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CONTRIBUTION OF MAHARASHTRA WOMEN TO BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

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Abstract:-

Although women are treated like goddesses in Indian tradition, women remained the weakest and most neglected element in 19th century India. But with the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi, Indian women joined the Indian freedom struggle along with men. With this exception, it must be admitted that Indian society has fallen short in mainstreaming women. Actually Maharashtra has a very long tradition of social reformers. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Dhondo Keshav Karve, Doctor Babasaheb Ambedkar created a creative ideological meeting in Maharashtra to treat women as human beings. However, there has not been much change in the ideological structure of the society. But the reflection of this point of view was not reflected in it.

The tradition of women's writing, which started with the first poet Mahadamba, reached from Muktabai, Janabai, Bahinabai directly to Tarabai Shinde, Savitribai Phule. Later in the 20th century, the disinterest in the subject of women's literature moved away from the realm of folk literature. Due to Dr. Sarojini Babar, women's reputation in literature came before the society. However, with the exception of writers like Durga Bhagwat, Nalini Pandit, Chitra Naik, Iravati Karve, Maltibai Bedekar, the writings of women do not seem to have been taken seriously. In the 50 years since independence, a large amount of folk literature has come to light through research.

Keynote Words:- 1) Biography 2) Narrative 3) Women writer 4) Historical Biography

Introduction:-

In the 19th century, biographies of women generally started in Maharashtra from Kashibai Kanitkar and Avantikabai Gokhale. But considering the trend in Marathi biographical writing, the role of women biographers was neglected. A biography is written with the intention of preserving the memory of someone for whom we feel respect, but that writing is not necessarily effective. For that, the role of the biographer has to be clear. If there is a dialogue between the writer and the reader, the character reaches a higher level. Considering that, the biography of "Educator Tarabai Modak" written by Padmaja Phatak is characteristic in many ways.¹ All the details are meticulously recorded from the footnotes in this biography. Also "Tolstoy: A Man" by Sumati Devasthale, a biography written by the author, also attempts to take a personal view of Tolstoy's developing personality. In this, the role of the writer is not one of individual worship but a curious attitude of absolutism.²

There is no doubt that character must have the power of authority. However, there is no consensus on how much history should be included in the biography. Biography and history are closely related. However, there is a fundamental difference between the two. A biographer chooses the subject according to his/her choice, keeping in mind the reliability of historical materials like letters, diaries, manuscripts and contemporary memories. This article reviews the same.

The nature of biography written by women between 1950 and 1975 A.D.

From 1950 to 1975, women wrote about a hundred biographical books, including memoirs, short biographies, mythological and historical biographies, character stories, etc. These biography can be categorized by subject. The author's motivation behind this biography can be a judgment about the quality of the biography.

1) Narrative stories:-

Numerous biographies on mythological, historical and saintly literature were written during this period. After reading 'Satipanchak', Muktai, Sri Krishna Pratap, Danshur Karna, Bavdekar's Biography, Siddharudh Vaibhav, Sant Eknath, Krishnapriya Satyabhama, Stories of Indian Heroines, Matoshree Jijabai, one will get an idea of the nature of the biography.

Piroj Anandkar has written short biographies of Muktabai, Janabai, Kanhopatra, Bahinabai,

Venabai under the name Sant Kavayitri. The old writers who wrote a lot of literature on Namdev did not even mention the biography of Janabai. Because of this indifference, the touching biography of many women writers could not be published yesterday.³ Those who got the opportunity to increase their altruistic status, the saint poet's poems were not only inspired by the tremors of the caste, but they also composed poems on the topics of the world and their own pleasures, experience, inequality, unwavering devotion to the Lord.⁴ The observations made by the author while writing the saint literature are very important. He told the important fact that profession, caste, age and femininity do not come in the way of charity. Rather than verifying the legend, the author has drawn attention to the power that appears from it. While illustrating Muktabai's spiritual authority, the mischievous nature of her personality is also accurately conveyed. The author has succeeded in expressing the anguish and compassion of Kanhopatra in a few words.⁵

Kumudini Pawar has written short biographies of Sant Janabai and Sant Savata Mali. Its form also falls into the genre of Charit Kahani. So the biography called Muktai written by Charushila Gupte is also of this type. Similarly Kalavati Devi has written a biography called 'Siddharudavaibhav'. This biography is divided into seven parts. The writer has opened this biography by adding a juicy description based on mythological incidents, facts and examples. Its simple style makes it readable. Explaining the purpose behind this biography, the author says that "Though the darshan of saints is rare, reading their biographies or meditating on them also cleanses away sins. For this, the biographies of such holy men should always be read."⁶

The book 'Yudhisthira' by Mrs. Kamalabai Tilak is a biography presented in the form of a novel. Triveni confluence of novel, biography and review is seen in this book. Vyasa considers Yudhishtara to have a certain temperamental defect. Shri Krishna and glorified him, but in the twentieth century, he became a subject of criticism for many. Writer feels that the main reason for this is that the role of Yudhishtara has not been properly understood. Therefore, the writer has tried to present his side by selecting some different incidents in the biography.⁷

Anusaya Joglekar wrote the book 'Bhartiya Samajsevak' which introduces the social work of Indians. The biographies of social reformers from Sant Eknath to modern Sant Sane Guruji are given in it. The choice made by the author regarding the biographical subject is typical. Attempts to solve problems like untouchability, women's issues, delusional beliefs, undesirable customs and immorality and people who risk their lives for it can be seen in this biography. The biographies of egalitarian saint Eknath, philosopher and reformer philanthropist, truth seeker Mahatma Phule, pioneer of Arya Samaj, Swami Shraddhanand, freedom of scientific Veer Savarkar, Sayajirao Gaikwad, Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde, Doctor Ambedkar can be read together in this book.⁸

2) Achievements in Biographical Writing of Women:-

It is difficult to ascertain the authenticity of information regarding a mythical person. But in the case of historical figures, it is possible for the writer to use authentic documents as evidence on a daily basis. There are some biographies found in this period that prove how powerful and prosperous women's life in India is. As there are women in mythological times, so are Viranganas in historical times. Two biographies of the writer, who wrote under the pseudonym Indutanaya, tell the glorious story of women. 'Jagatya Jyoti', the book tells the story of the glory of about Seventy Viranganas. This book provides information about known and unknown heroic daughter like Tarabai, rani Lakshmibai, Begum Hazarat Mahal, Rani Prabhavati, Kisan Kanya Padma of Bhopal, Tai Telin of Karad, Mahina Bai of Anandrao Pawar of Dhar, Malay Bai Desai, Preeti Lata Bahadur of historical time.⁹

Another important biography of Indutanaya writer is 'Bhartiya Stree Darshan'.¹⁰ In this biography, he has introduced many unknown women such as Mayyannal, the princess of Chandrapur Kshatriya of Mandvi, Chowghurani of Bengal, Saraswati Bai, the mother of the Agarkars, Swarnamayi, the mother of Gurudas Bandopadhyay, and Sunanda, the princess of Arkat. Dattu Vaman Potdar's comment on this book speaks volumes about the importance of this book, "Since ancient times, there have been many accomplished women in India and their biographies have become memorable and respected. If someone compiles and publishes a biography of a woman, it will be a great task."¹¹

3) Historical Biography:-

Dr. Kamal Gokhale has written the complete biography of Sambhaji Maharaj in a coherent and critical manner. In his treatise 'Shivaputra Sambhaji' he has written a biography of Sambhaji using all available and published sources.¹² Along with Sambhaji's judicial system, revenue policy, public vigilance, war skills, etc., Sambhaji's vision, boldness and creativity are presented in a neutral way by the author. "This book is pure historical. What is pure historical? So it is written on the basis of various reliable and standardized sources of historical records," said Datto Vaman Potdar.¹³

The biography of Padmashri Dadasaheb Gaikwad written by Bhavna Bhargwane is similar. Dadasaheb Gaikwad has dedicated his entire life to Dalits. He tried to free his gullible society from superstition and economic oppression. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Satyagraha for the Dalits, Satyagraha for the entry of Dalits in the Kalaram temple, etc., the writer has succeeded in depicting how Dadasaheb spent his entire life for the salvation of Dalits.¹⁴

Apart from this, some ideological biographies have also been written by women during this period. Like 'Karl Marx: Character and Thought' written by Sarla Karkhanis, the biographies of Friedrich Engels, Lenin, Shripad Amrit Dange, Rammohan Lohia, etc. were written by women, all of which are ideological biographies of historical nature.

Conclusion:-

Writing biographies of women started in the post-independence period. Between 1950 and 1975, women wrote about Hundreds biographies. These biographies are sure to inspire everyone from toddlers to adults. Each writer has arranged the biographical subject according to his time and strength. Just as the success of a biographical work depends on the hero, it also depends on the role of the writer. The more the role projects, the better the character. In this period, the biographies of twelve women biographers appear in profound form, it has to be called the achievement of this period. Also, the contribution of women biographers like Indumati Kelkar, Sarla Karkhanis, Kamal Gokhale, Sumati Devsthale is particularly visible. It is seen that biographical works were produced by women in this period, which should be looked at from a gender neutral point of view. It has to be said that due to their work, it has definitely helped to reduce the gender gap between men and women in the social sector.

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