical gestures but creative in many ways. It sprawled and expanded in several directions but was not pointless. It was in the nature of a discourse meant for intimate companions. It was embellished with spontaneous, beautiful brief statements which struck like freshly coined epigrams. ("A man may be poor in wealth but he should be rich in spirit." "The riches of the mind can remove the weeds of poverty"). Khandekar would forget himself as he plunged in the irresistible flow of words and his talk had the same effect upon his listeners.

The style of Khandekar's writing has been the subject of unending discussion and criticism. In earlier days, the style of Gadkari only had been so exhaustively treated. Khandekar's style was the chief attraction of his writing for his critics. As a result the merits and defects of his style were discussed more extensively than the content of his writing. The merits and excesses of his style came to be

equated with those of his writing. This means that style is the most striking and all-prevading feature of his writing. Highly figurative, his style is loaded with imaginative riches and suffers from the usual defects of riches. At times it becomes artificial, high falutin and verbose. Khandekar's eyesight was defective from early days and it is probably this which compelled him to see more with his mind's eye.

His style became picturesque and crowded with images which tumbled over one another in rapid succession and came out as mixed metaphors and ever mixing metaphors. His way, not only of writing and speaking but also of living turned out to be an endless indulgence in imagination. He breathed figures of speech. He said that writing without imaginative flair would have been impossible for him. His style got flooded with fine epigrams, phrases, idioms, parables and stories from history and mythology. Khandekar's fancy was quick like streaks of lightning, flashing from point to point. This irresistible fancy led him to put reality in the garb of romance and at times made his genuine sympathy for the poor seem ineffectual. It also prevented him from building up a feeling or a situation effectively or making out a powerful case for any proposition or point of view or person. His idealism and his imagination were responsible for producing this defect. It is true that these excesses of language were moderated in the course of time as Khandekar's youthful imagination matured into thoughtfulness. There is a marked difference in the style of his early writings and those written later. Khandekar's native flair for the play of fancy was encouraged by the rapid witticism of Kolhatkar and the imaginative firework of Gadkari, two of his literary idols. He learned to indulge in poetic excesses of many kinds and also in an irrepressible play on words.

His lyricism and tender, delicate fancy is seen in the descriptions of the various moods and aspects of nature. It is made more appealing by his nostalgic love for tradition. The tree of his imagination, in a moment, explodes with similes, metaphors, epigrams and witticisms. Many of these epigrams became a part of the language used by his ardent admirers. Some of them can be noted:

"A man can become a monk in a moment but a woman cannot easily become a nun", "Truth is not disturbed by any fear of favour", "In life, sorrow comes like a summer shower while happiness comes like a sprinkling of scented water", "Art is for happiness but hunger comes first and then happiness", "Socialism is the social appearance of filial love", "imagination is the greatest enemy of man". Khandekar thought that this love of epigram expressed man's desire for perfection. With all the blemishes attributed to Khandekar's style, there is hardly any doubt, that it was the most enviable asset of his writing. After Gadkari, his youthful hero, Khandekar is regarded as the greatest stylist in Marathi.

Khandekar was influenced successively by Reformism, Gandhism and Socialism but did not stick to any single ideology. His appeal was confined to the middle class which he knew so well. It was this class which gave direction to the society. Even the young men who represent the depressed section in his novel never rise in fiery revolt. Their ideal remains the comforts and status of the middle class. His heroines do not take a stand in open defiance of tradition. Women who are betrayed by men go to villages and engage themselves in social service. They do not hate the men who betray them. Those that are unmarried do not try to give a different shape to their future. They accept compromises. The former lovers agree to live as brother and sister.

Khandekar was always fascinated by noble and lofty ideals. He saw the helplessness of man but had a profound faith in his inner strength. For this reason his books could bring consolation and give courage to countless readers. He has had his effect on many writers as well. He conducted extensive correspondence with his friends and admirers. These letters reveal the transparent sincerity of his heart, the innocence of his mind, his progressive ideas, his love of beauty and his distaste for any discussion of sexual matters. These letters may be looked upon as fragments of his autobiography which unfortunately have not been published as yet in a book form.

What was the source and secret of this amazing labour

and appeal? It has been said and many critics nod approvingly at the judgement that Khandekar belonged to the age of "average quality and ability", that he was a common sort of author, enjoyed by common sort of readers. Many authors of this "average age" were lost but Khandekar, it was clear, refused to get lost or be reduced in stature. Through all shifts and changes in the political and special fields, he remains unshaken like a lighthouse.

At the bottom of this faith was the strong desire to perpetuate an uncommon literary culture. He strove to create a model of how a writer who happens to be an ordinary citizen, should enrich his spirit and dedicate himself to literature. He did this with rational purposefulness and with proper awareness of historical tradition. He refused to be swayed by the changing winds and circumstances. He directed all the energies of his head and heart, all the vital juices of his life to the pursuit of literature. He showed in his own person how an ideal can be attained by resisting all temptations of honours and material gains and how this life of self-denial has its own rewards. In the speech which he made while accepting, the Jnanpith Award, Khandekar said that writing was a "great struggle". He referred to a poem by Stevenson in which a child sees the dream of sailing away to distant countries in small paper boats and finds that reality was quite opposed to it's dreams.

A discord has developed between the role of the individual as a citizen and his role as an artist. Man has become an island unto himself. Under the circumstances, it is a standing challenge to him to preserve the unity of his spirit and to establish his meaningful relation with contemporary society. Khandekar proved, in no uncertain way, how this challenge is to be met. His example cannot be easily undervalued. It will certainly remain as a part of our cultural heritage.

In the life of Khandekar and in the cultural life of India there has been one persistent value. It is the value which binds the Teacher and the Pupil by a deep bond. That Khandekar became a teacher was no accident. In becoming so he was adopting the old cultural value of the land. Khandekar was not a teacher of society like Mahatma Phule

or Agarkar, he was a teacher of the young people in their formative years who wish to cherish reality as a dream. He was a teacher of youngsters who wish to sail away in paper-boats. Khandekar did not merely wish to present mere facts but to inculcate the desire for ideals. He gave to the ancient ideal of a teacher a warm emotional import. He put a dream at the centre of his teaching. He observed with profound feeling in his Jnanpith Award acceptance speech "Common man is a real protagonist of the colourful drama of life that is being enacted on the stage of this world", Khandekar in all that he thought and created tried to discover and depict the role of this common man. This common man is forced to lead life on two levels, one of his natural wants and the other of his cultural wants. If these two are not properly balanced and satisfied, he suffers a downfall. In modern times the progress in scientific and technical knowledge has outstripped ethical and cultural norms. Khandekar frantically wants us to remember this. His common man was the middle class man, he was not a farmer or a worker. Khandekar gave a place and a form to the imaginative concept of reality which the middle class common man inherited and cherished. After 1920 Khandekar's literary personality has merged with that of the middle class on the level of cultural wants and desires. His heroes and heroines stood as representatives of the middle class engulfed by growing conflicts and pressures. His 'Yayati' is as much a representative of the middle class as his Abhay in *Don Druv* was its representative years ago. This does in no way belittle 'Yayati'. The middle class man has always been caught in the trap of nature and Art, of the Real and the Fake and has always sustained himself on dreams. Political and social pressures have undermined the role of the middle class in the rough and tumble of present day existence but the worth and value of tradition has not been destroyed. The age of the average person is an everlasting age and the dreams of the uncommon person can be dreamt only by the common people. These were the dreams that Khandekar breathed. They embody selfless cultural and moral aspirations. It is for this reason that Khandekar emerges as the 'Artist with a moral Vision'.

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