



JYOTIRAO PHULE'S INTERPRETATION OF VISHNU'S INCARNATION

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Abstract

Jyotirao Phule is a great social philosopher and reformer. He fought for social justice and went beyond hindu social order, did many different revolutionary welfare activities for people. In this journey he wrote several books criticising the evil practices in Indian society. Gulamgiri was one of his books that gave a logical interpretation of Vishnu incarnations of Matsya, Kaccha, Varaha, Narasimha, Bali and Parashurama. Through this interpretation he clearly stated the dominance of the foreign Aryans invaders and discrimination faced by indigenous people. This created a strong awareness in the shudras and ati shudras.

Keywords: Aryans, Incarnations, Brahmins, invasion, domination, indigenous.

Introduction

Caste system plays a vital role in Indian society. The caste system was prevalent in India from the later vedic period and still present in the twenty-first century. Because of this caste system, fraternity is diminished in humans. And discrimination was increased with time. According to Manudharmashastra, people are born from four different body parts of brahma. It says that Brahmins are born from Brahma's mouth, Kshatriyas from shoulders, vaishyas from thighs and shudras from feet. Based on this theory the people were divided into four varnas, and they were further divided into numerous sub-castes. This hindu social order oppressed the shudras and also gave rise to the practice of untouchability.

Jyotirao opposed this hindu social order and criticised the religious texts which supported the varna system. And he felt that these religious texts are written in favour of brahmins to keep up their dominance. He thought that these texts gave a wrong perspective to the people. So he wanted to give the historical and rational perspective to these texts. Mainly he interpreted the brahmanical dominance in the disguise of Vishnu's incarnation and chaturvarna.

jyotirao contends that Manusmriti's account of the origin of the four Varnas (castes) is defective. He queries the creation of Brahmins from Brahma's mouth as well as the management of menstruation and births if Brahma's mouth served as their womb.

jyotirao keeps raising issues with the Manusmriti's mythical elements. He disputes the notion that if Brahmins were formed by the creator deity Brahma, he would have to confine himself to a separate area for the purpose of menstruation. Moreover, he queries how Brahma fed the infants.

In jyotirao's historical analysis, the Aryans from Iran (Persia) who conquered India and later were known as Brahmins. He makes the implication that the mythology surrounding the caste system was created in order to preserve their supremacy over the native population. According to jyotirao, several armies of Aryans arrived in India before the period of Vamana, one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu in Hindu mythology, via sea in little boats (canoes). This calls into

question the conventional wisdom that there was just one Aryan invasion by indicating that there were several waves of Aryan migration into India.

"Matsya."

jyotirao compares the little boats to a fish and suggests that it could have arisen from their quick movement over the water. He points out the significant physiological distinctions between humans and fish, yet condemns the Brahmin historians for claiming that Matsya was conceived as a fish. He further challenges the veracity of the matsya by highlighting the impossibility of a fish depositing an egg containing an embryo that resembles a human. He contends that it would be impossible for such an egg to develop into a human kid, even if it was pulled up from the water. jyotirao said sly Brahmins may have added the Matsya birth narrative to the texts of old in order to further their own agendas. This criticism questions the veracity of specific religious texts and narratives.

According to him, the Matsya horde entered India via the Western (Arabian) Sea and landed on the western shore. When they arrived, they assassinated Shankasur, a chieftain, and seized power over his realm. According to this story, when the Aryans first arrived, they may have waged battle and seized territory. After the death of Matsya, the horde's leader, Shankasur's supporters attacked the Matsya horde. After being routed, the Matsya horde sought safety in a mountain thicket to elude their assailants.

Kachcha

jyotirao continues by saying that the second Aryan horde from Iran came to the same harbour in somewhat bigger vessels that he refers to as "Kachchas." Because of the sort of boat, the leader of this new horde was given the moniker "Kaccha." The narrative of Aryan migrations and battles is further complicated by this. He gives a description of Kacchha's deeds when he first arrived in the area. According to him, Kacchha drove the Kshatriyas who were besieging the Matsya horde away. Afterwards, Kacchha declared himself to be the ruler of the area, frequently referring to himself as "God on earth" or "King of that territory." And the Kshatriyas were terrified when they learned of the advent of the second Aryan invasion from Iran. They traversed the mountains and retreated behind their leader Kashyap.

jyotirao elaborates on Kacchha's tenacious fight. He relates how Kachcha, accompanied by a little army, descended down the mountain and persisted in troubling the Kshatriyas in Kashyap's realm. Kashyap tried to take back control of the mountain, but Kacchha was able to hold his ground. This reflects a protracted struggle of Kaccha and his people's stubborn resistance.

Varaha

Jyotirao provides a rational criticism of varaha's birth. He refutes the notion that Varaha may be the manifestation of Narayan by using the illustration of a sow devouring its firstborn piglet.

jyotirao continues by criticising religious books like the Bhagavata for attributing Varaha's conception to a pig. He expresses amazement that this Adinarayan (Vishnu) manifestation failed to stop the infanticide committed by his own pig-mother. He also draws attention to the fact that no reference of the sow's crime's penalty is made. He jokingly explains that Padma and Brahma were Varaha's pig-mother and father, respectively.

jyotirao suggests that because of his destructive tendencies and boar-like conduct, the term "Varaha" may have been given to him by Kshatriyas in an insulting way. He makes the speculative claim that Varaha may have invaded Kshatriya territory, murdering Hiranyaksha in the process, instilling dread among Kshatriya chieftains. jyotirao pointed out that

Varaha passed away finally, relieving the Kshatriyas of their terror brought on by his activities. jyotirao underlines that there is no support for these strange stories in religious scriptures, and he speculates that they could be fabrications. He queries why such stories might be included by authors without any guilt.

Narasimha

Narasimha is described by jyotirao as being avaricious, dishonest, crafty, dangerous, ruthless, and merciless. He also mentions Narasimha's powerful physique.

According to jyotirao, Narasimha planned to assassinate Hiranyakashipu because he thought that doing so would grant him access to the throne. Through a dvija tutor, Narasimha tricked Prahlada, Hiranyakashipu's son, into ignoring the devotion of the goddess Hara-Hara, the family deity. In a disguise as a lion with his long beard and nails and wearing a saree of a woman, Hiding himself behind a pillar, Narasimha entered Hiranyakashipu's palace and assaulted him by tearing out entrails. Hiranyakashipu was killed as a result of this wicked conduct of Narasimha that was carried out in secrecy. As a result of Hiranyakashipu's death by Narasimha, Dvijas are now referred to as "Vipriyas" or "Vipras" rather than "Dvijas" by Kshatriyas. Because of these deeds, Narasimha was derisively referred to as "Naara Simha," which means "lioness."

jyotirao critiques the religious myth in which Narasimha appears to be coming from a pillar, pointing out that such a tale is in conflict with the rules of nature. He criticises Narasimha's morality for killing Hiranyakashipu, who was only attempting to teach his son Prahlada proper religious beliefs. He tells out that instead of killing his father, Narasimha might have disclosed his divine nature and attempted to make things right between father and son. He finds it odd that Narasimha, who is thought to be an embodiment of Adinarayan, used such brutality.

According to jyotirao, after Narasimha's deeds, The Brahmins attempted to acquire the throne, but Prahlada was aware of their tactics and did not trust them. He established a righteous government and gave the throne to his son Virochana. He continues by describing how Bali, Virochana's successor, exercised smart leadership, expanded his realm, and efficiently arranged it. The Brahmin leader Vamana became interested in this affluence and growth. He planned to seize control of Bali. He emphasises Vamana's ambition to seize control of Bali's realm for himself by portraying him as avaricious and arrogant.

Bali

jyotirao described Baliraja as a brave monarch whose realm encompassed a wide swath of territory, comprising places close to Ayodhya and Kashi as well as the Konkan and Maharashtra. Baliraja split up his realm into nine sections, each headed by a "Khandoba," or chieftain. Because they were connected to wrestling, the chieftains were also called "Mallu-Khan." Envious of Baliraja's growing kingdom, Vamana, a leader of the Vipras (Brahmins), gathers a covert army to subjugate it. Baliraja and Vamana fight because of Vamana's sudden invasion. Vamana wins the battle against Baliraja in spite of his best attempts. Baliraja battles valiantly but eventually gives up to Vamana's strategies. Vamana plunders the city of its riches when Baliraja dies, and the vanquished populace suffers under Vamana's domination.

Banasura, a devoted disciple of Baliraja, seeks retribution for the passing of his monarch. He assaults Vamana, vanquishes him. Banasura shuts off Vamana's troops' food supply, causing them to starve to death and Vamana to pass away.

The women of Baliraja's realm emphasise the king's dignity while expressing their sorrow and hoping for the restoration of a second Baliraja. From generation to generation, women have followed the custom of praying and waving lights on the tenth night of Ashwin, or Dussehra, in hopes of seeing Baliraja return.

Jyotirao attacks Vamana's persona, branding him ruthless, crafty, deceitful, and ungrateful. He doubts Vamana's morals in general and his betrayal to Baliraja in particular. Jyotirao challenges the stories' logical contradictions, questioning the viability of a gigantic shape that could traverse the entire globe and sky in two steps and he draws attention to the ambiguity surrounding Baliraja's survival and Vamana's ability to hear Baliraja's reply at such a great distance regarding the third step.

Brahma

According to Jyotirao, the administration was taken over by a Brahmin called Brahma who was an effective clerk to Vamana since it was deemed inconvenient to select an official from the high caste. Brahma has a temperament that is clever, unreliable, industrious, obdurate, shrewd, adventurous, and merciless. Brahma is called "Brahma the four-mouthed," maybe as a derogatory moniker.

Brahma is credited with creating the technique for employing nails as pens to engrave characters on hardwood parchments (Tadpatras). He combined made-up stories with authentic Iranian magic incantations and penned them in the "Sarva-Krit" (corrupted version of Sanskrit) spoken by the populace at the time. These parchments had Brahma's works, which resembled Persian couplets (bayatis). His followers held these writings in high regard, and they eventually blended religious knowledge, magic, and fiction. In order to stop certain Upadhyas from returning to Iran due to famine, Brahma issued an edict banning them from crossing the Western Ocean or the Attock River. But still some of them tried to flee to Iran. They survived in the jungles by consuming fruits, leaves, wild roots, and occasionally animal and bird meat. When there was no other food available, they were even made to consume horse meat.

Parashurama

Parashurama is described by Jyotirao as being impulsive, malicious, callous, ignorant, and nasty. During Parashurama's rule, the Maha-aris (Kshatriyas) engaged in twenty-one valiant battles to rescue their fellow countrymen from Brahmin servitude. The corrupted form of "Daitya" was known as "Dvaitis," and they later adopted this name. Some Maha-aris chose to make their homes in the kingdoms of their friends, such as Khanderao of Jejuri, who sought refuge with Ravana. These Maha-aris were given derogatory titles by Brahmins, such as "Janai of the Nine Khanas" and "Sapta apsaras".

Parashurama ordered the captive Maha-aris to sign an oath to abstain from fighting the Brahmins. He condemned them by tying black cotton strands around their necks. Shudras were prohibited by Brahmins from ever touching the Maha-aris. In an effort to commit genocide, Parashurama abducted Maha-aris pregnant wives who were hiding and planned to kill the unborn children. Some of the kids who got away eventually founded new clans. After several Brahmin warriors died in battle, Parashurama had difficulty supporting these widows. He strictly forbade Brahmin widows from being married again.

When Ramachandra (Lord Rama) strung his powerful bow and captured Janaki, Parashurama became envious. Ramachandra vanquished Parashurama when he challenged him, which resulted in his abdication. Dejected and crestfallen, Parashurama abdicated his throne and relocated to the lower Konkan. He allegedly felt regret for his past mistakes, but the precise moment and location of his death are still unclear.

If Parashurama was indeed divine and eternal, he challenged the Brahmins to present Parashurama before him. He questioned the Brahmins' assertions that Parashurama was immortal and chastised them for refusing to take up his challenge.

Jyotirao Phule urged Parashurama to come before him in an open letter. He mockingly said that some Brahmins had abandoned the customary dietary constraints and were now consuming banned foods like carrots, onions, and garlic. He requested miracles from Parashurama to demonstrate his divine status. He threatened to expose himself unless Parashurama worked miracles to demonstrate his divine status.

Conclusion

Phule clearly explained how Brahmins exploited Shudra and Ati Shudra people in the name of Vishnu incarnations. This rational and revolutionary interpretation opened a new perspective of the religious texts which gave rise to a new dimension of understanding the Hindu social order. This helped people to come out of the false beliefs and to adopt a rational thinking towards the Hindu religion and caste discrimination. This made the Shudras and Ati Shudra people realise that they have been deceived from ages. And this also gave a great inspiration and fighting spirit.

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