



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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Statuette of Annabhau Sathe,

Why it is in news?

Recently, statuette Activist-author Annabhau Sathe is unveiled by Devendra Fadnavis in Moscow.

The unveiling of the statuette is a part of the celebration of 75 years of independence of India, and also to celebrate India –Russia's relationship.



Who was Annabhau Sathe ?

- Annabhau Sathe, who was originally named, Tukaram Bhauro, Sathe.
- He was born to a Dalit family in wategaon village, of Satara district of Maharashtra on 1st August 1920.

- 10 years later in 1930, he along with his family moved to Mumbai, where he did some odd jobs like a porter, a hawker, and also a cotton mill helper.
- In 1934, he participated in a worker's strike, under the leadership of Lal Batwa mill workers Union, where he met an associate of Dr. Ambedkar in the famous "Chavdar lake Satyagraha" at Mahad, R.B More.
- Under his influence, he joined the labour study circle, where he first learned to read and write.

His journey from a laborer to an author.

- He developed his interest to write poems when he was in the labour camp.
- His 1st poem was on the menace of the mosquitoes in the labour camp.
- Then he formed a Dalit Yuvak Sangh, a cultural group that used to perform in front of mill gates during worker's protests, on the poems written by him
- At the same time, the progressive writers association was formed, with writers like Premchand, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Manto, Ismat Chughtai, Rahul Sankrutyayan, and Mulkraj Anand as its members.
- The association would translate the Russian work of Maxim Gorky, Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy, and Ivan Turgenev into Marathi, by which Sathe got inspired.
- It put an ideological impact on him, and he got the inspiration of writing street plays, stories, and novels. Etc.
- He wrote his first *ballad (a long song or poem that tells a story, often about love)* 'Spanish Povada', in 1939

The popularity of his work

- He lived for 49 years, he began to write when he was 20 years old.
- In just 29 years, of his writing, he penned about, 32 novels, 13 collections of short stories, four plays, a travelogue, and 11 Povadas(ballad).
- Along this, he and his group traveled across Mumbai campaigning for workers' rights.
- Several of his works like 'Aklechi Goshta,' 'Stalingradacha Povada,' 'Mazi Maina Gavavar Rahili,' and 'And Jag Badal Ghaluni Ghav' were popular across the state. Almost six of his novels were turned into films and many were translated into other languages, including Russian. His 'Bangalchi Hak' (Bengal's Call) on the Bengal famine was translated into Bengali and later presented at London's Royal Theatre. His literature depicted the caste and class reality of Indian society at that time.
- Many of his works like 'Aklechi Goshta,' 'Stalingradacha Povada,' 'Mazi Maina Gavavar Rahili,' and 'And Jag Badal Ghaluni Ghav' were well-liked across the state.
- About 6 of his novels were turned into films and many of them were translated into many other Indian languages and foreign languages, including Russian.
- One of his famous literary creations, 'Bangalchi Hak' on the Bengal famine was translated into Bengali and later presented at London's Royal Theatre.
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- In 1943, he formed the Lal Bawta Kala Pathak, along with Amar Sheikh and Datta Gavhankar.
- The group traveled across the Maharashtra, presenting awareness programs on caste atrocities, class conflicts, and workers' rights.
- He dedicated his most popular novel "Fakira" to his idol Dr. Ambedkar.
- He was also associated with the formation of the Indian People's Theatre Association in 1943 and became the president in 1949.
- His works were highly influenced by Marxism, but he also portrayed the harsh realities of the caste system

The Russian connection of Annabhau

- Sathé was greatly stimulated by Gorky's 'The Mother' and the Russian revolution, which can be seen in his writings.
- So once Annabhau was called Sathé, the Maxim Gorky of Maharashtra by The Famous Marathi Poet Baburao Bagul.
- As per Associate Professor of Russian Head, Department of Foreign Languages, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Dr. Megha Pansare, Annabhau's literature has a very close resemblance to the then Communist Russian literature which was a mixture of reality and art.
- In that era, Russia used to invite representative Indian literature translated into Russian.
- Some of the writings of Sathé's like Chitra and his famous Stalingradcha Povada based on the battle of Stalingrad battle were translated into Russian.
- In 1961, Sathé visited Russia.
- 'Maza Russiacha Pravas' (My Travel to Russia), his travelogue, in which he wrote about how workers of India have come to see him off and how the worker wanted him to go and see slums in Russia and describe them after he returned back to home.
- He was well known in Russia because of his translation and received a warm reception there.

What was the reason behind the statue in Moscow?

- Sathé hails from a Dalit community called Matang.
- The failure to negotiate Annabhau's artistic legacy, Sathé is now confined as a symbol of a separate community.
- The ruling party is aiming to get the credit for making the Sathé global icon.
- Installing Sathé's oil painting at the Indian consulate in Moscow also shows that the central government utilized this occasion to increase cultural dialogue between the two countries.

After more than 70 years, Cheetahs will again walk on the Indian soil

Context

After more than 7 decades of extinction from India, Cheetahs have returned to Indian soil. This morning saw a landmark event – the arrival of 8 African Cheetahs in India. The Cheetahs arrived from Namibia and landed in Gwalior for being taken to the Kuno Palpur National Park. Out of the 8 Cheetahs that arrived, 5 are females while 3 are male.



(Image Courtesy: livemint)

Background

- Cheetahs have an ancient history in India with the first reference dating back to the the Neolithic period. A Neolithic cave painting at Chaturbunj Nala in MP depicts a 'slender spotted feline being hunted'.
- 'Cheetah' is believed to have originated from Sanskrit word chitrak, which means 'the spotted one'.
- In the medieval era, the Mughal emperor Akbar is believed to possess 1,000 cheetahs which were used for hunting blackbucks and gazelles. This move was continued by Jahangir.
- The British rule didn't help for protection of Cheetahs either and some British even shot them for trophy hunting.
- By the beginning of the 20th century, only a few hundred Indian Cheetahs were left, rest were wiped out.
- Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo of Koriya princely state is believed to have hunted down and shot the last three recorded Asiatic cheetahs in India.
- In 1952, The cheetah was officially declared extinct by the Indian government.



Re-introduction and Project Cheetah

- India has been trying to bring back Cheetah since a long time. Talks were carried out with Iran in 1970s to bring Asiatic cheetah to India in exchange for Asiatic lions but this couldn't manifest into any action.
- Attempts were again made in 2009 when the then Environment Minister endorsed plan to reintroduce Cheetah but this was stayed by the Supreme Court citing that a detailed study needs to be conducted and produced before taking this big step.
- Project Cheetah is an ambitious project undertaken by the Government of India with the objective to re-establish the species in its historical range in India. This was approved by the Supreme Court as a pilot program and allowed reintroduction of cheetahs on an "experimental basis"
- India signed an MOU with the Republic of Namibia in 2020 whereby the latter agreed to donate the eight Cheetahs to start the program. Another batch is expected to arrive from South Africa once details between the two countries are finalized.
- Amongst the 10 surveyed sites of the central Indian states, Kuno Palpur National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh was identified as the best suited one. The reasons for this were its suitable habitat and adequate prey base, lack of human settlements and ample deciduous open forest landscape.

Translocation and associated issues

Translocation is not a rare phenomena and is often done to preserve species and re-populate its old habit or that of a similar kind. For example the southern white rhinos were transported in various places in Africa from KwaZulu-Natal. Similarly, Kaziranga Rhinos were translocated to Manas to build a new population in recent times. Such have been success stories. However, inter-continental translocations are no so common and certain risks are associated with translocation namely:

- **Genetic Diversity:** A genetically diverse population of species is ideally suited for building a new population elsewhere. But when the source population is itself small in number, it becomes difficult to build a new population of genetically suitable animals due to lack of gene diversity and inbreeding further increases health risks.
- **Habitat:** The habitat should match the original one from where the animals are brought as any difference can cause stress and difficulty to cope in the new environment.
- **Prey Base:** There should be sufficient prey base and density for the Carnivorous population to survive.
- **Area:** a single cheetah requires 100 sq km as its territory. Due to large scale construction, deforestation and industrialisation, it may become difficult to sustain a stable cheetah population.
- **Homing instinct:** It refers to an animal's innate ability to return to its territory after traveling away from it. This can lead to man-animal conflict as the animal displaced from its original site wanders in new areas in search of its old habitat. This was witnessed in 2009 when a young tiger was moved from Pench to Panna and it set its journey of over 400 km to travel back to Pench when authorities had to intervene to intercept it and bring it back to Panna.

Preparations made for successful Cheetah Translocation

- Extensive health check ups were done of the 8 Cheetahs in Namibia to ensure they were fit to be flown to India. They were checked for diseases and completion of vaccination.
- Indian forest officers and wildlife experts were trained by expert teams from Namibia and South Africa on the handling, breeding, rehabilitation, medical treatment and conservation of cheetahs.
- After arrival, they will be radio collared and monitoring would be done through satellites
- Each Cheetah will have a dedicated monitoring unit 24 hours a day.
- Heavy security arrangements are made like presence of drone squads and military personnel to prevent poaching
- Government has launched the 'Cheetah Mitra' campaign whereby volunteers would work to increase awareness about Cheetah among people.
- Cheetahs will be first released into a quarantine enclosure where they will be kept for a month after which they will be shifted to bigger enclosure till they adapt to the new environment before being released into Kuno Palpur National Park

Significance of the Cheetah reintroduction

- It will help Restore India's historic evolutionary balance. Cheetah had been an integral part of India and this move will restore it to its historic glory.
- It will help in developing a Cheetah metapopulation within India and contribute to increasing the global Cheetah number.
- The cheetah is a flagship grassland species and its conservation will also help to preserve other grassland species in the predator food chain.
- It will also help to protect the grasslands of India which is the habitat of Cheetahs

Way Forward

While a successful Cheetah diplomacy has ensured in getting the big cat back to India, the future course will be determined by proactive conservation efforts and coordination of all stakeholders. Once the population in Kuno National Park adapts to the region and population increases, the Indian government will expand the efforts to reserves in other parts of the country also. It is hoped that Project Cheetah will follow the footsteps of Project Tiger to be a success story.

Saumya Khedwal