

WOMEN SAINTS IN THE MEDIEVAL BHAKTI MOVEMENT OF RAJASTHAN
AND GUJARAT

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “*WOMEN SAINTS IN THE MEDIEVAL BHAKTI MOVEMENT OF RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT*” submitted by **Kaluram Palsaniya** bearing **Reg. No 15SHPH04** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in History is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance which is a plagiarism free thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Further, the student has the following publications before submission of the thesis for adjudication and has produced evidence for the same in the form of reprint in the relevant area of his work.

1. Kaluram Palsaniya (2018). Socio-economic background for the emergence of *bhakti* movement with special reference to Rajasthan. *Review of Research, International Online Multidisciplinary Journal*. Vol-8. Issue-2. November-2018.

2. Kaluram Palsaniya (2019). Women Sages/Saints Through The Ages: *Bhakti* Movement In Rajasthan With Special Reference To Saint Mirabai. *Think India Journal*. Vol. 22-Issue-14-December 2019.

and has made presentations in the following seminars and conferences.

1. “*Role of Bhakti in Creation of Hindu Religious Spaces in South Asia: A Study from Past to Present*” in International Conference on Indian Epics and Soft Power: India & Southeast Asia. New Delhi. November. 2019.
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Declaration

I ***Kaluram Palsaniya*** hereby declare that this thesis entitled ***“WOMEN SAINTS IN THE MEDIEVAL BHAKTI MOVEMENT OF RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT”***, submitted by me under the supervision of ***Prof. Rekha Pande***, Department of History, University of Hyderabad, is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this university or any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodganga/ INFLIBNET.

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CHAPTER: ONE

Introduction

There are many women saints from Rajasthan and Gujarat who pioneered the discourse of *bhakti*. Rajasthan and Gujarat's cultural glory during the medieval times is manifested in the proliferation of *bhakti* traditions. Rajasthan and Gujarat have been the birthplace of many great saint poets and these saint poets have contributed a lot for the creation of dignity, reputation and self respect of women, even after them.

These centuries witnessed the existence of various dynasties in different regions of today's Rajasthan and Gujarat. Political conditions in the region were volatile as the frequency of attacks from the north-west frontiers of India increased. Rajasthan and Gujarat remained the entry points to Indian subcontinent. *Bhakti* became ingrained in the culture of Rajasthan and Gujarat, where saints spread its ideas whose influences continue to resound in the society even today.

The present thesis examines the works and contributions of women *bhakti* saints in Gujarat and Rajasthan in medieval India. It studies the biographies of these saints as the embodiment of their spiritual and social philosophies. It examines the literary works of the saints as the site of their identity formations. It analyses the influence of their lives and works on the social, political, economic conditions of the period.

The importance of the study lies in its efforts to bring the life stories, the works and the influence of the saints into a dialogue with each other. Locating and studying this dialogue helps the thesis to reconstruct the regional histories of western India at a crucial time when modern identities were in the process of germination. Hence, this thesis is actually aware of the continuities between the medieval (Pre-modern) movements of *bhakti* and their modern social, cultural legacies.

Indian history has been a witness to many religious movements. These movements were multifaceted, multilayered and multidimensional with different degrees of impact on the socio-cultural milieu of their contemporary, and later, times. *Bhakti* which has gained restricted and technical meaning in modern times was a generic term in the past.¹

To explore the alternative space in the society, *bhakti* was the adequate medium. Nineteenth century saw alternative understanding of Hinduism and before that western scholars defined Hinduism through the Christianity point of view. Orientalists have understood Hinduism in the monotheistic manner that is lacking in understanding the basic nitty-gritty and complexity of a broader civilizational value system called Hinduism.

Bhakti movement that created alternative spaces for the oppressed classes and women along with influencing art, literature, devotional music, culture, sculpture, aesthetic traditions of Indian states, ruling classes and every aspect of life to which Rajasthan and Gujarat are no exception. In this movement, literature produced in vernacular languages, assumed the role of a focal point for social change in the society. At that time, in society, women were not considered equal to men. The biggest irony of the society was that in society, a women was not considered equal to men. At the same time, it was also emphasized that one can get the vision of God without the discrimination of social, economic and gender hierarchies.

Bhakti movement is divided into two different streams in South India and North India and, for these two streams, socio-economic-political conditions were different. The goals of *bhakti* movement in South India were individual salvation and mystical union with God. In South India, *bhakti* has never effectively challenged the rigid caste system prevalent in the society. Although some changes have taken place with the

coming of *Virashiva* movement, which adopted strong radical and heterodox attitudes. But in the North India *bhakti* primarily targeted the rigid caste system and superiority of *Brahmins*. In South India, negative feelings were stirring against Shankara's *Mayavad* for which the base was provided by the *Acharyas* like Ramanuja, Swami Ramanand, and Mahaprabhu, Vallabha etc. The *Acharyas* have established the reliance in the people for worldly life.

The above mentioned intellectuals and spiritual leaders gave novel foundations, conditions and philosophy to the society at large. The word *bhakti* means surrender to the supreme personal God. *Acharya* had made enormous contribution by adding new term and dimension to *bhakti*, which eventually spread into the masses. The prominent *Acharya* of *bhakti* is Ramanand who was successful in bridging the gulf between North and South India. The guru of Ramanand belonged to Sri Sampradaya of Ramanuja. Certain *Sagun* saints were also connected with Vaishnavism which became a movement quite soon and hence, affected all aspects of human life. The discourse among intellectuals and academicians pertaining to the concept and nature of *bhakti* is that whether it should be identified as a movement or not; since the philosophy of *bhakti* has developed over a period of centuries. Moving on, it associated with the trends of Mahayana Buddhism, worship of Narayana and Vishnu, Varkari's in Maharashtra, Sahajayana in Orissa, Nathpantis in eastern and western India, as well as with Siddhas and other traditions. The *bhakti* movement reached to its peak during the medieval time period, however, the accounts of those traces which led to the emergence of *bhakti* has a longer history.

During medieval times, upheaval and disarray were quite prevalent. The scope of verboten/ taboos as well as ritualism had also increased in the Brahmana religion. An increase in the heterodox tendencies (Nathpant), was the prime threat along with

Islam and its egalitarian concepts. Nathpantis, Munis, Parivrajakas, Jains and Buddhists disapproved the current norms prevalent in the society, that had become a part of, and at the same time, a threat for, Brahmanism. In such a scenario, Brahmanic ritualism and intellectualism borrowed sentiment and ideas from *bhakti* for a new lease of life in Brahmanic religion.

In the Brahmanic religion modifications have taken place due to the *Acharyas* tradition. Medieval saints, for instance Kabir, Raidas, Dadu Dayal, Nanak Dev, Tulsidas, Mirabai, Karmabai, Ranabai, Sant Pipa, etc. have come up as prominent leaders during the *bhakti* period. *Bhakti* (*sadhana bhakti/ gauni bhakti/ apara bhakti*) is directed towards a spiritual and unworldly life. The evolution of *bhakti* was based on a much needed relationship between man and God. In spiritual terms, *bhakti* means to achieve salvation, thereby surrendering oneself to God. *It* is an activity in which one's *indrye* and our very being neglects the mundane life and gives oneself to God, with one's own will.

The cultural history of India started with the Indus valley civilization, and it is from this time that worshipping of nature became rather prevalent and later on, during the Rig-Vedic period, nature worship eventually changed into worshipping of God with a certain kind of form. This was the reason why, evidences of *bhakti* were found for the first time, during the Vedic period. Moving on, we also discovered indications of *bhakti* in Bhagvad Gita. The Bhagvad Gita talks about giving up all kinds of religious and spiritual routes and taking resort in God alone. The word '*bhakti*' is originally derived from the root *bhaj* which means 'to adore'. This term *bhakti* is mentioned in Katha Upanishad as:

“To one who has the highest devotion (*bhakti*) for God?

And for his spiritual teacher (*guru*) even as for God.

To him these matters which have been declared.

Became manifest (if he be) a great soul

Yea, become manifest (if he be) a great soul.”²

Thus, if one wishes to attain emancipation, one must surpass all the opposites. Bhagavad Purana proposes three crucial facets for bhakti: (1) work without deeds; (2) work with total devotion; and (3) work continuously. Hence, one can say that Vedic *bhakti* is a trisection of *bhakti*, *knowledge* and *action*. Bhagavad Gita indicates three different ways to attain salvation, namely- *Karma*, *Jnyan* and *bhakti*. *Gita* is a collection of mystic poems. Each and every person has had encounters with these deeds. If one needs to liberate oneself from the materialistic deeds and skirmish, then the divine master becomes essential. In the sacred text Bhagvad Gita, the battleground of Kurukshetra symbolizes the actual battleground which is life itself because everyone encounters alike.³

Shrimad Bhagvad proposes four types of *bhakti*, which are as follows: (1) *Satvik bhakti* (for salvation); (2) *Rajsi bhakti* (for wealth and family); (3) *Tamsi bhakti* (for enemies and to bring dishonour to others); and (4) *Nirgun bhakti*. *Nirgun bhakti* is considered to be the highest or most advanced in the above mentioned *bhakti*. *Bhagvadkar* however, considered *Niskam bhakti* as the real *bhakti*.⁴

In Rig Veda, the word ‘Shraddha’ occurred which thereby, proves its existence during ancient time. In the Rig-Samhita, words like Samhita, bhakt and abhakt can also be found- which means that one who is suitable to do prayer and one who is not suitable to do prayer, respectively.⁵

In the beginning of the sixth century, there existed three sects in south India namely, Saivism who followed Shiva-creator and destroyer, along with his wife Parvati and sons Ganesha and Kartikeya; Vaishnavism who followed Vishnu- maintainer and

his ten incarnations/ avatar, viz. Rama, Krishna etc. and lastly, Saktas who followed Shakti (Durga (protector) and Kali (destroyer)).⁶

In South India, Siva Nayanars and Vaishnava Alvars saints have spread *bhakti* without acknowledging the distinctions of caste and class between the sixth to tenth centuries. They chose the various languages of the common people, viz. Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, to compose their songs and poems and not Sanskrit. Their choice of vernacular languages over Sanskrit (which was usually used for the production of spiritual literature) as a medium to impart and transmit their ideas does not symbolize any antagonism with the latter but it rather exhibits a preference for lingua franca. These saints travelled across the length and breadth of the sub-continent, in an attempt to spread the idea of *bhakti* by means of dancing and singing. The *bhakti* movement reached its celestial point during 10th century A.D in South India, after which its influence started declining. In the 11th and 12th century, *bhakti* was not as spectacular. The revivification of *bhakti* movement took place during the 13th century and it started travelling from southern India to northern India. Therefore, *bhakti* movement reached its zenith during 14th, 15th and 16th century in the northern parts of India.

A striking feature of *bhakti* that one should not omit is that in southern India it was not against the *varna* system and the caste system. Social discrimination was still quite rampant in the society and the lower classes or strata of the society were dealing with the social discrimination. An outstanding feature of *bhakti* in South India was its opposition to Jains and Buddhists as they had the support of the state because quite a lot of kings were progressively adopting these religions. Bit by bit, ill elements came into Buddhism and Jainism and hence, the masses of South India were naturally attracted to *bhakti*. Overall, one can say that this was a religious struggle between the orthodox sects and heterodox sects.

Bhakti was a movement to win over the masses in South India whereas on the other hand, in North India, main focus of *bhakti* was the rigid caste system and Brahmins. It started an onslaught the caste system and the superiority of Brahmins. In North India, it propagated the opinion of *Nirgun* monotheism. Kabir is a classic example of *Nirgun* monotheistic *bhakti*. *Bhakti* in North and South was distinct in its social base, their leader's social background, class, caste as well as economic background. We come across a difference in attitude towards God and *bhakti* as well.

Bhakti in South India did not develop in the hymns of Vaishnava, but it was quite present and it did not evolve with the hymns of Vaishnava Alvars and later on developed in Saiva Nayanars.⁷ It's true that the nature of *bhakti* varied over a period of time. In the initial stages, it was not against Brahmins but eventually, it developed into the prime resistance to the authority of Brahmins and inequality in society. In the later part, it supplied the base for a dominant ideology which was eventually adopted by kings and the dominant groups. Consequently, it became the ideology of the ruling class.⁸

A rather crucial question arises here, that when it declined in South, why *Acharya* Ramanuja supported it at the philosophical level? Was he in support of *bhakti*, because Brahmanism was exhibiting symptoms of decline and he wished to use *bhakti* as a safe guard of Brahmanism?

The Brahmanic ideology climbed great heights during the Gupta times. Although Harshavardhana followed Buddhism, he did not pose any danger to the Brahmanic ideology. However, this altered with the emergence of a new religion in medieval India. Allauddin Khilji was the lone sultan who extended his empire to the South. Although, he was not able to spread it to the interiors of South. Chalukya, Rastrakuta, Yadava, Pallava, and Chola accepted Brahmanic ideology instead of

Jainism and Buddhism. The spread of Brahmanic ideology is also found in the Srimad Bhagvad Mahatamya, as it talks about how *bhakti* had spread to various other parts of the continent from Karnataka.⁹

Ramanuja acted as a bridge between South and North India. He endorsed *bhakti* at a philosophical level and rendered a base to spread it in northern India. He constituted equilibrium between popular *bhakti* and rigid Brahmanism. He backed the entry of Sudras and untouchable into the temple however, he was not in support of the reading of Veda by the Sudras and untouchables, although he endorsed *bhakti* as a means of prayer for everyone.

Nimbark was the contemporary of Ramanuja and was a devotee of Radha and Krishna. He travelled from South to Vrindavana in North India. Madhava was another Vaishnava *bhakti* saint in the South. Madhava was in support of the act of reading Veda and *bhakti* by untouchables and low caste people. Ramanand was a Vaishnava *bhakti* saint who was born in South India and later on he went to North India. Ramanand brought a new trend in the *bhakti* movement. He accepted Vishnu as the supreme God and adopted the language of the masses instead of Sanskrit and also disapproved the caste system. Vallabhacharya was a Telugu Brahmin. He founded the Pushti marga, which is also known as Vallabha Sampradaya. Other than this, he was a follower of Krishna. Raidas who is popularly known as guru of Mirabai, spread *bhakti* among the untouchables and lower class by shunning the class norms of the society. He formulated the idea of Begumpura (a city without sorrow) and it won't be wrong to call it a revolutionary step, especially in the 16th century.

Bengal is known for its renaissance and hence, the *bhakti* movement there was different from both North and South India. Nathpanti, Vaishnava traditions and especially Krishna leela had huge effect on the *bhakti* movement of Bengal. Sahajiya

buddh and Nathpanti sects were also present and were relishing widespread popularity among the masses. These sects proved to be quite successful in presenting the core of dharma in plain and lucid manner. Vaishnavism also got some teachings from these sects. Chaitanya (1486-1533)- who was a follower of Radha-Krishna from Bengal, is one of the most important Vaishnava saint. He was not only a Vaishnavist but also a social worker who rejected caste, dharma and gender biasness. His followers hailed from different castes and religions. Although, he elevated several social issues, he somehow did not make any attacks against the dominance of Brahmins. His decision of sending six Brahmin to Goswami's Vrandavan ashram was reasoned to be a wrong step taken by him. Even then, we cannot deny his contribution because, through Kirtan, he demolished the caste system and tried to overcome the fragmentation's present in the society.

In Maharashtra, Bhagvad Purana and Nathpantis had a huge effect on the common people. Saint Jnaneshwara was very famed and he wrote bhasya on Bhagvad Gita. Bhasya is known as Jnaneshwarai. Namdev (1270-1350) belonged to low class tailor family and was a devotee of Krishna, a singer as well as a composer. He travelled South to North and is considered as both Varkari and monotheistic. According to Namdev, there was only one way to reach God, i.e. '*bhakti*'.

Just like all these regions in various parts of the Indian subcontinent, *bhakti* movement can also trace its legacy in the medieval western India. In the regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat , quite a lot of women *bhakti* saints founded and carried forward the tradition of *bhakti* movement thereby, leaving a great impact on their contemporary societies.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the background of *bhakti* movement in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

2. To examine the role of women saints in the *bhakti* movement.
3. To examine the contribution of these women saints and the challenges faced by them.
4. To assess the main factors behind the popularity of *Mirabai* and the negligence of other *bhakti* Women saints.
5. To explore the limits of *bhakti*.

Research Methodology:

1. This work examines both primary and secondary literature on the *bhakti* movement.
2. It uses primary sources like *Bhaktmal Katha* texts, *Muhanot Nainsi's*, *Marwar Ra Pargana ki Vigat*, and *Nainsi Ri Khyat* text etc. to examine this movement.
3. It also examines texts which are produced during the colonial period related to *bhakti* movement e.g. Col. James Tod's "Annals and antiquities of Rajasthan". An Orientalist view point which constructs the whole figure of few *bhakti* women saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat.
4. It also examines the oral traditions through interviews of people who sings bhajans of women saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The research also examines the relevant inscriptions, unpublished documents, letters etc., Persian historical accounts, archival records in Rajasthan, Rajasthani Sculptures, illustrated manuscripts and paintings, travelogues accounts, contemporary literature and recent contributions by the experts. In textual tradition whereby the main focus shall be the *Bhaktmal Katha*, *Muhanot Nainsi's Marwar Ra Pargana ki Vigat*, and *Nainsi Ri Khyat*. For some sections, this research uses *Vigat literature*, *Geet Govind Teeka*, *Rag Govind*, *Rag Sorath Ke Pad*, *Malar Rag*, *Satyabhamanu Rusan*, *Mira ki*

Garbi, Rukmani Mangal, Narsi Mehta ki Hundi, Spath Pad, Charitra, Rahiras and Sohila.

Thus, the different texts which have bearings on different aspects related to the theme are used. One must be fully aware of certain limitations that such texts possess of which the precept-practice dichotomy, who writes such texts, should be taken into account. At a later stage, the thesis has applied the anthropological perspective to decode *bhakti of these women saints* in this work.

Research Questions:

- a. How were the women saints received by readers and followers over the centuries?
- b. Why are some of the women saints seen more as figures of social rebellion and less as figures of *bhakti*?
- c. Why is the works and contributions of the women saints viewed more through a presentist lens and they are not adequately situated in the discursive context of their periods?

Bhakti Movement: Review of literature

The origin of *bhakti* movement is a debatable topic. Scholars holds different opinion regarding the origin of *bhakti*. In the opinion of some scholars origin of *bhakti* took place with Christianity. Whereas some other scholars associates origin of *bhakti* with *Islam* and rest with Brahmanism. Some associated its origin to indigenous causes, while others have shown the effect of feudalism and rest looked as the result of the radical expression of the social protest.¹⁰ In this chapter we will try to look closely at the literature which is produced around the origin of *bhakti*. Chapter gives a conclusion about *bhakti* origin and influences of other religions and sects on it.

Orientalist perspective was one of the first schools of thought which attempted to define the past of India. *Weber, William Jones and H.T. Colebrook* tried to define the customs, cultures and ideas of Indian society and Ancient Indian glory of India. Here it's very important to mention that the period of Oriental school coincides with the evolution of a discourse of power that characterized a particular set of social, economic and political relations between Europe and its colonies.¹¹ Regarding it *Romila Thapar* argues that

“European's in post renaissance period started to study ancient world but a very important shift occurred in the understanding of India because they ignored historical biographies and chronicles. Their main focus was to administer India in a good manner. Thus they started study of India with preconceived notions”.

With such mentality Weber propounded his theories on the East. Weber had firm belief that *bhakti* commenced as a way of Christianity. Weber identified similarities between Krishna *bhakti* and Christianity. In his opinion Christianity was a intellectual religion. He opined that as intellectual religion there was no need for changes in the core. It was need for lower sections of the society those got attached to it then Christianity allowed changes in the form of emergence of a personal, divine, or human divine savior as the bearer of salvation.¹² The changes had occurred according to the needs of the masses.

In the accommodation process transformation takes place in these cultic religions a pure magic. In the same accommodative process concept of eternal punishment and eternal savior concepts taken by *Krishna* cult from Christianity.¹³ They gave example from *Jnaneshvari*, in which *Krishna* makes those devoted to him fit for the kingdom

of heaven (*Vaikunta*). Some sermons in *Tukaram's abhangas* found certain similarities with Christianity. In their opinion the idea of Guru travelled from Christianity to *bhakti*. Surrender to the Guru is very much present in Christianity to make it better.¹⁴ Idea of spiritual salvation travelled from Christianity to *bhakti*.

Few scholars had opposed this idea and rejected the hypothesis. According to S.R. Goyal, it was not correct in the case of *Krishna Bhakti*. Although he accepted the possibility of certain influence of Christianity on medieval *bhakti*. *Goyal* says that what *Gita* indebted to Christianity is not easy to give answer, but when we pause to consider the question of the influence of Christian teaching on the ideas of later Vaisnavite and Saivite theism, we can observe some similarities.¹⁵ He gave example of Ramanuja and said that may be his conversion from school of Sankara to the Bhagvata religion regarded as an influence of Christianity.¹⁶ But when he analyzed the facts closely, then he reached to a conclusion that Madhva and Ramanuja bhakti was not exclusionist, but only a diversity of ekantika bhakti. He denied any influence of Christianity in emergence of Tamil mysticism. Whatever concepts emerged in Madhva and Ramanuja bhakti in relation to God, Guru, conflict of faith, calling, and predestination of grace had their roots within the indigenous intellectual traditions.¹⁷

H.H. Wilson in his work '*Sketches of the Religious Sects of the Hindus 1846*' wrote on the Vaishnavism in Bengal. He opined that their (Hindu) religion could be summed up into one word- *bhakti*.¹⁸ All Orientalist treated *bhakti* as a religion. They associated it with Krishna or Vaishnavism in general. According to Wilson Christian, religion had an influence on bhakti. After Wilson, Monier Williams, in his penetrating study of Brahmanism and bhakti, gave his views on bhakti. He also had preconceived notions about Indian society. He identified bhakti religion with Vaishnavism. According to him, Hindu

society had two religions, viz. Brahmanism, which was of a higher class and the other as an unthinkable mass. Basic granth-sastras for the first were Upanishads and for the later, cults of the personal deities.¹⁹ But it is important to note that these scholars were mostly neither historian nor trained in history.

Many scholars opposed the influence of Christianity and the most prominent were R. G. Bhandarkar, Roberet Charles Zaehner, D.D. Kosambi, and S. Radhakrishnan etc. They traced the origins of bhakti in the Indian origin. According to Zaehner, there is one main difference between Hinduism and Sufism, as in the former the powerful tendency is the movement from monism to theism as the higher form of religious life, whereas in Sufism the tendency is from theism, that is, a mysticism of love, towards what amounts to monism.²⁰ He questions the influence of Christianity on *bhakti* and declared it as an indigenous movement. According to him, *bhakti* originated first in Dravidian culture. S. Radhakrishnan claims that, for the first time *bhakti* emerged in Bhagvat Gita. He said that *bhakti* is in the Gita and is sustained by knowledge, but it is not knowledge itself, it involves yoga techniques and knowledge of divine as well.²¹ *Bhakti* also emphasizes humility, obedience, readiness to serve, as a devotee longs to surrender himself, renounce self-will and experience passivity, surrender of soul to the God. Therefore, according to Radhakrishna, it perceives genuine piety in the competence of the surrender rather than in the intensity of *bhakti* disciplines.

According to some scholars, *bhakti* movement was the result of the threat posed by the expansion of Islam. It is a very well known fact that Greeks, Hunas and Sakas came to India and adopted the Indian culture and civilization. It was reciprocal from both sides. But Turko-Afghan invaders did not assimilate themselves with Indian civilization and maintained distinct identity. They impressed their traditions of politics, culture and religious life upon Indians. On one hand, Islam had concept of

equality (egalitarian society), where all were equal in the eyes of God, on the other hand, Hindus were socially rigid and caste distinctions were prevalent. Hinduism did not accept the lofty ideals, toleration of various religious sects and creeds of Muslims.²²

After studying these two religions, many scholars propounded that *bhakti* was inspired by Islamic ideology. Adhering to this assumption, Humayun Kabir opines that whichever place Islam went, they established cultural supremacy, sometimes through virtual conquest and sometimes by partial absorption of some ingredients of local cultures. Arab conquest of India was also the same. Arabs imposed a composite Arab culture based on their own language and script and absorbed some elements of indigenous civilization. According to him initial clashes were followed by fusion and synthesis.²³ Far reaching changes took place in their dress, food, language, literature, art, architecture, music and philosophy. Kabir tries to understand the technicalities of the acceptance of Islam. At first Islam was willingly accepted as the existing order was very oppressive, but it also attracted the intelligentsia because they developed the sense of dissatisfaction with the prevailing religion of the country. Second its appeal for the social justice and human dignity and because of such aspects Muslims, with small group of soldiers, conquered this country. Indigenous people helped them to establish the rule because of such alternative ideas²⁴. In support of his argument he gave examples of ballads as recorded in vernacular literature. Ballads regarded Muslims as the champions of Dharma; in order to be rescued from oppression, the masses of people also gave the example of modified classes during feudalism.

Some scholars are of the view that Sankara was influenced by the monotheistic idea of Islam.²⁵ Humayun Kabir opined that Sankara's philosophy of advaita, his reputation of pretense of duality, his attempt to regard his own activity as mere

restoration of purity of an original truth are all elements which barring the doctrine of Maya, are paralleled in Islam and that historical factors do not exclude the possibility of his acquaintances with this religion.²⁶ He raised a further question that whether Christianity or Islam was a factor in his monastic interpretation? Or did he obtain all teachings indigenously? He neglected the second argument and gave examples in the support of first. Rawlinson said that first Muslims settled in Malabar in the 7th Century A.D. Francis Day, Eltton also have made the same argument. Fawcett, in his notes on the people of Malabar (Anthropology, III. 1), draws attention to the growth of the bhakti cult in the South.²⁷ He suggests that this was due to mainly the influence of Islam. In support of his argument, he provided other examples such as King of Kaladi, where Shankra was born, had been converted to Islam.²⁸

Acharya Ramchandra Sukla opined that when Muslim empire got established in India then people were very upset. In front of Hindus, they broke their temples, god's statues and insulted their devotional gods. People were very upset at this moment and they left only one option, i.e. to adopt bhakti.²⁹ Hazari Prasad Driwedi argued against Acharya Sukla and said that bhakti origin in northern India was the spread of tradition which emerged in South India. It has nothing to do with Christianity and also with Islam because when Muslims were demolishing temples in north India then bhakti was spreading in south India. He said further that if it emerged with the effect of Islam then it should have spread in Sind and North India first. According to him if Muslim invasion had not taken place, even then bhakti movement would have taken place. It was a natural process.

Barthwal propounded that bhakti movement arose among the lower castes of Hindu society. In egalitarian society, monism was important and Hindu society was theistic. Now confrontation took place between monism and theism. Islam was trying to

equate the idea of personal god with monotheism. According to Barthwal now people faced problems from both sides, new rulers were capable to extract the tax in a harsh manner because of Iqta system. On the other hand, Brahmins and Kshatriyas imposed on them economic and social inequalities.³⁰ In these situations saints like Kabir, Raidas, and Mira came forward with the message against oppression and suggested the path of salvation, called bhakti.

Tara Chand, in his book 'Influence of Islam on Indian Cultures', mentions that Sufi ideas of universal brotherhood and human equality left remarkable impression on the tradition of Hindu saints. These two things were parallel in Sufism and later on bhakti saints espoused these causes in their texts. But most important point that cannot be ignored here is that India was under the political control of Muslim rulers so effect of Islam was obvious on Hinduism. But one should also recognize that these cultural exchanges were reciprocated by Islam as well. According to him Hindu mind naturally turns to contemplative and speculative philosophy. In this manner he ignores practical activities.³¹

Susmita Pande critiqued these works and considered them ill-conceived and betraying gross ignorance of the history of India and Indian traditions. She declared these works as natural corollaries of the Upanishadic and Puranic traditions³². She points out,

*"Ramanuja depends on Yamunacharya behind whom stands Nathamuni and behind him we have Alvars, the Pancaratra Agamas and the Bhagavad-Gita and also a commentarial tradition going to Bodhayana."*³³

She denies any effect of Islam on *bhakti* and advocates that instead of looking it through Islamic perspective, we should look it through developments that took place indigenously.³⁴ She proposes that criticism of caste should not be confused with

social egalitarianism. She studied closely criticism of caste in *Sramana* tradition of Buddhism and Jainism and reached the conclusion that birth cannot be the basis of caste distinctions. The main motive of it was attacking the privileged position of Brahmins and ultimate denial of the relevance of caste to spiritual life.

R.G. Bhandarkar opined after the study of literary and archaeological sources that bhakti movement originated in India and he rejected any type of Christianity and Islamic influence on its origin. According to him, Vaishnavism adopted the idea of monotheism in 5th century B.C. and changed its nature as a religious reform movement. In this way historical epic, viz. Mahabharata and Ramayana were written. Bhagvad Gita was part of Mahabharata, which later on became a sect called Bhagvad Sampradaya (Bhagavatism) or Panchratra sect.³⁵ Arrival of Shankaracharya was perceived as a threat for *bhakti* movement because he supported knowledge path instead of *bhakti* path to attain salvation and it was very difficult for the masses. Later, Ramanujan became a champion for the spread of Vaishnavism and he popularized *bhakti*. Although, in the initial years of his life, for a few years, he was inclined towards Saivism, but later on Ramanujan criticized Shankaracharya and his monastic philosophy.

He propounded that there are multiple truths and spirit is also a part of monism. Ramanujan, Ramanujacharya, Chaitanya, Nimbakacharya, Namdev, Kabir, Raidas, Mirabai, Tukaram, Nanak Dev, Tulsidas, Akka Mahadevi, Andal etc. took this belief further and popularized it. To attain salvation Karma path was a thing of the past, the path of knowledge was not easy to follow (masses were illiterate) and it was only the path of *bhakti* which was simple and easy to follow. *Bhakti* became popular among the people. R. G. Bhandarkar is of firm belief that bhakti originated from within the Indian tradition.

H.C. Raychoudhary also had same views on origin of bhakti. He wrote 'Materials for the Study of Early History of Vaishnava Sect' in 1920. He said that Vedic Vishnu and Mahabharata Vishnu were different identities and their prayer patterns were also different. On the one hand, Vedic periods Vishnu was associated with rituals, on the other, during bhakti period, total surrender to Vishnu and also his greatness was propagated. Raychoudhary gave example of Basenagar, Ghusandi and Nanaghat inscriptions and showed that Bhagvata religion emerged before 5th century AD and their followers were called Vasudeva. He accepted that Vasudeva and Krishna were different and later Vasudeva and Krishna looked or were considered as one. He did not accept Krishna as nature God but he preserved the human aspect of Krishna.³⁶

Marxist scholars linked bhakti with the feudalism. According to D.D. Kosambi, bhakti ideology is of the submission as well as opposition. He linked bhakti with feudalism. He said that Bhagvad Gita emerged out of very important socio-political conditions. It was very important for feudal lords to establish loyalty with the subjects and, according to the conditions, they came up with the ideal society format. Bhagvad Gita came out in such a manner only. The unbreakable loyalty to God is similar to the loyalty that linked together "in a powerful chain of serfs and the retainers to the feudal lord"³⁷. At this time there were two types of phenomena emerging in the society, on the one hand high taxes to the royal courts and secondly, to the temple. These two types of burden on peasants attracted them towards *bhakti*. Gita was the outcome of the feudal system. Just like Gita asks for complete surrender to the God, feudalism demands a tenant's complete surrender to the feudal lord.

R.S. Sharma takes it further and says that unequal distribution of land rights, agricultural produce, no engagement of landlord in cultivation and living on rent, trade and handicrafts in bad condition, no metal money circulation in the market,

transformation of village headman and others into landed magnates, and Visti etc. were important developments. The question arises here is how unequal distribution of land rights made changes in socio-economic conditions? He pointed out three different kinds of processes, which are as follows: (1) Land grants with all revenue rights; (2) Transformation of village headman and other functionaries into landed magnates; and (3) Specified surtax; which assigned to officers for administrative works, later on has acquired permanent control over these along with land³⁸. Therefore we can say that peasants were oppressed with taxation, and the Vaisyas and the sudras refused to perform the functions assigned to them. In this denial, bhakti phenomenon was important. He drew one example of protest from southern India, in 12th century in which whole village refused to get converted into a religious/educational grant called agrahara. Such incidents were happening throughout India. In such conditions religion, became a very important tool to curb such protests.

Spread of agrarian activities was responsible for the emergence of more self-sufficient villages. Ritualistic and ideological factors became important because donors had feared that the land which they donated could either be seized by their successors or resumed by the existing peasants who had been in possession of them for a long time. They propagated idea of hell and heaven. Quoting *R. S. Sharma*

“One of the main reasons why the illusion of hell and heaven was developed very much in early medieval times seems to have been to protect the landed property of the *Brahmins* and others against encroachment by their equally entrenched rivals and also by the mass of the peasantry”.³⁹

Sharma is of the opinion that all these religious ideas were created to protect Brahmins and Kshatriyas.⁴⁰ Gita written in this time period and its teaching received

more publicity and increasingly came to be regarded sacred. To him bhakti now with its being interlinked to puja doctrine reflected the complete dependence of the tenant or the semi- serf on the landowners in medieval times.⁴¹

Another noted Marxist scholar Irfan Habib uses the argument of Muhammad Habib and propounds that Islam was very attractive for the new regions because of its egalitarian ideology of Islam. Caste system was very prevalent in India and artisans were very keen to get freedom. He speaks of the ties of caste and religious communities. He said that new structure established by Turks was superior to the previous ones and new towns were emerging. In such situations there was demand for the handicrafts activities and lower groups of the society took it quickly. Protest of Dadu, Kabir, Nanak and Haridas formed the new religious communities and caste chains given up by them.⁴²

Hiren Gohain focused on medieval India as compared to earlier Marxist Historians. He tried to look closely the relations between phenomenal growth of bhakti and the rise and expansion of commodity production and domestic trade in Medieval India.⁴³ Gohain also raised question against the association of bhakti with Vishnu and he said that Shiva was also equally important. So we cannot attach it with Vishnu alone.

According to Hiren Gohain, Kosambi sees apart from sublimating feudal loyalty two social functions of bhakti as it occurs in the Gita: (1) reconciling different sects and schools of thought among the ruling-classes during a period of abundant economic surplus; and (2) guaranteeing divine intervention in times of Adharma (impiety) and human distress.⁴⁴ Gohain said that during the bhakti movement social relations undoubtedly underwent significant changes. Money transactions helped to improve economic situation of artisan class. Satish Chandra studied North Indian bhakti

movement as well as south Indian bhakti movement. He is against calling the bhakti a mass movement and collective movement.

Bhakti movement's main aim was not to improve the condition of people but its main aim was salvation and surrender to the Supreme Being. He strongly feels that ideas of bhakti did not travel with Ramanuja alone but there was a strong connection between south India and North India. To capture Kanauj and upper Ganga Valley's fertile land, battle took place between Gurjar –Partiharas, Rastrakutas and Palas. There was also a strong tradition of Sastrarth and Shankarchrya which went from South to North and established four Mathas in four directions. Nathpantis travelled from North to South for Sastrarth. Mobility was taking place from South to North and North to South and with mobility of people and goods, religious ideas mobility was also taking place. He looks at the origin of South and North bhakti movement in socio-economic background. Material conditions for the north Indian bhakti are prevalent in the technological changes and coming of the new rulers. But he looked clearly at the role of Nathpantis, Sahajayani, Tantrism, and Sakti worship's importance and their ideas. Bhakti movement was taking lots of ideas from these sects. So he clearly says that coming of the Muslims only break the invisible bond of Rajputs and Brahmins. He looked very closely at the material conditions. Although he believes that materialistic changes, technical changes and changes in the production patterns were important factors but he also recognizes the importance of Nathpantis, Sakti, Sahajyanis and other minor sects of that time. Along with these, he also believes that between North India and South India, there was always a connection and we cannot deny that ideas were not travelling from South to North.

A.K. Ramanujan talks about bhakti in the plural sense. According to him, the variety is immense and one ought to attend it. Bhakti focused on Shiva, Vishnu, or the Devi,

bhakti by men and women, bhakti in Bengal and bhakti in Karnataka, early bhakti and late—they are all different from each other.⁴⁵ He looked at the language which is used in these movements. Bhakti as a concept was very old but only during the 6th century A.D, first long poem (to Murugan) was composed in Tamil. Earlier god is treated as lord but now, in the mother tongue, he became a part of family, as brother, mother, child and husband.⁴⁶

He also mentions the importance of Tamil and Sanskrit languages. These were used because they had the long literary tradition while the scope of other regional languages was limited to being dialects with oral traditions. When he talks about the social basis of bhakti, A.K Ramanujan clearly feels that Brahmins started it because they had liberty, he emphasizes that “You can't throw away privilege unless you have the privilege to begin with”.⁴⁷

But later on it started to enlist the people from all castes and classes. He studied very closely the poems of Akkamahadevi and pointed out that it was not required for women saints to convert because they were in love with God from the outset. God was the only husband for them to rely, on the other hand men were supposed to get converted. Akkamahadevi also mentioned the family structure in which she was tied very much. She considered it as social construct of society. On nakedness, Ramanujan said that giving up the clothes signifies throwing away of concession to social conventions, defenses and investments. Nakedness signifies being open to the experience of God.⁴⁸ Throwing of clothes for Akka was throwing of womanhood and sexuality associated with it.

Ramanujan found contrast between ordinary women, the saint wife, and the women saint who breaks away from domestic life and deserves attention.⁴⁹ Goddesses became consorts and auspicious guardians of the life cycle of marriage and birth.

They lost their central significance and they were denied central position in the temples as well. Although they were Shakti but still they were wifely, women saint, and dependent. Most importantly in the society these exceptional women, their deeds and values were accepted. Thus, it was a very major shift. The findings of A.K.Ramanujan's study are very important because he looked bhakti with a different perspective.

So after studying different perspectives, what is most important is that all perspectives have their limitations but all analyse the care of bhakti through their research approach but the opinion that bhakti movement originated indigenously seems most appropriate. Its origin did not take place because of Christianity or Islam but it was very much present before the advent of these religions to India. As mentioned earlier we find bhakti traces in the Bhagvad Gita, Vedas and Upanisads, Epics, Pancaratra literature, bhakti in Puranas, especially the Bhagavata and in the hymns of Nayanars and Alwars. A close study of orientalist perspective shows that it was more akin in to Indian religion as part of Christianity and to establish the superiority of Christianity. When it comes to the influence of Islam then we cannot deny it but both Sufism and bhakti influenced each other. It was not only bhakti which was drawing the ideas one way but both sides were sharing the ideas.

Chapterisation: This thesis is divided into seven chapters and these include:

1stChapter: Introduction

2ndChapter: Political, Economic and Social background of the rise of *bhakti* movement in Rajasthan.

3rd Chapter: Political, Economic, and Social background of the rise of the *bhakti* movement in Gujarat.

4th Chapter: Lives of Women saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat: An overview

5th Chapter: Writings of the Women saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

6th Chapter: Negotiating patriarchy

7th Chapter is the Conclusion.

In the first chapter, the main focus is on the plan of the thesis and it begins by outlining the title of the thesis and proceeded to elaborate the title and explain the same. In this exercise, the ideas that engage the thesis are also spelt out, along with the survey of literature. Moreover, the chapter also elaborates the different methodological positions based on their historiographical impact drawing from three different areas-history of religions, history of emotions and women's history. The last mentioned also overlaps with gender studies, and by increasing the thesis also makes the sudden problematic twist as most of the concerns of gender studies on present day concerns, whereas the thesis itself is set in the medieval period. This problem has been resolved by addressing the issues of anachronism.

By mapping the field of research, this chapter also has spelt out the road map of the thesis, beginning from the explanation of the title and proceeding onto the scope of the research and spending considerable length on the hypothesis and the methods. Proceeding from this point the thesis dealt with the main forms of religion that are known as *bhakti* as practised in Rajasthan and Gujarat during the medieval period. Therefore, the temporality and spatiality of the sources and the region, coalesce together to form a unified narrative. Further elaboration in terms of arguments and methods have been drawn primarily from the secondary sources that have evolved over time. Beginning from the 1960s, when the social, economic interpretation of religion and religious practices was the prime method of understanding religion, new trends have started from the 1990s. While displacing the earlier social and economic

reduction, the new trends stressed on culture and autonomy by trying to give agency to the women *bhaktas*. This exercise was only possible by employing the methods from history of emotions and cultural history. This is set in a feminist paradigm to understand the historical process of the religious observances. In this chapter, the different terms also supplement on another and flow from two different angles-one from the text and another from the performative tradition. A chronological approach is taken up to serve as an anchoring tool for the whole narrative.

Chapter two deals with the economic, political, and social background for the rise of *bhakti* movement in Rajasthan. In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand and further account for the factors that led to the rise of *bhakti* in Rajasthan. After an analysis of the context, the chapter evaluates the various explanatory frameworks. The chapter gives an account of trends in politics, economy, and society helped the shape of *bhakti* and religious processes in the Rajasthan. All these processes contributed to the formation of Rajasthani identity.

Chapter three deals with the political, social and economic background for the rise of the *bhakti* movement in Gujarat. In Gujarat, during medieval time due to political, social and economic activities, the base of devotion has flourished. Due to the expansion of trade and commerce activities, prosperity in the society expended which has promoted equality and individualism in the society. The main stress of *bhakti* was on individualism and equality in the society. Thus chapter explains these two prominent ideas of *bhakti* movement. Regional political identities were formed and regional courts became the patronage for the seeds of *bhakti*. This chapter also points out about the political disturbances and ruling dynasties of medieval Gujarat. The main theme of the chapter is discussion on socio-religious movements of Gujarat and rise or spread of Vaishnavism. This chapter gives description of male bhakti saints i.e

Narsimha Mehta, Bhalan, Vishnudas, Vallabhacharya, Vithalanathaaji, Gopaldas Vanik, Premanand, Akho etc.

Chapter four deals with the events of childhood, spiritual retreat and marriage. These stages of life are important to shape the decisive events in the life of women saints. The different stages of the women saints are reflective of society and patriarchal norms. Women saint poets of Rajasthan and Gujarat have played significant role in Rajasthan and Gujarat *bhakti* movement. The women *bhaktas* of Rajasthan and Gujarat have refashioned the role of women at large. These stories are also narration of the struggle for acceptance in the society which was male dominated.

Chapter five defines the writings of women devotional saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat. These writings of ecstasy and pain are not a simple piece of writings, but these are the depictions of Gujarat and Rajasthan's society and religion and carries the message of love, devotion against the existing rigid norms of the society. Women saint poets had considered lord as a source of energy and spirit. The women saint poets dedicated themselves to the god and separated from the mundane world. Women's saint were en-cultured in a specific culture, but the *bhakti* movement liberated them and gave space to form her freedom and identity. On these lines, chapter inquire about the writings of women saints one by one.

This corrective at the methodological level has helped to sharpen the reading of texts which are elaborated in chapters four, five and sixth that form the more chapters of the thesis. In addition to these three areas, certain borrowings also have been done from culture studies that have the potential to engage with hitherto underdeveloped or under researched area is in history. The one on the prime example are so this is the

employment of folk narratives and folk discourses into the larger ambit of history writing, thus bringing the personality of Rajasthan and Gujarat to the fore.

Chapter six gives a description on patriarchy. This chapter deals with the inequalities in the past based on gender. It deals with the complexities of the society. The *bhakti* had a complex relationship with patriarchy. On the one hand, it mounted a encounter to the inequalities of the society which were based on the patriarchy. On other hand it has also sustained the status quo of the period. So *bhakti* has negotiated patriarchy but did not topple the social order. Reorientation's of power relations within patriarchy is what the *bhakti* saints aimed at. It has constructed positions of power for women within the boundaries of patriarchy. The writings of women saints gives description of negotiating patriarchy. This chapter deals with all these above mentioned aspects on the basis of writings of women saints.

Chapter seven is the conclusion of the thesis. It gives the gist of the research and findings or outcome of the research. These outcomes are very significant and explores new dimensions of the *bhakti* movement.

¹ Sharma, Krishna., *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective, A Study in the History of Ideas*. New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharla Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1987, pp.ix.

² Katha Upanishad as quoted in Pande, Rekha. *Religious movements in medieval India, **Bhakti: Creation of** alternative spaces*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2005. p.40.

³ Ibid., p.43.

⁴ Nahar, Ratibhanu Singh. *Bhakti Andolan ka adhyayan*. Allahabad: Kitabmahal private limited, 1968), p.14.

⁵ Ibid, pp.15-16.

⁶ Pande, Rekha. Op.cit, P.97.

⁷ Champakalakshmi, R. *Religion, Tradition and Ideology: Pre-colonial South India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.438-439.

⁸ Ibid, pp.438-439.

⁹ श्रीमद्भागवत महात्म्य अ०, श्लोक, ४८

उत्पन्ना द्रववडे साह वृद्धिं कर्त्ताटके गता

क्ववित्क्ववित्महाराष्ट्रे गुर्ारे र्तीर्तां गता।

¹⁰ Pande, Susmita. *Medieval Bhakti Movement, its History and Philosophy*. Meerut: Kusumanjali Prakashan, 1989, p.1

¹¹ Pande, Rekha. Op.cit, p.3.

¹² Weber, Max. *Religion of the non- privileged classes, The Sociology of Religion*. Repr. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 60.

¹³ Yadav, Asha. *Women and the Bhakti movement: Study of Mirabai's and Tulsidas's poetry*. unpublished dissertation, 1997, p. 6.

¹⁴ Weber, Max. *Religion of the non- privileged classes, The Sociology of Religion*. Repr. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 117.

¹⁵ Pande, Susmita, *Medieval Bhakti Movement, its History and Philosophy*. Meerut, Kusumanjali Prakashan, 1989, p. 9.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁸ Pande, Rekha. Op.cit, p. 4.

¹⁹ Williams, Monier. *Brahmanism and Hinduism*. London: John Murray. 1891, p. 96.

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- ²⁰ Zeahner, R. C. *Hindu and Muslim mysticism*. London: Athlone Press.1995, pp.11-12
- ²¹ Pande, Rekha. *Divine Sounds from the Heart: Singing unfettered in their Own voices: The Bhakti Movement and its Women Saints, 12th to 17th Century*. U.K, Cambridge Scholars Publication, 2010, pp.16-20.
- ²² Ibid, p.18
- ²³ Kabir, Humayun 'Islam in India', in *Cultural heritage of India, IV, The Religions*, (Edited by Haridas Bhattacharyya), Calcutta: P.G. Ray, Sri Gopranga Press Pvt.Ltd, 1937) p.585.
- ²⁴ Ibid, pp.585-588.
- ²⁵ Pande, Susmita. Op.cit, P. 12.
- ²⁶ Kabir, Humayun. Op.cit, p.587.
- ²⁷ Ibid, p.588.
- ²⁸ Ibid, p.587-588.
- ²⁹ Singh, Gopeshwar Ed. *Bhakti Aandolan ke Samajik Aadhar (Hindi)*. Delhi: Bhartiya Prakashan Samsthan, 2002, pp.13-14.
- ³⁰ Pande, Rekha *Divine Sounds from the Heart: Singing unfettered in their Own voices: The Bhakti Movement and its Women Saints, 12th to 17th Century*. U.K: Cambridge Scholars Publication, 2010, p.20.
- ³¹ Chand, Tara. *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*. (Allahabad: The Indian Press, Limited, 1922).
- ³² Pande, Susmita. Op.cit, p.14.
- ³³ Ibid, p.13
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Chapter Two

Political, Economic and Social background of the rise of Bhakti movement in Rajasthan

2.1. Introduction: In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand and further account for the factors that led to the rise of *bhakti* in Rajasthan. After an analysis of the context, the chapter tries to evaluate the various explanatory frameworks. This chapter also gives an account of the political, economic, and social history of Rajasthan between the 15th to 18th centuries. The major trend in the political field was the emergence of Rajput in Rajasthan, Rajput-sultanate, and Rajput-Mughal relations. The major trend in economic history were new technology, tax system, and the influence of Mughal on the Rajput community in terms of economic policies. The prominent trends in the social realm were a reduction of peasantry class to an equal level of *Shudra's* and Sati tradition. These trends in politics, economy, and society helped to shape up *bhakti* and religious processes as discussed below. All these processes contributed to the formation of Rajasthani identity. The male saints and *Lokdevta* of Rajasthan were important to instigate the religious feelings in the people of Rajasthan. The process of identity of Rajasthan depicts colonial mentalities in the later.

2.2. Rajasthan an overview:

Rajasthan, which is popularly known for the forts, *maharajas* and *rajas*, desert, myths, ballads, aesthetic art etc. is also introduced with different names such as Rajputana, Rajwarra and Raethan.¹ Present Rajasthan is the outcome of “Instrument

of Accession” which was signed in the year 1947 and prior to that it was the land of **Riyasats**. History of Rajasthan have been preserved in bardic accounts, genealogies, *ballads, khyats, vamshavali, vats, rasos* etc. and public recitation by groups like the Charans, Bhats, Badvas, Barhats, Ranimangas and Bhopas.² Rajputana has incorporated two chief-ships, Ajmer- Marwar districts and eighteen native states during the British rule.³

One of the important problems in the history of Rajasthan is the predominance given to the political sphere as it came to the cost of erasing the cultural and the religious contributions. Therefore, the influence of politics has been over estimated and one needs to rescue the other factors from an over reading of politics and give relative autonomy to the religious aspects, as many of them were considered irrational.

Present Rajasthan is a rhombus, which is surrounded by *Sind* in the west, in the east lies Gwalior and Uttar Pradesh and Southern Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Modern cities of Rajasthan were famous with different names i.e., Jodhpur (*Maru*),⁴ Jaisalmer (*Mada*),⁵ Bikaner (*Jangaldesh*),⁶ Ajmer (*Ajayameru*),⁷ Nagor (*Ahicchatrapur*),⁸ Sirohi (*Arbud*),⁹ Udaipur (*Medpat*),¹⁰ Dungarpur (*Vagad*),¹¹ Jaipur (*Dhundhar*),¹² Alwar (*Mewat*),¹³ Bharatpur and Bundi (*Haravati/Hadoti*)¹⁴ respectively.

This peculiarity of different regions of the states can be seen all over. Geographical background/ scenario had played a major role in shaping the history of Rajasthan. The area in between Dungarpur and Banswara was known as Mewal. Whereas the area “Deseharo” was situated between Jarga and Rahaga. The Aravalli hills mountain range, which is a batch of hills. About these ranges, Babur sees changes as its horizon to Ranthambhor from north-east to southeast.¹⁵ These hilly areas were the shelter home for the tribes like Bhils and Mers.¹⁶ On a few occasions, it is said by Abul Fazal and Jahangir that because of hilly protection Rana Pratap and Amar singh disobeyed him.¹⁷

Another important aspect of hilly ranges lies in shaping or constructing religious settlements. It has also developed ethnic proclivity along with political and religious life. Aravalli Ranges is a natural divide of Rajasthan into the western arid part and eastern fertile and semi-humid. In the folklore of Rajasthan, Semi-arid region is widely acknowledged famously as 'land of death and thrust in folklore and became part of sacred geography.

The issues of sacred geography acquires importance in the context of bhakti when we understand that this is one of the new spaces created by the bhakti. One could go as far as to argue that it is not just the creation of new spaces but transformations of existing sacred spaces in to a network. Thus the sacred space that include sacred trees, groves centers sanctified by the saints and places where miracles took place are all part of one network. In this context we can speak of what Diana L. Eck¹⁸ talks about the national sacred geography which includes the four places and the seven places known as the Char Dham and the seven holy cities, known as the Saptapuri. The Char Dham or four abodes include, Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri and Rameshwaram. Saptapuri includes Hardwar, Dwarka, Ujjain, Ayodhya, Varansi and Kanchi. While the above mentioned constitutes the sacred geography at the pan -Indian level.

The sacred geographies of Rajasthan and Gujarat are the geographies that are constituted by the pilgrimages to the sacred sites in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Most of the sites those forms the pilgrimages networks are the abode of the saints and also pre-existing sites like Pushkar and Dwarka. These sites are encountered in the later chapter when we talk of saints and their association with some of the important places. These places include, Merta, Ajmer, Chittor, Kathiwad etc.

Another point which has to be made is that the sacred geographies also have spilled over into the neighbouring regions and one of the example is the *Braj*. region, which

falls outside both Rajasthan and Gujarat but still has linkages and myths connected to it. Thus the sacred geography provides vernacular of folk worship. In this way the sacred geography mediates between the local and pan-Indian.

Plateau is another geographical feature which is locally known as *Uparmal*.¹⁹ Ajmer and Bijoliyan plateau have become centers for the religious pilgrimages and abode for the ascetics process. This area of low mountains has attracted poets, saints, artists, etc. In the political sphere, the Chauhan dynasty came to existence in plateaus, and the pinnacle of the plateau was useful for every political set-up in the state.

Writings and accounts of that time had the firm opinion that geographical of the region had determined the formation of political boundaries of the state. The western part forms Rajasthan - Sind frontier from Kutch to Bikaner, whereas the region of Hadoti, Vagad, Mewar, and Abu are surrounded with an array of ranges in the southeast. This array of ranges separates Gujarat and Malwa northern frontiers from Rajasthan. In the north, the Plateau is spread along with Chambal and meets Gwalior.²⁰ Here it is imperative to note that, right from 11th century A.D, Turks and Mughal had made series of attempts to seize control over the parts of Rajasthan, but it was due to the geographical hardship that they could not fully succeed.

With time, Gurjara-Pratihara rose to power in the Western part of Rajasthan and larger portion of Marwar, later on known after Gurjara-Pratihara as Gurjaratra. Daulatpura inscription of King Bhoja I gives the reference of Gujaratrabhumi (land of Gurjaratra). Along with it the Jinapala's fourteenth-century Khartaragachchha-pattavali also mentioned Gurjaratra. It also has the reference of Maruvarta, which included Jalore and Samiyana.²¹ Rajasthan has four cultural divisions known as Dhoondhar, Mewar, Hadauti, and Mewar, and today these areas

include Jaipur-Dausa-Tonk etc., Alwar-Gurgaon etc., Kota-Bundi-Jhalawar etc., and Udaipur-Chittorgarh-Bhilwara etc.

In these zones, there are many sub-zones; for example, Dhoondhar has twelve sub-zones. These zones are also dominated by different caste composition groups and populations with mixed ethnicity. These different groups and sub-groups practiced a range of occupations. The caste groups of Rajasthan include Ahir, Gujar, Jat, Gadaria, Raika, Rebari, Dangi, Rajput, Bishnoi, Dhakar, Kunbi, Lodha, Mali, Meo, Patel, Rawat, Sirwi, Dhanak, Sondhi etc. The indigenous groups include Meena, Bhil, Garasia, Bhil-Mina, Sahariya Damor, etc.

2.3. Political developments: An overview

When we go back into the history of Rajasthan, we see different phases of history. History of Rajasthan c. AD 700 to 1200 saw the rise of the Pratiharas, Parmars, Nagas, and early 'Rajput States' up to the downfall of the Chauhan ruler, Prithviraj III. Down of the 13th Century saw a region of boundaries with several of older and several of new with redefining new boundaries. And later centuries have seen the same pattern dominated with the face of battles, sack of capitals, and external attacks. In the political chronological history of Rajasthan, states includes Guhilas and their branches, the Chauhans of Ranthambore, Jalore, Sirohi and Bundi, Kachchwahas of Amber, the Bhatias of western Rajasthan, Kyam-khanis of Shekhawati, Rathores of Mewar and Bikaner, the Mewatis, the Khanate of Nagaur etc.²²

The different inscriptions give glimpse of the wide spread influence of Muslims in the thirteenth century from Bharatpur to Nagaur. Whereas according to few inscriptions it is a well established fact that Kota, Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Udaipur, Sirohi, Abu, Bhinmal etc. remained independent from Muslim rule.

When it comes to political history of Rajasthan, it is obvious that discussion on Rajput is necessary. The number of clans settled in Pratihara period or post Pratihara period had occupied different geographical areas. These clans had acquired their names either after their geographical territories or clans. Present area of Rajasthan was ruled by different clans or tribes such as Gurjar-Pratihars, Guhilas, Bhatias and Chauhans etc.²³

B.D. Chattopadhyaya, saw the origin of Rajputs through different perspectives. According to him, at one level it was the colonization process of new areas, and colonization got accompanied by advanced economy. So more or less, the emergence of Rajput polity had undergone through many processes from tribal form of polity.²⁴

Lodrick in his book, discussed about the identity of Rajasthan and political space. He also pointed out the role of Rajputs, those have helped to evolve Rajasthan as political identity from 13th to 16th century. In the state formation process in Rajasthan, Guhila state of Mewar played the role of precursor to shape the political identity of Rajasthan between 10th to 15th centuries.²⁵

B.D. Chattopadhyaya is not a supporter of Indian feudalism but in case of Rajasthan he gave space to the regional context by stressing on the landscape and water works that formed the resources base for Rajasthan's emergence.

The Political process or expansion in the state was more linked with technological advances. It has emphasized or initiated Rajput penetration into new areas. This expansion further led the process of surplus production in the new areas and political settlement or consolidation process. So there was connection between polity-territorial expansion of agriculture and artificial irrigation.²⁶

The vast spread empire of Gurjar-Pratihars had faced challenges by Rashtrakutas, Palas, Chandellas, Parmars and invasions of Sultans. Finally the kingdom of Gurjar-Pratihars had collapsed in 10th century A.D.²⁷

With the fall of Gurjar-Pratihars, Chauhans had established themselves around Sakambhari region²⁸ and extended further to Jangaladesha. Chauhans were feudatory of Pratihars. Under Mahmud and his successors invasions to Rajasthan had increased and became frequent. Bisaldeva of Chauhans dynasty brought Chauhans into a conflict with Muslims after the capture of Delhi and Hansi.²⁹ Chauhans did not take any offensive steps to put a rest on Ghaznavides rule in Punjab and adjacent area. The Rajputs belonged to different branches of Rajputs.

At Nadol (Jodhpur) Sapadlaksha branch of Chauhans had established itself. Although Nadol could not rise like other powerful dynasties of that time but Kalhan (1162-92 A.D.) important ruler of the dynasty, had acquired much strength.³⁰ Prithvirajvijaya Kavya identified him in the fight against Turushka King as feudatory of Chalukya.³¹

Jalor, was ruled by the Parmara dynasty chiefs which had established by sub-division of Chauhans. Guhails of Marwar founded independent kingdom, but remained feudatories of Gurjara Pratihars and Mauryas of Chittor.³²

Bhatis of jaisalmer got established in Vallawada (modern Jaisalmer) and held independent position with imperial titles.³³ One of the branches of Rastrakuta's was settled at Hastikundi (Jodhpur) and known as "Rashtrakuta's of Hastikundi".

Paramaras of Banswara ruled over in late 13th century, the principality of Banswara.³⁴ Two other branches of Paramaras had established at Chandravati and Abu.

The different ruling dynasties of Rajputs were outcome of assimilation of various tribes and the term Rajput was not found in any source before the fifteenth century. In the Persian chronicles, a different term “Rae” and “Rana” was used for Rajputs. These Rajput clans, later on recognized as Kshatriya caste, drew the lineage from sun or moon.³⁵ During the later half of twelfth century and thirteenth century, Ghorian conquest of the Rajasthan started. Most of the north-west and north Indian territories held by Rajputs and the task of protection of India from foreign rule came on the shoulders of Rajput. It has changed the socio-political and economic equations of the province and directed the way for bhakti movement in Rajasthan.

Rajputs had put resistance against the Islamic invaders in India for a small span of time. Ranas of Mewar led the resistance against the Sultanate and Mughal. Rana Kumbha has defeated the sultans of Mewar and Gujarat. Rana Sangha had defeated Afghan Lodhi's empire and united various clans of Rajput against the foreign rule. Rana Sangha got defeated by the Babur at Khanua.

Rajput had established the matrimonial relations with the Mughal. Akbar had taken expedition to the Rajasthan. He seized the fort of the Chittor and had won the fort in 1568 A.D. Akbar also had seized Ranthambore and defeated Surjan Hada in 1568 A.D. The matrimonial relations of Rajput with Mughal led the process of assimilation and administrative representation of the Rajput at the Mughal court. The Rajput of Marwar and Mewar did not accept the Mughal supremacy and had constant war with the Mughal. Rana Pratap, successor of Uday Singh had fought the battle of Haldighati and lost the battle. These two Rajput branches were constantly in wars against the Mughal.

In this way, the political upheaval of this time had a huge impact on the bhakti movement of Rajasthan. The words of the saints healed the wounds of the people

engaged in war in a way. Political as well as economic and social changes had a wide impact on the *bhakti* saints. In the same way, we will now describe the social and economic changes.

The emergence of a strong state and the rise of strong Rajput clans showed the relative autonomy of local cultures and the stress on celebrations of the folk elements. The survival of regional cultures till date is accounted for by the vibrant folk elements.

2.4. Economy of Rajasthan between 15th to 18th century: An Overview

Economy plays pivotal role to shape the political and social sphere in the society. Rajput economy was deeply influenced by the Mughals. Rajput rulers have promoted trade and commerce in the area to increase the income of the respective states. The emergence of new towns such as Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Jaipur, Kota, Ajmer etc. Was the outcome of inter-connective trade routes and agricultural expansion.³⁶ The internal disparity of the region, trade of luxury goods, commodity etc. had fostered the trade and economy in the area.³⁷

The society of Rajasthan was stratified and peasantry played a significant role as important section of the society. Satish Chandra opined that the effect of war cannot be identified on trade and economy. The effect of war has been exaggerated.³⁸ The economy of the Rajasthan was robust in the eighteenth century and different regimes were involved constructively for promotion of production. Different centuries have seen the unified merchant class across the regimes of the state.³⁹

In the economic sphere, it was not only the locational advantage of Rajasthan but the convergence of the different eco-zones of Dhoondhar, Mewat, Hadauti, and Mewar were the different production patterns had helped in the development of wetland agriculture, semi-arid agriculture, dry land, agriculture mixed with pastoralism, pure

pastoralism and the transformations of metals to finished products in the urban centers. These urban centers transformed the products as part of an exchanged networks and thereby led to the growth of a strong economy.

According to Irfan Habib in the emergence of nirgun *bhakti* in North India, artisans and *Jat* landholding community played a pivotal role. The commercial structure of Mughals has been developed because of the military retinues and specific need of Mughal nobility.⁴⁰ So the expansion of urbanization and trade was linked with the small ruling elites of the society at that time.⁴¹ The relationship of three important segments of the society, peasant, bankers and state was based on hierarchy of oppression and continuous tussle with these sections of the society.⁴²

In Rajasthan, a layered society was formed during the 15th century and onwards. The growth of a section of rich farmers in this time is a sign of layered society. The main reason behind the emergence and economic prosperity of rich peasantry was tax relief and involvement in various economic activities which include superior crops production for the market, money lending, grain trading and giving on lease equipment.⁴³

The different Rajput kingdoms were giving space for the production activities and the growing activities of commerce and banking in these states have resulted in the consolidation of the power of regional states. This period of *bhakti* have seen the evolution of unified merchant socio-economic class across the state.

Rajputana was a distinct category as it was autonomous in nature but accepted the domination of Mughal, whereas *Jat's* *Satnami's* and *Sikhs* had revolted. The structure of revenue and taxation of the Rajputana was based on the Mughal pattern. They held *parganas* in various capacities as an autonomous chieftain, an imperial *mansabdar*, and *ijaradar*. The area held in '*jagir*' and '*ijara*' far exceeded the area held in '*watan*'.

Thus, in the large territory under their jurisdiction they were required to collect the revenue as per the rules and regulations of the Mughals. Even in the '*watan*' *jagirs*, where they were allowed autonomy, the administration was modeled on the Mughal pattern.

In the context of Rajasthan, one thing that is very important is that according to the personal interest of the people, they used to keep a record of their own books and account. After coming to light, these records and books a fresh light throw on the economic aspects of Rajasthan. The importance of these individual accounts is significant in the context of Rajasthan where economy was developed and trade, commerce and banking systems were very well developed. *James Tod*, the pre-eminent historian of Rajasthan, records 128 merchant castes with members in Rajasthan.⁴⁴

One important aspect in the trade and commerce history of Rajasthan is that most of the traders joins the rubric of *Marwaris*. In colloquial usage, outside of Rajasthan, '*Marwari*' word is used to refer to emigrant businessmen from the vicinity of Rajasthan. During the early middle age in the society of Rajasthan, bankers have got special treatment in the form of revenue and civil portfolios. The newly emerged class of *Marwaris* had controlled the banking system of Rajasthan.⁴⁵

In the rural economy of eastern Rajasthan the role of *Mahajans* were prominent and influential. The dignitaries and peasants of the area were dependent on money lenders class. According to G.N. Sharma, the need of disposal of agricultural surplus, financing industries, luxury trade, and exchange of articles from rural to urban centers and vice-versa stimulated the growth of a middlemen such as bohras, seths, sarrafs, banyas, etc. The bankers of Rajasthan were involved in multifarious activities such as money-changing, money-lending, etc. They lent money to agriculturists, artisans and

princes, who were in financial difficulties due to war or other reasons. In return, the Rajput rulers provided various types of incentives and concessions to the bankers.⁴⁶

Ramvilas Sharma, Irfan Habib, K. Damodaran, Harbans Mukhia all believe that trade and industrial activities increased in the medieval time period. Increase in the trade broke the rigidity of caste system and the emergence of new castes took place and in the social order fluctuation was taking place. Lots of new caste groups emerged, those accumulated enormous wealth from trade activities. In such caste groups Gujarati banye, Rajasthani Marwari traders and Multni were important. ⁴⁷

In the face of such economic conditions devotion made people strong. *Bhakti* has inspired people to get out of the worldly things. The burden of taxes was very much on people. Devotion was seen as the only support for the public to get rid of their sorrows.

2.5. Social history: An Overview

With the interaction of Rajput and Mughal, changes has occurred in the social life of Rajasthan. Gopinath Sharma has opined that the outcome of the interaction between Rajput and Mughal can be seen in the life of people of that time. Although Caste system was prevalent in the society of Rajasthan, but with the coming of Muslims, caste became the base for the stratification of the society. The kings of Rajasthan became weak and feudal lords of Rajputs had started to dominate them. This scenario had given importance to the trader class of the society. The Rajputs were categorized in thirty six castes and Chauhans, Rathore, Parmars and Guhilots were prominent in these. After Kshatriya class, Vaishyas were the important class in the society of Rajasthan. In the initial period, Vaishya's were divided into Aggrawal, Maheswari and Oswal communities. Oswal category of Vaishyas had been conferred the title of

Thakur. With time, Oswal gave up the title of Thakur and engaged themselves in trade activities. In the caste classification, chamar, carpenter, weaver, bhangi, goldsmith, blacksmith were other prominent categories.

Family was the basic unit at all the levels of cultural development in the medieval Rajasthan. The nature of the family was joint or combined. Families were patriarchal and extended.⁴⁸ In the Hindu way of life *Samskaras* are very important. The *Samskara*'s are sixteen in number i.e *Simantonnayana*, *Jatkarmasamskara*, *Namkarana samskara*, *Annaprasanasmskara*, *Chudakarma*, *Vidhyadhyana*, *Upanayana* etc. Marriage was the other important *samskara* and most of the married couples were minor's. In the *varta* literature we found references of minors marriage. In the medieval society of Rajasthan girl child was undesirable because of dowry, neg or money levied by the *charans* at the time of marriage and political reason.⁴⁹

We get tremendous references of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages during medieval Rajasthan. Raja Bharmal's daughter's marriage in Mughal dynasty had laid the foundation for conciliation between the Mughals and the Rajputs.⁵⁰ Many other Rajput kings also had established matrimonial relations with Mughals i.e. Jaisalmer, Kotah, Bikaner etc. The matrimonial alliances of Rajputs and Mughals had mutual benefits and it enhanced the position of rulers of Rajasthan in the Mughal court.

The status of women reduced in the medieval Rajasthani society with the origin of polygamy. Many kings had several wives and the mother of the heir-apparent was called *patrani*. Polygamy had created many ills in the society and the condition of women got deteriorated further with the *patrani* concept in the aristocratic class.⁵¹

Life of the widow was pathetic in the society. The right of the property of widow women belonged to the male member of the family. In the case of Rajasthan, concept of *sati* was prevalent. *Sati* was not limited only during the time of war, but was also

practiced during the occasions of a normal death. The widows had restriction to attend festivals and pious occasions. At the level of the society rigidity of caste and class increased day by day. It further created the rift and social hierarchy in the society, which led to the development of *bhakti* movement in Rajasthan.

2.6. Religious processes in Rajasthan and the bhakti movement:

In the early medieval Rajasthan, Hindu religion was divided into many sects. The worship of Brahma, Sun god, shakti was prevalent in the society. The temple of Dadhimata at Gothmanglod, Sharda and shakti pedestal (Peeth) at Vsantgarh were prominent among the others.⁵² Many royal families of Rajasthan had accepted shakti as kuldevi of royal families. Jodhpur royal family accepted Naganechi, Sisodiya to Banmata, royal family of Jaisalmer to Sangiyachi etc.as Kuldevi.⁵³ The worship of lord Vishnu was common in the second century A.D. Rajasthan. The opening lines of Mandor inscription (837 A.D.) starts with “Om Namo Vishnave” and 10th century A.D. Mandor inscription opening line states “Om Namo Bhagvate Vasudevaya”.⁵⁴ By the end of 10th century A.D. incarnations of Vishnu became important in the Rajasthani society. At many places of Rajasthan, such as Owasia of Marwar, Kiradu, Kekinad of Jasnagar, Ahad in Mewar, Ambaneri, Jagat Siromani in Jaipur etc. temples give glimpses of worship of different acts related with the life of lord Krishna.⁵⁵ Along with Krishna, the worship of Rama was also prevalent in Rajasthan. The worship of Shiva was performed in the forms of Ekling, Shiv, Yogeshwar, Girisutapati, Samidheshwar, Chandrachud, Bhavanipati, Acleshwar, Sambhu etc. names in medieval Rajasthan.⁵⁶ The opening lines of Mandor inscription start with “Om Nama Shivaya”.⁵⁷

Nath sect was very famous in Rajasthan and the first guru of *nathpanth* Gurugorakhnath had spent his lifetime in Rajasthan.⁵⁸ The two branches of

Nathpanth got established in Rajasthan. *Beragi* branch's first *pracharak* was *Bharathari* and *kendra* of the branch was *Ratanada*. The other branch was *Mannathi Panth* of *Jodhpur*.⁵⁹

In the medieval Rajasthani society animal were considered priceless and many people came forward to save livestock. Along with livestock, they even tried to uplift the down trodden castes of the society. In the later centuries, myths and miracles have attached to them and they became *Lokdevta*. *Gogaji*, was one among the five famous *pirs* of Rajasthan. According to Col. Tod, *Gogaji* was contemporary of *Firoz Tughlaq*.⁶⁰ The text, *Gogapedi*, *Gogaji Chahuvan ri Nisani*, *Gogachand*, *Gogaji ka Rasaval* etc. throws light on the life of *pir Gogaji*. *Gogaji* is famous as the god of snakes.

Veer Tejaji is another prominent *Lokdevta* of Rajasthan. In the gazetteers of *Ajmer*, it is found that “*Tejaji* was *Kuldevta* of *Jat*'s. He was born at *Moja Kharnal* ,village of *Nagur*. His gotra was *dholya*. He married in *Paner* of *Roopnagar*”.⁶¹ *Tejaji* has spent his life to safeguard cows. The episode of saving cows of *Lacha Gujar* from *Mer*'s and *Meena*'s is very famous in the annals of Rajasthan. Most of the farmers are the believers of *Tejaji maharaj* in Rajasthan.

Lokdevta, *Pabuji* was born in 1296 *Vikram Samvat* and is famously known as saviour of cows. He left his wedding ceremony in the middle and left to save the cows of *Deval Charani*.⁶² *Rewari* and *Devasi* communities are followers of *Pabuji*. Both the cattle rearing communities are found in *Marwar*, *Gujarat*, *Madhya Pradesh*, *Mewar*, *Sindh* and *Malwa* province. Many of the *Dingal* literature songs are dedicated to *Pabuji*. Apart from these *Devnarayana*, *Mallinathji*, *Ramdevji*, *Harbhuji*, *Kallalji* etc. are famous *Lokdevta*'s of medieval Rajasthan. All these *Lokdevta*'s were the protector of cows in the medieval Rajasthani society and still they are significant. Every

Lokdevta were adopted by any caste in the Rajasthan. These *Lokdevta* became the base for the ritualistic and religious life in Rajasthan. It has taken a new dimension with the introduction of teachings of Ramanand, Kabir and Raidas in medieval Rajasthan.

We see that, in terms of *lokdeveta* and unlettered aspects of religious life and culture, there was less of rigidity as it was not written down in the books. Therefore the traditions were open and dynamic and ensured participation of acts from all religious classes. This is one of the important findings of the thesis that argues for a positive value of pre- literate societies as there was less codification.

The effect of Ramanand is enormous on Rajasthani society.⁶³ He travelled to Gagorn of Rajasthan with the request of saint Pipa. In the later years many centers of Ramanand *sampradaya* had been established by his followers i.e Galta Peeth by Krishna das Payahari, Rewasa Peeth by Argdas, Banjakudi Peeth by Diwakar etc. Ramanand had taken bhakti to the whole of north India and critiqued superstitions and gave message to rise above caste, class, creed and gender. The Ramsnahi *sampradaya* had accepted Ramanand as its guru. The teachings of Ramanand accommodated in Gyan Lila, Mansi Seva, Bhagat Jog, Ram Rakasha, Chintavani etc. Few of other texts, such as Bhagti-Jog provide a glimpse of the teachings of Ramanand.

Saint Kabir, a follower of Ramanand gave emphasis on bhakti. Indeed we lack information on the life events related with saint Kabir Das. Kabir Das was born to widow brahmani and raised by Muslim weaver Niru and his wife, Nima. Many saints of Rajasthan were influenced by saint Kabir Das. Saint Pipa of Rajasthan said that if saint Kabir would not have been born then kalyuga, lok and Veda collectively would have pushed bhakti to the Patal lok.⁶⁴ Saint Dadu also had given reference of Kabir

das and said that his teacher is the same of saint Kabir's. Kabir das gave emphasis on the importance of guru for the bond of *Atma* and *Parmatma* and one should have full faith on guru. Kabir das also had stressed on the company of Sadhu and bhakti of god. Saint Raidas was from Chamar caste and a follower of Ramanand. Raidas travelled extensively areas of Rajasthan and influenced masses in the area. Saint Mirabai had accepted Raidas as her guru. The queen of Chittor, Jhali rani was impressed with saint Raidas and had invited him to Chittor.⁶⁵ Dhanna saint had put Raidas as equal to Namdev, Kabir and Sain those gave up the materialistic world deeds and devoted themselves to *bhakti*.

Raidas said that God is present everywhere and one should not differentiate between Ram and Rahim. For *bhaki* one should give up ego in life. Raidas said that the name of god is enough to attain bhakti. The teachings of Raidas have been influenced largely by the society of Rajasthan.

Saint Dhanna gave new direction to the religious life of Rajasthan. He was born in the Dhuankalan village of Tonk district in 1415 A.D. He was from the Jat farmer community. Dhanna saint wrote a pada which states that after seeing Namdev, who is always indulged in *bhakti*. Weaver Kabir who left everything and came to God, Raidas, a cobbler, gave up Maya and barber Sain. Story of indulging them to *bhakti* had inspired saint Dhanna and he gave up everything and devoted himself to *bhakti*.⁶⁶

Three major works of Dhanna saint are Parchi of Dhanna, Dhanna ki Aarti and Dhanna ke Pada. Dhanna was a believer of guru bhakti. Only the guru can direct on the path of bhakti. According to saint Dhanna, the one who has tendency of anger and greediness cannot attain salvation. The salvation is only possible with the chanting of the name of god. He was against formalities, brahmachars, rituals and idol worship.

He gave emphasis to the praise of god and leave aside shrewdness. He was also against the taboo of caste.

Most of the Dhanna followers were from Jat community and were called Dhannavansi. Although their conducts were like Ramavat sadhus, but in the matrimonial relation establishment, they strictly followed the caste lines. They were the ardent devotees of lord Vishnu and worshipper of lord Ganesha. The meaning of the few couplets of saint Dhanna are mentioned below.

The couplet of saint Dhanna gives emphasis on the name of God. One must leave the cleverness of the world behind and devote time in the bhakti of the God. In the couplet, Saint Dhanna opposes the worship rituals and ceremonial rituals and emphasizes on the name and remembrance of the lord. Why bathe the idol of God with Ganga water and soak with yellow cloths. God does not please by applying sandalwood paste. Why to decorate God with flowers and offer fruits, who is unique? The only way for *bhakti* and devotion is remembrance of the name of lord. All other deities worship or indulge in the worship of supreme God. The God is supremely powerful, omnipresent, omnipotent and generous. The one who worships with true devotion and spirit can get the blessings of God. God only can be attained through inner search and meditation.⁶⁷

Although Dhanna had given his message in Rajasthan and Punjab, but his message travelled across the country. From these couplets we understand the fact that the reception of the *bhakti* among the different classes was because of the strong character of the couplets as these couplets reflected a very strong rustic language and also were full of the production of oriented language.

Saint Pipa was the follower of Ramanand and belonged to the gargon gotra of Rajputs. Dr. Macauliffe identified 1425 A.D. as the birth date of Saint Pipa.⁶⁸ Many legends

are attached with his inclination towards *bhakti*. One legend says that *devi* had appeared and directed him to follow the *bhakti* path of Ramanand. Ramanand had directed him to give up maya and accepted him as his disciple. Saint Pipa had engaged himself in the seva of sadhus. Many of the later *bhaktmal* writers such as Nabhadas, Priyadas and Anantdas gave description of the miraculous acts of saint Pipa.

For saint Pipa, *bhakti* was the path of salvation and one should be directed by a teacher. According to him, God is indestructible, *nirgun*, only truth and present everywhere. Without bhakti, there is no use of reading Veda and other scriptural text. *Bhakti* is an essential medium for salvation. He gave the example of Namdev and other saints those had attained salvation by chanting the name of God. A *bhakt* should search for God inside in her/his heart. Saint Pipa was a follower of nirgun brahma and stood against idol worship. Pipa said that “my lord you are pilgrimage, kashi and if the heart is pure then one need not to go on any pilgrimage. The people are unaware about this *nirgun* brahma, who resides in their heart.”⁶⁹ Saint Pipa, a believer of equality and in his eyes everyone was equal instead of caste, class, creed, gender etc.

From saint Pipa and others, we understand the power of chanting the name of God, which discuss from the ancient Sanskrit ideas of “*Sabdam brahman*” which means sound is all pervasive and universal. The fact that the *bhakti* saints brought such abstract concepts to the reach of common men is remarkable.

These centuries also saw emergence of Muslim centers in Nagaur and Ajmer under the direction of Seikh Hamiduddin Sufi, Kazi Kamaluddin, Kazi Hamieuddin etc. Around the same time Jhambhoji had founded Bishnoi sampradaya and Jasnathji founded Jasnathi sampradaya. Jhambhoji was born in 1451 A.D. He had belonged to Parmar branch of Rajput. In 1485 A.D he had established Vaishnav sect on the day of

Kartik Krishna Ashtmi. He has emphasized on the importance of green trees and worshiped nature. His sabad and bhajans are still very famous in the oral form in the parts of Rajasthan.⁷⁰

His teachings are known with different names such as Sabadbani, Jambhvani, Guruvani or Vedavani. Jambhoji was a great thinker. He laid emphasis on the teachings of guru, chanting the name of lord Vishnu and satsang to attain salvation. He expressed his thoughts on atma, salvation, god, heaven-hell, birth-death, etc subjects or topics. According to him, lord might be called with many different names, but he is only one and he called lord with name of Vishnu. He was an ardent devotee of lord Vishnu. He has stressed upon the need of satsang and hatyoga. Jambhoji has laid down moral rules for the sect. His outlook was humble towards other religions and he tried to eradicate the social evils of these religions. A person who has born in the high class should be measured high class through his humble acts. Jambhoji has rejected the idol worship in the society.⁷¹ It was mandatory for the Vishnoi sect to follow 29 rules laid down by the Jambhoji. In these twenty nine rules one was avoiding the company of women during the menstrual cycle. It shows the outlook of society towards women. Non violence was the prime motto of the Vishnoi sect. The greeting word of the Jambhaji sect are navaan pranam, Vishnu ne and Jambhoji ne. This shows the syncretism of different Gods into the Vaishnavism.

Almost all the caste categories have been incorporated in the Jambhoji sect. Jambhoji sect attacked the caste categories. The main temple of the Jambhoji sect are situated at Mukam (Talva), Jambholav, Pipasar, Sambharathal, Lalasar, Pichovado-Jagalu etc.

Jasnathji was another prominent saint of Rajasthan who was born in 1482 A.D.

He was a student of Gorakhnath. Saint Gorakhnath had given him his new name, “Jasnathji”. Jasnathji’s upbringing took place in a Jat family. Like other earlier saints, he also stressed upon the need of guru and remembering the name. Jasnathji was a believer of karmism. The acts of the human beings are very important in deciding the fate. The one who did good acts will attain salvation and the one who didn’t will go to hell.⁷² Jasnathji was concerned for the moral education of the society and said that human being compulsorily follow the path of truth and calmness and should give up ego and falsehood.⁷³ He was against violence and opposed the devotees of Bharav because of their inclination towards liquor and meat. The tradition of establishing gaddi of Sampradaya was also part of Jasnathi sect and main gaddi of the sect got established at Katriyasar. Other saints of the sect practiced celibacy and were called paramhans. Two types of followers of the sect were Siddha and Jasnathi Jat. The only difference of the followers was identified by their dressing style.⁷⁴

Saint Dadu is a very famous name in the history of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Saint Dadu was born in 1544 A.D.⁷⁵ in the province of Gujarat. Although there are different views about his caste and family, but followers of Dadu sect accepts him without the label of caste. In 1568 A.D he had migrated to Rajasthan. He had raised his voice against superstitions prevalent in Hinduism and Muslim religion. The quazi of Sambhar tried to persecute saint Dadu. In 1575 A.D. he had travelled to Amer and settled there. He had religious debate with Akbar in Amer. In 1603 A.D. he died at Narayana.

He was a firm believer of god. According to Dadu, God is present in each and every particle and he has every power. Human being himself is part of the Brahma but because of indulging in maya (materialistic in nature), he/ she turns away from it. Saint Dadu divided heart in two parts, Kacha and Pakka. Kaccha maan is always into

bhakti whereas *Pakka maan* roams here and there.⁷⁶ After death, no one can attain salvation and the acts of life while alive are the base to attain the salvation. He has firmly criticized the practice of religious pilgrimage.

In the lifetime of Dadu we get references about his followers from Janamdas written “Dadu Janam Lila Parchi” and Madhudas written “Sat Gun Sagar”. Narayana is the main pilgrimage place of the Dadu sampradaya. This sect had influenced the many parts of Rajasthan and had many followers.

Laldas was another prominent male saint from Mewat region of Rajasthan. Laldas was born in 1540 A.D. at Dholidoob village of Mewat. He was a Mev gotra Muslim. He was a woodmen by profession. He was an ardent devotee of Bhagvat. His teacher, faquir Gadan Chisti had given him sermons of *bhakti*.

He has attracted pupil from both the religions, Hindu and Muslim. His opposition came from both the communities and he persecuted many times by Hindus and Muslims. Although he was born in Muslim faith yet never practiced Muslim religion. Because of his inclination towards *bhakti*, Haquim of Tijara had sent him to jail. His disciples Mansukh, Mozadishah, Mayala Kalal, Bhikan Badhai etc. were famous. His teachings are found in Sakhi and Sabad. Laldas ji ki Chitavani text throws light on the events related with his life.⁷⁷ The rise of decentralization in religion also created new spaces as above examples of Muslims practising *bhakti* is accounted for.

In his sermons, he accepted that there is only one divine entity in this world and known with the different names, such as Sadguru, Hari, Keshav, Khuda, Paidagar, Bhagvat Govind etc. The divine soul always watches other souls and judgement gets decided accordingly. According to him creatures are part of Prambrahma but after getting surrounded with Maya distance occurs. The mind of human beings are not stagnant (ekatmata). A devotee of god should give up all the diversions/needs of

mundane world and devote himself to *bhakti*. Like other saints of the time period, saint Laldas has also stressed on the morality, purity of heart, mercy, modesty etc. principles in the society.⁷⁸ In the laldasi sect word jairam is used for greetings and this sect got established near Alwar and Bharatpur. This sampradayat had opened its doors for each caste group of the society.

Saint Charandas was born in 1703 A.D. Charandas village's name was Dehra in Mewat region. He was called as Ranjeet during his childhood days. His teacher, Sukhdev muni, gave him a new name, while giving him sermons. Charandas had accepted Bhagavd Gita as pious religious book and gave sermons. He was a believer of Nirgun and Sagun Brahma. He has stressed on the importance of *satsang* and moral conducts in the society. The Brahma is neither bounded nor boundless. So one should not take him for granted. On the other hand he is not beyond the limit of attainment as well. The stress was given on the importance of a teacher in the Charndasi sect.⁷⁹ The company of sadhu is very important to attain salvation.

In Rajasthan, *bhakti* of Krishna became significant after Ranabai and Mirabai. In the Vaishnava tradition of bhakti in Rajasthan, Nimbark, Vallabha and Niskalank sect spread bhakti of Krishna.

Nimbark, a telang brahmin, was the promoter of nimbark sampradaya. He has written Vedanta-parijaat saurabh and dassloki texts. He gave the philosophy of dualism. In the philosophy of dualism the root, soul and god are both different and integral from each other. Everything depends on god and he is the source of power. Saint Parsuram was born in 1612 A.D and spread dualism philosophy in Rajasthan. He had established Nimbark Sampradaya at Salemabad village of Rajasthan. His two texts are *Vrapmati* and *parsuram sagar*. He was part of sagun bhakti but his literature gives glimpse of *nirgun bhakti* as well.⁸⁰ Many saints of the *sampradaya* have spread it

throughout Rajasthan. The ruler of Shekhawati, Jhunjhunu, and Sikar had built many temples. These rulers gave patronage to Nimbark sampradaya. Kunj leela and Nikunj leela became the medium to spread the *bhakti* to new areas.⁸¹

Mavji, a religious order was founded by Avadichya Brahmin, Mavji in 1700 A.D. He was passionate devotee of god in the Vagad area. In 1732 A.D he was died and a ritualistic cult arose around him. He was projected as an incarnation of Vishnu himself. The custodians of monastery at Sabla observe celibacy. His words and Vani have incorporated his teachings such as, Akala Ramana, Gyan Ratna Mala, Gyan Bhandara, Kalinga Harana, Surananda etc. He justified worship and pilgrimage in the society because these brought many people harmony. His work Nyaya is in question and answer form. In which, he replied many questions of his disciple Jivandas related with God, heaven, righteous acts etc.⁸²

Ramsnehi community occupies important space in the social-religious arena of medieval Rajasthan. The main branches of the sampradaya were founded at Ren, Shahpura, Sihathal and Khepara. Saint Daryavji was born at Jaitaran in 1676 A.D. In the later years of his life he settled at Ren (Nagore). Ren was the main place of the sect and his guru name was Premdasi. His vani has 412 Dohas and 30 Padas. Daryavji was the believer of *Nirgun Nirakar*.

Ramcharan was the founder of shahpura branch of Ramsnehi. He was born in Sodha village of Jaipur. Hearing his appreciation of efficiency, the Jaipur king called him to his state and made him his minister. He was a firm believer of glory of guru and accepted Kraparam ji as his guru. According to him guru is the form of Brahma and he can only liberate human being from this mundane world. He was firmly against the caste system and in his view, whoever was in favour of the caste system was said not a believer of devotion to God.

He said that person is like a bhangi. The fact that Ramcharan could bring out a strong critique of caste, shows the involvement of even top-sections of the society in *bhakti*, who could use their position for the greater social good by launching attacks on orthodoxy from being the minister in the royal court.

Jaimaldas, after attaining knowledge from Vaisanava Mahanat Charandasji has continued as gaddi head Roda. Hiramaldas of Sinthal branch was the disciple of Jaimaldas. He was believer of *Nirgun bhakti* and *yog* but he was equally inclined towards *Sagun upasana*. Nirgin can be known only through the medium of sagun and he gives the ideas for *bhakti* instead of *mukti*.⁸³

Another branch of Snehi sampraday, Khedapa, was established by Ramdasji in 1763 A.D. He has preached pursuit of Maadhyam Marg, sabad yog and *bhakti* as medium of sadhana. He gave emphasis on spiritual life. Hariramdasji of Sinthal was his guru.

Lalgirl had established Alakhiya Sampraday. One sadhu of naga branch of Dadu sampraday gave him teachings. His teachings are in Rajasthani and consist 29 sabads. In his teachings or messages he talked about swarup of god, medium to realize the god, illusionary nature of world and smaran of Nam. According to him Alakh was Nirakar, Niranjan, Nirakar and the only ultimate reality or truth. This sect is inclined towards hathyog and sadhna. The spread of the sampraday was in Bikaner and adjacent areas of the region. He had attracted most of the backward class of the society.⁸⁴

Most of the peasant and producing classes has a social calender that fitted in with their a production cycle that was mainly agricultural. Therefore the spread of many such sampradays among the peasants castes is also because of their adjustment to the production oriented agricultural calender rather than elaborated rituals.

Conclusion: Hence political, economic and social conditions of medieval time had laid the foundation stone of the *bhakti* movement in Rajasthan. With the emergence of new local political dynasties, emergence of new towns were visible. The emergence of new towns and markets was an outcome of the expansion of trade. The internal disparity of the region, trade of luxury goods, commodity etc. had fostered the trade and economy of the area. Economic prosperity of the society is directly linked with individuality and equality in the society. These two concepts became the base for the *bhakti* movement in the society of Rajasthan. The *bhakti* saints gave the message of equality in the society and it appealed to the people. Indian society was divided into caste and saints had opposed the rigidity of caste in the society. The period of *bhakti* had seen the evolution of unified merchant socio-economic class across the state. The emergence of new regional courts was very important, because of these courts patronage to *bhakti* saints, they could preach the message of *bhakti* to the society. People were surrounded with pain and difficulties in their life. *Bhakti* gave the message to overcome these by chanting the name of God. So *bhakti* as remedy in the society had worked for the people. In this way, we can say that, socio-political and economic reasons have contributed to the larger extent for the origin of *bhakti* and devotion in Rajasthan.

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- ¹ Hooja, Rima. *A History of Rajasthan*. New Delhi: Rupa. Co.Publisher, 2006. p, xv.
- ² Hooja, Rima. *A History of Rajasthan*. New Delhi: Rupa. Co.Publisher, 2006. p- xviii.
- ³ Tod, James. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or The Central and Western Rajput States of India Vol. I*. Bombay: Humphrey, Milford, Oxford University Press, 1920. p.1. Tod has stated that Rajpootana is a corrupt form of Raethana. But he is not correct. Raethana is a corrupt form of Rajasthan.
- ⁴ Ramayana, Yudhakaanda, Canto 22, v,33; Ghosundi Inscription of the 3rd of the bright half of Vaisakha (1504 A.D.), V.S. 1561, v. 4, J.A.S. of Bengal, Vol. 56 Part I, No. 2. p. 80; Markhana inscription of the 15th of the dark- half of the Jyestha, V.S., 1573 (1st May 1516 A.D.), J.A.S of Bengal, Vol. XIII, pp. 214-215; Karmachandra-vanshotkirtankaram-kavyam by Jayasoma v., 320; Gunarupaka, f.53; Rajarupaka, f.11; Rajavilasa, Canto 8, f.122; Ajitodaya, v.7; Abhayavilasa, f. 15; Surajprakasha, f. 93.
- ⁵ Chatiyala Inscription of the 2nd of the bright half of Chaitra, V.S. 919 (6th March, 862 A.D.), *J.R.A.S.*, 1895, pp. 517-518.
- ⁶ Mahabharata, Bhismaparva, Canto 9, v.56; Chirva Inscription of the first of the bright half of the Kartika, V.S. 1330 (1273 A.D.), *E.*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 285-292; Rao-Jetasi-Rau-Chhand, v. 38; Karmachnadra-vanshotkirtankam-kavyam, v. 108.
- ⁷ Apabhramsa-kayatravi, (G.O.S.), p. 112; Prithvirajavijaya, Canto VIII; Sarda; Ajmer, p. 37; Dasharath Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties, p.40.
- ⁸ Bijaliyan Inscription of the 3rd of the dark half of Phalguna, V.S. 1226 (5th Feb., 1170 A.D.), v. 12, *EI*, XXVI, pp.90-106; Beal; Buddhist records of the Western World. I, p. 200; *EI*, Vol. III, p. 235; *IA*, Vol. 40, p. 28; *Bombay Gaz.*, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 560., footnote No. 11.
- ⁹ Achalesvara Inscription of the 1st of the bright-half of the Magha, V.S. 1342, (1285 A.D.), v. 49; Bhavanagar Inscriptions, No-5, p. 86.
- ¹⁰ Adeivaraha Temple Inscription, Ahar, V.S. 1000 (943 A.D.). (Preserved by Dr. G.N. Sharma in the archaeological gallery, m.B. College, Udaipur); A copper-plate grant of the 15th

of the bright-half of the Kartika, V.S. 1242 (9th Nov., 1185 A.D.), No.30/126 (ORDU); Ekalinga Mahatmya, f. 20.

¹¹ Bhekrod Inscription of the 3rd of the dark-half of the Pausa, V.S. 1291 (9th Jan., 1234 A.D.), Ojha's D.R.I., p.2, footnote, No; 3; Varvasa Inscription of the 15th of the bright-half of Asadha, v.S. 1359 (10th July, 1302 A.D.) Ojha's D.R.I., p.3; Babur-nama, f.245; A.S. Beveridge, II, p. 573; Nansi's Khyata, f. 25; Rajavilasa, canto 8, f. 122.

¹² Waqiat-I-Mustaqi, E. and D., p. 551; Akbar-nama, I p. 196; H. Beveridge, I, p. 400; Nainsi's Khyata, f. 12; Surajaprakasha, f. 26.

¹³ Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, p. 131 (Susil Gupta); Babur-nama, f. 250; Beveridge, II, p. 577; A letter No. 2850 of Rabi-ul awwal, H. 1124, 3rd of the bright-half of Xhaitra, V.S. 1769 (29th March, 1712 A.D.) PC, IV: A letter No. 2947 of Muharram 9, H. 1140, 11th of the dark-half of Bhadrpada, V.S. 1784 (16th Aug., 1727 A.D.) PC, IV.

¹⁴ Ekalinga Mahatmya., v. 103; Nainsi's Khyata, f. 34.

¹⁵ Babur-nama, f. 282b, Beveridge, II, p. 606.

¹⁶ Dr. Sharma. G.N. *Social life in Medieval Rajasthan (1500-1800 A.D.)*. Jodhpur: Books Treasure. 2011. pp, 4-7.

¹⁷ Dr. Sharma. G.N. *Social life in Medieval Rajasthan (1500-1800 A.D.)*. Jodhpur: Books Treasure. 2011. p.9.

¹⁸ Eck. Diana, L. *India A Sacred Geography*. New York: Harmony Books, Three Rivers Press. 2012.

¹⁹ Bijoliyan Rock inscription, V.S. 1226 (1169 A.D.), 60-61, EI, Vol. 26, p. 97, The term Uttamadri stands for Uparmal which extends from Baroli and Bhensord in the south to Jahazpur in the north, (EI., Vol. 26, p.101).

²⁰ Dr. Sharma. G.N. *Social life in Medieval Rajasthan (1500-1800 A.D.)*. Jodhpur: Books Treasure. 2011. pp. 37-38.

²¹ Hooja, Rima. *A History of Rajasthan*. New Delhi: Rupa. Co.Publisher, 2006. p-23

²² Hooja, Rima. *A History of Rajasthan*. New Delhi: Rupa. Co.Publisher, 2006. pp-293-333.

²³ Sharma, Dashrath. *Rajasthan through the Ages* Vol. I: Bikaner: Archives Directorate of Rajasthan. 1966. p. 105.

Along the important clans that first gained prominence in Rajasthan were the Pratihara's of Meru, the Guhilas of Mewar, Mauryas of Kota and Chittor, the Bhatias of Jaisalmer, the Paramaras of Abu and the Chauhans of Shakambhari Nadol and Jalor. The abrupt rise of these dynasties in the region, has led to some controversy regarding their origin. A number of scholars like Tod, Crooks. D.R. Bhandarkar are inclined to regard them as Soythians of central Asia and hence foreigners, while V.A. Smith ascribed some of them to indigenous stook. Some other scholars like like C.V. Vaidya and G.H. Ojha have tried to put all of them under the Kshtrya fold. According to a recent theory, all warrior clans have an inherent right to be regarded as Kastriyas when Jati or birth does not monopolise, guna and karma conception asserts itself and various classes find their actual places in the society...and the law it should be remembered applied as much to the Indians themselves as to foreign settlers.

²⁴ Chattopadhyaya, B.D. 'Origin of Rajputs: The Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan' *Indian Historical Review*, Vol.III, no.1, Delhi: 1976, pp. 60-66.

²⁵ Lodrick, O. Deryik. '*Rajasthan: Myth of Reality*', in *The idea of Rajasthan*, Vol. I. pp. 6-12.

²⁶ Gupta, S.P. 'Reconstructing the Political and Economic profile of Rajasthan', *Proceeding of Indian History Congress*, 55th Session. Aligarh, 1994, p.161.

²⁷ See Jodhpur inscription of Bauka, *B.I.*, Vol. XVIII, p. 87, Baroda copper plate of Kakkaraja, *L.A.*, Vol. XII, p. 156.

²⁸ See Jayanaka, Prithivirajavijaya and Rajasekhara, Prabandhkosha which can claim acceptance as historical accounts dealing with the Chauhans, refer to Vasudeva as the first historical man of the Sakambhari line. For the details of the origin and early history of the Chauhans see Dashrath Sharma, *Early Chauhan dynasties*, Delhi. 1959.

²⁹ Delhi Shivalik Pillar inscription V.S. 1220, records Vighraja fourth as having rendered Aryavaratta worthy of its name by repeated extermination of the Mlechhas.

³⁰ The Nodal inscription of this date mentions the victorious reign of Chalukya Kumarpala when Kalhana was ruling at Nadol. *Bol., Vol. XI*, pp.103-104.

³¹ Sharma, Dashrath. *Rajasthan through the Ages* Vol. I: Bikaner: Archives Directorate of Rajasthan. 1966. pp. 120-140.

³² See Nagari Praicharni Patrika, *Vol. I, part. III, (V.S. 1977)*, pp. 241-285.

³³ Bhati, Devaraja. one of the rulers of this line is stated as the protector of Vallamandala in Bauka (Jodhpur) *inscription of V.S. 894/837 A.D.* see E.I., Vol. XVIII, pp. 95-97, verses 18-19.

³⁴ The Parmars had their original seat at Malwa under Bhoja (1010-55 A.D.) the dynasty claimed an important rank. After his death, its rulers were reduced to an insignificant status of Mahakumaras. In the first quarter of the 13th century, Devapala ruled over Malwa and exercised his authority in the region extending from Bhilsa to Baroch. For details, see U.N.Dey, *Medieval Malwa*, pp. 5-6.

³⁵ Sharma, Dashrath. *Rajasthan through the Ages* Vol. I. Bikaner: Archives Directorate of Rajasthan. 1966. p.245.

³⁶ Sharma, G.N. *Rajasthan through the Ages, Vol. II*. Bikaner: Archives Directorate of Rajasthan. 1990. p. 316.

³⁷ Sharma, G.N. *Rajasthan through the Ages, Vol. II*. Bikaner: Archives Directorate of Rajasthan. 1990. pp. 311-321.

³⁸ Chandra. Satish. 'The 18th Century in India: Its Economy and the role of Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and the Afghans', *'S.G. Deuskar Memorial Lecture on Indian History and Culture'*: Calcutta, 1982, p.15.

³⁹ Bayly, C.A. *Indian Society and the making of the British Empire*. Cambridge: The New Cambridge History of India, 11.1. 1988., p.25.

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⁴¹ Gupta, A.D. *Indian Merchants and the Trade in Indian Ocean c.1500-1750*. Delhi: Cambridge University Press. 1982. pp, 407-433.

⁴² Chaudhary, T.R. (ed.), *Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol.I (1250-1700)*. Cambridge: 1982, pp. 182-192.

⁴³ Singh, Dilbagh. Role of Mahajans in the Rural Economy of Eastern Rajasthan during 18th Century. *Social Scientist, Vol. II, No.10*. 1974, pp.20-31.

⁴⁴ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*. Delhi: 1978, I, pp.120-21, 200-1; and II, pp.166-69.

⁴⁵ Shanna, G.D. *The Marwaris: Economic Foundations of an Indian Capitalist Class*', in D. Tripathi, ed., *Business Communities of India-A Historical Perspective*, Delhi: 1984, pp.185-203.

⁴⁶ Sharma, G.N. Op.cit, pp.324-325.

⁴⁷ As quoted in Singh, Gopeshwar. *Bhakti Andolan ke Samjick Adhar*. New Delhi: Bhartiya Prakashan Sansthan, 2002. p. 74.

⁴⁸ Ranakpur Inscription, V.S. 1647 (1590 A.D.); Jaina Inscriptions Part-1, No.714; Pali Inscriptions, V.S. 1686 (1629 A.D.); Jaina Inscriptions, Part-1, No. 827.

⁴⁹ Dr. Sharma, G.N. *Social life in Medieval Rajasthan (1500-1800 A.D.)*. Jodhpur: Books Treasure, 2011. pp., 129-133.

⁵⁰ Muntakhab, Vol.II, p.110 (P.T), E. and D., VII, p. 254; The Cambridge History of India, Vol. IV, p. 81.

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- ⁵¹ Sharma, G.N. *An Interpretation of Carving of Rajsamundra*. J.R.U.U.P., Vol. V. 1958, pp. 19-25.
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- ⁵⁵ Aggrawal, Ratanchandra. *Marwar me Krishna-Bhakti prastar kala ka adhyanan*. Jodhpur: Praja Sevak, 2 September, 1953, pp. 2-3.
- ⁵⁶ Nath inscription 971 A.D. Chirva inscription 1274 A.D. Chatri inscriptions of Rasia 1274 A.D. Achleshwar article 1285 A.D. As quoted in Dr. G. N. Sharma, *Social Life in Medieval Rajasthan*, pp, 183-184.
- ⁵⁷ Dr. Gopinath Sharma, *Rajasthan ke Itihas ke Strot*, p, 50.
- ⁵⁸ Ojha, Gorichand, Hirachand. *Bikaner Rajya ka Itihas, Vol. I*. Ajmer. 1930. p. 64.
- ⁵⁹ Chaturvedi, Parshuram. *Uttari Bharat ki Sant Prampara, Vol. I*. Allahabad. Sahitya Bhavan Private Limited. 2014. p. 58-59.
- ⁶⁰ Tod, James. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or The Central and Western Rajput States of India Vol. I*. Bombay: Humphrey, Milford, Oxford University Press, 1920. P. 362.
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- ⁶² Nansi, Muhanoot. *Nansi ri Khyat, Vol-2*. Jodhpur: Rajasthanani Granthgar. 1934. p.180.
- ⁶³ In the prominent pupil of Ramanand weaver Kabir, Raidas, Dhanna Jat, Pipa Rajput, Sain and Padmavati were prominent.
- ⁶⁴ Dhanna ke Pada, *Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Aasa*, p. 430.
- ⁶⁵ Dhaana ke Pada, *Guru Granth- Sahib, Rag Aas*, p. 430.

रविदासु दुवता ढोरनी, तितिन्हा, तिआगी माइसा परगटु होआ साथ संगि, हरी दरसनु पाइआ ।

इह विधि सुनि के जाट रो, उठि भगति लागा ।

मिले प्रतिषि गुसाईआ, धना बड भागा ॥

⁶⁶ Dhaana ke Pada, Guru Granth- Sahib, Rag Aas, p. 430.

रविदासु दुवता ढोरनी, तितिन्हा, तिआगी माइसा परगटु होआ साथ संगि, हरी दरसनु

पाइआ ।

इह विधि सुनि के जाट रो, उठि भगति लागा ।

मिले प्रतिषि गुसाईआ, धना बड भागा ॥

⁶⁷ Dr. Pemaram, *Rajasthan me Bhakti Andolan*. Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akadami. 2019, p. 100.

हरी गुण गाइरे, हरी गुण गाई ।

औरे छांडि सबे चतुराई ॥

परम गंग गहि नीर न्हवाऔ पीताम्बर क्यूँ सोभे तास ।

चन्दन घिसै करौ हरिलेपन, जाकै अंग अनूपम बास ।

अगर चन्दन घसि धूप खिडाणौ, कौण वास मनि राम रलि ।

पत्रपुहुप किसे बनी आणौ, जांको अठारह रोमावली ।

पूजा भगति किसी भल माने, सनक सनदन भगत सुकादी ।

सेस महेस मुख नाउ अराधे पवन पूत जाके ब्रह्मादि ।

जाके नारद निर्ती नटारंभ, सकर अपछरा तोड़े ताल ।

अविगत महिमा राम तुम्हारी, मै गुण का जाणौ गोपाल ।

अविगत अगम विषम कठिनाई, कहि कहु कहिये अ जाई ।

कहे धनो स्वारथ परमारथ, जिनि पायो तिनि सहज सुभाई ॥

⁶⁸ Macauliffe. *The Sikh Religions, Vol. VI*. Calcutta: 1958. p. 111.

⁶⁹ पीपा की वाणी, (ह. ग्र.), क्रमांक 22459, पृष्ठ. 375, प्रा. वि. प्र. जो.

⁷⁰ Dr. Maheshwari, Heeralal. *Jambhoji, Bishnoi Sampradaya aur Shitya, Vol-I.* p. 238.

⁷¹ Dr. Pemaram, *Rajasthan me Bhakti Andolan.* Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akadami. 2019, p.110.

⁷² Jasnath Puran, samvat 1820 Pachla Sidda.p. 66.

“करणी करम कमायो नाही, के छुटे हत्यारे ॥

⁷³ Jasnath Puran, samvat 1820 Pachla Sidda.p.60.

⁷⁴ Dr. Pemaram, *Rajasthan me Bhakti Andolan.* Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akadami. 2019, p. 129.

⁷⁵ Dadu Janam Lila, Parchi, Karmank file no. 26635, Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute. 1733 A.D.

⁷⁶ Dadu ji ki Vani, Parchi, Samthai ko Aang, Sakhi 48. Karmank file no. 26635, , Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute. 1733 A.D.

पाका मन डोले नहीं, निहचल रहे समाइ ।

काचा मन दह दिसि फिरे, चंचल चहु दिसि जाइ ॥

⁷⁷ Laldas ki Chitavani, (Hand Written text), file no. 15820, Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute.

⁷⁸ Dr. Pemaram, *Rajasthan me Bhakti Andolan.* Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akadami. 2019. 160-169.

⁷⁹ Charandas Krat Bhakti Padarath (hand written), guru ke ang. Jaipur: Atal Bihri ji ka Mandir. Samvat 1837. p. 246.

⁸⁰ Vrajvallabh Sharan, *Nibakacharya aur unka sampradaya*, Vrandavan, 1972. pp.78-79.

⁸¹ Vrajvallabh Sharan, *Nibakacharya aur unka sampradaya*, Vrandavan, 1972. pp. 423-429.

⁸² Mavji Vani; Mavji Chopda, referred to in Sable records of Tahsil Aspur, *A letter from the collector of Dungarpur*, N0.397 con. Dated 29th dec., 1954.

⁸³ Maheshwari, Hiralal. *History of Rajasthan Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1980. p. 139.

⁸⁴ Maheshwari, Hiralal. *History of Rajasthan Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1980. pp. 145-146.

CHAPTER-THREE

Political, Economic, and Social background for the rise of the Bhakti movement in Gujarat.

3.1. Introduction:

In this chapter in the context of the *bhakti* movement, wherein the diverse streams of *bhakti* are unleashed. Going beyond economic determinism or social or political patronage and tensions as the primary cause, the chapter seeks to understand their interactions in the context of medieval Gujarat.

This chapter gives an account of the political, economic, and social history of Gujarat between 15th to 18th century. The major trend in the political field was continuous warfare and regular intervention of the Delhi sultanate. The other major trends were the declaration of independence from Delhi sultanate and the formation of independent Gujarat. During the independent Gujarat period decentralization process was taking place in the region. The emergence of regional empires such as Champaner, Jhalawar Idar, Junagarh and Nandot became a prominent feature. One other noticeable feature of the political arena was the regular intervention of the Mughal governorship in the state.

The primary trends or questions in the economic arena were the effect of trade with other countries and trade within the country. This is manifested in the rise of craft production and the rise of urban centers in the trade routes of Gujarat. The prominent trends in the economic realm were the development of port towns, maritime trade, and the role of Arabs in the trade. These trends in the fields of political, economic, and social helped to take the shape of *bhakti* and religious process. All these processes contributed to the formation of Gujarati

identity. The contribution of male saints was enormous in the germination of bhakti movement in Gujarat.

3.2. Gujarat an Overview:

Gujarat came into existence on the basis of a common language and occupies an essential place in country annals. Before emerging as an independent kingdom, Gujarat province was surrounded by the neighboring states Deccan, Malwa, and Rajputana. Gujarat province always had animosity with these neighboring states.

Gujarat owes its name from the Gurjara tribe, which came to India with Hunas. After coming to India in the second half of the fifth century A.D., the Gurjara tribe had established the Gurjara Desha kingdom. The word 'Gurjara' is found in the work of 'Banabhatta's *Harshacharita*. Till late 890 A.D., the Gurjara kingdom existed in Punjab, and in the later years the tribe penetrated to the vast region of Uttar Pradesh and Rajputana.¹

In *Harshacharita*, *Banabhatta* mentions for the first time the word Gurjara.² The principality area ruled by King Bhojadeva was called Gurjaratrabhumi. The principality ruled by Mularaja, the founder of the Chalukya dynasty, was known as Saravastamandal. Siddharaja, had extended the frontiers of the kingdom and the name of the Gurjara.

3.3. Political developments: An overview

The rule of Muhammadan lasted from their conquest around the thirteenth century A.D. to the loss by the hands of Marathas in AD 1757.³ The Muslim ascendancy of Gujarat has spanned for four and a half centuries. The period from 1297 to 1403 A.D is famously known as the early sovereigns of Delhi. The second phase was dominated by the

Ahmedabad rulers from 1403-1573 A.D. In the third phase, the Gujarat province were administered for two hundred years by Delhi court viceroys.⁴ These three political phases are essential because they had an influence on the socio-economic fabric of the society.

Alauddin Khalji had defeated Raja Karna Baghel (Chalukya) of Gujarat in 1299 AD, and at Anhilwada, the provincial headquarter got established. In the coming years, the other two provinces of Kathiawad and southern Gujarat had been conquered.⁵

When it comes to an understanding of the nitty-gritty of Gujarat political history, we cannot overlook the contribution and effects of Delhi Sultanate. During the reign of Muhammad Tughluq, rebellions had started, and Bukka, Harihari, and Hasan Kangu established independent kingdoms. Delhi sultanate's provinces of Malwa, Dipalpur, Jaunpur, and Gujarat governors had declared themselves as independent.

Governors of Gujarat, Samsuddin Damghani, Malik Mufarrah Khan Farhat-ul-Mulk, Zafar Khan, all failed to pay the bid money and meet the expectations of the Sultanate.⁶ Muzaffar Khan's grandson Tatar Khan was a very ambitious man and assumed the title of Nasiruddin Muhammad Shah. He handed over the administration to Nasrat Khan, and Nusrat Khan was not happy with Muzaffar Khan's confinement. Nasrat Khan gave poison to Muhammad Shah and won over the trust of the nobles.⁷

3.3.1. The emergence of Gujarat as the Independent Kingdom:

Amid the crumbling period of the Tughluq dynasty, Muzaffar Khan, with support of nobles, declared independence from Delhi Sultanate and Gujarat emerged as an essential kingdom in the annals of India. Soon after declaring the freedom of Gujarat, he undertook an expedition against Malwa and appointed Nusrat Khan as the ruler of Malwa.⁸

In 1410 A.D. Muzaffar Shah fell severely ill, and he elevated Ahmed Khan to the throne. But after some time, Muzaffar Shah recovered from the illness and tussle have started between Muzaffar Shah and Ahmed Khan. Ahmed Khan was impatient for the throne, and Kolis of Asawal's disturbances gave him the opportunity for it. In the year 1411, A.D Prince Ahmad Khan mixed poison in wine and gave it to Muzaffar Shah. With Muzaffar Shah death, an era of glory ended in the history of Gujarat.⁹

Before Mahmud Shah Begra, four sultans were prominent. These were Ahmad Shah (1411-42), Muhammad Shah (1442-51), Qutbuddin Shah (1451-58), and Daud Shah. Reign of Qutbuddin Shah was known for endless warfare with neighboring states.

Malwa, Deccan, and Rajputana were always in a struggle with Gujarat. Hoshang Shah of Malwa was jealous of Ahmad Shah's rise, and both the states had hostile relations. In the year 1414, A.D Hoshang Shah attacked Gujarat but failed. Champaner Raja Gangadas had invited Mahmud Khalji of Malwa to attack Muhammad Shah of Gujarat.¹⁰ Mahmud Khalji lost a battle with Sultan Qutbuddin of Gujarat and decided to avoid intrusion in Gujarat's affairs.

The ruler of Mahim, Qutb Rai, accepted the suzerainty of Gujarat. After the death of Qutb Rai, no male heir was left, and Dultabad governor, Malik-ut-Tujjar, with force, annexed both Mahim and Thana. Ahmad Shah had crushed the heads of his rivals who raised heads against him.

Rana of Mewar had hostile relations with the Gujarat kingdom due to his annexationist policy. Rana Kumbha, the ruler of gallant kingdom Mewar, had open hostilities against Gujarat and its annexation policy. In 1445 A.D. Firuz Khan died, who was the fief holder

of Nagor, had fought a war against Shams Khan, and took refuge of Rana Kumbha. Rana helped Shams Khan in restoring Nagor, but later on, Shams Khan took the side of Sultan Qutbuddin.

At this point, Sultan Qutbuddin of Gujarat sent an army under the command of Rai Amichand, but the Gujarati army lost. Inscription of Chittor provide insights of Rana Kumbha's glory of the win. At the same time inscription of Chitor also offer details of victory of Rana Kumbha against Abu's Raja of Sirohi. In the later years, this rivalry continued, and Qutbuddin sent the army to besiege Kumbhalgarh. Muslim sources give details of the victory of Sultan Qutbuddin against Rana Kumbha of Mewar.¹¹

3.4. Relations with the local chiefs: The kingdom of Gujarat, after declaring independence from Gujarat, was limited, and Chamapner, Jhalawar, Idar, Junagarh, and Nandot, all were acting as independent states. The long-lasting and continuous tussle was prevalent among the Gujarat Kingdom and these sovereign states, and sometimes they were forced to pay the tribute. The Rajput kings of the Chudasama dynasty ruled Junagarh. During the first phase of the Delhi Sultanate rule of Gujarat, Junagarh retained its freedom from Delhi Sultanate. With the independence of Gujarat from the Delhi Sultanate state of Junagarh became imperative. In A.D 1414, Ahmed Shah of Gujarat proceed against Junagarh but was opposed by Rao Malingdeva. Indeed Rao got defeated and was forced to take shelter in Uparkot fortress. But at the same time, the Madalik Mahakavya account gives exaggerated details Sultans' defeat in Gujarat.

Champaner is the eastern part of Gujarat and consists of hills and impregnable fortresses. It is also known as Pavagrah because of the ideal location on Pawakchil hills. Earlier Solanki

dynasty had ruled, but later on, it passed into the Kichhi Rajputs hands of the Chahaman's branch.¹² Tribamkdas, contemporary of Ahmad Shah, wanted to dethrone Muzafar Shahi dynasty of Gujarat. Tribamkdas made a confederation of local chiefs and Hoshang Shah against Ahmad Shah. They collectively attacked Gujarat in the year 1416 AD but failed. After the death of Tribamkdas, Narsinhadas succeeded to the throne and was compelled by Gujarat to pay tribute. After the death of Ahmad Shah, Muhammad Shah took over the throne and attacked Champaner but failed to collect tribute. After his death in 1451 AD. Qutbuddin succeeded them. Malwa's Mahmud Khalji and Champaner ruler Raja Gangadas together invaded Gujarat. During the period of Sultan Mahmud, many problems were posed by the Champaner ruler.¹³

The Rajput state of Idar was another state which put heroic resistance to Gujarat. Rebel nobles Firuz Khan and Masti Khan were supported by the Idar king Rao Ranmal. In 1425-26 Rao Punja succeeded Ranmal, and in the same year the Sultan forced him to leave the capital. His successor Naraindas was compelled to pay tribute to Gujarat. In the later years, during the reign of Muhammad Shah, Rao Bir king of Idar was forced to pay tribute. Muhammad Shah allowed Rao, possession of Idar, due to the influence of his Rajput wife.

Smaller states of Bagor, Nandot, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Siddhpur were independent and resisted the policy of the Gujarat state of encroachment. These smaller states made confederation along with Malwa against Gujarat.

Sultan Muhammad died in 1451 A.D. He left behind two sons. His step son Jalal Khan succeeded to the throne with the Qutbuddin Shah title. He had anonymity with his

stepbrother Fateh Khan. Sufi saint Shah Alam gave shelter to Fateh Khan, and ultimately Fateh Khan, after the death of Qutbuddin Shah, ascended to the throne in 1459 A.D.¹⁴

Fateh Khan, after taking over the throne, had assumed the title of Mahmud Shah. In the historic memoirs of historians, he is considered as the Great King of Gujarat because of his love for justice and wise measures

In A.D 1467, Mahmud Shah turned his idea to the conquest of citadel of Girnar. He also attacked Junagarh in A.D 1467 and compelled Rav Mandlik to submission. Mahmud Shah was known for his religious policies. In the year of 1469, A.D. Mahmud Shah conquered Girnar and Junagarh. In 1472-73 Mahmud shah handed over Junagarh to Rav Mandlik after embracing Islam.¹⁵ After accepting the Muhammadan profession of faith, Surat became part of crown possession and officials were appointed to govern Surat. He introduced the culture of settling in these places for nobles and repaired the fort of Jahanpanah. He also built Mustafabad's new city and declared it his new capital.

During Muhamud Shah's extended absence from the capital, Gangadas's son Jaising of Champaner mediated rebellion. King had appointed Imad-ul-Mulk to direct Songarh, Taj Khan, to command Norkha and Dakhna, Malik Sarang Kiwam-ul-Mulk, to control Godhra.¹⁶

Mahmud Shah also expedited against the Sumra and Sodha tribes of Cutch. In the year 1509, the battle of Diu took place, and Portuguese seized Diu.

Khalil Khan, with Muzafar Shah's title, had ascended the throne. In the continuous struggle of Rav Bhim and governor of Patan, Rav had agreed to pay the tribute. Nobles of Malwa asked for the help of Muzafar against Minister Medani Rai in the hope that he would

dispose of the Malwa sultan, Mahmud khilji, and replace the throne. Muzafar Shah honorably gave the command in favor of Mahmud Khalji and withdrew from Gujarat.

In the year 1509, after the battle of Diu, Portuguese had annexed Diu from Gujarat Sultanate. Delhi sultanate started to decline in the year of 1526, with the assassination of Sikandar Shah and finally ended in the year 1573, with Akbar's annexation of Gujarat. Muzaffar Shah III was the last ruler of Gujarat, who was put in the prison of Agra. Although in the later years, he has escaped from prison, and with nobles help ascended the throne, but he was finally defeated by the Mughal governor Abdul Rahim Khan-I-Khana.

Mughal ruler Akbar had appointed Mirza Aziz as the governor of Gujarat in 1573 A.D. but resigned in 1573 A.D. due to dispute with the emperor. Mirza Khan took over the post of governor, and during his governorship, Raja Todar Mal visited for the revenue settlements. At the same time, Wajih-ul-Mulik got appointed as minister of the province. In 1577 A.D. Shahab-ul-din had become governor of the Malwa.¹⁷

The nobles of the sultanate in Gujarat turned rebel from time to time. During the time of Jahangir, permission was granted to the British East India Company to establish factories at different places in the state. Shah Jahan had appointed Aurangzeb, Dara Shikho and Murad Baksh viceroys of Gujarat. He had put his efforts to strengthen the expansion of the empire to the other areas of Gujarat.¹⁸ This instability was primarily because of the fact that there were no clear winners in the fight for over-lordship and there was no clear hegemony of a single ruler.

After the reign of Aurangzeb, the period of instability had appeared in the history of Mughal, and we saw a direct effect of it on the different regional states, i.e., Gujarat. The

trend of continuous warfare had started in the the state, which further led to the instability in the state. Southern parts of Gujarat got captured by the Marathas, and other parts of the State faced constant wars. With time, Marathas, British East India Company and many other feudal lords established control over different parts of Gujarat. In this way, the events in the political field ultimately affected the stream of devotion.

In such circumstances of political upheaval, devotion was the only support of the people. In these new political situations, where there was a conspiracy of lynching and robbery at such a time, *bhakti* came at the behest of a ray of hope for the society. At the same time, under these new political conditions, new states had given protection to the saints in the society and idea of devotion had expanded. In this way, we can say that political circumstances prepared the way for devotion in the society.

3.4. Socio-economic conditions:

The influence of socio-economic conditions demonstrates through society and cultures. The socio-economic situation of fifteen, sixteen, and seventeenth-century have played a significant role in spreading the *bhakti* movement. The nature of commerce, political control, habitation patterns, natural environment, religious, cultural, and many other things have influenced the *bhakti* origin in Gujarat.

It is said that, “There is no province in all the Indies ... more fertile than Gujarat nor any that affords more fruits and provisions which grown in such abundance there that all the neighboring provinces are thence supplied.”¹⁹

From shaping the contours of the economic and political life of the region, the complex environment also accounted for the complexities in the material cultures and social structures that took shape in the region.

The long and rugged coastline provided a definite maritime dimension to the politico-economic and socio-economic formations of the region. The regional polity and economy of Gujarat was not only affected by the larger political and economic changes in the subcontinent, especially in the northern plains, but it was also shaped up by the occurrences along the coast and by the politico-economic changes in such distant areas such as in West and South East Asia, which were connected with Gujarat and its ports only through maritime linkages.

In seventeenth-century, port towns of Gujarat had emerged as a gateway for Gujarat. References have appeared that have attributed the foreign sailors and merchants for maritime wealth.²⁰ The coastal parts of Gujarat were mainly involved in the in and out flow of merchandise. In the more intimate trade relations, Gujarati merchants were engaged in the trade of spices.²¹ The Mughal administration of Gujarat had brought about changes in the socio-economic and political levels. Gujarati textiles were famous all over the world.

This period led to a complex social and cultural setup that emerge in the state. The commerce and trade of Gujarat had attracted people from across the world, which had created a miscellaneous and complex social-cultural scenario in the state. The different trader's communities of the state, such as Parsis, Jews, Arabs, Armenians, Banya, Jains, Kathis, Kolis traders, had complicated the social setup of the region.

India emerged as a significant exporter of different commodities, and imports were very less. The development of trade network routes and an efficient, safe transport system is required to fulfill the demands in a massive volume of foreign and inter-regional trade. Trade and commerce had a considerable influence on the economic prosperity of Gujarat. However, terms of trade and goods underwent different changes with time.

The travelogues of foreigners in India have served as essential records for historians. The documentation of European travelers of India provides narration by traders and travelers about trade and commerce. Travelers from different countries such as; Englishmen, Portuguese, Dutch, etc., also recorded every reign, that had put forward an exciting and detailed account for the period dealing with the socio-economic and cultural life of the period. During the 15th century on the eastern coast of Africa, Gujarat was well known²². Gujarat was going through the process of change in the later centuries. Gujarat had been under the Sultans at the beginning of the 16th century.

Vasco ds Gama discovered the sea route to India from Europe, and in 1498 at Malindi on the East African coast, he proceeds to Cambay. A local ruler gave him a pilot and encouraged to visit Calicut (Kozhikode) and guided him. Vasco Da Gama claims himself as an inhabitant of Gujarat.²³ Another Portuguese Pedro Alvares Cabral hired two Gujarati pilots to show him the way to India, who arrived in Malindi in 1500.²⁴ Gujarat was a natural gateway to the sea for northwestern India at the end of the fifteenth century. The other contemporary Portuguese travelers portray the different versions of a tussle for the supremacy in trade among the Turks, Gujaratis and their fellow countrymen during the first half of the 16th century. Despite the Portuguese monopoly, Gujarati nobles sustained in trade.

The first and the foremost book of Portuguese traveler chronicle was of Duarte Barbosa, who arrived in India sometime around 1500.²⁵ He supports Vasco Da Gama and travelled throughout the South east Asia²⁶. The author served officially and primarily at Cochin and Cannanore from about 1500 till 1517 A.D. under Portuguese authority. Barbosa reached Gujarat within three and four years after the death of Mahmud Begarah around 1515 A. D. Barbosa provides reliable and exciting details of Gujarat Sultanate, its population, art and crafts of people, customs and manners, wealth and commerce of cities, seaports in the years immediately after the death of Mahmud Begarah. He documented the ships on ports of Mombasa and Malindi from the Kingdom of Cambay²⁷.

The Arab traders of Malindi were dealing in textiles, gold, ivory, wax, and many other items with Muslim and pagan merchants belonging from the kingdom of Cambay²⁸. Indians were making huge profits from the export. Barbosa further mentioned that the rulers of the island kingdom of Zanzibar and Mafia to the south of Mombasa were dressed in the exquisite silk and cotton textiles, purchased in Mombasa from Gujarati traders.²⁹ There were several other ports on the long coastline. At Mogadishu, Barbosa witnessed many ships from Cambay, brought cloths of different varieties, spices, and several other goods in huge quantity³⁰. The Gujarati, in exchange for their commodities for the return journey, received gold, ivory, and wax. The travelogue by Barbosa unravels the existence of intimate trade ties of Gujarat with the East African ports down to Mombasa.

The new event in the external sea -trade of Gujarat in the second half of the 16th century was the import of goods of European, Chinese and South-East Asia goods at Cambay by the Portuguese. Compared to exports from India; only, few preferred commodities were imported. Gujarati textiles were imported and carried to prospective countries by traders

from 'Benametape' and 'Angoya' in exchange of gold and ivory, brought from Sofala on the Zambezi river³¹. The significant share of Indian export consists of textiles, saltpeter, and indigo. Sugar, opium, spices, and other sundry products were other substantial commodities for export.

European companies and other merchants from different parts of Europe and Asia were doing financial transactions and purchases in silver, which resulted in the import of silver as the primary metal. Copper, Lead, and Mercury were other significant imported commodities which were brought in some quantities in India. English used to import silk and porcelain from China which were imported into India.

During the 16th century, Gujarat had intimate relations with Persia. Mahmud Begada in A.D. 1510 received an embassy from Persian Shah.³² Therefore, it was not surprising that Ormuz received goods from Gujarat together with those from other parts of India.³³ Persia was famous for excellence in wine, carpets, and perfumes. Indian aristocracy had a massive demand for some items like cut glass, watches, silver utensils, woolen cloths, and small weapons from Europe. Italian traveler Vartema, who was in India around this time, confirmed Gujarat's trade relations with the Persian Gulf region³⁴. Undoubtedly, Gujarat's suitable geographical position helped it to be the center of the Indian Ocean Trade. The control over Malacca by Portuguese disturbed the traditional pattern of trade of Gujaratis. They shifted their activities to the neighboring ports of Pasai in Sumatra as they were forced to quit Malacca³⁵. Surat developed as the main port of Gujarat and was less liable to attacks from the Portuguese in comparison to other ports because by virtue of its location. The state was a major buyer and consumer of the horses that were imported from Central Asia for military uses.

3.5. Inland trade: A prominent feature of Gujarati traders was that they could also be found in inland towns as they were not confined to coastal cities.³⁶ The leading Gujarati traders were active in the Maharashtra port towns like in 1640 A.D. Virji Vora had a number of agents in Raipur.³⁷ In the 17th century, Mughal Emperors discovered an elaborate network of trade routes linking all the commercial centers of the Empire. The state or chieftains had the responsibility to look after the roads. In certain regions, sometimes bridges had to be built as rivers obstructed these roads. The state and nobles were the authority to build and maintain these fords and bridges. However, the condition of these roads throughout the rains was an unfortunate commentary.

The travelers record the bad muddy condition of the Surat-Burhanpur route throughout the rains and hardships in traveling. The state provided towers recognized as 'kosminans' to mark the alignment of roads and also to indicate the aloofness for travelers. Historical sources mention of kosminars regularly on the most traveled trade routes. All the prominent routes had sarais at short intervals for merchants and travelers as halting places. Big sarais also provided to the itinerant traveler space for storage of goods.

The production and manufacturing of cotton textiles were in excess in the country since cotton could be grown approximately everywhere. Abul Fazl documented a list of the significant regions of textile manufacture. Ahmedabad, Broach, Baroda, Cambay, Surat, etc. were known for textile manufacture.³⁸ Another one of the significant items for the manufacture of textiles was Silk.³⁹ Kashmir manufactured silk textiles in abundance, which is mentioned in Ain-i-Akabri. Patna Ahmedabad and Banaras were equally known and recognized for silk fabrics. Bengal in the seventeenth century produced the largest amount of raw silk, which was exported abroad as well as to other parts of India. In the middle of

the 17th century, approximately the total annual production was estimated at about 2.5 million pounds.

Although, it is believed that people of Vaisya caste were indulging in trade and commerce, however, people from different communities and castes were also a part of the trade and commerce. But trade activities were majorly dominated by the people of specific caste, community, and group in the region. The members of the Jain community were primarily the business class distributed almost all over Gujarat⁴⁰.

The state authority did not create any unique relationship with the other merchant groups or with Mahajan (a semi-autonomous group) in Medieval Gujarat. Many other trading groups existed during that period and acted more or less independently most of the time. However, they were in contact with the central authority. This association of trading groups in Gujarati society resulted in upright political amalgamation because through them, the social groups were connected to the imperial class. However, this vertical political association was not very frequent within all society. It was rather specific.

Moreover, it is essential to understand that there were other horizontal connections at different levels within medieval Gujarat. The social groups and trading communities were in association with various religious bodies too. This connection was mostly outside the cognizance of the rulers.

Some saints in Gujarat believed that close relations with the central authority are condensing and incompatible for religious life too. The relationships among these groups were multifaceted but also harmonious due to the belief that a person has to play several roles and for which he needs separate heads. So, a merchant could be a member of imperial

groups of the Sultan but also a pupil of a saint. A vital element of the Gujarati population is that it is extremely heterogeneous in nature⁴¹. Nevertheless, there were institutionalized mechanisms available, but rulers seldom achieve close relations with their subjects. The role of the head of various social groups was important here as they were helpful in providing vertical integration to society when needed as per an intermediary capacity.

Due to the expansion of business, prosperity came to the society and these business communities had started raising question on the Brahmanic superiority in the society. The result of the expansion of trade in internal parts of the country was that the idea of devotion was expanding from one region to another. In this way, these trading communities became powerful medium of exchange of thoughts of devotion from one area to another. As regionalism in the society was increasing, so was the writing of the literature in the regional areas of the society. This literature was questioning the bondage of society. So it was obvious and natural to bring social consciousness from the newly written regional literature. Women saints were also the product of such circumstances in the society.

3.6. Development of Vaishnavism and bhakti Movement in Gujarat.

In the development of *Vaishnavism* in Gujarat, above mentioned socio-political and economic conditions have played a significant role. *Vaishnavism* in Gujarat have traces from the time of moving Krishna Vasudeva from Mathura to Kusasthali (Dvaraka). He drew lineage from Yadava Dynasty, Vrsni family. Yadav tribe got the title after the Yadu, the founder. Yadava tribe had many branches and these branches were named after the founder of the branch i .e.Kukura, Cedi, Sini, Vrsni, Andhaka, Sattvata, etc.⁴² Krishna, who was a known hero for the Sattvata sect, migration from Mathura to Dvaraka, took place.

Anartadesa was the capital of Dvaraka (Kusasthali). Reva was the ruler of Arartadesa.⁴³ This time saw several wars with Asuras. Yadavas fought hard with Punyajana Asuras to protect the land of Gujarat. Krishna Vasudeva had re-inhabited and renovated the fort and gave a new name to it, Dvaraka.⁴⁴

After the prolonged thirty-six years, conflict among families brought Yadava paramountcy to an end. This defeat led to a fight among Yadava chiefs and severe injuries to the leaders of Yadava clan. Arjuna had approached to the new city of Indraprastha with the remaining members.⁴⁵ According to the Jaina tradition the destruction of the city of Dvaraka was the result of a curse of Dvaipayana. Whereas other claims argue that the city had submerged underwater after the Nirvana of Krishna.⁴⁶

In the later decades, many branches such as Maitrakas, Jadejas, Cudasamas, Yadavs of Devagiri had used the lineage from Yadavas. According to Historian, H.C. Raychaudhuri, Bhagavata sect came into existence even before the fifth century B.C., for example, in Sutra IV, 3, 95, and 98 Panini mentioned about the Bhagavata as religion.⁴⁷

R.G. Bhandarkar had claimed through the reference of Buddhist text Niddesa that various religious faith and belief were present in the subcontinent even in the pre- Christian era. Worship of Vasudeva and Baladeva was prevalent, and the development of the cult of Vasudeva was seen. Visnu Parvan gives the illustration of the deification of different figures.⁴⁸

Different titles also knew Vasudeva cult of Suhrit, Bhagavata, Sattvata, Tanmaya, Pancakalavit, and Ekantika, etc. These names have appeared in the Padma Tantra (108 Tantras of Vaisnava canons).⁴⁹ Different inscription provides insights of Krishna bhakti in

2nd Century B.C. During the Gupta period (415 A.D.-Cir.470 A.D.) we saw the prevalence of Bhavata in Gujarat. Before the Gupta dynasty, we don't find traces of Bhagavata in Mauryan and Ksatrapa periods.

Imperial Guptas have ruled Gujarat for half a decade, and Girnar Inscription of Skanda Gupta (547-58 A.D.) gives insights into the invocation of Vamana avatars of Vishnu. Skanda Gupta had spent lots of money on construction of Cakrabhrt (Vishnu) temple in 457 A.D.⁵⁰ Carkrapalita was an ardent devotee of Visnu. Gupta rulers had issued coins of gold and silver with the emblem of Garuda. Hoard of the coins of Kumara Gupta-I found in an excavation at Kuldi have the emblem of Garuda. These coins have legends written on these with "Parama Bhagavata Rajadhiraja Sri Kumara Gupta Mahendraditya"⁵¹ During the Gupta period, worship of Vishnu avatars had started.

Almost all the Gupta rulers had declared themselves Paramabhagavatas. Gupta vaisnavism prominent feature was the worship of *avataras*. It was very closely associated with yoga philosophy and solar worship.

After the decline of the Gupta empire, Maitrakas rose to prominence for the next three hundred years. Maitraka ruler Dhruvasena -I had avowed Parama Bhagavata. Valabhi ruler's downfall had witnessed many royal families until Caulukya took over. Different images of Vishnu on Laksmi-Narayana and Garuda were an indication of Vaishnav following of Saindhavas.

Post-Maitrakas, king Indraraja had founded an independent branch of the Rastrakuta dynasty, and this part ruled up to 970 A.D. ⁵² Most of the inscriptions of Rastrakutas starts with Siva and Vishnu stuti. The royal emblem of Rastrakuta was Garuda, and we find a

comparison of kings with an incarnation of Vishnu. It shows the real status of Vaishnavism in the Rastrakuta dynasty.⁵³

Chalukya period (942 A.D -1304 A.D.) is the golden era of the history of Gujarat. Chalukya was the follower of Siva and the Jain faith, and Mularaja built many temples. Copper plate of Karnadeva I had indicated Puranic Bhagavata importance, and it opens with "Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya". Siddhartha's Dohad inscription also had invocation of Vasudeva, 'Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya'.⁵⁴

The impact of the cult is visible in epigraphical, architectural, and sculptural evidence. The incarnation of Vishnu had influence, and different images of Adivaraha, Nrsimha, Trivikrama come to light.

Many temples of the era are dedicated to Lord Vishnu form Trivikrama. These newly erected temples were known with different names such as Sridhara, Daityasudhana, Gadadhara, Ranchhhod Ji, Damodara, etc. Various forms of Vishnu images are an indication of the progress of Vaishnavism in this era. Two significant changes were that Rama and Krishna avatars assumed greater importance and change in the society for the acceptance of Vasudeva Krishna's life. The period witnessed the increase and influence of Vaishnavism on the writers, and they have expressed their feelings or devotion through writings. Many dramas have been penned down on the lines of Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavata.

During the Sultanate period, Gujarat was either under the direct control or controlled through Governors. Indeed Gujarat was under Sultanate control, but still, a few parts of

Gujarat were ruled by Hindu Kings. The political chaos of the time had influenced society, and only a few images and temples came to light.

An inscription of 1381 A.D. had mentioned about Hariraja. Hariraja was the minister of King Satyaraja and an ardent devotee of Vishnu.⁵⁵ Inscription of V.S. 1389 A.D. has invocation of God Vishnu as Jalasayi. One other inscription of 1400 A.D. recovered in Patadi mentions that Krsnaraja was a Haribhakta Parayana.⁵⁶ Although inscriptions are in abundance, many images of Vishnu are also found with multiple hands, incarnation, Goddess Laksmi, Vishnu figure, etc.

In the social life of Gujarat, it has been seen that literature composition continued in Pali, Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsa, but the importance of classical languages got reduced. This had given the space to yield Gujarati and Persian languages. At the same time, around 1400 A.D. in Gujarat, messages of Purana had spread in the local languages called desibhasa, and it revived the society.⁵⁷

In the 14th century A.D. reformer Ramanand, a follower of Ramanujan, had tried to spread the worship and reform of the society. The teachings of Ramanand had influenced the learned society of Gujarat to teach illiterates in their language. This society of Ramanand is still present and is known as Ramanandins. The second wave of bhakti had launched in the form of Rama bhakti by Ramanand in North India.

With this emergence of Ramanand on the scene, the bhakti traditions of South that already had a historical lineage and development was now implanted in a fertile soil and we get a clear idea of the amalgamation of various trends of bhakti in a fertile soil.

This was followed by a wave of bhakti in Gujarat, and it led impetus literature growth of Vaisnavism. This period of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the development of highly developed bhakti based on mutual affection, physical emotions, ignorance of caste distinctions, etc. Two prominent saints of this time are Narsimha Mehta and Mirabai. According to Narsimha Mehta, the real Vaisnava is the one who feels others suffering as his own. One doesn't need to be a worshipper of Vishnu. His vision of Krsnalia sung in padas, and it was very appealing for both the women and men of Gujarat.⁵⁸

Mirabai, although belongs to Rajasthan but People of Gujarat also claims Mirabai as their saint poetess. Indeed padas of Mirabai give bhav of eroticism, but they express the feeling and desire of ardent devotee soul to be united with her deity.⁵⁹ In the social life of Gujarat, these saints influenced the lives of people. In the later time, these saints were followed by many other Gujarati poets, those inclined to Vaishnavism.

With the end of the Sultanate, the Gujarat region came under the control of Mughal emperors. The reign of Akbar is seen as liberal in history as he had given the space for spread of bhakti. He was liberal in his religious outlook. Temple inscription of Sundarvar and Wall inscription of village Mankhetra have names of different deities such as Laksmi-Nrsimha, Madana Gopala, Sundarvar, Krsnapanamastu, etc. These inscriptions show the spread of Vaishnavism during this time.⁶⁰

Many literary works have been composed by the notable poets of Gujarati during this time. Poet Gopaldas had written 'Bhaktipiyusa' and 'Vallabhakhyana' poems. Vallabhacharya sect in the sixteenth century was known as rudrasampradaya or Pustimarga. In the Gujarati society Vallabha sect's philosophy was considered superior, then Sankara, Madhva,

Nimbarka, Ramanujan etc. philosophies. Vallabhacharya sects had established 84 seats across the country, and these are known famously as 'Caurasi Baithak'.⁶¹ Followers of Vallabhacharya sect belong to every caste and category. Asthachap poets narrations are important. The asthachap poets are Surdas, Paramanandadas, Kumbhandas, Krsnadas, Citaswamy, Nandadas, Caturbhujadas and Govindswami. The teachings of asthachap poets are prominent for the people of Gujarat and seem to have wider acceptability.

People at large in Gujarat got interested in religious rites, festivals, image worship, temple visit etc. after the entry of the bhakti movement in Gujarat society. The philosophy of Vallabhacharya was very simple and attracted people towards the devotion and grace.

3.7. Socio-religious *bhakti* movement: Religion is an important constitute of Indian culture. An intensive study on the development of *Vaishnavism* has been already done, but the subject requires a detailed examination of the development of the sect. The concept of *bhakti* doctrine and its practice by the saints of the order had an impact on socio-religious concepts, which prepared the meeting ground for the spiritual men of both creeds and improved social conditions in medieval times. Gujarat had an independent social and cultural entity, and its proximity to the sea has been responsible for the ceaseless mercantile and maritime activities of its people. Trade and commerce brought riches that overflowed the land. Despite the pantheistic philosophy of Shankaracharya, it has ignored the personal religious aspirations of the people. People are always in need of earthly love of an ethical and emotional cult in which they understood nothing of *karna marg* and *gyan marg*, and it was in these circumstances that the path of *bhakt* or devotion found a favorable atmosphere.

Lastly, the great cause was the uplift most of the Indo-Aryan dialects such as Bhojpuri, Magadhi and Maithili of modern Bihar, Avadhi of Avadh region, Braj Bhasha of Mathura region and Rajasthani, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Sindhi and Gujarati, also assumed new shapes and meaning through bhakti poetry.⁶² The beginning of Gujarati was distinct from Apabhramsa.

Narasimha Maheta: Narasimha Mehta mentions some incidents of his life in his works. He was a Nagar Brahmin by caste who were the repositories of learning and orthodoxy. A native of Talaja village near Junagadh in Bhavnagar district and a date came to be fixed between 1412-1480 A.D.⁶³ Recent researches indicate him to being placed later than 1500 A.D.⁶⁴ He was dependent on his elder brother as he lost his father early. His association with the wandering sadhus of Vrindavan exposed and introduced him with the mysteries of *bhakti*. He looked upto Sri Krishna as his lover and began to sing and dance like *gopi*. This demeanor shocked his caste the men of who were worshipping orthodoxy.

Narasimhas behavior was equal towards all people, and he pursued every opportunity to bring relief to the lowly and the wretched. He ridiculed family status, caste exclusiveness, and associated even with the poor and untouchables, teaching them *bhakti*. Once even after being an orthodox Nagar of Junagarh, he reached to a Dhed 'untouchable sweeper' to sing his bhajans, he reached the height of seeing others equal. People of his caste proclaimed exclusion and excommunicated him straightaway. Tired of social persecution, the saint exclaimed, "O Lord! Do not give me poverty and birth in the Nagar caste again".⁶⁵

It is believed that most of his works are miraculous assistance and the rich imagination which Lord Sri -Krishna bestowed upon him rich imagination from time to time, and

which culminated in the center of a new mythology of *bhakti*. Moreover, scholars who began to acquire knowledge of early Gujarati literature credited honour upon Narasimha of being the first poet both in date and merit. So, the saint poet made a valuable contribution to the Gujarati literature. His works are as follows: *haramala*, *Sudama-carita*, *Caturi Sodasi*, *Caturi Chhatrisi*, *Samaldas no viviah*, *Danalila*, *Govindagraman*, about 2000 *padas* on devotion and erotics (*Srngar*) and *Surata Sangrama*.

Narasimha's style is considered the best in the *padas* of *bhakti* and *jnana* philosophy. *Rasasahasrapadi*, as it stands presently, consists of around one hundred and twenty-three *padas*⁶⁶. It represents the different aspect of Narasimha's writing which is very revolutionary in disbelief in the present formula of life, and he dedicated self to the master "God" who is complete. He defies all the worldly affections and has unshaken faith in almighty. He has considered the nobles figure in Gujarati society as he also goes among untouchables and prays.

His works are divided into *Srngar* and *bhakti*, which are combined. Late Ichharam Desai mentions twenty miracles appeared in his life⁶⁷. Narsimha Mehta much influenced the poets of later centuries. He is considered the father of Gujarati poetry due to the richness of his imagination and the variety of his creative activity. He is not considered a scholar, but his songs brought about spiritual and social reforms. During the period, great literary works were created- like devotional, didactic, quasi- metaphysical, and secular forms of literature. Narasimha was considered a messenger "*Vadhaia*" by the followers Vallabhacharya of the coming dispensation and attached special sacredness to his *padas*. However, no *pada* is available in his ow language, and some of them bear the traces of different authorship. Visvanath Jani (1652) was the first Gujarati poet to sing of his life and gave a new impetus

to *bhakti* in Gujarat. With Narsimha Mehta, we understand the strategic use of religion and its sanctity to subvert the hierarchy by encouraging the untouchable followers as equal.

Bhalan is Modh Brahmin from Patan dated around 1439-1539. He is not as popular as his senior contemporary of Narasimh Mehta. He has a staunch faith in Lord Rama, which is revealed from the verse of 'Raghunath (Rama) is Bhalan's God,' which he used in all his compositions. He was a Purani living by the music of his verse that touched the hearts of men and women of his times. His compositions include Nalakhyan, Rama-balacarita, krsnavisti, Dhruva akhyan, and Ramavivaha. He rendered a summary of Dasama Skandha of Bhagavata into Gujarati verses. He has also composed hundreds of padas on the lilas of the lord, shri Rama.⁶⁸

Visnudas, a Nagar Brahmin from Khambhat, dated between 1567-1612 A.D. He rendered fifteen parvans of Mahabharata in akhyana form and composed 11 akhyaanas on the basis of entitles, Ramayana, Laksmanaharana, Sukadevakhyan, Jaimaniya Asvamedha. His composition also includes poems entitled, Rukmangada akhyan, Ambarisa Akhyan, and Hariscandrapuri.

Vallabacharya credited to establish another popular *bhakti* school known as Rudrasampradaya or Pushtimarga. Vallabacharya Goswami, was a brahmana from Telengana born in c. 1479, a follower of Vishnuswami. The Goswami frequently travelled all over India preaching his cult and naturally reached Gujarat. He founded the shrine of Sri Nathji in Vraja in c. 1506 and died c. 1532⁶⁹. Vallabha was a scholar more than a *bhakt*. He aimed to find a compact sect based on *bhakti* which means 'Grace of God'. Vallabhacarya was very particular to keep this relationship as pure as possible, which 'delivers new

spiritual power, affixes the seal of salvation, and invests him with an "inextinguishable character"⁷⁰.

Vallabhacarya engaged himself in many intellectual pursuits and succeeded in proving that the doctrine of Suddhadvaita was superior to the philosophical systems of Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, and Nimbarka. In recognition of his intellectual superiority, Krsnadevaraya of Vijayanagara conferred the title of Mahaprabhu⁷¹ on Vallabhacarya and performed his kanakabhiseka.⁷² He travelled to Gujarat thrice and felt that it is most fitting place to spread his sampradaya. He went to Siddhapur (a centre of Pilgrimage and Hindu Orthodoxy in North Gujarat), Patan (a stronghold of Jainism), Vadnagar (centre of Nagar Brahmins- staunch followers of sankara's monism) and Borach. The Brahmins of Brigu race questioned him whether *hari* and *hara* were same or different entities. Vallabhacarya explained to them and they accepted the Sampradaya⁷³. In Kheralu, a Brahmin widow becomes his disciple and was given an image of Krishna for worship. Vallabhacarya on observing her faith rewarded her by a baithak (seat) being raised in her house, where a pair of sandals of Vallabhacarya is kept. Her two sons Jagannatha and Narayana, are named among the 84 disciples⁷⁴. Vallabhacarya also had a Muslim disciple. Muslims of Sind were impressed by his high spirituality and the latter accepted as his guru. This new convert was renamed Aryakhan, who become true Vaisnava⁷⁵. Vallabhacarya established 84 seats of his *Sampradaya* all over India. These seats are called '*Caurasi Baithak*'. Some of them are in Gujarat.⁷⁶ These *baithaks* (seats) of devotions have only been described as some aspects of religiosity but do not get the regular idea of a sacred space. One of the important findings of the thesis is that the sacred geography constituted from below has been considered in literature and *bhakti* tradition. Therefore the study of *bhakti* would become more enriched

when one understands that the sacred geography is not constituted only by the Puranic and literary elements from above but also the common people from below. This beauty of *bhakti* has been missed by many scholars and shows the dynamism of *bhakti* in the regional particularity of Gujarat.

The Mughal Emperor Humayun and his queen Hamida Begum were greatly impressed by his towering personality. The queen granted a village as gift in Vrja which is still in possession of his descendants⁷⁷. Vallabhacarya is believed to have written two commentaries on Brahma- Sutra by Badarayana Vyasa. However, only one commentary is available, and it is called Anu Bhasya. It is this text that earned him the title of Acarya⁷⁸.

Vallabha's second son **Vithalanathaaji (1516-1586 A.D.)**, a *bhakta*, improved upon his father's doctrines and became the sole leader of the movement. He was a poet, musician, a creative artist, and a true Krishna devotee.⁷⁹ He proved a great organizer of this sampradaya. Vithalanathaji came to Gujarat, founded one temple, and dedicated it to Srinathji- which he constructed more like a house than a temple so that more and more devotees could have *darshan* of the image without any hindrance⁸⁰.

He took an interest in spreading pustimarga in and reached Gujarat in 1544 A.D. at the age of 28. He visited Gujarat five times a year and stayed in the house of one of the Vaisnava bhakta called Bhaila Kothari of Ahmednagar.⁸¹ He encouraged bards, dramatists, singers, and other artists to enact the various episodes of Krishna's life in the public of Gujarat and this way the successful way of preaching the gospel. Vithalanathaji was honored by emperor Akbar by the title of Gasain (Gosvami) for the first time and also issued four Farmans to him.⁸² He also inspired Suradasa and other poets known as the *ashta chhap* to

compose *bhakti* poetry. These poets all of a very high order were, in a sense, the founders of medieval Hindi and *Vraja* literature and influenced the whole literature of North India.⁸³

After the departure of Vitthalanathji in 1586 A.D., his seven sons established 'Seven Gadis' in the country. The sixth svarup of Balakrishna was finally established at Surat after being shifted to several other parts before.⁸⁴ The grandson of Vallabha carried these principles to the logical extreme. Later the practice of a devotee dedicating even his wife to the achara before the marriage was consummated, was inculcated.

Gopaldas Vanik was known to devote all his life to the service of Vallabha Sampradaya. He was a Vaisnav of Rupal near Kaalol Gujarat date 1577- 1592 A.D. It is said Gopaldas was born mute and was cured by Vittalanathji the then head of the Vallabha sampradaya at Gokul. Not only that, he was also blessed with the divine vision (darsan) of Rasalila of Krishna. Gopaldas composed two poems Bhaktipiyusa and Vallabhakyan. Bhaktipiyusa gives the picture of Rasalila of Krishna, the vision of which he had. Vallabhakyan is the praise of the glory of Vallabhacarya and his family members, especially the poet's Guru Vitthalanathji.⁸⁵ In 1570 A.D. we see the influence of this sect on Gujarati literature in Gopaladas's Vallabhakhyan. The enthusiastic worshipper looked upon the Goswami as God and described his appearance and pomp with abject admiration.

Akho or Akha Bhagat (c. 1615-1674) voiced this gospel. He was a goldsmith of Ahmadabad originally from the neighbouring village of Jetalpur. For some time, he worked as the head of the royal mint. He lost his wife early, and also a sister whom he dearly loved. Forgetting the traditional dishonesty of the goldsmith, he secretly added his gold in preparing an ornament for a lady whom he cherished as a sister. The lady would not

believe that a goldsmith could so flagrantly depart from the recognized maxims of his trade and had the ornament tested to find out the truth. When she found that he had spoken the truth, she went to thank him for his kindness. Akho, however, shocked at the lady's suspicion and came to hate a world so full of distrust and suspicion. Weary of life, he threw his implements into a well and went abroad seeking peace of mind. He sought refuge in prayer, performed many rituals but found no peace. He went to Gokul in the hope of obtaining spiritual assistance from the Goswami, the head of the Vaishnava sect. At war with himself and the world, he went to Kasi. The philosophy of Sankaracharya gave him the solace he needed. On his return to Ahmadabad, he went to see the Goswami but poor beggar now sought admittance to the palace. He went home and studied the philosophic doctrines of Sankara and spent his life either in expounding them or lashing the world's hypocrisy in caustic verse. He says, "I wept for a long time; and once Hari appeared ... then the floodgates of my speech were opened".⁸⁶

His works, expounding the Advaita philosophy are: Akhegita, Chittavicharasamvad, Panchikaran, Gurusishyasamvad, Anubhavabindu, Kaivalyagita and Paramapadaprapiti in Gujarati; and Panchadasitatparyaand Brahmalila in Hindi. He also composed about seven hundred chhappas, or epigrammatic stanzas, on different aspects of life and about sixty pads. The Akha's place in literature depends upon his chhappas and pad in which, following a line of early writers like Mandan and other poets of what are styled jnani poets, he expressed the dominant note of the age in biting verse. Akha himself did not claim to be poet but a jnani, a student of philosophy. However, very poorly equipped for literary work, the words which he used were very often inappropriate. His knowledge of prosody, grammar and syntax was meager. Akho's poetic flashes lighten his philosophical works,

producing images of great vividness and beauty. In Anubhavabindu, he illustrates philosophical doctrines. In Akhegita, he describes the manifestation of the Supreme Soul. Akha did not possess Narasimh's subjectivity, nor his glorious wings of passion. But his bhakti was not devoid of personal touch. He had philosophic insight; his study of Vedanta was deep. But the poetic value of his works often lies in the Vedantic conceptions and images in which from the days of the Upanishads, the great Indian philosophers have embodied thought; his real contribution has been to use them with great force and appropriateness in the language.

In the seventeenth century, Gujarat, as a province of the Mughal empire, had settled down to a sort of peaceful existence. A new literary tradition arose and formed the expression and the technique for which the rasa or akhyan stood, together with its framework of Puranic episodes or popular fiction, were made a medium for a realistic treatment of life.

About 1584 Vishnudas of Khambat and another poet composed Mamerum. About 1645 A.D. an unknown poet rearranged Haramala, celebrating the incident in which Sri Krishna gave the saint a garland in the court of Ra Mandalik. Visvanath Jani (1625-1675) was a well-known poet who composed Mosalacharitr (1652) about another incident. Krishnadas composed a Hundi (1657). In 1678 Premanand edited Haramala set about composing brilliant works on well-known incidents in Narasimh's life.⁸⁷

Premanand is considered one of the greatest literary figures of his times, a Sathodra Brahmin by caste and son of Krishna of Baroda. Most of the information about him are received by the words attributed to him, but in reality, it a part of the Baroda forgeries.⁸⁸ However, so far the information about the poet is acquired form the works, it mentions that

he was left orphan in his infant age by the parents and assumed to be an idiot. In the company of a Sanyasin Ramacharan, he learned the Sanskrit and Hindi language while travelling through North India. He began his career at the richest port of the Mughal empire as gagaria bhat in Surat. Although, his life was uneventful but prosperous and completely dedicated to literature. He died at the ripe age of ninety-eight. Sources inform that he left fifty-two disciples, in which twelve of whom were women, all devoted to the cause of literature. But there is no trace of seventeen pupils of him. He is said to have guided and directed all his disciples before his death. He instructed his son Vallabh should write in hindi, Ratnesvar in style of Marathi poet, Virji in Persian and Sunder in style of Puranis.

The works of his were very famous and they kept the traditions alive and sustained the Puranic atmosphere in the province. Around fifty years ago in higher class Gujarat people there were hardly any middle-aged lady who did not know his poems by heart.

Premanand said to have composed Fifty-seven works with incredible facility. Several works of his being considered lengthy and only twenty-six of them appear to be smaller. The works are divided according to their sources, into following groups:

1. Akhyans from Mahabharata: handrasakhyan (1671), Rishyasringakhyan (1673), Draupdisvayamvar (1680), Mandhatakhyan (1681), Bhagavadgita (1682), Nalakhyan (1685), Draupadiharan (1689), Subhadraharan (1702), and Ashtavakrakhyan (1710).
2. Akhyans from the Bhagavata Purana: Lakshmanaharan (1664), Okhaharan (1667), Sudamacharitr (1682), Vamanacharitr (c. 1729), Dana-lila, Saptama- Skandh, Rukminiharan and Dhruvakhyan.

3. Akhyans from the Markandeya Purana: Madala-sakhyan (1672), Harischandrakhyan (1692) and Devicaritr (1695).
4. Akhyans from the Ramayana e.g. Ranayajna (1685)
5. Complete versions of the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata, the Markandeya Purana and the Ramayana.
6. Akhyans on the life of Narasimh Maheta: Vivaha Hundi (c. 1674), Haramala (c. 1678), Sraddh (1681), and Mamerium (1683).
7. Miscellaneous works like Suvarganisarani, Vivekavanjaro and Bhramar-pachisi.

Premanand did not follow any law, moral ethics of art, and creativity from considering the others man work so; he is titled as the prince of plagiarists. The audience well knows him in using all his acquired poetic skill in the akhyans. The consequence of the widely demonstration his work differs in skill and language. He was so fond and proud of Gujarati language that he assured himself to make Gujarati language prosperous and beautiful like Sanskrit. Due to his wide grip over the resources of language he also had extensive knowledge of contemporary life. He had an extraordinary observation power which led to no details being able to escape him. He excelled in making an old plot, however jejune, throb with new life. Among the literary artists of his time he alone was truly a creative artist and could give a glimpse of actual life. A clever reader of the popular mind, he was always ready to cater to the prevailing taste. It is hard to find even an isolated note of personal feeling in his writings. His perspective was limited by the narrow down world in which the small castes of Gujarat had their being. Premanand has been credited to have written dramas, three of which were published at some time sixty years ago. They are named Roshadariska-satyabhamakhyan, Panchali-prasannakhyan and Tapatyakhyan. The technique of the dramas

ascribed to Premanand is of a different and modern author. Their generousness has been rightly challenged by Narsinharo Dovatia in an ably written paper, Premanand- na Natako.⁸⁹

After Premanand, **Samalbhatt**⁹⁰ was the most notable poet. He was born around the year 1700. His composition Angadavishti in 1752 indicates that the earlier date 1640 is obviously incorrect. He was Srigod Malvi Brahman of Venganapur (now Gujarat) a suburb of Ahmadabad. He knew Sanskrit, Vraja, and Persian and left behind no followers, no school of poetry. The Puranic works of his are Siva Puran (1748), Revakhand, Angadavishti (1752), Ravanmandodarisamvad, Kalimahatmya, Sukadevakhyan, Draupadivastrahara.

The works of fiction done by him are Batrisaputi, Sudabahoteri, Padamavati (1718), Nandanatrishi, Vinechatni Varta, Barasakasturini Varta, Sundar Kamadar, and Bhojakatha. Some miscellaneous works on his name that have doubt-able authorship are Ranachhodana Saloka, Udyamakarmasamvad, Samalratnmal, Abhramkulino- saloka or Rustam-bahadurno Pavado (c. 1725), Rakhidasacharitr, Visvesvarakhyan and Ranastambh.

Earlier Samal was consider a great writer of original fiction and a fellow of Premanand, in recent time a need of re-estimation of his work is needed. He was able to produce only ordinary akhyans in his attempt of Puranic subjects. He frequently adopted from his predecessors. Neither he was able to communicate local colour nor succeeded in giving a contemporary touch as Premanand. Only few characters of life have been added to old stock. But his expertise lies in his matchless style and wonderful power of storytelling. Chappas of him are made up of six-line verses, illustrating a point of view and have acquired him an abiding place in literature.

2.7. Conclusion:

Hence, the above conditions in Gujarat have caused the seeds of devotion to flourish. At the political level, the province of Gujarat, went through three levels of governance. And in all the three levels, sometimes the Sultanate has intervened, and sometimes the Mughals intervened. There were also times when the sovereign rulers of Gujarat ruled. In such politically disturbed circumstances, people found an escape in devotion. In the conflict between two states, regional state Gujarat got prominence and bhakti found space in these conditions in Gujarat. Regionalism became very important and strong regional feeling had emerged. Literature have been produced in Gujarati language instead of Sanskrit. Due to the rise of the regional political houses, the bhakti saint got respect and patronage in the courts of newly emerged kingdoms. Economically the flow of internal, external trade, and village cultural economy also had contributed to the flow of devotion. Due to trade, prosperity expanded, due to which people got time to get into devotional music and bhajans of God. The Indian society was a stratified society and the message of social egalitarianism attracted the people towards bhakti. During this time, a literary society was formed which spread the idea of devotion in the society of Gujarat. In this way the triangular causes have strengthened the basis of devotion. At this time, Vaishnavism started making a place in Gujarat and became popular in the people of Gujarat. It was the result of the male saints of Gujarat that women saints also came forward and took the path of devotion.

¹ Munshi, K.M. *Glory that was Gurjara Desa Vol I*. Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1956. p.2.

² V.V. Mishra, (Ed.). *Harshacharita of Banabhatta*. p.1

हुणहरिणकेसरी सिन्धुराजज्वरो गुर्जरप्रजागरो गान्धाराधिपगन्धद्विपकूटपालको लाटपाटवपाटचचरो-

प्रभाकरवर्धननामराजाधिराजः।

³ Watson, J. W. *History of Gujarat*. New Delhi: Cosmos Publication.1983, p. 1.

⁴ Ibid. p. 1.

⁵ Chaube, J. *History of Gujarat Kingdom, 1458-1537*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1975. p.2.

⁶ Ibid. pp., 4-5.

⁷ Ojha. Gauri Shankar Hirachand. *Udaipur Rajya ka Itihas Vol. II*. Jodhpur: Rajasthani granthagar publisher. 2015. p. 505.

⁸ Chaube, J. *History of Gujarat Kingdom, 1458-1537*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1975. pp. 9-8.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 9-10.

¹⁰ Ibid. pp., 11.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 15.

¹² Alauddin Khalji conquered Ranthambhor after defeating Hammir deva. Ramdeva, son of Hammirdeva, immigrated to Gujarat and established his kingdom at Champaner near Pavagrah. Ramdeva was succeeded by Changdeva...and Rajadhira Jayasingha. Muhanot Nansi., 1. P.197. Nahani-Umarwan Inscription, 1469 AD. IA (Jan.1877), p.2.

श्रीपावकदुर्गे महाराज श्रीजयसिंहदेव विजयराज्ये श्रीपृथ्वीराजप्रमुख चहुआणवंशे

घणा राजा होआ कुलतिलक श्रीहम्मीरदेवकुले श्रीरामदेव श्रीचांगदेव

¹³ Chaube, J. *History of Gujarat Kingdom, 1458-1537*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1975 .p.19.

¹⁴ Ibid. pp.32-33.

¹⁵ Watson, J. W. *History of Gujarat*. New Delhi: Cosmos Publication.1983. pp, 39-41.

¹⁶ Ibid. pp., 41-42.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp., 42.

¹⁸ Campbell, James, Macnebb (ed.). *History of Gujarat. Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency. Volume I. Part II. Musalman Gujarat. (A.D. 1297–1760.)* Bombay: The Government Central Press. pp. 266–347.

¹⁹ Commissariat. M.S. (ed.) *Mandelslo's Travels in Western India*. London, 1931, p. 6.

²⁰ Cortesao. Armando (tr. & ed.) *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East. from the Red Sea to China, written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515 & The Book of Francisco Rodrigues, 2 Vols.* London, 1944, rpt. New Delhi: Hakluyt Society. 1990, Vol. I, p. 42.

²¹ Dames, Mansel Longworth (tr. & ed.). *The Book of Duarte Barbosa, An Account of the Countries bordering on the Indian Ocean and their inhabitants, written by Duarte Barbosa and completed about the year 1518 A.D. 2 Vols.* London, 1918-1921, rpt. New Delhi, 1989. Vol. I, p. 159.

²² Reusch, Richard. *History of East Africa*. New York: Evang. Missionsverlag. 1961, p. 226.

²³ The Soviet scholar Shumovsky has shown that this pilot was not an inhabitant of Gujarat. T.A. Shumovsky, *Triniizvestniye lotist Ahmadibn-Majida*, Moskva-Leningrad, 1957.

²⁴ Reusch, Richard. Op-cit. p. 226.

²⁵ Barbosa, Duarte. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa (hereafter cited as Barbosa) vol. I.* London: 1918, p. XXXIII.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 2

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 20-23.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

³¹ Ibid., p. 15.

³² Ahmad, Khwajah Nizamuddin . *The Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, trans. B. De, vol. III. *A History of India From The Early Musalman Invasions To The Thirty-Eighth Year of The Reign Of Akbar*. Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. 1939. p. 290.

³³ Barbosa I, p. 92; Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental (1512-1515)* (hereafter cited as Pires), vol. I., London, 1944, p. 20.

³⁴ Wertomanus, Lewis. (Vartema). *The Navigation, and Voyages Wertoanus*. Edinburgh, 1884, p. 110.

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CHAPTER: FOUR

Lives of Women saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat: An overview

4.0. Introduction: The events of childhood, spiritual retreat and marriage are important to shape the decisive events in the life of women saints. The different stages of the women saints are reflective of society and patriarchal norms. Women saint poets of Rajasthan and Gujarat have played significant role in Rajasthan and Gujarat *bhakti* movement. The women *bhaktas* of Rajasthan and Gujarat have refashioned the role of women at large. These stories are also narration of the struggle for acceptance in the society which was male dominated. The society accepted these women saints through demonstration of devotion to the supreme being, spiritual equality and exceptional poetry skills of the women saints. The vibrancy of the language and grounded nature of saints pervades the imagery of *bhakti* poetry. Women *bhaktas* have penned down the opposition at home, restriction of society, family, restrictions of married life, widowhood, meaningless household chores and absent husband etc.¹ The divine husband image was idealized or imagined by the women saints. The divine-hood attained by the women saints gave them acceptance in the society and till today we see the influence of the women saints. Keeping in mind the above mentioned things we will discuss about women saints birth, marriage and aftermath of their stories and along with these, we will also examine the status of women in the past.

4.1. Position of Women sages/saints in the past. Religion is the most potent source of collective identity. The position of women is closely related to faith. The status of women in society has been a subject of academic inquiry in a wide variety of

disciplines. From history to sociology, from literature to philosophy, a wide range of research projects explore the condition of women in society. Religion is not only the source of belief and religious observances, but also the source of social behavior. It shapes social conduct through laws, prescriptions, and norms. In this context, the history of religion **is** of crucial importance. It offers an excellent opportunity to explore the role of women in the formation of religious and social identity.

From the Vedic period onwards, women are part of the family system, one that was largely patriarchal in terms of how social relationships came to be organised.² The original Sanskrit texts *smṛti* and *śruti* define the status of women in early India.³ In the *Rigveda*, we see shreds of evidence of an ideology that considered –women equal to men. They had all the capacity for knowledge acquisition, which would lead to the Absolute or Brahma. Many of the collected *Ṛgveda*, the hymns that were revealed to women such as Romasa, Lopamudra Apala, Ghosa, Juhu, Jarita, Paulomi, Sraddha, Kamayani, Urvasi, Vagambhrini, Sarnga, Yami, Indrani, Devayani, Savitri, Kadra Visvavara etc. ṛṣkās. In the *Sāmaveda*, some other names also are to be found, such as Nodha, Sikatanivavari, Ganpayana, Akrishtabhasa, etc.⁴ It shows that ancient society and traditions endorsed women's **rights** and ability to pursue religious knowledge and emancipation from the mundane world.

There are many references which indicate that women exercised equal rights in the Vedic period. For instance, Gargi had philosophical debates with Yajnavalkya. For the advancement of education Vadava Prathiety, Sulabh Maitreyi and Gargi Vachaknavi had made valuable contributions. Rishika Atreyi was the student of sages Valmiki and Agastya.⁵

In the Vedic period, women could lead an ascetic life. These women were called Brahnavadinis. The right for marriage was given to the Brahnavadinis. They could get marry to learned bridegrooms. In the *Atharvaveda* it is mentioned that brahnavadini women are entitled to marry in the second ashram.⁶ Women had enjoyed every right and participated in religious ceremonies along with men. In the *Rigveda*, learned women were given the highest social status, and this trend followed later on in the *Upanishads*. *Vedic* women did not observe *Purdah*. They equally participated in Vidatha and recited verses, sang psalms, and wrote the rules of sacrifice.⁷ In this period, we also do not find any evidence of child marriage.⁸

However, it is with the later Vedic Ages that the decline in the social and scriptural status of women began. In this period, women were denied their individuality. Women got limited access to the outer world and remained under the control of father, son, or husband. During the epic age the condition of women further deteriorated. Although women were the central protagonists of these epics, their social condition worsened in society. The Buddhist Sangha gave the women, a space to lead spiritual lives as bhikshunis. However, the Buddhist nuns remained under the control of the monks. Similarly, in the Gupta period, we find prominent queens such as Kumardevi and Prabhavati playing significant political roles in forming matrimonial alliances between the Guptas and the Lichchhavis. However, princely women got some respect, freedom, and power, but the general state of women cannot be decided through the queens and princesses.

Virasaivism was a protestant movement as it protested against the caste system, Brahmanical supremacy, polytheism, panchasutakas, etc. In Virasaivism fold, through lingadharma, equal access has been given to men and women. In Virasaiva, highest respect granted to women and marriage establishes regulated and

complementary union. Virasaiva had gone through reforms with the highest status granted to women, and women saints like Akka Mahadevi, Sajjana Gudda Amma, Sharanamma of Sholapur earned a sacred place.

A.S. Altekar agreed on the Vedic age Pinnacle and that from here the continuous decline in the status of women began. Both have focused on the earlier texts because of the nationalist characterization to influence the writing of history. They have dived deeper in search for the origin and an ideal situation for injecting national and community pride, as well as the reflection of it.⁹ For them, emerging of a national identity was essential as well as a matter of concern. In these early writings, women were excluded from the public life. The perspective about the lives of women was very confined. Society used to see women only worthy in the context of family. Except that, all the other aspects of women's lives were not considered worthy.¹⁰ These authors, however have compiled to hypothesize change in the position of women. They have determined their focus on the questions of legal and religious aspects namely, widow remarriage, right to *niyoga* practice, property right, development and source of institution of *stridhana*, right to adopt children for childless widows etc. They used Brahmanical sources for their studies and were concerned about upper class women's health in the family. It was because upper caste women's health was the assurance for the development of the 'healthy races' in India.

According to Altekar, in the *Vedic* age, Sati got abolished and sanctioning of *niyoga* and remarriage took place. He further tells that it was the threat posed by the non-Aryans that Aryans became conscious and sati came into being to restrict the hybrid race origins or to protect purity of Aryans. Broadly speaking, he found non-Aryan women responsible for the degradation of Aryan women's status as they

were without the knowledge of Sanskrit language. Aryan consorts had more religious privileges than Hindu consorts. Altekar suggests that the birth of a girl child was not welcomed in the society because of the military value of boys. He neglects the contributions of women in their indirect participation in the war activity as the reproducing machine and says that it was also because parents did not wish to see their daughters as widows. In this study, Altekar tried to establish connections between the social formation and status of women to which they are placed. ¹¹

The advent of Turk & Afghan and Mughal invaders continued the general degradation in the Hindu social conditions. The establishment of Islam rule in the subcontinent led to the formation of rigid Hindu social and religious formations. *Purdah* became a restrictive custom and gained wide acceptance. Besides, constant warfare led to the valorization of social practices like *Jauhar*.¹² *Sati pratha* was not widely prevalent before the advent of the Islamic rule in India. It gained more attraction among the upper caste segments of Hindu society during this period. One cannot argue that the Islamic rule directly caused this regressive social practices such as *Sati* and *Purdah*. But they became widely prevalent during the medieval period.¹³ The rigid patriarchal forms of Hindu social and scriptural prescriptions had a connection with the loss of political power in the country.

Medieval Rajasthan saw two broad social changes. The Rajput principalities had compensated for their military defeats by forming political-matrimonial alliances with the Mughal establishment. This has provided a space of limited sovereignty to Hindu Kings. These royal houses became the centers of the newly emergent *bhakti* sects and networks. The Rajput-Mughal alliance played a key role in the formation of Vrindavan as a significant center of *bhakti* theology and practice. The second

change concerns the social position of women in Rajasthan. The scope of women's freedom became curtailed. ¹⁴

Women of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Saurashtra rose above their domestic needs and contributed constructively. The chief queens have acquired a prominent place in the society. Few queens also came to be known as valiant mothers such as Alha, Udal, Deval Devi, etc. Raja Sawai Jai Singh revivalist of Hindu traditions had abolished female infanticide and sati and introduced widow remarriage.¹⁵

Rajput princesses became the tool of political negotiations between the Rajputs and the Mughals. In the lower strata of Rajput society the status of women had declined. It was during this period that a vernacular literary tradition formed itself in both Gujarat and Rajasthan. This tradition received the patronage of the local Hindu chiefs.

With the emergence of the bhakti movement, society had witnessed a progressive landmark. It gave a new message, hope, and liberation path for the people. The message of equality at two levels between men and men, secondly between men and women, has been propagated by the saints. The message of love and devotion was attractive and soothing for women and Sudras. Bhakti saints asserted that the worship of God could be performed through commitment. Women saints hailing from different caste groups like Mirabai, Janabai, Karmabai, Sadhaavi Sita Sulakshani, Gangasati, Sati Loyal, Sati Loyal, Goribai, etc. had attained sainthood. These women saints became symbols of devotion, truth, and loyalty and discarded the traditional rigidity. Gradually, Patidevta got replaced with the worshipping of God.

Male bhakti saints attitude was conservative towards women saints. Bhakti saints were traditional and prejudiced towards women in their indifference to the realities of life. For male *bhakti* saints, women were the obstacle to attain salvation. Eknath said, "an aspirant must keep away from the women's influence." Tukaram declared, 'Give me not the company of women, for, by them, I forget God's worship and my mind goes beyond my control.'¹⁶ For Kabir, women were "a hellish well" and for Shankaracharya, a 'gateway of hell.'¹⁷

Married male saints attitude was humane but still considered women in terms pursuit of pleasure. They never considered women's ability for spiritual salvation and freedom. It is propagated that the impact of the *bhakti* movement teachings fell short amongst the masses and priestly class due to this shortcoming.¹⁸ The concept of asceticism had diverted the message of *bhakti* and women were considered as *Maya* or obstacle for *bhakti*.¹⁹

The *bhakti* movement created a space **for** women and *shudra* saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat. This space of emancipation needs to be studied within two contexts. First, an argument that the *bhakti* movement raised a voice of protest against caste or gender-based discrimination, but it could not eradicate such practices. The proper evaluation of the freedom that *bhakti* **brought** to women and members of lower strata in India can be done only when we compare it to the social movements of the similar groups of population in the neighboring nations of South Asia of the same period. Second, the present-day orientation towards the problems of social and gender justice need not render the historians blind to the accomplishment of the *bhakti* movement in this regard. It is beyond the scope of the present study to analyze these two concerns at length. However, we will keep these in mind as we go about

studying the lives and works of the women saints of the *bhakti* movement. We will first discuss the life and works of Mirabai.

4.2. Women Saints of Rajasthan : In the terms of women saints' tradition of Rajasthan and Gujarat, Mirabai stands out as one of the most prominent figures. Mirabai is considered a great saint of the Indian soil. Given the context that in Indian culture and society, where mostly women who bear children are given respect., Mirabai, who was not a “mother” was still revered. Songs of Mirabai are sung in different regional languages, but the most critical aspect is that these songs have become part of local/ regional cultures. Although saint Mirabai did not get any respect in her contemporary society, she had encouraged women in the later time to face difficult times head-on. To trace the figure of Mirabai, different sources i.e., hagiographical, manuscripts, *Khyat, Vat, Bat, Prakas, Vachnika, Vigat, Vamsavali, Hal, Raso, Haqikat* are important. Still, *Khyat*, an advanced development, is essential for historical representation.²⁰

Mirabai was born in a Vaishnava family in 1498 A.D. Although, scholars have different opinions regarding the birth date and place of Mirabai. Munshi Devi Prasad, Gauri Shankar Hirachand Ojha, Parshuram Chaturvedi, Hermann Goetz, have declared 1498 A.D. birth year of Mirabai based on Munsu Devi Prasad's book and other literary evidence.²¹ Her family was an ardent devotee of Krishna and followers of Vaishnavism. Her parents passed away in her childhood. She belonged to a royal family, and her father, Ratan Singh, was the feudal lord of few villages. Rao Duda, grandfather of Mirabai, was king of Merta. In Marwar Ra Paragna ri Vigat' we find information and details of the Rathor family of Merta and Rao Duda, Varsingh, Rao Biramdev, Rao Jaymal, Duda and their religious practices.²²

Udaybhan Champavat ri Khyat describes Rathor's family and its acceptance of Vaishnava faith. Biramdev forced Bhoj Sihavat to depart Kudki after the death of Rao Duda. He handed over Kudki to Ratansi.²³

Bhakts of Krishna had accepted him in different capacities. Mirabai called herself beloved, maidservant, and wife of Krishna and declared Krishna as her husband.

Two incidents are very famous in the life of Mirabai. During her childhood, she saw Shri Girdharlal alias Lord Krishna. One day a saint came to her father's house. He had an idol of Lord Krishna, and Mirabai got attracted to it. She keenly desired the idol, but Saint refused to give the idol to Mirabai and left the house. Mirabai became obstinate and refused to accept food or water. God himself has appeared in the dream of the saint and ordered him to give the idol to Mirabai. It was the will of Mirabai, which forced the saint.

In another episode, a marriage was taking place to her neighbourhood. After seeing the bridegroom, Mirabai had asked as to who was her bridegroom?". Mother of Mirabai fed up with her continuous pestering and told her that the idol of Krishna was her husband while indicating towards the idol of Krishna. On this, Mirabai has accepted Krishna as her husband and presented herself as married women.²⁴

Her childhood poetry indicates her inclination towards Lord Krishna:

She sings: "Come, O Charmer of Hearts,

For your speech is sweet.

O Krishna did you ever rightly,

Value my Childhood love?

Without your sight, I feel no ease,

My mind swings this way and that.

Mira says: I am yours.

I will proclaim this, with your permission,

To the beat of a drum.”²⁵

Ratan Singh, the father of Mirabai, was always busy in the war, so Mirabai spent most of her time with her grandfather, Rao Dudaji. Her cousin Jaimal, son of Rao Veeramdev, also lived with them. Rao Duda Ji was a Vaishnavite and ardent devotee of God Chaturbhuj. It had a massive effect on the life of Mirabai, and she inclined towards the path of bhakti in her childhood.²⁶

After the death of Rao Dudaji in 1515 A.D., his elder son Veeramdev ascended the throne. He wanted to marry his niece to a reputed family. Finally, after his efforts, Mirabai married Mewar's Maharana Sangha's eldest son prince Bhojraj in 1516 A.D.

We have found references of this marriage in the Khyat literature of Muhanot Nainsi, Diwan of Maharaja Jaswant Singh. In his Sisodiya ri Khyat we got a mention of the union of Mirabai. Khyat also describes Maharana Sangha's son, Rana Ratansi, Rana Vikramaditya, Rana Udaysingh Bhojraj, and Karan.

It mentions that :

“Bhojraj Sanghawat!

Mirabai Rathor got married to him only”.²⁷

In Pada Prasanga Mala, Nagridas states that Mirabai was married to younger brother of Rana, who died after sometime. Barhat Chaindan in his Mundiyaad ri Khyat narrated that,

It means: “Viramdev, Ratansingh, Raipal, Raisal

Mirabai indulged in the Bhakti and got married in Udaipur.”²⁸

Mundiyaad ri Khyat have considered saint Mirabai a devotee of God. But ironically *Mundiyaad ri Khyat* gives false information about Mirabai’s childhood, marriage, devotion. Indeed one can reach on conclusion that on one hand *Khyat* shows respect and on the other fabricated information. So the main question arises regarding authenticity of *Khyat*. It says that Mirabai Married in Udaipur but the city of Udaipur was founded in the later centuries.²⁹

This marriage had established the social status of saint Mirabai. The ruler of Mewar was very reputed in the whole community of Hindu rulers. But after few days of her marriage, prince Bhojraj died. Mirabai did not even consummate with her husband, Bhojraj. Even during the tough times for family, Mirabai had taken it as a routine of life. She had devoted herself entirely to the *bhakti* of Lord Krishna.³⁰

It is said that after marriage, she brought the idol of Krishna and servant Lalita along with her. During her whole life her servant, Lalita was along with her. After the death of Bhaojraj, Mirabai separated herself from the mundane world and devoted herself to the *bhakti* of Lord Krishna.³¹

Mirabai had discarded the social prestige concept of the royal family and served the sadhus. Such acts of Mirabai were not acceptable in the royal family.

Ratan Singh ascended the throne after the death of Rana Sanga, but he also died, and Vikramjit succeeded him. Vikramjit was very orthodox, and he did not like the dancing of Mirabai in the company of sadhus, discarding of Purdah acts. He did atrocity on Mirabai and tried to kill her on different occasions. Mirabai has mentioned atrocious nature of Vikramjit Singh in her bhajan and which says that, I was well aware that Rana Vikramjit Singh has sent me poison, but it is the same when you place gold in the fire; it shines more, so nothing had happened to me.³² Mirabai had discarded the worldly shame, the same as dirty water. I don't need to do purdah because I am in love with Girdhar. I have even sacrificed my body, mind, and have surrendered myself in the feet of God. I don't need any protection because god himself is protecting me. He knows his servants.³³

Saint Mirabai puts the devotion of songs on her tongue. At her paternal place she considers God, who is attached to her mind and body as her base of *bhakti*. There are hymns of Hari in my (Mirabai) mind and I fight with the sadness of the mundane world with these hymns of devotion. And the different kinds of pain and tragedy given to me are not given to me, but to this earth. I am both earth and women together. The salvation from this pain I will get through my songs and good deeds. Only after salvation from pain these two will be respected.

Here one thing emerges that both nature and women have been exploited by patriarchy. The modern time idea of Eco-feminism was very much present during those days. The modern language and understanding is different of patriarchy and in medieval time it was different.

Brahamadas has given description of Rana's acts. It says:

Mirabai is keenly waiting

After a long wait, she became sad

She waits day and night

She became madly in love with Krishna

Sings in the memory of Krishna

Rana saw her acts

And became angry

Rana sent the servant

With poison

Mirabai consumed it

Nothing happened to her

Mirabai devoted herself to Krishna

She disappeared to God.³⁴

In *Pada Prasanga Mala*, Nagaridas gave an interpretation of episode to giving poison to Mirabai and her company of Sadhus. According to the author, Mirabai had replied to Rana, and the couplet follows.

The color of bhakti of Hari is ultimate and others are fake. My beloved has taken my heart. I am happily singing and loving my beloved Girdhar, So I cannot commit Sati.³⁵

Pada Prasanga of Nagaridas mentioned that Mirabai denied to commit sati because of her love with Krishna, and she sang bhajans of Krishna. Because of her love with

Krishna, she was compelled not to commit sati. Pada Prasanga also mentioned about Bhagavad Satsang of Mirabai, offering poison by Rana and not agreeing to consummate her marriage.

In the prominent hagiographical account of that time is *Bhaktmal* written by Nabhaadas in the 17th Century. We find a description of Mirabai in *Bhaktmal*.

It states that Like Gopika Mirabai revealed her love!

Fearlessly she has sung the songs of beloved !!

She figured everything and refused death!

Nothing happened to her after consuming poison !!

Mirabai did not feel ashamed!

She gave up public shyness (expected from a woman) and the tradition of her family
and sung

the Girdhar bhajans !!”³⁶

Based on the oral stories and devotional verses, Chaitanya Sampraday’s close associate, Priya das wrote *Tika*. In 1769 Samvat wrote *Bhakti Ras bodhini tika*. Priya das printed a tale of the love of Mirabai for Krishna. Priya das says Mirabai had fallen in love with Krishna, and in her in-law's house, Mirabai refused to worship Kuldevi. Mirabai declared that her head will only lower in the name of Krishna. The text has shown the enmity of Mirabai and her in-laws. The mother-in-law of Mirabai considered Mirabai not worthy of her family because of her respect was not revealed to anyone except Krishna idol. The text further claims that in-laws of Mirabai separated her from the family and gave her a small place to live. Mirabai was an

ardent devotee of Krishna, and after these episodes, she was pleased because she could worship Krishna without any objection.

Priya das gave details of Mirabai and Krishna's love. Mirabai survived after even consuming poison, and Priya Das described that Rana ordered spies to inform him if any Sadhu comes to meet Mirabai. One day, spies had heard the voice of a Sadhu. On getting the message Rana immediately rushed to Mirabai and asked her, "who was here?", she replied while looking towards Krishna, "he is here, and he (Krishna) is not afraid of you."³⁷

Book gives details about the marriage of Mirabai in the Royal family, atrocities on Mirabai at Mewar, and discussion of Mirabai with Jiv Goswami das ji.

Priya Das also talks about the travel of Mirabai to Vrindavan, Gujarat, sending Brahmins to bring Mirabai back to Mewar by Rana and her disappearance.

Priya Das also gives a reference to Uddabai, her sister-in-law. Uddabai gives suggestions to Mirabai that: "Sister in law! Why you do not understand! Falling in love with sadhus brings dishonor to the family! Ranaji is king, and because of your acts, he feels ashamed"!³⁸

So above mentioned different *Khyat*, the literature describes the life of Mirabai. In the year 1533, A.D. Mirabai left Mewar forever. The environment of Merta was favorable for her bhakti. Viramdev and Jaimal both gave respect to Mirabai. Few relics of her kitchen and living space are still present. There was a constant struggle between Merta and Jodhpur. King of Jodhpur, Maldev had annexed Merta in 1538 A.D. These episodes had a tremendous effect on the life of Mirabai, and she compelled herself to leave Merta. She decided on a journey of Vrindavan.³⁹

Vrindavan was the center of Krishna *bhakti* in the whole of India. Vallabhacharya was spreading the message of Bal-Gopal *bhakti*, and Jivgoswami das preached Madhurya Bhava *bhakti*. The *bhakti* environment of Vrindavan was favorable for Mirabai, and she could devote most of her time in Krishna *bhakti*. This stay of Mirabai in Vrindavan gave birth to the new Mirabai. In Vrindavan, Goswamidas – refused to meet Mirabai based on her identity as a woman. On which Mirabai had replied that I thought that there is one male, Krishna and rest are female, but there are few others who consider themselves as male. This discussion with Mirabai has impressed Goswamidas. ⁴⁰

After an extended stay in Vrindavan, Mirabai left for Dwaraka. Her popularity had spread miles away, and Brahmins sent by both sides to bring her back, but Mirabai, in the last, disappeared in the idol of Ranchoddas.

Bhakt Siromani Ranabai (1504-1570 CE): In medieval Rajasthan, when saint Dhanna, Pipa, Jambhoji, Jasnathji, Dadu, etc. were trying for the reformation of society and giving messages of social transformation at that time saint, Ranabai taught the lesson of *bhakti*. Ranabai was born in the Marwar region's Harnam village in 1504 A.D. Birdhichand mentions in his writings about the birth of Saint Ranabai.

Pandhra so ekshat Pragat, Akha teej tayohar |

Jahi din rana janam ho, ghar ghar mangalachar || ⁴¹

On the auspicious occasion of 1561 (1501A.D.), *akshya tritya* Ranabai was born and happiness spread in every house. Ranabai was born in the Jat community. Her father's name was Ramgopal, and her mother was Gangasti. Although there are different viewpoints regarding her father's name. In the *parchi* of *Ranabai*,

Sukhsaran Maharaj says that Jalam Jat was the father of Ranabai. It states: Nam Pita ko Jalam Jat, Dhaman jaat vibha ko thaat.⁴² We find another reference to her father from 'Ranabai ki Aarti'. It states, '*Harsh Hua Harnave, Jalam ghar jaai*'.⁴³ It means: Happiness has spread in Harnav village when Ranabai was born in the house of Jalam. It is said here that her fathers name was Jalim Jat and the Jat community was known for hard work. This community was also known for its wealthiness. The life of Ranabai is full of all kinds of opulence and splendor.

At another place in her *bhajan*, *Ranabai* mentions her birth. This is called as *betinama* in the modern trends of writings.

The *bhajan* says: *Harnava me jai ho, aapki jot sawai ho|*

*Dhuvan jat kahai ho, Jalamji ki bai ho ||*⁴⁴

It means: Born in Harnava village and her light of knowledge or devotion gave pride to the whole dynasty. She is called as Dhuvan jat. She is the daughter of Jalam Jat.

Few other prominent scholars on the Jat community, Thakur Deshraj, and Sukhveer Singh Dalal, also have an opinion that Jalamjat was the father of Ranabai. At the same time, we found few couplets of Birdhichand and Karnisharan, those have declared Ramgopal her father.

Panraso eksath pratayaksh, teej akshya tayohar|

*Pita Ramgopal ghar, Rana ko Avtar||*⁴⁵

It means in the year of 1561 A.D., on the occasion of Akshaya tritya, in the house of Ramgopal, incarnation of Ranabai took place. It establishes the fact that Jalamjat was the grandfather of Ranabai. Ramgopal married Gadhwal gotra, Gangabai, and

became father to three daughters, Dhanibai, Ranabai, Dhapubai, and one son.⁴⁶ The family of Ranabai was not happy with her religious inclination. When the proposal of her marriage came, then she rejected it while saying that she has accepted God himself as her husband. She remained unmarried for life long.

Ranabai says that lord Ram is my husband. My *Satguru* has given me direction. My husband is immortal, and his mass is made of light. ⁴⁷

She devoted herself entirely to *bhakti*. One day saint Charndas visited her house, and she made him, her guru. Saint Charndas was famously known as Khojaji. Her family was very much in pain after seeing her attachment for bhakti. She has found a place lastly where she wanted to preach the name of God day and night without any disturbances. In the backyard of her house, one cave was available, and she took shelter in the cave for one year. No one was able to trace her. It is very famous for this act that God himself arranged her food and water. Everyone lost hope and had concluded that Ranabai might kill herself. When her family came to know one day that Ranabai was in the cave, they requested her to go out of the cave and give *darshan* to people.⁴⁸

Another couplet says that everyone was waiting for Ranabai. They had requested her to come out of the cave to give *darshan* to everyone.⁴⁹ People had requested her and said you become great and make others great.

The popularity and messages of the sacred pious soul have reached to surroundings. There are many stories, or narratives build around the figure of Ranabai. One of the stories says that Soobedar of Mughal sultanate have attracted towards the beauty of Ranabai and forcefully wanted to marry her. After **learning of this incident**, Ranabai

cut the head of Soobedar. This act of Ranabai further spread her popularity in Rajasthan.⁵⁰

Thakur Rajsingh of Merta took part from the side of Jodhpur in the war against Padsha. Thakur stayed in Harnava village and sought blessings of Ranabai to be victorious. He made a wish that after winning the war, he will visit Ranabai, but he did not come to Ranabai. When he tried to enter through Boravad, his elephant denied. After the realization of his mistake, he came to take blessings of Ranabai, and then he could open the gate of Boravad.

Ranabai was contemporary of Mirabai, and both have stayed in Vrindavan. She has travelled to Mathura and Vrindavan in the company of Nimbakacharya Parsuramdev Sulemabad. Ranabai has requested god Gopinath Ji to come to her country. God Gopinath came in the form of an idol, and braj lata and she constructed one temple for the idol. While worshipping God Gopinath on the day of Flgun Shukla Trayodasi and year 1570 A.D., Ranabai took Samadhi and left this world.⁵¹

Another prominent woman saint of this time was **Sahajobai**. Sahajobai was a devotee of Charndasi sect founder Charandas. She was the Guru sister of Dayabai. She was born in the Dehra village of Mewat region Rajasthan and later on migrated to Parishikatpur (Delhi). She has authored a book named Sahajprakash. In the book Sahajprakash, the author has mentioned her stay in Delhi, her birth kul; Vaishya kul, and the name of her father, Hariprasad. It is assumed that after getting education and sermons from Charandas Ji, she started staying in Delhi. Scholars unanimously agree on the dates of her birth and death as 1683 A.D. birth date and 1765 AD as death date.⁵²

Her writings do not ascertain the dates themselves, however, in a few instances, she gave a glimpse in her writings. She says that I am the daughter of Hariprasad. My name is Sahajobai. I am born in the Dhushar clan and have always been close to Guru's feet. The name of my Guru is Charandas ji. He has shown me path of devotion. My Guru gave me vision to see the universe. ⁵³

It is very much possible that around 1743 A.D. Sahajobai was alive. Above mentioned couplet defines it. Sahajobai was the only girl child of her parents. An episode of her marriage is written in the contemporary of Charandas's Jogjeet's Lilasagar. According to it, at the age of 10 or 12, her marriage got decided in the wealthy Bhargava sect family. When the marriage preparations were taking place Sahajobai recited one couplet and said that its story can be told after giving head. It is true to die in this world and no one has come here to live forever but people rarely considers it. ⁵⁴

After listening to the proposal of marriage, Sahajobai has denied the proposal. All her family relatives tried to agree to her for the wedding, but she did not agree. Now in her life, she had become quietude. Her father, along with his four sons and only girl daughter, became a devotee of Charandas Ji. In her one poem, she had defined her love for guru and about herself. According to Vankhade, Sahajobai was very much into serving water, serving guru, and other works of the ashrama. She **served** the society without any selfish/individualistic motives. She devoted her time in the evening and morning for Satsang and day time in serving the devotees and fellow followers.

In the *Nagri Pracharini Sabha*, her handwritten book **is** found. Writings of Sahajobai can be traced from *Santbani Sangreh*, *Sahaj Prakash*, and *Solah tatwanirnay*.

In the Guru tradition, she used to worship Shukdev Ji Maharaj, and later on, she started worship of Charandas Maharaj. Her teachings reflected on following the path of Guru for salvation. The writings of Sahajobai are in Braj, Rajasthani, and Khadi Boli. Her contribution is immense in *bhakti* literature.

Another prominent saint of medieval Rajasthan was **Sadhvi Sita Sulakshani**. Sadhvi Sita belongs to the royal family. Although there are different views regarding her birth year. Between 1446-1451 Vikram Samvat, most of the scholars considered her birth year. Sadhvi Sita **was** married to Rao Pipa. Rao Pipa belonged to the royal family of Gagron Gadh. He was born in 1416 Vikram Samvat.

Sita married in the Khichi dynasty royal family. Rao Pipa became famous with the name of saint Pipa. He had twelve queens. When Rao Pipa have discarded the kingdom at that time, Sadhvi Sita, also taken renunciation along with him and decided to travel through the jungle.

During the period of Mahaparyan of Sadhvi Sita, the king of toda became a father with the blessings of Saint Dadu and Sadhvi Sita. Sadhvi Sita gave him blessings and said live a long life and don't do wrong acts ever.⁵⁵

During the time of renunciation, Sadhvi Sita was twenty-four years old. In the text of 'Sadhvi Sita Sati Ji ro Bakhan' Sadhvi Sita's departed year considered in 1472 Vikrami Vaishaki Samvat. It is said that Rajpurohit of the family predicted that Sadhvi Sita will get married in a royal family and will leave home as Sanyasini. At the time of marriage, Sita was sixteen, renunciation time twenty-five age, and at the time of Mahaprayan age was forty-two years. Rajpurohit of the family gave her Padmini name.

Saint **Karmabai** was born in a Jat family in 1615 A.D. Karmabai, is known as a liberal bhakti woman saint who has served God in her way. Karmabai born in Kalva village of Nagaur district. Her father's name was Jivan Ram Dudi. At an early age, she married in Saou gotra but became a widow very soon. Father of Karmabai was the ardent devotee of God, and once, he went for pilgrimage. It was in the daily routine of her father to feed god before having food as part of prayer or devotion. He gave the responsibility to Karmabai and left. The very next day, Karmabai cooked *Khichari* and came to feed god, but he did not accept it. Karmabai was unable to understand that the idol of god cannot have food. She repeated this cycle for three days and taken a pledge that if God does not have *Khichari*, then she will also die fasting. For Karmabai, it was not an idol, but God himself present in the idol. She did purdah with her *Chabaliya* but could not succeed. After three days of her fast god himself appeared and had *Khichari*. This routine got repeated every day. The news reached the surroundings. In *Bhaktmal* of Nabhadas it is mentioned about Karmabai and her cooking *Khichari of Jawar* for Dwarka god, Krishna. ⁵⁶

Father of Karmabai was surprised, when he came to know about the story of eating food by god himself. Karmabai was far away from the rituals and did not follow any ritualistic tradition.⁵⁷

She was not conventional. One day a saint guru visited her house and gave her direction to follow rituals. The Guru said that, without guru, rituals are waste, and she should have food after feeding the idol given by Saint Guru. ⁵⁸

Karmabai says that the image of God will be shown only on the grace of what is written in your luck. For devotion, two prominent things are required. These two are seva and devotion.

Guru asked her to follow the rituals. He said without bath, and one should not offer food to god. Karmabai became late in providing food, and god waited for very long. Few other couplets also throw light on the other events. Priest of the temple saw *khichari* on the mouth of God. Couplet states that God had half *Khichari* and without washing mouth went to the temple. After seeing it, the priest of the temple had asked God that whom he loves more then *Chappan bhog*.⁵⁹

In this way, lord Jaggannath used to come every day to have *Khichari* of *Karmabai*. In the recent times temple of Karmabai constructed in Jaggannathpuri, and *Khichari* of Karmabai offered to God before *Chappan bhog*.

Saint **Dayabai** was born in 1693 A.D. Saint Dayabai was the guru sister of Sahajobai. Her teacher or guru name was Charandas. She was born in Dehra village of Mewat region. Although much less information is available about the life of Dayabai. It is said that both of them were disciples of Charandasji, and Charndasji founded the Suk Sampradaya sect. Her family was Dhusar (Vaishya). she has written two poems, *Daya bodh* and *Vinay Malika*. She has completed her writing in 1761 A.D. Dayabai was an ascetic woman.⁶⁰

Gawari (1758-1808), who born in the Vagad family of Dungarpur, was another prominent woman saint of Rajasthan. As a child widow, she has seen opposition from society. The birth, marriage, and renunciation of Gawaribai took place in her paternal village. Her descendant came to Girpur (Dungarpur) two hundred years back of her birth and settled.⁶¹ Parents of Gawaribai felt blessed after the birth of a girl child and did not discriminate based on gender. At the time of marriage, She was very young and could not even recognize her wedding because of her teenage. she had composed six hundred padas. Most of her time was spent with sadhus and in

kirtan. She is a well-known woman saint of medieval Rajasthan. Whenever anyone asked her after the death of her husband, she replied my husband is god himself, and God is immortal. So she even had asked the question of how I can be a widow? When Gawaribai became eleven years old, she had acquired lots of knowledge through her education. She restricted herself within the walls of the house and devoted entirely into *bhakti*. The mode of *bhakti* was *Puja, Kirtan, bhajan, Satsang*, etc.

Along with these *bhakti* modes, she devoted her time for writing of *padas* of *bhakti* and used to sing them.⁶²

Saint Siromani Phoolibai was a prominent saint of Rajasthan. She belonged to the Jat community of Rajasthan. In the women saints of the Jat community, Ranabai, Karmabai, and Phoolibai are very prominent. Phoolibai was born in 1568 A.D. at Majhvaas village of Nagaur. Her parents were Hemaram and Nauja. The childhood of Phoolibai has spent while cow grazing and agriculture activities. From her childhood onwards, Phoolibai was inclined towards bhakti.

Famous saint Gyaniji gave direction to Phoolibai to follow bhakti Marg. One day while going to her fields, she met with saint Gyanji. In Rajasthan, it is an old tradition to call a girl with the title of 'Bai' out of affection and respect. After realizing devotion for bhakti and the spirituality of Phoolibai, saint Gyanji asked her for food. He said, "Bai, I am starving, please give me something to eat." We got information about the conversation with saint Gyaniji, from *Parchi of Phoolibai*:

The couplet says that Satguru Gyaniji resided in Jodhana, Marudhar country. Phoolibai was going to the fields with food, and Satguru, Gyaniji, met with her. Hungry Satguru had asked her for food which Phoolobai offered with love and

affection, and Satguru became happy. Satguru Gayaniji gave her blessings and asked her to remember the name of Ram. Phoolibai had realized the bhakti of her previous birth and became delighted after getting the Mantra of the name of Ram. ⁶³

Phoolibai after this incident, filled the vacuum of her life with the name of Ram and accepted Gyaniji as her guru. Such situations compelled her family to search the groom for her, but Phoolibai did not accept any proposal and declared her wish of not marrying. In 1583 A.D., her family did her engagement with the son of Manoj Jani. Phoolibai compelled the family to consider her request for not marrying. Phoolibai says that I am already married to God himself, and he has taken me under his asylum. He is always with me in any circumstances, and there is no fear of him dying. When Jani came to her house, she gave it a thought and said that sahib of all the saints is my husband.⁶⁴

In the year 1587, A.D. Phoolibai involved herself in complete bhakti. She had taken shelter under the *Khejri* tree and started her *bhajan* and *kirtan*. With the blessings of *Phoolibai* pond, *Pilkudi* was carved.

King of Jodhpur, Jaswant Singh, once had a brief introduction of Phoolibai from few saints. From Kabul, he came directly to the house of Phoolibai to take her blessings. Phoolibai was a very grounded saint, and when Raja Jaswant Singh visited her home, she was busy in making Upala from cow dung. She ignored the king completely and spread some cow dung on him. Jaswant Singh became very angry about it and called her uncouth. On this saint Phoolibai replies there is no use in moving your mind back and forth. One has to be strong. One day your arrogance or ego will convert into mud as the body. Everyone has been born from this soil and will be found in this soil only. Phoolibai says, O king for all the sufferings only remedy are the bhajans of God.

Phoolibai asks king ‘ O king tell me how you will make your unholy body pure or superior. So if you want to save your life, then be a devotee of god and do bhajan.’⁶⁵

In the conversation, she replied to King's meaning of her name that till the moment I am always there can be any name and the moment I will die, there will be only one name called Puran. For salvation, the name of Rama is sufficient.

It is a famous incident that she has offered food and water to the army of King Jaswant Singh. Although it seems like an exaggeration but it was very present in the oral literature of that time. King Jaswant Singh even requested her to give sermons to his queens. King had accepted Phoolibai as **his adoptive** sister. While seeing the appearance of the **clothes** of Phoolibai, queens of the king made fun of her. To such behavior, Phoolibai gave a sharp reply and said that you are wasting your precious life because of these worldly things.

After giving the sermons to the king and queen, she returned to her village, where she devoted herself entirely to *bhakti*. She died in 1646 A.D. at the age of 78 years.

Chattra Kunvribai was a prominent saint who married Gopal Singh. Kanvribai was the follower of the Nimbark sect and devoted herself to Krishna. She was a mystic poet of Rajasthan, and her contribution is valuable in the journey of bhakti. **Karmeti Bai** was a woman saint of Rajasthan. Karmeti Bai was born in Khandela village. Her father's name was Parshuram Kathdiya. She had left for Vrindavan immediately after her marriage. She lost herself completely into Krishna bhakti and decided to surrender herself in the asylum of Krishna. To save herself from the horsemen, she hides in the shell of a camel. The Thakur of Khandela built a temple in her memory. She spent her whole life in the Brahm Kund of Vrindavan.

Saman Bai, a saint-poet of Rajasthan, was born in the Charan family of Bhavi village. She dedicated herself to bhakti and God. Although very little information is available on her life, one common thing of her life was that she lived her life in simplicity. She considered ego as the biggest hurdle of her life.

The soil of Rajasthan gave birth to many women saint poetess. Indeed, information about many women saints still needs to be explored, and it is more in abstract form. Either information about these women bhakti saints **is** available in oral form or other medium but written documents **are** not available. Although these women bhakti saints were very prominent personalities or saints of contemporary society due to social oppression or other reason, their messages are not available in written form. These women bhakti saints are Daya Bai, Bholi Gujar, Mahatma Bhanwari bai, Taj Begum, Gyanmati bai, Jansukhati, Rani Rupa Devi, Rani Ratnavati, Rani Anoop Kanwari, Abha Bai, Sarupa Bai, etc. We get very little information about these women saints.

4.3. Women saints of Gujarat:

In the Gujarat history of bhakti, Narsimha Mehta is a very prominent name, who was native of Talaja, Bhavnagar district. Narsimha Mehta was born in the Brahmin family in 1412 AD. In the Gujarati language, he contributed 2000 padas as caturi, sodasi, Haramala, danalila, Govindagaman, and works are majorly *bhakti* poems and love poems. According to Narsimha Mehta, the real Vishnu devotee is the one who understands and feels others sufferings and not the one who is a follower of

Vaisnavism teaching. Mahatma Gandhi incorporated his hymns in his life and championed "*Vaishnav Jana to tene Kahiye ji pida paraye jane re...*" song. Gandhi took over the message of Narsimha Mehta and has changed the poetry of Gujarat as impersonal to personal. ⁶⁶

When it comes to Women *bhakti* saints of Gujarat, Mirabai is equally acceptable to Gujarat. Other *bhakti* women saints are less visible in Gujarati literature. In the other *bhakti* women, saints of Gujarat Gangasati, Toral, Loyal, Gorebai, Ratnabai, etc. are important. Although these *bhakti* women saints have got less importance in comparison to male *bhakti* saints such as Dhiro, Mitho, Jivan, etc. Women *bhakti* saints works are not discussed in details, and only outlines get discussed. ⁶⁷

Most of the *bhajans* of these Women *bhakti* saints are available in the oral form. These songs are famous at the regional area to which the saints belong. Saurashtra region of Gujarat is renowned for protecting local traditions, folk music, dance, etc. These are very much an integral part of Gujarati culture. Although we see that most of the recent literature only talks about Gorebai, Diwalibai, and saints like Gangasati left out. Most of the contemporary writers have focused on their area-specific poet-saints writing. Saurashtra region is known for its traditional mentality. Most of the Rajputs consider birth of a girl child as a sin in the family, and due to this most of the women's rights were oppressed in the region. ⁶⁸

In a traditional society, which was patriarchal, it was not easy to allow women to become saints and icons for the community. Her life as a saint would be challenging for the man and his status in society. Most of the women saints in Gujarat were respected but did not get an equal position to men. Although their *bhakti*, songs,

devotion, and supernatural power **were** discussed but not their revolutionary nature against odd traditions.⁶⁹

In Gujarat, *Sagun bhakti* was famous, and most of the *bhakti* saints came from Brahmana families. In the region of Kathiawar and Kutch most of the *bhakti* women saints belong from the lower strata of the society, i.e., Loyal and Amarbai. Due to the restriction of entry into the temple, most of this region, women *bhakti* saints sang *Nirgun bhakti* poetry.

In Gujarat's Kathiawar and Kutch, three *bhakti* Women saints Gangasati, Sati Toral, and Sati Loyal are famous. Their writings and life stories have been discussed in detail and are alive in the oral medium. All these three *bhakti* Women saints were *Nirgun bhakti* saints. Their songs incorporate Sufi teachings as well. Three women saints tell the importance of guru to attain salvation, and according to them, salvation can only achieve through guru teachings. Apart from these Goribai, Ratnabai, Sati Roopa, Sati Deval, Sati Amarbai, Diwalibai, and Krishnabai were prominent women *bhakti* saints of Gujarat. Goribai and Ratnabai were *Sagun bhakti* saints.⁷⁰

Gangasati: The period of Gangasati was around 12th to 14th centuries. Gangasati was born in the Royal family of the Saurashtra region at Rajpara village of Palitana. She belonged to Vaghela Rajput dynasty. She inherited *bhakti* values and traditions from her parents. Her parent's name was Bhajibha Jesaji and Rupaliba. She was married at the age of eighteen to Gohel Kahlubha of Samadhiyala village of Saurashtra. Panbai, who was her maid, friend, and disciple, also sent along with her as part of the royal family tradition. Both the families were ardent devotees of God. In this way, both sides were equally favorable of Ganapati.⁷¹

The land of Saurashtra is known for Suras, saints, and satis. Gangasati had imbibed these qualities. Gangasati was chaste, devoted, and ready to sacrifice herself. So she falls into this above category of Suras, Saint and Sati.⁷²

Her husband, Kahalubha's company, was path-breaking for her renouncing *bhakti* because she got access to meet many *bhakti* saints there. Welcoming saints to her house was an integral part of her life. Both husband and wife were religious, and most of the time, they only had food after the saints had. Due to her devotional *bhakti* and after washing feet of saints, she consumed the water that was left. The effect of this scene on her son, who was about to die, became alive and healthy. After that, her husband, Kahalubha, became more devotional to *bhakti*.⁷³

Rametavan, an accomplished saint, was the spiritual guru of the couple who belonged from Mount Girnar. Gangasati got her education in her native language. Although there is confusion regarding her child. Few scholars say that she gave birth to a son, whereas other scholars say that she gave birth to two daughters. The spiritual odyssey of Gangasati spread all around and downtrodden, married couples, saints, and many other disciples have joined her in Satsang.

There was another critical incident in her life when around twenty to twenty-five saints came to her house. These saints did not get shelter in the whole village except Kahlubha house. One day one devotee invited Bhoj to these saints. While going in the way, they saw a dead cow. So one person asked these saints that although it is a very pious occasion to arrange bhoj for the saints. Can you leave this dead cow and proceed for bhoj. They did not pay attention to such words. Kahlubha felt very bad about it, and he reached home and narrated the whole episode to his wife Gangasati.

On this Gangasati replied although people will say anything, we should not feel bad or **any** animosity and forgive such people. Without any expectations, we must have belief and devotion in the saints. She had asked her husband to go and wash the feet of saints and splash it on the cow. Her husband did the same, and the dead cow became alive.

Kahlubha felt terrible for it and decided to give up his life out of the guilt.⁷⁴ In the saint tradition of India, dead bodies of saints are buried. Kahlubha had taken samadhi. Along with Kahlubha, Gangasati also wanted to take samadhi, but Kahlubha convinced her not to take samadhi. He wanted her to transfer knowledge through sermons to Panabai. Gangasati for this purpose, later had prepared one bhajans collection of fifty-three in fifty-three days. On the fifty-fourth day, she gave up her life and had taken Samadhi.⁷⁵ Her bhajans follows:

Clean yourself, come out in the field, Panabai

Learn of what stuff your soul is made

To know your kind from others, I teach you

I print you on another design

String the Pearl...

Beyond self and world is a teacher, Panabai.

I show you his land

Gangasati says

There no trace of illusion remains

String the pearls⁷⁶

Gangasati further states that devotion and compassion become a major requirement in the path of *bhakti*.

Before teaching others, show devotion.

Thus dissolving their illusions

Extend to them always compassion,

Address them with respect, attention

Cast no seed...

When their doubts disappear, the mind is at peace.

When they do not hate or envy any.

Gangasati says, only then.

To such a one, show the land of God.⁷⁷

This is the only example where a woman Saint gets respect due to her knowledge. *Gangasati* in her bhajans, gave direction to Pana to follow the path of truth. *Gangasati* was the ardent devotee of nirgun prambrama and did not talk about any specific Hindu deity. She had a strong belief that to attain salvation, and one must follow discipline and self-devotion. She had stressed on the direction of pious Guru.

Saint Toral: Legends of Saint Toral are full of classic chivalry, a sacrifice which finally unfolds in the dramatic scene of giving away one's wife and laced with myths. Sati Toral was Kathiwari's saint woman. Kathi category includes rulers, soldiers, and Jagirdar. She married Sansatia, but Jasal Toral and Sant Toral are better half, and

both are famous as legendary lovers as well as the saint pairs. Jasal was a Rajput dacoit from Kutch, who was dared to acquire Toral. According to legend, he threatened to acquire three things Tati, Toli, and Toral. Tati was the famous sword, Toli, the famous mare and Toral, the woman known for her beauty and piety. Toral was the follower of Nathpanth Sampradaya. It is a very famous proverb that when Satsang and bhajan were going on at the house of Sanstiya, Jasal came to their home with the intention of theft. He hid at the stables of a horse. It is said that the horse had recognized him and pulled out peg. On this, someone came to **the** stable and fixed peg in which the hand of Jasal got injured. During the distribution of *prasadam*, for one person, *prasadam* got left. To give it to someone they were searching and found Jaisal. Jaisal came forward and had revealed everything. *Jaisal* thought that if he is having this much dedication for theft, then he can put the same commitment for the *bhakti* or devotion. After listening to *Jaisal* the whole story narration, saint Toral agreed for her and horse to come along with Jaisal. It is said that Jaisal was born to change the life of three fallen men.⁷⁸ The other proverb says that it was part of Nathpanthi Satsang tradition that the host needed to give up one of the precious things after the Satsang. As part of the tradition, Sansatiya was compelled to give up saint Toral, his wife.⁷⁹ The famous incident of Jaisal and Toral's life was when they were crossing the sea in a boat. The boat was about to submerge into the sea, and Jaisal got upset because of it. He thought that why Toral was not shocked. On this, Toral gave him the lesson that we do not need to **be** afraid; god is there to take care of us. He will save us. Jaisal got repentance of his past acts while facing death. Saint Toral had changed the life of Jaisal completely. The third person whom saint Toral gave a lesson of life was Sudhir. Saint Toral put herself in mortgage to baniya Sudhir for providing food to sadhus. Later on, be the pupil of saint Toral.

The mausoleum of saint Toral and Jaisal is in Anzar village of Kutch. It is a very sacred and essential pilgrimage. Saint Toral's effect is still prevalent in the area and became more active.

Saint Ratnabai: In the women's saint tradition of Gujarat name of Ratnabai has gained lots of respect. Although there are different views regarding her birth. It is believed that she lived during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. She lived her life through the spinning wheel. Bhakti movement was attached to the architect, craftsman, and small businessmen. In such circumstances, to preach bhakti or writing poem by women weaver was not a simple act.⁸⁰ Very less information is available regarding saint Ratnabai.

Sati Loyal was another woman saint of Gujarat. Sati Loyal was born in a blacksmith family in Khabalia village. Her family was a follower of Mahapanthi. From her childhood onwards, Sati Loyal devoted herself to the bhajans and tradition of Mahapanth.⁸¹ In the eighteenth century, she was famous in the region of Gujarat for her beauty. Lakha, a bandit of Gujarat, has fallen in love with Sati Loyal. Both of them were lovers but could not marry because of the caste bond or taboo. During those days to fall in love was considered a sin. Although Loyal and Lakha were deeply in love, with the entry of hermit Selansi, everything has changed. Loyal was anxious to meet with the saint. With the invitation of Selansi, Loyal went to bhajan-kirtan evening, and there she realized her mistakes. She had regretted her mistakes. That day saint Loyal devoted herself entirely to the feet of God. After his return, Lakha reached the house of Loyal, where he found her with a music instrument and white cloths. She greeted Lakha with 'Bhai'. Lakha got surprised at this and tried to grab Loyal in his arms. Lakha has got paralyzed after this act.

Saint Loyal, sang more than one hundred forty-four bhajans and gave lessons of bhakti to Lakha.⁸²

Goribai, a sagun woman poet-saint of Gujarat was born in 1759 A.D. Giripur was her birthplace. It was situated at the border of Gujarat and Rajputana. Goribai was from Vadnagar Nagar living community. Her sister's name was Champu, but she could not trace any information about her parents. Goribai was a widow. She got married in her childhood. After the death of her husband, she accepted God as her husband. In her youth, she engaged herself in the worship of local gods, singing, and writing bhajans for god.⁸³ After the realization that a widow cannot marry again and needs to devote herself to religious activities, Goribai gave up the mundane world. She used to spend her time in bhajan-kirtan at home. The king of Girpur was Shivsamha. The king was a religious person and after getting the news of Goribai, he visited her house. The king had religious discussion with the saint and got influenced. The king constructed a new temple after the saint and a step ladder well. Goribai had shifted to the new place. In the new religious environment Goribai had started writing and many bhakti poems were penned by her. It is said that many of the saints told her that she was the avatar of Mirabai but she was more learned than Mirabai. Saints have given the blessings to Goribai and shown her path of true bhakti saint.⁸⁴

Many legends are attached with the life of saint Goribai. It is said that Goribai, often drowned in the samadhi for fifteen days. She used to give up all the senses during samadhi. The glory of saint Goribai had kept rising, the personality of saint Goribai along with external beauty was very attractive. Goribai was virtuous, kind, intelligent and did not get angry at the same time. Saint Goribai, in the later years of life decided to spend in Vrandavan. She has appointed a sadhu in the temple and left, for Vrandavan. The king of Jaipur himself came to welcome saint Goribai, while her

visiting Vrandavan. Many types of legends are attached with saint Goribai. After sending her days in Vrandavan, Goribai visited Varansi and Puri. On the pious day of Ramnavami, Gauribai had taken samadhi and attained nirvana.⁸⁵

There are some other women saints in Gujarat at this time, about whom there is a lack of information. When it comes to women saints of Gujarat and Rajasthan, it comes to prominence that these women saints had to struggle with their time, situation and society. The life of the saints were attached to miracles, misfortunes etc. But still every single incident in their life impacted the society. These women saints tried to create a harmonious and positive atmosphere for women. On many occasions women saints raised their voice against the rhetoric of society and rebelled. The next chapter deals with the writings of the women saints. The writings of the women saint give account of the revolt against the patriarchy and odds of the society.

4.4. Conclusion: The localized nature and amplification of struggle of women saints is common for every women saint. The rituals, ceremonies and traditions of communities have selectively perpetuated. The folk traditions accumulated and flourished the stories of the women saints with addition of legends through the amplification of the figure of women saints. The different genre adds the new dimension to the women saints. These genres have included *bhajan*, *geet*, poetry and ecstasy stories about the women saints. Most of the women saints have remained anonymous in the folk poetry. The only aspect is identifiable in the folk tradition and that is name and identity of the women saints. One prominent aspect is clearly identified that women *bhakta's* have intimated the alternative discourse in the society. The dissent of the women saints channelized and accommodation process took place in the mainstream arena of the society. Women *bhakta's* of Rajasthan and Gujarat have become the part of large group known as *Vaishnavism*. The identity of

Vaishnavism has been used by the women saints to push forward their agenda and dissent in the society.

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- ^{16.} Sharma, Ritu. *Women saints of Rajasthan (From 15th to 19th Century)*. Jodhpur: Books treasure. 2016. pp. 75-76.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. p. 77.
- ¹⁸ Upadhayay, Neelam & Pande, Rekha. *Women in India: Past and Present*. Allahabad: Chugh Publications. 1990. pp. 18-20.
- ¹⁹ Upadhayay, Neelam & Pande, Rekha. *Women in India: Past and Present*. Allahabad: Chugh Publications. 1990. p.297.
- ²⁰ Amarawat, Vikram Singh. 'Khyat Literature and its Historicity'. Sahitya setu: A Literary e-Journal, (March- April 2013).pp.1-16.
- ²¹ Shekhawat, Kalyan Singh. *Mira Ki Pramanik Jivani*. Jodhpur: Nvbharat Prakashak. 2012. pp. 1-60.
- ²² Bhati, Narayan Singh. ed. *Marwar ra Paragna ri Vigat*. (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Pracaya Vidhya Pratisthan, 1968).
- ²³ Bhati, Dr. Hukam. *Itihas Sahitaya Aur Gita ke Alok me*. Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar. 2014. p.17.
- ²⁴ Bansi, Baldev. *Sant Mirabai aur Unki Padavali*. New Delhi: Parameswari Parkashan 2013. p.11.
- ²⁵ Alston, A. J. *The devotional Poems of Mirabai*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas. 1980. p.75.
- ²⁶ Ghanananda Swami & Wallace, John Steward. *Women saints east and west*. California: Vedanta Press, Hollywood. p. 51.
- ²⁷ E. Rai Bahadur Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha. *Muhnot Nainsi ri Khyat*. Translation. Ramnarayan Duggad. Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash Sodh- Kendra.2010.
- ²⁸ As quoted in Bhati, Dr. Hukam. *Itihas Sahitaya Aur Gita ke Alok me*. Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar. 2014. p.21.

“वीरमदे, रतनसी, रायपाल, रायसाल

मीराबाई श्री परभुजी री भगत में हीज रहता, उदयपुर परणाया था।”

²⁹ Bhati, Dr. Hukam. *Itihas Sahitaya Aur Gita ke Alok me*. Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar. 2014. p.21.

³⁰ Ghanananda Swami & Wallace, John Steward. *Women saints east and west*. California: Vedanta Press, Hollywood. p.11.

³¹ Chaturvedi, Parshuram. *Mirabai ki Padavali*. Prayag: Hindi, Sahitya Sammelan. 2002. p. 21.

³² Bansi, Baldev. *Sant Mirabai aur Unki Padavali*. New Delhi: Parameswari Parkashan 2013. p.14.

³³ As quoted in Alston, A. J. *The devotional Poems of Mirabai*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas. 1980. poem 38, p.49.

³⁴ As quoted in Brahmadas, Charan. *Bhaktimal*. ed, Udairaj Ujjawal, Bhaktmal. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidhya Pratisthan. pp.13, 45.

My own translation.

मुखती हरपास तनभावन मीरा

भाग तवलास उधास भई

ददन ही ददन दस उपासत देखे

देस धणी तहक त्रास हुयी।

ण हुवी घट नास पीयो तवस पेमल।

जास धणी बळ तास जरै

ग्रतहया तव्रद लाज उबारण गायक

काज इसा महाराज करै ।

मेडतिया कुळ मरुधरा मझ

अधपतया आधार

मगन मूरत मातह तनरतन,

लई मीरा रा लार

तौ ररझवार री ररझवार

भगत गावता ररझवार ।

³⁵ As quoted in Bhati, Dr. Hukam. *Mira, Itihas Sahitaya Aur Gita ke Alok me.* Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar. 2014. p.27.

My own translation

मीरा के रंग लगयो हरी को रंग और रड सब अटक परी ॥

तगरधर गा या सती न हो या मन मोहो धनमानी ।

³⁶ Nabhadas. *Bhaktmal.* Gita Press. Gorakhpur: 2013. p. 374

My Own Translation:

“सदशु गोतपका प्रेम प्रगट, कतलजुगहीं ददखायो ।

तनरअंकुस अतत तनडर रतसक जस रसना गायो ॥

दष्टु तन दोष तबचारी मतयु को अधम कीयो ।

बार न बाँको भयो गरल अमृत ज्यो पीयो ॥

भति तनसान बजाय कै काहाँ ते नातहन लजी ।

लोक लाज कूल सुंखला ततज मीराँ तगरधर भजी ॥

³⁷ Nabhadas. *Bhaktmal.* Gita Press. Gorakhpur: 2013 p. 376.

³⁸ Nabhadas. *Bhaktmal.* Gita Press. Gorakhpur: 2013. p. 376.

³⁹ Chaturvedi, Parshuram. *Mirabai ki Padavali*. Prayag: Hindi, Sahitya Sammelan. 2002. p. 24.

⁴⁰ Chaturvedi, Parshuram. *Mirabai ki Padavali*. Prayag: Hindi, Sahitya Sammelan. 2002.p. 25.

⁴¹ My translation.

पंद्रह सौ इकसठ प्रगट, आखा तीज त्यौहार ।

जहि दिन राना जन्म हो, घर घर मंगलाचार ॥

⁴² Prof. Pemaram & Prof. Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gaurav Gatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. p. 35.

नाम पिता को जालम जाट, धामण जात विभा को ठाट ।

⁴³ Prof. Pemaram & Prof. Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gaurav Gatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. p. 35.

हर्ष हुआ हरनावे, जालम घर जाई ।

⁴⁴ Prof. Pemaram & Prof. Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gaurav Gatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. p. 35.

हरनावा में जाई हो, आपकी जोत सवाई हो।

धूवन जाट कहाई हो, जालम की बाई हो॥

⁴⁵ Prof. Pemaram & Prof. Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gaurav Gatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. 36.

पनरासौ इकसठ प्रत्यक्ष, तीज अक्षय त्यौहार ।

पिता रामगोपाल घर, राना को अवतार ॥

⁴⁶ Information extracted from descendants of Ranabai's, Umrao Singh badva Fagi resident "Malpura ki Bahi".

⁴⁷ Prof. Pemaram & Prof. Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gaurav Gatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. p. 35.

राना कहे राम वर मेरा, सतगुरु मेटिया सब उलझैरा ।

अमर सुहाग अमर वर पाया, तेज पुंज की उनकी काया ॥

⁴⁸ Nahar, Vijay. *Bhaktimayi Sati Ranabai, Harnava (Nagaur) Va Samarth Swami Guru Khojaji Maharaj, Paladi (Nagaur) Ka Charitra*. Pali, Rajasthan: Marudhar Vidhyapith, 2015.

⁴⁹ As quoted in Prof. Pemaram. *Rajasthan me Bhakti Andolan*. Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akadmi. 2019. p. 202.

देखे छाव भरी जल झारी, नैण निहारे सब नर नारी ।

बाई मान बचन अब मेरा, दुनियां ने दर्शन दे तेरा ॥

अब तूं आज्य भंवरा बारे, आप तीरे ओरां कूं तारे ॥

⁵⁰ As quoted in Prof. Pemaram. *Rajasthan me Bhakti Andolan*. Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akadmi. 2019. pp. 200-205.

⁵¹ As quoted in Prof. Pemaram. *Rajasthan me Bhakti Andolan*. Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akadmi. 2019. pp. 202-205.

⁵² Kishwar, Madhu. 'Sahajobai' Manushi (June-June 89), P., 102

⁵³ Sinha, Savitri. *Madhyakaleen Hindi Kavetriya*. Delhi: Atma Ram and Sons. Publication. p.,51.

हरी प्रसाद की सुता, नाम है सहजोबाई ।

घूसर कुल में जन्म, सदा गुरु चरण सहाई ॥

चरणदास गुरुदेव, सेव मोहे अगम बसायो ।

जोग जुगत सो दुर्लभ, सुलभ कारी दृष्टि दिखायो ॥

⁵⁴ As quoted in Sinha, Savitri. *Madhyakaleen Hindi Kavitriya*. Delhi: Atma Ram and Sons. Publication.

सहजो तनिक सुहाग पर, कहा गुथाय सीस ।

मरना है, रहना नहीं, जाना बिसवे बीस ॥’

⁵⁵ Dr. Sahgal, Puran. *Madhyakalin Samaj Sudharak, Sadhvi, Sita Sulakshani*. Delhi: Aryavrat Sanskriti Samsthan, 2016. p. 74.

आशीर्वाद दियो जग जीजे, खोटा काम कदा मति कीजै ।

⁵⁶ Dr. Rathore, Vikram Singh, *Santo Va Bhakto Ka Jivan Charitra*, P. 196.

Jimiya Khich Karma Ghire Jawar Ka

Vadam Dhin Dwarika Tanaa Vasi |

⁵⁷ Prof. Pemaram & Prof. Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gaurav Gatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. p. 206.

⁵⁸ Prof. Pemaram & Prof. Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gaurav Gatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. 207.

बिना गुरु के निरफल व्रत दाना, भाव भगत सेवा विध नाना ।

जब करमाबाई दिख्या लीनी, उण किरपा कर मूरत दीनी ।

या कू पेहली भोग लगाओ, ता पीछे तुम भोजन पावौ ।

भोग लगा बिना मिथ्या भोजन, छप्पन किया छत्तीसू व्यंजन ।

⁵⁹ Prof. Pemaram & Prof. Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gaurav Gatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016.p. 208.

आधी खिचरी जब प्रभु खाये, मंदिर पंडा भोग लगाये ।

करके तवरा बिना मुख धोये, चले गये मंदिर दुख मौये ॥

⁶⁰ Sharma, Ritu. *Women saints of Rajasthan (From 15th to 19th Century)*. Jodhpur: Books treasure. 2016. p. 112.

⁶¹ Aggrawal, Mathura Prasad & Punj Jyoti. *Bhartiya Sahitya Ra Nirmata. Gawaribai*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akadami. 1999. pp. 9-10.

⁶² Aggrawal, Mathura Prasad & Punj Jyoti. *Bhartiya Sahitya Ra Nirmata. Gawaribai*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akadami. 1999. pp. 10-11.

⁶³ *Phoolibai Ki Parchi (Hasthlikhit Granth) Sankhya 12585/9 Rajasthan Prachya Vidhya Pratisthan, Jodhpur*, p. 270.

मांझू मुरधर देश में, नगर नागाणा पास ।

ग्यानीजी सतगुरु बसै, गढ़ जोधाणै वास ॥

भातो ले खेता गई, सतगुर मिल्या आय ।

भूखा साधु आज म्हें, बाई रोटी खुवाय ॥

रोटी खुवाई प्रीत सूं, प्रसन हुवे गुरुदेव ।

सिर पे पंजा डे कह्यो, राम भजन को भवे ॥

पूरबली संचै पड़ी, भगति प्रगटी आय ।

सास उसांसा लिव लगी, सबद रह्यो गरणाय ॥

⁶⁴ *Phoolibai Ki Parchi (Hasthlikhit Granth) Sankhya 12585/9 Rajasthan Prachya Vidhya Pratisthan, Jodhpur*, p. 271.

फूली कहै कंवारी परणै, में तो पारब्रह्म पति सरणै ।

मलधारी परणी जूं नांहि, पारब्रह्म मेरे उर माहि ॥

जनम मरण में जो नही आवे, सुख सागर में सदा रहावे ।

जानि आया गोरवे, फूली कियो विचार ।

सब संता रो साहिबो, सो मेरे भरतार ॥

⁶⁵ Phoolibai Ki Parchi (Hasthlikhit Granth) Sankhya 12585/9 Rajasthan Prachya Vidhya Pratisthan, Jodhpur, p. 274.

ऊँचौ पिछो के करे, निहचल करले मन ।

झूगो सिर की पाघडी, माटी मिलसी तन ॥

माटी सूँ ही उपज्यौ, फेर माटी होय जाय ।

फूली कहै राजा सुणौं, करके भजन उपाय ॥

स्वानं, काग, जंबुक भरवे, के बल जल हुसी रवेह ।

ऐसी गंदी देह कूं राजा, ऊँची करिये केह ॥

⁶⁶ Pande, Rekha: *Religious movements in Medieval India: Bhakti creation of alternative spaces*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2005. pp.221- 222.

⁶⁷ Shukla, Sonal, 'Tradition of teaching: women saint poets of Gujarat', New Delhi: Manushi, Women Bhaktas. 1989. p, 63.

⁶⁸ Shukla, Sonal, 'Tradition of teaching: women saint poets of Gujarat', New Delhi: Manushi, Women Bhaktas. 1989. p, 64.

⁶⁹ Shukla, Sonal, 'Tradition of teaching: women saint poets of Gujarat', New Delhi: Manushi, Women Bhaktas. 1989. pp, 64, 65

⁷⁰ Shukla, Sonal, 'Tradition of teaching: women saint poets of Gujarat', New Delhi: Manushi, Women Bhaktas. 1989.p, 67

⁷¹ Mehta, Bhagirathi, ' Stri Sant Ratno, p., 219

⁷² Singh, Avadhesh Kumar (ed.) *The voice of women-Gargi to Gangasati*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd.2008. p. 259.

⁷³ Mehta, Bhagirathi, ' Stri Sant Ratno, p., 219

⁷⁴ Mehta, Bhagirathi, ' Stri Sant Ratno, p., 219

- ⁷⁵ Mehta, Bhagirathi, ‘ *Stri Sant Ratno*, p., 221.
- ⁷⁶ Shukla, Sonal, ‘*Tradition of teaching: women saint poets of Gujarat*’, New Delhi: Manushi, Women Bhaktas. 1989. pp., 66.
- ⁷⁷ Shukla, Sonal, ‘*Tradition of teaching: women saint poets of Gujarat*’, New Delhi: Manushi, Women Bhaktas. 1989. p, 69
- ⁷⁸ Pande, Rekha. *Religious movements in Medieval India: Bhakti creation of alternative spaces*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House. 2005. pp, 225.
- ⁷⁹ Shukla, Sonal, ‘*Tradition of teaching: women saint poets of Gujarat*’, New Delhi: Manushi, Women Bhaktas. 1989. p, 69.
- ⁸⁰ Tharu Susie & Lalita K. *Women Writing in India, Vol. I 600 BC to the Early Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1993, p. 89.
- ⁸¹ Gohil, Nathlall. *Sati Loyal Na Bhajano*. P. 9.
- ⁸² Shukla, Sonal, ‘*Tradition of teaching: women saint poets of Gujarat*’, New Delhi: Manushi, Women Bhaktas. 1989. pp. 72,73.
- ⁸³ Ghanananda Swami & Wallace, John Steward. *Women saints east and west*. California: Vedanta Press, Hollywood. p. 73.
- ⁸⁴ Ghanananda Swami & Wallace, John Steward. *Women saints east and west*. California: Vedanta Press, Hollywood. pp., 73-76.
- ⁸⁵ Ghanananda Swami & Wallace, John Steward. *Women saints east and west*. California: Vedanta Press, Hollywood. pp., 76-79.

CHAPTER: FIVE

Writings of the Women saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

5.0. Introduction:

Whenever it comes to female saint literature, we get examples from ancient times. Female saints have contributed significantly to the *bhakti* movement in India. In this chapter, efforts are made to study the writings of women devotional saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat. These writings of ecstasy and pain are not a simple piece of writings, but these are the depictions of Rajasthan's and Gujarati society and religion and carry the message of love, devotion against the existing rigid norms of the society. Women saint poets had considered God as a source of energy and spirit. The women saint poets dedicated themselves to God and separated themselves from the mundane world. Women's saint were en-cultured in a specific culture, but the *bhakti* movement liberated them and gave space to form her freedom and identity.

5.1. *Bhakti Movement: Corpus of women saints literature*

The women saint poets have contributed immensely to the *bhakti* Movement. We can contextualize *bhakti*, its contribution, and movement through the corpus literature of women saint poets.¹ The frenzy of an ecstasy, innocence of *bhakti* has nurtured a new genre of poetry. The newly produced poetry got enriched by the South Indian *bhakti* saints, Nayanmars, and Alvars. The expression of ecstasy has expressed of that time literary and metrical forms.

Devotional poems and *bhakti* of women saints, both were the medium to escape from the mundane world for women saints. Although the expression of ecstasy and feeling of women saints have been expressed in the local languages but because of limitations

there failed to accommodate the intense feelings. The feelings of women saints were more intense and could not be incorporated completely in local languages.²

Bhakti, a vast ocean of love and mysticism, is connected through God and experience of bliss. This mystical experience varies from one civilization to another.³ The experience of mysticism was unique for every saint. The devotion and experience of devotion were not equal for mystic bhaktas i.e., Kabir, Tulsidas, Surdas, and God Krishna devotee i.e., Sura, Mira, Narsimha Mehta. The experience of devotion was based on different parameters, and these include language, religion, civilizations, and cultures etc. For women poet-saints viz Mirabai, Karmabai, Ranabai Gangasati, Gawaribai, etc. devotion and mystics were the same, but the experiences of their journey were not the same.

Unlike many Rishis, Rishikas also have composed hymns for the worship of gods. Vedic women Rishis Vak⁴ had claimed about pervading God everywhere and seeing him in different forms. In the Rig Vedic society, women were granted permission for the infinite and reciting of mantras. Composition of Visvavara Rishika found in Rigveda's fifth mandala and 28th Sukta in the form of prayers and prasansa of Agni God. Ahuti offered by Rishika Visvavara to invoke the God Agni and said 'the light of God spreads early in the morning, and she prays the source of light, the God of fire itself and offers ahuti to the God.'⁵

Apala, a member of Atri family, was born with a half-grown body and skin diseases, wrote hymns for well established then God 'Indra'. In the tenth, Mandala of Rgveda Ghosa has two suktas. Ghosa was not happy with her bridegroom and became a devotee of Asvins. Apart from these women, sage Aditi was other highly inquisitive, learned, and have composed mystical hymns.⁶

Women's voices were heard during Upanisad's time, but the narrative got changed. Sages, Gargi and Maitreyi, were more inclined towards nobility, intellectual prowess, and for knowledge even sacrificed material gain. Gargi, in the quest of knowledge, had a question and answer session with Yajnavalkya. In the Brahdaranyaka upanisad, one gets dialogue between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi.

Yajnavalkya decided to divide his property between his two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani. On listing this, 'Maitreyi' reacted: "Lord, if this whole earth with its treasure were mine, then can I attain immortality through them? Yajnavalkya said that it is to make your life happy, unlike rich, but through wealth, one cannot achieve immortality. The Rig Vedic women sages were early ancestors of women devotional poets.⁷

The voice of sages prepared a background for *bhakti* discussion and devotees of *bhakti*, i.e., *Gita*, *Narada-bhakti-Sutra*, the *Sandilya bhakti Sutra*, etc. When one takes into consideration the *bhakti* poets (Women and men), one cannot overlook their denied right to access sacred texts because of caste, gender, social background, and language inaccessibility.⁸

It can also be seen that the folk voice has been ignored in the *bhakti* literature. It is essential to understand that the folk voice cannot be ignored as one can take into account the folk literature of Gujarat, which has a projection of Sita as superior and speaks for Sita. Sita has been projected as an ideal wife, whereas Radha is opposite to Sita and celebrated as a socially unsanctified yet existent love of two already married individuals. In the post Bhagavata period, Radha gets such high recognition as the name of Radha is more closely associated with Krishna than anyone else. Indeed, very few are aware of the husband of Radha or wife of Krishna (Rukmani). The union of two got recognition in the Indian psyche (folk). In the local arena, many women

protagonist like Toral-Jesal has caught the folk imagination in the annals of Gujarat. The choice of the women saints' loves was determined by the local traditional and cultural forces.⁹

The *bhakti* women saints sang in the oral culture, and the primary effect of it was significant in this period. In the printed form, one cannot identify the impact of the poem. Andrew Schelling, in his book titled “The Oxford Anthology of *Bhakti*”, has identified few features for *bhakti* saints of India and Rajasthan, Gujarat specific.¹⁰

First, saint poets of medieval India spread their messages through the oral form with local music and metrical form of local folk traditions. At the time of chanting, singing, and reciting the poem, the musical instrument was necessary.

Second, the process of thinking was highly intellectual in which saints had perceived images of god through a dream, linguistic puzzle, the supernatural, etc. The narrated stories of the women saint poets did not carry any technical plot of the story, but these are the outcome of personal pain, cries, and other experiences.

Third, the intensity of feeling cannot be measured. The meaning of the poem can be felt with the intensity and passion of a poet. The women poet-saint expressed their opinions, personal experience of God, etc. in the vernacular languages and music.

Fourth, a poet recites a poem to the public, and this is not in the dialogue form. The recitation of the poem is always in sermon mode. The poet creates an audience as well as followers. In this process, a parallel society created to which rules and regulations framed by the saint-poet.

Fifth, a poem carries a feeling of oneness of body and soul. To attract the pupil, one needs to have some instrument. Dance, *Satsang*, and *bhajan* are the primary technique of ecstasy along with the other performances.

Sixth, a poet always tries to convey the message to the listener. The real purpose of reciting the poem is to render sacredness to the participant so that he/she should reach on another state of ecstasy.¹¹

5.2. Women saints writing of Rajasthan and Gujarat: The meaning of poetry of the women saint poets needs to be understood in time and space specifically. **Gangasati**, the female saints of Gujarat, is named with great respect. In the songs of Gangasati, sign of love (*premalaksana*) *bhakti* is visible. The lessons or spiritual teachings of *Gangasati* were in the *bhajan* form. The *bhajan*'s of Gangasati are famously known as religious songs. Gangasati has opposed the rites and ritualistic *bhakti*. Gangasati adopted the yoga practice on her path of devotion. For this, only a person who is fully qualified in yoga practice is eligible. The writings of Gangasati consist of fifty-two religious songs and famously referred to as "Folk Upanisads".

In the Buddhi-yoga, one should understand the worldly activities and usefulness of divinity attainment. Once the buddhi-yoga is accomplished, the spiritual journey begins in the true sense. So more or less buddhi-yoga is the realization of true purpose of life. Few of her songs gives explanation of buddhi-yoga. ¹²

Gangasati was a believer of guru to guide on a spiritual path, and one should aspire for salvation. Saint Gangasati says to Panbai, in one of her hymn, that one should abandon the laziness to walk on the path of spirituality and should follow the spiritual direction of the mentor.¹³

In another song saint, Gangasati gave the teaching of dedication. The path of spirituality was the path of dedication for the saint Gangasati. The path of dedication was very difficult and not suitable for the one who cares for himself or herself. While explaining to Panbai, Gangasati says that the one who dedicate will be taken automatically into the spiritual fold of God. So with dedication a devotee or

worshipper can enter into the realm of consciousness. Whoever surrenders himself/herself falls under the circle of spirituality, but a sense of dedication is necessary.¹⁴

Along with all these qualities of sadhak, he/she should be brave to walk on the path of spirituality. In the way of spirituality, worldly obstacles should not be brought. The pureness of the sadhak is essential, along with yamas and niyamas. On the spiritual path, the seeker should necessarily give up impure activities and worldly desires. The fundamental core theme of bhakti is love. Once he/she starts feeling bhakti based on love, he/she does not require anything else. For Gangasati, love was the base for oneness with the supreme being.

Gangasati advised Panabai to observe nine kinds of devotions, i.e. singing for god in his praise, listening to his name, worshipping feet of Vishnu, archana, vandana, devotion like a slave, as a friend and complete dedication of the self.¹⁵

In her bhajans, Gangasati explained the value of affectionate-bhakti, which is based on God-affection.¹⁶ A person should show bhakti on the basis of vidhis associated with idol, if one wants to guide others. In bhakti, love is essential for God, and bhakti should flow through the heart of the seeker. Oneness with the supreme being can be felt with devotion and affection. Gangasati has explained the practice and nature of Vachana. In the Saint Vani tradition of Mahapanth, the concept of Vachana is most momentous and recurrent. In the poetry of Gangasati, Vachana is a continual motif that has a deep thematic relationship to the non-dualistic philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. The word Vachana refers to Mahavakyas, Mahavakyas like Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman) or Tatvamasi (that thou art) available in Brihadaranyaka, Chhandogya, Aitariya, Mandukya, and other Upanishads which is formally imparted by Guru to his disciple at the time of his/her initiation into rigorous spiritual training.

According to Bhandev the revelation of Vachana has been undertaken at the three levels, at the first level, learner needs to connect within his consciousness and breathing. At the second level, the chanting of ‘Soham’ is included with consciousness and breathing, and at the final level, the learner needs to identify and rehearse his self as Brahma.¹⁷ For the significance of Vachana-viveka Saint Gangasati sings:

“Vachana-wise

Gods fall to the feet of man and wife

That’ve discerned the power of *vachana*

Glory be to the grace of *vachana*

Their wishes always come alive.

If you’ve known *vachana*, celestial bliss you realize

Pilgrimage to the Ganges is the merit you earn

Aaradh sung on the day of *Ekam*,

Would give you a glimpse of Nakalamka.

Incomplete is she who doesn’t know *vachana* backwards,

Such is the magic of the *vachana*,

Vachan is the beat, *vachana* the song,

Vachana is the seat of worship lifelong.

Things become whole in the *vachana*

Vachana is the heart of bhakti

Says sati Ganga, listen O Panbai

Do well to be in the company of such folks.’’¹⁸

The fourth step of Vachana-sadhna is the transformation from kriya-yoga into ajapa-japa. Ajapa-Japa is chanting so’ham with full compactness and awareness. In the saint tradition, it is referred to as surata sabda-yoga. In the next level, the knowledge transforms into brahmakara-vrtti and one gets a reference of it in Vedanta as nididhyasana. The last stage of Vachana-sadhna is Atmavastha. The attainment of this stage comes after the dissolution of all the senses. In this stage, only brahman nature remains.

Gangasati had used jnana-yoga to achieve salvation. The main obstacle to attain salvation is ego. The ego prevents the sadhak from moving on the path of spirituality. The doctrine of Vedanta and Indian spirituality is “Naham Karta Hari Karta, Hari Karta Hi Kevalam”. It means that someone else is guiding your thoughts and thinking. Human being is neither actor nor the thinker and behind the knowledge, thinking is guiding figure or power. The invisible power always performs through you and called as cosmic self, Hari.

The Bhakta believed that behind any work, there is a hidden supreme power. Saint Gangasati advised sadhak to follow the path of spirituality without the attachment of the material needs of the mundane world. Gangasati was a firm believer that soul resides inside us, and one need not search for it outside. She says:

“The knowledge of Jugati

Know the *jugati*, be attuned

To the melody of *vachana*.

Thread your mind into the beads of *vachana*

The will cease to be the threat of Yama.

Worship's disgraced if the Jugati's not known

Know it, even if the stars are crossed.

Practice the eternal Dharma with Jugati

And the secret of the universe will unfold.

Jugati leads the path to Satguru's feet

Jugati facilitates communion

It spares the *triguna* effect

Knowledge of jugati takes you beyond.

None can stop the knower of jugati

He eternally resembles the Lord.

Says sati Ganga, listen O Panbai

Knower of *jugati* is worshiped by all.”¹⁹

For Saint, Gangasati, soul is the true being and sajatiya and rest is vijatiya. The one who concentrates on his/her soul is the jugati of sajati and vijati.

In between of thirty-three to thirty-eight bhajans, sadhna description is given, and the sadhna knowledge essential for progress on the spiritual path.

In the context of Gangasati, it can be said that she has used or combined three ways to attain salvation i.e knowledge, yoga and bhakti. In one of her couplet titled “**Mounts may rock**” she says:

Mounts may rock, for once

Cosmos may come crashing

But hearts of harijan won't give way

Be it the most torrid of times.
Hiccups of spirits, low and high,
Can't get her, Satguru's *vachan* is
A beacon to the braveheart
Selfless, she lays down her life.

The company of the wise
Gives her a high, all day and night
Don't care a fig for resolves and routes
Vicious is maya's hex, snap out of it.

Be such a devotee, if you so decide,
Confide in the legacy of *vachana*,
Says sati Ganga listen O Panbai.
Satguru's grace, your ultimate haven.²⁰

In the above-mentioned couplet, the qualities of follower or harijan pointed out by saint Gangasati in adverse circumstances. Harijan has to be away from all the materialistic illusions.

Mirabai, a woman saint who is equally famous in Rajasthan and Gujarat, got larger acceptance in the households of North India. The songs of Mirabai are the songs of ecstasy and pain for the downtrodden section of the society. The poetry of Mirabai has glimpses of mistreatment of women, social and caste injustice.²¹ According to Hermann Goetz, Mirabai was a revolutionary bhakti saint who ignored the rules and

regulations of the society to spread *bhakti* in the downtrodden section of that time. The behavior of Mirabai received opposition from contemporary society and pushed Mirabai to follow a mendicant life.²²

Saint Mirabai used the tradition of pilgrimage to seek an escape from patriarchy and an element of protest. In the *bhakti* movement for women, saint devotion to the personal God was an alternative to the marriage and adverse domestic situations. *Bhakti* was an outlet for women saint, and through *bhakti* women, saints had negotiated patriarchy. Saint Mirabai declared herself wedded to lord Krishna. She says:

In one of her couplet, Mirabai says, “the anger of Sisodiya cannot do anything to me. I will praise and sing the virtues of lord Govind, my friend. If Rana gets angry, he will stay in his own country, but if the lord gets angry, I won’t be having any place to go. I am least bother about worldly positions. The name of Rama is spread allover and enough. One needs to cross the fully filled ocean of water. Mira belongs to gray God Giridhar and devoted herself in the feet of God.”²³

Mirabai did away the notions of modesty and decency. She says,

“O my companion there is nothing to be ashamed of now

Since I have been seen dancing openly

In the day I have no hunger

At night I am restless and cannot sleep, leaving these troubles behind. I go to the other side.”²⁴

Mirabai entered into the religious field through *bhakti*, and the significant feature is that the *bhakti* movement provided the women leadership to the sects and the movement. *Bhakti* movement gave the message for the establishment of a direct connection with God and rejected any mediator-ship. Hence, the ideology of *bhakti*

was suitable for the women saints because of its guarantee for instant success away from any mediation and easily comprehend.

Mirabai has expressed her love openly in the public space for lord Krishna and it has been considered a challenge to the Rajput authority. Devotion was not a sin in the contemporary society of Mirabai but expression of devotion publically was considered sin. Mirabai says,

Oh my companion there is nothing to be ashamed of now

Since I have been seen dancing openly

In the day I have no hunger

At night I am restless and cannot sleep

Leaving these troubles behind, I go to the other side.²⁵

The system and traditions of Rajput were linked to kul and bhaiyad through which Rajputs have exercised their political power and sovereignty. These traditions and power structure models were interwoven with land ownership. According to Prof. Rekha Pande, 'the Rajputs being mainly Kshatriya classes were involved in the activities of war, so in this way, individual loyalty of Mirabai to Krishna raised the question on their authority'.²⁶ The codes of behaviour originated from the values of society and these were drafted to govern the whole life of women. The autonomy and individuality of women were snatched away with these codes of society. In the case of Mirabai, marriage was an instrument to forge strong ties with neighboring kingdoms. At different places, Mirabai has expressed her love for Lord Krishna. She has shown her pain and ecstasy in her bhajan's addressed to lover Krishna.

She says,

"I am mad in love

And no one understands my plight
Only the wounded
Understand the agonies of the wounded
When a fire rages in the heart
Only the jeweler knows the value of jewel
Nor the one who lets it go
In pain I wander from door to door
But could not find a doctor
Says Mira, Harken my master
Mira's pain will subside
When Shyam comes as a doctor.”²⁷

In the popular imagination of the people, Mirabai is seen as a devotee, saint, and an individual who has lived her life according to her own terms. In the modern time, embourgeoisement of the figure of Mirabai has taken place in the Gujarati painters. These modern period painters have drawn the inspiration from *Darshano ki Kitab*. In *Darshano ki Kitab* book, the aesthetic representation of Mirabai is in the sitting posture with a tanpura opposite to a Krishna idol. Mirabai silently gazes steadily to murati with hawk-eyed. Her outfit is not typical Rajputi, which shows her choice according to her own comfort. Kanu Desai and Ravishankar Rawal were a believer of Gandhi's idea that 'art should satisfy the soul'.²⁸ Rawal's Mira is the depiction of Mira chaste middle-class figure engrossed in Murati-Puja. It shows Mira more akin to the figure of a chaste house-wife widow.

Kanu Desai's Mira Portraits entitled: 'Mirabai' records different motions and consolidates her embourgeoisement in the visual arts. 'Dedication' entitled painting

depicts the face of a woman, holding a lamp with half-closed eyes. The second 'devotion' shows figure bending down in white cloths to perform Arti. In quest, Mira shows in white lending, romantic and seductive with self-consciousness of purity. It shows a woman gazing out to sea romantically, her hair blowing in the wind. Mira dancing and 'Mira in ecstasy' show her figure sexually charged, and this accepted and replicated by the middle and lower class. The artists have accepted changes, and earlier depictions altered for refined and highly idealized depictions. A soft and idyllic rural life was shown. In some paintings, Mirabai has been seen as a pure widow with a white saree symbol for upper-caste women. Mahatma Gandhi has used the figure of Mirabai in the national movement. He has declared Mirabai a symbol of non-violence, a foremost follower of non-cooperation and *ardarsh pativarta nari*. For Mahatma Gandhi, leaving the house for Mirabai was an act of liberation.

Through *bhakti*, devotion, and expression at all levels, Mirabai has earned its existence to its core. With her devotion to Krishna, she made life as a festival. She has sung the pace of existence, rhythm, and piercing on the stage of bondage. The family of Mirabai had tried to restrict her. She said in one couplet:

The king is refusing. The queen is refusing. The family is refusing. My husband, Kunwar ji is also refusing. All of my friends (*Saheliya*) are also refusing. I have lost my worldly shame while sitting with *sadhus*. She says further that the *Kul* of her is getting dishonour because of her delay in going home.²⁹ So in the eyes of her family, the *bhakti* of Mirabai has brought dishonor to the family, and reputation gone down.

In another couplet, Mirabai recited her attachment with the lord and her dissatisfaction with her parent's family and her in-laws. She says:

Neither I want to go to my maternal home nor my in-laws place. I will go to kashi and settle there. I am not going to see the face of Rana and Sisodiya's are going to regret it.³⁰

When one reads the bhajans of Mirabai one should understand the deepness of the love for Krishna and the aspect of bhakti. Without understanding this aspect of the bhakti of Mirabai, we cannot judge Mirabai and cannot impose modern narratives. At different places, she has expressed her love for beloved God.

The meaning of the couplet is that the whole world is in dormancy. The soul of Mirabai, in the ecstasy and memory of lord Krishna, weaves a rosary of tears. Every moment of night, Mirabai spends while counting the stars.³¹

At another place Mirabai says that the desire to meet the beloved has awakened in the heart of Mirabai. A moment of her life is spent in the attrition of Lord Krishna. In the hymns of Mirabai, the predominance of devotional spirit is prominently displayed. Mirabai devoted herself entirely to Krishna and became free from the world. This side of Mirabai needs to be explored which is even more profound.³²

Sahajobai, in her writings, gave message of importance of guru and for her without guru world is alien to salvation. In her compositions, Sahajobai has stressed on vairagya, purity of love, Sagun, Nirgun, guru bhakti etc. While stressing on love, Sahajobai said in her couplet.

One of her couplet is centered around God and different postures of his beauty. Nirgun bhakti poet-saint Sahajobai goes ahead with the examples of the nirgun and sagun god. In this sequence, she adjusts herself with the child's form of God and narrates her poetry centered around the beauty of God.³³

In the different hymns, Sahajobai gave a message. In another hymn, Sumiran Mirabai says:

Sumiran is the one to which no one is able to recognize in millions. Love should remain inside the heart and need not appear on lips. The love for God is such in which one not require chanting the name of God or to count the beads in the string of prayer beads. There is no need to say Ram from the tongue. My lord should do Sumiran in my place, while I rest.³⁴

The meaning of 'Sumiran' is remembered. In these verses, she has remembered such a form of God in which no one else can see him. It is the same when a dumb person eats sweet and cannot tell the taste of sweetness. This can be experienced, and experience is personal in nature. It is based on the love and cannot be defined through the tongue because the God is perpetual. In this process of remembrance, Sahajobai has forgotten herself. The remembrance has become God for Sahajobai.

Sahajobai was an ardent devotee of Nirgun braham but to attain the salvation she has accepted the role of a teacher. Sahajobai says that the teacher is more important than God for Sahajobai because of the illumination of the spirit light by Guru. The Guru is the symbol of self-confidence, knowledge, and reliance. That's why Sahajobai gives importance to knowledge and Guru tradition instead of God. Sahajobai is with the wisdom tradition due to the predominance of her self-belief.³⁵

Sahajobai, in her hymns, gave teaching to remember God even during good times. It should not be that people remember God during grief. The company of the saints was considered pious by the saint Sahajobai.

Ranabai, a famous woman saint of Marwar, Rajasthan, is important because of her historical importance. The devotional expressions of the Ranabai can be understood from her spoken verses. The couplets of Ranabai, reveals a renunciation from worldly

bonds and a sense of complete attachment to Lord Gopinath. Vaikuntha can be achieved by the remembrance of Lord Gopinath. Ranabai's bhakti was focused on salvation from the mundane world, and she was not a believer in any category of Nirgun and Sagun. In her devotion, Ranabai has placed great emphasis on reverence towards God rather than knowledge. The devotion of Ranabai is reflected through her hymns. Ranabai says that all of her wishes and expectations are with Nath (God). She has got the light of knowledge and got free from the cycle of rebirth in the form of different creatures.³⁶

With the close study of her poetry one can understand her level of devotion. In her hymns, those are written in different genres and ragas she defines the importance of bhakti and love for god.

In one other hymn Ranabai says that my chunari should not get dirty. For Ranabai, God himself was an inspiration to her dress up. Ranabai doesn't want any other chunari except her sweet heart's 'God' love. She has expressed feelings of heart to God. At many times Ranabai has controlled her wrath and convinced God. In this couplet, the importance of the teacher also told by saint Ranabai. So in this couplet, Ranabai has expressed her feelings of attachment with God in different circumstances.³⁷

An essential aspect of Ranabai was that she had opposed the feudal mentality of the Mughal sultanate. Few of the hymns of saint Ranabai were the outcome of the political and social conditions of the time. Ranabai's reaction to feudal oppression has given hope and inspiration to the masses to fight back. In the hymns of Ranabai, we find a sense of devotion to God. When Ranabai resists Mughals, the idol of God is fully embodied in her mind. The hymns composition of saint Ranabai are in many ragas i.e *raga-bhupali*, *raga-mishr khamaj*, *raga-pahadi*, *raga-bhupali*, *raga-jhinjhoti*,

raga-tilak kamod, raga-sarang, raga-shivaranjani, raga-mand, raga-kafi, raga-desh, raga-tilak-kamod, raga-bhima-plasi, tal-dadara-mishr gara, raga-gond sarang, raga-megha etc. In every kind of *Raga*, saint *Ranabai* has dedicated her hymns to God and has shown her exclusive devotion.

In her *raga-desha* composed hymn *Ranabai* says that except for the feet of God, *Ranabai* doesn't have any place. The couplet is centered around *Ranabai's* love and devotion towards to God. Even the god *Brahma* sings the glory of the God whom *Ranabai* follows. God has supreme power for all the miracles.³⁸

Karmabai, a saint-poet of Rajasthan, had transcended the boundary of conventional bhakti. For *Karmabai*, guru was not required for bhakti, and unknowingly she has opted out of the traditional path of devotion. *Karmabai*, in her worldly outlook, did not follow rituals. *Karmabai's* main emphasis was on bhakti rather than rituals. *Bhaktmal Katha* mentions about her that the pious name of a ardent devotee of God was *Karmabai*.

Contemporary society of *Karmabai* was very ritualistic. *Karmabai* used to prepare *Khichari* in early morning to feed god without taking bath and, because of her true nature of bhakti, she got criticized for not following rituals. The poetry of *Karmabai* indicates towards the caste rigidity of that time society and, in one of her hymns, she gave a glimpse of her contemporary society.³⁹

Ratanbai was born in a Muslim family. She has solved her problems through devotion. Through the medium of bhakti, *Ratanbai* has expressed pain and problems of life. Her expression was mainly through the composition of poetry and recitation of songs. Although *Ratanbai* came from a very modest family, yet her understanding and

ability to think made her immortal. Ratanbai wrote in knowledge centric tradition of bhakti. In the land of Gujarat many women saints were born or adopted the name of Ratanbai and it creates confusion for us. Main problem occurs to identify different time period Ratanbai and we trace a overlap in the identify of different Ratanbai's. One figure of Ratanbai might take over the other figure of Ratanbai. It becomes important for us to be very conscious in this regard. The saint poetess of 16th century Ratanbai is different from the saint poetess and disciple of saint Kayamuddin. Saint Ratanbai of Narasimha Mehta is different from these above mentioned saints. In the context of present study, we are referring saint Ratanbai of Saurashtra and believer of Muslim faith by birth. Although we get very less information about her in the written record.⁴⁰

In her writings Ratanbai gave the definition of bravery and the perfect soul. A brave person is the only one who can fight his/her words. For a brave person, it is very much required to have limits, control over senses, anger, lust and should surrender herself/himself to the God. She says:

“Who’ll Point out the brave?

Who’ll point out the brave?

One who fights by her word.

One who respects bounds and knows how to step across

Focuses her senses in the ultimate.

One who abjures lust and anger,

Reposes faith in just one name.

One who puts noose around all illusions
Roams free from feat and ego.

Ratan has met her Guru Shree Hari,
And has seen Him in one and all.”⁴¹

In another poem titled ‘the perfect soul’ Saint Ratanbai have given the description of pure soul. In Saint Ratanbai’s vision, the perfect self is the one who is pure and selfless. She is aware of the worldly things and, like a Brahmin who is knowledgeable is able to understand Maya and worldly illusions.

“The Perfect soul
She is a prefect soul,
Who acts neutrally in this world.

Whose words are pure heavenly bounty
Whose heart throbs with selfless goal

Whose knowledge is as sound as meditation
Whose awareness is focused in the Brahman.

Who discriminates among maya, Brahman, truth
Whose food is nothing but pure holy nectar.

Who pours nothing but karma in holy fire,
Who merges with holy flame in heaven.

Ratan has met her Guru Shree Hari,
And has seen Him in one and all.”⁴²

In this way Ratanbai’s writings focus mainly on world and the hereafter, without ignoring social aspects. Both bhakti and Guru are helpful in liberation from the mundane world.

Liralbai, Loyal and Rupande were women saints from Saurashtra region. The three saints were belonged to the Mahapanth sect and have written in the loka dharma tradition. Both Liralbai and Rupande saints are less known in the society of Gujarat and to the India. Although much information is not available for these saints and one has to depend on folk traditions, personal sketch of the saint poetess and word of mouth. Saint Liralbai, a prominent saint of the Mahapanth sampradaya, have acquired important space in the saint vani of Gujarat.⁴³

Parab sect was a sub sect of Mahapath and saint Liralbai was the disciple of saint Jivandas ji of Parab sect. The central themes of her poems were Nirguna worship of God and supremacy of Guru. Saint Liralbai is known to the society as social reformer, instead of women poetess. After going through the series of torture form her husband, Liralbai got peace and sanity during her stay at her parental house. Gradually compositions of Liralbai have reached to the people and she acquired a space in the society. It further led her acceptance in the family because of her spirituality and social capital in the society. The bhajans of Liralbai are the reflection of her disillusionment and unhappiness of her life. “In her poem titled “The Imperfect” Liralbai, warns against unlocking one’s heart to the immature fellows and asks to have patience till the mature fellow is found.”⁴⁴

Liralbai says:

“The Imperfect

The heart's not to be disclosed,
To the immature, O bai,
Pour it out only before the right men.

How could a forget of a well know
The abundant ocean waves.

How so ever washed with milk or soaps,
The coal never turns fair.

Even when fed on pure milk,
A snake would spit sheer poison.

Let the evil have mounts on their way
I'll walk along the Harijans, my dear comrade.

Says sati Liral by guru's grace
Sail by the ship of a seasoned sailor."⁴⁵

In the Mahapanthi sect tradition and society Liralbai got acceptance because of her devotion and spirituality.

Mahpanthi women saint poet of Saurashtra, Gujarat, Loyal is a shining star on the horizon of bhakti movement. The bhajans of Saint Loyal are addressed to Lakho. In the bhajans of saint Loyal worship to the God and progress of spiritual pursuit are central theme. Saint Loyal has sung of Guru, of Yoga, of Brahma and the value of attainment. The life of the saint Loyal gives us glimpse of negotiating patriarchy.

Saint loyal has sung 144 bhajans addressed to Lakha. The bhajans of Loyal are about repenting Lakha and spiritual pursuit of truths. Saint Loyal explains the futility of life in her hymns and advises against worldly rights and attainment to property. In the contemporary society Saint Loyal has tried to establish the supremacy of women over man. She says:

“Listen O Lakha

O Lakha!

Shed your ego and seek Guru's asylum

Submit all to Guru, heart and soul.

O Lakha!

Only way to find Hari

Is to return what you have got.

O Lakha!

If bhakti without fear is all you wish

Bow down your head in Guru's feet.

O Lakha!

Human life is priceless gift,

Make best use of it, the opportunity may not return

O Lakha!

Says sati Loyal , the disciple of Shelarasi

Let satguru be your guiding principle.”⁴⁶

Many hymns of saint Loyal are preserved by traditional hymn singers. Each section of her hymns generally begins with ‘Ji re Lakha’ exhortation. Saint Loyal has described in great detail the divine experiences in her hymns.

Saint Rupande was another prominent saint of Mahapanth tradition. Saint Rupande’s poems are about the saintly vision of life. In the western region of Rajasthan, bhajans of Rupande are very famous. The holy couple of saint was closely associated with great spiritual merit.

Saint Rupande says:

“The Party's Spoilt

O king!

Your party is going to be spoilt,

Wake up, O old yogis!

O king!

Truth is the needle,

Words are like a thread,

Don't surround them by thorns.

O king!

Horses are there at home, why to walk?

Riding on the horse,

Please come home.

O king!

Don't ally with a other woman,
Rupande is your constant companion
Let others be called your dear sisters.

O king!

Don't rob a virtuous man,
He will give his assets on his own,
If you ask with folded hands.
Says queen Rupande with folded hands,
A saint's company is your supreme treasure.”⁴⁷

According to saint Rupande, company of a saint is the biggest treasure because of the knowledge of saint. This knowledge of saint will lead surely the mankind on the path of salvation from the mundane world. Saint Rupande also opposed the prevailing polygamy in society at that time.

Saint Toral's life is known for her devotion and sacrifice. In the hymns of Toral we get the message that attachment to earthly things is devoid of purpose and a person should make good use of his life. In a hymn, Toral tells that Jaisal, while facing the death thinks about sins committed by him. She says in one of her hymns:

Sea Shells form in the sea
Of no worth are they
Rain under Svatis ray
Falls in them turns to pearls
Do come, Jaisalrai.
Rising at dawn, bathing in rivers

Coals do not turn white.
Whom can a whore call father?
Stray rains grow no grain.
Do come, Jesalrai.
Look not to another light
He who does is incomplete
Lamp in hand he falls in a well
Four ears tale Toral Rani tells
Do come, Jaisalraj. ⁴⁸

The most important aspect in Toral's stories are sermons to Jaisal. Her writings compilations are quoted in musical style. Toral's devotion is very difficult.

Chattra Kunvribai, a follower of Nimbark sect have composed hymns for lord Krishna. In her writings Kunvribai have shown her devotion for lord. In her hymns, she has accepted the human form of the God in a living form. In her composition she has considered both Radha and Krishna as living human beings. Chattra Kunvribai was the mystic poetess of medieval Rajasthan. The contribution of Kunvribai to the bhakti movement is enormous.

Her couplet gives the incite of her journey to the Salemebad. This glimpse of her journey has appeared in the 'Prem Vinod' text. In the couplet she also gives details of her affiliation with Nagaridas family. She says that I am the resident of Roop Nagar and belongs to royal family. The chieftains of this royal family are considered the best. I am the daughter born in such a family and the name is Kunwaribai. Who does not need to ask even in the world. My guru is Priyasharan ji whose company always benefited me. I have found refuge in Salemabad. At Salemabad I have attained

accomplishment. I do have abode of God and always devote my time in meditation and Sumiran. ⁴⁹

Saint **Phoolibai**, in her childhood revealed devotional songs. Phoolibai had accepted God as her husband and remained unmarried life long. In her writings, she has mentioned about her marriage with God. She said that in my knowledge only one who is married can get married. How I can marry? I am not bachelorette. I am already married to God himself. I don't have any desire to get married in a wealthy family. My husband resides in my heart. In all circumstances he is my companion. When knowledge comes, ideas thrive from it and I got this realization in the august company of saints. My God or husband resides in my soul.⁵⁰

In the hymns or bhajanas, Phoolibai gave the message of the importance of God. For Phoolibai, more important than worldliness, was spirituality and essence of it can be seen through her bhajans. The bhajans of Phoolibai have the essence of philosophy. In the hymns of Phoolibai, we find the antithesis of the worship of Nirgun Brahma, worldly imperfection, fascination and religious fervor. Phoolibai, a worshipper of Nirgun Brahma believed that there is no point in making pilgrimage instead. She says that due to confusion a person wonders here and there at pilgrimage places and comes back after a lot of disorientation. Illusionally, one considers the stone as God and worships it.⁵¹

In the bhajans of Phoolibai she gives emphasis on the God and bhakti and asks to avoid the mundane world rituals of bhakti. In the Parchi of Phoolibai, which consists doha, chopai, sakhi, uchav, pada etc. have different genres of expressions. The different instances or encounter in the life of Phoolibai gives us impression of her love for God. In one of her couplet Phoolibai pointed out the importance of the name of the

God 'Rama'. Many people might call him with different names but his name is ultimate reality for salvation from the mundane world. ⁵²

Gawaribai, spent her life in absence and was also an ardent devotee of God. According to Gawaribai, feeling first comes in human mind, then they are felt. The tone, colour, and alphabets etc. are the medium for expressing in the art and literature. For Gawaribai, a person keeps coming and going in this world, but the only truth is the remembrance of the name of the God. A person, who has maliciousness in his mind, has every action raw. That person, again and again, lives in the vicinity of birth and death. She says that the name of Hari, beloved god is to be spoken and heard and no other name is to be spoken and heard. When Girdhar is received inside the mind, then why wonder out here and there. The soul is unbroken and Gwaribai has known Girdhar for his liberation. Gawribai dedicated herself to the Girdhar's service. Gawribai worshiped Nirgun Brahma in her hymns. Gawribai has highlighted the importance of Guru's knowledge and meditation in her hymns. The hymns of Gawribai indicate the attainment of God based on experience.⁵³

Saint Dayabai in her Doha Bodh and Vinay malika dedication of saint is visible. In both the poems the dedication and deep faith of God are depicted in the lucid way. In Vinaymalika Dayabai shows her dedication as:

Piya ko roop anoop lakhi, koti bhanu ujjyar |

Daya sakal dukh miti gayo, pragat bhayo sukhsar ||⁵⁴

The core meaning of the couplet says that Dayabai finds God very beautiful and only by sight of God Dayabai forgets all the sorrow or pain. The Padas of Saint Dayabai are dominated by devotion.

Sadhavi Sita Sulakshani's writings mentions a great need of the Sadguru for getting involved into devotion. Sadhavi Sita had considered bhog as the biggest obstacle in the way of devotion. She says:

She has found a true 'Sadguru like Ramanandji. He has given teachings for true ascetic way of life. Sadguru, Ramanand have blessed the title of saint to Sadhavi Sita Sulakshani. After getting blessed with the title of saint my desire for the worldly enjoyments have disappeared.'⁵⁵

Sadhavi Sita says that the light which is outside the body, also resides inside. She indicates towards the soul of human being. Soul exists all over the place. Money power, mass power and royal power are useless when the light of Brahma within the body becomes alive. Rama's name was amrit rasa for her and she mentioned it in the her speech. She says that saintly people hold true to the truth in the same way as a snack protects the mani (precious stone). In her hymns, emphasis is placed on Guru, remembrance, Brahma, satsang etc.

5.3. Conclusion:

In this chapter, one of the main themes investigated was the writings of the women saints and as such, this chapter is focused mainly on content analysis of these writings. The content analysis of these writings hinges on the thematic element, the objects and the issues that were taken up and the manner of presentation. What emerges from this analysis is that most of the women bhaktas talked about the meaninglessness of this everyday world and the mundane character of this world, and articulated the same in no uncertain terms. This was articulated to reach the common man by using agricultural metaphors and everyday examples from the production oriented language that were in common currency. What was the solution in search by these saints was an

exit from this world while remaining in this world, but being unattached and therefore becoming part of spiritual world, whereas one physically remain in this world. This then would lead to the purpose of false existence of this world not as economic subjects or political subjects, but as spiritual subjects of one Lord. This one Lord or the personal God, to which they were attached and the method of attachment was through devotion. This type of devotion, sent the strong message because of the simplicity of the nature of devotion which was at a considerable distance from the ritual bound practices of the priestly class and the royal aristocracy. The flexibility of practices and the spaces where they were enacted, like the agricultural fields, festivals, other performative occasions only added to the creation of a different audience.

In many of the secondary sources, like inscriptions and literature, one gets the representation of rural folk as either agriculturists in the form of farmers or peasants or as craftsmen or in other capacity as political overlords. But in these songs of the saints, most of these differences melt and these people are seen as a community of the religious, the constitution of this community as a spiritual community bounded by the communion of love and a shared idea of worship that is centred on devotion in various forms. These forms are primarily conveyed through music and dance, and the reason for this is the high emotional content of the songs, which presupposes a different kind of literacy removed from the formal kind of literacy that permeates the inscriptions and texts.

¹ Singh, Avadhesh Kumar. (ed.), *The Voice of Women; Gargi to Gangasati*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 2008, p. 2.

² Das. Sisir Kumar. *A History of Indian Literature, 500-1399: From the Courtly to the Popular*. Delhi: Sahitya Akadami, 2005.

³ Otto, Rudolph. *Mysticism: East and West*. New York: Collier Books. 1962. pp.10-18.

⁴ Yakasha in his Nirukta has explained the term rsi as one who has seen dharma. “Saksatkratdharmanah rsyobabhuṣṭa”. Moreover, it meant that rsi was one before whom the self-generated supreme being presented itself. She practiced penance and had seen (understood) the Vedic mantra:

Yad yad enan tapasyavan brahma svayamabhuh
Abhiyanarsat yad rsinam rsitvam iti vijñayate.

⁵ As quoted in Singh, Avadhesh Kumar. (ed.), *The Voice of Women; Gargi to Gangasati*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 2008.

samiddho agnidivir socirṣṭeta
pratyangkusasamurviya vibhati
ati praci havisa namobhih
Devan etana havisa ghrtaci- 5.28-1

⁶ Singh, Avadhesh Kumar. (ed.), *The Voice of Women; Gargi to Gangasati*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 2008. pp.30-34.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 36-38.

⁸ Ibid. p.39.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 46-49.

¹⁰ Schelling, Andrew. *The Oxford Anthology of Bhakti Literature*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press India. 2011.

¹¹ Schelling, Andrew. *The Oxford Anthology of Bhakti Literature*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press India. 2011.

¹² As quoted in Singh, Avadhesh Kumar. (ed.), *The Voice of Women; Gargi to Gangasati*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 2008. p. 263.

Meru re dage ne jena manno dage
Marne bhangi re pade bharmand re.

¹³ Singh, Avadhesh Kumar. (ed.), *The Voice of Women; Gargi to Gangasati*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 2008.p. 264.

Alas chhodine aavo medanma
Samajo sadaguruvani san.

¹⁴ Singh, Avadhesh Kumar. (ed.), *The Voice of Women; Gargi to Gangasati*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 2008. p. 264.

aam tame tarnaru shish utaro panabai
to to ramadu baranni bar.

¹⁵ Ibid. pp.259-268.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 266.

Bhai re! Upadesh devo to pratham bhakti dekhadavi ne gali devo teno moha re.

Premalakshana bhakti jane pragate tene karavu pade nahi kain re.

¹⁷ Bhandev. *Gangasatinu Adhyatma Darshan*. Rajkot: Pravin Prakashan, 1999, p. 85.

¹⁸ Joshi, Neha. *Translation of select women Gujarati Bhakti poets into English and a Critical Evaluation of their poetics*. Unpublished thesis, university of Gujarat, March 2016. p. 193.

¹⁹ Joshi, Neha. *Translation of select women Gujarati Bhakti poets into English and a Critical Evaluation of their poetics*. Unpublished thesis, university of Gujarat, March 2016. p 194.

²⁰ Tharu Susie & Lalita, K. *Women Writings in India, Vol. I 600 BC to the Early Century*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp., 88-89.

Translation by Nita Ramaiya: Oh the Meru mountain may be swayed, but not the mind of the

Harijan,

Let the Whole universe be shattered into fragments.

But the mind uncorroded by misfortune-

That's the true measure of the Harijan,

The Meru mountain may be swayed, but not the mind of the Harijan.

O brother, this is one unaffected by joy and sorrow,

Whose head is willingly offered in sacrifice,

Who shows courage in adhering to the true Guru's teachings,

Who surrenders the ego in full submission-

The Meru mountain may be swayed, but not the mind of the Harijan.

O brother, this is one who lives in the company of the enlightened,

Who rejoices all hours of the day,

Who does not waver between resolution and counter resolution,

Who has broken all the bonds of worldly life-

The Meru mountain may be swayed, but not the mind of Harijan.

Devote yourself to God, O Panabai !

Be faithful to your words;

Here's a word of advice from Gangasati

Submit yourself wholly to the true Guru-

The Meru mountain may be swayed, but not the mind of Harijan.

²¹ Ruckert, E. George. *Music in North India*. US: Oxford University Press. 2003. p. 25.

²² As quoted in Pande Rekha. *Divine Sounds from the heart-Singing Unfettered in their Own Voices: The Bhakti Movement and its Women Saints (12th to 17th Century)*. United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2010, p. 156.

²³ Ranawat, Saubhagya Kumari. *Mira Charit*. Ujjain: Mratunjay singh publisher. 2012, p. 166.

सिसोद्धो रूथ्यो तो म्हारो काँई कर लेसी ।

म्हें तो गुण गोविन्द का गास्याँ हो माई ॥

राणोजी रूथ्यों वारों देस रखासी ।

हरी रूथ्याँ कठै जास्याँ हो माई ॥

लोक लाज की काण न मानाँ ।

निरभै निसाण घुरास्या हो माई ॥

राम नाम की झाझ चलास्याँ ।

भौ सागर तर जास्याँ हो माई ॥

मीरा सरण साँवल गिरधर की ।

चरण कँवल लपटास्याँ हो माई ॥

²⁴ Tharu Susie & Lalita, K. *Women Writings in India, Vol. I 600 BC to the Early Century*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 93.

²⁵ Op-cit, Pande Rekha. p. 184.

²⁶ Op-cit, Pande Rekha. p. 184.

²⁷ Op-cit, Pande Rekha. p. 186.

²⁸ Mukta, Parita. *Upholding the common life: The Community of Mirabai*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1994. p.206.

²⁹ Banshi Baldev. *Bhartiya Nari Sant Parampara*. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan. 2011, p. 72.

राजा बरजै, राणी बरजै, बरजै सब परिवारी,

कुँवर पाटवी सो भी बरजै और सहेल्यो सारी ।

साधन के ढिंग बैठे बैठे के लाज गमाई सारी,

नित-प्रति उठि नीच घर जाओ, कुल को जगाओ गारी ।

³⁰ Ranawat, Saubhagya Kumari. *Mira Charit*. Ujjain: Mratunjay singh publisher. 2012.

³¹ Prof. Pemaram. *Rajasthan me bhakti andolan* Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi granth Akadami. 2019. pp. 192-193.

मैं विरहणी बैठी जागूं जग सोवी री आली ।

एक विरहिन हम ऐसी देखी, अंसुवन की माला पोवे ।

तारा गिण- गिण रैण बिहाणी, सुख की घड़ी कब आवे ॥

³² Prof. Pemaram. *Rajasthan me bhakti andolan* Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi granth Akadami. 2019. p. 193.

राम मिलन के काज सखी मेरे आरति उर में जागी रे ।

तलफत तलफत कल न परत है विरह बाण उर लागी रे ।

निस दिन पंथ निहारूं पीव को, पलक न पल भरि लागी रे ।

³³ As quoted in Sharma Ritu. *Women saints of Rajasthan*. Jodhpur: Books treasure. 2016, p. 156.

मुकुट लटक अटकी मन माही ।

निरतत नटवर मदन मनोहर, कुंडल झलक पलक बिथुराई ॥

नाक बुलाक हलत मुक्ताहल, होठ मटक गति भौह चलाई ।

ठुमक ठुमक पग धरत धरनि पर, बाँह उठाय करत चतुराई ।

झुनक झुनक नूपुर झनकारत, तता थेई थेई रीझा रिझाई ॥

चरनदास सहजो हिये अंतर, भवन करौ जित रहौ सदाई ॥

³⁴ As quoted in Sharma Ritu. *Women saints of Rajasthan*. Jodhpur: Books treasure. 2016. 156

सुमिरन ऐसा कीजिये, दूजा लखै न कोय ।

औंठ न फरकत देखिये, प्रेम राखिये गोय ॥

माला जपौं न कर जपौं, जिभ्या कहौं न राम ।

सुमिरन मेरा हरि करै, मैं पाया बिसराम ॥

³⁵ Ibid. p. 155.

हमारे गुरु पुरन दातार ।

अभय दान दीनन को दीन्हे, किये भवजल पार ॥

जन्म जन्म के बंधन काटे, जन्म को बंध निवार ।

रंक हुते सो राजा कीन्हे, हरि धन दियौ अपार ॥

देवै ज्ञान भक्ति पुनि देवै, जोग बतावन हार ॥

तन मन बचन सकल सुखदाई, हिरदे बुधि उजियार ॥

सब दुःख गंजन पातक भजन, रजत ध्यान बिचार ।

साजन दुर्जन जो चलि आवै, एकहि द्रष्टि निहार ॥

आनंद रूप सरूप भई है, लिपत नहीं संसार ।

चरनदास गुरु सहजो करे, नमो नमो बारंबार ॥

राम तजूँ पै गुरु न बिखारु | गुरु के सम हरि कूँ न निहारूँ |

हरि ने जन्म दियो जग माही | गुरु ने आवागमन छुटाही ||

हरि ने पांच चोर दिये साथी | गुरु ने लई छुटाय अनाथा |

हरि ने कुटम्ब जाल में गेरी | गुरु ने काटी ममता बेरी ||

हरी ने रोग भोग उरझायो | गुरु जोगी करि सबै छुटायौ ||

हरि ने कर्म भर्म भरमायौ | गुरु ने आत्म रूप लखायौ |

हरि ने मोसूँ आप छिपायौ | गुरु दीपक दै ताहि दिखायौ |

फिर हरि बंध मुक्ति गति लाये | गुरु ने सब ही भर्म मिटाये ||

चरनदास पर तन मन वारूँ | गुरु न तजूँ हरि कूँ तजि डारूँ ||

³⁶ As quoted in Prof. Pemaram & Dr. Choudhary Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gauravgatha*.

Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016, p. 38.

राना की अरदास नाथ थासूँ, राना री अरदास |

जनम मरण री फेरी मिट गई,

³⁷ Ibid. p. 45.

चूंदड मैली न होय म्हारी बाया, चूंदड मैली न होय |

नौ दस मास रही आ ऊंडी, अब सिणगार करण लागी |

चूंदड चिमक चतुर साजन री, निजरिया में गौरी आगी ||1||

कर मनुहार बुलाई पिवजी, चूंदड घणी सराई ए ।

मन की बात करी हित चित सू, हिवडे घणी लगाई ए ||2||

जुग जुग चूंदड करै झिलामिल, जतन रतन अनमोला ए ।

‘राना’ सतगुरु खोजी सरणै, नीरभै निसदिन बोला ए ||3||

³⁸ As quoted in Prof. Pemaram & Dr. Choudhary Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gauravgatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. p. 50.

हरी चरणन बिन ठौड कठै ।

चरण पांवडयां मस्तक धारी, भरत तपस्या करी जठै ॥ टेक ॥

बसुदेव लियां जाय लाल ने, जमना करतब कर्यो बैठे ||1||

नार अहल्या तिरी म्हा जाणी, जोत जीव पारवाण हटै ।

ब्रह्मा गाई मैमां ज्यांरी, वेद पुराणां सभी रटै ||2||

जुग त्यारण गंगा में न्हाया, जन्म जन्म रा पाप कटै ।

‘राना’ इण चरणां में रमगी, म्हारे ज्यांरो पटो पटै ||3||

³⁹ Bhaktmal. pp., 400-402.

एक बाई ताको करमा ‘सुनाम’ जामि,

बिना रीति भाति भोग खिचरी लगावही ।

जगनाथ देव आप भोजन करत निके

जिते लगे भोग तामे यह अति भावही ॥

गयो ताह साधु, मानी बड़ो अपराध करै

भरै बहुत साँस सदाचार ले सिखाव ही ।

भईयो अवार देखे खोली के कीवार,

जो पे जुठनी लागे है मुख धोए बिनु आव ही ॥

⁴⁰ Joshi, Neha. *Translation of select women Gujarati Bhakti poets into English and a Critical Evaluation of their poetics*. Unpublished thesis, university of Gujarat, March 2016.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 255.

⁴² Ibid. p. 256.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 174.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 175.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 259.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 253.

⁴⁷ Joshi, Neha. *Translation of select women Gujarati Bhakti poets into English and a Critical Evaluation of their poetics*. Unpublished thesis, university of Gujarat, March 2016. pp. 260-261.

⁴⁸ As quoted in Pande Rekha. *Religious Movements in Medieval India: Bhakti Creation of Alternative Spaces*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House. 2005. p. 226.

⁴⁹ Sinha Savitri. *Madhyakaleen Hindi Kavetriya*. New Delhi: Hindi Anusandhan Parishad. pp. 198-201.

रूप नगर राजसी, निज सुत नागरिदास ।

तिनके सुत सरदार सौ, हौ तनया मै तास ॥

छत्र कुंवरी मम नाम है, कहिं को जग मांहिवे ।

प्रिया सरन दासत्व से, हौ हित चूर सदाहि ॥

सरन सलेमाबाद की, पाई तासु प्रताप ।

आश्रय हवं जिन रहि सके, बर्नायो ध्यान सजाप ॥

⁵⁰ *Phoolibai Ki Parchi, No. 12585/9. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachaya Vidya Pratishthan. p. 271.*

फूली कहै कंवारी परणै, मैं तो पारब्रह्मपति सरणै ।

मलधारी परणी जूँ नांहि, पारब्रह्म मेरे उर मांहि ॥

जनम मरण मैं जो नहीं आवे, सुख सागर मैं सदा रहावे ।

जानि आया गोरवे, फूली कियो विचार ।

सब संतारो साहिबो, सो मेरो भरतार ॥

⁵¹ As quoted in Prof. Pemaram & Dr. Choudhary Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gauravgatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. p. 225.

भ्रम को भूल्यौ तीरथ जावै, भटका खाय बोहोरयो आवै ।

भ्रम को भूल्यौ सेवा करावै, अंत काल पत्थर हुए जावै ॥

⁵² As quoted in Prof. Pemaram & Dr. Choudhary Vikramaditya. *Jato ki Gauravgatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Granthagar. 2016. p. 225.

फूली पणव्रत राम को, सतगुरु दीनो जोड़ ।

अब परतक छोड़ू नहीं, जो कला दिखावे कोड ॥

राम रसायन फूली पियो, सतगुरु कह्यो सोई मैं कीयो ।

राम जिसो दुजो नही कोई, फूली सब जुग देख्या जोई ॥

⁵³ Aggrawal, Mathura Prasad. *Bhartiya Sahitya ra Nirmata Gawribai*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akadmi, 1999. p. 11.

हरि नाम बिना और बोलना क्या, हरिकथा बिना और सुणना क्या

सुखसागर सामलियो त्यागी, कुबड़े के घर डोलना क्या ।

घट भीतर गिरधारी पाया, बाहेर द्रिग फिर खोलना क्या ॥

अतमा अखंड आवे ने जावे, जनम नही फिर मरना क्या ।

गवरी ब्रह्म सकल में जान्या, जान्या तो जद बोलना क्या ॥

⁵⁴ Mishra Bhuvneshvarnath. '*Madhav*' *Sant Sahitya*. Bankipur: Granthmala Karyalaya. 1941, p. 166-167.

पिय को रूप अनूप लखि, कोटि भानु उजियार ।

दया सकल दुःख मिटि गयो, प्रगट भयो सुखसार ॥

⁵⁵ Dr. Sehgal, Puran. *Madhyakalin Saamaj Sudharak Sadhvi Sita Sulakshani*. New Delhi: Aryavrat Sanskriti Samsthan, 2016. p. 88.

CHAPTER:SIX

Negotiating Patriarchy

The *bhakti* had a complicated relationship with patriarchy. On the one hand, it mounted an encounter with the inequalities of the society which were based on the patriarchy. On the other hand, it has also sustained the status quo of the period. So *bhakti* has negotiated patriarchy but did not topple the social order. Reorientation of power relations within patriarchy is what the *bhakti* saints aimed at. It has constructed positions of power for women within the boundaries of patriarchy. Therefore it is to be understood that the struggle of women *bhakti* saints was more inclined towards negotiating patriarchy and sincere devotion instead of toppling the patriarchy.

Patriarchy is very deep-rooted in history and we can trace examples of patriarchy from antiquity. In the process of human evolution, body changes have occurred with the period, and the biological evolution of humans took place. Male and female differences have occurred from biological evolution. As part of the cultural evolution in human beings, the differences have occurred, and patriarchy became an integral part of society. Patriarchy has become deep-rooted with time, and the condition of the women deteriorated gradually.

Before analyzing the nature and voice of negotiation by the women saints, it becomes essential to explain the patterns of patriarchy and how it should be understood. The prominent academic jargon oxford dictionary defines patriarchy as ‘a society, country or system controlled by a father, husband, son, etc. or in a broad sense controlled by the male. History of women unexplored and women represented as neglected beings in women’s history. Patriarchy is prevalent at every level of society, be it in historiography, socio-political structure, ownership of the resources, control of power,

administration etc. Although women have played an essential part in all the places but names of women as actors got replaced by the men.

When we analyze the Marxist doctrine, it considers the economy as base and determinant factor for other formulations in the society and superstructure. We see a shift from pre-history to Indus, early Vedic to later Vedic, pastoral to agrarian, community ownership to the private ownership of the land concept. These phases and transitions are marked as the gradual emergence of patriarchy in society. The term '*Swami*' or lord have been used first in Grihya Sutra and Srauta Sutra.¹ Along with these, a new term used for landholders called "Bhu Swami."

The focus was more on the mainstream historiography, and regional, folk or vernacular language literature have been left out. In medieval India, political and economic history has given importance and also to the other subjects left out of the study in the concerned period. In recent times, with the exploration of regional history and folk literature, one gets enormous evidence or examples of women's history. The women saints of medieval India provide many sources in the local languages to analyze the broader trends of patriarchy and the marginalization process of women. These new forms of patriarchy were not visible but exercised through the existed system, limbs, and state machinery. In the modern period, the fundamental disconnect can be traced between sources and their readings. In contemporary time, studies on nationalism, war, economy, religion, geography, regional studies, etc. have got attention, and research on patriarchy or trends of patriarchy did not get any significant place in academia.

The feminist movement of India has started in the 1960s, and in the ensuing years, it has pointed out the gender biases in history. Men have been shown as the actor and agents of the history whereas the role of women got discarded in the society as actors

and agents in the past. The mainstream historiography negated the role of women. In this scenario, the priorities, concepts, and framework of the mainstream histories reflected the role and importance of males.² It is an irony of the past that the decisive role of the women in the society was portrayed as insignificant. The role of women was seen as more of an aesthetic actor significantly rather than an empowered actor.

Women are excluded from history. Despite playing the leading role, women's representation as actors and authors have been denied. Women's presence in history has only been registered negatively.³ Here we should also note down that in the different periods, the presence of women varies, and social and cultural practices are the main reason for the differences. Historical writings, of course, have created space for women but only within clearly defined parameters. Questions have also emerged as to why they took up the study of finding the role played by women in Ancient India? ⁴

Recently Prof. Kumkum Roy has made remarkable intervention as she focused on new perspectives and gave new dimensions to the study. She has established connections of women's status, production process, and perceptions of society. Kumkum Roy, in her works, emphasized the importance of women in the gathering process, which relates to hunter-gatherer societies. Still, she is also aware of this juncture that in all the hunter-gatherer societies, the same process is not applicable. She states that the decline of the status of women took place due to the introduction of plow agriculture. In this process, the man started to dominate women in these societies. Now in the new production system, women became dependent because of their continuous dependence on agriculture, command of men in handling animals. All such things have resisted women to take over the production process.⁵

The concept of patriarchy is deeply rooted in the term of gender. Sex is biological and gender is a social construct.

In the recently published new volumes of encyclopedia or dictionaries- feminists have started to use gender either to define the relationship of two sexes or to refer social organization. Grammar connection is accurate and full of unquestioned potentialities. Explicit or precise because the grammatical usage involves formal rules that follow from the masculine or female designation: full of unexamined possibilities because in many Indo-European languages, there is a third category- asexual, unsexed or neutral. Firstly, gender used by American feminists who insist on the fundamental social equality of distinctions based on gender. It used to introduce a relational notion into our analytical vocabulary. Therefore, men and women are described in each others' terms.

A new notion also came into the domain when feminists pointed out that the study of women will add new dimension. Still, it will also criticize the existing notion, "we are learning," the three feminist historians wrote that, "the writing of women into history necessarily involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of historical significance, to encompass personal, subjective experience as well as public and political activities. It is not too much to suggest that, however hesitant the actual beginnings, such a methodology implies not only a new history of women but also a new history".⁶ So an interest in class, race, and gender signaled first, a scholar's commitment to history that includes the stories of the oppressed and an analysis of the meaning and nature of their oppression. Second, is the scholarly understanding that inequalities of power are organised along at least three axes.

Feminist historians did not try to give a new theory and are only comfortable with description. These terms address different concepts and possibilities to break the hegemony of the current term. According to Scott, “women had a separate history from men, therefore, let women make women history which need not concern us or history of women, gender and her family should be separated from political and economic history.”⁷ These types of understandings are not needed here, but it demands an analysis of male and female relationship in the past and recent historical practices. How does gender work in human social relationships, and the construction of patriarchy takes place? How does gender give meaning to the organization and perception of historical knowledge? The answer to such questions depends on the analytical category of gender and patriarchy.

One fundamental problem with historians is that they are confined within a traditional social scientific framework, using longstanding formulations that provide a universal causal explanation. So it is needed that we have a review of old theories to expose their limits and give a new approach for an alternative view.

The term women in “women’s history” proclaims its politics by asserting (contrary or customary practice) that women are valid historical subjects, “gender” includes but does not name any woman and so, do not seem to pose any critical threat. Gender, as a substitute for women, also suggests that information about women is necessary information about the man.⁸ Gender does not address the historical paradigms and lacks analytical power to address the existing ancient binaries. So as a new domain, it is subjected to inquiry.

The feminist historians have applied many theories for the analysis of gender and patriarchy, but finally, all the historians have restricted to three theoretical positions.

First, feminist had made attempts to explain the origin of patriarchy. The second locates itself within the Marxist tradition and seeks accommodation with feminist critiques. The third is fundamentally divided between French post-structural and Anglo- American theorists; draws on these different schools of psychoanalysis to explain the production and reproduction of the subject's gender identity.

Two schools deal with the processes of identity creation of the subject. For gender identity and patriarchy development, two schools concentrate on different stages of growth. The post-structural theories focus on interpretation, representation, and communication of gender. By language post-structuralism does not mean words but a system of meaning- symbolic orders- that precede the actual mastery of speech, reading, and writing. The subjectivities are seen to be formulated and negotiated through and on the plain of lingual (or discursive) domains. Another difference between the two schools of thought is the focus on the unconscious, which for Chodorow is ultimately subject to conscious understanding, and for Lacan, it is not. For Lacanian, consciousness is a critical factor in the construction of the subject; it is the location, moreover, of sexual division and, for that reason, of continuing instability for the gendered issue.⁹

Most of the works related to women are contextually European. Two problems of medieval India are male biases and the elitist nature of sources. To understand the historical experience and conceptual frameworks, one needs to apply diverse theories and multiple ideological frameworks.

The way saint Mirabai was articulating against the patriarchy in her time is still significant. One important aspect is that its necessary to understand the circumstances of that time with the benevolence of today's language and ideas. Today's meaning and language cannot express the emotions of the past time. Mirabai, bhakti

personified, was a poetess per excellence. In the period and situation in which Mirabai devoted herself to devotion, feudalism dominated the society at that time. Mirabai did not accept the rituals of her family and was opposed to patriarchy in itself.

But here one should also keep in mind that the opposition of society norms by all these saints based on the devotion of that time or on the understanding that male dominance has to be ended. Was there any such understanding of male prominence in the circumstances of that time? If there would have been an understanding of opposition to the norms of the society in the mind of Mirabai then she would not have declared herself as a Dasi or Cheri instead of a beloved of Krishna- or even the Sakhya bhav is conspicuous by its absence in the poetic expressions of Mirabai.¹⁰

In many of Mirabai's dialogues, it is known how she raised her voice in the circumstances prevailing at that time. It is also necessary to analyze all these dialogues here to find out that to what extent Mirabai negotiated the structure of patriarchy. Hagiographical accounts have recorded the spiritual triumph of Mirabai's bhakti. An essential aspect in the context of Mirabai is her love for Lord Krishna. In the contemporary society of Mirabai, the expression of love for women was not acceptable. While expressing her love for Lord Krishna, Saint Mirabai has negotiated the norms of patriarchy. She sings in her poetry:

“Come, O Charmer of Hearts,
For your speech is sweet.
O Krishna did you ever rightly,
Value my Childhood love?
Without your sight, I feel no ease,
My mind swings this way and that.
Mira says: I am yours.

I will proclaim this, with your permission,

To the beat of a drum.”¹¹

In another hymn, Mirabai expresses her love for Lord Krishna and says, “while singing the bhajans of my beloved Girdhar, I cannot commit Sati. He has taken my heart. The color of Hari is ultimate, and all the other colors are fake.”¹²

In the society at the time when many restrictions were imposed on women at that time saint, Mirabai expressed her love for Lord Krishna and sang bhajans in the Viraha of Krishna. One can deduct that in the reality saint Mirabai did not even know as to that what was the outcome of her expression of love for lord Krishna. Was it really against patriarchy? Simply she was overwhelmed with the devotion. Mirabai has transcended the boundaries of the mundane world and surrendered to Lord Krishna. Her opposition to the patriarchy has been identical in a few other hymns. As in another episode Saint Mirabai says about Vikramjit Singh’s atrocious nature :

Rana ji, I knew you had sent me poison.

Gold emerges shining like sun

When it placed in fire.

I have discarded away from the worldly shame

As one discards dirty water.

You observe purdah at your place

I become mad in Girdhar’s love.

An arrow from the quiver of love

Has perforated my heart and enforce me crazy.

I sacrifice for holy men

My body and mind,

And I hug those lotus feet closely.

God knows very well his servants

And he has taken me into his protection.¹³

In the couplet, as mentioned above, although the language of Mirabai has raised the question against the authority of Rana Vikramjit Singh, it has its limit. As we have mentioned above that the consciousness of patriarchy was not much prevalent in the contemporary society of Mirabai. This couplet points out in negotiation against the patriarchy but without much consciousness in the contemporary society of Mirabai.

The reading of the figure of Mirabai by the orientalist and nationalist was driven with the intention of administrative mission in the modern time period. Once Saint Mirabai have acquired the acceptance in the larger society because of her devotional bhav and as a hope for the downtrodden society. The Rajput community, which has discarded Saint Mirabai, accepted her later on because of wider cultural acceptance of the Saint. Mirabai has become the symbol of power to rule the masses, and Britishers received the Saint in the modern time because of her figure's power symbol. So in this manner, Saint Mirabai challenges patriarchy in the 19th century and later on. It is essential to place one's understanding in the time and space of a particular century.

Once a Saint acquires the divine-hood, he/she becomes part of other society. The society which is formed on the lines of certain rules and regulations to give the direction to the society. Once Saint Mirabai has become part of the society of sadhus, she, along with the sainthood, also acquired masculine quality. The masses have placed her equal to the male saints. In this way, Saint Mirabai needs to be understood in the context of her period.

In few of bhajans of Mirabai we get glimpse of breach of the limits of the society. The bhajans of Mirabai were symbolic challenge against the rigid norms and taboos of the society. A society in which expression of love was restricted, Mirabai expressed her love through the genre of dance and songs.

Mirabai tied anklet bells in her legs and danced in the love of God. I myself became the slave of God. Although people said that Mirabai became mad and brought dishonour to the dynasty. Rana had sent a cup of poison. Mirabai had laughed after the consumption of poison. Mirabai had attained the abode or company of God.¹⁴

The above lines show that during the medieval centuries it was difficult for a women to express her love, whereas Mirabai came out of the household boundary and danced in the public. These acts of Mirabai are path breaking in the process of negotiating patriarchy.

The events of the life of saint Mirabai make us realize the circumstances of that time. The esthetic figure of Mirabai worked as mirror for her contemporary patriarchal society. One of her conversations of Vrandavan with fellow saints points out her intellectual capacity and intellectual capabilities. She had forced to accept the other saints that one need to devote himself or herself in the form of wife to lord Krishna. She says “I thought there is only one male in Vrandavan and rest are females”. In a critical understanding of bhakti one can say that bhakti adopted by women saints to save themselves from the tradition of Sati. The concept of Sati was adopted in the royal families or houses. Medieval centuries had seen several severe wars. The continuous wars had intensified the tradition of sati in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat. So one possibility for the increase in devotional activities could be to save one from the tradition of Sati. It could be the reason for women to stress on *bhakti*.

But one cannot deny or negate the concept or essence of *bhakti* in the geographical areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

If we look very carefully, it seems that the path of devotion for all the women saints was only to reduce social pressure so that they can get rid of social bonds. Marriage was the compulsory ritual in society, and *bhakti* served the purpose of getting rid of it.

The saints of Rajasthan

Saint Ranabai's bhajans and messages give us examples of the negotiation of patriarchy. When the proposal of marriage came for Saint Ranabai, she said that my husband is Rama, and my teacher has enlightened me with this knowledge. She further says, "My husband is immortal who will not die forever." One needs to read this hymn through two angles. First, that the space created by the women saint for the rejection of marriage proposal with the help of devotional God and Second, it puts us in the dilemma that how patriarchy of the mundane world taken over by the patriarchy of devotional world. ¹⁵

A critical aspect of the hymns of Saint Ranabai is that she accepted Guru to guide on the path of devotion. If one needs to analyze very carefully, then it is very much visible that the patriarchy concept was very much present in the mind of women's Saints. But one should not reject the negotiation with the circumstances to widen the space for women in the larger society. Although the amount of voice was very less, a new era of change started with the women saints. The content of the women's saint hymns revolves around the feeling of pure devotion. The resistance against the patriarchy was different at the different levels of society. For e.g., the rigidity of patriarchy was very harsh in the ruling classes, whereas in the agricultural communities and other oppressed society, the intensity of patriarchy was less.

The hymns of Saint Ranabai addresses God and identify God as the remedy for all the worldly pains. At this level, also we identify very clearly the hegemony of dominant male society in her mind. Although Ranabai raised a voice of discomfort in her contemporary society, but the voice against the concept of modern time patriarchy of 21st century is absent in her hymns.

Saint Gangasati had composed many songs and explained their deeper meanings to Panbai. On daily basis Saint Gangasati had composed one song for Panbai. In the bhajans of saint Gangasati a full sense of devotion and dedication emerges. The importance of yoga reflected in the bhajans of Gangasati. The bhajans of Gangasati does not mention about patriarchy in any manner. There is neither opposition nor support for patriarchy in her hymns. Overall, the predominance of the spirit of devotion is seen in her and she has no attachment to all worldly things. At one place, in the midst of all this, there is an example that recovers the identity of women saint and dominates the phenomena of patriarchy when she gives spiritual learning to her husband Sansatiya. She has focused mainly on Unison, the new vision, attuned, head to tail, purification of Nadi's bound to guru, the land of the lord, the absolute form, nectar etc. All these were completely related with devotion. The very concept of the soul being different from one's worldly self is one of the basic precepts of knowledge-centric religion. This concept reflects the ritualistic puranic idea of dualism which was opposed by Sankaracharya. Later, however, even the followers of Sankaracharya's theory of non-dualism were merged with Nathmuni and Acharyas to extend the ritualistic tradition of Alvars.

Saint Gangasati is a living, breathing singing tradition in Saurashtra region and the figure of Gangasati has been received through folklore, narratives and different traditions over generations.

The poems of Saint Loyal reveals us about the prestige of the women saint in the patriarchal society of medieval Gujarat. Although Saint Loyal surrendered herself to guru Selansi but sung 144 bhajans for Lakha and gave him lesson of devotion. In her bhajans, she talks about emptiness of life, fruits of bhakti and greatness of a true guru. Most of the bhajans of Loyal are the exhortation to Lakha. She says “ Ji re Lakha...”

Shed your pride, O Lakha, enter the field
Bow your head at the guru's feet
O Lakha, shed your lordly ways,
Make into your choices and your resolves
Make the guru's word your touchstone, Lakha
Else you sink in the sea of being.
Many the views and opinions here
Submerge these continuous ways of seeing.¹⁶

Her hymns portray that Saint Loyal gives knowledge to a man even after being a women. Although, this seems to be a very simple thing in today's time, but in those times this kind of step elevated the existence of women. It did not eliminated patriarchy but it changed the attitude towards women. Devotion became the main emblem of this change. Through the medium of devotion, women saints had created a space and respect for women in the society. One notable aspect is that the knowledge that Loyal gave to Lakha through hymns was at the behest of her guru, which highlights the importance of spirituality. The predominance of bhakti is also found prominently in the hymns of saint Loyal.

Sati Toral's poems are addressed to Jesal. The poems of Sati Toral are popular in oral tradition. Many of the poems by Jesal and Toral are addressed to each other. The close study of Sati Toral's life gives glimpse of her fight to negate patriarchy. Jesal and Toral lived together for many years keeping in touch with other saints. The story of love and devotion of two cannot be separated.

All the women saint poetess of that time were only bound in the tradition and devotion of society and not driven by the concept or idea to overthrow patriarchy in the society.

If we see or analyze very closely the hymns of other women saints of Gujarat, then it emerges that the only fight for women saints was related to freely worship God in the society. There was no other reason for which they were keen to fight against the society and its norms. But even in this process, inadvertently the female saints constantly engaged in the process of negotiation of patriarchy in the society.

In the poem of Sati Loyal addressed to Lakha, saint points out to leave aside the ego and devote himself in the feet of guru. She gave teaching of good conduct, spiritual importance and importance of a teacher in the life of a Sadhak.

Saint Ratanbai in her poems points out the quality of a brave person. A brave person is the one who fights by his words. The one who respects bounds and knows how to step across and focuses his/her senses in the ultimate. The one who abjures lust and anger and reposes the faith in just one name. And likewise in her other poem "the Perfect soul" she has emphasized only what qualities a seeker should have. She has not directly attacked any form of patriarchy.

In the poems of Saint Rupande and Liralbai of Gujarat, the aesthetic glorification of God and the focus stressed upon the moral education to the society. In the poem titled

“Ganpati Comes”, Liralbai defines the beauty of beloved God “Ganpati”. Saint Rupande in her poem titled “The Party’s Spoil” had stressed on the importance of the voice of a person and importance of the company of a saint. So by looking at the whole, it is known that the women saints of Gujarat raised voice in the times and circumstances of that time but without the understanding of patriarchy. They were solely driven with the idea of devotion in the society.

The point which merits attention here is that the fabric of *bhakti* which weaves the rich canvass of *sant-vani*, especially that of woman-saints, is not a monochromic and monolithic phenomenon. It is highly democratic, eclectic and on that account quite liberating. Not only does it democratize the language of spirituality by making available to the masses in their own (dialectal) language something that was monopolized by the high castes and classes for centuries on end but it also carves out an alternative tradition forged out of the selective integration of diverse faiths and cults which is more progressive, egalitarian and accommodating than a vice-like grip of any single of them.

Saint Phoolibai, encountered patriarchy through her *bhajans*. She had created a space through the medium of *bhakti*. The medium of *bhakti* was the powerful tool for saint Phoolibai. She says that groom whom you are praising is like dead body because he will die one day and rest of my life I have live as widow. That’s why I have married a man who is neither born nor dies. She further says that only unmarried women are made to get married and I am already married. In this couplet Phoolibai discard the norms of the society. At that time, marriage was mandatory for women. One important question arises here that why did most of the female saints refuse to marry at that time? A very meaningful answer to this is hidden in the social, political and economic circumstances of the time. Many young men were killed in war and their

wives had to be sati. In this way, it was an important reason due to which women saints had to accept God as their husband. Phoolibai also accepted God as her husband.¹⁷

An effective negotiation with patriarchy and society could be traced from her conversation with king Jaswant Singh. Phoolibai had strongly opposed King Jaswant Singh. She said that one should give up the idea of superior and inferior. One's mind should always be steady. Everyone's end is the same. Nobody becomes great by body. One becomes great by virtues and devotion. In this way, Phoolibai's voice was not rebellion against patriarchy in the society. Rather it was a process to create a space through devotion or *bhakti* to negotiate patriarchy.

Devotional songs and bhajans of women saints of medieval India were two agencies to exercise their power in the society. For female saints singing of bhajans were the powerful vehicle for experiencing divinity and sacred knowledge. Bhajans of women saints were mechanism of power for them. Female saints had emphasized on the virtue of love in their construction of mysticism.

Conclusion: It is difficult to talk about patriarchy when one talks about it in the medieval period. This is one of the main issues when we talk about the concept of modern societies and cultures in pre-modern contexts.

Discussions on feudalism in non-European societies have generated considerable debate regarding the relevance of this context, and many scholars have had severe objections to the application of this term in pre-modern context for the simple reason that unlike the capitalism, which is the world system. Feudalism is not a world system but part of different religions and therefore displaced regional particularities. We find

similar parallels in the employing of the concept of the patriarchy to a context like a pre-modern India.

The understanding of patriarchy was ambivalent, and some of the modern authors have labeled it as dominance. While others have called it as exploitation. We are therefore placed with a multiplicity of meaning regarding the nature of Gender in pre-modern India. About *bhakti*, one may point out that as there were different constituencies of women *bhakta* who did not form the homogeneous category on account of their diverse nature of concerns.

Therefore, their reactions to the concerns of gender were not unified, and this lack of unity on the part of the women *bhakta* does not allow us to employ an overarching and unifying term like patriarchy. This further compounded by the fact that all women did not have similar issues and while some of the saints were engaging in a radical critique of gender domination. Many were only having problems with everyday life and issues of being alienated from the beloved. It is, therefore, this patriarchal idea of different reactions that show the problems of the lack of an effective unifying category. We may, therefore, use specific terms like mild resistance, on the one hand, to fervent appeals or the notion of the radical need to restructure the society. In this background, it would be safe to employ the term the patriarchy with the qualifier of an encounter rather than a challenge.

The rationale for this is that the encounter would give more historical tenability to the concept and the explanatory process rather than the overarching the term of patriarchy. Another rationale that emerges from this understanding is that the *bhakti* movement was primarily was religious in nature, and therefore, the prism of religiosity has, in many cases- soft and the attack on gender issues as a mild form of contestation rather than total total overthrow of the system. In conclusion, one may say that in medieval

bhakti, there were many institutions that mediated between the individual and the society, and this meditation presented a different image of patriarchy rather than the conventional model based on western understanding.

¹ Pande, Rekha Divine Sounds from the heart-Singing Unfettered in their Own Voices: The Bhakti Movement and its Women Saints (12th to 17th Century). United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2010, p. 126.

² Mathews, Jill. The good and madwomen: The historical constructions of femininity in the 20th Century. Australia, Allen & Unwin. 1985.

³ Priya Darshini, female identity in a transitional society: women In the Gupta period (AD 300-600), pp, 1-7

⁴ Kumkum Roy & Uma Chakravarti, In search of the past, A Review of the limitation and possibility of women historiography, Economic and Political Weekly, pp,2, 3

⁵ Roy Kumkum & Chakravarti Uma, "In Search of our past: A Review of the Limitations and Possibilities of the Historiography of Women in Early India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXIII, No.18. 1988, pp. ws-2-ws-10 p, 6

⁶ Scott. W. Joan, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol.91, No.5. (Dec. 1986), p. 1056.

⁷." Scott. W. Joan, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol.91, No.5. (Dec. 1986), p. 1057.

⁸ Scott. W. Joan, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol.91, No.5. (Dec. 1986), p, 1058.

⁹ Scott. W. Joan, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.91, No.5. (Dec., 1986), p, 1058.

¹⁰ Lohati, Veena. *Rajasthan Ka Sant Sahitya*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidhya Pratisthan. 2014. pp. 4-5.

¹¹ Alston.A.J. *The devotional poems of Mirabai*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas. 1980. p.75.

¹² As quoted in Bhati. Hukam Singh. *Mira: Itihas, Sahitya aur Gita ke Alok me*. Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar. 2014.

My own translation:

मीरा के रंग लाग्यो हरी को और रंग सब अटक परी ||

गिरधर गा यां सती न हो या मन मोहो धननामी ॥

¹³ As quoted in Brahmadas. Charan. Ed.Ujjawal Udairaj. *Bhaktmal*. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidhya Pratisthan : pp.13-45.

My own translation

राणा जी थे जहर दियो म्हे जाणी ।

जैसे कंचन दहत अगिन में, निकसत वाराणसी ।

लोकलाज कुलकाण जगत की, दइ बहाय जस पाणी ।

अपने घर का परदा कर ले, मैं अबला बौराणी ।

तरकस तीर लग्यो मेरे हियरे, गरक गयो सनकाणी ।

सब संतन पर तन मन वारों, चरण कँवल लपटाणी ।

मीरा को प्रभु राखि ली लई है, दासी अपणी जाणी ।

¹⁴ Ranawat, Kunwari, Sobhagya. *Mira Charit*. Ujjain: Martunjaya Singh Sisodiya, (2010).

पग घुंघरू बांध मीरा नाची रे ।

म्हें तो मेरे साँवरिया की आप ही हो गई दासी रे ।

लोग कहें मीरा भई बावरी न्यात कहें कुलनासी रे ॥

बिस रो प्यालो राणाजी भेज्यो पीवत मीरा हाँसी रे ।

मीरा के प्रभु गिरधर नागर सहज मिलया अविनासी रे ॥

¹⁵ Dr. Pemaram and Dr. Vikramaditya. *Jaton ki Gauravgatha*. Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar. 2016. pp 35-39.

¹⁶ Pande, Rekha Divine Sounds from the heart-Singing Unfettered in their Own Voices: The Bhakti Movement and its Women Saints (12th to 17th Century). United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2010, p. 165.

¹⁷ Phoolibai ki Parchi (Hasthlikhit) Grathank 12585/9 p. 271.

फूली कहै कंवारी परणै, मै तो पारब्रह्म पति सरणै ।

मलधारी परणी जूं नांहि, पारब्रह्म मेरे उर मांहि ॥

जनम मरण में जो नही आवे, सुख सागर में सदा रहावे ।

जानी आया गोरवे, फूली कियो विचार ।

सब संता रो साहिबो, सो रो भरतार ॥

CHAPTER: SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The thesis studies the works and contributions of women *bhakti* saints of Gujarat and Rajasthan in medieval India. This thesis focuses and analyses the biographies of the women saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat as the embodiment of spiritual and social philosophies. The study also marks the importance of the literary works of the saints as the site of their identity formations. Along with the socio-political and economic conditions of the period, this thesis identifies the influence of these conditions for the growth of *bhakti* movement in these two states.

This thesis tries to problematise the role of women *bhaktas* in a regional particularity of Rajasthan and Gujarat by trying to go beyond the narrow social, economic interpretation, instead of focusing on the emotional element. Proceeding from this a summary of the important findings of the thesis follows.

The importance of the study lies in its efforts to bring the life stories, the works and the influence of the saints into a dialogue with each other. Locating and studying this dialogue helps the thesis to reconstruct the regional histories of western India at a crucial time when modern identities were in the process of germination. Hence, thesis is actually aware of the continuities between the early-modern movements of *bhakti* and their modern social, cultural legacies.

Bhakti has primarily been understood as a religious phenomenon and from the 1960s onwards, a new breed of scholars made efforts to understand *bhakti* in the larger context of the social, economic forces. As feudalism was one of the most important topics to be investigated by historians of early medieval and medieval India, therefore the context was biased in favour of the social and economic aspects of the feudal

polities during the medieval period. While this explanation of locating *bhakti* in the feudal context relates largely to the Marxist paradigm of the dominant ideas which shall always be the ideas of the ruling classes. However, these explanations did not exhaust all other facets of *bhakti* and new ideas and vantage points to approach, *bhakti* and the *bhakti* movement emerged. One of the most important interventions and this was the feminist idea of religion and while broadly agreeing to the earlier social, economic interpretation, the role of women in Indian *bhakti* movement became another area of investigation.

This thesis tries to problematise the role of women *bhaktas* in a regional particularity of Rajasthan and Gujarat by trying to go beyond the narrow social, economic interpretation instead of focusing on the emotional element. Proceeding from this a summary of the important findings of the thesis follows. As historians, the idea of verifiability and proof stands uppermost in their minds, and therefore leads to a privileging of written sources that in turn also privileges published sources in standard languages. In the case of *bhakti* also, most of the standard texts are focused on *Braj*, *Hindi* and other languages that have become the lingua franca of many of the modern Indian states. At a considerable distance from this output of religiosity, there are also large number of texts in the vernacular language and dialects that have not been the focus of scholarly enquiry. Therefore, the thesis begins with by incorporating and making use of materials available in the regional languages and dialects of Rajasthan and Gujarat that had a different path of growth. These languages were patronized by the common folk, and sometimes by the feudal polities. When the standardization of modern Indian languages took place from the 18th century beginning that time many of these local dialects of Rajasthan were collapsed into Hindi and understood as

variants, branches or wrong renderings of Hindi language and therefore were not deemed fit.

In this thesis, such notion has been subverted and the languages of Rajasthan and Gujarat namely Hadoti, Dhundad, Shekhawati etc. and Gujarati, Kachi have been employed. Related to this is the finding that the employment of these languages as primary sources has broadened the social base of bhakti by bringing into the historical domain.

Many of the unknown women bhaktas like Gangasati, Saint Toral, Saint Loyal, Karmabai, Ranabai, Phoolibai, Dayabai etc. led their lives. Speaking only these dialects and singing in these dialects and languages, and were therefore disappeared from history, not as women, but as speakers of these dialects. Therefore, this thesis has rehabilitated many of these historical characters by employing the local dialects and sources.

Related to the local dialects crisis and the question of the context one find that most of these songs were composed in genres like *bhajans*, *satsang*, *aradhna* etc. and performative contexts like festival *teej* etc'. One of the accusations of using such sources as the distinction between folk culture and popular culture and this thesis is overcome the distinction by differentiating between popular culture that was popular only for a certain historical moment, whereas folk culture has endured for centuries. Thus, the enduring element that lives on in the minds of the folk and Indian performative traditions and cultural repositories is being understood. Adequate care has been taken to distinguish between primary and secondary orality and the question of interpolations. In this context, one of the important findings is the reading of proverbs, which is used by the women *bhaktas* that was set in agrarian context, along with the metaphors that are used to address different set of relationships and the

landscapes. The following example may help to suffice this point as explained in chapter five.

Proceeding from this finding of employing a folk literature and rehabilitating the lesser known women saints, a contrast between the dominant forms of representation in the textual linguistic traditions that has become standardize and the dynamic form of folk literature and the language is also brought about. In the 18th century, the entry of print into North India in a large way standardized Hindi and many religious texts were printed in Hindi, of which many of them were drawn from the lives of the bhakti saints. As the context of this new found print media was located in the city's, the consumers for the urban middle classes. Whereas the text were composed in a feudal setting at a predominantly rural. We get a clear idea of the difference and representations between the women saints of the great tradition that was composed in 18th century and the earlier tradition that evolved in the medieval period.

The location of the concept is of prime importance and related theme would proceeds to understand that emerges of Rajasthan is a region and the constitution of this region due to the two important forces of landscape and warfare. While the arid landscape did not permit for large surplus, and the same time, we have so strong state brought out the resultant partially parcelization that has been designated by various names as feudal polity or integral polity criteria. What is of prime importance here is that the process of legitimization of the Kings in this region employed many songs and music and performances that functioned as not only devices of representation, but also as tools of legitimization. Since this was the prevalent oral and performative tradition in both Rajasthan and Gujarat, the women *bhaktas* like the other male *bhakti* saints had an easy access to a ready-made tradition that was already included traditions of bravery, loyalty and certain established codes of conduct. The rich landscape was a

canvas on which this whole composition was drafted and made ample use of trees like Neem, Khajoor, Babul etc. and plants and animals like Neelgai and peacock etc. which functioned as a typical symbols. Therefore, these genres that are already an established and living tradition were borrowed and elaborated in new and creative ways by the bhakti saints. What the women further did was to improvise on this tradition and suffered some of the dominant forms of understanding.

Proceeding from the first finding, and other interrelated finding crops up, which is the level to which women saints subverted the normative order and the question of patriarchy. Modern frames of references employ the term patriarchies to designate sets of relationships between different genders. However, the context was widely different in the medieval world and therefore the reactions of the women saints against certain established norms of behaviour do not exactly fit into the modern notions of the patriarchal resistance. Since religion was the only form of legitimate communal activity that could be organised on a large scale. Unlike politics or warfare, both of which were the sole prerogative of the ruling classes, religion, therefore, functioned as an outlet for expressing other social economic and political grievances. Modern historians have read the expressions of these saints as acts of dissent, which is only partly true. And the same can be said about gender and normative patterns. Firstly, the issue of dominant ideas being the ideas of the dominant society is also not to be read in a plain and direct form as many aspects of human behaviour cannot be wholly controlled by a few. In this case, while the dominant ideas of the ruling classes were the overall control of the society, one cannot negate the influence of religion or downplay the role of religion. Hence, both the ruler and the ruled were imbued with a deep sense of religiosity and even for the rulers, the idea of ends justifying the means could not always be practised because they were also imbued with certain codes of

conduct and religious tenets. A violation of these tenets would have been unthinkable and beyond tradition. Therefore, when women could not think beyond the confines of the domestic space, the women as *bhaktas* could traverse many spaces and such spaces could also not be blocked, but a legitimate. Many of the women *bhaktas* also had certain discomfort with the domestic sphere, and therefore gave vent to their dissatisfaction with the same by carving out alternate spaces. These alternate spaces were also sanctioned by religion and *bhakti* and in doing so, they did not feel that they transgressed the ruling dictates of religion. Hence it was morally right for them to do so since it did not leave any feeling of guilt or such feelings of remorse of having violated religion and tradition.

Further, in the 19th century, the growth of colonial economy brought about many women away from the farm into the confines of domesticity and therefore the freedom that they had on the farm was lost and a new kind of patriarchy was emerging. As we had underlined the fact that the production of *bhakti* literature in colonial North India is one of the key factors that led to a misreading of the earlier texts out of their context. Similarly, most of the women saints of medieval Rajasthan and Gujarat like, Phoolibai, Ranabai, Karmabai etc. from an agricultural background. Since most of their life was also spent equally between the home and the farm, the reproduction of animals and the love songs of Krishna, all of which are part of the Bhagavata Purana, the services, the main foundational texts from which many of the *bhakti* traditions are derived exemplifies the fact that there are different perceptions of gender between the women who were inside the house, like Mirabai, who was secluded and the working women. As many women from the labouring classes became housewives in the 19th century, the idea of domesticating these women became a matter of importance and hence the reading of such discourse is reading of

the rise of patriarchy. This frame of reference of women being subjugated in the household does not hold much water for the women of the agricultural labouring classes. Their concerns were slightly different and therefore the articulation of the woman inside the household would fit the image of *Mirabai*. She was a woman belonging to the royal family and according to their behaviour patterns. The women were forced to wear the *purdah*. While this was true of the other women also, their mobility was less restricted as to perform labour rules, primarily in the agricultural fields.

By examining the content of the songs, we understand that most of the songs composed by women *bhakti* saints used a lot of metaphors that emanate from the production oriented language rather than from the courtly language that was ornamental and used for eulogies.

In a significant departure from the earlier findings, we come to understand that the alienation of *Mirabai* is one of the most important. Women saints reveals the contradictory nature of the *bhakti* tradition where we see the forces of dissent and the forces of co-option being in a contrasting manner. While the image of the as one of the persons who sang *bhajans* becomes the standard representation of women in the Indian *bhakti* tradition, this has not only become a domesticated image of a saint, far removed from reality. *Mira's* songs were in the form of *bhajans* that were useful for the maintenance of the social order. Since it was in the form of a monologue accompanied to the use of the instrument *tampura*, was given representation to the woman who is an agent of own religious emancipation by playing her own music to her personal God Krishna. The representations of *Mirabai* are such that the audience does not have any dialogue with the role, but passive consumers of discourse that emanates from above. In the initial stages, the dissident behaviour of *Mirabai* was

frowned upon by the kings of Chittorgarh. But she was embraced by the kings of the other Rajput states as she was a figure who had traits that were easy to be assimilated. This point needs certain elaboration because of the fact that bhakti is a complex process and cannot be reduced to a singular phenomenon like protest or devotion. Earlier studies had made some mistakes by applying a reductionist approach in explaining phenomena due to purely social economic reasons. In this context of Rajasthan and Gujarat, the coming of the Turks and the resultant Turkish invasions unsettled the political order and therefore, there arose a new feeling of the other. While it was a political invasion, the religious and social idea and motivations for this invasion cannot be divorced from any understanding. Therefore, the immediate result of the Turkish invasion was the rise of an inward looking society that became more devotional and also had to reconfigure the position of women in the public sphere. As a result of this fear of the Turkish invasion, many of the women started adopting the practice of wearing the purdah.

The other important point was the loss of patronage to the Hindu temples from the royalty who had themselves suffered losses and the result was the fragmented nature of political units in Rajasthan and Gujarat which could not mobilize massive objects of donations and patronize large-scale structures. Further, the shift in the religious traditions from the ritual based to the devotional aspect of Hinduism was becoming pronounced. As rituals were centred on texts, they were unalterable and therefore had a rigidity. Whereas, with the rise of the Puranic tradition in many local elements that belong to the popular and folk traditions could be easily absorbed by paying lip-service to the ritual aspect. Some of the examples of this are as follows, where we

see the transformation of local deities who become part of the divine entourage of Krishna like Tejaji, Gogaji etc.

This also signalled the emergence of new social groups, particularly peasant and the pastoral communities such as Jats and Bishnois in Rajasthan and the community is of Patel and Rabha in Gujarat. The rise of devotional Hinduism provided a vehicle for these communities to articulate their religious beliefs. In Gujarat, the rise of the Turkish invasions also led to rule by the Muslim rulers of Delhi and therefore they were seen as occupiers in the land of Gujarat as people with a different cultural ethos. Therefore bhakti also served as a sense of identification for the large masses of people who shared a version of a simple devotion that was free from the complex of ritual rigidity and at the same time was also easily adaptable to the local needs and customs. One of the important aspects talks about the movement of Vasudeva Krishna's association with Dwaraka. Since the pastoral community worshiped Krishna, they found in him one of the most potent symbols of articulation of many aspects of their daily needs, both material and emotional.

One has to take into a call to the non-material aspects as a material reading of the sources led to a certain form of determinism. Most of the saints of bhakti came from all sections of society and had left behind families and comfort of lives and did not join bhakti only for material reasons, but also for certain psychological and emotional vacuum that needed to be filled by the divine. Therefore, the movement towards bhakti was a spiritual quest, and the shift from the Royal to the lay patronage also signalled a shift towards popular participation in *bhakti* very slowly and thus was not a sudden shift. This popular participation was made possible by the employment of different genres of music played with instruments in high pitch. Which had a highly emotional quality that was amplified by the performative nature.

Many strands of emotional *bhakti* and as a historian, *F. Hardy* has explained, the concept of *viraha bhakti* or the *bhakti* of separation is one of the most distinguishing features of devotion towards Krishna and forms the cornerstone of the version of *bhakti* movement. Krishna is conceptualized as a lover and the woman *bhakti* saints can also know of him, in this form of *bhakti* wherein the devotee is now a partner to the divine. This emotional aspect of *bhakti* or the *bhakti* of separation uses a very strong tone in music characterized by raptures of separation, sorrow and an emotional high wherein the mood, is on the verge of ecstasy. This is the public display of ecstasy is not possible in normal circumstances wherein the devotee would cry, pine and shout to call for the attention of the divine who is Krishna in many different forms. For the women *bhakti* saints, the creative use of the space was to call out for Krishna as the divine lover. Therefore, this genre of music was a very robust type of folk music characterized by the use of agricultural metaphors and a very strong production oriented language which are set in high tone. e.g *bhajans of Karmabai*. In addition to this, the music is also enhanced by a crescendo of vibrant drumbeats and dancing is also allowed in many cases. Many of the songs give us a glimpse of some of the musical numbers of *bhakti* in the folk tradition of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Another problem that the historian has not dealt with seriously, but which is being taken care of in the disciplines of folklore and ethnomusicology. There is the problem of translating the performative non-verbal into a textual frame. While historians work with text and printed data, the music and its melody cannot be fully translated into a still textual frame and print quality as they show a dynamism and vibrancy that can be understood only when we read the performative context.

Agricultural fields, temples, temple courtyards, village spaces, the lands of the cowherds, the palace and the houses of the feudal lords etc. places became the scenes where the *bhakti* performances were enacted. One interesting fact emerges from this thesis is that the ritual calendar of *bhakti* is also the ceremonial calendar of the agricultural festivals and the ceremonial calendar begins with during the sowing season and most of the performances take place during the season between September and January and again June and August as these are the periods when there is less of agricultural activity and the peasants are also free from the everyday burden. Therefore, the temporal aspect of *bhakti* also chooses in with the geographical aspect and then we understand the *bhakti* in a *spatio-temporal* context. In the case of Gujarat and Rajasthan as part of the lean agricultural season and a significant presence of pastoral and agricultural communities is there.

A similar case followed also in Rajasthan where the regional particular, it exhibits some more differences going to the particular fact that the role of the king became weak and the different Rajputs feudal lords became strong. Therefore, it is not imperial but sub imperial patronage and of a very local nature. It is this local nature of patronage that can be understood and recorded in the different languages of Rajasthan and also in the different cultural regions of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Amber and Barmer and Tonk.

The same for the *bhakti* paintings also, as we see the three different painting traditions of Rajasthan, employing the Raga Mala paintings showing diverse elements in these three regions. While it is a truism that the Mogul Rajput relations blossomed during the period of the great Mogul is one can also not forget the fact that there were also significant tensions as there are no large imperial structures built by the lords, but rulers for the allies of the moguls, since they were not allowed to build such structures.

Rather, what is striking in Rajasthan is that most of the art forms and paintings, and the historical structures that were built to a very local character and sub imperial patronage that did not transcend the regional boundaries of the different cultural regions of Rajasthan as mentioned above. One positive aspect of this has been the employment of local dialects that were patronized both by the royalty and also by the lay people which gave full coherence and translation to the meaning of the intentions of the devotee. They are reflected in the forms of different genres, use of diverse musical instruments, the practices of different communities, each of which have different musical tradition of songs, proverbs and performative lyrics are classified in ethnomusicology, as branches.

Another finding of the thesis is that of the employment of abstract concepts like *lila*, which is translated as divine play by the historian David Kingsley and made famous in his book named *Krishna, the divine player*. The use of these concepts which are abstract form part of the Sanskritic set of practices that serve as a reference point and acted as the great tradition all over India. This pan Indian great tradition also had many different little traditions and both of them functioned as a complementary whole. Therefore, the thesis argues that a reading of only the great tradition from a textual point of view that would privilege the normative understanding is only partly true and causes a great deal of damage, as has been that the earlier historians who relied primarily on texts such as *Purana's* and *bhakti* texts.

On the other hands, the over reliance on folk texts and folk narratives as the only source also obscures the philosophical foundations and the abstract concepts that the *bhakti* saints wanted to convey. These include concepts of creation, concepts of the maintenance of the divine and human order that are presented in folk form, but nevertheless have a very strong philosophical content that has to be read only when

we employ the concept of the great and the little tradition which is one of the methods adopted in this thesis.

The landscape of Gujarat also served as one of the important centers for the display of a divine cosmology and this was achieved by the *bhakti* saints by process of what David Shulman calls as a localization of action wherein important events that took place in a mythological time and in a abstract or cosmic space are brought alive in the performances of the male and a female *bhakti* saints. Some of the examples are illustrated in chapter four and five.

Since the world is created by a divine play known as the *lila*, the creator is Krishna and he emerges as a divine player and therefore his antics and play nature of stealing butter, fighting with the Demons as child, playing with the *Gopikas* or the cowherd woman have brought about an enduring relationship between the women and the lover is identified as Krishna. The playful nature of stealing the clothes of the women, dancing with them form immediate contexts for the satisfaction of the emotional longing of the women and their search for certain social spaces that are now possible to be created as they are sanctioned by religion and hence cannot be deemed to be subversive. This nature of creation of new space by the women *bhakti* saints is itself a subversive activity as many ideas of patriarchy, were questioned, but through the frames of reference of religion and devotion and had to be understood as integrated whole.

It is also being pointed out earlier that the social content of *bhakti* embraced many different classes and castes, and it is no secret that this in India in many different forms travelled to vast distances. One of the most important examples is that of Mirabai and her association with the Untouchables saint Raidas. Incidentally, the

saints belong to the depressed classes of society had a very large clientele who are the lay followers and also who are the patrons in large numbers. Incidentally, the career of Raidas is of the most important cultural resource and has travelled as far as Punjab, where the follows of Sikhism enshrined the words of Raidas in a sacred text, and has added to a musical tone.

In the ultimate analysis, we also notice a fundamental disconnect between the historical and historiographical traditions of representing the *bhakti* movement. While the story of little traditions are primarily written in English and the impact of the 19th century modernism and enlightenment tradition's impact wherein the reconstruction of history was based primarily on verifiable texts. This led to a very narrow portrayal of only selected saints that has been challenged. What is not being challenged is the context in which the *bhakti* saints functioned and most of the women like the Ranabai, Phoolibai, Mirabai, Karmabai, Dayabai, Sati Loyal, Gangasati etc. were unlettered and spoke in a local language that cannot be fully rendered into text. Therefore, this thesis is made an attempt to bridge the gap by trying to draw the spirit of the material using methods from folklore and popular culture, which demands that the researcher use materials, amenable to folk culture and sensitive to gender studies, but at the same time not losing track of the historical aspect. This is an important point as one begins to neglect the historical context than the narrative becomes a historical. Therefore, the thesis lays great emphasis on the emotional ideas of the folk traditions of loyalty and the folk traditions of bravery that serve as recurring motifs in the *bhakti* songs.

The thesis has tried to bring about the significance of *bhakti* through the lives of saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat by adopting an analysis of their works and situating the same in the historical context of medieval Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The thesis then proceeded to read the life histories of the Saints against this background, and has come up with the following findings. Primary among the findings is that *bhakti* as a genre of literature is not like any other form of literature that is written in isolation at is informed by the multifarious currents in society and is therefore an ideal parameter of the same. In the context of Rajasthan and Gujarat, the reading of *bhakti* literature informs us about the regional particularity that on one side tries to locate the concerns of social stratification, domesticity, agrarian problems and the political issues of the current period. On the other hand, the universal features of *bhakti* that show a pan-Indian phenomenon like the devotion to God who is personal, the emotional strand of *bhakti*, the outpouring in vernacular languages and adoption of unorthodox forms of worship are also expressed here. Therefore, the thesis argues that the forms of worship that we understand that the forms of worship that are expressed in Rajasthan and Gujarat by the *bhakti* saints and more specifically the women *bhakti* saints are an expression of local concerns using the universal language of *bhakti* that had acquired a legitimate currency. This was a paradoxical situation in the political structure of medieval India since all politics except that of the ruling dynasties were not considered legitimate, and therefore the expression of *bhakti* was not merely religious, but the only sanctioned form of articulation.

The second important finding of the thesis is that while the religious element was given important space, it was only legitimate space and therefore *bhakti* cannot be read only as religious, but also as articulating personal, social, economic and political concerns of the particular period. This has been demonstrated by reading of the songs that showed the agrarian metaphors, problems of domesticity, problems of social stratification, including caste, criteria by employing the regional dialects of both

Rajasthan and Gujarat that seem to have provided the immediate vocabulary. This vocabulary of expression acquired a specific form and therefore the lineages came to be understood as the outpourings of the saints. One of the striking features of the stories of the women saints is that it is only through *bhakti saints's* writings that we can understand the position of women, whereas mainstream literature or inscriptions that form the other two sources are relatively silent on women's participation. Therefore, the argument that women were subjugated by religion does not hold much merit as women could support the religious structures using the language of *bhakti*.

Another problem is the thesis is discusses the issue of stories of the saints, patriarchy and through reading of the songs of the saints in their immediate and larger contexts suggest that it was an encounter in multifarious forms with forms of domination, one of which included gender domination. Therefore, the wholesale reading of this as a direct clash with patriarchy can be problematic and we may understand that this is one of the strategies employed by the women saints to encounter the forms of dominance and address their outpourings. A content analysis of the songs reveals that love, kindness and other aspects of human relations were more important and all they argued, was for a more just and equitable society. This aspiration for a more just order was an appeal to the personal God, and as such, this direct relationship with a personal God also reproduced the dominant social relationship in which the person was tied down to a super-ordinate in his everyday life.

The emotional *bhakti* that started in the Tamil country in the seventh century CE focused on both Siva and Vishnu worship and succeeded mainly by employing music and the local language of Tamil that embraced a large audience. In this tradition of devotional, *bhakti* that travelled northwards to Karnataka, a new twist was seen with

the participation of the artisan and women. In the regional particularity of Rajasthan and Gujarat, it was not the artisans but the agricultural classes and the pastoral people in large numbers who were the followers of *bhakti* tradition.

In the course of study, one can point out easily the importance of saint Mirabai due to the administrative importance of the figure of saint. The cultural capital (acceptance) acquired by the saint Mirabai points out the importance of her figure. People devoted themselves to the saint Mirabai due to her devotional nature added with miracles etc. In the due process, Rajput community, which have discarded saint Mirabai in the past, have accepted her for the purpose to rule over the masses. Whereas the acceptance of Mirabai for masses or downtrodden community was due to divine hood and a medium to get rid of worldly wounds.

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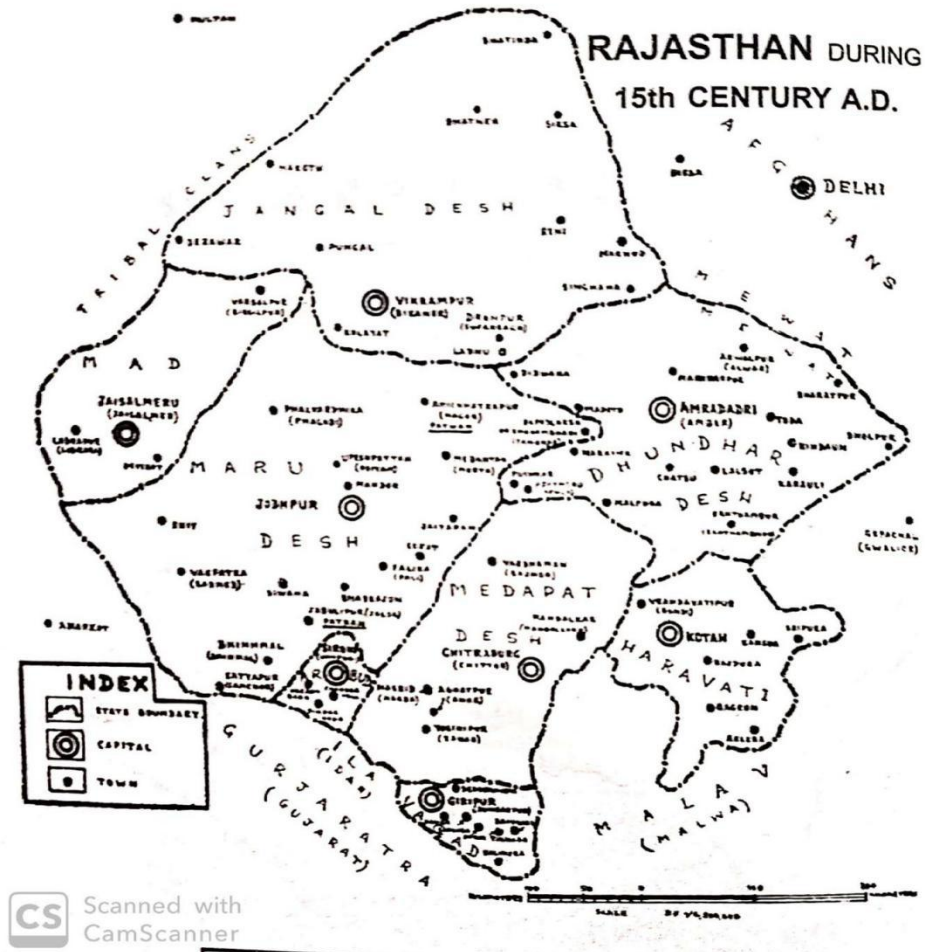
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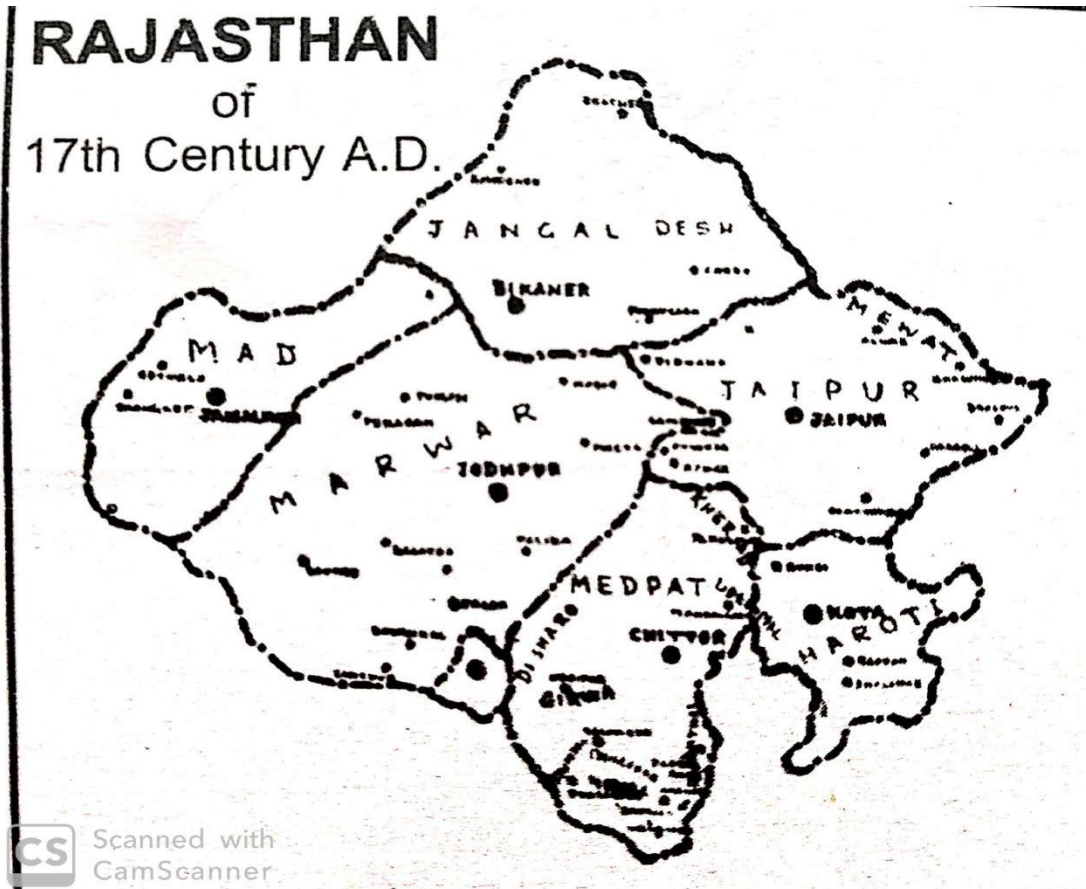
Appendix

Map of Rajasthan: 15th Century



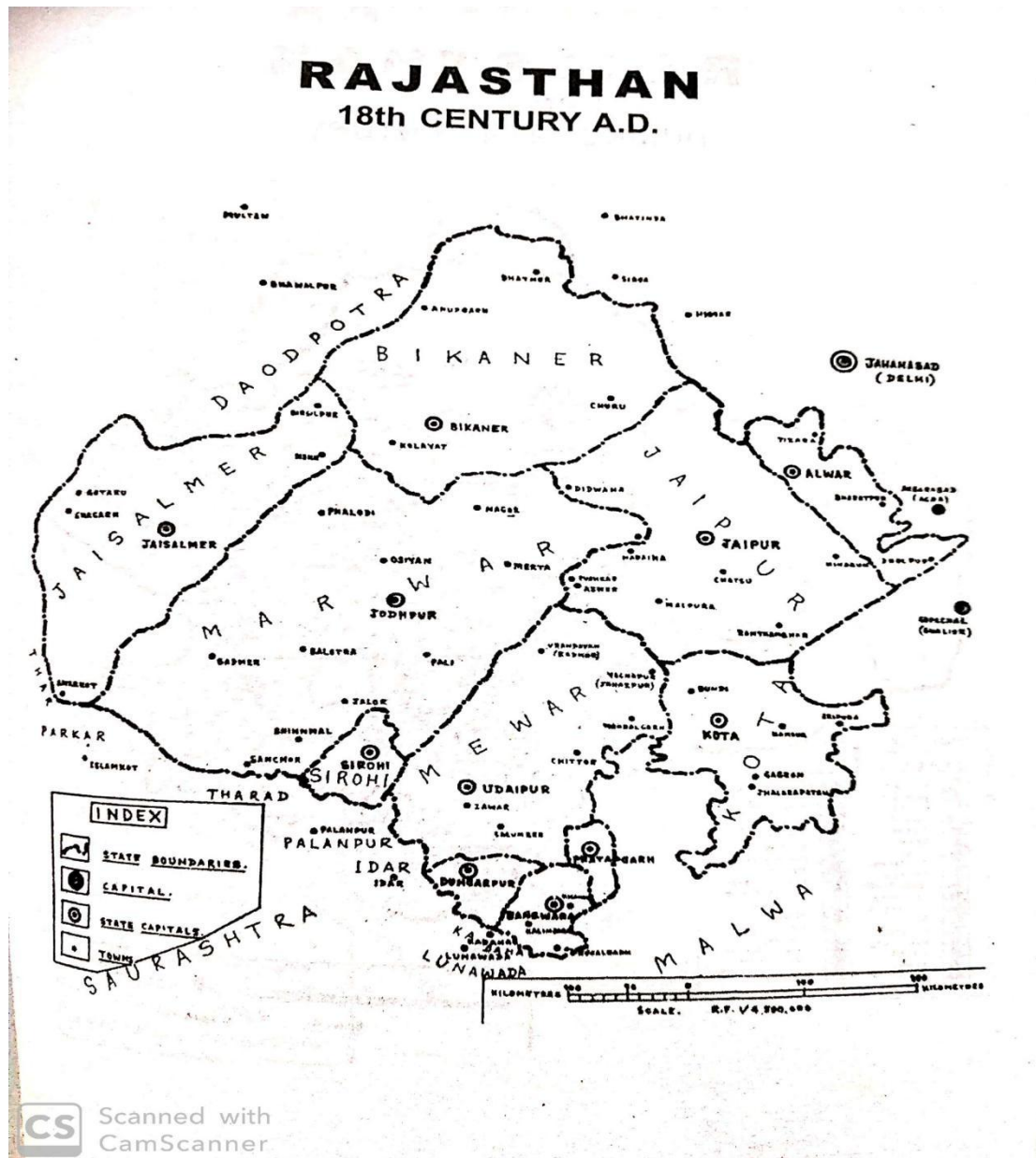
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Map of Rajasthan: 17th Century



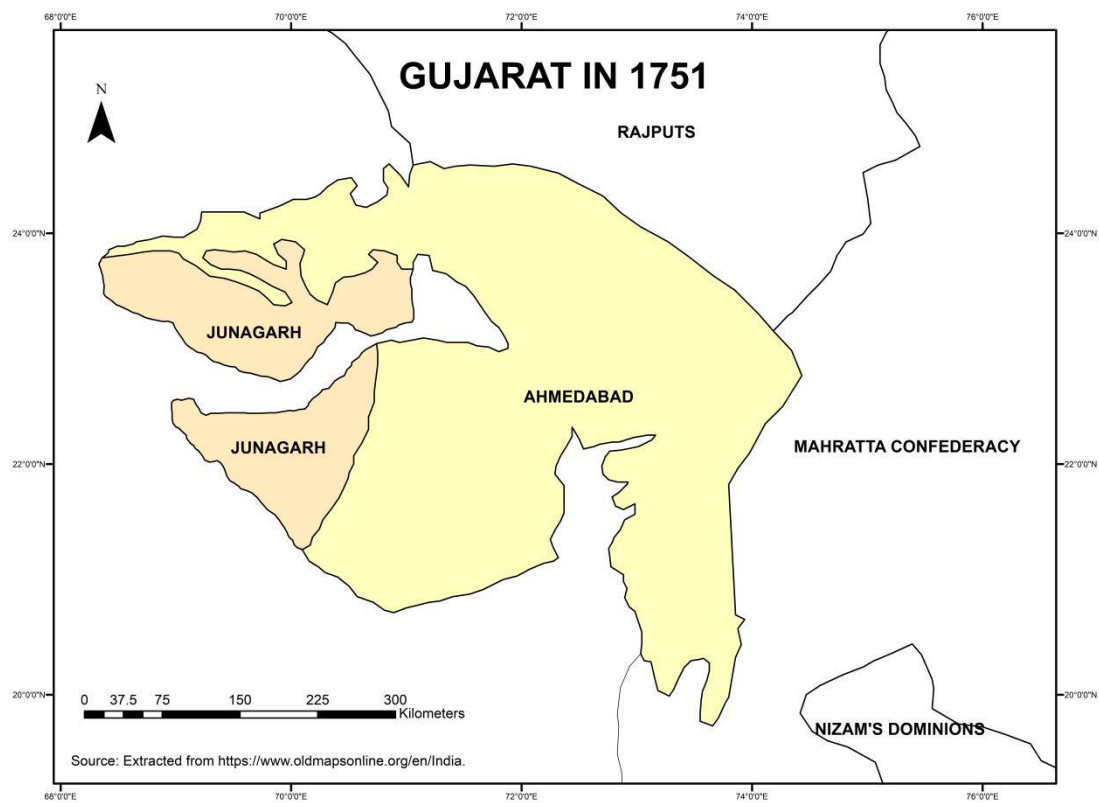
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Map of Rajasthan: 18th Century

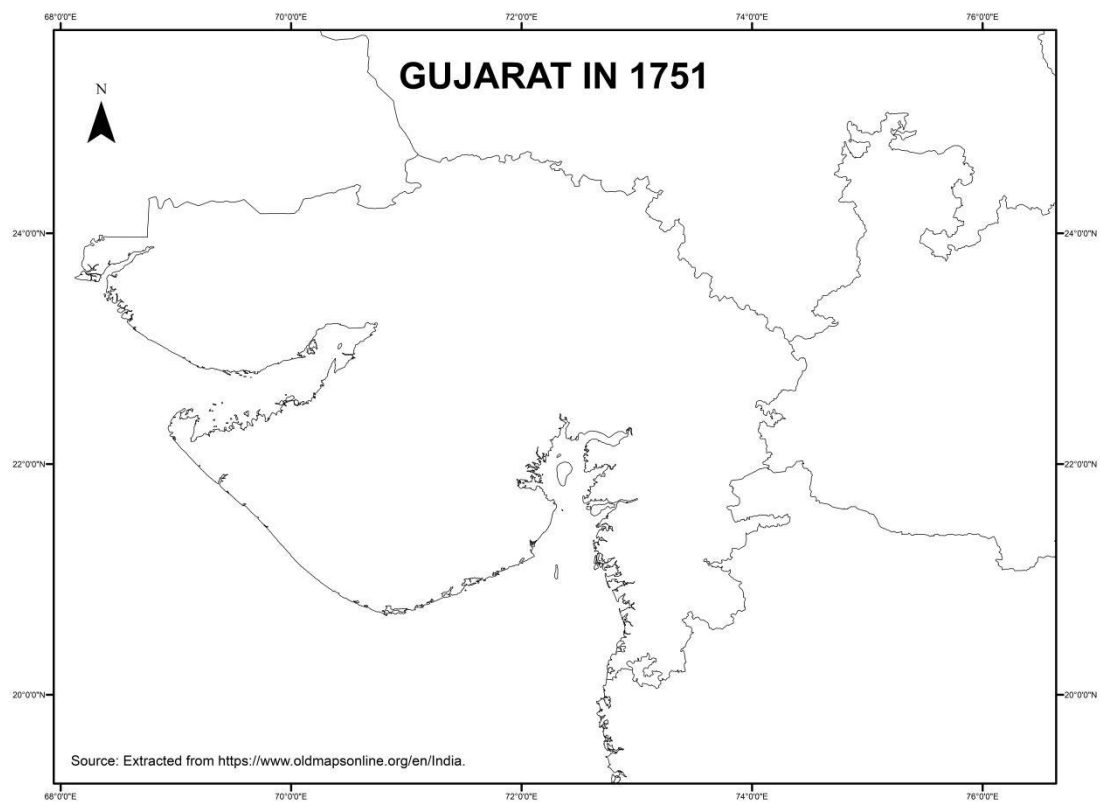


Source: Sharma, G.N. *Social life in Medieval Rajasthan*. Jodhpur: Book Treasure, 2011.

Map of Gujarat: 1751 A.D.



Map of Gujarat: 1751. A.D.



Saints of Rajasthan and Gujarat

<i>S.N</i>	<i>Name of the Saint</i>	<i>Place of Birth</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>	<i>Works</i>
1.	<i>Abha Bai (Ambha Bai)</i>	Didwana (Rajasthan).	1797 A.D.	Guru mahima, Sisya Sampraday, Kakka Battisi
2.	<i>Aiji (Jiji Devi): Ai Panth</i>	Bilada, Jodhpur. (Rajasthan)	Later half of 14 th Century.	Ai, Ugra Prakas composed by Bhawanidas Vyas.
3.	<i>Beeran</i>	Jodhpur (Rajasthan).	First half of 18 th Century.	Pada's found in Jodhpur Museum
4.	<i>Brajdasi Rani Bankavati</i>	Jaipur (Rajasthan).	1713 A.D.	Brajdasi bhagvat
5.	<i>Chattra Kunvribai</i>	Kandhade Village. (Rajasthan)	1674 A.D.	Prem-Vinod.
6.	<i>Dayabai</i>	Dehra village of Mewat region. (Rajasthan).	1693 A.D.	Daya bodh, Vinay Malika

7.	<i>Gangasati</i>	Saurashtra region at Rajpara village of Palitana. (Gujarat).	Gangasati was around 12 th to 14 th centuries.)	52 religious songs (Folk Upanishad) Ganga Satinu Adhyatma Darshan (1997) by Bhandev and Nanubhai Dudhrejiya and published them in his book titled <i>Sorathi Santvani</i> (1947).
8.	<i>Gawari Bai</i>	Vagad family of Dungarpur district (Rajasthan)	1758 A.D.	Gawri-Kirtanmala
9.	<i>Karmabai</i>	<u>Kalwa Nagaur</u> Village district. (Rajasthan)	20 January 1615	Parchi of Karmabai
10.	<i>Mirabai</i>	Kudki, Pali district. (Rajasthan)	1498 A.D.	The largest collection of poems credited are in 19 th century manuscripts.

11.	<i>Phoolibai</i>	Majhvaas village of Nagaur district. (Rajasthan)	1568 A.D.	Phoolibai ki Parchi.
12.	<i>Pratap Kunvribai</i>	Jakhan Pragana of Jodhpur. (Rajasthan).	First half of 19 th Century.	Ram-Charitara
13.	<i>Ranabai</i>	<u>Harnawa</u> in <u>Parbatsar</u> pargana of <u>Marwar</u> . (Rajasthan)	1568 A.D. Akshaya tritya	(Jaton ki Gauravgatha by Dr. Pemaram) Recently written from folk tradition.
14.	<i>Ratnabai</i>	Obscure	Ratnabai was around 12 th to 14 th centuries.	Obscure.
15.	<i>Sadhvi Sita Sulakshani.</i>	Tonk District in the family of Toda Rajsingh. (Rajasthan).	Between 1446-1451 Vikram Samvat.	Vani of Sadhavi Sita.
16.	<i>Sahajobai</i>	Dehra village of Mewat region. (Rajasthan)	1683 A.D.	Santbani Sangreh, Sahaj Prakash and Solahattwanir nay
17.	<i>Sati Loyal</i>	Khabalia village (Gujarat)	Obscure date	Obscure.
18.	<i>Sati Toral</i>	Kathiwar (Gujarat)	First half of 15 th Century.	Obscure.
19.	<i>Sunder Kunvribai</i>	Delhi (Delhi).	1734 A.D.	Padas in Nargidas 'Bhaktmal.

WOMEN SAINTS IN THE MEDIEVAL BHAKTI MOVEMENT OF RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT

by Kaluram Palsaniya

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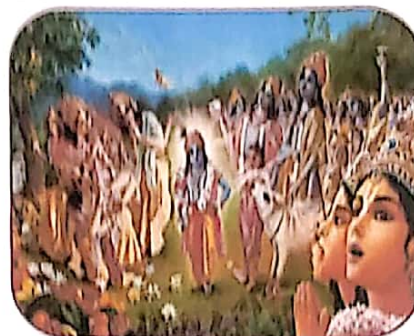
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SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND FOR THE EMERGENCE OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RAJASTHAN

Kalaram Palsaniya
Research Scholar



ABSTRACT

Bhakti Movement has started from South India and spread whole north India in later centuries. Historians have different opinion for the rise of Bhakti movement. Social, political and economic conditions were important for the rise of Bhakti movement. Few historians saw it as counterpart of Protestantism and Islam, whereas other considered it alternative voice to safeguard Hinduism. This paper will discuss material base, political and social conditions for the rise of Bhakti.

KEYWORDS: Bhakti, Sanatana, Vaishnavism, Brahmadeyas

INTRODUCTION

Bhakti, a dissent movement against orthodox religious society, stood against traditional norms of the society, became itself a religion.¹ It was considered as one way to attain salvation along with *Gyan marg* and *Karma marg*. The Bhakti movement which has started from sixth century and later decayed got momentum in twelfth century and became popular movement. Bhakti movement was multidimensional and multilayer movement. The social values that Bhakti established are still prevalent in the society. Now it is matter of inquiry that why only in twelfth century Bhakti got momentum and not before and after that? Historians have looked at the Bhakti movement rise as a result of changes in the production patterns. Changes in the production patterns affected the social, political and cultural area, which further led to the changes in religion and historians looked upon Bhakti as an outcome of such process.

Gupta's were the upholder of *Vaishnavism* and during Gupta period Brahmanism spread and Buddhism shrink. Buddhists were forced to run to the hills and built caves to live. It became partial reason for the decline of Gupta's as well. After the decline of the Gupta Empire, *Pandya* Dynasty (c. 550 BC -1345 A.D), *Chera* Dynasty (c.400 B.C-1314), *Chola* Dynasty (c.301B.C- 1279 A.D.) and *Pallava* (275-882 A.D) Dynasties were very important, those adopted the Hinduism and spread it to the other parts. *Harsha* was the devotee of sun, who later on became patron of *Shaivism* and after some time became upholder of Buddhism. In such circumstances when Jainism and Buddhism were spreading in the country than Bhakti became the alternative voice for the safeguard of Hinduism.

Some other viewed that it was the Indian counterpart of protestant movement. So views are different on Bhakti. *Acharya Hazari Prasad Dwivedi* opined that it was indigenous movement. It was only the development of the tradition. He denied any type of influence of Christianity and Islam. *Rekha Pande* opined to look closely the material basis of Bhakti. According to *Rekha Pande* when Turks came to India then they brought new techniques of management and in such techniques *Iqta* system was to extract the surplus production. In Turkish rule feeling of regionalism spread in the people because of harsh tax collection which

¹ R. Champakalakshmi, *Religion, Tradition and Ideology: Pre-colonial South India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Women Sages/Saints Through The Ages: Bhakti Movement In Rajasthan With Special Reference To Saint Mirabai.

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Abstract: Bhakti, a prominent social and religious movement of India generated diverse thoughts, philosophies, literature in the society. The position of women in the society is closely associated with religion and is the subject of academic enquiry in a wide variety of disciplines. This paper inquires the social conditions of women in the society from antiquity till medieval time. It also deals with the socio-economic conditions for the rise of Bhakti movement in Rajasthan. The women got rights to have debate and to hold important positions permission to acquire scriptures knowledge or to decide bridegroom in the past. With the passing of time and political disturbances condition of women got reduced in the society and Purdah and Sati introduced in the area of Rajasthan. This paper also deals with Mirabai and legends attached with the name of Mirabai through different hagiographical accounts references. The Bhakti women saint Mirabai was not merely saint. The figure or cult of Mirabai was more attached with Power. Paper drew attention on these lines.

Keywords: *Bhakti, religion, Mirabai, Rigveda, Brahmavadinis.*

I

Religion is the most powerful source of collective identity. The position of women is closely related to religion. The position of women in society is the subject of academic enquiry in a wide variety of disciplines. From history to sociology, from literature to philosophy; a wide range of research projects explore the condition of women in society. Religion is not only the source of belief and religious observation, but also is the source of social behaviour. It shapes social conduct through laws, prescriptions and norms. In this context, the history of religion is of crucial



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