

Book Review-2

Deepra Dandekar, *Boundaries and Motherhood: Ritual and Reproduction in Rural Maharashtra*. New Delhi. Zubaan: Kali for Women. 2016. Pp. i-x, 236, First Edition 2016. Hardcover, ISBN-978-93-83074-50-1. INR 695.

As the title suggests ‘Boundaries of Motherhood’ author Deepra Dandekar through this book takes us beyond the specified realms of motherhood to the complex layers and intersectional ties of womanhood, motherhood and child-mother nexus of rural society in Maharashtra. Her entry and creating niche for herself among the respondents for research doesn’t merely remain confined to surveys, responses and their analysis, she lives the experiences with her narratives and daily challenges of living with the community. In prologue: An Introduction to Dreams about Birthing the Impossible, where she deliberately plays with the capital and small words and problematizes the dreams with the demonizing and deification of women, where either she could be victimized or valorized for giving birth or not. Author worked on this research while doing her work under Prof. Sharmila Rege to which she profusely acknowledges in her writings and dedicated it to her ‘Child Interrupted’, indeed reading through this book takes you through journeys of trauma, gendered relations, caste hierarchies and internecine structural layers of exploitative channels which function through deities and religious hierarchies created through caste and tribal divides. In the social process of being mother and understanding motherhood. Most importantly, how in the rural societies of Maharashtra gendered roles of motherhood become dominant patriarchal narratives and their lived experiences. However, as we delve into the patriarchal narratives dictating motherhood, we realize that the stories of Rural Maharashtra are not much different from those of rural societies in Northern Indian regions or from other parts of patriarchal orders in the so-called matriarchal norms in North east India or in the Western Indian or in South Indian societies either, which are reflected in the studies by Kapoor (2012), Krishnaraj (2012), Manchanda (2023) and others. What distinguishes this work from others is the authors microscopic envision of locating the problematic in the everyday lived experiences of women and their kith kin female compatriots in the regions of rural Maharashtra where the divides within the social structures are complex and channeled through the motherhood. The cross-sectional web of extended families, tense sisterhood within caste boundaries and community ties and rituals associated with the feminine and reproduction-oriented goddesses and deities. She goes beyond the cliché of Indian motherhood and delves into its layered exploitative and confining of feminine bodies into frameworks of motherhood. This enclosed identity of being women which eventually brings complexities of exploitation and gendered violence in the rural societies, In the following chapters, 2. ‘Locating method and fieldwork’, she introduces her areas of microscopic understand and in chapter third ‘Silence amidst Babble, Women’s Relationships amidst Discourse’, she brings her narratives with intrinsic analysis fourth chapter with title ‘Region, Community, and Political Demarcation’, she bring out critical and explanatory understanding of people in their places,

and in fifth chapter 'Rendering Women Inanimate', she brings out the subtle confusion and tension among the so called feminine solidarity. Author in her ways of introspecting diverse perspectives beyond the assumed man woman roles in traditional Indian societies has brought into forefront social tensions, hierarchical spaces of exploitation and layered intersectional zones of conflicts through her actual empirical data, rather would prefer to state them as skillful narration of the lived experiences. In her concluding epilogue, Dandekar brings with what we began with Dreams and birthing which now shifts from birthing impossible to impossibility of birthing. The entire utopian context of Birth and Motherhood is windingly questioned through various paradigms where texts, symbols, icons, experiences are shredded to relook into the dynamics of womanhood, feminine and gendered equations with subtleties. The book definitely brings the various debates and questions about ideas of Indian motherhood to a threshold especially in context to which we see, debate and analyze as rural spaces of India. The book will entail theoretical shift when analyzed through gendered sisterhood in rural societies, and brings in debates about religious intonation of women and their motherly desires to become agencies of class-caste hierarchies of exploitation. Thus, the studies which confined motherhood to the enclosures of birthing are beyond the structures of child-mother relations and motherhood to be studied as an agency of caste class hierarchical debate.

References

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