

## BYPASSING WOMEN – THE UNSUNG HEROES, BY MEMORY, HISTORY AND HAGIOGRAPHIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Medieval Bhakti movement as well as Sufism witnessed an outpouring of literature in the Indian subcontinent. The female bhakti-poets, such as Andal Ranganayaki Alvar, Akka Mahadevi, Gangasati, Muktabai, Janabai, Lal Ded, So-yarabai, Nirmala, Kanhopatra, Tallapaka Thirumalamma (Timmakka), Molla, Meera (Mirabai), Bahinabai, etc., and the women Sufis, such as Bibi Fatima Sam, Bibi Hafiz Jamal, Mai Sahiba (Bibi Zulekha), Bibi Jamal Khatun, Bibi Ajiba, the Mughal princess – Jahanara Begum, etc., who came from all walks of life, also left their unforgettable impressions on these movements. Mostly, they stood as individuals asserting their identities in their own right. Many of them were even persecuted by the state and religious authorities when their popularity threatened their male counterparts or when they supposedly entered the so-called “male domain”. Most of them gained only posthumous recognition and reverence. Similarly, Sikhism also narrates legends about the Sikh gurus and warriors but the published record about various Sikh women such as Rani Jindan, Mai Bhag Kaur, Mata Sahib Devan, etc. is not more than a couple of inches of print. Have women not been written out of history? Do women really deserve no place in the memories of the generations to come? Should they play no role in shaping their spiritual lives? The paper seeks to highlight, investigate and question the discriminatory treatment meted out to women by historical narratives and hagiographies in the light of the Medieval Bhakti movement, Medieval Indian culture, society and norms; Dadu Panth, Sikhism and Sufism.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Aestheticism VS Feminism, Bhakti, Cosmopolitanism VS Feminism, Dadu Panth, Hagiographies, History and Culture – Ancient, Medieval, Post-Medieval, Marginalisation of Women, Sikhism, Sufism*