

Reviews & Notices

**Martin, Nancy M. *Mirabai: The Making of the Saint*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. pp. 400. ISBN: 978-0195153903.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997/3008pslix180br1>**

Dr. Nancy M. Martin, the author of the book *Mirabai: Making of a Saint*, is a professor and chairperson of religious studies and director of the Institute of Albert Schweitzer at the University of Chapman. She is also a lifetime member of Clare Hall at Cambridge University.

Dr. Martin is an expert in devotional Hinduism, comparative religious ethics, gender, and religion. She is a leading authority on the famous Hindu devout saint Mirabai. Dr. Martin's most recent publications include "The Gendering of Voice in Medieval Hindu Literature" and "Mirabai's Poetry: The Worlding of a Hindu Woman Saint's Dynamic Song Tradition". In the 400-page book *Mirabai-Making of a Saint*, the author tells the reader about the sixteenth-century iconic Indian poet Mirabai and her unwavering love for God in the form of Krishna. She adopted the path of Bhakti Marga to express her love for God and have a union with him. In this book, the author portrays Mirabai's courage to cross the boundaries of social hierarchies, gender notions, the religious authorities, and the caste system of her time to have an unreserved devotion towards her beloved God, Krishna.

The author examines ancient manuscripts and hagiographies to provide the life of an incredibly popular Indian saint, Mirabai. This book is a compilation of the oldest texts and hagiographies of Mirabai. By researching these oldest sources, the author hopes to show the reader that Mirabai and her experience of God through the path of Bhakti Marga is not a myth but rather a sixteenth-century woman. The author thoroughly explains Mirabai's spiritual existence to the 21st-century reader by evaluating several hagiographical stories. This daring, free-spirited, extra-Ordianic lover remained committed to her calling of unreserved devotion to her admiring heavenly spouse, Krishna. The author tells the reader in this book that Mirabai is a saint because of her devotion to Krishna. She communicates her love for him via private songs she has written, and she dances out her passion in exuberant ecstasy with her heart, mind, and body.

This book emphasizes the features of Bhakti and teaches the reader that Bhakti is an intrinsic strand within Hinduism practice. Mirabai is one of its venerated saints who practised this devotion throughout her life. Their songs, written in their mother tongues rather than Sanskrit or Hindi, convey their devotion to the holy. The devotee can only become closer to the divine through that language. By this, the author informs the reader that Mirabai composed all her devotional songs in her mother tongue, Bengali or Hindi (p. 23). The composed songs, sung in one's native tongue, convey a devotion that includes all known facets of human love, such as the entirety of parental love for their offspring and the love of friends, siblings, rulers, subjects, and lovers. There is also reverence, submission, adoration, and loyalty (p. 22). The author tells the reader that Mira's Bhakti Marga is a means of bringing freedom from all societal constraints and caste prejudice by concentrating on it. Ultimately, Bhakti surpasses the bonds, limitations, joys, and dreams of this Samsaric existence. Although her extraordinary miraculous existence, ordered and supported by the Divine, makes her different from ordinary women, her intense dedication demonstrates that she is no slave to the social order (p. 99-101).

I recommend to readers, as I have done, that they read this book as it provides a comprehensive account of Mirabai's life and commitment. The author hopes to demonstrate to the readers that not only does Mirabai have a place in Indian history but that she is still held in high regard as a Hindu mystic by providing hagiographical readings of her life. To achieve a singular experience and unity with God, individuals are motivated to practice Bhakti Marga through her thoughts and poems. I recommend Nancy Martin's book *Mirabai: The Making of the Saint* to everyone who wants to learn more about this Hindu mystic from the sixteenth century.

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King, Andrew M. *Social Identity and the Book of Amos. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 706.* London: T & T Clark, 2021. pp. 156. ISBN: 978-0-5676-9529-1.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997/3009pslix180br2>

When John Donne (1572-1631) expressed in the fragment of his poem: *No man is an island*, it seems he wanted to say that human beings do bad things when isolated from others and need to be part of a community to develop. Therefore, being part of the social community in John Donne's "dream" would be a good place for self-actualization. Henri Tajfel paraphrases the fragment from the poem above by saying, *No social group is an island*. These two fragments appear in Andrew M. King's *Social Identity and the Book of Amos* monograph.

This monograph, published in 2021, is an exploratory effort to construct the social identities contained in Amos' book. King believes that Amos' book is at "some level attempting to shape the identity of its readers" (p. 4). According to the author, the primary interest of his work is "to explore the embedded notions of identity in the text of Amos." He further said, "Amos as a text seeks to reconfigure the audience's sense of self wherever they may be situated. Yet a purely cognitive understanding of one's group membership is not