



UNITY AND EQUALITY IN SANT SAHITYA: A SPIRITUAL VISION FOR SOCIAL HARMONY

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Abstract

Sant Sahitya is a devotional and philosophical literature and oral tradition composed by the Sant of medieval India. It was created with the intention to reform the society and for spiritual awakening among the masses of all religions, castes and genders. One of its major concerns was the promotion of unity and equality beyond the barriers of caste, class, religion, and gender. Through a very simple language and powerful metaphors, Sant such as Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Kabir, Sant Namdev, Sant Mirabai, Sant Tukaram, Sant Eknath Sant Janabai emphasized that the spirit of true spirituality lies in the recognition of unity and equality; to consider every human being as equal. This article explores how Sant Sahitya and Sant Oral tradition worked for the elimination of social division and discriminations of all kinds. Even in the modern age, Sant Sahitya continues to inspire the masses by spreading the message of universal brotherhood, social justice, inclusiveness, and human dignity.

Keywords

Sant, Tradition, equality, Unity, Bhakti, Spirituality, Devotion, Society, etc.

Full Article

Sant Sahitya is a popular form of literature. It is not only a devotional poetry but a social, cultural and spiritual movement. The main objective of the Sant Sahitya (Saint Literature) was to make the people aware through so called 'Bhakti'. This tradition has been quite popular in many parts of India and especially in Maharashtra. In Maharashtra, it is linked with pilgrims called as *Warkari*. Sant like Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Namdeo, Sant Eknath, Sant Tukaram, Sant Sawta Mali, Sant Janabai, Sant Chokhamela made this literature rich through various literary forms such as Abhang (Hymn), Owyia (Quadrant), *Bharude* (songs), *Gawlani* (female songs). They wrote their *bhakti songs* (devotional songs) in a very simple and lucid language. Sant Sahitya was in fact a medium used by various Sant to awaken the masses towards the spirituality and unity. All Sants worked as reformist and gave efforts to maintain peace, harmony and unity in the society. It will be interesting to see how those Sants gave the message of unity to the people. Following are some important features of Sant Sahitya. The Sant proclaimed that the God resides in every being, and humanity itself is divine. These Sants gave the timeless message of unity through their compositions. In the era of caste, gender discrimination the Sant and their literature gave the message of unity and equality. Some of the important features of Sant Literature are as following.

Fight against Caste Discrimination:

During the era of these Sant, the society was very much affected by the evil of caste system. Societies were divided on the basis of caste system and it was up to the Sant to work for the eradication of caste discrimination by orienting the people. Initiatives were taken by the Sant like



Chokhamela, Sawta Mali, Gora Kumbhar, Sant Namdeo, Janabai and so many others. Sant Dnyaneshwar gave message of unity through his hymns by saying “Sarvangi Sukhacha bhog, sarwana milo” (All may deserve all kinds of happiness irrespective of their caste and creed). Sant Tukaram in his rhymes says, “Jati Pati Vicharu Naka, Hari Bhaje to Haricha” (Don’t ask the caste and creed of the devotee, one who devotes to the God belongs to the God). Sant Kabir also emphasized on the eradication of the caste discrimination saying “Jati na Pucho sadhu ki, pucch lijiye gyaan, mol karo talvaar ka, pada rahne do myaan” (Do not ask the caste of Sant, ask his knowledge just like the value of sword and not the sheath)

Gender Equity in Sant Sahitya:

Sant Sahitya also focussed on Gender Equity. Sant Janabi has showed the glimpses of women’s life through her poetry. Her verses focus on the gender equity. She says “Dev ha Sarvanchya antari aahe” (God is with all). Sant Dnyaneshwar puts it as “All souls are connected with the divine power”.

Social Unity:

These Sant gave the message of compassion, devotion, and brotherhood among the people of all caste and creed and for that *Wari* (pilgrimage) and *Bhajans* (hymns) became the effective instrument. The *wari* in which people of all caste and creed walk together and it is an attempt of the Sants to create awareness towards unity and equality.

Union of Devotee and God:

Sant taught the message of unity and equality to the masses. They made sincere efforts to erase the gap between the devotee and the God. Sant Tukaram in his *bhajan* sang it “God came into my house and my mind itself became the temple” Sant taught that devotion erases the distance between the devotee and the God. Sant Tukaram emphasized that God dwells within the heart of every devotee. Sant Dnyaneshwar also emphasized on the union of human soul with the God.

Spiritual Equality:

Sant Sahitya also demonstrated spirituality by stating that divine blessings are not the entity of Kings, elites, or priests. The Sant themselves belonged to a very humble backgrounds—Sant Kabir was a weaver, Sant Namdev was a tailor, and Chokhamela belonged to a Dalit community. Coming from a poor background and observing all kinds of social aspects, their poetry reflected social fabrics endowed with spiritual insights that gained wide recognition. Sant Chokhamela’s *Abhangas*, filled with devotion and suffering, expressed a deep faith in God despite social humiliation. Sant Namdev, similarly, rose from modest origins to become one of the most revered bhakti poets. It is this background that made these Sant to work for the spiritual awakening of the people and spread the message of unity and equality among the society.

Practice of Unity in Daily Life:

The Sants voiced equality and unity through their poetry and also embodied them in their lives. They challenged all kinds of orthodoxies that harmed the social unity and equality. They challenged the conventions. In that way, these Sant truly worked as reformists. Sant Eknath for example broke all conventions by offering sacred water to the socially marginalized and breaking the caste barriers. Sant Tukaram, through his *Kirtans* (devotional gatherings), brought together people of all backgrounds, creating a communal space of worship, where caste distinctions dissolved. Kabir’s refusal to adapt to either Hindu or Muslim orthodoxy was itself an act of defiance that embodied unity. By living these values, the Sant gave credibility to their teachings and created real spaces of equality in their communities.



A Path of Social Reform:

Sant Sahitya performed not merely as literature but as a social movement which was used by the Sant and other reformists to erase the social evil. The Sant did it by using the people's language so that it becomes accessible and intelligible for the masses. These Sant worked at the ground level breaking the monopoly of Sanskrit language and Sanskrit scholars. Their verses did not remain only the entity of rich people or kings and queens but they came on the streets, fields, and communal spaces, reaching to the ordinary people directly. This made it a grassroots movement for social reforms. Their literature dealt with their day-to-day issues. It echoed the voice of marginalized. They challenged orthodoxy, and created a more inclusive religious and social order. Its influence extended beyond all the conventions shaping modern movements for equality.

Relevance of Sant Sahitya in the Modern Age:

Sant Sahitya has been a popular literature since a long time and it will continue to be a prominent toll for reforming the society and spreading the message of equality and unity. Even in the modern age, Sant and Sant literature have maintained their popularity and utility. It is an effective platform to raise issues of caste-based discrimination, religious conflict, and social inequality persists in modern societies. The Sant tradition believes in the inclusiveness of all societies irrespective of caste and creed or gender. It appeals to the masses. It is the Sant Sahitya that has persistently been appealing the masses and highly relevant even in the modern age. Despite the western influences, the Sant tradition in the form of literature or oral talk remains unshaken. It emphasizes human dignity, universal brotherhood, and spiritual democracy. It fights for the justice and makes efforts for the peace and harmony.

Conclusion:

Sant Sahitya is a kind of literature and oral tradition that stands as a testimony to the tool of social transformation and reforms. Sant Sahitya will be known for its unique characteristics giving a proper platform to the voices of marginalized communities. Sant Sahitya challenged engrained systems of inequality while offering a spiritual path accessible to all. Sant like Kabir, Guru Nanak, Eknath, Tukaram, Namdev, and Chokhamela gave voice to the voiceless and created a cultural legacy that remains vibrant even today. The vision of the Sant of a society grounded on the principles of equality and unity serves as a timeless inspiration reminding us that spirituality is not defined by the individual alone but by our collective commitment to shared humanity. Moreover, the poetic simplicity of Sant Sahitya makes its teachings universally accessible, transcending the boundaries of time and region.

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