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**TO STUDY ABOUT THE RAMABI RANADE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY FOR  
COMPANIONATE MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

This autobiography also serves as a sociological record of the complex workings of hierarchical relationships within the family and community web. She sheds light on kinship politics, anxieties among various age groups, and the gender dynamics that exist within the extended family. Through rituals, perceptions of purity and pollution, and what Leela Dube refers to as the "idiom of food," it demonstrates the role of women in constructing and maintaining caste systems as bounded entities. Women are "aware acting subjects of social connections and processes that generate, perpetuate, and modify the social structure characterised by the institution of caste," according to Dube. Women are also objectified and used as instruments in the reproduction of caste, she claims. The jati-specific codes of behaviour flow down to the family and household, where they are ultimately protected by the womenfolk. The sacredness of this household space ensconced in the kitchen, as well as the ceremonial act of cooking and consuming the food, is reflected in Ramabai's narrative of how she was tormented by elderly ladies for daring to be educated. Her trips into public space to attend meetings, as well as her physical interaction with missionary instructor Miss Herford, caused tremendous household unrest, prompting a ban on her access to pure spaces such as the kitchen and the water tank. Women were entrusted with the coveted task of serving food, which was used to exclude 'unclean' women from this idiom of food. Ramabai is condemned to menial chores as a result of her violation of the proper use of the female body and sacred areas. Caste rules governing the purity of the body, the safety of the food being made, and the purity of areas designated for food preparation and consumption meant that any attempt to circumvent these limits would result in a boycott of the offending individual. Ramabai is forced to pay the price for her violation, which she committed at her reformer husband's demand, by becoming a household outcast, whilst Ranade, as a male, is spared.

**KEY WORDS: autobiography, family, Women, preparation and consumption.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Scholars have explored several possibilities in interpreting literature as a result of a deep-felt need to make the world understandable to oneself. Literary critics' earlier insistence on the

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wave of feminism. Women's issues were postponed until after independence in the struggle against a shared enemy that needed to be addressed. Forbes, on the other hand, notes that feminists have persevered in their efforts to secure women's rights. She writes of female leaders who established schools, widow homes, industrial centres, and other institutions for women, although of their own social class, because their worries did not extend to rural women who could not afford to send their daughters to the cities for education. 1 Unlike feminists in the West like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who struggled to develop a "voice" for themselves, Forbes highlights their intense concern with "tearing the purdah," "breaking out of the cage," and "escaping from bondage," even if they couldn't describe how they would use this liberation. Unlike in the West, this wave arose from the social reform movement, which was started by native reformist males in an effort to remove native practises of humiliating conventions such as Sati, polygamy, widow remarriage bans, women's education, and raising the age of consent for child brides.

The transition from a traditional to a modern civilization is often filled with ambivalence and tension. The New Woman's fashioning, as they were co-opted inside multiple discourses. Despite its entrenched Brahminism, nineteenth-century Maharashtra could not avoid the impact of colonial modernity, and missionary represented in women's life narratives exposes the conflictual nature of the restricted options made up to them by this transformation. They demonstrate the strategic ways in which women occupied new areas, including evangelism and social reform inside Hindu culture, all of which contributed to the shaping of the 'new woman.' The 'new women' in upper caste Brahmin families, usually from the Chitpavan community, became the vehicles through which the emerging middle-modern class's patriarchal values were meant to be 'disseminated' both within the house in their roles as educated companionate wives and enlightened, nurturing mothers, and as "class socialisers," as Uma Chakravarti put it. By mixing with other aristocratic women of their caste and class, these reformed women would help reformist men advance their goal. However, education's subversive potential, which Jotirao Phule saw as the "third eye" that might disclose the true character of upper caste male-dominated society's subordination of women and Sudras, was attempted to be kept harmless and tame. These women belonged to a community where the

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men-folk had previously enjoyed Peshwai patronage and had maintained their socio-cultural clout even in the new colonial dispensation due to their access to western education and success in class consolidation by filling various government service positions. "The imposition of the British Raj's economic and administrative institutions contributed...to the destruction not only of earlier agricultural Indian economies but also of indigenous family connections and family hierarchies," writes Judith Walsh of nineteenth-century British India.

### **DESCRIPTION ABOUT EDUCATION**

As a result, reform-assertions women's like Ramabai's come at a cost, as evidenced by the cracks and fissures in her story. Women's education was still viewed as a threat to male power and monopoly over knowledge, and reform-women often bore the brunt of patriarchal retribution in the inner, female sphere of family and an orthodox society. Other family women saw it as a threat to their power as well as a reason to desecrate the clean private realm. Reform women were torn between the old and the new methods, and it was difficult for them to strike a balance between their husbands' insistence on being reformed through meetings and education and the family's expectations of illiteracy, respect for convention, and confinement within the home. Women like Ramabai Ranade and Kashibai Kanitkar were examples of this. Both of them had to sneak out of the house in order to attend meetings and have many happy moments with other women in similar situations. However, the joy would be fleeting, as the terror and guilt of going home on the run would overwhelm them. According to Kosambi, a prevalent public fear was that women's education would increase their natural proclivity for waywardness and licentiousness, as well as clandestine correspondence with strangers to the point of elopement. In Sevantibai Nikambe's novel Ratanbai, a superstitious widow who wants to put an end to the child bride Ratanbai's educational ambitions exploits society prejudice and threatens to announce that Ratanbai was caught "looking at the gardener with an evil eye." Even Anandibai's husband is cautioned that educating his wife will cause her to become immoral and abandon him. According to Sudipta Kaviraj, Sibnath Shastri's educated mother would receive letters from a local teacher who assumed her education showed her willingness to do covert assignments. As a result, the potential power that education provided for women was transformed into a fear of how

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women could embarrass the family and bring shame to it. The mother-in-annoyance law's with Kamala's ability to read and her interest in literature is revealed in Kripabai Sattianadhan's novel Kamala. The challenge encountered by women bridging the two worlds of reform and tradition is revealed in women's autobiographical writings. They adopted self-effacement as a method to avoid societal criticism and mockery. In this context, Kashibai bemoans the fact that her mother-in-law, the daughter of a scholarly Shastri, was forced to conform to social norms by pretending to be illiterate and mispronouncing things like 'Mumbai' as 'Mumai.' Ramabai's narrative is rife with this quandary, in which she is both the 'site' of contestatory and conflictual concepts of the old and new, as well as the 'subject' who affirms her agency by choosing her husband's advantageous dictatorship over the older, more conventional patriarchy. On the plus side, it provided women with new ways to interact with the outside world and to express themselves. These reforms not only highlighted their personal strengths, but they also gave them a significant amount of power.

A brief look at the lives of other reformed women can help put Ramabai Ranade's story into context by demonstrating the link between education and the reiteration or subtle questioning of the pativrata dharma. Rukhmabai was a lady who shook Hindu patriarchy to its core by questioning the sanctity of non-consensual, indissoluble child-marriages, despite the fact that lower caste women had never been barred from obtaining divorce or entering into a second marriage. Her unwillingness to live with her consumptive and illiterate husband was perceived as a defiance of the pativrata dharma imposed on women, as well as a confirmation of the orthodoxy's greatest fears about the perils of educating women. Her resistance was perceived as the polar opposite of that of other educated women like as Anandibai Joshi and Ramabai Ranade, whose education did not directly threaten the institution of marriage or the wife's subservience within it. Rukhmabai's letters to The Times of India's editor reflect her "extreme distaste" for the institution of marriage, which was imposed on all women regardless of their partner's health. She cleverly connects nationalism, colonialism, and gender by blaming "pernicious customs," "ignorance," and "superstition" for impositions like the ban on inter-sect marriages and the insistence on non-consensual child-marriage –



customs that, she assures, were not enjoined by the Shastras and thus paved the way for foreign rule.

## **DESCRIPTION ABOUT MARRIAGE**

Pandita Ramabai, too, defied Brahmin marriage customs by marrying a Sudra well past the age limit for upper-caste women. Presuming that she and her husband had a somewhat happy marriage, she makes one telling remark after his death about her early interest in converting to Christianity. Her husband had specifically forbade her from having any contact with Allen, the missionary who had successfully implanted this concept in her mind. In her autobiographical writings, Pandita Ramabai speculates on what might have happened to her longing if her husband had lived a little longer! Such blunders in autobiographical writings reflect the underlying and subterranean meanings that lie behind the surface layers of ideal wifehood. These chasms rend apart popular representations of the perfect wife and point to other illegitimate desires outside the faithful wife's normative script. Her education and knowledge of the scriptures enabled her to expose the Shastras' misogyny and reject nineteenth-century India's strongly patriarchal societal values. It's no wonder, then, that the kind of reverence and admiration reserved for women like Ramabai Ranade is absent in the case of refractory women like Pandita Ramabai who defied Brahminical conceptions of gender. In fact, Rambai Ranade is built up as a contrast to Pandita Ramabai's challenges to Hindu orthodoxy. Meera Kosambi correctly points out that Maharashtra used women like Ramabai Ranade and Anandibai Joshi to demonstrate that education does not have to lead to women breaking cultural norms. Nonetheless, Ramabai Ranade develops a female consciousness that enables her attain greater socio-political visibility by embracing and slightly modifying the gender roles expected of her.

Even the ostensibly conventional Parvatibai Athavale scarcely mentions her husband in her memoirs, save to express her dissatisfaction with the clearly unequal match planned for her without her consent, with a crippled man who earned only fifteen rupees per month and had no family to call his own. Despite the fact that she upholds the pativrata dharma for other women, she chooses to write about her tragic miscarriages instead. She does, however,

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acknowledge the necessity of partners' permission in making the decision to marry at the appropriate age. Again, it is her education that enables her to recognise the degrading character of the strictures imposed on widows' minds and bodies, and to reject tonsuring of the head as a result. Anandibai's letters show how even the meek woman, who was expected to accept her husband's brutality and violence with a smile on her face, refused to accept her husband's brutality and violence as natural. 25 Even in her submissive demeanour, Meera Kosambi manages to quietly remind him that he was wrong in imposing this masculine prerogative on a young bride, traumatising her in the name of women's education. In the example of Kashibai Kanitkar, her husband's expectations of a companionate marriage pushed her to arduously educate herself without any assistance from him. The protagonist's mother, Anandibai, is depicted in Shevantibai Nikambe's novel *Ratanbai* as a meek wife who 'gently' and 'modestly' served meals to her husband, who ate alone and in quiet. Ratanbai washes her husband's feet and sings for his prosperity during a ritual symbolising the consummation of their marriage, while he warns her not to make any mistakes and to let her good example be observed by everybody, even as he refers to her as the queen of his home. Ratanbai's education is not portrayed as a danger to male prerogatives, because the writer Shevantibai's goal of attracting more upper-caste females to her own school would have been jeopardised otherwise. In her autobiography, Yashodabai Joshi expresses her dissatisfaction with the arbitrary expectations imposed in the name of pativrata dharma. Her memoirs contains numerous examples of male aggression toward spouses, particularly in the case of her mother-in-law. While her reformist husband does not take much interest in her education, he does require her to dress and conduct herself in the manner of a 'new woman,' causing the traditional caste members to be enraged. The autobiographical novel *Saguna* by Krupabai Sattianadhan emphasises the autonomous and egalitarian nature of her decision to marry a guy of her choosing - a man who spoke a different language and was a South Indian. She writes of her parents' companionate marriage, which was made possible by their conversion and the severance of their ties with his orthodox family that came with it.



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## DESCRIPTION ABOUT FAMILY

Ramabai also describes her father's autocratic control. Her narrative reveals her keen understanding of the suffocating life of the girl-child. The girls' movements were restricted, demonstrating the intense surveillance under which they learned to structure their selfhood. Female voices were muted by restrictions on which venues they might legitimately inhabit and which they had to avoid at all costs, and girls were encouraged to be as unobtrusive and self-effacing as possible. As Leela Dube and others point out, this would evoke diverse coping techniques that girls learned for survival - accepting deprivation as their fate, quelling their rebellious behaviours, building intimate ties with others of their sex and appearing to cooperate while manipulating male authority. In the narratives of Indian women autobiographers, Simone de Beauvoir's comment regarding gender as a cultural construct in which women are trained to be passive, economically dependent, and committed to a condition of "immanence" is immediately recognised. Ramabai says:

**Women, even a daughter who had returned home for a short time from her husband's house, and girls over the age of eight, were not allowed to enter the front apartment and be in the presence of the father. Of course, singing and playing around was out of the question. Was it the same with reading or writing? (RHWR, 37).**

In a psychoanalytic analysis of socialisation in some societies, Nancy Chodorow explains how, while boys are enculturated to be nurturers like their mothers and suffer no disruption in the formation of their consciousness because it is in continuity with the identity of the mother, girls are enculturated to be nurturers like their mothers and suffer no disruption in the formation of their consciousness because it is in continuity with the identity of the mother. The repressions and restraints placed on girls in the process of socialisation are also revealed in Ramabai's childhood story. "My father was stern and did not approve of his daughters going out to play anywhere," Ramabai continues, adding that he also could not "tolerate other girls chatting loudly, shouting, or playing around" (RHWR, 38). She reveals that due to the fear of becoming a widow, no woman in the family was granted an education. Her aunt, who





could read a few stotras, was unfortunate enough to become a widow. The women "began to fear even the concept of reading or writing" as a result of this (RHWR, 38). Ramabai's father had also played a role in ensuring that no dissension, material or otherwise, in the Ranade family was instigated by his daughter, lest his name be tarnished. He was able to imprint on her 'mind's tablet' the requirement that she act in a manner befitting her father's family. He exhorts her to put up with everything, no matter how uncomfortable it may be, and not to disturb the quiet of the house by even talking back to servants, saying that even empires have fallen owing to women's tale-telling. His counsel to Ramabai to remember that the Ranade family had many dependents shows that he is well aware of the genuine threat of the future mistress of the house causing a material and emotional rupture in the family. Ramabai's marriage exemplifies how upper caste patriarchal and patrilineal control was perpetuated through pre-pubertal, non-consensual, and indissoluble marriages of girls to men who were sometimes their fathers. Tanika Sarkar writes about how dire tales of ancestral souls' agony caused by a lack of pinda offerings, combined with religious threats of denial of salvation to parents if their daughters are not married off before menstruation, work to channel the volatile sexuality of girls through early marriage. Immediate consummation after puberty through the garbhadhan ceremony ensured the purity of the female womb as a reservoir for sons, who were the only ones who could save the ancestors. As a result, Ramabai's father seeks out an alliance for his young daughter in order to fulfil these familial and ancestral obligations while also avoiding social stigma. This desire to be free of the girl child's burden is evident in the fact he has no qualms about marrying her to a widower three times her age.

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## **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, Ramabai's biography demonstrates how her sense of self, her feminine consciousness, grows from childhood to widowhood, albeit not in a simple manner of smoothing out irritants, but rather in a complex negotiation within the framework of the devoted wife. Her early experiences of being banned to play with other girls or to speak loudly in front of the patriarch, as well as the collective fear of women's education, demonstrate her knowledge of the discriminatory treatment of girls. She is aware of her brother's higher standing as a result of the power that education represented in his instance. Through numerous processes of socialisation, role indoctrination, and injunctions provided even before she takes up her obligations as Ranade's young wife, she is also aware of society and familial expectations of her as a child bride. She expresses her utter dissatisfaction with the way gender and caste intertwined within the orthodox family to obtain control over her body and thoughts. She also articulates the gender disparity inside the marital relationship as a woman, which she internalises after some difficulty. Despite the fact that her text demonstrates her awareness of patriarchal norms, she decides to criticise them in a roundabout way, maybe because the framework of the faithful wife provided a woman with very little room for outspoken protest. Though her writing does not specifically address patriarchal behaviours as they apply to many other women, her never-ending search for better

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chances for less fortunate women demonstrates her compassion for a sisterhood of women. Her story illustrates the 'underground' concerns of a woman living in a changing society. Her narrative demonstrates a skilled building of selfhood through a series of formulaic identities she displays. In the course of the numerous efforts she takes to improve the condition of other less fortunate women, the sense of selfhood she develops as a gendered person, for example, makes her more resilient, humane, understanding, and service-oriented with respect to them. The performative part of ideal wifedom and normative womanhood that takes place in the interstitial spaces of overlapping ideologies is further highlighted by the many locations she occupies in the portrayal of the female self. We also see self-individuation, or the development of a person from a condition of ignorance to one of poise, confidence, and self-assurance, and the growth of a person from a state of ignorance to one of poise, confidence, and self-assurance, where she could hold her own in public. Her book displays her capacity to organise meetings, give public speeches, compose letters for her spouse, and advocate for reforms in women's sociopolitical status. Her contribution to cultural nationalism in those days began with her husband encouraging her to gain exposure to the outside world. She emerged from his shadow after his death and carved out a place for herself in Indian nationalism, particularly in the early stages of feminism in India.

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