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The Philosophy of Saurashtrian Saints: A Hagiographical Study of *Sorathi Santo*



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Abstract:

Folklore is an essential part of everyday life back then. People were consistent on its various twigs like folksongs, folktales, riddles, proverbs, hymns, dance, folk ballads etc. at that time folklore also keeps the record of the life of saint. This branch is known as hagiographical study.

Folklore has also done the preservation of the duties of the common people and consequently information about the people who preserved it can be gained. The oral tradition, from which folklore occurs, survived because it serves the interest of the people preserving it and the reasons for preserving folklore varied. Often it was for either personal reasons – something to tell the children and grandchildren around the fire – or professional reasons, in other words preserving the genealogies of kings and heroes because this was the job the person had been assigned.

Many of the aspects of folklore that are listed above are shared by the second discipline- hagiography. Every country has its own culture, rituals, and unique ideas regarding their beliefs and understanding. In this study researcher will observe the spiritual journey of various saints from Saurashtrian regions. In western literature there are sufficient works on hagiography, but in contradiction there are very less work available in Saurashtra region. in this paper researcher will study the hagiographical aspects of Saurashtrian saints. The paper will attempt to discuss Hagiography as a literary genre. The study of Hagiography plays a vital role in understanding culture of a particular region. The researcher intends to study Folktales and the life stories of saints in order to understand its cultural and literary significance.

Key words: Hagiography, Folklore, Oral narratives, Miracles, Poetics, reader response theory.



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Introduction

When there was no medium of communication humans always had some or other ways of expressing the events took place in their times.

Ever since language did not originate, humans have found different ways to tell each other the events that took place in their lives. Cave paintings, Drawing various types of shapes and signs, and different folk arts are proof that if any person or society wants to tell about their feelings or experiences, it can be expressed with the help of the mediums mentioned above. The motive behind this expression of storytelling was to entertain every human being. There is hardly anyone in this world who does not show interest in listening narratives. We have seen countless styles of storytelling in human society since the beginning of the art of storytelling. At the same time, the purpose of writing the story is to teach people. Over the time, human beings gradually mastered in language, learnt to share things, emotions, information with each other. They started passing their experiences and information to their next generation with the help of folklore. Now human beings not only entertained each other with the help of folklore but at the same time they were unknowingly weaving their heritage and culture as well as the stories of their family tribes in those folktales. Thus in the rigorous style of the story, one gets everything about community, society, manners and life of those people. Folklore has existed since ancient times. Folklore has been woven into every society, community, and every kind of people since the invention of manuscripts. People often misunderstand the terms folklore and folktales. They abruptly associate both the term with each other.

Folklore consists of legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, Life of Saints, popular beliefs, fairy tales, stories, tall tales, and customs that are the traditions of a culture, sub-culture, or group. It is also the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared. The study of folklore is sometimes called Folkloristics, and people who study folklore are sometimes referred to as "Folklorists". Studying folklore, academician can necessarily incorporate areas such as history and anthropology. This is because folklore, which is defined in *The New International Webster's Student Dictionary* as — "The traditions, beliefs, customs, sayings, stories, preserved among the common people". When studied vigorously, folklore allows to learn about the people who preserved



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the folklore, through the people themselves. The study of hagiography is linked to the study of folklore. In other words, Hagiography means the biography of saint. The term hagiography may be used to refer to the biography of a saint or highly developed spiritual being in any of the world's spiritual traditions.

Folklore has done the preservation of the customs of the common people and consequently information about the people who preserved it can be gained. The oral tradition, from which folklore emerges, survived because it serves the interest of the people preserving it and the reasons for preserving folklore varied. Often it was for either personal reasons – something to tell the children and grandchildren around the fire – or professional reasons, in other words preserving the genealogies of kings and heroes because this was the job the person had been assigned.

Since the folkloric tradition was maintained by people, contemporary events that affected the people also affected the folklore. Apart from being reflective of the people involved in its preservation, folklore also helped to accomplish such tasks as ensuring stability, strengthening cultural traditions and helping to educate the next generation. Many of the aspects of folklore are shared by the second discipline- hagiography. Every country has its own culture, rituals, and unique ideas regarding their beliefs and understanding. In western literature there are sufficient works on hagiography, but in contradiction there are very less work available in Saurashtra region. The study of Hagiography plays a vital role in understanding culture of a particular region.

Hagiography is the study of the saints and, in particular, the study of the genre of medieval writing that related the lives of the saints: the deeds and miracles associated with them, and often, especially in the case of the saints of the saints. antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the conditions His death (passion) and martyrdom. But, for contemporary medievalists, hagiography is far from being limited to the study of the church and its history. Hagiographic literature, which often describes the life of a saint with graphic details, is a vital source for mediaeval, cultural and intellectual medieval history, for the character of everyday life in the Middle Ages, values and tools, both intellectuals as physicists, with which he confronted the challenges of medieval life. Hagiographic texts have been, for example, a vital tool for examining the lives of medieval women, the peasantry, the urban proletariat and a large number of subjects that are generally invisible or opaque in documentary and



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traditional literary sources.

Sainthood is the final and developed state of a human being. Saints also began like ordinary people, and they faced same challenges as everyone else around them. But instead of staying ordinary, they pushed themselves to grow in grace and love so that they can become extraordinary individuals. The Saurashtrian reign of Gujrat had an implacable stream of folklore, although hagiographical study is less discussed literature in research filled. In this paper researcher focused on the life and the philosophy of the saints. The life of Saurashtrian saints were much different from western saints, because they were inter connected with church, whereas Saurashtrian saints are particularly folk saints like Aapa Mepa, Aapa Rata, Aapa Jadara etc, were not belonged to any religious schools. They were the firm believers. Saurashtrian saints spent their entire life in helping people, to understand the human one has to understands their psyche. The psyche of the Saurashtrian people is simplicity, less concerned about materialism, love for nature, highly emotional, believers, non-believers and superstitious at the same time! They were highly brave and lovable, and religious at that time.



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Philosophy of the saints

In the life account of any Saurashtrian saint one can easily observe that they were against the cast discrimination, because they believe that they were the children of mother earth (Meghani). They use to teach the moral value of acceptance. Everyone had a right to follow their religion. Saurashtrian saints are liberal in the matter of religion, cast or gender. Back in time were castism and blind faith on religion were on pick point, saints fought against them and took the stand in favor of truth and trust. Saints were also against to the orthodoxy. Saurashtra was very much deep in to sacrifice animals in the name of religious rituals. In one story Saint Vela Bhagat taught an important lesson to the hunter who hunts down one deer. And at the end of the story we can see a positive transformation in hunter. One another important observation is clearly highlighted Meghani's Book Sorthna santo is that even though every single Saurashtrian saints were deeply indulged with religion but they were not very much religious in one place. Like they were not often visiting temples, certain rituals like constant adoration and aarati, and other religious things. They simply sang the wonderful hymns which contains highly philosophical aspects and the unfold truths of



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human life and their journey. Hymns were the important part of the Saurashtrian saints, they have certain singing pattern, proper meters and very deep knowledge of poetry.

Now researcher will discuss the important aspect of saint's life, miracle. Not only Saurashtrian saints but almost every saint around the globe is indulged in miracles or in other words we can say wonders. In the *sorthi santo* the tale starts with the miracle and the book itself ends with miracle. In the stories we find out that saints can bring back life to the death, they can heal any disability, they anywhere they can find the source of under water, or even feel the pain of others literally. At some point all these above things were considered as hum buck, but when physics ends, when our physical world ends clairvoyance, occultism & mesmerism takes place. Saurashtrian saints were very much aware of these meta physical subjects too. Although in this discussion researcher is not in favor of any superstitious aspects, or blind faith. These things are very much normal in any folktales, though with the help of these stories we can consider that all these things might have the devise of any narrative. Without miracle people will not accept any person as saint. Every saint is a human being at first, gradually their love for nature, love for people, animals and love for the supremist defines them as saint. It is not mandatory that every saint can do miracle, but in order to convince the people who is doing wrong in their life they had to do so. Will power and psychic energy can do things as we all know. Reader has to be very objective regarding to their miracles and should try more focused in the tale of the saint and their hagiography.

Conclusion:

There are still so many reigns of Indian folktales which are untouched. There are plenty of narratives floating in our culture regarding to hagiographical studies. Right from the beginning this area of folklore called hagiography is not well researched and discussed. Though we find enough records of saints in western culture as well. Saints were the back bone of India in ancient days. So, it is researchers' duty to purify the elements and highlight the important aspects to the folklore discipline.



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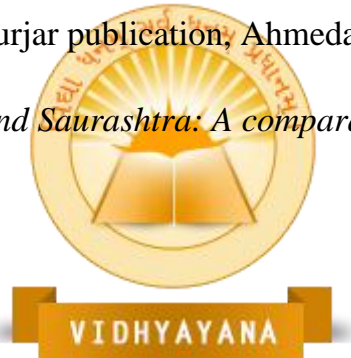
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