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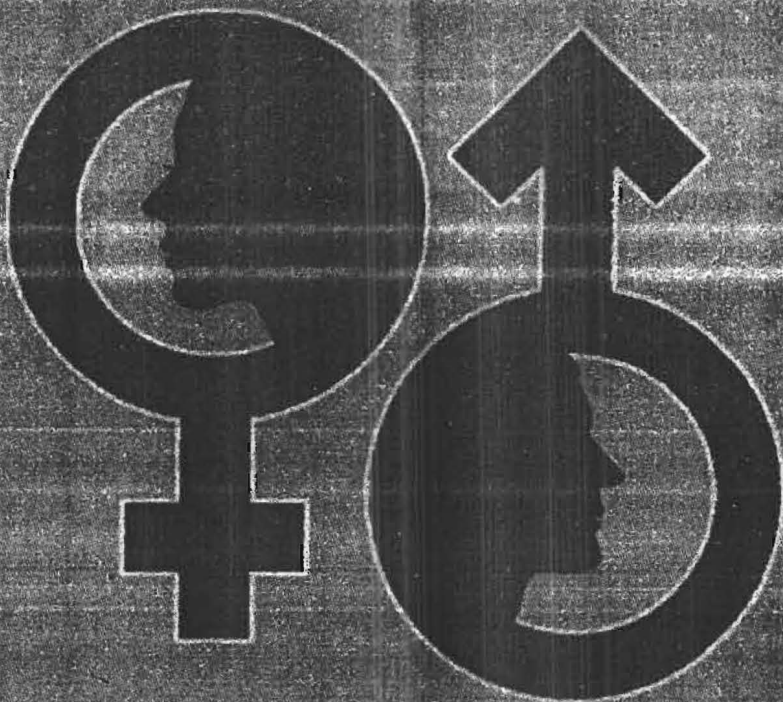
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## CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN SAINT IN WARKARI SECT

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The period from 13<sup>th</sup> century to 17<sup>th</sup> century was known for the Bhakti movements and it had gained importance in political, religious and cultural field. This era is also known as "The era of Saint Poetess".

During this era many foreigners were invading our country, the social and religious reformers were willing to spread an awakening against it. The Bhakti movement aroused in this era, developed and spread over in the country.

While studying the status of women in our country during the medieval period it is very necessary to refer to the literature written by these great women saints. From these literatures we can understand the struggles of women for their existence, restriction forced on the women, entrance prohibited for the salvation to attempt and even to not suppose to be a part of Bhakti movements. Women had to struggle too much and work hard for their existence.

In that era women didn't had right to education. In spite of all the restriction and after abiding all the rules and regulations put by the society, they had framed beautiful poems without the essence of the education. Few women revolted against all the rule and regulations and accepted the path of Salvation.

Indians follow the Patrial system, i.e. male is the main head of the family hence secondary status to women, child marriage, loyalty towards husband curial life style for widows, Sati system, no right to education, women were completely dependable on father or her husband. In spite of such family and society restriction the women saints struggled and framed their own path for salvation.

Due to Bhakti movement, people actually began to unite in Maharashtra. During the medieval age, Bhagwat religion foundation was laid by great saints along with the female saints.

### **Saint Muktabai : (1279 – 97)**

In the childhood Muktabai along with her family were suppose to stay away from the village. They had to face lots of problems as they were staying out the vllage, still she is one of the well known famous, popular saints of the era. She has a prominent status in Warkari Sampradaya. She is the sister of the renowned saints like Saint Nivruthinath, Sopandev, Dyaneshwar. She is the only female in the list of early Saints. She was a great scholar of her period.

In the Abhangas of great Changdev, Muktai is called a teacher. This shows her status in those days. After achieving the full enlighten, she regarded Namdev.

Dyaneshwar lost his temper and got angry due to the humiliation by local people's, that time Muktai explained Dyaneshwar that it doesn't suits a saint to be so

short-tempered. A saint needs to be calm and cool in any situation." "Tathi Abhang" is her most famous and popular literature.

When sant Namdeo has visited their place, Nivrutti, Sopan and Dyanehwar touched his feet to show respect towards him but Muktai just joined her hands for regards as she considered that only the females have the capability to give birth to a new life which nobody else can do i.e next to god and if not the world will come to an end. Muktai had the courage to announce this fact proudly in front of everybody. She was the only woman to have so much courage in that era.

Muktai's poetic collection comprises of only 42 Abhangas but it shows her intellect is the ocean of knowledge. Her verses are just not the words but they reflect spiritual talent, bhakti, yog experience, deep divine experience. There was just no difference in her thinking process and no restriction can be seen in her verses just because of the gender and hence all the saints has renowned her "Adishakti" (The first God).

### **Saint Janabai :(1358)**

Saint Janabai belonged to a family who served saint Namdev's family, have a great importance in the Warkaris. Janabai created her existence as a saint when Dnyandev, Namdev were very popular. Janabai was bought up by Namdev's family due to which her life got modulated and she got the path of Vitthal Bhakti. She belonged to lower caste and as a female she has secondary status, she had to face lots of difficulties. She had to do all the low grade work. This hard path provoked her towards Lord Vitthal. Her intense desired to meet Lord Vitthal can be seen in her literature. Her literature comprises of 347 Abhangas and 5 chapters of the literature are included in "Namdeo Gatha".

The verses composed by Janabai reflects her feeling for Lord Vitthal. The composition is encoded in simple, soft, and easy language just like a women hearts. Vithumazalekurwala reveals that Vitthal was very near and dear to a heart and she had a very affectionate relationship with the saints of that era. As Janabai belonged to lower caste she had to stay out of the house in the backyard, but when she step on the devotional path her name was equivalently taken like other saints.

Namdev's bhakti, Dnyaneshwar's deep devotion, and chokoba's feeling, Samartha's inspiration can be experienced in the verses return by Janabai. We can see how she had overcome her fourth grade status and achieve the name of a saint.

### **Saint Kanhopatra :**

Verses written by Kanhopatra, reflects her life and can be said as the mirror of the life experiences. Though she was born in a lower caste, she loved to live a holy life. We can feel her devotion and confidence in the verses. She had the courage to refuse to go to the polygamy house of Bidar Badasha. Her soul left her body in front of Lord Vitthal. Her importance and position can be seen by the flourished green tree which stand very proudly in the Pandharpur temple.

### **Saint Bahinabai : (1628 – 1700)**

Saint Bahinabai, a great saint, disciple of saint Tukaram, cultured blessed by special devotional efficiency. She had created her own place in Warkari Samaj. She struggled against poverty, widowhood, people harassment, humiliation, she continued her path of devotion. She believed that her gender should not be the hurdle in the path of devotion. She was always confused in the defeat faced by the women due to her gender and Sanyasi life. This made her different from other women saint. She believed that there is no need to leave the family to achieve the God. By performing the family duties, staying with the family cannot be a hurdle in achieving the God.

Her composition reflects her loyalty and respect towards family, husband, Vedas, cultured, lord Vitthal, elders, intellect of saints. On the death bed she recollected her prior life and she had the courage to hold the death. She wrote the experience of a prior life and then she gave up her breath. Her composition have 450 Abhangas. Most of the Abhangas are autobiography which reflects her.

### **Saint Nirmala and Saint Soyara: (13<sup>th</sup> Century)**

Saint Nirmala and Saint Soyara has a pronounced place in the list of saints of Warkari Samaj. Their compositions reflect caste discrimination, sex discrimination and even the restriction hampered by the society on the women. High tolerant and sensitive soyarabai had fully supported Chokhoba in all situation aroused by the peoples. Her compositions is of 62 Abhangas which are in a very simple language prescribing her knowledge and devotion towards Lord Vitthal. Saint Chokhoba's sister saint Nirmala have worst very few compositions. Desire of others belonging like money, food, lady are the hurdles in achieving the morality was the strong belief of Nirmala.

Hence we can conclude that all women saints had to struggle in their life, face humiliations, criticism this predicts the political, religious, cultured life of the era.

### **Contribution of women saint :**

During 12<sup>th</sup> century to 17 century all women saints were from difference community. Life of saint women differed from the life of the common people. They proved that they were no were less than the male saint. In those critical circumstances their contribution were as follows:-

1. Social awareness was spread through Bhajan and Kirtan .
2. Importance of unity.
3. Due to the awareness spread ,the people started socializing and coming into contact of one another.
4. A series of great women sent started hampering the rites and rituals custom.
5. They declared that Bhakti is the write of everybody irrespective of sex.
6. The language of the composition of women saint was local language which made it reached two each and every common man.

7. The composition used to have beautiful shades of love, affection, spirituality, faith belief etc.
8. The seeds of freedom were sown by the women saint in modern era. Freedom does not mean to do whatever we want is explained in our rich culture.
9. The struggle of women saint , their auto biography has proved a great inspiration and guidance.

### **Conclusion :**

During the medieval period there was Bhakti movement in different provinces. As these women had taken a step forward to step up on the path of devotion in a male dominating society. While taking care of the family they manage to frame the poems, Abhangas and spread the awakening through the songs. If we study the struggle of women freedom we come to a conclusion that to achieve equality , personal freedom and in a identification bhakti is an perfect path.