CHAPTER 3 –
THE SILENT SELF-RAMABAI RANADE’S
RANADE- HIS WIFE’S REMINISCENCES

Ramabai Ranade’s Marathi autobiography *Amachya Ayushvatil Kahi Athavani* was published by Anath Vidyarthi Gruha, Pune in 1910. Its English version, *Ranade- His Wife’s Reminiscences* by Kusumavati Deshpande, was published by Publications Division, New Delhi in 1960. It was the first Marathi autobiography by a woman. It belonged to an age when the Indian woman had recently begun to evolve into an independent individual, when she was still under the shadow of her husband. Naturally enough, the book is centred round the husband - the self has been relegated to the background.

Ramabai Ranade was the wife of Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade, who was a great social reformer, a distinguished judge, a scholar and a writer. After his death, Ramabai Ranade often used to share her reminiscences of him with others. As her adopted daughter, the late Mrs. Sakhubai Vidwans – requested her to write down those reminiscences, Ramabai Ranade wrote the book. This background of the book tells us that the woman of the age needed inspiration from someone else to write an autobiography. This is not surprising because in an age when the woman had only recently found her voice, she could be hardly expected
to handle a highly individualistic literary form like the autobiography on her own.

The title of the Marathi book — *Amachya Ayushyatil Kahi Athavani* — is in perfect keeping with that age—it refers to ‘our’ life, not ‘my’ life. The subtitle of the Marathi book—*Swatahasambandhi Kahi Goshti*—is also significant in this context, as it clearly indicates that the book is more about the husband than about the self. The title of the English version of the book *Ranade—His Wife’s Reminiscences* also stresses Ranade rather than his wife.

The book has been dedicated to the late Mrs. Sakhubai Vidwans, the writer’s adopted daughter who had inspired the book. It is remarkable that instead of dedicating the book to the husband, Ramabai Ranade has chosen to dedicate it to her daughter, that too in an age when the very birth of a girl-child was supposed to be unwelcome. According to Pramila Kapur, by 1800 a.d. the position of the women had deteriorated to such an extent that

\[\text{She had almost no status in society and none in her own estimation.}^{2}\]

Here we find an indication of the fact that with their getting educated, the position of women improved in their own estimation.

Just like the dedication, the introduction also reveals the Indian woman’s growing awareness of the importance of women. In spite of
being written in an age when a daughter was looked down upon and discriminated against, the introduction is all praise for the daughter. The first sentence of the introduction - 'A daughter is tender-hearted by nature' - may be construed as a subtle refutation of the popular Indian belief that a son is preferable to a daughter. The writer's introduction is generally supposed to tell us something about the writer's own self or the book. This introduction talks more about the daughter than about the writer's self or the book, which shows that the woman of the age was shy of talking about herself - that she had a tendency to bring others to the fore and relegate herself to the background.

The book begins and ends with a verse by Saint Tukaram- a legendary Marathi saint-poet. These verses give some kind of symmetrical framework to the book. Even though both these verses are actually addressed to the Divine, here they subtly refer to the husband and so the idea of the husband being equivalent to the Divine is implied in it. In this first autobiography, we find the position of husband equivalent to the Divine but in the later autobiographies, we find women getting an equal position as their husbands.

The scope of the self-portrait has been delimited by the fact that the book was originally intended to be a biography of the husband. Naturally enough, the focus of the narration is upon the husband than upon the self. As the Marathi book Kai Shrimati Ramabai Ranade by
Umakant tells us, Ramabai Ranade had given some details regarding the self in the original manuscript of the book. She deleted those details while making a final draft of the book because they had no bearing upon the husband. When it comes to talk about herself, Ramabai Ranade at times appears to be apologetic about it. In the first chapter, she gives us a number of details regarding the ancestry of her husband but when it comes to tell us about her own ancestors, she somewhat apologetically gives a clarification before telling us about them-

I shall give a full account of my own marriage later. But a brief account of my family would not be out of place here.  

At another place, while writing about a severe ailment of her husband, she tells us that an old sickness of hers had also become more intense at that time. She seems to be reluctant to give even this significant detail about herself - it has been preceded by a long clarification –

When I began to write this account, I had no intention of saying much about myself. I think I have succeeded more or less in my intention up to now. But one of the strange things in life is that a wife is like the shadow of her husband. You can not avoid her even if you wish to, while speaking of him.  

Though the husband is at the centre and the self is thus relegated to the background, the self-portrait that emerges from the book is vivid to a certain extent for the reason that the lives of the husband and the wife are often inextricably mixed up with each other. So when the wife gives us an
account of the husband’s life, it is bound to reveal the wife herself – at least to a certain extent.

Ramabai Ranade is a woman of wide intelligence, which is reflected by the mature thoughts she expresses at times. While talking about a woman called Annapurnabai Bhandarkar and her happy family, she observes,

> It is very true that if the lady of the family is loving, pious, industrious, all the people in the family are happy, well-behaved and hard-working. Their days are spent in peace and joy and they come to feel that heavenly bliss is possible even here and now in earthly life.

All these thoughts are conventional, without much depth, and the husband-centred nature of the book has delimited the number of such thoughts. Even then they are significant as they reveal the fact that with her getting educated, the woman began to think on her own.

She has some poetic sensitivity, which leads her to appreciate the beauty of nature. So she makes a detailed and vivid description of the Oriya gardens at Kalka. According to Mr. Anand Yadav, an eminent Marathi writer and critic, a good autobiography should explore three kinds of relationships: man’s relationship with himself, with others and with nature. While most of the autobiographies generally deal with man’s relationship with himself and others, his relationship with nature generally remains unexplored. So it is remarkable that Ramabai Ranade’s
autobiography reveals the man-nature relationship, though it brings out only a single dimension of that relationship—man admiring the beauty of nature.

In spite of this intelligence and poetic sensitivity, Ramabai Ranade does not seem to have much of independent individuality. According to the Archetypal theory, the self is made up of the elements inherited from the father and the mother but one has to get away from the parental mould in order to become a complete individual. In the opinion of Jung,

Though it is a misfortune for a child to have no parents, it is equally dangerous for him to be too closely bound to his family. An excessively strong attachment to the family is a severe handicap in his later adaptation to the world, for a growing child is not destined to be forever the child of his parents. 6

Unfortunately, as the hold of the patriarchal system was very strong, it was difficult for a child—a girl child especially—to break away from the parental mould. So Ramabai Ranade also remains under parental influences all her life.

According to the archetypal theory, the child’s psyche, prior to the stage of ego-consciousness, has primordial images of the Father and the magical figure of Magna Mater, which the child tries to project upon his individual father and mother. Even though in the course of time the primordial image of the mother wanes, it still continues to exercise its influence upon the psyche-
As life proceeds the primordial image fades and is replaced by a conscious, relatively individual image, which is assumed to be the only mother-image we have. But in the unconscious the mother always remains a powerful primordial image, coloring and even determining throughout our life our relations to women, to society, to the world of feeling and fact, yet in so subtle a way that, as a rule, there is no conscious perception of the process.

As patience and tolerance are considered to be the highest virtues for a woman in the patriarchal system, her mother often tolerates the irascible nature of the husband. Ramabai Ranade has also inherited this quality from her, which makes it difficult for her to openly rebel against elders. The mother is extremely devoted to the husband- she believes that the husband should be guru and God for the wife. She considers the husband as her guru, even receives a ‘guru mantra’ from him and devoutly recites the mantra.

Ramabai Ranade has inherited the same highly reverential attitude towards the husband. The husband is a guru for her- it is the husband who gets her educated, encourages her to participate in public life, teaches her to patiently bear with the insults made by the elders in the family or to thriftily manage household affairs, punishes her whenever she goes wrong. The husband is a master for her- in spite of being a social reformer, the husband expects her to serve him and she also believes that the real purpose of a woman’s life is serving the husband. This bears out
the observation made by Abbe J.A.DuBois regarding Hindu women in
1906 that their only vocation was 'to minister to men's physical wants
and needs'. For Ramabai Ranade, the life of a woman is meaningless if
she is not able to serve the husband. This shows the power politics played
by men—women were conditioned into believing that their lives were for
serving the husband only. Her repressed maternal instincts have been also
diverted to the husband—Ranade fills up the void the absence of children
has left in her life.

For her, the husband is the only refuge in the world and so naturally
enough, the very thought of the death of the husband often scares her.
When Ranade falls seriously ill at Karmalen, a doctor called Dr. Vishramji
has been invited to examine him. When he arrives, she simply falls at his
feet and prays him to save the husband. This is not just love for the
husband— it is fear of being orphaned with the death of the husband. His
death comes as a great shock for her— it means the end of the world for
her.

Of course, she is more progressive than the mother in certain
matters—she is not only an obedient disciple or servant for the husband
but also a friend and a counselor for him. Thus, she makes fun of the
husband in a friendly way at times. This shows that the husband-wife
relationship of the age had slowly begun to change. Similarly, at least
because the husband is educated and progressive, she has some
opportunities of exchanging thoughts with him—she questions some of his
decisions and offers him some advice at times. Thus, when Ranade keeps
writing a judgement for four hours, even without getting up for answering
the call of nature, he has to physically suffer a lot for it and so she scolds
him.

As far as her relations with the father are concerned, in the
opinion of Jung,

The mother's influence is mainly on the Eros
of her son...but the father exerts his Influence on
the mind or spirit of his Daughter...on her 'Logos'.

So her spirit is always influenced by her father and the patriarchal values
she
inherits from him. At the time of her marriage, her father advises her,

Listen girl, you are going to your father-in-law's.
It is a family of many relations— even step-relations.
There are many dependents too. You are my daughter.
Let your demeanor be worthy of your family.
Put up with everything patiently, however unbearable
it might be; but never answer back— not even servants.
That is one thing. The other is that even if things
are unbearable, don’t carry tales about anyone to your
husband. Not only families, but empires can be
ruined by tale-telling. Remember these two rules
and you will get all you wish for. You are fortunate.
Remember my words. If I ever learn that you have
behaved contrary to this I shall never bring you
back to your mother's home again.

She absorbs these values and puts them to practice, partially
because she is afraid of being denied access to the mother's house again.
Even at the time of writing the autobiography, she seems to be subtly
under the influence of the fatherly value of not complaining against elders. Thus, while narrating the incident of her reading a scrap of English newspaper in the presence of elders- which is a sin in the eyes of the elders of the family- and being scolded for it, she seems to put the blame on herself rather than the elders.

I was sweeping the middle hall. In the midst of it, I came across a piece of English newspaper. In my youthful enthusiasm, I thought I had attained proficiency in what I had just begun to learn and that I would be able to read it. So I put down the broom and stood trying to read the piece of paper.

Here she mocks herself and tries to make it appear that the real fault in this case lies with herself and not with the elders. This shows the extent to which the fatherly values can play upon the mind of the daughter. Her lack of formal schooling and limited relationship with the outside world may have strengthened the influence of the fatherly values. Yet it is significant to note that she has got the courage to describe all the sufferings she has undergone at the hands of the in-laws in her autobiography, which is a deviation from the norms the father has laid down for her. Of course, she did not have the courage to criticize the in-laws when they were alive- we learn from the book Ramabai Ranade-Vyakti ani Karya by Mr.M.S.Vidwans that Ramabai Ranade published the book in 1910 only after their deaths in 1907-08.
Apart from the parents, the values of the family of the in-laws also influenced the personality of the woman of the age. Being married off at the very impressionable age of nine, she naturally assimilates the values of that family. In the family of Ramabai Ranade’s in-laws, the elderly women are treated with utmost respect— it is something like a sin to disobey them or to answer them back. When even Ranade himself answers back to an elderly woman in the family, he profusely regrets it and even years after this incident, he feels guilty about it.

With the patience and tolerance she has inherited from the mother and the patriarchal values she has inherited from the father as well as the value system she has adopted from the in-laws’ family, it is not surprising that she is not able to openly defy elders. After her marriage to Ranade, he makes her get educated, which has been opposed by the elderly women of the family. According to the archetypal theory, the mother often becomes ‘terrible mother’ when the son or the daughter challenges her values. The elderly women of the family also put on the role of the ‘terrible mother’— they often taunt, parody or insult her for getting educated. Significantly enough, the men of the family are keen upon getting the women educated but opposition to women’s education comes from women themselves. It is also significant to note that Tai Sasubai and Vansa, the leaders of the ‘opposition party’, themselves know reading and writing but they oppose her education. This shows how the patriarchal
ideas of women themselves could be detrimental to women’s education. Of course, this is quite understandable because even in a progressive nation like England, women had no access to school education at this time. In her autobiography The Hard Way Up, Hannah Mitchell tells that in 1870, school education was a male prerogative. At home, while girls were supposed to work, boys were free to study or read. While she darned her brother’s stockings,

They read or play cards or dominoes. Sometimes the boys helped with rug making, or in cutting up wood or picking feathers, for beds and pillows, but for them this was a voluntary task, for the girls, it was compulsory, and the fact that the boys could read if they wished filled my cup of bitterness to the brim. 

So it is not surprising that Ramabai Ranade should be denied access to education by the elders in her family. Ramabai Ranade can neither answer them back nor can she complain against them to the husband- all that she can do is to weep silently. Of course, she does silently defies their authority- she continues with her studies in spite of their harassment but she never has the courage to openly confront them. She often needs the emotional support of Ranade- who becomes ‘the wise old man’ for her- while putting up her silent rebellion. In the view of Jung,

The figure of the superior and helpful old man tempts one to connect him somehow or other with God.
Naturally enough, the book projects Ranade as a thoroughly ‘spiritual’ person—she meticulously records things like his eating less or growing indifferent to worldly affairs and getting absorbed in some kind of spiritual contemplation in the last phase of his life, which has been significantly termed as the ‘spiritual’ phase. She occasionally treats him as the Divine—while dealing with his singing the ‘abhangas’ of Saint Tukaram in the morning, she tells us,

In the mellow light of the dawn, his face appeared to me so gentle and gracious, indeed so godly, that tears would well up from my heart in reverence and love. When I was alone, I often thought that although I regarded him from the point of view of an earthly relationship, there was such divine power and godliness in him.  

After his death, contemplating over his radiant face is something like a spiritual exercise for her—

Even in my desolate state, at present, I forget all my misfortune and feel an intense joy when I think of that face. I lose myself for hours in contemplation of that image. I feel lost and restless if I am disturbed in such communion.

The verses of Saint Tukaram quoted at the beginning and the end of the book and the dream she sees when the husband is seriously ill are also significant in this context. The banyan tree in that dream is an archetypal image—in the Indian collective unconscious, the banyan tree has been always held as something divine, because it is under the banyan tree that Savitri is supposed to have brought Satyavana, her husband, back from
the door of death. Apart from that, the banyan tree is also something holy for the Indian mind because of its association with Lord Dattatreya. The Krishna, on the banks of which the tree stands, is also an archetypal image. Just like the banyan tree, rivers have been also something sacred-equivalent to the Divine-for the Indian mind and so naturally enough, the banyan tree stands in the vicinity of the Krishna.

It is only because of the support of this ‘wise old man’ that she can continue with her studies. Fortunately for her, Ranade has been transferred to Nashik, which saves her from the elderly women of the house. Later on he has been again transferred to Pune, which again brings her into confrontation with the elderly women of the house. This time round, not only her education but her participation in public life and getting associated with an unconventional woman like Pandita Ramabai has been frowned upon by the elderly women. Again she puts up a rebellion against them- a silent one, of course, and that too with the help of ‘the wise old man’. She counts upon this help and when she does not receive it, it disappoints her. Thus, when she delivers her first public speech in English, she has been wildly abused by the elderly women for it and she regrets the fact that Ranade does not defend her at that time.

It needs to be remembered that in those days, even man was a servant of the patriarchal system. Ranade, her ‘wise old man’, himself is afraid of confronting his father-as far as possible he gets things done
through someone else. If direct talk is unavoidable, he speaks with the father in the fewest words, and that too very respectfully. He has to marry Ramabai Ranade against his wishes because his father wants him to. He is so much emotionally dependent upon his father that he does not even attend the funeral of the father as he can not bear with the bereavement. In such a situation, it is very difficult to expect a woman like Ramabai Ranade to openly rebel against elders.

Yet the truth of the matter is that she is not a rebel in the real sense of the term. She is a traditionalist at her core- thus, at Annapurnabai’s discourse, she refuses to sit with the reformist women. After getting home, she tells about it to Tai Sasubai- the chief of the orthodox elderly women in the family- with pride and revels in the appreciation she receives from Tai Sasubai for it. She believes that education should make women more obedient to her elders and husband. She does not have a real passion for learning- she gets educated just to please the husband. She is firstly negligent to her studies- in the beginning of her educational career, Ranade appoints a tuition teacher for her but she just whiles away her time during the tuition hours. It is only when the tuition teacher complains about it to the husband and leaves the services that she gets interested in learning. Of course, at the time of going in for education, she is just nine years old and so arguably too small to understand the real value of education. Yet in her adulthood
also, she does not seem to be much interested in learning. Thus, while the couple is on a visit to Calcutta for few months, Ranade learns Bengali and wants her to do the same but she tries to avoid it. So the silent rebellion she puts up against the elders is not born out of the courage of convictions- it seems to be just a way to please the husband. If she had got the misfortune of having an orthodox husband rather than a progressive person like Ranade, she would not have dreamed of getting educated or participating in public life against the wishes of elders.

In the ultimate analysis, it may be said that in spite of her intelligence and poetic sensitivity, Ramabai Ranade can never shake off the influence of the value system she has absorbed from her father, mother and in-laws’ family. Yet she seems to have the ability to slightly get away from the pattern laid down by the conservative society of the age. She seems to have got a feeble voice, which she expresses through her autobiography.

The self-portrait has been delineated with honesty, humility and boldness. Nowhere does Ramabai Ranade try to hide her mistakes or gloss over them-she does not hesitate to tell us things like her ‘stealing’ mangoes from someone’s mango tree and being scolded by the husband for it. In an age when the Indian woman was supposed to be shy about talking about her husband or expressing her love for him, Ramabai Ranade has boldly given free expression to her love for the husband.
Similarly, self-glorification is conspicuous by absence in the book. Instead, when it comes to talk about herself, Ramabai Ranade often talks with modesty. When she is to undergo an operation, her thoughts run like this-

The only merit I possessed in life was to be born in a decent family. Apart from that, I had neither looks nor complexion, virtue nor wisdom, nothing that would have made me worthy of my husband. It was only by God’s grace that I was blessed with such a partner in life and with a sense of utter fulfillment.  

This modesty seems to have been carried too far. The Marathi book Ramabai Ranade- Vyakti ani Karya by Mr.M.S.Vidwans, the grandson of Ramabai Ranade, as well as a biographical note regarding Ramabai by the same writer, which has been added to Ramabai Ranade’s autobiography, inform us that she performed a lot of social work during Ranade’s lifetime – the period with which this book deals- but she is silent on this.

While talking about the ailments of the husband, she allows probes in the inner recesses of her mind through dreams, conflicts of feelings, thoughts or prayers. Her vivid description of the dream that she sees during Ranade’s illness at Karmalen is also significant in this context- it touches upon her subconscious mind. It indicates how real things take on symbolic forms in the subconscious mind and project themselves before the eye of the mind in a dream.
As the book was mainly intended to be a biography of Ranade, it presents a very vivid and comprehensive portrait of him. Ranade— as she has portrayed him— is a man of great intelligence, wide reading, modesty, self-respect, intensely devout nature, immense love for nature, sincerity, straightforwardness, cautiousness in dealing with people, shrewdness, practical wisdom, love for society, reformist views, patience, tolerance but occasional irascibility, equanimity.

The only thing which somewhat mars the comprehensiveness of this portrait is that the book does not reveal Ranade’s public life in its entirety. That is quite understandable because Ramabai was not much of an active participant in Ranade’s public life and so she probably did not know it entirely. Besides, at the time the book was written, Ranade’s public life was too well-known to bear repetition. It was Ranade the private man whom the common Marathi reader wanted to know from a book written by his wife. Naturally enough, the book concerns itself more with Ranade’s private life than public one.

The portrait has been drawn with objectivity. Thus, Ramabai Ranade does not hide or gloss over the shortcomings in Ranade’s personality. This objectivity is remarkable because at the time the book was written, Ranade was a highly venerated person— Gopal Krishna Gokhale’s introduction to the book shows the high esteem in which he was held by the people of the age. The book Ramabai Ranade— Vyakti ani
Karva by Mr. M.S. Vidwans tells that after the death of Ranade, some people who considered him to be a demi-god put flowers of gold on his head. It requires a lot of courage to expose the human weaknesses of such a highly revered person. We learn from the same book that after Ramabai Ranade’s autobiography was published, some critics accused it of indulging in self-glorification and slighting the greatness of Ranade. This kind of criticism is quite understandable because in an age when the wife was supposed to hold the husband with extreme respect, the common Marathi reader could hardly appreciate the idea of a wife publicizing the faults of her husband. It is certainly to the credit of Ramabai Ranade that even at the risk of inviting this kind of criticism, she had the ability and courage to project her husband as a flesh-and-blood human being rather than the embodiment of perfection.

This objectivity has been marred by the fact that - as the book Kai. Shrimati Ramabai Ranade by Umakant tells us - she had written some ‘controversial’ reminiscences regarding Ranade in the original manuscript of the book but she deleted them from the final draft of the book. Similarly, at a place, she vehemently defends her husband against the charge that when it came to remarry, he married a child like herself instead of marrying a widow. She says that Ranade did so in deference to the wishes of his father –

Two principles were sacred to him- never to go
against the word of his father, and never to disturb the peace and well-being of his family. For this, he gave up a view which he had accepted as correct over a long time, the principle of the justice of widow-remarriage. He gave up his valued friendships. He even flung away his self-respect and the esteem arising from it. For the sake of his principle of devotion to the parental word, he faced the ridicule and lasting calumny of society.  

As Dr. Vimal Bhalerao has observed, Ramabai Ranade here ignores the fact that Ranade did not obey the father at times. Her projection of the husband as the only intellectual leader of Pune also mars the objectivity of the portrayal.

The portrait has been drawn with sympathetic understanding. After his marriage with her, on returning home, Ranade speaks to no one- he goes to his own room and locks himself in. No wife can appreciate this kind of behavior on the part of her husband on the wedding day but Ramabai Ranade tries to sympathetically understand it –

It was just about a month since he had lost his wife, who had been like a comrade to him. That great grief was yet fresh in his mind. To add to that, he had had to yield to his father’s stern insistence and marry again entirely against his resolve. …It was natural, then, that the night of his sacred wedding should be one of agony for him.  

The nature of the book being husband-centred, the number of other outstanding pen-portraits in the book is limited. The book Kai. Shrimati Ramabai Ranade by Umakant tells us that in the original manuscript of the book, Ramabai Ranade had included some significant details
regarding her mother but she excluded them from the final draft of the book as they were not related with Ranade!

Even then the book has few remarkable pen-portraits of characters like Mamanji, Tai Sasubai, Vansa, Vithu uncle, Sakharam Naik. Some of these characters are representatives of their age and individuals in their own right: the character of Tai Sasubai is a case in point. On the one hand, she is an orthodox woman - even the husband and the wife sitting closely together at a public place is something like a sacrilege for her. On the other hand, she is a woman of generosity who does not bear a permanent grudge against anybody. While her orthodoxy makes her a representative of the conservative women of the age, her generosity makes her an individual in her own right.

The characters of Vansa and Ranade are in contrast with each other. In spite of being younger than Ranade, Vansa is more shrewd and practical than Ranade. Even as a child, she can see through the mother’s trick of giving water in place of ghee to Ranade while he is gullible enough to be taken in by this trick. Being thus contradictory to each other, these characters illuminate each other.

All these pen-portraits have been drawn objectively. The objectivity in the portrayal of Tai Sasubai is specially remarkable because even though she has opposed Ramabai Ranade’s education and
participation in public life, Ramabai Ranade has good words to say about her.

The portrait of Sakharam Naik is drawn with sympathetic understanding. Even though Sakharam often distorts ‘abhangas’ and misinterprets them, Ramabai Ranade tries to sympathetically understand this. It shows that in spite of getting educated, she does not look down upon uneducated people. She tells us that people like Sakharam can not be blamed for their misinterpretation of ‘abhangas’ –

It is all due to their blind traditional faith. They cling to it in simple-hearted piety. They never try to think. That’s all. 19

She also has the knack of evocatively narrating an incident. Interestingly enough, even if she has not actually witnessed a particular incident, she can describe it evocatively- the incident of Ranade’s last meeting with his father was not actually witnessed by her but she describes it in vivid details.

Ramabai Ranade has not made any kind of experimentation with the narrative-technique- she has generally related all the incidents in a chronological order. This is quite understandable- in an age when even men’s Marathi literature was generally conventional in nature, innovativeness or experimentation were the last things to be expected from this first Marathi autobiography of a woman.
It is very rarely that Ramabai Ranade uses ‘literary’ language. There are just few similes in the book. As the world of the woman of the age was limited, the range of these similes is also limited but certain similes bear distinct marks of the Indian woman’s expanding world of knowledge. While dealing with the matter of Ranade’s taking a cup of tea at the hands of a missionary girl and his consequent ostracisation, she says,

The city was cleft into two sections, like the bright half and the dark half of the lunar month.

While talking about her chronic illness, she says,

Like the stone image in Arabian Nights, my body was growing heavy and numb from my feet upwards, up to my waist.

Ramabai Ranade has not made any experimentation with language but nothing is surprising about that as at the time the book was written, linguistic experimentation was a rarity even in men’s Marathi literature. So it is the last thing to be expected from this first Marathi autobiography by a woman.

In conclusion, it can be said that the book is remarkable for its interesting self-portrait, portrait of the husband and some other pen-portraits, absorbing narrative-technique and unartificial language-style. Yet one of the limitations of the book is that the husband-centred nature of the book has not allowed the writer to give full expression to the self.
The next chapter will deal with a book that overcomes this limitation of the women’s autobiographies and articulates the self very comprehensively.
References

1 Kusumavati Deshpande, tr. *Ranade—His Wife’s Reminiscences*. Delhi: Publications Division, 1963. (All subsequent references will be taken from this edition)


4 Ibid.190.

5 Ibid.74.


11 Ibid.186.
12 As quoted by Dr. Suhasini Tapaswi in *Feminine Sensibility in the Novels of Margaret Drabble*. Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2004. 4.


15 Ibid. 152.

16 Ibid. 94.

17 Ibid. 32.

18 Ibid. 32.

19 Ibid. 62.

20 Ibid. 127.

21 Ibid. 192.