



Feminism in Selected Women Saint Literature in Maharashtra

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT While studying 'Women' culture or regime in India, we came to read the evidences which make us realize her strength from the time of Divinity. 'Woman' does possess propriety of the three elements i.e. power, wealth and mind, which are essential for living. In Puranas also, the deities accomplished perfection due to women. Now a days, even though 'Ladies First' is said, this rule is seemed followed while pronouncing the names of the gods. Ex. Laxmi Narayan, Sita Ram, Uma Shankar, Bhavani Shankar, Sitapati (Ram), Umapati (Shankar) etc. With the whirly gig of time, there realize changes in woman's role, importance according to the period i.e. Stone Age, Aarya Age, Vedic Age, Jain, Buddha, Pre-independence and post independence era etc. From Gurukul era to the school era – present education system, importance has been given to 'woman'; reforms were made from the society and Government from the point of view of her education or progress. Ex. in All Education Commissions, Committees, Councils, Five Years Plan, Inclusive plans, Women empowerment, changes occurred in the national educational condition, there never ever occur any impediment in the women's abilities in changing nature of the woman, her rights and her independence. In all, in the present condition, there are measures on women's' problems of each phase from her birth to the old age and provisions made in the law regarding 'woman' security. But all this is in modern age. But what about when there were no law and security? Then, emotional, ideological maturity was mostly prevalent in the society. There was fear of words vice, virtue. Due to devotion and loyalty for Him, one cannot commit crimes easily. Women used to illustrate her strength by realizing her limitations and preserving the culture and family. From the Saint era, the period of Queen of Jhansi, Jijabai, Savitribai is not too old. They carved history. In the annals, and that of Maharashtra, the period from eleventh to seventieth century proved an era of works of various saint, sects. It also included women saints. Literary compositions were written in the works of women saints. It gives vision of renaissance and devotion. Many compositions of women saints were published in this period. The said research was conducted with an objective to study the thoughts of women saints. Objectives – • To study the compositions of selected women saints in Maharashtra • To search for the effects of the then social condition on the compositions of selected women saints in Maharashtra Assumption – Discovery of variety in the compositions of women saints according to their age.

Introduction-

While raising Bhagawat sect, Dnyandev has given extract of ideological life development to the society through affluence literature like Dnyaneshwari. In the further period, the holiness and purity of the same extract was preserved by saints Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram etc. by descending the same as devotional sentiment in the minds and brains of women and men and is understood by the other contemporary compositions. In the compositions of the saint, in the list of women literature Mahanubhav Poet Mahadamba, Muktabai, Namdev's mother – Gonai, Wife – Rajai, disciple – Janabai, sister – Aaubai, daughter – Limbai, Chokhamela's Spouse – Sayarabai, Kanhopatra, Bahinabai etc. many women saints made traditional literature compositions.

In the said research, a study of thoughts of women saints like Muktabai, Janabai, Bahinabai was conducted.

Muktabai –

All the three siblings of Dnyandev were light of brilliant knowledge. The compositions of Muktabai have proved emancipating to every one.

A micro thought is enough great to swallow a sun. Of course, she enlightened every one all about supreme thought, supreme life, wealth, beauty, knowledge.

Mujgi Udali Aakashi, Tine Gilile Suryashi
Thor Navlav Jala, Vanz Putra Prasavala
Vinchu Patalashi Jaay, Shesh Matha Vandl Paya
Mashi Vyali Ghar Jhali, Dekhon Muktai Hasali.

Muktabai taught spirituality to Namdev and Changdev. Once Dnyandev confined himself by shutting the door of the hut (i.e. tati) to keep away from the society, she urged him that the community needed his thoughts and works. To remove

Dnyandev's disappointment, she composed hymns in which she says -

Yogi Pawan Manacha, Saahi Aparadh Janacha
Vishvarage Jhale Vanhi, Sante Sukha vhave Pani
Shabdashastre Jhale klesha, Santi Manava Upadesha
Vishwapat Brahmadora, Tati Ughada Dnyaneshwara
While urging greatness of pronouncing His name, she said –
Naammantre Hari Nijadasa Paave,
Aikoniya Ghyavi Jhadakari

While addressing from her contours of philosophy of oneness to the man suffering from lust, she said –

Aadhi tu Muktachi hotasi re praniya,
Pari Vasane Paapniya Naadilasi

Naamdev never adored anyone as his mentor. He used to say that his Vitthal is his entire being. But while exalting the greatness of mentor, Muktabai addressed Namdev as an inexperienced one. Even Vitthal personally accepted the truth that there is not perfection in the devotion or life sans mentor. While compelling Namdev to adore mentor by revealing him realization of greatness of mentor, Muktabai said –

Mhane Muktabai Changya Antarichi Khoon,
Dhari Sadguruचे Paya Tujala Netil Udharuna
Nivrutti, Dnyandev, Sopanbai, Muktabai, Eknath, Namdev,
Tukaram.

In the Varkari sect, equally importance is given to Muktabai like the other saints. The reason behind this is that she has conquered the expectations of the community with her wonderful thoughts.

Janabai -

Janabai was brought to Damasheti, Saint Namdev's father, in

her childhood by her father. As she was five-six years elder than Namdev, she played him in her cradle. While creating compositions of devotion to Him, as she was involved in it, she used to feel that Vitthal himself was assisting her in her work whether it of any difficulty. And from that devotion and faith, she wrote,

Dalita, kandita, tuja gain Ananta

Once Janabai was accused of stealing God's necklace, then she appealed agonizingly from her heart,

Aandhalyachi kathi adakali kavane beti,
Majhiys harini kothe guntalis Rani

Every saint pleased Vitthal by his remembrance. Vitthal never desires for money, clothes, metals, delicacies etc. Pleased Vitthal by his remembrance, he is pleased with devotional remembrance not money. After Vitthal Mauli, please Dnyaneshwas Mauli. He too loved his disciples like mother and he too is pleased with his remembrance. She said –

Naam phukat chokhat, Naam gheeta naye veet,
Jad shila jua sagari, Aatmarama naame taari.
While appealing Mauli, Janabai said,
Yega YegeVithabai majhe Pandhari Aai.
While describing Vitthal's affection, she said –
Vithu majha lekurwala,
Sange Gopalancha mela.

God is hungry of devotion and that is why he is standing on the brick by renouncing the heaven. In this composition, Janabai called Vitthal as desirous, but of devotion.

Deva bhavacha lampat, Soduni aala Vaikuntha.

While seeking forgiveness for the sins she has committed in her hymn, she said –

Tujhi nahi keli seva, Dukha vatatase jiva.

While addressing her heart as cage, Janabai called Vitthal as thief. That hymn is as –

Dharila Pandharicha chora, Prem bandhoniya dor,
Hrudayi bandishala kele, Aant Vitthala kondale.

Through her compositions, Janabai depicted her life which had become one with Vitthal. While studying her hymns, we felt that due to this, she used to see Vitthal in nature, every relation, in life, material. Life without Vitthal was impossible.

Pakshi Jaya digantara, Balakasi aani chara.

Like the love and affection of every bird towards her child, we should also have blessings of Vitthal, Janabai said –

Taisi aamha Vitthal maye, Jani veloveli paho.

While regretting that she felt short of in service of Vitthal, she wrote that He had suffered her sorrows.

Tujhi nahi keli seva, Dukha vatatase jeeva,
Nashta papin ni heen, nahi kele tujhe dhyani.
Brahma vandi jyache paya, tyasi Yashoda te maya,
Samrajyacha jo dani, Mage Yashodesi loni.

While describing Shri Krushna in this way, Janabai proudly said that she was grateful as she got such kind hearted God for grinding. In the conclusion, she said –

Paya joduniya vitevari, Kar thevuni katavari.

She also depicted the form of Vitthal as well as the picture around the statue. In the honour of Padhari's Varkari, she expressed her respect for them in her words as –

Pandharich warakari, tyache paya majhe shiri,

He ka uttam chandal, Pay thevin kapal,

Mukhi naam garje vaani mhane naamayachi jani.

As Janabai was Namdev's Guru, she used to mention like Naamchachi dasi, Naamayachi Jani at the conclusion of her hymns. She also composed Dnyaneshwar Stuti Abhang, Naamdev, Thalipak, Palana, Dashavtar Varnana, Teerthavali etc. Because of internal self confidence and faith on Vitthal, she boldly said –

Doicha padar aala Khandyavair, Bharlya bajari jain mee.

As the feelings of me, thy departed from the mind, she said –

Dev khate dev peete, Devavari mee nijate,
Dev dete dev gheete, Devasave vyaherite.

These were the words coming straight from her experience –

Jani mhane deve mee jaale vesava, Nighale ghara tujhe.

Janabai also composed hymns on the birth of Krushna, his childhood, mixture of various food materials i.e. kala. In each of her composition, we read extreme belief, love and faith in Him.

Jyacha sakha Hari, Tyavari vishwa krupa kari,
Oone pado nendi tyache, vaare sosi aaghatache,
Tayabeen khabhari, Kada aapan nahve duri,
Aangan aapule vedhoni, tyala rakhe to nirvani,
Aaisa ankit bhakansi, Mhane Naamyachi dasi.

Bahinabai-

Santakrupa jhali imarat phala aali,
Dnyandeve rachila paya, Ubharile devalaya.

In this hymn, Bahinabai has described the Bhagawat sect. Bahinabai was born in the seventieth century in the family of Kulkarni residing at Devgaon near Verul. She was married at the age of five. Then her husband's age was thirty first. Due to patriarchal culture, she has to face atrocities. But still she lived the life of devoted wife, i.e. pativrata.

Santushta maansi sada sarvakal, Hrudaya nirmala jaisi
ganga,
Sant te janawe brahmaprapti laagi, Dhanya tochi jagi sharan
tyansi.

One who is always pure and satisfied by emotionally and mentality should be referred to as Saint, such is a feature of compositions of Bahinabai. Out of compositions, Bahinabai's four hundred compositions are available today. Like Janabai, Muktabai, Bahinabai also told the greatness of counting His name.

Naam sankeertan sadakala jaya,
Bhaktivant taya mhano aamhi.

There was effect of Tukaram's hymns on Bahinabai. She adored Tukaram as her Guru.

Eknaishtha bhava Tukoba charani, Mhanoni bahini laaghanise,
Bahini mhane Tuka Sadguru Sahedar, Bhetala apar sukha
hoya.

This hymn revealed her devotion towards Tukaram. Bahinabai never took pleasure in her family. She was self enlightened due to faith in Guru and devotion towards Vitthal. She never realized how she lost herself in devotion to Vitthal. She was astonished how she meekly devoted herself at the feet of Parmeshwar. The hymn she composed on this subject matter is like this -

Paache, jo geliya meeche haravaaliye, Naval kaise baiyanno,

Kay sango kaise viparit chij, Padile maajhe maan thak kaise.

Conclusion –

It seemed that in the then social condition, spirituality, wor-

ship were rights of only specific class and rich. In such situation, all complexions have right to devotion. Devotion to Him means counting His name, eternal aspirations for Him, service without any fruit, pure emotions. There was no trace of superstition. There was no place for superstition. We can trace renaissance, condition of mind, pure devotion and confidence with devotion towards Him in this literature.

Summary –

It is not that the then social or other all situations were different from today's. Apart from modern, scientific and physical facilities, women always properly guided the community at that time also. Though the basic core of thoughts in the community, literature of Mukrabai, Janabai and Bahinabai was one, they have shown their distinction. Usage of proper words, innovation, greatness of chanting His name, devotional worship are poured from the compositions of their literature. Principle of devotion and boldness in the Saint literature are seen in the compositions of Muktabai, Janabai, Bahinabai.