

Women's Perspectives in the Select Marathi Proverbs

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ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the critical analysis of the Marathi proverbs pertaining to the portrayal of the different aspects of womanhood. It is an attempt to focus on the significance of proverbs whose resources remain unknown and unidentified. It might have taken its roots from folklore and oral literature. The proverbs are unique in their manifestation of the human world especially of women who are often objects of inhuman exploitation and deprivation in the patriarchal society. The proverbs carry social, moral, psychological, religious, etc. perspectives in quite blatant, bold, and candid style. The proverbs project roles of women such as a daughter, sister, mother, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, etc. Proverbs are the rich storehouse of age-old wisdom capsules and continue in the present day to guide, reform, and safeguard society with its wise warnings. Marathi proverbs are the part of oral literature of Maharashtra, struggling to survive in the wake of a techno-savvy world by imparting valuable comments and guidance on the general situation of women.

Keywords: Marathi, Maharashtra, proverb, womanhood, patriarchy.

INTRODUCTION

Maharashtra is one of the prominent states of India. Rich in diversity, Maharashtrian culture emerges as a rich mine of folklore, myths, history, and oral traditions. Marathi, the mother tongue of the Maharashtrian people, dazzles our mind with its unique treasure of proverbs. Steeped in latent wisdom, these proverbs are an outcome of ancient wisdom and tradition. They put the challenge to decode its valuable stuff for inquisitive minds. Proverbs are the smallest units of worldly literature. Proverbs are as old as human existence as they manifest their lifestyle, mannerisms, customs, rituals, traditions, perspectives, impressions, thought processes, etc.

Proverb is a group of short, meaningful, and attractive words that originate from folkloric traditions. Like figures of speech, imagery, and idioms, proverbs enrich the language and literature. It is characterized by the catchy word order, irony, paradox, and rhyme. The proverbs are brief but apt observations of daily experience and human life. It is a rich storehouse of integrated social wisdom. The proverb originates from an unknown source. It comprises specific human experience, information, facts, and counselling or teaching. It reflects good and evil human attributes, behavioural patterns, customs, diverse relationships, etc. Every section of society appreciates the proverb. It manifests the specific region and geography. Some proverbs are mild and gentle. However, some of them are very direct and overt.

Marathi proverbs are also an important aspect of Maharashtrian culture as they exist largely in oral form. Generally, proverbs are mini statements on diverse human life. In every culture, women are at the center of the human world. They are an inseparable part of human existence as they are the progenitor of the human race. Their world is often shrouded in gossip, fantasy, romance, love, beauty, treachery, etc. From time immemorial, they are the symbols of different human desires and attributes. Proverbs on women exist in every human culture as if they are old habits. Women are the idols of culture as well as sexuality. The proverbs are unauthorized and undisputed remarks of the human (especially male) world where women are generally targets of criticism. The proverb provides a hidden platform to praise or attack the weaker section of society. It generally highlights the contemporary mindset of society.

In society, the childless woman often becomes the target of humiliation. The proverb such as '*Aapan viyina ani savatsahina*' (She herself does not bear children and yet she cannot endure a fellow wife) conveys the patriarchal system where a childless wife lacks dignity and respect whereas her husband has the privilege of second marriage. However, the proverb '*Eka purushachyadonabayakagharatkir kirkarunaka*' (The two wives of one man—let them not quarrel in the house!) emerges as a wise counsel. This proverb ironically comments on the quarrelsome nature of women, and their inability to cope with each other. It not only blatantly attacks their nature but also warns the men about the possibility of continuous conflict between the two wives after his second marriage. The second marriage will be a constant source of disharmony and an unpleasant environment. Thus, it shows the drawbacks and disadvantages of a

second marriage. In another proverb such as '*Jicha navaradasatatica samsara chokhat*' (She manages well whose husband is a slave to her), the secret of a happy marriage is unfolded. It talks about the universal truth that a woman can control a man if she is smart. It also unveils the attractive and captivating quality of a woman whom the man adores and becomes the slave of her charming beauty.

The proverb '*Jo baikoshibhala to khaidudhakala*' (He who is on good terms with his wife will live well) underpins the harmonious marital life. It is necessary for a husband to keep in good relationship with his wife to enjoy a happy life. The word '*dudhkala*' denotes the proper mixture of sexual and physical pleasure. Marital life is not an easy process as it is characterized by petty quarrels. Therefore, the proverb such as '*Navara baikochebhandan ani ralyachekandan*' (A quarrel between husband and wife is like pounding Panic seed. It is quickly over.) exposes its transient nature. It aptly points to the argumentative nature of women and their quick withdrawal or submissiveness.

The cordial alliance between husband and wife sustains the marital tie. Self-reliant couples keep better relations. This proverb illustrates it beautifully as it narrates '*Navaryachepitth, baikochemith*'. (The husband's flour, the wife's salt). Both should earn something. It exemplifies the bond of love and coexistence between the couple. Some proverbs indicate domestic violence meted out against women such as '*Najuknar ani chabakacha mar*' (A delicate wife and beating with a whip). It clarifies that the delicate woman becomes the prey of inhuman treatment. The proverb '*Divasbharghari, dive laundalankari*' (During broad daylight at home, and grinding at night) exposes the laziness of a woman and also sheds light on her meticulous and menial job. A woman's captivating beauty has multiple admirers. It is projected by this proverb, '*Hichanakhara, tyanchyachakara*' (Her tantrums, their wandering). It shows that a beautiful woman can influence her husband and accomplish her desires.

The proverb can focus on the contemporary social status of women in the vicious circle of class structure. The proverb such as '*Kunbinichyalugadyatmati, marwadnichyanakatmoti*' (Peasant's wife's sari drenched in clay, merchant's wife bears precious stone in nose) satirically points out that the peasant's wife has to work hard in the farm while the merchant's wife enjoys luxurious life. A proverb like '*Sitabainakela Ramayan, Draupadinakela Mahabharat*' (Sita make Ramayana, Draupadi make Mahabharata) conveys the dangerous attributes of beauty. It projects the two mythological women such as Sita and Draupadi from the Indian epic the 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharata' respectively. According to the epic, these two beautiful women were the driving force for the destruction of monster king Ravana and the Kauravas respectively. It is also a warning for the evil people to stay away from loyal wives.

The proverb, '*Manat nainandana ana powadebandhana*' (Not interested in marital life and composing ballads) deeply delves into the reluctant psyche of a newly married woman who often gives excuses to return back to her husband's house. It also indicates the custom of the child marriage system rampant in contemporary society. The proverbs are as old as mankind as we are not sure about their antiquity. '*Randhatyeina wale lakade*' (Unable to cook due to wet firewood) reflects the complaining voice of a woman who is restricted into domestic jobs in a male-dominated society. In the world of women often the newly wed daughter-in-law is compared with her mother-in-law such as '*Gharasarakhe gun, sasutashi sun*' (Virtues are inherited from home, the daughter-in-law is as mother-in-law).

The proverb, '*Bibisahebyenarumarit to miyasahebjanarkabarit*' (When the mistress becomes of age, the master will be on the edge of the grave) focuses on the disastrous effect of the marriage between an old man and young girl. It also exemplifies the child marriage custom and how women are victims of this system. The proverb '*Mhataradadalajivalaadhara*' (An old husband is a support to live) unfolds the assurance of security in society for a woman even though she is married to the old man. The proverb '*Char divas sasuche char divas suneche*' (Four days of the mother-in-law's (authority) and four days of the daughter-in-law's). When the daughter-in-law has children, she asserts her authority as she becomes the mistress of the house.

'*Sasari ekadasimaherishivaratra*' (Ekadashi at mother-in-law's house, and Shivaratra at home). A woman is always in trouble on both sides due to poverty. In the two religious practices such as '*Ekadashi*' and '*Shivratri*', Hindu women fast in India. Fasting also indicates a lack of food and poverty. The proverb '*Sasula mar ani sunela dhak*' (Beat the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law will be afraid), reveals domestic violence meted out to women in a male-dominated society to subordinate them and deprive them of their rights. Some proverbs glorify women for their compassion, love, selflessness, and motherly nature such as '*Mayamaromawashiuro*' (Should mother die then let aunt remain). It illustrates the different roles of women as they are capable of shouldering the responsibility of an orphan child.

The widows are often victims of hatred, negligence, deprivation, and humiliation in society. In the proverb such as '*Bodakenahale ani panivayagele*' (The widow bathed and the water was wasted). In society, it is useless for the widow to bathe and adorn herself as she has no husband. A proverb such as '*Konala kashachevabodakilakesache*' (Some are thinking of their trials, the widow is thinking of her hair) discloses the hair-cutting ritual of a young widow who pines for her early life. It also projects a widow as a problem for the elders in the family. In some sections of society, a widow has to shave her head after the demise of her husband. Widow's remarriage is sometimes considered a bold and rebellious act.

The generations of society have stored, continued, and even added proverbs in the oral literature. Though it is not approved and accepted as a separate genre, it has largely affected contemporary society as it represents the prevalent customs, traditions, rituals, observations, and perspectives. Its witty, sarcastic, pinching, and hard-hitting tone captures the mood of society. Proverbs are the vehicles of contemporary culture, rituals, social structure, belief systems, etc. They are reformatory, exemplary, ironical, moralistic, perpetual, scattered, and disseminated in the world of oral literature. Marathi proverbs on women are just exemplary records of the bygone era in which women were portrayed in different roles. The proverbs in the world have a lot of similarities with each other as they manifest the universal problems of women. Thus, the study of proverbs can change the perspectives toward women and relate us to them. Though proverbs are ignored and underestimated, they can be utilized for the welfare and reformation of women.

Marathi proverbs are pregnant with allusions and impressions that covers entire life of woman and stand universal in appeal as it surpasses the limits of region in its applications and relevance. These proverbs are eternal source of information and wisdom as they are inter connected with human language and life experiences. They appear to be similar in context with other proverbs popular in the world.

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