

The thesis proposes to examine the poetic output of four female mystics and see through the dynamics of their mystic consciousness and definitions of female space as centered through them within the frame of Indian theo-social contexts that attest to preexisting consciousness through a hermeneutics of cultural concern than suspicion. The mystics have not been arbitrarily chosen, but the intention has been to garner a better understanding of the spiritual landscape and the nature of female space vis-à-vis geographical delineations across the length and breadth of the subcontinent. A pre-colonial

lens based on specific criteria would assist us in gaining a fresher and more distinct perspective on the tone and tenor of the space occupied by (mystic) women across age groups, marital status, pan-Indian geographic locations, mystic output and performances in early India. With this objective in focus, the works of Āṇṭāl, Akkā Mahādevī, Lalleśwari and BahīṇāBāī have been considered for examination and further interrogation on the basis of the strength of their poetic and prose corpus as being revelatory representations of the mystic discourse. The enquiry also attempts to do away with the tendency to clump the mystics under a single banner called "Mysticism" for mysticism like Hinduism is not a monolithic edifice with rigid pre-fabricated frameworks. Each mystic shall be studied as an individual, as each woman deserves to be realized- each mystic with their own stylistics, their own personal approach to God and their own emotional connects and who inspite of revealing certain commonalities with the genre, which would tempt us into carting them under the same frames, would display myriad narratives. This would impel us into reinstating them to the contexts of their specific time where they pulsed with the fervor of their public-personal discourses and as genuine voices that created new paradigms of 'spatial voice' for women, mystics and humanity at large.

The enquiry will also interrogate the ever-blurred spaces of textual sexualities in mysticism and re-examine the role of rituals and rites in charting the domestic and public spaces for women. The argument would seek to dispel mounted notions of prolonged female absence in public space and try to redefine the very idiom of preoccupied space as is understood in social discourse today. The role played by ancient and medieval Indian women in public and private spheres, in domestic and ascetic platforms and the extents of their contribution in lending agency to female enterprise has often been left unspoken than

unseen, since there lies lesser academic adventure in acknowledging peaceful plateaus of existence compared to claiming triumphant conquests over invisible cliffs. My work shall therefore focus on the output of the four mystics in providing documentary evidence on the articulation and occupation of vertical space by women, in defining domestic and mystic paradigms, while re-examining the contemporary sexualized impingements that undermine the hermeneutical clemency that was characteristic of regular Indian life- domestic and spiritual.

In order to contextualize the mystics, I have deliberately refrained from seeking western theoretical paradigms as hinted earlier since one cannot apply frameworks of indifferent cultures that would well circumscribe their own roles and routines, but would fail at removed circumstances due to the significant variations in the latent natures of society, language and psyche. India's wealth of scriptural bounty in the form of *śāstras*, *sūtras*, *ślotras* and other texts provide a framework that is sturdy enough to avoid resorting to a detour from the roots of production and pithy enough to provide what I would refer to as an Indian hermeneutics of compassion that draws explicitly on culture specific examinations of the entire body of Indian scriptures and literatures which discusses areas as broad and discrete as the meaning of a word, meaning of a text and the meaning of meaning as well.

There have been centuries of relegated critical work lying in digests and treatises of various schools of Indian philosophy- theistic and atheistic, that have dwelt in detail on the purport of Vedic diatribes, injunctions and interdictions, the nature of their self-authentication and the rationale and lapses that converges in such structures with accompanying corrective missives appended to them. These bodies of critical work have a

To this purpose, a delicate un-reading of recent theosophical discourse would be undertaken to deconstruct the pandemic of anti-androcentric inclinations and to also reconstruct respective humanist contextualizations, since mystic study requires a pair of less coloured lens- one that doesn't necessarily see in terms of gender dialectics alone, but one that admits to the possibility of normativity and existence of sprained, yet not fractured societies and individuals. This does not automatically imply that my approach would be strictly postmodern in nature; I do not intend a deliberate destabilization of the academic mystic discourse in currency. However I propose to lend reduced malleability to the words, texts and performances and take them less for their perfunctory politicizations than the social contemporariness behind their narratorial processes. In the process, I hope to undo some of the knotted strings of postmodern problematization of textual representations that questions the narrative beyond its scope to determinate flared conclusions.