

# The Warkari Panth : The World of Janabai

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## **Abstract:**

*Women's history is not only history of women in society and family but also challenges which social structures posed in different historical phases through different agents-to this marginalized group. Warkar panth is associated with the region of Maharashtra and is a popular bhakti movement. It represents both Shaiva and Vaishnava tradition and is associated with the worship of Vitthal of Pandharpur. One of the most important aspects of this panth is broad gender equality. There are numerous women saints in Warkari panth or sampradaya (cult) and they are still revered in Maharashtra. They have been rightly referred as "women of courage". Their compositions known as abhangs in Marathi are known for the spiritual content and rhythmical sophistication. This article deals with the reconstructing the life, contribution, ideas, etc., of Janabai with the help of abhangs and other hagiography. It has been discussed along with the brief survey of the Warkari movement in western India.*

**Keywords:** Warkari, Abhang, Vitthal, Janabai, Pandharpur, Gender, Bhakti, Dasi.

Women have been ignored in conventional history writing; her experiences have not been taken into account. In simple words women's history in general and history of gender<sup>1</sup> relations and structures of patriarchy<sup>2</sup> in particular have been overlooked. Feminist historians have alleged that the history of humankind has been written as essentially history of men.<sup>3</sup> This is evident not only in the writings of Liberal historians of nineteenth century but also in the Marxist writings. They were primarily evaluated in context of family and not as an independent entity in their own right. However, with the rise of social history during 1960s, the experiences of powerless and inarticulate began to be taken into account by trained historians.<sup>4</sup> Recent trends in historical research, mostly by women historians, have noted this omission and initiated social construction of femineity and masculinity. In other words, introduction of gender as an analytical category has been created by the women historians. Thus, women's history is not only history of women in society, family but also challenges which social structures posed in different historical phases through different agents-to this marginalized group. This article deals with the reconstructing the life, contribution, ideas, etc., of Janabai or Janai one of the important Warkari woman saints in medieval period through her abhangs.<sup>5</sup> There are

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