

ABSTRACT

Keywords: Bhakti, Resistance, Body, Female Poets, Patriarchy

'Bhakti' is a philosophical and theological movement that extended from sixth century to seventeenth century in India. Those poetical works are not mere conversations with their beloved God as they have strong socio-political implications based on their reflections on caste, creed and gender issues of the society, thus becoming a powerful tool of resistance. It is an interesting fact that the female Bhakti poets focused mostly on the issues of gender rather than that of caste. The common thread between the female writers of Bhakti is the idea of body as one can identify different manifestations of body in their poetic practices. To limit the scope of the study, four major Bhakti poets including Andal, Akka Mahadevi, Lal Ded and Mirabai, who hail from four different time periods, languages, subcultures, socio-political conditions and geographical locations are selected.

The works of Andal, *Tiruppavai* and *Nacciyar Tirumoli*, are analysed from the aspect of feminine body and desires. Her manifestation of sensual love and desire for her beloved lover was a matter of severe shock to the 'moralists' and medieval masculinity. Akka Mahadevi, with her powerful lyrics, dominant actions and threatening lifestyle of a solo wanderer fashioned several social and cultural revolutions. Her lyrics are analysed from the side of a woman who questioned the society by exposing her physical nudity and individual soul. Lal Ded speaks about beyond body. She focused more on the subject of emptiness of the body rather than on bodily flesh. Hence, her lyrics represent the physical as well as the metaphysical. Contrary to that, Mira portray images in relation with feminine body and are the manifestations of the intense depth of her liberal love. Her verses produced voices that couldn't be voiced. To conclude, all these poets together set a path in order to resist the medieval patriarchy using the celebration of their physical bodies. For them, body was never an obstruction or inferior to human psyche, but a clean abode of human intelligence, knowledge, emotions, creativity, enlightenment and so on.