

Book Review-2

Pushpa M Gaikwad, Bhaktipanthacha Jatividroh v Strimuktichya Prerana Ambedkarwadi paridrushtine Aakalan, Pune, Hariti Publication, 2017, pp.320, ISBN-978-81-933211-4-0

The Bhakti movement has traditionally been considered as an influential social reformation in Hinduism and provided an individual-focussed alternative path to spirituality regardless of one's caste of birth or gender. Postmodern scholars question this traditional view and whether the Bhakti movement ever was a reform or rebellion of any kind. They suggest Bhakti movement was a revival, reworking and recontextualization of ancient traditions. In the same point of view Prof. Gaikwad works on *Bhaktipanthacha Jatividroh v Strimuktichya Prerana Ambedkarwadi paridrushtine Aakalan* is her first book based on her Ph.d. thesis. In the history, there are many approaches to writing history, but Prof. Gaikwad followed Ambedkarite approach in her book. In book's preface Gail Omvedt well known social reformer and historian wrote her foreword and expressively explains idea about the book. Through her foreword we are introduced about the detailed framework of this book.

This book is divided into six chapters, but main theme is Mahanubhav Bhakti movement and its rebellion against casteism in medieval Maharashtra. In first and second chapter, author gives details about medieval Maharashtra's social, religious, and cultural history and explains how bhakti movement entered and emerged in society. We know that medieval era was the era of feudalism in all over Indian subcontinent. Society was divided into many layers such as high class to untouchability, which continues to remain subject of social schism and exploitation in different social group of society even today. Casteism became strong and indestructible in the medieval era. Position of women also restricted to home and children as explained by two Marathi colloquial words 'chul' and 'mul' restricting rights of women in the society. Society made many barriers around the women hence her position declined day by day. Author also discusses contemporary religious philosophies and religious reform movements of the thirteen century some of these religious philosophical schools which are discussed in the study are Vedic dharma, Jain and Buddhism, Nath *pantha* or sect, Virshaiva *pantha*. These contemporary movement were to a large extent causal and conditions for the rise of Mahanubhav *pantha* in those times. With these many insights this chapter discusses and analyses the cause for the rise of Mahanubhav sect in the western India.

In the third and fourth chapters she focuses on the Mahanubhav Bhakti movement. Chakradhar Swami was the founder of Mahanubhav Bhakti *pantha* in Maharashtra. Chakradhar Swami's teaching was the main philosophy of Mahanubhav Bhakti *pantha*. He not only teaches freedom, equality, justice but also breaks down casteism and casteist boundaries. In bhakti movement people were equal and given same position and each person was expected to renounce their ego, supremacy and caste identity. Men and women had (and have) equal rights to worship God.

Prof. Gaikwad through her study brings out analogy of Mahanubhav with the reformist cults of Jainism and Buddhism in ancient Indian. She also mentioned the influences of Buddhism and Jainism philosophy on Mahanubhav sect. Further she gives detailed account of Mahanubhav sect viz. the sect and its Gods, the sect and its structure, their religious concept, and their path of emancipation, rebellion against Brahmanism, revolt against contemporary casteism and its rhetorical concept, their rebels against puritanism and impurity concepts and primarily the concept of feminism in the Mahanubhav sect. She discussed every point in the book and its narrative through views of Ambedkarite historical approach which critically assess the caste narratives in the history of India and how the Mahanubhav sect denounced caste hegemony and casteist patriarchy in early centuries of medieval India.

In the fifth chapter she mainly focuses on what is feminism? She brings out the kind of approach Mahanubhav sect had towards women, here she took anecdotes from life of Chakradhar Swami and his personal experiences with feminine issues. She also narrated the relations between society and women and brings out what were the limitations of saint women, how women were breaking the boundaries of patriarchal family system with Ambedkarite historical approach. In last chapter she concludes with the thematic debate of Mahanubhav sect, women and her issues in the medieval era and how we could understand them through Ambedkarite approach.

In the last we come to know that Mahanubhav sect was one of the leading movement of its times in medieval India which broke the barriers of caste system. The book is an insightful and seminal work which brings out contextualised history of gender and religious reform movements in the medieval India especially through Mahanubhav sect. It's a well research study through primary sources and historical analysis of based on Ambedkarite approach.

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