

# ***CHAPTER***

# ***4***

## 4. Sarpa Satra

### 4.0 Introduction:-

'*Bhijaki Vahi*' is a remarkable collection of poems in Marathi, strung together with the archetypal motif of '*The weeping women*'. Employing narratives, myths and legends from all over the world Kolatkar has evoked a women's suffering and agony. In this collection there are poems on Legend from Greek, Egyptian, Arabic and South Indian cultures. Many poems in this collection describe women's suffering and agony poignantly '*Sarpa Satra*' is an English version of a poem by similar name in *Bhijaki Vahi*.

'*Sarpa Satra*' is a wonderful creation. It is a long poem on the snake sacrifice performed by king Janamejaya. The theme of the poem is taken from Mahabharat.

The prologue of the poem says,

Sarpa Satra :

According to the Mahabharata,  
a sacrifice performed by Janamejaya  
with the object  
of annihilating the Nagas,  
or the snake people.

Sarpa Satra is divided into three parts. The first part is '*Janmejaya*' and the second one is '*Jaratkaru speaks to her son Aastika*', which is also sub-divided into three sections. The last part is '*The Ritual Bath*'. In this poem Jaratkaru has told the history of destruction from Khandava forest to Sarpa Satra in three parts.

Though '*Sarpa Satra*' is based upon the myth from Mahabharat it is applicable to the modern human history. Arun Kolatkar reinvents the

myth in the modern context . He mixes myth, allegory and contemporary history in this poem. He tries to bring out the chaos and disorder in the contemporary human world. He has written this poem from present consciousness. It is the human world seen through the eyes of a snake woman Jaratkaru. It refers to mass destruction, rage, vengeance and violence in the human world since time immemorial.

The poet indirectly laughs at the purpose of sacrifice. The purpose of Sarpa Satra is not good morally. Only to take revenge Janamejaya has performed this sacrifice. It is cynical yajnya. It is not right that to kill many for the crime of one. It is also not right for someone's sake killing thousands of people or snakes or to destroy systematically the whole species. This meaning of war and the feeling of revenge has been expressed effectively in the narration. Thus Sarpa Satra has modern interpretations. The poem is a triumph of modern sensibility. There are several words and phrases that are applicable to the modern world. It, therefore becomes imperative to study Sarpa Satra in the light of modernity. Though it is based on the mythological past, the poet's intention of writing this poem is different and modern and it is expressed in the theme of the poem.

#### **4.1 Theme :**

The most important recurring theme in Sarpa Satra is a story of revenge motif. It is also a story about ending the duty to revenge, which breeds further hatred more battles and continual death. This thought is universal all over the world. It is also applicable to modern world. It is expressed effectively in the narration as following.

Sarpa Satra is a long poem divided into three parts, but concentrates on single theme of vengeance. It is set in a mythic

framework and the myth of Sarpa Satra is from the Mahabharat. It runs like this :

Arjuna is the father of Abhimanyu . Abhimanyu is the father of Parikshita and Parikshita is the father of Janamejaya . King Parikshita died from the bite of a serpent named Takshaka. Takshaka had a prejudice against Arjuna. Takshaka is a snake. He loses his wife in burning of Khandava forest by Arjuna and Krishna. So he bites King Parikshita, Arjuna's grand son. The Parikshita's son Janamejaya performed a great snake sacrifice as a revenge .

In the first part 'Janmejaya' king Janamejaya refers to a scheming snake Takshaka, who killed his father with venom. His father king Parikshita had been warned of the conspiracy by his secret police. He had taken all precaution to save his skin, but Takshaka was powerful. When Takshaka, in trial, had stung a full grown banyan tree, within a moment, the great tree was burnt down and there fell a large heap of ash down to earth. Such was the venomous bite of Takshaka. So the assassin Takshaka.

Smuggled in,

disguised as 'tiny worm in a fruitbowl'

and appeared in full form as a snake. It was unbelievable scene. Takshaka reached King Parikshit and king's protector ran away in terror. Takshaka stung him and king Parikshita died.

Janamejaya, at that time was a child

" I knew nothing of all this

at the time.

- I was only a child then." (2004: 21)

Janamejaya, became the successor and the courtiers made him aware of his father's death by a Naga, named Takshaka. Then Janamejaya as a king of Hastinapur takes a terrible vow of revenge.

" My vengeance will be swift and terrible  
I will not rest  
Until I've exterminated them all

They'll discover  
that no hole is deep enough  
to hide from Janamejaya." (2004: 21)

He pledged to take revenge on the snakes and he will not take rest until he has exterminated the whole race of the snakes. The snakes would not discover a deep hole in the earth to hide from him. Thus, his revenge will be swift and terrible.

In fact, Sarpa Satra is a narrative poem of an unending celebrations of vengeance. The seeds of this vengeance are rooted in the burning of Khandava forest, by Arjuna and Krishna with the help of their divine weapons. Then the snake Takshaka took revenge of his wife's death in the Khandava forest by killing, not Arjuna, but Arjuna's grandson and Abhimanyu's son Parikshita. Then this vengeance reappears in the form of Parikshita's son Janamejaya who deignifies the snake sacrifice in the high sounding name of 'yajnya'.

In the second part of the poem Jarthkaru speaks to her son Aastika. Aastika is a snake man. She laughs at the purpose of snake sacrifice. His purpose is politically incorrect and impractical. She explains him the evil motif of Janamejaya to wipe out the whole species from the earth.

All the great sages of the time, the finest minds of our age, Janmejaya's cronies and councillors and thinkers encouraged Janamejaya.

But I mean all the great  
Sages as well  
Yes, they actually encourage him  
" and invent a yajnya

- a complete innovation -  
called the snake sacrifice, " (2004: 31)

Arun Kolatkar criticises all rishis and Maharshis, great thinkers who supported the sacrifice in the following lines. They are easily indentifiable with today's politicians:

All the great rishis and maharshis  
So called  
great thinkers, all

the finest minds of our age,  
even people like  
Atreya, Uddalaker, Shevetaketu

- people we thought of  
until, oh, the day before yesterday  
as living volcanoes of conscience

ready to blow their tops  
at the first sign  
of any wrongdoing in the land  
or whenever the mighty strayed  
from the patch of justice -  
seem strangely silent

and worried about just one thing  
how to wangle a job for themselves  
as officiating priests (2004: 33)

All the rishis and great thinkers supported the wrong - doing of the king . They went away from the path of justice and remained strangely

silent. They were worried about one thing and that was how to get a contract for themselves as officiating priests.

The scene was sad one that even Somashravas was very happy because he got the job of presiding priest in young age. It is surprising that Somashrava's mother is a snake woman, but he accepted the job.

Jaratkaru tells Aastika about the great Vyasa and criticises his self indulgent epic of 24000 verses. This old man did not regard his own duty to stop the madness of his grand children - Pandavas and Kauravas - fighting with each other until tragic ending and destruction of the whole nation.

"as a whole nation destroyed itself  
and , instead of being  
ashamed

of the whole saga  
and his own role in it,  
or trying to forget it all,

quietly set out  
to put down the whole wretched chronicle  
in black and white

and in polished verse  
to the external shame of  
posterity. " (P.36)

Vyasa did not present the Kurukshetra battle. He wrote the whole saga and his role in it. But he was not ashamed to record the chronicle in black and white and in polished verse to the eternal shame of posterity.

Jaratkaru is not ready to forgive Takshaka, who behaved like an extremist. So he deserves the harshest punishment. After committing the crime, he is hiding now behind Indra's throne to save his skin. He hopes that his powerful friend will help him to escape from the consequences of his act. This show how all terrorists are cowards with their ferocious masks, Jaratkaru did not forgive Takshaka for killing king Parikshita. She raises a question to Takshaka:

"Why did you not make Arjuna  
pay for his crime  
while he was yet alive (P:51)

why did you wait  
for his grandson to grow up  
to give him a taste of your terrible poison

instead of Arjuna  
Don't you know  
that true revenge accepts no substitute ? " (2004 : 51)

Jaratkaru mocks at a 'nice yajnya' that is an insult to Agni, the sacred sacrificial fire which brings blessings to human beings. But the one man's twisted logic & madness makes him assassin, butcher or a mass murderer. According to Jaratkaru this snake sacrifice is mockery and grotesque partly of the institution of yajnya. The chief actors in this theatre of the macabre play various roles assigned to them:

"This snake sacrifice  
this mockery, this grotesque parody  
of the institution of yajnya." (P 60 )

Jaratkaru tell Aastika to remind Janamejaya that the whole earth is rested on the hood of Shesha Naga who is her brother. If Shesha comes

to know about this sacrifice, he will be obsessed with the vengeance and then nothing will be left behind:

And that, surely, will be The End  
of not just the nagas, or any one species  
but of everything and everybody." (P : 63)

Jaratkaru hopes that Aastika is the only fit person to carry out his responsibility as he is the son of man. His vision is clear and his brain is not infected by the dirty bondage of history. Thus Kolatkar's version is also a story about ending revenge; revenge breeds further hatred, more battle, and continued death.

You are your father's son  
A man.  
You belong to the human race.

Don't forget that, ever  
And that's the reason  
why you'll have to stop this sacrifice

Not for Vasuki Mama' sake,  
or mine  
Not for anything else –

but to make sure  
that the last vestige of humanity  
you are heir to,  
your patrimony, yes,  
does not go up in smoke  
in this yajnya (P.74)

The another important theme of the poem is ecological devastation. The destruction caused by the fire was tremendous and it was ecological devastation.

Takshaka was a extremist and a extremist and a coward terrorist, but his vengeance is due to his wife's death. But the fact was that Takshaka lost his temper when his wife died in burning of Khandava forest. Jaratkaru tells Aastika about the terrible incident of burning Khandava forest by Arjuna. Arjuna was a great grandfather of Janamejaya. He was a super hero and a wizard in archery. He had no equal in archery except Karna. Arjuna, with the help of his friend Krishna performed the very first act of heroism. He burnt down one of the largest rainforests in the land. Both were gifted with divine weapons. Jaratkaru says :

And it was these two together  
that did this thing  
- burn down the khandava forest

And when they were done,  
not one green leaf,  
not a single blade of grass

was left behind  
Just miles of ash that kept smouldering  
for months afterwards. (P : 42)

The destruction caused by the burning of Khandava forest is tremendous and horrible. The poet expressed the destruction in detail. It is God's own laboratory on earth. It is a great sanctuary dear to Indra and protected by the gods themselves:

Surging with sup

and bursting with gums and resins  
that forest had been

God's own laboratory on earth  
where life had been allowed to express itself  
with complete abandon.

It contained five thousand  
different kinds of butterflies alone  
and a golden squirrel found nowhere else.

some of the trees in that place  
were oh,  
hundreds and hundreds of years old, easily;

and it contained a wealth  
of medicinal plants  
that were not found anywhere else.

But nothing was left, not a trace  
of that great sanctuary so dear Indra  
and protected by the gods themselves. (2004: 43)

The Khandava forest contained five thousand different kinds of butterflies, a golden squirrel, hundreds of years of trees and medicinal plants. But nothing was left after burning it down. Trees, birds, insects, animals and elephants, gazelles and antelopes were burnt down. Besides simple and innocent people were burnt down. Several children died of fire. The songs of children like the twittering of birds were gone forever.

What makes the evocation of the hideous tragedy of the Khandava forest so effective is the relentless and sinister accumulation of detail:

Trumpeting elephants  
rushing towards water  
for safety

trample on half-cooked turtles  
as they crawl out of  
the boiling lakes

A gazelle tips over  
a dead crab at the water's edge  
and spins an ankle

The taste of honey  
still on its tongue,  
a bear bursts into flames,

falls from a tree  
with a burning branch between its legs  
to roll on the flaming grass below

The chakra slices  
every single honeybee  
from a swarm in flight  
and returns to tip  
of Krishna's finger  
for fresh instructions (2004: 46-47) .

Hence, the poet pointed out the great destruction of Khandava

forest effectively. It was tremendous destruction. It was a great sanctuary, but not a single green leaf was left. Thus from another point of view ecological devastation is another theme of the poem and it is shown through the burning of Khandava forest by Arjuna & Krishna.

From another point of view satire, sarcasm is the theme of the poem Sarpa Satra. There is a satire on the great thinkers, rishis and Maharishis as 'the finest minds of our age', who supported the 'Yajnya', for their vested interests. Another example of satire is Somashravas. He is described sarcastically. Though Somashravas priest in Yajnya for a blank cheque.

Arjuna and Krishna are described sarcastically divine weapons and petty jobs:

he burnt down one of the largest  
rainforests in the land,

and what a thorough job he made of it.  
Reduced it completely  
to ash

It wasn't just him,  
No  
He was aided in this crime

by another  
A crosscousin of his  
a crony since childhood (2004: 41-42) .

Krishna got Sudarshan Chakra. Sudarshan Chakra cuts every honeybee and returns to Krishna's finger for fresh instructions. Arjuna's

hundred arrows killed a flock of a hundred swans. He also killed a lioness and her cub in a single shaft.

The final section of a 'Sarpa Satra;, The Ritual Bath' is a sarcastic comment on the final outcome. When the sacrificial ceremonies come to an end, the priests, honoured guests, vedic wizards go back to their respective homes and ashramas, the hangers - on and freeloaders carry away whatever they get. They take away sacrificial vessels, furniture deerskins and bricks.

Bands of brahmins  
hangers- on  
and assorted freeloaders

strip the place  
of everything that isn't nailed down  
and make off

with whatever they can lay  
their hands on -  
sacrificial vessels, furniture, deerskins, bricks. (P-80)

After the mandatory ritual bath the sacrifice is concluded and the kings return to their capitals. They realize that they have to govern their kingdoms. They think about the neighbouring country to attack or net taxes to levy and ask their ministers to come up with recommendations.

Kings return to their capitals  
reminding themselves  
that they also have kingdoms to govern

Wondering  
which neighbourly kingdoms to attack next

or what new taxes to levy

to refill the coffers  
and ask their ministers to come up  
with recommendations." (P-81)

The poem concludes with the message of these celebrations of hatred that would never come to an end.

Though sooner or later,  
these celebrations of hatred too  
come to an end

Like everything else ,  
the fire - the fire lit for the purpose -  
can never be put out. (2004 : 83)

Thus Arun Kolatkar tries to bring out the chaos and disorder in the contemporary human world. This poem is a satire on politicians, rulers. The characters in this poem are not caricatures, but real people easily identifiable with today's politicians. The murder of the snake people is no different from the genocide of any ethnic group of today. So from another point of view satire, cynicism is the theme of the poem which indirectly relates to modern human world.

The another important theme or thought of this poem is it expresses a woman's suffering. Jaratkaru is a snake woman. She is the sister of Vasuki, the great serpent king. She is the mother of Aastika, Sarpā Satra is a translation of a poem by similar name in Bhijaki Vahi. Many poems in this collection express women's suffering and sorrow throughout the world. 'The Weeping Woman' is the motif of this collection. A woman's tears seem to symbolize the suffering of all of humanity. Human tears transcend cultural and temporal contexts and become universal.

In this poem, '*Sarpa Satra*' Jaratkaru is a snake woman and a mother of Aastika, Jaratkaru tells Aastika the history of destruction from Khandava forest to Sarpa Satra in three parts. She expressed her sorrow and suffering in the poem.

She is a snake woman. She is helpless. She can do nothing only she can see what is happening. The human world is seen through the eyes of Jaratkaru. It is full of rage violence and vengeance.

She first tells Aastika her son about the burning of Khandava forest. It is valuable forest. It is full of many things. The destruction caused by fire is tremendous. Arjuna with the help of Krishna burnt down one of the largest rainforest. She tells details about destruction to Aastika. The most important thing is Takshaka's wife died in this burning. Takashaka lost temper. The seeds of revenge area rooted in this burning. Jaratkaru criticizes Arjuna and Krishna for their petty things. Then she tells that the idea of Sarpa Satra is politically and morally incorrect.

She tells Aastika about Sarpa Satra. The snakes have been charmed by means of a Yajna. Inexorable drawn to the fire, that will destroy them. The snakes are drawn helplessly into the fire. Many innocent snakes are killed in sacrifice, before her eyes. She is disappointed at the thought of how to stop this. So in the end she requests Aastika to stop this. She hopes that Aastika is the only fit person to carry out his responsibility because he is the son of a man, he can not be charmed. It is only Aastika who can intervene in this Massacre being a son of man though his mother is a snake woman. So Jaratkaru is sure that Aastika will find a way to stop this festive of hatred. She is certain that her son will find a way to stop the unending celebrations of vengeance she says

"You'll find a way

to put a stop

to this festival of hatred ; (2004 : 75)

Hence throughout the poem Jaratkaru's suffering and sorrow is shown through her taking with her son Aastika. She is disgusted with the situation in the human world. It is full of rage, vengeance, violence. She requests her son to stop this festival of hatred her prayers are with him. Her heart tells that he will find a way to stop that festival of hatred. It is the human world seen through the eyes of a snake woman Jaratkaru.

Though this poem is based on Myth from Mahabharat, It is applicable to the modern human history. Arun Kolatkar mixes myth, allegory and contemporary history in this poem. He tries to bring out the chaos and disorder in the contemporary human world.

#### **4.2 Language :-**

Arun Kolatkar is one of the most significant and modern poets in English. He makes constant experimentation with style and structure and this shows his modern and urban sensibility. He is a experimentalist both in form and the vision of reality. His early verse seems to be surreal, obscure and difficult for interpretation. But during 1960 , he changed his style from highly imaginistic and uninterpretable to anti poetic.

His use of language is non-conventional and experimental from Jejuri. Sarpa Satra is a poem based on myth from the Mahabharat. It is a narrative hence a long poem. It's nature is like an epic poem.

The nature of an epic poem is such that detail is piled upon detail and the reader is sucked into the story, just as the snakes are drawn helplessly into the fire.

Arun Kolatkar uses very contemporary language when he deals with legends and myths. Sarpa Satra modernizes the Sanskrit into colloquial English. This poem makes colloquial the often

incomprehensible language common to translations of Sanskrit into English. The poet has used colloquial and conversational tone in this poem.

For example :

"What would your reaction be  
if someone were to come up to you  
and say.

My father died of snakebite.  
When ? Oh, I was too young then  
I don't even remember,

but I'm going to avenge his death  
by killing  
every single snake that lives;

Yes,  
by wiping out the whole species  
from the face of the earth ." (2004, P : 27)

We find contemporary and colloquial language throughout the poem. So the narrative becomes readable and effective. The reader is seems to be sucked into the story.

For example :

And I think it's your job,  
Aastika.  
I mean who else is there to do it ?

It becomes your responsibility  
automatically

just because nobody else wants it,

not even the gods.

And something tells me

that you're exactly the right man for it. (2004 : 64 )

There is a conversational tone in the following lines.

A hundred arrows leave

Partha's bow

all at the same time

to go after a flock

of a hundred swans

winging its way to safety

and (well done)

do not miss

even one.

Look Arjuna !

See that lioness

with her mane in flames ?

Don't let her get away

just because

She has a cub in her mouth

Oh, good !

You got them both

with a single shaft. (2004 : 48)

Rhetorical question is traditional figure of speech. It is , in a loose sense, a question which is abnormal, in that it expects no answer. In poetry this device can impart a heightened dramatic quality to the language because they transfer into an unaccustomed context, the contextual implications of questions, in the narration. Because of these rhetorical questions the narrative becomes effective and dramatic.

For example :

What would your reaction be  
if someone were to come up to you  
and say.

My father died of a snakebite.  
When ? Oh, I was too young then  
I don't even remember (P : 27)

But what do the people  
around Janamejaya,  
his cronies and councillors do ? (P : 30)

But what did you expect of  
an old man  
who saw it as no part of his business  
to interfere, let alone try  
and stop  
the madness of his grandchildren . ( P : 36 )

and what a through job he made of it.  
Reduced it completely  
to ash . (P : 41)

Why did they do it ?

Who knows !

Just for kicks, may be. (P : 45)

Why did you not make Arjuna

pay for his crime

While he was yet alive ?

Why did you wait

for his grandson to grow up

to give him a taste of your terrible poison ( P : 51)

Can you think of a worse insult

to Agni,

the sacred, sacrificial fire. (P : 59)

Have they all gone mad ?

What do they think they're doing,

these wise men !

Does one have to remind them

that this

planet itself, this sphere, our whole earth

is resting,

balanced precariously,

on the hood of a snake called Shesha,

the mightiest them all ? (P : 62)

This poem is mostly written in freeverse. His use of language is non conventional and experimental. The poem has no rhyming scheme and the poem has a three line stanza pattern. The poet reported in a contemporary terms, gossipy, detailed events unfolding in front of television cameras. This is in fact, predominant characteristic of Kolatkar's writing.

#### 4.2.1 Modern Terminology :-

Arun Kolatkar does not write lyrical and emotional poetry, Like *Jejuri* , *Sarpa Satra* is also ironical in its approach. The poet creates imaginary character and through their speaking the poet narrates. The narration is effective, dramatic and colloquial. The poet's intention in writing this poem is to relate this story to the contemporary world. Indirectly he tries to attack the tendency of rulers, politicians and leaders. So the poet does not use metaphors, images or symbols in the poem. Instead he used words, phrases and which applicable to modern world.

There is one example of simile in the first part of the poem 'Janamejaya'

" a palace perched atop a single column  
that stood like a crystal lotus  
on a steel stem in the middle of vast lake," (2004 : 19)

Beside this example there is no use of metaphor and simile throughout the poem. Instead the poet has used words and phrases applicable to the modern world. The poet tries to point out disorder, vengeance, violence in the contemporary, human world by using modern terminology.

For examples :

The poem opens with 'Janmejaya' speaking of the reason for the

annihilation - the death of his father, we find many words and phrases which are modern, as following.

Janamejaya referred Takshaka as a 'scheming snake'

"It was a scheming snake I'm told  
with a grudge against my great grandfather  
that killed my father ." (2004: 19)

Janamejaya talks of the conspiracy and secret police.

" My vengeance will be swift and terrible  
I will not rest  
until I've exterminated them all. " (2004 : 21)

In the second section 'Jaratkaru speaks to her son Aastika', there are many examples of modern terminology.

Jaratkaru tells her son about Janamejaya's terrible vow to avenge his father's death by killing the whole species of snake and wipe them out from the face of the earth. She tells him that his purpose to exterminate the whole snake race is politically incorrect.

In the first part the following words or phrases are used by the poet.

' Politically incorrect', the future of the country in question, a question of national importance' , the finest minds of our age, ' a blank cheque !

We find some other words or phrases in the next part of the poem:

'an extremist', 'all terrorists' , 'ferocious masks', 'the senseless massacre' , 'the great superhero', fantastic weapons, ' a miraculous escape', 'terrible poison', 'the wholesale destruction' , 'event managers' 'assassin, butcher or a mass murderer' , 'assassin, butcher or a mass murderer.' 'one man's twisted logic and madness' something unindian, alien and antinational '. 'The End' , 'khatam' and 'the dirty bandage of History'.

The last section, 'The Ritual Bath' talks of 'intellectual superstars' the daily statistics of death and celebrations of hatred'. The final section is a sarcastic comment on the final outcome of Sarpa Satra.

All the above words used in the poem are modern they are used in contemporary human world. All these words and phrases bring out devastation in the contemporary human world.

#### **4.2.2 Myth :-**

Arun Kolatkar's 'Sarpa Satra' a poem is based on the myth from Mahabharat. According to Mahabharat Sarpa Satra is a sacrifice performed by Janamejaya with the object of annihilating the nagas or snake people. The original story or myth of Sarpa Satra runs like this.

After Yudhisthira Parikshita became the king of Hastinapur. He was the grandson of Arjuna and son of Abhimanyu. He was a honest, kind and brave king. He takes care of his subjects.

Once he went into the forest, found a deer. He followed that animal, but the deer disappeared in the thick forest. King was disappointed and searched the animal in all directions. As he was searching he came into one ashram. It was Shamik rishi's ashram. King found that Shamik rishi sat in silence and was praying. King asked him about the animal but he did not get answer from rishi. King became very angry. He saw there on the ground a dead snake fallen. Parikshita picked up this dead snake and tied in the neck of Shamik rishi and he returned to his house. Rishi was praying and he did not understand about king's behaviour.

After some time Shrunji rishi, a son of Shamik rishi came. He found a dead snake in the neck of his father. Looking at this snake, he became very angry. He removed the dead snake from his neck and throw away. In this angry mood he cursed the king and said, "The person who

has tied this dead snake in the neck of my father will be died by the bite of snake within seven days. "

After his praying , Shrunji rishi told his father about the curse. Shamik rishi was disappointed. Parikshita was a kind and honest king. He said , it is not good that you cursed a king like Parikshita'. He informed Parikshita about this curse, so he will take care of his life.

When Parikshita heard about this terrible curse, he frightened. He repented on his action. He felt that he ridiculed rishi by tieing dead snake, was not good. But it was too late. He called wise people and asked them about the curse and took their advice. They told that we can do nothing in this situation. Rishi's curse is inevitable. But king had a minister. He gave different advice to king. You go to in dandakaranya near Pipilika mountain and live there because snakes are not found there and you will be saved from curse. The King was confused. He lost his conscience and decided to go to that place. The King went there and built a palace on the top of a single column in the middle of vast lake. King was relaxed. The palace was patrolled round the clock by crocodiles with a nightvision. This defence was unbreakable. No one could enter the palace.

King Parikshita looked outside from the palace. He saw that Shukmuni was coming. He invited Shukmuni, and narrated the whole incident. Sukmuni felt sympathy for Parikshita, and started telling Bhagvat Puran. He narrated Puran in seven days. On the seventh day there was a orcale that - "King, Today is your death day". He became worried.

Meanwhile king saw that a person is carrying fruits. He called the person and bought some fruits. He was eating. At that time from one fruit a tiny worm came. When it came on the ground , appeared in full form as a snake.

The snake coiled himself around king Parikshita, stung him and king died. The snake was Takshak.

At that time Janamejaya was a child. He did not know about his father's death by snake-bite. He became successor and the courtiers made him aware of his father's death by a Naga named Takshak. Then he pledged to take revenge on the snakes and he will not take rest until he has exterminated the whole race of the snakes.

This is the original story or myth in Mahabharat. This poem is based on this Myth. But Kolatkar is not retelling this story. His intention behind this poem is different. 'Sarpa Satra' retells from an alternative perspective the snake sacrifice performed by Janmejaya in Mahabharat. The sacrifice to annihilate the Nagas, or snake people is usually allegorized not only morally but also by alluding to such actual historical battles as one between the northern, invading light-skinned Aryans and black southern Indians.

Employing this myth Kolatkar tries to bring out disorder, vengeance in the contemporary human world. He retells Sarpa Satra from a different perspective. The poet looks at the Sarpa Satra from the eyes of Jaratkaru. Jaratkaru is a snake woman. The poet focused here consequences of sacrifice.

Through the imaginary character of Jaratkaru, a snake woman the poet first criticises the great thinkers, leaders, rulers. The poet laughs at the idea of Sarpa Satra. Then the poet expressed in detail the tremendous destruction of Khandav van. Besides using this myth Kolatkar has evoked woman's suffering and agony throughout the poem. The last part is the sarcastic comment on the final outcome of Sarpa Satra. Thus the poem has contemporary relevance. Though this poem is based on myth, Arun Kolatkar has deliberately woven modern materials on the pattern of ancient myths.

The poet again referred two myths at the end of Sarpa Satra. These are 'The Myth of Aurva' and 'the myth of Parashara'.

The poet referred these myths because sooner or later these celebrations of hatred would come to an end but like everything else this fire of hatred cannot be put out completely. It will never stop permanently. To prove this there is a story of the fire that Aurva got up to avenge the massacre of the Bhrgus and still burns at the bottom of the sea. Parashara produced the fire for the destruction of rakshasa. This fire still rages in the great forest beyond the Himalayas.

### 4.3 Style :-

'Sarpa Satra' is an epic poem, about the genocide of the Nagas, or snake people by Janamejaya. The poem opens with Janamejaya speaking of the reason for the annihilation the death of his great father by snake-bite and continues with Jaratkaru telling her son Aastika that only he can put a stop to the killing.

The nature of an epic poem is such that detail is piled upon detail and the reader is sucked into the story.

Arun Kolatkar had a distinctive style of his own. His style is descriptive, colloquial, and chatty. He might have developed this style from his advertising days. He rarely discussed his work.

The mode of narration is colloquial and chatty. He reported in contemporary terms, gossipy, detailed. He used colloquial expressions and modern terminology. The poet creates imaginary character like Jaratkaru and through this character the poet narrates. The poet looks at the incident through the eyes of snake woman Jaratkaru.

The mode of narration is experimental. Sarpa Satra modernizes and makes colloquial the often incomprehensible language common to translations of Sanskrit into English.

For example

"And I think it's your job,

Aastika

I mean who else is there to do it ? "

Such colloquial expressions are used by the poet. So the narration becomes effective dramatic and readable. Unfortunately, most translations of the Mahabharat are barely readable. But Sarpa Satra is readable. While reading the poem, we feel as if the character is speaking. In modernizing the language and tones of the Maharashtra he is also offering a liberal or common sense revising of what in India has become a text used to justify the violence of reactionary Hinduism. It is like putting the Mahabharat in contemporary speech and retelling it to give emphasis on different modern aspects.

The general tone of the poem ranges from irony, satire, cynicism. The greatest strength of the poem lies in his peculiar use of dramatic narration.

Thus, looking at all these aspects of the poem we can say that, Arun Kolatkar has written this poem about modern human life based on myth.