Mahatma Jotirao Phule

Rationalistic Attitude Towards Religion and Society

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Ajaykumar Lokhande

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Mahatma Jotirao Phule

Rationalistic Attitude Towards Religion and Society

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Foreword

I am happy to write this foreword to this research book titled, *Mahatma Jotirao Phule: Rationalistic Attitude Towards Religion and Society* of Dr. Ajaykumar P. Lokhande by way of introducing it to the academic community and scholars.

Though we have a plethora of publications on Socio Religious Reform Movement of India in the nineteenth Century and role of the social reformers and religious leaders' in it, additions to them are always welcome. Mahatma Jotirao Phule occupies a unique position among the Social reformers of Maharashtra. Hence, the topic has immense importance from study point of view.

The rationalist thinkers in the world followed reason-based approach towards religion. They applied the critical thinking to the existing socio-religious problems instead of orthodox attitude and fanatic traditions. Reason had perceived them as the guiding principles to expose religious fundamentalism and it replaced the blind obedience to the existing social and religious taboos.

The rationalists apply the critical thinking to the existing problems whereas the dogmatic religion follow different attitude. A Rationalist follow reason based logical thinking whereas dogmatic religion follows the dictate of religious scriptures.

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Jotirao Phule was rationalist in socio religious matters. He professed rationalism to make assessment of religion and the concepts related to it. The religious concepts put forward by him indicate that he was a great humanist and rationalist of his era. Jotirao was primarily an active social reformer nonetheless his philosophical stance was very clear. Jotirao Phule was very much impressed by the deistic philosophy of Thomas Paine. Deism was very popular among European rationalists in the eighteenth century. Deism was greatly influenced by the rationalistic philosophy of Rene Descartes and Spinoza. He had developed his philosophical stance in accordance of deistic rationalism, a legacy of Thomas Paine.

The book is divided in seven chapters, following the Epilogue.

In the first chapter Introduction, the researcher has defined the basic terms and concepts to understand the historical process of rational thinking. He also has focused on the influence of rationalist thoughts on Modern India, Jotirao Phule and Social Revolution.

The second chapter is Rationalistic Prolegomena. It deals with various concepts of rationalism in the west as well as in India, from ancient to modern period: development of rationalism in renascent India, assessment of religions based on rationalism and reformers and reform movement in Modern Maharashtra.

The third chapter Awakening period discusses the awakening process in India, the social, religious and political condition in the first quarter of the nineteenth century western India, role of western education in awakening process, role of the British officers as well as Christian missionaries and the press in reform movement, life sketch of Jotirao Phule, influence of western rationalist thoughts on his mind and his rationalistic ideas.

Chapter IV titled, Rationalist Attitude Towards Religion focuses on Phule's rationalist attitude towards religion, concept of