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FEMALE VOICES IN THE VĀRKARĪ SAMPRADĀYA: GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS IN A BHAKTI TRADITION

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Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

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This thesis explores the ways the attribution of women’s authorship is used in the construction and development of the Vārkarī bhakti tradition in order to ask what function the high visibility of female poet-sants (santakaviyatrīs) in the tradition might have played in the sampradāya’s self-understanding and presentation. The thesis investigates why there are so many women associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya, while the santakaviyatrīs and the compositions attributed to them are largely absent from contemporary devotional practices. I consider how gender attribution within the sacred biographies (caritra) and the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs relates to the basic tension within the Vārkarī sampradāya, and within bhakti more generally, between complete devotion to God to the exclusion of all others and the worldly duties of a householder; the tension between sannyāsa and grhaastha. Consequently, the thesis considers the elements that mark the Vārkarī sampradāya out as a householder tradition, as well as the importance of the sants and their attributed compositions to the devotional practices and the discursive formation of the sampradāya. The thesis contends that the presence of compositions attributed to women and caritras about women within the Vārkarī literary corpus is indicative of an argument for, and indeed exemplification of, the viability of the householder path by those who were involved in constructing the traditions of the sampradāya.
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1. Muktābāī
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2. Goṇāī
3. Rājāī
4. Āūbāī
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TRANSLITERATION

In accordance with the conventional practice for scholars of Hinduism, non-English terms are transliterated and italicised within this thesis. Place names are not as a rule transliterated. Languages or dialects that have an English form, such as Hindi, are produced without diacritics. Caste and proper names are rendered with diacritical marks, at least when first mentioned, as this reflects Marathi speech and reminds the reader of the context. However, the names of Marathi or other Indian authors writing in English are reproduced without diacritics and in an anglicised form (for example Aklujkar). I have avoided using w in transliteration except in the rare case where it has been used by others and due to the focus of this thesis the transliteration provided is Marathi.

A Marathi syllabary or alphabet is provided below (minus all the consonant conjunctions) to indicate my transliteration style. This is for several reasons. Firstly, transliteration is fraught with difficulties. Secondly, not all writers of Marathi transliterate Marathi into English in the same way. Thirdly, until the 1950s Marathi was written in Modi when it was replaced by Devanagri. Fourthly, the Marathi syllabary has undergone further changes during the modern period due to the Government of Maharashtra’s desire to increase literacy and to bring written Marathi into line with spoken Marathi. When transliterating from texts, particularly the Śrīsakalasantagathā, I have tried to reconstruct the text exactly. This may sometimes include errors, possibly due to scribal inaccuracies, printing errors, the transfer of Modi to Devanagri or confusion arising with the change from ‘old’ to ‘new’ writing styles. Consequently, the transliteration of such texts needs to be seen as a guide to pronunciation and articulation—allowing the non-Marathi speaker or reader to gain a feel of the language—rather than as an infallible rendition.

In modern Marathi, words ending in a consonant—e.g. vāṭ (way)—are usually transliterated without the ending ‘a’ as the consonant has an inherent vowel that is lightly pronounced. However, I have retained the ‘a’, particularly when transliterating poetic compositions, as the ‘a’ is necessary for metrical structure and would often be pronounced in singing or recitation, and in the case of certain technical/Sanskrit terms (for example vairāgya). Nonetheless, certain words like sant are not rendered with an ‘a’ within this thesis, despite this being a Sanskrit word, as this does not reflect pronunciation or
general usage. Finally, when transliterated and italicised words embedded in the English text they are pluralised with an ‘s’, as this is technically inaccurate the final ‘s’ has not been italicised.

Marathi Vowels:
अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ए ऐ ओ औ ऋ अं अः
a a ā i ī u ū e ai o au ṛ am/ā aḥ
d द दा दि दी दु दू दे दै दो दौ दं दाः
da dā di dī du dū de dai do dau dr dam/ā daḥ

Marathi Consonants:
क ख ग घ ङ च छ ज झ ञ
ka kha ga gha ṅa ca cha ja jha ṇa
ट ठ ड ढ ण त थ द ध न
ta tha ṛa ṛha ṇa ta tha da dha na
प फ ब भ म य ल र व
pa pha ba bha ma ya la ra va
श ष स ह छ क ज झ
śa śa sa ha ḷa kṣa ḷa ja ḝa śra
### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Amṛtānubhava or Anubhvāmṛta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMAD</td>
<td>Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCE</td>
<td>Before the Common Era (equivalent to BC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BhG</td>
<td>Bhagavadgītā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BhP</td>
<td>Bhāgavata Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLM</td>
<td>Bhaktalilāmṛta by Mahipati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVJ</td>
<td>Bhaktavijaya by Mahipati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>Cautḥālīkī Bhāgavata by Eknāth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDSL</td>
<td>Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Common Era (equivalent to AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COED</td>
<td>Concise Oxford English Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Cāṅgadev Pāṣaṇī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAG</td>
<td>Eknāṭhācī abhaṅgācī gāthā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB</td>
<td>Eknāṭhī Bhāgavata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>Epigraphia Indica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG</td>
<td>Gītagovinda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HV</td>
<td>Harivamśa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JñŚv</td>
<td>Jñāneśvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbh</td>
<td>Mahābhārata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>Rukmini Swayamvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJH</td>
<td>Śrī Jñāneśvaramahārājaṅka Haripāṭhāce abhaṅga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBG</td>
<td>Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>Śrī Eknāth Carita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSG</td>
<td>Śrīsakalasantaṅgāthā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Tāṭīce Abhaṅga</td>
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INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

In the mid to late 1970s I spent part of my childhood in Pune (Maharashtra) and so my love for India and my interest in Indian religions began. Eventually, I undertook a BA in comparative religion with a focus on Hinduism and the religions of South Asia and an MA in Indian religion during which I began to explore the compositions of Maharashtrian poet-saints like Tukārām. While I was writing my MA dissertation on Vārkarī pilgrimage I noticed there were numerous women associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya and decided to discover more about them. The more I read, the more I saw that scholarship had been focused primarily on male poet-sants, particularly Jhāneśvar, Nāmdev, Eknāth and Tukārām. It seemed to me that female poet-sants were marginalised as addendums to the male poet-sants and as footnotes to history and so, influenced by my parallel interest in feminist scholarship, I decided to explore the compositions and lives of the Vārkarī santakaviyatrīs. I was keen to locate and identify individual women’s voices in an effort to dismantle the hegemonic, patriarchal narratives and perspectives of the past and participate in the project of recuperation.

Feminist historiography looks to the past in order to recover women ‘as subjects and agents in the making of history’ because of their absence from most accounts of history (Morgan 2009:381, 383). Feminist historiography also includes the task of ‘rewriting’, ‘re-reading’, ‘re-presenting’/representing (Wilkinson 1996), the retrieval of women’s writing (Tharu and Lalita 1991:xvii, 1, 13ff; see Forbes 2003a) as well as recuperating and listening to ‘women’s voices’.

The feminist project of the recovery bears similarities to the Subaltern Studies early strategy of recovering the subject from elite historiography, recuperating acts of subaltern resistance and recovering

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the ‘voice’ of the subaltern (Mathur 2000:94–97; see Rajan 1993; Bhagwat 1999). Spivak’s assertion that the subaltern woman could not speak or rather that her speech could not be heard because it could not be interpellated into the site of hegemony, it could not articulate itself in the terms of that hegemony but was instead co-opted by the essentialist and politically interested discourses of colonial and native elite discourses (1988)\(^8\) offered a challenge to Subaltern Studies and to feminist historiography in terms of their representation of and continued muting of women.

Influenced by these ideas I began reading all the available material in English to locate the compositions of Vārkarī santakaviyatris.\(^9\) These compositions are in the abhaṅga metre, an elongation of the ovī (Tulpule 1979:451–52), which is an orally transmitted folk genre that is regarded as being composed by women. The ovī is primarily a grinding song, which is also performed while doing other domestic tasks, and village women often compose new ovīs while working (Junghare 1983:273; Kiehnle 1997a:8, 41ff; Amshoff 1999:159). Learning of the connection between the ovī and women was most exciting with regards to identifying women’s voices but it also drew my attention to the oral nature of the compositions and their transmission.

The author of an abhaṅga is usually identified by the name of the poet that appears at the end of the verse and which acts as an oral signature. However, Hawley argues that these signatures say less about the authorship of an ‘author’ and more about ‘the author’s authority’ (2005:22, 30; 1988:270, 275). Thus, the nāmamudrā might convey the idea a song is by a particular composer but the song may actually have been composed in his or her name in order to garner its authority.\(^10\) Thus, Dharwadker argues a name like ‘Kabīr’ might better be understood as a ‘poetic pseudonym’ or a ‘discursively constituted mark’ (2003:60). Moreover, if the compositions were transmitted orally until the process of textualisation began in late sixteenth century this meant that the ‘text’ was mediated by performers and editors.\(^11\) Consequently, poems cannot be understood as the work of a specific historical person or legendary figure and so need to be regarded as attributed words or speech that were later written and codified (Hawley 2005:5, 9; 1984:44; 1994:5).

The issue of attribution is barely alluded to by scholars in relation to the Vārkarī santakaviyatrīs (Feldhaus 1982:601n.6; Bhagwat 1990:223), although I later discovered more on the issue in relation to the male sants Jānēśvar, Nāmdev and Tukārām (Kiehnle 1997a:2ff; Novetzke 2008:139ff; Chitre 1991:viii). However, attribution is discussed by other scholars in relation to sants like Mīrābāī. Mukta, for example, states that it is difficult to authenticate any of the Mīrā verses due to the accumulation of Mīrā verses over a long period and thus Mukta argues for the ‘collective formation’ of Mīrā (1994:33–36). In support of this view she cites Tripathi’s proposal that ‘many a clever little woman has composed her own sweet song in the name of Mira...’ (1892:61), as well as Jhaveri’s view that ‘a crowd of imitators...passed off their own verses’ under Mīrā’s name (1938:41), and Hawley and Juergensmeyer’s more recent suggestion that the Mīrā poems were ‘by other “Miras” than the original one, if ever indeed she existed at all’ (1988:123). Consequently, I realised that I had to construe the poems of the Vārkarī santakaviyatrīs and santakavis as ‘the work of a community of authors’ and therefore as attributed compositions rather than as necessarily signalling a straightforward connection between authors, compositions, and gender (Dharwadker 2003:59–60).

The realisation that no single figure, no distinct female voice could be recovered as the author of a composition destabilised my proposed project. Moreover, it raised questions about the identity of the santakaviyatrīs as there is a close relationship between poetry and sacred biography as caritras are usually organised around the poetic compositions of particular figures (Hawley 2005:34ff, 1988:278). Consequently, I realised that the approach offered by feminist historiography and Subaltern Studies was untenable in relation to the women identified as poets and/or sants in the Vārkarī sampradāya. Thus, I was going to have to go ‘against the grain’ (Spivak 1988c) and subordinate the feminist project of recovery to an analysis of the existing information (see Bynum 1988; Mahmood 2005). In considering how to address the question of gender I took into account Scott’s submission that gender be employed as an analytical category rather than as a descriptive device (1986: 1055, 1066ff) and Scott’s contention that ‘women’ and ‘men’ are discursively constructed (1986; 1988; 1989:11; 2008:1424). Therefore, I considered what was intellectually possible with the available material and decided it was feasible to look at the ways the attribution of women’s authorship is used in the construction and development of the

Vārkarī bhakti tradition and to ask what function the high visibility of santakaviyatrīs in the tradition might have played in its self-understanding and presentation.

2. Research Questions

The predominant question that this thesis thus investigates is why there were so many women ‘poets’ associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya although these santakaviyatrīs and the compositions attributed to them are largely absent from contemporary devotional practices. This issue was first raised by Zelliot who noted the ‘extraordinary number of women who sang their devotional songs in Marathi’ and ‘the voices of some dozen women saints [who] are recorded in the collected songs of all the saints’ (2000:192; also see 1999a:89). For Zelliot the recording of poems attributed to women and the inclusion of stories about them within the Vārkarī corpus occurred because the Vārkarī sampradāya ‘was and is a householder tradition’ (1999a:89, 99; 1999b:418). However, no scholars appear to have picked up on Zelliot’s connection between the householder nature of the sampradāya and the inclusion of poems attributed to and stories concerning women within the Vārkarī corpus.

In her article ‘Three Women Sants of Maharashtra’ Vanita observes that the Vārkarī tradition emphasises ‘living a devoted life while a householder’ (1989:47) and comments that women sants seem to have been incorporated into the tradition from the outset despite living ‘relatively ordinary lives’. However, Vanita does not connect the householder nature of the sampradāya and the inclusion of women as she regards the integration of women into the tradition as due to each woman being part of a guru paramparā. Interestingly, Vanita notes that there is a paradox in the inclusion of women into the Vārkarī sampradāya as the compositions attributed to sants like Eknāth and Tukārām portray women as ‘a symbol of worldly attachment’ (1989:49). The presence of santakaviyatrīs in the Vārkarī sampradāya did not alter the image of women in the teachings or the tradition itself according to Vanita as most santakaviyatrīs remained ‘subordinate to a male guru’ who was often a relative (1989:49). However, it is not always the case that women were included in a guru paramparā or subordinate to a male guru as Kānhopātrā’s life-story demonstrates (see Chapter Four).

The lives and writings of Maharashtrian santakaviyatrīs are of concern for Bhagwat who ponders whether the women have gained adequate recognition and questions why social history customarily considers the women in relation to their male mentors (1990:223; 2005:170). Bhagwat notes that the Vārkarī movement ‘produced a long line of women saints’ (1995:WS-25; 2005:170) who were from ‘all castes and regions in Maharashtra’ (1995:WS-25) and whose literature Bhagwat regards as ‘full
of radical intent, critique and expression’ (2005:170; see 1995:WS-26, 29). However, while Bhagwat alludes to the issue of attribution in relation to Jñāneśvar her concern is with why the santakaviyatrīs ‘suffered non-recognition and oblivion’ (1990:223). The possibility that women were elided as part of the discursive formation of the Vārkarī panth as a householder tradition is not addressed by Bhagwat. Like Vanita and Bhagwat, Aklujkar notes that the Maharashtrian sant tradition records ‘women’s contribution on many levels’ (2005:105). Aklujkar’s statement ties in with Zelliot’s contention about the number of women and the recording of songs in the Śrīsakalasantagāthā (2000:192; also see 1999a:89). However, Aklujkar does not consider how or why the women attained their status as sants, the fact that their poetry is best understood as attributed speech, and like Vanita and Bhagwat does not consider why the tradition records women or its possible connection with the householder nature of the sampradāya.

I am going to examine the question of why there are so many women associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya by considering the function of gender attribution in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path. The issue of attribution has been considered by some scholars of bhakti (see above) in relation to compositions and/or sacred biography but generally these scholars have not employed gender attribution to consider the discursive construction of a bhakti tradition. In the next section I examine some literature pertaining to the discursive construction of bhakti traditions to demonstrate where my project concurs or differs from previous studies before considering the tension between sannyāsa and grhastha as this relates to construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition.

3. Literature Review

The incorporation of attributed compositions and/or sacred biography into a tradition appears to be connected to the compilers’ or biographers’ goals. Snell argues that sacred biography must show that ‘the sectarian attitude being promoted offers a uniquely correct perception of divine truth’ (1994:6). Hawley notes that poems attributed to Sūrdās were included in later versions of the Sūrsāgar due to a ‘programmatic intent’ among the editors whose concerns were with the doctrinal framework of the Puṣṭimārga (1979:66ff). Hawley argues that the later poems added to the Sūrsāgar act as commentary on earlier poems, aligning them with Vallabhite views and muting the dominant mood of viraha that appears in the early Sūrsāgar, and thus supplying a systematic framework for an unsystematic text (1979:67–9). Hawley’s statement regarding the sectarian agenda of the Sūrsāgar’s compilers ties in with Lincoln’s
contention that discourse is an instrument of ‘ideological persuasion’ and ‘sentiment evocation’ that has the ability to shape and reshape society (1989:4–5, 8–9).

It has been proposed that Mīrā’s verses and life have not been preserved in religious compilations as Mīrā was not aligned to an established or establishing sampradāya who would have incorporated her compositions into their tradition. Both Mukta and Martin refer to the Vallabha sampradāya’s explicit rejection of Mīrā that was probably due to Mīrā’s disregard for social norms like wifehood (Mukta 1994:24–5; Martin 1999:12, 34; see Harlan 1992:205ff). Similarly, Tulsīdās’ renunciation of married life may account for why the Vallabhites rejected him (see Lutgendorf 1991:6), which might be connected to the Vallabha sampradāya’s endeavour to establish itself as a householder tradition (see Barz 1992:29, 32).

The biography of sants like Mīrābāī and Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār now seem to overshadow their attributed compositions in public imagination despite the fact that the sacred biographies were meant to accompany or respond to the poems (Hawley 1984:15–16; Pechilis 2012:2, 82, 104). Pechilis argues that the biography of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār in the Periya Purāṇam ‘is a discourse that certifies a woman as a religious exemplar’ (2012:90) as Cēkkilār is primarily concerned with representing Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār as a wife who renounces wifehood and transforms into a ghoul (pey) before becoming a poet. Cēkkilār’s concerns thus differ from the Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār poems which focus on her experience as a Śiva devotee (2012:82–3). Pechilis’ interest is ‘the relationship of the interpreter to the interpreted as contributing towards a discourse on the identity and significance of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār’ (2012:140,138) and not on the discursive formation of a particular tradition. Significantly, Pechilis overlooks the issue of gender attribution as she states that Cēkkilār’s interest in Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār ‘played a role in preserving her poetry’ and presenting ‘a glimpse of her through her own utterances’ (2012:138). Pechilis’ programme therefore differs significantly from scholars like Mukta who argue that the life of a woman like Mīrā cannot be extrapolated from published verses and analysed in terms of what she exemplifies (1994:35).

Barz, like Pechilis, suggests that within bhakti sacred biographies like the Caurāsī Vaiṣṇavan ki vārtā (CVV) are meant to be understood as indicating ‘prototypic behaviour for the cultivation of a life of devotion’. However, Barz suggests that texts like the CVV ought not to be read as a record of secular history (1994:53). Barz applies Lorenzen’s assertions regarding the importance of the Kabīr legends to the Kabīr panth to the vārtās of the Vallabha sampradāya (1994:53):
For Kabir's followers…these legends have been a vital source and part of their religious faith, of their communal and personal identities, and of their socio-religious ideology. The legends provide the fullest expression of this faith, identity, and ideology at the same time they serve to inculcate them in the minds and heart of those followers. Without the legends the Kabir Panth would, in fact, not exist, just as Vaishnavism would be inconceivable without the legends of Rama and Krishna…

(Lorenzen 1991:8)

Barz argues that episodes in the CVV are interpreted to illustrate Vallabhācārya’s key philosophical principles (1994:55) and to reconcile ‘the conflict between rules of social morality and the attitudes appropriate to the Kṛṣṇa-centred life’ (1994:56). While Barz may not consider the discursive construction of the Vallabha sampradāya explicitly one can understand the CVV to indicate ‘programmatic intent’ as the vārtās provide a manual of sectarian precept and practice (Snell 1994:7).

According to McLeod the janam-sākhīs are a collection of hagiographic anecdotes regarding Gurū Nānak that seek to portray him as one who reveals the path to liberation (1994:19; 1999:12). McLeod argues that the role of the janam-sākhīs relates to their function in the Sikh community, particularly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in terms of ‘panthic cohesion’, which differs from the issue of purpose as this relates to the motives and intentions of narrators, compilers and redactors (1999:9, 12, 237–38ff). The janam-sākhīs can thus be understood to play a role in the discursive construction of the Sikh community like the CVV and the Sūrsāgar in the Vallabha sampradāya, the Rāmcaritmānas in the Rāmnāmī community and the Kabir legends in the Kabir panth. However, none of the scholars mentioned above consider gender attribution in relation to the discursive construction of a tradition.

The power of the Mirā symbol is of concern for Mukta (1994:31, 26; see Kishwar and Vanita 1989:90; Harlan 1992) who contends that the Mirā compositions ought to be considered as ‘an expression which had a popular base…’ (1994:32, 27; see Trawick 1988). Mukta argues that communitas, as a community of relations or feelings, stems from the Mirā bhajans. According to Mukta, the Mirābāī community keeps the memory of Mirā alive and provides a ‘powerful social base to the Mira bhakti—upon which other figures of Mira were built upon in the course of time’ (1994:37). Mukta views this bhakti generated ‘community of feelings’ as the subordinated communities of Rajasthan and Gujarat who are able to describe ‘privation, want, humiliation and pain’ through the Mirā bhajans. Relatedly, Mukta mentions Nāmdev and other Vārkarī sants who gathered across caste and sexual divides to form a similar community (1994:38–39). Martin-Kershaw maintains that as Mirā lived and lives in popular imagination ‘her traditions are a powerful resource to voice resistance among members of lower castes, and her example is an interpretative category that facilitates the choices made by some women to live lives outside marriage in a society where such options are severely limited’ (2000:165, 176; 1999:7–46). Lorenzen regards the Kabīr legends as defining ‘the imagined shared past’, historical identity and values of the panth as well as embodying a ‘socio-religious ideology’ of protest against social discrimination and economic exploitation by the poor and powerless (1991:4–5; see Dharwadker 2003:18–19). Similarly, Lutgendorf interprets the derision among Brahmanical elites towards Tulsīdās’ Rāmcaritmānas, which is presented in the sacred biographies, as signally the Rāmcaritmānas had been received enthusiastically by the lower classes and religious mendicants (1991:8–9).

Consequently, it is apparent that while ‘programmatic intent’ or ‘ideological persuasion’ play an important role in the discursive construction of a tradition along sectarian lines, attributed compositions and sacred biographies also serve the ‘popular base’ in resisting and deconstructing their subordination or the goals of elites (see Lincoln 1989:5). The issue of ‘popular base’ signals a tension in the discursive construction of a tradition. Relatedly, there is a tension between sannyāsa and grhastha that narrators, compilers and redactors attempt to resolve so as to construct the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition.

It is my contention that while the compositions attributed to women say nothing about gender as such they signal that the tradition argues a spiritual life is viable on the householder path. Furthermore, the compositions attributed to women point towards the discursive debate and the tensions between grhastha and sannyāsa. Thus, I contend that the most plausible explanation for the compositions
attributed to women is that they signify the grha status of the tradition rather than the existence of specific individuals. Therefore, the tension between grha and sannyāsa within bhakti will be explored in order to frame the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path.

3.1. Bhakti and the tension between sannyāsa and grha

Bhakti is characterised by the tension between sannyāsa and grha according to Biardeau (1992:290) and Dumont (1999:274). The householder stage of life is regarded as the ‘best’ (Manu 3.78, Doniger 1991:50) or most important by dharmaśāstra and dharmasūtra texts (Gautama 3.3, Baudhāyana 2.11.27, Vāsiṣṭha 8.4, and Viṣṇusmṛti 8.14–15), although the āśrama system sanctions sannyāsa for elite men who have fulfilled their grha role (Manu 6.2). The generosity of the householder in providing for the other āśramas seems to account for the exalted status of the householder in the dharma texts (Heesterman 1988:251; Malamoud 1981:43; Lingat 1973:49). However, Laine comments that these texts were composed by ‘male brahman householders to continue to justify the male brahman’s role in the caste hierarchy’ and to include, absorb and de-radicalise the ‘challenge to caste particularism’ represented by the renouncer (1998:128). This is because the renouncer, by eschewing society and only being concerned with mokṣa, threatens the ‘dharmic order of the world’ (Heesterman 1988:251). Following Dumont (1960:45; 1999:274–75), Heesterman regards the (Brahman) hostility to renunciation as understandable because ‘the renouncer is the archetypal dissenter…for he is a living reminder of a transcendent value that disturbs the settled order…’ Thus, there is an insoluble conflict between the householder and the renouncer (Heesterman 1988:252). Dumont regarded the relationship between householder and renouncer as one of ‘genuine dichotomy’ (1957:16ff; see 1960:37ff and 1999:273ff) and asserted that due to bhakti renunciation was no longer necessary as ‘detachment and disinterestedness are sufficient: one can leave the world from within…’ (1999:282). However, Dumont incorrectly understood bhakti as ‘a sanyasic development, an invention of the renouncer’ (1999:282; see Lorenzen 2004a:9) and bhakti traditions as transcending caste (1999:284; see Laine 1999:129). Bayly argues that Dumont’s binary pairing of renouncer/man-in-the-world is part of his ‘Brahman-centred’ perspective with a ‘hierarchical or purity-centred picture of caste values’ (1999:16–22) while Lorenzen points out most bhakti sects tend to uphold the caste system and draw followers from a specific group or a range of castes (2004a:10, 13).

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Biardeau finds the key term relating to the tension is *kāma* as desire underlies every phase of human life and as it is *kāma* that has to be renounced in order to attain *mokṣa* (1992:86–88). For Biardeau *bhakti* offered a solution to the problem presented in the *sannyāsa* view:

> Whereas the starting-point of the sanyāsin’s speculations was karman, the analysis he conducted, parallel to that of the Brahman, on human actions and goals, has shifted the focus of interest. It is this notion of *kāma*—in the all-encompassing sense which the renouncer attributes to it—together with the whole constellation of associated ideas, which comes to constitute a golden thread that runs through all speculations about true universal salvation. *Bhakti* would seek a solution in the abolition of *kāma* in the very heart of man’s ordinary activity. In other words, it would seek to imbue secular life with the sanyāsin’s ideal.

(Biardeau 1999:88)

Renunciation was however an institution that all *bhakti* traditions confronted as they arose. Horstmann believes that *bhakti* traditions rejected the soteriological and ontological concept on which renunciation relies rather than rejecting renunciation in itself (2001:229). Horstmann highlights the fact that *sannyāsa* is based on the idea that *mokṣa* can only be attained if one renounces *grhaustha*. Liberation cannot be realised as a householder because a *sannyāsi* candidate has to die to the world during his initiation and exist in ‘an absolute state of freedom and perfect being’, a state to which no *bhakta* could lay claim as it conflicts with the notion of Divine grace (2001:229). Consequently, *sannyāsa* and *bhakti* may be regarded as conflicting concepts.

Vallabhācārya (c.1479–1531), the founder of the Puṣṭimārga, criticised orthodox renunciation in his treatise the *Saṃnyāsanirṇaya*:

> It is not necessary to take vows of *sannyāsa* (world-renunciation) in order to practice the ninefold *bhakti*, for in the practice of that *bhakti* the help of other *bhaktas* is essential; both the pride common to the state of *sannyāsa* and the duties of the state of *sannyāsa* are contrary to the *bhaktimarga*.

(v.3; Barz 1976:33)

Moreover, because there is pride inherent in the *sannyāsa* and specific duties are imposed upon a *sannyāsi*, the two religious systems are incompatible.

(v.4ab; Horstmann 2001:229)

In the first verse Vallabhācārya stresses that *bhakti* is a communal form of religion while renunciation is solitary (Horstmann 2001:230). This highlights the fact that *bhakti* is performed within the world and, ideally, in the company of other *bhaktas* (Barz 1976:33–4). In the second verse Vallabhācārya emphasises that renunciation engenders arrogance while *bhakti* rules out other commitments and attachments as one must surrender completely to the Divine (Horstmann 2001:230; Barz 1976:32).
In bhakti there are ‘no pure types’ argues Laine as bhakti is ‘mixed up with renunciation’ (1999:130). According to Laine, one usually finds male and female ‘saints’ who are ‘drawn into quasi-sannyāsi styles of life, lives described with images drawn from the tradition of saṃnyāsa, but lives often complicated by their being, however reluctantly, householders’ (1999:130). Following on from Laine’s view Horstmann argues that bhakti texts and the lives of bhakti exemplars demonstrate that ‘bhakti cannot lead anywhere but to withdrawal from the world’ because ‘in its most radical form [bhakti] seems to be incompatible with life in the world’ (2001:231). Horstmann maintains that the charisma of the majority of historical bhaktas lay in ‘mystic experience’, which ‘had a tendency to break away from the world’ and that this resulted in a tension between sahaja and viraha (2001:231). This tension can lead to withdrawal from the world which is brought about by nirveda or by vairāgya, which Horstmann calls ‘spontaneous individual renunciation’ (2001:232). It must be noted that vairāgya is used in sannyāsa texts to refer to institutionalized renunciation or monasticism (Horstmann 2001:232ff) while vairāgya in a bhakti context tends to indicate ‘a strong personal disgust for worldly life and a personal decision to cut oneself away from that life’ (Barz 1992:36). The difference between sannyāsa and ‘the spontaneous type of individual vairāgya’ for Horstmann is that the sannyāsi or his guru ‘bring about the candidate’s ascent to the rank of liberated being, while in bhakti only God’s grace is thought to be able to bestow liberation. Moreover, the reward of bhakti is bhakti itself…the experience of the divine. Liberation is considered to be of secondary importance (2001:233).

Furthermore, Horstmann regards the ‘idea of the freely accorded grace of God’ as annihilating the ‘antagonism of householder versus renouncer’ but she argues that this annihilation is counteracted by the desire of the “‘radical” mystic bhakta’ to renounce the world. For Horstmann this then leads to a tension between ‘a kind of vairāgya that allows for the fulfilment of the demands of the world and a radical type of vairāgya…’ (2001:235–236). Thus Horstmann finds the difference between a householder and a renouncer, particularly within the Dādū Panth, to be operational (2001:236). The sacred biographies of the Vārkarī sants Nāmdev and Tukārām portray them as reluctant householders drawn to vairāgya, which highlights the tension between the homeless renouncer and the housebound bhakta like Tukārām who yearns for and experiences boundless space beyond the confines of ghar (Laine 1998:131; see Omvedt and Patankar 2012:173).

Biardeau ventures that the ‘structures of bhakti’ were the work of Brahmans (1992:90) for as Lipner points out Brahminic authority straddled the religious teaching of traditional Vedic religion and
the bhakti traditions (1999:126). Furthermore, the Brahman was the custodian of the path towards liberation and even after the rise of bhakti traditions that offered salvation to all Brahmans continued to have authority in many bhakti movements (Lipner 1999:57, 102; see Lorenzen 2004a:10ff). For Chakravarti bhakti continued the dissent of movements like Buddhism as it challenged the caste system but also because it dissolved the distinction between the worlds of the grhaṣṭhā and the sannyāsī (1989:18; 2003:95–6). Both Lipner and Chakravarti regard Buddhism as having allowed women to pursue religious goals and suggest that in response bhakti traditions, as Brahmanised theistic traditions, accommodated this change (Lipner 1999:102; Chakravarti 1989:18). The Bhagavadgītā asserted that women, vaiśyas and śūdras could attain mokṣa despite the fact that their birth resulted from demerit (BhG 9.32). Bhakti was thus spiritually egalitarian (Chakravarti 2003:95ff; 1993:585) and open to the lower levels of society while the path of knowledge was considered appropriate only for Brahmans and Brahman ascetics (Lorenzen 1995:15). However, Chakravarti argues that the collapse of the divide between householder and renouncer within bhakti only operated in practice in the case of men as the dichotomy continued for women as a tension between marriage and bhakti (1989:23, 28). Likewise, Kishwar and Vanita suggest that the ideology of pativrata is a site of active conflict as it makes the unanimity of bhakti and grhaṣṭha that is possible for the male bhakta impossible for the female bhakta (1989:91). Thus the life of Bahinābāī sugests an ‘attempt to reconcile pravrötti and nivṛttī’ for Feldhaus (1982:593, 599–600; see Jávaḍekar 1979, v.451), a compromise between the pativrata and virakta for Pandharipande (2000:170) and a tension between deviance and conformism for Ramaswamy (1997:217).

The tension between sannyāsa and grhaṣṭha pertains to the question about the number of women recorded by the Vārkarī sampradāya. Kiehnle notes ‘the Vārkarīs (at least since the time of Eknāth) propagate the householder’s life’ (1997a:25; see Jones 2009:4–5, 13). Eknāth is significant in this respect according to Keune because he ‘provided the Vārkarī tradition with a model for integrating…the second and fourth stages (grhaṣṭhaśrama and sannyāsāśrama) of a traditional brahman male’s life’ (2011:46). Keune bases his view on Skyhawk who submits that Eknāth’s most significant contribution to the development of the Vārkarī sampradāya was the notion of ‘renunciation-in-the-world and asceticism in marriage’ (1983:346). These notions highlight the tension between sannyāsa and grhaṣṭha in the sampradāya but also the discursive construction of the tradition as a householder path.

In colloquial Marathi the term samsāra—which I transliterate as sansār to differentiate it from the Sanskrit and ascetic concept—tends to refer to the domestic or married life (Laine 1998:129), ‘having
a husband or a household’ (Feldhaus 1998:77), and ‘practical life and its responsibilities, domestic affairs; the temporal world, life in this world; household’ (Berntsen 1982:155). According to Sarkar, sansār as ‘the domain of the householder…[is] a vital phase within the prescribed four-stage life-cycle of a pious [male] Hindu…The observance of prescribed ritual, caste and gender norms that had been spelt out by the Vedas and subsequent sacred law-codes, would constitute the essence of a pious life or dharma’. However, sansār is governed by scriptural injunctions and prohibitions (vidhi nisedha), and sustained by the law of karma. Thus, Sarkar argues that sansār is ‘the site of dharma as well as the site of trials’ (1993:39; 2006:36).

Laine suggests that when reading the negative portrayals of the domestic life of a householder found in religious texts one needs to consider that the male authors ‘had critics, or if not critics, perhaps sparring partners (many of whom were women) who…took for granted the values and joys, as well as trials, of the ordinary sansār of the ordinary grhastha’ (1998:129). Tukārām said he turned to God because he was afflicted by the miseries of sansār: sansārācyā tape tāpalo mī deva (abhaṅga 66.1, SSG 2:640). Tukārām’s second wife, Āvalī or Jijāi, critiqued him fiercely and the speech attributed to her indicates her trials as Tukārām’s wife (Aklijkar 2005:115–119; see Chitre 1991:42ff) as well as the difficulties a woman might suffer due to a husband inclined to renunciation, which raises the question of how women, particularly those in a sant’s family, are understood to have dealt with sansār (Zelliot 1999a:94). In her essay on the autobiography of the Bengali woman Rashsundari Debi, Sarkar points out that a woman ‘enters sansara through…marriage, the only sacrament that is available to her. For her, sansara is the unending flow of domestic work and responsibilities, primarily connected with cooking, serving, and child-rearing. Ideally, the woman should have no other religious activity…’ (1993:39).

Ramanujan argues that women saints ‘invert and even subvert the traditional ideals of womanhood’ through five phases: early dedication to God, denial of marriage, defying societal norms, initiation, and marrying the Lord (1982:317–322). Sangari suggests that the lives of women sants like Mīrābāī are punctuated by other ‘typical conventions’: ‘the bitter persecutions and miraculous escapes, the displays of wit and logic when questioned and tested by a male authority figure, the association with holy places, the breaking of norms and taboos…the rejection of worldly power and authority…’

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19 The poem Are sansār sansār, ‘Oh the married life, the married life’ by Bahinabai Chaudhari (1982a:103–04; dipiaarmarathi 2008) is an excellent example of this colloquial usage.

Ramanujan also finds a ‘related pattern in the role of sants’ wives’ who ‘appear superior to their husbands, needing no conversion’ as they are ‘the vehicles of divine grace for the male saint or poet’ (1982:322). Ramanujan juxtaposes the woman saint ‘who rejects family and child’ and a sant’s wife who ‘out-saints’ him (1982:323). Yet there are other possibilities, for example that a woman might negotiate between bhakti and pativrata-dharma or that a woman might not ‘out-saint’ her sant husband but rather be remembered for the ‘nuisance value’ she offered a male sant (Aklujkar 2005:105; see Vanita 1989:49).

Aklujkar’s idea of women remembered for their ‘nuisance value’ to a male sant is interesting as it draws attention to the conflict between a man’s disgust for the household life (vairāgya) and the desire of his family to perform his household duties (2005:108). Aklujkar notes that both Goṇāī and Rājāī are depicted as named women who despite a dialogue with God do not make Nāmdev ‘give up his worship completely’ or join him in ‘total disregard for the family’. Rather they are shown ‘taking their social roles of a mother and a wife very seriously…Between the two of them, they have used practically all the arguments to make the Sant assume his share of household responsibility…Therefore the dispute between the divine and the domestic remains unresolved…’ (2005:115, 118). However, Aklujkar does not consider why the abhaṅgas and/or the sacred biographies might have wished to draw attention to the conflict and the tension between vairāgya/sannyāsa and grhaustha. Aklujkar observes that Tukārām’s wife is recorded as ‘his major adversary’ in the Tukārām abhaṅgas and in the BVJ (49?) where she is unnamed and referred to as strī, albeit the oral tradition in Maharashtra names her Āvalī or Jijāī (2005:108; see Chitre 1991:ix). The eleven Tukārām abhaṅgas that offer advice to his wife depict an angry woman through speeches attributed to her and portray the tensions between vairāgya/sannyāsa and grhaustha (2005:116–117).21 Aklujkar argues that the account of Tukārām’s wife differs from Goṇāī and Rājāī because no miracles occur to convince Āvalī of Tukārām’s greatness, neither does Āvalī dialogue with God, nor is Āvalī remembered for composing abhaṅgas but rather as being ‘a cantankerous wife who does not understand the magnanimity of her Sant husband’ (2005:117–118). However Aklujkar regards Goṇāī, Rājāī and Āvalī as ‘typical examples of disempowered women’ to whom a nurturing role is assigned but to whom no protection is offered against a man who refuses to share the burden of family/domestic life. Moreover, Aklujkar argues these women are accused of hindering their men on the bhakti path and criticised for attempting to pursue familial life (2005:119).

Aklujkar’s idea of women with ‘nuisance value’ contrasts with Ramanujan’s notion of saints’ wives, as mentioned above. Ramanujan suggests that while many male saints do not reject family life most female saints do; female saints then substitute their natal and conjugal families with a family composed of saints [satsaṅga] (1982:323). However, Ramanujan’s view of saint’s wives as superior is not supported by the depictions of Vārkarī sants as Aklujkar’s point about ‘nuisance’ makes clear. However, Rājāī is portrayed as accepting bhakti (Aklujkar 2005:114) but it is my belief that this, like the tension between vairāgya/sannyāsa and grhastha, can be understood as part of a ‘construction of particular conjecture’ (Mukta 1994:23).

It is the role and portrayal of women, particularly those now recognised as santakaviyatrīs in the Vārkarī sampradāya which is of interest for this thesis. It is my contention that the sampradāya was formed through ‘discourse’—oral, chirographic, typographic, performative, and communal discourse—and that through this discursive construction the Vārkarī sampradāya defined itself as a householder tradition. Consequently, the tension between sannyāsa and grhastha outlined above is significant for the sampradāya. Furthermore, I contend that women play a relatively prominent role in this discursive formation as they are instrumentalised as householders par excellence even if there are ‘no pure types’ in bhakti as Laine maintains. The role and portrayal of women is therefore connected to the sampradāya’s presentation of itself as a householder tradition.

4. Methodology

The unsustainability of reading back into the past to recover the subject and/or ‘voice’ requires an alternative methodology for my project of considering the function of gender attribution in the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya. Consequently, I have combined elements from Hall’s ‘discursive strategies’ of national culture (1996b: 613–15) and Kolakowski’s typology of national identity (1995:33 cited in Wodak 2009:24–25) to form a framework to track the discursive formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path.

4.1. The discursive formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya

The first of the discursive strategies identified by Hall is narrative, which he regards as providing ‘a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events…symbols, and rituals which…represent, the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning…’ (1996c:613 italics in original). In the context of the discursive formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya narrative operates within

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various genres including poetry and sacred biography. *Caritra* in the Indian context is part of the process by which a tradition grows and develops as it can ‘play a central part in the formulation and transmission of sectarian theology and communal identity’ declares Snell (1994:2, 13). In his discussion on Śrīvaśṇava sacred biography Hardy argues that biographies aim to imbue a life with religious significance and define its position in relation to its environment. *Caritra* therefore ‘constitutes a particular symbol-system which is involved in the construction of a universe of meaning’ (Hardy 1992:82). The intentions and aims of sacred biographies or biographies are varied but Snell notes they include some common patterns: *satsaṅga* (see Tulpule 1994b:166), ‘didactic instruction, the benefits of spiritual life, charity, the grace of God, the merit of praise, the example of conversion stories, the certain rewards earned by pious service...the efficacy of composing and singing hagiographical works [and] a search for closeness or communion with charismatics of the past’ (Snell 1994:2). The biographer’s agenda includes an ‘interpretive element which controls, directs or otherwise manipulates the reader’s [or hearer’s] perception of the tradition’ argues Snell (1994:3). For example, the biographies of the Puṣṭimārg highlight the importance of the *guru* as an intermediary (Barz 1994:55; Dalmia 2003a:133ff). Snell notes that there is a contradiction regarding sacred biographies as *bhaktas* usually insist the individual is subservient to the deity and that details of an individual’s life are therefore irrelevant (1994:3). Poetry also acts as a form of narrative as poets relate details of other poets or *bhaktas* lives. For example, Nāmdev was a poet and biographer of Jñāneśvar but also the subject of sacred biography, thus highlighting another common element in the genre that hagiographers become ‘ideal subjects for hagiology’ (Snell 1994:10; Tulpule 1994b). Snell also notes that sacred biography reveals ‘facets of belief and attitude which, though at some remove from historical actuality lie at the very heart of the traditions they represent’. Furthermore, sacred biography is characteristically reverential and tends towards timelessness (Snell 1994:1).

An emphasis on *origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness* is the second discursive strategy (Hall 1996c:614; emphasis in original) and this resonates with some of the objects of canon formation which forms part of the discursive construction of the Vārkarī *sampradāya*. Von Stietencron argues that one of the main functions of canon is to ‘arrest time’ or rather to select ‘essential and eternally valid’ elements that provide the community with continuing direction (2003:15).\(^23\) According to Christof the reason canonical and sacred texts differ is that while sacred texts ‘show a tendency to normativity and

\(^{23}\) See also Hammer & Lewis 2007:1–2.
provide a direction, they are open to additions and interpretations’ while a canon is ‘the institutionalization of permanence, and is believed to be based on an ahistorical connection with primeval times’ (2003:63). In this view Christof follows J.Z. Smith’s notion that canon is a list that is ‘held to be complete’ (1982:48). Consequently, particular expression—language, stories, agreements, prescriptions, and examples from a specific social and cultural context—also become fixed. A canon may therefore become a ‘snapshot’ of a cultural and socio-religious moment; a moment out of time. This can lead to a gap between the canon and its receivers and von Stietencron argues that in this context an important role can be played by personal charisma (2003:15–16; see Graham 1993:xi).

The third discursive strategy (Hall 1996c:614) is what Hobsbawn calls the invention of tradition. Hobsbawn defines an ‘invented tradition’ as ‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past’ (2000a:1). Hobsbawn also contends that a feature of an ‘invented’ tradition is that this continuity with the past is largely factitious as the object and characteristic of traditions is ‘invariance’ (2000a:2). Hammer and Lewis find a comparable situation with regard to religion noting that in many invented sacred traditions ‘the actual processes of human agency…are overlaid with a historiography that confers legitimacy to religious claims and practices’ (2007:2). Furthermore, Hammer and Lewis argue that once the charismatic leader ceases to be present, ‘charisma needs to be transferred to some other medium for the movement to continue existing’ (2007:4). Charisma is thus a key element in the interplay between the second and third discursive strategies of ‘inventing’ and developing and maintaining a sacred tradition.

The foundational myth or the myth of origin is the fourth discursive strategy which Hall regards as ‘a story which locates the origin of the nation, the people, and their national character so early that they are lost in the mists of, not “real,” but “mythic” time. Invented traditions make the confusions and disasters of history intelligible, converting disarray into “community” and disasters into triumphs’ (1996c:614). Hall’s view connects with Hobsbawn’s notions of ‘factitious’ and ‘invariance’ in the invention of tradition but also raises questions about how one might understand myth in the context of a religious tradition (see Doniger 1995; Eilberg-Schwartz 1995).

For Barthes ‘since myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse. Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message…’ (2000:109). Thus for Barthes, myth is defined by the way in which it is used to communicate
rather than by its content. However, verbal discourse is not the only means of producing myth as anything
can become a myth if it is used as a sign to convey meaning (Flood 2013:161–162): ‘We shall therefore
take language, discourse, speech, etc., to mean any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or
visual…even objects will become speech, if they mean something’ (2000:110–111 *italics* in original). For
Barthes myth is a system of meaning constructed from pre-existing material ‘which has already been
worked on so as to make it suitable for communication’ (2000:110). Eliade regarded myth as narrating a
‘sacred history’ and relating how ‘reality came into existence’ (Eliade 1998:5) which connects with the
first two discursive strategies. Consequently, myth as a means of communicating a system of meaning
may explain the ‘sacred’ origins of the *sampradāya*, its charismatic figures and encapsulate the
*sampradāya*’s beliefs and values (see Chapter One).

The fifth discursive strategy is *historical memory* (Kolakowski 1995:33 cited in Wodak 2009:25)
or *collective memory* (Halbwachs 1992 *my italics*). There are numerous terms for memory research and
significantly the various terms suggest memory is a social phenomenon (Novetzke 2008:26). The social
aspect of memory follows the notion put forward by Halbwachs that memory operates in a group: ‘it is in
society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and
localize their memories’ (1992:38). Novetzke proposes that just as Pechilis suggests *bhakti* be understood
as ‘participation’ (1999:24ff; 2008:26) one might also think of memory as participation, ‘as predicated on
social cooperation’ for where *bhakti* and memory intersect is the space where publics are created
(2008:26). This intersection is significant as it highlights the association between memory and factors
such as orality, literacy, performance and myth in the discursive formation of a tradition (see Novetzke

It is probable that one of the desired outcomes of the discursive formation of the *sampradāya*
was/is creating Vārkaṇi identity for as Hall has argued identities are constructed within discourse and
‘through, not outside, difference’ (1996a:4; see Derrida 1981). If the formation of identity is based on
exclusion (see Laclau 1990:33) and on leaving something out (Hall 1996a:5) then one may suppose that
in order to constitute itself as a householder tradition the Vārkaṇi *sampradāya* excluded *sannyāsa* or at
least excluded renunciation to a certain degree. However, there still remains the issue of the construction
of a gendered identity and role via the discursive formation of the *sampradāya* as Butler (1993:1),
Chakravarti (1999a:78, 86n.124) and Mani (1998; 1999) all argue that a gendered subject is discursively
constructed. It is the issue of gender, as attributed and as employed in the discursive construction of a
tradition which differentiates my project from other scholastic studies.

4.2. My original contribution

My original contribution highlights the fact that due to the issue of attribution it is impossible to
understand the poetic compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs as the work of a specific historical
person or legendary figure. It is therefore unfeasible to recover women as subjects or retrieve women’s
voices as there is no clear-cut connection between authors, gender and compositions. However, my work
reveals that it is possible to examine the ways the attribution of women’s authorship is used in the
construction and development of a bhakti tradition like the Vārkarī sampradāya and to ask what function
the prominence of ‘women’ might have played in the sampradāya’s self-perception and representation.
Furthermore, my focus on gender attribution could have implications for the analysis of caste in similar
contexts as it is unviable to recover the caste status of an attributed author (see Hawley 1984:28;

Additionally my contribution lies is in the translation and presentation of new material. I have
translated more than one-hundred-and-fifty compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs and at least
eighty-eight of these are completely new translations (see Appendix B). Moreover, I have also translated
two chapters pertaining to the lives of Janābāī and Kānhopātrā from Mahīpati’s Bhaktavijaya, which are
presented in Appendix C. This is the first time that any chapters of the Bhaktavijaya have been translated
into English since 1933 (see Abbott and Godbole 1996).

4.3. Translation

The selection of compositions for this thesis was based on providing translations of all the santakaviyatrīs
associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya, some of whom do not appear in the Śrīsakalasantagāthā (SSG).
It was also my aim to try and include poems from many of the themes or groupings identified by the
editors of the SSG. My selection was further directed by my desire to explore certain themes, such as
grinding grain (daḷane), the domestic setting and sansār. Moreover, due to the discursive construction of
the sampradāya it seemed germane to provide translations of compositions attributed to the
santakaviyatrīs.

The primary sources for the compositions attributed to the sants were the SSG (Gosāvī 2005)
and two websites—‘Marathi Documents List’ and ‘Marathi World’—while my translations from
Mahīpati’s Bhaktavijaya were based on an 1850 edition. The translations of compositions were
undertaken in conjunction with Dr. Kasturi Dadhe (2004–2007) and the author V.P. Kanitkar (2010–2011) with some additional help from Veena Dadhe and Sulu Abhyankar. I sought aid in translating the compositions partly due to my less than fluent Marathi but also because translation is an act of ‘intercultural negotiation’ (Chitre 2005:127) that involves translating ‘modes of thought’ (Lienhardt 1954; see Asad 1986:142).

The translations of the compositions attributed to Vārkarī women are provided in Appendix B with the Marathi text and transliteration. I have provided the Marathi text to avoid silencing/marginalising/Otherising the authors/composers utterly and to allow their voices to speak for themselves (hooks 1990; Spivak 1988, 1996; Bhabha 1996:209–210) even if those voices cannot be identified as female. The Marathi is provided as many academic works provide inadequate referencing while the transliteration is supplied so that the reader unfamiliar with Marathi will be able to get a sense of the rhythm and rhyme but also in the hope that the reader may be ‘powerfully affected by the foreign tongue’ (Rudolf Pannwitz quoted in Benjamin 1990:81).

My aim has been to try and keep my translations as close to the Marathi as possible. Thus, I have attempted to follow the structure of the abhaṅgas by translating the first ‘foot’ of each line and retaining the number of lines. However, I have not attempted to reproduce the syllable based rhyme (see Tulpule 1979:451–52) and as a result my translations are in prose, although I hope they retain some ‘poetic qualities’ (Pechilis 2012:23). In attempting to follow the Marathi I have sometimes used phrases that, in English, may sound awkward to the reader but which I feel reflect the composition more accurately. Conversely, I am aware that I have inadequately rendered some Marathi and Sanskrit terms and concepts into English due to the lack of a direct equivalent. However, I have provided detailed footnotes that I hope will assist the reader. I have also tried to avoid using any vocabulary borrowed from Christian terminology as the context within which the abhaṅgas originated and exist is predominantly a bhakti one. I have retained all epithets as their use is often intentional and they suggest a certain meaning in specific contexts and these are detailed in the text, footnotes or glossary. I have retained a few Sanskrit and Marathi terms that are fairly standard in English (for example guru, mantra or yoga). I have also retained terms for which no adequate English word or phrase exists (such as nirguṇ, ovāḷaṇī and sohaṃ) and explanations for these are provided in the footnotes or glossary. Occasionally I have inserted a few clarificatory words in square brackets to aid meaning or if the syntax requires them. I have also inserted
personal pronouns and articles, and used the active voice for some passive constructions in Marathi as this reads better in English (see Bryant 2003:lxxxix–lxxxi).

I am aware that translation is a representational act. It is an attempt to represent what some other person or persons, in another context may have said and what they may have meant. It is therefore also an interpretational act. However, translation is also relational as it involves the translation of one’s own ideas and an attempt to fuse them with those of an author or authors (Pechilis 2012:5). I do not believe that I have ‘final authority in determining the subject’s meanings’ (Asad 1986:162), whoever the subject might be. My translations, representation(s) and productions (Gadamer 2004:296; see Pechilis 2012:5) may be/become ‘a textual construct’ because it cannot be contested by those to whom the ‘texts’ are attributed (Asad 1986:163). Nonetheless, my translations are not fixed as new translations can be undertaken at any time. Obviously, this does not resolve the issue of the production of a text for the consumption of a Western, academic audience. Neither does it alter the fact that by undertaking research to gain a doctorate I am sanctioned and empowered by the academy to ‘create meanings for a subject’ (Asad 1986:162). I readily accept that translation is ‘an active site of conflict’ (Spivak 2005:105): a conflict between languages—words and concepts—and cultures but also within the translator. Translation is difficult and I have found apt Leach’s statement that the ‘perfect translation is usually impossible’ (1973:772). Consequently, my interlingual and intercultural translations should be regarded as an interpretation of a dynamic historical-religious cultural context.

4.4. Ethnography

Ethnography is regarded by scholars such as Clifford and Asad as a form of cultural translation that results in a textual construct. Clifford contends that ‘ethnographic writing is allegorical’ (1986b:98) because ethnography ‘translates experience into text’ (1986b:115). Asad argues that ‘the ethnographer’s translation/representation of a particular culture is inevitably a textual construct’ because it is not typically ‘contested by the people to whom it is attributed’ and thus ‘the process of “cultural translation” is inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power’ including ‘the authority of ethnographers to uncover the implicit meanings of subordinate societies’ (1986:163). However, Chambers suggests that while ‘epistemic violence’ inheres in anthropology’s history one should also be aware of its potential as an ‘enabling violation’ (2006:3; Spivak 1988:280–83, 1999:95, 271, 371). For Spivak the best example of epistemic violence is the project of constituting/effacing the Other (1988:280–81; 1996:219), an issue also highlighted by Said (1995:21ff). Dingwaney recognises that the process of translation involves
varying degrees of violence, especially when the culture being translated is constituted as that of the "other" (1995:4). Furthermore, Spivak has argued that the subaltern/Other cannot speak (1988) which leads Sharpe to argue that when the subaltern/Other is a woman "the subaltern must always be caught in translation, never truly expressing herself, but always already interpreted" (2009:111). These perspectives raise some serious issues, with which I have wrestled, in relation to cultural translation and ethnography such as: excluding dissenting voices and information (Chambers 2006:5); the need to avoid erasing historical and environmental factors (Chambers 2006:14 see Appadurai 1988:16); the importance of the interaction between the 'problem of place' with 'the problem of voice ("speaking for" and "speaking to") as the 'the problem of voice is a problem of multiplicity as well as a problem of representation' (Appadurai 1988:16–17); the value of including the personal so as to counter 'the tendency toward alienation and dehumanization' (Pratt 1986:33).

My primary method of inquiry was qualitative research, which included overt participant observation, informant interviewing—usually based on some prepared questions and electronically recorded and transcribed—additional note-taking and journal-keeping, and some photography. In order to conduct my ethnographic research I based in Pune with a Marathi-speaking Brahman family from September 2004 to March 2005 and with a Maharashtrian, formerly-Bohra family from June to July 2006. During 2004–2005 I continued to take Marathi lessons from an MA student at Pune University while I undertook textual translation and ethnographic research with my research assistant Kasturi Dadhe.

One major obstacle I encountered was of access to rural, low-caste Vārkarīs as a white, western woman whose connections were primarily with urban Brahmans. Many of those who provided information were ‘elite’—educated, middle-class, high-caste men in positions of religious authority and/or power—but not all my informants can or should be thus categorised as some of the people who spoke to me and my research assistants (Kasturi Dadhe and Gayatri Gurjar Gajabhiye) occupied different subject positions and might be considered part of the ‘popular base’ (see Mukta 1994:32–33). Another issue of my data collection was that the information I gathered was usually mediated by my research assistants, which meant that I was not always acquiring ‘direct testimony’ from my informants (see Crapanzano 1986:79). Nonetheless, it was often fruitful to work with another woman and clarify much of what I had seen, heard and read through discussion.

The primary question to which I sought a response while conducting my fieldwork was ‘what is the role of the santakaviyatrīs in the Vārkarī sampradāya?’ In October 2004 I produced a list of almost
100 questions developed from Knott (1998), Raheja (1988), Uberoi (1998), Hall (1996), Gold and Raheja (1994), Bhagwat (1990, 2004) and Shrotriya (1993). The list began with questions such as ‘what marks the sants out’ and ‘why are there so many women sants in the Vārkarī sampradāya?’ and concluded with questions such as ‘what meaning, if any, do these santakaviyatrīs have in the lives of contemporary Vārkarīs?’ However, as there appeared to be a lack of familiarity with santakaviyatrīs other than Muktābāī, Janābāī or Mirābāī I soon realised that it was necessary to enquire which santakaviyatrīs people could identify before I could begin exploring the position/role of the santakaviyatrīs in the Vārkarī sampradāya. Consequently, the questions I asked in relation to the Vārkarī santakaviyatrīs altered depending on the situation and the interviewee. Furthermore, I found that in interviews with male gurus and senior figures that the interview often took its own course once an initial question had been posed. However, it was one of these figures who highlighted the connection between the householder nature of the sampradāya and the inclusion of poems attributed to and stories concerning women within the Vārkarī context/corpus. The Vārkarī corpus will be explored in Chapter Three of this thesis as the summary of chapters below outlines.

5. Outline of chapters

The first chapter provides an historical and social profile of the sampradāya as a framework for later discussions. The reasons Zelliot put forward for the householder character of the Vārkarī sampradāya—its rural nature, the lack of a strong renouncer tradition in the Marathi-speaking area and the leadership from Śūdras or unorthodox Brahmans—are considered in this context. The second chapter investigates the role, if any, of the Vārkarī santakaviyatrīs in the sampradāya today through ethnography. The aim is to demonstrate the almost total absence of women sants from current devotional practices and from public memory. It is my contention that this absence could indicate the successful construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path as women no longer need to be cited as figures of exemplary religiosity while fulfilling their duties as householder.

The third chapter examines the discursive formation of the sampradāya as a householder bhakti tradition by considering the issues of attribution, transmission and textualisation. The texts which constitute the Vārkarī sampradāya’s corpus or ‘canon’ will be examined after an initial discussion outlining the theories of canon in relation to the Indian context so as to situate the Vārkarī ‘canon’ and its formation. The sacred biographies of the santakaviyatrīs associated with the Vārkarīs are examined in Chapter Four. The chapter seeks to address what these portrayals reveal about the discursive construction
of a tradition and how the gender attribution within the biographies relates to the basic tension in the Vārkarī sampradāya between sannyāsa and grhaṭha. The chapter will show that while the stories of women exemplify the tension they do not fully resolve the conflict. The compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs are explored in Chapter Five so as to understand genres such as philosophical and yogic mastership, grinding songs and spiritual autobiography in the context of the tension between sannyāsa and grhaṭha as well as the dichotomy between nivṛtti and pravṛtti. The chapter also explores how the women, particularly those in sant’s family, deal with sansār (see Zelliot 1999a:94). The final chapter responds to the questions put forward in each chapter and concludes that there were probably so many women ‘poets’ and/or sants in the Vārkarī sampradāya as the tradition constructed itself discursively as a householder tradition. The conclusion also raises questions for future research relating to ethnographic research among the ‘popular base’.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE VĀRΚARI SAMPRADĀYA IN HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

The Vārkarī sampradāya—sometimes referred to as the Bhāgavata sampradāya of Maharashtra—1 is a Vaiṣṇava bhakti tradition whose distinctive feature is its pilgrimage to Pandharpur, in south-eastern Maharashtra. The term vārkarī refers to those who regularly ‘do’ (karī) the ‘pilgrimage’ (vārī) to Pandharpur and who worship and are devoted to Viṭṭhal/Viṭhobā of Pandharpur.2 The Vārkarī sampradāya recognises over fifty Marathi male and female sant-poets spanning a period of over five hundred years, whose compositions form the teachings and corpus of the tradition, and whose lives are regarded as paradigmatic (Schomer 1987:4; Zelliot 1987a:94, 2000:192; Bhagwat 2005:166). The lives of the sants are commemorated in compositions attributed to various sants and in sacred biographies—Mahīpati (c.1715–1790) being the most renowned and productive of all the Marathi biographers—and these accounts also form part of the Vārkarī corpus. As I noted in the Introduction, the inclusion of poems attributed to women and of stories about women within the corpus appears to have occurred because the Vārkarī sampradāya is a householder tradition (Zelliot 1999a:99; 1999b:418) and Zelliot proposes three aspects that mark it as such: ‘the rural nature of the bhakti movement in Maharashtra’, the ‘lack of a strong sannyāsī tradition in the Marathi-speaking area’ (2000:198; 1999b:424) and the fact that ‘leadership from either Śūdra or unorthodox Brahmins may be most responsible for Maharashtra’s householder bhaktas’ (1999b:423–24). The purpose of this chapter is to provide historical and contemporary social contexts to ground my subsequent discussions of the women poet-sants associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya and the formation of the tradition as a householder path. It is therefore not intended to be a comprehensive history of the sampradāya which has been done adequately elsewhere.3

My discussion begins by examining the town and deity at the heart of the sampradāya before exploring the concept of sant within the Vārkarī context so as to understand their importance to the tradition. A brief sketch of the four main male sants is provided before outlining the female bhaktas and poets.

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associated with the *sampradāya*. The vārī will then be delineated along with some of the *sampradāya*’s key practices before discussing aspects of the *sampradāya*’s contemporary social profile.

1. Pandharpur: an historical perspective

The city of Paṇḍharpūr is situated in south-eastern Maharashtra on the left bank of the river Bhima, also known as the Candrabhāgā. Pandharpur is a *śrīth* according to Engblom (1987:10–11) as the town is a ‘sacred pilgrimage complex’ while Dhere indicates that the river Bhima is the *śrīth* (2011:114, 221; see Sand 1990:58, n.45). Nonetheless, Pandharpur is home to the deity Viṭṭhal or Viṭṭhobā whose presence is said to sanctify the town and surrounding area making Pandharpur a *kṣetra* (Vaudeville 1996:201ff).4

The earliest mention of the town seems to be as Paṇḍaraṅgapāḷī—‘the village of Paṇḍaraṅga’ according to Vaudeville (1996:201) or Paṇḍaraṅga ‘a settlement of wild tribes’ according to Sontheimer (1989:70)—in a copperplate inscription dated 516 C.E. carved under the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Āvideya (ARMAD 1931:197–198, II.b.19; Deleury 1994:24–8). Vaudeville suggests that the name Paṇḍharpūr derives from Paṇḍuraṅgapūra ‘the town of Paṇḍuraṅga’, the ‘white-coloured’ deity (1996:203; see Dhere 2011:27, 29; 300 n.16). However, Dhere believes that ‘Paṇḍuraṅga’ does not refer to ‘Śiva, who is white as camphor’ because the Marathi sants regard ‘Paṇḍuraṅga’ as referring to Kṛṣṇa the cowherd who is called ‘Paṇḍuraṅga’ as ‘he is dusty all over from the dust raised by the hooves of the cows’ (2011:27). Nonetheless, Hemacandra (*c*.1089–1172), the Jain scholar-monk, suggested Paṇḍuraṅga was an epithet for Rudra-Śiva (*Deśināmamālā* 6.23; Pischel 1938:219; Dhere 2011:27) and Bhandarkar intimates that Pandharpur was once an important site for Śaivite worship and that as Śiva’s importance declined Viṭṭhobā’s importance increased until Paṇḍuraṅga and Viṭṭhobā became synonymous (1929:125).5

Vaudeville suggests that Śaivism was the ‘basic faith in Maharashtra’ and that ‘nominal Vaishnavism or Krishnaism’, where the role of Śiva as supreme Lord and Guru is transferred to Kṛṣṇa, may have come about due to the interpenetration of the Nāth *panth* and Vedāntic traditions (1987:217, 219–220). The change in orientation from Śaiva to Vaiṣṇava, or the ‘gradual merging’ of the two according to Vaudeville (1996:243–252), may also have been due to the transformation of the *deś* from a largely pastoral to a largely agrarian economy. The Vaiṣṇava Brahmans played an increasingly prominent role in this transformation as they were granted land in return for authorising the ruling dynasty, executing administrative functions or performing rituals argues Eaton (2005:138–139; see Sontheimer 1989:147).

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Brahmans thus supervised agrarian activities and performed a religious role, gaining dominance over the non-brahman population on a social and spiritual level. Deleury, following Kosambi, suggests that Paṇḍharpūr was donated to a Brahman called Jaydvītha in 516 C.E. and that Pandharpur was Brahmanised from the late ninth century C.E. onwards (1994:198–99). The Vaiṣṇava priests at Pandharpur were thus responsible for promulgating Viṭṭhal as a form of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa according to Dhere (2011:44). Consequently, Viṭṭhabā may have been regarded as a svarūpa of Viṣṇu by the fourteenth century due to the influence of Vaiṣṇava Brahmans. Eaton argues that this identification of Viṭṭhabā with Viṣṇu coincided with the expansion of agrarian communities in the pastoral deś which tended to be ‘preoccupied with…social categories, distinctions, and hierarchies’. Consequently, Eaton equates the advance of agrarian society in the deś with the growth of the caste system and ‘ideas of social categories and graded hierarchies presided over by Brahmins’. Moreover, Eaton argues that Viṭṭhabā’s identification with Viṣṇu was strongest among agricultural castes like the Kuṇbīs and weakest among pastoral communities (2005:140), for as Sontheimer states ‘the nomadic Dhangars are more inclined towards Śaiva deities; even Viṭṭhabā of Paṇḍharpūr is not (yet) Viṣṇu for them’ (1989:147).

The exact origins and derivations of the names Viṭṭhabā and Viṭṭhal—for which numerous epithets are employed (see Chapter Five)—are uncertain and have been much debated. It is possible that Viṭṭhabā was a Kannada deity—he was certainly worshipped by the Hoysaḷas of Karnāṭaka (Vaudeville 1996:202; Deleury 1994:135ff; Iwao 1988:184)—as viṭṭha is a Kannada form of Viṣṇu with a suffix contracted from bābā that expresses loving respect (Vaudeville 1996:202; Deleury 1994:127ff; Bhandarkar 1929:124). Sontheimer refers to the oral traditions of the Gavāḷs who assert that Viṭṭhabā/Viṭṭhal came from Karnataka (1989:47, 106; see also Bhagwat 1974:116), which seems to correspond with the perspective of Vārkarī sants like Jñāneśvar, Nāmdev and Eknāth:

Kāṇadā ho viṭṭhalu karnāṭaku / tyāṇē maja lāvilē vedhī//
The Karnāṭak Viṭṭhal who attracted me is Kannada. (Jñāneśvar abhaṅga 764.2, SSG1:203; Kiehnle 1997:17 n.85, 65).

Viṭṭhal kāṇade bolā jāṇe / tyācī bhāṣā puṇḍalīka neṇē//
Viṭṭhal knows how to speak Kannada; Puṇḍalīk does not understand his language. (Nāmdev abhaṅga 374.1, SSG1:323; Dhere 2011:36)

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9 The title of this abhaṅga is पाण्डुरंगकांती दियव तेज झलकती। Pāṇḍuraṅgakāntī divya tej jhalakatī/ 10 Kiehnle asserts that both the Jñāneśvarī and the Jñāneśvar Gāthā were influenced by Kannada (1997a:75).
The holy water place is Kāṇada, the deity is Kāṇada, the holy site Paṇḍharī is Kāṇada. Viṭṭhala is Kāṇada, the devotees are Kāṇada…

(Eknāth abhaṅga 323.1–2; SSG 2:123; my translation).

The etymology of the name Viṭṭhala is uncertain. Dhere suggests that each syllable in the name Viṭṭhala may have a philosophical meaning—‘viḍā (through knowledge), ṭhān (ignorant people), lāti (grasp)—so that ‘Viṭṭhala is the one who accepts ignorant people through knowledge’ (2011:6). The name is also often taken to mean ‘one who stands on a brick’, possibly deriving from the Marathi word viṭ ‘brick’ and ṭhal ‘place’ (Crooke 2003:602; Deleury 1994:144–146). However, the name of the deity additionally appears to be connected to the various legends about how and why Viṭṭhala/Viṭhobā came to reside in Pandharpur (Zelliot 1987:28, see 1987b:35, 37; Vaudeville 1996:204; see Dhere 2011).

The sampradāya’s foundational myths go some way towards elucidating the origins of the sampradāya and encapsulating some of its key beliefs and values. The first legend to provide a basis for the connection between Pandharpur, Viṭṭhala and the Vārkarī sampradāya is that of Puṇḍalīk. The muni Puṇḍalīk is mentioned in several inscriptions in Pandharpur: one dated to 1237 C.E. refers to Viṭṭhala and Puṇḍarīka (Puṇḍalīk) being present in Pandharpur, while a Sanskrit copperplate inscription dating to 1249 C.E. refers to Pandharpur as the Puṇḍalīka kṣetra, ‘the sacred site of Puṇḍalīk’ (Vaudeville 1996:202ff; Deleury 1994:33: Ranade 2003:183). These inscriptions may suggest that Puṇḍalīk was a historical personage but almost nothing is known about him apart from what the legends relate.

The earliest account of Puṇḍalīk is probably one of three Sanskrit Pāṇḍuraṅga Māhātmyas (Dhere 2011:18ff; Engblom 1987:12). However, the Vārkarī sampradāya takes the Marathi Pāṇḍuraṅgamāhātmya by Śrīdhar (Śrīdharsvāmī Nājharekar, c.1658–1729) as its authorised version although Mahipati gives an account of Puṇḍalīk in his Bhaktalilāmṛta (BLM 6.86ff; Raeside 1965:83, 85 n.19; Dhere 2011:22, 24; Deleury 1994:144). Śrīdhar describes how Puṇḍalīk neglected his parents as he bestowed all his attention on his wife (Mate 1962:191–93; see Sand 1990:52), thus Śrīdhar portrays Puṇḍalīk as a householder. However, Raeside notes that the Vārkarī sampradāya rejects the notion that Puṇḍalīk had a wife (1965: 85 n.19), a view which coincides with the Bahiṇābāī account. Bahiṇābāī (c.1628–1700) is regarded as the first sant and the first woman to give a full account of Puṇḍalīk in her Puṇḍalīkamāhātmya. Bahiṇābāī, like Śrīdhar, details Puṇḍalīk’s conversion and relates how Nārad tells God about Puṇḍalīk’s extraordinary devotion towards his parents. God comes to see Puṇḍalīk but he is so

11 Also see Eknāth abhaṅga ‘Kāṇada viṭṭhala’ (321.1, SSG 2:123).

12 Zelliot regards this eighteenth-century text as presenting ‘a traditional Brahman view’ as it does not mention the Vārkarīs (1987b:37).
engrossed in washing his parents’ feet that he tosses a brick towards God, which God stands on. Śrīdhar and Mahīpati do not refer to Puṇḍalīk throwing a brick but rather state that God stands on a brick looking at Puṇḍalīk (13.466.1–75; Abbott 1985:148–156, ररर→रर; Deleury 1994:144). One informant explained the use of the brick to me thus: ‘the brick keeps a constant temperature; [it] doesn’t get heated in the sun. There was sand when Viṭṭobā went to Puṇḍalīk so Puṇḍalīk probably just picked up a brick and threw it to him…Puṇḍalīk was probably an agnihotra so thought “I’d better give God something to sit or stand on”’ ( N. Utpat, personal communication, 22nd November 2004).

Dhere notes that Śrīdhar’s Māhātmya is the most popular version of the story in Maharashtra (2011:96), which may be due to the fact that he was a Brahman male and ‘one of the brahman’s most significant roles…is to write Māhātmyas’ according to Feldhaus (2005:58). Furthermore, Śrīdhar’s text fits in with the process of Vedicising Viṭṭhal that Dhere believes began before the rise of the sants (2011:222ff). It is therefore probable that the relative unimportance of Bahinābāi’s account is an indicator of the position of women in the sampradāya. However, the story of Puṇḍalīk is an important one within the Vārkarī sampradāya as it accounts for the presence of God in Pandharpur. The story has further significance as it highlights Puṇḍalīk’s transformation from a disrespectful and abusive son to the epitome of devotion and service, which is a strong householder theme. The story also demonstrates the power of bhakti on Viṭṭhal and portrays him as the ultimate bhakta-vachā. Viṭṭhal loves his bhaktas like a mother loves her children so he is prepared to accept any form of rebuke and is willing to wait—‘on the brick’—forever.¹³ The Vārkarīs regard God as taking form in answer to and in return for the devotion shown by Puṇḍalīk (Deleury 1994:113). The brick is viewed as holy due to the fact that it bears an impression of the divine feet and enjoys Viṭṭhal’s treads, and has thus become a Vārkarī symbol of complete surrender to God (Deleury 1994:145).

Scholars such as Deleury and Tulpule suggest that Viṭṭhal’s origins lie with a cult of a deified hero-stone (Deleury 1994:181; Tulpule 1978:1009–10; Sontheimer 1981; Eaton 2005:137). Viṭṭhal could have been a Kannada hero who died fighting cattle thieves and was commemorated with a hero-stone (bhaḍakhambā or vīragaḷ). A deity may subsequently have been identified with the hero of the memorial stone resulting in Viṭṭhal-worship.¹⁴ Dhere considers whether Viṭṭhal might have been a pastoralist hero-deity because his stance ‘with his hands on his hips’ suggests that the name of the deity might originally

have indicated his form (2011:121–23). However, Dhere concludes that there is insufficient evidence to support the idea the Viṭṭhal was originally a deified hero-stone because the hero-stone Tulpule located opposite the main door of the Pandharpur temple had not been installed there intentionally and because the local folk tradition does not include any memory about that particular hero-stone in relation to Viṭṭhal (2011:126, 138).

There is a third myth which asserts that Kṛṣṇa-Gopāla came from Dvarka to Pandharpur as a wandering cowherd in search of his wife Rukmiṇī, who had abandoned him due to his amorous relationship with Rādhā, and that the couple were eventually reconciled at Viṣṇupad.\(^{15}\) This story, like that of the deified hero, has a pastoral focus which probably stems from the fact that the deś region in which the stories are set is one associated with pastoralism and cultivation (Eaton 2005:137–139; Sontheimer 1989:47–8; see Bhagvat 1974:116ff). Both Dhere and Sontheimer argue that Viṭṭhal was originally the deity of pastoralists like the Gavālis, Dhangars, Gollas and Kurubas and that this deity was subsequently Vaiṣṇavised.\(^{16}\) Significantly, Dhere suggests that the political, social and religious history of the medieval period connects most of the royal families of the region with the Yadu lineage or Yādava clan of pastoralists or cattle herders (2011:246, 120). It is therefore probable that the rural nature of the sampradāya is connected to the pastoral and agrarian nature of the deś region.

In 1237 a significant change occurred around Pandharpur as it came under Yādava control. Kannada had previously been the predominant language but under Yādava rule Marathi rose to prominence as the official language of the kingdom (Vaudeville 1996:201–02; Deleury 1994:30–33; Sontheimer 1989:151). Moreover, the Yādavas paid homage to Viṭṭhal as a temple inscription records the visit of Hemādri, minister to King Rāmacandra, to Pandharpur in 1273 C.E. The inscription details donations given, by Hemādri in 1276 C.E. and Rāmacandra in 1277 C.E., for the maintenance of the temple (Deleury 1994:36ff; see also Sontheimer 1989:151). Dhere suggests that one reason that the Yādava dynasty supported and developed the worship of Viṭṭhal was that they descended from pastoral tribes known collectively as ‘Yādavas’ and consequently Viṭṭhal was the Yādava’s deity (2011:120, 237ff, 246). It was during this period that the Vārkarī sampradāya arose with the composition of songs and texts in Marathi\(^{17}\) by sants like Jñāneśvar and Nāmdev.


\(^{16}\) Dhere 2011:31, 120, 221ff; see Feldhaus 2011:vii, xiii; Sontheimer 1989:47–8, 70–72, 171–72, 190 passim.

\(^{17}\) For more on the Marathi language see Bloch (1970), Pandharipande (1997), and Guha (2008).
The term *sant* in Marathi *sant* means ‘holy’, ‘meritorious’ (Tulpule 1999:704), ‘gentle’ or ‘calm’ (Molesworth 1857:810) and refers to a ‘good’ (Berntsen 1975:151) or ‘holy’ man (Vaze 1911:530; Molesworth 1857:810). The Vārkarī sampradāya is marked by its unique link between *sants* and Viṭṭhal. Tradition maintains that it was not only for the sake of his *bhakta* Puṇḍalīk that Viṭhobā remains waiting on the ‘brick’ but for the sake of all *sants* (Vaudeville 1996:216). The Vārkarī *sants* are revered as the preeminent proponents of *bhakti* and personifications of the Lord’s grace according to Vaudeville (1996:215). Furthermore, within the Vārkarī sampradāya a *sant* is often revered as an *avatāra* of the deity by his or her disciples and descendants but is also regarded as spiritually ‘still present’ and as ‘still living for the good of the community’ according to Deleury (1994:73). Moreover, among the Vārkarīs a *sant* is regarded as an intermediary between the deity and the people:

> When he lived, the ‘santa’ used to go on pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr with the group of his disciples. While on the way he assumed a very special holiness in the eyes of the ordinary Vārkarī, he was God himself walking across the country, giving to everybody the possibility to come near him and receive his blessing. To have a darśana of a ‘santa’ on his way to Paṇḍharpūr was to have a ‘darśana’ of Viṭhobā himself: the ‘santa’ was thus...a special messenger to carry on to God the various requests of the faithful...

(Deleury 1994:73)

However, the term *sant* is not confined to the *sants* of the past or to a known *guru* but also applies to any Vārkarī en route to Paṇḍharpūr; for as Deleury says it is ‘as if the road had somehow the power to sanctify’ (1994:75). Consequently, Engblom observes that the *sants* are almost as important to the vārī as Viṭṭhal himself (1987:13).

In general *sants* are both male and female *bhaktas* who are credited with poetic compositions and are therefore known as *santakavis* or *santakaviyatrīs*. *Sants* were usually householders, rather than Śaivite *sannyāsīs* or Vaiṣṇava *vairāgīs*, and thus eschewed asceticism. *Sants* tended to belong to the lower strata of society and the majority were *śūdras*, although a number were *atiśūdras* and some leading *bhaktas* were Brahman. On the whole the *sants* were poor, uneducated or illiterate and had no access to Brahmanical or orthodox knowledge. Consequently, they were usually unacquainted with Sanskrit, the sacred liturgical language, and expressed themselves in Marathi (Vaudeville 1987:22, 1987a:36–7; Bhagwat 2005:165–166; Lele 1981:109). It is probable that the preoccupation with *grhaṣṭha* religiosity came about later with the programmatic intent of Brahmans like Eknāth and Mahīpati, as I will consider in Chapter Three.

The *sants* associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya were primarily ‘a community of active producers’ according to Lele (1981:107; see Bhagwat 2005:165). The compositions of the Vārkarī *sants*
were largely ‘in the idiom of their caste based occupation’ declares Bhagwat (2005:166; see also Zelliot 1987b:41) and their expression of ‘everyday life practices’ as well as use of Marathi facilitated communication within the community and the dissemination of the bhakti message (Bhagwat 2005:166, 168; Vaudeville 1987:22; Lele 1981:108ff; see Pechilis 1999:27). It is probable that the sants’ low-caste status and practice of traditional occupations was a contributing factor to the rural and householder nature of the Vārkarī tradition. However, with regard to Zelliot’s contention about the leadership of the sampradāya, it is probably best to see it as a mixture of śūdra and Brahman during the medieval period, as I will highlight in Chapter Three.

The literature composed by the sants comprises ‘the real “scriptures”’ of the sampradāya according to Vaudeville (1996:215; 1974:156). Sants are often viewed as contesting ‘Brahmanism, caste hierarchy, untouchability and Islamic orthodoxy’ as Bhagwat suggests (2005:166). However, Pechilis argues that bhakti poets expressed both conformism and dissent (1999:27; see Sharma 1987:24–5) and this is an aspect that my discussions in subsequent chapters will show. The Marathi-speaking sants did not formally reject the authority of the Vedas or the Vedāntic tradition according to Vaudeville (1987:23) and Joshi (2009:371). However, O’Hanlon argues that Tukārām critiqued the ‘equivalence of spiritual merit with high caste status’ but that his critique did not lead to intellectual criticism or a direct challenge of caste hierarchy and the religious pre-eminence of the Brahmans within the sampradāya (2002:61; see Omvedt 2012). Lele argues that ‘the Varkari blueprint for a new and renewed society aimed at revolutionising orthodoxy without seeking to destroy tradition’ (1987:124). Moreover, he argues that Jñāneśvar rejected the transcendental authority of the Vedas and challenged the ‘foundations of Brahmin-Maratha hegemony without advocating self-destructive defiance’ by maintaining that the meaning of the Bhagavadgītā was both eternal and new (1981:111). Following Lele, Eaton contends that the Vārkarī sampradāya was concerned with reform as it sought to reappropriate ideas contained in texts like the Bhagavadgītā (2005:153). It is my contention that the Vārkarī sampradāya was thus discursively constructed as a householder tradition that offered a spiritually egalitarian path open to all and compositions attributed to women were a key element in achieving this objective.

The attitude of the Vārkarī sants towards the deity Viṭṭhal is characterised as prema-bhakti or bhāva-bhakti by Vaudeville (1987:29) due to the fact that the Vārkarī sants tend to approach Viṭṭhal/Viṭhobā as their mother or māyabāpa, and as Viṭhobā and Pandharpur are viewed as their māher ‘maternal home’ (Tulpule 1979:161; Vaudeville 1996:220; Dhere 2011:213–14ff). Dhere argues that the
sants were attracted to a ‘universal mother’ who would ‘take all to herself equally…who would accept everyone…and would save everyone’ as most of the sants came from the lower social orders and were thus seeking egalitarianism (2011:219). However, the Vārkaṛī sampradāya is also identified as advocating advaita bhakti (Joshi 2009:375–76; Pande 2008:46, 2010) while other forms of bhakti such as dveṣa-bhakti (Lipner 1994:317; O’Flaherty 1982:73ff), virodha-bhakti or āṛṭta-bhakti are also found in the compositions attributed to the Vārkaṛī sants. The Vārkaṛī sants propose various sādhana to achieve spiritual liberation but highlight nāmasmarāṇa, bhajan and kīrtan, and satsaṅga or santasaj janāṇcī māndi ‘the company of sants’ as Chapter Five will demonstrate.18

2. The Vārkaṛī sants

Traditionally four male sants are marked out as significant, probably as their texts and compositions in Marathi can be credited with constructing the sampradāya discursively (I develop this argument further in Chapter Three below). However, these sants are also distinguished because they exemplify Zelliot’s contentions that ‘the Saint-poets lived in their households, did their normal daily work, and in most cases their wives and their children joined them in devotion to the God’ (1999b:424), and that ‘leadership from either Śūdra or unorthodox Brahmins may be responsible for Maharashtra’s householder bhaktas’ (1999b:425).

Jñāneśvar (c.1275–1296) is remembered as the author of the Vārkaṛīs’ most popular text the Jñāneśvarī. Jñāneśvar and his siblings lived and travelled together as sannyāsīs as they probably could not marry as their father had been declared an outcaste for returning from his sannyāsī state to his wife and thereafter fathering of four children (Zelliot 1999b:418; 2000:192). Furthermore, Jñāneśvar was probably initiated in the Śaivite yogic tradition of the Nāths by his brother Nivrūṭti.19 Consequently, Zelliot proposes that Jñāneśvar and his siblings may be the ‘exception to the idea of the importance of the household’ (1999b:418). Nāmdev (c.1271–1350) was a śimpī and thus a śūdra householder, who is remembered for composing songs, performing kīrtans, travelling widely and spreading bhakti in central, western and northern India. Eknāth (c. 1533–1599),20 the author of the Eknāthī Bhāgavata, was an educated Brahman householder from Paithan who fraternised with śūdras and because he advocated social equality was thus persecuted by other Brahmans. Tukārām (c.1598—1650) was a Kuṇbī merchant

20 This is the commonly accepted date for Eknāth but 1528/1548–1599/1609 are also proposed (see Zelliot 1987a:91, Ranade 2003:214–215).
from Dehu and therefore a śūdra householder who is remembered for composing abhaṅgas and performing kīrtans but also for being persecuted for taking up religious leadership. Tukārām is regarded as the greatest exponent of Vārkarī philosophy, the last of the great bhakti poets in Marathi and the link between medieval and modern Marathi poetry (see Chitre 1991:xx).21

Typically the only compositions discussed in a Vārkarī kīrtan are those attributed to these four sants (Dadhe 2012: 34; Novetzke 2003:224, 226) as there is an unwritten convention among the Vārkarīs that forbids expatiation on the compositions of any poet-sant that followed Tukārām, although an exception is made for the abhaṅgas attributed to Tukārām’s posthumous disciple Niḷobā (Tulpule 1979:392).22 There are however up to sixty male and female sants associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya and exposition of their deeds and achievements is permissible during a Vārkarī kīrtan (Dadhe 2012:34). A brief survey of the women sants is provided here as their sacred biographies and attributed compositions will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Muktābāī (c. thirteenth century) is remembered as the youngest of four siblings—Nivṛtti, Jhāneśvar and Sopān—who, despite being the children of an outcaste Brahman, became spiritual adepts and poets at an early age. Muktābāī is thought to have spoken words of advice to her brother Jhāneśvar in the tāṭīce abhaṅga and to have challenged the yogi Cāṅgadev and sant Nāmdev. There are forty-two compositions attributed to Mukta in the SSG and many of these use yogic terms associated with the Nāth sampradāya. Mukta is regarded as a mahāyoginī by Bhagwat (2005:171),23 as citkalā rather than a yoginī by Baba Maharaj Satarkar (personal communication, 10th December 2004), the incarnation Ādiśakti (Swami Radhika Anand, personal communication, 28th January 2005; Wadia 2011) or Ādimāyā according to Mahīpati (BVJ 1.98; 8.9, 186; 9.6, 71), as the ‘founder’ woman of the Vārkarīs by Shrotriya (1992:12; see Tulpule 1979:337), and as having ‘a greater spiritual understanding than the other women sants’ according to Bhat (1998).

Goṇāī (c. thirteenth–fourteenth century) is primarily remembered as ‘Mātā Goṇāī’ the mother of sant Nāmdev. The compositions attributed to Goṇāī are in the form of a dialogue with Nāmdev and Viṭṭhal demanding that Nāmdev should return to the householder life instead of singing the praises of God (Gosāvī 2000:256). Like her mother-in-law Rājāī is remembered for suffering due to Nāmdev’s disinterest in the householder life. The compositions attributed to Rājāī—in the form of a dialogue with

21 Dhere suggests that Jhāneśvar belongs to the Nāth sect, Eknāth to the Datta sect and Tukārām to the Caitanya sect (2011:200).
Rukmini (Viṭṭhal’s wife) and with Viṭṭhal and Nāmdev—express anger and distress, often using acerbic language. Aklujkar suggests Goṇāī and Rājāī are examples of disempowered women who try to fulfil their traditional roles but who are hampered by a God-centred man. Consequently they are remembered ‘mainly for their nuisance value to the Sant, or as his stepping stones towards his world-weariness’ (2005:105, 119). These women are portrayed as grhini struggling with sansār and their attributed compositions and life-stories appear to indicate the tension between vairāgya and grhastha.

Nāmdev’s kutumb seems to have included his elder sister Āūbāī, his daughter Limbāī and his daughter-in-law Lāḍāī, each of whom have a single verse in their name. Lāḍāī’s abhaṅga is considered important as it narrates the samādhi of Nāmdev, and possibly other family members, in 1350 C.E. There is a possibility that Nāmdev’s niece, Nāgarī, also formed part of the family group composing devotional poetry. There are some apparently autobiographical poems attributed to Nāgarī and according to Dhere these abhaṅgas are probably the first autobiography by a woman in Marathi (1977; see Shrotriya 1992:65–67).

Janābāī is primarily remembered as the dāsī in Nāmdev’s household: an orphan who became a servant and then a devotee (see Aklujkar 2005:105ff). There are over three hundred poems in Janī’s name many of which detail domestic chores such as grinding and that bring the deity—in feminine form—into the domestic sphere (see Sellergren 1996:219–226; Vanita 1989:58). Mahīpati devotes an entire chapter to Janābāī’s life (BVJ 21, see Appendix C) in which he intertwines miracles from Nāmdev’s life with those of Janābāī thus highlighting the connection between their lives (Novetzke 2008:68ff). Janābāī is considered the foremost santakaviyatrī according to Bhat (1998), possibly because there are more compositions in her name than any other santakaviyatrī. Janābāī is also one of three santakaviyatrīs to have been celebrated in film: Sant Janābāī, a Hindi film directed by Govind B. Ghanekar (1949), the Marathi film directed by Raju Phulkar (2003) and the Marathi film directed by Rajesh Limkar (2011).

Soyarābāī (c. fourteenth century) is repeatedly described as ‘Cokhā’s Mahārī’ in the compositions attributed to her although the poems hardly refer to her husband Cokhāmeḷā (Zelliot 2005b:160). The sixty-two Soyarā compositions in the SSG often refer to her low-caste status (Zelliot 2010:82). There are also numerous references to Nirmaḷā, Soyarābāī’s sister-in-law, in the Soyarā abhaṅgas. The poems attributed to Nirmaḷā refer to her brother Cokhāmeḷā as her guide but the compositions do not mention Nirmaḷā’s husband Banka, although he is thought to have been Soyarā’s brother (Zelliot 2005b:161). Significantly, the poems attributed to Soyarā and Nirmaḷā contain almost no
household images but do refer to the burden of **sansār** (Zelliot 2010:83, 2005b:163–164). There is another female Mahār poet identified as ‘Bhāgū Mahārīṇ’ in the five compositions attributed to her. Shrotriya suggests Bhāgū was a contemporary of Cokhāmeḷā (1992:78) so it is possible that her inclusion in the Vārkarī corpus, as with Soyarā and Nirmaḷā, it due to her status as a Mahār (Kher 1979:62).

Kānhopātrā (c. early fourteenth or mid-fifteenth century) is remembered as the beautiful daughter of a courtesan who, rather than continue in her mother’s profession, became a Viṭṭhal-bhakta. There are about thirty *abhaṅgas* attributed to Kānhopātrā and Bhat suggests these ‘can be sung easily as she was a singer’ (1998) although only a few are well-known today. Like Janābāī, Kānhopātrā has been immortalised in film: *Sant Kānhopātrā* (1931), *Kānhopātrā* (1937) directed by Bhalaji Pendharkar, and *Sant Kānhopātrā* (1950) directed by D. S. Ambapkar.

Bhāgūbāī, who has one or two compositions in her name, may be Tukārām’s daughter Bhāgīvathī by his second wife Āvalī/Jijābāī. Tukārām died while his children were very young after which they may have lived with their grandparents but nothing is really known about Bhāgū. The compositions attributed to Bhāgū appear in the SSG but she is not, to my knowledge, remembered elsewhere.

Bahiṇābāī (c. seventeenth century) is remembered particularly for her (attributed) spiritual autobiography, which details her marriage, aged four or five, to a thirty-year-old Brahman widower. The biography describes the verbal and physical abuse to which Bahiṇā/Bahiṇī was subjected by her husband, who despised her inclination towards *bhakti* and her discipleship of the *śūdra sant* Tukārām.

Sakhūbāī (c. seventeenth century) is remembered as a great Viṭṭhal-bhakta who suffered abuse at the hands of her mother-in-law and her husband but who is miraculously saved by Viṭṭhal. The story of Sakhū, like those of Bahiṇābāī and Viṭṭhābāī, present the experiences of housewives who are abused and suffer the torments of **sansār**. Sakhū’s life has also been commemorated in numerous films: the silent film *Sant Sakhūbāī* (1922) by the Hindustan Cinema Company; the 1932 film by Prabhat Films; a Hindi and Marathi film called *Sant Sakhū* (1941) directed by V.G. Damle, Sheik Fallelal and Raja Nene;24 *Santa Sakhūbāī* (1944) a Hindi film directed by G.V. Sane, the Marathi Kay Ga Sakhū directed by Shankarroa Chavan (1982), the Marathi *Sant Sakhū* directed by Rajesh Limkar (2000) and Subhash Sharma’s *Ashi*

24 The film has been described as a ‘family melodrama’ as Sakhū is saved from domestic oppression by her devotion. Pauwels says the message ‘seems to be that self-sacrifice and long-suffering submission to patriarchal structures, if coupled with intense devotion, will pay off in the end’ (2007:177n7).
Hoti Sant Sakhā (2013). H.N. Apte also wrote a play called Sant Sakhūbāī, which was first staged as a musical drama in 1911 (Deshpande 1959:278; Chandvankar 2007:43).

Śantābāī was a Carmakār/Cāmbhār woman who is honoured with a samādhi at the Carmakār dharmaśālā in Pandharpur. Zelliot and Mokashi-Punekar note that Śantābāī’s story relates that her devotion to Viṭṭhal persisted despite opposition from her family: ‘locked in the house at night, she was still able to spend the night in adoration of Vithoba…and when this miracle was recognized, she became free of family pressure and is acknowledged as a saint’ (2005:40; see also Zelliot 2005:171–72). Kadam notes that there is a ‘monastery’ dedicated to ‘Saint Santabai’ as part of the circumambulation of Pandharpur (2012:99) and Deleury refers to the ‘Santābai pālkhi’, which is not part of the official list of pālkhīs as Śantābāī is one of the sants to have taken samādhi at Pandharpur and therefore her pādukās do not travel (1960:80). This is all the information currently available about Śantābāī as she not a widely remembered sant and so she will not be discussed further.

Gaṅgabāī (c.1599–1665 C.E.) is said to have been widowed at the age of sixteen after which she spent her time at bhajan-kīrtan and singing discourses of Jñāneśvar’s works at night to large audiences. Gaṅgabāī is said to have met Gaibināth who initiated her into the Nāth panth and gave her the name Guptanāth (the compositions attributed to her are in the name ‘Gupta’). Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth is believed to have considered Jñāneśvar as her guru and it is this tenuous connection that links Gaṅgā with the Vārkarī sampradāya (Shrotriya 1992:46–48) as none of her attributed compositions appear in the SSG and Mahīpati does not record her life. From this sketch of the kaviyatrīs and bhaktas it is clear that most of the women were grhinī with the exception of Muktābāī, Janābāī and Kānhopātrā, which makes the familial nature of the Vārkarī sampradāya clear as many of the sants were part of family groups that formed the wider community of sants.

More suggests that the Vārkarīs are a kāl with sants like Jñāneśvar and Tukārām as ancestors, and that this extended family includes the kuladevatā, kuladharmā and kulācāra (1998:209). Tukārām credits the earlier sants with introducing the kuladevatā, Viṭṭhal: kufē he kuḷadevi / kelī ṭhāvī santānī{//1// (abhaṅga 1363, SSG 2:776).25 While Nivrūtināth says: Nitya harikathā nitya nāmāvaḷī / vaiṣṇavānce kuḷī dhanya janma {//1// (abhaṅga 10, SSG 1:33):26 ‘A birth in the Vaiṣṇava [Vārkarī] family is a blessed event for in this family the names and legends of the Lord are continuously recited’. More points out that

25 कुळींची हे कुळदेवी। केळी ठावी संतानी।
26 नित्य हारिकथा नित्य नामावली। वैष्णवाचे कुळीं धन्य जन्म।
the Vārkarīs believe that the sants recognised the real nature of Viṭṭhal and revealed it to the people, who accepted him as their kuladevatā. Consequently, the sants are regarded as forming the Vārkarī kul (1998:210; Baba Maharaj Satarkar, personal communication, 10th December 2004). Tukārām describes the kuladharma of the Vārkarīs as āmha vaiṣṇavāncā kuḷadharma kuḷīcā / viśvāsa nāmācā ekā bhāve//1// ‘Our Vaiṣṇava [Vārkarī] family’s particular practice is our continual faith in the name [of Viṭṭhal]’ (abhaṅga 3134, SSG 2:963).27 Furthermore, More argues that the most important kulācāra in a Vārkarī family is the vāri to Pandharpur (1998:210).

3. The pilgrimage to Pandharpur

The Vārkarī sants are venerated by the sampradāya and are part of the reason that pilgrims undertake the vāri across the deś. Pandharpur is regarded as ‘the city of saints’, the place where all the sants and their followers come together. It is the anticipation of this meeting with the sants and the sight of Viṭṭhal on his ‘brick’ that motivates pilgrims to undertake their arduous journey according to Vaudeville (1996:216; see also Tulpule 1979:329; Zelliot 1987b:35; Pechilis 1999:36; personal communication, Dāyanoba Utpat, 21st November 2004). The tradition of the vāri dates to at least the thirteenth century if not earlier (Engblom 1987:15, 18; Deleury 1994:36) and the first mention of the vāri appears in the Hebbaḷḷī (Dharwad district, Karnataka) stone inscription of Kṛṣṇa Yādava in 1248 (Tulpule 1979:328n.99). Eaton argues that by the early seventeenth century the Vārkarī pilgrimage tradition encompassed the Marathi-speaking deś and had been transformed into ‘a broad-based social movement’ by sants like Tukārām who expressed ‘in ordinary language the socio-religious aspiration of non-Brahmins’ (2005:136–137, 152; see also Pechilis 1999:36, 47). The fact that the vāri encompassed the deś by the seventeenth century suggests that the case for the householder path had been won by those with programmatic intent.

To become a Vārkarī one undergoes a simple ceremony (Deleury 1994:4; Morje 1992:163). The candidate presents him/herself, with a Vārkarī friend, before the mahārāj or guru of one of the diṇḍīs and expresses a desire to join.28 The candidate must bring a tulasīmāḷā with them. The diṇḍī mahārāj tells the candidate to place the tulasīmāḷā on a sacred book—usually the Īśāneśvarī, Eknāthī Bhāgavata, or Tukārāma Gāthā—and then places the tulasīmāḷā around the initiate’s neck (Morje 1992:163). Thus, Vārkarīs are also known as māḷkarīs ‘one with a garland’ (Deleury 1994:2) and the sampradāya is

27 आहां वैणावांचा कुळधम[ कुळींचा।वैस्व साधन नामाचा एका भावे।
28 The diṇḍī leader is also called a ‘vinākarī buva’ according to Manjul (2008:413). The term vinākarī could connote one who bears as litter from viṇa ‘to bear a litter’ (Berntsen 1982:140) or could connote one who carries the viṇā. The term buvā is an ‘honorific suffix added to man’s name; religious leader’ (Berntsen 1982:105).
sometimes referred to as the mālkari panth (Morje 1992:163; Pande 2008:46, 2010). The key feature of being a Vārkarī is to commit to performing the vārī at least once or twice a year in the company of the sants and other Vārkarīs (Engblom 1987:16). However, the vārī is an obligation freely undertaken and is thus what defines a Vārkarī (Deleury 1994:103; Engblom 1987:24). This fits with Pechilis’ understanding of pilgrimage as ‘the preeminent example of the public demonstration of one’s individual decision and commitment to participate in worship (1999:50) as being a Vārkarī means going on pilgrimage.

The vārī to Pandharpur can be undertaken by Vārkarīs up to four times a year—for the ekādaśī of Caitra, Āṣāḍh, Kārttik and Māgh. However, the āṣāḍhī vārī is considered the most important and is the pilgrimage undertaken by the majority of Vārkarīs (Engblom 1987:2, 16; Joshi 2009:371; Deleury 1994:73; Wagle 1987:58). In Caitra the Vārkarīs go to Pandharpur to celebrate guḍhīpāḍavā and rāmanavamī by having darśan of Viṭṭhal (Gupta 2006:988–999; Encyclopaedia of Observances 2007). The four months of the monsoon between Āṣāḍh and Kārttik are considered holy (cāturmāsya). The āṣāḍhī vārī culminates on devasayanī ekādaśī, when Viṭṭhal ‘goes to sleep’ until he is awoken on the śukla ekādaśī in Kārttik. Many Vārkarīs remain in Pandharpur during cāturmāsya and return home after the kārttikī vārī (‘Pandharpur Pilgrimage’). The kārttikī vārī celebrates the samādhi of Jñāneśvar in Alandi. Vārkarīs go to Alandi for the vadya ekādaśī and then walk to Pandharpur for Viṭṭhal’s awakening on the prabodhinī ekādaśī. It is during this vārī that the Nāmdev pālkhī leaves Pandharpur—the only time it does so—and travels to Alandi to honour Jñāneśvar (Novetzke 2003:12, 2005:135n.40, 2008:84, 2009:218–19; Pande 2008:506, 2010; Bahirat 1961:14; Vaudeville 1996:217). There is also a vārī in Māgh, lasting for the fortnight between the śuddha pratipadā and pūrṇimā, which celebrates the Bhakta Puṇḍalīk Utsava ‘Festival of the Devotee Puṇḍalīk’ (Sanagala 2012).

The āṣāḍhī vārī allows the Vārkarīs to meet and honour the sants as well as glorify Viṭṭhobā (Vaudeville 1996:216; Tulpule 1979:329). During the pilgrimage all the members of the sampradāya, the living as well as the dead, are said to gather at the feet of Viṭṭhal (Deleury 1994:73). The most sacred part of the Vārkarī is the feet as they bear the burden of the journey towards Viṭṭhal (Deleury 1994:75–76; Stanley 1992:80; personal communication, Baba Maharaj Satarkar, 10th December 2004). Stanley suggests that the feet are significant in the Vārkarī context because the bhakta moves to express bhakti

29 There are four kinds of Vārkarīs according to Stanley: those who go to Pandharpur and Alandi once a year, usually to Pandharpur in Āṣāḍh and to Alandi in Kārttik; those who go to Pandharpur and Alandi twice a year; those who go to Pandharpur and Alandi quarterly, and those who go to Pandharpur and Alandi monthly called mahinemāha Vārkarīs. These Vārkarīs are greatly respected and it appears that their numbers are growing (1992:83–4.n12; see More 1998:206 and Dhyānoba Utpat in Chapter 2 below).
while temples and deities are static: Viṭhobā ‘stands’ on a brick in his temple in Pandharpur (1992:80). Similarly, Hawley regards the brick as Viṭhobā’s *vahan*, in the same way that the bull Nandī is Śiva’s vehicle, but while Nandi makes Śiva mobile the brick makes Viṭhobā immobile (1992:83n.9). 30 Stanley’s argument is based on Ramanujan’s discussion of the opposition between standing (*sthāvara*) and moving (*jaṅgama*) at the heart of Vīraśaivism in which Ramanujan identifies the Jaṅgama as ‘a religious man who has renounced world and home, moving from village to village, representing god to the devoted, a god incarnate’ (1973:21). Consequently, it might be possible to view the Vārkarīs undertaking the vārī as temporary renouncers (something that would again underline the householder nature of the *sampradāya*) but this is not the accepted view.

It is quite common to see Vārkarīs greeting each other by touching each other’s feet irrespective of caste. However, Kiehnle argues that this act must be understood as one that occurs within the traditional structure of society because Vārkarīs only touch each other’s feet within the context of the vārī or when they meet as Vārkarīs (1997b:4–5). Consequently, Kiehnle believes that Turner’s definition of ‘ideological communitas’—‘an attempt to describe the external and visible effects…of an inward experience of existential communitas, and to spell out the optimal social conditions under which such experiences might be expected to flourish and multiply’ (2008:34)—is applicable to the Vārkarīs in this instance:

> In fact, the Vārkarī communitas meets traditional society carefully and respectfully. In so far as the *bhaktas* are Vārkarīs, ‘those undertaking the vārī…’, and perform the ensuing activities, they belong to the communitas. They are then in a sort of liminal context as defined by Turner…as temporary *sannyāsīs*, in a ritual outside society. Yet, in ‘normal life’ they belong to their respective castes and abide by the rules of brahmanized Hinduism. So a *brāhmaṇ* Vārkarī will touch the feet of a *kuṇbī* (farmer) when he recognises him as a co-Vārkarī, but never marry his daughter to him.

(Kiehnle 1997b:5)

Engblom regards the vārī as a journey that conveys individuals ‘from everyday profane environments to a sacred place’ (1987:28; see Morinis 1984). Furthermore, Engblom believes that Turner’s use of the vārī to exemplify the ‘liminality’ of pilgrimage (1973; 1974), where ‘normative communitas’ governs the social relations of the pilgrims during the vārī, is apposite as it recognises that *bhakti* lies at the heart of the vārī (1987:29). However, Stanley argues that Turner saw the Vārkarī’s promise (to perform the vārī) as ‘so unconditional’ that it took the Vārkarī out of the structure of ‘normative communitas’ and, wrongly, into that of spontaneous or ‘existential communitas’ (1992:79; see Turner 1973:193). According to Stanley the Vārkarī experience is one of normative communitas as the

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vārī has organisational structures such as the ‘order of the march, prescribed stopping times and places, and sometimes elaborate eating arrangements’ (1992:79; see Karve 1988; see Plates 15, 22–25, 28–29). However, it seems that Turner is aware that while pilgrimages reduce structural divisions, limit the constraints of status and role and remove the pilgrim to another type of time, communitas does not abolish social and cultural structures (1973:221). Turner is aware that distinctions of caste are maintained on the vārī, as members of a dīṇḍī tend to belong to a single jātī, and accepts that the vārī ‘remains within an established religious system’ (1973:195, 220–221). Turner exemplifies his point by referring to Deleury’s explanation for the single-caste dīṇḍī:

this is not in opposition to the ideal….it is on the contrary a solution of the problem of the distinction of castes and of their life together. The idea of a group composed of individuals coming from various castes with different cultures, traditions and customs could be an artificial juxtaposition and not a true community: this idea can exist only in the minds of idealists who have lost contact with human and social reality. The Vārkarī solution is a happy compromise between the reality of the distinction between castes and the ideal of a social community to unite them.

(Deleury 1994:105)

In my view, this point about an ideal social community is significant as it suggests the formation of the Vārkarī tradition as a householder path in which caste and gender equality are regarded as an ideal rather than a social reality. Furthermore, Deleury’s statement highlights the notion of compromise within the sampradāya which connects with Lele’s and Eaton’s argument, outlined above, that the Vārkarīs were concerned with reforming orthodoxy and Brahman-Maratha hegemony while maintaining traditional views.

A dīṇḍī leader from Alandi, Muktabai Maharaj, told me that some of her male followers do not want to touch her feet as it makes them feel inferior. Muktabai Maharaj said that she felt responsible for doing something about this and showing people the strength of women (personal communication, Alandi, 25th March 2005). Thus, it is notable that while Vārkarīs are usually willing to touch each other’s feet when they meet as Vārkarīs, gender appears to be an impediment to this egalitarian practice in some contexts. It may be that Muktabai Maharaj is suffering the repercussions of being a woman in a position of authority as there are almost no authoritative women in the Vārkarī sampradāya apart from a few contemporary female kīrtankārīs: Shantabai Maharaj Deshmuk; Bhagavati Maharaj Satarkar, the daughter of the famous kīrtankār Babamaharaj Satarkar;31 and Miratai Mirikar (Schultz 2013:125). 32 Dnyanoba

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31 V.N. Utpat informed me that no one had been willing to allow a woman to perform kīrtan until he permitted the first kīrtan by Bhagavati in the Pandharpur temple—c. 2000 according to Dnyanoba Utpat (personal communication, 21st November 2004)—and that because she had performed in Pandharpur the people in Alandi allowed Bhagavati to perform there too (V.N. Utpat, personal communication, 22nd November 2004). There are clips of Bhagwati Maharaj Satarkar performing kīrtan on YouTube (see babamaharajsatarkar 2011).
Utpat also mentioned Gitabai Sarnikar as a contemporary kīrtankār and sant (personal communication, 21st November 2004). However, Muktabai Maharaj’s experience may also be related to the fact that she is a single woman and a sanvyāsi (like her namesake). This all suggests that despite the sampradāya’s avowal of spiritual egalitarianism patriarchy and casteism remain in operation as confirmed by one of my informants when he said ‘the Vārkarīs are affected by class and caste while the Rāmadāsīs were ahead of their time [with women heading maṭhs]’ (personal communication, V.N. Utpat, 22nd November 2004).

The feet of the Vārkarīs en route to Pandharpur are regarded as an object of veneration as I discovered when I got back from Pandharpur and was told jokingly that the family should touch my feet. Stanley observes that spectators take darśan of the feet of the pilgrims, the horses and the pādukās: ‘Moreover, the dust from the pilgrims’ feet, as well as the dust from the horses’ feet stepped on in the ringan ritual, is regarded as holy and is either mixed with, or applied to, the forehead in place of Vithoba’s holy powder (bukka)’ (Stanley 1992:80). 33 The feet of the sants are venerated in the form of pādukās, usually rendered in silver, which are carried or driven on a pālkhī by the sant’s followers (Deleury 1994; Engblom 1987:16; Eaton 2005:152). Thus, the vārī—in particular the āṣāḍhī vārī—is also known as the ‘pālkhī festival’. The term pālkhī refers not only to the palanquin but also ‘the organised procession that accompanies it’ states Engblom (1987:17). The most renowned pālkhīs are those of Jñāneśvar from Alandi and Tukārām from Dehu, which travel a distance of about 150 miles to Pandharpur over a period of about fifteen days. These two pālkhīs attract the largest number of followers and the sants combined names—‘Dīyānoba-Tukārām’ or ‘Dīyānoba-māuli-Tukārām’—are chanted by Vārkarīs en-route to Pandharpur (Engblom 1987:16; Vaudeville 1996:216–217; Chandawarkar 2005).

Tukārām is credited with transforming the pilgrimage to Pandharpur from an informal and personal event into a communal experience—he is said to have been followed by 1,400 devotees—and after Tukārām’s death his brother Kānholā and his son Nārāyaṇ continued the tradition. Nārāyaṇ (c.1650–1723) is said to have taken the silver Tukārām pādukās and mask on a pālkhī from Dehu to Alandi and included the Jñāneśvar-pādukā on the pālkhī. The Jñāneśvar-Tukārām pālkhī then travelled to Pandharpur from about 1685 to 1830, until a dispute among Tukārām’s descendants led to two separate pālkhīs being established (Eaton 2005:152; ‘Pandharpur Wari’; ‘Pandharpur Palkhi’; Tulpule 1979:237n.94; Glushkova 2014:124n.3). In 1832 Haibaṭrāv/Haibatrao Baba Arphalkar (d.1836) started a separate pālkhī for sant

32 The late Gayabai Manmadkar and Mirabai Shirkar were followers of Gadge Maharaj and, like the Muslim sant and dīnī leader Jaytunbi Maharaj, were only marginally Vārkarī in their kīrtan style according to Schultz (2013:196n.3).
33 Lucia King’s film ‘The Warkari Cycle’ shows Vārkarīs picking up the soil where the horses have trod (2011).
Jñāneśvar, in order to avoid conflict affecting the whole vārī tradition (‘Pandharpur Wari’). Haibatrao Baba was a saradār of Shinde in Satara but he gave up his profession after being saved from some robbers, which he ascribed to Jñāneśvar’s grace. Subsequently, he moved to Alandi and lived a life of devotion (Kiehnle 1997a:22; Deleury 1994:18). Haibatrao Baba reorganised the āśādhī vārī by providing a pālkhī, a bullock cart to put it on, and all the accessories such as tents, carts and horses. Moreover, Haibatrao Baba established the first official diṇḍīs and set their order within the pālkhī procession, as well as establishing the route and the liturgy of the Jñāneśvar pālkhī (Kiehnle 1997b:22, 1983:195–212; Kosambi 1996: lxiv, n.12; ‘Pandharpur Wari’; Deleury 1994: 18; Engblom 1987:18; Danđekar 1980; personal communication, V.N. Utpat, 22nd November 2004; Glushkova 2014:110). In recognition of his devotion and contribution to the Vārkarī sampradāya Haibatrao Baba is now buried under the first step at the Jñāneśvar mandir in Alandi (Engblom 1987:18). Haibatrao Baba’s revival of the vārī is regarded as having led to the Vārkarī sampradāya becoming a mass movement in the nineteenth century according to Laine (2003:108n.11; see Eaton 2005:136–7, 152). Clearly the programmatic intent to construct the sampradāya as a householder tradition had succeeded. Nevertheless, the organisation of the vārī continued after Haibatrao Baba, as Deleury makes clear with reference to Neurgaonkar’s call in 1952 for trees to be planted to protect the Vārkarīs (1994:109). There are still demands for the state Government to provide better amenities for the Vārkarīs (see ‘Govt apathy’ 2012) although there is much charitable giving, for example: the Rotary club of West Pune states that for its Vārkarī sevā it distributes thousands of food packets to Vārkarīs (‘Incidental’ 2014) and people serve the Vārkarīs tea, bananas, dosas and pohe (Sahni 2013).

Deleury suggests that the organisation of the Jñāneśvar pālkhī inspired the commemoration of other sants with pālkhīs (1994:18), although the majority of today’s pālkhīs were established in the twentieth century (Eaton 2005:152 n.55; Deleury 1994:18; Engblom 1987:19). Most of the pālkhīs come from Maharashtra or from Marathi-speaking communities and honour sants associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya. The only santakaviyatrī to be commemorated with a pālkhī is Muktābāī for whom there are at least three pālkhīs from the Jalgaon district where her samādhi is located (personal communication, 28th December 2004).

34 At one point Deleury seems to suggest that the Vārkarī sampradāya lacks organisation: ‘There is no centralised organisation, no hierarchy, no general councils, no credo, no sacraments. It is a spiritual movement, or more exactly a body of spiritual groups gathered around spiritual Gurus’. However, Deleury is making the point that the sampradāya should be understood not as a ‘church’ but as ‘a body of spiritual groups gathered around spiritual Gurus’ (1994:4).

35 One of my informants, Anand Joshi from Belgaum, used to lead a diṇḍī from Hallur in Karnataka—via Darur, Athani, Balligeri, Waifal (Maharashtra), Gherdi, Laxmi Dahlwadi and Kasegaon—to Pandharpur (personal communication, 28th December 2004).
V.N. Utpat, 22nd November 2004).\textsuperscript{36} There is a pālkhī from Muktañagar which was formerly Edalābād (diliptiwari98jalgaon 2009), from Mehun near Bhusawal (Rajendran 2013; see Deleury 1994:76, Plate 30) and from Jalgaon (EJalgaon.com, 11th June 2013).\textsuperscript{37} There was a suggestion that there is a Kānhopātrā dīṇḍī from Maṅgalvedha as the dīṇḍīs of the santakaviyatrīs ‘come from their own place, their birthplace’ (Personal communication, Anand Joshi, 28th December 2004) but I found no evidence of this dīṇḍī. Currently about forty-three pālkhīs travel to Pandharpur for the Āṣāḍh vārī (‘Palkhi Festival’ 2010) although in the past the number may have been as high as fifty (Kosambi 1962:131).\textsuperscript{38} There is no longer a pālkhī associated with Cokhāmeḷā since the Nirmaḷā and Banka pālkhīs from Mehunpur lapsed due to the Mahārs’ rejection of Hinduism and mass conversion to Buddhism in 1956 that was led by Ambedkar (Zelliot 2000a:190; 1978a:89, 96ff; 1996). The majority of Vārkarīs travel to Pandharpur independently for the āṣāḍhī vārī and only join the pālkhīs for the procession from Warkhari to Pandharpur on the eve of the āṣāḍhī ekādaśī (Engblom 1987:19; Kosambi 1962). The number of Vārkarīs undertaking the āṣāḍhī vārī seems to depend on the completion of the ‘initial sowing’ according to Brahme (2010) and ranges from five hundred thousand to a million (‘Pandharpur Wari’; Shedde 2002; Savaikar 2010).\textsuperscript{39}

The pālkhīs are divided into dīṇḍīs, which number between thirty and several hundred members often connected by family, being from the same village, or following the same guru (Engblom 1987:20; Grewal 2006:154; Deleury 1994:83; Vaudeville 1996:216). Dattatreya Rasne said that the Kāsārsamāj dīṇḍī (number 125), honouring Mahātmākāsār, consisted of about twenty family members (personal communication, 3rd January 2005) while Vimalabai, a servant in Baner, said her dīṇḍī (the Nandedkar dīṇḍī) was made up of about three hundred people from eighteen villages (personal communication, 20th December 2004). However, Eaton notes that dīṇḍīs tend to be ‘differentiated by caste and ranked hierarchically’ with the oldest dīṇḍīs nearest the pālkhī (2005:152–53; see also Engblom 1987:20; Deleury 1994:83). Furthermore, a dīṇḍī may itself be divided into caste units even though such a division is contrary to the egalitarian teachings of the sants but the practice seems largely based on social custom and differences in diet between the castes (Karve 1988:153ff; Deleury 1994:104–5; Ramaswamy 2007:199). However, commensality does occur within dīṇḍīs: Vimalabai stated that in the Nandekar dīṇḍī

\textsuperscript{36} Deleury also suggests that there is a Śantābāī pālkhī, which resides in Pandharpur permanently (1994:80).

\textsuperscript{37} The ‘Muktabai Lord Rama Palakhi’, organised by the Lord Rama Temple Trust, was leaving old Jalgaon at 5pm on the 22nd June 2013 to arrive in Pandharpur on the eve of Āṣāḍhī ekādaśī and part of the journey was to be accomplished bare foot (EJalgaon.com 11th June 2013).

\textsuperscript{38} Deleury (1960: Plate 40) lists twenty-eight pālkhīs while Ahirrāv (1997:38) lists forty-nine (Feldhaus 2011:viii, 297 n.3).

\textsuperscript{39} Dnyanoba Utpat told me that 5–600,000 Vārkarīs take part in the kārttikī vārī (personal communication, 21st November 2004).
everyone eats together (personal communication, 20th December 2004). The number of Vārkarīs has been increasing over recent years and thus new ḍīṇḍīs have been organised. For example, in 2009 a new ḍīṇḍī was organised from Mulgaon-Bicholim that included about 250 Vārkarīs in 2010 at a cost of about ₹ 550 per Vārkarī (Savaikar 2010).40

According to Zelliot, the Vārkarī saṃpradāya advocates religious egalitarianism but ‘practises neither religious nor social equality’ (2000a:187) as the division of a ḍīṇḍī into caste units indicates. The Viṭhobā temple in Pandharpur was a stronghold of Hindu orthodoxy and was thus inaccessible to ‘untouchables’ (Dalits) until 1947 when Sane Guruji—Pāṇḍhurāṅga Sadāśiva Sāne (1899–1950)—undertook a fast unto death to gain them admittance to the temple. Staunch bhaktas who were Mahārs were not allowed beyond the samāḍhi of Cokhāmelā at the foot of the steps leading into the Viṭhobā temple but due to Sane Guruji’s actions the temple priests eventually capitulated and admittance to the temple was achieved.41

However, Manjul states that before the temple priests capitulated they used the Rām Rājiya Pariṣad and orthodox leaders such as Pandit Bhagwanshastri Dharurkar, Pandit Gopalshastri Gore and Dhundamaharaj to campaign against the entry of ‘untouchables’ to the temple and employed public meetings, seminars and fasts to oppose Sane Guruji (2005:185).42 Manjul recalls that the passing of the new law prompted a ‘very peculiar act’: on the 10th November 1947 a group of local orthodox people led by Dharurkar performed a mahāpūjā to remove the divinity of the Viṭṭhal-mūrti and store it in a copper pot. This act was undertaken to make plain that the devotees were only worshipping a stone statue. Furthermore, the pot containing Viṭṭhobā’s divinity was removed to Dharurkar’s home since when his home has functioned as an orthodox Viṭṭhobā temple (Manjul 2005:186–87; C. Naik 2012). The ritual of storing Viṭṭhal’s divinity in a copper pot was repeated in 1997 by people who continue to believe that the temple has been polluted by the act which lifted the restrictions placed on former ‘untouchables’. Significantly, this ‘divinity removal’ has not altered the devotion of Viṭṭhal’s followers as millions of Vārkarīs go to the temple each year. While the orthodox do not enter the temple at Paṇḍharpūr, they do worship at the Viṭṭhal temples in Dehū (connected with sant Tukārām) and Āḷandī (connected with sant

40 There was also a ḍīṇḍić led by a Muslim/Sufi woman, Jaitunbī, (whom I met 12th July 2006) who died in 2010 (see Mokashi 1987:219–222; Ramaswamy 1997:199, 207; TNN July 8th 2010).
42 The Rām Rājiya Pariṣad (Organisation of Rāma’s Kingdom) was a North Indian, conservative Hindu political party instituted by Swami Karpati (1905–1980) but which was reduced to a marginal presence within a dozen years of its founding in 1947 (Lochtefeld 2002:563).
Jāneśvar) despite the fact that both these temples have been open to everyone for some time, a paradox Manjul finds inexplicable (2005:187). However, the paradox reinforces the notion of two discrete elements in the worship of Viṭṭhobā as Deleury states: ‘the ritualistic worship of the baдвās’, the deśastha Brahmans who have been responsible for the administration of the temple in Pandharpur and collecting the offerings brought by pilgrims since the time of the Adilshahi dynasty (late fifteenth century), and ‘the spiritual worship patronised by the Vārkarīs’ who have no role in the administration of the temple (1994:64, 72; personal communications Dnyanoba Utpat, 21st November 2004 and V.N. Utpat, 22nd November 2004).

It is worth noting that the temple entry satyāgraha was viewed by some as a pointless action (Rege 2006:144) and was undertaken after most Mahārs had left Hinduism for Buddhism according to Zelliot (1978:82). Nonetheless, the quest for social and political reforms continued to affect the Vārkarī sampradāya. In the 1970s communities of former ‘untouchables’ agitated for better treatment and increased participation within the sampradāya. One significant change that occurred was that the Cāmbhār diṇḍī to Rohidās—the north Indian sant—won the right to a new position within the Jāneśvar pālkhī (Engblom 1987:7; see Ramaswamy 2007:199). The route and order of precedence for the diṇḍīs on pilgrimage was, according to my informant Mr Nene, fixed by the British and there was a great deal of conflict over which diṇḍī had priority. The Cāmbhār’s pālkhī used to be placed in a denigrated position in front of the riderless horse representing Jāneśvar. A group of Cāmbhārs came to the Mahātma Phule Samatā Pratiṣṭhān (Equality Foundation) in Pune for help over the issue of segregation. The Foundation adopted the slogan ‘Horses in front, diṇḍīs behind’ in support of the Cāmbhārs and after a long dispute and a legal case it was agreed that the Cāmbhārs could walk behind the horses. While the Cāmbhārs are now the lead diṇḍī they are still segregated from the Brahman diṇḍī who travel at the rear of the Jāneśvar pālkhī. However, it appears that the Cāmbhārs are satisfied with the arrangement (Nene, Personal communication, 18th June 2006; see also Zelliot and Mokashi-Punekar 2005:40–41; Mokashi-Punekar 2005:136).

The diṇḍīs provide for the needs of their members (for a fee) en route to Paṇḍharpūr and provide a daily programme to engage the Vārkarī in bhakti (Karve 1988:145ff; Engblom 1987:20, 25; Mokashi 1987:97–98,108–09; see Plates 24–25). Vimalabai said that she pays about ₹ 1000 for the whole trip.

43 There were also those who maintained that the deity’s state of purity was ovaḷe rather than sovaḷe as all (non-Dalit) devotees could embrace the Viṭṭhal-mūrti until 1873, when a man threw a rock at the mūrti and broke one of its legs, after which devotees could put their heads on the deity’s feet (Dhere 2011:113, 222). Furthermore, there are those who regard the image as broken and therefore unfit for worship (Dhere 2011:113).
which covers food, a man to cook and the truck to transport luggage (personal communication, 20th December 2004). One of my informants, a former dindi leader and kirtankār from Karnataka, describes a dindi thus:

The first thing is that there should be vina, with four strings, and one who takes the vina on his shoulders is called the vina karī, so first of all there should be a vina karī and then there should be a talkī and those who sing abhangas and other people to call ‘Pundalik Hari Viṭṭhal…Tukā’. When they sing abhangas they should be accompanied with mrdanga, in the group of talkī they should be accompanied by mrdanga. At the very beginning, at the start of the dindi there should be a jhenekārī and the flag has to be in the red or maroon colour. That is the symbol that the dindi is coming…and all the ladies and kids and all are following the vina karī not in the queue, but it is like the military, they have discipline. When they walk they have slogans to call Pāṇḍuraṅga, they sing abhangas and all that the dindi is formed in this way. In all the dindis there need not be a pālkhī, when they carry a pālkhī—with a photo of the guru or some moti of Viṭṭhal—the pālkhī is secondary, if you have a tradition you can carry a pālkhī but if you carry a pālkhī there should be at least forty people to look after that. It is heavy and after every 100–200 steps they should change the people [carrying the pālkhī]. It is not compulsory [to have a pālkhī] but the group together is called a dindi.

(Anand Joshi, personal communication, 28th December 2004)

The dindis have a strict schedule for their departure, halts and arrival (see Plates 22–23 for the schedule of the Jñāneśvar pālkhī and Plate 28 for both the Tukārām and Jñāneśvar pālkhī). Moreover, the pālkhīs and dindis tend to follow a traditional route—as I observed during the āṣāḍhī vārī in June 2006—and villagers know when to expect them. It was explained to me that ‘There is one who keeps on going ahead of you, informing people of that particular place where the dindi is going to stay and he goes on informing that…people are coming so prepare the tea’ (Anand Joshi, personal communication, 28th December 2004). Traditionally, the Vārkarīs ate what was offered to them (Nemade 1981:122) but these days tend to cook meals for themselves (Karve 1988; Engblom 1987:21–22). At night the dindi holds kirtans, bhajans or gāruḍs, which the villagers or townspeople also attend and which impart the spiritual message of the vārī. As the dindi traverses the country-side people join the procession (Nemade 1981:122; Deleury 1994:86ff) or just take darśan of the pādukās (Deleury 1994:85).

The pālkhīs all gather at Warkhari on the ninth day of the bright fortnight of Āṣāḍh and then at about noon on the tenth day the pālkhīs start towards Pandharpur so as to arrive on the eve of the sūkla ekādaśī. The vārī culminates when the final pālkhī, the Jñāneśvar pālkhī, has entered Pandharpur (Deleury 1994:87; Engblom 1987:19). The pālkhīs usually go to the temple consecrated to their sant and the Vārkarīs try to have darśan of Puṇḍalik (Engblom 1987:21) before finding lodging with friends, on the forecourt of a shop or an empty lot (personal observation, 21st November 2004) or in a dharmāśālā or maṭh. Muktabai Maharaj told me that she has two ashrams in Pandharpur ‘one on the outskirts for the dindi and one near the mandir. The maṭh close to the temple [is where] the old people can stay as they don’t have the stamina to walk from the other maṭh [to town]’ (Personal communication, 18th June 2006).
The Vārkarīs are now left to their own devices as the pālkhī organisation only applies to the journey to Pandharpur (Engblom 1987:21). Typically, on the ekādaśīs of Āṣāḍh and Kārttik a Vārkarī will fast and try to have darśan of Viṭṭhal in the temple (Deleury 1994:71; 71) but there are long queues so many pilgrims are satisfied if they just have kaḷaśa-darśan once they have bathed in the river (Bandekar 2010; Vimalabai, personal communication, 20th December 2004). The Vārkarīs stay in Pandharpur for up to five days—during which time the regular temple routine ceases in order to enable the pilgrims to have darśan of Viṭṭhal day and night (Deleury 1994:71)—until pūrṇīmā and they then return home individually. The Jñānēśvar pālkhī travels back to Alandi, accompanied by a core group of Vārkarīs, in half the time so as to be back in Alandi for the dark ekādaśī when the Jñānēśvar pādukās are reinstalled in the temple (Engblom 1987:22; Muktabai Belgaonkar, Personal communication, 18th June 2006). Stanley notes that the Jñānēśvar pālkhī is the only one for which there is a ‘ritual return’ and that this may be due to Jñānēśvar being regarded as an avatāra of Viṭhobā by some Vārkarīs. It seems that other Vārkarīs regard the return of the Jñānēśvar pālkhī to Alandi as ‘representative of the return of all the sants to their respective places’ and that a small number of Vārkarīs may perform the return of Tukārām to Dehu or Eknāth to Paithan (1992:87n.33). The Vārkarī has thus fulfilled his or her vow and accomplished his or her sādhana (Engblom 1987:24–25) but as Nemade argues the vārī has also provides the labouring classes with an opportunity to travel and have a change of scene, and allows women a respite from housework (1981:122). Nemade’s view ties in with that of Vimalabai who said she went on the vārī because, ‘it made me happy, made my mind happy. We’ve been doing the menial jobs of the house for a whole year and then you can’t go anywhere so then one wants to go for the vārī and then you get away from your family, your children and you forget about the family for those twenty days and chant the name of māuli’ (Vimalabai, personal communication, 20th December 2004). Vimalabai’s view of the vārī as a holiday from domestic service and a break from sansār may go some way to explaining why there are more women travelling with vārī than ever before (Sabnis 2011).

4. Contemporary perspectives: caste, class and social vision

In the contemporary period the majority of Vārkarīs are ordinary householders who are farmers (kuṇbī-Marāṭhā), Brahman landlords, petty officers, craftsmen or traders. Those Vārkarīs that come from towns tend to be shopkeepers and traders and are fewer in number than the rural Vārkarīs with the urban middle

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44 Fasting on the eleventh day of both fortinights of every month is regarded as a kulācāra in a Vārkarī family (More 1998:210).
classes constituting the minority of Vārkarīs. However, the number of Vārkarīs from the urban centres such as Mumbai and Pune is growing. This may be due to the influence of kīrtankārs like Baba Maharaj Satarkar (a Brahman) whose kīrtons and bhajans have been recorded and distributed widely (Jones 2009:151). Many urbanites join the vārī for one or two days, walking from Alandi to Pune or even further (Sawant 2009; TNN 2011). One woman from Pune whom I interviewed did the vārī from Alandi to Pandharpur by doing it in stages each Āṣāḍh over a twelve year period (Mrs D., Personal communication, 14th October 2004). However, the Vārkarī sampradāya is by and large rural and non-Brahman (Zelliot and Berntsen 1988: xvii; Lele 1981:104; see Schultz 2013:81, 83). Vimala, a Lingāyat from Umarga with five acres of farmland told me she did the vārī ‘for God, for the body and for the god within our body’; Mrs Salunkhe, a Maratha, said they had ‘farmland at home in Satara’ and Subhadra Jadhave (from near Satara) was a Maratha (Personal communications, Alandi, 10th December 2004).

The tradition is considered ‘liberal and inclusive’ by Nemade as it has respected Brahmans, Muslims and ‘untouchables’ (1981:114) while Kosambi argues that the Vārkarī sampradāya has spiritually transcended Brahmanical caste and gender hierarchies (2000:2). However, neither Maharashtrian society nor the Vārkarī sampradāya is really socially equal according to Engblom (1987:7), as the cases of the Mahārs, Cāmbhārs and ‘god in a copper pot’ outlined above indicate. One might imagine that the abhaṅgas attributed to ‘untouchable’ sants like Cokhāmeḷā would have a profound effect on the Dalit movement but Zelliot argues that while this was the case in the past Cokhāmeḷā has been rejected by contemporary Mahārs and Dalits in Maharashtra for three particular reasons. Firstly, Cokhāmeḷā accepted his ‘untouchable’ status as a consequence of sin in a previous birth, a karmic reasoning for ‘untouchability’ which is rejected by contemporary Dalits. Secondly, the Vārkarī sampradāya maintains that it is committed to religious equality but neither religious nor social equality are practiced in reality, as the dīṇḍīs of ‘untouchables’ and the dharmaśālās or maṭhīs where pilgrims stay in Pandharpur tend to operate on a caste basis. Thirdly, Cokhāmeḷā has been rejected because the Vārkarī sampradāya lacked ‘social vision’ and has failed to advocate equality (2000a:187–188). There seems to be a feeling that the Vārkarī sampradāya and the deity Viṭṭhal are blind to the Dalits and that they, just like Cokhāmeḷā in his lifetime, remain unaccepted (Zelliot 2000a:191; see Rege 2006:61, 181; Bhagwat

2005:177). Consequently, the meaning that the Vārkarī sants and sampradāya have in the lives of contemporary Dalits must not be assumed to be operational.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to say that there is a total lack of ‘social vision’ among contemporary Vārkarīs as diṇḍīs in 2012 promoted the fight against corruption, advocated ‘saving the girl child’ and curtailing child labour (‘Warkari Wave in town’). Furthermore, the tiffin delivery network of Mumbai dabbawallas— the Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Charity Trust (NMTBSCT)—is supported by a moral code and a vision of shared values that Roncaglia traces back to the Vārkarī sampradāya (2013:37, 88, 91). Additionally, according to Zelliot (1987b:50), one significant change to the sampradāya during the twentieth century was ‘the presence of the genuinely radical saint from within the tradition’. Gadge Mahārāj (1876–1956) was from a poor parīṭ family in the Vidarbha region and became a sannyāśī when he was about thirty to travel across Maharashtra for the next fifty years preaching a message of devotion and social reform. Gadge Mahārāj used the metaphors and idioms that were familiar and stirring to rural Maharashtrians in his kīrtan to preach abstention from alcohol, anti-untouchability and brotherhood. Gadge Mahārāj—whose name derives from his single possession, the gāḍge—is regarded by many as a sant who possessed the spirit of Nāmdev and Tukārām and who assured people that Maharashtra will continue to produce sants in keeping with the Vārkarī sampradāya (Zelliot 1987b:48–50; Dandekar 1988:223–250; Schultz 2013:83). The examples of Gadge Mahārāj, the Mumbai dabbawallas and some Vārkarī diṇḍīs demonstrate that there is a degree of social vision among many associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya but that this has not adequately dealt with the inequities of caste which continue to this day. The limited social vision of the sampradāya highlights that its message is one of spiritual rather than social egalitarianism and appears to support Lele’s view that the sampradāya sought to reform orthodoxy without destroying tradition (1987:124).

From the brief survey I have provided here of the sampradāya, it appears that the reasons proposed by Zelliot for the householder character of the Vārkarī sampradāya are credible. The majority of the women remembered by the Vārkarī tradition were grhini who are regarded as having struggled with sansār, which is indicative of the householder life. Jñāneśvar and his siblings were probably outcaste Brahmans living as sannyāśīs even if they could not take formal vows of renunciation. The siblings and Eknāth, with his unconventional attitudes towards low-caste persons, can be taken to represent the ‘unorthodox Brahmin’ leadership. Nāmdev, Cokhāmeḷā, Tukārām and numerous other sants fit with Zelliot’s notion of ‘śūdra leadership’. However, further assessment of whether the ‘leadership from
either Śūdra or unorthodox Brahmins may be most responsible for Maharashtra’s householder bhaktas’ is necessary and I will undertake this in terms of my discussion in Chapter Three of the discursive construction of the tradition. There are also several possible explanations for the rural nature of the Vārkarī sampradāya (Zelliot 1999b:423–24): Viṭṭhal’s connection to pastoralists and shepherds (Dhere 2011; Sontheimer 1989) and the fact that most Vārkarīs are agriculturalists (Nemade 1981); the low-caste status and practice of traditional occupations by most sants (Lele 1981; Bhagwat 2005); the route of the vārī across the deś (Eaton 2005; 137ff) to converge on Paṇḍharpūr, a rural town connected with the local agrarian society and economy, which was earlier supervised by Brahmans (Deleury 1994:23ff). While the tradition of the Nāth yogis was influential in Maharashtra (see Vaudeville 1987; Zelliot 1987; White 1996) it is really the only example of a sannyāsī tradition in the region that influenced the early Vārkarī sants. Jñāneśvar clearly had connections with the Nāths and it is probable that Nāmdev and Eknāth had some association with the tradition (see Chapter Three below). However, both Nāmdev and Eknāth were householders, however reluctantly, which suggests that the argument for a householder path triumphed. The Nāth connection will be explored further in Chapter Three in relation to the discursive formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya. However, my ethnographic research will be presented first in order to explore the position of the santakaviyatris in the contemporary tradition and ascertain whether the successful construction of the sampradāya as a householder path means that female figures now have a diminished presence.
In September 2004 I went to India to undertake several months of fieldwork in Maharashtra so as to experience and observe the important religious sites and practices of the Vārkarīs first-hand, and to explore the role of the santakaviyatrīs in the contemporary tradition. This chapter therefore relates my observations and experiences of key sites like Alandi and Pandharpur, practices like the vārī, as well as some of my encounters and interviews with men and women in order to begin investigating the role and status of the medieval santakaviyatrīs in the contemporary Vārkarī tradition inasmuch as these relate to the function and purpose of gender attribution in the discursive formation of the sampradāya as a householder tradition.

My first formal interview was with Acarya Vyas (now Swami Govind Giriji Maharaj), who described himself as an ‘ardent Jhāneśvar devotee’ and said: ‘people don’t know much about these women sants. In the Vārkarī tradition men and women [were/are] treated equally and people honour female and male sants equally’. The connection between the householder nature of the sampradāya and the number of women sants within the Vārkarī context was also brought to my attention by Vyas as he said, ‘equality is one reason [why there are so many women sants] while the other reason was that the sants were householders and therefore there were families, which accounts for the mix of women and men sants’. Vyas mentioned ‘Janābāī in Nāmdev’s family’ to exemplify his point (personal communication, 16th October 2004). Likewise, Sumantai Tade, an ascetic who had done the vārī for years, suggested that ‘there was no difference between men and women’ in the homes of sants as ‘they were on the same level’. However, Sumantai suggested that the reason that not many women sants were recognised was due to the ‘limitations at home’ (Personal communication, 6th December 2004).

The second official interview was with Vidyut Bhagwat, the sociologist and director of the Women’s Studies’ Centre at the University of Pune. Bhagwat’s view was that all the ‘big shots’ in the Vārkarī tradition are male (personal communication, 27th October 2004) and that scholars like Sadanand More and Dilip Chitre also have a patriarchal approach as they examine the male sants in detail but ignore female disciples and sants (personal communication, 29th January 2005). Bhagwat was keen that we discover the caste of the practitioners we interviewed as she thought that Brahman women have a very
different outlook from Dalit women. Bhagwat said that the ‘heritage of Vārkarī’ gives dignity to a community and that one is upgraded by being a Vārkarī. For Bhagwat Brahman women are rebelling by being Vārkarīs whether they choose the tradition individually or whether it is a family tradition.

Bhagwat’s response to my question about whether the santakaviyatrīs are emulated was an unequivocal ‘no’. According to Bhagwat, there is no emulation of the santakaviyatrīs because ‘resistant voices and/or women are written out’ rather the focus is on performing bhakti within a household context:

Household/spirituality is the only message and Brahmanism underscores it because Brahmanism is still dominant. The balance between the household and other worldliness is what is being advocated because this is the perception of what the women sants did. The only ‘emulation’ that exists is that of behaving as a proper wife, a pure and chaste women, and doing ‘other worldly’ things in the context of caste [and home].

(Vidyut Bhagwat, personal communication, 27th October 2004)

Bhagwat continued that Janābāī is not really read by Brahman women, who [if they read about the Vārkarī women at all] only read about Muktābāī because they like the mystical element of her work. They talk about Muktābāī as a mystic, who was trained [and] denied womanly pleasures….The fact that she had male disciples and was a mahāyoginī means Muktābāī is now ‘pure’ (personal communication, 27th October 2004).

The first time I went to any of the religious sites associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya I went to Alandi with my research assistant Kasturi Dadhe, her mother, and a friend by car. The temple in Alandi consecrates the samādhi of sant Jñāneśvar, one of the most important figures in the sampradāya. We left our shoes behind in the car and walked barefoot towards the temple stopping off to purchase offerings of garlands, marigold flower heads, several bags of small round white sweets and some tulasi leaves. We entered the temple through the main entrance by passing over a brass-covered step with silver inlay in the centre, commemorating Haibatrao Baba (Haibathaba), which people touched in a gesture of respect. We carried on through a narrow corridor and entranceway into the main temple complex, which we circumnavigated in a clockwise direction (Plate 1).
First we saw the tree around which Jñāneśvar’s mother Rukmiṇī is said to have walked one thousand times while waiting for her husband to return from being a sannyāsī. There is a tradition of women walking around the tree with a ball of string asking for their husbands to be blessed with longevity as Rukmiṇī’s act is considered a kind of vow that women try to emulate. This act appears to counter Bhagwat’s view that there is no emulation of women sants but Rukmiṇī, Jñāneśvar’s mother, is not considered a sant so it is possible that she offers a means by which women can be encouraged to perform domestic votive rites (see McGee 1991). Nonetheless, this act signals the sampradāya’s advocation of the householder path.

We then visited the area dedicated to sant Eknāth where pādukās are set into a wall. The story I was told that day related that Eknāth came to the site of Jñāneśvar’s samādhi at Alandi as he had had a ‘message’ from Jñāneśvar which said that Jñāneśvar needed Eknāth to help people understand the Jñāneśvarī as there had been a great deal of confusion and misinterpretation of the text since Jñāneśvar had completed the work (c. 1296). However, Mahīpati recounts that Eknāth had a dream while he was visiting Alandi in which Jñāneśvar told him that ‘the roots of the ajjāna tree have reached my neck. Dig into my tomb and push the root aside’. Mahīpati asserts that Eknāth did as instructed, made his namaskāra to Jñāneśvar, moved the root aside and resealed the tomb (BLM 19.100–105; Abbott 1927:135).
The entrance to the garbhagrha was through a chamber with something similar to an airport security line. We squeezed through two narrow doorways and entered the outer chamber. Around the edge of the chamber was a queue of people waiting to enter the garbhagrha as well as people kneeling and prostrating in front of the doorway. We entered the garbhagrha containing images of the deity Viṭṭhal and his wife Rukmiṇī (Plate 10) and a small black stone edifice marking Jñāneśvar’s sañjīvan samādhi under which devotees believe that Jñāneśvar is still sitting (Plate 11). We gave our tray containing the offerings to the priest on our left; we each knelt and placed our foreheads on the stone. The priests were performing abhiṣek of the stone with water and milk so I ended up with a rather damp forehead. We took our prasāda and, having consumed our own portions, distributed the rest among the crowd outside.

After we left the garbhagrha I stood at the back of the antechamber and looked around while my companions performed namaskāra. A large number of children and elderly people entered the garbhagrha and nearby an older lady was sitting cross-legged reading what appeared to be a booklet with large print text, which was probably the Jñāneśvarī. Next door was a room where mainly older people were studying and reading the Jñāneśvarī while sitting on mats. The impression was of saffron-coloured turbans, bags and texts, as saffron is considered to be the colour of fire and is therefore auspicious (see Plate 5). The chamber had a hammered silver frame around the doorway to the garbhagrha including a Gaṇeśa at the top which many people touched as they entered or exited the sanctum. Even though it was not a festival day there was a steady stream of people. Leaving the antechamber we moved to the next area which houses the Nandī bull that is revered as the place where Jñāneśvar is said to have entered his tomb (Plate 2). The story of Jñāneśvar and his samādhi are presented on a stone plaque outside the Nandī shrine, while adjacent to the Nandī is the enclosed shrine of sant Muktābāī (Plate 3) at which a woman was making an offering (Plate 4).
Plate 2: Nandi bull, Alandi
Plate 3: Muktābāī shrine, Alandi

Plate 4: Woman making an offering at the Muktābāī shrine, Alandi
We continued round the complex visiting a meditation room and a tree that is thought to have been at the site since the time of Jñāneśvar’s samādhi. Next to the tree was an area where individuals were praying and reading from the Jñāneśvarī that was inscribed on marble tablets on the wall (Plate 5), which highlights the Jñāneśvarī’s importance for the Vārkarī sampradāya (see below).

Plate 5: Vārkarīs reading the Jñāneśvarī, Alandi

After leaving the temple we visited the Vedic school run by Acarya Vyas and met those who prepare and distribute food for fifty students at the Vārkarī School. We met the senior man at the school and observed the examination of some the students who hoped to become kīrtankārs (Plate 6). The turbaned man facing the audience was being examined on his ability to give the discourse, his use of abhaṅgas, the relevance of the abhaṅgas to the topic of the discourse and his use of music. I was informed that the idea was that he did not sing too many abhaṅgas but focussed on the discourse. The rest of the group is largely formed of ṭāḷakarīs and the vīṇā player on the right of the group.
Plate 6: Examination of Vārkarī kīrtankārs, the Vārkarī school, Alandi (29th October 2004)

The Vārkarī Śikṣaṇa Sanisthān (‘Vārkarī Teaching Institution’) was started by Jog Maharaj in 1917 and now has an entrance exam for students willing to undertake four years of training to be kīrtankārs.¹ The school is regarded by Lele as a place where lower caste males are ‘trained to return to the villages in order to propagate Brahmanic interpretations of saint poetry’ (1989:44). The school only admits male students, which fits with the Dīyoba Utpat’s explanation that the reason there is a lack of female Vārkarī kīrtankārs and sants is that women have not been given the freedom to study (personal communication, 21st November 2004). Sumantai Tade said ‘from the times of āstras and purānas women always had a secondary position in society and a woman had to keep her limits…What is also true is that the importance that is given to a male has not been given to a female and that cannot be denied’ (personal communication, 28th February 2005). Muktabai Maharaj Belgaonkar said something almost identical: ‘from ancient times women have been proving themselves but men don’t want to acknowledge it because women are looked up to when they have proved themselves and they don’t want that…A woman who is considered to be of a weaker strength and who is on a progressive path is definitely something to appreciate. We [women] should never stand back’. Muktabai Maharaj, a disciple of Gayabai Manmadkar and Dada Maharaj Manmadkar, also related how she challenges gender discrimination:

When I do kīrtan and they say that ‘you, a woman, is not supposed to do kīrtan, sing bhajans.’ I say ‘you are here because of a woman, who gave birth to you, who are you to deny her? Has a man ever become pregnant’…I keep fighting with these men [saying] you don’t have any right to tell me ‘don’t do parāvācā, don’t do kīrtan’. I will do what I want to. I always ask them which authorities

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¹ Ashwin 2011; Dighe 2011; see Mokashi 1987:208 and Dadhe 2012:10–11ff.
have said women should not perform kīrtan. Even Vyas did not say that women should not perform kīrtan.

(Personal communications, Muktabai Maharaj Belgaonkar, 7th and 25th March 2005)

Tade and Belgaonkar’s views support Bhagwat’s idea that resistant voices and/or women are obscured in the Vārkarī sampradāya.

The first time that I visited Pandharapur was for the kārtikī ekādaśī. We headed out of Pune on the Solapur road following the route of the Jhāneśvar pālkī from Alandi. We drove up the five mile Dive ghāṭ, which the Vārkarīs walk as part of the Pune-Saswad stretch of the route. We stopped for breakfast at the Cāṅgadev mandir at Saswad (Plate 7) before continuing our journey to Pandharapur through Jejuri with its hilltop Kānhobā temple (see King 2011).

Plate 7: Nandī, Cāṅgadev temple, Saswad

About thirty miles out from Pandharapur we began to see more and more Vārkarīs on the road, identifiable by their white clothing: turbaned men walking, men on bicycles, groups of men and women with jāl and vīṇās singing. We drove through Warkhari, where all the dindīs gather before entering Pandharapur during the āṣāḍhī vārī and drove into town. I was told that the crowd was nothing compared to the āṣāḍhī vārī as the Vārkarīs are not obliged to walk to Pandharapur for the kārtikī vārī. After making various arrangements for the next day via our hotel room phone we met with Dnyanoba Utpat—an expert on lāvaṇī and a Rukmiṇī temple trustee—for an interview (21st November 2004).
That evening we went down to the river, which was running through a small central channel. The exposed riverbed provides a site for the Vârkarîs to camp and to erect pavilions in which to hold kîrtans. The area is like a small town fair as there are ice-cream carts and snack sellers lining the main route through the pavilions. There were people lying on tarpaulins, plastic sheets or mats and bodies wrapped from head to foot all trying to sleep. There were members of different dîndîs eating their evening meals and I commented on men serving a group of women as this seemed unusual. My friends told me that normally the women of the group would do the cooking, serve the men and then eat themselves. However, I later discovered some dîndîs employ a cook for the whole group so that the Vârkarîs can just concentrate on the walking.

The official publication of the biography of a well-known Vârkarî kîrtankâr, Baba Maharaj Satarkar, was taking place. The Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra was speaking on the dais, while the police tried to make the large crowd sit down. The Râmâdâsîs and Kabîr-panthîs were both performing kîrtans nearby. The fact that the Râmâdâsîs were present is interesting because there is generally considered to be a rift between the Râmâdâsîs and the Vârkarîs. Marutibua Ramdasi, the head of the Samartha Seva Mandir Trust at Sajjangad (Satara), asserted that the Vârkarî sampradâya is largely made up of low-caste people who lack education while the Samartha sampradâya is predominantly formed of high-caste, educated people who can cope with revolutionary ideas, like women in positions of authority. Marutibua Ramdasi said that the Samartha and the Vârkarî sampradâyas both had the goal of spiritual development in common but despite this the two communities are moving further apart (personal communication, 22nd November 2004).

The day of the kârttiê ekâdaśî began with a bath and breakfast of sâbûdâna vadâs so that we followed the ‘fast’. One of our hosts for the day, Suresh Utpat—a trustee of the Rukmiñî temple—came to the hotel with our passes for the temple so that we could avoid the long queues to have Viṭṭhal-darśan that afternoon. When our rickshaws could go no further, we walked along holding hands so we would not get separated in the crowd (Plates 8 and 9) then squeezed between two corrugated iron stalls and up a flight of metal stairs in order to meet V.N. Utpat, a senior trustee of the Rukmiñî temple, at his house on the south side of the temple. Utpat said that the main female sants are Sakhûbâî, Muktâbâî, Janâbâî, Bahinâbâî and Kânhopâtrâ as these women achieved complexities and a proper form of poetry that were not just sporadic compositions. Utpat suggested that Bahinâbâî’s compositions are to be revered due to their quantity while Muktâbâî’s few abhaṅgas are to be revered due to ‘the level she explored’. Utpat also
implied that women sants like Goṇāī and Lāḍāī are less important because they were not as revolutionary as the others. We asked why the compositions of Muktābāī and Bahiṇābāī are not acknowledged and Utpat replied: ‘Some sects within the sampradāya are so caste rigid that they won’t use any other abhaṅga apart from Tukārām in the kīrtan; not even other male saints, forget women saints’. This raised the issue of caste so Utpat continued ‘There are some diṇḍīs that have the rule of sofā [where no one touches anyone else] and this is not in the Vārkarī sampradāya but it’s still practised by some groups during the vārī…The Brahman-Maratha war is still going on, even politically…despite all this the principles/philosophy of the Vārkarī sampradāya is really revolutionary’ (N. Utpat, personal communication, 22nd November 2004).

Plate 8: Vārkarīs in Paṇḍharpūr for kārttikī ekādaśī

In the crowd outside Utpat’s house there were Vārkarīs performing a pradaksinā of the temple, including a woman performing lōṭāṅgaṇa, which they conducted in a clock-wise direction around the temple beginning from the main eastern entrance of the temple (Plate 17). The pilgrims then passed under the bridge that connects the ‘queue’ building, with its spiral walkway, to the temple (see Plate 8). Dnyānoba Utpat told us that ‘now almost 30,000 people a day want to touch the feet [of Viṭṭhal], therefore it takes about thirty-six hours for darśan’ during Kārttik, which is why the queue building had to be built (personal communication, 21st November 2004). One female informant told us the queue for darśan can take three to four days during Āṣāḍh and related how offerings of tulasīmāḷās were
immediately thrown into a heap in the corner by the priests and how the police tried to push people away: ‘I spoke to the police guy saying “You dare not touch me. I will just touch the feet of Pāṇḍuraṅga for just a second but don’t touch me at all”. He said “OK I won’t touch you just take darśan” and afterwards he asked if the darśan was good. You don’t feel good when you’ve walked for days and then you want to take darśan [and you see how the devotees are treated]. I don’t like it’” (personal communication, 3rd January 2005).

Pressing through the crowd we went up a small lane to the northwest of the temple and entered a house, through a low carved wooden door, where we left our shoes and bags. Barefoot and hand-in-hand we walked down the lane with our heads covered, escorted by Suresh Utpat, and entered the ticket-holders entranceway, thus circumventing the queue. On entering the temple we climbed a steep flight of wooden stairs with a rather wobbly iron railing, turned left, went across a piece of flat roof, and descended a flight of stairs holding onto the railing on our right as we were all packed tightly in the stairwell. At the bottom of the stairs, on the southern side of the temple, we passed the taraṭī tree associated with Kānhopātrā and a niche with her icon. The stream of people kept pushing us forward in the one-way system as we passed icons of sants and deities. We entered the outer hall of the Viṭṭhal shrine with its carved pillars of dark stone but there was hardly time to take it all in as we jostled our way round the sides of the hall. We entered the garbhagrha on the right-hand side passing through two doorways decorated with silver. I just managed to touch the feet of Viṭṭhal and handed over my donation to the priest on the left of the deity before moving out: darśan was over rapidly.

Leaving the Viṭṭhal shrine we joined the queue to have darśan of Rukmiṇī, passing up some marble stairs and entering the garbhagrha, touching the goddess’ feet and giving our money. We were given a blessing by the priest and prasāda—a coconut and garland in my case—by an official whom Utpat had asked to escort us around and who met us at various strategic locations. The priests and police were all very curious that there was a foreigner in their midst and kept asking questions. We all kept performing namaskāra: putting our hands together and bowing before touching their feet with our hands. We left the temple by the rear exit (Plate 18) before making our way to the front of the temple, where we squeezed through the crowd, to see the steps dedicated to Nāmdev and the Cokhāmeḷā shrine. All this was done with bare feet and my friends saying ‘just don’t look down’!

Back at Suresh Utpat’s house we washed our feet before climbing the narrow walled-in stairs to the first floor. Later, I learnt that the old vāḍā had been sub-divided so that members of the Utpat family
could all have their own homes. Our hosts fed us sābūdāṇā, yoghurt with fruit and fresh grated coconut—what was laughingly referred to as ‘fast’ food—before we once again joined the crowd and went on our way. Among the Vārkarīs were women carrying tulasīvṛndāvana on their heads, or something that symbolises the tulasī, as the tulasī is said to act as a means of purification. Vimalabai said there are a number of women who travel with the Jhānēśvar pālkhī carrying the tulasīvṛndāvana during the āṣadhī vārī because ‘it is required to walk with Māuli’s pālkhī [and that] when the pādukā are given a wash the water mustn’t be thrown away so you give it to the tulasī and the tulasī is offered to the pādukās’ (personal communication 20th December 2004). The kārttikī ekādaśī is also the day of the tulasī vivāha—the marriage of Tulasī and Viṭṭhal—that marks the beginning of the marriage season. The purchase of a Viṭṭhal and Rukmiṇī brass statuette concluded my first visit to Pandharpur.

Plate 9: Vārkarīs in Pandharpur for the kārttikī ekādaśī

The kārttikī vārī was celebrated in Alandi over three days and my research assistant, her mother, and I travelled by car from Pune arriving just after dusk had fallen on the final day. We crawled into town as the roads were full of people, passed the big wheel of a fun fair as well as all kinds of stalls, and then across the new bridge. We picked our way down a dingy lane and entered an uncompleted building that turned out to be the maṭh of Baba Maharaj Satarkar, the kīrtankār and diṇḍī leader.

Satarkar said that the sants are those who are ‘aloof from all the vices’ for this is how being a sant begins while sant-hood concludes with sāksātkār (personal communication, 10th December 2004). I said, ‘earlier you talked about how the sants were in families, most of the saints from the past had family lives’. Satarkar replied:
Yes, yes, family or without family, that is not an important question. Tukārām Mahārāj was a family man, Nāmdev Mahārāj was a family man; Jñāneśvar Mahārāj, though not married, was a family man [as he had brothers and sisters, so nobody is without family. A person may not marry but all his śiṣya and sampradāya are his family. Family does not mean kith and kin, it is all the people who come to gather, appreciate the goodness of each other that is family….

(partial communication, Baba Maharaj Satarkar, 10th December 2004)

I then asked ‘Is it acceptable to say that Muktābāī was the “founder” woman in the Vārkarī sampradāya?’ and he replied ‘She was the beginning…Janābāī was also there….’ ‘What would you say about the idea that Muktāī was a mahāyoginī? ’ Of course, she was citkalā; she was also a bhakta more than a yoginī…”

(Personal communication, 10th December 2004). This statement made me wonder if Satarkar wanted to diminish Muktābāī’s Śaivite associations and stress her connections with the householder Vārkarīs.

‘Do you think that Janābāī suffered distress in Nāmdev’s family?’ I asked. Baba Maharaj replied: ‘That is not distress…she talks to almighty God. She uses bad words to him…Other people think that there is no God but when she gives him bad words…her bad words are more important than our scriptures because He is listening to her…He used to come to her house daily, she had very good relation [with Him]…” (Personal communication, 10th December 2004). Later, in an interview with Bhagwat, we raised the issue of why certain men were of the view that there was no distress in the lives of women when the abhaṅgas attributed to sants like Janābāī suggest otherwise. Bhagwat declared:

…the very fact that they are visible or given credit of writing [these men] feel that it proves that there was no injustice. They feel that if there was any cruelty then they [female sant-poets] would have been invisible-ised or erased but if they are not erased and are applauded in certain ways then that is justice, what else does a woman want? …Similarly we have a universal truth making capacity through Janābāī, Muktābāī and Bahinābāī, and we…have to separate them from mainstreamers who are glossing over the struggle of these women and deifying them.

(Vidyut Bhagwat, personal communication, 29th January 2005)

After the interview with Baba Maharaj we joined some of the women who made up Baba Maharaj’s diṇḍī and I asked them about the vārī. The first woman we spoke to was called Vimala, an agriculturalist from Umarga. Vimala had been going on the kārttikī vārī for eighteen years, although she did sometimes go on the āṣāḍhī vārī. Vimala explained that she went on the vārī ‘for God, for the body and for the god within our body’. When asked if there had been any opposition to her going on the vārī we discovered that Vimala was a Lingāyat and that her family had opposed her going on pilgrimage. Vimala said that she was ‘almost addicted’ to going on the vārī because ‘paramārtha is very appealing’. Vimala said that she knew some abhaṅgas by heart and could recite some of the well-known ślokaś from the Jñāneśvarī but that mainly she learnt through listening. Vimala, like other low class women we interviewed, had little or no education and thus learnt the songs, spiritual texts and the spiritual and
philosophical teachings of the sampradāya aurally: Salunkhe said ‘why do you need to read and write, you do not need it for anything’. When asked whether Vimala saw a change in herself after going on the vārī she said that the sorrow she had felt in her material life had lessened by going on the vārī: ‘When you live at home you have to do this or that, all the menial jobs but after joining the vārī this [attachment] becomes a little less. Nobody complains anymore’ (personal communications, 10th December 2004).

Another woman later expressed a similar idea: ‘when we go on the pāyāvarī…we don’t think of home, we’re contented. We never get bored. However much one walks one feels fresh, rejuvenated for fifteen days…’ (Personal communication, 3rd January 2005).

One elderly lady, Subhadra Jadhav, told us that she cooked for the Baba Mahārāj diṇḍī although her own diṇḍī was the Veṇṇāsvāmī diṇḍī that was established at the turn of the millennium. The diṇḍī goes from Theur, near Pune, and follows the Tukārām pālkhī with about five hundred people. ‘Is it easy for you to leave your family, home and children?’ we asked. ‘Yes, they take care of everything now…once you leave you do not look back. You should not worry about anything, get up in the morning; take [a] bath in the river and start walking’. Another woman continued saying, ‘we start at six in the morning, have a small break for breakfast and then reach [Dehu] at eight thirty and then we all wait for the vārī, there are so many people who wait the whole year for the vārī [to come]’ (personal communications, 10th December 2004).

There were two young women in the diṇḍī: Satarkar’s granddaughter and her friend Bhagirathi both of whom who had only been going on the vārī for three years. Bhagirathi said that she had previously walked from Warkhari to Pandharpur. We asked her if she ‘stood behind Bhagavati [Satarkar’s daughter] during a kīrtan and Bhagirathi replied ‘Yes I do and I sing [in the chorus] too’. Satarkar’s granddaughter said that she walked all the way from Alandi to Pandharpur for both the āṣāḍhī and kārttikī vārīs: ‘We bunk college, we do not mind, there is nothing more important than God. We enjoy it actually…because for [the last] two years many youngsters are coming into this…actually in our place there are more youngsters than old people. It is not only enjoyment; it is spiritual enjoyment’. When asked what was attracting the youngsters to the vārī she replied, ‘It is the bhajans, the rhythm, the energy, [and] the dances: so everyone enjoys it’. Satarkar’s granddaughter also said that due to the vārī she was thinking about things in a different way ‘whenever we think of something we think of God first…’ ‘How do you find the experience of walking?’ we asked Satarkar’s granddaughter. ‘I was very worried that I would not be able to walk so much, twenty-five kilometres per day…tomorrow we are going to walk to
Dehu, three…no eight kilometres’. ‘Do you always go with the same dīṇḍī?’ ‘Yes, yes…everyone has the same group, and we follow Baba Maharaj’. Satarkar’s granddaughter told us that about two thousand people travel in Baba Maharaj’s dīṇḍī and ‘the speciality of our dīṇḍī is that everyone walks together, women do not walk behind. [There’s] no discrimination in our dīṇḍī, in most other dīṇḍīs you see women walking behind but that does not happen in our dīṇḍī…’ (personal communication, 10th December 2004).

Vimalabai later told us that in her dīṇḍī the women do walk behind the men but that they might mingle while walking (personal communication, 20th December 2004).

Later we headed into the street where we spoke at random to passers-by and stallholders. One of the women, Hansabai, said that although her husband went to Pandharpur for the monthly pilgrimage she stayed in Alandi and ran their food stool (personal communication, 10th December 2004). There are about fifty thousand Vārkarīs who go to Pandharpur every month from places like Alandi or Dehu and about five percent are thought to be women. Dīṇyaṇoba Utpat said that the reason so few women undertake the monthly pilgrimage is that only women without family responsibilities can go on the regular pilgrimage so those that do go tend to be old or widows (Personal communication, 12th November 2004). Several of my informants had done the monthly pilgrimage but told me that many people took public transport to Pandharpur rather than walking there (Personal communications: Vimalabai, 20th December 2004; Dattatreya Rasne, 3rd January 2005).

A shopkeeper, Padmani Bamne, said that they took their business and family, consisting of twenty-five members, with them wherever they went and that they travelled continually all year. ‘This is the vārī for us, because there is a problem of sustenance for us. Through this we can sustain ourselves as well as gaining spiritually, so it works both ways, materially and spiritually (dharmārtha and paramārtha)’. Padmani told us she was from Mangalvedha and mentioned Kānhopātrā saying she ‘became one with God and God made her one with him despite her caste. God made love immortal for her. So what about us, are we going to become one with God? We go to the river-bed…I eat and sleep well. I’ll never miss it…I am not bothered by anybody or what they do, [we] live our lives for ourselves….’ (personal communication, 10th December 2004).

Finally, we entered the temple leaving our sandals with one of the stallholders who sold offertory items. Luckily I was allowed to take a photo of the Jhāneśvar samādhi and the Viṭṭhal and Rukmini mārtis in the garbhagṛha (Plates 10–11). The taking of photographs is usually prohibited in
temples but as it was late on the final day and as the crowd had lessened the police officers were agreeable.

Plate 10: Viṭṭhal and Rakhumāi, Āḷandī
On our way out we passed a bhajan session that was being held beside the garbhagṛha (Plate 12). Bhajan as one of the fundamental Vārkarī practices and many Vārkarīs go to bhajan classes regularly (personal communication: Vimalabai, 20th December 2004; Dattatreya Rasne, 3rd January 2005). Bhajan often occurs in temples and pilgrimage sites and while this session may appear to be dominated by male participants, bhajan tends to lack formal organisation as anyone can lead a song or suggest the next song to be sung. However, some accomplished singers and/or musicians are usually present to hold the proceedings together (Jones 2009:142, 153 passim; see Kiehnle 1983), as indicated by the drummer and the man at the microphone.
The Vārkarīs were gathering in Alandi to take the Jñāneśvar pālkī to Pandharpur. The roads were full of buses and trucks belching smoke and honking. There were women in saris, men in white caps and coloured turbans, saffron-robed sadhus with matted hair and staffs, bodies resting in the shade beneath stationary trucks, saris strung along the side of trucks and buses to increase the shade or perhaps to dry. There were groups of Vārkarīs gathering outside houses, on porches, and on empty plots of land, every available space was being taken by the arriving Vārkarīs.
The real reason I had come to Alandi with my research assistant Gayatri (Gurjar) Gajabhiye was to see Muktabai Maharaj: a woman who was the head of a math in Alandi, a kirtankar (since 1960) who discusses Jñāneśvar and Tukārām, and the leader of dindī number fifty-nine in the Jñāneśvar pālkhī (Personal communications, 6th and 7th March 2005).\(^2\) The hope was that Muktabai would allow us to join her dindī for part of the āṣāḍhī vārī. The various possibilities were discussed over tea and, having examined her dindī’s schedule for the vārī, we decided that we would join the Muktabai Maharaj Belgaonkar dindī five days before the āṣāḍhī ekādaśī. That evening the Jñāneśvar pālkhī would be stopping overnight at Malasiras, thirty-one miles from Pandharpur, where Muktabai would be giving a kirtan. We planned to travel with Muktabai Maharaj’s dindī to Pandharpur and so witness bhajan, kirtan and raṅgaṇ as well as interviewing Vārkarīs. The practical arrangements were of some concern to me, especially as a woman and a foreigner, for a number of female Vārkarīs had described how they had to sit, sleep, eat, bathe or get dressed wherever they found themselves (personal communications, 3rd January 2005). However, Muktabai declared that the Vārkarīs of today could not be compared with those of the past as nowadays facilities are provided en route. ‘Are you sure we won’t inconvenience you’ we said. ‘What do you mean “you”? It is us, we are together, we are one’ replied Muktabai Maharaj. ‘Even if

\(^2\) Mathurabai was about seventy, unmarried and had been a Vārkarī from childhood. Mathurabai said she performed sant-seva by being responsible for Muktabai’s dharmaśāḷā (personal communication, 6th March 2005).
there is some trouble’, she continued, ‘I believe in one thing [that] if it brings happiness to the other person, one should do it’ (personal communication, 18th June 2006).

Whose abhaṅgas were sung on the road I wondered. ‘The abhaṅgas of Jñāneśvar Mahārāj and Tukārām Mahārāj are used prominently’, replied one of the group, ‘though those of sant Nāmdev, Muktābāī, Janābāī and Mīrābāī are also sung. Muktābāī, Janābāī and Mīrābāī are all women sants because they remained unmarried and pursued the spiritual path. The Bhāgavata panth—the Vārkarī sampradāya—allows one to stay in the world (prapañca) and have a family while pursuing paramārtha. A sant is someone who has lived a life of devotion’ (personal communication, 18th June 2006).

‘What about other women associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya’, I asked, ‘what about Kānhopātrā and Bahiṇābāī?’ ‘Bahiṇābāī was Tukārām’s disciple. She has written a few things that have spiritual meaning but we don’t call them abhaṅgas’. ‘Do you mean Bahiṇābāī Chaudhari is the same as Tukārām’s Bahiṇābāī?’ ‘Bahiṇābāī Chaudhari is not regarded as a sant…she never really preached, she only wrote [poems]’. This confusion about sant Bahiṇābāī Pāṭhak (c.1628–1700), the disciple of sant Tukārām, and Bahinabai Chaudhari (1880–1951) the Marathi poetess was one I often met. The conflation may have occurred due to the transmission process and/or the non-importance of the individual author, as I discuss in Chapter Three, but it is more likely that sant Bahiṇābāī ceased to be significant once the Vārkarī sampradāya had established itself as a householder tradition.

‘What about women like Kānhopātrā’ I enquired, ‘was she a sant?’ ‘Kānhopātrā is a sant; she’s the daughter of a prostitute’. ‘What about Soyarābāī and Nirmaḷā?’ ‘Goṇāī was Nāmdev’s mother’ replied Muktabai Maharaj and then added (incorrectly) ‘Soyarābāī was Nāmdev’s wife’. ‘So besides the well-known names are there any names of women sants that we have never heard?’ She responded, ‘The women who are well known as sants are known because they made a significant contribution and achieved a height. Maybe the other women who wrote were not given the status of sant as their contribution was minimal’ (personal communication, 18th June 2006). Muktabai thus expressed a view similar to that of V.N Utpat above, suggesting that the quality or quantity of attributed compositions are a factor in characterising a woman as a sant.

The first day of the āṣāḍhī vārī began with the Jñāneśvar pālkhī travelling the sixteen miles from Alandi to Pune. When I had asked about what happened en route with the Jñāneśvar pālkhī Muktabai Belgaonkar had told me:

During the vārī every morning at six a horse goes to where the pādukā are kept, bows and greets them before walking away backwards. Even the horse realises that [one should keep faith with God] and it
[the bowing] happens daily. There [are] two horses with Jñāneśvar’s pālkī and one with Tukārām’s pālkī. It is believed that Jñāneśvar Mahārāj is sitting on one horse. On one horse there is a person and on the second horse no one sits. Even at the time of the ringa the horse goes to where the pālkī is and bows. This tradition has been going on for more than four hundred and fifty years.

(Muktabai Belgaonkar, personal communication, 18th June 2006)

However, I did not witness this event as it occurred before the Vārkarīs entered Pune. Many of the main roads had been closed to allow for the Jñāneśvar pālkī and the Tukārām pālkī to enter the city. Consequently, traffic in the city was worse than usual and by eleven in the morning the areas lining the route were crowded. There were already lots of Vārkarīs walking into the city by the time we got to the Alandi road. We walked against the flow of people to try and find a good spot from which to see the pālkī. We navigated our way between the parked trucks, with people resting underneath, and the open drain at the side of the road. The people just kept coming until the crowd was so thick it was impossible to move at all. One could hear the crowd murmur ‘the pālkī is coming, the pālkī was coming’. My back was pressed up against the side of a truck as the pālkī came past (Plate 14). The flag bearers, horses and musicians must have gone by but I had hardly noticed them. The press of people was so great that it was impossible to get near the pālkī and see the Jñāneśvar pādukās. The chants of ‘Māulī, māulī’ continued as the pālkī passed.

Plate 14: The Jñāneśvar pālkī en route from Alandi to Pune (20th June 2006)

Desperate to sit down out of the sun we walked away from the road but most of the shady places were already filled with Vārkarīs as many of the dīṇḍīs that form the procession have traditional stopping
places. Nonetheless, we were offered a place to sit among members of a diṇḍī. The diṇḍī (number 593) came from the Parbhani-Nanded area and its seven hundred members, the majority of whom were Maratha agriculturalists, are all from different villages. One of the diṇḍī leaders told us that they have one truck to transport food, one truck for luggage and those who are unable to walk, and another small truck for water. The diṇḍī members walk to Pandharpur but it seemed that most of them return home by truck at the end of the pilgrimage. There were several women who knew an abhaṅga attributed to Sakhūbāī or more accurately referring to Sakhūbāī, which they sang for us and which we recorded (see Appendix B).

We were then invited to eat lunch with the diṇḍī.

The meal began with everyone taking out their metal plates, bowls and cups before sitting down in rows (Plate 15). Then Ganga Maharaj led the diṇḍī in singing ‘Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Hari’ as well as another song, to which the Vārkarīs all clapped along. The food was then served while the sponsor of the meal walked among the group. After everyone had finished eating—pōḷīs, rice, vegetable-dhal and a kind of hard sweet—the utensils were washed and put away in the Vārkarīs’ own bags. Ganga Maharaj and the servers only sat down to eat once all the diṇḍī members had eaten. It was only after he had finished his meal that we were able to meet Ganga Maharaj. He told us that he had been the diṇḍī leader for at least sixteen years and that he mainly gives kīrtans based on Tukārām. Ganga Maharaj gave us his blessing and presented me with a coconut—we later gave a donation to sponsor a meal for the diṇḍī—and then the diṇḍī members continued following the Jhāneśvar pālkī into Pune.
While the Jñāneśvar-pālkhī was in Pune I attended a ceremony in the old city organised by Muktabai Maharaj (see Appendix H, Plate 26) during which I was presented to the assembled crowd and after which I was interviewed for the local paper (see Appendix H, Plate 27). I had not wanted to be interviewed and bring unnecessary attention to myself but found the reporter unrelenting. However, I managed to avoid being pictured with ṭāḷ as I felt that would be unethical. After we had eaten with the dīndī, sitting in rows (paṅgatī), we were able to talk with Muktabai Maharaj briefly who told us that she was not happy with people sitting in the pālkhī next to the pādukās (see Plate 14) as it is disrespectful (personal communication, 21st June 2006).

A couple of days later we went to help with the free medical camp organised by the Sahyadri Manav Seva Manch. The camp was set up on the Dive Ghat as the Vārkarīs travelling with the Jñāneśvar pālkhī would be going up to Saswad (Plate 16). The volunteers included a mixture of medical and non-medical personnel and spent the day administering saline and injections, pills for stomach ailments, treating minor injuries, and in my case administering embrocation for sore limbs (see Naik 1998; Mandpe 2009). One of the organisers told me that about thirty percent of the pilgrims who travel with the pālkhī suffer from typhoid and cholera and that as soon the monsoon begins disease spreads rapidly (personal
communication, 22nd June 2006). Unfortunately, I was to discover this for myself, so much so that I was unable to join the Muktabai Belgaonkar dindi as arranged.

Plate 16: Vārkarīs on the Dive Ghāṭ with the medical camp under the awnings (22nd June 2006)

However, the afternoon drew on and as the heat grew so did the number of Vārkarīs. There were flag bearers, then groups of men at the front of the dindi playing the ṭāḷ and vina, younger men bouncing and dancing enthusiastically while other men clapped and sang. One dindi had a vasudeva who was singing. The joy of the Vārkarīs was clearly visible in their singing and dancing, despite the long pull up the ghāṭ. A woman carrying ṭāḷ rushed out of the crowd and bounded up to me saying that doing the pilgrimage was an act of faith. By about 4.30 p.m. we began packing up as all the medicines had gone. The sky was darkening and the clouds were rolling in just as the crowd thickened and the shouts of ‘māuli’ began. The Jñāneśvar pālkhī approached but it was impossible to get near it for the crowd, although several of the volunteers did manage to have darśan of the secondary pālkhī as it passed. The pālkhī gone we rushed to the bus as the monsoon had arrived.

Due to a severe bout of monsoon fever I was only able to go to Pandharpur for a few days at the end of the āṣāḍhī vārī after the ekādaśī. We arrived late in the afternoon and then met Dada Maharaj Manmadkar at his math for an interview. Dada Maharaj is the son of the kirtankari Gayabai Manmadkar
mentioned above, which may account for his positive attitude towards women (see Schultz 2013:125). Dada Maharaj discussed bhāgavata-dharma and then said that people of the medieval period like Jñāneśvar ‘were quite keen on the issue of giving freedom to women. Jñāneśvar’s own sister, Muktābāī, and her contemporary Janābāī were not just saying it [that they were given this status they really were given it]’. Dada Maharaj continued, ‘Janābāī was a great person, someone with krāntīkārak and bhrāntīnārak [i.e. she said what was on her mind in a straightforward way]…Her destiny was to be a devadāsī…but she was lucky [she became Nāmdev’s dāsī]’. Dada Maharaj related his version of Janābāī’s biography and concluded talking about Janābāī by saying: ‘in her case she should be respected for her virgin spirit, despite being unmarried she was content…’ Dada Maharaj then mentioned Mīrābāī and Sakhūbāī, and related the stories of Kānhopātrā and Bahinābāī. He said ‘there are lots of arguments and criticisms between us followers of Mādhva saying that Niḥlobā is the main disciple of Tukārām. Leaving aside all arguments, Bahinābāī was the one who really got the instruction she wanted (pratīkṣā anugraha) from Tukārām. The anugraha Niḥlobā got was after Tukārām had gone to Vaikuṇṭha…Bahinābāī was the only one [disciple] who got direct anugraha’ (personal communication 10th July 2006). Later the same evening we went to see Muktabai Maharaj at her maṭh on the outskirts of town to apologise for not joining her on the vārī. Muktabai Maharaj told us they would be leaving early the next morning to return the pālkhī to Alandi so we then said goodbye.

Dada Maharaj arranged for us to have darśan, via a police inspector who was staying at his maṭh, so the next morning our driver Gajanan, Gayatri and I were guided by a boy from the maṭh to park near the temple before walking, bare-foot, to find the inspector. We saw Rukmiṇī, had darśan of Viṭṭhal, saw the tarafī tree associated with Kānhopātrā to which devotees tie pieces from blouses and saris, before seeing Rukmiṇī again. All this involved navigating the one-way system, squeezing through gates and doorways, and giving donations in each temple. While we were waiting to meet Dhanve Maharaj, one of the Viṭṭhal temple committee members, we took darśan of the Tukārām pālkhī as it left the temple to return to Dehu. The procession included the tutārī, ṭāḷ and vīṇā players as well as the pādukās and abadāgīrī. Our visit to the temple concluded with Dhanve Maharaj’s presentation of prasāda and an authorised photo of the Viṭṭhal and Rukmiṇī mūrtis.

Later we visited Gopalpur about a mile south-east of Pandharpur. We were obliged to give a few rupees to feed the cows at the bottom of the steps leading up to the temple, where we took darśan of the Gopāl-Kṛṣṇa icon. We saw the underground cell said to have been occupied by Janābāī and the guṇja in
the grinding wheel said to be that of Janābāī. Dada Maharaj later told us that Janī used to work in Gopalpur, making govarī and gōdaḍī, for some extra income as it seems that Nāmdev’s family lived in Gopalpur.³

Plate 17: Main (eastern) entrance to the Viṭṭhal temple in Pandharpur with Cokhāmeḷā’s samādhi

Various interviewees were asked which female sants they knew and the names that usually came up were Muktābāī, Janābāī, Kānhopātrā, Bahiṇābāī, Sakhūbāī or Mīrābāī. Satarkar’s granddaughter replied: ‘Not so many, I’ve just been doing the vārī for three years, before that I was in school…’ ‘If I asked you to name some of the santakaviyatrīs whom would you be able to name?’ ‘Janābāī, Muktābāī [and when prompted] Bahiṇābāī, Kānhopātrā…Mīrābāī’ (personal communication, 10th December 2004). Vimalabai replied: ‘Janābāī, Mīrābāī and Muktābāī’. We then asked if she knew Kānhopātrā and she said ‘hah’ but it did not sound convincing so we asked if she sang anything by Mīrābāī and she said ‘Yes but we mainly sing abhaṅgas by Māulī or…by Tukārām Mahārāj or gavaḷāṇī [by Eknāth]’. ‘This probably means you don’t sing many abhaṅgas by women?’ ‘No mainly abhaṅgas that Tukārām wrote on Jñāneśvar…we don’t sing abhaṅgas by Bahiṇābāī’ (personal communication, 20th December 2004). We asked the Ganga Maharaj diṇḍī from Narsinhe Pokhari if the women sung abhaṅgas by women sants and the general response was that not even men sing songs attributed to women sants (personal communications, 20th June 2006). Sumantai Tade said: ‘Janābāī, Bahiṇābāī and Mīrābāī are given respect and are studied…Some [santakaviyatrīs] have a lot of literature [attributed to them] so they are studied particularly. Women whose gurus were famous became more known but there are many unknown
[women] who are lost in history’ (personal communication, 6th December 2004). The sociologist Suma Chitnis mentioned Kānhopātrā and said Muktābāī, Janābāī and Bahiṇābāī ‘draw attention to the inadequacies of the bhaktimarga [and] have insights into the social situation and the cultural traditions of Maharashtra’ (personal communication, 24th February 2005). Hema Rairkar, the social-scientist, referred to Bahiṇābāī, Kānhopātrā, Janī (personal communication, 3rd March 2004). Muktabai Maharaj said, ‘Janābāī…was a saint of high stature. Sakhūbāī didn’t sway into the sampradāya in the way that other sants like Janābāī, Kānhopātrā or Muktābāī did’ (Personal communication, 7th March 2005). Muktabai Maharaj discussed Muktābāī and Janābāī in detail and just mentioned Bahiṇābāī in passing (personal communication, 25th March 2005).

Mīrābāī was included as a santakaviyatrī by Vimalabai (20th December 2004), Dattatreya Rasne (3rd January 2005), Suma Chitnis (25th February 2005), Sumantai Tade (28th February 2005), Muktabai Belgaonkar (25th March 2005) and Baba Maharaj Satarkar, who said: ‘If you are talking about philosophy, about paramārtha, about advaita…Mīrābāī, her deity is Kṛṣṇa and Vārkarīs talk about Pāṇḍūrāṅga, it is the same thing. It is not a problem and if some person says ‘no’ [she has no connection with the Vārkarīs]…many of the kīrtankārs quote Mīrābāī’ (personal communication, 10th December 2004). However, V.N. Utpat said that Mīrābāī ‘is not part of the Vārkarī sampradāya as she never came to Maharashtra’ and that the debate that there were two (or more) Muktābāīs and Mīrābāīs has no basis (personal communication, 22nd November 2004). In response to my statement that Mīrābāī is included the SSG Swami Nischal Anand declared: ‘it is not the question of the Sakala Santa Gāthā…The basic comparison between the Vārkarī and the other bhakti sects…is basically dualism and non-dualism. [The] Vārkarī sect is the only bhakti sect [that is non-dual]…it is the same advaita that comes from the Upaniṣads, Bhagavadgītā and afterwards from Śaṅkarācārya’ (personal communication, 28th January 2005). Clearly Anand, like Utpat, did not believe that Mīrābāī should be connected with the Vārkarī sampradāya. However, many Vārkarīs clearly do connect Mīrābāī with the sampradāya as a female sant and poet even though Mirā rejected the householder life.

It is worth noting that almost no one with whom we spoke referred to Goṇāī, Rājāī Āūbāī, Limbāī, Lāḍāī, Soyarābāī, Nirmalābāī, Bhāgū Mahārīṇ, Gaṅgabāī, Bhāgūbāī or Viṭhābāī. V.N. Utpat mentioned Mata Goṇāī and Lāḍāī as less revolutionary than other women sants (personal communication, 22nd November 2004); Muktabai Maharaj stated that Janī was treated as a dāsī by Nāmdev’s mother (personal communication, 25th March 2005); Sumantai Tade said ‘God came to the women [like]
Soyarbāī when husbands were involved in meditation/renunciation’ (personal communication, 28th February 2005), and Vidyut Bhagwat mentioned Soyarbāī as a ‘non-prominent’ sant (personal communication, 29th January 2005). The absence of these names suggests that there may be some veracity to the idea raised above that the quality or quantity of attributed compositions are a factor in characterising Muktābāī, Janābāī, Kānhopātrā or Bahinābāī as a sants. However, as Sakhubāī has only one or two compositions in her name it seems more likely that her biography, and its depiction in film, is responsible for her being remembered as a sant.

From the conversations I had during my fieldwork, it became very apparent that most of the women sants are absent from public memory and current devotional practice apart from Muktābāī (with her shrine at Alandi and her samādhi and pālkhī emanating in the Jalgaon district), Janābāī (with the memorial of a cell and grindstone at Gopalpur), Kānhopātrā (with the taraṭī tree commemorating her in the Viṭhobā temple complex at Pandharpur) and Bahinābāī (whose samādhi is in Dehu, see Plate 20). Nonetheless, compositions attributed to Mīrābāī, and possibly those attributed to other santakaviyatris, are quoted by some kīrtankārs and this might suggest that the women are not totally elided from devotional practice or public memory. Nonetheless the position of the compositions attributed to women is ambiguous as they are not formally part of kīrtan discussion (see Dadhe 2012). It is my contention that the contemporary absence of acknowledgement of women sants in the tradition indicates the successful construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path as women no longer need to be cited as figures of exemplary religiosity while fulfilling their duties as householders. The role and function of gender attribution should thus perhaps be understood in relation to the construction of the tradition as a householder path and it is to this issue that the next chapter turns: the discursive formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya.
CHAPTER THREE

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE VĀRKAṆI SAMPRADĀYA AS A HOUSEHOLDER PATH

1. Introduction

This chapter considers the discursive formation of the Vārkaṇī sampradāya as a householder path and what constitutes the Vārkaṇī corpus or ‘canon’ so as to later establish the role of the santakaviyatrīs and the compositions attributed to them within the construction of the Vārkaṇī sampradāya. The discussion begins with an exploration of the term ‘canon’ in relation to the Indian context so as to situate the specific contours of the Vārkaṇī ‘canon’ and its formation.

A religious canon is defined by von Stietencron as ‘the result of a deliberate attempt to collect, arrange and preserve the original message of a religious community, and to protect it against all corruption. It transforms haphazard individual recollection into authoritative tradition or sacred scripture. As such, it itself becomes endowed with an aura of sacredness…’ (2003:14).1 Canon is thus a means of defining and fixing a particular religious identity ‘by representing the ultimate truth and the means of attaining it’ to adherents and the religious community as a whole (ibid. see Pechilis 2001:4). J.Z. Smith argues that canon is a list that is ‘held to be complete’ and canon is therefore fixed and closed (1982:48; see Christof 2003:63; Pechilis 2001:4). Consequently, particular expression can also become fixed and a canon may therefore become a record of a cultural and socio-religious moment; a moment out of time. This can lead to a gap between a canon and its receivers and in this context an important role can be played by personal charisma (see Graham 1993:xi).

Charisma represents innovation according to von Stietencron as it is through charisma that the original message is ‘made meaningful’ again (2003:15–16). This is because charisma provides the authority to introduce changes and as Dalmia argues ‘set new standards, values and norms of action’ while also legitimizing ‘new sacred scripture and fresh commentaries on older canonical works’ (2003:3). Charismatic innovation certainly seems apparent in the Jñāneśvarī and the Eknāthī Bhāgavata, commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā and Bhāgavata Purāṇa in Marathi, which I will discuss below. Expanding Weber’s notion of charisma Von Stietencron argues that canon and charisma ‘form a chain of

religious legitimization’ as charisma can renew meaning and authority when an extensive gap opens up between the initial message and the spiritual requirements of a ‘changed society’. The recurring presence of charisma is important for religious movements as ‘primary legitimacy’ is derived from charisma. Von Stietencron maintains there is a vertical and horizontal aspect to the relationship between charisma and canon. Charisma is connected to the ‘legitimizing impact’ of the sacred while canon is connected to systematisation or the historical processes by which the sacred is realised and modified (2003:16–17; see Dalmia 2003:3; Weber 1958b:245; 1978:24–6). This process of systematisation through which canon is formed appears similar to Hawley’s notion of ‘programmatic intent’ or Lincoln’s concept of ‘ideological persuasion’ discussed in the Introduction and which operates in the formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder bhakti tradition.

The formation of a religious community occurs due to the agency of at least one charismatic leader but successors are required to maintain the community. A canon provides a religious community with a set of doctrines and religious practices based on the charisma of founder(s) but these doctrines and practices have to be revitalised regularly so as to avoid stagnation and even the eventual demise of the community. The yearly festival calendar is one of the main ways by which this revitalisation occurs—the vārī undertaken by the Vārkarīs is one example—but it can also be accomplished by establishing a lineage (guru paramparā) from one charismatic person to another (von Stietencron 2003:31–32).

However, Brian Smith argues that a religious tradition is constituted through the formation of a canon, which he describes as ‘a finite set of “texts” that are regarded as foundational and absolutely authoritative’, constructing a method of transmission for the canon, and ‘establishing the means for its infinite interpretability’ (1992:105). Furthermore, Smith argues that canon must be perceived as such by a community or tradition in order to exist (1992:105 n.8). In this view Smith follows Graham who states that the sacredness of a text occurs when a community responds to the text as sacred:

A text becomes ‘scripture’ in active, subjective relationship to persons, and as part of a cumulative communal tradition. No text, written or oral or both, is sacred or authoritative in isolation from a community…there is no absolute ‘meaning’ in a scriptural text apart from the interpreting community that finds it meaningful.

(Graham 1993:5)

Consequently, the meaning of a text can only be comprehended when it is ‘expounded in a special context’, the context of the interpreting community that finds the text meaningful (1993:5). The interpreting community in the context of this thesis is the Vārkarī sampradāya.
Jonathan Z. Smith raises a further issue of interpretation in relation to canon and religious traditions arguing that ‘where there is a canon we can predict the necessary occurrence of a hermeneute, of an interpreter whose task it is to continually extend the domain of the closed canon over everything that is known or everything that exists without altering the canon in the process’ (1982:48, emphasis in original). For J.Z. Smith canon ‘is best seen as one form of a basic cultural process of limitation and of overcoming that limitation by ingenuity’ (1982:52). One form of ingenuity that may overcome limitation is the notion of charismatic innovation put forward by von Stietencron although scholars like J.Z. Smith, Brian Smith and Christof argue that canon is fixed and closed (2003:63)

‘Canon’ and ‘scripture’ have generally been accepted as ‘text’ or as having a physical form, particularly by Western scholarship, and are regarded as ‘a tangible document that fixes the fluid sacred word and gives it substance and permanence’ (Graham 1993:ix, 4). However, in many religious traditions, the central place is often given to oral tradition and composition as spiritual Truth is connected to the spoken word (Graham 1993:67). The spoken word and truth are connected because persons and their utterances are regarded as the loci of truth and authority rather than texts. Thus, within many Indian contexts the written word is valueless without a guru to explicate, interpret and transmit the tradition of learning with which a text is associated. We might note here that the need for an interpreter of the spoken word accords with J.Z. Smith’s assertion regarding the hermeneute connecting both oral and written ‘texts’. The Vedas, which have been transmitted orally for over three millennia and only written down comparatively recently, are an exemplar of sacred ‘text’ as spoken word according to Graham (1993:4, 68–69, 74; see Coburn 1989:111, 1984:444 and Carpenter 1994). However, David Carpenter argues that the canonicity of the Veda appears ‘to reside more in its form as oral performance than in its content as a well-delimited corpus’ (1994:20). The question of who preserves the Veda and the manner in which the Veda is employed cannot be separated from its status as a ‘canon’ for the Veda is tied to forms of ritual action that have legitimated the Brahmanical social order. However, Carpenter suggests while canons ‘may function as instruments for the creation of identity and the establishment of authority’ there are differences in the way these are achieved (1994:31–32; see Graham 1993:72). Similarly, Brian Smith concurs that the Vedas were preserved orally until recently but he states that ‘nonliterate groups’ also have sets of myths, origins stories, legends and so on that are ‘the oral equivalent of a written canon’ (1992:105n.6). This issue of orality is significant for the discursive construction of the Vārkarī
sampradāya as there is interplay between orality, literacy and textuality as well as a core practice of attribution that serves to authorise particular themes and emphases within the Vārkarī corpus.

2. **The Vārkarī ‘canon’**

An *abhaṅga* attributed to Bahinābāī describes the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya through discourse by likening the *sampradāya* to a temple whose key components are the compositions of four male *sants* (Ramanujan 1973:19; Dhere 2011:274–76):

> संतकृपा झाली | इमारत फळा आली |†† Santakepā jhālī / imārata phaḷā ālī /1/

The sants bestowed their favor [and] the building came to fruition.
Jñānadev laid the foundations and erected God’s house.
Nāmā, your servant, he formed the enclosure.
Janārdaṇḍa’s Eknāth erected its pillar through his Bhāgavata.
Tukā became the pinnacle. Sing the bhajan slowly.
Bahiṅī says, the flag flutters; this is an honest account.

(Bahiṅī abhaṅga 32, SSG 2:1157, my translation)²

The works of the four *sants* mentioned in the *abhaṅga* above—Jñāneśvar, Nāmdev, Eknāth and Tukārām—may be regarded as forming the basis of the Vārkarī ‘canon’ through a chain of religious legitimization (see von Stietencron 2003:16; Jones 2009:131ff). However, the Vārkarī ‘canon’ was also formed discursively through the compositions attributed to all the *sants* associated with the *sampradāya* between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. These *sants* were male and female *bhaktas* who composed poems and/or texts as expressions of *bhakti*. The different *bhaktas* came to embody *bhakti* for later *bhaktas*, interpreters and anthologizers who detailed the lives of the celebrated *bhaktas* in biographical literatures (*caritra*) and thus represented the *bhakti* poets as *sants* (Pechilis 1999:5, 7, 26).

The *Jñāneśvarī*, the *Eknāthī Bhāgavata* and the *Tukārā Gaṭhā* are regarded as the Marathi *prasthānatrayī* of the Vārkarī *sampradāya*.³ The *Jñāneśvarī* and *Eknāthī Bhāgavata* are both commentaries and interpretations on the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* respectively; texts that are regarded as the two most influential Sanskrit texts for *bhakti* traditions and as the *loci* for *bhakti*.⁴ The commentary (*bhāṣya, ṭīkā*) is the principal way that thinkers contributed to the received texts and ideas of their traditions as the hermeneutic process allowed for new interpretations although these interpretations had to show knowledge of and engagement with the original text (Frazier 2011:36). Christof argues that

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² Panāṣikār (1968) suggests that this *abhaṅga* (4488) may be by Tukārām (see Zelliot 1987:92 n.4; Rigopoulos 1998:159 n.17; Omvedt and Patankar 2012: 49n.1). However, Tulpule (1979:393) and the SSG regard the *abhaṅga* as Bahinābāī’s composition.


the canonic commentary, which was composed by a male Brahman, is an attempt to overcome limitation by ingenuity. Furthermore, the commentary ‘serves as the legitimising basis for innovation’, making sacred texts like the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* accessible and meaningful for the present (2003:63–64, 65; see also J.Z. Smith 1982:52). The innovative elements of *Jñāneśvarī* and Eknāthī *Bhāgavata* are considered below but as the Vārkarī ‘canon’ also includes a number of other texts and the compositions attributed to the *sants* the works significant to the Vārkarī sampradāya are considered below in three sections—the texts of Jñāneśvar, the texts of Eknāth, and the compositions of the Vārkarī *sants*—beginning with the *sant* regarded as laying the foundations for the Vārkarī sampradāya.

2.1. **Jñāneśvar and the Jñāneśvarī**

Jñāneśvar is credited with composing several ‘great works’ in Marathi: the *Jñāneśvarī*, the *Amrūtānbhava*, the *Cāṅgadeva Pāsaṣṭī* and about nine hundred *abhaṅgas* including the *Haripāṭh*, which have all been described as the ‘sacred texts’ of the Vārkarī *sampradāya* (Chitre 1991:xxv; Ranade 2003:35). However, Jñāneśvar is probably regarded as a foundational figure for the Vārkarī *sampradāya*, as the Bahīnābāī *abhaṅga* above indicates, due to the composition of one of the most highly revered texts in the *sampradāya*.

The *Bhāvārthadipikā* ‘The Light of the Meaning of Faith’, popularly known as the *Jñāneśvarī*, is a commentary on and extensive interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* in Marathi. Jñāneśvar declares that he ‘will present you your native language as it makes the world of literature come alive and its sweetness makes one find fault with even the elixir of immortals’ (Jñāvä 13:1151; Lele 1981:109). Jñāneśvar thus apparently challenged the hegemony of Sanskrit as a means to express religio-philosophical ideas. According to Lele Marathi was ‘rejected as vulgar and unsuitable for spiritual knowledge by Brahmins’ as it was spoken by the ‘productive classes’ but Jñāneśvar chose to use a living everyday language, rather than the liturgical language of Sanskrit, because he was aware of the relationship between language and community (1981:108–109; see Pollock 2001:393; Devy 1998:50). Lele thus interprets Jñāneśvar’s use of Marathi as promulgating new and contemporary meanings of the *Bhagavadgītā* for the community of

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6 According to Bahirat the titles *Jñāneśvarī* or *Jñānadevī* were used by Nāmdev and the title *Bhāvārthadipikā* was suggested by Janābāī (1998:15–16).

7 तैसे जी होलसे देवा तया अवधानाविवा खलवता। पाहतां व्याख्यान चढले थांवा। दैगुणे वरी || ११५१।। Taisे jī hotase deva / tayā avadhānācīyā lavalavā / pāhatā vyākhyaṇa caḍhalē thāvā / caugūnē vārī //1151//

The poetic medium in which the Jñāneśvarī is composed is the ovī metre (Jñśv 13.1149, 18.1720–21). The ovī is a genre that has been defined as ‘a chanting folk song passed down orally throughout generations’ by Sellergren (1996:220) and as songs sung by women in a work context by Junghare (1983:273–74; see Tulpule 1979:314; Kiehnle 1997a:34; Molesworth 1857:122). The literary ovī arose from the folk ovī according to Vaudeville (1969) and Tulpule (1979:452) but Raeside argues that it is ‘far from evident that the popular ovī…preceeded the literary form’ (1971:612). However, the folk or popular ovī is usually set to music while the literary ovī is ‘mainly read rhythmically with the intonation of prose’ states Tulpule (1979:452). The distinction between the oral/folk ovī and the literary ovī is also made by Junghare who argues that the folk ovī is sung by women while the literary ovī tends to be employed by men in the composition of religious poetry in old Marathi (1983:273). Junghare’s contention seems to apply to the Jñāneśvarī as it is a literary ovī that consists of three and half feet (Tulpule 1999:119, 1979:451–452; see also Pradhan 1987:xix).

The Jñāneśvarī can be described as both a ṭīkā and a dharmakīrtan as it combines philosophical exposition with a kīrtan given to an audience (Pradhan 1987:xvii–xix; Joshi 2009:372). According to Devy, one of Jñāneśvar’s aims was to integrate the yoga of the Nāths and bhakti and that Jñāneśvar therefore worked within the traditional framework of a commentary so as to ‘transform the tradition by adding a complex inter-textuality to the established discourse’ (1998:46). The discourse in the Bhagavadgītā occurs on two levels—Sanjaya’s narration of the happenings on the field of battle to the blind prince Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the religio-philosophical dialogue of Arjūna and Kṛṣṇa—to which Jñāneśvar adds his discourse with his guru Nivṛtti and the discourse with his audience. Śaivite interpretations of the Bhagavadgītā presented the dialogue as one between jīva and śiva but as Devy argues Jñāneśvar also interpreted the dialogue as one between a bhakta and God thus combining Nāth and bhakti perspectives (1998:46–47; see Brockington 1996:56, 1997).

The audience or interpreting community with whom Jñāneśvar entered into an intersubjective dialogue through his use of Marathi and the literate ovī was a ‘community of active producers’ and a
'community of the oppressed' according to Lele (1981:107, 111; see Graham 1993). A Marathi-speaking community primarily formed of low-caste persons practicing traditional occupations, as I outlined in Chapter One, who form the ‘popular’ or ‘social base’ for the expression of bhakti compositions according to Mukta (1994:32–33, 37, and 78). Lele argues that the unity of the community ‘rests on the productive social activity of human beings’ and that Jñāneśvar urged the community to remain socially active (1981:110). The Jñāneśvarī expands on the notion of performing svakarma and disinterested action (karma yoga) that is expressed in the Bhagavadgītā (BhG 2.47–50, 18.2; see Patton 2008:xx, 29, 184; Malinar 2007:5ff; Jīśv 2.264–272, 18.85ff, see Yardi 2011):

\[
\text{Tūḥ yogayukta hoūnī / phaḷācā sāṅgu ṭākunī / maga arjunā citta deunī / karī करी करrne //267//}
\]

Steadfast in yoga, renouncing attachment to the fruit of action, perform all actions with an attentive mind, O Arjunā.

(Jīśv 2. 267; Pradhan and Lambert 1987:45)

\[
\text{Na peritā̃ saiṅgha trṇē / uhati sāḷīcẽ honē / nāhī̃ gā rābāuṇẽ jiyāparī //95//}
\]

Grass grows freely without being sown; on the other hand rice will not grow without cultivation.

(Jīśv 18.95; Pradhan and Lambert 1987:536 v.94)

\[
\text{Āpaṇacī hoūni brahma / sārije kṛtyākṛtāncẽ kāma / maga kīje kā niḥsīma / sevā jyācī //1571–2//}
\]

After becoming one with Brahma, having completed right or wrong actions, I will worship Him with boundless devotion.

The river Ganges goes to serve the ocean but becomes the ocean. Similarly you give the devotee a share of Yourself.

(Jīśv. 18.1571–2; my translation)

Consequently, the ‘householder’ audience is urged to accept that one can practice yoga without renouncing a life of social activity but that all actions, like growing rice, must be performed disinterestedly. The Jñāneśvarī, following the Bhagavadgītā, thus reinterprets the Vedic understanding of karman to emphasise that one can perform action disinterestedly but with devotion and still attain the goal of union with Brahman (see Malinar 2007:88, 104, 228–230). The significance of this message for the Vārkarī sampradāya is emphasised by Pande who states that it is now a precept of the sampradāya that all householder duties are to be performed with non-attachment (2008:507).

While the Jñāneśvarī may have been transmitted to a burgeoning bhakti community of socially active Marathi-speakers, Devy observes that the Jñāneśvarī had a specific audience at its time of composition in the form of the scribe Saccidānanda (1998:47; see Abhayanananda 1994:51ff). The final verse of the Jñāneśvarī and an abhaṅga attributed to Janābāī record Saccidānanda as Jñāneśvar’s scribe:
in śake 1212 [1290 C.E] Jñāneśvar composed this commentary and Saccidanandabhābā was his reverent scribe’ (Jñśv 18.1899) and ‘Jñāneśvar’s abhaṅgas were verbalised, Cidānanda Bhābā wrote them down’ (Janābāḥ abhaṅga 271.1, SSG 1:743). This version of the Jñāneśvarī is however not available. The closest redaction was produced by sant Eknāth who collected and collated all the available versions to create a ‘corrected’ edition of the Jñāneśvarī in about 1584 C.E., which is regarded as the most authoritative edition of the text.

The initial version of the Jñāneśvarī was probably a palm-leaf manuscript known as a pothī. The pothī, a term derived from the Sanskrit pustaka, was employed for ritual purposes and to preserve Sanskrit religious texts. Novetzke argues that a pothī ‘marks a text with superior cultural capital in the world of “higher learning” in Marathi’ that serves “private” or elite memory, the literate, perhaps courtly archive, as against public memory, an open, lightly mediated, and often nonliterate archive—the domain of the bada’ (2008:101). According to Novetzke (2008:101) the Jñāneśvarī is considered a pothī and is honoured in the manner of Sanskrit and ‘classical’ manuscripts. Significantly, this veneration occurs despite the fact that Jñāneśvar rejects Sanskrit in favour of Marathi throughout the Jñāneśvarī.

Consonant with J.Z. Smith’s argument that canon is a cultural process overcoming limitation by ingenuity (1982:52), Devy argues that ‘the procedure of sect-formation involves a self-limiting act’ as sects are formed around totems that symbolise the questions being raised. Thus, Devy argues that the Jñāneśvarī was adopted by the Vārkarī sampradāya as ‘the most sacred totem’ of the radical stance posed by Jñāneśvar and later sants but that subsequently the Jñāneśvarī ‘ceased to appeal to the rational side of the Vārkarīs’ (1998:53). Devy’s argument therefore suggests that communal dissension, like gender attribution as I will argue, became relatively unimportant once the sampradāya had been discursively constructed in opposition to Sanskrit and Brahmanical orthodoxy through texts like the Jñāneśvarī.

The Jñāneśvarī is generally considered to contain no specific mention of the Vārkarī sampradāya, Viṭṭhal or Viṭṭhal-bhakti (see Ranade 2003:40–42; Bhagwat 1989:xxii; Kiehnle 2008:101).

11 शके बाराशते बररोतरे। तै टीका केली जानेवरे। सिविदानंदबाबा आदरे। लेखकु जाहला ।।१८९९।। Śake bārāśatẽ bararottarẽ / taĩ ċīkæ kēlĩ jñāneśvarẽ / saccidanandabābā ādarẽ / lekhaku jāhalā //1899//

12 जनेश्वर अभंग बोलले उय शब्द। सिविदानंद बाबा लिङ्गि स्त्रीस ।। Jñāneśvara abhaṅga bolile jyā sabda / vidānanda bābā liṅga śtyās // Jñāneśvara abhaṅga bolile jyā sabda / saccidananda bābā liṅga śtyās //

13 The oldest printed text of the Jñāneśvarī is probably that of V.K. Rājavaḍe (1909), which has been reprinted by the Government of Maharashtra on several occasions (see Tulpule 1979:330n.108; Devy 1998:174.7.n.1) but there are also later editions by Bhide (1928), Daṇḍekar (1953) and Godbole (1977).


16 Plate 5 (above) shows copies of the Jñāneśvarī wrapped in saffron.

However, a connection between the Jñāneśvarī and the Vārkarī sampradāya exists due to the fact that the Jñāneśvarī is a Marathi commentary upon the Bhagavadgītā, a text that is considered to be a locus of bhakti. Moreover, the Jñāneśvarī has an important role in the Vārkarī sampradāya as a sacred text:

> It is a holy scripture...a holy book...that people follow. The Jñāneśvarī is intuition and intuition is godly... The words are appealing and because the words are appealing lakhs of people read it and follow it. If it was not appealing, if they had [not] found happiness in it they would have kept it aside...but they get something from it...So this Jñāneśvarī, we feel that guru Maulī is talking to us and...through such songs we sometimes get the answer to our questions. It is not a story, it is not history, it is what he felt about God, the world, what change he passed through and that is more important. In looking at the words of the saints we feel they are talking to us as a letter from a mother or father...

(Baba Maharaj Satarkar, personal communication, 10th December 2004)

Several of my informants told me that they ‘read’ the Jñāneśvarī every day. Baba Maharaj’s granddaughter told me that she read some verses daily and said that if one read three pages a day one could finish reading the Jñāneśvarī in a year beginning and ending on Jñāneśvar jayantī (personal communication, 10th December 2004). Kayalabai Satpune told me her brother Dattatreya Rasne had read the Jñāneśvarī from childhood, and a lady in the group with Satpune and Rasne told me: ‘First you say the Haripāṭh, then you water the tulasī, then you say the Jñāneśvarī and then you eat’ (Personal communications, 3rd January 2005). This daily recitation of Jñāneśvarī is known as svādhyāya and forms part of the daily sādhana of Vārkarīs (Pande 2008:507; Bhave 1994; Klostermaier 1994:14). There is also a pārāyaṇa of the Jñāneśvarī before the āṣāḍhī vārī:

> Pārāyaṇa...goes on for seven days and every day the Jñāneśvarī is read for three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening. During the evening some part of it is recited for about an hour and though in this village, called Abhehpuri [near Wai, Satara district], it was children in the age group of seven to twelve, in other villages it could also be adults [who recited the Jñāneśvarī].

(J. Rao, Personal communication, 29th July 2011)

The philosophical texts and abhaṅgas attributed to Jñāneśvar also play a role in the Vārkarī sampradāya as they form part of the Vārkarī ‘liturgy’ (see Deleury 1994: 89–90, 94, 97–98, 145; Jones 2009:10ff). The Amṛtānubhava is the subject of controversy regarding its date, authorship and content but is nonetheless considered ‘the epitome of Marathi philosophic discourse’ according to Garg (1992:396). Primarily the Amṛtānubhava advocates advaita bhakti and presents the author’s theory of cidvilāsa ‘the

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18 Jñāneśvar’s 743rd birthday was celebrated on the 1st June 2014.

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complete absence of duality and the absolute oneness of the creator and creation’ (Datta 2005:1849).20

The Cāṅgadeva Pāsaṣṭī is regarded as a distillation of the Amṛtānubhava and the quintessence of Jñāneśvar’s philosophy (Bahirat 1993:114).21 The letter is formed of sixty-five (pāsaṣṭa) verses that deliver advaita philosophical advice to the Ṣaṭṭha yogī Cāṅgadev (Bahirat 1996:18; Ranade 2003:45; Datta 2005:154–55).22 Mokashi describes how four Vārkarīs—who met in a shop every Wednesday afternoon and ‘read’ works like the Jñāneśvarī, Amṛtānubhava or Cāṅgadev Pāsaṣṭī over a period of twenty years—did not really comprehend the Amṛtānubhava but lost themselves in the melody and in murmuring the words (1982:6, 11–17). Similarly many Vārkarīs learn the Haripāṭh by heart even if they do not fully comprehend its meaning due to its use of old Marathi (Jones 2009:108; Nemade 1981; Paniker 1997:351).

The Haripāṭh is a group of about twenty-nine popular abhaṅgas extolling nāmasmaranaṇa and satsaṅg that is sometimes regarded as the Vārkarī ‘creed’ (Kiehnle 2005:201, 1992:128, 1997b:10).23 The recitation of the Haripāṭh occurs during the vārī and communal bhajan sessions but, as I have already mentioned, it also forms part of many Vārkarīs’ daily sādhana (Kiehnle 1997b:10, 52; Jones 2009:107, 129; Deleury 1994:97–99). The Amṛtānubhava, Cāṅgadev Pāsaṣṭī and Haripāṭh all contain quotidian imagery and suggestions of the householder life but they say nothing specific about leading a life of disinterested action. It is therefore likely that their position in the sampradāya is due to their connection with the author of the Jñāneśvarī, the fact that the Amṛtānubhava and Cāṅgadev Pāsaṣṭī relate advaita bhakti and that the Haripāṭh extols nāmasmaranaṇa, a theme that I will discuss further in Chapter Five.

Significantly, while all the texts mentioned above exist in textual form they operate in an oral and performative medium (see Jones 2009:136–7). Devy maintains that for Jñāneśvar literature was performative and that literature was ‘the simultaneity of speech and writing, Sanskrit and Prakrit, orality and textuality’ (1998:50–51). Furthermore, both Devy and Lele concur that such literature is inseparable from the community within which it circulates. The Jñāneśvarī can therefore be viewed as transmitting the Bhagavadgītā to a community of socially active, ‘householder’, Marathi-speakers and discursively

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20 See Bahirat 1998: xii, 18ff; Pande 2008:553–554 and Abhayananda 2000:111–218. Like the Jñāneśvarī the Amṛtānubhava and Cāṅgadev Pāsaṣṭī are in the ovī metre of three and half feet (see Janābāī abhaṅga 195, Appendix B).
constructing that community over a period of seven hundred years. Jñāneśvar’s use of Marathi, the ovī metre, and his integration of speech and writing may be regarded as ingenuity or charismatic innovation for the reasons sketched above. The Jñāneśvarī can certainly be considered ‘canonical’ because it is a Marathi text, transmitted and recalled in an oral medium, expounding karma yoga and bhakti, which has become a ‘sacred totem’ that plays a significant role in the sampradāya as one of the prasthānatraya. However, other texts operate in a similar manner within the sampradāya.

2.2. Eknāth and the Eknāthī Bhāgavata

The legacy of Eknāth is predominantly a literary one as he is remembered as a ‘conduit for the [Sanskrit] epics into Marathi’ and as ‘an editor and preserver of important textual sources’ according to Novetzke (2008: 123,142). Eknāth created a corrected edition of the Jñāneśvarī in about 1584 C.E., as mentioned above, which Tulpule maintains is the most authoritative edition of the text (1979:359). Novetzke emphasises that Eknāth’s ‘text-critical endeavour is unique among the Maharashtrian Vārkarī sants and…among bhakti figures in general’ (2008:143). Novetzke’s observation ties in with Devy’s statement that Eknāth’s edition of the Jñāneśvarī ‘which forbade any interpolation in the text as taboo, is the high watermark of the formation of the sect’ (1998:55). It is probably due to this discursive endeavour, which re-established Jñāneśvar’s public remembrance, that Eknāth gained prominence in public memory. Eknāth re-established Jñāneśvar’s public memory by rediscovering the site of Jñāneśvar’s samādhi in Alandi and renovating the tomb,24 and thus initiating the yearly commemoration of Jñāneśvar’s samādhi during the kārttikī vārī. Consequently, Eknāth regenerated the Vārkarī sampradāya due to the ‘initiation of a physical site and text as loci of public memory’ argues Novetzke (2008:144; see Zelliot 1987a:91).

Like Jñāneśvar, Eknāth insisted on using Marathi rather than Sanskrit for his compositions even though he was a Brahman scholar (Tulpule 1979:358; Zelliot 1987a:91) and asked, ‘If Sanskrit was created by God, was Prakrit [Marathi] born of thieves?’ (EB 1.129, Pāṅgārkar 1925:6; Tulpule 1979:358; Tagare 1993:11).25 In his first work, the Cautḥślokī Bhāgavata, Eknāth said that his guru Janārdan had told him to put the mystic teachings into the common language (deśabhāṣa) of the people (CB 1021; see Abbott 1927:242) and that he had woven a ghoṅgāḍī (rough blanket) in Marathi against the fine shawl of

25 सस्त्रुत-वाणी देवेने केली / तरी प्रकृत काय चोरापासो झाली / असोतु या अभिमानभुली / वृथा त्योली काय काज।।१२९।। Saskṛt-vāṇī devē keli / tarī prākṛta kā corāpāsonī jhalī / asotu yā abhimānavbhulī / vṛthā voḷi kāya kāja //129//
Eknāth, again like Jñāneśvar, thus acted as a bridge between elite Sanskrit and the vernacular by rendering Sanskrit devotional texts into Marathi, popularising Vedānta and composing songs intended for the masses. He is also credited with reviving bhakti—Maharashtra had been under Muslim rule for over two-hundred years—and providing a simple, new interpretation of bhakti for ordinary people.

Eknāth’s most important work is considered to be his Marathi commentary on the eleventh book of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (Zelliot 1987:95; Tagare 1993:12; Christof 2003:62). This book contains a philosophical discourse of over twenty chapters spoken by Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava known as the Uddhava Gītā. The twenty-ninth chapter presents Kṛṣṇa’s ultimate and final instructions to Uddhava to speak Kṛṣṇa’s teachings on bhakti to all who are devoted ‘even if they be from the śūdra caste, or women’ (BhP 11.29.31; Bryant 2003:1xxxi n.9, 410). Eknāth’s text, begun in Paithan c. 1570 and completed in Varanasi in 1573 C.E., consists of over eighteen thousand oविस (Deshpande 2007:173; Rigopoulos 1993:267). The Eknāthī Bhāgavata is regarded as one of the philosophical foundations for the Vārkarī sampradāya, like the Jñāneśvarī and Amṛtānubhava, as it outlines both advaita and bhakti. The text accepts Brahman as the only existent and the world, a manifestation of māyā, as unreal. Jīva and śiva/Brahman are undifferentiated (EB 11.164–205, 22.111–113) and therefore the bondage of the soul is an illusion (EB 11.29–32). The Eknāthī Bhāgavata also explains navadhā bhakti and outlines the means for attaining spiritual realisation (Tagare 1993:12–16; Ranade 2003:232; Abbott 1927:xxi–xxii; Rigopoulos 1993:267).

However, in contrast to the Sanskrit text, the Eknāthī Bhāgavata is regarded as a work of ‘stern morality’ (Zelliot 1981:145). Skyhawk argues that Eknāth’s writings are about the methodical practice of

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26 The mudrikā employed in the compositions attributed to Eknāth—‘Ekā Janārdan’—combines Eknāth’s name with Janārdan, the name of his guru and of God (Zelliot 1987:96; Rigopoulos 1998:141). Eknāth may have been connected to Dattātreya and the Sūfis through his guru Janārdan (Rigopoulos 1998:135–168; see Skyhawk 1992) as Janārdan may have been part of the Sijrā-i-kādri Sūfi order (Tulpule 1979:353) but this is disputed (Novetzke 2008:76, 259n.2). Eknāth is credited with composing over four thousand abhaṅgas in Marathi and Hindi (Tagare 1993:39) as well as some verses in Kannada and Telegu (Deshpande 2007:172–173). Eknāth is also credited with composing at least three hundred bhārūḍs in which non-orthodox and low-status characters are used to carry the bhakti message (Zelliot 1981:145, 1987:91, 97; Deshpande 2007:171; Tulpule 1979:356–7), which suggests that Eknāth wanted to indorse the lowly and/or persuade them to follow the bhakti-marga (Tagare 1993:45). For more on the bhārūḍs see Zelliot (1981, 1982 and 1987a). The bhārūḍ continues to be one of the most popular forms of folk art in rural Maharashtra, as I saw when I attended a bhārūḍ performance (September 2005) at Baner near Pune, and is an important part of annual fairs and festivals, Jñāneśvarī pārāyaṇa or Tukārāma gāthā pārāyaṇa (‘Bharud’ 2009; Sangeetha 2011).


bhakti-yoga and that he therefore attempts to ‘create a feeling of disgust with sensual enjoyments…[and] to intensify the feeling of bhakti for and intense contemplation of the divine’ (1983:343–44). Consequently, Eknāth developed the notion of disinterested action (karma yoga) to include asceticism-in-marriage so as to deter the grhastha-sādhaka from attachment to sexual stimulation,\(^{31}\) encourage vairāgya and direct the grhastha-sādhaka toward liberation via means like harikīrtan (EB.7.646; Skyhawk 1983:344, 346ff; see Morwanchikar 1985:63).\(^{32}\) In this context, Eknāth, like Tukārām, presented women as temptresses and distractions from the path of vairāgya (EB 7. 119–122, 126, 130–31, 241–244.).\(^{33}\) This negative portrayal of women may be interpreted as representing patriarchal and orthodox views but it also highlights what is an important feature of the historical construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a whole, which is the necessity of negotiating the tension between sannyāsa and grhastha. By promoting asceticism-in-marriage Eknāth proposed an operational median between a radical form of vairāgya and the kind of vairāgya which allows for worldly demands to be fulfilled (see Horstmann 2001:235–236). Moreover, Eknāth’s promotion of asceticism-in-marriage demonstrates Laine’s assertion that bhakti is mixed up with renunciation (1999:130). Nonetheless, Eknāth was clearly propagating a householder life, he himself was married and the father of children, and as Kiehnle observes the Vārkarī sampradāya has advocated the householder life ever since the time of Eknāth (1997a:25).

Eknāth, like Jñāneśvar before him, acted as a hermeneute and interpreted a significant Sanskrit bhakti text into Marathi, which has played an important role in forming the sampradāya discursively. Skyhawk indicates that the language of the text appears to follow archaic Marathi as it has few Arabic, Persian or Hindustani words (1992:68). Skyhawk suggests that the absence of such words might be due to Eknāth responding to the complaint, supposedly by the pandits at Varanasi, that he was polluting a sacred text like the Bhāgavata with a Marathi commentary (1992:74). This would mean that Eknāth used a ‘pure’ or Sanskrit form of Marathi to comply with the pandits request. However, caritra suggests that in the end the text was honoured by the pandits (BLM 21.37–22.44; Abbott 1927:173–193),\(^{34}\) which implies that Mahīpati wanted the text to be regarded as authorised by Brahmanical orthodoxy in the manner of a Sanskrit text. The composition of the Eknāthī Bhāgavata in old Marathi may also be connected to the

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\(^{31}\) Literally nirājja ‘shameless or immodest’ behaviour.

\(^{32}\) कलियुगीं सुगम साधन। न लगे योग त्याग दान। किरिता निर्लाज्ज इरिकेतन। चारि मृक्ति घरण बंदिंती।[EB.646]

kaliyugīṁ sugamā sādhana / na lage yoga tyāga dāna / kārīta nirājja harikīrtaṇa / cāri mukti vanditī //


revival of bhakti in Maharashtra. Eknāth, like Jñāneśvar, provided a new interpretation of an important bhakti text but Eknāth also re-established a connection with the beginnings of the Vārkarī sampradāya by using old Marathi. It is this use of Marathi, the literate ovī and the exposition on bhakti that probably accounts for the Eknāthī Bhāgavata’s position as prasthānatraya. However, there are other works by Eknāth that are more accessible and more popular than the Eknāthī Bhāgavata.

2.2.i. The Rukmiṇī Svayamvara and Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa

The Rukmiṇī Svayamvara ‘Rukmiṇī’s self-choice’ (c.1571) describes a ‘romantic episode’ in the life of Kṛṣṇa (Tagare 1993:20). It relates Rukmiṇī being attracted to Kṛṣṇa, the abduction of Rukmiṇī by Kṛṣṇa and their subsequent marriage (Abbott 1927:xxiv–xxv). Like the Amṛtānubhava, the narrative poem is interpreted as an allegory for the union of jīva and śiva with Rukmiṇī as a bhakta and Kṛṣṇa the Ultimate Reality (RS 18.73). The text is said, by Tulpule to be more popular than Eknāth’s Bhāgavata (1979:355), which may be due to the Maharashtrian, Brahman and sixteenth-century flavour of Eknāth’s story. Although Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa were kṣatriyas the marriage-ceremony presented is a deśastha Brahman one; the marriage-feast is a vegetarian one, thus supporting the Vārkarī precept; the food prepared is Maharashtrian, and Rukmiṇī is advised to perform menial housework like the newly married girls of the period (Tagare 1993:23–24; Abbott 1927:xxiv–xxv). It may be tempting to think that the Brahman character of the marriage ceremony indicates an attempt Brahmanise the sampradāya and while this is a distinct possibility it seems more likely that Eknāth was attempting to give Kṛṣṇa, as the deity, the highest social status possible. It seems plausible to me that the enduring popularity of the text is due to the householder nature of the story, as it is said that reading the text can solve marriage related problems (‘Marriage getting delayed’) and help girls of marriageable age in Maharashtra get a good husband (TNN 2001). However, the popularity of the Rukmiṇī Svayamvara may also be due to the fact that it is a feature of Vārkarī kīrtan as it is regarded as having been composed for performance like Eknāth’s final and incomplete work (see Novetzke 2005a:131n.4).

The Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa is considered Eknāth’s second most meritorious work after the Eknāthī Bhāgavata according to Ranade (2003:217). Eknāth is thought to have composed 25,000 ovīs before his death (c.1599) and his disciple Gāvabā to have completed the work with the addition of about

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36 See also Abbott 1927:xvi; Deshpande 2007:172 and Tagare 1993:20.
Eknāth’s rendition of the story of Rāma is largely based on two Sanskrit texts, the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki (c. 100 BCE–100 CE) and the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa (c.1300–1600 CE), although it also contains material from other texts (Abbott 1927:xxvi; Tulpule 1991:141). Tagare states the work was composed as a purāṇa, which would have meant that it was delivered as a kathā or pravacana, to encourage the semi-literate or illiterate to follow the bhaktimarga. Tagare submits that Eknāth was concerned with presenting the inherent meaning (bhāvārtha) of the Rāma story and offering moral and spiritual guidance through his discursive narration (1993:28, 30). However, Tulpule finds there is more to the text. Firstly, it is composed in Marathi, which gives the Sanskrit story a regional dimension and allows the text to be broadly disseminated—a criterion that also applies to the Jñāneśvarī and Eknāthī Bhāgavata. Secondly, it references contemporary history as the Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa narrates the conflict between Rāma and Rāvaṇa from a sixteenth-century perspective; thirdly, the story of Rāma is augmented with philosophical and political metaphors, and fourthly it employs a socio-political approach (1979: 356; 1991). The Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa was written ‘to inspire hope in a demoralised society’ because the socio-political situation in the region had worsened after the fall of the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar in 1565 C.E. according to Tagare (1993:25). Pollock agrees that in the text Rama represents righteousness and divine kingship while Rāvaṇa, the outsider and invader, is represented as tyrannical and ‘deviant’ due to his polygyny. Consequently, Rāvaṇa represents ‘a fully demonized Other’ who is be condemned (1993: 282–84, 286). Rāvaṇa may therefore be interpreted as the Muslim or as one who leads people away from righteousness, particularly as the fall of Vijayanagar may have instituted a period of ‘defensive polemics’ towards Muslims according to Talbot (1995:705, 716). The Rāmāyaṇa ‘with its demonizing imaginary’ therefore offers ‘a conceptual instrument for the utter dichotomization of the enemy’ (Pollock 1993:283). The purpose of the incarnation of Rāma was to liberate those enslaved by Rāvaṇa and to establish rāma-rājya according to Tulpule (1991:144–46). Consequently, Eknāth may have been portraying ‘a hero capable of setting the subject[ed] people free’ as Tagare suggests but whether Eknāth was suggesting freedom from Muslim rule remains open to interpretation (1993:25). Eknāth may however be viewed as renewing the meaning of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa in response to the spiritual requirements of a ‘changed society’ (see von Stietencron 2003:16–17). The Bhāvārtha

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38 Tulpule suggests that the Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa was a forerunner to the two Rāmāyaṇas by Smartha Ramdas (1991:151). Ramdas promoted mahārāṣtra dharma, which Laine describes as ‘a sort of religious complement to the political-military activism of Shivaji’ (2003:10, 108n.7; see Tulpule 1979:395). Laine suggests that Shivaji was regarded as a hero comparable to Rāma by killing Afzal Khan in 1659 (2003:20).
Rāmāyaṇa is certainly a popular text, which Tulpule believes is due to its combination of ‘literary beauty, spiritual depth and socio-political consciousness’ (1979:356; see Deshpande 2007:172; Sontheimer 1991:116). However, Novetzke argues that its popularity may be due to its delivery in performance (2008:143). This performative aspect suggests that the Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa fits the rāmalīlā genre that is prevalent across much of India and south-east Asia. However, as the popularity of the Rukmiṇī Svayaṃvara also seems connected to its delivery in performance this suggests that the oral dissemination of literary works among the Vārkarīs did not cease once the works were textualised, thus highlighting the importance of orality and performance for the Vārkarī sampradāya (see Jones 2009:132).

The texts I have discussed were primarily composed in the literary ovī metre and like the Jñāneśvarī, the Eknāthī Bhāgavata and Bhāvārtha Ramayana are regarded as pothīs and thus honoured in the manner of Sanskrit and classical texts (see Kamath 1991:254, 276). However, the Vārkarī sampradāya also has a non-literate archive which was originally transmitted through oral performance before becoming textualised. This archive, primarily consisting of abhaṅgas attributed to the Vārkarī sants, underpins the Vārkarī tradition and forms an essential part of the Vārkarī corpus (see Jones 2009:131–32) but unlike the Jñāneśvarī and Eknāthī Bhāgavata most of these compositions are not classified as prasthānatrayī.

2.3. The abhaṅgas of the Vārkarī sants

The abhaṅga is an elongation of the folk ovī, as mentioned above, and is the form in which the poet-sants of the Vārkarī sampradāya chose to compose most of their songs (Kiehnle 1997a:8, 41ff; Jones 2009:123).39 The author of an abhaṅga is usually identified by the mudra, mudrikā or nāmamudrā that tends to employ the third person and usually appears in the last line of the abhaṅga (see Appendix B). The mudrikā operates as a form of oral copyright and is intended to put a seal of authorship and authority on the composition.40 At the end of the thirteenth century the term abhaṅga was used in Marathi for the mudrikā and eventually came to apply to the whole composition. An abhaṅga attributed to Nāmdev suggests that the term abhaṅga might refer to a ‘signature’ because ‘there is no break/difference (bhaṅga) between metre and musical rhythm’ (abhaṅga 2085.1–2, SSG 1:600; Kiehnle 1999b:36, 43; Tulpule

39 For the other forms of oral expression employed by the Vārkarīs see Nemade (1981:120–121)
Tulpule, on the other hand, suggests that an *abhaṅga* is inviolable because it has been sealed with an (unbreakable) *mudrikā* (1966:13, 1967:20, 1969:52–3). However, as I outlined in the Introduction, a composition with a name or *mudrikā* cannot be understood as the work of a specific individual and must therefore be regarded as attributed words or speech that were written and codified sometime after initial composition. The attribution of a name ascribes gender and sometimes caste so this designation must be viewed with suspicion. Moreover, it is my contention that the utilisation of gender attribution, through a *mudrikā*, is one of the primary means through which the Vārkarī *sampradāya* has been discursively constructed as a householder tradition.

Although the *nāmamudrā* may symbolise (*mudrā*) a composer’s name (*nāma*) it also symbolises a genre of corporate authorship. There are several possible reasons why a poet ‘signed’ his or her compositions with the *nāmamudrā* of another as Novetzke, Hawley, and Kiehnle propose: s/he wanted to signal s/he was composing a song in the style of a particular poet (Novetzke 2008:136); s/he ‘wanted to be perceived as singing compositions of some importance and pedigree’; s/he wanted to pay homage to a particular poet and/or *sant* ‘by affixing to a poem the name of the poet who inspired it’; s/he wanted to evoke a devotional mood or theme associated with a particular poet or s/he felt a lack of authority so imbedded their composition with their poetic preceptor (Hawley 1988:274–75, 287). Furthermore, a poet may just have been quoting another poet, for example Nāmdev may have said ‘Jñānadeva says’, and this was later understood as a composition by Jñāneśvar (Kiehnle 1992:127).

The multiplicity of authorship and the matter of attribution is an issue associated with many *bhakti* figures. For example, the author of the *Jñāneśvarī*, *Cāṅgadeva Pāsaṣṭī* and *Amṛtānubhava* is held to be different from the author of the *abhaṅgas* attributed to Jñānadev/Jñāneśvar by Bhāradvāj (1931), W.B. Patwardhan (1924) and Vaudeville (1969) but this view is refuted by Bhingārkar (1900), Ranade (1993), Gajendragadkar (1934), P.N. Joshi (1977), Tulpule (1979) and the Vārkarī community (Kiehnle 1997b:3). There are held to be at least four Nāmas by Novetzke (2008:136ff), while Tagare states that there were seven authors who used the *mudrikā* ‘Ekā-Janārdan’ (1993:4; see Tulpule 1979:359).

For Novetzke composing in another’s name suggests ‘a system of continuity that rests with processes of approximation and mimesis, diverging from a direct correspondence between name and

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41 नःखय मातृकांची संख्या। सोळा अक्षरेन नेटूक्या। | 1 | समचरणी अभंग। नवहे ताळ छंदोभंग। | 2 | Mukhya mātṛkāṅci sanśhyā / soḷā akṣarē netukyā//1// samacaraṇī abhaṅga / navhe tāḷa chaṅdobhaṅga//2//


44 See also see Callewaert 1989:12 and Tulpule 1979:335.
authorship’ (2008:136). Subsequently, Novetzke suggests that there are two ideas of authorship at work in the practice of attribution. Firstly, there is that of the sole author who composes in his or her own name and whose biography establishes the veracity of the text (2008:153). This view of biography is problematic, as I will discuss below, as a biography is usually a representation of the life of a bhakta attributed with compositions by a later biographer rather than a historically accurate text. Secondly, Novetzke argues that authorship is a process with ‘several kinds of authors operating at once in a chain of anamnesis, of remembering through imitation with variation’ (2008:137). Novetzke’s contention about remembering through imitation bears a resemblance to J.Z. Smith’s notion of overcoming limitation through ingenuity that I discussed earlier but it also ties in with Hawley’s argument that upholding authorial difference is considered unimportant within the context of bhakti poetry as a name indicates more than an author.

In devotional Hindi poetry, to give an author's name is not so much to denote who said what as to indicate the proper force of an utterance and the context in which it is to be appreciated. The author's name is no mere footnote. It anchors a poem to a life, a personality, even a divinity that gives the poem its proper weight and tone; and it connects it to a network of associations that makes the poem not just a fleeting flash of truth—not just new and lovely—but something that has been heard before and respected, something familiar and beloved. By providing this tie, the signatures in bhakti poems communicate much more than authorship. They lend these poems authority and conviction, and they establish an aura in which the act of listening can be as intense as the speech.

(Hawley 1988:287–88)

There is however another important factor in relation to attribution: the role of the performers and editors in mediating the process of transmitting an authorial tradition. The abhaṅgas would have been composed orally and transmitted by oral recitation, bhajan and kīrtan. The songs would have been sung by kīrtankārs or travelling singers, who picked up songs, shared them with their audience and passed them down from father to son or through the guru-śiṣya paramparā. New songs would have been added to the repertoire until the number of songs grew too large to memorise and so notebooks (bāḍa, vahī) were employed to aid recollection.45 The earliest manuscripts probably had the bāḍas as their source and the extant Hindi manuscripts of the sixteenth and seventeenth century are copies of these early manuscripts according to Callewaert (1989:4). It was handwritten copies like these that were used to compile the editions of the compositions attributed to the Vārkarī bhaktas and sants when the literary recording of songs began in the seventeenth century.46


The Marathi bāḍas appear to have organised on the basis of attributed author and the compiler of an edition would then include as many songs as possible attributed to a particular poet from numerous different sources (Novetzke 2008:107, 109; see also Hawley 1988:274). Consequently, Chitre finds the available versions of Tukārām’s collected poems unsatisfactory because they are ‘a massive jumbled collection of randomly scattered poems of which only a few are clearly linked sequences and thematic units. There is no chronological sequence among them. Nor…is there any attempt to seek thematic coherence beyond the obvious and broad traditional divisions made by each anonymous “editor” of the traditional texts’ (1991:viii). The fact the collections are compiled from the oral tradition of the Vārkarīs and/or copies made from other copies leads Chitre to declare ‘there is no canonical text of Tukaram’s collected works’ only a ‘collated and critically edited’ version (1991:xxiii).

The abhaṅgas attributed to the Vārkarī sants can be found in various abhaṅga gāthās and the Śrīsakalasantagāthā ‘The Glorious Compendium of All the Sants’ (SSG). These anthologies are rooted in the bāḍas of kīrtankārs and thus Novetzke argues that modern printed editions must be viewed as ‘the products of premodern performance traditions’ (2008:109). The SSG seems to follow closely the conventions of thematic grouping of songs present in manuscripts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Chapter Five). Novetzke suggests that Mahīpati and Āvaṭe may have used the same sources as the chronology of the songs in the Āvaṭe edition seem to follow Mahīpati’s chronology in his first section on Nāmdev in the BVJ (2008:54 n.53). One of the most influential anthologies of Nāmdev compositions was produced by the Vārkarī kīrtankār V. Jog (1925) who was one of several eminent kīrtankārs who edited gāthās of Marathi sants. The modern printed gāthās can thus been regarded as inheriting the tradition of the kīrtankār’s handwritten bāda and as transmitting ‘the structure of oral, live performance…through the replication of the contents of old notebooks’ as Novetzke suggests (2008:109–110).

The first version of the Sakaḷa Santa Gāthā was edited by Āvaṭe (1908) and was based on a collection of manuscripts, the Santagāthā, by Nānāmahārāj Sākhare.47 There is scant information regarding the compilation of the SSG under Āvaṭe as neither Āvaṭe or subsequent editors of the SSG have provided information about the selection of songs although it does seem that a convention for grouping the songs by author and then theme was followed. Āvaṭe may have referred to the same sources as the biographer Mahīpati as the chronology of the songs in the SSG appears to correspond to that of Mahīpati

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47 The main gāthā printing is owned by the Āvaṭe/Āvṭe family (Kiehnle 1997b:23).
according to Novetzke (2008:54, 258n53; see Aklujkar 1992:114; 1999:13). The SSG was later edited by Jośī (1923), Dhere (1983), Sākhare (1990a) and Gosāvī (2000, 2005). The SSG is considered the “real” scriptures’ of the Vārkarīs by Vaudeville (1996:215), as ‘near a canon of Marathi sant literature’ by Zelliot and Punekar (2005:48n.6), as ‘almost canonical’ to the Vārkarī tradition by Novetzke (2008:54, 196, 259n.83) and Aklujkar (1999:12), and as lying ‘at the heart of the Varkari tradition’ according to Chitre (quoted in Novetzke 2008:270, n.6) because it contains the compositions attributed to all the sants associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya.

There are numerous reasons why the compositions attributed to the sants might be important to the sampradāya. Firstly, as Pechilis observes ‘their poetry tends to be observational, with images of everyday life and their responses to it, including folklore, as well as the more institutionalized religious images such as God, temple and ritual’ (1999:27). Secondly, as Hawley suggests the words of the poets assess human nature, provide access to God and teach the path to salvation (1987:201, 209) and thirdly, by reading or uttering their compositions the reader or speaker takes part in satsaṅg for as one informant told me ‘In looking at the words of the saints we feel they are talking to us as a letter from a mother or father’. However, anthologies like the SSG are not classified as prasthānatraya by the Vārkarī sampradāya and neither are the compositions of Nāmdev, one of the most important Vārkarī sants.

2.3.i. Nāmdev and Tukārām

Nāmdev, like Jhāneśvar, is considered a foundational figure for the Vārkarī sampradāya, as the Bahinābāī abhaṅga expresses.48 Tukārām, described as the ‘pinnacle’ of the Vārkarī sampradāya in the Bahinābāī abhaṅga, is one of the most popular and well-known santakavis.49 Considering their status as cornerstones of the Vārkarī sampradāya it is important to consider why the compositions attributed to Tukārām and not those attributed to Nāmdev are considered prasthānatrayī.

Both Nāmdev and Tukārām are accepted as having been born in Maharashtra and composing songs in Marathi although there are thousands of songs in various north Indian languages ascribed to Nāmdev as he is also remembered as spreading bhakti in north India (Novetzke 2008:4; Callewaert 1989). Nāmdev and Tukārām are both deemed śūdras—Nāmdev was a śimpī and Tukārām a Kuṇbī and vāṇī—and both are accepted as struggling against caste prejudice and being at odds with Brahmanical

orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{50} Furthermore, Nāmdev and Tukārām are both accepted as popularising bhakti particularly through their performance of kīrtans.\textsuperscript{51} However, Nāmdev is remembered as the first Marathi kīrtankār while Tukārām is primarily remembered as a poet (Jones 2009:132; Novetzke 2008:75, 90, 123, 261n41; Chitre 1991:xviii).\textsuperscript{52} Novetzke argues that it is within kīrtan, ‘in speech and performance, not in literate practices, that Nāmdev’s songs endure’ (2008:79ff; see Deleury 1994:11; Ranade 2003:184; see Nemade 1981:120). Tukārām is remembered as writing his own compositions and as having been compelled to drown them all on the order of his Brahman detractors but miraculously the notebook book is said to have re-emerged after thirteen days. The manuscript is regarded as being in Tukārām’s writing and is referred to as the bhijki vahī or ‘soaked notebook’ (Chitre 1991:xxiii; see Plate 19).\textsuperscript{53}

The visual depictions of Jñāneśvar, Eknāth and Tukārām almost always represent them in conjunction with the texts with which they are associated while Nāmdev is usually depicted holding only a vīṇā as Novetzke argues (2008:76). However, the images in the SSG only support Novetzke’s argument up to the point that Tukārām is depicted with a vīṇā in his right hand and a text before him (see Plate 19). Nāmdev may primarily be remembered as a kīrtankār but on the basis of visual depiction Tukārām is remembered as both a poet and kīrtankār.

\textsuperscript{52} Muktabai Belgaonkar told me that Nāmdev was a pioneer and the first kīrtankār to forward the message [of the Vārkarī sampradāya] through kīrtan (personal communication, 21st June 2006).
Jñāneśvar, Eknāth and Tukārām are all said to have written down their own compositions but Jñāneśvar and Tukārām are also deemed to have had scribes. Although, Jagaṇāḍe’s role was to produce a ‘back-up copy’ of Tukārām’s work according to Novetzke (2008:76). According to Novetzke, Nāmdev is not mentioned as writing or as in partnership with a human scribe (2008:76–79). However, there is an abhaṅga that suggests that Nāmdev’s songs were recorded in vahīs. Nāmā mhaṇe hāti bāṇḍhoniyaḥ vahyā / baise lihāvayā pāṇḍuraṅga, ‘Nama says, “Pāṇḍuraṅga sits down to write, stitching the notebooks [vahyā] with his own hands”’ (abhaṅga 1405.5, SSG 1:506; Novetzke 2008:103). The abhaṅga also depicts Nāmdev as a medium for divine speech. Novetzke argues that Nāmdev is inspired by Sarasvatī and articulates the words she gives him, which are then written down by Pāṇḍuraṅga/Viṭṭhal. Sarasvatī is the goddess of speech, which includes orality and the recitation of sacred texts. Sarasvatī therefore

Plate 19: The Tukārām pothī at Dehu

There are various collections of Tukārām’s compositions—Paṇḍit and Paṇḍit (1869), Tatya (1889), Jog (1925), Bhāve (1919) and Patwardhan (1977–78)—but the standard edition is regarded as the one published for the Government of Maharashtra (Paṇḍit 1869; Lad 1950). The Śrī Tukārāmāṅgāgāthā contains 4607 poems (the SSG contains about 4092) and is a collation of the various recensions of the Tukārām Gāthā based on manuscripts at Dehū, Talegaon, Kadusa and Pandharpur (Ranade 2003:269; Chitre 1999:vii–viii; Aklujkar 1999:12). There are also numerous works that discuss the life and works of Tukārām in Marathi and English: Fraser (1909–1915), Abbott (1926), Kolatkar (1966), Machwe (1977), Engblom (1982b), Chitre (1991) and Omvedt (2003b, 2012).

The title of this verse is निशचय पाहूनि उपजली दयाल निशचय पाहूनि उपजली दयाल/
amalgamates orality and literacy via performance. Novetzke argues that these functions are transferred to Nāmdev in the abhaṅga and may explain why the compositions of a non-literate sant are included in the literate corpus (2008:103–104). This amalgamation of orality, literacy and performance has similarities to Devy’s argument, discussed above in relation to Jñāneśvar, that the Jñāneśvarī represents a simultaneity of speech and writing, and orality and textuality but the difference between Jñāneśvar and Nāmdev is that Nāmdev’s attributed compositions were not written down at the time of composition.

However, the inclusion of Nāmdev and other non-literate poets within the written and printed corpus may also be due to their compositions being exemplary expressions of bhakti and the fact that the poets came to embody bhakti for later interpreters and anthologist (Pechilis 1999:5–7). Nonetheless, Novetzke’s argument that Nāmdev is distanced from literacy due to his primary connection with oral composition and performance is compelling. If Novetzke is right then Nāmdev and the majority of other Vārkaṛī santakavīs and santakaviyatrīs could be distinguished from the ‘literate’ sants. Consequently, the connection with orality and performance may account for why the compositions attributed to Nāmdev and other Vārkaṛī non-literate sants are not classified as prasthānatraya.

There are, of course, a number of possible reasons why the compositions attributed to the poet who signed himself ‘Tukā’ are classed as prasthānatraya. Firstly, Tukārām is regarded as the ‘culmination’ of the tradition that began with Jñāneśvar and as the last of the great bhakti poets.56 This position may be due to Tukārām being a charismatic figure who like Eknāth before him renewed the message of bhakti for a changed society. Secondly, Tukārām’s poems are held as having a ‘modern’ quality not seen with the earlier Vārkaṛī poets due to ‘their subjectivity, their expression of a variety of mixed feelings and experiences, [and] their very individuality’ as Omvedt notes (2012:14–15, 27, and 36).57 Thirdly, the story of the ‘ordeal by water’ (jala divya) can be viewed as vindicating Tukārām’s production of a written text in Marathi and thus contributing to his legendary status. Fourthly, Tukārām expressed the socio-religious aspirations of non-Brahmins and so transformed the Vārkaṛī tradition into an inclusive social movement (see Eaton 2005:136). Fifthly, Tukārām’s use of colloquial speech and his caustic language may have had a wider appeal than the refined language and ideas of sants like Jñāneśvar.58 Finally, Tukārām is said to embody the vīṇā bearer who is the only figure of spiritual

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authority at Vārkarī bhajan sessions (Jones 2009:153, 156). It is therefore probable that the compositions attributed to Tukārām are considered prasthānatraya for numerous reasons including his combination of orality and literacy.

Tukārām’s compositions are regarded as concluding the Vārkarī corpus of devotional poetry, as I mentioned in Chapter One. However, it seems that new songs are still being added to the wider corpus of compositions attributed to the Vārkarī sants. Novetzke relates that the director of the Nāmdev Sevak Mandir in Pandharpur told him that new songs or new versions of Nāmdev songs were recorded and added to their manuscript collection (2008:108–109). This leads Novetzke to declare that ‘there is no sense in which the collection now on hand has been frozen or restricted to the past or that Nāmdev songs do not themselves travel, change, and return anew’ (2008:109). Consequently, one can understand the Nāmdev abhaṅga gāthā, and probably other abhaṅga gāthās, as not fully canonical as it is open to addition and interpretation (see Christof 2003:63). This openness or fluidity might be one reason that the abhaṅga gāthās are not regarded as prasthānatrayī.

The fluid nature of the Nāmdev abhaṅga gāthā may also be related to social memory, the discursive strategy of collective or historical memory I outlined in the Introduction. Novetzke argues that Nāmdev’s public memory ‘travels through time in the media of performance’ (2008:39, 26ff). Moreover, Mukta argues that it is the popular social base which has kept sants like Mīrā alive in social memory because ‘the power of the symbol of Mira’ operates among the social base who form a subordinated community who enunciate their feelings through bhajans. Thus, Mukta suggests that if one wants to explore what sants like Mīrā symbolise to a community one needs to consider the compositions of the sant, in bhajan and kīrtan, within the context of the social base (1994). Consequently, Mukta takes issue with the use of published anthologies by scholars because it disassociates the compositions of poet-sants from ‘the context of an expression which had a popular base’ (1994:32–33, 37–40, 78, 115; see Harlan 1992:214n.15).

While I fully accept Mukta’s assertion that the use of anthologies distances the compositions of the sants from their context of expression, the compositions attributed to sants are now contained within anthologies that inhabit a central position in the Vārkarī literary canon. Jones observes that the compositions, as ‘texts’, are consumed, studied and disseminated by scholars, recording artists and those without official connection to the Vārkarī sampradāya. Moreover, the ‘texts’ are taught in Maharashtrian schools, included in pan-Indian anthologies and distributed nationally. The compositions have thus been
divorced from their performative context and are now viewed as poems rather than songs (2009:133–34). Jones also observes that the treatment of the *abhaṅga* repertoire as literature has influenced the ways in which the Vārkarīs and in particular *kirtankārs* understand and represent themselves. Annotated anthologies are used as sources for songs during rituals and are studied and read by devotees partly because they clarify the old Marathi used in the compositions. Jones argues that the modes that place and re-place the *abhaṅgas* into the canon are distanced from Vārkarī gatherings and rituals that are accessed by insiders. In these gatherings ‘virtuosity and improvisation act to reinvigorate or even transform basic text and musical structure, and the charisma called upon by singers and drummers during these performances replaces the ‘lost’ personal charisma of the sants’. Thus, according to Jones, the Vārkarī liturgy ‘is only fixed in terms of its text’ as the manner in which it can be performed is ‘variable’ (2009:135–6). It is therefore probable that the flexibility and the fluidity of the *abhaṅga gāthās* account for their non-categorisation as *prasthānatrayī* and why scholars have referred to them as ‘almost canonical’. However, the *abhaṅga gāthās* form an important part of the Vārkarī corpus, particularly in textualised from, and this corpus includes compositions attributed to the *santakaviyatrīs*.

### 2.3.ii. The attribution of compositions to the *santakaviyatrīs*

The compositions attributed to the Vārkarī *santakaviyatrīs* are primarily found in the *abhaṅga gāthās* of the male *sants* with whom they are associated and the SSG. The *nāmamudrās* employed in the compositions ascribed to the *santakaviyatrīs* highlight the issue of attribution and multiplicity of authorship that applies to all *bhakti* poets but also draws attention to the inclusion and exclusion of particular poets identified as women within the corpus.

The first *santakaviyatrī* included in the SSG is Muktābāī, whose attributed compositions are also found in the *Jñānadev Gāthā*. The SSG also presents *Sant Muktābāīce aprasiddha abhaṅga* ‘Sant Muktābāī’s un-established *abhaṅga*’ in the addendum; with the addendum suggesting the openness and fluidity of *gāthās*. The Muktābāī compositions in the SSG use the *mudrikā* “Muktāī” for forty of the forty-two verses with ‘Mukta’ being used in the other two. “Muktāī” is a conjunction of *mukta* and āī and implies that a spiritually ‘liberated woman’ is speaking. Kiehnle suggests that the name Muktā may refer to three different figures connected with the Nāth *panth* or the sister of Nivṛtti, Sopān and Jñāneśvar (1997b:5; 1997a). However, the name was probably an unusual one as a Nāmdev *abhaṅga* indicates: *nivṛtti jñāneśvara sopāna muktābāī / hāṃsatī sakaḷahī aikāni nāṃva* ‘the names Nivṛtti, Jñāneśvar, Sopān
and Muktābāī made everyone laugh (Nāmdev abhaṅga 900.5, SSG 1:396). According to Ranade, the names may have been a cause of mirth because they are ‘allegorical representations of the stages of an advancing mystic’ (2003:31; see Kiehnle 1997b:148n.536). The name or term mukta may be understood as ‘the liberated one’ or ‘a pearl’ according to Tulpule (1999:558). However, Kiehnle argues that this does not mean that Muktā was not a real name as within siddha circles ‘adepts were often dubbed in memory of some incident or other characteristic features of their lives’ (1997b:148–149). The tāṭice abhaṅga that are attributed to Muktābāī are not included in the SSG, possibly as they are identified by the signature tāṭī ughaḍā jñāneśvara ‘open the door Jñāneśvar’, but they are found in manuscripts and in the Vārkarī Bhajan Saṅgraha (Daṇḍekar 1980; 130–32, nos.334–344).

The compositions attributed to Goṇāī (Nāmdev’s mother), Rājāī (Nāmdev’s wife), Āūbāī (Nāmdev’s elder sister), Limbāī (Nāmdev’s daughter), Lādāī (Nāmdev’s daughter-in-law) and Janābāī (the maid) appear in the SSG and in various editions of the Nāmdev Gāthā. The compositions attributed to Janābāī have two other sources: Sant Janābāī: caritra va kavya published in Gaṅgākheḍ (supposedly Janābāī’s birthplace) and Gāthāpaṇcak edited by Āvaṭe (1908) and Dhere (1983). There is a separate edition of Janābāī compositions (Janābāī 1983) and a few works on her biography and poetry by Dhere (1960), Ajgaonkar (1967), Irlekar (1981) and Bhiṅgārkar (1989). Bhiṅgārkar includes forty-two compositions which he collected from libraries in Maharashtra and Thanjavur that are not found elsewhere (see Pandharipande 2000:150).

The forty-four compositions grouped together as ‘Sant Goṇāī’s abhaṅgas’ in the SSG use a number of mudrikās. The name ‘Goṇāī’ appears in the mudrikās but so does the name ‘Nāma’—Nāma mhaṇe māte ‘Nāma says “Mother”’ (3) and Nāma mhaṇe ‘Nāma says’ (8)—thereby reflecting the conversational nature of these abhaṅgas but also raising the issue of ascription. The most frequent mudrikā is Goṇāī mhaṇe ‘Goṇāī says’, which appears twenty-one times but the name ‘Goṇāī’ also appears in a mudrikā a further six times. The compositions attributed to Rājāī are, like those of Goṇāī, conversational so the group includes verses with the mudrikā ‘Nāma mhaṇe’ (3). However, the name ‘Rājāī’ appears in six compositions; once in Rājāī mhaṇe ‘Rājāī says’ and once in nāmyācī Rājāī ‘Nāma’s Rājāī’. The connection to Nāmdev is also found in the mudrikā of the compositions attributed to Āūbāī

59 The verse begins caitanyaśrama sanyāsī jhāle grhavāśī.
61 For editions of the Nāmdev Gāthā see Gondhālekhar (1896), Gharat (1894), Bhave (1919), Āvaṭe (1908; 1953), Jog (1957), Subandha (1960), Babar (1970) and Sākhare (1990a). For a detailed list of all the works pertaining to Nāmdev up until 1987 see Callewaert (1989).
and Limbāī: nāmayācī bahiṇa āūbāī ‘Nāma’s sister Āūbāī’ and nāmayācī lekī limāī mhaṇe ‘says Nāmdev’s daughter Limbāī’. However, the mudrikā for Nāmdev’s supposed daughter-in-law just reads Lāḍāī mhaṇe ‘Lāḍāī says’, which may be due to the description of the samādhi of Nāmdev and his family in the Lāḍāī abhaṅga. The eight abhaṅgas attributed to Nāgarī, Nāmdev’s niece, use the mudra ‘Nāgī’ (Dhere 1977:15; Shrotriya 1992).

The Janābāī compositions have the largest number of mudrikās of all the santakaviyatrīs, which is unsurprising considering the size of the Janābāī corpus. The SSG has 347 compositions with an additional forty-three compositions in the addendum under the title Sant Janābāīce aprakāśita abhaṅga sanhītā (‘the collection of sant Janābāī’s unpublished abhaṅgas’). The mudrikās that appear most frequently are janī mhaṇe ‘Janī says’ (154), dāsī janī ‘servant Janī’ (86) and nāmyācī janī ‘Nāma’s Janī’ (76). However, there is some crossover between these mudrikās such as mhaṇe nāmyācī dāsī ‘says Nāma’s servant’ (36, 123, 158, 253 and 311); mhaṇe nāmyācī janī ‘says Nāma’s Janī’ (152, 204, 312); janī nāmyācī dāsī ‘Janī, Nāma’s servant’ (182); mhaṇe dāsī janī nāmyācī ‘says Nāma’s servant Janī’ (219) or mhaṇe janī dāsī nāmyācī ‘says Janī, Nāmdev’s servant’ (161). Although authors like Ramaswamy (2007:216), Vanita (2005:95) and Aklujkar (1999:25) suggest the Janābāī compositions use a mudrikā that references Nāmdev this is by no means the case. Most of the other mudrikās in the Janābāī corpus employ the name ‘Janī’—a few refer to Puṇḍalīk (18), Cakrapāṇī (22), deva (62, 73) or other figures—but do not specifically connect Janī and Nāmdev. The name Janī may derive from the Sanskrit term janī connoting ‘woman’ or ‘wife’ (Monier Williams 2008) or the Marathi term jāṇī connoting a ‘knowledgeable woman’ (Tulpule 1999:256). Consequently, the mudrikā ‘Janī’ could be taken to refer to any woman or any person, which implies there may have been multiple ‘Janīs’ composing songs that have been ascribed to Janābāī the servant of Nāmdev. The size of the Janābāī corpus and the enormous variety of mudrikās, in comparison to the corpus and mudrikās attributed to other santakaviyatrīs clearly suggests attribution.

The abhaṅgas ascribed to Soyarābāī—like those of Goṇāī, Rājāī and Janābāī—reference a man. The most frequently employed mudrikās in the sixty-two compositions found in the SSG are mhaṇatase mahārī cokhyācī (26) and mhaṇe cokhyācī mahārī (16) both of which translate as ‘says Cokhā’s mahārī’.
These mudrikās both connect the author/Soyarābāī with her husband Cokhāmeḷā but they also efface the identity of the author because mahārī can mean ‘a Mahār woman’ or ‘the wife of a Mahār’. These mudrikās can be interpreted as the author honouring the husband as a pativratā but they can also be interpreted as a form of muteness or even resistance to the bhakti teachings that the author/Soyarā hears. The mudrikā ‘says the Mahārī of Cokhā’ is the only one to which Zelliot really refers in her work on Soyarābāī (2005:158–160, 164–65; 1999:421). This mudrikā is the ‘suffix’ applicable to the Soyarā compositions according to Ramaswamy (2007:216). However, there are also fifteen abhaṅgas with the signature Soyarā mhaṇe ‘Soyarā says’ and six with the name ‘Soyarā’. This could suggest that either different persons composed the songs in the name of Soyarā or that Cokhāmeḷā’s wife ‘signed’ her compositions in different ways, perhaps depending on their content or her mood. However, asserting ‘Soyarā says’ could also signal the author/Soyarā’s desire for autonomy and agency and/or be an expression of that agency. In contrast, twenty of the twenty-four abhaṅgas ascribed to Nirmaḷā—supposedly Soyarā’s sister-in-law—in the SSG are signed Nirmaḷā mhaṇe ‘Nirmaḷā says’. The Nirmaḷā compositions, unlike those attributed to Soyarā, never refer to her supposed husband Banka (who is thought to have been Soyarā’s brother) but they do refer to her brother Cokhāmeḷā in two nāmamudrās: mhaṇatase bahiṇa cokhiyācī ‘says Cokhā’s sister’ (16) and mahādvārī cokhā tyācī bahiṇa, ghāla loṭāṅgaṇa ubhayatā ‘Cokhā’s sister rolls over and over in prostration to the door [of the temple]’ (24).

The gender attribution through the use of the nāmamudrās ‘Soyarā says’ or ‘Nirmaḷā says’ could be functioning to signal the presence of women as part of the discursive strategy to secure the householder credentials of the Vārkarī sampradāya.

All the women mentioned so far are connected with a male sant in some form. However, Kānhopātrā was not part of a family group or in a relationship with a guru as far as one can guess. The Kānhopātrā compositions use a variety of nāmamudrās but the name ‘Kānhopātrā’ appears in all twenty-three abhaṅgas found in the SSG. However, three verses also use the word dāsī in connection with Kānhopātrā—for example tujhī kānhopātrā dāsī ‘your servant Kānhopātrā’—and two compositions also include the word mhaṇe ‘says’. The term kānho connotes ‘Kṛṣṇa’ (Tulpule 1999:149) while pātra connotes ‘a vessel’,65 ‘actor’ (Tulpule 1999:431; Monier Williams 2008), ‘a respectable person’ (Tulpule 1999:431), a ‘competent person; an adept in, a master of’ (Monier Williams 2008) or ‘a sexual partner’ (Tulpule 1999:432; see Molesworth 1857:506). However, Date indicates that the Marathi term pātrā

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derives from the Sanskrit term pātra and denotes strī (1932/2012). The name Kāñhopātrā therefore suggests designations for a woman that could be interpreted spiritually as well as sexually: ‘Kṛṣṇa’s vessel’, ‘Kṛṣṇa’s adept’, ‘Kṛṣṇa’s singer’ or ‘Kṛṣṇa’s courtesan’.

There are five abhaṅgas attributed to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ (the female mahār) in the SSG but one of these is also attributed to Bhāgūbāī (possibly Tukārām’s daughter). The two abhaṅgas attributed to Bhāgūbāī appear in the SSG addendum. However, the abhaṅgas attributed to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ all have a second line dhrupad and use the signature bhāgu mhaṇe’ Bhāgū says’ while the other abhaṅga attributed to Bhāgūbāī does not include a dhrupad or the word mhaṇe in the mudrikā (see Appendix B). It is therefore possible that the twice attributed abhaṅga belongs to the author identified as Bhāgū Mahārīṇ. However, the SSG appears to conflate Bhāgū Mahārīṇ and Tukārām’s daughter Bhāgū and thus highlighting the issue of attribution and the impossibility of establishing gendered authorship.

There are thirty-two abhaṅgas ascribed to Bahiṇābāī in main body of the second volume SSG and 704 additional abhaṅgas in the addendum.66 The abhaṅgas use the mudrikā ‘Bahiṇī says’(bahiṇī mhaṇe) except in a few cases. The compositions attributed to Bahiṇābāī have been edited by Umarkhāne (1913), Kolhārkar (1926; 1956) and Jāvaḍekar (1979). There are 740 compositions in Kolhārkar’s edition of the Bahiṇābāī Gāthā and of these only about thirty employ a different nāmamudrā and even some of these mudrikās refer to Bahiṇābāī in some form (nos. 113, 114, 234, 455, 456, 466, 562, 563, 564). The Jāvaḍekar edition covers the earlier editions by Umarkhāne and Kolhārkar, refers to manuscripts made available by Bahiṇābāī’s descendants and contains 732 poems, ten of which are previously unpublished compositions (Shrotriya 1992; see Tulpule 1979:393). There are also English translations of the Bahiṇābāī abhaṅgas by Abbott (1929) and Bahadur (1998).67 The term bahiṇa connotes ‘sister’ or ‘everywoman’ according to Feldhaus (1985:vi–vii), which strongly suggests gender attribution may be a factor in the corpus of Bahiṇābāī, the Brahman ‘disciple’ of Tukārām.68 Like other nāmamudrās mentioned above, the use of the generic term ‘sister’ suggests that gender attribution may function as a

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66 Many of these compositions can be found in the Kolhārkar (1926) edition but do not follow Kolhārkar’s order/numbering.
67 Abbott seems to have used Kolhārkar’s 1926 edition for his translations.
68 Sant Bahiṇābāī is not be confused with Bahiṇābāī Caudharī (c.1879–1951) an illiterate woman who composed ovī—in the Khāndeśī-Varhāḍī dialect—while undertaking her daily tasks. Her poems were written down by her son Sopāndev (who became a well-known Marathi poet) and were published in 1952 under the title Bahiṇābāī’s Songs for which the writer and journalist P.K. Atre wrote the introduction. Her songs were also popularised through the Marathi film Mānani ‘Proverb’. There are a number of translations into English of her poems, see Dharwadker (1994:107), Tharu and Lalita (1991:352–355) and Engblom et al (1982). For Marathi renditions see gazalrang (2010) and dipiaarmarathi (2008).
discursive means to include women in the Vārkarī sampradāya and construct the tradition as a householder path.

The Sakhūbāī *pad* in the SSG addendum mentions the name ‘Sakhū’ in the final line, while the song I heard attributed to Sakhūbāī only mentions Sakhū once and not in the context of the nāmamudrā (see Appendix B).\(^{69}\) The SSG does not include any compositions attributed to Gangabāī or Viṭhābāī, the reasons for which will be detailed in Chapter Five but which appear to relate to the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition. The nāmamudrās employed in the compositions attributed to women draw attention to the issue of ascription and possible corporate authorship but also indicate on what basis a song or poem may have been included and codified (see Jones 2009:132). However, the inclusion of compositions attributed to a female *bhakta* may also have occurred due to the interplay between anthologies and the genre of *caritra*.

### 3. The literary genre of *caritra*

*Carita*, or *caritra* as it is known in Marathi, began in India during the post-Gupta period (c.500 C.E.) as a complement to the *vaṃśāvalī*. The earliest *caritras* date to between the eighth and twelfth centuries C.E. and have been described by Thapar as ‘the eulogy of the patron’ or as a tribute to those with ‘special status and function in the ruling family’ (2002:144–5, 153n.46; 1997:571).\(^{70}\) However, the genre gradually grew to encompass the lives of heroic and religious figures such as those found in the ‘Lives of the Āḻvārs’ (see Hardy 1983:558, Hess 1983:183 and Thapar 2000:144).\(^{71}\) The central role given to *caritra* in *bhakti* traditions was one of innovation, like the use of vernacular languages, that set *bhakti* apart from Vedic Hinduism. Vedism rejected the notion that the history of specific individuals was relevant to spiritual Truth as its concern was *śruti* while *caritra* is more concerned with *smṛti* (see Lorenzen 2005:17–18, 181).

*Caritra* plays an important role in the discursive formation of a religious community like the Vārkarī sampradāya as the personages of the *sants* and their religious authority are largely established by biographical texts with a biographer creating and consolidating the public memory of a poet, *bhakta* or charismatic figure. A biographer identifies an individual as a poet and interacts with the content of the poetry attributed them. Consequently, the biographer may reproduce the self-representation of a poet but

\(^{69}\) The song was sung by Caturabai Naravate (40) and Vatsalabai Sakhare (65) who were part of the Sant Ganga Maharaj *diṇḍī* (no. 5/93) from Pokharī (Parbhani district) on 20\(^{th}\) June 2006.

\(^{70}\) See Basham 2003:68, 120, 424, 447, 451.

\(^{71}\) The *Divyasūricaritam* by Garuḍavāhana (c.12\(^{th}\) century) was the first major work on the ‘lives’ of the Āḻvārs (Hardy 1983:243).
may also present the poet in ways that do not correspond to their attributed poetry as the concerns of the biographer tend to differ from those of the poet as Pechilis suggests (2012:2, 14, 82, 83; see also Hardy 1983:248, Lorenzen 1995:181, Malinar 2003:91 and Novetzke 2008:35ff). While bhaktas or poets are usually adamant that the individual is subservient to the Divine and are ‘modest, indifferent or disinterested…in respect of their own life-stories’ it is the later tradition that is interested in and demands details of a bhakta’s life (Snell 1994:3). Biographical texts thus provide an interpretation of a bhakta’s life and seek to portray the figure in question as the one who discloses the way to liberation. The sacred biography is thus a means of concentrating the attention of the hearer or reader on the personality of the bhakta(s) under discussion in order to propagate an interpretation of the bhakta that encourages those who desire liberation to follow the example of the bhakta (McLeod 1994:19). Caritra as religious biography is therefore characterised by reverence as it aims to record the ‘spiritual triumphs of well-known practitioners of bhakti’ according to Mukta (1994:20; see Snell 1994:2; Hawley 1984:244). However, as Snell argues, caritra also encourages satsaṅga to ‘erode the distinction between the puranic [the ancient] and the contemporary’ so that contemporary devotees associate with the sant of the past (1994:2–3; see Tulpule 1994b). Furthermore, like Christian hagiographies that are concerned with the life of a saint, caritras tend not to focus on historical or biographical facts as they are more concerned with orientating the followers of a specific tradition and thus Mukta argues that caritras are constructions ‘of particular conjecture’ (1994:23). Sacred biographies can therefore be interpreted as endeavouring to establish the pre-eminence of a tradition, lineage or teaching as I outlined in the literature review of the Introduction.

According to Hawley (1988:279), the first anthologies of bhakti poetry and of sacred biography were both assembled around the turn of the seventeenth century. The oldest surviving collection of sacred biographies in Hindi is probably the Bhaktamāla by Nābhājī/Nābhādās and its primary commentary the Bhaktirasabodhīnī of Priyā Dās (1712 C.E.), both referred to as the Bhaktamāla, and many of the poets whom the Bhaktamāla features also figure in the contemporary anthologies. The interplay between caritra and poetry is visible in the structure of the sacred biographies as they usually occur around the poetic compositions attributed to the figures being portrayed while entries in poetic anthologies are often inspired by motifs connected with the lives of poets (Hawley 1984:251, 1988:279; see Pechilis 1999:7). For example, the Caurāsī vaiṣṇavam kī vārtā (‘Accounts of the Eighty Four Vaiṣṇavas’) provides biographical features of Sūrdās, like his blindness and conversion to the Puṣṭimārga, as well as weaving

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his compositions into the narrative. The interdependency between the poetic corpus attributed to Sūrdās and the vārtā texts of the Vallabha sampradāya is therefore demonstrated by this interplay (see Barz 1994; Snell 1994:2–5).

However, there is also an interplay between biographical images or forms of ‘prototypic behaviour’ that act as the indicators of saintliness—such as a fantastic birth or the performance of miracles—and the historical dimension. It is important to note that between the life of the bhakta and the composition of a sacred biography there is usually an interval of time, which relates to the distance between the probable life of the bhakta and the compilation of biographical material. In his discussion on the sources used for the biographies of Dādū (c.1544–1603) Callewaert indicates that the initial biography—the Dādū janmalīlā (c.1610–1620) by Janagopāl—was altered by the addition of miracles and passages of praise. Later biographies, under the influence of the oral tradition, added more details of the performance of miracles thus conforming to the use of biographical images prevalent in the carita genre (1987:182–189). Moreover, the addition of material to the sacred biography of Dādū suggests that the genre of caritra is not closed but open, particularly within an oral or performative context, in the manner that abhaṅga gāthās are not fully canonical works as they are open to addition and interpretation (Christof 2003:63).

The interplay between biographical images and the historical dimension is also visible in the elevation of bhaktas to divine status (see Muktābāī and Janābāī in Chapter Four). The desire for biographical details by lay-followers and biographers is intensified by the tendency to present bhaktas or poets as utterly transcending the concerns of mortal and material lives. The elevation to divine status thus occurs when a bhakta or poet is regarded as an avatāra of a particular deity or mythic figure. This practice is common to sacred biographies and particularly those associated with traditions that perform mūrti worship like the Vārkarī sampradāya. Malinar argues that a community is able to extend itself back into the past by constructing its origins in relation to a charismatic or founding figure. Furthermore, ‘the process of writing and transmitting sacred biographies mirrors the debates of a community in the making’ and this process offers a temporal frame to the religious community as the subject(s) of caritra are viewed as intersections between different times and spheres (2007:61ff). The designation of historical figures as avatāra thus supplies an ‘interpretive pattern’ for the emergence of charismatic figures and religious leaders as the status is regarded as an essential and recurring event to restore an original teaching.

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and respond to ‘crisis, disorder and decadence’ of the *kaliyuga* (Malinar 2003:97; see Lorenzen 1995:16–17). For example, Mahīpati ascribes the status of *avatāra* to the Vārkarī *sants* Nāmdev, Jñāneśvar, Sopān, Nivrūti and Muktābāī for salvific purposes (BVJ 1.87–105) during the age of Kali (BVJ 1.46–86).

*Caritra* in Marathi probably began with the *Līḷācaritra* (c.1278 CE), a collection of anecdotes about Cakradhar the founder of the Mahānubhāvas, which also describes the origin of Viṭṭhobā unfavourably (Tulpule 1979:429; Sontheimer 1989:70–71 n.10). However, the first biographical work within the Vārkarī *sampradāya* was a *caritra* of sant Jñāneśvar that is attributed to sant Nāmdev and which appears in the *Nāmdev Gāthā*, although Novetzke suggests it may have been composed by Jñāneśvar (2005:120). The biography is divided into three parts: Ādi, *Tīrthāvaḷī* and *Samādhi*. The account of the pilgrimage begins with Jñāneśvar inviting Nāmdev—the famous *kīrtankār* and renowned Viṭṭhal-*bhakta*—to go on a *tīrthayātrā* with him. Nāmdev responds hesitantly until Viṭṭhal permits him to go, on the condition that he returns to Paṇḍharpūr afterwards as Viṭṭhal fears that he will be forgotten by Nāmdev (Novetzke 2005; Tulpule 1994:159–160). The final episode recounts the return to Paṇḍharpur, Nāmdev’s reunion with Viṭṭhal and the ritual celebration of the journey, directed by Viṭṭhal, to which the Paṇḍharpur Brahmans are invited and to whom the teachings of the Vārkarī *sampradāya* are disclosed (Tulpule 1994:159–160; More 1994:170–171; Novetzke 2005). Novetzke emphasises that the *Tīrthāvaḷī* dramatizes the separation anxiety (*viyoga, udvega*) and the co-dependence of both the deity and the *bhakta*, Viṭṭhal and Nāmdev, and that it should not therefore be understood as a spiritual travelogue (2005:114, 121–122). While the *Tīrthāvaḷī* recognizes the connection between the Vārkarī *sampradāya* and the broader Kṛṣṇa tradition it advocates devotion to Viṭṭhal of Paṇḍharpur and therefore reinforces the importance of Paṇḍharpur argues Novetzke (2005:127–128). The *Tīrthāvaḷī* is often sung during *bhajan* sessions and cited during *kīrtans* as it holds an important position with the *sampradāya* as it expresses Vārkarī philosophy, even though it is regarded as implausible by scholars (More 1994:170; Tulpule 1994:159; Ranade 2003:185; Novetzke 2005:120). This biography attributed to Nāmdev demonstrates that poet-*sants* were the primary sacred biographers and eulogists of other *sants*. For example, there are

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74 The *Nāmdev Gāthā* has been published by R.S. Gondhalekar (Pune 1892), T.H. Avate (Pune 1923), V.N. Jog (Pune c. 1931) and edited by Sarojini Barbar and others for the Government of Maharashtra (Bombay 1970).


76 This journey and meeting is symbolically re-enacted each year during the *āṣāḍhī-vārī* when Jñāneśvar’s *pādukās* are met and greeted outside Paṇḍharpur by Nāmdev’s *pādukās* and his followers before the Jñāneśvar *pādukās* are escorted into Paṇḍharpur. In return Nāmdev visits Jñāneśvar in Alandi for the *kārttikī ekādaśī* and commemorates Jñāneśvar’s *mahāsamādhi* (Novetzke 2005:134, n.40).

77 Biographies of Jñāneśvar were also composed during the seventeenth century by Uddhava-Cidghana and Niraṇjan Mādhav (Tulpule 1979:430, 1994:161; Abbott 1996:xxiv; see Kelkar 1902).
poems ‘on the sants’ (santapara) attributed to Muktābāī and poems ‘in praise of sants’ (santastuti) and ‘in praise of Jñāneśvar’ (jñāneśvarstīti) attributed to Janābāī in the SSG (see Chapter Five).

Mahīpati (1715–1790) is the most renowned Marathi biographer and the primary source of sacred biographies relating to the Vārkarī sants (Novetzke 2008: xii, 40, 53; Tulpule 1994:161). However, Mahīpati was not the only biographer of the bhaktas and poets associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya as Keune demonstrates in his discussion of the biographies of Eknāth (2011).78 Mahīpati was a ṛgvedī vaśiṣṭha gotrī deśastha Brahman and the village accountant at Tāharābād (Ahmednagar district) but he later relinquished this position to become a kīrtankār and biographer (Abbott 1927:vi–xxviii, 1996:xxiii–xxiv; Tulpule 1994:161). Mahīpati is credited with composing a number of sacred biographies: the Bhaktavijaya ‘Victory of the Bhaktas’ (1762),79 the Pāṇḍuraṅga-stotra ‘Praise for Pāṇḍuraṅga’ (1766), the Santalīlāmṛta ‘Sport of the Immortal Sants’ (1757), the Bhaktalīlāmṛta ‘Sport of the Immortal Bhaktas’ (1774) and the Santavijaya the ‘Victory of the Sants’, which was incomplete at the time of Mahīpati’s death and which Keune, following Dhere, suggests may not have been composed by Mahīpati (2011:151n.36, Dhere 1967:77; see Tulpule 1979:431, 1994:163).80

The early narratives Mahīpati composed were based on those of Uddhav-Cidghana and the Bhaktamāla of Nābhādās and his commentator Priyādās. Tulpule suggests that although Mahīpati appears to have been familiar with Hindi he probably used an interpreter for these texts as Priyādās’ Bhaktirasabodhinī was in braj bhāṣa (1979:430n. 651; see Lutgendorf 1994:69, 74; Abbott 1927:xxviii; Callewaert 1987:185). Fortunately Mahīpati only followed Nābhādās and Priyādās for information on the northern sants as it seems that neither of them were familiar with any Deccan bhaktas and they therefore described Jñāneśvar as a follower of the Viṣṇuvāmīs and portrayed Nāmdev as the son of the widowed daughter of ṛṣi Vāmdev (Tulpule 1994:165).81 Mahīpati also borrowed heavily from other sources but does not reference the verses attributed to Nāmdev as a source according to Novetzke (2008:52, 54).

There are several stories in the Bhaktavijaya obtained from the abhaṅgas attributed to Nāmdev such as

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78 The only extant biography of Tukārām was composed by his grandson Gopal (c.1768) and has been partially published in the Janatā-Janārdana periodical of the Gaṅgebābā Prakāśan Samita (1955–1956). The only other biographical work relating to Tukārām was composed by his posthumous disciple Niḷobā and Tulpule asserts that it is panegyric poem rather than a biography (1979:430 n.647).
79 Abbott and Godbole state that there are four printed texts of the Bhaktavijaya as well as an unpublished manuscript (c.1851) belonging to the descendants of Mahīpati’s brother (1996:465).
80 Bhaktavijaya (1883), Pāṇḍuraṅga-stotra (c.1835), Santalīlāmṛta (1886), Bhaktalīlāmṛta (1908), Santavijaya (c. 1927) all printed in Bombay.
81 The Viṣṇuvāmīs were a sect of Kṛṣṇa-bhaktas founded in the twelfth century (Flood 1996:142).
the biographies of Jñāneśvar and Gorā Kumbhār (Abbott 1996:xxvii; Aklujkar 1999:14). Mahīpati also seems to have gathered information from Tukārām’s descendants and collected material from the abhaṅgas of Tukārām’s brother Kānhobā, the abhaṅgas of Tukārām’s disciple Rāmeśvar Bhaṭ and Tukārām’s posthumous disciple Niḷobā (Abbott 1927:xxv; Tulpule 1994:166). Moreover, in the Bhaktalīlāmṛta Mahīpati broadened his biography of Eknāth from the Bhaktavijaya by adding to it from Kesava’s life of Eknāth (see Tulpule 1994:166). It is therefore apparent that the majority of Mahīpati’s sources were drawn from religious works composed primarily by bhaktas. Although Mahīpati presents himself as merely the instrument through which God speaks—jaisā vājaviṇāra phunkī vārē / taisī vājantarē vājatī //109//= ‘Like the puff of breath blown by a musician I am the wind that sounds the flute’ (BVJ 57.109, Mahīpati 1850; Novetzke 2008:121)—Mahīpati makes it clear that he recorded what he believed to be true and did not draw on his imagination (BVJ 1.37, SLM 1.67–69; Abbott and Godbole 1996:xxvi–xxvii).

Significantly, Mahīpati often refers to ‘hearers’ or ‘listeners’ in the Bhaktavijaya and concludes the text saying:

Svasti śrībhaktavijaya granthā // aikatān tuṣṭalā jagannātha / premāla aikābhā vika bhakta / sattāvannāvā adhyā rasāḷahā//220//

Peace. This book is the Bhaktavijaya. Listening to it the Lord of the World is pleased. Listen all you loving and faithful devotees to the stimulating fifty-seventh chapter.

(Mahīpati 1850; my translation)

Consequently, as Novetzke suggests (2008:121), the Bhaktavijaya can be understood as a form of written kīrtan or ‘a textual commentary that emerges from the performance tradition of elaboration on the verses of a famous sant’. Mahīpati inserts his own flourishes and embellishments, between the material garnered from other sources, just as a kīrtankār does in a live performance (see Appendix C). Novetzke argues that Mahīpati therefore ‘bridges a gap between oral performance and literacy with what appears to be a transcribed kīrtan…’ (2008:121–22). This connection between orality and literacy has similarities to the interplay in the Jñāneśvarī, as discussed above, and emphasises the discursive nature of transmission within the Vārkarī sampradāya. However, Mahīpati lived at a time when oral literatures were being

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82 The fact that Nāmdev later became the subject of sacred biographies demonstrates that hagiographers become ‘ideal subjects of hagiology’ asserts Snell (1994:10).
83 For other examples of Mahīpati describing himself as an instrument of God see BVJ 8:190–191, BLM 30.180–183; 33.181–182 (Abbott 1927).
84 For example, BVJ1.7, 8.187ff; 9.1ff and BVJ 21.29, 70, 256; 31.1 in Appendix C.
written down and beginning to be replicated on printing presses (Novetzke 2008:122). Consequently, Mahīpati and the sacred biographies he composed may represent the confluence of orality, literacy and textuality. Mahīpati’s biographies also characterise the interplay between the compositions attributed to the sants in anthologies and the genre of caritra, as well as the use of gender attribution to construct the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

4. **Summary**

The discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as an householder path is primarily due to the use of Marathi, the literate ovī and abhaṅga, and a combination of oral, literate, textual and performative means of dissemination. The Jñāneśvarī and Eknāthī Bhāgavata are texts that transmit the message of bhakti and karma yoga to a community of socially-active, Marathi-speakers by employing Marathi and the literate ovī metre. This use of Marathi and the ovī metre, as well as Jñāneśvar’s integration of orality and literacy and Eknāth’s addition of asceticism-in-marriage, fits with the concepts of ingenuity or charismatic innovation. Moreover, the Jñāneśvarī and Eknāthī Bhāgavata, may be understood as making an original message meaningful for a changed society as they are both commentaries that disseminate Sanskrit works that are regarded as the loci of bhakti. The veneration of these texts as pothi suggests that they are regarded as closed and permanent, and thus as canonical, by the sampradāya. Contrastingly, the reason that most of the abhaṅgas attributed to the sants, including Nāmdev, are categorised as ‘almost canonical’ and not as prasthānātrayī is probably due orality, and the openness and fluidity of the abhaṅga gāthās. However, it is feasible that the compositions attributed to Tukārām are considered prasthānātraya because he combined orality and literacy. It is therefore possible to see a chain of religious legitimisation and discursive construction running from Jñāneśvar to Tukārām which includes both canonical and sacred texts, and oral and performative mediums of transmission. Yet, the position of the compositions attributed to women is ambiguous as they are not formally part of kīrtan discussion (Dadhe 2012). Furthermore, biographers like Mahīpati added meaning to the textual and oral compositions of the bhaktas and sants and helped to maintain and revitalise the Vārkarī sampradāya reproducing and enhancing the ethos of the tradition. Significantly, it is not the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs that are most remembered today but their biographies. Consequently, the next chapter explores the presentation of women as exemplars of bhakti and as householders within the biographies of santakaviyatrīs to consider the role and function of gender attribution in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE SACRED BIOGRAPHIES OF THE VĀRKAŘī SANTAKAVIYATRIS

1. Introduction

Today the sacred biographies of women sants and bhaktas are remembered more than their attributed compositions, as suggested by the number of films about Sakhūbāī mentioned in chapters one and three. Moreover, contemporary people seem to understand the poems attributed to the poet-sants through their biographies but as Pechilis argues the introduction of poet-sants via their caritra is ahistorical as the attributed songs or poems precede the caritra. Nonetheless, the identity of the women sants is largely mediated by their caritra rather than the compositions attributed to them (see Pechilis 1997:7; 2012:82) and thus one cannot treat these as historical sources; rather they have to be read discursively to the degree that they contribute to the construction and/or creation of a tradition The caritra of the women sants and some female bhaktas associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya are considered below in order to address what these portrayals reveal about the purpose of gender attribution in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition.

2. The caritras of the santakaviyatrīs and some female bhaktas associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya

The primary sources I have used for the caritra of the Vārkarī santakaviyatrī are: Vārkarī Santāncā Bhaktiyoga (‘The Devotion of the Vārkarī Sants’) (Abhyankar 1992); Prācīṇa Vārkarī Santakaviyatrī: Ek paricāyaka abhyāsa, (‘The Early Vārkarī Female Poet-Sants: A detailed study’) (Shrotriya 1993), which references Junē Vāṅmaya: Navē Samśodhana, (‘Ancient Literature: New Research’) (Āvaḷīkar 1964); Kalyāṇ Sant-Aḍaka (‘The Kalyan Sant-Tales’) (Poddar et al 1994); Sakala Santa Caritra Gāthā (‘The Collected Deeds of All the Sants’) (Bhat 1998); Śrīsakalasantagāthā (SSG) (‘The Collected Poems of All the Sants’) (Gosāvī 2005); the Stories of Indian Saints: translation of Mahipati’s Marathi Bhaktavijaya (Abbott and Godbole 1996) and Life of Tukaram, Mahipati’s Bhaktalilamrita Chapters 25 to 40 (Abbott 1996). I have translated two chapters from Mahipati’s Bhaktavijaya (BVJ) relating to Janābāī and Kānhopātrā (see Appendix C) and examined sections of the BVJ pertaining to Muktābāī from an 1806 manuscript. My footnotes in Appendix C clarify my points of departure from Abbott and Godbole (1933/1996), whose translation of the Bhaktavijaya I consider in the main to be fairly accurate. While
Mahīpati’s *Bhaktavijaya* is the basis for many of the *caritras* of the *santakaviyatris* not all the women attributed with poetry or all the women recognised as *sants* are mentioned or detailed in the *Bhaktavijaya*. Consequently, I have combined elements from a number of sources to provide the most comprehensive *caritra* of the *sant* or *bhakta*. The attributed compositions that relate biographical details about a *sant* or *bhakta*, particularly the spiritual autobiography attributed to Bahīṇābāī, are discussed in Chapter Five but this chapter utilises details from abhaṅgas attributed to various *sants* for elucidatory purposes. The *caritras* of the women *sants* and *bhakta*s are presented and discussed below sequentially following Mahīpati and other *caritra* biographers.

2.1. **Muktābāī**

Muktābāī is described in the *Bhaktavijaya* as an *avatāra* of Ādimāyā on at least six occasions, for example: *brahmā hoī sopāna / sadā siva nivṛtti puruṣa / ādimāyā mukta rūpē jñāna / avatare la bhūmanḍalī // ‘Brahma will become Sopān, Śiva will become Nivṛtti, Ādimāyā will become Muktā and descend to earth as *avatārs’* (BVJ 1.98; see BVJ 8.186; 9.6, 71, 102). Significantly, whenever her *avatāra* status is mentioned Muktābāī is always described in association with her alleged brothers by Mahīpati. This indicates the connection between the descents of the four siblings, which places Muktābāī in a sphere of spiritual efficacy but also relates the stages of spiritual progression as I mentioned in the previous chapter. However, one could also interpret this to suggest that Mahīpati fails to see Muktābāī as distinct. Like her brothers Muktābāī is also considered ‘undefilable’ (BVJ 9.71), a ‘noble Brahman’ (BVJ 9.73), the child of a *sannyāsī* (BVJ 9.80), ‘a world guru; uninfluenced by her body’, as jīvan-muktī ‘liberated while still alive’ (BVJ 9.103), and as a ‘blessed *bhakta*’ (BVJ 9.76; Abbott and Godbole 1996). These definitions, her status as an *avatāra* and her name as the final stage of spiritual development as ‘the liberated one’ or the ‘(blue) pearl’ mark Muktābāī out as a figure of particular spiritual status and ability (see Kiehnle 1997a:148; Monier Williams 2008; Molesworth 1857:653). Moreover, Muktābāī’s designation as an *avatār* of Ādimāyā can be interpreted as providing a female charismatic figure or

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1 ḍhंेमाहोईसोपान।। सदासीवनिर्वृत्तिपुरुषा।। आदीमायामुक्तरुपेज्ञाना।। आवतारेलभूमंडप।।९८।। *brahmāhoīsopāna/ sadāśīvanirvṛtpura/ ādimāyāmuktarūpējñāna/āvatarelaḥbhūmanḍalī // The handwritten manuscript (*pothi*) of the *Bhakta-Vijaya* (1806) that I read in the British Library was a beautiful text written in black ink with a red ink page border and an end border with a floral design that differed at the end of each chapter (where the chapter information was provided as the final verse). However, the manuscript had numerous crossings out, transcribing errors and ink spots, and was clearly the product of more than one hand which made it difficult to decipher. Consequently, I have provided the Marathi and transliteration of this verse to demonstrate the variations in a handwritten work. The transliteration in the main body of the chapter differs from that in this footnote to reflect more standardised Marathi spelling.
counter balance to the male charismatic figure or religious leader in Mahīpati’s attempt to sanction the Vārkaṇī sampradāya by extending its origins back into the past (BVJ 1.93; see Malinar 2003:97).

The traditional account of Muktābāī’s life states that her father Viṭṭhalpant became a sannyāsī sometime after his marriage to Rukmiṇī. However, Viṭṭhalpant’s guru discovered that Viṭṭhalpant was married so sent him back to Rukmiṇī to fulfill his obligations as a householder. Nivrṛtti, Jñāneśvar, Sopān and Muktābāī were then born to Rukmiṇī and Viṭṭhalpant at Āḷandī near Pune (see Kiehnle 1997a:2). However, the family was ostracised due to Viṭṭhalpant’s deviation from orthodox religio-social norms and the boys were denied upanayana. The story goes that Viṭṭhalpant eventually drowned himself in the river: either because he had been condemned to death by the village leaders (Inamdar 1999:11), had been advised to atone for his actions (Deleury 1994:8) or because he felt he was depriving his children of happiness (Abhayananda 2000:32). According to Shrotriya (1993) Rukmiṇī joined Viṭṭhalpant in the suicide by also drowning. Thus Muktābāī possibly aged about four or five, was orphaned and had to endure much hostility and numerous privations (Inamdar 1999:11–12; Ranade 2000:33; Deleury 1994:8; Kiehnle 1997:2; Shrotriya 1993). The story suggests that before Viṭṭhalpant died Nivrṛtti had been initiated into the Nāth paramparā by Gahinināth and was therefore able to care for his younger siblings (Shrotriya 1993:13–15; personal communication Baba Maharaj Manmadkar, 11th July 2006; see Gold 1992:47).

The siblings are then said to have gone to Paiṭhaṇ—a centre of Brahmanical authority and learning—to get a śuddhipatra so as to reinstate their socio-religious status. There is a story that Jñāneśvar caused a buffalo to recite the Veda—‘mocking the notion that only Brahmins had access to scripture’ according to Eaton (2005:132; see also Kulkarnee 1989:205)—and gained the respect of the judges by this miracle. Mahīpati suggests that the siblings gained the śuddhipatra and were accepted by the Brahmans in Alandi, which means that Muktābāī’s caste status is represented as Brahman by Mahīpati

2 Muktābāī’s parents were called Viṭṭhal and Rukmiṇī according to the Nāndev Gāthā, for example SSG 1.394, v.888–889. These names may be popular names for mythical rather than real parents according to Kiehnle (1997a:37, 40).
3 Viṭṭhalpant’s guru in Vārkaṇī was Śrīpād Svāmī according to Inamdar and Deshpande (1999:11) or Rāmānānd Svāmī according to Abhayananda (2000:21).
4 There is some debate as to whether the siblings were born in Āḷandī (Inamdar and Deshpande 1999:11) or Āpegāon/Āpegāv in the Godāvarī valley (Ranade 2000:31; Abhayananda 2000:23; Deleury 1994:8). The dates of the siblings vary as there are two different dating traditions (Ranade 2000:31). The first and more accepted tradition asserts: Nivrṛtti, 1273–1297; Jñāneśvar, 1275–1296; Sopān, 1277–1296 and Muktābāī, 1279–1297 (Ranade 2000:31; Inamdar and Deshpande 1999:12). The Janābāī tradition asserts that Nivrṛtti was born in 1268, Jñāneśvar in 1271, Sopān in 1274 and Muktābāī in 1277 (Ranade 2000:31–32). The dates given by Deleury (1994) seem to correspond to the Janābāī tradition: Nivrṛtti (c.1268–1294), Jñāneśvar (1275–1296), Sopān (1274–1293) and Muktābāī (1279–1297). However, the dates Abhayananda (2000:23) suggests—Nivrṛtti (1269), Jñāneśvar (1271), Jñāneśvar (1271), Muktābāī (1272) and Sopān (1273)—do not seem to correspond to either tradition.
5 Most accounts suggest that the visit to Paiṭhaṇ occurred after Viṭṭhalpant’s death although Abhayananda (2000:32) suggests otherwise.
(BVJ 9.134–36; see Ranade 2000:33; Deleurry 1994:8; Abhayananda 2000:32). Muktābāī and her brothers are thought to have stayed in Nevāse—where Jñāneśvar is believed to have composed the Jñāneśvarī and the Amṛtanubhava—before returning to Alandi. Muktābāī is depicted going from Paithan to Nevasa with her brothers, walking with joy, singing God’s praises and composing verses (BVJ 9:115–117). Muktābāī is portrayed interacting with her siblings, telling Nivrītti that they must visit Alandi in order to see where they were born, and performing kīrtans (BVJ 9.126, 132, 142).

There are three stories in the Bhaktavijaya that relate to Muktābāī specifically. The first story recounts that Nivrītti asked Muktābāī to prepare a special dish to celebrate dasarā-divāḷī. Muktā agrees to do this, which necessitates her going to the potter (kulḷaḷa) for a dish (khāpara, bhāṇḍẽ). While on the way to the potter Muktā hides from Visobā Chati (later Khecar) who is persecuting the siblings. However, Visobā finds her and demands Muktābāī tells him where she is going. Trembling with fear Muktābāī answers his question only to be struck by Visobā. Nonetheless, Muktābāī continues to the potter and asks him for the necessary dish but the potter, having been warned off by Visobā, declines to provide her with a pan. Muktābāī returns home weeping and empty-handed. Muktābāī’s cries are heard by Jñāneśvar who comforts his sister. Jñāneśvar asks Muktābāī what is troubling her and Muktābāī tells him what has happened. Jñāneśvar then asks her to cook māṇḍe on his back, which he heats through his ajñī or yogic powers. Muktābāī cooks the māṇḍe on his back and serves them to her brothers before joining them to eat. The story concludes with Visobā, who has been spying on the siblings, realising the saintliness of the siblings and taking initiation from Jñāneśvar (BVJ 9.143–200, Mahīpati 1806). This account refers to Muktābāī while still a young girl and shows her as responsible for the domestic arrangements of the family. Moreover, it suggests that Muktābāī fulfils the convention of ‘bitter persecution and miraculous escape’ put forward by Sangari. Interestingly, the miracle (a motif common in caritra) combines both elements of sannyāsa and grhaṭha with Jñāneśvar fulfilling the yogic/sannyāsa role and Muktābāī, who is portrayed as a participant in the miracle, performing a domestic rather than ascetic role. Additionally, Muktābāī performs another domestic role as she serves her brothers first as custom demanded but then Muktābāī sits and eats with them suggesting that the siblings, as a kind of religious community, practiced commensality or that Mahīpati is advocating that the Vārkarī community practice commensality.

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6 Visobā was named ‘Khecar’ when he became Jñāneśvar’s disciple after which he then became Nāmdev’s guru according to Mahīpati (BVJ 9.192–200, 18.55ff; see Kiehnle 1997a:5, 188).

7 Tulpule notes that a Jñāneśvar abhaṅga refers to mānde (1999:543): मांडे पूरणपोष्या मिले अन्न (31).
The second account of Muktābāī in the Bhaktavijaya shows her interaction with the yogi Cāṅgadev. Mahīpati relates this encounter after he has outlined Nivṛttī and Jñāneśvar’s position in the Nāth paramparā (BVJ 22.20–137). Cāṅgadev, in order to challenge Jñāneśvar, sends him a blank letter to which Jñāneśvar replies with sixty-five ovīs: the Cāṅgadev Pāsaṣṭī mentioned in Chapter Three (BVJ 22.169–195). Later, Jñāneśvar brings Cāṅgadev to the house where Muktābāī is having a bath (maṅgalasāṇā) but Cāṅgadev retreats when he realises Muktābāī is bathing. Muktā then scolds Cāṅgadev for running away and suggests that if he had the favour of a guru he would not be troubled by embarrassment or shame. Muktābāī chastises Cāṅgadev for having years of experience but still being ignorant. Cāṅgadev amazed at Muktābāī’s knowledge, pays his respects to her and then goes to Jñāneśvar and becomes his disciple (BVJ 22.205–211).

Mahīpati’s narrative does not however present the traditional ending to this story in which Cāṅgadev becomes Muktābāī’s disciple (see Khanolkar 1978:20; Babras 1996:76–77; personal communications: Swami Govind Giriji Maharaj, 16th October 2004 and Muktabai Maharaj, 25th March 2005), which raises questions about the guru paramparā and the Muktā figure. It is possible that because Mahīpati presents Muktābāī as performing a ritual bath when Cāṅgadev encounters her Mahīpati is portraying Muktābāī as performing a ‘domestic’ task or presenting her as a nominal householder who is unsuitable as a guru. Nonetheless, Mahīpati does not connect Muktābāī and Cāṅgadev by paramparā which may be one way by which Mahīpati downplays the notion that a woman could act as a preceptor.

The authority of bhaktas, charismatic figures and religious leaders is usually defined by paramparā and caritra plays a role in presenting the lineage of transmission (Brzezinski 1992:472; Snell 1994:3–4). The guru paramparā is important in a sampradāya because the transmission from teacher to disciple authenticates and preserves both teachings and sampradāya and paramparā thus plays a role in the discursive construction of tradition.8

Babras, following Gosāvī and Gosāvī (1986), thinks Jñāneśvar asked Muktābāī to explain the Cāṅgadev Pāsaṣṭī to Cāṅgadev and that this ‘proved her great intelligence’. Thus, Cāṅgadev became Muktābāī’s disciple and addressed her as ‘Yogini Muktabai’ (1996:125). However, I can find no mention of the term yoginī in the Cāṅgadev abhaṅgas in the SSG. The Cāṅgadev abhaṅgas refer to Muktāī mātā or ‘Mother Muktāī’ (see abhaṅga 11; SSG 1:246) and the SSG abhaṅgas suggest Muktāī was advising Cāṅgadev as the verbs bolane ‘to speak’ and mhaṇane ‘to say’ appear in a number of abhaṅgas.

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Khanolkar regards Muktābāī as Cāṅgadev’s guru and says that she ‘taught him true renunciation and how to rise above the differentiations of name and form’ (1978:20). Moreover, a number of different Muktā’s have been identified by Kiehnle: firstly, there is a Muktā who was a pupil of Gorakhnāth according to Cāṅgadev’s Tattvasār and Visobā Khecar’s Šatsthal; secondly, there is a Muktā who called herself the disciple of Nivṛtti, composed songs and instructed the yogī Cāṅgadev; and thirdly, there is a Muktā who was a tapasvinī known to Cakradhar (d.1272 or 1274), the founder of the Mahānubhāvas (1997b:5).

According to Dhere the Muktābāī known to Cakradhar was a Nāth yogini and a disciple of Bhartrihari (Bhartṛhari) who came from Kadalīvana (2001:2). All three of these Muktās are connected with the Nāth panth, which raises the issue of Muktābāī’s guru paramparā.


nivṛtti gayanī kṛpā keli ase pūrṇa / kāla hē pāvana kṛṣṇanāmẽ //6//

‘Gayanī bestowed his full compassion on Nivṛtti: [his] family [became] pure by the name of Kṛṣṇa’ (SSG 1:50, v.172.6; Kiehnle 1997a:144).

Nivṛtti probably initiated Jñāneśvar:

Jñānadev nivṛtti guruṇiyarupa / lakṣītā cidupa sarva jāle //4//

‘Jñānadev and Nivṛtti, in the form of teacher and pupil, putting their attention on the nature of consciousness, have become everything’ (Kiehnle 1997a:257, 19.0.2, S2).

An Eknāth abhaṅga suggests that Jñāneśvar advised Sopān and Muktābāī, that Muktābāī then instructed Visobā Khecar, and that Visobā Khecar awakened Nāmdev, Nāmdev’s family and Cāṅgā Vateśvar (1893; SSG 2:269). A Cāṅgadev abhaṅga suggests that Muktā instructed [Visobā] Khecar with a mantra ‘muktāī khecarā upadeśa mantra’ (10.4; SSG 1:246). The Visobā who composed the Šatsthal in the fourteenth century is said to consider himself a member of the Muktābāī line, which would connect Nāmdev with Muktābāī, but the Bhaktavijaya indicates that Jñāneśvar was Visobā’s teacher (BVJ 22.9–133; Kiehnle 1997a:5; 1999:93).

9 Kadaliīvana is said to be at Srīsaila[m] in Andhra Pradesh. It is a centre of Vīraśaivism—Akkmahadevi is said to have attained samādhi there—but also of the Nāth Siddhas and others. White states that the “term is either: (1) kadalī vana, “plantain forest,” a place identified with sensual life (as in the legends of Matsyendranāth), but also with a grove of yogic realization and immortality (in the Padmāvat); (2) kajalī van, “forest of black mercuric sulphide,” of the mineral hierophany of the sexual essences of Śiva and the Goddess, which does in fact constitute an elixir of immortality; or (3) kajarī van, identified with Zulmāt, the name of the land of death and darkness (kaj[alī] also means “lampblack”) to which Iskander (Alexander the Great) travelled, according to Muslim legend’ (1996:238).


11 Jñānadeva upadeśa karuniyā pāhī / sopāna muktāī bodhiyelī // Ṣāktāmē bodha khecarāsī kēlā / tenē nāmiyāī bodhiyelī // Nāmyāce kuṭumba cāṅgā vateśvara / ekā janārdanī vistār muktācā //3//
Callewaert 1989:35). Dhere connects a śivayoginī called Muktāī with Nāmdev through the Nāth paramparā but asserts that this Muktāī was probably not Jñānēśvar’s sister. Dhere also suggests that Muktābāī, Jñānēśvar’s sister, might have been Cāṅgadev’s guru after the death of his first guru, the śivayoginī Muktāī (1997c; see Vaudeville 1987:225, n.27; Babras 1996:149). Kiehnle suggests that Muktābāī’s guru may have been Gorakhanāth or her brother Nivṛttināth (1997b:5). Babras regards Nivṛtti as Muktābāī’s guru but suggests that she ‘received the knowledge of yoga from Jnaneshvara’ (1996:124). There is a possibility that Muktābāī was initiated by Nivṛtti as several verses seem to refer to him in the role of a guru, for example: ‘Good for Cāṅgadev he’s benefited from this principle, which was given to us by Nivṛtti’ (16.2, SSG 1:240). However, there are several compositions which suggest Muktābāī advised Nivṛtti, for example: ‘Muktāī counsels Nivṛtti: ‘there is no further rebirth for us’ (21, SSG:240) and ‘Muktāī informs Nivṛtti about the emergence of the single principle of love for Hari’ (19.4, SSG 1:240). If Muktābāī had been initiated by Nivṛtti then the lineage would run from Matsyendranāth to Goraksanāth to Gahinināth to Nivṛttināth to Muktābāī (Shrotriya 1992). Consequently, it is impossible to establish categorically Muktābāī’s identity as a guru or śīṣya. Nonetheless, Muktābāī operates as Cāṅgadev’s guru in public memory, which fits with Dhere’s contention that both men and women were accepted as disciples in the Nāth panth and could also act as preceptors (2001:6; see White 1996).

The third story in the Bhaktavijaya which features Muktābāī is one in which a gathering of sants occurs at Gorā Kumbhār’s place in Tarḍokī near Pandharpur. Nivṛtti, Jñānēśvar, Sopān, Nāmdev, Sāvātā Māḷī and other bhaktas are all in attendance when Jñānēśvar asks Gorā to test which pots (that is ‘heads’) are unbaked. After tapping all the heads of the sants with his thāpāṭaṇa (potter’s paddle) Gorā finds Nāmdev’s head to be raw and unbaked. Then Muktābāī says ‘Gorā, how did you know? You are a skilled judge, of that I am certain’ (BVJ 18.19; Mahēpati 1860). It is probable that Mahēpati referred to the Nāmdev compositions to glean his information as a Nāmdev abhaṅga describes Muktābāī challenging Nāmdev’s ego: mhaṇe muktābāī candanācē jhāḍa / ahaṃtā sarpa veḍe guṇḍāḷi //5// ‘Muktābāī says, egoism is like a mad serpent that winds around a sandalwood tree’ (Nāmdev abhaṅga 1342, SSG 1:496; Bhat 1998; BVJ 18.14ff; see Novetzke 2008:64–5, 226–7). Mahēpati then relates that the sants all enjoy a

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12 Babras bases this idea on a Nāmdev abhaṅga 1344 (SSG 1:496) that begins caudāśē varūṣē śarīra kele jatana/bodhavina śīna bāḍhavilā/1/ The abhaṅga suggests that Gahinināth gave Nivṛtti a secret (guja) [i.e. initiated him] which Nivṛtti gave to Jñānēdev and that Jñānēdev developed the seed (bīja) [probably the mystical syllable which forms the essential part of the mantra of any deity] in people (4–5). The abhaṅga then suggests that either Nāmdev and/or Muktābāī acquired …. as three people were imprinted (5–6).

13 तेव मुक्ताबाई गरिया कैसीलके तुजसी भला रजसक होसी जागवले भजसी नीर्माणेति।
good laugh except Nāmdev who decides he must seek out a guru (BVJ 18:14ff).14 This narrative depicts the bhaktas engaged in satsaṅga and enjoying each other’s company but more importantly it shows the degree to which Muktābāī’s peers respected her as it is her words that are quoted, albeit alongside those of Jānēśvar, and which are given prominence (see Babras 1996:125; Khanolkar 1978:40). Thus Mahīpāti presents Muktābāī as capable as acting as an adviser, if not a guru, in a bhakti context.

Muktābāī is said to have disappeared in a flash of lightning while performing a kīrtan. Ranade (2003:44–45) and Kiehnle (1997a:38, 170) believe this idea may be based on an abhaṅga attributed to Jānēśvar, but transmitted in the Nāmdev gāthā, which describes enlightenment and final emancipation.

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According to Kiehnle, terms like ‘sky’ or ‘space’ among the Nāths designate the upper part of the head. The reference to pearls thrown in the sky may indicate a specific meditative experience but the term ‘pearl’ could also be a specific reference to Muktā. The term nīlabindū (blue dot) refers to a state of consciousness or ‘vision’ that is absorbed into the dot and connotes ‘the Ātman experienced as a lustrous point’ according to Tulpule (1999: 492; Kiehnle 1997a:119, 123, 148). There are a number of abhaṅgas in the Nāmdev gāthā relating to Muktābāī’s samādhi. One Nāmdev abhaṅga describes how Muktābāī disappeared in a flash of lightning and says that when she reached Vaikuṇṭh bells started ringing (Nāmdev abhaṅga 1187.1, SSG 1:466).16 These abhaṅgas have similarities with the account of the death of the Kashmiri Śaivite yoginī Lāl Ded or Lallā (c.1317–1391) who is said to have disappeared ‘like a flame of light in the air’ (Handoo 1955:45; see Voss Roberts 2010:9ff), which suggests that the passing of yogic figures were often related in symbolic terms.

14 This story was also related to me by Baba Maharaj Manmadkar (11th July 2006).
15 Molesworth states that the term pitāmbara connotes ‘silk cloth…[that] may be red or of other colour than yellow’ while pitāmbara connotes ‘a garment or cloth of yellow silk’ (1857:516). The verb nesaviṇẽ means ‘to dress or clothe…to clothe with fire; to invest with blazing materials…’ (Molesworth 1857:476).
16 Ṛṣī mhanātī hari pātaleśe vighaṭā kaise prāṇa vāncatīla/1//
Muktābāī is said to have ‘disappeared’ or attained emancipation at Edalābād in about 1297 C.E., which means she may have been aged between eighteen or twenty according to Ranade (2003:31). The exact location of Edalābād is debated. One view suggests Muktābāī disappeared at Mehuṇ near Edalābād (Tulpule) or near Edalābād, Māṅgāon (Bhave). There is a temple to Muktābāī, the Sant Muktābāī mandir, in the village of Mehuṇ (earlier known as Edalābād) Muktāīnagar Tālukā, Jālgāon district, Maharashtra. This is one of the places that Muktābāī is said to have taken samādhi. It has been suggested that because mēhūṇa means ‘couple’ it may imply that Muktābāī became one with Śiva when she was struck by lightning (Shrotriya 1992:16–18). However, Kher suggests that Muktābāī’s samādhi took place at Managāon near Verūl (1979:61) and Bhat suggests Muktābāī’s samādhi is in Khandesh near the Tapi River (Bhat 1998:68). The location of Muktābāī’s samādhi is of concern to later interpreters and the Vārkarī sampradāya probably due to issues such as prestige and revenue for the sites. It is however interesting to note the connection between the occurrence of lightning, signalling liberation in yogic terms, and the place name. This connection suggests that in public memory Muktābāī’s disappearance/death is connected with lightning/liberation.

Mahīpati presents Muktābāī very much in a female domestic role—going to the potter, cooking māṇḍe and serving her brothers—but he adds the element of renunciation through Jñāneśvar’s yogic ‘heat’ (ajñī, tapas) that cooks the māṇḍe. By describing Muktābāī performing domestic tasks Mahīpati aligns her with the Vaiṣṇava household tradition of the Vārkarīs despite the fact that the three Muktā’s referred to above are connected with the Śaivite Nāths. The Nāths, like most ascetic traditions, highlight the importance of the guru which may have some bearing on why the guru paramparā is of such significance in relation to Muktābāī (see Hawley 1995:311ff, 2005; Harlan 1992:215). Denton argues that three things mark out initiation into asceticism: ‘the rejection of…householdership; a commitment to a particular path towards salvation; and the entry into a community of fellow aspirants’ (1991:214).

The Mahīpati caritra may not explicitly demonstrate Muktābāī’s rejection of householdership but Mahīpati alludes to it by presenting Muktābāī and her brothers as peripatetic but more significantly by representing Muktābāī as an avatāra. When I interviewed Vidyut Bhagwat she suggested that Muktābāī is thus ‘deified’ and ‘iconized’ in traditional memory (personal communication, 29th January 2005). However, while the elevation to divine status usually signifies an individual’s transcendence of mortal and material concerns Mahīpati represents Muktābāī as persecuted by and afraid of Visobā Chati and performing domestic tasks. Nonetheless, Muktābāī may be understood as a renouncer but not in the
manner of her brothers who were renouncing the performance of male duty (varnāśramadharma). A female ascetic (sannyāsinī, yoginī) renounces the female duties (strīdharma) of marriage, family, bearing children and domestic responsibilities (see Gupta 1991b:195; Harlan 1992:216–7; Khandelwal 2004:1; Teskey-Denton 1991:211). Vidyut Bhagwat suggested that Muktābāī demonstrated that it was not compulsory for a woman to get married and become a biological mother (personal communication, 29th January 2005). Thus, by not representing Muktābāī as married and with children Mahīpati signals Muktābāī’s deviance from the prescribed norm of strīdharma. Nevertheless, while Muktābāī is clearly not a householder she exemplifies living a family and community-centred life: one may regard her family as operating like a mini community of renouncers while Muktābāī’s later participation in the gathering of bhaktas at Gora Kumbhār’s place signals her inclusion in a bhakti community. Muktābāī’s commitment to a particular path towards liberation is indicated by Mahīpati’s portrayal of Muktābāī as a spiritual advisor to both the Śaivite yogi Cāṅgadev and the Vaiṣṇava bhakta Nāmdev, which fits with Sangari’s notion of women sants displaying logic and wit but also with the upadeśa theme discussed in the following chapter. However, while Muktābāī is presented as a woman who performs domestic tasks and lives a family/community-centred life, the women associated with sant Nāmdev are largely represented as concerned with sansār and the effects of Nāmdev’s vairāgya.

2.2. The women in Nāmdev’s family

An abhaṅga attributed to Janābāī relates that the Nāmdev household had fifteen members:

Goṇāī and Rājāī are mother-in-law and daughter-in-law; Dāmā and Nāmā are father and son. Nārā, Viṭhā, Gongā and Mahādāī are the four sons; a gift born into the holy family. Lāḍāī, Goḍāī, Yesāī and Sākharāī are the four daughters-in-law who look after Nāmdev. Limbāī is the daughter, Āūbāī is the sister and Nāma’s Janī is the empty-headed dolt.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 279, SSG 1, p. 744)

The caritras of Goṇāī, Rājāī, Limbāī and Janābāī are discussed below but nothing seems to be known about Goḍāī, Yesāī and Sākharāī. Āūbāī is thought to have been Nāmdev’s elder sister but nothing further is known about her life. Āūbāī is portrayed in the SSG as having a high level of spiritual knowledge as she is credited with composing an enigmatic abhaṅga which describes the positive vacuum that exists in the cosmic principle (Gosāvī 2000:713; Āūbāī abhaṅga, SSG 1:775; Shrotriya 1992:74). Lāḍāī was Nāmdev’s daughter-in-law (sūna) and married to Nāmdev’s eldest son Nārā (Shrotriya 1992:74). Lāḍāī was patient and forbearing according to Gosāvī (2000:713) but the caritras say nothing more about her. However, an abhaṅga attributed to Lāḍāī relates how the whole family, apart from her, entered samādhi or died in 1350 C.E. (see Appendix B). There is also another possible member of the family, Nāmdev’s
niece or servant/disciple Nāgarī, who is presented below but whose apparently autobiographical compositions are discussed in Chapter Five.

2.2.i. Goṇāī

Goṇāī is remembered as the mother of sant Nāmdev, which is why she is often referred to as Mātā Goṇāī. Goṇāī is regarded as the daughter of Govind Śeṭ Sadāvarte—a tailor from Kalyāṇ—who married Dāmāseṭī Relekar, the son of Hari Śeṭ Relekar, who was a Viṭṭhal devotee (Āvaṭe 1908; Callewaert 1989:15, 33; Shrotriya 1992). There is a line that states goṇāī dāmāseṭī jhāle pāṇ igraṇa / sansārī asona narasī gāvī ‘Goṇāī and Dāmāśeṭī got married and spent [their] married life in Narsi’ (Nāmdev abhaṅga 1245.3; SSG 1:474). It therefore appears that before Goṇāī and Dāmāśeṭī settled in Paṇḍhapūr they lived in Narsi or Narsī Brāhmanī (Callewaert 1989:16), which is in the Nanded district of eastern Maharashtra. It was probably while the couple were in Narsi that ‘Āūbāī a girl was given to Goṇāī’ (Nāmdev abhaṅga 1245.5; SSG 1:474) and that Nāmdev was born (Callewaert 1989:30).

An abhaṅga attributed to Janābāī relates how Goṇāī asked Viṭṭhal for a son:

Goṇāī made a vow: ‘God give me a son.
Give a son to your devotee who likes Paṇḍharīnāth’.
Her unalloyed faith observed: from her womb Nāmdev was born.
Dāmāseṭī was delighted; dāsī Janī waves the tray of lamps.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 278, SSG 1:744; my translation)

The narrator/speaker of this abhaṅga states that Goṇāī made a vow to God in order to be granted a son. The term navas refers to ‘a vow to a god often involving the promise of an offering in return for a request granted’ states Berntsen (1975:75; see McGee 1991:71.n1). McGee argues that vrataś are regarded by women in Maharasthra as ‘necessary in order to fulfil their duties as women, their strīdharma’ (1991:74, 78). McGee also notes that Maharashtrian women often fast on Kṛṣṇa’s birthday for the birth of a child and observe a votive rite prescribed in the Agni Purāṇa (1999:75). Consequently, one may interpret the author/Janābāī presenting Goṇāī as desiring to fulfil her strīdharma and her pativratā dharma by presenting her husband with a son.

The abhaṅga above suggests that Goṇāī asked God for His devotee—possibly Dāmāseṭī—be blessed with a son. The abhaṅga makes clear that it is Goṇāī’s bhāva that allows Nāmdev to be born through her. The birth of a son for Goṇāī and Dāmāseṭī was clearly regarded a joyous occasion, as the performance of ovālaṇē (waving a tray of lamps) by Janī depicts. However, Mahīpati’s account of how

17 For detailed list of the sources for the Nāmdev biography see Callewaert and Lath (1989:11ff).
18 The abhaṅga begins kalyānicā simpī haribhakta gomā.
Nāmdev came to be born differs from that of the Janābāī abhaṅga as Mahīpati asserts that Nāmdev was the *avatāra* of Uddhava (Kṛṣṇa’s friend and counsellor) who was miraculously born from a shell (BVJ 4.9–12; Abbott and Godbole 1996). The reference to a shell may have been the means by which Mahīpati avoided the contentious issue of Nāmdev’s caste according to Novetzke (2008:54–5). Goṇāī was the daughter of a *simpī* (Callewaert 1989:15; see also Āvaṭe 1908 and Deshmukh 1970) and thus Nāmdev belonged to the *simpī* caste in Maharashtra or the *ciṁpi* (calico-printer) caste in northern India. However, at issue is the position of these caste designations within the Brahmanical *varṇa* theory. Novetzke states that outside the caste community the *simpī* or *ciṁpi* castes are considered *śūdra* and only just above ‘untouchables’. However, followers of Nāmdev within this caste bracket remember their status as *kṣatriya* rather than *śūdra*. Thus, by ascribing Nāmdev a miraculous birth Mahīpati may have been avoiding communal disagreements (2008:55).

Mahīpati characterises Goṇāī and Dāmāśeṭī as virtuous *bhaktas* and Goṇāī as a dutiful wife (BVJ 4.15). Mahīpati states that Goṇāī asked her husband to ‘Go to Pāṇḍuraṅga and ask for a son’ (BVJ 4.13–16). This may relate to the vow mentioned in the Janābāī abhaṅga but Mahīpati makes no mention of this. Instead Mahīpati relates how Dāmāśeṭī tells Goṇāī ‘You are an ignorant woman. We are both now aged. Why should we expect God to give us a child?’ (BVJ 4.17; Abbott and Godbole 1996:58) Goṇāī replies to Dāmāśeṭī’s rebuke ‘Lord of my life, you blame me for being unreasonable but God’s power is supreme…What difficulty has He in giving us a child although we are aged? (BVJ 4.22–24; Abbott and Godbole 1996:59). Dāmāśeṭī then goes to the temple and prays for a son, after which he falls asleep. Viṭṭhal appears to Dāmāśeṭī in a dream telling him that when he goes to bathe in the Bhima river the next morning he will find a baby floating downstream and that he is to take the child—the *avatāra* of Uddhava—home with him. Dāmāśeṭī tells Goṇāī about his dream and events miraculously unfold as predicted. Dāmāśeṭī finds the baby floating in a shell—there is a play on words between *śimpa* ‘shell’ and *śimpī* ‘tailor’ (Novetzke 2008:55)—takes the baby home with him and presents him to Goṇāī as their son. Amazingly Goṇāī’s breasts immediately fill with milk and she is able to feed the baby whom they call Nāmdev to honour God (BVJ 4.25–37).

What is significant about Mahīpati’s account, apart from its miraculous content, is that Goṇāī and Dāmāśeṭī are presented as aged householders without a son—the ‘fact’ that they already have a daughter is not mentioned. Goṇāī yearns for a son, as the Janābāī abhaṅga indicates, and is presented as a non-mother due to her lack of sons because every Hindu woman is expected to have as many children as
possible and in particular sons (see Leslie 1991:5; Menski 1991:54, 58). However, where Mahīpati’s account and the Janābāī abhaṅga differ noticeably is that it is Dāmāṣeṭī who prays to God in the temple, sees God in a dream and finds the baby. While Goṇāī may have urged Dāmāṣeṭī to ask God for a son it is Dāmāṣeṭī who is the protagonist and Goṇāī who plays the minor role. Mahīpati does not seem to regard Goṇāī’s faith as a significant factor in Nāmdev’s arrival into the couple’s life. Goṇāī is just the ‘dutiful wife’ and an ‘ignorant woman’ whose role is to feed and care for the baby. Goṇāī is not even represented as the woman whose womb bore Nāmdev (see Irigary 1985:18, 127). In Mahīpati’s account Goṇāī does not bear Nāmdev, her agency in his birth and her fertility—miraculous or otherwise—are denied. Moreover, Goṇāī is deprived of her religiously sanctioned duty of bearing a son. It is only because she is miraculously able to feed him that Goṇāī can fulfil the role of Nāmdev’s mother. However, the manner of Nāmdev’s birth/arrival is something that Mahīpati presents as unsettling Goṇāī: she later tells Dāmāṣeṭī that ‘God had mercy upon you, and gave you a son, though born in an unnatural way’ (BVJ 4.61; Abbott 1996:61, my emphasis). Thus in Mahīpati’s account, with its focus on the miraculous, Dāmāṣeṭī rather than Goṇāī appears to be the central character. In contrast, the Janābāī abhaṅga has Goṇāī as the protagonist. It is Goṇāī who undertakes the vow in the expectation God will respond (Olson 2007:259). It is due to Goṇāī’s bhāva—her faith, her state of mind, her behaviour, her disposition and feelings—that God responds and Nāmdev is brought into being.

The subsequent stories including Goṇāī in the BVJ are all about her relationship with her son Nāmdev. The first of these accounts describes how Goṇāī sends the youthful Nāmdev to the temple with an offering for Viṭṭhal instructing Nāmdev to return home with the offering once it has been blessed. However, convinced that God actually consumes the offerings presented to him, Nāmdev refuses to leave the temple until his offering is consumed. Finally, out of love for Nāma, Viṭṭhal consumes the offering commanding Nāma to tell no one what has happened. Nāmdev returns home and when Goṇāī asks him to whom he has given the offering, Nāma replies that God has consumed it. Ultimately, both Dāmājī and Goṇāī recognise their son as a bhakta (BVJ 4:38–62). This miraculous story indicates that Nāmdev was inclined towards bhakti from an early age, a feature of caritra, and depicts Goṇāī as a witness to Nāmdev’s devotion within a domestic setting. The story was clearly a popular episode in the life of sant Nāmdev as it also features in the biographies of Hiriram Vyās (1580), Anantadās (1588), Nābhādās (1600), the Guru Granth Sahib (1604) and Caturdās (early nineteenth century). The story also appears in
various compositions in Marathi and Hindi, as well as dramatic performances and films relating Nāmdev’s life (Novetzke 2008:56; Callewaert 1989:12, 17).

The ensuing accounts of Goṇāī describe how her relationship with Nāmdev becomes more turbulent as his focus on bhakti grows and his interest in supporting his family lessens. Drawing attention to the tension within bhakti regarding his duties as a householder Goṇāī tells Nāma:

There are many Vaishnavas who carry on at the same time their domestic affairs and their religious life. It seems to me that your condition is quite different from theirs. In your domestic life you have children, but you have little food and few garments. The evil-minded laugh at you, what are we to do?


However, all this chastising does is send Nāmdev off to the temple in search of succour and advice from Viṭṭhal on how to resolve the situation (BVJ 4.74–98). Meanwhile Goṇāī, who had gone out to gather grain, returns home and decides to find Nāmdev, console him and take him home (BVJ 4.138ff). Entering the temple Goṇāī sees Viṭṭhal and Nāmdev together and angrily addresses God, telling him that due to his association with Viṭṭhal he has neglected his family and his business, and that as Viṭṭhal is destroying her life she will no longer revere Him (BVJ 4.142–148, see Abbott and Godbole 1996:67–68). In response to Goṇāī’s tirade Viṭṭhal tells her she has no need to be angry and the heated conversation between the two continues. Goṇāī even calls on Viṭṭhal’s wives to support her point of view. Viṭṭhal realises that despite his arguments for bhakti Goṇāī is still set on having Nāmdev involved in worldly affairs. Finally, Mahīpati describes how Viṭṭhal tells Goṇāī to take her son and lead him home (BVJ 4.155–214). The account of Goṇāī engaging in a lengthy and heated conversation with God draws attention to the anguish suffered by women connected with male bhaktas who abandon sansār in favour of vairāgya. Moreover, the conversation exemplifies the negotiation of the tension between household/sansār and bhakti in the narrative tradition of the Vārkarī sampradāya.

Mahīpati appears to be relating some of the abhaṅgas attributed to Goṇāī (see Appendix B) showing her concerns about Nāmdev’s vairāgya and his neglect of everyday responsibilities (Novetzke 2005:132n8). The conversations (samvāda) are recorded in a number of abhaṅgas in both Goṇāī and Nāmdev’s names (abhaṅgas 1264–1307; SSG 1:477–487). These are the only compositions in Goṇāī’s name although they may in fact be Nāmdev reiterating what his mother said to him but the abhaṅgas propose ‘Goṇāī’s’ concerns.19 Once again attribution appears to be functioning here and so indicates the tension between grhaṭha and vairāgya. Goṇāī therefore acts as an exemplar of the possibility in that one

19 Apparently a handwritten ārati and some verses attributed to Goṇāī can be found in Tanjāvar Sarasvatī Mahal Library and in the Śrī Samartha Vāgadevatā Mandir in Dhule (Shrotriya 1992:72).
may pursue a spiritual vocation on the householder path. Goṇāī calls Viṭṭhobā a gharagheṇā ‘demolisher of families (abhanga 1266.10, 1267.7, 1268.7) and Mahīpati also relates how Goṇāī says that Viṭṭhhal ‘stands on the brick and destroys the domestic life of others (BVJ 4.202; Abbott and Godbole 1996:72).

This statement refers to Viṭṭhhal standing on a brick because Puṇḍalīk was absorbed in ministering to his parents, a story that is regarded as indicative of the Vārkarī sampradāya’s value of family and filial obligations (Laine 1998:134). The fact that the deity is denounced as a home-wrecker is therefore significant as it highlights the importance of family and the obligations of sansār. The Goṇāī abhanga are regarded as exhibiting virodha bhakti (see Gosāvī 2000:256) and part of Mahīpati’s caritra depicts Goṇāī’s opposition to vairāgya and to Viṭṭhhal as the cause of Nāmdev’s disinterest in sansār. The conflict between Nāmdev and his family continues with his wife Rājāī who also expresses opposition to Nāmdev’s withdrawal from the world.

2.2.ii. Rājāī

Rājāī is remembered as the wife of sant Nāmdev if she is remembered at all. It has been suggested that Rājāī and Nāmdev were married when Nāmdev was nine years old (Callewaert 1989:17). Rājāī and Nāmdev are thought to have had four sons (Janābāī abhaṅga 279; Callewaert 1989:17)—although Mahīpati only refers to Nārāyaṇa (BVJ 4.64)—and a daughter called Limbāī although Mahīpati does not refer to Limbāī by name (BVJ 17.59ff). The SSG states that Rājāī suffered as Nāmdev’s wife and that the affecting story of her troubled life is related in thirteen abhanga, which are presented within the compendium. The SSG presents Rājāī as expressing her feelings towards Nāmdev while realising his spiritual status. The SSG also states that Rājāī expresses the real rage and distress (sāttvik santāp) of a grhini in her dialogue with the goddess Rukmini and with her husband. The SSG says nothing more about Rājāī, presumably leaving the abhaṅgas to speak for themselves, except to say that Rājāī composed 50 abhaṅgas in total (Gosāvī 2005). Dattātreya’s biography of Nāmdev, Nāmadevācī Ādi Samādhi ‘The Beginning [and] the Threnody of Nāmdev’ (1723) describes Rājāī complaining about Nāmdev neglecting his household duties, a story of riches given to Rājāī but disposed of by Nāmdev exemplifying the struggle between economic prosperity and the life of a bhakta (Novetzke 2008:71).

The distress felt by Goṇāī is also apparent in the life of Rājāī who describes her predicament to her mother-in-law: ‘For me you have given birth to a pure crystal. But now my garments are torn and exceedingly old. I have not enough to eat. I have, therefore, come to your house to live my poverty-stricken life. He whom I serve with devotion has been persecuting me. I see no way of bettering our
domestic state’ (BVJ 4.100–101, Abbott and Godbole 1996:64–65). These verses are interesting because they not only portray Rājāī’s scorn for Nāmdev but also describe her as ‘serving her husband with devotion’ as a pativrata. The story continues with Viṭṭhal, disguised as a merchant called Keśava, coming to Rājāī’s aid because she had complained about her state of poverty. Viṭṭhal-Keśava goes to Nāmdev’s house with a bag of gold coins and en route he asks for directions from the townspeople, who laugh at the thought of a guest going to a house with no food. Rājāī tries to dismiss her guest by informing Keśava that the master of the house is away. Rājāī complains to her neighbours that she is inundated by guests whom Nāmdev has instructed her to feed but whom she cannot serve as she has no food in the house: ‘Innumerable sadhus have come into my house. They carry cymbals and viṇās and dance in their love. They put aside all thought of shame and public praise. They put aside all thoughts of caste difference. They hold the Chief of Yadavas [Krṣṇa] in their heart and dance in delight’ (BVJ 4.110–114, Abbott and Godbole 1996, Vol. 1, p. 65–66). Mahīpati thus emphasises that the guests are bhaktas and that bhaktas in general should disregard public praise and caste difference. Keśava then tells Rājāī that He is a friend of Nāma who has brought Nāmdev some gold coins, so Rājāī comes out of the house and offers Keśava a seat. Keśava seems amused by Rājāī’s volte-face and tells Rājāī that one should not go anywhere empty-handed: an example of didactic instruction from Mahīpati. Keśava tells Rājāī she is not to bother Nāmdev but just accept His gift and call on Him for more when it is required. Rājāī as any hostess should, offers Keśava food but he declines telling her he will not eat without Nāmdev—a possible reference to the miraculous story of the offering mentioned above—and Keśava then leaves (BVJ 4.115–132). This story suggests that one can live as a householder and as a bhakta because God is present in even the most difficult domestic situations.

With her new found wealth Rājāī joyfully prepares ‘delicious food’ but when Nāmdev returns he views the scene with displeasure. Rājāī tells him to bathe so that they can eat the food but Nāmdev is made uncomfortable with Rājāī’s apparent comfort in wealth. Nāmdev questions Rājāī but in the hope he will not give everything away she says nothing. However, Janābāī tells Nāmdev about Keśava Šeṭ, the Lingāyat banker from Karnataka, who brought the money (BVJ 4.215–242). Nāmdev praises God in gratitude (BVJ 4.243–244) and then distributes the wealth to the Brahmans of Pandharpur (BVJ 4.250–251). Mahīpati does not refer to how Rājāī felt about this distribution of wealth, although one can imagine

20 An abhaṅga attributed to Janābāī tells story of Viṭṭhal the banker (v.131, SSG 1:728): शेय झाला हरी। śetya jhālā hari
she might be very unhappy, rather Mahīpati describes how ‘those desiring wealth and wives will not enjoy these stories’ (BVJ 4.253). The important factor for Mahīpati is to show Nāmdev as a good bhakta who is not interested in or constrained by the concerns of the material world. In this manner both Rājāī and Goṇāī—depicted as women deeply concerned with worldly matters—draw attention to Nāmdev and his performance of disinterested action (karmayoga) which destabilises the householder path.

There is another story in the Bhaktavijaya that depicts Rājāī’s desire for material comfort as well as an interaction between female bhaktas (BVJ 18.126ff). Mahīpati relates how Kamalajā, Parīsa Bhāgvat’s wife and Rājāī meet and chat while fetching water from the river. Rājāī tells her friend Kamalajā that Nāmdev has devoted himself to Viṭṭhal completely and that as a result he has no concern for the welfare of the family: ‘At home we have the very least of food and raiments and yet we have a very large family. Tell me at once what I am to do?’ (BVJ 18.130–134, Abbott and Godbole 1996:305). Kamalajā then asks Rājāī how Nāmdev can continue to worship a god who does not give him anything in return. Kamalajā then tells Rājāī that her husband, Parīsa Bhāgavat, has made Rukmiṇī pleased with him and so She has given them a touchstone. This touchstone turns ordinary iron objects into gold and as a result Kamalajā and Parīsa are eating well (BVJ 18.135–143, Abbott and Godbole 1996:306). The two women go to Kamalajā’s house and Kamalajā allows Rājāī to borrow the touchstone so she can turn things into gold. However, Kamalajā warns Rājāī not to tell Nāmdev anything about the matter. Rājāī goes home, applies the touchstone to various household items, takes the golden objects to the bazaar and exchanges them for cash. Rājāī then purchases garments, ornaments (possibly a means of attaining cash at a later date), cooking vessels and large quantities of food (BVJ 18.144–150). When Nāmdev returns home he notices all the new things and questions Rājāī. In an attempt to distract him Rājāī tells Nāmdev to eat his meal but he refuses to do so until Rājāī has explained herself. Aware that trouble is brewing, Rājāī tells Nāmdev about Kamalajā lending her the touchstone. Nāmdev asks Rājāī to bring him the touchstone and then takes it from her he throws it into the river all the while repeating the names of God. Rājāī then sits down and cries in anguish (BVJ 18.151–160).

Meanwhile, Parīsa Bhāgavat returns home and finds the touchstone missing. Mahīpati describes Parīsa scolding Kamalajā for losing the touchstone and Kamalajā replying she had lent it to Rājāī. Parīsa Bhāgavat sends Kamalajā to get the touchstone from Rājāī. On learning that Nāmdev has thrown it into the river both women became incensed and start shouting (BVJ 18.161–173). A confrontation between Parīsa Bhāgavat and Nāmdev thus ensues. Nāmdev asks Parīsa Bhāgavat why he would want a
touchstone when he professes indifference to worldly things and tells him if he wants the touchstone he should look for it in the river. The assembled crowd laugh at this and ask who could recognise the touchstone in the sand. Nāmdev then takes a handful of sand from the water and declares that it contains numerous touchstones; an assertion that was found to be true when tested. The crowd rejoice at the miracle but Parīsa Bhāgavat repents and becomes Nāmdev’s disciple (BVJ 18:173–193). Mahīpati represents Rājāī and Kamalajā as women concerned with material wealth and comfort rather than bhakti. Although aware that Rājāī is responsible for feeding and clothing a large family Mahīpati highlights Nāmdev performing a miracle and Parīsa Bhāgavat’s capitulation rather than Rājāī’s anguish.

The stories relating to both Rājāī and Goṇāī depict the women as primarily concerned with sansār and thus highlight the tension between grhaṣṭha and vairāgya. Aklujkar argues that Goṇāī and Rājāī are remembered for their ‘nuisance value’ to Nāmdev or as his ‘stepping stones towards his world-weariness’ (Aklujkar 2005:105). Nāmdev went on pilgrimage with Jñāneśvar according to Mahīpati (BVJ 10) so clearly Mahīpati does not view Goṇāī or Rājāī prevailing on the grhaṣṭha/domestic front. However, it is possible that Mahīpati represented Goṇāī and Rājāī as the antithesis of Nāmdev. In other words, Mahīpati may have used Goṇāī, Rājāī and Kamalajā to denote the most undesirable aspects of grhaṣṭha and used Nāmdev to exemplify the negative elements of an extreme form of vairāgya. Consequently, one could construe Mahīpati’s portrayal of Goṇāī and Rājāī as drawing the hearer/reader towards a happy median between grhaṣṭha and vairāgya and suggesting that it is possible to live as a bhakta and a householder. Nonetheless, the tension between householdership and renunciation is not resolved fully in Mahīpati’s accounts of Goṇāī and Rājāī, and neither is it resolved in the story relating to Rājāī and Nāmdev’s daughter.

2.2.iii. Limbāī: Nāmdev’s daughter

Limbāī was Rājāī and Nāmdev’s youngest child, who is described by the SSG as a kanyā. The SSG states that Limbāī gained spiritual knowledge through living with her father, which is why the single abhaṅga attributed to her is contained in the Nāmdev Gāthā (Gosāvī 2003:713). Mahīpati relates a story about Nāmdev’s daughter in the BVJ but nowhere does Mahīpati refer to her as Limbāī. Nonetheless, Mahīpati’s story about Limbāī indicates Nāmdev’s relationship with his daughter but also relates an incident between the daughters of two Pandharpur bhaktas (BVJ 17.59–68).

The story states that Nāmdev’s daughter was washing clothes in the Bhima River and that while beating the clothes on a stone she sprayed Vāṅka, the beautiful daughter of Rākā Kumbhār (BVJ 17.9).
Vāṅka tells Nāmdev’s daughter to beat the clothes gently as she has just bathed and sat down to perform *manas puja*. Nāmdev’s daughter replies that Vāṅka seems very particular for someone from the potter caste that has abandoned the domestic life and wanders from house to house begging (BVJ 17.60–62, Abbott and Godbole 1996:283). Vāṅka responds scornfully: ‘The sobbing of Nama is well known amongst men. Although the holder of the disk [Krṣṇa] is in the form of Buddha [mute] he forced Him to speak by breaking his own head’ (BVJ 17.63, Abbott and Godbole 1996:283). After the quarrel both girls return home and Nāmdev’s daughter tells her father what had happened and that Vāṅka had criticized him. She tells Nāmdev that Vāṅka had described her father, Rākā Kumbhār, as a desireless man and one who gathered faggots and sold them in the market to support his family. This perplexes Nāmdev who decides to find out about the potter (BVJ 17.64–69). The story concludes with Nāmdev, accompanied by Viṭṭhal and Rukmīṇī, going out into the forest to test Rākā Kumbhār and his family (BVJ 17.70–85). Rākā finds the gold bracelet Rukmīṇī had put under some sticks and tells his wife Bāṅka, ‘Look at this, the root of disaster’. Bāṅka replies that a gold bracelet is useless as it hinders the worship of God. The couple leave the bracelet and the firewood where they found it and go away. Consequently, Nāmdev recognises Rākā’s *bhakti* and at his request Viṭṭhal reveals himself to Rākā and Bāṅka and embraces his bhaktas (BVJ 17.86–98).

It is noticeable that in this story the daughter of the prominent and well-known Nāmdev is unnamed while the daughter of a less well-known *bhakta* is clearly identified. The term *lāḍāī* in Konkani connotes ‘battle’, ‘collision’, ‘conflict’, ‘contend’, ‘contentious’, ‘quarrelsome’, ‘row’, ‘fight’, ‘quarrel’ and so on (Maffei 1883) while in Marathi *lāḍhāī* denotes ‘a battle or fight’ (Tulpule 1999:262) and ‘fighting; warfare or war’ (Molesworth 1857:704). This argumentative definition might have a bearing on Mahīpati’s story of the quarrel between the daughters of Nāmdev and Rākā Kumbhār (BVJ 17.59ff). The story highlights the fact that the girls were living in a town, as part of the community of *bhaktas*, where people were aware of each other’s family situations. The girls insult each other and try to outdo each other but it is probably Limbāī who ends up telling tales to her father Nāmdev. Mahīpati says nothing further about the girls’ relationship as he is more concerned with the spiritual understanding Nāmdev gains and the recognition of Rākā and Bāṅka as *bhaktas*. Nāmdev’s daughter appears to support a happy family life, a life as a householder, as she criticises Vāṅka’s father and family for abandoning domesticity in favour of begging for alms. However, the story of Rākā and Bāṅka highlights the importance of indifference to worldly things and suggests that such indifference is rewarded by God (BVJ 17.86–98).
This story again draws attention to the tension between grhaṣṭha and vairāgya but does not completely resolve the conflict although disinterested action (karma yoga) seems to be emphasised.

2.2.iv. Nāgarī: sant Nāmdev’s dāsī and/or dhvāḍī

The first reference to Nāgarī comes in the abhaṅgas of Nāmdev’s son Gondā: ‘Nāma’s dāsī Nāgarī, another Janī, hypnotised God through her service’ (Śāsakīya Nāmdev Gāthā: Gondāce abhaṅga 1; Shrotriya 1992:62).21 Significantly, Gondā refers to both Nāgarī and Janābāī as Nāmdev’s dāsīs (Shrotriya 1992:75–76). The term dāsī is usually translated as ‘servant’ or ‘slave’ but can also be interpreted as ‘devotee’ (see Tulpule 1999:327). The use of the term dāsī in relation to Nāgrī suggests that Nāgrī might have been Nāmdev’s student rather than servant (Shrotriya 1992:64; see Dhere 1977a). Nāgrī is the first woman credited with composing autobiographical compositions by R.C. Dhere and consequently a summary of Nāgarī’s biography is presented in Chapter Five. However, the most famous dāsī connected with Nāmdev is Janābāī whom Mahīpati portrays and whose caritra is discussed below. The inclusion of Nāgarī signals the importance of kul for the Vārkarī tradition and that gender attribution is being utilised to discursively construct the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition.

2.3. Janābāī

An account of Janābāī’s life is found in the Bhaktavijaya (see Appendix C.1).22 Mahīpati describes several miraculous incidences from Janī’s life, which seem to derive from the compositions attributed to Nāmdev and Janābāī. Novetzke observes that Mahīpati extracts miracles from Nāmdev’s life and intertwines them with those of Janī to highlight their interconnectedness and the correspondence of their miraculous experience (2008:68). The story begins with seven-year-old Janī on a visit to Paṇḍharpūr, during Kārtik, with her parents refusing to leave the city (BVJ 21.9–10). Janī’s parents agree to let her stay and Janī then is adopted by Nāmdev or Nāmdev’s father Dāmāśeṭī according to other accounts so that Janī is almost Nāmdev’s sibling. V.N. Utpat said that Janī’s parents died of cholera, which is why she was adopted by Nāmdev (personal communication, 22nd November 2004). Janī’s status as an orphan and her parents’ death due to cholera has similarities to the Sakhūbāī caritra discussed below. However, a Vārkarī scholar and kīrtankār suggested that Janī’s destiny was to be a devadāsī:

The story goes that her parents, who were innocent simple people, did not have a child for a long time. So they took a vow that they would offer the first child to Viṭṭhal and Janābāī was their first child. They were worried about where they would leave her [in the temple]. They went to the temple and Nāmdev was giving kīrtan and he impressed them so they touched his feet and left the girl at his...

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21 Nāmayācī dāsī nāgī duṣrī janī; tyāṇī sevā karūṇī [vaśa] kelā deva.
feet [i.e. offered her to him]. They told him that they came from Gangakhed, were a simple family and that they had made a sankalpa to offer their first child to Viṭṭhal. They said that they had therefore offered her...that she was five years old, that she can wash her own clothes, take a bath by herself and so on, and was being offered at God’s feet. Nāmdev was in a fix because he could not say yes or no. He had a big family and it is a big responsibility to take on a child. He decided to keep her as a dāsī.

(Dada Maharaj Manmadkar, personal communication, 10th July 2006)

There was a tradition of consecrating young girls into the service of God at temples in Maharashtra, Orissa and across South India (Mishra 2011:241). So Manmadkar’s suggestion that Janī’s parents intended to place her in the service of God may relate to this practice and to a reference by Mahīpati in his biography of Janābāī.23 Janī’s biography thus seems to fulfil one of Sangari’s typical conventions in the lives of women sants: the association with a holy place, namely Pandharpur. Additionally, Janī’s caritra appears to demonstrate early dedication to God, one of the phases the lives of women sants display according to Ramanujan (1982:317).

Mahīpati states kṛṣṇa avatārī kubjā dāsī / tyājavīna māyahāpa nase majasī / mī nāmayačī ananya dāsī / nase āṇika maja kāhī /19/ ‘During Kṛṣṇa’s descent (avatāra) there was a maid, Kubjā. Without him there is no other parent for me. Similarly, I am Nāma’s only dāsī. There is nothing more for me’ (19).24 Abbott and Godbole translate the verse as: ‘At the time of Krishna’s avatar-ship he had a maid by the name of Kubja (the cripple). She had now appeared as an avatar in this Kali Yuga. So she has come on pilgrimage to Paṇḍharī, and is absorbed in the worship of Hari’ (1996:339). The name Kubjā relates to the story of Kṛṣṇa and the hunchbacked (kubja) woman Trivakrā.25 It is unclear why Mahīpati connects Janī with Kubjā but it is probably because they were both maidservants who had an intimate relationship with God (see Pauwels 2008:332; Novetzke 2008:69). Moreover, they are both regarded as having been liberated—Kubjā by association with Kṛṣṇa and Janī by association Nāmdev—and they are both venerated. Janī is remembered by the Vārkarīs at the temple in Gopalpur (see Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:69, Ill 11–17) while Kubjā is remembered in the Braj region (Pauwels 2008:317–18). Furthermore, both Kubjā and Janī are unattached and unprotected, and might therefore be considered sexually ‘available’ like Kānhopātrā whom Mahīpati also connects with kubja (BVJ 39.15). However, it is probable that Mahīpati regarded Janī as the ultimate servant. Mahīpati later relates that Jānāśvar asks

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23 For more on devadāsīs see Marglin 1985 and V.S. Kadam 1998.
24 The verse reads: कृणावतारीकुञ्जादासी।। त्याजवीनामयापनमजसी।। मीनामयाचीअनुयादासी।। नसेआणीकमजकाहं।।१९।। My thanks to Kasturi Dadhe for her help with interpreting this verse (Personal communication, 16th April 2013).
Janī ‘How many births have you had through worshipping God?’ (199) and that Janī replies that she accompanied God through various avatāras (BVJ 21.200–203). Abbott and Godbole’s interpretation that Janī is an avatāra of Kubjā seems inaccurate as Janī appears to be represented as an avatāra of Kṛṣṇa who descended to serve Viṭṭhal (see Novetzke 2008:70).

Mahīpati makes it clear that Janī’s role in the family is as a domestic servant but makes no more mention of Janī as a servant although he does refer to Janī performing household tasks (22), grinding (85, 103–6, 113; 23.92). However, by putting the words ‘I am Nāma’s only dāsī’ (19) into Janī’s mouth Mahīpati signals that Janī views Nāmdev as her spiritual teacher. Mahīpati either had no idea about Nāgrī as Nāmdev’s dāsī or considered Nāgrī considerably less important than Janī. The account presented by Mahīpati portrays the developing relationship between Janī and Viṭṭhal, and highlights how Janī’s memory is interwoven with that of Nāmdev the householder (see Novetzke 2008:69).

Mahīpati describes how Viṭṭhal, having repaired Nāmdev’s hut after a terrible storm, dines with Nāma and has his back massaged by Janī (44). When Viṭṭhal does not sit next to Janī she protests (52–3). Viṭṭhal wonders why he has lost his appetite and Nāmdev explains that it is because Janī is standing outside crying (55). Viṭṭhal then stops eating and Goṇāī gives Janī Viṭṭhal’s leftovers. Once Nāmdev had fallen asleep Viṭṭhal comes to Janī’s hut and asks to eat the food that He had left. Despite Janī’s uncertainty Viṭṭhal tells her not to worry and serve Him that which is His own. Mahīpati explains that Viṭṭhal left the food on his plate so that Janī would have food to offer Him as she had no food in her hut. Viṭṭhal eats the food, indicating that He favours food sharing across caste boundaries, and then lies down beside Nāma to sleep. Mahīpati closes this story saying that Janī was honoured by Viṭṭhal due to her association with Nāmdev (BVJ 21.61).

This story presents the conventional social practice of women and servants eating after the male members of the household. However, the story also combines giving left-over food to servants and devotees eating food that has first been offered or sacrificed to God (prasāda), which are still common practices today, but very much in a domestic setting. However, Vanita suggests that Janī is given the leftovers because she is ‘despised’, that is, because of her low social status. Significantly, due to her association with Nāmdev, Janī is given the leavings but God comes to eat with Janī in her hut away from all the others including Nāmdev. Vanita regards this private interaction as indicating that ‘normal social practice falls short by divine standards’ (2005:102–03). While the interaction may well imply a lack in social practice it also highlights that Janī is being honoured much in the way Nāmdev was honoured when
Viṭṭhal consumed the offering in his presence. Aklujkar refers to Nāmdev sharing his food with Viṭṭhal as an expression of sakhyā-bhakti and suggests that food becomes a symbol of bhakti as the deity and devotee share a meal together. Only the devotee consumes the leftovers as prasāda as normally an individual’s leftovers are considered too polluted for anyone else to eat. Thus, because the devotee and the deity are in a reciprocal relationship they share food without following the normal conventions (1992:101–103). The themes of sharing and friendship are also visible in other interactions between Janī and Viṭṭhal in Mahīpati’s caritra.

Mahīpati relates how Janī is awoken in the early morning by Viṭṭhal who tells her to get up and do the grinding. Viṭṭhal tells Janī he has prepared the mill for her and that He is waiting to help her (84–89). Mahīpati, following the abhaṅgas attributed to Janī, describes how Viṭṭhal plaits Janī’s hair and listens to her while He helps her with the grinding. Viṭṭhal thus helps Janī perform her daily tasks and listens to her revering the sants. The story of Janī grinding continues with the appearance of Goṇāī who is roused by Janī’s singing. Goṇāī quizzes Janī about whether she has hired a woman to help her with the grinding but Janī remains silent. Infuriated Goṇāī takes a stick, enters Janī’s hut and chastises Janī (106). Goṇāī then strikes Janī but the blow falls on Viṭṭhal who tells Goṇāī his name is Viṭṭhāī—the feminized form of the deity’s name meaning ‘mother Viṭṭhal’— and that he has come to help Janī grind (107). (The themes of sakhyā-bhakti and grinding are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five below). Nāmdev hears about what happened from Goṇāī and tells her that she struck God and not Janī and subsequently Goṇāī repents (108–111). This story highlights friendship and sharing but also the ‘less than ideal nature of human social relations’ according to Vanita (2005:102–03). The biographies of some nineteenth-century Marathi women describe the tyranny of a mother-in-law who exercised complete authority and even the physical punishment received from a mother (Kosambi 1998:90–91). Goṇāī seems to fit the image of the authoritarian matriarch who represents the antithesis of the bhakti ethos. However, if one considers the incident in relation to Goṇāī’s caritra outlined above one can imagine that Goṇāī is motivated by financial concerns due to Nāmdev’s abandonment of sansār in favour of vairāgya and is thus driven to the depths of despair which sadly results in violence. Moreover, this and other narrative accounts function in the discursive construction of the sampradāya by arguing for the householder path. The stories suggest that doing one’s duties within the household is compatible with being a bhakta because God/Viṭṭhal will meet one within the domestic setting.
Mahīpati then describes how Viṭṭhal falls asleep at Janī’s place after the grinding has been completed (116–7). Viṭṭhal is woken at dawn by Janī who tells Him He must return to the temple in time for morning worship. Viṭṭhal rushes off but in His haste forgets his jewellery and takes Janī’s blanket instead of His own woollen garment. Consequently, the attendees at morning worship discover Viṭṭhal covered by Janī’s blanket and without His jewels. The Brahman priests accuse Janī of stealing and demand she returns the jewels. Janī declares her innocence but the priests find the jewels while searching her hut and announce Janī must be punished. Janī is taken to the river bank where she is to be impaled on an iron stake. However, Janī cries out to God (145–6) and the iron spike miraculously turns into water (147). The story concludes with the crowd clapping their hands and saying that God saves His servants when they are in trouble (149). This account emphasises Janī’s vulnerability to public condemnation due to her gender and low social status (see Vanita 1989:56; Sellergren 1996:218), a theme that appears in some of the compositions attributed to Janābāī. This Janī story fits Sangari’s typical convention for women sants of bitter persecution and miraculous escape but it also suggests that even women of low status are loved and protected by god so they should perform their household duties faithfully with devotion.

Janābāī’s status as an important bhakta is depicted by Mahīpati when Viṭṭhal, hearing Janī compose verses in her head, begins to write down her compositions ( 150–156). However, Viṭṭhal is caught out by Jhāneśvar and eventually tells Jhāneśvar He is writing down Janī’s verses, which makes Jhāneśvar laugh ( 162). Thus, Mahīpati validates the textual recording of the compositions attributed to Janī through the actions and presence of both Viṭṭhal and Jhāneśvar. Mahīpati then narrates how Viṭṭhal and Jhāneśvar go to Nāmdev’s house to tell him how much God loves Janī but finding a gathering of sants they decide to introduce Janī to the community. Goṇāī sends Rājāī to fetch Janī from making dung cakes and after washing her hands Janī joins the gathering. Jhāneśvar describes how he witnessed Viṭṭhal writing down Janī’s compositions and Viṭṭhal replies:

‘writing down Janī’s verses has not diminished me at all (188). I take an oath, witnessed upon your feet, that Janī’s Prakrit [Marathi] speech must be known as charming (svāda) and delightful (rasa)’ (189). I, Govind, take the paper of pure being and write of my own delights: inner happiness and the realisation of knowledge (190). Whoever reads Janī’s words, I will avail them in the courtyard’, he so mouthed. From Nāma’s house the Discus-Holder said (191): ‘He who continually sings Janī’s verses will have no difficulties in their domestic life (sansār). At the end I will certainly lead him to absorption in the Divine (sāyujyā)’ (192).

(BVJ 21.189–193, my translation)
Thus Mahīpati establishes Janī’s compositions in Marathi as sanctioned by God and as spiritually efficacious. Janī is then accepted into the community of sants that includes other householders: Kabīr, Cokhāmeḷā, Rohidās, Sajjan the Paṭhān [Muslim], Bayā the butcher, the leatherworker and Bhil tribeswoman, Mukundarāj the door-opener, Goṇāi, Rājāi and Nāma (194–197). The final part of Janī’s biography affirms her status as an avatāra and member of the community of sants. Jhāneśvar questions Janī and she discloses that in each descent she had come to serve Viṭṭhal as Kṛṣṇa (198–203; see Novetzke 2008:70). In the concluding segment Viṭṭhal assigns a scribe for each sant apart from Nāmdev (205ff) saying: ‘Rukminī’s Husband will write down the words of Nāma’s Janī’ (209). Thus, having allocated the scribes the Discus-Holder said to Jñānadev, ‘Now, you should have no inhibition in listening to Janī’s abhaṅgas’ (210).28 Janī is here presented as a poet and sant rather than just a dāsī within the domestic setting of Nāmdev’s home, the suggestion seeming to be that she can be both. Novetzke suggests that the metaphor of all the sants residing together indicates the interaction between ‘public’ and ‘private’ in bhakti (2008:70) but it also highlights satsaṅg, which is an important element in bhakta and in caritra, and Janābāī’s place within the community of sants who are worthy of reverence. It is worth reiterating that Mahīpati places Janī in a paramparā that portrays her as Nāmdev’s disciple, and connects her with Jhāneśvar and the Nāth panth: Matsyendranāth – Gorakṣa – Śāmbhava – Advayānand – Prabhava – Gahini – Nivrtti – Jhānadev – Visoba – Nāmdev – Janī (BVJ 22.133–37). Thus, Janī appears to fit the phase of ‘initiation’ that Ramanujan argues the lives of women sants display.

Mahīpati’s biography seems to present Janī as a woman for whom domestic work is unavoidable rather than one who is a domestic servant according to Novetzke (2008:69). Conversely, I think that Mahīpati’s caritra highlights Janī’s position of domestic servitude: at the outset Janī is accepted by Nāmdev as a dāsī; Janī fulfils a service role even as an avatāra; Janī is a marginalised figure in the

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26 Kabīr (c.1398/1440–1518) is presented by Mahīpati in the Bhaktavijaya (5, 6, 7, 11). It is unlikely that the lifetimes or dates of Kabīr and Janī coincide as Nāmdev’s family is accepted as having taken samādhi in 1350 C.E. However, Novetzke notes that the connection between Kabīr and Nāmdev is important in northern India, which may be why Mahīpati connects Janī to Kabīr (2008:59). See Lorenzen 1991 for more on Mahīpati’s interpretation of the Kabīr legends.

27 Abbott and Godbole do not mention the cāmbhār (leatherworker) or bhillâtī (Bhil tribeswoman)—who was probably Śabarī/Shabari— but refer instead to ‘Kamal the gardener’ (1996:355), which may be a reference to Janābāī abhaṅga 172 (see Appendix B) or abhaṅga 9.1–3 in Santa janābāīce aprakāśita abhaṅga saṁhitā ‘The collection of sant Janābāī’s unpublished abhaṅgas’ (SSG 2:1397, 9.1–13): Viṣṇava kabīr cokhā meḷa mahār/ nija to cāmbhār roсидāsa /1/ sajan paṭhāṇabācch to kasāb/ viṣṇava te siddha ekānśtā /2/ kamal phullārī mukunda jhārekarī / jhī devadāvīr vasti keīl /3/ Kabīr the Vaiṣṇava, Cokhāmeḷā the mahār; His own shoemaker Rohidās (1). Sajan the young Paṭhān and butcher: they were pure and whole-hearted Vaiṣṇavas (2). Kamāl the florist, Mukund the sifter of goldsmith’s ashes who remained at the great door [of the temple] (3).

28 The allocation of scribes appears to replicate Janābāī abhaṅga 271 (see Novetzke 2008:70, 259n.8, 78, 260n.9).
household until Viṭṭhal grants her favour; Goṇāi’s harsh treatment of Janī, and Janī’s performance of numerous domestic tasks within the domestic setting of Nāmdev’s home highlights Janī’s position as a dāsī. Interestingly, Mahīpati later adds a few verses relating how Viṭṭhal is exhausted by helping all his bhaktas with their tasks and outlines all the jobs Viṭṭhal has performed for Janī including grinding, fetching water, sweeping, washing clothes and pounding (BVJ 23.92–95). Janī’s marital status is not specified by Mahīpati but, as with Muktābāī, the lack of reference to husband and children may be taken to suggest that Janī was unmarried. However, Janī is portrayed as living a domestic life so she is clearly not a renouncer. Mahīpati’s account presents no tension between grhaṣṭha and vairāgya unlike the accounts relating to Nāmdev’s female relatives. Significantly, Mahīpati marks Janī out as an āvatāra like Muktābāī. However, Janī is presented as in service to Viṭṭhal as well as to the household where she was employed while Muktābāī is identified as Ādimāyā, the primeval female power. Nonetheless, Mahīpati clearly regards both these female figures as worthy of divine status which is possibly due to their connection with male sants who are regarded as the cornerstones of the Vārkarī sampradāya, possibly due to their attributed compositions and possibly because they both represent ‘unmarried’ women within a householder context. Janābāī is a more typical Vārkarī sānt than Muktābāī according to Vanita because Janī ‘falls into the category of those sants whose low social status distanced them from the religious establishment, but whom god is believed to have favoured more highly...’ (1989:55). Thus Janābāī’s caritra intertwines low social status, the domestic setting and bhakti by portraying Viṭṭhal saving Janī from execution and by the metaphor of food sharing. However, Muktabai Maharaj suggested that nobody wants to narrate the incident of Viṭṭhal eating food with Janī because ‘no one wants to acknowledge the greatness of these women sants. A woman can take care of everything but a man can’t, a woman carries the burden of the whole of sansār. I don’t say this because I am a woman but because I see it’ (personal communication, 23rd March 2005). The lives of Goṇāī and Rājāī and Janī to a lesser extent clearly depict the burden of sansār as do the lives of other Vārkarī women sants. The lives of these figures imply the possibility of balancing domestic duties with devotion to god, stressing that, like the path of the renouncer, sansār might be full of difficulties and suffering but that one must nonetheless persist in dutiful and spiritual action.

2.4. Soyarābāī and Nirmaḷābāī

29 See Janī abhaṅgas 80, 83, 85, 86, 87, 122, 124, 125, and 130 for a description of household tasks and Viṭṭhal helping her to bear her burdens (Appendix B).
It is generally accepted that Soyarābāī was Cokhāmeḷā’s wife and that her brother Banka (the diminutive of Venkatesh) was married to Cokhāmeḷā’s sister Nirmaḷā, and that these marriages probably came about due to Nāmdev’s influence (Mokashi-Punekar 2005b:144).30 Soyarābāī and Cokhāmeḷā are accepted as having lived in Mangalvedha (near Pandharpur) during the late-thirteenth to early-fourteenth century and as having had a son called Karmameḷā, while Nirmaḷā and Banka are associated with Mehunpur/Mehunpūrī, near Buldhāṇā (Zelliot 2005:157, 172, 2000a:190).31 Mahīpati makes no mention of Nirmaḷā and her husband in the Bhaktavijaya but does however refer to Cokhāmeḷā living in Pandharpur with his family (23.8); Cokhāmeḷā telling his wife that they are to go and live on the other side of the river (23.60) as the Brahmans of Pandharpur have banished Cokhā for entering the temple, and Cokhāmeḷā scolding his wife for spilling curds on Viṭṭhal (23.67; see Abbott and Godbole 1996:377ff).

Mahīpati states that Cokhāmeḷā ‘lived indifferent all earthly things’ and that one day while Cokhāmeḷā was eating God joined him and shared his meal. Cokhāmeḷā’s wife spilled some curds on Vanamāḷī (Kṛṣṇa) while serving Him and Cokhāmeḷā rebukes his wife for soiling His pītāmbara. A priest who was passing thinks Cokhāmeḷā is taunting him as God would not eat with a Mahār so he slaps Cokhāmeḷā over the mouth. The priest then bathes in the river and enters the temple in Paṇḍharpūr where he sees that the Viṭṭhal-mūrti’s pītāmbara is soiled with curds and that the deity’s cheek is swollen. The Brahman realises he has falsely persecuted Cokhāmeḷā and brings Cokhā into the temple to worship Viṭṭhal, and thus Cokhāmeḷā gained admittance to the temple always (BVJ 23.61–86). The incident of Cokhā’s wife spilling curds on Kṛṣṇa/Viṭṭhal while serving Him appears to be a reversal of the stories in which Kṛṣṇa spills the gopīs’ curds or butter, for which He has a great fondness, that appear in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (10.9) and in the Sūr Sagar (see Hawley 1983). However, the story with its theme of food-sharing highlights the issue of caste commensality and caste discrimination which meant that Mahārs were barred from entering temples (see Chapter One). Mahīpati makes the point that God accepts everyone whatever their caste and thus Cokhāmeḷā is deemed a sant because Kṛṣṇa/Viṭṭhal shares his food and feels his sufferings as His own. Cokhāmeḷā’s wife appears in a supporting, service role in Mahīpati’s account but the effects of her actions are visible on the Viṭṭhal-mūrti, which suggests that God bears her sufferings too and reinforces Mahīpati’s point about God accepting persons of any caste.

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Bhat states that Soyarābāī and Bankā’s father was Kṛṣṇa and their mother was Bhima (1998:88). The names Kṛṣṇa and Bhima, like those of Muktābāī’s parents Viṭṭhalpant and Rukmiṇī, may however be popular names for mythical rather than real parents (see Kiehnle 1997:40). Bhat and Gosāvī present Soyarābāī as Cokhāmeḷā’s mahārī (wife). Bhat then says that while there is little reference to Soyarā’s life-story she is known for serving her husband with exertion (pati-sevā-prayatna) and being a spiritual-seeker (pāramārthika). Gosāvī states that Soyarā had one son called Karmameḷā, that she lived on after Cokhāmeḷā’s samādhi (as a widow) and that she wrote sixty-two famous abhaṅgas including one that says ‘come give me darśan and I’ll worship you along with the brick’. Bhat, Gosāvī and Abhyankar then go on to discuss the compositions attributed to Soyarābāī before concluding that Soyarābāī and Cokhāmeḷā overcame the difficulties [of being Mahārs] by praying to and worshipping Viṭṭhal. Gosāvī says Nirmalā came from Mehunpur near Mangalvedha and, like Bhat, refers to the importance of chanting the Name of God (see Chapter Five) that appears in Nirmalā’s attributed compositions. Gosāvī states that Nirmalā composed twenty-four abhaṅgas, that her language is full of devotion which blesses the hearer or reader so one should read her abhaṅgas (Bhat 1998:88; Gosāvī 2000:811–13 and Abhyankar 1992:153–56ff). Bhat concludes that the two couples, Nirmalā and Bankā, and Soyarābāī and Cokhāmeḷā, as well as Soyarābāī’s son Karmameḷā all produced abhaṅgas (1998). Zelliot picks up on this point as part of her discussion on the compositions relating to the story of Karmameḷā’s birth as it is notable that a whole family is recorded as composing abhaṅgas (2005:149–155; 1999a:93–98). It is clear from this brief life-sketch that Soyarā and Nirmalā were low-caste, married women and therefore householders: Mahīpati and Bhat both depict Cokhāmeḷā’s wife serving her husband. However, the caritras provide almost no biographical details about Soyarā and Nirmalā suggesting that these women are of little concern to the biographers even though some biographical details, like the story of Karmameḷā’s birth, are depicted in compositions attributed to Soyarā and Nirmalā. It is possible that although there are compositions attributed to Soyarā and Nirmalā the lack of caritra for these figures played a role in their relative absence from the tradition. Mahīpati’s stories about Cokhāmeḷā allude to his indifference (vairāgya) but do not explicitly draw attention to the tension between vairāgya and grhaṣṭha as the Cokhāmeḷā family is depicted living a householder life and therefore fit with the Vārkarī sampradāya’s successful construction as a householder path. However, the topic of vairāgya appears in other accounts by Mahīpati, like those relating to Banka and Vāṅka.

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32 Yeī yeī garuḍadhvajā (Soyarābāī abhaṅga 1, SSG 1:998) translated by Zelliot (2005:158).
2.5. Banka and Vāṅka

Mahāpati tells stories about Banka and Vāṅka but as the women have no compositions attributed to them it is probably best to understand them as bhaktas rather than santakaviyatris. Banka was the wife and Vāṅka the daughter of a Gujarati potter name Rākā Kumbhār, as mentioned above in relation to Nāmdev’s daughter Limbāi. The first story tells how the family’s cat and its kittens were miraculously saved from the potter’s oven. The whole family prayed for Viṭṭhal to save the kittens and fulfilled their promise that they would give everything away and go to Pandharpur to live in the company of the sants if the kittens came out alive. The second story relates how Vāṅka was splashed with water by Nāmdev’s daughter (probably Limbāi) while washing clothes in the river, which resulted in an argument between the girls that is discussed above. Limbāi said ‘you’re just a potter’s daughter …’ and then both girls say, ‘My father…’. Limbāi goes home and tells Nāmdev what has happened and asks about Vāṅka. Nāmdev then asks Viṭṭhal about Vāṅka and Viṭṭhal tells him how the potter family have given up everything for the sake of three cats. Nāmdev, Viṭṭhal and Rukmiṇi go to inspect the family and see them collecting firewood but not taking the wood others have already set aside. Rukmiṇi puts down her gold bracelet but none of the family pick it up as they have given up such temptation. Consequently, Nāmdev, Viṭṭhal and Rukmiṇi appear to them (BVJ 17.7–98). Thus, this Gujarati family gained a place in the list of sants (Bhat 1998:93). However, Banka and Vāṅka are not widely remembered although the stories about them do suggest the importance of kuṭumb in the Vārkarī tradition. There are a number of other women mentioned by Mahāpati—for example the kuṇbī Hānsī (BVJ 54.18–35, 67–121; Abbott and Godbole 1996:314–322)—but like Banka and Vāṅka these women are not widely remembered. Significantly, this story depicts vairāgya but performed in a family group, which highlights two key features of Vārkarī bhakti: family and disinterested action.

2.6. Bhāgū Mahārīṇ

The caritra of Bhāgū Mahārīṇ in SSG states she was born in the mahār community, found her life enriched by devotion to the Lord and flourished as a poet, that her dates and life story are unknown, and that only two of her abhaṅgas are included in N.G. Joshi’s Prācīna Gitabhāndāra ‘Treasury of Ancient Songs’ (Gosāvi 2005:816). There are five abhaṅgas attributed to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ in the SSG, which are discussed in the following chapter, but nothing more is related about Bhāgū Mahārīṇ. However, the inclusion of compositions attributed to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ in the Vārkarī corpus draws attention to the
inclusion of low-caste women among the community of sants and once again highlights the role of gender attribution in discursively forming the sampradāya as a householder tradition.

2.7. Kānhopātrā

The story of Kānhopātrā’s life appears in Mahipati’s Bhaktavijaya (BVJ 39.1–78, see Appendix C.2).\(^{33}\) However, there are a few differences between Mahipati’s account and those of later biographers so a composite version of her caritra is presented below before discussing some issues raised by her biography.

Kānhopātrā was born in Maṅgaḷveḍha—a town fourteen miles south-east of Pandharpur—and was the daughter of Śāmā (BVJ 39.2) or Śyāma (Bhat 1998:56). Śyāma was ‘a famous singer and dancer’ (Bhat 1998) and a veṣya ‘prostitute’ (Abhyankar 1992).\(^{34}\) Mahipati describes Kānhopātrā’s youth and beauty saying that she was ‘a beautiful gem (2). In looking at her beauty the heavenly attendants were ashamed. The creator had created none her equal in the three worlds (3). In her youth she learnt the art of singing and dancing. In looking at her Rambhā, Tilottamā and Menakā were all ashamed (4)’. These apsarās are celestial singers and dancers who are renowned for their everlasting beauty and eternal youth (Garg 1992:565–67). However, the apsarās also symbolise free or unattached women as their sexual services were employed by Indra to interrupt the concentration of ascetics who were attempting to weaken Indra’s power (see Sheth 1992:14, 19, 20). Mahipati is clearly likening Kānhopātrā to the apsarās due to her beauty, and her proficiency at singing and dancing.

The story goes that Śyāma insisted Kānhopātrā continue her profession and that Śyāma wanted Kānhopātrā to go to the palace of the Bādaśāhā ‘Great King’ (Bhat 1998). Mahipati suggests that this was in the hope that Kānhopātrā’s beauty would be rewarded with ornaments (BVJ 39.6–7, Abbott 1996:78), thus implying that Kānhopātrā would have performed as a courtesan.\(^{35}\) However, Kānhopātrā did not fulfil this role or go to Bādaśāhā’s court but instead became a Viṭṭhal-bhakta. In one version of the story

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\(^{33}\) For an alternative telling of the Kānhopātrā story see Kalpita (2009).

\(^{34}\) Śyāma’s exact status is unclear because if she was a singer and dancer of repute it is likely that she was in fact a ganikā ‘courtesan’ rather than a veṣya ‘prostitute’ (Gupta 1987:272ff). Doniger calls a veṣya ‘a courtesan’ and a ganikā ‘a courtesan deluxe’ and suggests that both terms suggest multiple sexual partners (2009:187n.1.3.17). The difference between the two is one between ‘the earth and the sky’ as only the most beautiful, talented and virtuous courtesans were called ganikā. A ganikā was regarded as ‘the wealth and glory of the entire kingdom’ for she was not only beautiful but educated. It is important to note that despite a ganikā’s extraordinary education and upbringing not all social conventions or ‘customary modes of conduct’ were discarded. Furthermore, the daughter of a ganikā had the right to study (Doniger 2003: xxix, 16). See Appendix C.2 n.8 for more on this topic.

this is because Kānhopātṛā was so in love with a man that she focussed on him rather than her singing. When Kānhopātṛā discovered he had deceived her—for he was married—their relationship ended and Kānhopātṛā lost interest in everything (Bhat 1998). However, the traditional account of Kānhopātṛā’s life does not include this amorous ‘householder’ prelude. Baba Maharaj Manmadkar told me that Kānhopātṛā was keen to escape the sheltered life she had led and to sing for pleasure not financial reward:

Kānhopātṛā had never been let out on the streets or allowed to have contact with new people. One day her mother had gone to the Bijapur court to dance and sing. This was during the time of the kārttikī vārī and there were a lot of Vārkarīs going from Mangalvedha to Pandharpur. Kānhopātṛā wondered what the noise/singing and [the shouts of] ‘Viṭṭhal-Rakhumāî’ were, she looked out of the window and the servants taking care of her told her not to look and to close the window. Kānhopātṛā asked ‘if the whole world can sing why can’t I? Have I done something wrong?’ The servants could not really stop her and said she could go and see what was happening.

(Personal communication, 10th July 2006)

Kānhopātṛā saw a group of Vārkarīs on their way to Paṇḍharpūr and asked the Vārkarīs (BVJ 39.11), or an old man from the diṇḍī (Bhat 1998), where they were going. The Vārkarīs explained they were going to Paṇḍharpūr to see the Viṭṭhal (BVJ 39.8–11). Kānhopātṛā enquired if Viṭṭhal would accept her and was told that he would for he had accepted the mahār Cokhāmeḷā and the sinner Ajāmil. Consequently, Kānhopātṛā decided to go to Paṇḍharpūr (BVJ 39; Bhat 1998). Kānhopātṛā sang abhaṅgas, accompanying herself on the vīṇā, as she travelled with the diṇḍī to Paṇḍharpūr (BVJ 39.18, Abbott and Godbole 1996:79) and people came to listen to her as she had a good singing voice and so respect for Kānhopātṛā grew (Bhat 1998). Interestingly, most of the depictions of Kānhopātṛā show her holding a vīṇā near an image of Viṭṭhal. Once in Pandharpur, Kānhopātṛā prostrated herself before the temple door, where she is said to have uttered these words:

‘Hearing of your fame I have come as a supplicant to you Viṭṭhal’ (19). ‘You are generous, patient, handsome, perfect and possess the six attributes of divinity, [so I have come to] stay at your place as a supplicant to you O Viṭṭhal’ (20). ‘Ajāmeḷā and Ganikā came and you accepted them in a moment. The saints have told of this in writing, so I come to you as a supplicant (21). My customary occupation was bodily sexual pleasure and my place was known. I have abandoned all on your account and supplicate myself to you O Generous One (22). Now accept me as your supplicant O Lord’…(23).

(BVJ 39.19–23; Mahīpati 1850; my translation)

Mahīpati seems to be drawing from compositions attributed to Kānhopātṛā in referring to Ajāmeḷā and the ganikā (abhaṅga 12), Kānhopātṛā’s occupation and seeking protection (abhaṅga 7) but the rest of the statement does not appear to correspond with the poetry attributed to Kānhopātṛā (see Appendix B).

The story continues with an evil man (BVJ 39.25ff) or ‘people’ (Bhat 1998) going to the Bādaśāhā and telling him that Kānhopātṛā had become a bhakta and was in Paṇḍharpūr. The Bādaśāhā

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36 Mahīpati seems to be drawing from abhaṅga 12 in referring to Ajāmeḷā and the ganikā but the rest of the statement attributed to Kānhopātṛā (v.21–23) does not correspond with the poetry attributed to Kānhopātṛā, see Appendix B.
then sent men to get Kānhopātrā, suggesting she may have been promised to him in some way as well as being a beautiful, talented and desirable woman. The men tell Kānhopātrā she is to go to the Bādaśāhā and that failure to comply will mean forcible removal. Kānhopātrā tells God she ‘felt like a deer caught by a tiger’ (Bhat 1998).  

Kānhopātrā then tells the men she will leave with them after she has performed namaskāra (BVJ 39.25–33). Kānhopātrā prays to Viṭṭhal and asks him to absorb her into his svarūpa, as an attributed Kānhopātrā abhaṅga suggests (22). Kānhopātrā asks the men for another day and in the morning goes to the temple, accompanied by the men. Kānhopātrā prays at Viṭṭhal’s feet and asks him to take her within his svarūpa. The request is granted and Kānhopātrā is absorbed into Viṭṭhal’s mūrti (BVJ 39.44), prāṇotkramana occurs (Baba Maharaj Manmadkar, personal communication 10th July 2006) or Viṭṭhal takes Kānhopātrā to vaikuṇṭha (Bhat 1998).

Bhat’s version of the story has an alternative ending in which the Bādaśāhā’s men from Bidar tell him that Kānhopātrā had died at Viṭṭhal’s feet.  
The Bādaśāhā then goes to the temple and sees the deceased Kānhopātrā after which he looks at Viṭṭhal. The Bādaśāhā is so touched that he becomes a Viṭṭhal-devotee and goes on the vārī every year. The story concludes with the Vārkarīs ‘giving Kānhopātrā agni’ or performing her funeral rites rather than burying her (Bhat 1998:56–58). Both Mahīpati’s and Bhat’s account show the transformation of the Bādaśāhā, which may suggest the use of Kānhopātrā’s memory as a device of history to serve subaltern resistance (see Novetzke 2008:163, 247). Novetzke argues that there is a direct connection between devotional efficacy and temporal power in seventeenth-to nineteenth-century narratives pertaining to Nāmdev (2008:180, 182ff). Thus it is possible that such a motif, which is also present in the sacred biographies of other sants (see W. Smith 2000), not only signals ‘an upturned power relationship’ (Novetzke 2008:190) but the transformative power of bhakti for non-Hindus.

Mahīpati relates that rather than dying Kānhopātrā united or merged with Viṭṭhal at Pandharpur:

…the Compassionate One took Kānhopātrā within (45). Kānho was absorbed through his lap and the evidence [of this] continues to the present day. Those who go to Paṇḍharī in veneration see this for themselves (46). Her corpse was taken at that time and interred by the southern door. Immediately a taraṭī tree sprang up there (47).

(BVJ 39.45–47, Mahīpati 1850; my translation)

This mergence implies that Kānhopātrā fits Ramanujan’s fifth phase in the life of a woman sant: ‘marrying the Lord’ or merging with God in a temple (1982:322). However, Sellergren points out that

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37 This is line two of the famous verse ‘nako devarāyā anta pāhā ātā’, see Appendix B.
38 Tulpule also suggests the Bādaśāhā was ruler of Bedar (1979:347)
Kānhopātrā may have ‘auspiciously merged into the image of Viṭhobā in a marriage with the Lord, committed suicide, or as one scholar [Mundalay] has suggested, even been murdered for her lifelong rebelliousness’ (1992:226, 236 n.20; see Ranade 2003:10). The theme of merging with the deity is also present in the Mirābāī biography as Mirā is said to have merged with the Kṛṣṇa mūrti at Dvarka. Mukta suggests two stark alternatives to this transcendental end attributed to Mirā: self-destruction or destruction at the hands of the Rana (1994:225–6). In the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya the ‘merging’ trope suggests that one may follow the bhakti path while fulfilling one’s duties as God will save anyone in need.

There are striking similarities in the story of Kānho and Mīrā: the Rana and Bādaśāhā both send emissaries to bring Mīrā/Kānho to them (BVJ 39.31, 34), both women sought refuge in the temple (BVJ 39.34) and are said to have merged with the mūrti (BVJ 39.44). However, the biographies differ in that Mirā’s merging was not witnessed and sants and priests are said to have witnessed Kānho’s ultimate salvation (BVJ 39.45). Mirābāī’s body was not discovered, suggesting she was eliminated by the Rana’s men according to Mukta or suggesting that Mirā slipped away from the temple to live anonymously in southern or eastern India (1994:226–227; see Goetz 1966:33–40). Kānho’s body was discovered and buried according to Mahīpati (BVJ 39.47).

Harlan proposes that Mirā’s death validates her character and confirms her claim of divine marriage for when Mirā’s body dissolves into stone she miraculously unites with her beloved thus connoting sati immolation (1992:211–12; see Mukta 1994:16). According to Mukta, the story of Mirā’s absorption into the mūrti indicates the ‘ultimate negation of worldly relations’ and the ‘annihilation of self’, which are key tenets of bhakti but merging with the deity is not advocated by bhakti:

Bhakti demands a social relationship. This requires that the two within the relationship remain separate beings in order to experience the presence of the other. Bhakti does not require the bhakta blots herself out in the other…The bhakta seeks opportunities to demonstrate a love through bhakti. A flight from this—to a mergence with the Ultimate—is a flight away from acting out this relationship.

(Mukta 1994:227)

Mukta’s argument that mergence is contrary to bhakti raises an interesting issue with regard to the interment of Kānho’s body. Traditionally only sannyāsīs (and babies) are buried as part of the initiation ritual for sannyāsīs involves the performance of their own death rites in which they symbolically die to the world. Furthermore, with samādhi, ‘union, the ultimate state of mystical practice, all dualities collapse and the bounded individual self merges with the divine Self’ declares Narayan (1997:184; see Khandelwal 2004:1). Consequently, Kānho’s interment might indicate her non-compliance with the tenets
of bhakti as suggested by Mukta and the interpretation of her ‘death’ as the samādhi of a sannyāsī. However, Kānhopātrā’s interment might also signal her compliance with the tenets of bhakti and signify that the spiritual life is equal to sannyāsa and that such a life is to be found in the Vārkarī sampradāya.

However, the story of Kānhopātrā does not end with her interment in the manner of an ascetic as there is the matter of the taraṭī tree (BVJ 39.47). Mahīpati states ‘the Brahmans told the king that the sacred city of Paṇḍharī was ancient and that all the gods became trees and remained there’ (BVJ 39.77), which may be an idea taken from the Jñāneśvar abhaṅgas (see Dhere 2011:18). There is a possibility that Kānhopātrā is being honoured as a vrkṣadevatā ‘tree goddess’, which may have a connection to the Dinḍīrvan forest/sacred grove that surrounds Paṇḍharpūr and the auspicious power of nature. Furthermore, the tree may be a motif of nature worship or Kānhopātrā as a semi-divine being, with the tree marking a transition from worldly to sacred space (see Foulston 2002:31, 56, 61). The vrkṣadevatā is not an object of worship but one of veneration as the vrkṣadevatā is invoked due to an association with fertility so women invoke her in order to find a husband or conceive a child (see Fowler-Smith 2009). It is possible that Kānhopātrā, despite being unmarried and childless, is so invoked as Vārkarīs tie ribbons and so on to the tree in the hope of having their wishes fulfilled.

Mahīpati’s account can be read as censuring kāma and advocating bhakti as he appears to be concerned with the notion that God can transform and redeem the lowest of the low: Kānhopātrā representing the gaṇikā and the Bādaśāhā as the embodiment of sin (see Chapter Five for more on this theme). It is therefore possible that Mahīpati was offering a message of bhakti and hope for a changed society. In Mahīpati’s account Kānhopātrā is obviously not a householder but neither is she clearly depicted as a renouncer, despite the interment of her body, as Mahīpati makes it plain from the start that Kānhopātrā was destined to be a veṣyā and kalāvantīṇa (BVJ 39.2). Kānhopātrā’s caritra relates a story about the sexualised female body and illustrates a woman’s vulnerability to male desire (kāma). Kānhopātrā rejects a life of worldly relations based on desire to live as a bhakta, which is one reason Mahīpati might connect her with sannyāsa, but her acceptance of bhakti did not allow Kānhopātrā to live without concern for her physical safety. Kānhopātrā is pursued and persecuted due to her youth and beauty, which highlights the threat that female sexuality poses to non-grhastha women. Kānhopātrā’s mergence, as the ultimate annihilation of the self, may be interpreted as a means of denying and transcending sexuality but also as a means of escaping violation (see Chakravarti 1999:26–27). The issue of physical safety and mergence also appear in the Sakhūbāī caritra suggesting that unification or death
may be the only option for women undergoing bodily suffering. However, a different form of suffering occurred to the child-widow who was humiliated by having her hair shaved off, her marriage bangles removed, and wearing a sari that identified her widowed status (Kosambi 1998:95).

2.8. Gaṅgabāī

Gaṅgabāī (c.1599–1665 C.E.) is thought to have been born in Rashin to a Deśastha r̄gvedīc Brahman family. She is said to have been widowed at the age of sixteen after which she spent her time at bhajan-kīrtan and singing discourses of Jñāneśvar’s works at night to large audiences. Gaṅgabāī is said to have undertaken a pilgrimage towards Varanasi on which she met Gaibināth, a disciple of Satyāmalnāth, who initiated her into the Nāth panth and gave her the name Guptanāth.39 The compositions attributed to Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth use the mudrikā ‘Gupta’ (see Appendix B). Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth is said to have initiated Uddhav—the son of Malhar Naik Thipse—who became known as Udbodhnāth and who accompanied her to Varanasi (Shrotriya 1992:46–48). The Jñānakaivalya (1761) by Cintāmaṇināth provides Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth’s guru paramparā: Ādināth – Matsyendranāth – Gorakhanāth – Gahinīnāth – Nivrṭtināth – Dīyānanāth (Jñāneśvar) – Satyāmalnāth – Gaibināth – Guptanāth (Gaṅgabāī) – Udbodhnāth – Keśarīnāth – Śivadīnānāth – Cintāmaṇināth (Dhere 2001:9). The Jñānakaivalya also suggests that Guptanāth and Udbodhnāth bathed at Toke (Toka Pravara Sangam), the confluence of the Godavari river and its tributary the Pravara, in the Ahmednagar district (Dhere 2001:9; Molesworth 1857:538). The samādhīs of Guptanāth and Udbodhnāth are at Rashin. Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth is believed to have considered Jñāneśvar as her guru and it is this tenuous connection that links Gaṅgabāī with the Vārkarī sampradāya (Shrotriya 1992:46–48). Consequently, Gaṅgabāī may be better regarded as a Nāth, which may be why she is largely ignored by Vārkarīs.

Gaṅgabāī’s biography raises several interesting issues such as her child-marriage and her asceticism being due to her widowhood. Widow remarriage was forbidden for Brahman women like Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth and widows were required to lead an existence of poverty and austerity without the status of renouncer so one can easily imagine that widows would choose to become ascetics as renunciation provided a culturally sanctioned path (see Khandelwal 2004:11, 192; Pechilis 2004:8). Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth’s caritra also draws attention to the possibility that during the seventeenth century

39 Satyāmalnāth’s birth was believed to be due to Jñāneśvar’s blessing and to have occurred about two hundred years after Jñāneśvar’s samādhi (Dhere 2001:9). Satyāmalnāth is thought to have received initiation from Jñāneśvar in a dream. Satyāmalnāth composed the Siddhāntarahasya, known as the Lalitaprabandha (c. 1600), and Navaratnamālā (Tulpule 1979:347, 420).
women in the Nāth panth were able to perform as kīrtankārīs and act as gurus to male disciples in contrast to the image of women presented in Vārkarī caritras like those of Sakhūbāī. The reason that Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth’s caritra and a few attributed compositions are included in this thesis is to draw attention to the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition. Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth is a woman who is connected to the Vārkarīs via her guru paramparā but who is probably not accepted or included by the Vārkarīs due to her overt connection to the Nāth panth rather than the Vārkarī sampradāya. The epitome of the good wife who also suffered due to marriage is depicted in the story of Sakhūbāī who suffers from domestic abuse but is miraculously saved by God.

2.9. Sakhūbāī

The story of Sakhūbāī’s life is recounted in the Santa Lilāmṛta (1757) by Mahīpati (Gupte 1994:45–47), the Kalyāṇ Sant-Adaka (Poddar 1994:501–503), the Sakala Sant Caritra Gāthā (Bhat 1998:91–92) and online (Anon ‘Sakhubai’). Additionally, Bhavalkar presents a sketch and a women’s folk song about Sakhū’s life, which she memorised having heard the song from her mother (1996:241–42; 252, n.7).

The story states that Sakhū’s parents were poor Vārkarīs who went to Paṇḍharpūr [for Āṣāḍhī ekādaśī] every year (Bhat 1998:91ff). One year at Karāḍ (Poddar 1994), Mhāḷsā—the wife of Viśvambhar Bhaṭ—a Brahman moneylender—saw Sakhū [with her parents on the vārī] and decided she wanted Sakhū to marry her son Digambar. Mhāḷsā asked Sakhū’s father whether a marriage had been planned for Sakhū and he told Mhāḷsā that he did not have the means to marry Sakhū. Mhāḷsā thus arranged for Sakhū and Digambar to marry. Sakhū’s father advised her to remember God and continue to pray and worship Him even though she was joining an affluent family. [After the wedding] Sakhū’s parents returned to their own place even though she did not want them to leave. Sakhū was [later] told by a passing Vārkarī—presumably on his/her return from Paṇḍharpūr—that her parents had died, due to cholera, on their return home. Consequently, Sakhū told Viṭṭhal that he was now her māher and sāsar (Bhat 1998).

Sakhū was skilful in the house and so she got on with her mother-in-law at first. However, this situation changed due to local gossip (Bhat 1998) and/or because her husband and in-laws were cruel.

40 Unfortunately, I have not managed to locate and examine a copy of Mahīpati’s Santa Lilāmṛta. There are also other versions of the story online (for example: The Hindu Universe 2009–2014; Explore Maharashtra 2012).
41 ‘On the bank of the Kṛṣṇa, in the town of Karhāḍ there was a holy settlement called Brahmapurī. An evil Brāhmaṇ lived there; What great fortune for his daughter-in-law, Sakhū! Leaving her waterpot at the river, Sakhū went to Paṇḍharpur. Beating her and hitting her, he brought Sakhū back. He locked her in a room’ (Bhavalkar 1996:241).
42 Karāḍ is a town in the Sātārā district of Maharashtra that lies on the confluence of the Koyna and Krishna rivers.
43 ‘Mhāḷsā’ is the name of the wife of the Maharashtrian deity Khaṇḍobā and refers to a ‘huge, burly, termagant woman’ (Molesworth 1857:673).
cunning and egotistical (Poddar 1994). [While working] Sakhū chanted the names of God (nāmasmarana, nāmasaṅkīrtan) and thus some of the other women said she was like a beggar always saying something—in other words she was irritating. Consequently, Mhāḷsā told Sakhū to stop chanting the Name and began to harass her (Bhat 1998; see Gupte 1994:45–7). It appears that Mhāḷsā did not give Sakhū enough to eat (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998) and physically abused her even though Sakhū continued to perform her household duties (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998). Mhāḷsā was a powerful figure so even though Sakhū’s father-in-law and husband sympathised with her neither of them were able to do anything to stop her being harassed (Bhat 1998). Sakhū never retaliated and swallowed her blood as she considered this treatment as the fruit of her own behaviour and as God’s blessing (Poddar 1994; see Gupte 1994:45–7).

Once Sakhū went to the river to wash clothes (Bhat 1998) or fill water jars (Poddar 1994) and saw a group of Vārkarīs passing (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998). This incident has similarities to the Kānhopātrā caritra and Swami Radhika Anand suggested that the vārī, as ‘singing, chanting [and] free movement’, appealed to both these sants (personal communication, 7th March 2005) in much the same way that Vimala and Vimalabai said the vārī was a holiday from their everyday lives (see Chapter Two). Sakhū ‘felt drawn to Paṇḍharpūr’ on the eleventh day of Āṣāḍh (Bhavalkar 1996:241, 252n.8) because she met an old couple who had been friends of her parents (Gupte 1994:45–7). Sakhū recalled all the times she had been on the vārī, began singing abhaṅgas and left her washing behind (Bhat 1998) in order to join the pilgrims and take darśan of Viṭṭhal (Poddar 1994). However, a neighbour (Poddar 1994) and/or local lady (Bhat 1998) told Sakhū’s mother-in-law [that Sakhū had joined the vārī] and she sent her son—Digambar—to bring Sakhū back home (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998) and beat Sakhū (Poddar 1994) or the dindī’s vīṇā-player (Bhat 1998). Sakhū was then tied up (Bhat 1998) in a room or in an underground cellar (Gupte 1994:45–7) so she could not escape (Poddar 1994) and denied food and drink (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998). Sakhū prayed (Poddar 1994; Gupte 1994) internally asking God if he could hear her and if she could visit Paṇḍharpūr again (Bhat 1998):

O God if my eyes could look upon feet just once and have darśan it would be easier for me to leave my body. You are the only one I have and however I am, I am yours. O God, please listen to my small request.

(Poddar 1994)

Viṭṭhal asked Rukminī to lend him her clothes and went to Karāḍ (Gupte 1994). Thus Sakhū’s prayers were answered and Viṭṭhal took Sakhū’s form so she could go to Paṇḍharpūr (Poddar 1994; Bhat

44 Apparently Sakhū sang ‘Mother is dead, father is dead; please take care of my Viṭṭhal’ (Janābāī abhaṅga 58, Appendix B).
Bhat states that Viṭṭhal cured Sakhū [of starvation] by feeding her _amṛta_ while Poddar declares that while Sakhū was freed from her ties of rope all her bonds were released and she was liberated (see Bhavalkar 1996:242). Gupte states that Viṭṭhal broke the ropes tying Sakhū and told her that her father’s old friend was waiting for her and that a guide called Garuḍa would take her to him by the shortest route. Viṭṭhal transformed into a coolie and carried Sakhū on his back to Pandharpur to meet her father’s old friend on the outskirts of the city (1994:45–7).

The story continues with Viṭṭhal standing in for Sakhū. Bhavalkar suggests that this part of the story is ‘a miracle narrative’ made up later to glorify Sakhū (1996:241). Viṭṭhal performs Sakhū’s daily tasks and her recitation of the Viṭṭhal’s name ceased, making Sakhū’s mother-in-law think Sakhū was ‘normal’ (Bhat 1998). Although Sakhū’s in-laws and her husband used foul language Sakhū-Viṭṭhal, like a good wife, tolerated everything for fifteen days (Poddar 1994), which was presumably the length of the _vārī_. Sakhū’s husband realised that Sakhū-Viṭṭhal had not eaten or drunk for fifteen days so he went and removed her bonds and allowed her to wash before feeding her. Viṭṭhal stayed until Sakhū returned so that she would not get into trouble and he acted as a proper _pativratā_, which made everyone favour her (Poddar 1994; see Gupte 1994).

Meanwhile, Sakhū was in Paṇḍharpūr—having forgotten that she was really tied up (Poddar 1994)—where she bathed in the Candrabhāga (Gupte 1994; Bhat 1998), participated in _bhajan_ and _kīrtan_ (Bhat 1998) and took _darśan_ of Pāṇḍuraṅga/Viṭṭhal (Poddar 1994; Gupte 1994). It appears that Sakhū’s spirit/soul left her body (Bhat 1998) or she died (Gupte 1994) while she was at the deity’s feet (Bhat 1998) meditating on the Name and that she became one with Him (Poddar 1994). This unitive element bears an uncanny resemblance to the Kānhopātrā and Mīrābāī _caritra_ suggesting that mergence is the only option for women undergoing bodily suffering. There were some people—residents (Poddar 1994) or Vārkarīs (Bhat 1998)—who recognised Sakhū and took care of the body (Bhat 1998) and cremated Sakhū (Poddar 1994; Gupte 1994).

However, Rukmiṇī went to the cremation ground (Poddar 1994) and—with her _māyā_ ‘creative energy’ (Bhat 1998)—raised Sakhū from the dead (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998). It seems that Rukmiṇī brought Sakhū back to life because she [Rukmiṇī] was in an awkward position as her husband [Viṭṭhal] had become a daughter-in-law (Poddar 1994) and that because Viṭṭhal was serving in Sakhū’s place he was not in the _mūrti_ when Sakhū took _darśan_ (Bhat 1998) and thus Sakhū could not have really merged with Viṭṭhal. Rukmiṇī tells Sakhū that her wish to die in Pandharpur has been fulfilled and that Sakhū
should now return home (Poddar 1994). Sakhū returned to Karāḍ (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998) with other Vārkarīs in two days (Poddar 1994), suggesting that Sakhū had travelled to and returned from Pandharpur with a particular dīṇḍī. Sakhū then went to the river—the place she had departed from—and encountered Viṭṭhal-Sakhū (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998). Sakhū touched Viṭṭhal’s feet and expressed her gratitude to him (Bhat 1998). Viṭṭhal spoke to Sakhū sweetly, gave her the water pot and vanished (Poddar 1994). Sakhū brought the water home and continued her domestic chores and was astounded by the transformation in the family (Poddar 1994).

A villager who had seen Sakhūbāī die (Poddar 1994)—Govind Bhaṭ [the brahman] who had cremated Sakhū (Bhat 1998; see Gupte 1994)—went to the family and told them what had happened to Sakhūbāī (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998). The in-laws told him that Sakhūbāī had not been to Paṇḍharpūr and called Sakhūbāī to ask her what had happened (Poddar 1994). Sakhū was questioned (Poddar 1994; Bhat 1998) by Govind Bhaṭ (Bhat 1998) and she recounted what had happened (Poddar 1994). The family put Sakhū back in the cellar and mistreated her for being a witch (Gupte 1994), which suggests Sakhū was regarded as threatening in some way (see Bynum 1988:23). The family said that if what had happened was true Viṭṭhal should give them darśan. Viṭṭhal appeared in response to Sakhū’s prayers and the family all prostrated themselves [at his feet] (Bhat 1998; see Gupte 1994). The family thus repented, affirmed God had come in the form of Sakhūbāī and that they had been cruel to tie God up (Poddar 1994). Interestingly, there is no mention in either version of the story that the family might have regretted tying up Sakhū. However, Poddar states that the family began treating Sakhū with respect and started singing God’s praises. It was thus that Sakhūbāī got her husband and in-laws to be favourable towards her (Poddar 1994). This suggests that one way a young, married woman could avoid harsh treatment at the hands of her in-laws is through divine intervention elicited through piety and devotion. The message of Sakhū’s caritra, like that of figures such as Janī, is that divine intervention is possible within the domestic setting and that women do not need to leave an oppressive domestic situation. Consequently, the Sakhū caritra seems to correspond with Sangari’s typical convention of persecution and miraculous escape. The story of Sakhūbāī’s life concludes saying that she continued to work for the family throughout her life (Poddar 1994)—Sakhū thus remained a pativrataḥ who performed her strīdharma—and that she spent her time chanting the Name (Bhat 1998; Poddar 1994), meditating and singing bhajans like any good Vārkarī.

Sakhū’s story raises some interesting issues. Mhāḷsā is represented as the harsh mother-in-law and powerful matriarch. Many of the nineteenth-century autobiographies of Marathi women highlight the
cruelty high-caste child-brides suffered at the hands of their mothers-in-law and Sakhū seems to suffer in a similar manner (see Kosambi 1998). Sakhū has no status or authority in the household, is subservient to her mother-in-law and fulfils a service role, much like Janī, but also has no means of alleviation as she has no māher to visit (see Junghare 1998:113). Traditionally Sakhū and Digambar’s wedding would have been in the bride’s village but for some reason Sakhū, like Janī, loses her connection with her natal place and maternal family (see Raheja and Gold 1996:94). Thus Viṭṭhal is portrayed as Sakhū’s māher and sāsar, her maternal home and refuge as well as her marital home. While Viṭṭhal is often represented as mother, father or parent His designation as Sakhū’s māher and sāsar draws attention to Sakhū’s status as an orphan and her subsequent isolation.

Sakhū is represented as a woman who, despite not being attracted to worldly life, performs her domestic role perfectly (Bhavalkar 1996:241). The Sakhū caritra clearly relates to grhastha as it does not make any mention or reference to sannyāsa. At the start of the story Sakhū is identified as a poor Vārkarī who marries a wealthy Brahman. Sakhū is therefore represented as fulfilling the social requirements of marriage and householdership as well as the religious path (strīdharma) of being a good wife (pativratā). Sakhū is not represented as desiring to live a non-householder life but rather to be able to fulfil her duties in combination with bhakti. Sakhūbāī is therefore presented as an exemplar of a grhiṇī living out bhakti. However, her marital family and in particular her mother-in-law are averse to Sakhū’s commitment to bhakti and oppose her participation in the vārī. Consequently, Sakhū is forcibly restrained and left to starve but Sakhū is miraculously saved by Viṭṭhal. The story highlights the fact that Sakhū is not a happily married woman and that for her sansār is a life of domestic toil and domestic abuse that is only made bearable by bhakti. The fact that her unswerving devotion may have cost Sakhū her life is evaded in the caritra by the miracle narrative which draws attention to the power of bhakti to convert sinners. This theme is apparent in Mahīpati’s Kānhopatrā caritra but is also present in the compositions attributed to the sants and will be discussed in Chapter Five. This caritra seems to demonstrate that the Vārkarī sampradāya had resolved the sannyāsa-grhastha tension to such a degree that it advocated a completely householder life for women by the time Mahīpati’s Santa Līlāmṛta was composed in the mid-eighteenth century.

2.10. Āvalī/Jijāī

There are several stories in the Bhaktavijaya pertaining to Tukārām’s relationship with his, unnamed, second wife. Only Mahīpati names her as Āvalī or Jijāī in the Bhaktalīlāmṛta (1774) where he expands
upon Tukārām’s life (28.31). The first time that one encounters Āvalī in the Bhaktavijaya is when Tukārām advises her not to keep all the grain, purportedly, given to him by Sivaji. Mahīpati narrates how Tukārām tells his wife only to keep provisions for one day and to distribute the rest to the Brahmanas. (This bears similarities to Nāmdev’s distribution of the wealth Rājāī had received from Keśava). The account states that Āvalī became enraged saying: ‘I am unfortunate. A sack of grain came to our house without anyone’s asking for it. But he won’t let the children eat it. If it is distributed to the Brahmanas, what am I to do? How shall I conduct the family affairs?’ (BVJ 48.180–181, Abbott and Godbole 1996:215)? Tukārām replies philosophically, ‘How can we have a bigger share than what is stored up for us in our fate?’ (BVJ 48.182). Once again the wife of a sant is presented as concerned with material comfort while the male sant is portrayed as indifferent, highlighting the tension between grhastha and vairāgya that the Vārkarī sampradāya is attempting to resolve.

This exchange between husband and wife is taken from a series of Tukārām compositions entitled strī upadeśa or ‘Advice to Wife’, in which Tukārām comments on Āvalī as she talks and relates how he advised her to change (Aklujkar 1999:21). Tukārām refers to strī ‘woman’, pisī ‘madwoman’, lānsī ‘slut’ or rānda ‘bitch’ in these verses but never calls his wife by name (Aklujkar 1999:13, 2005:117ff; see Chitre 1991:42–49; Fraser 2000:41–43; BVJ 48.178–182). According to Aklujkar, these abhaṅgas portray Āvalī as a ‘sharp-tongued nag’ and the verses in which one hears Āvalī’s attributed speech are emotional and full of drama. The speeches attributed by Tukārām to his wife give a view of the sant from his wife’s perspective and reveal the tensions that existed between the couple, and between the domestic and spiritual spheres (1999:21–22). The abhaṅgas all begin with the woman’s speech and conclude with a remark by Tukārām. The bitterness of Tukārām’s wife and her reproach to him are clearly expressed as are Tukārām’s crude admonishment:

‘The sack (of grain) has arrived (at our) home, and still he won’t let my children eat the grains. He has to fill other people’s bellies. Damn the rouge, the robber, the sucker’. ‘The madwoman is outraged and drags me by my arms like a witch’. Tukā says, ‘The bitch is bankrupt in merit from the past.

(Aklujkar 1999:22)

“A sackful of grain is delivered at our door. But this bastard won’t let his own children eat. “He distributes it to the whole town. I suspect he himself eats it too.” Says Tuka, you stupid bitch! Don’t you understand that the deeds of the past can never be stored.”

(Chitre 1991:43)

Mahīpati states that Tukārām’s eldest son Santobā died in the famine with his mother and Tukārām’s first wife Rakhumābāī. Mahīpati also states that Tukārām had three daughters: Kāśībāī, Bhāgīrathī (Bhāgūbāī) and Gaṅgābāī (BLM 34.140–149), as well as two sons Mahādev and Viṭhobā (BLM 40.215).
The second account in the Bhaktavijaya pertaining to Āvalī states that Tukārām was so absorbed in contemplation that he did not go home for two months. Consequently, Āvalī went from house to house complaining about her husband:

Hear, O my friends, my fate is adverse. My husband does not care for me but goes and sits in the forest. He has given up his business and dances in the kirtan with love. He constantly thinks of Purushottam and as a rule sings His praises. He has been in the town for the last two months but all that time he has never come home. O friends, I am worn out by anxiety day and night. If you ever see him, teach him the morals of religion. He has abandoned his wife, and therefore his life has become disreputable among the people.

(BVJ 49.32–35, Abbott and Godbole 1996:220–221)

However, one day Āvalī meets Tukārām on her way back from fetching water and she grabs his dhotar and reprimands him saying he has spends all his time praising God but never comes home and that she wants to know what he is going to do (BVJ 49.39–40, Abbott and Godbole 1996:221). Tukārām replies saying that her parents married her to him without considering his circumstances—in other words no one took his wishes into account—so why should he worry about feeding or clothing her. The argument intensifies until Āvalī says his parents are dead so where should she go to find them. This question gives Tukārām an opportunity to offer his wife spiritual advice. He says his parents are the deities Pāṇḍūraṅga and Rukmiṇī, who do not grow old or perish, and that Āvalī should contemplate them as they will provide all she needs (BVJ 49.41–47). Mahīpati states that Āvalī begs Tukārām to come home and says she will worship the feet of Lord Hari believing that food and clothing will be provided. Tukārām declares that if she promises to listen to his advice he will return home, she gives her word and takes Tukārām home (BVJ 49.48–51). Mahīpati concludes that Tukārām’s acceptance of his wife ‘is a matter of satisfaction to us. [For] many go and sit in the caves of mountains, but which of them has attained Vaikunth’ (BVJ 49.53–54; Abbott and Godbole 1996). Mahīpati makes it clear in this account that as a wife Āvalī was honour bound to acquiesce to her husband’s demands but that Tukārām is also meant to accept Āvalī’s requests. It is interesting that Mahīpati felt the need to state that Tukārām accepted his wife. The story also draws attention to the dichotomy between the ascetic life—sitting in a cave meditating—and the life of a householder. This choice was largely unavailable to women but inconceivable for married women who were bound up in sansār so it suggests that the householder path is valuable and worth pursuing as it secures spiritual rather than material benefits.

Mahīpati relates Tukārām giving Āvalī advice (BVJ 49.56–114; 50:15–24) saying he has expanded upon Tukārām’s eleven abhaṅgas to clarify their meaning. Mahīpati then describes how Āvalī resolved to free her mind from desire and bathed in the Indrayani River before inviting the Brahmans to
plunder her house. All the household items were carried away and a sannyāsī even smeared his body with the ashes from the fire. Tukārām then went out leaving Āvalī alone in the house and worried about feeding the family again (BVJ 49.115–129). Tukārām’s indifference to the material life is shown when he gives a piece of his wife’s clothing away to Rukmiṇī who has come in the form of a mahārī to test him. When Āvalī discovers what her husband has done she angrily complains to her friends and neighbours (BVJ 49.136–148). Mahīpati states that Viṭṭhal began to tremble when he heard that Āvalī was en route to smash His feet [in the temple]. Viṭṭhal discussed with Rukmiṇī what action to take saying that He cannot run away because He stands still on the command of his bhakta [Puṇḍalīk] and that He cannot abandon Tukārām. Meanwhile Tukārām encounters Āvalī on her way to the temple and discovering what she intends to do is greatly distressed. However, Tukārām goes to the temple with Āvalī thinking that he could take the blow for Viṭṭhal but in order to protect Tukārām Rukmiṇī closes the temple door to bar his entrance. Just as Āvalī was about to dash the stone against Viṭṭhal’s feet Rukmiṇī interrupts Āvalī asking her what wrong Viṭṭhal has done. Āvalī tells Rukmiṇī that there are no provisions in her house so she has come to break the feet that have ruined her family. Rukmiṇī solves the issue by providing Āvalī with clothes and some silver coins so that she puts down the stone and leaves the temple (BVJ 49.231–203; BLM 34.10–74). However, Mahīpati’s account in the Bhaktavijaya leaves out Tukārām distributing the coins his wife had been given to the Brahmans of the town (BLM 34.72). This story shows that despite her promise to listen to her husband’s advice Āvalī remains concerned about feeding and clothing the family. While Āvalī has no direct communication with the Viṭṭhal she does have contact with Rukmiṇī (Aklujkar 1999:23). It is Rukmiṇī, as the mother-in-law fixing things, who resolves the domestic situation and as a consequence protects her husband. Interestingly, the compositions attributed to Rājāī depict Rājāī’s conversations with Rukmiṇī and her call for Rukmiṇī to intercede on her behalf with Viṭṭhal as Nāmdev has abandoned sansār (see Appendix B). Once again this story suggests that the householder path is valuable and worth pursuing as the difficulties and suffering of sansār can be alleviated by bhakti.

The final account of Āvalī in the Bhaktavijaya describes an incident in which Āvalī is so enraged by the loss of sugarcane given to Tukārām—he had distributed it to the children of the town—that she takes the remaining cane and beats him with it. However, the cane breaks into three parts causing Tukārām to comment that the sugarcane has been divided equally due to God’s help. Āvalī is astonished at her husband’s serenity despite her beating but she once again laments the fact he has ‘given up all thought of family life’ (50.75–101). Aklujkar observes that Āvalī appears as a ‘disenchanted, bitter,
essentially helpless woman’ who is confronted by a husband she finds ‘unsympathetic, unproviding, and adamant’ and whose obsession with God she cannot comprehend (1999:23). Āvalī is portrayed by Mahīpati as bad-tempered and argumentative but more significantly as a woman with a limited outlook who is unable to grasp the message of bhakti.

It is interesting that Mahīpati presents the adversarial relationship between Tukārām and his wife as Mahīpati regarded Tukārām as his guru. It is said that Tukārām gave Mahīpati initiation in a dream and instructed Mahīpati to compose caritras (Abbott and Godbole 1996:xxiv). Bhagwat suggested that one cannot just say Tukārām was a chauvinist when he talks of his wife and children as a hindrance [to his spiritual life]. The question of why they were always fighting needs to be explored so one does not just say Āvalī was trapped (personal communication, 27th October 2004). The tension between grhastha and vairāgya seems to account for the adversarial relationship between Tukārām and his wife. Āvalī, like Goṇāī and Rājāī, exemplifies a woman who is expected to fulfil the social requirements of marriage and householdership as well as the religious path (strīdharma) of being a good wife (pativratā). These duties appear as obstacles in the path of a male householder who is primarily concerned with disinterested action which is why Āvalī is represented and remembered as a nuisance and cause of shame to Tukārām (see Aklujkar 1992:105, 119). However, Āvalī appears to operate as a device by which Mahīpati can show that things go badly wrong when vairāgya or sannyāsa is pursued by a householder. Mahīpati’s message therefore suggests that the householder should fulfil his or her duties as a householder and as a bhakta.

2.11. Bhāgūbāī

Bhāgūbāī may refer to Tukārām’s daughter Bhāgīvathī by his second wife Āvalī /Jijābāī, who Mahīpati recounts Tukārām married to ‘boys of his own caste’ who were playing outside the house (BLM 34.140–149; Abbott 1996:193). Bhāgūbāī’s life story states that when Tukārām ‘flew to heaven’ his children were young so they did not know how unique their father was. The children lived with their grandparents for twenty-five years and only heard of their father’s fame. It is possible that Bhāgūbāī composed some abhaṅgas, which can be inferred from the Śrī tukobārāma bāhānāe bandhā kānhobā, mulgi bhāgūbāī āṇi śiṣya nīlobā yāncyā abhaṅgancī gāthā ‘The Abhaṅga Gāthā of Tukārām’s brother Kānhobā, daughter Bhāgūbāī and [posthumous] disciple Nilobā (SSG 2.1389; Shrotriya 1992:49–50). However, it is possible that the single verse attributed to her was composed by Bhāgū Mahārīṇ or some other ‘Bhāgū’. Sontheimer notes that in the Dhangars’ stories Bhāgūbāī—also known as Bhāgulek— is the daughter of Viṭṭhal and the forest goddess Padubāī (Padmiṇī), who comes from the GavĪ caste, and that ‘Padubāī dies
because of Viṭṭhal’s curse, and Bhāgūbāī does not forgive her father for this, even though Viṭṭhal grants
her the first right to the pilgrimage festival (*jatrá*) at Paṭṭan Kuḍolī’ (1989:72 n.15, 47, 120; see Bhagwat
1974:116ff). This anecdote highlights the issue of attribution. However, the editors of the SSG clearly
regard Bhāgū as a poet even though she is confined to the addendum. The few biographical details
relating to Bhāgū suggest she was married, which connects her with householdership and it is possible
that compositions attributed to Bhāgūbāī were drawn into the corpus as Tukārām was an important figure
and there was a desire to include his family members, like those of Nāmdev’s family, as authors
in the *sampradāya* (see Hawley 1979:69–70). The inclusion of Bhāgūbāī within the Vārkarī literary corpus
therefore signals the discursive construction of the *sampradāya* as a householder path that includes
women.

2.12. *Viṭhābāī*

Viṭhābāī is thought to have been born in Paṇḍharpūr on a Tuesday, the fourteenth day of Āṣāḍh (Shrotriya
have been Rāmappā (Bhat 1998:558) or Rāmpyā Nāyak (Shrotriya 1992:53) and her mother Santubāī
(Bhat 1998:558; Shrotriya 1992:53) and it is said that as they were Viṭṭhal devotees they named their only
child in his honour.

It seems that when Viṭhābāī ‘came of age’ (Shrotriya 1992:54), aged fourteen (Bhat 1998:558),
she was obliged to marry and as she was disinclined towards marriage she suffered at the hands of her in-
laws. A verse attributed to Viṭhābāī portrays the experience of a young girl obliged to have intercourse
with a man who was probably much older:

> My husband pulls me into a secluded place in order to have sex with me. When he has pulled me
> there, he beats me badly in the middle of the night.

(Bhavalkar 1996:240; Āvaḷīkar 1964:220)47

Bhavalkar points out that the candid description of a sexual encounter attributed to an Indian woman is
uncommon and finds that the frankness of the verse lends it veracity and points to some of the sufferings,
inflicted by men, borne by figures like Viṭhābāī, Sakhūbāī and Bahiṇābāī (1996:240ff) who are regarded
as contemporaneous. However, the reference to a sexual encounter or to domestic abuse may also act as a

46 For further information on Viṭhābāī see A.N. Deshpande (1968–84) and J.R. Ajgaonkar (1907, 1957).
47 Bhratār ho majaśi voḍhatī yekāntī, bhogāve mujaśi mhaṇūniya. Odhōniya hut mārito majaśi, mahayaśṭārī jāṇā
Viṭṭhābāī is then said to have taken her image of Viṭṭhal and abandoned her husband in favour of wandering the forests (Shrotriya 1992:54). It is said that she had a dream in which Viṭṭhal told her ‘I live in Kudgoḷ with the name Cidambar, you will meet my disciple Rājārām and go with him to Kudgoḷ’. Miraculously, the next morning Viṭṭhābāī is said to have seen Rājārām’s diṇḍī, which she then joined. Viṭṭhābāī then travelled with the diṇḍī for the next two months before she was able to see Cidambarsvāmī (Shrotriya 1992:54; Bhat 1998:556). There is an interesting anecdote, which suggests Viṭṭhābāī might have had darśan of Cidambarsvāmī after fasting for seven days and nights:

The disciples [sic] also thought of the darshana of Shri Chidambar Maha Swamiji and requested to Rajaram. Shri Rajaram told them that if you do seva for seven day and nights with out food Shri Chidambar Maha Swamiji will give darshana. The disciples have done accordingly and all of them got darshana on seventh day midnight. They are 14 members who got the darshana on that day.

(‘Holy Places of Mahaswamiji’: n.d.)

Viṭṭhābāī seems to have had an out-of-body experience which led her to identify herself with Janābāī (Shrotriya 1992:54) or more specifically to regarding herself as an avatar of Janābāī (Bhat 1998:556, 558). Bhat believes that this experience came about because Viṭṭhābāī was so caught up in bhakti that she burned her hand on the torch she was carrying and was rendered unconscious. Moreover, Viṭṭhābāī identified Rājārām as an incarnation of Nāmdev (Shrotriya 1992:54; Bhat 1998:556) and Cidambarsvāmī as an avatar of Viṭṭhal or Pāṇḍuraṅga on her return to consciousness (Bhat 1998:556).

The idea that Cidambarsvāmī was an incarnation of Viṭṭhal or Śrī Pāṇḍuraṅga Mahārāj is not specific to Viṭṭhābāī but seems to be part of the Cidambarsvāmī tradition (‘Panduranga Maharaj’). Cidambarsvāmī or Cidambar Dikṣit was born in Murgod, Karnataka. It seems that Rājārām of Bubhulgaon in Maharashtra met Cidambarsvāmī in Kundgoḷ (c.1805) and became his greatest devotee.

Cidambar is said to embody both Śaivite and Vaisnavite traditions as he is regarded as an avatar of Śiva in northern Karnataka and as an avatar of Viṣṇu—specifically Viṭṭhal/Viṭṭhabāī in his form as Pāṇḍuraṅga—by Rājārām and others (Chitnis 2000:218–222; see Dhanpalvār 1981:30; Dhere 2011:44, 51ff).

When her parents learnt where Viṭṭhābāī was they came, with her husband, and argued with her—presumably in an attempt to get her to return to her husband and perform her strīdharma as a

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48 There is a place called Kundgoḷ in the Dhārvāḍ district of Karnataka, which is the home of the Shambulīṅga temple honouring Śiva and Pārvatī.
Viṭhābāī said that they only had rights over her body but not over her and she then fell motionless at Cidambar’s feet. Taking her for dead Viṭhābāī’s parents and husband returned to Pauḍharpūr and thus Viṭhābāī gained her freedom (Bhat 1998:558). Viṭhābāī is said to have spent her life in service to Cidambarsvāmī and her guru Rājārām (Shrotriya 1992:54), as well as composing songs about her experiences and about Cidambarsvāmī (Bhat 1998:558). There is however no information on where Viṭhābāī lived—although she may have stayed at the Rājārām math in Gurlhosur (‘Holy Places of Mahaswamiji’),<sup>49</sup> which is the site of Cidambarsvāmī’s samādhi—or when she died. There are 4,000 abhaṅgas attributed to Viṭhābāī and 600 of these abhaṅgas were located by Āvalīkar (1964; Shrotriya 1992: 53–57; see Appendix B).

There is probably one major reason that Viṭhābāī is not included in the SSG or remembered as a Vārkarī santakavyatrī—despite her family being presented as Viṭṭhal-bhaktas and as being an avatāra of Janābāī—her abandonment of husband and home. Viṭhābāī thus accords with one of Ramanujan’s criteria by rejecting marriage in favour of bhakti (1986; see Kinsley 1980). Viṭhābāī emulates Sumantai Tade’s view that the reason some women might not be recognised as sants is that ‘men had freedom to wander around, which women could not do [because of the limitations of the home] because if she did do it people would say “her house situation is not good that’s why she’s gone off’” (personal communication, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2004). Here we have an example of the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as householder tradition and Viṭhābāī does not fit the model. This has similarities to the Vallabhite rejection of Mīrābāī that I mentioned in the Introduction (see Mukta 1994:24–5; Martin 1999:12, 34; Harlan 1992:205ff). However, there is also the possibility that the conflation of Viṭṭhal, Pauḍhurāṅga and Cidambar did not fit with the programmatic intent of the editors of the SSG or the biographers associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya because their concern lay with constructing a householder tradition in which doing one’s duty within a domestic setting is compatible with being a bhakta.

3. Summary

This chapter demonstrates that while some of the carītras exemplify the tension between sannyāsa and grhaṭha the conflict is not fully resolved in the carītras of the women sants and bhaktas associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya. Muktābāī is represented as a householder who is able to pursue a renunciate life in terms of her devotional practices as she is not represented as renunciate in the classical sense of sannyāsa. The carītras of Goṇāī, Rājāī and Āvalī highlight the possibility of living a devotional life even

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<sup>49</sup> Gurlhosur (Guruwanpur) is in the Belgaum district of Karnataka.
when a grhastha. The narratives suggest that the suffering and deprivations of sansār equate to those of a spiritual path like sannyāsa and that these sufferings are effectively ‘authentic’. The male sants like Nāmdev and Tukārām do not appear to fare well in the narratives and one can imagine that audience for these narratives would sympathise with the female characters. The story of Limbāī and Vāṅka highlights the unresolved tension between grhastha, as represented by Nāmdev’s daughter, and vairāgya, as represented by Rākā Kumbhār’s daughter. Jānī’s caritra portrays her in a household but not as a grhini; rather Jānī lives a domestic life of service within a social setting. Significantly, Jānī’s caritra like Kānhopātrā’s caritra does not draw attention to the tension between grhastha and vairāgya. Kānhopātrā’s life-story seems to censure kāma and advocate bhakti and while Kānhopātrā’s body is interred in the manner of a sannyāsī her status remains ambiguous, highlighting Laine’s point that there are ‘no pure types’ in bhakti. However, Kānhopātrā’s caritra draws attention to the threat to the female body that is also depicted in the life of Sakhū. Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth’s caritra portrays her as an ascetic due to widowhood, which is a form of renunciation that is within the grhastha idiom as this is prescribed behaviour for high-caste householder widows. Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth’s overt connection to the Nāth panth rather than the Vārkarī sampradāya may account for her exclusion from the Vārkarī corpus. Viṭhābāī is depicted as renouncer who abandons house and home in favour of devotion to Cidambarsvāmī, which is probably why she is not included within the broader Vārkarī literary corpus. However, Sakhūbāī’s caritra presents her as a bhakta who epitomises strīdharma and pativratādharma. It seems to me that it is Sakhūbāī who has come to represent the householder par excellence and it is she who seems to have been instrumentalised by biographers and film-makers, above all the other women mentioned above, to advocate women following their strīdharma and pativratādharma while living as a Vārkarī bhakta. Nonetheless, there is a santakaviyatrī whose autobiographical poems are identified as attempting to resolve the conflict between bhakti and pativratā dharma. The autobiographical compositions attributed to Bahinābāī are therefore discussed in the following chapter along with compositions attributed to other santakaviyatrīs so as to consider the role of gender attribution in the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition.
1. Introduction: themes assigned to the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs

The abhaṅgas of Muktābāī, Goṇāī, Rājāī, Janābāī and Bahiṇābāī are all divided into sections by the editors or compilers of the volumes in which the abhaṅgas attributed to them appear and in particularly within the Sakala Santa Gāthā. The verses attributed to Goṇāī and Rājāī—located within the Nāmdev gāthā—are given headings such as ‘Goṇāī and Nāmdev’s conversation’, ‘Goṇāī and Viṭṭhal’s conversation’, ‘Rājāī and Nāmdev’s conversation’, ‘Rājāī’s message to Viṭhobā via Rakhumāī’, ‘Rājāī’s decision’ and ‘Nāmdev, Rājāī and Viṭṭhal’s conversation’. However, the abhaṅgas ascribed to Muktābāī, Janābāī and Bahiṇābāī are categorised according to certain themes, which may be due to the arrangement of verses in the notebooks of kirtankārs or to the programmatic intent of the editors. It is possible that the size of the corpus ascribed to Janābāī and Bahiṇābāī accounts for the thematic division but the issue of quantity is unlikely in relation to Muktābāī as only forty-two abhaṅgas attributed to her are presented in the SSG. It is therefore likely that the complexity of the abhaṅgas or Muktābāī’s status as Ādimāyā, which was forged through caritra, is responsible for the thematic categorisation of the Muktābāī compositions. Five themes are used to divide the abhaṅgas attributed to Muktābāī in the SSG: paṇḍharīmāhātmya ‘the greatness of Paṇḍharī’ (1–3); nāmapara ‘on the Name’ (4–10); santapara ‘on the saints’ (11–19); upadeśapara ‘teaching’ or ‘advisory’ (20–40), and kūṭa ‘enigmatic’ (41–42). These themes demonstrate that the concerns of the compositions attributed to Muktābāī are spiritual rather than biographical and that these concerns therefore differ from those of a biographer like Mahīpati.

The abhaṅgas attributed to Janābāī are divided under twenty-five themes: nāmasankīrtana-māhātmya ‘the greatness of chanting the Name’ (1–15); viṭṭhal māhātmya ‘the greatness of Viṭṭhal’ (16–33); karunā ‘compassion’ (34–68); bhēta ‘meeting’ (69–154); māgaṇe ‘request’ (155–163); santastuti ‘in praise of saints’ (164–177); ātmasvarūpapātithi ‘the condition of my soul’ (178–203); janābāī niścaya ‘Janābāī’s decision’ (204–224); jāṭē ‘hand-mill’ (225–227); upadeśa ‘advisory’ (228–257); kṛṣṇajanma, bālakrīḍā va kālā ‘Kṛṣṇa’s birth, child play and curds’ (258–265); jñāneśvarstiti ‘in praise of Jñāneśvar’

1 Only one of the eleven tāṭīce abhaṅga (‘door’ verses) appears in the SSG as it seems that these verses do not generally appear in ‘traditional gāhās’ (Tulpule 1979:334n.127).
(266–276); senā nhāvī caritra ‘Senā the barber’s actions’ (277); śrīnāmadeva caritra ‘Nāmdev’s deeds’ (278–293); Hariścandra ākhyaṇa ‘the story of Hariścandra’ (294–316);\(^2\) thālīpāka ‘the cooking pot’ (317–330); tūrthāvaḷi ‘pilgrimage’ (331–334);\(^3\) pālaṇā ‘lullaby’ (335); padē ‘verses’ (336–340); dasāvatāravarṇana ‘extolling the ten descent-forms [of Viṣṇu]’ (341); prārabdhagati ‘the rolling on of the wheel of fate’ (342–343); nāmadevaāce goṇāīśī bhāṣaṇa ‘conversation between Nāmdev and Goṇālī’ (344); kūta ‘enigmatic’ (345); bhaktisvarūpa ‘the appropriate form of devotion’ (346), and the kākada ārati ‘the daybreak ārati’ (347). These themes demonstrate that whilst some of compositions attributed to Janābāī are concerned with caritra, most of the compositions have a spiritual rather than biographical focus.

The compositions ascribed to Bahiṇābāī are divided under different themes depending on the edition. The themes in Abbott’s translation number fourteen and appear to follow the Kolhārkar edition, which includes thirty-eight other thematic headings (1926). The first theme is ādiparamparā and contains one abhaṅga that traces Bahiṇābāī’s lineage through several gurus from Ādināth (Śiva) to Jñāneśvar and ultimately to Tukārām (SSG 1:1150; Abbott 1985:1). The presentation of Bahiṇābāī’s guru paramparā highlights the importance of the paramparā for authenticating a particular poet, for the transmission of teachings within the sampradāya and for the inclusion of attributed compositions within the Vārkarī corpus. Significantly, Muktābāī, Janābāī and Bahiṇābāī are all connected to the Nāth panth by paramparā and may even be connected to each other through Jñāneśvar.\(^4\) The second and third thematic sections in the Bahiṇābāī Gāthā are ātmanivedan and niryāṇapara, and these compositions are discussed below. The subsequent themes in the Bahiṇābāī Gāthā are primarily spiritual and are not detailed here due to their number and the differences between the various editions.

The themes used to group the compositions attributed to these three women show both similarities and differences. Firstly, the Bahiṇābāī Gāthā includes her spiritual autobiography and compositions relating to the behaviour and duties of a virtuous wife. Secondly, only the compositions attributed to Janī include a section on the hand-mill (jātẽ). Thirdly, Muktābāī and Janābāī are both given sections on upadeśa and kūṭa, while Janī and Bahiṇī are given a section entitled māgaṇe. However, there

\(^2\) Hariścandra was a king who was raised to heaven with his subjects as a reward for piety (Molesworth 1857:888). I have translated the first and introductory verse of the Janābāī account (see Appendix B) but am not discussing the story as Madhuri Deshmukh (2006) has done detailed work on Janābāī’s story and her article on this topic is forthcoming. For the story in English see ‘Hariścandra and Viśvāmrita’ (Dimmitt and Buiten 1978:273–286) and for a discussion of the Hariścandra legend see Sathaye (2009).


\(^4\) Janābāī’s guru was Nāmdev and Nāmdev’s guru was Visobā Khecar but it is however unclear whether Visobā’s guru was Jñāneśvar or Muktābāī (see Muktābāī caritra in chapter four).
are some themes that appear in relation to the compositions of all three women—the Name; Puṇḍalīk, Pandharpur and/or Viṭṭhal and the sants—and these themes are also found in the compositions attributed to the other santakavis and santakaviyatrīs. The presence of such spiritual themes demonstrates that the concerns of bhakti poets often differ from that of sacred biographers like Mahīpati. Bhakti poets are mainly preoccupied with devotional concerns and representing their devotional subjectivity or the devotional subjectivity of the attributed author (see Pechilis 2012:3, 14ff).

There are numerous possible themes that could be discussed with regards to the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs such as the body, suffering, status, seeking and/or meeting God. However, this chapter takes similarities and differences in the thematic groupings of the compositions attributed to Muktābāī, Janābāī and Bahiṇābāī as its template because it suggests programmatic intent in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya. Consequently, the chapter considers some of the biographical images of figures like Soyarābāī and Nirmaḷābāī who are under-represented in Mahīpati’s caritra as well as exploring the spiritual autobiography attributed to Bahiṇābāī and its implications for the tension between grhastha and vairāgya that characterise the Vārkarī sampradāya. The grinding songs ascribed to Janābāī and abhaṅgas attributed to other santakaviyatrīs are considered in relation to quotidian or domestic imagery. The kīṭa and upadeśa songs attributed to Muktābāī and Janābāī are discussed in relation to topics such as yoga and nivṛtti while the relationships between the devotee and deity is explored as a means of expressing devotional subjectivity. The efficacy of the name of God (nāma) is one of the most important devotional practices associated with bhakti so the discussion begins with this devotional theme so as to explore the function of gender attribution in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī tradition as a householder path.

1.1. Nāma: the importance of the name of God for liberation

The three pillars of sant sādhana are the Name (nāma), the Divine Guru (satguru) and the company of the sants (satṣaṅga) according to Vaudeville (1987a:31). However, Deleury argues that the three methods of attaining liberation advocated by the Vārkarīs are nāmapara, kīrtanapara rather than satguru and santapara which includes the guru but Deleury notes that ‘for the Vārkarī the utterance of the Name is the most important part of bhakti’ (1994:121–25; see also BhG 10.25; Bonouvrié 1999:52; Vaudeville 1987b:216). The Haripāṭh extols the practice of nāma and forms part of many Vārkarīs’ daily sādhana as I mentioned in Chapter Three. Nāma is also called nāmajapa, nāma-smarana, nāma-sañkīrtan o nāma-sañkīrtana, nāmapara, nāmāghoṣa, nāmapantha o nāmapāṭha and is a key theme in the compositions
attributed to both the Vārkāri santakāvis and santakaviyatrīs. The practice of nāma may be done by japa—often a continual muttering of the Name—bhajan, ajapā or ajāpajapa and is considered to grant salvation.\(^5\) Moreover, the practice of nāma is one that can easily be undertaken within the domestic setting so by including songs attributed to the santakaviyatrīs on this theme those with programmatic intent may be employing gender attribution to construct a householder tradition.

Sing bhajans faithfully, perpetually repeat the Name; a harlot can enter paradise thus.
For us the sacred Names are Hari, Rāma and Krṣṇa; day and night they point the way to liberation.
With the power of the Name the river of existence can be crossed; chanting the Name of Hari has now become a hobby.
Muktāī ponders Hari-love after chanting the Name: the Name always leads to immortality.

(Muktābāī abhaṅga 7, SSG 1:239; my translation)

The practice of nāma is mentioned in verses attributed to Muktābāī (7, 10, 26, 37), Janābāī (3, 6, 8, 11, 155, 204, 208, 227), Goṇāī (1268, 1269, 1273), Rājāī (1325), Soyarābāī (4, 22, 41, 47, 62), Nirmaḷā (6, 16), Kānhopātrā (7, 12, 14), Viṭṭhābāī, and Bahiṇābāī (393–403; Abbott 1985:119–123). The performance of nāma is described in the verses attributed to these women as a ‘hobby’ (Muktābāī 7; Nirmaḷā 6), an ‘obsessive habit’ (Janābāī 11), a ‘daily task’ (Janābāī 204), a ‘remedy’ (Nirmaḷā 6), a ‘boon’ (Janābāī 155), and something that should be done continuously (Bahiṇābāī 393; Abbott 1985:119) because it is one’s ‘wealth’ (Muktābāī 26, 37).

The verses that I have translated and examined suggest that by chanting the Name all oppression and difficulties disappear (Kānhopātrā 14; Soyarābāī 41); that one is purified and sin is conquered (Soyarābāī 41); that the ‘net of evil’ ceases (Soyarābāī 41); that ‘familial life will be happy’ (Nirmaḷā 16); that one will gain eternal happiness (Goṇāī 1273), and as the abhaṅga attributed to Soyarābāī suggests one will gain fulfilment by uttering the Name:

Death trembles when the Name is uttered; saying ‘Viṭṭhal’ leads to fulfilment.
The three syllable repetition is easily achieved: repeat it at all times.
It removes life’s sorrow and strife: don’t follow any other path.
Have faith in the Name and hold on to it within, says the Mahārī of Cokhā.

(Soyarābāī abhaṅga 47, SSG 1:1003; my translation)

The sacred and mystical syllable om is identified with Brahman in the Upaniṣads and in the Bhagavadgītā it is said that meditating on ‘the Brahman of the om syllable’ will lead to liberation (BhG 8.13; Patton 2008:96).

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\(^5\) Lucia King’s film ‘The Warkari Cycle’ (2011) shows a woman at Alandi writing Rāma repeatedly. For more on the topic of nāma see Dev 2002:110–120.
Moreover, by uttering the Name one can ‘become strong’ (Janābāī 209); ‘attain peace and forgiveness’ (Muktābāī 26); ‘cross the river of existence’ (Muktābāī 7; Bhāgubāī); make friends with Yama, the god of death (Viṭṭhābāī); ‘free the soul’ (Viṭṭhābāī); gain liberation (Muktābāī 7; Soyarābāī 41) or release from the cycle of existence and rebirth (Muktābāī 10, 26; Janābāī 11, 227; Soyarābāī 41); reach heaven (Nirmalā 16); enter paradise (Muktābāī 7); attain immortality (Muktābāī 7); attain union with the divine (Muktābāī 37) or as an abhaṅga attributed to Janābāī suggests actually become the deity:

The Name is free and excellent; one never tires of chanting the Name.
A heavy stone in the ocean, the name ‘Ātmārām’ saves.
Recollecting the son, he was taken to Vaikuṇṭh.
Janī knows the greatness of the Name; by chanting she becomes Viṭṭhal.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 3, SSG 1:716; my translation)

This abhaṅga and one attributed to Muktābāī (10) both contain references to ‘stones’, which probably refer to an episode from the Rāmāyaṇa called the Setubandha, ‘The Building of the Bridge’.

Beginning – middle – end, the devotee of Hari is released; inwardly and outwardly Hari is all.
No holy places are necessary when the essential hymn is repeated.
Through His Name the slow and ignorant are liberated; even the stones floated on the ocean are saved from drowning.
Through Hari’s name Muktāś is forever liberated, there is no beginning or end for us anymore.

(Muktābāī abhaṅga 10, SSG 1:239; my translation)

The story goes that in order to make the stones ‘float’ Hanuman inscribed stones with rā and others with ma (or inscribed the stones with rāma). When the stones were put in the water they joined to form Rāma and floated due to the power of the deity’s name. Consequently, a bridge was formed allowing Rāma to cross the waters to Lanka and so rescue Sītā from Rāvaṇa. The Name therefore has the power to make stones float and so save people from drowning in the ocean of existence.

The practice of nāma can be done as part of one’s daily domestic activities as the composition attributed to Janī suggests:

Contemplate the name of Viṭṭhobā, then step ahead.
Chanting the Name is a great saviour, it takes you beyond borders.
Ājāmeḷa was sanctified; Cokhāmeḷā was set free.
‘Contemplate the name while grinding and pounding’, says Nāma’s Janī.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 8, SSG 1:716; my translation)

The Name is also said to be able to save sinners and social outcastes like the Vārkarī sant Cokhāmeḷā. Cokhāmeḷā was a mahār and therefore barred from entering the temple but Cokhā’s guru Nāmdev is regarded as responsible for getting Cokhā to worship on the steps of the temple in Pandharpur. Mahīpati’s caritra states that Cokhāmeḷā was led into the temple’s inner sanctum by Viṭṭhal where Cokhāmeḷā spent
the night and thus Cokhāmeḷā was thrown out of Pandharpur by the Brahmans (BVJ 23.6ff; Abbott and Godbole 1996:377ff). However, a well-known story and an abhaṅga attributed to Cokhāmeḷā relate that Viṭṭhal put His necklace around Cokhāmeḷā’s neck and led him out of the temple. Cokhā in a state of bliss then lay down on the sands of the river in a trance. The temple priests discover Cokhāmeḷā with Viṭṭhal’s missing gold necklace and are enraged that the temple and the deity have been polluted. When Cokhāmeḷā is about to be put to death he calls out to God and is miraculously saved, much in the way that Janī was saved from death. Cokhā is said to have died when a wall he and other mahārs were repairing in Mangalvedha collapsed on them. Nämdev is thought to have gone to find Cokhāmeḷā’s remains and to have picked up the bones that muttered ‘Viṭṭhal, Viṭṭhal’. The bones were buried at the bottom of the steps outside the main door of the temple in Pandharpur where Cokhā had stood in worship and this is now the Cokhāmeḷā samādhi (Mokashi-Punekar 2005a:123–141).

Mahīpati refers to Ajāmeḷa as a sinful Brahman who on the point of death called out to his son ‘Nārāyaṇa’ and his sins were thus removed (BVJ 3.217; Abbott and Godbole 1996:47). Abbott and Godbole state that Ajāmeḷa was a Brahman who abandoned his parents and wife to spend his life with a śūdra woman and was thus deemed a sinner.6 Ajāmeḷa’s youngest and much loved son was called Nārāyaṇa. One day Ajāmeḷa overhead Yama and Viṣṇu discussing him, which led Ajāmeḷa to repent and so abandon the śūdra woman and his child (in accordance with Vedic law). Ajāmeḷa then spent his remaining days at Gangadwar (Nasik district) in the service of God and so attained mokṣa after death (1996:389). However, Prapnnachari’s story of Ajāmeḷa, based on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (6.1–3), states that Ajāmeḷa became a robber so as to satisfy his woman (Ajāmeḷa was thus a sinner on two counts). At the end of Ajāmeḷa’s life messengers came from Yama in order to inflict death upon him. In fear Ajāmeḷa called out for his favourite son Nārāyaṇa and thus uttered the name of God. Viṣṇu’s messengers consequently came to his aid and the two sides debated whether Ajāmeḷa had acted righteously. They came to the conclusion that although Ajāmeḷa was a sinner he had uttered the name Nārāyaṇa at the moment of death and that this absolved his sins (Prapnnachari 2007:143ff; Kiehnle 1997a: 24–25).7

The line attributed to Janī that reads ‘recollecting the son, he was taken to Vaikuṇṭh’ (abhanga 3.3) may refer to Ajāmeḷa going to heaven because he said the name ‘Nārāyaṇa’. The idea that Ajāmeḷa was saved by uttering the Name is also found in an abhaṅga attributed to Soyarā:

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6 The name is also rendered Ajāmila (Marathi), Ajāmila/Ajāmil (Hindi) or sometimes even Ājāmeḷa.
7 The story of Ajāmil is presented in Tulsīdās’ Rāmcaritmānas (3.40.3–4). Ajāmil is also mentioned in Hawley’s discussion of Sūrdās’ poetry as ‘the Brahman who deserted his family and ran off with a prostitute…’ (Hawley 1992:232, 1994b:84; see Leslie 2003:165).
For those guilty of five great sins and breach of faith, Rāma’s Name saves.\(^3\)
It saved the great sinner Vālhā [Vālmīki]. It rescued the harlot.
The son’s name sent him to paradise: Ajāmeḷā was liberated by the Name.
The Name saves men and women, says the Mahārī of Cokhā.

(Soyarābāī abhaṅga 22, SSG 1:1000; my translation)

This *abhaṅga* depicts various lowly figures, who were probably well-known to a Vārkarī audience as they appear in various epic and *purānic* stories, being saved by reciting the Name. These figures represent the ‘Other’ within or on the margins of the social order and are ‘a metaphor for all the downtrodden and marginalized victims of human society’ according to Lorenzen (1996:25). These are characters with whom the audience are meant to identify because they are not *sannyāsīs* but more than that they are characters with whom the composer of the *abhaṅga* may identify. Consequently, a listener/reader, would understand that they too might be saved by uttering the Name within a domestic setting.

This theme of low-caste persons or outsiders finding salvation through the Name is also found in an *abhaṅga* attributed to Kānhopātrā that also mentions Ājāmeḷa:

The one who knows your Name by heart threatens Death.
Hurray! Your great Name has delivered even the wicked.
The ruined harlot, Ajāmeḷ and Vālmikī all became pure.
Hurray! Kānhopātrā’s neck is decorated with a garland of your Names.

(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 12, SSG 1:919; my translation)

The ‘harlot’ (*gaṇikā*) mentioned in the compositions attributed to Mukṭābāī (7), Kānhopātrā and Soyarābāī is probably Piṅgalā, about whom there are several stories. One story goes that Piṅgalā had a pet parakeet that had learnt to repeat the name of God (Rāma) from a previous owner. Just hearing the Name repeated constantly meant Piṅgalā attained salvation (Leslie 2003:165). Another story states that one night Piṅgalā failed to get any customers and that in thinking the matter over Piṅgalā became detached from sense gratification and so praised God for saving her (BhP 11.8.22–44; Kiehnle 1997a:124). Although the *abhaṅga* attributed to Kānhopātrā does not mention Piṅgalā by name it is likely that the *gaṇikā* mentioned is Piṅgalā because both she and Ajāmeḷa are regarded as representing the redeemed sinner or what Kiehnle describes as the ‘less super human bhaktas’ (1997a:23–24; see Sellergren 1996:232).\(^9\)

The Name as a means of salvation for the lowest of the low, by breaking the bonds of the cycle of existence, is also found in an *abhaṅga* attributed to Janābāī:

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\(^3\) The five great sins or crimes are known as *mahāpātakī* (see Glossary).

\(^9\) Vālmīki, whom the *abhaṅgas* attributed to Kānhopātrā and Soyarābāī mention, also exemplifies the redeemed sinner but for more on this topic see Leslie 2003.
Great is the name of Viṭṭhobā; the fisherman and the potter have been saved.
By liking the Name, the fetters of samsāra are broken.
Time and again I sing the name of God; it has become dāsī Janī’s obsessive habit.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 11, SSG 1:717; my translation)

It is likely that the potter mentioned was Gorā Kumbhār (c. 1267–1397 C.E.) who is said to have lived in the village of Ter/Teraḍhokī/Tardokī (Deleury 1994:5, 33, 37). Mahīpāti’s caritra of Gorā begins with Gorā constantly repeating the Names of God, which indicates Gorā is a good bhakta (BVJ 17:99ff). One day, while in an ecstatic state of devotion and treading his clay Gorā inadvertently tramples his infant daughter to death. Although she is angry Gorā’s wife wishes to have another child but Gorā refuses to touch her. Consequently his wife arranges a second marriage for him. However, as he has sworn to treat both his wives equally Gorā also refuses to touch his second wife. One night, both wives each took one of his hands and placed them on their breasts in the hope Gorā will be aroused. However, Gorā—seeing he had broken his vow not to touch his wives—cuts off his hands and consequently loses the tools of his trade. Gorā tells his wives not to worry as Viṭṭhobā favours his bhaktas and carries on with nāma (BVJ 17.181). Not long after this Gorā and his wives go to Panḍharpūr for the āṣāḍhī-vārī and attend a kīrtan given by Nāmdev. The crowd claps with delight but Gorā is unable to join in the celebration. Gorā calls out for God to restore his hands so he can participate, God hears him and restores Gorā’s limbs. Gorā’s first wife then begs for a miracle of her own: the return of their infant daughter. A little child then comes crawling out of the crowd in answer to her prayers (BVJ 17.182–205; Abbott and Godbole 1996). The key feature of the story is that bhakti prevails as uttering the Name and the efficacy of Nāmdev’s kīrtan leads to Gorā’s hands being restored and the resurrection of Gorā’s daughter (Novetzke 2008:64, 74). Mahīpāti’s account refers to Gorā constantly repeating the Name, which makes it clear that it was because of his faith and devotion that Gorā was the recipient of God’s grace. Moreover, by having his hands restored Gorā will be able to continue to live a householder life and remain socially active as a potter. The story therefore highlights the compatibility of doing one’s duty in the domestic setting and bhakti.

However, the reference to the fisherman (koḷī) in the Janī abhaṅga is unclear. Sadasivan states that ‘the name Koli is taken by hillmen, fishermen, landless cultivators, weavers or a section of the Jats’ (2000:276). Consequently, the term koḷī probably just connotes any lowly person as exemplars of those who attained redemption. Leslie asserts that the reason so many bhakti stories, and perhaps bhakti compositions, have ‘untouchable’ protagonists is that in respect of its self-presentation bhakti was

10 See ‘Saint Gora Kumblar’.
11 Gorā’s first wife may have been called Šāntī and this second wife Rāmī (Parchure 1974).
arguably a spiritual path open to low-caste persons and women. The ‘untouchable’ protagonist or exemplar may therefore have been a means through which the salvific power of bhakti was discursively demonstrated (2003:154–55).

The practice of nāma is often considered the best means of ending saṃsāra. An abhaṅga attributed to Muktāī draws attention to God as having both ‘name’ (nāma) and ‘form’ (rūpa).

Think of liberation at all times; proclaim—‘Rāma-Kṛṣṇa-Govind”—daily.
The habit of saying ‘Lord, Lord’ destroys the source of worldly existence; chanting consistently is virtuous.
Everywhere Hari’s pleasing form is visible; Hari is the knower and all that’s comprehensible.
Muktāī’s wealth is reflecting on Hari’s form; the cycle of existence ends through Hari’s name.

(Muktāī abhaṅga 37, SSG 1:242; my translation)

The reference to God’s form indicates that saguṇa bhakti is being advocated in conjunction with nāma to achieve liberation as meditation on and worship of the divine form also coincides with nāma (Vaudeville 1987a:31–32). According to Lorenzen, saguṇa bhakti ‘represents a “liberal” reform of an earlier Vedic and śāstrik Hinduism’ by allowing women and non-Brahmans access to salvation (1995:15). Moreover, devotion to the ‘form’ of God, particularly to an avatāra or svarūpa like Viṣṇu, is regarded as allowing the deity to intercede on behalf of the bhakta resulting in salvation (1995:17). Thus, the author/speaker/Muktāī can be interpreted as the Vārkarī tradition advocating that salvation for all is possible through devotion to God’s name and form. The term nāmarūpa represents the phenomenal world rather than transcendent reality.12 Individuality is considered to be comprised of nāma and rūpa. Guénon states that nāma refers to the ‘essential’ or ‘subtle’ aspect and rūpa refers to the ‘substantial’ or ‘corporeal’ aspect of individuality. Liberation is thus a state where one is beyond nāmarūpa (2004:68–69; see Vaudeville 1987a:28, 31). Guénon argues that in order to understand the true meaning of nāma one must remember that the ‘name’ of a being—in this case Hari, the Lord—expresses its ‘essence’. Moreover, the ‘name’ is a sound that is connected with the aural (and oral) while ‘form’ is connected with the visual (2004:71–72). The form of the deity is an object of adoration within bhakti and having sight of the deity (darśan) is the ultimate spiritual experience as through the act of darśan the devotee and Lord become united (Paranjpe 2009:133–135). The nāmamudrā in this verse and in abhaṅga thirty-two asserts that muktāī sādhana, ‘Muktāī’s wealth’ or Muktāī’s spiritual practice, is connected with the ‘form’ of God but that liberation is gained by uttering the Name. This demonstrates the power of the spoken word but also that one may need to transcend saguṇa bhakti and instead worship the Lord ‘without form’

12 For more on nāmarūpa, particularly in relation to the philosophy of advaita, see Halbfass (1995) and Falk (2006).
This idea is also expressed in the phrase ‘inwardly and outwardly Hari is all’ (Muktābāī 10), which may suggest that reflecting on both ‘name’ and ‘form’ lead one to realise that Hari the Lord is ‘the knower and all that’s comprehensible’ but also that ultimately one unified with brahman so the anterior form is no longer necessary.

The idea that the devotee is discharged from performing all other religious observances by uttering the Name is expressed in an abhaṅga attributed to Muktābāī that states ‘No holy places are necessary when the essential hymn is repeated’ (10) and is also conveyed in a composition attributed to Viṭhābāī:

Avoid yoga and sacrifice. Chanting the Name will free the soul.
Set aside nādabindu. Avoid the channels of the vital spirit.
Do not search for Brahman, nor perform yogic postures.
Do not seek a beehive in a cave, nor seek the cakras in yogic exercise.
Do not seek a lotus in your heart, nor seek the kundalini.
Yama is Bhagavān’s chief devotee. Keep chanting the Name and you’ll make friends with him.

(Viṭhābāī abhaṅga; my translation)

This verse advocates chanting the Name above all else and exhorts the hearer/reader to avoid yogic practices in favour of nāma, again offering seeming confirmation that the Vārkarī sampradāya is constructing itself firmly as a householder tradition that has equivalence to that of sannyāsa. For example, the term nādabindu refers to ‘the unstruck sound heard by yogis and the luminous point they see’ when they experience union or liberation (Tulpule 1999:369–70). In Yoga uttering the sacred syllable Ōṃ (om) is said to lead to liberation due to the unification of bindu or ‘Śiva’ and nada or ‘Śakti’ (Beck 1995:81–83, 93; Gupta 1972:100). In Kuṇḍalinī Yoga bindu, as nasal resonance, is the rise of prāṇic energy in the form of vibration. Singh states that ‘the energy of the bindu appears as a point of light in the middle of the eye-brows’ and the bindu is transformed into nāda, the mystical resonance that extends from the summit of the head (nādabindusthāna) through the central channel of the body (1991: xliii–xliii). Although the utterance of Ōṃ is said to lead to liberation, as the abhaṅga attributed to Soyarābāī presented above suggests, the Viṭhābāī abhaṅga and others which promote the citing of nāma, discourages uttering the praṇava in conjunction with yogic practices in favour of nāma, often within quotidian contexts.

While the abhaṅga attributed to Viṭhābāī itemises practices from which one should abstain in favour of chanting the Name, a Janābāī abhaṅga warns of the negative consequences if one should fail to perform nāmajapa:

If you dislike Viṭhāl’s name, dire consequences will ensue.
Tie your neck to a pillar and place a scorpion on your tongue.
Such a damned egoist goes to hell. 
Nāmdev advises me, dāsī Janī stays at the feet.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 6, SSG 1:716; my translation)

The threats conveyed in this verse are very forceful. The second part of the first line—kāḷa hāṇoni tonḍa phoḍī—literally translates as ‘time will strike [you with a] punch in the face’ or ‘death will hit [you with a] punch in the mouth’. The second line presents excruciating means of permanently silencing oneself, implying that it is better to be voiceless than take God’s name in vain or fail to perform nāma. Moreover, the author/speaker states that failure to perform nāmajapa will result in going to hell. However, something in the tone of this verse leads me to wonder if Nāmdev’s “advice” to Janī is in actual fact a reprimand, in the form of a warning, saying ‘there will be dire consequences for you if you don’t acquire a taste for Viṭṭhal’s name’. The nāmamudrā reflects Janī’s servile position in the household as a dāsī but also depicts her as at Nāmdev’s feet and implies that there is no contradiction between household duties and devotional practice. This is an act of submission and surrender, which can be interpreted as humility and reverence for the guru as well as one of accepting fault and seeking guidance (Olson 2003:313).

In contrast to the consonance promoted here between citation of the nāma and household duties, where most of the compositions that advocate nāma present it as having a positive outcome, words attributed to Rājāī suggest otherwise: ‘The door to our house is always open, which affects business. He is dedicated to chanting the Name. Night and day his heart is filled with Govind’s name. He shows no concern about our welfare’ (Rājāī abhaṅga, 1325.8–9, SSG 1:490–491; my translation). For Rājāī nāma seems to mean that everyday family and business life are negatively affected. It seems that Nāmdev operated an ‘open-door’ policy for bhaktas, as suggested by Mahīpati’s caritra outlined in Chapter Four, which would have meant added financial pressures and practical concerns for Rājāī and her mother-in-law Goṇāī. It is interesting to note that Cokhāmeḷā advised Nirmāḷā that by chanting the Name ceaselessly ‘familial life will be happy’ (Nirmāḷā 16). However, the words attributed to Rājāī and spoken to Rukhmāī suggest that she did not share Cokhāmeḷā’s view:

Because of you we are miserable. How don’t you feel for us?
Everyone has troubles in life but we are doing what is fitting to deal with these.
There is only one answer, but have you thought about it?
You comprehend all this due to experience. We recite your name continuously.
From birth to death you sustain us. There is no one else but you to help us.
We beseech you—body, speech and mind, Rājāī implores dearest Rukhumāī.

(Rājāī abhaṅga 1325.10–15, SSG 1:490–491; my translation)

Rājāī obviously hopes that Rakhumāī will intercede with Viṭṭhal on her behalf and get Nāmdev to perform his duties as a householder. This verse, like the Janābāī abhaṅga above, indicates that life for the
women in the household of a male bhakta was not without its trials and tribulations, and that even the practice of nāma did not alleviate all suffering.

The sense of distance from the Name, expressed in the composition attributed to Rājāī, is also found in a Kānhopātrā abhaṅga, which like the Janī verse connects the Name and ‘feet’:

You are named ‘Purifier and restorer of the fallen’, Nārāyaṇa.
Keep your promise, acknowledge your vow.
My caste is unclean, I lack faith; my behaviour and character are vile.
No Name on the tip of my tongue. Kānhopātrā seeks the protection of your feet.

(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 7, SSG 1:918; my translation)

This abhaṅga draws attention to the status of the locuteur as one who feels so unworthy, due to their family profession and social status, that s/he is unable to utter the Name. Consequently, s/he humbles herself before God and seeks redemption at His feet. In Indian traditions the feet are usually regarded as polluted and are associated with servants but within the bhakti context the deity’s feet are regarded as symbols of purity and auspiciousness which represent the deity’s grace. The devotee therefore approaches the deity in a position of humility, as his servant, and gains access to the only part of the deity/mūrti attainable to them and in so doing attains salvation (Bryant 2003:xxxv–xxxvi; Pechilis 2012:44)

Evidently, Kānhopātrā/the speaker/author wants to be redeemed like the other ‘untouchable’ protagonists mentioned above. However, Sellergren suggests that Kānhopātrā was afraid that she was ‘outside the scope of God’s love’ due to her social status (1996:227). Consequently, Kānhopātrā might have sought the protection of God’s feet as a means of attaining the grace of God.

A further abhaṅga attributed to Kānhopātrā expresses a different perspective, suggesting that the author/speaker/Kānhopātrā may have progressed on their spiritual journey.

Chant the Name by heart, with love from within.
My Father is trusting; he removes all oppression.
Through chanting Names, difficulties will quickly disappear.
Experience Him yourself. He is Kānhopātrā’s Mādhav.

(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 14, SSG 1:919; my translation)

This abhaṅga refers to God as ‘my father’, which is a very common appellation among the Vārkarī bhaktas but it also employs the epithet Mādhav. Stoler Miller states that epithets are names that ‘function to delineate the subject’s character by evoking his deeds, relations, physical forms, and qualities’ (1997:18). Vaudeville notes that although the divine Name is considered unique numerous names for the Supreme deity are used in devotional compositions (1987a:32).
The epithets that the Vārkarīs use first and foremost are ‘Viṭṭhal’ and ‘Viṭhobā’ (see Deleury 1994:122, 127; Dhere 2011). The Vārkarīs use a number of diminutives for Viṭṭhal and Viṭhobā such as Viṭho, Viṭhū or Iṭhobā as a song I heard attributed to Sakhūbāī demonstrates (see Appendix B), and a number of feminised forms like Viṭhābāī, Viṭhobāī and Viṭhāī (see Deleury 1994:127–28). The epithets that appeared most frequently after Viṭṭhal and Viṭhobā were deva, Hari, Nārāyaṇa and Pāṇḍuraṅga. The epithet Pāṇḍuraṅga, as discussed in Chapter One, may refer to the Śaivite form of the deity connected to Pandharpur but the compositions use other epithets that connect the deity with Pāṇḍharpūr as demonstrated in the table of appellations (see Appendix D).

However, in the context of nāma it is worth exploring the significance of some of the epithets which are employed in the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs. The name Mādhav means ‘a descendant of madhu’ but also connotes ‘sweet’, ‘honey’ or ‘intoxicating drink’, ‘springtime’, ‘the progenitor of Krishna’s own Yadu clan’, and refers to the demon destroyed by Kṛṣṇa (Monier Williams 2008). Stoler Miller states that the various meanings suggest Kṛṣṇa absorbed into himself the potentially dangerous power of what he conquered: ‘Springtime…is erotically powerful and painful for parted lovers. Honey, the prized food of the forest, is cited as an aphrodisiac…the dominant meanings of madhu thus provide a strongly erotic content…’ (1997:19–21). This erotic element is significant when one considers that Kānhopātrā is regarded as the daughter of a courtesan and that Kānhopātrā is said to have united or merged with Viṭṭhal at Pandharpur rather than to have died (BVJ 39.43–47; Ramaswamy 2007:226). Thus, the use of the epithet ‘Mādhav’ could imply an erotic-emotional connection with Kṛṣṇa/Viṭṭhal and desire for union with the divine. However, an erotic interpretation of ‘Mādhav’ may reflect the concerns of a biographer more than those of the poet and present an ahistorical perspective as the abhaṅga probably preceded the caritra. The epithet Mādhav is also used in a Muktābāī abhaṅga: Mādhav, Mukund and Hari—all lead to liberation! Muktāī’s wealth is in uttering God’s name; freedom from successive lives is thus achieved’ (Muktābāī abhaṅga 26.3–4, SSG 1:241; my translation). What is significant about these epithets is that they relate to the function of the deity as conquering and absorbing (Mādhav), offering liberation (Mukund) and destroying pain or removing sin (Hari). Both Hari and Mukund can be taken as referring to the Ultimate Reality, which suggests one can achieve liberation by uttering these efficacious epithets on a regular basis within the domestic context and thus the efficacy of the householder path is being emphasised (see Stoler Miller 1997:20; Monier Williams 2008).
An *abhaṅga* attributed to Janābāī asks for the ‘blessing’ (*vara*) of singing the Name “Hari” eternally, to serve the Lord forever and for Cakrapāṇī to bless the author/speaker:

Let Hari give me a boon: to sing his name eternally.  
Satisfy my desire to be of service to you.  
This is my will, bless me Cakrapāṇī.  
I’m looking at you closely; let me chant your name habitually.  
O Generous One, *dāsī* Janī touches your feet.  

(Janābāī *abhaṅga* 155, SSG 1:731; my translation)

The epithet *udārācyā rāyā*, which is used in the final line, is one that appears to have been devised by the author. It is formed of *udāra* (‘generous’ or ‘bountiful’) and *rāyā* (‘king’ or ‘master’) and therefore translates as ‘Bountiful King’ or ‘Generous One’. This epithet seems fitting considering that the speaker/Janī is asking humbly for the ‘boon’ or ‘blessing’ of singing the Lord’s name, which might ultimately lead to salvation.

The notion of continual remembrance is also present in another Janābāī *abhaṅga* but this time in the context of daily domestic chores. The singer/Janī, says that she sings “Ananta” while she husks the grain by pounding and while grinding the grain:

While grinding and pounding I’ll sing your name Eternal One (refrain).  
I can’t forget your name for a moment Murārī.  
Saying Hari’s name is my daily task,  
While grinding and pounding I’ll sing your name Eternal One.  
You are my mother and father, brother and sister, Cakrapāṇī.  
I shall contemplate your feet, says Nāma’s Janī.  
While grinding and pounding I’ll sing your name Eternal One.  

(Janābāī *abhaṅga* 204, SSG 1:736)

The singer is not only asserting that both grinding the grist and singing the Name are Janābāī’s daily tasks but that these actions are ‘endless’ like *samsāra*. The domestic arena therefore provides the resources on which to reflect spiritual truths and the song shows the viability of the domestic context for *bhakti*. *Nāma* while grinding and/or pounding is recommended as singing traditionally accompanies these tasks and as singing the Name(s) is the ‘easiest and most spontaneous act of personal worship’ according to Poitevin and Rairkar (1996:70–71). The song implies that by performing *nāma* continually one may destroy evil in the way that Kṛṣṇa destroyed the demon Mura. There are other epithets that appear specifically in relation to the Name in the *abhaṅgas* I have translated, most of which refer to Kṛṣṇa in some form, which suggests that the composers of the songs referred to specific characteristics and qualities associated with the deity in relation to the practice of *nāma* and in their search for liberation. However, the compositions attributed to Janābāī and Kānhopātrā also refer to certain attributes of the deity by employing the appellation ‘Viṭṭhābāī’, the feminine form of the name Viṭṭhal that refers to Viṭhobā as a mother or as a
woman friend. These intimate relationships with the divine, to which the discussion now turns, suggest a domestic setting and familial interactions. Consequently, gender attribution is probably being employed by those with programmatic intent to construct the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition.

1.2. Intimate relations with the divine

The compositions attributed to the various santakaviyatris portray different intimate relationships with the Divine. These relationships depict responses to and imaginings of the Divine, which indicate the poets’ perceptions of themselves and of their surroundings according to Pechilis (1999:7, 26–27). The intimacy between devotee and deity is expressed in different forms within bhakti literature: child-to-parent, servant-to-master (dāsya), disciple-to-teacher (śiṣya-guru), friend-to-friend (sakhya), parent-to-child (vātsalya), and bride-to-husband, spouse-to-spouse or lover-to-lover (Thielemann 2000:19; Cutler 1987:51; Vaudeville 1989:29; McLean 2008:213; see Aklujkar 2007). For Mclean these relationships represent some of the ascending forms of parā-bhakti or ‘perfect devotion’ in which the devotee expresses prema ‘tender devotion’ or ‘selfless love’ towards the divine (2008:213). Vaudeville regards prema-bhakti or bhāva-bhakti as characterising the attitude of the Vārkarī sants toward Viṭṭhal because they address the deity as a parent (1989:29; see Aklujkar 1992:102). However, other relationships with the divine such as sakhya-bhakti also characterise the interactions between devotee and deity in the Vārkarī community. Vanita suggest that relationships like sakhya-bhakti move the idea of intimacy beyond the confines of the patriarchal family where relations were circumscribed by gender and age (2001:62). However, as I shall demonstrate, familial relationships form the basis of many interactions with the divine by poets and bhaktas and these relationships reflect the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as concerned with accommodating grhastha religiosity and resisting the attraction of sannyāsa.

1.2.i. The relation of parent-to-child

One form of intimacy expressed in bhakti is that of god as child and devotee as parent. In this form of bhakti the bhakta assumes a form of tender, protective love (vātsalya bhakti) shown by a cow for her calf or vatsa (Lipner 1998:191). The vātsalya relationship portrays the parent, particularly the mother, as concerned with the child’s welfare. The ultimate goal for Hindu women is considered to be bearing a child, especially a male child, who is regarded as the source of her happiness, object of her tender affection and the basis of her prosperity and security. Moreover, the relationship of mother and child is one of close bodily contact—the mother often massages the child’s body with her bare hands—and this
provides the child with security in which to develop (see Stork 1991:103–105). The mother-child relationship is transformed within the bhakti context into a relationship of close contact between devotee and divine and is thus once more reflective of householder concerns, drawing on householder imagery. This trope often represents the deity as ‘mischievous and whimsical’ with the devotee as ‘mature and amused by the deity’s doings’ according to Vanita (2001:61). The Lord’s divine līlā is celebrated and thus behaviour that would be regarded as abnormal or scandalous is transformed into something joyful and venerable. These actions include erotic behaviours, such as the adolescent Kṛṣṇa teasing the milkmaids (gopīs), stealing their clothes and forcing them to emerge naked from the water. These activities are described as ‘sport’ (kṛida) and because the deity is viewed as a child all such activity can be considered innocent (Vanita 2001:62). This is a sentiment that certainly predominates in Vallabhite poetry (see Barz 1992:89ff; Thielemann 2000:81) but is not a motif that is often considered in relation to the compositions of Vārkarī sants and santakaviyatris as the focus tends to be on other connections between devotee and deity. However, there are numerous abhaṅgas describing Viṭṭhal in the form of a child and describing bālakṛṣṇa, while the stories of Kṛṣṇa’s childhood pranks are often the focus of kīrtans (Deleury 1994:148, 183; Novetzke 2008:112–115), all of which in my view, reinforce the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition. There is a section on kṛṣṇajanma, bālakrīḍā va kālā ‘Kṛṣṇa’s birth, child-play and curds’ in the Janābāī section of the SSG (258–265). One abhaṅga illustrates vātsalya bhakti by describing how Yaśodā, Kṛṣṇa’s foster-mother, cared for him despite his pranks like stealing butter but the abhaṅga also reminds the hearer/reader that the child Kṛṣṇa is actually the Cosmic Reality (Janābāī 262; see BhP 10.8.32–45, 10.9.1–21; Bryant 2003:43–47). However, what is significant about this abhaṅga is that it shows Yaśodā as a mother to Kṛṣṇa. Karve comments that devotees do not imagine Viṭṭhobā as their child because Viṭṭhal is not considered inferior to the bhakta. Only Yaśodā has the right to call Kṛṣṇa her child because she sacrificed her own child to save him. According to Karve, Viṭṭhal has therefore always been assigned roles that are considered superior or equal to that of the devotee in the different familial relationships used to describe God (1988:6). However, the relation of bhakta to divine in the Vārkarī sampradāya is generally regarded as one of child-to-parent, which like the relationship of parent-to-child signals a domestic setting and the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition.

1.2.ii. The relation of child-to-parent
The child-to-parent in the Vārkarī sampradāya usually has Viṭṭhal/Viṭhobā as a parent and in particular a mother who is often addressed in the feminine as Viṭhāī, Viṭhyā or Viṭhābāī (Vaudeville 1989:29; Dhere 2011:207ff). This is however only partially true as the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs also express different forms of intimate relationships with the divine. Nonetheless, there are a number of compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs that portray the divine in the role of parent: mother and father (māyabāpa), and as either father (bāpa) or mother (māya, mātā, āī). Interestingly the term ‘mother’ appears before father in the term māyabāpa which may allude to the importance of and reverence of the mother in the tradition (see Manu 2.145, 4.183; Altekar 1959:100–101).

A composition attributed to Janābāī portrays the speaker as a calf (vatsa) and the divine as the mother. The speaker is seeking love and tenderness from the divine Mother (māya) while in a state of desperation: tuja vāñconiyā māye / jīva mājhā jóvo pāhe // Mī vatsa mājhī māya / naye ātā karā kāya // ‘Without you Mother, my soul wants to abandon me. I am the calf, you are my mother; I don’t know what to do now’ (74.2–3). For the author/Janī the divine parent(s) may replace those she has lost and provide her with a ‘spiritual’ family instead: māya melī bāpa melā / ātā sāmbhāllī viṭṭhalā// ‘Mother died, father died; please take care of my Viṭthal’ (58.1); pāṇḍuraṅga mājhī pita / rakhumāī jhāli mātā// ‘Pāṇḍuraṅga is my father, Rakhumāī is my mother’ (82.3) and māyabāpa bandubahiṇī / tū bā sakhā cakrapāṇī // ‘You are my mother and father, brother and sister, Cakrapāṇī’ (204.4).

The divine parent in Pandharpur provides Kānhopātrā/the author/speaker with a sense of belonging and reassurance: yethē āhe māyabāpa / hare tāpa daruśanẽ // ‘This is where my parents are; all my anxiety will end after seeing God’ (8.2). While for Bhāgū/the author/speaker the lack of parents and family, and therefore social status, may be the reason she feels the parental role is not being fulfilled by the divine: anātha mhaṇūnī dhar / yē hā maga kaisā dātāra mhaṇavisī // ‘Orphaned, I’m kept at arm’s length. How can you be called generous?’ (4.2). Furthermore, Limbāī/the author/speaker refers to Viṭthal as her parent while she beseeches him for salvation: tārı̄ maja āta rakhumācyā kāntā / pandharicyā nāthā māyabāpā// ‘Please liberate me Husband of Rakhumāī, Master of Paṇḍharī, my parent’ (1.1).

Soyarābāī abhaṅga (31.1, 3–4) portrays the common Vārkarī understanding of God as mother and father (māyabāpa): ‘With unbecoming familiarity I speak but you are a forgiving parent. The afflicted and miserable seek refuge with you. Please run to their aid, our mother and father. Soyarā prostrates herself: ‘You are our leader and mother, Pāṇḍuraṅga’. The speaker communicates directly with
the divine, saying s/he speaks with familiarity. This suggests that there is an impediment, like low-caste status, to the speaker addressing God. However, the speaker’s ‘familiarity’ could also be understood as that of ‘an intimate companion’ or ‘familiar acquaintance’ (salagī), which fits with the personal and intimate relationship one has with a parent. So while the speaker implies a close connection with the parental figure s/he retains a respectful distance. This is borne out by the use of the second-person plural (tumhī), the formal ‘you’, which is the correct way to address elders and superiors. However, the divine parent is also presented as ‘generous’ (udāra) suggesting that God forgives one’s faults or transgressions.

This poem, like numerous others ascribed to the santakaviyatīs, portrays the speaker seeking refuge and aid, the kind of aid a loving parent offers. The final line refers to Soyarā/the author/speaker performing a full body prostration and form of greeting (daṇḍavata) that low-caste persons would have given Brahmans and those considered superior to them. This demonstrates the humility of the speaker/author but also their depth of entreaty to God, her mother and nāyak. The term nāyak connotes a ‘leader’ but can refer to a man, husband or lover in a dramatic or amorous composition, as well as the hero in a drama or poem (Molesworth 1857:454). Consequently, these designations could apply in this poem and the speaker/author could be referring to God as the head-man/leader of the Mahārs while calling on him for aid.

A very touching verse attributed to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ asks Viṭṭhāl to come and meet her outside the temple as she is pining outside: ‘Listen to my desperate plea Viṭṭhāl; meet me, your child’. Wonderfully ‘God came outside, picked me up on his shoulders’ and granted the meeting (1). The significance of this verse lies in the fact that it describes God, female or male, carrying an ‘untouchable’ into the temple on her/his shoulders (Zelliot 2005:32). This has similarities with the story of Viṭṭhal leading the mahār Cokhā by the hand into the temple (BVJ 23:6ff) and the story of Tiruppāṇ Āḻvār who was carried into the temple on the back of the Brahman who had thrown a stone at him (Hardy 1983:478; Zelliot 2005:31). This abhaṅga attributed to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ can be understood as expressing a desire for more than just spiritual egalitarianism as the speaker is resisting the dominant religio-social ideology of the time. It portrays God as a mother who hears her child’s plea and a God who is willing to ‘embrace’ (bheṭa) the lowest of the low. Unfortunately little social reform has taken place within or through the Vārkarī sampradāya but the notion of Viṭṭhal as all-embracing prevails among Vārkarīs (see Zelliot 1981:153; Karve 1988:142ff; Youngblood 2003:299).
The idea of God as father is expressed in compositions attributed to both Kānhopātrā and Lāḍāī: mājhā āhe bholā bāpa / ghetto tāpa haronī // ‘My Father is trusting; he removes all oppression’ (Kānhopātrā 14.2) and pūrvasanbandhe maja didhalē bāpānē / sekhī kāya jūnē kaisē jhālē// ‘From an earlier life I’ve been related to my father; in the end, who knows how that happened (Lāḍāī, line 1).’

Vitho, the familiar male diminutive, is also used in some compositions. One verse attributed to Bhāgū asks for God’s protection and love and says ‘Vitho, please hold me close’ (Bhāgū abhaṅga 5.4). In a Janābāī verse Vitho appears in conjunction with the word bā, which is a familiar form of bāpa ‘father’ and can be understood as ‘pa’ or ‘dad’ (abhaṅga 116). This composition is found in the SSG under the heading bheṭa ‘meeting’ or ‘the mutual embrace of friends meeting’ and it is this relationship of friend-to-friend, which occurs in a householder context, that I now explore.

1.2.iii. The relation of friend-to-friend

The relationship where the devotee relates to the deity as an intimate friend is known as sakhyā-bhakti. Lipner notes that sakhyā-bhakti is a form of bhakti that includes expressions of such familiarity that the bhakta can even insult, scold or belittle the deity (1999:316). In sakhyā-bhakti the devotee usually approaches God as friend and the relationship tends to be male-male or male-female amorous love rather than female-female friendship. However, Vanita submits that a relationship between female friends allows for greater equality and reciprocity in the relationship. This is because one is engaged with a ‘fellow-seeker’ and a dialogue with a female friend (sakhī) is like a dialogue with the self. According to Vanita, the sakhi occupies a ‘psychological space’ akin to the ‘philosophical space’ occupied by the sākṣī (witness) in Vedānta. The sākṣī is viewed as the ‘real self’ that observes the actions of the ‘phenomenal self’ but does not participate in them. The sakhya relationship is thus one of mutuality rather than difference. Vanita, like Aklujkar, argues that sakhyā-bhakti is the ‘dominant mode’ in the Vārkarī community (2001:66; 2005:92–93; Aklujkar 2007:205–221).

In Marathi sakhā means ‘male friend’, ‘compassion’ and ‘associate’ (Tulpule 1999:701; Molesworth 1857:808) while the words for ‘female friend’, ‘confidante and ‘companion’ in Marathi are āli, gadīna, maitraṇī or maitriṇī, sakhi and sahelī (Molesworth 1857). However, the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatris seem to refer to God as a male friend (sakhā, sakhya, sakhe), for example: Māgẽ puḍhē nāhī koṇī / sakhyā viṭṭhalāvāncunī // ‘There’s no one around me apart from my friend Viṭṭhal’ (Bhāgū 2.2). There are also several Janābāī compositions that refer to God as a male friend.

13 The reference to ‘father’ in this verse is rather ambiguous and could refer to Nāmdev as the ‘father’ of the family.
friend: sakhyā paṇḍharīcyā rāyā / ghaḍe daṇḍavata pāyā/ ‘Friend, Master of Paṇḍharī, May I be able to prostrate myself at your feet?’ (53.1); Tujaviṇa sakhe koṇa / mājhē karīla saṃraksana/ ‘Who else is there, my friend, to protect me?’ (58.4); janī sānge sarva loka / nhāā ghālī mājhā sakkhā / ‘Janī tells everyone, ‘My dear friend is washing me’ (86.4), and māyabāpa bandubahiṇī / tū bā sakkhā cakrapāṇī// ‘You are my mother and father, brother and sister, and friend Cakrapāṇī’ (204.4). There are also some Bahinābāī abhaṅgas that refer to god as her brother or sister and friend: Sakkhā sahodara tūmcī ek harī / dināncā kaivārī pāṇḍuranga // ‘Hari, you alone [are my] friend, my sibling; Protector of the Lowly, Pāṇḍuranga’ (Bahinābāī 68.1, my translation, see Abbott 1985:41)14 and sosiyaś kleśa jivē bahū phāra / jāli he apāra din sakhya // ‘My soul has borne much distress; it is greatly afflicted, dear Friend’ (Bahinābāī 70.1, my translation, see Abbott 1985:42).

However, numerous compositions refer to Viṭhābāī, the feminised divinity who is understood as mother (Deleury 1994:127; Dhere 2011:207) or as a female friend (Vanita 2005). According to Vanita the conception of the relationship between devotee and deity as one between two women in the compositions attributed to Janābāī is ‘unique in medieval Indian poetry’. Female friendships tend to occur in domestic settings as there is no other context in which girls can be friends so this relationship implies the householderness. Vanita argues that Viṭhāi, Viṭhal in female form, only appears as a mother in the compositions attributed to the male Vārkarī poets and that Viṭhāi is ‘frequently a woman friend’ in the Janī compositions (2005:96). Vanita therefore contends that Janābāī is the only santakaviyatrī to reverse the gender of a male deity and so construct an intimate female-female relationship between the deity and devotee, which reflects the love between women (2005:99; 2012:13).15

Although Viṭhābāī does appear in some of the Janī compositions as a female friend, in my opinion it is not the only role which Viṭhābāī inhabits in compositions attributed to Janābāī or in those of other santakaviyatrīs. Viṭhābāī is described as ‘mother’ in several of the Janī verses I have translated, for example: ye ga ye ga viṭhābāī / mājhē paṇḍharīce āī / ‘Come O, come O, Viṭhābāī, my mother from Paṇḍharī (71.1); tuja vāṅconiyā māye / jīva mājhā jāvo pāhe // Without you Mother, my soul wants to abandon me (74.2), and janī mhaṇe māya jhāli ‘Janī says, “My mother has come”’ (85.6). However, another composition describes Viṭhābāī as māyabahiṇī ‘mother and sister’ (48.4). The term māyabahiṇī is

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14 The term sahodar means ‘co-uterine, born of the same womb’ (Molesworth 1857; Monier Williams 2008).
15 There are also references to Viṭhābāī in compositions attributed to men. Mahīpati quotes two sants as referring to Viṭhābāī: Nāmdev (BVJ 22.144, Abbott and Godbole 1996:199) and Tukārām (BVJ 52.311, Abbott and Godbole 1996:293). Moreover, the eighteenth-century poet Govinda also refers to Viṭhābāī in one of his compositions (v.3, Abbott 1999:153).
’a respectful or affectionate term for a female’ (Molesworth 1857:647) and it depicts the divine as female but specifically as ‘mother’ thus countering Vanita’s assertion that Viṭhābāī is only a female friend. However, the role of sister is very similar to that of the female friend (sakhī) so the speaker may be assigning both those roles to the deity.

However, there are two compositions attributed to Kānhopātrā that uses the epithet Viṭhābāī but do not specify if the deity is fulfilling the role of mother or friend (whether female or male). The first one says: tujaviṇa ṭhāva na dise tribhuvanī / dhāve bo jananī viṭhābāī /// ‘Apart from You, I see nothing in the three worlds; please come to our aid Viṭhābāī’ (Nako devarāyā line 4). The second one says: Dīna patita anyāyī / śaraṇa ālyē viṭhābāī /// ‘Lowly, fallen, unrighteous: I seek your protection Viṭhābāī’ and maja adhikāra nāhī / bheṭī dei viṭhābāī /// ‘I have no rights; please meet me Viṭhābāī’ (10.1, 3). This verse expresses a desire for Viṭhābāī’s protection but also to ‘meet’ or ‘embrace’ (bheṭa) God, suggesting that Viṭhābāī may refer to mother Viṭṭhal as the use of the term Viṭhābāī seems to occur when the devotee wishes to address ‘the motherly, tender side of God’ states Abbott (1990:153, 3). However, these compositions also draw attention to the desire for refuge and protection that low-status figures like Kānhopātrā, Rājāī, Janī, Soyarā and Nirmalā have in relation to God.16

In the abhaṅgas attributed to Janābāī her friend Viṭhābāī shares Janī’s tasks of grinding, pounding, washing clothes (122, 124, 130), making cow-dung cakes (125, 130), collecting firewood sweeping (80.1) and washing Jain’s hair (85, 86). The relationship is therefore an intimate one, as acts such as washing one’s hair or bathing would normally be done privately. God is depicted in these abhaṅgas as a friend and attendant but also as a participant in the activities of Janī (Vanita 2005:96–97). God’s involvement in the life of the servant Janī highlights the participatory nature of bhakti but also suggests that the deity is intimate with every part of the devotee’s life. These compositions also suggest that there is no need to renounce to encounter or meet God as God is within the domestic setting.

Janī’s head is itching. Viṭhābāī runs to her aid.
God unties her hair, crushes the lice quickly.
She combed her tangled hair free. Janī says, ‘I feel clean’.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 83, SSG 1:724; my translation)

This abhaṅga depicts the female friend Viṭhābāī performing a task that a man from Janī’s own social strata might not perform as it may be regarded as defiling (Vanita 2005:97). The declaration that God cleans Janī’s hair makes a statement about touching the body of a śūdra and calls into question notions of

16 See Kānhopātrā abhaṅgas 4, 6, 7, 10, x; Rājāī abhaṅgas 1325–26; Janābāī abhaṅgas 38, 42, 104535; Soyarā abhaṅga 31 and Nirmalā abhaṅga 21 in Appendix B.
impurity based on caste. These verses therefore suggest that Janī is a special person because God is willing to touch her (Vidyut Bhagwat, personal communication, 29th January 2005). Significantly, the deity does not always appear in feminine form in the *abhaṅgas* in which he aids Janī:

To remove the husk from rice he swept the mortar.
Pounding vigorously Panḍharināth became exhausted.
His entire body drenched in sweat, his yellow dhoti became wet.
Anklets on his feet and rings on his hands, he removed the chaff by winnowing.
On his hand a blister appeared, Janī said, ‘let go of the pestle’.

(Janābāī *abhaṅga* 87, SSG 1:724; my translation)

In this *abhaṅga* the deity appears in all his temple finery as the Lord of Pandharpur but he still participates in the domestic chores that Janī undertakes. The *abhaṅga* draws attention to the reciprocal relationship of exchange between deity and devotee in bhakti as Janī, like any good friend, responds to the deity’s exhaustion (see Eck 1996:7; Vanita 2005:98). Moreover, the reciprocal relationship portrayed in this and other *abhaṅgas* echoes the relationship described in Mahīpati’s *caritra* in which Janī and Viṭṭhal share food (Aklujkar 1992:101–03).

Having myself translated and analysed most of the verses which Vanita presents and discusses it seems to me that while God shares or participates in many of the domestic chores undertaken by Janī, as well as fulfilling a nurturing and supportive role, the deity is rarely represented in the form of Viṭṭhāī the female-friend. For instance, there are two *abhaṅgas* that refer to the deity Cakrapāṇī (‘discus-bearer’):

jhāḍaloṭa kārī janī / kera bharī cakrapāṇī// ‘Janī sweeps briskly. Cakrapāṇī collects the rubbish’ (80.1) and hāṭī gheūniyaō loṇī / ḍoī colī cakrapāṇī // Cakrapāṇī takes some butter and massages Janī’s head’ (86.2). Vanita regards the epithet Cakrapāṇī as a ‘grammatically ungendered appellation’ for Kṛṣṇa which allows one to regard the deity as an ‘empowered female figure’ (2005:96). This is a view with which I find it difficult to concur. Firstly, the epithet Cakrapāṇī is not always considered gender neutral (see Monier Williams 2008). Secondly, both these *abhaṅgas* appear to play with the term ‘Cakrapāṇī’. While the epithet Cakrapāṇī is generally accepted as a conjunction of cakra ‘discus’ or ‘wheel’ and pāṇi ‘bearing in hand’ it is possible that the author may have been applying a different interpretation as *abhaṅga* authors are inventive in terms of appellations and their uses (see Appendix D). The second of the *abhaṅgas* mentioned above continues “‘My Janī has no one”, so God pours water’ (86.3), which suggests a play on the words cakra ‘circle’ or ‘whirlpool’ and pāṇi/pāṇī ‘water’ (Molesworth 1857:267; Molesworth 1856:267).

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17 There is a partial translation of this *abhaṅga* by Pandharipande (2000:167) and full translation by Vanita (2005:97–8).
18 Vanita presents and discusses *abhaṅgas* 59, 71, 74 (which she also numbers 59), 80, 83, 86, 87, 89, and 191. The only verses of these I have not translated are 59 and 89.
Monier Williams 2008). Vanita’s proposition that God is ‘feminized’ by participating in household chores seems to limit the possible readings of gendered relations in the context of the sakhyā relationship. Is it not startling to see the male God, the first among men, participating in domestic work? Does it not highlight the depth of love felt by the deity for the devotee that he is conceived as sharing the burdens of his bhakta? Does it not draw attention to the speaker’s desire for intimacy, for someone with whom to share their obligations and anxieties? What is so striking about these compositions is that God is present even in the most trivial and denigrated tasks in the household environment. The sakhyā relationship is therefore another argument for the efficacy of the householder path.

Moreover, many of the compositions discussed by Vanita are grouped together under the heading bheta ‘meeting’ in the SSG, suggesting that those with programmatic intent place a different interpretation and value on these compositions. Vanita suggests that the ‘love between women’ is a ‘trope for God’s love’ (2005:99ff) but I wonder whether Vanita is trying to read more into the compositions than is actually there, particularly if one bears in mind the issue of gender attribution. Those with programmatic intent appear to be using the relationship of friendship, represented in compositions attributed to women, within a domestic setting to construct the sampradāya discursively as a householder tradition.

When Janī feels neglected by Viṭṭhal she goes into a rage and swears at him:

O Viṭhyā Viṭhyā, you’re the naughty son of the primal mother.  
Your widow has become a prostitute and wears the bangles of Sāvitrī.  
Your corpse is gone; looking at you Death cries.  
Standing in the courtyard, dāśī Janī swears.  

(Janābāī abhaṅga 19, SSG 1:717; my translation)

Janī refers to Viṭṭhal as ‘Viṭhyā’ a name which appears to be a diminutive for the deity but which also translates as ‘Tom cat’ (Molesworth 1857:757). Janī tells Viṭṭhal he is a brat born out of illusion (māyā) that he was not God to begin with and that if he is God she is the one who has given him power so he cannot ignore her (Vidyut Bhagwat, personal communication, 29th January 2005). The abhaṅga refers to the story of Sāvitrī whose exemplary behaviour and arguments persuaded Yama to restore her husband Satyavān to life (Mbh 3.277:19–65; Bryant 2009:215–227). Sāvitrī therefore never had to break her marriage bangles or endure the stigma of widowhood. The speaker plays on the fact that during their lives prostitutes also wear bangles (cuḍa) as the “wives” of innumerable men. Janī thereby insults Viṭṭhal and his wife Rukmiṇī by implying that Viṭṭhal is dead and that Rukmini has become a bangle-wearing prostitute (Sellergren 1996:222–223). Janī may also be insinuating that Rukmini, unlike Sāvitrī, could not
persuade Yama not to take Viṭṭhal and therefore deserved to become a widow. The anger expressed in this abhaṅga may express the struggle of a marginalised śūdra woman who wants her rebirth and distress removed so as to gain liberation (see Janābāī abhaṅgas 43.3, 44.3 in Appendix B). However, this abhaṅga also represents the form of sakhyā-bhakti in which the devotee insults or belittles the deity.

The intimacy between devotee and deity is primarily expressed as friend-to-friend or child-to-parent(s) in the compositions of the Vārkarī santakaviyatrīs although there are instances of dāsya-bhakti in the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs.19 However, there is another relationship with the divine that of union. Mystical union with the divine is expressed in a number of the compositions attributed to Janī (see abhaṅgas 38, 180 and 186) but one well-known verse states that all Janī’s actions—eating, drinking, and sleeping—are dedicated to God, as there’s no place without God:

I eat God, I drink God; I sleep on God.
I give God, I take God; I deal with God.
God here, God there; void is not devoid of God.
Janī says, ‘Viṭhābāī, no distance remains between the two of us’.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 191, SSG 1:735; my translation)

This abhaṅga may be based on a verse from the Bhagavadgītā: ‘Son of Kunti, all that you do, all that you take, all that you offer, all that you give, all that you strive for, in heated discipline – do that in offering to me’ (BhG 9.27; Patton 2008:108). This verse is a statement of mystical understanding and union with the divine who is conceived as Viṭṭhābāī, the ultimate Mother. Bynum suggests that the analogy of eating god indicates the devotee’s experience or feeling of knowing God with their whole being but Bynum also suggests that eating god has an erotic element to it as the fusion of the self and god is rather like a sexual orgasm (1988:151, 156). This abhaṅga refers to the void (ritā)—a theme that is found in the abhaṅga attributed to Āūbāī but which uses the term śūnya—which suggests that the author is familiar with Nāth or yogic practices.20 Similarly, the references to union as the conjunction of the self and śiva (Muktābāī.32.4; Janī 186.1, 226.2), as a ‘flood’ in the compositions attributed to Janī (195) and Nāgarī, as well as the use of yogic term pranayama in an abhaṅga attributed to Lāḍāī, all suggest that the authors were conversant with the Nāth yoga tradition (see Kiehnle 1997a:188).

These intimate and unitive relationships with the divine as well as the concern with nāma suggest that poets were probably more concerned with encouraging devotional practice and devotional

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19 See Janābāī abhaṅgas 11.4, 42.4, 54.3, 58.1, 67.4, 155.5 and 284, and Kānhopātrā abhaṅgas 10.4 and 11.4 in Appendix B.

subjectivity within the idiom of *grhastrha* practices than with creating a life-narrative (see Pechilis 2012:3, 14ff). However, some of the compositions attributed to *santakaviyatrīs* do provide some biographical images that appear to highlight the particular concerns of the poets and/or the female bhakta in question. Consequently, the next section explores some biographical images of figures who are under-represented in *caritra* so as to consider issues like caste status but also to maintain the focus on the construction of the *sampradāya* as a householder tradition and the role that gender attribution plays in that process.

1.3. Biographical images

In the previous chapter the *caritras* presented provided few biographical details about Soyarā and Nirmaḷā suggesting that these women are not of much interest to biographers. However, the compositions attributed to Soyarā and Nirmaḷā do provide some biographical images which suggest that these figures were Mahārs and connected to each other. Soyarā is identified through the *nāmamudrā* ‘Cokhā’s Mahārī’ that connotes ‘Cokhāmelā’s wife’ and apart from this designation the compositions attributed to Soyarā rarely refer to Cokhā/her husband. However, one composition with Soyarā’s name seems to relate the story narrated by Mahīpati in his *caritra* (BVJ 23.11–86) that recounts Cokhāmelā’s exile from and return to Pandharpur at the hands of the Brahmans:

All the Brahmins of Panḍharpūr were cruel to Cokhā; God was astonished.
The whole community is at Cokhā’s home; wealth and accomplishments remain at the door.
Beautiful *raṅγamāḷā* and *guḍhī* at the door—a Vaiṣṇava *kīrtan* is proceeding happily.
Innumerable Brahmins are sitting for *paṅgatī* while great souls look down from above.
This happy occasion is equal to *divāḷī* or *dasarā*, Cokhā’s Soyarā does *ovāḷī*.

*(Soyarābāī abhaṅga 19, SSG 1:1000; my translation)*

The presence of the *raṅgamāḷā* and the *guḍhī* indicate that a special event is taking place as the presence of patterns in coloured powders (*raṅgōḷī*) on the ground at the entrance to a building marks festive occasions. *Guḍhī* refers to a pole that is usually wrapped with cloth and hung with mango leaves and marigold flowers which is erected before the door to a house. The special event is the *kīrtan* that is occurring at Soyarā and Cokhāmelā’s home and the significance of this event is that the audience is drawn from different castes and classes. The reference to numerous Brahmins being fed also indicates an auspicious occasion. Moreover, the *abhaṅga* suggests that the diners are seated in a row (*paṅgatī*) which indicates commensality, companionship and fellowship: an ideal in the Vārkarī *sampradāya*. The reference to *ovāḷī* suggests Soyarā performed a light-offering ritual by waving a small oil lamp in a circle.
in front of each individual or the image of the deity and that Soyarā was therefore instrumental in concluding the occasion.\(^{21}\)

The compositions attributed to Soyarā do refer to her supposed sister-in-law Nirmalā (Zelliot 2005:160)—for example ‘Taking leave of everyone, Nirmalā set out and soon reached Mehunpūri’ (Soyarābāī abhaṅga 62.1, 12, 13 and 15)—and one abhaṅga attributed to Soyarā refers to the birth of Soyarā and Cokhāmeḷā’s son:

‘Karmameḷā was born: a promise from black Viṭṭhal.\(^{22}\)

Viṭṭhal’s Name acclaimed. Rukmini’s husband comes running.

Viṭṭhal and Rukmini perform the naming ceremony joyfully
With all the necessary materials’, says Cokhā’s Mahārī.

(Soyarābāī abhaṅga 14, SSG:999; my translation)

This composition describes Karmameḷā’s birth as a joyous event. Firstly, Soyarā had a son and so is fulfilled. Secondly, it appears that his birth was due to a ‘promise’ or vow, which Soyarā may have undertaken in order to have a child and which she regarded as being fulfilled by Viṭṭhal. Thirdly, the baby survived a number of days and could therefore undergo the naming ceremony. The story of Karmameḷā’s birth is, however, told in more detail by Nirmalā who shows Cokhāmeḷā to be an inadequate husband. He leaves his heavily pregnant wife at home, without provision, and goes to visit his sister:

‘You are my elder brother yet you acted thoughtlessly. Tell me why did you act with such determination?

Why did you come running without even asking, wouldn’t sister-in-law be grieving for you?’.

He says, ‘Vitho will provide all necessities, the burden is his’.

Nirmalā says, ‘making this Viṭṭhal’s business is not the right thing to do’.

(Nirmalā abhaṅga 14, SSG 1:1010; my translation)

The story is completed by Nāmdev who describes how Soyarā searched for Cokhā but could not find him. When the time came to deliver the child Nāmdev describes how “Mother Viṭṭhū” came to Soyarā’s aid in the form of her sister-in-law Nirmalā. For Zelliot, the moral of the story is that God will look after you. However, in her presentation and discussion of Karmameḷā’s birth Zelliot notes that the story also has some ‘human touches’: the husband who leaves to avoid a ‘bloody mess’, the sister who is appalled by her brother’s behaviour, a sant who ignore his duties due to his detachment, the deity who comes to the rescue in female form, and a wife who forgives her husband (Zelliot 2005:149–155).\(^{23}\) These abhaṅgas

\(^{21}\) Ovāḷī/ovāḷaṇī is also mentioned in Janābāī abhaṅgas 53 and 172 and aratī is mentioned in Janābāī abhaṅga 347 (see Appendix B).

\(^{22}\) This line could also be interpreted ‘when faced with the fruits of one’s actions [karmameḷā] speak the name of black Viṭṭhal’ (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 14th May 2011).

\(^{23}\) The story of Karmameḷā’s birth appears in the compositions attributed to Soyarābāī (14), Nirmalā (12–16) and Nāmdev (2353).
combine biographical, religious and domestic imagery, reinforcing the sense that the religious and domestic domains are not necessarily separable: housewives and young girls draw the raṅgamāḷā/rāṅgoḷī and create the decorated pole (gudhī), women undertake navas or a votive rite in order to have a child; the naming ceremony of a child (bārase) also refers to the mother’s restoration of purity/auspiciousness after eleven or twelve days of seclusion with her child, and if the child is a boy and was subject to a vow, his right nostril is then bored and a gold ring put into it. Nirmalā challenges Cokhā’s extreme detachment suggesting that while Cokhā might have faith that all will be well practical issues have to be considered when a child is being born.

The compositions attributed to Nirmalā do not mention her husband Banka, although he is thought to have been Soyarā’s brother, but they do mention Cokhāmeḷā as he is thought to have been Nirmalā’s spiritual guide. In one abhaṅga Nirmalā complains to God ‘You have given Cokhā peace and happiness yet it looks like you’ve forgotten me’ (19.3). Nirmalā clearly desires a relationship with God and contrasts Cokhā’s intimate relationship with God with hers: ‘Until today you’ve taken care of him and tolerated all Cokhā’s faults’ (21.1). Significantly, the poems attributed to Soyarā and Nirmalā contain few quotidian or domestic images but they do refer to the burden of sansār (see Soyarābāī abhaṅga 10; Nirmalā abhaṅgas 1, 5; Zelliot 2010:83, 2005b:163–164); thus they indicate the necessary struggle of grappling with drudgery of daily life (sansār) whilst seeking to be devout. Moreover, the compositions attributed to Soyarā and Nirmalā refer to their low status, for example: ‘Base and lowly, I am a mass of sin [but] seek refuge at your feet with heart and soul. Nirmalā says, you are the compassionate one, so please take care of me’ (Nirmalā abhaṅga 21.3–4, SSG:1011). Some of the songs attributed to Soyarā mention caste but other abhaṅgas are concerned with issues relating to purity and impurity (see Soyarābāī abhaṅgas 3, 4, 6 and 41 in Appendix B). One Soyarā abhaṅga disputes the notion of pollution as innate and determining social status:

A body is unclean, they say, but the soul is clean and aware.
The body’s pollution arises through menstruation, birth, death and touch. What kind of dharma makes
the Brahmin pure in body?
Nobody is born without becoming polluted.24
Therefore, praise Pāṇḍuraṅga: impurity resides within the body.
‘The body’s pollution lies within the body’, says the Mahārī of Cokhā with confidence.

(Soyarābāī abhaṅga 6, SSG 1:999; my translation)

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24 This line is rather complex: it suggests that because we are all born in the same way (in blood) we are all equally polluted.
The third line of the *abhaṅga* particularly refers to *sovalā* Brahmans or Brahmans who would be rendered unclean by the touch of impure persons or things having attained a state of cleanliness by ablation or purificatory ceremony. The term *sovalā* is also applied to those regarded as uncontaminated or undefiled (by any bad action) or to anyone who, by purification, is fit for everything (Molesworth 1857:868). This phrase refers to the idea that while a Brahmin’s spiritual pollution can be removed by a purificatory bath, a low caste person—particularly a *mahār* who deals with human excrement or dead animals—remains in a permanent state of spiritual pollution, even after bathing (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 22nd March 2011). The third line suggests that because we are all born in the same way (in blood) we are all equally polluted and this *abhaṅga* therefore offers a direct challenge to untouchability. Once more, here is an example where the attribution of compositions to women signals a discursive construction, in this case perhaps of the Vārkarī sampradāya as egalitarian. Zelliot suggests that the limited reference to untouchability is due to the songs of the *sants* being ‘kept orally for generations’ and being ‘sung by pilgrims going to Paṇḍharpūr, so those specifically about untouchability might have been considered inappropriate for the joyous pilgrimage’ (2005:160). However, as I mentioned earlier caste attribution may apply in the same way that gender attribution does. Accordingly, the caste status of the author/speaker may be indeterminable, as is the case with Nāgarī to whom the discussion now turns.

1.3.i. Nāgarī

The only study of compositions attributed to Nāgarī was undertaken by the Marathi scholar R.C. Dhere who was given eight compositions by the *pujārī* of the Sopān temple in Sāsavaḍ. The compositions were presented in a research article in which Dhere sought to clarify the references to Nāgarī and Nāgī (Nāgī being the *mudrā* ‘seat’ employed in the eight *abhaṅgas* attributed to Nāgarī). Dhere concluded that the autobiographical compositions had a special place in Marathi literature (*sāhitya*) as the first autobiography by a woman (1977a:15; Shrotriya 1992:64). There is a reference in the compositions that the autobiography was due to the ‘company’ of Janābāī and the ‘influence’ of Nāmdev which is why Nāgarī is connected to Nāmdev’s family. The familial connection highlights the importance of *kul* for the Vārkarī sampradāya and draws attention to the householder nature of the tradition that is being discursively constructed through the use of compositions attributed to women like Nāgarī.

Nāgarī’s autobiography refers to her father Ramayā who, was a Viṭṭhal-*bhakta* like Nāmdev. The story goes that Ramayā married Nāgarī off when she came of age: ‘Ramayā’s daughter, small and sweet,
he sent her off to her in-laws’ (Shrotriya 1992:62). Nāgarī apparently found the contrast between her māher, a devotional household, and her sāsar disturbing. The story states that one ekādaśī Nāgarī wanted to go on the pilgrimage but her in-laws locked her up to prevent her from going. So while Nāgarī was physically at her in-law’s house she mentally travelled through the main gate of the Viṭṭhal mandir to the feet of Viṭṭhal. The following morning Ramayā saw Nāgarī in Paṇḍharpūr ‘standing behind where the kīrtan is going on like an enlightened statue’ (Shrotriya 1992:62) and was angry that she had come on the vārī. Nāmdev explained to Ramayā that Nāgarī’s mind was entangled with Keśava/Viṭṭhal. Nāgarī then explains to her father why she has chosen the bhaktimārga before stating that she has accomplished something as she has a place at Viṭṭhal’s feet (Shrotriya 1992:63). This account bears a remarkable similarity to the Sakhūbāī caritra presented in the previous chapter and highlights the suffering of young married girls in their marital homes. The narrative also highlights the possibility of combining grhaṭha and bhakti so gender attribution plays a role in constructing the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path.

The eight abhaṅgas attributed to Nāgarī have almost no information about Nāgarī but do suggest that Nāgarī may have come from Narsī Brāhmaṇī—Nāmdev’s probable birth place—which is situated in the Parbhana district of the Marāṭhavāḍā region of eastern Maharashtras (Shrotriya 1992:64; Callewaert 1989:30; Ḍhere 1977a).26 The third of the eight abhaṅgas is entitled Nāgarī Nāmdevācī dhvāḍī ‘Nāgarī Nāmdev’s Niece’. It is this statement, along with the reference to Narsī Brāhmaṇī and the reference to Nāgarī in the Gondā abhaṅgas, which Ḍhere regards as proof that Nāgarī was in fact Nāmdev’s niece (1977b; Shrotriya 1992:64). A number of the abhaṅgas attributed to Nāgarī use old Marathi words. For example the word avacchā ‘a state’ or ‘a condition’ appears in the fifth abhaṅga. Tulpule notes that this word appears in a Nāmdev abhaṅga, which could indicate Nāmdev’s influence as Nāgarī’s guru or just place Nāgarī to the same era as Nāmdev (1999:31). However, one must remember that there were a number of different Nāmdevs and compositions could be attributed to any one of them (see Novetzke 2008).

In expressing her experience as an eyewitness (sākṣa) Nāgarī is attributed as saying her ten working organs, which actively controlled her life, were at peace. This was because there was no more sorrow or worry in the condition of complete happiness. The thoughts and desire that shaped her character were submerged in complete happiness as she was now a yogīnī (abhaṅga 6, Ḍhere 1977a; Shrotriya

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26 Narsī Brāhmaṇī is twenty-six miles from Washim in Vidarbha according to Parchure (1973).
In the Nāgarī ātmānubhava (abhaṅga 5)—which has similarities to a Janābāī abhaṅga (284 in the Śāsakīya Nāmdev Gāthā, Appendix B)—Nāgarī is attributed with saying, ‘Along with my character, my mind is drowned in happiness and I’m entranced like a yoginī’ (quoted in Shrotriya 1992:65). The final composition attributed to Nāgarī states, ‘Viṭṭhal has provided me with so much happiness that I cannot speak’ and then says that she is convinced she has no more to achieve before concluding: ‘At length Nāgarī has swallowed her own speech and the flood of happiness has rolled through me’ (Shrotriya 1992:65–66). The reference to terms like flood, drowned, submerged and yoginī suggest that Nāgarī/the author was familiar with Nāth practices as the speaker describes their emancipation in yogic terms (see Kiehnle 1997a:188). These references may suggest that the author is referring to the Nāth origins of the sampradāya but it may also be a means of connecting Nāgarī and Nāmdev via a guru-paramparā. Dhere and Shrotriya regard the Nāgarī compositions as the first autobiography by a woman connected with the Vārkarī sampradāya, signalling that the sampradāya was being constructed discursively by utilising gender attributed compositions. However, traditionally the narrative compositions by Bahiṇābāī are regarded as the first autobiography by a woman associated with the Vārkarīs.

1.3.ii. Bahiṇābāī’s autobiographical compositions

Bahiṇābāī (c.1628–1700) is best known for her attributed autobiography or more accurately her ātmanivedan ‘offering one’s self up to the deity’ (Monier Williams 2008) or ‘consecration of body and soul’ (Molesworth 1857:67). The term ātmanivedan appears in the Jñāneśvarī (7.97) but is also used by sant Rāmdās in his Dāsabodha to describe the highest form of bhakti through which the bhakta realises God and becomes one with Him (8.8.9–24, 6.2.39–45; see Ranade 2003:406–407; see McGee 1999:165n.7). The Marathi text of the ātmanivedan is found in the editions the Bahiṇābāī gāthā by Umakhāne (1914), Kolhārkar (1926; 1956) and Jāvaḍekar (1979) while Abbott provides English translations of the ātmanivedan (v.2–73, 1929/1985:1–44) and some of Bahiṇābāī’s other attributed compositions.28 Bahadur states that the first 116 abhaṅgas in the Bahiṇābāī Gāthā are biographical as they relate the early period of Bahiṇābāī’s life, her death and her previous births (1998:36). Usually only the ātmanivedan is discussed when considering Bahiṇābāī’s attributed autobiography but including the verses on niryāṇa allows a more detailed picture of the Bahiṇābāī figure to emerge. Consequently, the

27 There are eight stages in yoga and the last stage is that of entrancement but by following the path of bhakti Nāgarī reached the state of deep meditation (samādhi) early and did not have to follow the path of yoga in its entirety.
28 The SSG provides Bahiṇābāī’s ātmanivedan and her gāthā but most of it appears in the addendum (SSG 2:1150–57, 1421–93).
niryāṇapara abhaṅgas are considered as part of the spiritual autobiography attributed to Bahiṅābhāī in the following discussion.

The ātmanivedana relates that Bahiṅābhāī’s natal place (māher) was Devgāv/Devgaon (2, 55) and her father and mother were Audev/Aūjī and Jānakī Kulkarnī. Bahiṅābhāī says that while other girls wanted to play with toys she was thinking of nāma (55). The life of Bahiṅī thus corresponds to the notion of early dedication to God, the first of Ramanujan’s five phases for women sants. Aged about three Bahiṅī was married to a Brahman astrologer, Gangādhār Pāṭhak, who was thirty years old and who had been married before (5–6, 57). After about four years a quarrel between Bahiṅī’s father and his family meant that Bahiṅī and her husband had to emigrate with her parents and brother (7). They moved around Maharashtra, begging for survival, and visiting various holy places until they arrived in Kolhapur. Bahiṅī was now eleven years old (8–12, 58). In Kolhapur the family were given a place at the house of a Brahman called Harirambhāī. While they were living there they listened to Hari-kathās given by Jayarām Gosāvī and discussed spiritual matters (13).

One day Harirambhāī gave Gaṅgādhār a black cow and a calf, which developed a great affection for Bahiṅī. The calf followed Bahiṅī everywhere and in turn Bahiṅī felt lost without it. Gaṅgādhār did not like this and excused her behaviour by saying that the calf was a substitute for the children that Bahiṅī—aged eleven—did not yet have (14.29). When Bahiṅī went to listen to Jayarām Gosāvī’s Hari-kathās the calf went with her. However, one ekādaśī the house in which Jayarām was giving his discourse was so crowded that the calf was removed, with caused both Bahiṅī and the calf to wail. Informed about the reason for the commotion Jayarām called for the girl and the calf to be brought to him and caressed them both, even though this shocked people (14.58). Bahiṅī and the calf both prostrated themselves at Jayarām’s feet and the performance continued. The next day Gaṅgādhār overheard a woman called Nirābāī describing what had happened, including that Jayarām had put his hand on Bahiṅī’s head. Bahiṅābhāī’s husband rushed to the house, grabbed Bahiṅī by her braid, beat her uncontrollably (5.11–12), and then trussed Bahiṅī up and flung her aside. Bahiṅī’s husband only untied her when he saw that both the calf and cow were refusing to eat (16). The cow and calf still refused grass and water and so Bahiṅī forsook all food but after two days the calf died. At the calf’s burial Bahiṅī fainted and was unconscious for four days. Bahiṅī awakened to a vision of Pāṇḍurāṅga (21.1; SSG2) and a desire to meet Tukārām.

29 Suma Chitnis referred to Bahiṅābhāī’s husband as Ratnārkār, a Yajurvedī Brahmin of the Gautama gotra, astrologer and performer of rituals (personal communication, 24th February 2005). Dada Maharaj Mannmadkar also referred to Bahiṅābhāī’s husband as Ratnārkār Bhat (personal communication, 10th July 2006).
After a week Tukārām appeared to Bahiṇī in a vision, fed her nectar and taught her the mantra ‘Rāma-Kṛṣṇa-Hari’ (25), signalling the Bahiṇābāī was Tukārām’s disciple.

After this Bahiṇī recovers but becomes addicted to meditating on Tukārām, which adversely affects her marriage. Bahiṇābāī’s husband had a narrow and orthodox religious outlook and was therefore antagonistic to her religious pursuits and bhakti particularly as a woman was not allowed to have a mantra and was supposed to worship her husband as god (Suma Chitnis, personal communication, 24th February 2005). Bahiṇī has another vision of Tukārām (30) and crowds of people come to see her so her husband beats her again. Gaṅgādhar complains bitterly about bhakti, and declares he will abandon Bahiṇī and go into the forest (as a renouncer) even though Bahiṇī is three months pregnant (34.3). Gaṅgādhar would therefore be going against his varnāśramadharma by becoming an ascetic but his threat suggests that he feels Bahiṇābāī is destabilising family life (sansār). Moreover, the account draws attention to the tension between grhaṣṭha and sannyāsa that the Vārkarī sampradāya attempts to resolve in its discursive construction. According to the ātmanivedan, Bahiṇī contemplates her situation and capitulates:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Bhratārācī sevā toci āmhā̃ deva / bhratāra svayameva parabrahmana//} \\
\text{I’ll serve my husband, he’s my god; my husband is the supreme Brahman (35.4)} \\
\text{Sadgurū bhratāra sādana bhratāra / satya hā nirdhāra antarṛćā//} \\
\text{My husband’s my guru, my husband’s my way; this is my heart’s true resolve (35.11)} \\
\text{Bhratāradarśanāvina jāy disa / tarī teci rāsa pātaṅkāncī//} \\
\text{A day spent without sight of my husband will be a heap of sin (37.6)} \\
\text{Pāṣāṇa viṭṭhala svapnātīla tukā / pratyakṣa kā sukḥā antarāvē//=} \\
\text{Why should the stone Viṭṭhal and dream Tukā, deprive me of the happiness I know? (38.1)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

However, just when Gaṅgādhar was about to leave and Bahiṇī was about to conform to his views he fell ill. Gaṅgādhar suffered from a fever for a week and could not eat for more than a month. While he was in this feverish state an old Brahman appeared and chastised Gaṅgādhar for planning to abandon his wife. The Brahman advised Gaṅgādhar that Bahiṇī was a true bhakta and that he should also be one (40.6). Gaṅgādhar returned to health a changed man and resolved that the family would go to Dehū, Tukārām’s village, and give themselves over to bhakti (42). This story therefore draws attention to the compatibility of the householder life and bhakti but the narrative also suggests that grhaṣṭha and bhakti are necessary.

However, Bahiṇābāī’s life still had its difficulties. One of the local Brahmans, Mambājī Gosāvī, persecuted Bahiṇī and Gaṅgādhar for being the disciples of the śūdra Tukārām but this situation was miraculously resolved (43–53). Gaṅgādhar also appears to have resented Bahiṇī’s devotion to Tukārām (73.5) but Bahiṇī thanks God for allowing her to fulfil both her pativrataḥdharma and be devoted to Him.
However, it seems that Bahinī would have preferred to live as a renunciant but could not do so because she is female and married:

Śtriyeṣcā śarīra parādhīna deha / na cāle upāva vīraktīcā/
Possessing a woman’s body and subject to another body / I was not able to embark on renunciation (60.1)

Bhratāra tyāgitāṃ vedāsī virūddha / paramārtha to śuddha sāṃpaḍenā/
Leaving one’s husband is contrary to the Vedas; one would never attain pure spiritual knowledge (62.3)

The authoritative Brahmanical tradition, here represented by the Vedas, had taught Bahinī that her body was an impediment to obtaining spiritual knowledge or attaining liberation (McGee 1999:144). In re-examining her life Bahinībāī is attributed with saying that she was depressed due to the restrictions placed on her by her female body (63–64) and her marriage to a man who disapproved of bhakti (65), and that she therefore contemplated suicide (66–67). However, in anguish Bahinībāī turned to God (68–72) but had to wait for her husband to leave town before she could spend three days meditating, during which time she was given three mantras by Tukārām—probably the ‘Rāma-Kṛṣna-Hari’ mantra delivered in a dream (25)—and was inspired to become a poet (73–78, 98.25ff).

Bahiṇābāī’s ātmanivedan thus concludes with her dīkṣā and her biography then continues with Bahinī aged seventy-two in the niryāṇapara abhaṅgas (98.38). The focus of the intervening years may have been on bhakti and the concerns expressed in the other compositions that make up the Bahinībāī Gāthā (Suma Chitnis, personal communication, 24th February 2005). It may have been during this period that Bahinībāī gave kīrtans as suggested by Mahīpati’s statement ‘Govind danced in her kīrtan’ but due to gender attribution one cannot assert that Bahinībāī was a kīrtankārī (BVJ 57.181; Abbott and Godbole 1996:384). Bahinībāī, like Kānhopātrā, is often depicted holding a vīṇā as both the picture of Bahinībāī in the SSG and her image at the Dehu temple demonstrate (see Plate 20). Thus, Bahinībāī appears to be remembered as giving public performances.
The niryāṇapara verses (90–115) are not part of the ātmanivedan attributed to Bahiṇābāī but I think they are important as they relate to her attributed life-story and spiritual experiences. Suma Chitnis suggested that the narration of transmigration, of twelve lives over 360 years, is very unusual and special and not just because Bahiṇābāī was a woman (personal communication, 24th February 2005). McGee states that ‘to have knowledge of previous lives is a sign of a great yogī’ (1999:162). Thus the detailing of Bahiṇābāī’s twelve previous births may signal her spiritual status, spiritual knowledge or spiritual aspirations. Bhagwat suggested that Bahiṇābāī dreamt about her past lives as a way of coping with the beatings she suffered and therefore proposed that Bahiṇābāī’s rebirths—which mention she was not married in every birth—need to be translated or decoded differently (personal communications, 27th October 2004 and 29th January 2005). Consequently, one may interpret the niryāṇapara abhaṅgas as Bahiṇābāī, a Brahman woman, resisting the socio-religious restrictions placed on women as the abhaṅgas state that in each birth Bahiṇābāī was born a woman who was spiritually inclined. For example, Bahiṇābāī is attributed with saying that in her first birth she was initiated into Śaivism with a mantra (90.13) and that by her seventh birth she was recognised as a yogabhṛṣṭa by a siddha (93.1, 7–10). The
niryāṇapara abhaṅgas, which Bahiṅābāī is attributed as relating to her son Viṭṭhalpanth, conclude by summarising Bahiṅābāī’s thirteenth life (97–98) and describing her union with God, her realisation ‘I am Brahma’ (107.8) and her comprehension of advaya (111.17, 113.5). These compositions establish that Bahiṅābāī, the bhakta, has attained realisation and union, and has thus accomplished ātmanivedan, the ninth form of bhakti listed in the Nārada Bhakti Sutra (9.82) and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BhP 7.5.23–4).

The spiritual biography attributed to Bahiṅābāī is often understood as attempting to reconcile the conflict between pativratādharma and bhakti or pravṛtti and nivṛtti.30 The ātmanivedan makes it clear that Bahinī was a victim of domestic violence—like Sakhūbāī, Viṭhābāī and Nāgarī—but according to McGee Bahiṅābāī appears to rationalise the abuse she receives as being due a sin she had committed in a previous life which resulted in being born a woman (64.1–2) or as a test from God (67.3) (1999:143). The sexuality of Brahman women was closely monitored and highly valorised during the eighteenth century and Brahman women were socialised to accept strīdharma and pativratā dharma (Chakravarti 2001:239; see Kosambi 1998). Bahiṅābāī is said to date to an earlier age but her attributed biography reflects this socialisation. The beating Bahinī received after Jayarām’s blessing demonstrates the gender bias of the dominant Brahmanical culture (McGee 1999:143). However, Bahiṅābāī is represented as defying patriarchal and orthodox social norms by participating in bhakti and accepting the śūdra Tukārām as her guru (see Ramaswamy 2007:217). Bahiṅābāī therefore exemplifies both conformism and dissent as I outlined in Chapter One and thus seems to exemplify the message of the Vārkarī sampradāya that a householder path is compatible, whilst in tension with, that of a devotional orientation.

However, Harlan observes that Rajput women commented that it is impossible for a bhakta like Mirābāī who has realised mokṣa to live at home as a pativratā. A woman can be a pativratā or a sant but not both as ‘these are two separate paths’ (1992:217). Similarly, Suma Chitnis suggested that Bahiṅābāī was searching and came to the conclusion that pativratādharma was not for devotees (personal communication, 24th February 2005). Conversely, McGee suggests that Bahiṅābāī’s life does not represent a compromise between pativratādharma and bhakti but rather the realisation of their complementary nature as Bahiṅābāī advocated performing pativratādharma with detachment. McGee submits that this harmonising should not be a surprise as the Vārkarī sampradāya ‘is known for its advocacy of integrating the life of bhakti into the household’. Moreover, McGee proposes that Bahiṅābāī is an example of a great devotee and a great householder (1999:163). Bahiṅābāī might be used as an

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example to convince women to accept social oppression but Suma Chitnis suggested that married women can associate themselves with Bahīṇābāī if they are torn between profession/calling and family/community (personal communication, 25\textsuperscript{th} February 2005). Likewise Feldhaus implies that such an association is possible because Bahīṇābāī ‘provides an example for other Hindu women, a promise that they too can remain faithful to their wifely duties and still participate fully in the bhakti tradition’ (1985:vi). However, if one takes account of Bhagwat’s statement that Bahīṇābāī’s niryānapara abhaṅgas must be decoded differently one can understand the ātmanivedan attributed to Bahīṇābāī as a means of resisting the religious and social restrictions placed on women. But the presence of a woman’s spiritual autobiography within the Vārkarī corpus is significant as it demonstrates the harmonisation of pativratādharma and bhakti, pravratti and nivratti, and grhastha and vairāgya. It is thus an exemplar for seeing the ways in which the sampradāya constructed itself as a grhastha tradition.

1.4. Quotidian imagery

There are numerous ordinary, everyday, domestic and household images and motifs in the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs and these taken together reinforce the strong presentation of the tradition as grhastha. Swami Radhika Anand suggested that the reason the santakaviyatrīs stand out or are special is that the compositions attributed to them ‘reflect routine life’ and that ‘they were able to bring out the spiritual content from their day-to-day lives and apply it’. However, Anand commented that ‘the activities that women do have changed…so what the saints said at that time has to be looked at from a different perspective’ (personal communication, 30\textsuperscript{th} October 2004). The presence of quotidian imagery seems significant when one considers the function of gender attribution in the formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition because it attests to the concerns of ordinary householders even if the context is devotional.

Muktābāī’s caritra describes her cooking māṇḍle on Jñāneśvar’s back but the compositions attributed to her present very few domestic images or terms. This suggests that the author/speaker of the Muktābī compositions was primarily concerned with religious, devotional or philosophic subjects as the kūṭ and upadeśa themes discussed below indicate. However, cloth is mentioned as a philosophical metaphor in the tāṭīce abhaṅga attributed to Muktābī (1) and the lack of clothing is referenced in abhaṅgas attributed to Rājāī (1322.2, 1324.4). The lack of domestic necessities appear to be due to Nāmdev not performing his trade as a tailor for the Rājāī verse refers to ‘needle and scissors’ as an analogy for her husband’s occupation (1324.10). The padar is mentioned in Janī (224.1) and Soyarā
(35.1), while the lugadī appears in the Sakhū song. The song attributed to Sakhū also refers to the phugadī game that women play and the riṅga with which Vārkarīs interact on the vārī.

The topic or image of food appears in many of the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs. Sometimes the references to food are quotidian but sometimes the references are metaphorical or even divine. In the SSG there are a series of Janī abhaṅgas under the heading thālīpāka ‘a plateful of food’, which tell a story relating to Draupadī:

Due to the ṛṣi a calamity struck the forest at midnight. 
Paṇḍu’s children gathered; the ṛṣi revered.
Dharma glances at Bhīmā, righteousness is being damaged.
Draupadī cried for help, God left his meal unfinished.
He satisfied the sage in the forest, says Nāma’s Janī.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 318, SSG:752; my translation)

This abhaṅga refers to an incident in the Mahābhārata in which the sage Durvās visits the Pāṇḍavas in the forest. Durvās was known for his quick temper and was thus treated with reverence wherever he went. While in exile in the forest the Pāṇḍavas were all fed by the means of the akṣayapātra (the inexhaustible vessel), which was depleted once Draupadī had eaten. As Draupadī had just eaten when Durvās arrived she had no food left to serve the sage. The brothers Dharma and Bhīmā glance at each other concerned that sattva will be damaged if they cannot offer Durvās hospitality. While Durvās and his retinue were away bathing in the river Draupadī prayed to Kṛṣṇa for aid. Kṛṣṇa appeared immediately and asked her for food. Draupadī said she had none to give him and that she had prayed to him because she had no food! Kṛṣṇa then asked her to bring him the akṣayapātra and finding a grain of rice and a piece of vegetable in the vessel declared himself satisfied. Thus, the hunger of Durvās and his disciples was satisfied and they left without returning to the hermitage and offending the Pāṇḍavas by declining their hospitality (see Ganguli 2008; van Buitenen 1973–1978). The author/Janī may therefore be glorifying Kṛṣṇa and/or empathising with Draupadī by putting themselves in Draupadī’s shoes in having Kṛṣṇa come to their aid. The incident, also referred to in compositions attributed to Bahiṇābāī and Soyarābāī, portrays the devotee fulfilling God’s desires and God as the recipient rather than the devotee (Aklujkar 1992:107). Similarly, an abhaṅga attributed to Janābāī refers to Janī feeding Viṭhobā:

One fine day, Viṭho went to Janī.
Quietly He asked her for food to eat. ‘Father, what can I give you?’

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31 The Sanskrit term is sthālīpāka ‘a dish of barley or rice boiled in milk’ (Monier Williams 2008; see Molesworth 1857:868).
Holding hands she led him inside, served him pañcāmṛta and rice. Belching with love and satisfaction, Janī says ‘Viṭṭho is sated’.

(Mahīpati abhaṅga 116, SSG 1:727; my translation).

Mahīpati’s story of Janī offering Viṭṭhal food in her hut seems to replicate this abhaṅga as Mahīpati mentions that Viṭṭhal was sated (BVJ 21.64–76). The life-stories of Janī, Sakhū and Bahinābāī all mention amṛta but this abhaṅga refers to pañcāmṛta, the five nectar like substances or delicious food. Aklujkar suggests that the abhaṅga expresses God’s hunger for love or faith and the idea that He is only sated when he has received an adequate satisfaction of bhāva (1992:108). This abhaṅga also draws attention to the reciprocal relationship between devotee and deity or sakhyā-bhakti which is prevalent in the Vārkarī sampradāya. Aklujkar also suggests that the devotee is eternally hungry for God but compositions attributed to Goṇāī (1300.3) and Rājāī suggest that Nāmdev’s family members suffered from hunger due to Nāmdev’s disinterest in sansār.

In the middle of the night when there’s peace, Rājāī reports to the Mother. ‘O Rakhumābāī, please ask Viṭhobā why He has made my husband go mad. There’s nothing to eat, drink or wear yet still he dances shamelessly. There are fourteen people in my house, roaming from door-to-door for food. Direct him towards the correct path or Nāma’s Rājāī won’t be good’.

(Rājāī abhaṅga, 1322, SSG:490; my translation)

This idea of starvation is also visible in Sakhū’s caritra but in Sakhū’s case her hunger was due to malicious intent rather than her husband’s vairāgya. This abhaṅga attributed to Rājāī highlights the tension between grhastha and vairāgya and the draws attention to the consequences of vairāgya in everyday life. There is reference to Rājāī cooking but with very negative connotations as she is boiling up a snake to poison herself and her children as she can no longer cope with Nāmdev’s vairāgya (1326.11–14, see Appendix B). The effect of Nāmdev’s vairāgya is also alluded to in an abhaṅga attributed to Goṇāī who suggests that Nāmdev’s birth is the result of the deeds she performed in a previous birth: Why were you born?’ Goṇāī says, ‘my deeds have borne fruit’ (Goṇāī abhaṅga 1275.11). The metaphor of ‘fruit’ as the result of deeds is also mentioned in a composition attributed to Kānhopātrā; ‘The virtuous actions of all my lives have borne fruit today; That’s why I saw the feet of Viṭṭhal’ (20.1). However, unlike the abhaṅga attributed to Goṇāī the Kānhopātrā attributed verse suggests that her actions have had a positive result.

There are also references to food and drink in other compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs. However, the compositions attributed to Janī contain the largest number of quotidian and
domestic images and these include references to grain, grist and flour. Thus, the genre of grinding songs and their connection to *sakhya-bhakti* is discussed below.

1.4.i. **Grinding and pounding**

The genre of grinding songs within the Vārkarī *sampradāya* is interesting as traditionally grinding songs use the *ovī* metre and the *ovī* is the basis for the *abhaṅga* metre used by the Vārkarī poets. As I mentioned in the Introduction, the *ovī* is an oral folk metre that is mainly used by women while performing domestic tasks. Junghare observes that *ovīs* ‘are primarily grinding songs, sung while grinding spices, lentils, and grains such as rice’ but that rural women also sing *ovīs* while doing other domestic chores and sometimes while working in the fields. The *ovī* is thus usually performed in a work context. Additionally, Junghare argues that the content of the *ovīs* ‘generally revolves around some legendary event or hero from the great epics...and the Puranas’ but that the songs ‘also reflect some personal element, expressing the woman’s particular problems and experiences’ (1983:273–74; see Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:130–31ff). In their cultural-anthropological study of grinding songs Poitevin and Rairkar argue that the songs of rural miller-women only deal with ‘the personal and subjective relationship that they entertain with their millstones and their flour’ as they are not concerned with discursive representations. However, Poitevin and Rairkar find three traits in the women’s songs: the existential; the experience of and relationship with the gods, and oral tradition of singing while grinding (1996:8–11). Grinding is usually undertaken at cockcrow by one woman but sometimes by women working in tandem. Consequently, if two women are grinding together then one will begin singing the first line of the *ovī* and the other woman will add to it. Thus, women are able express themselves relatively freely and confide in one another (Junghare 1983:273; Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:1, 4, 11, 93–99, 106–108, 113; Amshoff 1999:160). However, the grinding *ovī* is dying out as stone hand-mills have been replaced by electrically-powered flour mills and because many young women no longer learn the songs as they do not participate in the early morning grind (Junghare 1983:274; Amshoff 1999:160; Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:3).

The majority of *abhaṅgas* which refer to grinding and/or pounding within the Vārkarī corpus are songs ascribed to Janābāī. However, Poitevin and Rairkar note that the allegory of the grindmill has been used by male *gurus* and poets since the fourteenth century to communicate philosophical ideas and provide religious instruction (1996:7, 61–68). Pounding grain is mentioned in an unpublished *abhaṅga*

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34 Poitevin and Rairkar suggest that the grinding *ovī* may be comparable to other Marathi work songs like the *bhalari* (*bhalerī*) harvesting songs (1996:93–94*).
attributed to Jñāneśvar, a Nāmdev abhaṅga describes the grinding of saṃsāra, while winnowing, pounding and grinding are included in abhaṅgas attributed to Tukārām (Kiehnle 1997a:42; Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:62–63, 108–110). Moreover, there are some abhaṅgas attributed to Bahinābāī on the related theme of ṭonapyāce ‘threshing’ (507–522, Kolhārakar 1926:205–07) and there is also a pad attributed to Sakhūbāī that states ‘Grinding the grist; Viṣṇu should arrive and purify my mind. Govind, Govind!’ (see Appendix B). The SSG groups three songs attributed to Janābāī under the theme jātẽ ‘hand-mill’ but there are at least thirty songs on the theme of grinding and pounding in the Janābāī corpus. It seems significant that the majority of grinding songs are attributed to Janī who is the preeminent exemplar of female domestic labour. In fact one of the most interesting Janī verses relating to grinding appears to have been put into Janī’s mouth by the mistress of a prosperous household:

My beautiful stonemill rotates, singing verses praising you.
You come Viṭṭhal.

Jīva and Śiva both support of the world; touching all five of my fingers.
You come Viṭṭhal.

Mother-in-law; father-in-law; third, the brother-in-law; singing verses for the husband.
You come Viṭṭhal.

The sixteen confidantes assembled are friends, sitting together singing verses.
You come Viṭṭhal.

Having ground prapañca, gathered the flour, [then] laid it in front of my mother-in-law.
You come Viṭṭhal.

Keeping existence on the boil, making merit my daily diet; my sins have spilled over.
You come Viṭṭhal.

Janī’s stonemill will keep singing, your fame will continue; I will gain a little.
You come Viṭṭhal.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 226, SSG 1:738, my translation)37

In their discussion of this verse Poitevin and Rairkar draw attention to three themes. Firstly, this verse calls to bā viṭṭhalā, which literally translates as ‘Dad’ or ‘Pa’ Viṭṭhal but could also be interpreted as ‘Dear Viṭṭhal’, and thus invokes the benevolent presence of God as the women perform their daily chores. Secondly, the song shows concern for the prosperity of the family and implies that by invoking the divine one secures protection for members of the household. The reference to singing verses for the husband may suggest that the woman singing is performing a votive right, in accordance with her pativratādharma, to maintain marital felicity (see McGee 1991:78–9). Thirdly, the song is didactic as it depicts the daughter-in-law as under the authority of her mother-in-law. The domestic relationship and tasks of the daughter-in-law comprise the prapañca (worldly life) and theme of the song. The daughter-in-law says that having ground prapañca she offers the flour to her mother-in-law. This suggests that she...

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35 Bahadur suggests that many of the songs attributed to Bahinābāī were sung while she was grinding as ‘it was customary for village woman to sing songs while working’ (1998:21).
36 See abhaṅgas 42, 87, 118, 121, 181, 204, 225, 226, 227 and 262 in Appendix B.
37 For other translations of this verse see Poitevin and Rairkar (1996:86–7) and Sellergren (1996:220).
may be offering her illusions about sansār/saṃsāra. This is probably why the mother-in-law is mentioned first as she might be overseeing the task in hand. However, the main message of the verse is that by calling on God for his collaboration a woman can accomplish her daily tasks although the singer/Janī may not be rewarded for her effort (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:86–89).

Plate 21: Janī grinding with the help of Viṭṭhal (Gopalpur)38

Women often grind together as grinding is a strenuous, repetitive and exhausting task, which can be relieved by help and companionship. Viṭṭhal aids Janī with grinding and pounding in many of the grinding abhaṅgas attributed to Janābāī and in Mahīpati’s caritra. This interaction allows Viṭṭhal to hear Janī expressing her personal sentiments and experiences. In the following abhaṅga Janī offers herself as feed to the mill, the feed/self is ground to dust or duality (dvaita) is crushed and the dust forms the flour, implying that ultimately all beings merge into One (advaita).

With the excuse of grinding Viṭṭhal comes in slowly.
Body and soul, as the handful of feed, clean the stone of duality.
   Alone, she sings; another voice responds.
   ‘Who are you with?’ He constantly answers your call.
   ‘Nāmdev, I know the sign’. Viṭṭhal hears Janī’s feelings.

   (Janābāī abhaṅga 118, SSG 1:727; my translation)

You sing by yourself; another voice is heard nearby.
   ‘Who’s singing with you?’ One who sings continuously.
   “Pāṇḍuraṅga is my father, Rakhumāī is my mother”.
   Janī says, ‘I’ve come home. I am blessed’.

   (Janābāī abhaṅga 82, SSG 1:724; my translation)

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38 The writing on the wall reads ‘Janī grinding with God. Witness her faith. Bless the King of Paṇḍharī’.
The suggestion in the first abhaṅga that Viṭṭhal slips in unobtrusively ties in with Janī attaining union as Janī sings alone but God joins in her song. However, Janī is the only one who recognises the other voice as belonging to God as her partner remains unknown to the third party who is present, for unlike Janī they have not attained the state of realisation or union. In Mahīpati’s caritra the ignorant third party appears to be represented by Goṇāī (BVJ 21.103ff). Poitevin and Rairkar argue that the two voices represented in these abhaṅgas are involved in a never-ending dialogue as the voices are distinct yet intertwined (1996:77–78). This interaction is thus a particular expression of sakhya-bhakti, in which God participates in the lives of his bhaktas. However, the interaction is also a metaphor for advaita, a theme which is present in another abhaṅga that concludes ‘Let’s all become Brahman. Let’s see all beings unified’ (Janābāī abhaṅga 181.3, SSG 1:734).

The genre of grinding songs within the Vārkarī corpus utilises a quotidian image to express religio-philosophical ideas concerning liberation, stressing perhaps again the compatibility of the domestic arena and the devotional path. The ovī-abhaṅga metre and the grinding theme connect the compositions to female domestic labour. However, due to the issue of attribution and the fact that grinding songs are also ascribed to Jhāneśvar, Nāmdev and Tukārām one cannot take these songs to represent a female voice or even necessarily to reflect female concerns. Nonetheless, the grinding songs are contextualised within a domestic setting and may therefore be regarded as a means of reflecting the personal sentiments, the experience of and relationship with the deity, or the oral tradition of singing while grinding that is attributed to women. Moreover, the interaction between deity and devotee in many of the grinding songs draws attention to sakhya-bhakti as a means of coping with the demands of sansār. Again, the emphasis seems to be on the possibility and efficacy of devotion in domestic settings and thus these compositions could be read as a discursive argument for the grhaṣṭha framework. The compositions attributed to the santakaviyarśīs which contain quotidian and domestic imagery reflect the routine of daily life and the concerns of ordinary householders, particularly female householders, even if the context in which these concerns are expressed is devotional. However, there are songs attributed to Muktābāī and Janābāī which reflect different concerns and employ extraordinary images to convey philosophical and devotional concepts.

1.5. **Kūṭ: enigmatic, puzzling and obscure compositions**

The Marathi term kūṭ refers to ‘a riddle’ (Tulpule 1999:52), ‘an enigma; a puzzling question; a knotty point; an obscure, perplexing stanza or passage’ (Molesworth 1857:177) and is applied by the compilers
of the SSG to abhaṅgas attributed to Muktābāī (41 and 42) and Janābāī (345). The classification kūṭ is similar to a type of poem known as uḷaṭbāṁśi, poems in ‘upside-down language’ according to Hess (1983; see Gold 1992:32). This type of back-to-front language or the ‘ambiguous language of ciphers’ according to Ramanujan (1973:49) was part of the sandhyābhāṣa tradition of medieval India. Both uḷaṭbāṁśi and sandhyābhāṣa refer to the same tradition but according to Hess uḷaṭbāṁśi ‘usually applies only to medieval vernacular poetry’ and ‘poetry associated with the Nath yogis’ (1983:315, n.7; see McGregor 1984:22; Ramanujan 1973:49). Ramaswamy suggests that the kūṭ abhaṅgas, which she terms ‘mystical verses’, resemble the vacanas of Allama Prabhu and Muktāyakka of the Vīraśaiva tradition (2007:221). There is a genre of esoteric vacanas called beḍaṅga vacana ‘fancy poem’ or ‘riddle poem’ that Ramanujan believes has a ‘common pool of symbols and concepts drawn from yogic psychology and tantric philosophy’ (1973:48, 196n.69). It is therefore likely that the kūṭ abhaṅgas may be considered part of the uḷaṭbāṁśi or sandhyābhāṣa tradition and had various influences including Nāth yoga.

The term uḷaṭa is better understood as ‘reversed’ as the connotation ‘upside-down’ suggests there is a ‘right side up’ suggests Hess (1983:316). Hess states that the uḷaṭbāṁśi expressions are based on ‘reversals of roles, personalities, [and] laws of nature’ like fire burning water or rain falling from earth to sky. The reversals often occur as almost instantaneous inexplicable transformations without any space to consider how the world has altered. Hess therefore argues that what is being transformed ‘is the very apparatus of thinking’ (1983:316). There are two possible levels of interpretation—simple or esoteric—and according to Hess one can choose whether to intuit the compositions directly or to ‘pursue the meaning endlessly’ (1983:318). Hess suggests that the interpretation of such poems cannot be too dogmatic as different authors and traditions have their own symbols and meanings (1983:317). Ramanujan proposes that such poems are ‘meant to shatter the ordinary language of ordinary experiences’ and confound rational intelligence so that one gains insight (1973:49). The poems have thus been described as ‘Zen yoga’ by Hess as one has to figure something out in order to access truth (1983:318, 321).

There are also kūṭ abhaṅgas ascribed to Jhānēsvāra (SSG 1, 704–719, pp. 184–187) and Cāṅgadev (SSG 1, 43–46, pp. 249). Interestingly, Cāṅgadev abhaṅga (44.1) refers to ants (mungi) like the Muktābāī kūṭ abhaṅga: मृगजळावरी मुंͬगांÍया हारȣ । दुǾ ceramic hārī//1//

For more on the definitions of sandhyābhāṣa or sandhyābhāṣa see Hess 1983:336–37.

41 Allama Prabhu (Master Allama) was a twelfth-century Kannada poet who presided over the company of Vīraśaiva saints (Ramanujan 1973:143–148). Mukiyaakka is said to have met Allama Prabhu after the death of her brother Ajaganna and thought to have had a ‘polemical conversation’ with him in which the guru-disciple relationship and ultimate union were debated (Ramaswamy 2007:179ff; Datta 2005:134). For more on the Vīraśaivas see Ramanujan (1973), Michael (1983; 1992), Zydenbos (1997), White (1998) and Leslie (1998).

42 The Marathi term uḷaṭa connotes ‘return’ or ‘inverse’ while uḷaṭāpāḷāṭa means ‘upside-down’ or ‘inside-out’ (Molesworth 1857:105; Tulpule 1999:97, 463, 622, 657, 667).
This idea ties in with Gold’s suggestion that the use of such language even if not understood by its hearers ‘might point to hidden powers within themselves’ (1992:33).

One of the two kūṭ abhaṅgas ascribed to Muktābāī fits into the ulāṭbāṃśī or sandhyābhāṣa category and describes what Zelliot calls the ‘mystery of life’ (2000:193):

> Ant flew in the sky, she swallowed the sun.  
> A great surprise: a barren woman gave birth to a son.  
> A scorpion went to the underworld, Śeṣa touched his feet.  
> The fly gave birth to a kite; seeing [all this] Muktāī laughed.

(Muktābāī abhaṅga 42, SSG 1:242; my translation)

This abhaṅga may refer to the union of jīvātmā and paramātmā, a theme that appears in many of the compositions attributed to Muktābāī. The ant, barren woman, scorpion and fly are symbols of jīvātmā while the sun, the snake and the kite exemplify paramātmā states Joshi (2009:378). Furthermore, as Ramaswamy suggests this abhaṅga has similarities to an Allama Prabhu bedagina vacana:

> A little bee born in the heart’s lotus flew out and swallowed the sky.  
> In the breeze of his wing, three worlds turned upside down.  
> When the cage of the five-coloured swan was broken, the bee fell to the ground with broken wings.  
> Living among your men, O Lord of Caves, I saw the lovely tactic of truth’s coming on.

(Ramanujan 1973:150, v.95)

In interpreting this vacana Ramanujan identifies the bee as ‘ignorance’ that ‘obscures the light, [and] overturns the worlds, even though it begins in a small way’. It is only when one realises the body’s impermanence—the swan’s five-coloured cage symbolises the soul—that the bee/ignorance loses its power (1973:196n.69). Consequently, the ant in the abhaṅga attributed to Muktābāī could be interpreted as ignorance or illusion (māyā) that obscures the truth and which is only broken when one realises what is true and real, the ultimate union/non-duality of the individual soul (jīva) and the Ultimate Reality (Śiva).

The second kūṭ abhaṅga attributed to Muktābāī does not fit quite so easily into the ulāṭbāṃśī or reversal category but can easily be understood as posing puzzling questions:

> On the temple dome dwelt a sage, Yogeśvar asked him:  
> ‘Moon[shine] by day, heat by night: how can this conundrum be resolved?’  
> The sage said: ‘Death trembles before the cāmpā-bud!  
> Interweaving one alone is futile. Viṭṭhal easily liberates!  
> The Unfailing One is manifest in paradise’. Muktāī says, ‘byways are futile’.

(Muktābāī abhaṅga 41, SSG:242, my translation).

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43 This verse has also been translated by Arun Kolatkar (1982), Champa Limaye and Ruth Vanita (Vanita 1989:46), Ramaswamy (2007:221) and summarised by Joshi (2009:378).

44 This is reference to a variety of Magnolia (michelia champaca) which is native to India. It has orange, yellow or creamy-white flowers in spring.
The question posed by Yogeśvar (the Lord of Yoga; Kṛṣṇa) could refer to the union/conjunction of the (female) moon and (male) sun as the moon is particularly identified with Kṛṣṇa in Braj-bhakti according to Sanford (2009:23–4; see Doniger 1982:255, 263; Stanley 1977:28). However, in his poetry Paramānand also equates Kṛṣṇa to the sun and its life-giving rays. Normally, the sun stalks the gopīs and sears them with its rays and it is only the presence of Kṛṣṇa—as the moon and its cooling rays—that allays the heat of separation (Sanford 2009:52–3). This line may therefore be asking how one can have the presence of Kṛṣṇa during the day rather than at night when Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs engage in the rāsa dance. The reference to new life budding suggests that the advent of Spring makes Death apprehensive as his power is diminished. The abhaṅga seems to suggest that one should focus on matters such as gaining liberation and not worry about things that one cannot understand.

The kūṭ abhaṅga attributed to Janābāī also appears to refer to gaining liberation and uses a game of chess as its exemplar:

The game has been laid out; the player’s judgement colours the game.  
The King marched; the pawn trampled the Queen.  
The King’s side won, Janī says ‘it’s checkmate’.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 345, SSG 1:756; my translation)

The author may be implying that s/he is the pawn (foot-soldier, servant, attendant) on the king’s side who took the queen. There is a suggestion that life is a game of chess which the author/Janī has won as s/he was on the king’s side. In order to play a good game of chess one needs to concentrate and ignore any distractions. This is also what one must do in order to attain salvation. Consequently, this verse can be read as advocating that one focus on playing the right game so as to attain the goal of liberation (Potter 1956:242).

There is a composition (pad) attributed to Janābāī which, although not categorised as kūṭ by the editors of the SSG, fits the ulatbāṃsī category as it reverses accepted spiritual and religious truths:

Those with spiritual merit are sent to hell. The poor are made weary. Thieves are inundated with honour. The illustrious are dishonoured.  
You grant the greedy and indifferent an audience (refrain).  
Your enemies are granted liberation. Fraudsters are enriched. Servants must choose between poor cloth and rags. Pranksters are loved and adored in the three worlds.  
The dutiful wife is engaged fruitlessly. The dancing-girl and courtesan are conducted to the highest heaven. Your own people are displaced. The full story of the many Yādavas is not told.  
The virtuous are persecuted. The children of the illustrious are killed. Friends are made to say your power is false. Janī says, ‘I know your game’.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 336, SSG 1:754; my translation)

Poitevin and Rairkar argue that this verse suggests that ‘the government of God is apparently insane’ (1996:81–82). While at first glance their assertion may ring true the pad makes the point that through
bhakti those persons who are traditionally deemed social outcastes or unworthy may be redeemed. The pad has a didactic element which is similar to that found in the compositions relating to nāma. However, while the compositions on nāma stress nāmajapa as a means to redemption the pad seems to imply that not everyone may attain salvation or liberation despite accumulating merit or performing their dharma because ultimately salvation occurs through God’s grace. The bhakti aspect of this composition sets it apart from the other kūṭ abhaṅgas due to their yogic and esoteric content but its ambiguous language allows it to be considered an enigmatic composition.

The connection between the kūṭ abhaṅgas and the poetry associated with the medieval Nāths is interesting as both Muktābāī and Janābāī are connected to the Nāth panth through their guru paramparās. However, the fact that the kūṭ abhaṅgas contain yogic philosophy and provide a means of gaining insight suggests that these compositions are thematically connected to the advisory compositions that are also attributed to Muktābāī and Janābāī. Moreover, the inclusion of these attributed compositions suggests that the sampradāya negotiated a set of tensions in its discursive construction and so included Nāṭh/Śaivite/sannyāsa notions of mystical union to correspond to the bhakti concepts of salvation and ultimate liberation. The function of gender attribution within this context may relate to the inclusion of women as both disciples and preceptors within the Nāth panth, as I mentioned in Chapter Four. Consequently, by including compositions attributed to women the Vārkarī sampradāya may have been indicating that female figures capable of giving advice were worthy of inclusion in the Vārkarī literary corpus. Thus, gender attribution functioned to construct the sampradāya discursively by directing the hearer/reader away from sannyāsa.

1.6. Upadeśa or ‘advisory’ abhaṅgas

The term upadeśa in Marathi connotes ‘advice’ (Berntsen 1982:14) as well as ‘instruction, teaching, communicating knowledge; impartation of or initiation in a mantra’ (Molesworth 1857:98), ‘spiritual initiation; a direct mystical experience’ (Tulpule 1999:96) and ‘instruction or initiation given by the guru’ (Tulpule 1999:205). The SSG credits Janābāī with twenty-nine upadeśa compositions (of which I have translated only one) and Muktābāī with twenty (of which I have translated five). It is striking that in one attributed abhaṅga Muktāī advises her elder brother Nivṛtti.45 Thus, as I suggested in Chapter Four, Muktābāī is portrayed as a woman capable of instructing a man on spiritual and philosophical matters.

Union with God, Excellent! The soul speaks languages. 
Worldly attachments arise from illusion; this leads to the city of Yama. 
Advise such a being—an insect or a dull witted person—God sends such a being back to the womb. 
Muktāī counsels Nivṛtti: ‘there is no further rebirth for us’.

(Muktābāī abhaṅga 21, SSG 1:240; my translation)

The speaker says that in order to gain liberation and experience union with the divine one must not get caught up in māyā as worldly attachments lead not to liberation but to judgement by Yama and therefore to rebirth. The abhaṅga suggests that both Muktāī and Nivṛtti have attained realisation and will thus escape rebirth. Another abhaṅga advises the hearer/reader to gain control of the mind to attain liberation:

When the mind is controlled and at peace, then you won’t need to meet Yama. 
The authority of the mind gives you the wisdom to accomplish your spiritual goals. 
As you perform your spiritual practice, repeat the nārāyaṇa-mantra in your heart. 
Muktāī is an expert, for Nārāyaṇ has endowed her with spiritual wealth. Repeat the mantra as you purify the body.

(Muktābāī abhaṅga 23, SSG:240; my translation)

The nārāyaṇa-mantra is presented as a means of purification and attaining the spiritual goal of liberation. The nārāyaṇa-mantra—aum namaḥ narāyaṇāya, ‘Oṃ, reverence to Nārāyaṇa’—is regarded as one of the most important Vaiṣṇava mantras as it can be recited by anyone (Gupta 1991a:241; Chawdhri 2005:90). The Tārasāra Upaniṣad (12.1.5) states that the nārāyaṇa-mantra is the means by which one is saved from transmigration: ‘Oṃ’ is the form of the self; namaḥ (salutation) is the form of the world, and narāyaṇāya (to Nārāyaṇa) is the supreme Brahman. The Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad states: ‘one who meditates on the mantra will reach Vaikunth… (I worship) Nārāyaṇa who abides in all beings, who is...the cause, who has no case, who is Brahman’ (18.4; Mahadevan 2000:217). The mantra is thought to condense ultimate truth and make known the meaning of everything, so is therefore all that needs to be said. The mantra therefore has both a doxological and soteriological aim according to Sheveland (2011:125–126). However, the mantra is usually only muttered by the preceptor to the disciple, after which the disciple reflects upon it silently in order to gain salvation (Williams 2004: 68). One can therefore imagine the speaker/Muktābāī instructing a student—Caṅgadev and/or Visobā Khecar are thought to have been Muktābāī’s disciples and Muktābāī is said to have initiated Visobā with a mantra as I mentioned in the previous chapter—or the speaker/Muktābāī may even have been instructing a wider audience on the use and aim of the mantra.

__46__ It is also known as the aṣṭaksāra (eight-syllabled) mantra and is the mantra of a Värkārī subsect known as the Prakāśa sampradāya (Pandy 2010). 
__47__ For more on mantras see Clooney (2008), Coward (2004), Alper (1991), and Gonda (1963).
Another advisory abhaṅga also refers to Nārāyaṇa but this time in the context of union or non-differentiation:

On the bed of nirguṇa and the bedstead of saṅguṇa is where God will lie.
How do you get moonlight during the day? The dark Lord arises on one principle.
The ego vanishes, compassion for all remains; it doesn’t take long to describe the beginning to end.
Muktāī’s wealth emanates from seeing Nārāyaṇa everywhere; the personal soul and the Supreme Soul are one.

(Muktābī abhaṅga 32, SSG 1:241; my translation)

This verse suggests that Kṛṣṇa—referred to as Keśīrāja ‘King Keśava’ and the ‘dark Lord’—is the Supreme Reality who has taken form. The reference to moonlight during the day, like that of the Muktābī kīṭa abhaṅga (41) discussed above, connects the verse to Kṛṣṇa and suggests that the ‘principle’ that Kṛṣṇa represents is that of non-duality. The speaker/Muktāī advises the hearer/reader that liberation from saṁsāra occurs if one is egoless and compassionate, and if one realises that one is not different from the Supreme Reality (Nārāyaṇa, Śiva). The upadeśa compositions attributed to Muktābī seem to combine different approaches to gaining liberation which may be based on different forms of yoga.

The ‘advisory’ abhaṅga attributed to Janābī also portrays the philosophical doctrine of advaita by expressing various forms of non-difference and concluding that the deity and sant are one:

We and the sants, the sants and us; the sun and its rays, what’s the difference?
The flame and the kite, the kite and the flame; meditation and silent chanting, what’s the difference?
Peace and detachment, detachment and peace; contentment and satisfaction, what’s the difference?
Disease and illness, illness and disease; body and frame, what’s the difference?
Ear and auditory organ, auditory organ and ear; fame and pride, what’s the difference?
‘God and the sant, the sant and God’, says Janī, ‘these are both the same’.

(Janābī abhaṅga 243, SSG 1:740; my translation)

What is significant about these advisory verses is that they are ascribed to unmarried non-householder women. Muktābī is remembered as a young ascetic and Janābī is remembered as a dāsī, as the biographies in Chapter Four highlight. In these attributed abhaṅgas women give advice, offer advaitin interpretations of philosophy and guide the hearer/reader towards the goal of liberation. This runs contrary to the orthodox notion of how a woman ought to behave as presented by Manu (5.147–48; Doniger 1991:115) or Tryambaka in the Strīdharmapaddhati (Leslie 1989). Traditionally, one was born a woman due to the sins of a previous birth and because a woman’s nature (strīsvabhāva) was impure and sinful she was denied a mantra. Thus, as a woman was amantra she remained sinful all her life and had no hope of redemption argues Leslie (1989:246ff). The lack of a mantra denied women education, the right to perform religious roles, and disqualified women from taking sannyāsa (see Teskey Denton 2004;
Khandelwal 2004). However, these abhaṅgas signal that women may have been regarded by the tradition as capable of giving spiritual direction and of communicating a mantra to disciples if they had been initiated themselves. Muktābāī and Janī are both regarded as having been initiated into the Nāth paramparā, which accepted both men and women as disciples and preceptors. The editors of the SSG may therefore be demonstrating their acceptance of Muktāī and Janī as initiated women capable of giving upadeśa but this possible acceptance also draws attention to the interaction between the anthologising of compositions attributed to the sants and caritra. Moreover, Muktābāī is also credited with abhaṅgas in which she acts as a teacher to her elder brother Jñānēśvar and these compositions may therefore also be considered advisory in nature. Whatever the case, here again we have an example where the attribution of compositions to women signals a discursive construction, in this case perhaps of the Vārkarī sampradāya as egalitarian.

1.6.i. Tāṭīce abhaṅga: the songs of the door

The famous tāṭīce abhaṅga, of which there are generally accepted to be eleven, are thought to be words of advice spoken by Muktābāī to her brother Jñānēśvar through a tāṭī or door. The story goes that Jñānēśvar was so disgusted with some abuse he received that he shut himself up behind the door of a hut and resolved to give up his body through samādhi (Joshi 2009:378; Panicker 1997:356; Vanita 1989:52; Sivananda 2011). Dada Maharaj Manmadkar told me that Jñānēśvar and his siblings were thought to be unlucky (as the children of a sannyāsī) and that there was a bhikṣekarī who said that just because he saw Jñānēśvar first thing in the morning he would not get any alms that day. Consequently, Jñānēśvar thought ‘I’m shutting myself off from the world rather than living such an insulted life, I’d rather die. If someone who goes door to door…can treat us like that what is the dignity of…life?’ (Personal communication, 11th July 2006). Sivananda suggests that Jñānēśvar’s brothers Nivṛtti and Sopān implored Jñānēśvar not to leave them but to no avail. However, Muktabai returned from the river and ‘very lovingly, with a maturity and insight far beyond her young years’ pleaded with Jñānēśvar to give up his drastic plan and open the door (2011). Manmadkar quoted part of the first tāṭīce abhaṅga: viśvapaṭa brahma dorā / tāṭī ughaḍā jñānēśvarā ‘the universe is the woven cloth, Brahma is the thread; please open the door Jñānēśvar’ (1.4) and explained ‘Muktābāī is saying that Jñānēśvar should rise above saṃsāra (a sea in which one drowns) and help people…’ rather than shutting himself off from the world. Manmadkar, like Sivananda, drew attention to the fact that the tāṭīce abhaṅga are regarded as ‘advice coming from the younger sister’ and that they draw attention to Muktābāī’s level of understanding. However, Manmadkar also suggested that
what Muktābāī ‘said to Jñāneśvar changed his entire life and allowed his talents to blossom: he was going to end his life but the Jñāneśvarī and his other works were written after Muktābāī gave him advice’ and that the tāṭīce abhaṅga are therefore the reason Muktābāī is called Ādimāyā (personal communication, 11th July 2006).

Swami Raghavdas and Ruth Vanita have translated eleven tāṭīce abhaṅga and Vanita argues that these abhaṅgas use two main arguments. The first argument is based on Vārkarī advaita philosophy and asserts that as Brahm is indissoluble from the universe ‘one should see Brahm in all beings, treat them without distinction and remain unperturbed by their disturbing manifestations which are Maya; second, that a sant must not remain isolated from the world and from ordinary people but must give them the benefit of her or his experience (1989:52). While I concur with Vanita that the tāṭīce abhaṅga invite an advaitic interpretation and elucidate the proper behaviour of a sant, I contend that these abhaṅgas also promote nivṛtti dharma as their didacticism outline rules of conduct for ascetics and the characteristics of a renouncer. The dichotomy between nivṛtti and pravṛtti echoes the tension between sannyāsa and grhastha outlined in the Introduction and once more signals effort at discursive construction. In her discussion of the works attributed to Jñāneśvar Kiehnle argues that pravṛtti can be interpreted as ‘“moving forward” into active live, the life of the householder’ while nivṛtti may be understood as ‘“moving back” into the sannyāsī’s life of retreat’ (1997a:146). However, Kiehnle also points out that nivṛtti is the method of rejecting objects of the senses or ‘turning away from the domain of Śaktī or māyā who goes on creating and changing’ (1997a:148).

The first tāṭīce abhaṅga is the only tāṭīce abhaṅga presented in the SSG despite the fact that Tulpule states that the tāṭīce abhaṅgas are not found within traditional gāthās (1979:334):

A yogi of pure mind bears people’s insults.
The world rages but as a sant you should easily douse your anger.
Words are like hurtful weapons but a sant regards these as teachings.
The world’s a cloth and Brahma the thread; open the door Jñāneśvar.

(First tāṭīce abhaṅga, Muktābāī, SSG 1:236; my translation)48

This abhaṅga seems to suggest that to be a sant one should cultivate serenity and detachment from the world.49 This verse can also be interpreted as promoting nivṛtti ideals, as it is through non-attachment that one gains knowledge of the Self that leads to realisation and mokṣa (Patañjali 1983:xvi). This abhaṅga appears to reiterate ideas from the Jñāneśvarī and Amṛtānubhava, for example: ‘a yogin casts out all

48 There is a rendition of this abhaṅga by aabasam (2009).
49 Eknāth also puts forward similar ideas in the Eknāthī Bhāgavata (see Skyhawk 1983:345ff).
objects of desire by means of dispassion, and concentrates his mind within the body’ (Jñān 5.150; Shima 2008:51). Shima regards part of the Jñāneśvarī as describing kundaliniyoga or ‘a way of meditation to attain Brahmanhood without abandoning one’s body’ (Jñān 5.149–157; 2008:51). Kiehnle suggests that kundaliniyoga is the means by which one returns to perfect rest in pure consciousness and that nivṛtti is therefore ‘the reversal of the creative process’ (1997a:148). It is therefore possible that the speaker was using Jñāneśvar’s own words to remind him/the hearer that he can achieve liberation through meditation and not by undertaking self-immolation (samādhi). The statement ‘the world’s a cloth and Brahma the thread’ expresses an advaitic idea. The relation of the world to brahman is like cloth to a thread, brahman is not the cloth but forms the cloth, and the cloth exists only when the threads exist. This idea is also expressed in the Jñāneśvarī: ‘He is as the ether pervading all Space, and like the threads of warp and woof a piece of cloth…so Brahma both is all and in all (Jñān 13.887–890, Pradhan and Lambert 1987:382). One could imagine Muktābāī repeating Jñāneśvar’s words back to him, reminding him that deep down he knows there is no duality so being angry is fruitless and he should therefore calm down, open the door and come out. The tāṭīce abhaṅgas continue in this vein outlining the characteristics of a sant.

People recognise a sant as one who is forbearing.
As one whose mind lacks conceit, as one who is called ‘he who has attained bliss’,
As one who desires happiness after death, as one whom in his youth attained pure knowledge,
Set aside false doubts; open the door Jñāneśvar.

(Fourth tāṭīce abhaṅga, my translation)

The characteristics of an ascetic—forbearance (ksamā), attentiveness and vigilance (jāgā), consideration (lobha), indifference or freedom from worldly desires (virakta), bliss (sukha), purity (śuddha) and knowledge (jñāna)—are here asserted. These virtues are some of those listed in the Bhagavadgītā and which are ascribed to Brahmanical ascetics (BhG 16.1–3; Patton 2008:169–70; Zaehner 1973:369–70; Malinar 2007:207). The Jñāneśvarī elucidates upon these virtues (Jñān 16.67–210; Pradhan and Lambert 1987:472–482) and states that one who possesses the ‘spiritual wealth’ of the twenty-six virtues ‘will excel among the seekers after liberation’ (Jñān 16.205; Pradhan and Lambert 1987:481). The speaker is therefore reminding Jñāneśvar/the hearer of the qualities his behaviour should reflect—which he should know as he composed a text that detailed such virtues—and s/he is also recommending such behaviour to the hearer/reader.

50 तरी वैशम्याचे अधार| जिही विषय ददूति बाहि| शरीरी एकंदर| केले मन|१५१| (Jñāneśvarī, 5.150, Shima 2005:8).
If one knows oneself to be an ascetic, are all others worthless? Passions arise from Brahma—the origin; all illusion is rubbish. When the origins of illusion cease, then all will become Brahma. Understanding this from beginning to end a sant should be content. Leave behind all worry and anger; open the door Jñāneśvar.

(Fifth tāṭīce abhaṅga; my translation)

In the fifth tāṭīce abhaṅga the speaker or singer refers to Jñāneśvar as a sadhu and s/he draws attention to the fact Jñāneśvar’s anger, a heightened or passionate emotional state (vikara), is not really real for it is the product of māyā. Jñāneśvar is being advised not to get carried away by emotion and realise that his anger is blinding him from the truth that ultimately he and brahman are non-distinct (advaita). The ideal characteristics of a sant are therefore intertwined with the rules of conduct for ascetics and renouncers in this didactic verse. The didacticism signals discursive construction, the function in this case is perhaps to signal the parity of the tradition with other parallel traditions with older pedigrees.

The following abhaṅga describes brahma as vadīla ‘an ancestor; a senior or an elder; a superior’ (Molesworth 1857:723) and suggests that it is He/It that drives us along. almost as if we were pieces on a chess board:

Brahma is the Absolute; the ancestor of us all.  
If your own hand hits you, you don’t get upset, do you?  
If one’s teeth bite one’s tongue, do all thirty-two [teeth] break?  
Great mental sorrow can lead to true wisdom.  
Chew chick-peas as hard as iron, then dance at Brahma’s feet.  
Subdue the mind, become detached; open the door Jñāneśvar.

(Sixth tāṭīce abhaṅga; my translation)

The implication of this verse is that great hardship may have to be endured or experienced before one can comprehend the nature of brahman. Moreover, one can only ‘dance’ once one has realised the true meaning of brahman. The yogic state of detachment (unmanī) mentioned here comes about when one is no longer focussed on the self, when one is emancipated from māyā and immersed in contemplating the Divine (Mishra 1998:181; Kiehnle 1997b:129, 188ff; Daniélou 1990:149–50; Avalon 1974). Thus, the speaker is probably advising Jñāneśvar to stop thinking about himself, to put his yogic training into effect, to rise above his negative feelings and focus on higher things. One can imagine Jñāneśvar responding to the different statements, maybe even refuting them, so that the speaker/Muktāī keeps trying different tacks to get their point across and get Jñāneśvar to open the door and come out.

From where does this anger come? You are enlightened.  
You know well the people are Janārdan.  

51 My thanks to V.P. Kanitkar for elucidating this point (personal communication, 18th March 2011).
Pledged to serve, we cannot give up our pledge. Anytime anger erupts, all yoga is wasted. So enlarge your vision; open the door Jñāneśvar.

(Eighth tāṭiçe abhaṅga; my translation)

It is significant that this abhaṅga uses the term Janārdan—an epithet for Viṣṇu in his form as the preserver (Gonda 1968:221) and an epithet for Kṛṣṇa or Hari (Söhnen 1989)—to describe jan ‘man’ or, as I have translated it, ‘people’. Janārdan is a form of brahman according to the Brahmapurāṇa and a key feature of Janārdan appears to be division (BrP 20.41cd–41ab, Söhnen 1989:53ff). Firstly, as Brahman he is male in his right half and female in his left half (BrP 45.37–41; Söhnen 1989:99). Secondly, Janārdan is said to divide his body into two parts, one to suppress the wicked and the other to protect the righteous (BrP 181.2–4; Söhnen 1989:292; see BhP 4.7–8). This division may account for the various interpretations of the epithet. Janārdan—formed of jan and ardana ‘destroying’, ‘annihilating’, ‘disturbing’, ‘distressing’ or ‘tormenting’ (Monier Williams 2008)—appears as janārdanaḥ in śloka 14 of the Viṣṇusahasranāma and refers to ‘One who destroys the wicked’, ‘One who protects people from the wicked’ and ‘One who is approached by devotees for their wishes’ (Iyengar 2003–2010). The phrase aise kalē uttama / jana teci janārdana // ‘you know well the people are Janārdan’ is a play on words. It implies that people, or one person in particular, may be ‘wicked’ for tormenting Jñāneśvar but also that ultimately people are brahman (Janārdan). This is an advaitic statement asserting that as all beings, including Jñāneśvar, are brahman anger is pointless. This fits with the idea that as a yogin or sant one should serve people. Jñāneśvar is being told in no uncertain terms that his anger counteracts yoga. Moreover, if Jñāneśvar is contemplating samādhi then his anger might negate the act. The tāṭiçe abhaṅga are a plea to Jñāneśvar’s better nature. Thus one can see that the tāṭiçe abhaṅga highlight the qualities and proper behaviour of a sant and for an ascetic, suggesting that the listener or reader is being provided with an exemplar on both counts.

The tāṭiçe abhaṅgas clearly advocate advaita, which is accepted as the predominant philosophical position of the Vārkarīs. However, the tāṭiçe abhaṅga also promote nivṛtti dharma. The term nivṛtti connotes cessation, inactivity, renunciation and a rejection of worldly life (Monier Williams 2008; Dhand 2008:33). Nivṛtti dharma or nivṛttimārga holds that the world is a place of suffering perpetuated by one’s actions (karma) and that one’s participation in the realm of pleasurable distraction leads to endless rebirth. One should therefore strive for emancipation from punarāgamana so as to attain

52 The translation by Raghavdas and Vanita (1989:53) use the word ‘pledge’ and I can find no other word that conveys the meaning of the line so fully.

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mokṣa. Nivṛtti dharma is often used as a synonym for mokṣadharma ‘the religion of freedom’ states Dhand (2008:33). Kiehnle suggests that the use of the term nivṛtti by Jñāneśvar and his followers indicates one of the highest states of consciousness ‘considered identical with the state of turīya/nīlabindu’ (1997a:148–49). The term nīlabindū or nādabindu refers to ‘the Ātman experienced as a lustrous point’ (Tulpule 1999:492) as discussed above. The tāṭīce abhaṅgas may therefore be regarded as teaching the hearer/reader about how to gain liberation from a perspective different than that of advaita.

Nivṛtti adherents are supposed to be calm, patient and perfectly balanced in mind. Dhand suggests that the ethics of nivṛtti are ‘personal, self-cultivational, and mystical’. They are concerned with the ‘care of other beings, truthfulness, charity, patience, self-restraint and compassion’ (2008:36), which are all qualities described in tāṭīce abhaṅga number four. Moreover, Dhand argues that nivṛtti dharma does not recognise social differences rather true worth is measured by conduct and not birth (2008:36; Mbh 12.182.8, 12.285.28). Thus, a low-caste person or a woman can achieve mokṣa as it is achieved by mental rectitude and personal effort. The only obstacle is ignorance so it is important to accept instruction from anyone with sufficient wisdom to help eradicate it (Dhand 2008:37). This is very similar to the advaitist position that advocates knowledge, particularly that gained from a teacher or guru, as the means of gaining liberation. The role of the guru or teacher in attaining liberation also draws attention to the upadeśa nature of these verses.

Dhand argues that there are three dimensions to nivṛtti dharma: the personal and introspective dimension that requires the individual to transform physically, mentally and emotionally so as to achieve equanimity. However, Dhand suggests that one’s efforts to achieve equanimity must be inspired by the soteriological goal of mokṣa, which in turn requires one to act without causing harm or injury (ahīṃsā). Consequently, one becomes a person ‘full of compassion and generosity for the suffering of others’ according to Dhand (2008:37–8), and this is what the tāṭīce abhaṅga advocate. There is also a connection between yoga and nivṛtti dharma. Yoga regards the world as a place of inevitable and endless suffering, sees engagement with the world as futile and transient and asserts that the only worthwhile goal is to seek something constant within oneself. One is therefore encouraged to gain ‘liberating knowledge’ argues Dhand (2008:56). The phrase ‘open the door Jñāneśvar’ could therefore be read as a play on the word jñāna, in which the speaker advises the ascetic to ‘open’ himself to liberating knowledge.

Traditionally, Muktābāī the sister of Jñāneśvar is regarded as the speaker of the ‘songs of the door’. However, the abhaṅgas contain no reference to an author as they lack a signature such as ‘Muktāī’,
the mudrikā found in the other abhaṅgas attributed to Muktābāī. The first person plural pronoun (āpāna) is used in tāṭīce abhaṅga five but this is a gender-neutral term meaning ‘oneself’ and cannot therefore be taken as a sign that the author was female. Moreover, the content of the tāṭīce abhaṅga differs in content and style from the abhaṅgas attributed to Muktābāī according to Shrotriya (1992:19–20). If Muktābāī, Jñāneśvar’s sister, did compose these abhaṅgas then the principles of advaita and nivrītti dharma are possibly being voiced by a young girl who elucidated the qualities Jñāneśvar and other ascetics and sants should exhibit. These abhaṅgas show the speaker to be knowledgeable, spiritually discerning and concerned with yogic rather than householder or worldly aims. The tāṭīce abhaṅga highlight nivrītti and it is therefore possible that those with programmatic intent did not want to include the abhaṅgas formally within the corpus of Vārkarī literature, even though public memory attributes these compositions to Muktābāī the sister of Jñāneśvar, because their concern was with constructing the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition.

Significantly, both Muktābāī and Janābāī are portrayed as women capable of instructing a man on spiritual and philosophical matters by the categorisation of their attributed composition under the upadeśa theme. However, as Dada Maharaj Manmadkar pointed out to me, even though women may have played a role in bringing about spiritual development by offering advice women are still considered ‘in a certain way’. Thus, even today kirtankārīs are not given the same status as kirtankārs within the Vārkarī sampradāya. Manmadkar therefore advocated developing ‘an atmosphere of flexibility where the principle of equality is accepted and where there would be social approval for this equal status’ (personal communication, 11th July 2006).

2. Summary

The compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs were explored in order to consider the role of gender attribution in the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition. The important devotional practice of nāma is a practice that can be undertaken easily within the domestic setting. So by including songs attributed to the santakaviyatrīs on nāma those with programmatic intent may be understood to be employing gender attribution to construct a householder tradition. The intimate relationships with the divine outlined in the chapter indicate familial situations and a domestic setting as female friendships and parental relationships occur within a grhastha and not a sannyāsa context. The intimate relationships reinforce the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition and draw attention to the possibility of performing bhakti within a householder environment. The sakhyā relationship suggests
that the deity is present in all manner of mundane tasks and that the deity can be met anywhere so there is no need to undertake renunciation.

The biographical images of Soyārā and Nirmāḷā, like many of the domestic or quotidian images in other compositions attributed to the santakaviyatris, reinforce the discursive construction of the tradition as grhaṣṭha. The biographical compositions attributed to Nāgarī and Bahinābāī as well as many of the abhaṅgas attributed to Goṇāī and Rājāī highlight the tension between grhaṣṭha and vairāgya. This tension may not be fully resolved in the compositions attributed to Goṇāī and Rājāī but it is harmonized in the ātmanivedan attributed to Bahinābāī. The resolution of the tension between grhaṣṭha and vairāgya as well as pativratādharma and bhakti in the spiritual biography of a woman is important in the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a household tradition because it signals the utilisation of gender attribution for the successful construction of the sampradāya as a householder path.

The inclusion of abhaṅgas on themes such as grinding or ‘helping’ appear to be explicitly directed at a female audience and may signify affiliation with a singing tradition through the use of the ovī/abhaṅga metre and the inclusion of a dhrupad like ‘You come Viṭṭhal’ (Janābāī abhaṅga 226). However, the grinding songs and compositions that employ quotidian imagery emphasise the possibility and effectiveness of devotion in domestic situations and thus these compositions can be interpreted as a discursive argument for the grhaṣṭha framework. The inclusion of kūṭa and upadeśa abhaṅgas attributed to Muktābāī and Janābāī suggests that the sampradāya negotiated a set of tensions in its discursive construction and so included Nāth/Śaivite/sannyāsa notions of mystical union to correspond to the bhakti concepts of salvation and ultimate liberation. Moreover, these attributed compositions signal a discursive construction, in this instance perhaps of the Vārkarī sampradāya as egalitarian.

The issue of attribution means it is impossible to determine the gender of the speaker or author of any composition so one cannot assert that songs with domestic or quotidian images were composed by women or represent the ‘female voice’. It is therefore my contention that the presence of compositions attributed to women within the Vārkarī corpus is indicative of an argument for, and indeed exemplification of, the viability of the householder path by those who were involved in constructing the traditions of the sampradāya.
CONCLUSION

The Introduction to the thesis asserted that the approach offered by feminist historiography and early Subaltern Studies to recover the ‘female voice’ was untenable in relation to the women identified as santakaviyatrīs in the Vārkarī sampradāya due to the vexed issue of gender attribution and the speculative nature of any attempt to correlate attribution to gendered, living person. Consequently, the focus of the thesis has been altered to consider the ways the attribution of women’s authorship is used in the construction and development of the Vārkarī bhakti tradition and to ask what function the high visibility of santakaviyatrīs in the tradition might have played in its self-understanding and presentation. Therefore, I have chosen to examine the question of why there are so many women associated with the Vārkarī sampradāya by considering the function of gender attribution in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path.

Chapter One began by providing a contextual overview of Pandharpur and Viṭhobā/Viṭhal and their apparent re-orientation from Śaiva to Vaiṣṇava that probably coincided with the transformation of the deś from a pastoral to an agrarian economy. The Vārkarī sampradāya’s primary myth elucidated the connection between the deity, Pandharpur and bhakti by relating that Puṇḍalīk was responsible for God’s presence in Pandharpur due to his transformation from disrespectful to devoted son. The Puṇḍalīk myth thus encapsulates the sampradāya’s householder values and relates to the discursive construction of the tradition as a householder path. The chapter noted that the Vārkarī sants are regarded as the preeminent proponents of bhakti and that they are crucially important to the vārī, the sampradāya’s distinguishing feature which the chapter detailed, as they act as ever-present intermediaries. It was also noted that the sants were predominantly low-caste ‘active producers’ and householders who are credited with poetic compositions in Marathi that now form the Vārkarī literary corpus. A brief sketch of the four main male sants—Jñāneśvar, Nāmdev, Eknāth and Tukārām—was provided as their attributed compositions are the key components of the Vārkarī ‘canon’ discussed in Chapter Three. The outline of the female bhaktas and poets who are the focus of the thesis determined that the majority of these women are remembered as grhini and strongly connected to the householder life.

The chapter also accepts as plausible Zelliot’s three reasons for the householder character of the Vārkarī sampradāya. Firstly, there are several probable explanations for the rural nature of the
**sampradāya**: Viṭṭhal’s connection to pastoralists and shepherds and the fact that most Vārkarīs are agriculturalists; the low status and practice of traditional occupations by most of the sants; the route of the vārī across the deš which converge on Pandharpur, a rural town connected with the local agrarian economy and society, which was administered by Vaiṣṇava Brahmans. Secondly, the ‘lack of a strong sannyāsī tradition in the Marathi-speaking area’ is perceptible by the philosophical influences of the Nāth panth rather than the number of sants who are regarded as sannyāsīs. Thirdly, the assertion that the ‘leadership from either Śūdra or unorthodox Brahmans may be most responsible for Maharashtra’s householder bhaktas’ is demonstrable by the four main male sants. Jñāneśvar and Eknāth can be taken to represent the unorthodox Brahman leadership while Nāmdev, Tukārām and numerous other sants fit with the notion of śūdra leadership. However, the issue that emerges throughout the historical and contemporary development of the sampradāya is that of caste. The sampradāya advocates spiritual egalitarianism but caste and gender equality appear to be ideals rather than social realities as highlighted by the caste differentiation of dīṇḍīs, the removal of ‘god’ into a pot, the Mahārs’ rejection of sant Cokhāmelā, and Muktabai Maharaj’s experience of male followers not wanting to touch her feet.

Chapter Two added an experiential dimension to the material presented in chapter one by relating my observations of some of the important Vārkarī religious practices such as the kārttikī and āṣāḍhī vārīs. Moreover, my ethnographic research explored the position and presence of the santakaviyatrīs in the contemporary tradition and determined that Goṇāī, Rājāī, Āūbāī, Limbāī, Lāḍāī, Soyarābāī, Nirmalābāī, Bhāgū Mahārīṇ, Gangabāī/Guptanāth, Bhāgū and Viṭhābāī seem to be largely ignored in public memory. However, Muktabāī, Janābāī, Kānhopātrā, Bahiṇābāī (Pāṭhak not Chaudhari) and Sakhūbāī appear to still be remembered to a limited extent. Moreover, Mīrābāī is also remembered in connection to the Vārkarī sampradāya, which may be due to Mīrābāī’s non-householder status as she is considered ‘unmarried’ like Muktabāī and Janābāī. The notion that some female figures are ascribed non-householder status highlights a persistent tension between grhaṣṭha and sannyāsa/vairāgya that exists within bhakti traditions like the Vārkarī sampradāya.

It was suggested that the reason women are remembered and characterised as sants may be due to the number of compositions attributed to a specific figure. Additionally, I argued that the characterisation of a female figure as a sant may be connected with the quality of their attributed compositions or their connection with a well-known guru. However, Sakhūbāī has few compositions in her name and has no connection with a male guru or sant which suggested that Sakhū’s public
remembrance occurs for other reasons. Sakhūbāī is remembered as suffering distress, as her caritra in Chapter Four demonstrates, but Bhagwat argued that most men in positions of authority within the sampradāya and even some male scholars do not acknowledge the distress and/or suffering represented in the lives of female figures because they regard the inclusion of women in the Vārkarī literary corpus as effacing the possibility that female figures might have suffered in any way. Vyas suggested that the inclusion of women sants was due to the egalitarian nature of Vārkarī sampradāya while Utpat, Tade and Belgaonkar suggested that the lack of kīrtankārīs and women in prominent positions is due to the restrictions placed on women. Bhagwat declared that no emulation of santakaviyatrīs occurs in the contemporary tradition because ‘resistant voices and/or women are written out’. Rather, the balance between household and bhakti is advocated in the contemporary tradition because it is thought that women sants like Bahiṇābāī achieved this balance and they are thus exemplars. This message of balance appears to relate to the dominance of Brahmanism which is still apparent today as most of the gurus, temple officials, and diṇḍi leaders with whom I spoke were Brahman. The diminished presence of female figures appears to signal the successful construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path as women no longer need to be cited as figures or exemplars of household religiosity. To that extent, the constitutive tension between grhaustha and sannyāsa/vairāgya appears, in the contemporary context of the sampradāya to have been resolved in favour of grhaustha religiosity.

Chapter Three considered the discursive formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path and what constitutes the Vārkarī corpus or ‘canon’ in order to examine the role of the santakaviyatrīs and the compositions attributed to them within the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya. The discussion established that the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path is primarily due to the use of Marathi, the literate ovī and abhaṅga, and a combination of oral, literate, textual and performative means of dissemination. The Jñāneśvarī and Eknāthī Bhāgavata are texts that transmit the message of bhakti and disinterested action to a community predominantly formed of socially-active, Marathi-speakers by employing Marathi and the literate ovī metre. The use of the Marathi ovī as well as Jñāneśvar’s integration of orality and literacy and Eknāth’s addition of asceticism-in-marriage corresponds to the concepts of ingenuity or charismatic innovation. The liturgical role that texts like the Jñāneśvarī perform may also be interpreted as contributing to the ongoing discursive construction of the Vārkarī community. Moreover, the veneration of texts like the Jñāneśvarī and Eknāthī Bhāgavata as pothī suggests that they are regarded by the sampradāya as closed and permanent, and thus as canonical.

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Contrastingly, the reason that most of the abhaṅgas attributed to the sants are categorised as ‘almost canonical’ and not as prasthānatrayī is probably due to the connection between orality and performance as well as the openness and fluidity of the abhaṅga gāthās. It is therefore possible to see a chain of religious legitimisation and discursive construction running from Jñāneśvar to Tukārām and beyond, which includes both canonical and sacred texts, as well as oral and performative means of transmission. Yet, the position of the compositions attributed to women is ambiguous as they are not formally part of kīrtan discussion even if songs attributed to some women are sometimes sung on the vārī as Chapter Two intimated. Furthermore, biographers like Mahīpati added meaning to the textual and oral compositions of the bhaktas and sants and helped to maintain and revitalise the Vārkarī sampradāya reproducing and enhancing the ethos of the tradition.

Chapter Four explored the presentation of women as exemplars of bhakti and as householders within the biographies of santakaviyatrīs to consider the role and function of gender attribution in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya. Muktābāī is interpreted as a householder who is able to pursue a renunciate life in terms of her devotional practices but she is not represented as renunciate in the traditional sense of sannyāsa. Muktābāī is also represented as an avatāra of Ādimāyā and a knowledgeable woman capable of advising men like Cāṅgadev and Nāmdev, suggesting that she is regarded as a figure of spiritual status and ability. The caritras of Goṇāī, Rājāī and Āvalī highlight the possibility of living a devotional life as a grhaṣṭha. The narratives suggest that the suffering and deprivations of sansār equate to those of a spiritual path like sannyāsa and that these sufferings are thus effectively ‘authentic’. It is possible that Mahīpati represented Goṇāī, Rājāī and/or Āvalī as the antithesis of Nāmdev or Tukārām. In other words, Mahīpati may have used Goṇāī, Rājāī and/or Āvalī to symbolise the most undesirable aspects of grhaṣṭha and used Nāmdev and/or Tukārām to exemplify the negative elements of an extreme form of vairāgya. Consequently, one could construe Mahīpati’s portrayal of Goṇāī, Rājāī and/or Āvalī as drawing the hearer/reader towards a happy median between grhaṣṭha and vairāgya and thus discursively constructing the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder path. However, the tension between householdership and renunciation is not resolved fully in Mahīpati’s accounts as the conflict between Nāmdev’s daughter (Limbāī) and Vāṅka demonstrates.

Jani’s caritra depicts her as the ultimate servant by portraying her living a life of domestic service within a household and as an avatāra serving Viṭṭhal. Jani’s caritra suggests that even women of low status are loved and protected by god so they should perform their household duties faithfully with
devotion. Kānhopātrā’s life-story seems to censure kāma and advocate bhakti. Kānhopātrā’s interment probably signals her compliance with the tenets of bhakti and signify that the spiritual life is equal to sannyāsa and that such a life is to be found in the Vārkarī sampradāya. The brief biographies of Soyarā and Nirmalā suggest they were low-caste, married women and therefore householders. Gaṅgabāī/Guptanāth’s caritra portrays her as an ascetic due to widowhood, which is a form of renunciation within the grhaṇa framework that is prescribed behaviour for high-caste householder widows. The lives of these figures strongly imply the possibility of balancing domestic duties with bhakti, stressing that sansār might be full of difficulties but that one must nonetheless persist in dutiful and spiritual action. In contrast, Viṭhābāī is depicted as renouncer who abandons house and home in favour of devotion to Cidambarsvāmī, which may be why she is not included within the broader Vārkarī literary corpus. However, like Bahiṇābāī’s ātmanivedan, Sakhūbāī’s caritra presents her as a bhakta who epitomises strīdharma and pativratādharma. It seems that Sakhūbāī represents the householder par excellence as it is she who has been instrumentalised by film-makers to advocate women following their strīdharma and pativratādharma while living as a Vārkarī bhakta. Sakhū’s caritra demonstrates that the Vārkarī sampradāya resolved the sannyāsa-grhaṇa tension and so advocated a bhakti-focused household life.

Chapter Five took as its template the similarities and differences in the thematic groupings of the compositions attributed to Muktābāī, Janābāī and Bahiṇābāī within various editions as these suggest programmatic intent in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya. The chapter began by considering nāma, one of the most important devotional practices associated with bhakti as it reflected a devotional concern that appears in compositions attributed to almost all the Vārkarī santakaviyatrīs. The nāma abhaṅgas are effectively didactic as they outline the best means to achieve the spiritual goal of liberation or union but significantly the practice of nāma is one that can easily be undertaken within the domestic setting. In effect, the inclusion of the nāma songs attributed to the santakaviyatrīs signals the use of gender attribution as an effective device in the construction of a householder tradition because women are so wholly identified with the domestic environment: they are in effect paradigmatic of the grhaṇa life. The intimate relationships with the divine outlined in the chapter reinforce the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder tradition and draw attention once more to the possibility of performing bhakti within a householder environment. The sakhyā relationship suggests that the deity is present in all
manner of mundane tasks and that the deity can be met anywhere so there is no need to undertake renunciation.

The inclusion of the grinding abhaṅgas and compositions that employ quotidian imagery once more highlight the efficacy of bhakti in domestic settings and these compositions can therefore be interpreted as a discursive argument for the grhastha framework. The inclusion of kūṭa and upadeśa abhaṅgas attributed to Muktābāī and Janābāī suggests that the sampradāya negotiated a set of tensions in its discursive construction and so included Nāth/Śaivite/sannyāsa notions of mystical union to correspond to the bhakti concepts of salvation and ultimate liberation. Moreover, these attributed compositions signal a discursive construction, in this instance perhaps of the Vārkarī sampradāya as egalitarian.

The biographical images of Soyarā and Nirmaḷā, like many of the domestic or quotidian images in other compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs, reinforce the discursive construction of the tradition as grhastha. The biographical compositions attributed to Nāgarī and Bāhīṇābāī as well as many of the abhaṅgas attributed to Goṇāī and Rājāī highlight the tension between grhastha and vairāgya. This tension is balanced in the ātmanivedan attributed to Bāhīṇābāī. The resolution of the tension between pativratādharma and bhakti as well as grhastha and vairāgya in the spiritual biography of a woman is important in the construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a household tradition because it indicates that gender attribution has been utilised in the successful construction of the sampradāya as a householder path.

In summary then, this thesis has argued that gender attribution plays an important role in the discursive formation of the Vārkarī sampradāya as women are instrumentalised as householders par excellence. Moreover, I contend that the presence of compositions attributed to women and caritra about women within the Vārkarī corpus is indicative of an argument for, and indeed exemplification of, the viability of the householder path by those who were involved in constructing the traditions of the sampradāya. I therefore believe that the most plausible explanation for the number of women in the Vārkarī sampradāya is the effectiveness of gender attribution as a rhetorical device in the discursive construction of the Vārkarī sampradāya as a householder rather than a renunciatory path.

This thesis also raises some questions for future ethnographic research: to explore whether the compositions attributed to the santakaviyatrīs discussed in this thesis have a connection with the ‘popular base’. Do any of the santakaviyatrīs live in the popular imagination or operate as a resource to voice
resistance or protest against social discrimination and economic exploitation by the poor and powerless, particularly among members of lower castes. And if not why not?


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APPENDIX A:

GLOSSARY

*abadāgirī* ornamental umbrella, carried in processions over kings or pādukās

*abhaṅga* ‘steady’, ‘continuous’, ‘unbroken’ and ‘inviolable’; a metrical composition based on the folk ovī

*abhiseka* sprinkling of continual pouring of water; the ritual bath given to the image of the deity

*ācārya* a spiritual guide or teacher, one invested with the sacrificial thread who instructs in the Vedas and in religious mysteries; a conductor of religious ceremonies; a founder or leader of a religious order or sect

*adhyāya* section, chapter or part of a book

*advaya* non-duality, unity, identity, ultimate truth (see advaita)

Ādi ‘beginning’; the first part of Jñāneśvar’s life told by sant Nāmdev and then Mahīpati

Ādi-māyā/mātā/sakti primal power, primordial cosmic energy; the great divine mother; ‘a goddess united to the primeval male (ādipuruṣa) and genitress of the material world’ (Molesworth 1857:67); Pārvatī

ādiparamparā spiritual lineage; succession from the beginning of time

advaita “non-dual”, an influential school of thought that argues there is no distinction between Ultimate Reality (brahman) and the Self (atman, jīva); advaita Vedānta is considered the principal philosophy of the Vārkarīs

agni/ajñī fire, the sacrificial fire; the ‘fire’ of the stomach or the digestive faculty

agnihotra a priest who maintains a sacrificial fire in his home

āī mother; a suffix, denoting respect, added to the name of a woman or goddess

ajānavrksa the name of a tree in the temple court at Āḷandī, said to have sprung from the planted staff of Jñāneśvar and said to be unique

ajñāna ignorance

ajñī see agni

ajapā inner meditation of the Name (nāma) synchronised with one’s breathing

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ajāpajapa silent repetition of the Name (nāma)
ākṛtrima bhakti natural devotion
alaukika beyond the world, out of the world
Āḻvār ‘those immersed in god’, south-Indian Vaiṣṇava poet-saints (c.6–9th century C.E.), corresponding to the Nāyāṉārs
amantra unaccompanied by, unentitled to or not knowing Vedic verses or texts (i.e. śūdras or women)
amṛta nectar, the drink of the immortals; a preparation of milk, sugar and spices; deathless, eternal, immortal; final emancipation
aṃśa part, portion
anugraha favour, grace
anuṣṭhāna observance, religious exercise
Anuṣṭhānapāṭih ‘litany of observances’
anusvāra the nasal character represented by the dot over any letter (see bindu)
apsarā a class of female divinity or celestial nymph, who dance and sing at Indra’s court in heaven
āratī light from wicks soaked in purified butter or camphor is offered, in a circular motion, to a deity/person/object, sometimes with song(s) sung in praise of the deity (see ovālanae)
arccana honouring, worshiping; homage paid to deities and superiors (see navadhā bhakti)
ārta one who is distressed
ārta-bhakti distressful yearning devotion
arthārathī a seeker of worldly success, one who desires material gain
ārto the afflicted
āsana a posture held while seated; abiding; a small stool
āśrama the stages of life for a twice-born (dvija) male: brahmacārya (celibate student), grhaṭha (householder), vānaprastha (hermit or forest dweller), and sannyāsa (renouncer)
atiśūdra persons beyond the class of śūdra, ‘untouchables’
ātman the soul, the [essential] self
ātmānubhava experience or knowledge of the self
ātmanivedana offering oneself to the deity (see navadhā bhakti)
avatār/avatāra descent-form; incarnation (see svarūpa)
bābā ‘father’, a term of respect for an elderly man; a term of endearment for a child
bāda a notebook, book or compendium
baḍvā/baḍavā hereditary Brahman priest with a share in the proceeds of the temple of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr
bālakṛṣṇa adolescent Kṛṣṇa
bārase the naming ceremony of child on the eleventh or twelfth day after birth (also nāmavidhāna)
bhada bright
bhadakhambā ‘hero-stone’, memorial stone erected for a hero; a statue with human form
Bhagavadgītā ‘the Song of the Lord’ (c. 200 BCE), an episode in the Mahābhārata, is a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjūna discussing jñāna ‘knowledge’, karma ‘action’ and bhakti ‘devotion’ at the end of which Kṛṣṇa is revealed as the Supreme Lord (Bhagavān)
Bhagavān God, the Supreme Lord/Being; Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa
Bhāgavata Purāṇa a Sanskrit text, composed in South India, detailing the exploits of Kṛṣṇa and present Kṛṣṇa as the highest manifestation of the divine
Bhāgavata a follower or worshipper of Bhagavān; a Vaisnavite devotee
bhajan adoration, worship, reverence; repeating/singing the names of god as an act of worship; group devotional signing
bhākarī millet flat bread, the staple food of Maharashtra
bhakta a devotee
bhakta-vachaḷa devotee-lover
bhakti devotion, adoration; participation; performance
bhakti-mārga the way or path of devotion
bhaktin/bhaktīṇ a female devotee, worshipper
bhāṅḍē a vessel, dish, pot, pan (of metal, earth, wood or stone)
bhārūḍ a drama poem
bhāśya a commentary or exposition (see āṭkā)
bhāṭ a bard or minstrel
bhāva
 faith; condition, emotion, mood

bhāva-bhakti
emotional devotion

bhāvārtha
inherent meaning; faith in

bhedika
ballad, song, poem

bhikṣā
alms, begging, mendicancy; to beg for alms

bhikṣekari
beggar (for alms)

bhikṣu
an ascetic mendicant (of the Mahānubhāva sect); a Brahman in the fourth āśrama (saṁnyāsa/sannyāsa) existing by begging

Bhīmā
the main tributary of the river Krishna in Maharashtra; Paṇḍharpūr lies on its banks

bhrāntinārak
suffering the hell of a confused mind

bhūpāḷī
a metrical composition sung or hummed in the morning

bindu
dot, central or focal point; the dot representing the anusvāra in the syllable om

Bohra
part of the Isma'ili sub-sect of Shi'a Islam

Brahmā
the creator deity; first of triad with Śiva and Viṣṇu

brahmacārya
celibate student, a Brahman or twice-born male (dvija) in the first stage of his life

brahmagranthi
knot of Brahmā

brahman
the impersonal Absolute, the Ultimate Reality (see paramātmā); a brāhmaṇ, one of the priestly class

buddhi
intellect, mind, understanding

bukā
fragrant black powder

Candrabhāga
the river Bhīmā at Paṇḍharpūr is known thus (‘moon-quarter’) because it resembles a crescent moon

caritra, carita
the actions, acts, deeds, exploits, adventures, feats or exploits of gods, heroes or sants; a life-story, biography

Cēkkiḻār
Tamil court minister and hagiographer of the Periya Purāṇam (c.12th century)

cidvilāsa
‘the complete absence of duality and the absolute oneness of the creator and creation’

citkalā
one with divine intelligence

dabba/dabbā
‘little box’, tiffin

dabbawalla/dabbāvālā
lit. ‘box (-carrying) person’
dacoit a bandit, armed robber (from the Hindi term डाकैत)
dalāṇe to grind grain
darśan ‘sight’, ‘vision’ of the deity, exchange of vision; audience, meeting
dāsa a servant or slave (m)
dasarā the 10th day of the bright half of Āśvina (Sept.–Oct.), which concludes
Navarātrī, when Rāma defeated Rāvaṇa
dāsī a maidservant or slave; the wife of a śūdra (see navadhā bhakti); a prostitute
daśnāmī ‘ten names’, a Śaiva ascetic belonging to one of ten orders established by
Śaṅkara in the 8th century (Aranya, Āśrama, Bhārati, Giri, Parvata, Purī,
Sarasvatī, Sāgara, Tīrtha, and Vana)
daśya servitude, service
Dattātreya/Dattā Lord of ascetics; an incarnation of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahma
dēś (desh) ‘country’, ‘region’; in Maharashtra, the (west-central Deccan) plateau:
the area east of the ghāṭs/Sayhādris to the Bālāghāts, from the Godāvarī river
in the north to the Karnāṭaka border
deśastha Brahmans of the deś
deva pradakṣiṇā ‘the circuit of the gods’
devadāsī a girl dedicated to the worship and service of a deity or temple; a temple
dancer or ‘prostitute’
Devakī Kṛṣṇa’s mother, wife of Vasudev and sister of Kaṃsa
devanāgarī ‘divine city writing’; the script used for Sanskrit and other Indian languages,
commonly known as nāgarī
deväśayanē ekādaśī (śayana ekādaśī) the ekādaśī when the god goes to sleep
dharmakīrtan a religious discourse
dharmāśāḷā free accommodation for travellers (also dharmāśāla)
dhotar five to seven yards of cloth that is tied and knotted at a man’s waist and which
covers most of the legs
dhoti (Hindi) see dhotar
dhrupad/dhrūvapad ‘refrain’, the second or first stanza of a verse which acts as the refrain of a
song and which is meant to be sung by the audience
dhvāḍī a brother’s daughter, niece
dindī/dindī a (walking) group of pilgrims, usually with a leader; a stringed instrument,
with a gourd and long stick to which strings are fastened; a musical metre
**dīndīgān** a singer accompanied by a stringed instrument (dīndī)

**Dīndīrvan** the Dīndīra forest to which Kṛṣṇa came in search of his wife Rukmini

**dīvalī** the festival of lights (falling on the last two days of Āśvina) celebrating the victory of light over darkness, good over evil etc.

**dosa/dosā** South Indian crepe made from fermented rice batter and black lentils

**dvaita** dualism (see sāmkhya)

**dveṣa-bhakti** hate-devotion

**ekabhakta** the preeminent devotee

**ekādaśī** the eleventh lunar day (tītha) of the fortnight (pakṣa)—waning/dark (Kṛṣṇa) or bright/waxing (śukla)—of every lunar month of the Hindu calendar (see Appendix C); viewed as a spiritually beneficial day

**fakīr** a Muslim mendicant

**gāḍge** a small earthenware pot

**gālu/gāḷi** rude scolding; a curse; a term of abuse

**gaṇa** a composition in praise of Gaṇeśa and others

**Gaṇeśa** the deity of wisdom (hence the elephant head) and remover of obstacles; the son of Śiva and Pārvatī; chief of subordinate gods who attend Śiva

**Gaṅgā** the Ganges river

**garbhagṛha/garbha** ‘womb chamber’; inner sanctum of the temple, where the image of the deity resides

**gāruḍa** the mantra of Garuḍa, the king of birds

**gāthā** a book, collection of poems; a verse or stanza

**Gauḍīya** Bengali (Vaiṣṇavism)

**gavāṇa/gauḷan/gauḷani** a milkmaid or cowherdess; the song of a milkmaid or cowherdresses, a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and the milkmaids

**ghar** a house, household, habitation; domestic or social life

**gharadhanī** a householder, the husband or head of a household/family

**gharakarī** a householder, the master of the house

**gharavāsī** a householder

**ghāṭ** (ghat) a mountainous range

**gōdaḍī** a rough patchwork quilt, often made from old saris using running stitch
gondhaḷa a religious rite with singing and drama
gopa cowherd, cowherd song
gopī cowherdess, milkmaid
gopīcandana sandalwood-paste
gotra lineage, family
gotrī belonging to the lineage of…
govarī cow-dung cake
Govind ‘the chief of the cowherders’ or ‘the protector of cows’; Kṛṣṇa
grhaṛṣṭha a householder; a Brahman or twice-born (dvija) male in the second stage of his religious life
grhaṛṣṭha-sādhaka householder-spiritual seeker
grhini a housewife; a wife, a mistress of a house
gudhī a pole wrapped in cloth, decorated with coconut, marigold flowers and mango leaves, topped with a flag or upturned brass or silver pot (kalaśa)
gudhīpādaṃvā the spring festival celebrating the first day of the New Year (in Caitra) when gudhī are displayed in front of the house
guṇja wooden knob, i.e. handle
gurava low-caste worshipper of Śiva
guru religious teacher
guru-śiṣya paramparā guru-disciple lineage, disciplic succession
haripāṭh reciting the name of Hari (god)
haṭha yoga a branch of yoga that unites opposites, based on āsanas (postures) and prāṇāyām (breathing techniques)
hīn/hīna low, vile, bad, base, mean; deficient, defective, faulty, poor (skill); abandoned, forsaken; brought low
Janārdan ‘One who stimulates men’, an epithet for Kṛṣṇa
japa vocal repetition of the Name (nāma)
jāṭē hand-mill, quern
jāṭī/yāṭī castes
jayajayakār acclamation, calls of praise
jayantī birthday (of Kṛṣṇa)
jheṇḍā  a flag, ensign or banner
jheṇekārī  a flag-bearer
jhūlana/jhulāṇā  a swing or swinging seat
jīnāsūḥ  the inquisitive
jīva  soul
jīvalagā/jivalaga  dear, beloved, a person attached to one’s heart
jīvanmukti  liberation
jñāna  knowledge, understanding
jñāna-yoga  discipline of knowledge, wisdom and direct experience of Brahman as ultimate Reality, includes the renunciation of desires and actions to attain advaitin (advaita) knowledge as the means to liberation
jñānī  a person of higher knowledge
jñasu  a seeker of knowledge
kaivalya  isolation; liberation; the state of the being reabsorbed into brahman
kākaḍā/kāṅkaḍā  a coarse cloth wick, a wick of a lamp
kākaḍāraṭī  waving a platter with a cloth-wick lamp before the idol at day-break
kalā  murmuring
kalāṣa  pinnacle or zenith, a dome or cupola; a metal or earthen water-pot (also kālaṣa, kaḷaṣa, kaḷasā)
kalāvantaṇa  sight of the temple pinnacle
kāma  desire, pleasure, longing, love; an act or deed, work, action
Kāṅnaḍā/ Kannada  the language of Karnataka; that which pertains to Karnāṭaka
kanyā  girl of marriageable age, about eight years old
karman  act, action, performance, work; an religious act or rite (e.g. sacrifice)
karma-yoga  discipline of action without desire for results
kathā  story, account; a legend of a deity related in public with music and singing
kavi, kavī  poet (m)
khāpara  a flat earthenware dish in which cakes are rolled, grain parched etc.; the lower half of a pitcher, serving as a bowl etc.; a potter’s vessel or earthenware pot
kīrtan/kīrtana  a public religious discourse, recitation, narration or story-telling with musical interludes (see sankīrtana and nāma-sankīrtana; navadhā bhaktī)
kīr̥tanakār  a performer of kīrtans (m)
kīrtanakārī  a woman who performs kīrtans (not usually a Vārkarī)
krāntikārak  revolutionary principles
kīrtanapara  ‘the way of kīrtan’
Kṛṣṇa  ‘black’, ‘dark-blue’; the deity regarded as an avatāra of Viṣṇu
kṛṣṇa-līlā  Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes
ksatriya  warrior, the second of four varṇas (social orders)
ksetra  a sacred site, a field, a human body
kubjā  hump-backed, crooked, dwarfed; the ‘hunch-backed’ maid Trivakrā whom Kṛṣṇa first encountered on the road to Mathura
kāl/kul  family, race, tribe, lineage, caste
kulacāra  behaviour/practices/duties of a family/tribe
kuladevatā  family and/or tutelar deity (also kuladaivata, kuladaivatva)
kuladhharma  religion or religious practice particular to a family
kulakaranī/kulkarnī  village accountant and record keeper
kullāla/kullāla  a potter
kuṭ  enigmatic
kuṭumb  family, household; mistress of a household, a wife
lākh  one hundred thousand (100,000); also lakṣa
lākhoṭā  a closed or sealed letter
lalīta/lalitā  a dramatic entertainment on the last night of navratra, songs composed and sung for this event; the last abhaṅga of a series
laukika  worldly, belonging to the world
lāvani  a love song with a powerful rhythm and erotic sentiment;² a song sung by women when planting or sowing
līlā  pastime, exploit
liṅga  the phallus representing Śiva; a penis; gender; a distinguishing mark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning and Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lingāyat</td>
<td>one who wears the Śiva-liṅga; a devotee of Śiva (Vīraśaiva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lōṭāṅgaṇa</td>
<td>a prostration; a means to proceeding to a pilgrimage site or temple by rolling one’s self over and over; a means of obtaining religious merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lugadī</td>
<td>a nine-yard sāḍī (sārī)</td>
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<tr>
<td>madhurā bhakti</td>
<td>intimate loving devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mādhurya</td>
<td>love, amorous passion, the erotic sentiment (see śṛṅgāra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mādhuryyabhāva</td>
<td>beautiful-sentiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahābhārata</td>
<td>Sanskrit epic poem (c.400 BCE–300 CE) about the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas, resulting in a battle that the Pāṇḍavas win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahānubhāva</td>
<td>a religious tradition that began in the thirteenth century in protest against image worship and Brahmanical orthodoxy³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mahāpātaka</td>
<td>the five great sins or crimes: killing a Brahman (brahmahatyā), stealing gold (survana-steya), drinking spirits (surāpāna), adultery with one’s spiritual teacher or incest with one’s mother (gurutalpagamana), and associating with anyone who has committed the previous four crimes (tatsamsarga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahārāj</td>
<td>‘great king’, an honourific title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahārāṣṭra</td>
<td>the Marathi speaking state, formed in May 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahārvāḍā</td>
<td>the part of a village or town where the Mahārs live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māhāmya</td>
<td>a legendary account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mahayogini</td>
<td>the great mistress of yoga; the Goddess (Devi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māher</td>
<td>a woman’s maternal home, a married woman’s mother’s home; a refuge or resting place, a place of pleasant resort, an asylum or retreat (contrasts with sāsar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mahinemāha</td>
<td>monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mālkarī</td>
<td>‘one with a garland’ of tulasī beads (a Vārkarī)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māṇḍā/mānde</td>
<td>a thin, sweet pastry made from wheat flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maṅgalasnāna</td>
<td>an auspicious bath in oil and afterwards in water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maṅgalveḍha</td>
<td>a town near Paṅdharpūr, associated with Cokhāmeḷā and Kānhopātrā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manas puja</td>
<td>mental worship, meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mantra</td>
<td>sacred incantation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marga</td>
<td>way, path, road</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>math</td>
<td>a college; a hermitage; a devotee’s dwelling place; a residence of a company of ascetics; a religious community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māuli</td>
<td>“mother” (lit.); used as a term of endearment or respect for a woman, the deity Viśṭhal, the sant Jñāneśvar and for a cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māyā</td>
<td>illusion, ignorance; creative energy; love, affection; compassion, pity, tenderness; a mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māyabāpa</td>
<td>‘mother-father’ (lit.), parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mehuna</td>
<td>a couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehunpurī</td>
<td>a town associated with Cokhāmeḷā, his sister Nirmaḷā, and Muktābāī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moḍī</td>
<td>the syllabary used to write Marathi until 1950 when it was replaced with devanāgarī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mokṣa</td>
<td>liberation, emancipation from transmigration and absorption of the self into the Absolute (Brahman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motī</td>
<td>a pearl; an ornament (for the nose)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mrdaṅga</td>
<td>long drum held horizontally and played on both ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mudrā</td>
<td>seal, stamp, imprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mudrikā</td>
<td>‘little symbol’; the seal or signature of a poem or song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mukta</td>
<td>liberation or freedom from worldly existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muktī</td>
<td>final liberation, freedom or emancipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukund</td>
<td>the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who awards liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muni</td>
<td>a sage, ascetic, seer, monk, devotee, hermit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mūrti</td>
<td>manifestation, embodiment, personification, incarnation; an image or idol of a deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nada</td>
<td>nasal sound indicated by the ardha-mātrā ‘semi-circle’ in ॐoṃ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāda-bindu</td>
<td>the unstruck sound heard by yogis and the Ātman experienced as the luminous/lustrous point they see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nagarapradaksinā</td>
<td>‘circuit of the town’; carrying the image of a deity around a city in procession; making a round of temples in a city paying one’s respects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāma</td>
<td>a name; the Name of the divine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāma-ghoṣa/ghosa</td>
<td>loud utterance of the Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāma-japa</td>
<td>repeating/muttering the Name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
nāmamudrā  the ‘symbol’ (mudrā) of the name (nāma); the ‘seal’ or ‘signature’ of a poem or song (also mudrikā)
nāman  veneration, obeisance
nāmapanitha  the practice of repeating the Name
nāma-para  the way of the Name
nāma-pātha  repetition of the Name
nāma-saṅkīrtana  chanting the name(s) of the Lord (a deity or King)
namaskāra  worship, obeisance or salutation; performed by joining the palms, inclining the head and saying namaskār
nāmasmaranā  calling to mind the names of a deity, repeating the divine Name
Nammāḻvār  the most famous of the Āḻvārs (c. 880–930 C.E.); composed the Tiruvāymoli ‘the ten decades’ to Viṣṇu, which is considered the ‘Tamil Veda’
Nāth  ‘Lord’; a Śaivite sect
navadhā bhakti  nine forms of bhakti: śravaṇa, kīrtana, smaraṇa, pādasēvana, arcana, vandana, dāsya, sakhyā, ātmanivedan
navarātra  nine days and nights
navarātrī  festival of nine days and ten nights when the nine forms of the goddess Śakti are worshipped; the tenth day is dasarā or vijayādaśamī
dīnānār  an eye
Nāyaṉār  Tamil Śaiva ‘poet-saints’ corresponding to the Āḻvārs
nirguṇa  without attributes, devoid of all qualities or properties
nirūpaṇa  explanation, narration, telling
nirvānā  final emancipation, cessation, death, dissolution, extinction, vanishing
niśveda  disgust, loathing (of the world)
nirvāṇa  departing, death, final emancipation
nirvāṇapara  ‘on’ or ‘about’ nirvāṇa
niṣedha  prohibition
niskāma karma  disinterested action
nivṛtti dharma  the way of renunciation
nivṛtti  inactive contemplative life; death, emancipation from existence; stopping, resting
nivṛttimārga  the way of renunciation and withdrawal
the sacred and mystical syllable identified with Brahman; \( \text{ॐ} \) \((a+u+m)\) is formed of the bindu (dot) and nada (nasal sound indicated by the ardha-mātrā ‘semi-circle’) and is known as the prānava

the ritual act of waving a small lighted oil lamp, in a vertical circle, in front of a deity or person in order to remove evil or in consecration. The receiver will often have a kunkum (saffron, turmeric) tilak (mark on the forehead) and then be offered rice, grains and flame (see ārati)

normal, medial ritual state (neither polluted nor pure), (see sovāle)

a poetic stanza, verse; a song sung by women while pounding and/or grinding (pl. ovāyā)

a foot or footprint; a metrical composition

the end or ornamental border of a sāḍī (sārī)

service to the feet [of a deity in a temple] (see navadā bhakti)

a sandal; an impression of the feet of a deity or holy person worshipped as a source of grace

‘cradle swinging’

palanquin, litter

the five nectar like substances—milk, curds, clarified butter, honey and sugar—in which the image of a deity is bathed; a seasoning of chillies, tamarind, coconut milk, molasses and oil; or delicious food

a religious name for the town of Paṇḍharpūr

‘Lord of Paṇḍhari’ (Paṇḍharpūr)

an learned man, a teacher

‘The White One’; an epithet for Viṭhobā (also Pāṇḍuraṅga, Pāṇḍuraṅga, Pāṇḍuraṅgā)

group of people dining in a row, commensal dining

a ‘road’ or ‘way’; a religious group; a ‘sect’

spiritual knowledge; spirituality, meditation

the Cosmic Soul, Supreme Reality (see brahman)

lineage, succession, tradition

evening recitation

reading (a purāṇa), perusal, studying
**patākā**  
red-ochre flag

**pāṭh**  
reciting or reading

**pāṭīḷ**  
village headman

**pativratā**  
a devoted, dutiful and virtuous wife

**Periya Purāṇam**  
‘Great story’, a hagiographical account of the lives of 63 Tamil Śiva-bhaktas (Nāyaṉārs) by Cēkkiḻār that forms the twelfth and final volume of the *Tirumugai*

**phugadī**  
a game in which two [female] players hold hands and spin rapidly in a circle (the players often utter a puffing sound *phū*)

**pitāmbara**  
a yellow silk *dhotar* (*dhotī*)—five to seven yards of cloth that is tied and knotted at a man’s waist and which covers most of the legs—worn by Kṛṣṇa and Viṭṭhal

**pohe**  
flattened rice flakes cooked with onions, turmeric, chillies, mustard and cumin seeds, and curry leaves; served as a snack or for breakfast

**pothī**  
a manuscript (of a religious text); a loose leaf volume; reading or reciting a *pothī*

**pothīpāṭha**  
reading or reciting a *pothī*

**prabodhinī ekādaśī**  
eleventh day of the bright fortnight

**pradakṣiṇā**  
circumambulation of an object keeping one’s right-side towards it

**praṇava**  
the sacred syllable *om*

**prāṇāyām**  
breathing techniques; the practice of ‘restraining of breath’ while mentally reciting the names and attributes of the deity. This form of spiritual meditation includes *kumbhaka* (stopping the breath by shutting the mouth and closing the nostrils with the fingers of the right hand), *pūraka* (closing the right nostril with the forefinger and drawing up air through the left nostril and then closing the left nostril and drawing up air through the right nostril) and *recaka* (expelling the breath from one nostril). It is also one of the eight modes of self-restraint (yoga): *yama* (restraint [of the senses]), *niyama* (voluntary penance, meritorious piety), *āsana* (holding a posture), *prāṇāyāma* (*breath exercises*), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal), *dhāraṇā* (concentration of the mind), *dhyāna* (meditation), and *samādhi* (to repeat, study thoroughly)

**prāṇotkramaṇa**  
departure of the breath or spirit; death

**prapañca**  
the world; the business of life; worldly life; deceit, trick, fraud; error, illusion

Prārthana Samāj  
Prayer Society
**prasthānatraya/i** triple foundation

**pratīksā anugraha** favourable attention

**pravacana** recitation, oral instruction, exposition; sacred writings

**pravr̥tti** active worldly life

**prema** love, affection, tenderness, devotion

**prema-bhakti** tender devotion

**punarūgamaṇa** rebirth, returning

**Puṇḍalīk** a great bhakta, considered to have attracted Viṭṭhobā to Paṇḍharpūr

**purāṇa** a sacred or poetical work; stories and myths of gods and/or kings (see smṛti)

**pūrṇimā** the day of the full moon

**pūrvvaraṅga** first discourse, explanation

**rāga** musical mode

**Rakhumāī** the wife of Viṭṭhal or Kṛṣṇa (in Maharashtra); also Rukmiṇī

**Rakmāī** see Rukmiṇī or Rakhumāī

**rāmanavamī** the ninth day of the light half of the month of Caitra (March-April); celebrated as the birthday of Rāma and the marriage day of Rāma and Sītā

**rāma-rājya** the kingdom of Rāma or God

**rana/rāṇā** prince, monarch, king, chief

**raṅgaṇ** a circle, an arena; a ceremony of horses circling the pālkhī in a large field; the platform or rostrum for performing a kīrtan

**rasa** taste, flavour, sentiment or feeling

**ṛgvedī** a Brahman following the Ṛg Veda

**ṛṣi** ancient sage or seer; inspired poet, singer of sacred hymns (Vedas); seven were innumerated in the Brāhmaṇas and later ten (Mbh)

**Rukmiṇī** the wife of Viṭṭhal or Kṛṣṇa; also Rakhumāī, Rakhamāī, Rakhamādevī, Rakhamīṇ (in Maharashtra)

**rūpaka** a musical measure; a drama or play

**sābudāṇā (khicāḍī)** sago fried with black mustard seeds, cumin seeds, green chillies, salt, sugar and peanuts

**sābudāṇā vadā** fried sago patty

**sadguru** a good teacher or a spiritual instructor; the Divine Guru (see satguru)
sādhaka  a spiritual seeker or aspirant, an adept
sādhana  practice (one’s own spiritual practice), observance; method, means (the ‘means’ to an end); study with the goal of obtaining emancipation
sadhu  a holy man, sage or saint
saguṇa  with attributes, qualities, properties, virtues
sahajā  mystic union, emancipation during life; innate, natural
sāhitya  literature
śaka/śake  era
sakhī-bhāva  the state, condition or emotion of female friendship or companionship
sakhyā  friendship, companionship (see navadhā bhakti)
sāksātkar  perception or apprehension of God; direct mystical experience
śakti/Śakti  the active energy or power of a deity often personified as his wife; the vulva (see linga)
sāmādhi  ‘union’; profound or abstract meditation (so as to identify with the object meditated upon), a religious vow of intense devotion; self-immolation by drowning or burying oneself alive; the rite of burying in water a deceased sannyāsi; the tomb or sanctuary of a sant or sannyāsi (often with a tulasī plant erected over it)
sāmkhya/sāṅkhya  a system of philosophy that posits dualism (dvaita)
samnyāsa  asceticism; renunciation (S)
samnyāsin  a renouncer (S)
Sampradāya  a religious tradition or ‘sect’; a system of religious doctrine transmitted from one teacher to another; custom, practice
samsāra  the cycle of birth and rebirth, reincarnation, transmigration, wandering through [one existence to another], the circuit of mundane existence; secular; worldly illusion (see sansār)
samvād  conversation, dialogue
samvittī  consciousness; knowledge
sandhyābhāṣa  ‘intentional’ or ‘secret’ language
sañjīvan saṃādhi  living tomb
saṅkalpa  resolution
saṅkīrtana  praise, celebration, glorification; congregational chanting of the Lord’ name
**sannyāsa** asceticism; renunciation (M)

**sannyāśī** a renouncer or an ascetic (M)

**sannyāsinī** a renouncer or an ascetic (F), see yoginī

**sansār** secular life (as a householder), domestic life, married life or familial life; domestic affairs (see sansāra)

**sant** 'saint’, a holy person,

**santakavi** sant-poet

**santakaviyatrī** sant-poetess

**santapara** ‘the way of the sants’, the companionship of the sants (see satsaṅga)

**santa-parivār** followers or family of sants

**santa-sevā** service to the sants

**śānti** peace, tranquillity; death

**saptāha** reading a text over seven days

**saradār** a title of honour conferred by Maratha and Peshwa rulers; a chief, a leader, a military commander, an officer

Sarasvatī the wife of Brahma; the goddess of speech and eloquence; patron of arts and music; the inventor of Sanskrit and devanāgarī (Sanskrit works like the Veda are ascribed to her); speech

**sāsar** a woman’s father-in-law’s house (contrasts with māher)

**śāstra** a didactic religious text or treatise considered to be of divine origin

**śāstrik/śāstric** relating to the śāstras

**sāsuravāśīṇ** daughter-in-law, a girl living in her father-in-law’s house

Śatarudrīyastotra a liturgical prayer dedicated to Rudra (Śiva)

**satguru** the Divine Guru; a good teacher

**satsaṅga** good society, good company, good association

**sattva** righteousness, goodness, purity, wisdom

Satyaśodhak Samāj Truth-seeking Society

**saubhāgya** good fortune; the happy and joyous state of wifehood as opposed to widowhood (consisting in the privilege of wearing ornaments, using pigments, etc.); the auspiciousness, excellent and blessed quality, inhering in a woman with a husband

**saudāgar** trader
| **śejāratī** | waving a platter with a burning lamp before the idol at night |
| **sevā** | religious service |
| **sevak** | servant, attendant |
| **siddha** | ‘realised, perfected one’, a practitioner (sādhu) who through his practice (sādhana) realises his goal of superhuman powers (siddhis) and bodily immortality (jīvanmukti); a sectarian appellation |
| **siddhi** | ‘realisations’, ‘perfections’; superhuman powers |
| **śimpī** | tailor |
| **śisya** | a pupil, disciple, follower or apprentice |
| Śiva | deity of ‘destruction’ in triad with Brahmā and Viṣṇu; the supreme Lord who creates, maintains, and destroys the cosmos; the Lord of yoga and asceticism; the Lord of the Dance (Śiva Naṭṛāja) |
| **śiva-līṅga** | a representation of the phallus within a vulva symbolising the union of Śiva and śakti (his dynamic energy) |
| **śivarātrī** | a night on which fasting, vigil, and other observances are held in honour of Śiva. The night is the thirteenth/fourteenth of the dark half (kṛṣṇa pakṣa) of every month and particularly that of Māgha |
| **skandha** | chapter, section, part (of a book) |
| **śloka** | a verse or stanza of two lines |
| **smarana** | remembering, recollection; mental recitation of the name(s) of a deity (see navadhā bhakti) |
| **smrīti** | ‘that which is remembered’ or indirect revelation (see śrūti) |
| **soḷe/solā** | undefiled (derived from sovalā, somvalā or sovala) |
| **sovala/sovale** | pure, clean, holy (see ovale) |
| **śraddhā** | reverence, veneration; faith, belief |
| **śravaṇa** | ‘hearing’; listening to spiritual discussions, sermons or discourses (see navadhā bhakti) |
| **śrigāra** | love, amorous passion (see mādhurya) |
| **śrūti** | ‘that which is heard’ or divine revelation (see smṛti) |
| **strīdharma** | the office, business, proper function, or appropriate virtue of woman; the religious duties/path of women; menstrual excretion; modesty (lajjā) |
| **śuddha pratipadā** | first full moon day |
| **śūdra** | the fourth varṇa |
śukla  
bright

sumeru  
the golden or sacred mountain, Meru

sūna  
daughter-in-law

dsvarūpa  
[having] one’s own form or figure; a spontaneous manifestation (in contrast with avatāra)

Śyāma  
dark blue, black; dark coloured; an epithet for Kṛṣṇa.

ṭāḷ  
cymbal(s); a musical measure

ṭāḷakarī  
a cymbal player; a chorus of 10–50 cymbal players who stand behind a kirtankār singing and playing ṭāḷ

tapasvinī  
female ascetic

tāṭi  
a ‘gate or fence made of strips of bamboo’ (Tulpule 1991: 297); ‘a light frame of bamboos or other sticks covered with grass, leaves…used as a door’ (Molesworth 1857:273)

thālīpāka  
a plateful of food; the name of a poem by Janābāī

ṭīkā  
a commentary (see bhāṣya)

tīrtha  
‘holy place’, ‘holy water’, ‘crossing place’ and ‘ford’; a sacred pilgrimage site usually beside a river, stream or sacred spring; the pilgrimage to such a site

tīrthāvaḷī  
Nāmdev and Jhāneśvar’s pilgrimage of holy places; a line or list of places of pilgrimage (recited at worship)

tīrthayātrā  
pilgrimage of holy places

Tirumūraśi  
a canon consisting of eleven volumes of songs praising Śiva in Tamil by south Indian poets (c.6th to 11th century) and a final hagiographical volume (the Periya Purāṇam)

tribhaṅgī  
 thrice-bent: Kṛṣṇa

tulasī/tuḷasī/tulaśī  
holy basil (ocymum sanctum), venerated by Vaiṣṇavas as sacred to Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa; worn by Viṭṭhal (commonly tuḷśī)

tulasīmāḷā  
garland of beads (made from tuḷśī wood)

tutārī  
a large curved horn
udvega  distress due to separation from beloved
udyāpana  a completion ceremony
ulaṭbāṃśi  ‘upside-down language’, paradox
unmanī  detachment
upadeśa  advice
vacana  a saying, utterance or aphorism
vāḍā  a large house with a compound; public building; a quarter, a division of a town or village
vadha  dark
vahī  a stitched book; a register
vaikunṭha  Viṣṇu’s paradise or highest heaven
vairāgya  absence of worldly desire or passion; renunciation of sensuous delights or gratification; detachment from the world
Vaiṣṇava  a devotee or follower of Viṣṇu (or one of his incarnations)
vaiśya  the third varṇa (agriculturalists, merchants)
vamsāvalī  chronicle of a dynasty or region
vānaprastha  a hermit or forest dweller, a Brahman or twice-born male (dvija) in the third stage of life
vandana  praise, worship, adoration, obeisance (see navadhā bhakti)
vāṇī  merchant
vārī  pilgrimage (to Paṇḍharpūr)
Vārkarī  ‘one who goes on pilgrimage’ to Paṇḍharpūr (see māḷkarī)
varṇa  the social order (brahman, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra)
varṇa-dharma  the duty of one’s social order
varṇāśrama-dharma  the obligations of one’s class or caste associated with one’s stage of life (āśrama)
Vaśiṣṭha  a celebrated Vedic sage; a Brahman man who observes all commands and rites
Vāsudeva  father of Kṛṣṇa and husband of Devakī; an epithet for Kṛṣṇa; a type of wandering mendicant who sings devotional songs, a member of a (Marāṭhā) caste whose men wear a cap of peacock feathers and go on begging rounds at daybreak (see Kiehnle 2005)
vātsalya  parental love, affection or tenderness
Veda
'sacred knowledge', ancient scriptures that were ‘revealed’ (śruti) to the sages of which the Rgveda is considered the holiest by the orthodox

Vedānta
'end of the Vedas'; the philosophical systems based on the Upaniṣads; advaita Vedanta is considered the principal philosophy of the Vārkarīs

Vedic
relating to the Vedas

Veśyā
prostitute

Vidhi
an injunction; a sacred precept

Viṇā
a stringed musical instrument; an Indian lute

Viṇākarī
a lute-player

Viraḥa
separation, the anguish of separation or of absence (of lovers or friends, from God)

Virahiṇī/virani
a woman under the pangs of separation from her beloved; a song of such a woman

Virakta
detached, dispassionate; an ascetic or renouncer

Viṅgānā
stories of heroic (Rajput) women

Viraśaiva
‘heroic’-śaiva, devotees of Śiva (see Lingāyat)

Virodha
opposition, obstruction, antagonism, contradiction

Vīryāṇī
‘the wonderful activities of god’

Viṣṇu
the ‘maintainer’ deity in triad with Brahmā and Śiva; the transcendent Lord dwelling in Vaikuṇṭh where his devotees go, with his grace, upon liberation; he manifests himself in the world by his avatāra, mūrtis and in the hearts of all beings as their inner controller (antaryāmin)

Viṣṇusahasranāma
the Thousand Names of Vishnu

Viḍ or Ĩṭ
brick

Viṭhobā
the deity at Paṇḍharpuḍ, worshipped by Vārkarīs

Viṭṭhal
the deity at Paṇḍharpuḍ, worshipped by Vārkarīs

Viṣvagah
suffering in separation

Vrata
votive rites; vow

Yajña
worship, devotion, prayer, oblation, sacrifice

Yajurveda
liturgical manual to perform sacrifice (c. 1400–1000 B.C.E)

Yama
the god of the underworld who judges/governs the spirits of the dead

Yaśodā
Krṣṇa’s foster-mother
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>yoga</strong></th>
<th>‘yoke’; physical, mental and spiritual discipline; abstract meditation; devotion; with the aim of gaining spiritual insight and/or union with the Absolute (Brahman)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>yogabhrasṭa</strong></td>
<td>one who was interrupted during the performance of yoga in former birth; a person eminent for virtues and graces, who would have been liberated if s/he had completed what s/he had begun (i.e. a course of Yogic discipline)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>yogapar abhanāgamālā</strong></td>
<td>garland of songs about yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yogeśvar</strong></td>
<td>the Lord of Yoga; Kṛṣṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>yogi/yogin</strong></td>
<td>a follower of yoga; a contemplative, devotee, ascetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>yoginī</strong></td>
<td>a female ascetic or yogi in the Siddha/Śaiva tradition; a woman in whom Śiva and Śākti are united or a woman who meditates on the union of Śiva and Śākti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B:

COMPOSITIONS ATTRIBUTED TO THE VĀRKĀRĪ SANTAKAVIYATRĪS

1. Muktābāī

Tāṭīce abhaṅga.1

Yoṁī pāvana manācā | sahäi appareṭa janācā 1/1
Vishś rāgaṁ ḍhāle ṣahśi | sāntī suḫe ṣāvā pāṇī 1/2
Shabdāṣṭraṁ ḍhāle kḷesha | sāntī manāvā upadeśa 1/3
Vishvapāşa bṛhṃ ḍoria | tāṭī ṭudā jānaṇeśvara 1/4

Yogī pāvana manācā / sāhī aparādha janācā /1/
Viśṇa rāgē jhālē vanhē / sāntī sukhē vāhē pāṇī /2/
Śabdāṣṭra jhāle kḷesha / sāntīmāṇāvā upadeśa /3/
Viśvapāśa brahma dorā / tāṭī ughādā jhāneśvara /4/

A yogi of pure mind bears a person’s faults.
The world rages but as a sant you should easily douse your anger.
Words are like hurtful weapons but a sant regards these as teachings.
The world’s a cloth and Brahma the thread; 3 open the door Jāneśvar.
(First tāṭīce abhaṅga, Muktābāī, SSG 1, p.236).

Santa teci jāṇā jagī / dayā kṣamā jyānce angī /1/6
Lobha ahantā naye manā / jagī virakta teci jāṇā /2/
Iḥ paralokī suhī / śuddajñāna jyānce mukhi /3/
Mithyā kalpanā maṇi kṣara / tāṭī ṭudā jānaṇeśvara /4/

People recognise a sant as one who is forbearing.

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1 The translations were undertaken with Dr. Kasturi Dadhe (2004–2007) and the author V.P. (Hemant) Kanitkar (2010–2011) with some additional help from Sulu Abhyankar.
2 There are forty-two Muktābāī abhaṅgas in the SSG and I have translated nine. There are several translations of Muktābāī verses by Vanita (1989) with Champa Limaye but due to the lack of references it is difficult to identify the abhaṅgas. However, two of these are probably the kut abhaṅgas—“On the temple dome dwelt a sage” (SSG 1:41; Vanita 1989:48) and mungī udāti ākāśi ‘Ant flew in the sky’ (SSG1:42; Kolatkar 1982:114; in Zelliot 2000:193; Vanita 1989:46; Ramaswamy 2007:221)—that I have also translated. There are also eleven tāṭīce abhaṅga ‘Songs of the Door’ ascribed to Muktābāī and Vanita (1989) has translated all eleven tāṭīce abhaṅga while I have translated five.
3 A tāṭi is a door made of planks or a wattle gate. These abhaṅgas tend to appear in manuscript form rather than compendia like the SSG, see Dāṇḍekar (1980) and muktAbA_1 (1999). Babras accepts these verses as being by Muktābāī, Jāneśvar’s sister, aged nine (1996:76) but the question of authorship remains open.
4 The first part of this line may also read tāṭīce brahma dorā and paṭa means ‘cloth’.
5 This could also read ‘Brahma ties the folds of the universe together’.
6 muktAbA_1 (1999) replaces teći with tocī throughout this verse.
As one whose mind lacks conceit, as one who is called ‘he who has attained bliss’,  
As one who desires happiness after death, as one whom in his youth attained pure knowledge,  
Set aside false doubts; open the door Jñāneśvar.

(Fourth tāṭīce abhaṅga).

If one knows oneself to be an ascetic, are all others worthless?  
Passions arise from Brahma—the origin; all illusion is rubbish.  
When the origins of illusion cease, then all will become Brahma.  
Understanding this from beginning to end a sant should be content.  
Leave behind all worry and anger; open the door Jñāneśvar.

(Seventh tāṭīce abhaṅga).

Brahma is the Absolute; the ancestor of us all.  
If your own hand hits you, you don’t get upset, do you?  
If one’s teeth bite one’s tongue, do all thirty-two [teeth] break?  
Great mental sorrow can lead to true wisdom.  
Chew chick-peas as hard as iron, then dance at Brahma’s feet.  
Subdue the mind, become detached; open the door Jñāneśvar.

(Sixth tāṭīce abhaṅga).

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7 This is probably verse number 4 of those translated by Swami Rajhandras and Ruth Vanita (1989:52).
8 This is probably verse 5 as translated by Swami Rajhandras and Ruth Vanita (1989:53).
9 The word ‘chickpeas’ (caṇā) appears in the Jñāneśvarī 12.70 (see Pradhan and Lambert 1987:318; Tulpule 1999:225).
10 This seems to be verse 6 of those translated by Swami Rajhandras and Ruth Vanita (1989:53).
From where does this anger come? You are enlightened. You know well the people are Janārdan.

Pledged to serve, we cannot give up our pledge. Anytime anger erupts, all yoga is wasted. So enlarge your vision; open the door Jñāneśvar.

Sing bhajans faithfully, perpetually repeat the Name; [even] a harlot can enter paradise thus. For us the sacred Names are Hari, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa; day and night they point the way to liberation.

With the power of the Name the river of existence can be crossed; chanting the Name of Hari has now become a hobby.

11 Janārdan is referred to in the Bhagavadgītā where he is identified with Kṛṣṇa (1.35–39; 3.1; 11.51). In the Mahābhārata (3.186.14) Janārdan is described by Mārkaṇḍeya as Viṣṇu with ‘broad eyes and yellow garments’ [Kṛṣṇa] and as ‘the creator, the transformer and the maker of the existence of all beings’ (Sutton 2000:204). This follows the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (1.2.63–66) where Janārdan takes the form of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva to create, maintain and destroy the world (Sutton 2000:244 n.20). In the Matsya Purāṇa Viṣṇu, in the form of a fish, is manifested as Janārdan (Muir 1868). ‘Janārdan’ has been interpreted as ‘Punisher of Man’ (Molesworth 1857); ‘exciting or agitating men’ (Monier-Williams 2008); ‘Punisher of the wicked’ and ‘Giver of benevolence to beings’ (Abbott 1996, 2: 452); ‘the destroyer of people’s distress’ (Kumar 1998:31); ‘the Ideal Hero and Paragon of Universal Humanity’, the ‘Paragon and Perfection of all sublimated aspirations’ (Gitanand 2004:334); ‘slayer of Jana’ the demon (Mokherjee 2002:291); ‘the object of adoration to mankind’ (Wilson 1864:41 n.1); ‘He who is adored by devotees for the fulfilment of their desires’ (Chinmayananda 2008:xvii).

12 This line talks of wearing a badge (brīda) and being bound or attached to feet, both of which can be interpreted to indicate service.

13 This line appears to follow the second line of a Sopān abhanga: sabāhya kondalẽ nivānta ugalẽ/rāmarasẽ rangalẽ are janā/1/ hari rama krsna, hari rama krsna/ dinaniśī praśna mukhẽ kara/2/ (v. 7, SSG 1:231). The word praśna in this context may mean ‘a call’ rather than ‘a question’ (Tulpule 1999:467).
Muktāī ponders the extent Hari-love after chanting the Name: the Name always leads to immortality.\(^{15}\) (Muktābāī *abhaṅga* 7, SSG 1, p.239).

\begin{align*}
\text{आदि मध्य उध्वे मुक्त भक्त हरि | सबाह्य अभ्यंतारी हारि ऐकु } & 15 \\
\text{नदगि तीरं हरिरूपे मुक्त | अवधेय सूक्त जपिलें } & 16 \\
\text{त्यापौल नामं मुक्त पै जडमूढ } & 16 \\
\text{तरले दगड समुद्री देखा } & 16 \\
\text{मुताई हरि हरि सवंदा पै मुक्त | नाहीं आदि अंत उरला आम्हां } & 16 \\
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
Aḍī madhya ुर्वध्वा मुक्ति हरी / साह्या अभ्यासंतारी हारी ऐकु /1/ 
Galaṅghī तर्थे हरिरूपे मुक्ता / अवधेय सूक्ता जपिलें /2/ 
Jyacena नामं मुक्ता पै जडमूढां / तराले दगडां समुद्री देखा /3/ 
Muktāi हरिनामे सर्वदा पै मुक्ता / नाहीं आदि अंत उरला आम्हां /4/ 
\end{align*}

Beginning – middle – end, the devotee of Hari is released;\(^{16}\) inwardsly and outwardsly Hari is all. No holy places are necessary when the essential hymn is repeated.\(^{17}\) Through His Name the slow and ignorant are liberated; even the stones floated on the ocean are saved from drowning.\(^{18}\) Through Hari’s name Muktāi is forever liberated, there is no beginning or end for us anymore. (Muktābāī *abhaṅga* 10, SSG 1, p.239).\(^{19}\)

\begin{align*}
\text{नादाबिंदा बेटी जे वेळीं पै जाळी | ऐसी ऐसे बोली बोलती जीव } & 16 \\
\text{उगौंचि मोहन धरूनि रागी | त्यासी पै यमाची नगरी आहे } & 16 \\
\text{जीव जंतु जड सती उपदेशी | त्यासी गरभवासी घाली देवो } & 16 \\
\text{मुताई शीर्षर उपदेशी निरूपण | संसार पुढती नाहीं आम्हां } & 16 \\
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
Nādābindā bheṭīje veḷı̄ ̃pa jālī / aśī eke bolī bolāti jīva /1/ 
Ugeñci mohana dharūnī prapañcī / tyāsī pai yamācī nagarī āhe /2/ 
Jīva jantū ḍaadī tyāsī upadeśī / tyāsī garbhavāsī ghālī devo /3/ 
Muktāī śrīharī upadeśī nivṛtti / samśāra pudhārī nāhī āmhā /4/ 
\end{align*}

Union with God, Excellent! The soul speaks languages. Worldly attachments arise from illusion; this leads to the city of Yama.\(^{20}\) Advise such a being—an insect or a dull witted person—God sends such a being back to the womb.\(^{21}\)

\(^{15}\) The term *poṭī* means ‘stomach’, ‘abdomen’ or ‘womb’ but also refers to the belly figuratively (Molesworth 1857:530), which is why I have translated it as ‘extent’.

\(^{16}\) A devotee of the Lord is released from rebirth. The words ‘beginning-middle-end’ may refer to the various ‘worlds’ (loka) of which there are different levels and enumerations.

\(^{17}\) A *tīrtha* (‘holy place’, ‘sacred site’, ‘crossing place’ and ‘ford’) is a sacred pilgrimage site usually beside a river, stream or sacred spring. It can also refer to the pilgrimage to such a site or the water from such a location, which is considered holy.

\(^{18}\) This is a reference to an episode from the *Rāmāyaṇa* known as the *Setubandha*, ‘The Building of the Bridge’. One stone had the letter ‘ṛ’, the second stone had the letter ‘ma’. When they were put in the water the stones joined to form *ṛma* and floated due to the power of the deity’s name (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27th January 2011). The *Setubandha* (also known as the *Rāṃsetu* or the *Rāvana-vaha*) is the name given to various works relating how Hanuman and the monkey army formed a bridge of rocks to give Rāma’s army passage to Lanka. For example, the Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit epic commissioned or composed by the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II in the 5th century (Datta 2005:1189, 1201; Pruthi 2004:195). There is a verse attributed to Janābāī (*abhaṅga* 3, SSG 1:716) with a similar allusion.

\(^{19}\) This verse may have been translated by Vanita (1989:50).

\(^{20}\) Worldly attachments do not lead to liberation but rather to judgement and ‘punishment’ from the deity Yama.

\(^{21}\) Unless one realises that attachments to the material world are false one will be reborn and have to live through another cycle of existence.
Muktāī counsels Nivṛtti: ‘there is no further rebirth for us’.  
(Muktābāī abhaṅga 21, SSG 1, p.240).

When the mind is controlled and at peace, then you won’t need to meet Yama. The authority of the mind gives you the wisdom to accomplish your spiritual goals.  
As you perform your spiritual practice, repeat the nārāyaṇa-mantra in your heart. Muktāī is an expert, for Nārāyaṇ has endowed her with spiritual wealth. Repeat the mantra as you bathe.

The embodied soul is liberated by the power of the Name. The mind attains peace and forgiveness through singing Hari’s praises. Show compassion for all creatures, then your only desire will be for the Lord. Reciting the Names—Mādhava, Mukund and Hari—all lead to liberation! Muktāī’s wealth is in uttering Hari’s name; freedom from successive lives is thus achieved.

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22 The author states that as devotees of the Lord (bhaktas) they are not caught up in māyā (illusion) or saṃsāra (the cycle of rebirth). Jīva janta jada, ‘living being, insect, inanimate [body]’, does not apply to them (Personal communication, Sulu Abhyankar, 16th November 2010). Jīva may be understood here as ‘a living being, an animated creature’ (Molesworth 1857:316). Janta refers to ‘an animated creature’ but the word is commonly applied to insects—any animal of the lowest organisation (Molesworth 1857:304; Monier-Williams 2008). Jada, ‘inanimate, lifeless’ (Monier-Williams 2008) probably refers to the material body (Molesworth 1857:301).


24 The second part of this line could be interpreted as ‘hands you “the ready” for your spiritual observances’. Rokaḍa means ‘cash, ready money, hard coin’, while rokaḍā has the additional meaning of ‘wisdom or understanding’ (Molesworth 1857:700).

25 The term snāna connotes ‘a ritual bath’ (Tulpule 1999:783), ‘ceremonial purification of the body’ (Molesworth 1857:868) or ablutions (Monier-Williams 2008).

26 There is a translation of this verse by Ramaswamy (2007:218) and possibly by Vanita (1989:50).
निर्गुणाची सैज सगुणाची बाज | तेथे केशीराज पहुँचले ।
कैंसै बाजे दरणे दिवसांचा बाजीरी | सावळ्या दरणे एका तत्त्वे ।
नाहीं या ममता अवधारण समता | आदि अंतु बिचाहत नाले वेदूँ ।
मुळताई सधन सवैंनागरायण | जीव शिव सपूण एकत्त्वे ।

Nirguṇācī saija saguṇācī bāja / tethe keśīrāja pahuḍ
divāsan divasā cāndiṇā / sāvaḷā uṭhāṇē jiva svāmīra
keśīrājā pahuḍā ā̃cā

On the bed of nirguṇa and the bedstead of saguṇa is where Keśīrāja will lie.

27 Keśīrāja connotes ‘Hair-Lord’ and is an epithet for Viṣṇu.
28 The moon, particularly in Braj-bhakti, is identified with Kṛṣṇa (Sanford 2009:23–4). However, in his poetry Paramāṇanda also equates Kṛṣṇa to the sun and its life-giving rays. Normally, the sun stalks the gopīs and sears them with its rays and it is only the presence of Kṛṣṇa—as the moon and its cooling rays—that allays the heat of separation (Sanford 2009:52–3). This line may, therefore, be asking how one can have the presence of Kṛṣṇa during the day rather than at night when Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs engage in the rāsa dance.
29 The line uses the verb uṭhaṇē (to rise, arise, mount, ascend; get up) which also has the meaning ‘to stand up against’ (Molesworth 1857:89–90). One could therefore translate the phrase as ‘the dark Lord stands up for one principle’. This is most likely a reference to Kṛṣṇa as the moon and may refer to the story of Kṛṣṇa lifting mount Govardhana in which Kṛṣṇa defeats Indra and teaches about karma (BhP 24–25; Bryant 2003:111–120). The ‘principle’ would therefore be karma. However, the line could also refer to the idea, put forward in the Bhagavadgītā, that one must perform one’s duty (dharma).
30 In other words it does not take long to describe one’s life on earth or one’s wandering through (sansāra).
31 Śiva—‘the Supreme Self’, ‘the Universal Soul’, ‘the Absolute’, ‘the pure soul or divine emanation’; ‘the vivifying, actuating, and sustaining principle in animated beings’ (Molesworth 1857:792)—is generally considered, particularly in Saivism, to share the same consciousness as jīva—the individual or embodied soul or self). The relationship between jīva and śiva does however vary from school to school. The relationship correlates to that of ātman (the individual self) and paramātman (the Supreme Spirit).
the universe while tolerate the idea of thought; this is her nature, and is thought of as eternal’ (15.79–80; Pradhan 1987:434–435).

These different events may be referring to mâyâ (illusion). The Jñânavârî states that ‘Mâyâ both is and is not and is as impossible to describe as the offspring of a barren woman. She neither exists nor does not exist, she cannot tolerate the idea of thought; this is her nature, and is thought of as eternal’ (15.79–80; Pradhan 1987:434–435).

On the temple dome dwelt a sage, Yogeśvar asked him:
'Moonshine by day, heat by night: how can this conundrum be resolved?' The sage said: ‘Death trembles before the cāmpâ-bud! In the mind luminousness and madness flow as one. Interweaving one alone is futile. Viṭṭhal easily liberates! The Unfailing One is manifest in paradise’. Muktâī says, ‘byways are futile’.

(Muktâbāī abhānga 41, SSG, p.242).

This is reference to a variety of Magnolia (michelia champaca) which is native to India. It has orange, yellow or creamy-white flowers in spring. This new life is presumably what makes Death tremble.

Avīṭa ‘unfading’ or ‘unfailing’ is an epithet for God (Molesworth 1857:50).

There is a translation of this verse in Vanita (1989:48).

The final word of this verse is given as hāsali. Hāsa means ‘laughing’ or ‘laugher’ while the verb hasanē/hamsanē means ‘to laugh’ but can also be used to mean ‘ridicule, deride, and jeer’ (Molesworth 1857:888). Thus the final phrase could also be translated as ‘seeing [all this] Muktâī jeered’. Considering the events described are unlikely it might be appropriate to imagine Muktâī giving something between a jeer and a laugh.

The notion of a barren woman giving birth to a son is mentioned by Bahiṇībāī in the Punḍalikâmâhâtya (466.8) as an example of something that occurred despite being thought impossible (Abbott 1985:149,292). The notion of a ‘barren woman’ may be a metaphor for spiritual barrenness (Ramaswamy 1997:165) or may be connected to the Nāths as the BhP (4.108) mentions that a ‘barren woman was born in the Plantain Forest’ or the ‘Kadalirîjya, the ‘Kingdom of the Plantain Forest’ or the Kadalîvanâ (‘Plantain Forest’), a place the Nāths associate with eroticism and spiritual attainment (White 1996: 236ff, 475–76, n. 100).

The fly gave birth to a kite; seeing [all this] Muktâī laughed.

A scorpion went to the underworld, Śeṣa touched his feet.

A great surprise: a barren woman gave birth to a son.
वाह वाह साहबजी सदगुङ लाल जुसाईजी।
लाल बाच मो उडला काला ओंठ पीठसो काला।
पीत उनयनी भमर गुफा रस झूलनवाल।
सदगुङ चेले दोनों बाजार एक दर्तयो भाई।
एकसे एक दरीन पाये महाराज मुक्ताबाई।।

Vāha vāha sāhabajī sadaguru lāla gusājī /
Lāl bīc mo uḍalā kālā onṭha pīṭhaso kālā /
Pīta unyanī bhrāmara gunphā rasa jhūlanavālā /
Sadaguru cele dono barābara eka dastayo bhaī /
Ekase kā darśana páye mahārājā muktābāī //

Hurrah! Hurrah! Master, True Guru, Dear Darling.
Darling Krṣṇa poured black on me; my lips are darker than my back.
The yellow one swings high with their love in a garlanded arbour.
The True guru and the disciple are equal, one...brother.
The mahārāj and Muktābāi have darśans of each other.

(Muktābāi, Hindi abhaṅga, quoted in Shrotriya 1992:26).

1.1. Cāṅgadev abhaṅga

ब्रह्मांड गोलकिं पवनाईया पालखिँ । अवधूत कवतुकिं पहुँचालिसे | १|
बोलवी चांगया मुङ्काई माता । ब्रह्मविद्या पय्यादे सुख देखतां | २|
डोळा लाजिं निजीं निजेला निवांत । स्वप्नीं वटेश्वर देखिला निवांत । ३| ४०

Brahmāṇḍa goḷakı̄̄ pavanācyā pālakhı̄̄ / avadhūta kavatukı̄̄ pahuḍalāse /1/
Bolavī cāṅgayā muktāī mātā / brahmavidhyā paryandē sukha dekhatā /2/
Ḍoḷā lāunjī̇njī̇ nijelā nivānta / svapnī vaṭeśvar dehilā nivānta /3/

The breeze, like a palanquin, is making its rounds of the universe; god lies down in appreciation.
Mother Muktāi calls on Čāṅgayā; she gives knowledge of Brahma through which happiness is achieved.
He has slept peacefully in his place; in his peaceful dream he saw Vaṭeśvar.

(Cāṅgadev abhaṅga 11, SSG 1, p. 246). ४२

2. Goṇāī ४३

Ranade states that māyā ‘is merely a synonym of non-existence’, which is why it is like the description of the children of a barren woman (2003:59).

39 There are a two other translations of this verse: Kolatkar (1982: 109–14; provided by Zelliot in Bose 2000:193) and Champa Limaye and Ruth Vanita (1989:46).

40 Some of the spellings given in the SSG may be incorrect: ni̇jī should be replaced with ni̇jī, and dehilā with dehile (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27th January 2011).

41 Vaṭeśvar, ‘Lord of the Banyan Tree, is the epithet used for Śiva (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27th January 2011). Vaṭeśvar is the village, on the Tapti river, where Čāṅgadev is believed to have lived. It is also the name of a Śiva-līṅga and there are Vaṭeśvar temples at Vategaon and Saswad. Čāṅgadev is connected to the deity he worshipped by the name Cāṅga-Vaṭeśvar or Vaṭeśvacāṅga, although at least fourteen possible Čāṅgadevs have been identified by scholars (Ranade 2003:45; Vaudeville 1987:225; Dhhere 1977b).

42 This abhaṅga is presented and discussed in Shrotriya 1992.

43 There are over twenty compositions signed ‘Goṇāī says’ (goṇāī mhane) within the Nāmdev Gathā but as these are part of a conversation between Goṇāī and Nāmdev, Goṇāī and God, and Nāmdev and God it is extremely difficult to determine in whose voice the poems are composed (SSG 1: 477–487, v.1264–1307). Nonetheless, I have translated
Son and wife have become the cause of the family's misfortune, but you misfortunate think only of
people without you! There's not a moment's peace for your parents.

Leaving all pride and ego, you are engrossed in singing songs.

How come you're not ashamed of your lost honour? I am amazed at such behaviour.

Children of good fortune behave soberly. You're the reason for my line's extinction.

Having been born, achieve something worthwhile. Why are you being a burden here on earth?

Give up this addiction to God. Why are you bent on totally destroying the home?

Mātā mhaṇe nāmā rādjāśī khelātā / tuja konyā daivatā adhiyale /1/
Lājirāvē nāmā yāvā kēlē jivanē / hāmsāśi pīśunē deśodeśē /2/
Śāndi devapisē nako kārā aise / balē gharā kaise budāvisē /3/
Jannā yeṁīnē pānāmē kārē / kā hōsi sāṃśārī bhūmībhāra /4/
Sudāvācē lēkārē varatātā kaisē / tū maja jhālāsi kulakṣaya /5/
Kaisētuja nānī laukikācālā / hēcēthāra maja navala vātā /6/
Abhimāna ahaṭā sāṃdźīnīyā jagē / nacatosi raṅgī gīta gātā /7/
Tujāvina loka adhiyāna nasatī / kṣaṇa visambatī māyābāpā /8/
Putra āni kalatā gharācē vipattī / tuja abhāgyācē citē pānḍhārānātha /9/
Yāṭē bhājati tyācē na ureic kāṃhī / hācī deva pāḷ hērğagāhēna /10,44
Jayācē khaṇūte to lāge yācē pānthē / tujasī sākavitē mhanonīyā /11/
Goṇāī mhaṇe nāmā hē navve paī bhālē / viṭhobāne kēlē āpanā aise /12/

Mother says,45 ‘Nāma plays in God’s palace. Who are these gods who have attracted you?
Nāma you’ve made life embarrassing, laughing all over the place as if possessed.

Give up this addiction to God. Why are you bent on totally destroying the home?

Having been born, achieve something worthwhile. Why are you being a burden here on earth?
Children of good fortune behave soberly. You’re the reason for my line’s extinction.

How come you’re not ashamed of your lost honour? I am amazed at such behaviour.

Leaving all pride and ego, you are engrossed in singing songs.

People won’t be ignorant without you! There’s not a moment’s peace for your parents.
Son and wife have become the cause of the family’s misfortune, but you misfortunate think only of
Pāṇḍhārānāth.

Praying in anguish, nothing remains of him; this same God is a destroyer of families.

I tell you this: whomever He stumbles upon becomes His follower.

Having been born, achieve something worthwhile. Why are you being a burden here on earth?
Children of good fortune behave soberly. You’re the reason for my line’s extinction.

How come you’re not ashamed of your lost honour? I am amazed at such behaviour.

Leaving all pride and ego, you are engrossed in singing songs.

People won’t be ignorant without you! There’s not a moment’s peace for your parents.
Son and wife have become the cause of the family’s misfortune, but you misfortunate think only of
Pāṇḍhārānāth.

Praying in anguish, nothing remains of him; this same God is a destroyer of families.

I tell you this: whomever He stumbles upon becomes His follower.

Goṇāī says, “Nāma, what’s happening isn’t good; Viṭhobā is responsible for our state”.

(Śānā abhaṅga 1266, SSG 1, p.478).46

Goṇāī mhaṇe nāmā sōḍi dēvapisē / būdvīsī kēsē ērē Māród /11
Tujā saṅḥāl lēkūrē vartī tēśī / tū mā jānāśī kūḍkāsī /12

thirteen of forty-three ‘Goṇāī’ abhaṅgas. A translation of the verse Goṇāī mhaṇe nāmā yāvā devapisē / budāvisē kaisē gharā balē ‘Goṇāī says, Nāma give up being over-religious; how come you’re hell-bent on drowning us all?’ by
Jayant Karve is presented by Zelliot (1999:419), while other Goṇāī verses have been summarised by Aklujkar (1999).

44 The term gharagṛha—which also appears in Goṇāī abhaṅga 1267.7, 1268.7—means ‘a ruiner of families’
(Molesworth 1857:253) or ‘(a man) who brings ruin on his family’ (Tulpule 1999:216). Laine suggests that a similar

45 The fact the verse begins ‘Mother says’ suggests that Nāmdev is recording what Goṇāī said to him.

46 Aklujkar has translated the third line of this verse (1999:15).
धन्य धन्य पुरुष कलेव मांदती। तुज अभाग्य तो चिल्ली पाँडुरंग।
शिवम्या शिलप्या धातलें फाणी। न पहासी परस्तीन घराकडे।
कैसी तुमी भक्ती लोकिका बेगड़ी। संसाराची होळी केली नाम्या।
याची तुमी कैसी चर्चासे काँता। हा तो कवणास झाळा नाही।
यादे जे अनुसरती ल्याणे नुरे कांही। हा देव नवे पाती घरायेचा।
गोकुली करी चोरी आघूने पोट भरी। तो तुज निच्छारी देहुं काय?
गोणाई महान नाम्या हे तो नवेहे भरली। गर त्यां बड़विले कुलसाहित।

Goṇāī mhane nāmyā sofē devapisē / budavisi kaisē gharā balē /
Tuja sīla lekurē vartē kaisē / tū maja jhālēsī kulakṣaṇa /2/
Dhanya dhanya putra kalatē nāndatē / tuja ābhāgya tō cītī pāṇḍuraṅga /3/
Śivānī tipanā guḍatē sē pāṇī / na pahāsī paratoni gharākade /4/
Kaisē tuhē bhaktī laukikā vegaṇī / sansārācī hoḷī keī nāmyā /5/
Yācitē vē kaisē dharīse kāmsā / hā to kavanāsī jhālā nāhī /6/
Yātē ke ānurasatiyēcē nūre kāṁhē / hā deva navē pāhē gharāhēnā /7/
Gokuḷī kari corī āpulē poṭa bhāri / to tuja nirdhārī dēllā kāya /8/
Goṇaī mhane nāmyā hē tō navhe bhāle / gharā tvā budavile kūfāsahī /9/

Goṇāī says, ‘Nāma give up being over-religious; how come you’re hell-bent on drowning us all?
How can your lax children succeed you; you are causing the extinction of our family.
Blessed sons reside together; you, unfortunate one, have Pāṇḍuraṅga in mind.
You’ve ignored tailoring and you don’t look back towards your home.
How is your bhaktī different from notoriety? You have made a bonfire of your household Nāma. 47
How come you held on to Him, He who has never belonged to anyone?
The one who follows Him, nothing will remain of him; He is not god but rather a demolisher of families.
By stealing in Gokul he fills his stomach, how will he ever support you?
Goṇāī says: ‘Nāma, this is all wrong; you have destroyed our home along with our family’.

47 Nāmdev has destroyed the family business as he is not concerned with worldly affairs.
48 Zelliot (1999a:90) presents a translation of this verse by Jayant Karve while Aklujkar (1999:15) provides a summary of the verse.
Being born, achieve something. Why are you being a burden on earth?

The children of others lead a family life, [but] you've caused the ruin of my race.

How come you aren't ashamed [when you stand] before people, I'm amazed at such behaviour.

You live without shame or pride, engrossed only in singing and dancing.

There are people more ignorant than you, but there's not a moment’s peace for your parents.

Why have you held onto Him with hope, He has been useless up until now.

The one who keeps singing is left with nothing. He whom you call God isn't a god— He ruins families.

His name is Cakrapāḷa; 49 even Brahma cannot fully comprehend Him. How can he be the one who shows compassion to the lowly?

You’ll learn a lesson [because] of your inflated intellect: He is not God, he is the destroyer of the three pure worlds.

Only he who is deficient follows His path: as your mother I give you this advice.

Goṇāī says: 'Nāmadevā navhesī lekṣaṃ | jāri jāyanśī vīcharaṃ sansārika | 1 |

शिवप्रय-टिपन्यासी त्वा घातले पाणी | न पाहसी परतोरी घाघरकडे | 2 |

कैती तुझी भक्ति या देसावेगळी | संसाराची जुळी केली नाम् | 3 |

उदंड मै आहीं देशवरे भक्त | परं तूं आपुले हित न विचारिती | 4 |

अन्जेंसि उपवासी सैंसारिसं येथे | कय देईल तुंटे विधल हा | 5 |

कांस उपवासी बैसला संसार येथे | काय देईल तूं आपुले हा | 6 |

उदाणी तया आमी हे करले विधल हा | 7 |

गोकुळीं करून चोरी आपुले पोट भरी | 8 |

तूं तुजी निष्पृथ देईल काय | 9 |

तूं निष्पृथ चोरी आपुले पोट भरी | 10 |

सांडून घरदार आपुला संसार | नाचतां विचार न किंसी मानी | 11 |

काम कटून सांडयलां कान्हीं | संसाराची चंता कोण करी | 12 |

गोणाईः म्हणो नाम्या नाहेरे हूँ | विधल नामें केले आपणा ऐसें | 13 |

Being born, achieve something. Why are you being a burden on earth?

The children of others lead a family life, [but] you’ve caused the ruin of my race.

How come you aren’t ashamed [when you stand] before people, I’m amazed at such behaviour.

You live without shame or pride, engrossed only in singing and dancing.

There are people more ignorant than you, but there’s not a moment’s peace for your parents.

Why have you held onto Him with hope, He has been useless up until now.

The one who keeps singing is left with nothing. He whom you call God isn’t a god— He ruins families.

His name is Cakrapāḷa; 49 even Brahma cannot fully comprehend Him. How can he be the one who shows compassion to the lowly?

You’ll learn a lesson [because] of your inflated intellect: He is not God, he is the destroyer of the three pure worlds.

Only he who is deficient follows His path: as your mother I give you this advice.

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कैती तुझी भक्ति या देसावेगळी | संसाराची जुळी केली नाम् | 3 |

उदंड मै आहीं देशवरे भक्त | परं तूं आपुले हित न विचारिती | 4 |

अन्जेंसि उपवासी सैंसारिसं येथे | कय देईल तुंटे विधल हा | 5 |

कांस उपवासी बैसला संसार येथे | काय देईल तूं आपुले हा | 6 |

उदाणी तया आमी हे करले विधल हा | 7 |

गोकुळीं करून चोरी आपुले पोट भरी | 8 |

तूं तुजी निष्पृथ देईल काय | 9 |

तूं निष्पृथ चोरी आपुले पोट भरी | 10 |

सांडून घरदार आपुला संसार | नाचतां विचार न किंसी मानी | 11 |

काम कटून सांडयलां कान्हीं | संसाराची चंता कोण करी | 12 |

गोणाईः म्हणो नाम्या नाहेरे हूँ | विधल नामें केले आपणा ऐसें | 13 |

Being born, achieve something. Why are you being a burden on earth?

The children of others lead a family life, [but] you’ve caused the ruin of my race.

How come you aren’t ashamed [when you stand] before people, I’m amazed at such behaviour.

You live without shame or pride, engrossed only in singing and dancing.

There are people more ignorant than you, but there’s not a moment’s peace for your parents.

Why have you held onto Him with hope, He has been useless up until now.

The one who keeps singing is left with nothing. He whom you call God isn’t a god— He ruins families.

His name is Cakrapāḷa; 49 even Brahma cannot fully comprehend Him. How can he be the one who shows compassion to the lowly?

You’ll learn a lesson [because] of your inflated intellect: He is not God, he is the destroyer of the three pure worlds.

Only he who is deficient follows His path: as your mother I give you this advice.

Goṇāī says: ‘Nāmadevā navhesī lekṣaṃ | jāri jāyanśī vīcharaṃ sansārika | 1 |

शिवप्रय-टिपन्यासी त्वा घातले पाणी | न पाहसी परतोरी घाघरकडे | 2 |

कैती तुझी भक्ति या देसावेगळी | संसाराची जुळी केली नाम् | 3 |

उदंड मै आहीं देशवरे भक्त | परं तूं आपुले हित न विचारिती | 4 |

अन्जेंसि उपवासी सैंसारिसं येथे | कय देईल तुंटे विधल हा | 5 |

कांस उपवासी बैसला संसार येथे | काय देईल तूं आपुले हा | 6 |

उदाणी तया आमी हे करले विधल हा | 7 |

गोकुळीं करून चोरी आपुले पोट भरी | 8 |

तूं तुजी निष्पृथ देईल काय | 9 |

तूं निष्पृथ चोरी आपुले पोट भरी | 10 |

सांडून घरदार आपुला संसार | नाचतां विचार न किंसी मानी | 11 |

काम कटून सांडयलां कान्हीं | संसाराची चंता कोण करी | 12 |

गोणाईः म्हणो नाम्या नाहेरे हूँ | विधल नामें केले आपणा ऐसें | 13 |

'Nāmadevā you’re no longer a child, think of your worldly business a little.

You’ve ignored tailoring and you don’t look back towards your home.

49 Cakrapāḷa, ‘Discus-Holder’, is an epithet for Viṣṇu.

50 Line five has been translated by Aklujkar (1999:15).

320
What kind of devotion is this, how is it different from the known; you’ve made your worldly affairs into dust Nāma.

We have seen innumerable devotees, but you don’t even ask us wherein your benefit lies.

You sit hungry beside food [but] what will Viṭṭhal give you?

He holds Puṇḍalīk there; it’s useless to try and win Him.

By stealing in Gokul He feeds himself;[51] what then does He have to support you?

You’re unabashed, without shame; what is the point in repeatedly telling you the same?

You have renounced your family along with your worldly life; you caper about thoughtlessly.

You have abandoned all work, so who will worry about our worldly affairs?

Goṇāī says: ‘Nāma, this isn’t right; Viṭṭhal’s name is responsible for this’.

(Goṇāī abhaṅga 1269, SSG 1, p. 479).

51 This is a reference to the village in which Kṛṣṇa was raised.

52 The term atmasukha (ātmasukha) refers to ‘inherent pleasure; the satisfaction in the consciousness of being’ (Molesworth 1857:67).
Goṇāī mhane nāmyā rāhilāśī udarē / taṅhūnī mi karē āsa tujiē /53
Upajalāsī taĩ maja jhālā santosa / ānanda sāha vāte jivā /2/
Gaṅgagotāmājī kelē hā re nāmyā / paṇḍharīcā deva prasanna kelā /3/
Rātrindivasa lekhī āṅgoḷī varī / tu maja samsārī kōstī mhanūnī /4/
Taṃva tuja avacītu upajalī buddhī / bhopālā hā khāndī āvaḍalā /5/
Hāti āla geṁī kariśī ālyānī / ghāriyā caraṇī bāndhoniya /6/
Śāndōni gharadārā āpulā samsārā / nācātī vīcārā na dharīsī /7/
Navē tē kariō koṇa ase vārtī / pari tvē āpulā hitā pravartēvē /8/
Mē ekē āhe tamva kariṁā tāḷamāḷa / maṅa tujiē sāmbhāḷā kariḷa koṇa /9/
Yī viṭṭhalāvācūnī tuja nāḥī re samsārā / hā bola nirdhāra satya mājēhī /10/
Konyā gunē tūṁvā āghetā dharanē / goṇāī mhaṅe karaṇē phālāśī ālē /11/

Goṇāī says, ‘Nāmyā after I’d wished for you, you lay in my belly.53
When you were born I was delighted, I was filled with happiness.
You gained a good name among our people and relations; the God of Paṇḍharī was pleased with you!
Day and night, I counted on my fingers until you, my householder, would exist.54
At that point you had a brainstorm: you’d prefer a “gourd” on your shoulder.55
You keep praying and requesting, clanging cymbals in your hands and jingling bells tied at your feet,
Neglecting the household and dancing thoughtlessly.
You’ll gain nothing behaving like this: start behaving properly!
I worry about you: when I am gone who will look after you?
Your life is nothing but Viṭṭhal: this is my opinion.
Why were you born?’ Goṇāī says, ‘my deeds have borne fruit’.
(Goṇāī abhaṅga 1275, SSG 1, p. 480).56

53 Translated literally the phrase reads ‘Nāmyā you lay in my belly after I’d wished for you’.
54 Goṇāī eagerly anticipated the birth of a son not expecting that he would cause her disappointment.
55 Goṇāī is saying that the dīṇḍī (or viṇā) Nāmdev carried is ‘nothing’, that it is hollow and worthless. Goṇāī is implying that Nāmdev preferred carrying an empty gourd and bhakti to everything else and that he is ‘a victim of the Viṭṭhal craze’ (Kiehlle 1997b:18).
'Why have you chosen differently for yourself? Why do you run away? Tell me Nāmyā? You have been released from son-hood. Please consider nourishing my pride. I won’t go away without taking you along with me; I will swallow Paṇḍharī along with Viṭṭhal. Although you’ve become so smart, you’re still my son; my business is with this Viṭṭhal. He harasses the demons calling himself strong; this won’t work with me at all’.

‘I’ll tie my neck to your feet and brick; every moment kills a part of me. I won’t let you rest even when sitting or eating; I’ll rip out my heart and give it to you. I have come having pledged my life, on the way I cried at every house. I know you’re the Lord of the three worlds, but today I will test your prowess. It has been said that twenty-eight ages have passed since Puṇḍalīk made you stand thus’.

Goṇāī says, ‘O God, why don’t you smarten up? Why do you yearn for someone else’s wealth?’ (Goṇāī abhaṅga 1276, SSG 1, p. 480).
Tuja kāya uṇẽ brahmāṇḍanāyakā / navhesī majasārikhā ekadesī /4/
Ananta brahmāṇḍe ḷyanē ghadāmōdiśi / kā maja durbaḷāḷi śaṣṭavilī /5/
Tuja dujepaṇācā sahaja ālā viṣṭa / tū tanya ekta ekalācī /6/
Aṣī kṛtī veda varṇī purāṇē / tē kā lājiravāṇē karīśi devā /7/
Tā kṛpecā konvāḷā mahānā viśvajana / tyā tujhē nirvāṇa kalalē nāhī /8/
Maina mukrā dharaṇē galā tuḷasīmāḷā / nivāṭitośi galā na kalalē /9/
Ādā āpulā bhrama rākhe to śhānā / jhaṇī mājhyā nirvāṇē devā /10/
Goṇāī mhaṇe mājhē nāmā dēunī gāṭī / angkāṅṛī kṛtī paṇḍharīyā /11/

Many days have passed now Gopāl. At least now Viṣṭṭhal, show some compassion. Give me back my Nāma quickly; let me him come back, O Friend of the friendless. I will give you food and drink to satisfy your desire; I will sing your praises across the world. Of what are you short, O Lord of the Universe, You are not confined to the same place as me. Ananta you can make or break universes in an instant, so why do you trouble a weak one like me? You are easily tired of duality; You are alone and will stay solitary. The Vedas and Purāṇas sing your praises; why would they shame you, O God? The people of this world say that you’re compassionate; they don’t understand your distress.

Goṇāī says, ‘By handing over my Nāma, I will acknowledge the fame of the King of Paṇḍhart’. (Goṇāī abhaṅga 1286, SSG 1, p. 483).

58 Ananta (Eternal, Boundless) is an epithet for Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.
59 Line four has been translated by Aklujkar (1999:16).
This excessive scolding is too much; you must not be hard-hearted towards your mother. She nourished you fondly at her breast; you must not abandon her. 

(εγόναυ abhangā 1304, SSG 1, p.487).

Deva jhālā nāmā nāmā jhālā deva / goṇāīcā bhāva pahāvayā /1/
Hā ghe tuñā nāmā kāya chāḍa āmāhā / ānandācā premā goṇāśī /2/
Hātī dharoniyā guṇānī chālsī / fīrūna pāhatī jhālātmva to deva /3/
Agā mājhyā bāpa tuñā kēparā hawasī / maja durbārsī kāya hōya /4/
Sōla sahas muṣṭā astū tūdāryā kāntā / tva mājhyā gāthā pravartatīla /5/
Puṇḍalikāsī tuñā dīpālī aāhe bhāka / goṇāī mahāṇe ṭuk hūl āsī /6/

God became Nāmā and Nāmā became God to test Goṇāī’s faith. ‘Here, take your Nāmā, who loves him?’ Goṇāī’s ecstatic with joy. Taking him by the hand she proceeded. Looking back she saw she was holding God by the hand [instead]. ‘Hey Father, who wants you? I’m weak, what would I do with you? Your sixteen thousand and eight principal beloved women, they would set about me. You gave your word to Puṇḍalīk’. Goṇāī says, ‘You great rascal, you can’t come with me!’

(εγόναυ abhangā 1305, SSG 1, p.487).

Sukha paṇḍhariśa pāhū / āle bhīmātīrı̄ ̃ bahū /1/
Premē garjatī harice dāsa / mārē paṇḍāri-nivāsa /2/
Mōkṣ paṇyā lōḍānā gālī / dekhnāi muṇḍāi nivālī /3/
Jñānadeva sadadita / dekhnāi goṇāś hāsata /4/

To see happiness in Paṇḍhari, a group has gathered on the banks of the Bhīmā. The servants of Hari shout with love, the house of Paṇḍhari stands behind them. Roll over to attain bliss. 60 Seeing this Muktāī was calmed, Jñānadev was touched and Goṇāī looked on laughingly.

(εγόναυ abhangā 1307, SSG, p.487).

3.  Rājāī61

60 The term lōṭāṅgaṇa means ‘rolling about’ (Tulpule 1999:617), ‘rolling one’s self on the ground; rolling over’ (Molesworth 1857:723) and is probably a reference to a rolling prostration, lōṭāṅgaṇa, performed by bhakta.

61 There are only a couple of compositions in the Nāmdev Gāthā with signature ‘Rājāī says’ (rājāī mhaṇ) as the compositions attributed to Rājāī continue the conversation(s) Goṇāī began (Aklujkar 1999:17). I have only translated four of the thirteen verses in the Rājāī section of the Nāmdev Gāthā (SSG 1: 479–94, v.1320–1333) as they are long

325
In the middle of the night when there’s peace, Rājāī reports to the Mother.

‘O Rākumābāī, please ask Viṭṭhā for what reason He has made my husband go mad. There’s nothing to eat, drink or wear yet still he dances shamelessly. There are fourteen people in my house, roaming from door-to-door to find food. Direct him towards the correct path or Nāma’s Rājāī won’t be the good one.’

(Rājāī abhaṅga, 1322, SSG, p.490).

Pariyesī rukmāī jaisā baisālā pāṭī / dainyā paī na soḍikāya kaĩṇa /1/

and complex. *Dona prahara rātra pāhonī ekānta / rājāī vṛttānta sāṅge māte /1/

Aho rukhumābāī viṭhobā sisāṅga / bhratārāsī kā jā veḍā keḷē /2/

Vastrā prātra nāḥī khāya jēvāyaśī / nāce aharniśī nīlājasā /3/

Cavadā manoṣyē aīeta mājhī gaurī / hindatī dārodāśī annāsāṭī /4/

Barā mārga tumbhi umajonī sāṅga / nāmāyacī rājā bhaḷī navhe /5/

Pariyesī rukmāī jaisā baisālā pāṭī / dainyā paī na soḍikāya kaĩṇa /1/

and complex. *Dona prahara rātra pāhonī ekānta / rājāī vṛttānta sāṅge māte /1/

In the middle of the night has also been translated fully by Zelliot (1999a:91) and partly by Aklujkar (1999:18); *Pariyesī rukmāī jaisā baisālā pāṭī / Listen Rukmini’s* has been partially translated by Aklujkar (1999:18) as has *Śikavā vo rukmāī āpuliyā kantā / O Rukmini, counsel your husband* (Aklujkar 1999:18). Zelliot has translated *donhī joḍunī kara māthā ṭhevī caraṇī / Joining her palms, she put her head on his feet* (1999a:91-92).

62 There is a translation of this by Zelliot (1999a:91): ‘In the middle of the night, in private, Rajai pleads with the Mother. “Oh Lady Rukmini, please ask Lord Viṭṭhal: Why did you make my husband crazy? No food in the house, no pots, no pans—he has no shame. He dances night and day like a shameless man. I’ve got fourteen mouths to feed in my house, and I have to go from door to door to feed them. You better realise this and convince Him to find a better way, or else this Rājāī of Nāma won’t remain good anymore!”'
Listen Rukmāi, sitting there with your ornaments, poverty will never leave me. What am I to do?
Fortunate women are adorned with jewels but I am an unloved woman. What am I to do?

Poverty is wearisome; it ruins everything; who will hear my woes, Mother?

If there were no Viṣṇu, no Paṇḍharī then he would have happily stayed at home.

Tell Nāganāth privately that the woman, who bears the burden of this knife, is crying. O the shame, the town sees I am forsaken; come Mother, who shall instruct me, uh?

What was to happen has happened, now what more remains for me to learn; such is Rājāī’s request to Rakhumāi.

(Rājāī abhāṅga, 1324, SSG I, p.490).

63 A parikara is a girdle, sash or petticoat. The first phrase could be read as ‘some complain about wearing the petticoat’.
64 The term used for arrow (bāṇa) can also refer to ‘a man without wife, or family, or home, or friends, or money’ (Molesworth 1857:573). Consequently, Nāmdev could be being described as such a man because he has abandoned his family. There is a Nāmdev poem that refers to ‘needles and thread, scissors and measure’ (Novetzke 2003:215). One can interpret the reference to needles and scissors as indicating the profession and caste of the household (Glushkova 1998a:35).
65 Nāganāth is an epithet for Śiva. It refers to one of the twelve jyotiṅgā ‘liṅga of light’ or manifestations of Śiva. The location of the Nageshvar liṅga is disputed with Jagheshvar near Almora in Uttarakhand, Dwarka in Gujarat, and the Aundha Nāganāth temple in the Hingoli district of Maharashtra all claiming to be the correct location. The Aundha Nāganāth temple has a connection with Nāmdev. It is said that Nāmdev was performing a kīrtan to a large crowd in front of the temple when Brahmins complained and told him to move the kīrtan to the back of the temple. Having complied, Nāmdev and the audience were then amazed when Nāganāth turned the temple around to face them so he could listen to the kīrtan (BVJ 12:73ff, Abbott and Godbole 1996:193–203).
66 The meaning of sansār/sansāra in Marathi includes the notion of ‘married life’ as well as that of worldly/mundane existence.
67 See the translation by Aklujkar (1999:18).
Rukmāī, counsel your husband and ask why we—the wretched—are distressed? He is responsible for our condition and destroying our daily routine.

Mother, what can we do now? Under whose roof can we seek shelter? My husband’s addiction is caused by your husband. God will not leave him alone for a minute. Our business is destroyed through neglect, by a husband who shows no compassion.

It’s up to you Rukmāī to remedy the distress caused by Pāṇḍuraṅga. My husband doesn’t differentiate between what belongs to him and what belongs to others. He can’t get to grips with reality.

The door to our house is always open, which affects business. He is dedicated to chanting the Name. Night and day his heart is filled with Govind’s name. He shows no concern about our welfare. Because of you we are miserable. How don’t you feel for us?

Everyone has troubles in life but we are doing what is fitting to deal with these. There is only one answer, but have you thought about it?

You comprehend all this due to experience. We recite your name continuously. From birth to death you sustain us. There is no one else but you to help us.

We beseech you—body, speech and mind’, Rājāi implores dearest [Rukmāī].

(Rājāi abhanga, 1325, SSG 1, p.490–491).
एक बांधले पाठीसी दुजे बांधले पोटासी । वेपुनादापाशी वहावत गेली ।
हाकरता हणणी बोभाय नामया । आवती पडोलीया तंत्रास गेली ।
योगेन्द्रा सरोरी देव जगा झाला । त्वरित पावला काडीली तिर्यं ।
नारा विच धोबे काडीली घेतले । राजास धिरले दिक्षण करी ।
आणणी महादावारं पूढे देलकर्लं । बिचोबा सारोरा नामा आला ।
बासा बास महणोगी नारा धावूनलं । नामा त्या बोलिला परते होई ।
देखोनी राजासी गंगिरु पू आला । अरे वा बिचला काय केले ।
पोटसाहित विच पैडें भी आलं । पाईं पंदरिनाथशा बुढवीन घ ।
मेला सरप होता तो ऑटीये घेतला । खाडोली घातला धेयामाजी ।
खामी ज्वाळ घाली उक्की मुटली । पोटास धिरली दोघे बाळं ।
ढें बिचोबोसी समर्पण करूं । ऐसां पै निर्धर धरिले ।
सुमित्ती मणे देवा अर्थ माधिला । नामा बाहेर गेला निश्चयी ।
ढेसा उघडोली राजां जंब पाहे । तीव्रभी भरले अय्य सोने ।
राजासं धिरले नामया चरण । कुपालिंक्ट पाहणे आम्हांकडे ।
नारा विठोबासी दोघे काडीले घेतली । राजास धिरले नामया चरण ।
कुपालिंक्ट पाहणे आम्हांकडे ।
बोळेसहत गेला घेईन मी आतां । पाहे पंढरीनाथा बहुतांपर ।
मेला सपर होता तो काव्यांकडे घेतला । खाडोली घातला धेयामाजी ।
खामी ज्वाळ घाली उक्की मुटली । पोटास धिरली दोघे बाळं ।
ढें बिचोबोसी समर्पण करूं । ऐसां पै निर्धर धरिले ।
बाप आणि आई । माझी विठल रखुमाई ।
पुंडलिक बंधू आहे ।
राजास धिरले नामया चरण ।
कुपालिंक्ट पाहणे आम्हांकडे ।

Aṅgoḷiye viṭhā kaḍiyesī nārā / rājāī paṇḍharīnāthā kāya kelẽ /1/
Bhīvarā sampūraṇa jātase bharalī / rājāī bōlalī kaisẽ jhālẽ /2/
Ekāli mī bāḷẽ kāya karū ātā āhā paṇḍharīnāthā kāya kelẽ /3/
Eka bāṇdhilẽ pāṭhīsī dujẽ bāṇdhilẽ poṭāsī / veṇunādāpāśı̄ vāhāvata gelī /4/
Hāmbaraḍā hāṇonī bobhāya nāmayā / āvaī padonīyā tafāsa gelī /5/
Yogāṅdrā sāronī deva jāgā jhālā / tvaraī pāvalā kāḍhīlī tighẽ /6/
Nārā viṭhobā doghe kādyesī ghetalī / rājāīs dharile nāmā ālā /7/
Āṇilī māḥādvārā puḍhẽ de lēkurā viṭhobā sāmorā nāmā ālā /8/
Bābā bābā mhaṇonī nārā dhāvinnalā / nāmā tyā bolilā parate hoī /9/
Dekhonī rājāsī gahiṃvaru paĩ ālā / are bā viṭṭhalā kāya kelẽ /10/
Baḷlesahita vikha gheīna mīātā / pāhẽ paṇḍharīnāthā buḍavīna ghara /11/
Mēla sarpa hotā oṭīye ghetalī / khāṇdonī ghātalā ḍeyāmājī /12/
Khāli jvāḷa ghālī ukaḷī phuṭalī / poṭāsī dharīlẽ doghẽ bāḷẽ /13/
Deha viṭhobā samarpāṇa kārī / aīsā paĩ nirdhārā dharīyelā /14/
Rukmīni mhaṃe deva anartha māṇīlā / nāmā bāhera gelā niścyesī /15/
Derā ughadonī rājāi jamva pāhe / tondabharī bharalāḥē avaghe sonē /16/
Rājāṅbhā dharile māyācē caraṇa / krpaḍṛṣṭi pāhanē āmḥākade /17/
Viṭhala viṭṭhalā aīsā bolīyelā / nīvānta rāḥiī ghaṭākā cārī /18/
Kāmphā kāmphā māḥādvārā ālā / tujhī māva viṭṭhalā nakale kāmḥī /19/
Aṣṭa dīśā deva varūtā ānī kālūtā / tujaṭe sarvatā ṭhāva nāḥī /20/
Tāṁva nāmdeva niʃalā dekhilā / antarıṭ hiṭhilā viṭṭhalā ḍhenāi /21/
Rājāi mhaṃe prayila na cale tehthī ālā / prāṁbāḥ pāṭharināthā bahuṭāpārī /22/
Rājāṅbhā dharile viṭḥobācē pāya / krpaḍṛṣṭi pāhī āmḥākade /23/

With Viṭhā holding her finger and Nārā on her hip, Rājāi went to Paṇḍharpūr. The Bhīmā was in full flood.

71 There is an abhaṅga by Eknāth which refers to the Bhīmā: माझी माहेर पंढरी । आहे भीवरेचे तीरं ।
बाप आणि आई । माझी बिचल रखुमाई ।
पुंḍलिक बंधू आहे ।
ल्याची ख्याती सांतवा काय ।
माझी बहीण चंद्रभागा । करीतसे

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All alone I asked, ‘what do I do now? Oh! Pāṇḍharīnāth, what am I to do?’
One tied to the back, the other tied to the belly; near the Veṇunāda they floated downstream.
God came out of his yogic trance, reached the river in one step and rescued all three.
He took Nārā and Viṭhā on his hips and grasped Rājāī’s right hand.
He brought them to the great door of the temple. Nāmā came and stood before Viṭhobā.
‘Father, Father’ called Nārā, running up to him. Nāmā said, ‘Nārā, return home’.
Rājāī was overcome. ‘O Viṭṭhal, what have you done?’
I’ll drink poison along with the children now. Look Pāṇḍharīnāth I will destroy our home and family!
There was a dead snake, which she tucked into her sari, chopped up and put it in a metal pot.
She put the pot on the fire, the water boiled. She held the children to her.
‘We will donate our bodies to Viṭhobā’ [and so die] she resolved.
Rukmiṇī says, ‘Lord, Nāmā is now beyond redemption’.
The moment Rājāī lifted the lid she noticed the pot was brim-full of gold.
Rājāī touched Nāma’s feet, and asked for grace and forgiveness.
Nāma exclaimed ‘Viṭṭhal, Viṭṭhal’ and remained still for a while.
Trembling, Nāmā came to the great door. ‘I cannot comprehend your compassion’, he said.
She bowed towards the eight points of the compass, God, the west and the east. ‘Without You I’d be at the bottom of the river’.
Then she saw Nāmdev asleep. In his mind arose the voice of Viṭṭhal.
Rājāī says, ‘I won’t attempt suicide. Now let’s pray and beseech Pāṇḍharīnāth’.
Rājāī clasped Viṭhobā’s feet and said ‘view us with a favourable eye’.
(Rājāī abhaṅga, 1326, SSG 1, p.491)
4. Āūbāī

The universal zero has now been achieved, where form is destroyed [there] is formlessness. The formless is the essence, the formless is the essence; every atom becomes one with the formless. Āūbāī’s sister Āūbāī has become one with the universal zero; her thought and soul have become one with Viṭṭhal.

(Āūbāī abhaṅga, SSG 1, p.775).

5. Limbāī

Please liberate me Husband of Rakhumāī, Master of Paṇḍharī, my parent. Lord of the destitute you hear the needy; even great sages like Sanaka talk to you. From their promises I gain my faith. I grasp your waist Pāṇḍuraṅga.

(Śūnya abhaṅga, SSG 1, p.775).

6. Lāḍāī

The adjective anātha means ‘destitute’ and ‘orphaned’ (Berntsen 1982:3; Tulpule 1999:428, 459) as well as ‘forlorn’ and ‘friendless’ (Molesworth 1857:27). Consequently the phrase anātha nātha could be interpreted as ‘Lord or Master (nātha) of the destitute, orphaned, forlorn or friendless’. However, Molesworth defines the epithet anāthanāth, which has similarities to the epithet used in this abhaṅga, as ‘Friend of the friendless’ (1857:27).

This verse has been translated by Zelliot (1999:420).
From an earlier life I’ve been related to my father; in the end, who knows how that happened. I was made pregnant and was blessed; then I was separated from the king of Paṇḍharpur.

Mukund put me in an embarrassing situation in the river of life. Why was I excluded? What was my sin?

Lāḍāī says, ‘I offer my body to Viṣṇu, that’s why I’ve begun prāṇāyāma’.

(Lāḍāī abhaṅga, SSG 1, p. 775.)

7. **Janābāī**

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80 Mukund is an epithet for Viṣṇu and sometimes Śiva. It translates as the ‘Giver of Salvation’ (Abbott and Godbole 1996, Vol 2, p.453), the ‘giver of liberation’ (Monier Williams 2008) or the ‘Personality of the Godhead, who awards liberation’ (BhP 3.13.4). The phrase about the ‘river of life’ implies that daily life is a struggle which flows endlessly.

81 Prāṇāyām—the practice of ‘restraining the breath’—is undertaken in three stages, while silently reciting the gāyatrī mantra: breathing in (pūrka), holding the breath (kumbhaka) and breathing out (reca). Lāḍāī is thought to have been the only member of the family left behind when the others entered samādhi so the verse suggests that she attempts to ‘hold’ her breath as a means to attaining samādhi.

82 This abhaṅga attributed to Lāḍāī expresses Lāḍāī’s sorrow at being left behind when the entire family entered samādhi or died c.1350 C.E (SSG 1:775). Lāḍāī had probably gone to her natal village, which Shrotriya suggests was Kalyāṇ, to give birth and on her return found the whole family, including her husband had entered samādhi (1992:75). This verse mentions the same event as that of an unpublished Janābāī abhaṅga (43, SSG 2:1400). There is a story told by Dattātreya that the entire family—Dāmadevī, Goṇu, Nāmadev, Rājamāī and the four children committed ritual suicide by drowning (jalasamādhi) in the Bhimā river at Paṇḍharpur because they were unable to bear the absence of Jñāneśvar and his siblings. Dattātreya’s biography thus recalls the ritual suicide of Mukundā and Jñāneśvar’s parents (see Novetzke 2008:71–2).

83 Janābāī is credited with composing over 340 songs of which about fifty have been translated into English (SSG 1:716–56, v.1–347). The largest number of Janābāī compositions have, until now, been those translated by Macnicol (1919), Kolatkar (1982), Vanita (1989), Pandharipande (2000)—she has translated thirty-four abhaṅgas and paraphrased others. Poitevin and Rairkar (1996) translated over twenty-five verses and paraphrased others, while Sellergren (1996) translated thirteen verses.

Translations of Janābāī compositions have also been undertaken by Macnicol (1919), Kolatkar (1982), Vanita (1989), Bhagwat (1990), Sarang (1993), Bhavalkar (1996), Aklujkar (1999), Zelliot (1999, 2000), Sāibābāyā Mandirāṭi (2002), Sivamanda Saraswati (2004), Vanita (2005) and Yardi (2006). Only Macnicol, Sellergren, Zelliot, Aklujkar, and the Sāibābāyā Mandirā provide any Marathi by which to identify their translations, so it is difficult to know exactly to which compositions the translators are referring. Nonetheless, I have attempted to establish which compositions the translators have translated but the list is by no means comprehensive. The underlined verses indicate abhaṅgas that I have also translated: ḍhā sakhiye sājāni ‘O Friend, Dear One’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:80n.200; Vanita 2005:98).

ā melā bāpa melā ‘Mother died; father died’ (Yardi 2006; Sellergren 1996:217; Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:73v. 266; Aklujkar 1999:25; Pandharipande 2000:158); āṁhi pātaṅkācyā rāṣṭi ‘A storehouse of sins’ (Yardi 2006); ane vīthvārī vīthvā ‘O Viṣṇu, O Viṣṇu’ (Sellergren 1996:222–23 Bhagwat 1990:229; Pandharipande 2000:175); āṭā pure hā sansāra ‘enough of this sansāra/sansāra now’ (Sellergren 1996:221; Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:74v.261); bhaṭka māṭī agrāṇā ‘To holy Pandulik give’ (Macnicol 1919:49; v.23); dālaṅvācyā māṇī (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:77v.256); dālaṅ kāṇḍī ‘As I mill and pound’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:70v.342; Yardi 2006); dālaṅ kāṇḍī kehā ‘Let us grind’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:72v.317); ḍeva bhāvācyā lampaća ‘Dev was trapped in Jānī’s intense
The Name is free and excellent; one never tires of chanting the Name. A heavy stone in the ocean, the name ‘Ātmārām’ saves.

Recollecting the son, he was taken to Vaikuṇṭha.

Janī knows the greatness of the Name; by chanting she becomes Viṣṇu [himself].

Janābī abhangā 3, SSG 1, p.716.)

devotion’ (Pandharipande 2000:173); deva khāte deva pīte ‘I eat god, I drink god’ (Macnicol 1919:50v.25; Kolatkar 1982:114; Sellergren 1996:226; Pandharipande 2000:161; Vanita 2005:99); dhūlāīa pandharīcā cōra ‘I’ve caught the thief of Pandhari’ (Sellergren 1996:223–24; Pandharipande 2000:154ff); dhūne ghetāī kānkhētī ‘Carrying the washing’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:75v.262; Pandharipande 2000:162–163); doicā paddar āla khāndvāvari ‘Cast off all shame’ (Sellergren 1996:224; Bhavalkar 1996:245; Sarang 1991:83; Aklujkar 1999:26); ekā divāśī māhāvāśā ‘One day no cold water’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:79v.224; Vanita 2005:96); ekā prahar rātrē jhālī ‘Once in the middle of the night’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:79v.267; Pandharipande 2000:174); eke ratīce saṇāfī ‘One night God hastened to Janī’s house’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:80v.285); ekātī tī gāṇē gātī ‘You sing alone’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:77v.221; Pandharipande 2000:176); gāṇātī geli sinhadātī (Sellergren 1996:222); gōṇātī rājāī doghtī sākā sunī ‘Goṇāī and Rājāī are mother-in-law and daughter-in-law’ (Zelliot 1999:418–19); jāntī dōī jānāfī ‘Janī’s head is itching’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:79v.222; Vanita 2005:97); jāntī jāyā pāṇāyī (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:74v.268); jāntī jāyā savāśētī ‘Janī goes to fetch cow dung’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:75v.263); jānīnē bōdītī taisencā lihil ‘I wrote down Janī’s words as she uttered them’ (Pandharipande 2000:173–74); jāy jāy vālasāī ‘Go away, go back’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:76v.260); jāhātāōa kārī jānī ‘When Janī sweeps the floor’ (Sarang 1991:83; Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:76v.219; Pandharipande 2000; Vanita 2005:96; Yardi 2006); kāgē nīsthura jhālītī ‘Why have you become so cruel’ (Vanita 2005:98); kākada ārauī (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:74v.259); maga hansonī sakātī ‘All jeered seeing God a victim to such a point’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:80v.257); māvā melī bāpa melā ‘Mother is dead, father is dead’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:69v.199); niḥī kēlī niḥī sevā ‘I have not served you’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:73v.186); nāma viṭhobācē dhyāvē ‘Take the name of Viṣṇu and Rāma’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:70v.152); nīva hādāhī vārāvē ‘Please settle my life’s difficulties’ (Kiehnle 1997b:188–89); pāṇī tēci medha medha tēci pāṇī ‘Water and cloud, cloud and water’ (Pandharipande 2000:145); purīvī kāya tāpa nenē pai ho kele ‘What austerities have I practised’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:76v.220); rājī ānū ‘Rājāī and Goṇāī’ (Sellergren 1996:218–19); selfi sačā vīṣya kohī ‘for cleaning the rice by pounding’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:75v.266; Pandharipande 2000; Vanita 2005:97–98); srito jāmā mhaṇavunī na vhaē udāsī ‘I should not feel sad that I was born a woman’(Sellergren 1996:219–220; Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:81v.312); sundārī māhī jātī ge phire bahutēkē ‘My grinding stone goes round and round’ (Sellergren 1996:220; Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:86v.364); pakā jāy dīgaṇtārē ‘the bird flies in four directions’ (SSG 1:724v.89; Vanita 2005:99); tujāī loḥhā nīhī deva ‘O God I have lost your love’ (Sellergren 1996:223); tujē kai devoon saawalyya mee khānayaa taree (Kākaḍa Ārtyā, Sāībābā ̃cyā Mandīrātīl, 2002); tulasīce hārī ‘Among a cluster of basil plants’ (Poitevin and Rairkar 1996:79v.225; Vanita 2005:97); utāḥ pāṇḍurānaga āta prabhātāsamavavo pūlāīa ‘Arisē Pāṇḍuranga it is now dawn’ (Kākaḍa Ārtyā, Sāībābā Mandīrātīl, 2002); vaikārayā abhāmāc ‘Dispersion’s mill’ (Macnicol 1919:49v.24); viṭhō māhā lēkurvāī ‘My Viṣṇu has many children’ (Sellergren 1996:218; Vanita 1989:55, 2005:101); ye ga ye ga viṭhāhā ‘O Viṭhāhā come soon’ (Vanita 2005:100), and yere yere māyēva rāmē ‘come, come, oh my Rāma’ (Sellergren 1996:221–222). This list counters Pandharipande’s assertion that there are no translations of Janābī compositions in English (2000:150). However, no one has yet undertaken to translate all the Janābī compositions, although I think that my contribution is probably the largest as I have translated seventy-two verses and at least thirty-five of these are new.

34 This is a reference to an episode from the Rāmāyaṇa known as the Setubandha, ‘The Building of the Bridge’. One stone had the letter rā and the second stone had ma. When they were put in the water the stones joined to form rāma and floated due to the power of the deity’s name (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27th January 2011). This allusion also appears in a verse attributed to Muktābīhī (abhangā 10, SSG 1:239).

35 Ātmārām in sanskrit poetry refers to the ‘Supreme Reality’ or the ‘all-pervading Being’ and not ‘Rām’ the incarnation of Viṣṇu according to Vaudeville (1987:32). Literally ātmārām means ‘one who finds joy in his/her own self’ or ‘one who finds joy in the supreme Reality’ but Vaudeville states that in sanskrit literature the word refers to ‘he who is immanent in all beings’ (1987:32–3, n.16).

36 Vaikuṇṭha is Viṣṇu’s heaven or paradise.

Nāma phuṣṭa cokhaṭa / nāma ghetā naye viṣa /1/
Jūḍa śilā jyā sāgarī / ātmārāmē nāmē tārī /2/
Putrabhāva smarāna kēlī / tūyā vaikuṇṭhāsī nēlē /3/
Nāmamahīnā janī jānē / ḍhādē viṭhālaci hoṇī /4/

The Name is free and excellent; one never tires of chanting the Name.

A heavy stone in the ocean, the name ‘Ātmārām’ saves.

Recollecting the son, he was taken to Vaikuṇṭha.

Janī knows the greatness of the Name; by chanting she becomes Viṣṇu [himself].

Janābī abhangā 3, SSG 1, p.716.)
If you dislike Viṭṭhala’s name, dire consequences will ensue. 
Tie your neck to a pillar and place a scorpion on your tongue. 
Such a damned egoist goes to hell.

Nāmdev advises me, servant Janī stays at the feet.

Contemplate the name of Viṭṭhobā, then step ahead.
Chanting the Name is a great saviour, it takes you beyond borders. 
AJāmela was sanctified; Cokhāmeḷā was set free.
‘Contemplate the name while grinding and pounding’, says Nāma’s Janī.

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87 The last part of the line literally translates as ‘time (or death) will strike [with a] punch in the face’.
88 Ājāmeḷa (Ajāmīḷa, Ajāmila) was a Brahman from Kanyakubja (central India). He abandoned his parents and wife to spend his life with a śūdra woman and was thus a sinner. His youngest and much loved son was called Nārāyaṇa.

One day Ājāmeḷa overhead Yama (the king of the underworld who is regarded as the punisher of the wicked) and Viṣṇu discussing him, which led him to repent and so abandon the śūdra woman and his child (in accordance with Vedic law). Ājāmeḷa then spent his remaining days at Gangadwar (Nasik district, Maharashtra) in the service of God and so attained mokṣa (liberation, emancipation) after death (Abbott 1996, 2:389). The Prapnnachari (skanda 6, BhP 7.1) version of the story states that Ajāmil became a robber to satisfy his woman (he was thus a sinner on two counts). At the end of his life messengers came from Yama in order to inflict death upon him. In fear Ajāmil called out for his favourite son and thus uttered the name of God. Viṣṇu’s messengers consequently came to his aid. The two ‘sides’ debated whether Ajāmil had acted righteously. They came to the conclusion that although Ajāmil was a sinner he had uttered the name Nārāyaṇa at the moment of death and that this absolved his sins (Prapnnachari 2007:143ff). Hawley mentions Ajāmil in his discussion of Sūrdās’ poetry as ‘the Brahman who deserted his family and ran off with a prostitute…’ (1992:232) and as ‘the dissolute, womanizing Brahman who met death by calling desperately for his son Narayan and was answered instead by God, one of whose names…was also Narayan’ (1994b:84). There have been several Hindu movies entitled Ajāmil: 1934 (directed by Abdul Rehman Kabuli) and 1947 (staring Narmada Shankar). Ajāmela/Ajāmil and Cokhāmeḷā are mentioned as being accepted by Kṛṣṇa (BVJ 39:16). This suggests that, particularly within bhakti, both sinners and low-caste persons can be liberated by contemplating/uttering the name of God (BhG 8.7, 9.22). There is a verse attributed to Kānhopātrā that mentions Ajāmila (SSG 1, p. 191, v.12) and which Sellergren has translated (1996:232).
Great is the name of Viṭhobā; the fisherman and the potter have been saved. By liking the Name, the fetters of samsāra are broken. Time and again I sing the Name; it has become servant Janī’s obsessive habit. (Janābāi abhāṅga 11, SSG 1, p.717).

O Viṭhyā Viṭhyā, you’re the naughty son of the first mother. Your widow has become a prostitute and wears the bangles of a married woman. Your corpse is gone; looking at you time cries. Standing in the courtyard, servant Janī swears. (Janābāi abhāṅga 19, SSG 1, p.717).

It is likely that the potter mentioned here was Gora Kumbhār but the reference to the koli is unclear. Sadasivan states that ‘sometimes between two different linguistic regions, a name may be adopted by two or more castes who have no occupational identity. The name Koli is taken by hillmen, fishermen, landless cultivators, weavers or a section of the Jats’ (2000:276).

Viṭhyā is a very casual or unrefined way to address Viṭhobā. It is an expression of familiarity by the author who is indicating her/his intimate relationship with God.

Kāraṭā means ‘the epitome of naughtiness’ and the term derives from kāratā a term used to censure a mischievous or troublesome child (Molesworth 1857:159) but kārṭā connotes ‘brat’ according to Bernstsen (1982:24).

There are other translations of this verse by Sellergren (1996:222–223), Pandharipande (2000:175) and Bhagwat. The translation by Bhagwat differs from my translation and that of Sellergren but provides an interesting interpretation of the meaning of the verse: ‘Vithya, you brat of Adimaya. You begetter of umpteen kids. How do you dare to forsake me? Wages of adultery are burdens of responsibility. As to myself, I have none else to look upon’ (1990:229).
Vitho my family-man, with a gathering of children. 93

Nivṛtti on the shoulders, Sopān holding the hand. Jhāneśvar walks ahead, behind is beautiful Muktāī. Gorā the potter at his thigh, Cokhā in his heart. Bankā on the hip, 94 Nāmā holds the little finger. Janābāī says, ‘Gopāl is having a bhakta festival’. (Janābāī abhang 30, SSG 1, p.718). 95

93 One version of the verse replaced lenkurāncā with gopālāncā, ‘a gathering of Gopāls’. Gopāla (cowherd, a king, or a caste) is an epithet for Kṛṣṇa. Molesworth states that gopālas are leapers, tumblers, weightlifters or those who perform feats of strength (1857:245). One could therefore interpret the ‘gathering of Gopāls’ as a joyful get-together of Viṭṭhal’s caste, family or followers.

94 The SSG refers to Vankā, while Marathi World refers to Bankā. Bankā, a mahār, is generally accepted as Soyarābāī’s brother and Nirmalā’s husband (Mokashi-Punekar 2005b:143ff; Zelliot and Mokashi-Punekar 2005:30). There are two Vankās mentioned in the BVJ—one male and one female—as well as a female Bankā (BVJ 17.9, 74, 98). The first Vankā is associated with Cokhāmeḷā and is described as a woodcutter (BVJ 13.76; 15.71; 15.145). The second Vankā is the daughter of the potter Rākā and his wife Bankā (BVJ 17.8ff), although some versions of the story call the wife Baka and the daughter Bankā (Chenhil 2009). Due to a promise Rākā made Viṭṭhal—to save some kittens from dying—the whole family became mendicants. Rākā and his wife (Bankā or Baka) are recorded as dressing themselves in rags and then in leaves. This is significant when one considers the meaning of vankā (‘bare, naked, and void’). The term vankā is sometimes written onkā as a number of words that appear under ‘o’ are also written and pronounced under ‘va’ (Molesworth 1857:117, 727). Rākā is also described as collecting and selling faggots, from which the family subsist (BVJ 17.67), which means that one could describe Rākā as a woodsman—although the story makes clear that he was not a woodcutter (BVJ 17:76). There is also a story (BVJ 17:59–285; and possibly a Nāmdev abhang)—related by Ralhan (1997:238–9)—in which Vankā and Nāmdev’s daughter Limbāī get into an argument, the result of which is that Nāmdev is ultimately convinced of Rākā’s (and his family’s) detachment and indifference to worldly things. If there was a connection with Limbāī and Nāmdev then it is possible that Janābāī could have heard about or possibly even met Rākā, Bankā/Baka and/or Vankā. There are two main reasons that one might suppose that the most likely referent is Bankā: firstly, the figure is mentioned after Cokhāmeḷā (his brother and indifference to worldly things. If there was a connection with Limbāī and Nāmdev then it is possible that Janābāī —in contrast to his brother—could have heard about or possibly even met Rākā, Bankā/Baka and/or Vankā. There are two main reasons that one might suppose that the most likely referent is Bankā: firstly, the figure is mentioned after Cokhāmeḷā (his brother and

95 There is also a translation by Sellergren (1996:218) and a ‘modern religious illustration’ of this verse, with the caption ‘My Vithoba has many children’, in Manushi (Vanita 1989:49; 2005:101). This fits with the SSG version of the verse as it depicts the sans, as children, with Viṭṭhal.
Janī mahāṇe śarāṇa ālē | avherītā bīrā gelē 141

Gangā āḷī sindhūpāśī / tyāṅē avherīlī tīśī /1/
Tarī tē saṅgāvē kavaṇālā / aśē bōlē bā viṭṭhalā /2/
Jala kope jalacarē / mātā avherī lēkurē /3/
Janī mhaṇe śarana ālē / avherītā bīrā āḷī /4/

If the Gangā goes to the sea and the sea rejects her,96
Tell me who would rebuke him father Viṭṭhal?
Can a river be angry with its fish?97 Can a mother reject her child?98
Janī says, ‘those who seek protection must not be rebuffed’.
(Janābāī abhaṅga 38, SSG 1, p.719).99

Nāḥī kele tuḍī āḷē | duṅ kāṭayē māḍī jīva /1/
Naṣṭa pāṇīṇa mī hīna /nāḥī kele tuḍī dhāyāna /2/
Jēṇē duṅ kāṭayē māla / tē tē sāsītē vīḍaḷa /3/
Tāṇḍivās māṇapārē | dādu kāṇḍū āḷāgelāsī /4/
Kṣmā kārāvī devaraṇā / dāṣī janī āḷā āḷaṇā /5/

I have not served you. I am very sorry.
I am a vile sinner, contemptible. I have not meditated upon You.
You have endured all my troubles and sorrows Viṭṭhal.
Beside me, day and night, you’ve helped me grind and pound.
‘Please forgive me Lord God’, begs your servant Janī.100
(Janābāī abhaṅga 42, SSG 1, p.720).

Yēre yēre māḷāṇa rāma | māḷomohā mṛdāgārama /11/
sāntamārē bēṭē | dēḍē dēḍē kṛpā gōṇḍē /12/

96 This line is similar to Amṛṭānubhava 1.54: सिंधु आँण गंगेची निवाणी | स्त्रीपुरुष नामाची मिरवणी | दिसतसते तली काय पाणी दैत्त होडला? ‘Although the names “Ganges” and “ocean” are different, when then commingle, are their waters not the same?’ (Abhayananda 2000:119) and Jñāneśvarī 18.1572: गंगा सिंधु सेवूं गेलत | पावतांच समुहदरु माली | तेवीं भक्तां सेव देताली | निजपाठी || ‘Gangā sindhā āḷī āḷī / pāvatāci samudra jāti / tevī bhakta sela didhalī / nijapadācī //
The river Ganges goes to serve the ocean but becomes the ocean. Similarly you give the devotee a share of Yourself’ (my translation).

97 The term jala refers to water or any fluid in general but is also the name of a river (Monier Williams 2008) and jalacara refers to ‘a water animal’ (Molesworth 1857:309; Tulpule 1999:574; Vaze 1911:204). I have translated jala as ‘river’ rather than ‘water’ and jalacara as ‘fish’ due to the reference to rivers in the first line of the abhaṅga.

98 The term sindhu refers ‘the ocean or a sea’, ‘the river Indus’, a ‘river’ (Molesworth 1857:852) or ‘a stream; flood, waters’ (Monier Williams 2008). This verse may be referring to the bhakta’s unitive experience with the Divine put forward in the Jñāneśvarī (18.1138) and Amṛṭānubhava (9.1–71).


100 Janābāī abhaṅga 155 (SSG 1, p.731) also ends dāṣī janī lāge pāyā. The phrase translates literally as ‘servant Janī touches your feet’.
Come oh come my Rāma; Charmer, the Dark One. Look upon the meeting of the sants with kindliness.  
Remove our re-birth and disease, please give us bliss.  
Janī says, Cakrapāṇī, please do this deed.  
(Janābāī abhaṅga 43, SSG 1, p.720).

O Nārāyaṇā, why don’t you bless me?  
I am ignorant; therefore I have come to your feet.  
Janī says, it’s high time, O Compassionate One, [that you] liberate me!  
(Janābāī abhaṅga 44, SSG 1, p.720).

You’ve filled my belly; how come you now abandon me.  
Gently, gently Pāṇḍuraṅga; why have you abandoned me without a companion?  
Only I know how stressed I am; I have no other resting place.  
Viṭhābāī, my mother and sisters, with your blessing Janī is saved.  
(Janābāī abhaṅga 48, SSG 1, p.720).

101 This literally means ‘Meeting with the saints, look upon with blessings’.  
102 Cakrapāṇī means ‘discus bearer’ and is an epithet for Viṣṇu.  
103 There is a translation of this verse by Sellergren (1996:221–222).  
104 The words nārāyaṇā and karānā rhyme.
Friend, King of Paṇḍharī, may I be able to prostrate myself at your feet.\textsuperscript{105} [May I be able to] do this uninterruptedly, with pure love and pure understanding. My constant thought, may it be of the Lord of Paṇḍharpūr. ‘I’ll perform ovāḷaṇī from birth to birth’, says Janī.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{105} As a low caste woman Janī would not have been allowed to enter the temple so this is poignant.

\textsuperscript{106} Òvāḷaṇī (òvāḷī, òvāḷla, ovāḷaṇī) means to move a lamp vertically in a circular motion in front of a deity or person in order to remove evil or in consecration (Molesworth 1857:122). The receiver will have a kuṅkum (saffron, turmeric) tilak (mark on the forehead) and then be offered rice, grains and flame (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27\textsuperscript{th} January 2011). See Janābāī abhaṅga 172 (SSG 1, p.733) for another reference to Janābāī performing ovāḷaṇe.
I am a slow learner, a dumb person and your servant; give me a place at your feet.

Who else is there, my friend, to protect me?

Don’t test my patience O Lord, my spirit is weary.

O life force in all living things, Janī says ‘Nārāyaṇā’.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 58, SSG 1, p. 721).

अहो सखीये सजणी | जानाबाई हो हरणी । १।
मज पाडसाची माय | भित व×साची ते गाय । २।
कां गा उशीर लाива | तुजविण शिण झाला । ३।
अहो बैसले दलणी | धांव घाले जहणे जनी । ४।

Aho sakhiye sajanī / jñānābāī ho haraṇī //1//
Maja pādasācī māyā / bhakti vatsācī te gāya //2//
Kā gā usīr lāvīla / tujāvīna śīna jhālā //3//
Aho baisalē daļanī / dhāṁva ghālī mhaṇe janī //4//

O friend, beloved companion, Jñānābāī, O doe.

I am your child, attached to you like a calf to its mother.

Why are you late? Without you I am exhausted.

I’ve sat down to grind; ‘O make haste’, says Jānī.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 59, SSG 1, p. 721).

राजाई गोणाई | अखंदित तुझे पायीं । १।
मज ठेवियले दवारीं | नीच महाणै बाहेरीं । २।
नारा गोंदा महादा विठा | ठेवियले अवाटा । ३।
देवा केव्हां शेम देसी | आपुण्यी महाणै जनी दासी । ४।

Rājāī goṇāī / akhandīta tujhe pāyī /1/
Maja thēviyalē dvārī / niča mhaṇonī bāherī /2/
Nārā gōnda mahādā viṭha / thēviyalē agravāṭa /3/
Devā kevhā kṣēma desī / āpulī mhaṇonī janī dāsī /4/

Rājāī and Goṇāī have been at your feet all along.

You make me stand outside the door; you consider me base.

Nārā, Gondā, Mahādā and Viṭhā, for them there are ways to go.

When will you grant me your concern and call me your servant.

107 There is a translation of this verse by Vanita (2005:98) and one by Poitevin and Rairkar (1996:80).

108 The term sakhi denotes a ‘female friend’ and sajanī (sājanī) refers to a ‘woman friend’ (Tulpule 1999:731), ‘a [female] friend or lover’ (Bermsen 1982–83:157), or ‘a mistress, a beloved woman; a woman’s confidante or female companion’ (Molesworth 1857:731). This line has been translated by Poitevin and Rairkar as ‘O Friend! Dear One! It’s Janabāī the doe’ (1996:80 v.200) but my understanding is that the author is referring to Jīnāēśvar as mother (Dhere 2011:214). Consequently, I have taken ho as a vocative particle and not a form of the verb hoṇẽ (to be).

109 The term pāḍasa denotes ‘a fawn’ (Molesworth 1857:503; Tulpule 1999:428) but is applied to a calf or an infant as an endearment according to Molesworth (1857:503) and the term vatsa denotes ‘a calf’ (Molesworth 1857:731). The term bhakti is generally taken as ‘devotion to’ but also denotes belonging to, attachment to, fondness for and so on (Monier Williams 2008), which is why I have translated bhakti as ‘attachment’ in the context of the mother-doe and child-calf.

110 This abhaṅga has also been translated by Poitevin and Rairkar (1996:80v.200), Vanita (2005:98) and (Dhere 2011:214).

111 This is a reference to Goṇāī and Nāmdev’s sons. The point of the verse is that Janābāī is an outsider within Nāmdev’s family where she is the servant but moreover that she in not yet on the path of bhakti like Nāmdev’s sons and is pleading for inclusion.
Come O, come O, Viṭṭha-di, my mother from Paṇḍharpūr. The Bhimā and Candrabhāgā are the Ganga at your feet.

Come with all these; dance in my garden. Your virtues colour me, says Nāma’s Janī.

Why are you so heartless? I’m your dumb child. Without you Mother, my soul wants to abandon me. I am the calf, You are my mother; I don’t know what to do now. I’m holding my breath; Janī says, ‘please meet me’.

There is also a translation of this verse by Sellergren (1996:218–219). For a verse relating to Nāmdev’s family see Janābāī abhaṅga 279 (SSG 1:744).

There is a translation of this verse by Vanita (2005:100).

There is a translation of this verse by Vanita (2005:98).
Kavaṭāḷurī bheṭi poṭi / janī mhaṇe sāṅgū goṣṭī /3/

I’m thinking so much that my mind’s mind is thinking. In these happy thoughts Pāṇḍuraṅga comes to meet me. I embrace him.117 Janī says, ‘we conversed’. (Janābāī abhaṅga 77, SSG 1, p.723).

Dehācā pālaṭ viṭṭhalāce bheṭī / jaḷa lavaṇa gāṅṭhi padona ṭhēli /1/ 
Dhanya māyabāpa nāmadeva mājhī / tevē pāṇḍhārīraḷā dākhavīlī /2/118 
Rārandivas bhāva viṭṭhalāce pāyī / citta thāyīnce thāyī māvalalī /3/ 
Nāmayāce janī ānanda paḷ jhālī / bheṭāvayā ālā pāṇḍuraṅga /4/

After meeting Viṭṭhal my body changed completely, water and salt met.119 Nāmdev, my mother and father, is blessed; through him I saw the king of Paṇḍharpūr. Day and night my devotion remains at Viṭṭhal’s feet and my consciousness melts there. Nāma’s Janī seems happy; Pāṇḍuraṅga has come to meet me.

Janī sweeps briskly. Cakrapāṇī collects the rubbish, Carries the basket on his head and throws the refuse far away. He has become infatuated by devotion and is doing lowly chores.

117 The verb kavaṭāḷane means ‘to embrace’ (Tulpule 1999:137). The verb bheṭaṇẽ connotes ‘to meet, to have an interview with; to join in close embrace; to encounter, to meet or fall in with’ (Molesworth 1857:617). The author seems to be suggesting that s/he embraced the stomach or belly (poṭī) of Pāṇḍuraṅga—suggesting s/he was hugging him when they met.

118 The term here may also be paṇḍhārīraḷā meaning ‘the darling (rāyā) of Paṇḍharpūr’.

119 The idea here is that just as salt dissolves in water and the two become one, there is a union between jīvā and śiva. Janābāī has therefore been flooded with self-realisation and/or become one with God (Personal communication, Veena Dhade, 20th October 2004). A similar idea is expressed in the Amṛṭānubhava 1.63: सांडूǓन मीठपणाचा लोभु | मीठे संधुअचा गेत्तलास सांडूनी मीठपणाचा लोभु / मीठे संधुअचा गेत्तलास / tevī ahaṃ deūni mī śambhu / śāmbhavī jhālõ/ ‘When salt dissolves, it becomes one with the ocean; When my ego dissolved I became one with Shiva and Shakti’ (Abhayananda 2000:120); and the Cāṅgadev Pasasti 46: लवण पाͨणयाचा थावो | मािज रघोǓन गेलɅ पाहो / tanva tẽci nāhī ̃, mī kāya ghevo / māpa jhāl? ‘A grain of salt went to fathom the ocean’s depths, But when it became immersed, where did it go? What can it do and what can it measure when it has altogether ceased to exist’ (Abhayananda 2000:243).
Janī says, ‘Vīṭhobā, how can I repay you?’
(Janābāī abhaṅga 80, SSG 1, p.723).120

Janī’s head is itching. Vīṭhobā runs to her aid.
God unties her hair, crushes the lice quickly.
She combed her tangled hair free. Janī says, ‘I feel clean’.
(Janābāī abhaṅga 83, SSG 1, p.724).122

There is a translation of this verse by Vanita (2005:96).
There is a translation of this verse by Pandharipande (2000:176).
There is a translation of this verse by Vanita (2005:97).
There is a translation of this verse by Vanita (2005:97).
Deva dhāṇvoniyā āle / śītaḷ udaka ghe ghe bole /2/
Āpulyā hate visaṇī / ghālī janīcyā doyī pāṇī /3/
Mājhyā keśānsa / mhaṇe ugaça baisa /5/
Tenē muradi deśānsa / kā mhaṇe māya jhāli /6/

One bathing day: no tepid water.
God came running and said ‘take this cold water’.¹²⁵
Adding cold water to hot he pours water on Janī’s head himself.
‘For too long my hair has not been washed’.
He wrings her hair, says ‘sit quietly!’
He plaits her hair himself. Janī says, ‘My mother has come’.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 85, SSG 1, p.724).¹²⁶

Among the basil plants Janī unravels her plaits.¹²⁸
Cakrapāṇī takes some butter and massages Janī’s head.
‘My Janī has no one’, so God pours water.
Janī tells everyone, ‘My dear friend is washing me’.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 86, SSG 1, p. 724).¹³⁰

125 Ghe ghe translates literally as ‘take, take!’
126 There is a translation of this verse by Vanita (2005:96).
127 The name Cakrapāṇī should probably be written Cakrapāṇi, with a short ‘i’ but the ‘ī’ rhymes better and makes the play on the word pāṇī ‘water’ better.
128 The term bana refers to a ‘grove’ (Molesworth 1857:564; Tulpule 1999:481), a ‘wood’, ‘plantation’ (Molesworth 1857:481) or a ‘garden’ (Tulpule 1999:481). Consequently, the phrase could read ‘In the basil grove’ or ‘in the garden of tulasī’.
129 It seems as if Viṭṭhal washes both Janī’s head/hair and body at bath time (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 19th May 2011). It is worth noting that loose hair is a symbol of female sexuality. Loose hair can indicate a state of bodily pollution such as menstruation during which time a woman should not oil her hair. In some cases the act of oiling the hair, usually undertaken by unmarried girls or women married to a living husband, may be considered a means of making oneself attractive to the opposite sex. Moreover, loose or dishevelled hair can symbolise a dissolute or even violent state, such as that of the goddess Kali (Fuller 1992:188; Hiltebeitel 1981:206, 396).
130 There is a translation of this verse by Vanita (2005:97).
Kāndīṭā kāndīṭā / śīna ālā pandharināthā /2/
Sarva aṅgī ghāma ālā / tenē pīṭāmbhara bhijalā /3/
Pāvī patijana hārī kaḍī / kondā pāṅkhadunti kādhī /4/
Hāṭā ālā ase phoḍa / jānī mhaṇe musalā soda /5/

To remove the husk from rice he swept the mortar.
Pounding vigorously Pandharināth became exhausted.
His entire body drenched in sweat, his yellow dhoti became wet.131
Anklets on his feet and rings on his hands, he removed the chaff by winnowing.
On his hand a blister appeared, Jānī said, ‘let go of the pestle’.

(Chānābāī abhaṅga 87, SSG 1, p.724).132

Deva bhāvācā lampaṇṭ / sōḍunī ālā ho vaiṅṭha /1/
Puṅḍalikāṇḍhrū ṭhe / sama caranāvāri sōbhā /2/
Hāṭī cakra pāyī vāṇkī / mukha bhakṭācē avalokī /3/
Ubbā baise na sarvathā / pāhe koṭhē bhaktaṅkathā /4/
Sarva suṅkācā sāgara / jānī mhaṇe sārāṅgadhara /5/

God values deep devotion. He left heaven and came down [to earth].
He stood in front of Puṅḍalikā, with well-formed beautiful feet.
Discus in hand, anklets at his feet, He beheld the devotee’s face.
He stands erect, never sits down. Witness the story of devotees!
Jānī says, ‘Sārāṅgadhara is the Ocean of all happiness’.133

(Chānābāī abhaṅga 91, SSG 1, p.724).

131 The pīṭāmbhara is the yellow silk dhotī or dhotor (Marathi)—five to seven yards of cloth that is tied and knotted at a man’s waist and which covers most of the legs—worn by Viṭṭhal and Kṛṣṇa.
132 There is a partial translation of this abhaṅga by Pandharipande (2000:167) and full translation by Vanita (2005:97–8).
133 Sārāṅgadhār, ‘Bow-holder’, is an epithet for Viṣṇu or one of his incarnations (avaṭār). However, this reference is rather confusing. There are stories connecting both Kṛṣṇa (HV 81.63–4; Matchett 2001:59) and Rāma to a bow. In the Bhāggavata Purāṇa, which is regarded as a supplement (khila) to the Mahābhārata (Brockington 1998:313ff)—Lākṣmānā tells Draupadī how she chose to marry Kṛṣṇa. Lākṣmānā states that her father, Brhatṭesa, set up a svayamvara (‘own choice’) marriage ceremony/contest for her. The contest—similar to the one in which Arjūṇa won Draupadī (Mahābhārata, ādi parva)—required the competitor to shoot a swimming fish through the eye with a bow and arrow. This feat was accomplished by Kṛṣṇa and the couple then married (Bṛh. 83. 17–39; Bryant 2003:353–55). The first book of the Rāmāyaṇa (Bāḷākanda ‘Boyshood’) relates how Rāma breaks the bow given to king Janaka by Śiva during the svayamvara ceremony/contest and as a result marries Janaka’s daughter Sītā (Rāmāyaṇa 65, 66; Goldman 2005:333ff). The Rāmāyaṇa also recounts how, after Rāma and Sītā’s wedding, Parasurāma (the sixth incarnation of Viṣṇu, the ‘warrior Brahma’) appeared and told Rāma—sometimes referred to as Rāmacandra (Rāma–‘moon’) or Rāma-Dāsarathī (son of Dāsaratha of Ayodhyā) who is the seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu—the history of the bows. Viṣṇu and Śiva were going to fight a duel, so Viśvakarman (the Architect of the Universe) made a bow for each of them. Śiva was disappointed when Viṣṇu unstrung his bow—the sīva dhanusa—so he gave his bow to Devarāta. This bow was passed on to Janaka and was broken by Rāma. Viṣṇu’s bow went to Śrīka, Janmadagni and finally Parasurāma. Parasurāma states that having heard that Rāma had broken Śiva’s bow he wanted to see if Rāma was strong enough to break Viṣṇu’s bow (sārāṅgā). Rāma proves mighty and Parasurāma, having been robbed of his strength, departs (Rāmāyaṇa 76.1–75.20; see Goldman 2005:380–388). The point of this story is that while both Rāmas are incarnations of Viṣṇu it is Rāma-Dāsarathī/Rāmacandra who is declared the mightier asserts Wilkins (2003:168ff). There is a hymn by Tulsīdās—kahun tau kar-saroj raghunāyak (O Lord of Raghūs! O Rāma!)—describing this incident (Subramanian 2008:86–7).
Casteless Cokhāmeḷā feels intensely for his devotees. By staying at home he provides shelter [for his devotees]. He has shared his body, Janī laughs and sings songs.134 (Janābāī abhaṅga 96, SSG 1, p.725).

Cokhāmeḷā is a good sant, who has bewitched God. So great is his devotion, he is blessed in times of trouble. Through his deeds Cokhāmeḷā’s God is indebted to him. Go to Viṭṭhal’s feet, says Nāma’s Janī. (Janābāī abhaṅga 97, SSG 1, p.725).


Janī says, ‘Pāṇḍurāṅga, you are my soul mate; I beseech you [tell me of] the greatness of the holy ones. What’s the significance of the Bhīma’s river-bank? Why are you standing beside Puṇḍalīk’s door? How can Govind be here? How does the sound of the flute float here? Has Nārada come to stay?’135

134. Cokhāmeḷā’s body does not remain his; everyone gets a part of him because he does so much.

135. Nārada, ‘Wisdom Giver’, is known as the son of Brahma and one of the ten mūnis or rṣis, while in later mythology he is regarded as the friend of Kṛṣṇa. He is credited with the composition of the Nārada Bhakti Sūtra (c. twelfth century), which details the worship of Kṛṣṇa. He is regarded as ‘an archetypal figure of spiritual devotion’ whose mission was ‘the dissemination of the teachings of bhakti yoga’ according to Prem (1998:3–4). He is usually depicted with a vīṇā or tampura as his principal act of devotion is to sing the praises of the Lord. Nārada, in this verse, can be understood as the preeminent bhakta.
Do me a favour Nārāyaṇa; tell me of the innermost heart’. ‘Have pity on me’, servant Janī prays. (Janābāī abhaṅga 104, SSG 1, p.726).136

One fine day, Viṭṭho went to Janī. Quietly He asked her for food to eat. ‘Father, what can I give you?’ Holding hands she led him inside, served him paṁcāmṛta and rice.137 Belching with love and satisfaction, Janī says ‘Viṭho is sated’. (Janābāī abhaṅga 116, SSG 1, p. 727).

There is an excellent recording of this abhaṅga by Kishori Amonkar (see Panjari 2013). 137 Paṁcāmṛta is the five nectar like substances—milk, curds, clarified butter, honey and sugar—in which the image of a deity is bathed; a seasoning of chillies, tamarind, coconut milk, molasses and oil; or delicious food (see Molesworth 1857:481; Tulpule 1999:399).

136

137
The dawn āratī is performed to revere the Lotus-Lord. All the devotees have gathered: they see the temple empty. Jānēśvar says, ‘Now, where has God gone?’ With his mind’s eye he saw God grinding at Janī’s place. (Janābāī abhaṅga 121, SSG 1, p.727).

‘Go back to the temple, don’t come with me’. ‘Let’s go together’. He becomes her servant. He works in union with her; she appreciates God bearing her burdens. He does the washing with his four hands. Janī says, ‘Well done’. (Janābāī abhaṅga 122, SSG 1, p.727).

Carrying the washing under her arm, Janī leaves without eating. Viṭṭhal runs behind: ‘Why did you leave me?’ ‘Why did you come running? Go back to the temple!’ He does the washing with his four hands. Janī says, ‘Well done!’ (Janābāī abhaṅga 124, SSG 1, p.727).

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138 Kāmalaṅga, ‘the Lotus Lord’, is a reference to Viṣṇu as the husband of the goddess Lakṣmī.

139 The ‘four hands’ mentioned suggest that because God is using his four hands the work gets done twice as fast. It also suggests that Viṭṭhal is an incarnation of Viṣṇu, as he has four hands which hold the discus (cakra), conch (śaṅkha), club (gada) and lotus (padma). The arms at the back indicate Viṣṇu’s presence in the spiritual world and the two arms in front his presence in the physical world. Therefore, the abhaṅga may suggest that both the spiritual and physical world interact. This verse, like many others, is metaphorical as it suggests that Janābāī’s work is made bearable by her envisaging or feeling the helping hand of God.

140 There is a translation of this verse by Pandharipande (2000:165).
Janī jāya senasāthī / ubhā āhe ticyāpāthī /
Pitāmbarācī kāṃsa kovī / mage cāle janābāī /
Gaucyā vēcūni bāndhīli moṭa / janī mhaṇe dyavī gāṇtha /
Moṭa ucalūna doīvara gheī / mage cāle janī /

Janījāya senasāthī ubhā āhe ticyāpāthī /
Pitāmbarācī kāṃsa kovī mage cāle janābāī /
Gaucyā vēcūni bāndhīli moṭa janī mhaṇe dyavī gāṇtha /
Moṭa ucalūna doīvara gheī mage cāle janī /

Janī goes to collect cow-dung. He is standing behind her.
He tucks in his yellow silk dhoti. Behind walks Janābāī.
He gathers cow-dung cakes in a bundle. Janī, says ‘tie the knot’.
He lifts the bundle and puts it on his head. Behind walks Janī.
(Janābāī abhanga 125, SSG 1, p.727–728).

Eka prahara rātra jhālī / pherī viṭṭhalācī ālī /
Nāma mhaṇe jāne dhūya /
Prabhā gharānta dāṭalī / eka sarāda suṭalī /
Ekamekā ālingaṅ / nāma mhaṇe janī dhanya /

The first watch [of the] night begins. Viṭṭhal comes on his usual rounds.
Nāma asks Janī to look out: ‘Who is standing at the door?’
Suddenly there’s an intense light in the house, there’s a single ray.
The two embrace each other. Nāma says, ‘Janī is blessed’.
(Janābāī abhanga 129, SSG 1, p.728).

Janījāya pāṇīyāsī maṅghā dhāṅve hṛṣīkeśī /
Pāya bhījō nēdi hāt / maṅghā dhāṅve vāhā /
Pāṇī rāṇjanāṁ bharī / saḍāsāravāna kari /
Dhunē dhūnīyā āņī / mhaṇe nāmayāĉi janī /

When[ever] Janī goes to fetch water, Hṛṣīkeśa follows behind to help.
He does not let my feet get wet. He carries the water pots with his own hands.
He fills the water jars. He sprinkles water and smears cow-dung [on the yard].
He even washes the dirty clothes’, says Nāma’s Janī.
(Janābāī abhanga 130, SSG1, p.728).

141 The word māthā ‘forehead’ suggests that Viṭṭhal carried the water pots on his head.
Whatever Janī said is what she wrote and that happened because of you sants.\textsuperscript{143}
O Jñānadev you should know I feel minuscule because of your greatness.
I know my limitations; I stay at your feet in your service.
The words of Janī are words rejoicing in themselves, the svāmī’s words increase twofold.
The ink that you write with makes the paper pure and true; I know that because you’ve written extensively near me.
Jñānadev laughs and claps his hands; everyone extols and praises [Janī].

\textsuperscript{143} This verse has also been translated by Poitevin and Rairkar (1996:74–5, v.268) and there is a recording of this abhaṅga by Kishori Amonkar (see SJisBack 2010d).

\textsuperscript{144} If Janābāī was an historical figure then it is highly unlikely she was literate so it is unlikely Janī wrote down her compositions (Novetzke 2008:78ff) although Kiehnle suggests ‘paper’ was available at the time (1997b:21).

\textsuperscript{145} The happiness due to being freed or liberated is temporary since the soul/self has to obey the consequences of karma (Personal Communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 28 February 2011).

\textsuperscript{146} The last line suggests that this was an unexpected experience for Janī.
One particular night, God comes unexpectedly. Reclining on the bed of happiness, He shares secrets with Janī. While revealing secrets, He unexpectedly falls asleep. ‘Wake up, wake up Cakrapāṇi, it is dawn’ says Janī.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 147, SSG 1, p.730).

This verse has been translated by Poitevin and Rairkar (1996:80, v.285). This abhaṅga tells the story retold in BVJ 21.115ff (see below).

Janābāī abhaṅga 42 also ends dāsi janī lāge pāyā. There is a recording of this verse by Kishori Amonkar.
I am the resident of Alankāpur near the Indrayani, whose current flows from the east.\(^{149}\)

Mother Jñānabāī anxiously desires your feet, run towards them.\(^{150}\)

My life is suffocating; take pity please on the one who moans.

Please make Nāma’s Janī your own, take care of me at your feet my parent.

(Janābāī abhāṅga 168, SSG 1, p.732).

\(^{149}\) Alankāpur translates literally as ‘Jewel-town’ and probably refers to Āḷandī. The Indrayani, considered a sacred river, originates at Loṇāvalā (a hill-station south-east of Mumbai) and runs east through Dehū and Āḷandī to meet the Bhimā river.

\(^{150}\) Jñānabāī is a feminised form of the name of sant Jñānēśvar. The reference to Jñānēśvar indicates that Alankāpur refers to Āḷandī the town associated with Jñānēśvar.

\(^{151}\) The term śarīra connotes ‘body’ but is also a covert term for a woman’s vulva according to Molesworth (1857:783). It is significant that Janābāī ōvāḷaṇī with her body, rather than a ghee lamp, as this mean that she is consecrating the sant herself. See Janābāī abhaṅga 53 (SSG 1, p.721) for another reference to Janābāī performing ōvāḷaṇī.

\(^{152}\) There are references to Kṛṣṇa as ‘the thief of the mind’ or ‘the thief of butter’ in the Sūrdās poems (Hawley 1981c; 1984:82–3), which suggests that this is a motif in bhakti.
I’ve reproved him with shouts of ‘so’ham’.\(^{153}\) Viṭṭhal fell to his knees. Janī says, ‘Dear Viṭṭhal I won’t leave you whatever the cost’. (Janābāī abhaṅga 180, SSG 1, p.734).\(^{154}\)

This abhaṅga has similarities to one attributed to Nāmdev:

7.1. Nāmdev abhaṅga

\textit{Premapāṃsā ghālūniyā gaḷā} | jita dharīlẽ gopāḷā \(^{11}\)
\textit{Ekya manācī karūni joḍī} | viṭṭhala pāyī ghātalī beḍī \(^{12}\)
\textit{Hṛdaya karūni bandikhānā} | viṭṭhala kōṇḍunī thevilā jānā \(^{13}\)
\textit{Soham śabdē māra kēlā} | viṭṭhala kākulaṭi jālā \(^{14}\)
\textit{Nāma mhaṅe viṭṭhalāśi} | jīvē na sodē śāyāśi \(^{15}\)

I’ve tied the noose of love around Gopāḷ’s neck and I’ve retained him. I have shackled my mind and Viṭṭhal’s legs. I’ve made a prison of my mind and I’ve locked Viṭṭhal up. I’ve bombarded Him with \textit{so’ham} and I’ve cowed Viṭṭhal.

Nāmā says, ‘Viṭṭhal I’m not going to leave you’. (Nāmdev abhaṅga 1526, SSG 1, p.522).

\textit{Dāḷū kāṇḍū kheḷā} | sarva pāpa tāpa jāḷū \(^{11}\)
\textit{Sarva jivāmadhyẽ pāhū} | eka āmhī hounī rāhū \(^{12}\)
\textit{Janī mhaṅe brahma hoū} | aise sarvāṅghaṭī pāhū \(^{13}\)

Let’s grind, pound and play. Let’s burn all sin and turmoil. Let’s see unity among all living beings.\(^{155}\) Janī says, ‘Let’s all become Brahman. Let’s see all beings unified’. (Janābāī abhaṅga 181, SSG 1, p.734).\(^{156}\)

\textit{Jōḍ ḋaalī ṛe śiṇāsī} | bhānt fīṭīlī jīvāṣī \(^{11}\)

\(^{153}\) The term \textit{so’ham} or \textit{sahaham} in Sanskrit (सः He + अहं I)—translates as ‘I am He’ (Molesworth 1857:868; Tulpulse 1999:779) although it may also mean ‘Who am I?’ (Molesworth 1857:872). In \textit{advaita} Vedanta \textit{so’ham} is often used as a \textit{mantra} to achieve the highest state of enlightenment, after which the \textit{jīva} merges with \textit{brahma} and becomes \textit{so’ham} (Tirth 1985:10, 78; Tripathy 2007:19).

\(^{154}\) This verse is also translated by Sellergren (1996:223–224) and Pandharipande (2000:154ff).

\(^{155}\) This line suggests that one should see all souls as one despite external differences such as being in different bodies (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 14\(^{th}\) May 2011).

\(^{156}\) This verse has also been translated by Poitevin and Rairkar (1996:72, v.317).
I’m conjoined with Śiva and the space in my soul is filled. There’s happiness even in happiness; the happiness that has to be perceived has been perceived. There’s a wave of happiness, I’ve swallowed the omnipotent wave of happiness. Wherever unity sees or is seen, the question of representation no longer arises.

Such are the deeds of the spiritual teacher; servant Janī is at the feet of Viṭṭhal.

Janī says, ‘Viṭṭhābāī, no distance remains between the two of us’.

The term viṇā means ‘without’ (Molesworth 1857:758; Tulpule 1999:656) but can also mean ‘void of’ (Tulpule 1999:798). Consequently, the phrase could be translated as ‘void is not without God’. The term ritā connotes ‘empty’ and ‘devoid, destitute, wanting, standing or being without’ (Molesworth 1857:696; see Tulpule 1999:595). The Sanskrit term rikta, from which ritā derives, connotes ‘empty’, ‘void’, ‘devoid or destitute of’ and ‘without’ (Monier Williams 2008).

In this verse the author is saying that all Janī’s actions—eating, drinking, and sleeping—are dedicated to God, as ‘there’s no place without God’. The abhanga may be based on a verse from the Bhagavadgītā: yat karoṣi, yad aśnāsi, yaj juhoṣi, dadāsi yat, yat tapasyasi, Kaunteya, tat kuruṣva mad-arpāṇam, ‘Whatever you do [whatever action you perform], whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice or give away in alms, whatever penance you may perform, offer it up to Me’ (BhG 9.27; Zaehner 1973:283). I am grateful to V.P. Kanitkar for this reference. For other translations of the verse see Macnicol (1919:50, v.25), Kolatkar (1982:114), Aklujkar (1999:25), Arun Kolatkar (1982:114, quoted in Sellergren 1996:225), Pandharipande (2000:161) and Vanita (2005:99). Zelliot regards this abhaṅga as referring to the void (riṭā), a theme that is found in the abhanga attributed to Āūbāī (SSG 1:775) but which uses the term śūnya (1999a:92).
Please settle my life’s difficulties through [your] divine hands. A flood of the form of the Self came onto the eyes.\textsuperscript{160} When the inundation came my eyes dipped.\textsuperscript{161} Jānī says, ‘this kind of flood is the flood of Raghuvīra himself’.\textsuperscript{162}

Janī mhaṇe ālā ālā / pāhate toci rāghuviṇa / 4/

\begin{align*}
| & \text{(netra means ‘eye’ (Tulpule 1999:287) and avara connotes ‘on this or the nearer side’ (Molesworth 1857:47), ‘low; inferior to the one Supreme God’ (Tulpule 1999:20, 32).} \\
| & \text{Raghuvīra ‘Raghu-hero’ refers to Rāma. Raghu was an ancient king and Rāma’s great-grandfather (Monier Williams 2008).} \\
\end{align*}

160 The term \textit{netra} means ‘eye’ (Tulpule 1999:287) and \textit{avara} connotes ‘on this or the nearer side’ (Molesworth 1857:47), ‘low; inferior to the one Supreme God’ (Tulpule 1999:20, 32).

161 Raghuvīra ‘Raghu-hero’ refers to Rāma. Raghu was an ancient king and Rāma’s great-grandfather (Monier Williams 2008).

162 Lines 2–4 of this \textit{abhaṅga} have been translated by Kiehnle (1997a:188–189) who regards it as an indication that the author was aware of Nāth practices and sees similarities between it and two songs attributed to Jñāneśvar: [first line missing] ‘Such a flood of the one whose nature is the Self (caitanya) has come onto the eye (2). The flood of the one whose nature is the Self has come – seeing [it] the eye was dazzled (3). Jānī says, the one who sees such a flood is Raghuvīra (Rāma, i.e. God) himself (4)’. The \textit{abhaṅga} probably relates to Janī’s God-realisation (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27th January 2011) and has similarities to Cāṅgadev Pasasti 58: \textit{Jāliyā praḷayī ēkānāva | apāra pāṇiyācī dhāmva / jiḷī āpulā ugaṇa/ taīse kari/} ‘The river flows surely towards the sea but when the final Deluge comes, Both rivers and sea are submerged. In the same way, you should devour both “I” and “Thou”, For, truly, you are the source of both’ (Abhayananda 2000:245).

163 Anantā is an epithet meaning ‘Eternal One’.

164 Murārī (\textit{murhārī}), ‘Enemy of Murā’, is an epithet for Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.
I will embrace your feet; I have no desire to go to heaven.
I will sing your name wholeheartedly; you are my friend and soul mate.
I will touch your feet with my head continuously, through which all fear will be destroyed.
I will observe your form attentively [and] happily tell stories.

Dīnānāth, Cakrapāṇī, servant Janī stays meditating.

Janī says, ‘through compassion and forgiveness I have gone mad’.
We are an accumulation of sin, thus we have come to your feet. Do whatever suits you, now save or kill us.

Janī says, ‘Lord of the Universe, you are the only one’. (Janābāī abhaṅga 211, SSG 1, p.737).

Nāmayācē thevanē janīsa lādhalē / dhana sāmpadalē viṭevarī / 1/
Dhanya mājhā jamma dhanya mājhā vamsā / dhanya viṣṇudāsa svāmī mājhā / 2/
Kāmādhāma mājhī viṭhobācē pāya / divasanisē pāhe hārapali / 3/
Mājhīva vādālēcē davata to ha paṇḍharināthē / tenē mājhē artha purāvīlē / 4/
Samsārēcē sukha neghe mājhē citī / tarīca purānāvṛtti cukavīlē / 5/
Nāmayāce jāni ānanda paī hālē / hrdayē bimbalā pāṇḍuraṅga / 6/
Nāmdev’s deposit has been placed on Janī; wealth is found on the brick. Blessed is my life and are all the generations of my family, blessed is the servant of Viṣṇu, who is my master. My work is at Viṭhobā’s feet; day and night I’m lost in their examination. Pāṇḍharināth, Lord of my father, he is the one who has given me meaning. My mind does not find happiness in saṃsāra, no wonder I’ve skipped the next rebirths.

Nāma’s Janī is happy; Pāṇḍuraṅga is etched on the heart. (Janābāī abhaṅga 222, SSG 1, p.738).

Dōīcē padar ālā khāndyāvarī / bharalyē bājārī jāīn mē / 11/
Hātī dhēvena ṭaṭa khāndyāvarē vēṇa / ātē mātā māna kōṇa kari / 12/
Pāṇḍharicyē pēthē māḍiyeḷē pāla / mānṇātāvarē tela ghālē tumēhi / 13/
Jāni nūpēnē devā mē dhīrē yēsavā / niṭhāreṇē kēsavā ḡhara ḡulēhi / 14/

The padar has slipped onto my shoulder. I don’t give a damn I’ll go to the bazar. I’ll take the cymbals in hand, the viṇḍa on my shoulder. Who can stop me?

168 The epithet sṛṣṭivarī is a conjunction of sṛṣṭi ‘creation’, ‘nature’, or ‘universe’ with varī ‘excellent’ or ‘best’.
169 There is a translation of this verse by Yardi (2006).
170 The padar is the ornamental border at the end of a sāḍī (sārī) or dhoti (Molesworth 1857:488; Berntsen 1982:83). Padar also refers to ‘a cloth’ (Tulip 1999:48), ‘a cloth cover; a screen’ and ‘the end of a garment’ (Tulip 1999:404). On a spiritual level the sāḍī could refer to māyā according to Tagare (1993:43). Belwalkar states that in rural Maharashtra the idiom padar ālā, which forms part of ‘language in the home’, conveys the idea that a ‘teenage girl is supposed to wear a sari and cover her breast with the padar’ during menstruation (1998:173). This could suggest that Janī should not go into the market as she is menstruating.
171 The use of the word bazar may indicate that this verse is an attribution to Janābāī as the word did not come into usage in Marathi until the fourteenth century (Sellergren 1996:235–6, n.17).
In the market of Panḍharpūr I’ll sell myself.¹⁷² Like the lowest of the low¹⁷³ I’ll prostitute myself at your temple.¹⁷⁴ Janī says, ‘Lord, I have become a whore.¹⁷⁵ Keśava I am setting out for your house’.¹⁷⁶ (Janābāī abhaṅga 224, SSG 1, p.713).¹⁷⁷

Jātyāvarīl gīतāसी।दलणमिश्रे गोविदासी।१।
देख बुझौं देरण।बरता दण्डा हे निसून।२।
नामधा हो कोडी।गुरुआजोळे भी पठी।३।
मज भरससा नामधाचा।गजर दासी जनीचा।४।

My songs on the grindmill for grinding are really for Govind. Body and soul, beautiful grains fed to the mill, produce flour.¹⁷⁸ Nāmdev the weaver:¹⁷⁹ I obey the guru’s commands. ‘I have Nāma’s confidence’, acclaims servant Janī. (Janābāī abhaṅga 225, SSG 1, p.738).¹⁸⁰

सुंदर माझा जाता मे फिरे बहले ते।ओंया गाडूं कौतुके तूं येरे बा विवल।१।
जिवाविव दोनी खुंटे मे प्रणायचे भेटे मे।लावूनी पाडूं जोते मे तूं येरे बा विवल।२।

¹⁷² The verb pāla māṇḍanē means to ‘set up openly the trade of a prostitute’ according to Molesworth (1857:512).
¹⁷³ The word used is managāvāra: managai is a contemptuous term for the low-caste Māṅg; vara means husband or bridegroom (Molesworth 1857:640, 639, 731). This may indicate that it is those most afflicted by poverty who give their wives or daughters up to become temple prostitutes (see Dalrymple 2008).
¹⁷⁴ The word tela (oil) is used here. Molesworth states that the verb tela ghetē means ‘to devote herself to the temple; to become a prostitute for the use of the worshippers of some idol’. Her intention is indicated by putting some of the oil from the lamp in front of the deity on her head (1857:387). The term devadāsī, ‘a woman who serves god’, is often applied to such women. The word ghālō (from ghālē) means ‘attacking, ‘assaulting, falling upon’; ‘bringing ruin or heavy mischief upon’ (Molesworth 1857:258). This may suggest that the author is saying that she will bring ruin upon God by becoming a prostitute. There is no evidence in Yādava records to say whether the custom of dedicating a girl as a devadāsī was prevalent in Maharashtra under Yādava rule (or later) as there is little reference to the custom in Maharashatra (Babras 1996:67). However, a scholar and kīrtankār told me that Janī’s destiny was to be a devadāsī (Dada Maharaj Manmadkar, personal communication, 10th July 2006).
¹⁷⁵ The word yesavē means ‘whore’ (Tulpule 1999:577) and derives from the Sanskrit term veśyā ‘harlot, courtesan, prostitute’ (Monier Williams 2008).
¹⁷⁶ This is an important but somewhat threatening statement as Janābāī is a śūdra and is denied entrance to the temple. The author Janābāī may therefore be threatening to enter the temple. See the note attached to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ (abhaṅga 1, SSG 1:1015).
¹⁷⁷ There are translations of this verse by Sellergren (1996:224), Bhagwat: ‘I will let my saree slip from my head to the shoulders. Hold my head high and walk into the market-place. Taking cymbals in hand and veena on shoulder I will go. Let me see who forbids me. I have opened a shop in Panḍharpur. Janī declares herself a prostitute. Leaving you O God, this “home”’ (Śrī Nāmdev Gatha 1970:171; Bhagwat 1995:WS26); and Vilas Sarang: ‘Cast off all shame, and sell yourself in the market place; then alone can you hope to reach the Lord. Cymbals in hand, a veena upon my shoulder, I go about; who dares stop me? The pallav of my sari falls away (A scandal!!); yet will I enter the crowded market place without a thought. Janī says, My Lord, I have become a slut to reach Your home’ (Tharu and Lalita 1991:83).
¹⁷⁸ The verb poitevīn and Raikar refer to this verse (1996:71).
My beautiful stonemill rotates, singing verses praising you.
You come Viṭṭhal.
Jīva and Śiva both support of the world; touching all five of my fingers. You come Viṭṭhal.
Mother-in-law; father-in-law; third, the brother-in-law; singing verses for the husband. You come Viṭṭhal.
The sixteen confidantes assembled are friends, sitting together singing verses. You come Viṭṭhal.
Having ground prapañca,183 gathered the flour, [then] laid it in front of my mother-in-law. You come Viṭṭhal.
Keeping existence on the boil, making merit my daily diet; my sins have spilled over. You come Viṭṭhal.
Jani’s stonemill will keep singing, your fame will continue; I will gain a little. You come Viṭṭhal.
(Janābāī abhaṅga 226, SSG 1, p.738).184

The work of grinding is being done with pride but pride is also being ground in the mill of detachment (vairāgya).185
Feed the mill with the grist of accumulated deeds. The Transcendent grinds the visible and invisible. Name and form, the cause, is ground completely.186 The God of Paṇḍhari collects the flour.

181 ‘Bā Viṭṭhalā’ literally means ‘Dad Viṭṭhal’ but could also be interpreted as ‘Dear Viṭṭhal’.
182 Jīva and Śiva are ultimately one.
183 This line suggests that worldly life (prapañca), with all its illusions, is been ground in the grindmill.
185 The work of grinding is being done with pride but pride is also being ground in the mill of detachment (vairāgya).
186 The term nāmarūpa connotes ‘name and form’ (Monier Williams 2008) and ‘name and repute’ (Molesworth 1857:454) or nāṃvarūpa ‘fame, renown, glory: also credit, reputation, honorable character or bearing; name and form, personality, individuality, distinct subsistence’ (Molesworth 1857:454). The term ādi connotes ‘the origin or source (of something)’, ‘a cause’ (Tulpule 1999:58), ‘source, stock, root, origin; the seat or subject sustaining or the cause or principle originating; the beginning, commencement’, ‘first, prior, principal, chief’ (Molesworth 1857:67).
Amazingly, God himself sits down to grind without Nāma’s Janī doing anything.
(Janābāī abhaṅga 227, SSG 1, p.738).

We and the sants, the sants and us; the sun and its rays, what’s the difference? 
The flame and the kite, the kite and the flame; meditation and silent chanting, what’s the difference? 
Peace and detachment, detachment and peace; contentment and satisfaction, what’s the difference? 
Disease and illness, illness and disease; body and form, what’s the difference? 
Ear and auditory organ, auditory organ and ear; fame and pride, what’s the difference? 
‘God and the sants, the sants and God’, says Janī, ‘these are both the same’.
(Janābāī abhaṅga 243, Upadeśa ‘Advice’, SSG 1, p.740).

The mother of the One whose feet are revered by Brahmā is Yaśodā. 
The One who grants empires asks Yaśodā for butter. 
The One who has oceans of milk at his feet is being bathed on someone else’s feet. 
The One who is the guardian of the cosmos had his head massaged by her hands. 
‘Śuka and Sanaka are celestial devotees’, says Janī, starting to grind.

187 Novetzke has translated the final line of this verse as ‘God and the sants, sants and God, Janī says, I believe these are one’ (2008:242).
188 This might be better spelt brahmāṇḍa but I am following the rendition of the SSG.
189 The Bhāgavata Purāṇa relates how Kṛṣṇa revealed the universe to Yaśodā when he opened his mouth (BhP 10.8.32–45; Bryant 2003:43–44) and stole butter (BhP 10.9.1–21; Bryant 2003:45–7).
190 The tāḷū refers to the sinciput, the front of the skull from the forehead to the crown of the head.
191 Śuka was the son of Vyāsa (the arranger of the Mahābhārata) and the preceptor of the Āsuras (‘anti-gods’ who were opposed to the devas). Śuka is regarded as the original narrator of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. He recited the
Emotion reflected through every word, further reflects the knowledge of Brahman.
That is what the Jñāneśvarī is all about; for the sants it is the Lord Śiva.

Janābāī abhāṅga 266, SSG 1, p.743.

Bhāgavata to king Parīkṣit, the last member of the Yadu clan, who was undertaking a fast to death that was being witnessed by all the great sages. Sīta heard the Bhāgavata from Śuka ‘the greatest sage of them all’ and then related it to the sages (Bryant 2003:7). Sanaka was the eldest of the four mind-born sons of Brahmā (BḥP 3.15.12; 3.12.1–33). Sanaka, Sananda, Sanātana and Sanat-Kumāra all refused Brahmā’s request to procreate as they were engaged in meditation of the Impersonal Absolute (BḥP 3.12.1–33). They are known as the Kaumāras (‘child’, ‘youth’) or Sanas (‘little’) as they remained celibate boys. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa regards them as mahājana ‘great men’ (BḥP 6.3.20–21), while the Śaiva Purāṇa presents them as yogī (Wilson 1840:38, n.14). They are supposed to have recited the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BḥP 3.8.7) and they are thought to have taught Nārada (another of Brahmā’s celibate sons and a great proponent of bhakti). They are viewed as eternally liberated souls who impart bhakti (BḥP 11.12.14). Both Śuka and Sanaka are regarded as immortal celibates who offer didactic support and transmit bhakti (Wilson 1840:38; Chalmers 1894:34; Grierson 1909:634, 637, 639; Shulman 1986:115; Dhody 1994:45; Sharma 1998:42; Dhond 2008:39, 68–9). There are a number of Vaiṣṇava sects connected to both Śuka and Sanaka. In 1753 Charandas (1703–1788) started the ‘Śuka’ or ‘Charandas’ sampradāya (Datta 2005:642). Sanaka is regarded as the founder of the Nimbārka sampradāya (Sharma 1998:42), which is also known as the Hamsa sampradāya, Kumāra sampradāya, Catūḥ Sana sampradāya and the Sanakādi sampradāya. According to Deleury the Vārkarīs honour both Śuka and Sanaka as great sants in the hope that they will intercede on their behalf (1994:125). The verses of a number of sants make this point, for example a Tukārām abhāṅga translated by Deleury: tumhī sanakādika santa, ‘O you Sanaka and other saints’ (SSG 2:1016; 1960:91). The Jñāneśvarī (9.464) mentions both Sanaka and Śuka as some of those who attained union with Kṛṣṇa through bhakti (Pradhan 1987:225, n. 22 p. 231; Ranade 2003:109).

192 This abhāṅga is from the section entitled kṛṣṇajanma, bālavriddha va kalā ‘Kṛṣṇa’s Birth, Youthful Play & “Rice-curds”’ (SSG 1, p.742). Dhere states the Vārkarī sants were captivated by the child form of Kṛṣṇa who they regarded as ‘a symbol of the supreme Absolute (Brahman)’ (2011:4).

193 Māheśvar is an epithet for Śiva but māheśvarī could mean ‘abode of the Great Lord’ (Monier Williams 2008).
Compassionate Mother, respect one who does self-consecration.
My Jñānadev is like a ferry to the other world.
The mind seeks possessions and relatives but truly worships the guru's feet.
Janī says, 'How much can I say? A devoted wife has a devoted husband'.

Jñānesvara abhaṅga bolile jyā śabda /
cidānanda bāhā lihi tyāsa / 
nivṛttice bolalihile sopānẽ / muktāīī vacanẽ jñānadevẽ / 
cāṅgayācā lihiṇāra śāmā to kāṃsārai / paramānand khecara lihita hotā / 
sage pūrṇananda lihi paramānanda / bhagavanta bheṭī ānanda rāmānanda / 
sāṁvata mālīcā kāśiḥa gurava / karmyācā vasudeva kāṭa hotā / 
cokhāmelyācā anantabhaṭṭa abhyaṅga / mhaṇonī nāmayācī janīcā pāṇḍuraṅga / 

Cidānanda Baba wrote down the words of the verses which Jñānesvar spoke.
Nivṛtti's words were written by Sopān and Muktaśāī's sayings by Jñānadev.
Cāṅgā’s scribe was Śāmā the metal worker and Khecar wrote for Paramānanda.
What Pūrṇananda said, Paramānanda wrote; he found Bhagavanta when he happily met Rāmānanda.
Sāvātā the gardener’s [scribe] was Kāśiḥa Gurava; Kūrma’s scribe was Vasudeva.
Ananta Bhatt [wrote down] Cokhāmēlā’s songs and finally Pāṇḍuraṅga [wrote] for Nāma’s Janī.

(Janābāī abhaṅga 271, SSG 1, p. 743).

194 There was a slightly different version of this verse at Marathi World (<http://marathiworld.com/abhanga>); (Janābāī abhaṅga 16 ‘Veeveksagar sakha maaza dnyaneshwar’, accessed 11th December 2013). Jñānācā sāgara/ sakhā mājīhā jñānesvara /1/ Maroniyā jāvẽ / bā mājīhā poṭā yāvẽ /2/ Aisā kārīmājīhā bhāvāi/ sakhyā mājīhā jñāneva /3/ Jāve ovālāṇi/ jannojamānī dāsi janī/4/ “Ocean of knowledge”, my companion Jñānesvar. Let him die, [then] enter my womb. Do this for my sake, in friendship my Jñānadev. I will perform ovālāṇi from birth to birth [says] dāsi Janī’. This verse uses ovālāṇi, which is probably a corruption of ovālāṇi, to move a lamp in a circular motion in front of a deity or person so as to remove evil and in consecration (Molesworth 1831:122).

195 The final phrase could read ‘Some say that a devoted wife has a devoted husband’.

196 Jñānesvar is considered as a mother (māuli, māvalī) by Vārkarīs so the first line of the verse may be a reference to him. The verse suggests that one is ferried across the river to the future world (heaven or liberation) by ridding oneself of evil or by consecrating oneself.

197 Bhagavanta is an epithet for the Supreme Being, God (Molesworth 1857:598); ‘the divine or adorable one’, Krṣṇa (Monier Williams 2008).
गोणाई नवस केला। देवा पुत्र देई मला। १।

ऐसा पुत्र देई भक्त। ज्याला आवडे पंढरीनाथ। २।

शुद्ध देखोन्यां भाव। पोटं आले नामदेव। ३।

दामशेटी हरुशला। दासी जनीनं अवाळिला। ४।

Goṇāīnẽ navasa kelā / devā putra deĩ̄̃ malā / १ /
Aisā putra deĩ̄̃ bhakta / jyālā āvaḍ e paṇḍharīnātha / २ /
Śuddha dekhonīyā bhāva / poṭī āle nāmadeva / ३ /
Dāmaśeṭī haruṣalā / āsī janinē ovālī / ४ /

Goṇāī made a vow: ‘God give me a son.
Give a son to your devotee who likes Paṇḍharīnātha’.
Her unalloyed faith observed: from her womb came Nāmde. Dāmāśeṭī was delighted; servant Janī waved the tray of lamps.
(Janābāī abhaṅga 278, SSG 1, p.744).

गोणाई राजाई दोघी सासू सुना। दामा नामा बाप लɅक। १।

नारा वठा गोदा महादा चवघे पुढू। जूमले पवित्र त्याचे वंशी। २।

लाडाी गोडाई येसाई साखराई। चवघी सुना पाही नामयाच्या। ३।

लिंबाई ति लेकी आऊबाई बंहणी। वेदीपिशी जनी नामयाची। ४।

Goṇāī rājāī doghī sāsū sunā / dāmā nāmā bāpa lēṅka / १ /
Nārā viṭhā gondā mahādā cavaghe putra / janmale pavitra tyace vamśī / २ /
Lāḍāī godāī yesāī sākhārāī / cavaghī sunā pāhī nāmayacyā / ३ /
Limbāī tī lekī āubāī bahānī / veḍīpīśī jānī nāmayāci / ४ /

Goṇāī and Rājāī are mother-in-law and daughter-in-law; Dāmā and Nāmā are father and son. Nārā, Viṭhā, Gondā and Mahādā are the four sons; a gift born into the holy family.
Lāḍāī, Goḍāī, Yesāī and Sākhārāī are the four daughters-in-law who look after Nāmdev.
Limbāī is the daughter, Āubāī is the sister and Nāmde’s Janī is the empty-headed dolt.
(Janābāī abhaṅga 279, SSG 1, p. 744).

त्या निद्रेजं निजले। भाव जागूती नाही आले।।
ऐसी विशाली लाबली। आनंद कम चंशेरली।।
तेथ स्वांग सुखी झाले। लिंगदेख विसरले।।
त्या एकी होता। दासी जनी नाही आता।。

Tyā nidrejā nījale / bhāva jāgūtī nāhī āle//
Aisī viśrānti lādhalī / ānanda kalā sancaralī//

198 For a translation and discussion of this verse see Novetzke (2008 70, 259 n.8; 78, 260 n.9).
199 The word navas refers to ‘a vow to a god often involving the promise of an offering in return for a request granted’ (Berntsen 1975:75).
200 The verb ovāḷaṇē means ‘to wave a tray of lamps in front of a deity or person’ (Berntsen 1975:18).
201 There is a translation of this verse by Jayant Karve in Zelliot (1999:418–19), which Zelliot states is by Nāmdev and that includes a fifth line: ‘Everyone has sung abhangas —Nama says, God has fulfilled us all’. Zelliot states that the abhaṅga is number 56 in the SSG collected by Sākhāre and edited by Joshi, Pune 1967 (1923). However, I can find no mention of this verse in relation to Nāmdev in the 2005 edition by Gosāvī.
Whoever sleeps won’t have a feeling of emotion.
I went into such a trance that there were waves of happiness within me.
There my body experienced eternal happiness, the subtle body was forgotten.
Now it is one to one [with God], there’s no more servant Janī.

Janī (Janābāī abhaṅga 284, Śāsakīya Nāmdev Gāthā; Shrotiṣya 1992:65)

Once upon a time there was an assembly at the [celestial] court of God.
The narrator wandered the universe, carrying a lute.
There was one who respected all siddhas, sādhūs, yogīs and men.
‘This is the remarkable story [of Hariścandra]’, says Nāma’s Janī. (Janābāī abhaṅga 294, ‘The story of Hariścandra’, SSG 1, p.723).

The exact meaning of this phrase is unclear. Karī could be interpreted as ‘an elephant’ suggesting that ‘an elephant wandered the universe’, which connects with the story of the hermit Gautama who raised a baby elephant (Mbh 13.102ff). However, I am inclined to interpret karī as a derivative of kathekarī, ‘a narrator of legends’ or ‘a story teller’ (Molesworth 1857:132).

It is likely that the figure described is Nārada, the celestial ṛṣi, as he is carrying the brahmavīṇā (see BVJ 14.141; Abbott 1996:224) and because he has a connection with the Hariścandra story. The brahmavīṇā is a kind of lute (vīṇā). The vīṇā was probably current until the 15th century but as it was difficult to play it ceased to be performed (Wrazen 1986:36; Tewari 1977:153). The brahmavīṇā may now be known as the vicitra-vīṇā or the batta bīn (Misra 1996). A form of the brahmavīṇā, called tali aeinla, is still used in Orissa (see Digambra 2008). For a discussion on the parallel of the human body to the vīṇā in yogic philosophy see Subramanian (1985:14 ff.).

‘The story of Hariścandra’ is told by Janābāī in twenty-two consecutive verses in the Śrīsukalasantaggāthā (SSG 1, v.294–316:752). Hariścandra, ‘Having Golden Splendour’, was a king who was raised to svaragā (the heaven or transitory place for righteous souls before mokṣa) with his subjects as a reward for piety (Molesworth 1857:888). The story first appears in Sanskrit in the Mahābhārata (2.12.1ff), Bhāgavata Purāṇa (9.7.7–25), Mārkandeya Purāṇa (7.1–61; 8.1–130, 174, 217–221, 239–254) and the Padma Purāṇa (1.7–9). Nārada advises Hariścandra in these stories. There is an incomplete version of the Hariścandra story in the Nāmdev gāthā (v. 2104, SSG 1:603) but it seems that this story is not widely accepted as part of the Nāmdev corpus. Moreover, Janābāī’s rendition is ‘more coherent, organized and complete’ states Deshmukh (2006). For a discussion in English see ‘Hariścandra and Viśvāmrita’ (Dimmitt and Buitenen 1978:273–286). For a discussion of the Hariścandra legend see Sathaye (2009). The Janābāī story is also discussed by Deshmukh in her paper ‘Taramati’s Satyagraha: The Radical Feminine in Janabai’s Harischandra Akhyanai’ (2006). I am grateful to the author for providing me with a copy of her article.
Due to the rṣi a calamity struck the forest at midnight. Pandu’s children gathered; the rṣi revered.

Dharma glances at Bhīmā, righteousness is being damaged. Draupadī cried for help, God left his meal unfinished.

He satisfied the sage in the forest, says Draupadī prays to Kṛṣṇa and offending the Pāṇḍavas by declining their hospitality [see Ganguli 2008; also see van Buitenen 1973–1978]. In

the major practises of bhakti. Bahinābāī also refers to this incident (abhaṅga 400; Abbott 1985:122, Ṣa; Kolhārkar 1926:82).

The presence of a dhrupad indicates affiliation with a singing tradition asserts Callewaert (1989:56).

The cloth (dungā) mentioned probably derives from dōngarī ‘a term originally for the common Country-cloth’, which applies to poor and low-priced cotton cloth in general (Molesworth 1857:354).

This abhaṅga refers to an incident in the Mahābhārata (Book 3, Vana Parva, ‘The Forest’; Draupadī Harana Parva) in which the sage Durvās visits the Pāṇḍavas in the forest. Durvās was known for his quick temper and was thus treated with reverence wherever he went. While in exile in the forest the Pāṇḍavas were all fed by the means of the aksayapātra (the inexhaustible vessel), which was depleted once Draupadī had eaten. As Draupadī had just eaten when Durvās arrived she had no food left to serve the sage. [The brothers Dharma and Bhīmā glance at each other concerned that satva will be damaged if they cannot offer Durvās hospitality]. While Durvās and his retinue were away bathing in the river Draupadī prays to Kṛṣṇa for aid. Kṛṣṇa appears immediately and asks her for food. Draupadī says she had none to give him and that she has prayed to him because she had no food! Kṛṣṇa then asks her to bring him the aksayapātra and finding a grain of rice and a piece of vegetable in the vessel declares himself satisfied. Thus, the hunger of Durvās and his disciples is satisfied and they leave without returning to the hermitage and offending the Pāṇḍavas by declining their hospitality (see Ganguli 2008; also see van Buiten 1973–1978). In having Kṛṣṇa come to their aid the author may be empathising with Draupadī or putting themselves in Draupadī’s shoes. The author may also be expressing aspects of Kṛṣṇa as a means of chanting the names of god, which is one of the major practises of bhakti. Bahinābāī also refers to this incident (abhaṅga 400; Abbott 1985:122, Ṣa; Kolhārkar 1926:82).
The dutiful wife is engaged fruitlessly. The dancing girl and courtesan are conducted to the highest heaven. Your own people are displaced. The full story of the many Yadavas is not told.

The virtuous are persecuted. The children of the illustrious are killed. Friends [who] are made to say oblations to you are corrupt. Janī says, ‘I know your game’. (Janābāī abhaṅga 336, SSG 1, Pudē, p.754).209

The game has been laid out; the player’s judgement colours the game. The King marched; the pawn trampled the Queen. The King’s side won, Janī says ‘its checkmate’. (Janābāī abhaṅga 345, SSG 1, p.756).

Arise Pāṇḍuraṅgā, it is dawn: your devotees have gathered near the Garuḍa shrine. From the river bank to the main door, gods throng offering homage with palms joined.

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208 This contradictory verse suggests that God works in mysterious ways (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 14th May 2011).

209 A pada is a short rhymed sung poem.

210 This is the Janābāī kūṭa (enigmatic) abhaṅga. The author may be implying that Janī is the King’s pawn trampled by the queen. There is a suggestion that life is a game of chance which Janābāī has won or conquered as she was on the king’s side and God is thus the one who conquers life.

211 This could also read ‘Wake up Pāṇḍuraṅgā, it is daybreak’ (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 21st March 2011).

212 Garuḍa, the eagle, is the vehicle of Viṣṇu. He is associated with the sun and is, according to Monier Williams (2008), considered the personification of dawn. The garuḍapāra may be a ‘stone platform with a shrine of Garuḍa’ (Tulpule 1999:196) or an ‘eagle-shaped platform found in Vaishnava temples’ (Nukala 2014).
Devotees like Šūka, Sanaka, Nārada, Tumburu, and millions of others, look at Jagajēṭhī from behind the gate.  

The chariot of the gods completely fills the sky; Mother Rakhumābī quickly awakens god.  

Rambhā dances with both palms joined. Girijī’s husband has come with his trident and drum. The consorts of the gods wave arati lamps infused with vital airs, with living flame and deep devotion they greet Rakhumābī’s husband.  

Ananta takes form for his devotees, and through his compassion liberates the lowly.

Nāmā, your devotee in all four ages, stands for the discourse; behind him stands Janī swaying with her eyes closed.

\[
(\text{Janābāī abhang a 347, SSG 1, p.756}).
\]

\[\text{213} \text{ The verb } \text{joḍanē } \text{means to put together, join, and unite; to lay or place equally together, to lie along or alongside (Molesworth 1857:323) thus the ‘joined palms’ refer to namaskāra.}\]

\[\text{214} \text{ The epithet Jagajēṭhī is derived from } \text{jagata ‘world, universe’ and } \text{jeṣṭha ‘greatest, eldest’ (Molesworth 1857:301; Monier Williams 2008) and refers to ‘the strongest or greatest man in the world’ (Tulpule 1999:248).}\]

\[\text{215} \text{ There is a suggestion that Rakhumābī awakens Viṭṭhal by ringing something loudly as } \text{ghananīla or rather } \text{gahanānī } \text{connotes ‘with a loud ringing, clanking, clanging, twang, or jingle’ (Molesworth 1857:253).}\]

\[\text{216} \text{ Rambhā is an } \text{apsarā or a courtisan from varagā (Indra’s paradise). She is a ‘celestial woman who is both closely connected with water (hence often translated as ‘nymph’) and a dancer in the harem of the king of gods’ states Doniger (2005:42). She was the wife of Nalakābāri and was carried off/raped by Rāvāna (Doniger 1999:9). She is considered the most beautiful woman of Indra’s paradise and a form of the goddess Laksānī (Monier Williams 2008). For more on Rambhā see Doniger (2005:42f; 1999:9f), Rosen (1984:283, 286), Rajan (2000:108–110) and Hopkins (1932:319).}\]

\[\text{217} \text{ Girijā ‘mountain-born’ is a name for Śiva’s wife Pārvatī as the daughter of the personified Himālaya (Monier Williams 2008).}\]

\[\text{218} \text{ The } \text{damāra } \text{is a sacred drum, shaped like a hourglass, used by Śiva and Buddhist monks to accompany chanting (see Bender 1985:392; Reck 1982).}\]

\[\text{219} \text{ Panca-paripāra are the ‘five vital airs’ or forces of the human body: } \text{samāna (‘navel’), it circulates aiding digestion), udāna (‘throat’, it rises upwards), prāṇa (‘breath’), āpāṇa (‘anał’, it travels downwards) and vyāna (that circulates or is diffused through the body) (Molesworth 1857:481).}\]

\[\text{220} \text{ The kākaḍārati, the ‘dawn’ aratī, is named after the lamp with a coarse cloth wick (kākaḍā) that is used. It begins at three in the morning with the temple trumpeter calling to inform the attendants to gather in the sixteen-pillared hall. When everyone has gathered, the badvā responsible enters the temple with the key to the four-pillared room (the outer-sanctum). He prays in front of the door for the deity to awaken, then opens the door, enters the bedroom recess and removes the food offerings from the previous day. The other attendants then enter the room, except for the hariṣā who remains in the sixteen-pillared hall with those admitted to see the arati. Nobody is allowed to enter the four-pillared hall unless they have recently bathed. The puja begins when everyone has gathered. The puja rī washes the feet of the image in milk and water carried by the paricāraka (assistant, attendant). The puja rī then replaces all the garlands and flowers put on the deity the previous day, offers incense, lamps and food. The paricāraka gives the puja rī the kākaḍā brought by the badvā and the puja rī waves it in front of the deity from head to foot. While the waving is being done, the hariṣā sings suitable songs in the sixteen-pillared hall. When the song is over the badvā gives the puja rī a cup with fresh butter (lonī) and sugar, which the puja rī offers to the deity and puts in the deity’s mouth. A metal lamp filled with clarified butter (nirañjana), and lighted camphor, is waved in front of the image while the hariṣā sings. When this singing is over the arati concludes with the audience throwing flowers at the image and the priest giving them tīrtha (holy water), prasāda (blessed food) and the flowers of the old garlands. After this the pañcāmṛta puja, bathing the deity in five substances, begins (Deleurry 1994:65–69). According to Datta the Vārkari perform an arati, ‘a really grand performance on a mass scale’, on āṣāḍhī ekādaśī and cry ‘jaya deva, jaya deva, jaya panduranga’ before the arati to Viṭṭhal is performed (2006:225).}\]

\[\text{221} \text{ The epithet Ananta, ‘Eternal’, refers to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. However, the word ananta means ‘innumerable’, consequently the phrase suggests that God incarnates himself countless times for the sake of his devotees.}\]

\[\text{222} \text{ The kālīvogā is regarded as the age of discord or darkness.}\]

\[\text{223} \text{ The last phrase of this line raises the issue of Janābāī’s location. If she was behind Nāmdev while he performed a kīrtan then she was in front of the audience and therefore visible (to some extent). This is significant for it suggests that Janī, a woman, might have formed part of the phalanx of musicians and singers that accompanied the kīrtankār. It is worth noting that in abhang a 224 (SSG 1:713) the author declares that Janī will take up the viṇā, which may suggest Janābāī was a kīrtankārī. Janābāī’s location may also indicate her status as Nāmdev’s follower and/or disciple. However, the physical placement of Janābāī behind Nāmdev might indicate that a santakavīvyātrī is perceived as not inhabiting the forefront and as an adjunct to a male sant. However, if one reads the phrase as ‘at the back, swaying with her eyes closed stands Janī’ then Nāmdev would be out-front and centre-stage as the kīrtankār, while Janī would have been invisible to the audience. The depiction of Janī with her eyes closed implies that she was absorbed in devotion (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 21 st March 2011). The verb joḍanē ‘to sway in appreciation or wonder’ (Tulpule 1999:286) implies Janī is engrossed in and ‘enraputured’ by the kīrtan and bhakti (Novetzkze 2008:97). The swaying to music as part of kīrtan and bhakti remains commonplace.}\]

\[\text{Various translations of this verse are available online although they do not concur with the SSG (see Patel 2008).}\]
Blessed was that time, blessed was that day; blessed the treasure, Jñāneśvar.
The year twelve hundred and eighteen; a lunar Thursday, the thirteenth day of the lunar fortnight.

Although the Marathi in SSG 2 states guruvāsara trayodaśī (guru-day thirteen) I have interpreted this as guruvāra trayodaśī (Thursday the thirteenth) and translated it thus. What the verse makes clear is that the day of Jñāneśvar's samādhi was an auspicious one.

Deleury states that 'in yogic terminology' samādhi is 'the final union with or absorption in the absolute self; enstasis. Hence, in bhakti, the final absorption of a bhakta in his God when he dies, hence the memorial (stone) set up where he died' (1994:221). Jñāneśvar is widely accepted as having interred himself at Alandi (see Abhyananda 2000:93–94; Inamdar & Deshpande 1999:24–25 and Ranade 2003:43–44).

There are forty-three 'unpublished' Janābāī compositions in the second volume of the SSG (Gosāvī 2005). This verse comes under the sub-heading "hindi ko marāṭhī santõ kī dena” (1957) Middle Abhaṅga’.

8. Soyarābāī²³²

²²⁵ This verse uses Jñānadev, ‘Lord of Knowledge’ and Jñānarāva, ‘King of Knowledge’ as epithets for Jñāneśvar.

²²⁶ The year saka 1218 would be 1296 C.E.

²²⁷ Although the Marathi in SSG 2 states guruvāsara trayodaśī (guru-day thirteen) I have interpreted this as guruvāra trayodaśī (Thursday the thirteenth) and translated it thus. What the verse makes clear is that the day of Jñāneśvar’s samādhi was an auspicious one.

²²⁸ The literal translation for ṛtu kṛṣṇa pakṣa is ‘the season of the dark half of the month’.

²²⁹ Deleury states that ‘in yogic terminology’ samādhi is ‘the final union with or absorption in the absolute self; enstasis. Hence, in bhakti, the final absorption of a bhakta in his God when he dies, hence the memorial (stone) set up where he died’ (1994:221). Jñāneśvar is widely accepted as having interred himself at Alandi (see Abhyananda 2000:93–94; Inamdar & Deshpande 1999:24–25 and Ranade 2003:43–44).

²³⁰ There are sixty-two abhaṅgas attributed to Soyarābāī in the SSG (1:998–1004) and I have translated fourteen of these verses including those underlined of the nine abhaṅgas translated by Zelliot: (5) avadhā raṅga eka jhālā, ‘All colours have merged into one’ (2005:165); (6) dehāsī viṭāḷ a mhaṇatī, ‘A body is unclean, they say, only the soul is untainted’ (2005:159); (17) garjatī nācatī ānnadẽ ḍolatī, ‘They shout, they dance, they sway in joy’ (2005:165); (28) kā bā udása maja kelē, ‘Why have you saddened me so?’ (2005:159); (37) nūmācā bharanivāsā mānīlāse sār ‘I have
I am base, You have given me a coloured body, Keśava the generous. Please gratify me by showing me your feet. Even after the river floods over me, I know my body is not pure. ‘Please save the drowning ones’, says Cokhā’s Mahārī.

Once I have seen you Nārāyaṇa there are no more desires. There is no more discrimination; my mind has become pure. There was a net of evil, it has ceased on the strength of your Name. The ties to the four bodies have been broken, says Cokhā’s Mahārī.

The term kāya is an interrogative but also means ‘the body’ (Tulpule 1999:152; Vaze 1911:95). One can imagine that the author is being ironical when s/he describes the deity as generous for making him/her a low caste person. A similar statement is made in Soyarābāī abhanga 35 (see below).

The term samādhāna means ‘contentment, satisfaction, pleased quiescence of mind; rest, relief, ease, the feeling consequent on the removal or cessation of pain, anxiety, or affliction’ (Molesworth 1857: 826; Vaze 1911:537), while samādhāna karaṇa means ‘to satisfy; to please’ (Tulpule 1999:152). However, samādhāna also refers to ‘restraining of the mind from external objects and fixing of it steadfastly in contemplation’ (Molesworth 1857:826) or ‘religious meditation, profound absorption or contemplation’ (Monier Williams 2008). Consequently, the author could also be suggesting that s/he is absorbed in meditation at/of the Lord’s feet.

The last two lines suggest that a ritual bath or bathing does not remove the taint of ‘untouchability’ (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27th January 2011).

The term vāsanā refers to ‘the dying desire, the last and earnest longing of the departing soul’ (Molesworth 1857:751).
A body is unclean, they say, but the soul is clean and aware. The body’s pollution arises through menstruation, birth, death and touch. What kind of dharma makes the Brahmin pure in body?  

Nobody is born without becoming polluted. Therefore, praise Pāṇḍuraṅga: impurity resides within the body. ‘The body’s pollution lies within the body’, says the Mahārī of Cokhā with confidence. (Soyarābāī abhanga 6, SSG 1, p. 999).

My mind feels dejected if I can’t look at Nārāyaṇa. Good behaviour and thoughts don’t help, I am forever stained. The pretence of a pretender reveals the meaning of the story. One who always thinks of another’s wealth but conceals his envy: ‘Such a man is immoral’, says Cokhā’s Mahārī. (Soyarābāī abhanga 8, SSG 1, p.999).

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237 Sovaḷā ‘auspicious’ refers particularly to pure, clean and holy Brahmans who, having attained a state of cleanliness by ablution or purificatory ceremony, would be rendered unclean by the touch of impure persons or things. The term is also applied to those regarded as uncontaminated or undefiled (by any bad action) or to anyone who, by purification, is fit for everything (Molesworth 1857:868). This line refers to the idea that while a Brahman’s spiritual pollution can be removed by a purificatory bath, a low caste person (particularly one who deals with human excrement or dead animals) remains in a permanent state of spiritual pollution even after bathing (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 22nd March 2011).

238 This line suggests that because we are all born in the same way (in blood) we are all equally polluted.

239 There are some similarities with a verse attributed to Ravidās (दूधु त बछरै थनह ु ǒबटाǐरओ), which relates to ritual purity. ‘Mother, she asks, with what can I worship?| All the pure is impure. Can I offer milk?|| The calf has dirtied it in sucking its mother’s teat.| Water, the fish have muddied; flowers, the bees—|| No other flowers could be offered than these.| The sandalwood, where the snake has coiled, is spoiled.| The same act formed both nectar and poison.| Everything’s tainted—candles, incense, rice—|| But still I can worship with my body and my mind and I have the guru’s grace to find the formless Lord.| Rituals and offerings—I can’t do any of these.| What, says Ravidas, will you do with me?'|| (Translation by Hawley 2005:40–41; Simh 1977:195, pad 13). The verse attributed to Soyarābāī offers a direct challenge to untouchability.

240 The author seems to be suggesting that, like a licentious man who thinks about another man’s wife, s/he is immoral if s/he does not dwell on Nārāyaṇa.
Upajatā karmameḷā | vāce viṭṭhal sāṃvalā | 1√
Vīṭṭhala nāmācā gajara | vegē dhāṃve rukminiṇāvara | 2√
Vīṭṭhala rukmini / bārasē karī ānandānī | 3√
Karī sāhiyā sāmugrī / mhaṇe cokhyācī mahārī | 4√

'Karmameḷā was born: a promise from black Viṭṭhal.241
Vīṭṭhal’s Name acclaimed. Rukmini’s husband comes running.
Vīṭṭhal and Rukmini perform the naming ceremony joyfully.242
With all the necessary materials,’ says Cokhā’s Mahārī.
(Soyarābāī abhaṅga 14, SSG 1, p. 999).243

Paṇḍharīce brāhmaṇẽ cokhyāsī caḷīlẽ / tayālāgı̄ keḷẽ naval devẽ | 1√
Sakaḷa samudāva cokhiyāce gharī / rāḍhī sidhdī dvārī tiṣṭhatātī | 2√
Rāṅgamāḷā sade gudhiyā tōrē / ānanda kūrtana vaisṇavāce | 3√
Asāṅkhya brāhmaṇa baisalyā pāṅgatī / vimāṇā pāhaṭī suravara | 4√
To sukhasoha ṣṭā divāḷī dasarā / vovāḷī soyarā cokhiyāsī | 5√

All the Brahmins of Paṇḍharpūr were cruel to Cokhā; God was astonished.
The whole community is at Cokhā’s home; wealth and accomplishments remain at the door.
Beautiful Rāṅgamāḷā, gudhiyā at the door—a Vaiṣṇava kūrtan is proceeding happily.244
Innumerable Brahmins are sitting for pāṅgati while great souls look down from above.245
This happy occasion is equal to divāḷī or dasarā, Cokhā’s Soyarā does ovāḷī.246

241 This line could also be interpreted ‘when faced with the fruits of one’s actions [karmameḷā] speak the name of black Viṭṭhal’ (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 14th May 2011).
242 The term bārasē refers to the naming ceremony on the twelfth day of a child’s life (Tulpule 1999:488; Molesworth 1857:576).
243 This abhaṅga has been translated by Zelliot (1999a:94; 2005:150).
244 Rāṅgamāḷā are patterns drawn on the ground at the entrance to buildings, for festive occasions, with rāṅgoḷī ‘coloured powders’ (Molesworth 1857:678, 688). The patterns are commonly known as rāṅgoḷī. Gudhiyā refers to a pole that is usually wrapped with cloth and hung with mango leaves and marigold flowers, which is erected before the door to a house (Molesworth 1857:238). The presence of the rāṅgamāḷā and the gudhiyā indicate that a special event is taking place.
245 Pāṅgati refers to a row of diners and indicates commensality, companionship and fellowship (Tulpule 1999:431; Molesworth 1857:480). The fact that numerous Brahmans are being fed indicates an auspicious occasion.
246 Divāḷī ‘a row of lamps’ is the festival of lights held at the end of Āśvin (September-October) and the first two days of Kārtik (October-November). It is held in honour of Viṣṇu (commemorating his destruction of the demon Naraka) and to propitiate Lākṣmī, the goddess of fortune and beauty, who is Viṣṇu’s wife (Molesworth 1857:414; Monier Williams 2008). Dasarā is the tenth day of the festival of Navarātrī. During the nine nights (navarātrī) and ten days of the festival images of the goddess Śakti/Devi are worshipped. Dasarā celebrates the day Rāma marched against the demon Rāvaṇa, indicating the victory of good over evil. The images of Devī, which have been worshipped
For those guilty of five great sins and breach of faith, Rāma’s Name saves.

It saved the great sinner Vālhā. 249

It rescued the harlot.

The son’s name sent him to paradise: Ajāmeḷā was liberated by the Name.

‘The Name saves men and women’, says the Mahārī of Cokhā.

(Soyarābāī abhanga 22, SSG 1, p. 1001).

I speak with unbecoming familiarity but you are a forgiving parent.

Your generosity is famous across the three worlds; therefore I seek refuge with the Lotus-Lord.

The afflicted and miserable seek refuge with you. Please run to their aid, our mother and father.

Soyrā prostrates herself: 250 ‘You are our leader and mother, Pāṇḍuraṅga’.

(Soyarābāī abhanga 31, SSG 1, p. 1001).

c over the previous nine nights, are then thrown into the river (Molesworth 1857:405). Ovāḷī (ōvāḷāṇē, ōvāḷā) means to move a lamp in a circular motion in front of a deity or person in order to remove evil or trouble and in offering or consecration (Molesworth 1857:122).

247 This verse has also been translated by Zelliot (1999a:97; 2005:160).

248 The five great sins or crimes (mahāpātaka) are: killing a Brahman (brahmahatyā), stealing gold (survana-steya), drinking spirits (surāpāna), adultery with one’s spiritual teacher or incest with one’s mother (gurutalpagamana), and associating with anyone who has committed the previous four crimes (tatsaṃsarga).

249 Vālhā refers to Vālmīki. For a discussion on this theme see Leslie 2003. For a verse with a similar theme see Kānhopātrā abhanga 12 (SSG 1:919).

250 The term daṇḍavata refers to the full body prostration and the form of greeting given to Brahmans by lower caste persons.

372
I’m base and lowly, is that why you won’t set me free? Nevertheless, I hold onto your padar.251 It’s not good ethics to ignore me; a great person should act according to his greatness. I seek protection so show support.252 What a great thing to be given colour!253 Soyārā says, ‘O resident of Pāṇḍharīpūr you have left your imprint on the three worlds.’254 (Soyārābāī abhanga 35, SSG 1, p.1001)

The Name purifies, know this to be true, saying Vīthobā’s name is easy. The Name breaks the ties of sansār. Enjoyment and liberation are achieved through the Name. The Name conquers sin and oppression. People experience this. ‘Proclaim the Name, utter it out loud’, says the Mahārī of Cokhā. (Soyārābāī abhanga 41, SSG 1, p.1001).

251 The padar is the ornamental border at the end of a sāḍī (sārī) or dhotī (Molesworth 1857:488; Berntsen 1982:83). Padar also refers to ‘a cloth’ (Tulpule 1999:48), ‘a cloth cover; a screen’ and ‘the end of a garment’ (Tulpule 1999:404). The term also has references to ‘being under the care or protection of’, ‘to supplicate abjectly and earnestly’ (Molesworth 1857:488) or ‘to take refuge with’ (Tulpule 1999:404). In this instance one can imagine the author taking hold of the fold in the dhotī and in this context refers to ‘aid, support, backing’ (Molesworth 1857:502).

252 The term pāṭhī is derived from pāṭha (back) and in this context refers to ‘aid, support, backing’ (Molesworth 1857:502).

253 The term vāna derives from vana or varṇa meaning ‘colour’ (Molesworth 1857:446, 746) or ‘caste’ (Tulpule 1999:625), which suggests that the author is referring to their low caste status in an ironical manner. This may refer to the three strides of Viṣṇu where Viṣṇu’s steps encompassed the earth, heaven and beyond. See Ṛg Veda 1.154 (Doniger 1981:225-227), 1.22.16, 17; 6.4.13; and 7.100.3. For discussions on this topic see Kuiper (1962), Wayman (1965:3160), Sirca (1971:210), Knife (1972), Soifer (1991), Hoek (1992), Kinnard (2000) and Keith (2007). The line may also refer to the imprints of Viṣṇu’s feet (visṇupada) that, according to the Śrīdhar’s Pāṇḍuranga-Māhātmya are found at Veṇūnāḍa (VI. A. 9; Raeside 1965:18; see Rājāī abhanga 1326, SSG:491) and Gopalpur near Pandharīpūr. According to Śrīdhar the site of Gopalpur is as good as Gayā (VI. B. 1; Raeside 1965:19) the most well-known of the sacred sites where the visṇupada are worshipped. The Soyārābāī verse may therefore be referring to the Vedic myth of Viṣṇu’s all-encompassing strides and connecting it with the visṇupada at Gopalpur. The verse may also be drawing attention to the pervasive and benevolent nature of Viṣṇu as he was regarded as having taken the three steps for the benefit of humanity (RV 6.4.9.13). However, the author may also be making an ironical statement about caste being imprinted on each person.
Bhavatām Śrīma Bhavatāyathā | Āna Naka Pāntha Jāūn Kōṇi | 13
Nāmaścā Śivāvatā Hātara Antarī | Mṛṇasattes Mahaṁrī Čōkhiyācī | 14

Kalikāla kāmpe nāma uccāritā / Viṭṭhaḷa mhaṭatā kāryasiddhi 1/ Trikṣaṇāḥ japa sulabha sopārā / vāce to uccārā sarvakāla 2/ Bhavatāpā śrāma hare bhavavyahā / āṇa nakā pānthā jāū kōṇī 3/ Nāmācā viśvāsa dṛhari dharā āntarī / mhaṇatase mahaṁrī cokhiyācī 4/

Death trembles when the Name is uttered; saying Viṭṭhal leads to fulfilment. 255
The three syllable repetition is easily achieved: repeat it at all times. 256
It removes life’s sorrow and strife: don’t follow any other path.
‘Have faith in the Name and hold on to it within’, says the Mahārī of Cokhā.
(Soyarābāī abhaṅga 47, SSG 1, p. 1003).

255 Kalikāla can be interpreted as ‘the age of kali (vice)’ but it can also be personified as Death.
256 The sacred and mystical syllable ॐ has three phonetic elements, a+u+ṃ and a silent fourth element. Auṃ is first mentioned in the Atharva Veḍa Śaṃhitā. In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (1.8.1) auṃ is identified with Brahman and in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad (1–12) auṃ is identified with Brahman as well as the structure of the cosmos (Radhakrishnan 2004:535, 693–705). In the Bhagavadgītā (8.13) the supreme deity is equated to auṃ and Brahman (Zaehner 1973:265). For further discussion see Killingly 1987 and Beck 1993 (42ff).
257 The term ucchiṣṭa connotes ‘left, rejected, left of a meal; leavings; fig. Used and left,’ (Molesworth 1857:87), ‘leavings, fragments, remainder (especially of a sacrifice or of food)’ (Monier Williams 2008) and ‘leavings considered as prasāda’ (Tulpule 1999:297). Zelliot translates Soyarābāī abhaṅga 32 as saying ‘I will accept your leftovers’ and this abhaṅga as saying ‘I can only wish for your discarded food’ (2005b:160). Zelliot states that the image of gladly receiving God’s leftover food is a Mahār reference (2010:82). Mahīpati states that Janī ate Viṭṭhal’s leavings in the BVJ (21.60).
Fulfil my votive prayer. I look at your feet Viṭṭhobā.
I was liberated from the shackles of innumerable previous births when I pushed myself in front of Him. I kept thinking of those feet, which I finally saw on a brick.

‘My mind cannot contain the happiness’, says Cokhā’s Mahārī.

(Soyarābāī abhangā 57, SSG 1, p.1004).

Pusonī sarvāṃsī nirmāḷā nighālī / yeūni pōhacāli mehuṇapūrī /1/
Sarvakāḷa chanda vācē nāma gāya / āṭhavīta āhe kokhiyāsī /2/
Mhane viṭṭhobā māganē āhe tuja / tuje bhaktarāja sāmbhāḷī /3/
Soyrā mhaṇe aisā sukhācā sohālā / bhogī avalīlā nirmāḷā ti /4/

Taking leave of everyone, Nirmāḷā set out and soon reached Mehuṇapūrī.
‘He spent every moment recalling the Name’. Cokhā is thus remembered.
Calling, ‘Viṭṭhobā, protect and take care of your excellent devotees’.
Soyrā says, ‘Nirmāḷa the festivities are to be enjoyed.’

(Soyarābāī abhangā 62, SSG 1, p. 1004).

9. Nirmāḷābāī

Majā nāmācī āvaḍī / saṃsāra kelā deśadhaḍī /1/
Sāmpaḍale varma sopē / viṭṭhala nāma mantra japē /2/
Nāhī āṇika sādhana / sada gāya nārāyaṇa /3/
Nirmāḷa mhaṇe devā / chanda yevaḍhā pūravāvā /4/

I’m fond of the Name. Wandering wretchedly somehow I existed.
I discovered a remedy: chanting the Name of Viṣṇu.
There is no other means except constantly singing the name of Nārāyaṇa.
Nirmāḷa says, ‘O God, please support this hobby of mine’.

(Nirmāḷa abhangā 6, SSG 1, p. 1009).

258 The term bhogī also refers to the day before narakacaturdāśī, the fourteenth day of Āśvin (September–October), the day when Viṣṇu killed the demon Narak, and the second day of the festival of divāḷī (Molesworth 1857:450, 279). The line could therefore read: ‘Soyrā says, ‘Nirmāḷa, the festivities will be on the thirteenth’.

259 The SSG has twenty-four abhangas attributed to Nirmāḷa of which I have translated six (underlined) and Zelliot has also translated six: (21) ājivarī tumhı̄̃ tayāsī pāḷil (2005:161–62); (9) anantā janmācīcī sukṛta padarı̄̃ (2005:162–63); (1) cahūnkaḍe devā dāṭaḷā vaṇavā (2005:163–64); (5) kṛpecyā sāgarā parisā ninava (2005:163); (10) parāmartha sādhavā boliyā gosṭi (2005:162); (23) nuncā bharavasā dharonī mānası̄̃ (2005:161).
चोखया म्हणे निर्मळेसी | नाम गाये अहनिशी।
तेणं संसारा सुखांचा | इह परलोक साचा।
साधन हैचं थोर असे | शांतं क्रमं दयांवसे।
ऐकतंच आनंदलीं | निर्मळा म्हणे मिठी चरणीं दाळी।

कां बा पंढरिराया मोकळिलं मज | नाठवेच मज दुजं कांहं।
मजं तव असे पार्यांचं चांद | आणां कैवाद कांहं मेणं।
चोखियासी सुख विश्रांति दिलं | माझं संदं केलं दिसतंस।
निर्मळा म्हणे तुमंहं तो सुजाण | माझं भाग शीण कोण वारं।

You are my elder brother yet you acted thoughtlessly. Tell me why did you act with such determination? Why did you come running without even asking, wouldn’t sister-in-law be grieving for you?"

He says, ‘Viṭṭho will provide all necessities, the burden is his’. Nirmalā says, ‘making this Viṭṭhal’s business is not the right thing to do’. (Nirmalā abhanga 14, SSG I, p. 1010).

Cokhayā mhaṇe nirmalaesī / nāma gāyē abharniśī /
Tenē samsāra sukhačā / iha paraloka sācā /
Sādhana héci thora ase / śānti kṣamā dayā vase /
Aikatānicānandali / nirmalā mhaṇe miṭhi caranī ghāṭī /

Cokhā tells Nirmalā, ‘chant the Name [of God] ceaselessly. Consequently familial life will be happy and you will attain the heavens. The ways to accomplish this are through peace, forgiveness and sympathy’. Hearing this she was filled with joy. Nirmalā says, ‘Embrace the feet’.

(Nirmalā abhanga 16, SSG, p.1010).

Kā bā paṇḍharirāyā mokalilē maja / nāthaveci maja dujē kāhiū/1/
Maja tuva ase pāyāmsave cāda / ānaka kaivadā kāhi neṇē /2/
Cokhiyāśi sukha vīśrāṇī didhalī / mājhi śāndā kēlū āstase /3/
Nirmalā mhaṇe tumbhī tō sujaṇa / mājā bhāga śīṇa koṇa vāri /4/

King of Paṇḍharpur why have you ignored me? I can’t think of anyone else but you. I desire to touch your feet; I have no wicked intentions. You have given Cokhā peace and happiness yet it looks like you’ve forgotten me. Nirmalā says, ‘you are knowledgeable. Will you relieve my weariness’?

(Nirmalā abhanga 19, SSG, p.10011).

260 The Nirmalā abhàngas 12–16 tell the story of Karmameḷā’s birth and describes Cokhäuserā as a useless husband (see Zelliot 1999a:94–95; 2005:149–155). A Nāmdev abhanga (2353, SSG 1:688–89)—cokhäuserā kāntā ase tī garbhina ‘Cokhäuserā’s wife was pregnant’—completes the story and a condensed translation is provided by Zelliot (1999a:95–6).

261 It is unclear to whose feet the author is referring.
Until today you've taken care of him and tolerated all Cokhā’s faults. You've always been at his back but tell me are you tired of us?

Base and lowly, I am a mass of sin [but] seek refuge at your feet with heart and soul.

Nirmaḷā says, ‘you are the compassionate one, so please take care of me’.

(Nirmaḷā abhanga 21, SSG, p.1011).262

I am sure of you; resolutely I surrender to your feet.
Now, do what you think is right; I have unburdened myself.
I’ve put my head in your lap; I know what the future holds.
Nirmaḷā says, ‘either save me or kill me; my whole burden is now yours’.

(Nirmaḷā abhanga 23, SSG 1, p. 1001).

10. Bhāgū Mahārīṇ263

This verse has been translated by Zelliott (2005:161–62).

The life story (caritra) of Bhāgū Mahārīṇ, which comprises three lines in SSG (1:816), states she was born in the mahār community, found her life enriched by devotion to the Lord and flourished as a poet; that her dates and life story are unknown, and that only two of her abhanga s are included in N.G. Joshi’s Prācīna Gitabhānḍāra ‘Treasury of Ancient Songs’: tujā asatā maja gañjīti and ālō tujhyā darśanāśi [abhangas 4 and 1]. It is believed that Bhāgū Mahārīṇ was a contemporary of the mahār Cokhāmelā (Shrotriya 1992).
‘I’ve come to see you, please come and meet me.

All the saints are inside the temple; I alone am pining outside (refrain). 264

Listen to my desperate plea Viṭṭhāī; meet me, your child’.

God came outside, picked me up on his shoulders.

Bhāgū says, ‘He granted me a meeting; my worries have now ended’.

(Bhāgū abhaṅga 1, SSG 1, p. 1015). 265

People have no other task than to please God.

People may laugh at me now that I go about shamelessly (refrain).

There’s no one around me apart from my friend Viṭṭhāī.

He will deal with injustice, which is why I’ve put my trust in Him.

Bhāgū says, ‘I’ve become fearless, because of my Viṭṭhāī’.

(Bhāgū abhaṅga 2, SSG 1, p.1016).

\[\text{Kāya nāhī ho ācārī / riňhavāvē tyā devāsī /1/}\ 
\text{Jana hāsatīla maja / ātā jātē nirālaja / dhrūpada/}\ 
\text{Māgẽ pudhē nāhī konī / sakhyā viṭṭhalāvāncunī /2/}\ 
\text{Anāyācē karito kāya / mhaṇonī bhariśā āhe maja /3/}\ 
\text{Bhāgu mhaṇe jhāle nirbhaī / āhe mājhī viṭṭhāī /4/}\ 

The dhrupad indicates affiliation with a singing tradition states Callewaert (1989:56).

This verse has also been translated by Zelliot (2005:31–2): ‘We have come for Your darshan; please meet us.| All the saints are inside the temple.| I am alone outside, pining.| Oh Mother Vithu, listen to my plea.| I am a poor girl, please meet me.| God came outside and took me in on Her shoulder.| Says Bhaga, I met God and my fears disappeared’. Zelliot remarks that the verse is ‘reminiscent of the south Indian story of Triuppan Alvar being carried into the temple (2005:31). For Zelliot the significance of this verse lies in the fact that it describes God, male or female, carrying an ‘untouchable’ into the temple on his shoulders (2005:32). There is also a connection with the story of Cokhā being led by the hand into the temple by Viṭṭhal (BVJ 23:6ff, Abbott 1996:377–84). The Vārkarī sampradāya profess the notion that everyone is equal before God irrespective of caste but this did not apply to so-called ‘untouchables’ until 1947 when Sane Guruji undertook a fast unto death in front of the temple in Pandharpur.

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The Ocean of Blessedness, my mother-and-father Jñāneśvar.
No longer conscious of my physicality. Father, take care of me (refrain).
The Desert Conqueror made a creature chant the Vedas.
He made the wall move, such is the blessed mother.
His devotees bless him; he is our mother-and-father.
He is the ultimate refuge. Bhāgū says, ‘Jñānadev’.

In your presence people harass me. O God, what can you do?
Friend of the Friendless, why can't you take pity on me (refrain)?
Orphaned, I'm kept at arm's length. How can you be called generous?
Bhāgū says, 'don’t release me, please deliver me compassionate Pāṇḍurāṅga'.

266 The SSG has bhārā ‘a load, bundle, fagot, or pack’ but Bhāgū may be more accurate.
267 The term poṭī denotes ‘stomach’, ‘belly’ or ‘womb’ but the verb poṭī ghālaṇẽ connotes ‘to overlook (an offense)…’ (Molesworth 1857:530).
268 The term paradeśī denotes ‘a foreigner’ (Molesworth 1857:488) or ‘a refugee’ (Tulpule 1999:407).
269 The SSG is confused about which Bhāgū composed these abhaṅgas. However, the verses attributed to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ all have a refrain (dhrupad) while the only other verse attributed to Bhāgūbāī has no dhrupad.
Shiv to nivritti visṣu jñānadeva pāhī / sopāna to brahmā mūla māyā muktāī 1/

Dhanya dhanya dhanya dhanya nivṛtti / dhanya jñānadeva sopāna sakhyā / 2/

Pratyakṣa paithanī bhaṭā ācārī pravarti / rekhāyache mūrhi vadhavī vedaśruti / 3/

Caudāsī varūṣe taṭā rākūvāsī / garva haravīlā cālāvīlā bhūtī / 4/

Dhanya kānhrpātra āṭī jñāhī bhāgyavī / hṛte jñāhī jñānadevācī hmaṇṇiṇī / 5/

Nivṛtti is Śiva, Jñānadev is Visṣu, Sopān is Brahmā, and Muktā is Māyā.

Blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed Nivṛtti, 272 blessed Jñānadev and Sopān.

The Brahmans from Paithan realised [their greatness] when the buffalo recited the Vedas.

The fourteen-thousand-year-old sage conducting tapas, 273 living on the [river] bank, lost his pride because the four made the wall move.

Blessed is Kānhrpātra, because she could meet Jñānade (Kānhrpātra abhaṅga 2, SSG 1, p.918). 274

11. Kānhopātra 270

Shiv to nivritti visṣu jñānadeva pāhī | sopāna to brahmā mūla māyā muktāī | 11

Dhanya dhanya dhanya dhanya nivṛttiśrīra | dhanya jñānadeva soppāna sakhya | 12

Pratysa paithanī bhaṭa dāvī pravāmi | rekhāyache mūrhi vadhavī vedasruti | 13

Vādāsī varūṣe taṭā rākavāsī | garva haravīlā cālāvīlā bhūtī | 14

Dhanya kānhrupātra āṭī jñāhī bhāgyavī | hṛte jñāhī jñānadevācī hmaṇṇiṇī | 15

Śiva to nivṛtti visṣu jñānadeva pāhī / sopāna to brahmā mūla māyā muktāī / 1/

Dhanya dhanya dhanya dhanya nivṛttiśrīra / dhanya jñānadeva soppāna sakhya / 2/

Pratysa paithanī bhaṭa dāvī pravāmi / rekhāyache mūrhi vadhavī vedasruti / 3/

Caudāsī varūṣe taṭā rākavāsī / garva haravīlā cālāvīlā bhūtī / 4/

Dhanya kānhrupātra āṭī jñāhī bhāgyavī / hṛte jñāhī jñānadevācī hmaṇṇiṇī / 5/

Nivṛtti is Śiva, Jñānadev is Visṣu, Sopān is Brahmā, and Muktā is Māyā.

Blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed Nivṛtti; 272 blessed Jñānadev and Sopān.

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Blessed is Kānhrpātra, because she could meet Jñānade (Kānhrpātra abhaṅga 2, SSG 1, p.918). 274

Jīvīche jīvīlame bhāge kṛṣṇāī kānhāī | sāvare dōṭe kariṇa yeṭuḍe kāhī | 11

Ānā avvāvā yathā sāṃ nānīcī pāhī | sāvare dōṭe kariṇa yeṭuḍe kāhī | 12

Dīnoddhāra aise veda sāṃtvā garjāti pāhī | sāvare dōṭe kariṇa yeṭuḍe kāhī | 13

Sāvare dōṭe kariṇa yeṭuḍe kāhī | 14

Dīnoddhāra aise veda sāṃtvā garjāti pāhī / sāṃtvā dolase karūnā yeūnde kāmṭāī / 15

Dīnoddhāra aise veda sāṃtvā garjāti pāhī / sāṃtvā dolase karūnā yeūnde kāmṭāī / 275

Dīnoddhāra aise veda sāṃtvā garjāti pāhī / sāṃtvā dolase karūnā yeūnde kāmṭāī / 3/

Sāvaṇa kānhrpātra tujaḷal velovelā pāhī / sāṃtvā dolase karūnā yeūnde kāmṭāī / 4/

Love of my life, Kṛṣṇa-Kānhāī; 276

Show compassion in those dark eyes.

My caste is reviled, my reputation’s tarnished;

Show compassion in those dark eyes.

The Vedas and Śastra proclaim you save the wretched; 277

270 There are twenty-three Kānhopātra abhaṅgas in the SSG and I have translated twelve, five of which have been translated previously: janmātaricē sukta āṭī pāvāṇī pāhī (Sellergren 1996:231), jīvīcē jīvalage mūle kṛṣṇāī kānḥāī (Sellergren 1996:227–228), patita pāvāṇī hmanaviśā ādī (Sellergren 1996:229), patita tā pāvāṇā (Sellergren 1996:227; Tulpule 1979:347), śiva to nivṛtti visṣu jñānadeva pāhī (Sellergren 1996:233). Kānhopātra’s life was the subject of a drama Sant Kānhrpātra (1931) and a film Kānhrpātra (1937) directed and written by Bhalji Pendharkar. For more information on Kānhopātra see ‘Mangalwedha: Shri Sant Kānhrpātra’ (2011), [online article], available at <http://www.mangalwedha.com/2009/07/shri-sant-kanhrpatra.html> [accessed 11th December 2013].

271 Muktā is mūla/mālā Māyā, which can be interpreted as the ‘original Māyā’, ‘progenitor Māyā’ or ‘principal Māyā’ (Molesworth 1857:662; Berntsen 182:121).

272 Nivṛtti is designated ‘Nivṛttiśrīra’ and rāvī like rāvī or rāvī means ‘king’ and is attached to names as an honorific title (Molesworth 1857:693).

273 This is a reference to Cāṅgadev.

274 This verse has also been translated by Sellergren (1996:233).

275 The term apavāda refers to ‘scandal’, ‘malicious gossip’ (Tulpule 1999:21), an ‘unjust imputation’ and ‘censure’ (Molesworth 1857:34).

276 Kānhāī is an epithet for Kṛṣṇa as playful, sportive and joyful (Molesworth 1857:133).
Show compassion in those dark eyes.
Seeking refuge Kānhopātrā falls at your feet, again and again,\(^{278}\)
Show compassion in those dark eyes.
(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 4, SGG 1, p.918).\(^{279}\)

अगा वैकुण्ठच्या राया | अगा विष्णु सख्या \(^{18}\)
अगा नारायणा | अगा वसुदेवनदना \(^{19}\)
अगा पुंडलीक वरदा | अगा विष्णु तूं गविदा \(^{20}\)
अगा रखुमाईच्या कांता | कान्होपात्रा राखी आता \(^{21}\)

Agā vaikuṇṭhā rāyā / agā viṣṭhal sakhāyā /1/
Agā nārāyaṇā / agā vasudevanandanā /2/
Agā puṇḍalika varadā / agā viṣṇu tūṁ govidā /3/
Agā rakhumāicyā kāntā / kānhopātrā rākhī ātā /4/

O King of Vaikuṇṭh; O companion Viṣṭhal.
O Nārāyaṇā; O Vasudev’s son.
O Puṇḍalīk’s boon granter; O Viṣṇu you [are] Govind.
O Rakhumāī’s husband;\(^{280}\) Kānhopātrā begs to be protected.\(^{281}\)
(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 6, SSG 1, p.918).\(^{282}\)

पतित तूं पावना | म्हणविसी नारायणा \(^{18}\)
तरी संभाळी वचन | ब्रीद वागविसी जण \(^{19}\)
यानी शूद नाही भाव | दुष्ट आचरण स्वभाव \(^{20}\)
मूढी नाम नाही | कान्होपात्रा शरण पायी \(^{21}\)

Patita tū pāvanā/ mhaṇavisī nārāyaṇā /1\(^{283}\)
Tari sambhāḷi vacana / brīda vāgavisi jāna /2/
Yāti śuddha nāhī bhāva / duṣṭa ācaraṇa svabhāva /3/
Mukhī nāma nāhī / kānhopātrā śaraṇa pāyī /4/

\(^{277}\) The term dīnodvāra connotes ‘salvation or deliverance of the meek and humble’ or ‘saviour of the meek and humble’ (Molesworth 1857:414). Consequently, the author could be using the term as an epithet for the deity and/or asking for salivation as a wretched supplicant.

\(^{278}\) The Sanskrit term śaraṇa means ‘place of shelter’, ‘refuge, protection, refuge with; to go to any one for protection, to seek refuge with’ (Monier Williams 2008) while in Marathi the term is defined as ‘a refuge’ (Tulpule 1999:690) or ‘protection’ (Vaze 1911:514). There are a number of related terms: śaraṇāgata ‘that is come seeking refuge or protection, a refugee, an appellant’ (Molesworth 1857:782; Vaze 1911:514), śaraṇa jānẽ ‘to surrender’ (Berntsen 1982:145), śaraṇa asanẽ ‘to be a supplicant for protection’, śaraṇa yenẽ ‘to come as a supplicant for protection’ (Vaze 1911:514).

\(^{279}\) The final refrain could include the suggestion that Viṣṭhal saves or rescues Kānhopātrā. For another translation see Sellergren (1996:227–228).

\(^{280}\) This verse uses different epithets for God so one can imagine the author saying ‘O God, O God, O God, O God’ as a desperate plea for help. The verb rākhaṇẽ means ‘to keep, preserve, protect, guard; to keep or save; to hold back or hold in; to reserve or withhold; to retain or keep back’ and ‘to hold as one’s concubine or as one’s paramour, to keep’ (Molesworth 1857:687). The author of this abhaṅga may be playing with words and implying Kānhopātrā’s supposed status as a courtesan.

\(^{281}\) This abhaṅga has been recorded by Tukaram Gosavi, ‘Nathanchi Abhanga Vaani’, 2003.

\(^{282}\) This should probably read patitapāvana, ‘Purifier and restorer of the fallen’ (Molesworth 1857:48). Marathi World (Kanhopatra abhanga 3 ‘Patita tu pavana’) has the first two lines as ‘पतित तूं पावना | म्हणविसी नारायणा’ \(^{18}\)
तूं संभाळी वचन | ब्रीद म्हणविसी जण \(^{21}\)
Patita tū pāvanā/ mhaṇavisī nārāyaṇā /1/ Tari sambhāḷi vacana / brīda mhaṇavisī /2/
You are named ‘Purifier and restorer of the fallen’, Nārāyaṇā.
Keep your promise, acknowledge your vow.
My caste is unclean, I lack faith; my behaviour and character are vile.
No Name on the tip of my tongue.
Kānhopātrā seeks the protection of your feet.
(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 7, SSG 1, p.918). 284

My refuge is Paṇḍharī; happily I’ll dwell on the banks of the Bhīmā.
This is where my parents are; my anguish will end after seeing [God].
My agitation and anxiety have been removed, my agony has passed.
How radiant He looks upon the brick; Kānhopātrā is satisfied.
(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 8, SSG 1, p.918).

The life of my life is my treasure Viṭṭhal;
Standing on the brick, lovingly distributing provisions.
Cakrapāṇī, turn back the master of your friend. 288
‘Embrace me Ocean of mercy’, implores Kānhopātrā.
(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 9, SSG 1, p.918).

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284 This verse is quoted and translated in Tulpule (1979:347) and translated by Sellergren (1996:227). The verse also has some similarities with Kānhopātrā abhaṅgas 10, (SSG 1:918) and 20 (SSG 1:919).
285 The term māher refers to a girl’s natal home as opposed to that of her husband’s parents. Consequently, it is seen as a place of refuge, asylum or rest (Molesworth 1857:651). In this context the phrase can therefore mean that Pandharpur is Kānhopātrā’s natal home and/or her refuge.
286 This is an epithet for Viṭṭhal (see Janābāī abhaṅga 91, SSG 1:724).
287 The word ṣidhorī should be ṣidhorī (ṣūdha + ṣorī, cord of the sling basket or pot); ‘vijectuals or dressed provisions (as carried on a journey, taken or sent to the fields or another’s house)’; ‘vijectuals (given by women to Brahmans, especially in the rainy season)’; ‘vijectuals (given to a stranger or child in order to obtain puṇya or merit)’ (Molesworth 1857:789), ‘a lunch packet for a journey’ (Tulpule 1999:691, 749) or ‘food taken on a journey’ (Berntsen 1982:146).
288 The word ālī refers to ‘a female friend or companion; a confidante’ (Molesworth 1857:75) or ‘a woman’s female friend’ (Tulpule 1999:70). Consequently, the author is probably female and referring to the deity as her female friend. It is possible that ‘master’ (dhāni) refers to the king who attempted to take Kānhopātrā from Pandharpur but the term may imply that the author has a master whose control s/he wishes to thwart.
Dīna patita anyāyī / śaraṇ ālayẽ viṭhābāī / 
Mī to āhe yāṭińīna / na kale kāmē ācaraṇā / 
Maja adhikāra nāhī / bheṭī dei viṭhābāī / 
Thāva dei caraṇāpāśī / tujhī kānhopātrā dāsī /

Lowly, fallen, unrighteous; I seek your protection Viṭhābāī.289
I am low caste and do not know how to behave. I have no authority;290 please meet me Viṭhābāī.
Give me a place at your feet; I am your servant Kānhopātrā.
(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 10, SSG 1, p.918).

Ambarṣīśāṭhī / janma ghetale jagajeṭhī / 
Vāgavī bhaktāncā ābhāra / ṛṇī jhālā nirantara / 
Arjunoca rathiṁ baise / tyāce ghoḍe dhūtase / 
Lāja sāṇḍī hṛṣīkeśī / kānhopātrā tujhī dāsī /

For Ambaṛṣī’s sake, Jagajeṭhī took form.291
He bears his devotees burdens; he is continually indebted.
Sitting in Arjūna’s chariot, He used to wash his horses.292
Cast away shame ‘Lord of the Senses’,293 Kānhopātrā is your servant.
(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 11, SSG 1, p.919).

289 For a similar theme see Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 7 (SSG 1:918).
290 The term adhikāra has numerous connotations: ‘authority; right’ (Berntsen 1982:3), ‘spiritual authority arising from devotion to God’ (Tulpule 1999:12), and ‘an office, post, place; right, title, authority; province, proper office or business: also authority; right of action; subject, theme, matter proposed or contemplated; rule, government, exercising or holding authority’ (Molesworth 1857:25).
291 The verse uses the epithet jagajeṭhī, formed from jagata ‘the world or universe’ and jyeṣṭha ‘greatest, best’ (Molesworth 1857:301, 326), which means ‘the greatest and strongest man in the world’ (Tulpule 1999:248). This epithet is also used in compositions attributed to Jhāneśvar and Nāmdev (Tulpule 1999:164,248, 355, 427, 463, 623).
292 This is a reference to Kṛṣṇa, who tended the horses as Arjūna’s charioteer. The verse is making the point that Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, served Arjūna as an example to people.
293 Hṛṣīkeśa, ‘Lord of the senses’ (Monier-Williams 2008) or ‘Lord of the senses and of the heart’ (Abbott 1996, 2:452) is an epithet for Viṣṇu. The story is that Viṣṇu appeared to the sage Raibhya, as a result of his austerities, in the form of hṛṣīkeśa.
The one who knows your Name by heart threatens Death.

Hurray! Your great Name has delivered even the wicked.

A ruined harlot, Ajāmeḷ and Vālmiki all became pure.

(Hāmarā abhaṅga 12, SSG 1, p.919).

Chant the Name by heart, with love from within.

My Father is trusting; he removes all oppression.

Through chanting Names, difficulties will quickly disappear.

Experience Him yourself. He is Kānhopātrā’s Mādha

(Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 14, SSG 1, p.919).

The virtuous actions of all my lives have borne fruit today;

294 The word sojvaḷa means ‘shinning, brilliant, bright, sparkling, and glittering’ as well as ‘glossy’ from burnishing or polishing (Molesworth 1857: 868; see Tulpule 1999:775).

295 There is a translation of this verse by Sellergren (1996:232) and Ranade (2003:208).
That’s why I saw the feet of Viṭṭhal.296 Happily, I realised my good fortune today; That’s why I saw the feet of Viṭṭhal. Blessed are my feet that have followed this panth; That’s why I saw the feet of Viṭṭhal. By coming here my body has been blessed; That’s why I saw the feet of Viṭṭhal. Kānhopātrā says, ‘enclose me in your womb,’297 so as to see the feet of Viṭṭhal from birth to birth’. (Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 20, SSG 1, p.919).298

पतित पावन हमानविसी आर्धी | तरी कों उपाधी भक्तामागी ।
तुळ्ण हमानविता दुजं अनंसंग | उपोषणा सांग कोणाकडे ।
सिन्हाचे भातुके स्वसं नेतां | थोराचिया माथां लाज वाटे ।
मरण कान्होपाता देह समरण | करावा जतन ब्रीदासाठी ।

Paṭita pāvana hmaṇavisī ādhı̄ ̃ | tarīkā upādhī bhaktāmāgẽ/1/
Tujhẽ hmaṇavitā dujẽ aṅgasāṅga | upepanā sāṅga koṇākade/2/
Siṃhāce bhātukẽ jambuka paē netā | thorāciyā māthā lāja vāṭe/3/
Mhañe kānhopātrā deha samarpaṇẽ | karāvā jatana brīdāsāthī/4/

If you are called ‘Purifier and restorer of the fallen’, then why is this devotee still agitated?300 I am your other half. Whose fault is it if I am subjected to another? When the jackal takes the lion’s food,301 the great should be ashamed.

Says Kānhopātrā, ‘I offer my body, protect me on account of your office.’ (Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 22, SSG 1, p.920).303

नको देवराया अंत पाहूं आतां | प्राण हा सर्वापि फुटो पाहे ।
हरिणीवे पाडस व्यासे धरिवेने | मजदुरी जाहले तैसे देवा ।
तुजवण ठाव न दिसे विभुवनी | धावे वो जननी विठाबाई ।
मोक्तोली आस जाहले मी उदास । घेई कान्होपाता इदयात ।

296 This refrain stresses the fulfilment of constant devotion (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27th January 2011).
297 The term garbhā means ‘a foetus or an embryo; pulp, pith, kernel, heart, interior portion or the essence, moral, sum, substance; Surface or space included, area; the middle, the exact centre; meaning or import; the interior or inside: e. g. the womb; the belly; an inner apartment; a lying-in-chamber; the adytum of a temple’ (Molesworth 1857:225) while the term garbhavāsa refers to ‘dwelling in the womb; i.e. undergoing formation and being in the womb’ (Molesworth 1857:227).
298 The author appears willing to continue being reborn so that s/he can see Viṭṭhal’s feet.
299 For another translation see Sellergren (1996:231).
300 This first line of this verse is similar to that of Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 7 (SSG 1:918).
301 The word bhātukē denotes ‘food; a snack; a light repast’ (Tulpule 1999:513; see Molesworth 1857:607). The term jambuka (jambūka) is a Sanskrit one referring to ‘a jackal’ or ‘low man’ (Monier Williams 2008; see Molesworth 1857:307). There are numerous folktales featuring a jackal and lion, for example Pañcatantra 4.1 ‘The Ass without Ears or a Heart’ (Olivelle 1999:152–54). The jackal is regarded as the meanest of animals; greedy, deceitful and cunning (see Gupta 1975:243–44; van Damme 1995:48–50). The jackal is thus ‘the typical minister (craft is a characteristic of both), appearing always when there is a lion king. The contempt for the jackal is implicit whenever it is mentioned’ asserts Olivelle (1999:xxiv). The lion is ‘the king of the world, the king of all the animals’ and he is ‘noble and brave, but can be arrogant, proud and foolish’ according to Olivelle (1999:xxv). It is possible that the jackal refers to the ‘evil man’ (durācārī) who Mahīpati says told the king (the lion) that Kānhopātrā was in Pandharpur (BVJ 39.25ff; Abbott 1996:80ff).
302 The term brīda (bīrīda, bīrada, bīda, bīrada, bīradāha) denotes ‘a forte; a title; a badge proclaiming one’s excellence in a particular field of expertise’ (Tulpule 1999:502; see Molesworth 1857:582).
303 For another translation see Sellergren (1996:229). Sellergren states that the comparison made between Kānhopātrā and the food of wild animals is one that appears in songs attributed to women saints such as Āṇḍāl (1996:230).
Nako devarrāya anta pāhā ātā / prāṅa hā sarvathāh prutō pāhe /1 /
Hariniĉ pāḍasa vyāghre dhariyelē / majalāṅī jāhālē taisē devā /2 /
Tujavīna thāva na dīse tribhuvanē / dhāve vo jānani viṭhābāī /3 /
Mokaloni āsa jāhale mī udāsa / gheī kānhopāṭrā hrdayānta /4 /

O Lord God, please don’t test me; my breath is leaving me. 304
I feel like a doe caught by a tiger, O God. 305
Apart from You, I see nothing in the three worlds; please come to our aid Viṭṭhābāī. 306
There’s no hope so I’m sorrowful; please take Kānhopāṭrā in to your heart. 307

12. Bhāgūbāī308

Mī re aparādhī moṭhī / maja ghālāvẽ bā poṭī /1 /
Mī tānhulẽ adñy āna / mhaṇū kā deū naye stana /2 /
Avadhyā santā tū bheṭasī / mī re ekali pardeśē /3 /
Bhāgū mukti vīlēbāsī / maja dhārvẽ poṭāsī /4 /

I’m a great transgressor, please overlook my offense. 310
I’m an ignorant suckling, is that why you won’t talk to me? (refrain)
You met all the other sants. Why am I the only stranger? 311
Bhāgū says, ‘Viṭṭhābāī, please hold me close’. 312
(Bhāgūbāī, abhanga SSG 2, p. 1389).

304 The first line of this verse could also read ‘Don’t, Oh God, put me to the test; my life is falling apart’.
305 The term harinī denotes ‘a doe’ but also refers to ‘one of the four kinds of beautiful women’ (Monier Williams 2008; Molesworth 1857:888).
306 The last part of this phrase could also be translated as ‘please clasp Kānhopāṭrā to your bosom’. The verse presents Kānhopāṭrā as yearning for mukti.
307 This famous verse is thought to be Kānhopāṭrā’s final composition. I have taken the Marathi from Marathi World (Kanhopatra abhanga 1 ‘Nako Devrayaa anta pahu aata’). This verse has been set to music and sung by Hridaynath and Lata Mangeshkar for the film Sādhī Māṇas (1965), see dipiaarmarathi (2008b). The verse was set to music by K. S. Inamdar and sung by Sanjeev Chimmalgi for the film Not Only Mrs. Raut (2003). Inamdar has outlined the differences between his version of the verse and that by Mangeshkar in his blog (2006). The text presented by Inamdar differs slightly from the ‘Marathi World’ text: ho rather than vo in the third line. To hear the Inamdar song go to <http://www.archive.org/details/KaushalS.InamdarNakoDevaraya> [accessed 19th September 2010]. For the film clip see: Rajshri (2011) ‘Nako Devrayaa (Not Only Mrs. Raut) – Marathi’, [online video] uploaded 03/03/2011, available at: <http://dai.ly/xhclgy> [accessed 11th December 2013]. The verse has also been sung by Shreya Ghosal in Gaani Anandagananchi.
308 Bhāgūbāī’s life story (SSG 2:1389) states that when Tukārām ‘flew to heaven’ his children were young so they did not know how unique their father Tukaram was. The children lived with their grandparents for twenty-five years and only heard of their father’s fame. It is possible that they composed some abhaṅgas, which can be inferred from the Tukārāmṭātyā edited by Kānhoba—Tukārām’s older brother—Bhāgūbāī and Tukārām’s posthumous disciple Niḷobā. There are two abhaṅgas by Bhāgūbāī in Niḷobā’s abhaṅga gāthā, showing her desperate plea for Viṭṭhal to give her darśan.
309 This is the text provided in the SSG for Bhāgūbāī’s abhaṅga and there are a few subtle differences with that of the verse said to be by Bhāgū Mahārīṇ.
310 The term poṭī denotes ‘stomach’, ‘belly’ or ‘womb’ but the verb poṭī ghālaṇẽ means ‘to overlook (an offense)…’ (Molesworth 1857:530).
311 The term paradeśī denotes ‘a foreigner’ (Molesworth 1857:488) or ‘a refugee’ (Tulpule 1999:407).
312 Shrotriya presents this verse as being by both Tukārām’s daughter Bhāgūbāī (1992–3:50) and Bhāgū Mahārīṇ (1992–3:79). The SSG is also confused about which Bhāgū composed which abhaṅgas. However, the other four verses attributed to Bhāgū Mahārīṇ each have four lines with a refrain (dhrupad).

386
Cultivate the company of saints; immerse yourself in the delight of reciting the names of the Lord.  
Hold fast to devotion, forsake all other acts; cultivate the company of saints.
Behold a mirage—the net of illusion; become entangled and there’s no progress.
You’ll be sunk. Turn to the ferry that is Viṭṭhal’s name.
Delighting in kīrtan and abhaṅga, see how Bhāgu pays you homage.

13. Gaṅgabāī

The God of gods does everything, yet mankind is ignorant.
The body flows with pride. God is omniscient.
Egoism prevents one from seeing God’s omnipresence.
Egoism, so I say, is self detrimental.
One who is God-fearing, Gupta says, ‘he is blessed’.

(a; From Bhave 1919:449, quoted in Shrotriya 1992–3:48).
A mother, father, protector, enemy, son or brother, are all less important than the Guru. Animals, birds and castes are really the Guru in different forms. He who thinks thus knows the secret.

'Think of such an all-pervading Guru who treats kings and paupers equally', says Gupta.


14. Bahiṇābāī

Vithū mājhā leṅkuravāḷā / saṅge leṅkurāṃca pāḷā //
Tukā ghetto kadiyevari / nāmā karāṅguļ dhari //
Ekanāthā khāndyāvari / kabicėtē hāti dhari //
Gorā kumbhāra māṇḍīvari / cokhā jivā barobarī //
Puṭe ḍalāle jāneśvar / māṅge mūktābāī sūntar //
Bahinī mheñe ba gopāḷā / kirisī bhaktāṃca sōhāḷā //

Vithū is my family-man, with him come a troop of children. Tukā carried on the hip; Nāmā holding the little finger. Eknāth on his shoulders, Kabīr holding his hand. Gorā the potter at his thigh. Cokhā in his heart. In the lead walks Jhānēsav, behind walks beautiful Muktābāī. Bahinī says, 'Gopāl, you have brought all the sants together'.

(Bahiṇābāī abhaṅga 546, Kolhārkar 1926:112).

Santakrpā jhālī / imārata phaḷā ālī /1/
Jhānadevē racilā pāyā / ubhārīlē devālayā /2/

316 Guruvīṇa has been translated as ‘without guru’ by Kiehnle (1997:43, 43) and ‘without a guru’ by Vaudeville (1987:225 n.28).
317 Aklujkar has translated abhaṅgas 63, 64 and 70 from the Bahiṇābāīcā gātha in full, and 33, 60 and 68 in part, while referring to abhaṅgas 39 and 41 (1999:27–8; 2005:122).
318 Gopāl is an epithet for Kṛṣṇa. This verse is akin to one attributed to Janābāī (abhaṅga 30, SSG 1:718).
The sants bestowed their favour [and] the building came to fruition. Jñānadev laid the foundations and erected God’s house. Nāmā, your servant, he formed the enclosure.319

Janārdana Eknātha errected its pillar through his Bhāgavata.320
Tukā became the pinnacle. Sing the bhajan slowly.
Bahiṇī says, ‘the flag flutters; this is an honest account’. (Bahiṇībāī abhaṅga 32, SSG 2, p.1157).321

322

The word brāhmaṇa refers to Brahman, the first of the twice-born classes and the four divisions of the Hindu body, one considered to have divine knowledge or sacred/divine power, a priest. The term also refers to white, pure, and fair (Molesworth 1857:598).

323

This suggests that if the body that makes a Brahman then the son lighting the funeral pyre would be a Brahman-murder. The murder of a Brahman is considered a heinous crime according to orthodox Hinduism. It is regarded as one of the five great crimes along with stealing gold, drinking spirits, adultery with the wife of a spiritual teacher or incest with one’s mother, and associating with anyone who has committed such crimes (Molesworth 1857:637).

324

For another translation see Abbott (1985:126).
Now, a Brahman may consider himself pure due to his caste but that is not demonstrated by experience. A Brahman is not white, a kṣatriya red or a vaiśya yellow. As a śūdra is not black there can be no divisions; in life everyone is appointed equal. 

Bahiṇī says, ‘wherever Hari is that’s the zodiac of blessing, at his home peace and forgiveness sleep while wealth is the servant’.  

Fruit without flower, buds without water; without man there can be no shelter. Lotus without water, light without sun, one cannot exist without the other. Where there is a tree there is seed and where there is a lamp there is light. Where there is a man there is a woman, where there is a blessing there is permanence.

In other words the purity of Brahmans is not due to the caste (varṇa) into which they are born. The word varṇa means ‘colour’ (race, species, kind, sort, quality; hue, tint); ‘class’, ‘order’, ‘tribe’, or ‘caste’ (Molesworth 1857:735; Monier Williams 2008). 

This line could also read ‘Brahmans are without colour; careful consideration will show this is true’. This last part of this statement could read ‘let your mind prove discriminating’.

For another translation see Abbott (1985:127).

The word bahen, like bahin or bahīṇa means ‘sister’.

325 In other words the purity of Brahmans is not due to the caste (varṇa) into which they are born. The word varṇa means ‘colour’ (race, species, kind, sort, quality; hue, tint); ‘class’, ‘order’, ‘tribe’, or ‘caste’ (Molesworth 1857:735; Monier Williams 2008). 
326 This line could also read ‘Brahmans are without colour; careful consideration will show this is true’. 
327 This last part of this statement could read ‘let your mind prove discriminating’. 
328 For another translation see Abbott (1985:127). 
329 There are other verses ‘signed’ bahinī kahe in the section marked padẽ-gauḷanī in Kolhārkar (1926:115–121). 
330 The word bahen, like bahin or bahīṇa means ‘sister’.

15. Vīţhābāi

Pāndharapurī gěle prārthale vīţhalā / cidambara koṇa sāṅge malā // 
Rārī ho ṛṣṭāntī vīţhalā sāṅgātī / ṛṇa hovonī bolaiti cidambarāce //
I went to Paṇḍharpūr to pray to Viṭṭhal and he told me of Cidambar. During the night Viṭṭhal came to me in a vision, he spoke to me in the form of Cidambar. ‘I’ve been reincarnated Cidambar’s form, please go to Karnāṭaka. Viṭṭhābāī says, ‘I left in happiness, I came close to the svāmī of Kudagoḷ’.


Why aren’t you compassionate Svāmī Brahmapūrṇā? You are considered the king of mercy. Day and night I run toward you svāmī. Why don’t you feel compassion towards me? Viṭṭhābāī’s end is nearing svāmī. Where have you gone Cidambar? (Avalīkar 1964:223 quoted in Shrotriya 1992:54).

In this age of darkness there is nothing greater than chanting the Name; yoga, sacrifice, oblation or obligation are unimportant. Avoid yoga and sacrifice. Chanting the Name will free the soul. Set aside nādabindu. Avoid the channels of the vital spirit.

331 There is a place called Kundgoḷ in the Dharward district of Karnataka, which is the home of the Shambuliṅga temple honouring Śiva and Pārvatī.

332 Svāmī brahmapūrṇā—a conjunction of svāmī (master, lord) brahma (divine substance; marvel, mystery, enigma) and pūrṇā (complete, entire; perfect, adept)—could translate as ‘Lord of complete mystery’ but it might also mean ‘Lord of Brahmapūr’.

333 Ṛṇa can mean ‘duty’, ‘obligation’ and ‘debt’. Traditionally a Brahman is said to owe three debts—studying the Vedas, sacrifice to and worship of the gods, and the procreation of a son—although benevolence to humanity and hospitality to guests are also considered ‘debts’ (Monier Williams 2008).
Do not search for Brahman, nor perform yogic postures. Do not seek a beehive in a cave, nor seek the cakras in yogic exercise. Do not see a lotus in your heart, nor seek the bhuvanī in yogic exercise.

Yama is Bhagavān’s chief devotee. Keep chanting the Name and you’ll make friends with him. (Āvalīkar 1964, quoted in Shrotriya 1992–93:54).

16. Sakhūbāī


Happy festival of lights; to invite Vanamālī into the house I draw rāngolī. Govind, Govind! (Refrain).

334 Nādabindu is formed of nāda (sound; reverberating sound; subtle, inarticulate sound) and bindu, the dot or nasal character over a word (anusvāra)—said to be of great mystical importance—and/or the central or focal point (Monier Williams 2008; Molesworth 1857; Singh 1991). Both nāda and bindu are manifestations of Śakti (Gupta 1972:100, v.22–24). In Kuṇḍalinī Yoga bindu, as nasal resonance, is the rise of prāṇic energy in the form of vibration. Singh states that ‘the energy of the bindu appears as a point of light in the middle of the eye-brows’ (1991:xiii). The bindu is transformed into nāda, the mystical resonance that extends from the summit of the head (nādabindusthāna) through the central channel of the body (Singh 1991:xiii). For further discussions on bindu see Avalon (1974), Singh (2004) and Krishnaraj (2001).

335 In Yoga idā (tubular vessel) is the channel of the vital spirit on the right side of the body, and piṅgalā is the channel on the left side of the body.

336 The use of the word āsanu suggests the physical spreading of the body and performance of yogic postures.

337 The reference to bees in a cave suggest the after-sounds of the mystical syllable (aum) that continue to reverberate in the skull or inner self (Beck 1995:112, 73). In yoga there are six cakras (wheels, circles, depressions) that form anatomical divisions of the body along a central axis connecting the trunk with the crown of the head. Interestingly, there is a Mīrā poem that refers to sitting in a cave in a yogic pose (see Hawley 2002:303).

338 Kuṇḍalinī ‘snake’ is the corporeal energy that lies coiled at the base of spine and which, awakened by yoga, rises up the central channel piercing each cakra until it reaches the crown of the head and gains blissful union with Śiva.

339 This means that one makes friends with Yama and so gains liberation.

340 There is only one composition in the SSG attributed to Sakhū (SSG 2:1396), despite the fact that Bhavalkar states there are no extant Sakhū compositions (1996:241). Bhavalkar provides a women’s folk song about Sakhū, which she memorized after hearing it from her mother: ‘On the bank of the Krṣṇa, in the town of Karhād there was a holy settlement called Brahmāpurī. An evil Brāhmaṇ lived there; What great fortune for his daughter-in-law, Sakhū!’ (1996:241, 252 n.7).

341 Vanamālī is an epithet for Krṣṇa meaning ‘the one who wears the garland of forest-flowers’.

342 Govind, Govind!
In my family my soul rejoices; moon [light] and sun [light] adorn my threshold; Govind, Govind!
Grinding the grist,⁴³⁴ Viṣṇu should arrive and purify my mind. Govind, Govind!
Rāvaṇa died, Sītā went home and Bibhīṣaṇa became king. Govind, Govind!⁴³⁴
Mārūti, the celibate student, was born from Anjana’s womb; baby Kṛṣṇa lay on Yasodā’s lap. Govind, Govind!⁴³⁴

The king of heaven came to the Candrabhāga in recognition of Puṇḍalīk’s faith; standing erect He waited. The bhakta Puṇḍalīk was doing his duty,⁴³⁶ he couldn’t be bothered with Vanamālī; thus, He appeared on the brick.

Dark-skinned Vanamālī was captivated by Puṇḍalīk’s devotion; he had seen Puṇḍalīk’s chaotic life with his own eyes.

Viṭṭhal is my friend; I will sing ovīś and shall go to the temple to see Hari.

Viṭṭhal is my family, [our] household-deity; Viṭṭhal’s feet are Sakhū’s heart’s desire.

(Varaṅgī pado, SSG 2, p.1396).

Janāī muktāī nesalāya reśāmī lugaḍī | rīgaṇāmārāya viḷḷēya xeḷḷōta phugāḍī 1/⁴³⁷
Pahilyā divasī nāmādeva āle | phugāḍī yā kheḷāta rangūna gele /1
Rahile na bhāna tālcyā dagaḍī | rīgaṇāmārāya viḷḷēya xeḷḷōta phugāḍī 2/
Dusuryā divasī āle tukobā | phugāḍicīyā phugāḍilā kheḷālā_alertāyā shēma /3
Fū bāi phū māñgya mūkā udhāji | rīgaṇāmārāya viḷḷēya xeḷḷōta phugāḍī 4/
Tisicyā divasī āle ālīyā ṭugumābhāi | phugāḍīchī kāy sāṅgū tvalāhī /5
Xeḷḷōta xeḷḷōta ḫaḷiyā yīgūḍa | rīgaṇāmārāya viḷḷēya xeḷḷōta phugāḍī 6/
Chōyā divasī Janāī-muktāī ālī | sakhū xeḷḷōta dhuṇā gele /6
Vidū nāmāchī tāājī vajīlī nāgārī | rīgaṇāmārāya viḷḷēya xeḷḷōta phugāḍī 8/
Janāī muktāī nesalāya reśāmī lugaḍī | rīgaṇāmārāya viḷḷēya xeḷḷōta phugāḍī 8/⁴³⁸

Janāī muktāī nesalāya reśāmī lugaḍī / ringānāmadhye viṭhobā khelato phugāḍī / dhrupada / ³⁴³⁸
Pahilyā divasī nāmādeva āle / phugāḍī yā khelāta rangūna gele /1
Rahile na bhāna tālcyā dagaḍī / ringānāmadhye viṭhobā khelato phugāḍī /2/
Dusuryā divasī āle tukobā / phugāḍicīyā phugāḍilā khelāli āliyā śobhā /3/
Fū bāi phū māñgya mūkā udhāji / ringānāmadhye viṭhobā khelato phugāḍī /4/
Tisicyā divasī ālīyā ṭugumābhāi / phugāḍicī kāy sāṅgū tvalāhī /5/
Xeḷḷōta xeḷḷōta ḫaḷiyā yīgūḍa / ringānāmadhye viṭhobā khelato phugāḍī /6/
Chōyā divasī Janāī-muktāī ālī / sakhū khelāta damūna geli /7/
Vīthū nāmācī tāājī vajīlī nāgārī / ringānāmadhye viṭhobā khelato phugāḍī /8/
Janāī muktāī nesalāya reśāmī lugaḍī / ringānāmadhye viṭhobā khelato phugāḍī /dhrupad /

⁴³² A Vārkarī housewife is meant to beautify the courtyard (aṅgana, caaka) with rāṅgoḷī (More 1998:209) and these designs are considered ‘vehicles of self-expression for a woman’ according to (Pawar 1998:xii).
⁴³³ The word māndīr (or mājīrī) refers to “cat’s eyes”: ‘the two loops or eyelets appended to the fixed post of a churning apparatus, and through which the churn staff descends’ (Molesworth 1857:643).
⁴³⁴ Bibhīṣaṇa or Bibhīṣaṇa was Rāvaṇa’s righteous younger brother who repudiated Rāvaṇa and joined Rama after his advice to Rāvaṇa to return Sītā to Rama was ignored.
⁴³⁵ Ajjāna was Mārūti/Hanuman’s mother (see Enthoven 1989:22; Lutgendorf 2007 and Vanamali 2010). The ‘circle’ could refer to either the hand-mill (gharaṭa) or the group of women who are gathered in a ‘circle’ and who are singing as they perform tasks like grinding.
⁴³⁶ The word balī connotes ‘strong’, ‘powerful; ‘sacrifice’, ‘oblation’ or ‘religious offering’ (Molesworth 1857:569; Tulpule 1999:484). In this context it refers to Puṇḍalīk performing his religious “sacrifice” and caring for his parents.
⁴³⁷ The song was sung by Caturabai Naravate (40) and Vatsalabai Sakhare (65), who were part of the Sant Ganga Maharaj dindī (no. 5/93) from Pokharnī (Parbhani district) on 20th June 2006 during the lunch break while the dindī travelled from Ālandī to Pune. There are two phugāḍīs attributed to Bāhīṇābī (Kolhākar 1926:125–126, v.589–90) and these include a dhrupad (refrain).
⁴³⁸ Moreover, a dhrupada indicates affiliation with a singing tradition states Callewaert (1989:56).
Janāī and Muktāī are wearing silky lugāḍīs, in the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.\(^{349}\)

The first day Nāmdev immersed himself in playing phugadī.
Lost in playing he didn’t realise there were stones beneath their feet.
In the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.

Janāī and Muktāī are wearing silky lugāḍīs, in the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.

The second day Tukobā came and graced the phugadī.
While playing he said ‘phu bai phu’.
In the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.

Janāī and Muktāī are wearing silky lugāḍīs, in the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.

On the third day Rakhumābāī came to play,
How can I describe how great the phugadī was?
While playing her bugāḍī\(^ {351} \) was lost.
In the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.

Janāī and Muktāī are wearing silky lugāḍīs, in the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.

On the fourth day Janī and Muktāī both came to play.
Sakhū tired while playing.
Viṭhū’s name was heard throughout the town.
In the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.

Janāī and Muktāī are wearing silky lugāḍīs, in the riṅgaṇa Iṭhobā plays phugadī.\(^ {352}\)

\(^{349}\) A lugāḍī is a nine-yard sārī (sāḍī) worn by women.

\(^{350}\) The village women sang ‘Iṭhobā’ rather than the more formal ‘Viṭhobā’. Phugadī is a dance, in which two or more people cross their arms, hold hands and spin or reel in a circle keeping time to the movements by puffing phu with the mouth (Molesworth 1857:554).

\(^{351}\) A bugāḍī is an ear ornament.

\(^{352}\) During a puja the deity is invoked and treated as a human guest. Various upacāra (offerings; of which there are sixteen) are presented to the image. In this verse Viṭhobā not only joins in the fun and plays phugadī but acts as the human guest (Personal communication, V.P. Kanitkar, 27th January 2011).
APPENDIX C:

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE BHAKTAVIJAYA BY MAHIPATI

1. Bhaktavijaya 21: Janabai

Homage to sacred Gaņeśa. Victory to the Dweller on the ocean of milk (kṣirasāgara),¹ who reclines on Śeṣa (ṣeṣaśayanā), who assumes the body (līlāvigrahī), the husband of Rukmiṇī (rukmiṇīramaṇā),² manifest in your own form (sagunasvarūpā), Ornament of your devotees (bhaktabhūṣaṇā), a treasure of virtue (guṇanidhānā), O Viṭṭhal (1).³ Victory to you who has taken infinite incarnations, who is the form of consciousness (caitanyarūpā), the home of compassion (karuṇālayā), protector of the gods (amarapāḷakā), Lord of Paṇḍharī who removes the illusions of your devotees (2). Victory! Victory to you who is all-pervading (vyāpakasarvā), the Protector of Gajendrā (gajendrārakṣaka), Lord of Heaven (vaikunṭha), none except you can comfort your own devotees (3). Victory! Victory to you Heart-mover (cittacāḷakā), Cloud of intelligence (caitanyaghanā), Supporter of your devotees (bhaktakaivārī), Demon-slayer (asūradamanā), Puṇḍalīk’s boon-granter (puṇḍalikavaradā), Rukmiṇī’s lover (rukmiṇīramaṇā), Life of the world (jagajīvana), Pāṇḍuraṅga (4). You are Brahma’s father,⁴ all-doing yet not acting, there is nowhere so small as an atom that is without you (5). Have mercy on me now [and] through [me] narrate the stories of your devotees. Apart from you, Lord of the world (jagannātha), I am friendless (6). The preceding chapter told the remarkable story of God’s servant Paramānand Jogā. His actions were very spirited; he was definitely a religious student (7). The famous Śiva devotee, Naraharī, was made to contemplate Him. Then Cakrapāṇī tormented Nāma and tested his mind (8).

One day when Paṇḍharī was filled with pilgrims, during the month of Kārtik, a girl⁵ suddenly arrived at the great door [of the temple] (9). She said to her parents, ‘I will remain here forever; I shall not return with you to your house now’ (10). Everyone who heard the girl’s words was surprised. They said, ‘being only seven years old how has she attained knowledge?’ (11). [Her] mother and father were greatly distressed but she would not listen to their words. When the Lord regards one with a compassionate eye, love grows within (12). Thus, seeing her resolve her elders were content. They left their daughter at the great door [of the temple] and returned to their own place (13). When Nāma beheld the girl compassion welled up within him. He said, ‘Who are you sitting here alone without your parents and in a strange

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¹ Janabai abhaṅga 262.3 refers to ‘oceans of milk’ (kṣirasāgara), see Appendix B.
² The term ramana used here and below means both ‘husband’ and ‘lover’ (Molesworth 1857:608; Monier-Williams 2008).
³ Janabai abhaṅgas 3, 78, 118, 124, 129 and 180 refer to Viṭthal, see Appendix B.
⁴ Mahipati uses the phrase viriñcicāpitā: viriñci refers to bramhā (Molesworth 1857:762; Monier Williams 2008) and pitā to ‘father’ (Tulpule 1999:445).
⁵ In Marathi the term kumarī connotes ‘an unmarried girl or daughter’ (Tulpule 1999:164) and kumārikā connotes ‘an unmarried girl, from ten to twelve years old: also a young virgin’ (Molesworth 1857:174). In Sanskrit the term kumārī connotes ‘a young girl, one from ten to twelve years old, maiden, daughter’ and ‘any virgin up to the age of sixteen or before menstruation has commenced’ (Monier Williams 2008).
place (14). What village is your father from? Tell me your name. What travails have your parents undergone to abandon you here? (15) The other responded, ‘My name is Janī. The Discus-Holder (cakrapāṇi) is my mother and father. I have no one except Him.’ (16) On hearing her words Nāma was filled with compassion. He held the child by the hand and led her to his own home (17). He told Goṇāī about the child lost among the pilgrims: ‘Without her parents she seems miserable; we must protect her’ (18). [Janī said] ‘During Kṛṣṇa’s descent (avatāra) there was a maid, Kubjā (19). ‘Without him there is no other parent for me. Similarly, I am Nāma’s only dāsī. There is nothing more for me’ (19). (20) Day after day her standing increased. Men and women asked her, ‘tell us who you really are’ (20). Janī answered them, ‘I am Nāma’s devoted servant who came on pilgrimage to Paṇḍharī and became absorbed in worshipping the Lord’ (21). While performing her household tasks she continuously recited the names of the Lord; at night she listened to kīrtans and would render obeisance [to god] (22).

A strange thing occurred one day while Nāmdev was asleep at home: five ghatiṅkās (23) of the night had passed and clouds covered the sky (23). A great wind loosened his hut and carried it off. When Rukmiṇī’s husband heard [about the incident] he seized his sudarśan disk (24). He said to it, ‘Go to Nāmdev’s place and spin awhile, I will follow you soon’ (25). The Viṣṇu devotee and family (26) were sleeping in the hut when Viṣṇu’s discus came and spun there rapidly (26). A colossal rainstorm raged on all sides but not a drop fell [on Nāma and his family], for when one of God’s servants participates in devotion calamity is averted (27). Thus, Rukmiṇī’s husband soon arrived and with his own hands he rebuilt the walls and then skilfully thatched the roof (28).

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6 The Marathi term paradeśī connotes ‘a foreigner’ (Molesworth 1857:488) or ‘refugee’ (Tulpule 1999:407), while paradeśa refers to ‘a foreign country’ (Berntsen 1982:84), ‘a foreign people or land’ (Tulpule 1999:462) and ‘a remote or foreign country’ (Molesworth 1857:488).

7 The term vadinī connotes ‘senior; elder; eldest’ (Tulpule 1999:620) or ‘an ancestor; a senior or an elder; an elderly person; a superior (in age, wisdom, dignity); applied, by way of eminence, to one’s father’ (Molesworth 1857:723).

8 The term mandir connotes ‘a house’ (Molesworth 1857:629) or ‘any waiting or abiding-place, habitation, dwelling, house, palace, or temple’ (Monier Williams 2008).


10 The verse reads:

कृष्णावतारिकुब्जाधासी || त्याज्ञानायामयायपोलसेमजसी || मीनामयाचीअनायदासी || नसेआणीकमजकाही ||

The Marathi term kubja dāsī tyājaivāna māyābāna nase majasī Imp nāmayācī ananya dāsī/ nase āṇīka maja kāhī/19/ Abbott and Godbole translate this as: ‘At the time of Krishna’s avatar-ship he had a maid by the name of Kubja (the cripple). She had now appeared as an avatar in this Kali Yuga. So she has come on pilgrimage to Paṇḍharī, and is considered the destroyer of all evil. It is unclear why Mahipati connects Kubjā and Janī but it is probably because they were both maidservants (see Pauwels 2008:332; Novetzke 2008:69) who had an intimate relationship with God. Moreover, they are both regarded as being liberated—Kubjā by Kṛṣṇa and Janī by Nāmdev (whom Mahipati regards as an avatar of Uddhava in BJV 1.8)—and are both revered: Janī at the temple at Gopalpur (Poitevin and Rainkar 1996:69, Ill 11–17) and Kubjā in the Braj region (Pauwels 2008:317–18). Furthermore, both Kubjā and Janī are unattached and unprotected, and might therefore be considered sexually ‘available’—like Kānhopātrā—and so might seek God as a ‘Protector’. My thanks to Kasturi Dadhe for her help with this and later verses (Personal communication, 16th April 2013).

11 A ghatikā is a measure of time equivalent to twenty-four minutes (Tulpule 1999:215).

12 The sudarśan cakra is the discus like weapon used by Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa and is considered the destroyer of all evil.

13 The term kutumbha refers to a ‘family or household; the mistress of a family or of the house; a wife generally’ (Molesworth 1857:167).

14 Novetzke regards this story as indicating that ‘Nāmdev’s’ memory is intertwined with that of Janabai’ (2008:69ff).
Having heard the story astute listeners might say, ‘If the Holder of the sāraṅga [Kṛṣṇa] came and thatched the roof of Nāma’s house then why did he not make the hut more attractive?’ (29) But the Lord of fortune (śrīpatī) does not allow his servants to become entangled in their domestic life (saṃsāra, sansār), for if he gave them great wealth it would hinder their indifference to worldly life (30). Duryodhana was the enemy of the Pāṇḍavas and he constantly harassed them. But when trouble befell them the Life of the world would run to their aid himself (31). He said, ‘I should keep them safe even if they will not remember me inwardly’. Yet the Lord will not let his servants drown in the ocean of worldly existence (32). ‘If I gave my devotees an excellent house then they would cease to worship me inwardly’. Therefore the Holder of the sāraṅga [only] gave Nāma a roof (33). In case cooked food harms her child a mother gives him a small mouthful, similarly the Dweller in the world (jagannivāsa) does not give his devotees unalloyed wealth (34). If plants are given too much water they will turn yellow, thus the gardener gives a plant only as much water as necessary (35). The Dweller in the world gives his devotees sufficient food and clothes for their bodies; by various means he keeps their minds continually indifferent to earthly things (36).

Returning to the previous account: the Life of the world came, gathered straw and thatched Nāma’s roof himself (37). When His devotee awoke he looked outside and saw a yellow garment shining with the intensity of lightning (38). Then he immediately went outside and grasped His feet with love and said, ‘God, what are you doing coming here at night?’ (39) The Life of the world replied, ‘a terrible storm raged and your hut came loose and I have re-thatched it (40). You have abandoned your worldly life (saṃsāra) and occupation (vṛttī) and lovingly devoted yourself to worshipping me. Consequently, I—the Husband of Śrī—repaired the walls of your hut straightaway (41). If I had not come immediately, good people would have become sick due to the great calamity. Goṇāī would have become very angry and spoken to me severely (42). Thus, my esteemed devotee I came running to your aid during the night’. When Goṇāī heard His words she immediately fell at His feet (43). While Nāma told Him his secrets the Lord of the Universe remained there.

Janī came at once and began to massage God’s back (44) saying, ‘Ocean of mercy (kṛpāsāgara), Charmer (manamohana), House of compassion (karuṇālaya), Life of the world (jagajīvana), You yourself have protected us in numerous ways’ (45). Then The Lord of the senses (hṛṣīkeśa) said to Nāma, ‘You must be hungry. Quickly get up and let us take a meal together’ (46). Then Goṇāī quickly brought the savoury food served on a platter and they all sat down together to eat (47). Govind, Viṭṭhal,

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16 The term sāraṅga refers to Kṛṣṇa’s bow, which is known for its strength (Bryant 2007:282 n.41).
17 The epithet Śrīpaṇi connotes ‘lord of fortune; a king, a prince’ (Monier Williams 2008) and ‘the lord or husband of Śrī’ (Molesworth 1857:801), and refers to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.
18 Mahiṣpati highlights indifference (udāsa), as in verse 36, as what is important is worshipping God inwardly.
19 The Marathi verb nirmiṇẽ means ‘to create; to cause, produce, effect, make’ (Molesworth 1857:470) and ‘to create, to build up’ (Tulpule 1999:386). The Sanskrit term nirmā connotes ‘to build, make out of, form, fabricate, produce, create’ while nirmāṇa connotes ‘forming, making, creating, creation, building, composition, work’ (Monier Williams 2008).
20 The term used is jīvana that connotes ‘living, existing, subsisting; any means of life, immediate or remote, any provision or food, or any profession or business; water’ (Molesworth 1857:316), ‘life; water; nourishment’ (Tulpule 1999:261) or ‘vivifying; giving life; enlivening’ (Monier Williams 2008).
21 The term pītāmbara refers to the yellow (pītā) garment (ambara)—a dhotar—worn by Kṛṣṇa and Viṭṭhal/Viṭhobā.
23 Janābāī abhanga 43.1 refers to manamohana, see Appendix B.
24 Janābāī abhanga 130.1 refers to hṛṣīkeśi as helping Janī collect water, see Appendix B.
Närāyaṇ and Mahādev were the names of Nāmdev’s four sons and the Life of the world (jagajīvana) sat with them to eat (48).25 Goṇāḍ and Rājāi sat near Nāma, the devotee whom He placed beside Him when they sat down to eat: a marvel (49). Witnessing this Janī felt distressed in her heart and said, ‘Compassionate to the lowly (dinadayāla), Discus-Holder (cakrapāṇī), why have you abandoned me (50)?26 You accepted everyone when you all sat down to eat but I am inferior, an outsider,27 so Lord of the senses you abandoned me (51).28 As the cook discards the grit from the rice or the leather whip threshes the sugarcane to remove the straw (52) so heartlessly you turn your back on me and fail to regard me with compassion’. The servant Janī became distressed because the First among men (jagajīthi) was not compassionate towards her (53). Hearing her accusation the Life of the world said to Nāma, ‘this food gives me no pleasure now. What might be the cause?’ (54). The other one [Nāma] replied, ‘Discus-Holder, Janī is outside in distress; hearing her cries your mind is agitated (55).29 Like when a calf cries loudly and the cow goes off her feed; or when a child wails in its cradle [and] the mother loses her appetite (56); or when a bird quietly gathering grain remembers her young; or when a doe cannot see her fawn for a moment and goes off her feed (57); or when wealth is beyond the grasp of a greedy person and he finds no pleasure in sweetmeats: thus, because Janī is discontent you are unable to relish your food’ (58). God withdrew his hand [from the food] so everyone else also stopped eating. Observing this Rājāi was heartened (59). The Discus-Holder washed his hands and sat calmly on a straw stool. Goṇāḍ called Janī and gave her the dish with [Viṭṭhal’s] leavings (60).30 Brahma and all the other gods (brahmādikā) never attained the favour (prasāda)31 they desired but Janī attained it unexpectedly due to her association with Nāma (61).32 Next [Janī] immediately covered the desired dish and waited in her hut calling, ‘First among men run to my aid now’ (62). Nāma and the Holder of the sāraṇga [Viṭṭhal] reclined on one bed; the clever one [Nāma] was comatose,33 the World-saviour (jagaduddhāra)34 arose (63). Quietly the Life

25 Janābāī abhaṅga 471 mentions various family members, see Appendix B. This is an interesting verse as it connotes commensality and promotes equality. Novetzke states that it associates bhakti with food sharing (2008:70; see Aklujkar 1992:104ff). Traditionally, the wife or daughter-in-law would have served the food to the men first and describes the family sitting around a ‘board’ and would have eaten [the husband’s leavings] afterwards. Mahīpati describes the family sitting around a ‘board’ and sharing the meal with God! No wonder he described it as navālāī; ‘a wonderful or uncommon thing, a marvel’ (Molesworth 1857:452). See Kosambi 1998 and Dabre 1998 for more on women in the home. Technically nobody can eat a meal until the family god(s) have been offered ceremonial food (nāivedya) so Mahīpati may be expanding on this notion (see Elkunchwar 1998:192).

26 Janābāī abhaṅga 48 refers to Janī feeling abandoned by God, see Appendix B.

27 See note 6 (above).

28 My translation of this verse differs slightly from Abbott and Godbole: ‘Thou hast placed all beside Thee and hast seated Thyself to eat. O Hrishikeshi (Lord of the heart), I am over very low birth, therefore Thou hast abandoned me as one without a protector’ (1996:342).

29 Janābāī abhaṅga 67.2 refers to Janī standing outside the door, see Appendix B.

30 The term ucchista refers to the ‘leavings, fragments, remainder (especially of a sacrifice or of food)’ (Monier Williams 2008) and ‘leavings considered as prasāda’ (Tulpule 1999:297).

31 The term prasāda connotes ‘favor, graciousness, propitiousness; anything (a fruit, flower, rice) given by an idol, a Guru, a saint, as a blessing or mark of favour; Food etc. presented to an idol or a holy person to be distributed, thus honored, among worshipers; the sweetmeats and fruits distributed among the audience at the conclusion of a kathā or a Purāṇa reading; the rice etc. which are stuck upon an idol when it is consulted; Lit. cleanliness, clearness, brightness [but] fig. mental sanctity or purity’ (Molesworth 1857:541).

32 Significantly, Mahīpati points out that Janī gains access to Viṭṭhal due to her association with Nāmdev according to Novetzke (2008:70).


34 The term jagaduddhāra—the text has the word jagadoddhāra but this appears to be an error—can also be translated as ‘salvation of the world’ (Molesworth 1857:301; Monier Williams 2008).
of the world went to Janī and in a humble voice said, ‘I am hungry therefore I have come to you (64). I was eating with Nāma but had not invited you there. Therefore, I immediately withdrew my hand and left the food’ (65). Janī replied, ‘Discus-Holder, Ocean of compassion (kṛpāsāgara), Rukmiṇī’s husband (rukmiṇīvarā) I have nothing to give in my house except pure loving faith (66). Goṅāī brought the leavings and gave them to me but I feel apprehensive about giving it to you Discus-Holder’ (67).

Rukmiṇī’s husband (rukmiṇīkānta) replied to her, ‘Bring and give it to me quickly. One should not be reluctant to serve me that which is mine (68). Because I was eating I forgot to appreciate the food [enough]. So I’m still thinking about it. Immediately bring that food back to me’ (69). Hearing the words spoken with love you listeners will doubt unnecessarily and will say, ‘why did the First among men go hungry only to later eat his leavings?’ (70) It was so that Janī could fulfil her objective as she had no food to give Him, thus the Life of the world asked to eat his leavings (71). Then Nāma’s maid seated the Lord of the senses and immediately brought the leavings and placed them before Him (72). With Janī sitting beside him the Discus-Holder began to eat. When Mother Rukmiṇī heard this she became perplexed mentally (73). He, who manifests himself on the ocean of milk, whose flag is the eagle, who dwells in heaven; He is eating his leavings accompanied by his servant (74). He—of whom the Vedas and Śāstras continually sing, upon whom the Lord of Kailāś [Śiva]18 meditates—He sits alone and lovingly eats Nāma’s leavings (75). When sacrifices are offered He will not accept the oblation [thrown into the fire]. He, the Life of the world, then said to Janī, ‘I have eaten and am sated’ (76). He then immediately washed his hands and lay down to sleep. Then Goṅāī came outside and said to Nāmdev (77), ‘While you were sleeping God arose, went to Janī’s dwelling and loving ate his own leavings’ (78). Viṣṇu’s servant replied, ‘O mother, the Discus-Holder is fond of devotees. [If anyone] has a pure heart He rushes there to their aid’ (79). He does not enquire about caste or family nor name adverse times and seasons. Seeing [a person’s] faith, the Compassionate to the lowly (dīnadayāḷ) rushes to their aid immediately (80). The
Bhil woman plucked the fruit and first tasted it. Recognising her love the First among men lovingly accepted it (81). Thus recognising Janī’s devotion He ate his own leavings. Gaṇāā what is there to be wondered at? Shall I explain it to you [further] (82)? Having heard this conversation the Life of the world came and lovingly lay down beside Nāma on the same mat (83). Only one watch of the night remained. The Holder of the sāraṅga came and sitting on Janī’s bed told her to arise immediately (84). ‘It is getting late Janābāī, arise at once and do your grinding, I have cleaned the hand-mill (jātē) and am waiting for you’ (85). The Lord of the world put his hand under her neck and lifted her up. Rukmini’s husband then covered her head with the end of her sari (86). He tied up her hair and straightaway seated Janī facing him and put the basket of grain nearby (87). Then Rukmini’s husband said, ‘I will turn the hand-mill truly. You hold [the handle] in your hand, merely pretending [to grind], and lovingly sing songs’ (88). While the Lord of the senses spoke Janī the maid awoke. With love and much delight she began singing verses (oviš) about the sants (89). ‘Nivṛtti, Sopān and Jāneśvar are my most supreme (parātpara) kin. It is through their favour that the Bow-Holder shows me mercy (90). The servant of Viṣṇu [Nāma] is my father, Rajābāī [Rājāī] is my beloved mother, Gorā the potter is my friend (sakhā), Kabīr is my paternal uncle (culatā), and Sāvātā my brother (91). They performed improbable acts. Friends, words fail me. They attached the Disc-Holder to them and became sated with the vivifying bliss of the Self (svānanda) (92). Jāneśvar, harassed by the Brahmins of Paṭīṇā, did the impossible: he

40 Šabarī/Shabari was a tribal woman who is said to have offered Rāma fruit she had pre-tasted for sweetness thus violating the fruit’s purity but Rāma accepted the gift as it was offered with love. For a discussion of the story see Lutgendorf (2001) and Horstmann (2003:40–41, 82). Doniger (2010:569), Futehally (1994:135 n.29) and Martin (1999:29) all refer to a pad by Mirābāī—translated by Hawley and Juergensmeyer (1988:137)—that relates the story and condemns the caste system. Mahīpati also refers to the Bhīl woman offering Rāma bor (jujube) fruit in the Bhaktafilâmṛta 23.149 (Abbott 1927:221) and 30.132 (Abbott 1996:118).

41 The term prahar connotes ‘a watch; a period of three hours’ (Tulpule 1999:440).

42 Janābāī abhaṅga 129 refers to the first watch of the night and Viṭṭhal visiting Janī, see Appendix B.

43 The term padar refers to the ‘end of [a] sari or dhoti’ (Berntsen 1982:83), ‘the end of a garment’ (Tulpule 1999:404), ‘an end of a cloth; an ornamental border’ (Molesworth 1857:488).

44 Mahīpati uses the verb sāvarane/ sāvarane, which connotes ‘to gather up or together closely, compactly, into narrow compass or the suitable order’ (Molesworth 1857:847), ‘to catch, take in hand’ (Berntsen 1982:159), ‘to control’ (Tulpule 1999:743) while Janābāī abhaṅga 85 refers to God forming a braid/plait (veṇī). Abbott and Godbole’s translation states, ‘Then he plaited her hair...’ (1996:345). Janābāī abhaṅgas 83 and 85 refer to God helping Janī with her hair, but abhaṅga 85 refers to plaiting hair, see Appendix B.

45 The hand-mill might have been between Janī and Viṭṭhal as numerous depictions illustrate, for example the cover illustration and illustration 12 in Poitevin and Rairkar (1996).

46 This could be a reference to Janābāī abhaṅga 225 which says ‘My songs on the grindmill for grinding are really for Govind’ or abhaṅga 227 which says ‘The millstone of detachment rotates with pride, therefore hold onto God as much as the handle’, see Appendix B.

47 The term soyarā connotes ‘a relative’ (Tulpule 1999:777), a ‘relative my marriage’ (Berntsen 1982:162) or ‘a connection, one related by marriage; a gallant or man kept by a dancing girl, slave-girl, or other prostitute; a kinsman or –woman’ (Molesworth 1857:868).

48 Abbott and Godbole’s translation reads: ‘Gora the potter is my dearest uncle, and Kabir and Savata are my brothers’ (1996:346).

49 Janābāī abhaṅga 172 mentions a number of these sants, see Appendix B.

50 Abbott and Godbole translate this as ‘He did seemingly impossible things. Dear Friends, how can I describe them all?’ (1996:346). The term sājanī connotes ‘a mistress, a beloved woman; a woman’s confidante or female companion’ (Molesworth 1857:841), a ‘woman friend’ (Tulpule 1999:731), a female ‘friend, lover’ (Berntsen 1982:157).

51 Abbott and Godbole’s translation reads: ‘They made the Holder of the disk (Krishna) subject to them, and became satisfied with the water of supreme spiritual joy’ (1996:346). The term jīvana connotes ‘living, existing, subsisting; any means of life, immediate or remote, any provision or food, or any profession or business: also the pabulum or aliment of anything; water; life-giving’ (Molesworth 1857:316), ‘life; water; nourishment’ (Tulpule 1999:261),
made a buffalo recite the limitless Vedas with its own mouth (93). Gorā the potter—Your devotee—absorbed in meditating upon the Husband of Rukmini, trampled his child into the mud as he was oblivious [to what he was doing] (94). As he had broken his oath to Viṭṭhobā he cut off his hands. While hearing Nāmdev’s exposition (kathā) the Life of the world responded to his friend (95). [While the crowd were] clapping and shouting his hands burst forth,52 and suddenly a child came crawling [out of the crowd]. The event seems unlikely and one regards it with astonishment (96).53 Vanamāḷī54 went to meet his devotee Sāvātā, who immediately split open his stomach and hid Him in his lotus-heart (97). Hari, who contains infinite universes, concealed himself within him [Sāvātā]. Nāmdev came and quickly drew himself outside (98).55 Brother Kabīr, a foreigner, lives far away in Varanasi. The Lord of the senses sat beside his loom and did his weav (99).56 On the night of Śiva (śivarātri) Nāma sat cross-legged and performed a religious discourse (harikīrtan) for Nāganāth.57 Nine hundred thousand flags suddenly came down from heaven (100). Pleased with [his devotee] the inhabitant of Śiva’s paradise (kailāsavāsī) turned the temple to the west for him.58 Such deeds are unintelligible to the Vedas and Śāstras’ (101). Thus, while pulling the hand-mill she sang verses pleasing to the heart. Listening to her the Lord of Paṇḍharī (paṇḍharīnāth) joyfully nodded his head (102).

When Goṇāī heard singing she hurried to the yard and asked Janī, ‘Whom else did you ask here to [help you] grind (103)? Did you bring a charwoman (molakarīṇa)59 or a friend (jāriṇa)60 to your place?’ The other [Janī] spoke not a word and stayed silent (104). Then Goṇāī, with anger in her heart, took a cane and entered Janī’s hut saying, ‘With whom have you been speaking (105)? Our domestic affairs (sanssāra, sanssāra) are in a poor state.51 What charwoman did you bring here? You give her grain for grinding, continually stealing it from us’ (106). She struck Janī with the cane but it struck God’s head [instead]. [He] said, ‘My name is Viṭṭhāį. I come to help [Janī] with the grinding’ (107).62 When Nāma heard this statement he understood its significance. He said to his mother, ‘You caused pain to the Life of

52 The text reads टाळयावाजकपुतलेहात।।
54 The term vanamāḷa means ‘wearing a garland of forest flowers’ and is an epithet for Kṛṣṇa (Monier Williams 2008).
57 The term mola connotes ‘price or rate; wages of labour, hire, fare’ (Molesworth 1857:671) while molakarīṇa means ‘maidservant’ (Bertens 1982:122) and molārīṇa connotes a ‘char-woman, job-woman, or corn-grinding woman; a labouring woman in general’ (Molesworth 1857:671).
59 Abbott and Godbole (1996:347) add ‘and we have not enough flour in the house’ to this phrase.
60 Janābāī abhangas 48.4, 71.1, 83.1, 199.4 refer to Viṭṭhābāį and abhangas 42.4, 59, 118, 121, 204, 225, 226, 227 and 262 refer to grinding, see Appendix B.
which denotes ‘a pleasant rest or sleep’ (Monier Williams 2008). Abbott and Godbole translate the term as ‘easy bed’ whose sight cools the heart and eyes’ (1996:347).

The delicate (sakumāra), dark-complexioned Supreme Reality whose sight cools my eyes; He, Rukminī’s husband, the Dark-blue cloud, shows compassion to Janī (112). Here the handle of existence rotates the hand-mill of indifference. She fed the mill with the grist of accumulated deeds and ground it with love (113). That which had appeared as name and form [individuality] she ground in the mill. Uniting the invisible and visible Janī sat there unconcerned (114). Then the Discus-Holder immediately filled a basket with flour and put it aside. A little of the night remained so He reclined on a bed of bliss (115). While the Life of the world was speaking to Janī with love He fell asleep. As dawn [Varuna] appeared in the east (116) Nāma’s maid came to God [and said], ‘Arise. The temple priests will come for sight [of you] and will not see you there (117). If the kākaṭāraṇī (72) is not performed there will

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63 Abbott and Godbole add ‘you did not know this’ to this phrase (1996:347).
64 The text reads: maga paratoni āśrama pāñāti // Abbott and Godbole translate this as ‘From there she then came back to her home’ (1996:347). The term paratane means ‘to turn to the other side; to shift, to cause to change places; to change, alter, reverse; to return, give back, send back’ (Molesworth 1857:488). The term āśrama connotes ‘a hermitage; religious organization; stage of life’ (Berntsen 1982:10) or ‘the householder state’ (Tulpule 1999:73). However, the term āśraya connotes ‘an asylum, a refuge, a place of protection or security; shelter, protection, defence, cover; support or sustentation…’ (Molesworth 1857:76) and the verb āśrayane connotes ‘to take shelter in; to take refuge with; to resort to’ (Tulpule 1999:73). The verb pāṭane means ‘to arrive; to reach; to obtain’ (Tulpule 1999:430) or ‘to confide in or rely upon’ (Molesworth 1857:556). Consequently, one could interpret the phrase to suggest that Goṇāḥ returned home and confessed her wrongdoing.
65 The text reads: jaṭalotayā sansārāyāgoṣṭi // Abbott and Godbole translate this as ‘accursed be my worldly thoughts’ (1996:347). The verb jalane means ‘to burn; to be kindled, to be on fire; to be inflamed (with anger, lust)’ (Molesworth 1857:311). The term sansār refers to ‘practical life and its responsibilities, domestic affairs; temporal world, life in this world; household’ (Berntsen 1982:155) and ‘the married life’ (Tulpule 1999:217). The term goṣṭi connotes ‘story, tale, apologue; word, syllable, utterance, sound; matter, affair; case, condition, circumstances’ (Molesworth 1857:248) and ‘incident; conversation, dialogue’ (Tulpule 1999:211).
66 The text reads: manonī kāṣṭha hotase // Abbott and Godbole translate this as ‘Thus speaking she became very repentant’ (1996:347). The term kāṣṭha connotes ‘trouble’ (Tulpule 1999:38), ‘agony’ (Tulpule 1999:45), ‘bodily exertion, labor, toil, pains, endeavors; the sensation of fatigue or weariness resulting; pain or inquietude’ (Molesworth 1857:145). The verb kāṣṭha hone connotes ‘to be in distress’ (Berntsen 1982:22) and kāṣṭane ‘to suffer’ (Tulpule 1999:139) or ‘to be fatigued or harassed (by toilsome exertion): to be distressed or vexed (mentally): to suffer much pain or affliction or trouble’ (Molesworth 1857:145).
67 The text reads: pahāṇānivattimāhodole// Abbott and Godbole translate this phrase as ‘whose sight cools the heart and eyes’ (1996:347).
be an outcry in the town’. Hearing this, the Lord of the world hastily went to the temple (118). In his haste the Life of the world was unaware of what he was doing. He forgot his woollen shawl (sakalāda) and threw on Janī’s patched quilt (119). And the Lord of the world forgot the beautiful jewel-pendant threaded onto a single-stringed necklace (ekāvālī) as hurried to his temple (120). The door opened [and] his devotees came to see and worship Him. [They saw] the Life of the world standing on the brick draped with a patched quilt (121). All those who saw him were amazed. ‘From where did God bring the patched quilt? [What] evildoer has laid a hand on [His] sapphire? We are completely in the dark (122). One woman said, ‘He is a great trickster. He feels great affection for His devotees. He forbids ritualistic action and shows the way to the final end (siddhānta)’ (123). Another woman said, ‘Life of the world, Ornament to your devotees, Rukmiṇī’s Husband, Dweller on the sea of milk, Recliner on Śeṣa, this patched quilt does not become you’ (124). Yet another woman said, ‘One can infer that the maid Janī is very fickle: she must have beguiled the Discus-Holder and enticed Him’ (125). Another woman declared, ‘Just as Kubjā the maid is described in the holy Bhāgavata Purāṇa so are Janī’s own deeds [here described]; let these deeds be known to you all’ (126). A different woman said, ‘Go and tell Nāma to restrain his maid Janī [for] she has confused the Bow-Holder and made Him obedient to her’ (127). Thus, in different ways all the people reasoned in their own minds. A priest quickly went near [the image], removed the patched quilt and examined [the image] (128). He saw that the pendant and necklace were not upon His lotus-heart and said, ‘Perhaps generous Vanamāḷī has given them to someone?’ They made humorous remarks saying that Janī had done a clever thing in offering God the patched quilt and taking the pendant and necklace (130). To illustrate: it is as if one offered god (naivedya) some buttermilk, begged for His favour and brought back some butter; or one gave God some water from an earthenware jar and brought back nectar (131); or one gave the jeweller hailstones (gārā) and exchanged them for diamonds or as if one offered Rukmiṇī’s husband black eyeliner (arījana) and took home his silk

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73 The jewel (ratna)-pendant (padaka) to which Mahīpati refers is probably the kaustubha jewel.
74 The phrase reads कवादू उघङ्धि निषा ब्हक्ता जाना दार्शनाऐ ले पीजाग्ना // Abbott and Godbole translate this as ‘As the door was opened His bhaktas came to see and worship Him, bringing the materials for worship’ (1996:348).
75 The verse reads देवाणिफलियोक्तत्वकल्ल // देवाणिफलियोक्तत्वकल्ल // चेदकहत्तामालनीठ।। नक्कौरप्रामासी ||१२२।। कवादू उघङ्धि निषा ब्हक्ता जाना दार्शनाऐ ले पीजाग्ना // Abbott and Godbole translate this as ‘All who saw Him thus were astonished. They made, “He Who is dark-blue-complexioned, like the leaves of the tamal tree, has done a very strange thing. Whose blanket could He have brought? We have no idea whatever”’ (1996:348). The term cetakī refers to one ‘that practises sorcery or witchcraft; a sorcerer, wizard, sorceress, witch; [one] that devises or plots mischief’ (Molesworth 1857:290) and I have translated this as ‘evildoer’.
76 The use of एकहम्नलिती in the verse indicates that the speaker in this verse and in verses 124–127 are female, a distinction Abbott and Godbole fail to make (1996:348ff). The presence of a female speaker indicates that women are familiar with different aspects of religion and the stories relating to bhakti and are able to articulate them in public within a mixed gender group.
77 The term nāṭakī connotes ‘trickster; clever at acting’ (Tulpule 1999:368) but Abbott and Godbole translate it as ‘mimic’ (1996:123).
78 Mahīpati seems to regard his text, the Bhāktavijaya, as comparable to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Kubjā is acknowledged in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa so Mahīpati is acknowledging Janī in the Bhāktavijaya (Personal communication, Kasturi Dadhe, May 2013).
79 Abbott and Godbole translate gārā as ‘crystals’ (1996:349). Tulpule (1999:201), Berntsen (1982:36) and Molesworth (1857:233) denote gārā as ‘hailstone’ or ‘flint’ but Molesworth also suggests that it is ‘a term for gems and jewels, in enumerating the things which run away with money’ (1857:233).
garment (pāṭoḷā) (132); or as if one offered the milkweed’s [poisonous] (arkī) stalk to gratify Māruṭī,\(^81\) begged for the favour of nectar-like (amṛta) fruit and took the favour (133).\(^82\) Likewise, in offering her patched quilt she gave Vanamāḷī pleasure. [She] has removed the pendant on the necklace to which the nine gems are joined (134). The priests said, ‘What shall we do? There’s no one to blame. The locks being secured how did the Lord of Paṇḍharī leave? We do not understand’ (135). A woman said, ‘Let’s go to Nāma’s house straightaway, immediately call the maid Janī and question her’ (136).\(^83\) With this thought in their minds they rushed over [to Nāma’s house] and said to Janī, ‘Rukmiṇī’s Lord is taken with you (137). We do not know how you have bewitched him. He dislikes our worship and homage. By some trick or other you have beguiled the Life of the world (138). The Dark-blue cloud is enamoured with you and our good deeds are all lost. Last night the Compassionate to the lowly came to you (139). You took His pendant and necklace and gave him your patched quilt. Bring and give it [to us] at once or we will punish you’ (140). Hearing these words she instantly avowed, ‘If I have taken the pendant then may my eyes burst’ (141). As they rummaged around they found the necklace among the clothing and said, ‘She must be impaled on an iron spike immediately (142)! Evidently she has stolen the ornament of Supreme Brahman, the Eagle-banned (gāruḍadhvaja), today. Therefore she must be punished as a matter of course’ all the Brahmins stated (143). Then Janī was promptly seized and lead to the edge of the Candrabhāga river. There she brought the First among men to mind and begged for mercy (144). Saying, ‘Purifier and restorer of the fallen (patitapāvana),\(^84\) Bow-Holder, Friend of the friendless (anāthanāthā), Rukmiṇī’s Husband, Loving to his devotees (bhaktavatsala), Ocean of mercy, Saviour of the meek (dinodvāra),\(^85\) Pāṇḍurāṅga (145).\(^86\) I am a refugee (paradesī), in want of a protector (anātha),\(^87\) and wretched (dīna). Who is there to rush to my aid apart from you?’ Hearing Janī’s affecting words the Life of the world came to her aid (146). The iron spike had been driven into the ground,\(^88\) but suddenly it turned into water. Seeing such a miracle all the people were astonished (147). The priests were perplexed and said, ‘Blessed is Janī’s devotion, for when she recalled God, Rukmiṇī’s husband came to her aid’ (148). All the devotees gathered in a circle, cheering (jayajayakāra) and clapping, saying ‘Vanamāḷī immediately rushes to the aid of his servants when they fall into trouble’ (149).

A strange thing happened one day. The maid Janī was sitting in her hut, composing poetry in her mind to the Discus-Holder (150).\(^89\) Then, what did Discus-Holder do? The Discus-Holder took pen and

\(^81\) Māruṭī ‘Son of the Wind’ is a Marathi epithet for the monkey deity Hanumān (Lutgendorf 2007:10, 24, 73).

\(^82\) The verse reads:

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\text{अकोंचेदांडेवाहोननिæचता।। ĤसÛनकेलामािæती।। अमृतफळɅमागोǓनĤीती।। तयापासोǓनघेतलȣं।।}
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Abbott and Godbole’s translation states: ‘or as if one should offer fruit of the rui to Maruti to please him, and take from him nectar fruit’ (1996:349).

\(^83\) Abbott and Godbole do not distinguish the speaker as female (1996:349–50), see note 76 above.

\(^84\) This epithet appears in Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 7.1, see Appendix B.

\(^85\) This epithet appears in Goṇāī abhaṅga 1286.2, see Appendix B.

\(^86\) This epithet appears in Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 4.1, see Appendix B.

\(^87\) This epithet appears in Janābāī abhaṅgas 48.2, 77.2, 78.4, 82.3, 222.6 and Goṇāī abhaṅga 1267.3; see Appendix B.

\(^88\) The term anātha also connotes ‘destitute’ (Bernsten 1982:3), ‘orphaned’ (Tulpule 1999:459), ‘forlorn; friendless’ (Molesworth 1857:27) and ‘helpless, poor’ (Monier-Williams 2008).

\(^89\) The iron (loha) stake (suḷa) was used to impale criminals (Tulpule 1999:766).

\(^90\) The text refers to अथवातीस अथवास्ती: aṭha connotes ‘eight’ and viṭha or vitasti means ‘span’ (Tulpule 1999:667; Molesworth 1857:788) or ‘measure of length: defined either as a long span between the extended thumb and little finger or as the distance between the wrist and the tip of the fingers and said to be 12 aṅgulas (breadth of a finger) or
ink, and as Janī’s poetry fell upon His ears He wrote it down with His own hands (151). You will say, ‘How could words from Nāma’s house reach his ears while the Discus-Holder was seated in the temple? This seems doubtful in our minds’ (152). But the Pervader of the universe (viśvavyāpaka), the Life of the world, Witness to the intents of the heart (antararasākṣi), Cloud of intelligence, who knows his devotees’ minds, He is omniscient (153). Draupādi was harassed by Duḥśāsan. In Hastanāpur she thought about Kṛṣṇa. How could He hear her in Dvārakā? Yet he rushed to her aid (154). When Gajendrā pleaded movingly then he was heard in heaven (vaikunṭha). Similarly the First among men, through his inner eye (jñānadrṣṭi), heard Janī’s words immediately (155). Only the Lord of Paṇḍhārī understands his devotees’ pleas, so listeners never should be doubtful (156). Then, Rukmini’s Lord said to Himself, ‘I find Janī’s verses pleasing’. Therefore, He took up a pen and sat writing in person (157). Once Jānēśvar came to pay his respects (namaskāra). Seeing him the Bow-Holder remembered what He was doing (158). So, Govind hid away His ink, pen and paper. Brahman (saccidānanda), the Root of joy (ānandakanda) created a marvellous diversion (159). Jānēdev came to Him and put his head on His lotus-feet, saying ‘All alone Vanamāḷī, what are You writing (160)?’ Hearing this Pāṇḍurāṅga replied, ‘I am writing down Janī’s verses (abhaṅgas)’. As Śrīraṅga [Viṭṭhal] spoke, Jānēdev laughed. He said, ‘Victory! Victory to Rukmini’s Husband (ramana) and Lotus-Lord (kamalāpati), Janī has complained about You [but] You are writing about this in a book with your own hands, which is surprising (162)! Fords (tīrthas), vows, donations, austerities, speaking the truth (satya), even though you write about this with your own hands and speak about it with your own mouth it is not right for anyone with a little wisdom (163).’

Moreover, Vanamāḷī you must have committed numerous deeds all over the world yet one must never write them down (164). Your deeds (caritra) Lord of Rukmini are written by Sarasvatī.92 The Vedas and Śāstras extol your attributes, the Purāṇas sing the praises of your heroic deeds (pavāḍā);93 Vyāsa, Vālmika and the other great poets extolled You before attaining their position94 and if you write down Janī’s verses (pada) then the poets will laugh at you’ (166). Hearing him say this, the Cloud Dark-Blue body (ghananīḷakāya) replied, ‘Janī’s words are filled with love and I find her compositions lively (167).’ Truly, as they fell upon my ears I sat down to write them but seeing you suddenly I felt apprehensive (168). So hurriedly I hid the paper, ink and pen but I do not understand at all what gave me away?’ (169) Jānēdev said, ‘Life of the world, Ornament of your devotees, there is none other apart

about 9 inches’ (Monier Williams 2008; Tulpule 1999:4). The phrase ‘for eight spans’ may refer to the length of the verse(s) that Janī composed or the amount of time that Janī spent composing.

91 Mahīpati seems to be suggesting that Janī has composed about tīrtha and so on and that she is also critical of Viṭṭhal. Janī may be saying that Viṭṭhal should acknowledge everything she has done to attain Him. Jānēdev seems to be criticising both Janī and Viṭṭhal: Janī because she should not write and/or talk about what she has done or composed about (tīrtha and so on) as it is rather egotistical; Viṭṭhal as He should not write or talk about what she has done either because it acknowledges her ‘ego’ and He should know better because he is wise (Personal communication, Kasturi Dadhe, 10th May 2013).

92 See Novetzkze for more on Sarasvatī as ‘the goddess of orality and the recitation of sacred text’ (2008:103–104).

93 The term pavāḍā connotes ‘A panegyric or encomiastic piece in a kind of alliterative poetry recounting the achievements of a warrior, the talents and attainments of a scholar, or the powers, virtues, and excellencies of a person gen.’ (Molesworth 1857:496).


95 The text reads ‘सौरभेन्द्रदेव-प्रेममेंतः || जनिवेशदेशभूषणमेंतः || वटदिर्गतमलागी || 165 || aise aikonī taye vele/ ghana nila kāya bolīye/ janīce sābha premāla bhale/ vāṭaī raśīla majā lajī/167/’ My translation differs from Abbott and Godbole’s translation which states: ‘Hearing him say this, the cloud-dark Krishna replied, “The verses of Jani are full of love. I feel them today exceedingly interesting”’ (1996:352).
from us [devotees] who knows Your inner thoughts (170). Just like a husband’s inner thoughts are only understood by a chaste and dutiful wife; or a mother’s love is only understood by a child (171); or as the poet’s delightful words are identified by an expert, so the ones with wisdom and experience are those who attained the knowledge that comes knowledge about the Self (adhyātma) and scripture (vidyā) (172); Dark-Blue Cloud, it is as if the cakor [bird] fully understands the Lord of Rohīṇī [the Moon];96 or Govind’s mind understands the objects of the sense organs (173). So we always understand your soul’s secrets easily’, thus spoke Jānānadev and Adhokṣaja [Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa] laughed (174). Then Jānānadev said, ‘Life of the world, let’s go and meet Nāma, and I will tell him about your great love for Janī’ (175). ‘Certainly’ replied Rukmiṇi’s husband, quickly getting up and setting out. So taking one another by the hand they both proceeded (176).97 Jānānadev and the Discus-Holder came to the house of Viṣṇudāsa.98 They gave each other a hug and sat on a comfortable seat (177).99 When Vanamālī arrived at the house a crowd of sants had already gathered there: like a king sitting in his assembly hall once his army has gathered (178); or hearing that Indra100 is seated a host of gods encircle him; or as when ascetics sit around Śiva101 with love (179); or as wherever Indra sits all the perfected ones (siddhas) enfold him there; or when loving devotees with a fondness for religious discourse (kīrtan) come running to the arena (180); or wherever priceless gems are found, all the appraisers gather there; or when large black bees hover around the lotus plant’s flower (181); or how beggars gather around when they see the lotus-like eyes of a generous donor; or as when small red ants rush towards wherever there is sugar (182). So, seeing the Lord of world seated in Nāma’s house all the sants, united in joy, gathered there (183). Having embraced every one, the Life of the world said to Nāma ‘Call Janī and bring her here so that she may be presented (darśan) to the sants’ (184).102 Then Goṇāī said to Rājāī, ‘Janī is outside making dung cakes.103 Go and tell her that Rukmiṇi’s Husband is calling her’ (185).104 Then Janī quickly washed her hands and came to the courtyard; beholding the Lord of Paṇḍharī she prostrated herself (186).105 Then Jānānadev remarked to Nāma, ‘Today, I have seen a marvellous thing: the Lord of Heaven writing down Janī’s verses with his own hands’ (187). The Ornament of His devotees said to them, ‘writing down Janī’s verses has not diminished me at all (188). I take an oath, witnessed upon your feet (179); or as wherever Indra sits all the perfected ones (siddhas) enfold him there; or as when small red ants rush towards wherever there is sugar (182). So, seeing the Lord of world seated in Nāma’s house all the sants, united in joy, gathered there (183). Having embraced every one, the Life of the world said to Nāma ‘Call Janī and bring her here so that she may be presented (darśan) to the sants’ (184).102 Then Goṇāī said to Rājāī, ‘Janī is outside making dung cakes.103 Go and tell her that Rukmiṇi’s Husband is calling her’ (185).104 Then Janī quickly washed her hands and came to the courtyard; beholding the Lord of Paṇḍharī she prostrated herself (186).105 Then Jānānadev remarked to Nāma, ‘Today, I have seen a marvellous thing: the Lord of Heaven writing down Janī’s verses with his own hands’ (187). The Ornament of His devotees said to them, ‘writing down Janī’s verses has not diminished me at all (188). I take an oath, witnessed upon your feet, that Janī’s Prakrit [Marathi] speech

96 The cakor is a Greek Partridge, which is fabled to subsist on moonbeams (Molesworth 1857:267; Monier Williams 2008). The term rohīṇī is the ‘name of the ninth nakṣatra or lunar asterism and of the lunar day belonging to it…it is personified as a daughter of Dakṣa, and as the favourite wife of the Moon, called “the Red one” from the colour of the star Aldebaran…’ (Monier Williams 2008).

97 The text reads: अवशयमणिपरिषिद्धिभिः || उपरोक्तिन्तरितिविविद्धिः || एकाधिकाकायोपभि || दोषोज्ज्ञवालिसे || ॥ ॥

98 abbayamana mhanonī rukminī kāntā/ uṭhoni nighāle tvartā/ ekamekācē dharoni hāta/ do ghe jana căile// Abbott and Godbole translate this as: ‘The Husband of Rukmini replied, “I agree. That was already in my mind.” Then taking on another by the hand they hastened along’ (1996:353).


96 Abbott and Godbole translate sukhasana as ‘easy mat’ (1996:353).

100 The term sacīramaṇa means ‘Husband or Lover of Śacī’ and is an epithet for Indra (Monier Williams 2008).

101 The term sakāraka means ‘maker or conferrer of prosperity’ and is an epithet for Śiva (Molesworth 1857:779).


103 Janābāī abhuṅga 125.1 (SSG 1, p.727–728) refers to Janī collecting cow-dung (śena), see Appendix B.

104 This phrase illustrates the female hierarchy in the home: 1) Goṇāī, the mother and mother-in-law; 2) Rājāī, the daughter-in-law; and lowest of all 3) Janī, the servant.

105 Abbott and Godbole have an additional verse for 186: ‘Hearing this request, she hastily went and told her, ‘The Holder of the disk (Krishna) has come to our house and call for you’ (1996:354).
must be known as charming (svāda) and delightful (rasa)” (189). Abbott and Godbole appear to translate svāda and rasa as ‘happy thoughts’ (1996:354).


107 The term svāda (see note 106 above) seems to denote ‘the person employed to open and close the gateway’ (Tulpule 1999:327). Abbott and Godbole translate this as ‘If anyone reads her verses I shall stand waiting upon him in his yard.’ Such were the words that Krishna used in the house of Nāma…’ (1996:354).

108 The text reads:

\[ \text{Janīचींबोलणींवाचीलकोणीं।। मी直属नतेनतयाचेआंगंणी।। ऐसे०म ुखɅचĐपाणी।। बोलेसदनींनामयाचे।।} \]

109 Janī is accepted into the group of devotees due to the endorsement of Viṭṭhal and, possibly, Jñānādev's word (1992). Vanamāḷī (Muslim), His devotee; the Paṭhān [Muslim], His devotee; in the middle sat Rukmiṇī's husband like the King amidst his army radiating lordly grandeur (nātha aisvārye) (197). Then Jñānēsvār asked Janī, ‘Nama has assumed four incarnations (avatāras): Pralhād, Angad, and the venerable Uddhava, and has subjected the Bow-Holder to him (198). How many births have you had through worshipping God? Tell us all about it. Do not be inhibited (199).
Hearing this Nāma’s maid prepared to speak, she said, ‘When the Lord of the senses became Hayagrīva, then I obtained a place at his feet (200). Then the champion of Ambarśī assumed ten forms (avatāras): as the fish, the tortoise and the great boar he came to kill powerful demons (201); after becoming Nāràsinī, Vāmana, and Paraśārāma. He then became Dāśaratha’s Rāma. Now Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the resting place of all, has become the seated Buddha (202). When God assumed these various forms (avatāra) I was with Him’. Having heard these words Jñānadev was amazed (203). He said, ‘Blessed is this servant Janī. By her endless accumulation of meritorious deeds she has made the Lord of the senses gracious [towards her], which Brahma and all the other gods find difficult to obtain’ (204). Then the Discus-Holder said to the sants, ‘Now, divide the scribes amongst yourselves and the words which come from your mouths write them down (205). Saccidānand the Brahmin will write down Jhānēvar’s jewelled words; Sopān, the perfect incarnation of Virīnchi [Brahmā], will write down Nivr̄itti’s [words] (206). Jñānadev will write down Muktābāī’s abhaṅgas completely. [Visobā] Khecar will write down Jogā Paramānand’s secrets (207). Sāvatā the gardener and Vaiṣṇava devotee—let his scribe be Kasibā Gurav; The God of gods made Sudev the scribe of Kūrmadās (208). Ananta Bhaṭ the Brahmin: he should do Cokhāmeḷā’s writing, and Rukmīṇī’s Husband will write down the words of Nāma’s Janī (209). Thus, having allocated the scribes the Discus-Holder said to Jñānadev, ‘Now, you should have no inhibition in listening to Janī’s abhaṅgas’ (210). Hearing this, the noble Vaiṣṇavas said, ‘We have made ourselves capable of keeping promises. There is none like us in this world however hard you search’ (211). If the sun takes a blind man by the hand, then what will he not be able to see? If Sarasvātī is kindly disposed towards Janī then who will call her a slave?’ Hearing this, the Life of the world smiled (213). Then, Nāma fetched water and reverently washed everyone’s feet with fragrance (gandha), flowers and all the offerings (upahāra) and completed the worship with all the particulars of worship (214). He gave betel

117 Mahīpāti may be suggesting that Janī gave a discourse or kīrtan. See Novetzke 2008 (pp.74ff) for more on kīrtan and oral performance.
118 Hayagrīva means ‘horse-necked’ and is the ‘name of a form of Viṣṇu’ (Monier Williams 2008).
119 Nārasimha is the ‘man-lion’, Vāmana is the ‘dwarf’, and Paraśārāma is ‘Rama with an axe’ avatāra of Viṣṇu (Monier Williams 2008).
119 The text reads: \[अष्टक्षरकृत्तीर् अन्तर्।।\| \[अष्टक्षरकृत्तीर् अन्तर्।। \| \[अष्टक्षरकृत्तीर् अन्तर्।। \| \[अष्टक्षरकृत्तीर् अन्तर्।।\] Abbott and Godbole translate this as ‘his mind was full of astonishment’ (1996:355), which follows the Marathi more accurately than my translation. One may wonder if the inclusion of Jñānadev legitimises Janī as a poet and/or sant. Mahīpāti may be referring to the abhaṅgas attributed to Janī that regard Jñānadev as a guru and praise him: see Janābāī abhaṅgas 59, 121, 143 (which refers to Jñānadev writing near Janī), 168, 266, 268, 269, and +43 in Appendix B.
120 The text states: \[मच्छस्य स्नेताभिः जनीदासी।। इव अपारपुन्यशरीरसै।। \| \[सतं भर्तीं श्रीलक्षेलका।। \| \[विंदानदिदिक्षितानांभजो।। \] Abbott and Godbole translation reads: ‘Said he, Blessed is this servant girl Jani. By her limitless good deeds she has made Hrishikeshi (the Lord of the heart) favourable to her. His sight is unobtainable even to Brahmadev and other gods’ (1996:355).
121 Mahīpāti seems to be quoting from Janābāī abhaṅga 271 (see Appendix B). See Novetzke (2008 70, 259 n.8; 78, 260 n.9) for a translation and discussion of this verse.
122 This statement seems to validate Janī as a poet and sant.
123 The term sampārṇa connotes ‘All, every one, the whole; whole, entire, complete, perfect; completed, perfected, finished, prepared or executed wholly; the entertainment of Brahmans, or other particular ceremony, completing and closing a religious observance’ (Molesworth 1857:820). The term milita denotes ‘mixed, mingled; met; met together; blended’ (Molesworth 1857:653). The term upacāra connotes ‘service’ (Tulpule 1999:3); ‘an article of substance used in worship’ (Tulpule 1999:95); ‘sandalwood paste and rice particles; a ritual of welcoming’ (Tulpule 1999:195), ‘the performance of a ritual’ (Tulpule 1999:655), ‘approach, service, attendance; reverence, attendance; ornament, decoration’ (Monier Williams 2008) and ‘A common term for the particulars and points of idol worship; of which sixteen are enumerated’ (Molesworth 1857:98).
rolls (vīḍā; pān) to everyone and lovingly prostrated himself. Then the Husband of Śrī (śripati) took His leave of Goṇāī and immediately set off (215). Taking a group of devotees along with Him, Vanamāḷi entered the temple. Then He told Rukmiṇī all that had happened (216). He who is the Brother of the destitute (anāthabandhū), the Source of compassion (karuṇākara), Loving to his devotees, the Ocean of mercy, the Ocean of compassion (karuṇāsindhu), the Bow-Holder, He is the one concerned about our well-being (217). He is the one narrating His devotee’s life-stories, with loving-eyes, Mahipatī is merely a puppet. The wise ones know this already (218). Peace! This book is the sacred victory of devotees (śrībhaktavijaya). Listening to it the Lord of the world will be pleased. Listen with love O faithful devotees. This is the twenty-first delightful chapter (219): an offering to Lord Kṛṣṇa.
2. **Bhaktavijaya 39: Kānhopātrā**

Reverence to Śrī Gaṇeśa. O Hearers, listen carefully. Paṇḍharī is in the southern country and seven kos from there is the village of Mangalvedha (1). In that place was a prostitute (veśyā) and dancing girl (kalāvantīṇa) and her name was Śāmā. Kānhopātrā was born of her, a beautiful gem (2). In looking at her beauty the heavenly attendants were ashamed of their own beauty. The creator had created none her equal in the three worlds (3). In her youth she learnt the art of singing and dancing. In looking at her Rambhā, Tilottamā and Menakā were all ashamed (4). The mother said to her daughter ‘Let’s go to the royal palace so that you will be given ornaments when your beauty is seen’ (5). She replied, ‘O mother know that no man worthy of my beauty will appear however one searches (6). If there is a man endowed with ten million times my beauty I shall marry him’, thus Kānhopātrā resolved (7). ‘Men of the mortal world seem to me as flies before a sun: to them I shall appear radiant’ (8).

One day there was a pilgrimage going to Paṇḍharī. The Vaiṣṇavas proclaimed with cymbal, drum, flag and kettledrum (9). When Kānhopātrā saw the sants she prostrated herself and asked ‘Where are you Vaiṣṇavas going? Please tell me’ (10). They said, ‘We are going on pilgrimage to Paṇḍharī where the Dweller in Vaikuṇṭh waits on account of Puṇḍalīk (11). Kānhopātrā asked the sants, ‘Who is the Dweller in Vaikuṇṭh?’ They said, ‘Even Brahma extols His greatness (12). He is ten million times more generous, patient, handsome and perfect than Lakṣmī; the moon and sun orbit the earth due to his radiance’ (13). Kānhopātrā said to the sants, ‘If I go to the Lord of the senses (hrṣikesa) for protection will He accept me (14)?’ They told her, ‘Kubjā was Kama’s deformed and lowly maidservant in Mathura and Krṣṇa transformed her body for his own honour (15). Ajāmeḷa and Cokhāmeḷā he cherished, for he is Cloud-Blue, Purifier and restorer of the fallen (patitapāvana), Compassionate to the wretched (dinaayāla), Saviour of the world (jagaduddhāra) and Protector of the lowly (dīnabandhū)’ (16). On hearing the sants recitation [Kānhopātrā] hurried home, paid homage to her mother and said ‘I am going to Paṇḍharī’ (17). Taking the vīṇā, the beautiful woman left singing with love. Then Kānho went [to Paṇḍharī] extolling Hari’s qualities (18). Kānho proceeded to the great door [of the temple] by performing a [rolling] prostration (loṭāṅga), with impassioned devotion and in supplication. She said, ‘Hearing of your fame I have come as a supplicant to you Viṭṭhal’ (19). ‘You are generous, patient,

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1. The distance from Maṅgaḷveḍha to Paṇḍharpūr is fourteen miles.
2. These three women were apsarās, a class of female divinity or ‘celestial nymph’ who inhabit the sky but often visit the earth and are fond of water; they are the wives of the gandharvas (demigods; celestial musicians) and can change their shape at will. Rambhā is sometimes regarded as a form of Lakṣmī and as the most beautiful woman of Indra’s paradise (Monier Williams 2008).
3. Ranade suggests that Kānhopātrā found Vīthobā to be her equal in beauty and so ‘married’ him (2003:190–191, 10).
4. The phrase brahmādikāṃsī de notes the ‘region’ or ‘sphere’ of Brahma, which suggests Mahīpati is referring to brahmāloka (the world of Brahmā) and to the celestial beings who reside there.
5. This verse could be interpreted as Kānhopātrā seeking the protection of the deity or of a man so as to be kept woman. Kānhopātrā, like Kubjā and Janī, is unattached and unprotected, and might therefore be preyed upon by men who considered her sexually ‘available’. Consequently, Kānhopātrā might have God as a ‘Protector’.
6. The story suggests that Kubjā satisfied Krṣṇa’s senses by providing him with sandalwood paste but that once she had been transformed into a beautiful woman she wanted to satisfy her senses (lust) with Krṣṇa. Krṣṇa had no desire to gratify himself but went to Kubjā’s house to transform her into a pure devotee. The Vārkarīs appear to be suggesting that Kānhopātrā, like Kubjā, can be transformed into a pure devotee (Prabhupada 1970). For the story see BhP 10.42.3–12; 10.48.1–11 (Bryant 2003:174–75, 202–03). Mahīpati also suggests that Janī is an avatāra of Kubjā in BVJ (21.19).
handsome, perfect and possess the six attributes of divinity,7 [so I have come to] stay at your place as a supplicant to you O Viṣṭhaḥ (20). ‘Ajāmeṭā and Ganiṅkā came and you accepted them in a moment.’ The sants have told of this in writing, so I come to you as a supplicant (21). My customary occupation was bodily sexual pleasure and my place was known. I have abandoned all on your account and supplicate myself to you O Generous One (22). Now accept me as your supplicant O Lord’. Thus, Kānhopāṭrā placed her head on his feet (23). Considering Hari’s form in her mind, Kānhopāṭrā remained in Paṇḍharī at the great door [of the temple] extolling the good qualities of the Lord (24).

However, there was a wicked man who went to the king of Bedar10 and reported to him (25): ‘In Paṇḍharī, at the great door [of the temple], is a beautiful courtesan (gaṇikā) and in the three mortal worlds there is no other woman her equal’ (26). A fishermen kills fish even though they have committed no wrong, so bad men maintain their enmity towards the good and virtuous (27). The hunter shoots wild beasts even though they are faultless, so the wicked maintain their enmity towards the good and virtuous (28). When a tiger sees a man it looks at him with anger seeking to devour him, so the wicked always bear hatred in their hearts for the good and virtuous (29). Bed-bugs bite men while they sleep although they are without fault, so the wicked always bear hatred in their hearts for the good and virtuous (30). Knowing [Kānhopāṭrā] had committed no crime the wicked man went to the king and reported to him. Having heard the news the king sent his messenger to Paṇḍharī (31). Kānhopāṭrā was at the entrance [of the temple] faithfully performing a kīrtan. Immediately the king’s men appeared and spoke (32) saying, ‘Come to Bedar at once or you will be taken by force’. She replied, ‘I will pay my respects (namaskāra)

7 The six attributes (sadhaguna) are samagraga aśīvarya (all-sovereignty or lordship), samagraga dharma (all-goodness or excellence), samagraga yaśa (all-glory, majesty, or victory), samagraga śṛī (all-opulence or fullness), samagraga jñāna (all-knowledge or understanding), and samagraga vairāgya (absolute exemption from desire, dispassion) (see Molesworth 1857:801; Tulpule 1999).

8 The term gaṇikā suggests one ‘enjoyed by one person or many persons living in a group’ (Sithannan 2007:11) or ‘belonging to gana, the people’ (Eraly 2011:453). A gaṇikā was an ‘elite courtesan’ who, in contrast to the ordinary prostitute (veśī), resided in a large, well-furnished house and whose ‘household establishment was headed by her mother and included maidservants, female messengers, musicians, other professionals and children’. The gaṇikā was ‘a connoisseur of refined pleasure and culture’ (Singh 2008:506) and according to the Kāmasūtra (1.3.15) was expected to be familiar with the arts of ‘singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, painting and decoration; preparing wines and other drinks; doing conjuring tricks, practising sleight of hand, telling jokes and riddles; completing words, reading aloud, improvising poetry, staging plays, knowledge of metre and literary work; gambling; and etiquette’ (Kaul 2006:63). Furthermore, a gaṇikā ‘was a desirable woman, desired for her beauty as well as her refinement and intellect’. However, a gaṇikā had no choice in ‘the object of their love’ (Singh 2008:506). The Kāmasūtra and Sanskrit kāvya literature refer to gaṇikās but with ambivalence. The gaṇikā ‘is admired and celebrated for her beauty, wit, and other accomplishments’ but ‘the fact that her sexual favours could be bought by anyone for money meant that she could never hope to attain social respectability (Singh 2008:507). The idea that a gaṇikā lacked social respect is challenged by both Sithannan (2007) and Eraly (2011:453) who refer to the Kāmasūtra (1.3.18) saying that ‘the king always honours her, and virtuous people praise her’ (Doniger 2009:16). A gaṇikā symbolised ‘well-being, luck and prosperity, wherever present’ and was considered niyā sumaṅgali ‘eternally married and reaching widowhood being out of bounds for her’ (Sithannan 2007:13). A gaṇikā was often the property of the state and could only be freed, if at all, for an exorbitant sum. The daughter of a gaṇikā with the required qualifications was expected to become a gaṇikā too. The Tamil epics Maṇimekālai (6th century) and Čīvaka Čitāmūnī tell how Maṇimekālai becomes a Buddhist nun just as her mother, the courtesan Mādavī, had done so earlier (Feldman 2006:171; Sithannan 2007:14). The Gaṇikā mentioned by Mahīpati was probably Pīṅgalā (see BhP 11.8.22–44; Kiehne 1997a:124; Leslie 2003:165) rather than the apsarā whom Īndra sent to Yama and who turned into a river (Brahmā Purāṇa 86.30–39; Söhen 1989). There are distinctions between the different types of prostitute as indicated by the different terms: veśī or rūpāyīva was a prostitute ranked lower than the gaṇikā due to her lack of artistic skills. The lowest form of prostitute was the dāṣī (slave) such as the kumbhadaṣī ‘pots-and-pans prostitute’ (Feldman 2006:162).

9 Mahīpati seems to be drawing from abhaṅga 12 in referring to Ajāmeṭā and the gaṇikā but the rest of the statement attributed to Kānhopāṭrā (v.21–23) does not correspond with the poetry attributed to Kānhopāṭrā, see Appendix B.

10 Bedar (Bidar) is a city and district in north-eastern Karnataka.
to god and return immediately’ (33). The messengers stood in the assembly hall while Kānho went into
the temple. Hands joined she prayed, ‘God-King, Husband of Śītā (34), called “Puṇḍalik’s blessing”,
Pāṇḍurāṅga. I call myself yours Śrīraṅgā. Now, if you give me up Destroyer of existence, who will be at
fault? (35) Fearful, I to say to you, if the king takes me to Bedar, Dweller in Paṇḍharī, Śrī Hari, whose
fault will it be? (36) When you heard Gajendrā’s lament you immediately came to his aid, Life of the
world.11 If you give me up, Cloud of mercy, who will be at fault? (37) When a pigeon falls into distress
you easily apprehend its anguish. Now if you should abandon me, who will be at fault? (38) When the
tiger caught the doe,12 she called upon you and you came to her aid Lord of the Senses, so if you abandon
me Lord of Paṇḍharī who will be at fault? (39) When Durvās tormented Ambaṛṣī you endured the pain
of birth,13 now if I am taken to Bedar who will be at fault? (40) Ajāmeḷa and Cokhā the mahār were
accepted by you, now if you ignore me who will be at fault? (41) When a young frog was being boiled to
death it called upon you and you instantly came to its aid, so if you abandon me now who will be at fault?
(42) My heart has been united with your form (svarūpa), and if the wicked [men] touch me then the sants
and good people will mock you, O Viṭṭhal’ (43). On hearing this piteous speech Nārāyaṇa dissolved with
compassion. Immediately he withdrew her spirit and united it with his own essential form (44). The
sants and priests nearby witnessed [what happened] there: the Compassionate One took Kānhopātrā within
(45).14 Kānho was absorbed through his lap and the evidence [of this] continues to the present day. Those
who go to Paṇḍharī in veneration see this for themselves (46). Her corpse was taken at that time and
interred by the southern door.15 Immediately a taraṭī tree sprang up there (47).16

Meanwhile the messengers from Bedar came from the assembly pavilion and questioned the
priests about what had become of Kānhopātrā (48).17 They said, ‘her spirit has been absorbed into the
Lord’s form’. The messengers said, ‘bring her corpse to show us’ (49). The priests told the messengers,
‘her corpse has become a tree’. Then they [the messengers] said, ‘your desire has caused this (50). You
[must have] dug an underground passage in front of the door from where she was able to flee, and now
you say she has become a tree! You are telling untruths’ (51). Without further consideration the priests
were seized and taken to Bedar to report to the king (52). They presented him with a gracious gift
(prasād) but as he was an arrogant man a hair appeared [in it]. The Muslim became angry and questioned
the priests (53). The Muslim king lacked discrimination so the priests were terrified and quickly placed
the coconut and fragrant black powder (bukā) before the king (54).18 Greatly afraid they wondered what
to say and decided to tell the king that it was god’s hair (55). They said, ‘the hair is surely that of

11 Gajendrā was the chief of the elephants whom Viṣṇu saved from a crocodile and who gained liberation. The story is
[Accessed 27th November 2012].
12 Mahīpati seems to be referring to the final abhaṅga attributed to Kānhopātrā—nako devarāyā anta pāhū ātā—see Appendix B.
13 Mahīpati seems to be referring to Kānhopātrā abhaṅga 11, see Appendix B.
14 The text suggests that the deity took Kānhopātrā within his knee (jāṇū) but as this sounds odd in English it has
been omitted in this translation. However, it is possible that the text means that Kānhopātrā was on her knees when
she was absorbed into the deity.
15 It is interesting that Kānhopātrā was interred as usually only sannyāsīs are buried.
16 The taraṭī (taraṇṭī) tree is Capparis Erythrocarpus
17 This is probably the Viṭṭhal sabhā maṇḍap, a quadrangle with wooden pillars that dates to about 1621 (Deleury
1994:60a).
18 The king is described as avinda (avindha), a term meaning ‘unbored or unpierced’ and which refers a Muslim
‘because his ears are unbored’ according to Molesworth (1857:50).
Kānhopātrā’s supporter,19 the Dweller in Vaikuṇṭha who stands on the bank of the Bhima (56). Come to Paṇḍharī and if the hair is not god’s [hair] then punish us’: this they gave in writing (57). The king asked the Brahmans how Kānho had united with god. The priests replied, ‘she [united with god] like sea-salt unites with the sea’ (58). So as to attain evidence [of this for himself] the king went rushing off [to Paṇḍharpūr]. The Brahmans wondered, ‘now what do we do?’ (59). ‘If the Muslim does not find hair on god then he will kill us. The Dweller in the three-worlds will either keep us from shame or neglect us’ (60). When the Brahmans came near Paṇḍharī they then appealed [to God] saying, ‘Merciful Mādhav, You are our protector (61). When the house made of lac was on fire you delivered the Pāṇḍavas, O Eternal One; now you are our only protection in this difficult situation (62). While serving vile company20 you made Draupadī into the four-armed one: O Husband of Rukmī you are our protection in this difficult situation (63). When a forest fire blazed you consumed the fire to protect the cows and cow-herders. How difficult can it be for you to save us at this time? (64) When clouds unleashed terrible rain you easily held up [mount] Govardhan.21 How difficult can it be for you to save our lives? (65) Knowing your power we testified in writing that the curly hair graced the Four-armed one, the Dark-coloured one’ (66). Then the king arrived at the great door [of the temple] and instantly saw the Brahmans spread out in prostration before god, near the eagle [shrine] (67). They said, ‘Puṇḍalīk’s boon-granter, Eternal one, you are our protector from difficulty. Except for you, Lord of the Universe, we see no one to come [to our aid] at the moment’ (68). The king went into god’s bed-chamber and looked at him. Suddenly he saw his radiant crown confining his beautiful curly hair (69); his enormous lotus-eyes, his heavenly crocodile-shaped earrings and around his throat Viṣṇu’s necklace with the kaustubha jewel (70). On his breast was a very beautiful pendant and both his hands lay on his hips. His loins were wrapped by a yellow silk dhotar and his neck adorned with the necklace of Viṣṇu (71). He whom yogis petition in meditation, whom all gods worship, he was seen by the king (72). The king became repentant and said to the Brahmans, ‘I have seen the deity as you told me he would look’ (73). With sincerity the king prostrated himself before god, embraced god and promptly said to the priests (74). ‘Kānhopātrā’s fortune is great as she was absorbed into the Lord’s own form. We are unfortunate and lack understanding so have I harassed her’ (75). Then he said to the priests, ‘How did Kānhopātrā become a tree?’ They took him to the southern door [of the temple] and showed him the taraṭī tree (76). The Brahmans told the king that the sacred city of Paṇḍharī was ancient and that all the gods became trees and remained there (77). Today the taraṭī tree is still visible at the southern door and faithful devotees come to Paṇḍharī to see it (78). The next chapter tells the amazing story of the Vaiṣṇava devotee Dāmājīpant.22 Mahipati, who comes to him as a supplicant, extols his good qualities (79). Peace-Happiness-Prosperity (svasti)! This book is the Śrī...
Bhaktavijaya. In listening to it the Lord of the Universe will be pleased; so listen god-loving, faithful devotees. This is the tasteful thirty-ninth chapter (80). This is an offering to Kṛṣṇa; Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
APPENDIX D:

LIST OF EPITHETS EMPLOYED IN THE COMPOSITIONS ATTRIBUTED TO THE SANTAKAVĪYITRĪŚ¹

<table>
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<tr>
<th>EPITHET</th>
<th>SANT</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Acyuta ('Steadfast') = Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (134)²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adināth ('First Lord') = Śiva</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āji ('Grandmother’/respectful particle)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akalākala ('Inscrutable Unblemished')</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akhanḍa eka svarūpa ('Undivided One’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amareśvarā (Omkareśvarā) = Śiva</td>
<td>Janābāī (45, 51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambābāī ('Mother’)</td>
<td>Janābāī (Unpublished 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ānanda (Joy, Happiness) = Śiva</td>
<td>Rājāī (1333); Janābāī (260); Soyarābāī (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ānandakanda ('The root of joy’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ānandavadana ('Face of joy’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anantā/ Ananta (Eternal One)</td>
<td>Muktābāī (8); Goṇāī 1286; Janābāī 204, 347; Goṇāī 1286; Nirmaḷā (9); Bahiṇābāī (67, 178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anāthanāthā (Friend of the friendless)</td>
<td>Goṇāī 1286; Kānhopātrā (3); Līmbāī; Bhāgū Mahārīṇ 4; Nirmaḷā (8, 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anāthācī deva (God of the friendless)</td>
<td>Soyarābāī (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arikulahanana ('Killer of the enemy tribe’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ātmārām (the Supreme Reality)</td>
<td>Muktābāī (31); Janābāī 3; Bahiṇābāī (107, 614, 637)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ātmārūpa (Form of the soul)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (109)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aviṭa (Unfailing One)</td>
<td>Muktābāī 41</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹ The numbers beside the sant’s name denote the abhaṅga number from the SSG or Kolhārkar edition for Bahiṇābāī in which the epithet appears. The numbers in parentheses are abhaṅgas I have not translated.

² The numbering of the Bahiṇābāī abhaṅgas is from Kolhārkar (1926) as this is the edition used by Abbott (1929/1985) for his translations. The numbering of the other abhaṅgas is from the SSG (Gosāvī 2005). The epithets sometimes appear more than once in the abhaṅga listed.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Bā (Father/Dad)</td>
<td>Nirmaā (4), 19; Soyarābāī (2, 24, 28); Bahinābāī (413)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bābā (Father)</td>
<td>Rājāī 1326; Janābāī (15, 33, 271)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bālamukund ('young Mukund') = Kṛṣṇa</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (585)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bālpā (Father)</td>
<td>Goṇāī 1305; Janābāī 268; Kānhopātrā (14); Bahinābāī 139, 141, 196, 254, 578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahagān (God, Supreme God)</td>
<td>Viṭhābāī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaktajanājījivana ('Enlivener of his devotees’ souls’)</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (585)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaktijivāhāla ('The source of devotion’)</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (585)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhavamocana ('Releasing from worldly existence’)</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brahma vandī jyāce pāya (whose feet are revered by Brahma)</td>
<td>Janābāī 262</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brahmāṇḍanāyakā (Lord of the Universe)</td>
<td>Goṇāī 1286</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brahmarūpa ('A form of Brahma’) = Viṣṇu</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (226)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caitanyadhana ('Destroyer of consciousness’)</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cakrapāḷa (Discus-holder)</td>
<td>Goṇāī 1268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cakrapāṇī (Discus Bearer)</td>
<td>Goṇāī (1302); Janābāī (22, 36), 43, 80, (81), 86, 147, 155, 204, 208 (253, 283, 291, 320, 321, 337, 339; U 19, 29); Kānhopātrā 9; Soyarābāī (7); Bahinābāī 172, 294, 466, 588, 701, 717–18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candramauḷī ('Bearing the moon upon his head; Moon-crested’) = Śiva</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (83)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cidambār ('Heart as big as the sky’)</td>
<td>Viṭhābāī</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dāvānalaprāśana ('Feeding on forest fire’)</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dayecyā sāgarā (Ocean of mercy)</td>
<td>Kānhopātrā 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deva (God; deity)</td>
<td>Muktābāī (13, 22, 24); Goṇāī (1264), 1266, 1267, 1268, 1275, (1277, 1278,1280, 1283,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Devācā visrāma (‘Rest of the gods’) = Viṭṭhal

Devādhideva/devāciyādeva (God of gods; God over gods)

Deveakīnandana (‘Devakī’s son’)  

Devakīsuta (‘Devakī’s son’)  

Devarānā (God-king)

Devarājā (God-king)

Devarāyā (God-King)

Dharmarakṣaṇa (‘Protector of righteousness’)  

Dīnabandhu (‘Brother of the distressed’)  

Dīnānāth (Protector and reliever of the wretched)  

Dvārakecyārāya (King of Dvārka)  

Girajecā kānta (Girija’s husband) = Śiva

Gokuḷīcyā devā (God of Gokuḷ) ³

³ The Vārkarī sants portray Viṭṭhal as ‘playing with the cowherd boys and girls’ when they regard him as the resident of Gokul according to Dhere (2011:31).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Gokulamanḍhaṇa (‘Adornment of Goku’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gokularaṅkaṇa (‘Protector of Goku’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gopāla (Cowherder; Earth-protector)</td>
<td>Goṇāī 1286; Janābāī 30, (61, 264, 265, 270, 334, 335; U36); Soyarābāī (1); Bahiṇābāī (291–92, 466, 527–28, 565, 588, 631)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gopīmanaraṅjana (‘Delight of the milkmaids’ hearts’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gopirājā (‘King of the milkmaids’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gopīpriyākānha (‘Playful beloved of the milkmaids’)</td>
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<td>Govardhanagokulraṅkaṇa (‘Protector of Govardhan and Goku’)</td>
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<td>Govinda (Protector of cows)</td>
<td>Muktābāī 37; Goṇāī (1277); Rājāī 1325, (1330); Janābāī 104, (142, 148, 152, 156, 212), 225, (335; U 24, 41, 42); Kānhopātra 6; Soyarābāī (42); Bahiṇābāī (70, 103, 293, 300, 346, 564–65, 568, 570–71, 575, 585, 588); Sakhūbāī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guṇanidhāna (‘Treasury of excellencies’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guṇavīhīna ’(Devoid of attributes’)</td>
<td>Bahiṇābāī (585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guru</td>
<td>Muktābāī ‘Hindi’; Janābāī 225, 269, ‘43’; Gangābāī B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gururāja (Venerable king; Preceptor-King)</td>
<td>Gangābāī B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gururuṣa (Handsome Form)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guruvīṣa (Preceptor)</td>
<td>Gangābāī B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hari (the Tawny One; the Destroyer of pain) = Lord</td>
<td>Muktābāī (1, 4, 5, 6) 7, (8, 9), 10, (11,12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20), 21, 26, (27, 28, 36), 37 (39); Goṇāī (1277, 1289, 1294); Rājāī (1333); Janābāī (15, 79, 94, 103, 131,150, 152), 155, 204, (261, 331, 332, 337), x (U26, 36); Kānhopātra x; Nirmalā (11); Soyarābāī (9, 43, 45, 52, 60); Bahiṇābāī (14, 21, 26, 32, 36, 60, 62, 65, 67–9, 94, 105, 136, 154–56, 160, 292–93, 295, 333, 428, 453–54, 462, 466, 486, 499, 524, 528, 532–37, 585, 589, 563, 565, 570, 582, 585, 587, 596, 611–12, 625, 635, 702) ‘Hindi’; Sakhūbāī</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harinijadhāma (‘The abode of Hari’)</td>
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<td>Hariguṇabharita (‘Abounding in the Lord’s qualities’)</td>
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<td>Hṛṣikeśa (Lord of the Senses; Bristling Haired One)</td>
<td>Muktābāī (29); Janābāī (47, 60, 79, 120), 130 (286, 289, 292; U 17); Kānhopatrā 11; Bahinābāī (527, 529, 705, 719)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indra (The god of rain who presides over heaven and the gods) = the Supreme Being</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iṭhobā = Viṭhobā (popular, illiterate use)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Īśvar (God)</td>
<td>Muktābāī (Unpublished SSG 2 p. 1400)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jagajēṭhī ('Conqueror of the world’)</td>
<td>Goṇāī (1294); Janābāī 347; Kānhopatrā 11; Bahinābāī (720)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jagajīvāna ('Life of the world’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jagannātha ('World lord') = Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa</td>
<td>Bahinābāī (187)</td>
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\(^4\) Hawley defines Mohan as ‘the Beguiler’ (2005:106).
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⁵ The Vārkarī sants refer to Viṭṭhal as the “husband of Rukminī” when they consider him as the Lord of Dwārakā according to Dhere (2011:31).
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6 The term sadguru may refer to the guru of a particular disciple and some of the abhaṅgas attributed to Bahiṇābāī are ambivalent as to whether they are referring to Tukārām or the deity.
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<td>Viṭhābāī = Viṭṭhabā as friend/mother</td>
<td>Janābāī (35, 41, 48, (51, 52), 71, 83, (136, 160), 191, (U 5); Kānhopātra 10 (16), x; Viṭhābāī</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 The Vārkarī santas call Viṭṭhal ‘the husband of Lakṣmī’ when regard Viṭṭhal as the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha according to Dhere (2011:31).
<table>
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<td>Viṭhāī (feminine of Viṭhobā)</td>
<td>Janabhāī (265, 285; U11); Kānhopātrā (16); Bhāgū Maharin 1, 2</td>
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<td>Viṭhāī māulī (Mother Viṭhāī)</td>
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<td>Viṭho</td>
<td>Janabhāī (28), 30, (107), 116, (137, 149, 165, 219; U7, 25; Bhāgū Maharin 5/Bhāgūbhāī; Nirmālā 14;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viṭhobā</td>
<td>Goṇāī 1266, 1268, 1270 (1278, 1293, 1299); Rājāī 1322, (1323), 1324, 1326, (1332, 1333); Janabhāī (1), 8, (9), 11, (31, 33), 78, 89, (135, 149, 165, 176, 182, 187, 192), 195, (215), 222, (252, 280, 282, 292, 331, 338, 344; U 1, 15, 18, 25, 36, 40); Kānhopātrā; Nirmālā; Soyarābāī 41, (43, 46), 57, (60), 62; Nirmālā 14, (17); Bhāgūbhāī; Bahinābāī (52, 74–5, 98, 129, 459, 460, 463, 511, 561, 673)</td>
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<td>Viṭṭhal māulī (Mother Viṭṭhal)</td>
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APPENDIX E:

HINDI COMPOSITIONS ATTRIBUTED TO MUKṬĀBĀĪ AND BAIṆĀBĀĪ

1. Introduction

There are compositions in Hindi attributed to both Muktābāī (c. 1279–1297 C.E.) and Bahiṇābāī (c. 1628–1700 C.E.). I first read these compositions in Shrotriya (1992) and my translations and discussion is based on this work. It is probable that this is the first time that any of these ‘Hindi’ compositions have been translated and discussed in English. The Hindi scholar V.M. Sharma (1957) mentions Muktābāī as having composed in Hindi and how she describes herself as ‘Mahārāja Muktābāī’ in her Hindi compositions. It seems that the Marathi poets Cakradhar (1194–1276) and Jñāneśvar composed poems in Hindi (Sharma 1957) and that this may have been influenced by the Nāths (Pandey 1965:60n.23; McGregor 1984:21–23). The type of Hindi used by the Nāths was a mixture of old Khārībolī and Brajbhāṣā (McGregor 1984:23). Nāmdev is said to have composed songs in a form of ‘mixed’ Hindi (including Khārībolī, Rajasthani and Panjabi) known as sādhukkārī ‘holy men’s jargon’ (McGregor 1984:40). It is therefore not inconceivable that Muktābāī composed in a form of Hindi influenced by the Nāths. However, it is possible that attribution could be based on Muktābāī’s connection with Jñāneśvar as three different Muktā’s connected with the Nāths have been identified by Kiehnle (1997b:506). This may also be the case with Bahiṇābāī, who is regarded as Tukārām’s disciple, because Tukārām is thought to have composed in Hindi as well as Marathi (Lal 2006:4403; Desai 1973:183).

It is interesting to note that the compositions in Hindi have been ascribed to women who might both regarded as Brahmans but otherwise have few biographical similarities. Muktābāī is regarded as a mahayogīṇī who decided to accomplish sthitaprajñāta or ‘complete tranquillity or balance of mind’ by Bhagwat (2005:171; 1990:227), she never married and died young. Bahiṇābāī is regarded as a pativratā and a yogabhṛṣṭā ‘an individual perched in this life on the edge of mokṣa’ (McGee 1999:137; 1999:161), who had two children and died in old age.

2. Muktābāī’s ‘Hindi’ composition

One Hindi verse attributed to Muktābāī is a fascinating composition as it appears to differ from the Marathi ābhaṅgas attributed to Muktābāī. This is largely due to the amorous devotional theme, in which the author appears to be celebrating their love for Kṛṣṇa.

वाह वाह साहबजी सदगुि मल जुसाइजी।
लाल बाच मो उड़ा साला ओठ पीठसो काला।
पीत उनयनी भमर गुफा रस झूलनवाल।
सदगुि चेले दोनों बराबर एक दस्थयो भाई।
एकसे एक दर्शन पायेय महाराज मुक्ताबाई।।
Vāha vāha sāhabajī sadaguru lāla gusāījī/
Lāl bāc mo udālā kālā onṭha pīṭhaso kālā/
Pīt unyānī bhmar guru ḍuṇa ṛasa ḍhūlānval/
Sadhaguru cēle dōno bārabar eka dastayō bhāī/
Ekase eka dārśana pāye mahārāj muktābāī//

Hurrah! Hurrah! Master, True Guru, Dear Darling.
Darling Kṛṣṇa poured black on me; my lips are darker than my back.
The yellow one swings high with their love in a garlanded arbour.
The True guru and the disciple are equal, one…brother.
The term lāl gusāījī, which appears in the first line, can be translated literally as ‘Red Lord’. However, lāl means ‘dear’ or ‘darling’ and is a specific epithet for Kṛṣṇa. Consequently, I have taken lāl, in the first two lines of this verse, as referring to Kṛṣṇa. The phrase ‘Darling Kṛṣṇa poured black on me’, at the start of the second line, does not make sense in Hindi. The term udalā may be urelā, from urenā ‘to pour out’, which would give the phrase ‘the darling Kṛṣṇa poured black on me’. The ‘black’ probably refers to Kṛṣṇa’s colour, after all he is Śyāma ‘the dark Lord’. The meaning of the phrase ‘my lips are darker than my back’ is difficult to ascertain. It suggests some play with colours, red and black, by the author. It is probable that the author is relying on the audience understanding a double meaning for lāl, ‘red’ and ‘darling’. The phrase may suggest that the author’s lips—Muktābāī’s lips—had contact with Kṛṣṇa, and that his kisses made her lips black. There are similar sentiments expressed in Jayadev’s Gītagovinda: ‘Dark from kissing her kohl-blackened eyes, At dawn your lips match your body’s color, Krishna’ (GG 8.2, Stoler Miller 1997:106) and ‘My black form responds with red passion’ (GG 10.5, Stoler Miller 1997:112). This line of the verse is particularly difficult to translate. It is unclear whether the subject of the line is Muktābāī, Kṛṣṇa or someone else? Consequently, I am discussing the terms and all their possible meanings and interpretations so as to show how I have arrived at my translation. What becomes clear as one explores each term is the number of possible meanings. The author may have phrased things so as to allow for a broad interpretation but one can only speculate.

The first word, pīta, could mean ‘drink’, which makes sense in the rasa context. Pintchman describes rasas as ‘subjectively felt aesthetic emotions’, which a viewer or listener experiences (2005b:357). In the worship of Kṛṣṇa rasas and bhāvas are reconfigured as devotional categories with bhāva referring to the devotee’s attitude and rasa the joyful experience of the love relationship with Kṛṣṇa (Pintchman 2005b: 357–58). However, pīta could also mean ‘yellow’ as Kṛṣṇa is often depicted clad in yellow. This might connect with bhramara (bee), as a bee is dark and draped in yellow like Kṛṣṇa and the two are equated by the ropīs (Goswami and Case 2006:54; Hawley 1981b:4). Kṛṣṇa’s body may have turned yellow—aflame—due to the pain of love he felt for the woman next to him (Pauwels 1996:34). However, in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (10.47.1) Uddhava/Ūdha, Kṛṣṇa’s messenger, is described as wearing yellow (Olivelle 2003:195). Moreover, Rādhā’s complexion is said to be carried in the yellow flowers of the kadamba tree (Ray 2003:155–6), a tree which is associated with Kṛṣṇa and that is thought to reunite separated lovers. Consequently, I have translated pīta as ‘the yellow one’ as it remains unclear who the subject of the line is, although it seems clear that the ‘yellow one’ is connected to Kṛṣṇa in some way.

The term unnayamī may have a connection with nayan. In Sanskrit unnayana connotes ‘having upraised eyes’ (Monier Williams 2008) or ‘with eyes raised upwards’ (Apte 1890:436). Kṛṣṇa invites the ropīs to look into his eyes and so establish a bond with him. One of the reasons Kṛṣṇa is said to be dark is because he lives in the eyes of the ropīs, whose eyes are lined with kohl and this leaves a mark on him (Kumar 2007: 6–7). Kṛṣṇa is also described as kamala-patra-akṣa ‘lotus-eyed one’ (BhG 11.2; Prabhubpādā 1986:529). There are a number of references to eyes in relation to Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. A passage from Kṣemendra’s Daśāvatāracarita relates: ‘Could anyone’s eyes help drowning in him when he is addicted to passion, A trembling wave of love, delighting delightful young women?’ (Daśāvatāracarita 173; Miller 1975:665). If one takes these different interpretations into account, the eyes referred to in the verse are probably those of either Kṛṣṇa or his inamorata: Rādhā/the author/Muktābāī. However, unnayana as ‘raising’ or ‘lifting up’ (Chaturvedi 197:91; Molesworth 1857: 97) could be connected with jhūlana (swing), as I will discuss below.

A bhramara is a ‘large black bee’. The bee is regarded as acting like a lover in producing and drinking honey (Stoler Miller 1997:19). The bee was considered fickle, flirting with one flower then another (Goswami and Case 2006:54; Snell 1991:101), which is why Rādhā and the ropīs regarded Kṛṣṇa as a bhramara. The epithet was transferred to Uddhav, saying that like Kṛṣṇa he was dark and draped in yellow (Śūrṣāgar 36.2, Snell 1991:101; Goswami and Case 2006:54). There is a verse that connects

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1 The kadamba tree is Nauclea cadamba (Dhere 2011:298n2).
Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa through the metaphor of a bee: ‘Rādhā became his most beloved for his joy—like jasmine for a bee’ (Daśāvatāracarita 8.83, Durgāprasāda 1891:82.; Stoler Miller 1975:664). There are also references to bees in Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda (1.27; 1.28; 1.36, 11.4; Stoler Miller 1997:19) and one particular phrase connects both bees and eyes: ‘Lover, draw kohl glossier than a swarm of black bees on my eyes (12.12, Miller 1997: 124). The Bhāgavata Purāṇa (10.33.15) also mentions bees as part of the backdrop for Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs to perform the rāsa īlā:

The gopīs, with glowing faces, cheeks adorned with locks of hair, and lotus flowers behind their ears, were beautiful. They danced with the Lord in the circle of rāsa to the musical accompaniment of the bees complemented by the sound of their anklets and bangles. Wreaths of flowers feel from their hair.

(BhP 10.33.15; Olivelle 2003:141)

In this context bees form part of the setting in the glades and bowers of Vṛndāvan (Kinsley 1972:179). Consequently, the location for the interaction between Kṛṣṇa and his devotee/lover is most likely the forests of Vṛndāvan.

The term gupphā refers to a cave, cavern or place of retreat. In Marathi gumphā refer to a cave or thatched hut (Tulpule 1999:205)—presumably as a place of retreat—but it may also refer to ‘a sylvan abode of a yogi or devotee, a recess formed by intertwining boughs and creepers; an abode, a bower’ according to Molesworth (1857:240). The verb guphanē means ‘to wreathe, string together’ or ‘to get involved’ (Tulpule 1999:205). In Sanskrit gumpha connotes ‘tying or stringing’ as a garland, combining with each other while gupphā refers to a wreath or bunch of flowers, which may suggest a particular rasa. If one takes the setting to be Vṛndāvan it is likely that the verse is referring to an abode or bower in the forest, which may be strung with flowers. This is probable when one considers the term jhulana, as I mentioned above.

The term jhulanā, jhūlānā or jhālānā in Marathi means ‘swing’ (Molesworth 1857:332, 334) and the verb jhulānā in Hindi means ‘to swing; to rock; to keep in suspense/uncertainty’ (Caturvedi 1970:256). The jhūlān yātra ‘swing festival’ occurs in Śrāvaṇ, which is during the rainy season, and celebrates Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s love (Tripathy 2003; Māhāpātra 1989:118). The festival can last anywhere from one to thirteen days. In Vṛndāvan the festival starts on the third day of the bright fortnight of Śrāvaṇ and continues until the full-moon night. In the temple the deities are placed on a decorated swing for five days. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are offered flowers and prayers, and they are pushed on their swing. At the Jagannāth temple in Puri, the dolayātra (swing festival) begins on śukla daśamī (the tenth lunar day of month-bright fortnight) and continues for seven days until pratipadā (the first phase of the dark fortnight).

Lord Jagannāth’s representative Madanmārtanda and Eknāth are all attributed with composing gītagovinda (BhP 10.33.15; Olivelle 2003:141), there are also references to bees in Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda that are part of the backdrop for Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs to perform the rāsa īlā:

The gopīs, with glowing faces, cheeks adorned with locks of hair, and lotus flowers behind their ears, were beautiful. They danced with the Lord in the circle of rāsa to the musical accompaniment of the bees complemented by the sound of their anklets and bangles. Wreaths of flowers feel from their hair.

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Lord Jagannāth’s representative Madanmārtanda—the utsava mūrti (festival image)—the goddess Lakṣmī and Viswadhatri are placed on a decorated wooden swings and worshippers gather to witness the deities being swung and passages from Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda being recited (Khuntia 2004:4; Sri Sri Radha Govinda’s Julian Yatra’; ‘Jhulan Purnima’). The pushing of the swing constitutes a service to the deities, a means of entering into their pastime and a celebration of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s passionate union.

The rainy season, when the festival occurs, is considered a time of ‘lush sensuality’ (Stoler Miller 1994:57). After the heat of summer the forests are in bloom and full of buzzing bees. During the monsoon the air is humid so finding, or creating, a breeze is important and swinging is one the best ways to do this. The season of swinging is one of ‘wild freedom and delight’ states Hawley (1981:24). A swing ride suggests ‘rhythm and balance as the swing passes back and forth over the ground’ (Hawley 1981:27) and can be seen as an action that sets the powers of fertility in motion (Solomon 1970:44). Furthermore, swinging is a metaphor for sexual union or ‘erotic engagement’ (Lyons 1992:36; Hawley 1981:27; Khuntia 2004:49). Rādhā’s friends make and decorate a swing with garlands and creepers for her and Kṛṣṇa on a kadamba tree. The kadamba tree—a symbol for the love between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā (Ray 2003:155–6)—is said to carry Rādhā’s complexion in its yellow flowers. The kadamba is considered strong and beautiful, signifying that Rādhā can control Kṛṣṇa with her love. While the couple are swinging they are sprayed with rose-water, which may have a connection to the rasa mentioned in the verse. However, there could also be a connection between the kadamba and rasa as Purānic legend states

2 Muktābāī, Jhānadev and Eknāth are all attributed with composing jhokyāvarīl ovyā or ‘ovis [sung] on the swing’ by Pāṅgārkar (see Kiehnle 1997a:42, n.179, 180).
that the distillation of liquor is connected with the *kadamba* tree (Wilson 1840:571): Kṛṣṇa is said to have seen drops of liquor coming from a *kadamba* tree and to have drunk the liquor with his herdsmen and *gopīs* (Gupta 1971:25).

The story goes that Kṛṣṇa swung higher and higher—he is considered the king of pranksters—and faster and faster while the couple were swinging. This frightened Rādhā so much that she clung to him. The subsequent union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is said to resemble the flash of lightning in the middle of a rain cloud. Having accomplished his objective Kṛṣṇa allows the *sakhīs* to bring the swing to a stop. He then rides with Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *gopīs*, expanding himself to swing on swings with each of them (Kumar 2007). It is interesting to note that Muktābāī is said to have disappeared in a flash of lightning while performing a *kīrtan* (Ranade 2003:44), an idea which may be based on a Jñāneśvar *abhaṅga* (Ranade 2003:44–5). The author of this Hindi verse may be intimating that, like Rādhā, s/he were suddenly unified with the Lord.

The swing season is considered one of homecoming and reunion, and is the time when a woman visits her paternal home. There is a story that after a long wait Rādhā was collected from her in-laws by her brother Śrīdārmā and taken to Varsana (Barsana) where she was reunited with her family and friends. While she was at home Rādhā rocked to and fro with her brother on a swing. Kṛṣṇa—as a newlywed husband—was jealous of her departure so he disguised himself as a girl in order to join Rādhā and swing with her (Hawley 1981:27; Khuntia 2004:50). The suffering in separation (vιyoga) that Kṛṣṇa felt for Rādhā—and Rādhā and the *gopīs* felt for Kṛṣṇa—is therefore overcome by reunion (Hawley 1984:93–118). The illustrated manuscript of the *Devī Māhātyma* has an image of the goddess ‘seated in lalitāsana (a pose connoting ease or relaxation), on a swing suspended from a leafy branch, high above the peaks of her mountain abode’ (Lyons 1992:36). There are depictions of women swinging which date to back the first century C.E:

...women swinging from the branches of trees (that is, grasping a branch with one hand in order to swing the body, rather than sitting on a plank attached by ropes to the trees) are known as far back as Sāncī...such a female figure, a kind of vṛksadevatā [tree goddess], was associated with the flowering or fruiting of the tree.

(Lyons 1992:36)

There may therefore be a connection with fertility, a theme that is part of the swinging season, and swinging in trees. In the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, the goddess Tripurā-sundarī is called *kumārī* (virgin). Lyons asserts that *kumārī* signifies that the goddess was ‘unwed’ and ‘free from a husband’s control’ as she had ‘created the world, and continues to act in it according to her own, supremely free desire’ (1992:36). Lyons believes that the depiction of the goddess in the *Devī Māhātyma* is of the ‘young, playful, independent aspect of the goddess’ (1992:36). One can therefore make a connection between this conception of the goddess and Rādhā/Muktābāī/devotee utilising her love for Kṛṣṇa in order to gain union with him.

The fourth line of the verse is difficult to complete as the meaning of *dastayo* is uncertain. In Hindi the term *dast* may connote ‘from hand-to-hand’ or ‘hand-in-hand’ (Caturvedi 1970:308), while *dastā* refers to a [police or army] division as well as a bouquet of flowers (Caturvedi 1970:309). In Marathi *dasta*, a term with Persian derivations, refers to ‘a hand at cards’ as well as ‘power, authority, right’. The term *dastāvaya* (dastaivaja), connotes ‘a note of hand, a title deed, a bond, a signature. It is used loosely of anything...by which one may be bound in law (Molesworth 1857:405). The term *dastayo* clearly has a connection to ‘hand’, which suggests a bond or intimate connection between Kṛṣṇa and the disciple/devotee/lover who is termed bhāī (brother). I have left the translation unfinished as I could find no suitable term or expression in English.

The final line of the verse—ekase eka darśana pāye mahārāj Muktābāī—has been translated as ‘Mahārāj Muktābāī keeps having darśan, each one better than the other’ but it could equally read ‘Muktābāī has darśan of the mahārāj, one better than the other’ or ‘the mahārāj and Muktābāī have darśans of each other’. The key element is that darśan, the look and look returned, is occurring. The selection was made on the basis that the verse uses the signature ‘mahārāj a Muktābāī’, which is taken as identifying the Hindi compositions attributed to Muktābāī (Shrotriya 1993:26).
Muktābāī, remembered as the sister of Jānāśevar, probably did not compose this verse according to Shrotriya (1993:26). Moreover, three different Muktā’s have been identified by Kiehnle: a Muktā who was a pupil of Gorakhnāth according to Cāṅgadev’s Tatvasār and Visobā Khecar’s Šatsthāl; a Muktā who called herself the disciple of Nivṛttī, composed songs and instructed the yogī Cāṅgadev, and a Muktā who was a tapasvinī known to Cakradhār (d.1272 or 1274) the founder of the Mahānubhāvās (1997b:5).

The possibility of different Muktā’s highlights the issue of attribution, as does the difference between the signatures in the Marathi and Hindi compositions. The Marathi compositions attributed to Muktābāī use the signature or mudrā ‘Muktā’ while this verse refer to Muktābāī. Furthermore, the Marathi abhaṅgas explore the themes of advaita vedānta and nivṛttī dharma in the tāṭīce abhaṅgas (door verses), as well as the importance of the Name and attaining union with the Supreme. This Hindi verse falls into the category of mādhurya or madhurā bhakti, which is a form of bhakti not found in the Marathi compositions attributed to Muktābāī.

Mādhurya bhakti relates to the mādhuryabhāva with which it is performed. In this state the devotee approaches the Lord as if they were close relations and thus an inner relationship of love is fostered, which culminates in union with the Lord (Tipnis 1985: 235–238). Madhurā bhakti is formed of three main bhāvas: kāntābhāva, where the devotee looks upon the Lord as husband/beloved; gopībhāva, where the devotee considers themself the Lord’s gopī and engages in play with him, and sakhībhāva, where the devotee considers themselves the Lord’s female friend, companion or confidante. It may be possible to connect this form of bhakti and advaita (Brockington 2005:41) as some advaitin teachers regard the bath as an external form of meditation in which the individual becomes immersed in god (King 2005:173). In the same way one could imagine the author/subject—Muktābāī—so engrossed in Kṛṣṇa that the bond between them resulted in the realisation of non-difference. While this is conceivable it does not resolve the issue of authorship. Significantly, the first records of mādhurya bhakti in Marāṭhī are found in the works of Vamana Pandit (1618–95 C.E.). This tradition was carried forward by lāvani poets of the eighteenth century onwards (Novetzke 2005a:131, n.3). It is worth noting that the Vārkarī sampradāaya is regarded as ‘disassociated’ from mādhurya bhakti (Novetzke 2006:128), which might account for why compositions with that sentiment do not form part of its mainstream rhetoric or compendia.

However, Muktābāī is credited with being the first Marathi sant to compose songs in Hindi (Paradkar 1970) but limited information on this topic is available. The Nāth siddhas used songs to spread their teachings and Matsyendranāth has had songs in Old Hindi attributed to him (Kiehnle 1997a:15–16).

Consequently, there could be a linguistic link between Muktābāī and the Nāths via her brother Nivṛttīnāth (Sharma 1957). Hawley notes that Uddhav/Ūdho is presented as a Nāth yogī in the NPS Śūr Sāgur (NPS 4156.2-4, 4219.8-13, 4252.5-6, 4308.3, 4311.12, 4312.3-5 and 4430) but that Uddhav/Ūdho probably just ‘represents yoga in general’ (1981b:5, n.6). However, it is Nāmdev’s Hindi songs which are considered the first authentic Hindi compositions by a Marathi sant (Paradkar 1970). Whomever the author of this composition it connects both Hindi and mādhurya bhakti to the Vārkarī sampradāya to some extent.

3. Bahīṇābī’s ‘Hindi’ composition

Bahīṇābī is credited with composing pads (verses) and gaulans in Hindi (Kolhārkar 1929:115–121; Paradkar 1970:272). A gaulan, gaulanī or gavan is a milkmaid or cowherd woman (Tulpule 1999:212) and therefore refers to a ‘dialogue between Krishna and the milkmaids’ (Rege 2002:1044). One can therefore see a connection with the madhurā bhakti genre of the Hindi composition attributed to Muktābāī. However, Bahīṇābī is credited with composing twenty-two compositions in Hindi (although they often mix Marathi and Hindi) thirteen of which tell the story of Kṛṣṇa based on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (Shrotriya 1992:36; Jāvadekar 1979). These compositions, like the ones attributed to Bahīṇābī in Marathi use the signature bahīṇi kahe ‘Bahīṇī says’. However, the Hindi word bahīṇ (bahiṇi), like the Marathi word bahīṇa, means ‘sister’. The composition of the verse might therefore have been by someone connecting themselves to Bahīṇābī as a ‘sister’ or just using the term ‘sister’ as a generic term for a woman.
The Hindi compositions attributed to Bahinābāī (Jāvaḍekar 1979:161–64; 180–89, pade 390–404) begin with a description of Vasudev and Devakī’s astonishment at seeing Kṛṣṇa’s true form after he had been born (BhP 2.9–46, Bryant 2003:19–23) and explains that through the Lord’s blessing one may have peace (Jāvaḍekar 1979:161; Shrotriya 1992:37):

फूल बिना फल | जल बिना अंकुर | बिनपुरुष नहीं छाया।।
जलबिन कमलनी राविविन तेज आँग नहीं सब आया।।
तरु ताहां बीज | बीज नहां तरु है | दीपके पास प्रकाश।।
नर नांही नारी. पुष्प ताहां आविनाश।।
बहेणि कहे जिसकु हरी आवे वोहि है पुण्यकी रास।।
शाती क्षमा उसके घर सोवे | सबसी संपत्ति दास।।

Fruit without flower, buds without water; without man there can be no shelter.
Lotus without water, light without sun, one cannot exist without the other.
Where there is a tree there is seed and where there is a lamp there is light.
Where there is a man there is a woman, where there is a blessing there is permanence.

Bahiṇābāī then describes how Vasudev removes Kṛṣṇa from the palace, leaves him in Gokul and takes Yasoda’s daughter Maya back with him to Mathura. She concludes: ‘Bahini says, “Whoever is blessed by Kṛṣṇa, nothing can touch him”’ (Jāvaḍekar 1979:181, v.390).

In the next verse Bahiṇābāī says that she has become a bhāṭī, a bard or minstrel, through singing about Kṛṣṇa’s victories (Jāvaḍekar 1979:162, v.639). She congratulates Nanda and Yaśoda for gaining a son saying, ‘O Nanda do not make him downcast, Govind is Brahman himself’ (Jāvaḍekar 1979: 162, see v.399 p.176). She reminds Kṛṣṇa’s foster-parents and the hearer that although Kṛṣṇa is called Govind: ‘He is the Brahma in saṃsāra and his name is nirguṇa’ (Jāvaḍekar 1979:162). Despite the fact that Kṛṣṇa is nirguṇ nirākār paramātmyā ‘the qualityless, formless Supreme Soul’, the Bahinābāī Hindi compositions relate how Viṣṇu took various forms (ṛūpa)—or descent forms (avatāra)—as Kūrma, the ‘Tortoise’; Narasiṁha, the ‘Man-lion’; Parasurāma, the ‘axed-wielding Rāma’; Vāman, the ‘Dwarf’; Matsya, the ‘Fish’, and Varāha, the ‘Boar’ (Jāvaḍekar 1979:162, see v.640, p.300). Bahinābāī declares that Kṛṣṇa came to protect dharma and frighten away sin (Jāvaḍekar 1979:132, v.399 p.176).

The Bahinābāī ‘Hindi’ compositions can be appreciated for telling the story of Kṛṣṇa—an important practice in bhakti—and for the socio-religious critique they offer asserts Shrotriya (1992:39–40). Bahinābāī is not the only Marathi santakaviyatrī attributed with composing songs in relation to Kṛṣṇa—there are Janābāī songs about Kṛṣṇa’s youth—but the attribution of these compositions raise some interesting questions.

4. Conclusion

Why might Bahinābāī and/or Muktābāī be the only santakaviyatrīs credited with producing (so-called) Hindi poems? Muktābāī may have produced various forms of composition, including those in Hindi, due to Nāth influence. However, this does not explain the mādhurya bhakti theme, as that has little connection to the yogic concerns of the Nāths. Could their composing in Hindi be related to their caste or the

3 There are pads attributed to Bahinābāī, which use of the ‘signature’ bahinī kahe, in Kolhārkar (1929:115–121).
relationship with a male figure or guru? Muktābāī’s guru may have been Gorakhanāth or her brother Nivrīttināth (Kiehnle 1997b:5) while Bahiṇābāī is considered to have been a disciple of Tukārām, so might it be that Muktābāī and/or Bahiṇābāī composed in Hindi to honour their gurus. Might author(s) composing in the name of these women have sought a connection with these male figures? If so, then why are there no Hindi compositions attributed to women connected with Nāmdev, to whom a whole corpus of poems in Hindi is ascribed (see Callewaert 1989)? Moreover, what might the aim of composing songs in Hindi have been? It is possible that the songs in Hindi were a means of situating Hindi within Maharashtra, to honour the guru, to include mādhurya bhakti in the Vārkarī context, and/or promulgate the Vārkarī sampradāya beyond the confines of Marathi linguistic and socio-cultural borders. Why might an author have wanted to attribute their compositions in Hindi to these women specifically? Would it just have been a means of authorising their composition(s)? If that is the case it does not appear to have succeeded as the ‘Hindi’ compositions do not tend to appear in ‘authorised’ Vārkarī works like the Sakala Santa Gāthā. Did the author(s) wish to be connected to a life perceived to have been lived by a woman, a sant and exemplar, with whom s/he related? Was it a means of being in communion (satsaṅg) with these santakaviyatrīs and/or ‘the community of sants’, which is considered important in bhakti? These questions and probably others in relation to these Hindi compositions are as yet unanswered.
## APPENDIX F

THE HINDU CALENDER IN MAHARASHTRA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Month Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caitra</td>
<td>March–April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaiśākha</td>
<td>April–May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyeṣṭha</td>
<td>May–June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āṣāḍha</td>
<td>June–July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śrāvaṇa</td>
<td>July–August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhādrapada</td>
<td>August–September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āśvina</td>
<td>September–October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāṛttik</td>
<td>October–November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mārgaśirṣa</td>
<td>November–December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauṣa</td>
<td>December–January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māgha</td>
<td>January–February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phālguna</td>
<td>February–March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G:

CASTES, CLASSES AND TRIBES IN MAHARASHTRA

Andh: a tribe from the Nanded district
Beldār: stone-diggers and earth-workers, also called Waḍār
Bhandārī: a śūdra caste who make an alcoholic spirit from coconut trees
Bhangi: hereditary sweepers and scavengers, ex-‘untouchables’
Bhaṭ: Brahmans
Bhiḷā: a tribe found in the Dhule and Jalgaon districts
Brāhmaṇ: there are four Brahmans in Mahārāṣṭra: Chitpāvan, Deśastha, Karhḍā and Sāraswat
Cāmār: a leather worker or cobbler [Cāmār in Hindi]
Carmakār: a leather worker
Chāndrasenieya: a caste of writers (well-educated but below Brāhmans)
Chitpāvan: a Brahman caste who directed politics 1700–1920; also known as Koṅkaṇasthas (as they originate from the Koṅkaṇ)
Deśastha: a Brahman caste belonging to the deś
eśarch: Dhanagar: shepherds
Gamit [Gramit]: tribals from the Koṅkaṇ
Gavḷī: herders
Goṇḍ: a tribal group found in Bhandara, Chandrapur and Nanded districts
Gopāl: cowherders; a caste of ‘acrobats’, who break stones with their bare hands, lift great weights and perform feats of strength
Gurākhī: cow-keeper/herder
Gurav: a śūdra Śaivite caste; employed in temples, also musicians
Hāṭkar: a sub-caste of the Dhanagars
Jain: an adherent of the Jain tradition; Gujarati merchants or agriculturalists from southern Maharashtra, treated as a caste
Kaikadi: makers of twig baskets
Katkari: a forest tribe
Karhāḍā: a small Brahman caste originally from the Koṅkaṇ
Kāsār: braziers or workers in white/bell metal; makers or stringers of glass bangles
Kolhātī: ‘untouchables’; women are singers, dancers and prostitutes. Their current status is that of a nomadic tribe: Dulkar Kolhātī, Kham/Bhantu Kolhātī
Koḷī: fishermen, watermen found in Thane, Raigad, Nasik, Pune and Ahmednagar districts; priests with rights to offerings, particularly in Pandharpur temples
Kokana: a tribe
Koṅkaṇastha: a name for Chitpāvan Brahmans
Korku: a tribe from the Amaravati district
Koṣṭī: weavers
Kulkarni: Brahmans, traditionally village accountants
Kumbhār: potters
Kuṇbī: farmers, agriculturalists, or cultivators
Lingāyat: a member of the Vīraśaiva ‘sect’ that originates from Karnataka, treated as a caste in Maharashtra
Lohār: ironsmiths
Mahār: the largest ‘untouchable’ caste in Maharashtra; protagonists in the struggle for equality and in mass conversions to Buddhism
Mahadeo-Koḷī: agricultural tribe
Māḷī: gardeners
Māṅg/Māṅg: ‘untouchable’, caste of rope-makers, formerly executioners
Marāṭhā: the dominant agricultural caste of Maharashtra; a resident of Maharasthra
Mārwāḍī: businessmen, moneylenders originally from Marwar (the Jodhpur region of Rajasthan)
Nandīwālā: “One who works with bulls”, a nomadic tribe possibly originating from Andhra Pradesh
Nhāvī: barber
Parīṭ: washermen
Rāmośī: watchmen, formerly tribals
Sāḷī: weavers
Sāraswat: Brahmans with religious centres in the South
Saudāgar trader
Śīnpī: tailors
Śūdra: the fourth order of the varṇas; some Brahmans believe that all Maharashtrians except Brahmans and 'untouchables' are śūdras (Zelliot 1988:343–44)
Sonār: goldsmiths
Telī: oil pressers, oilmen
Ṭhākūr: a woodland tribe particularly associated with north Koṅkaṇ; a chief in certain castes
‘Untouchable’ there are three main ‘untouchable’ castes: Cāmbhārs, Mahārs and Māngs who are now generally referred to as dalits
Wāḍār/Beldār: stonebreakers, earth-workers
Vanjārī/Banjārī: carriers of grain and salt
Wāraḷī: a jungle tribe found particularly in north Koṅkaṇ
Wārik: barbers
Veśya: dancing girl, woman who dances in public, courtesan (harlot)
Vikar: weavers
## APPENDIX H:

**ARTICLES, CUTTINGS AND PROGRAMMES**

Plate 23: Jñāneśvar pākhī timetable 2 (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tīrtha</th>
<th>vār</th>
<th>dinānik</th>
<th>sakāḷī nighaṇyāce ṭhikāṇ</th>
<th>sakāḷacā visāvā</th>
<th>dupāracā naivedhya (bhojana)</th>
<th>rātrīcā mukkām</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The columns, left to right, read: tīrtha, holy place; vār, day of the week; dinānik, date; sakāḷī nighaṇyāce ṭhikāṇ, place of morning start; sakāḷacā visāvā, mornings' rest; dupāracā naivedhya (bhojana), noon's food offering to the deity (meal); rātrīcā mukkām, overnight place of halt.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>मिठी</th>
<th>वार</th>
<th>तिथि</th>
<th>दुपारचा मैदान व बोजन व परम ते देवसरे भाविक व रथवाणे</th>
<th>रामाच्या मुक्तामाणचा मैदान व बोजन पंत देवसरे भाविक व रथवाणे</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>जेप वाड 8/9</td>
<td>सोमवार</td>
<td>19/6/2006</td>
<td>आमदी (प्रधान) &lt;br&gt; श्री. विश्वनाथ ताकरकर प्रमोट अंद बिनंदा</td>
<td>आमदी (प्रधान) संस्था &lt;br&gt; श्री. मंगलेश चौधरी धननी सुम साहेब, सुम गोरम पायास पुणे</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>जेप वाड 10</td>
<td>मंगलवार</td>
<td>20/6/2006</td>
<td>कठमगाव &lt;br&gt; श्री. बाजाराहेब धापटे व श्री. रिसल (मांडवाळे)</td>
<td>पुणे मुक्तामाण &lt;br&gt; श्री. परेल बंधु पुणे</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>जेप वाड 19</td>
<td>संतुवार</td>
<td>21/6/2006</td>
<td>पुणे मुक्तामाण &lt;br&gt; श्री. तोलाबा सानुजी वेळे (पाटील)</td>
<td>पुणे मुक्तामाण &lt;br&gt; श्री. शांकरासां सोनवणे व सूरण गोवड</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>जेप वाड 12</td>
<td>शुक्लवार</td>
<td>22/6/2006</td>
<td>हंडपार &lt;br&gt; माजी नगराचेर श्री. दत्त बनकर सावानामाली नगर</td>
<td>सावानाड &lt;br&gt; श्री. रितिप वेळे (पाटील) मा. सारपंच &lt;br&gt; श्री. लक्ष्मणासां वेळे (पोलिस पाटील)</td>
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<tr>
<td>जेप वाड 13</td>
<td>शुक्रवार</td>
<td>23/6/2006</td>
<td>चाले, शिवारी &lt;br&gt; श्री. विश्वनाथ सोपानपाराव वेळे (पाटील)</td>
<td>चेजुरी &lt;br&gt; श्री. संतरास सिद्दे व श्री. बाजाराहेब किसन चिवावड, चिवावड</td>
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<tr>
<td>जेप वाड 14</td>
<td>शनिवार</td>
<td>24/6/2006</td>
<td>बाल्हे &lt;br&gt; श्री. राजभारा जाधव सरपंच, ने गाव</td>
<td>बाल्हे &lt;br&gt; श्री. मानसिदाचार जाधव</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jētakā odd 20</th>
<th>Rāvivara</th>
<th>29/6/2006</th>
<th>निर्रा</th>
<th>श्री मकंकर नमूने,</th>
<th>लोण्ड</th>
<th>श्री हरभाष महावान पातळे, पुणे.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>आषाढ़ शुक्ल 1</td>
<td>सोमवार</td>
<td>26/6/2006</td>
<td>लोण्ड</td>
<td>श्री रामचंद खास, पुणे</td>
<td>लोण्ड</td>
<td>श्री नितिन सोयन दासाले, पुणे.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>आषाढ़ शुक्ल 2</td>
<td>मंगलवार</td>
<td>27/6/2006</td>
<td>लोण्ड</td>
<td>श्री आवासबाळ रोडके पाटील</td>
<td>तारड़वाच</td>
<td>श्री राजाराम गावकावड, माळी सरपंच</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>आषाढ़ शुक्ल 3</td>
<td>बुधवार</td>
<td>28/6/2006</td>
<td>विवेके अंबडा</td>
<td>श्री राजामहाद जोरी प्रमोट अंबड किवड़ा</td>
<td>फलों या</td>
<td>वहां लांचर चलन शाहेंगाव, होळा बंधु</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>आषाढ़ शुक्ल 4</td>
<td>गुरुवार</td>
<td>29/6/2006</td>
<td>फलों या</td>
<td>श्री मानेसाहेब</td>
<td>फलों या</td>
<td>अग्रवाल बंधु</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>आषाढ़ शुक्ल 5</td>
<td>शुक्लवार</td>
<td>30/6/2006</td>
<td>पियेर दे</td>
<td>श्री राजेंद्र दादामहाराज टॉर्के, श्री मुलकावणा दोळे</td>
<td>वरड</td>
<td>श्री दिलीप उत्तर वाडे, मा. उपसरपंच</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>आषाढ़ शुक्ल 6</td>
<td>शनिवार</td>
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<td>5/7/2006</td>
<td>वांदरे - अंबडी नवदिन लोकम</td>
<td>वांदरे - अंबडी नवदिन लोकम</td>
<td>नामधे पूजा विद्यासाहेब मराठे व विकसन - सरकारी विद्यासाहेब</td>
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</table>

1 The columns, left to right, read: tīrtha, holy place; vār, day; dināṅk, date; dupāraṇā naivedhyā va bhojana va pangai deñāre bhāvik va sthal, noon food offering to the deity and meal given to the devoted in rows, and place; 441
Plate 26: Invitation to honour Ulhāsdādā Pavār, Wednesday (21st June 2006)

Muktābāī Mahārāj Belagānvakar and all the Vārkarīs of diṇḍī 59…
Honour Śrī Ulhāsdādā Pavār
Wednesday 21st June 2006 at 9 am, Pune district…
Nānāsāheb Navale,
Programme Organiser: Muktābāī Mahārāj Belagānvakar;
Chief Guests: Śrī Mahāvīr Jondhale (Editor of the ‘Daily Prabhāt’); ‘City-servant’ Śrī Vikās Maṭhkarī (Pune Municipal Corporation Corporator)
Organisers: Śrī Kṛṣṇa Śankar Candere, Śrī Dīlīprāv Buttamarāv Dagaḍ, Śrī Nāmdevrāv Genujī Candere, Muktābāī Mahārāj Belagānvakar’s institution, All Trustees and supporters of Diṇḍī 59.
At Gogate School, behind Modī Gaṇapatī, Nārāyaṇ Peṭh, Pune, 499030.

rātrīcyā mukkāmācā naivedya va bhojan pangat deṇāre bhāvik va sthal, overnight halt with food offering to the deity and meal given to the devoted in rows, and place.
Matter of faith and more...

The annual ‘palkhi’ draws unusual participants

By Snehil Sonawane & Giteesh Shekhe/TNN

Pune: A foreigner who is fascinated by the saint poets of India. A group of youngsters who think a pilgrimage will teach how to live in peace and harmony. An elderly couple who have tirelessly been drawing rangoli for the Sant Dnyaneshwar palkhi (palanquin) for half a century.

They are those who have been mesmerised by the power of faith that draws lakhs of pilgrims every year on the annual pilgrimage on foot from Dehu and Alandi to Pandharpur via Pune. They are among the young, old and the unusual participants in the 700-year-old tradition of the warkari community.

For rangoli-maker Vasant Thite (70), who has for 50 years been part of the annual pilgrimage from Alandi to Pandharpur on scooter along with his wife Subhashini (68), drawing rangoli for the palkhi is like service to God.

“We also teach the art of rangoli to students in various villages on our way to Pandharpur,” Thite said. He is always in the forefront in social service, including assistance for the earthquake victims in Gujarat and soldiers engaged in the Kargil war.

The life of saint poets in India, including Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram, has always fascinated Jacqueline Daukes, a Briton who will be travelling on foot with the warkaris from Vilaspur to Pandharpur. In India on her second visit for research, Jacqueline is studying the Bhakti literature for her post-graduation. “It’s amazing how the warkaris travel all the way on foot with only faith in God in their hearts. They are willing to put themselves to hardship only because of their devotion.”

She pointed to the devotion of Mukta Balkar, one among a few women to lead a dindi in the Dnyaneshwar palkhi procession. Balkar, who hails from Beed district, has been undertaking the pilgrimage since the age of eight. “As a warkari, I have accompanied the palkhi for 25 years, and as a dindi pramukh, I have completed another 25 years,” she said.

Leaving behind luxuries of life for the 21-day pilgrimage on foot is a group of youngsters who have been inspired by devotion. On his eighth pilgrimage from Alandi to Pandharpur is Bhushan Narkhode (25) from Jalgaon, for whom the journey teaches many lessons of life. “It teaches us to live with peace and harmony with each other in spite of adverse situations. It increases our tolerance and we learn to face hardships in life,” he said. Narkhode has inspired his cousins and friends too, many of whom have joined the pilgrimage.
Plate 28: Tukārām and Jñāneśvar Pālkī timetables (2006)
Plate 29: Map detailing the route of the Jāneśvar and Tukārām pālkīs to Paṇḍharpūr²

² Thanks to Dr. Mukta Garsole for having this and the subsequent map made for me.
Plate 30: Birth and work/samādhi place of Vārkarī female sants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SANT</th>
<th>BIRTHPLACE</th>
<th>WORKPLACE/SAMĀDHI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Muktābāī</td>
<td>Apegaon (or Alandi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Janābāī</td>
<td>Gangakhed</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Soyarābāī</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Kānhopātrā</td>
<td>Mangalvedha</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Gaṅgabāī</td>
<td>Rashin</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Girijābāī (Eknāth’s wife)</td>
<td>Vijapur (or Bijapur)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bhāgūbāī (Tukārām’s daughter)</td>
<td>Dehu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Goṇāāi</td>
<td>Kalyan</td>
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<td>10</td>
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