CHAPTER – IV

JOTIRAO PHULE AND HIS CONTRIBUTION
OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

This Chapter deals with the ideology of Phule. In implementation of his ideology what was his planning, organization and participation in low caste protest movement is also dealt. Phule neither interest nor believes in early reform movements, such as Brahma Samaj, and the ideology of the Nationalists. His objective was to attack on the foundations of the existing system such as caste and its related socio-economic, politico-cultural systems without which no real reforms were possible. Unlike other reformers, the sources of reference for Phule was the peasants in Maharashtra.

1. In support of his ideology Phule tried to trace out the contribution of its ancestor and wrote the following books. Tritiya Ratna: The Third Eye. Phule completed the manuscript for this play in 1855, but it was not published in his life time. The first published edition is in the journal purogami Satyashodhak (Marathi), Vol.5 No.2, April-June, 1979.

2. Chatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhonsle Yancha Pavada: (A Ballad of the Chatrapati Raja Shivaji Bhonsle): This work was published in Bombay in June, 1869, and has been reprinted in the collection of Phule’s work edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe.

3. Brahmanache Kasab (Priestcraft Exposed): This work was published in Bombay in 1869, and has been reprinted in the collection of Phule’s works edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe.

4. Vidyakhad Brahman Pantoji: (Brahman Teachers in the Education Department): This ballad was published in the journals Vividhadnyam Vistar and Satyadipika (both Marathi) in July and
June, 1869 respectively. The comments the accompany the ballad in the *Vividhadnyan Vistar* suggest that the ballad was only one of a larger collection written at the same time. No copies of these have so far been recovered.

5. **Gulamagiri** (Slavery): This work was published in Pune, 1873. It has been reprinted in the collection of Phule's works edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe.

6. **Memorial Addressed to the Education Commission**: Phule made a long statement to the Hunter Commission on Education in India in 1882. This was not published independently during his lifetime, but has been reprinted in the collection of his works edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe.

7. **Shetakaryacha Asud** (The cultivator's whip-Cord): This work was made up of a collection of Phule's speeches delivered to Satyashodhak audiences in 1882-83. He put these together and made a manuscript copy to send to the Earl of Dufferin. This manuscript is in the National Library of Calcutta. The work was not published during Phule's lifetime, but has been published in the collection of his works edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe.

8. **Satsar** (The Essence of Truth): Issues one and two, published in Pune in 1885. Phule hoped to make this into a regular series, but publication was discontinued after the second issue. Both of these have been reprinted in the collection of Phule's works edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe.

9. **Asprashyache Kaifiyat** (The Tale of the untouchables): This work was completed in 1885, but was not published during Phule's lifetime. The manuscript is in the P.S. Pati MSS, Shivaji University Library, Kolhapur.
10. **Satyashodhak Samajokta Mangalashtakasaha Sarva Pujavidhi:** (All the Rites Ceremonies, and Verses used by the Satyashodhak Samaj): This small book was published in Bombay in 1887, and has been reprinted in the collection of Phule's works edited by D. Keer and D.G. Malshe.

11. **Sarvajanik Satyadharma Pustak** (A book of true religion for all): Phule completed this work in 1889. It was published in 1891, a year after his death, in Bombay. It has been reprinted in the collection of Phule's work edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe. Note: This list excludes letter and other small pieces published only in contemporary newspapers. A collection has been made of some of these in the collection of Phule's works edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe. This list includes items that were written as independent works, although some of them were not published while Phule was alive. The original Marathi titles are followed by the English translations that have been used throughout this study.

A part from the above Phule wrote the following articles and books, which were published in Marathi newspapers time to time.

- *Satya Shodhaka Samajichi Thsanya Varshika Samaranbachi hakigatha*
- *Duskala Vishayaka Vinantri Pathrika*
- *Marati Granthakara Sabhesa pathra*
- *Ishara*
- *Mama Paramandh Yamsha Pathra*
- *Akhandhadi Kavya Rachana*
- *Parisheste*
- *Mahatma Phule Yanche Anupalabdha Lekhana*
- *Jothrao Govindharao Phule Yanchya Charithracha Kalapata*
As part of his strategy to fight Brahman domination Phule also made use of the Natural Rights argument. He was deeply influenced by Thomas Paine's philosophy and it was thanks to Paine's influence that Phule argued that all men enjoyed certain natural and inalienable rights which every just society must recognize. Even when a society did not recognise such rights, Phule contended, they existed as moral imperatives. In Slavery he condemns Hinduism for its violation of man's natural rights and argues that God has given the Shudras, the Ati-Shudras and other people the freedom to enjoy equally all the things of the earth. He accuses the Brahmans of seeking advantage only for themselves, of writing 'false books' in God's name, and of trampling on the rights of all other men. He thanks the English rulers and the missionaries for making the low castes aware of the fact that they are human beings just like the Brahmans and worthy of all forms of rights. But Phule does not merely stop at condemning the Brahmans for depriving the lower castes of their due rights; he proceeds further to construct a religious ethic in which God is viewed as the creator of all men equally and whose explicit command is that the benefits of the earth be equally shared by all men.

In September 1873 Phule founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society for the Dissemination of Truth), a non-political body, whose declared objective was to make amends for the neglect of Natural Rights of men, especially of the Shudras over the past centuries. It sought to restore their rights and also take remedial action for their misery. In fact, one of the vows, the members were required to take was to worship only 'our creator', and honour 'the pure rights' that
have been given by the Creator to all men by rejecting the beliefs that some men are born inferior and by refusing to treat any one as inferior. Each member was also required to give education to his children so that they may understand their rights'.

Since the Samaj viewed education, especially English education, as vital not only for providing occupational skills but also for the intellectual emancipation of the low castes, educational activities figured prominently in its agenda of action. Phule had hoped that the Samaj would take the lead in establishing the Shudras as a new moral community worshipping a Supreme God and taking into its own hands the conduct of all ceremonies thereby dispensing with the Brahman priest. That the Samaj members did not always go along with Phule’s radicalism is a different story. Those members who actually came forward to perform marriage and other ceremonies without the involvement of a Brahman were a small minority.

Phule sought to change the identity of the Shudras and Ati-Shudras in Maharashtra from that of low and ‘unclean’ castes to that of an oppressed community. He adopted a three-pronged strategy for this purpose. First, he sought to re-write history correctly explaining the true position and the past of the Shudras. Second, he made shivaji, the popular Maratha warrior, the symbol of low caste aspirations, Finally, he tried to rally the Shudras round pre-Aryan Gods like Khandoba, and the God Daitya King Bali.

*Tritiya Ratna* (The Third Eye) is the first work of Phule. This work was completed in 1855. This was not published in his life time. It was published in 1979 in the journal *Purogami Satya Shodhak* (Marathi) vol.5 No.2 April-June. The principal characters of the play are a poor cultivator and his wife, a Christian missionary and Phule
himself who makes in intervention as the commentator. The plot is simple. The Brahman priest visits the pregnant wife of the cultivator and cautions her against an unfortunate conjunction of the zodiac which can destroy her unborn child. The only way to ward off the danger is to propitiate the God Maruti and feed a large number of Brahmans. In connection to this, the cultivator and his wife incur a heavy debt in order to give the feast to the Brahmans. The Brahman is not only portrayed as a cunning rascal who plays on the ignorance and credulity of the simple peasant, but also as heartless and unscrupulous. During the feast the Brahman keeps the peasant couple waiting in the hot sun and when it is over spares the tired, exhausted and hungry couple only a few left-overs, shortly thereafter, the cultivator and his wife come across a Christian missionary preaching by the roadside and enter into a discussion with him. As the missionary explains the true nature of God as kind and good who could never have willed the inhuman caste system and explains how he cannot be found in idols, the cultivators anger grows and he comes to understand how he has been fooled, cheated and robbed in the name of propitiating the idol of Maruti and Planetary forces. The play ends on the happy note of the cultivator and his wife realizing their folly and resolving to educate themselves at Phule's own night school.

What the play brings out clearly is not only the fact that the Brahmans, acting as the guardians of Hindu beliefs and institutions, exploited and robbed the ignorant low caste people, but also the existence of a conspiracy on the part of the Brahmans to deliberately keep the Hindu masses ignorant and illiterate. Phule's endeavour in the play is to show how the Brahmans conspired to the use the doctrines of Karma, Dharma, and the ideas of Varna and Jati not only to exploit and plunder the low
castes but also to keep them permanently backward. The commentator urges the Malis and Kunbis, the Mangs and the Mahars to cease fearing the Brahmans and to no longer fall a prey to his conspiracy, for now, God has sent the English into this country to revoke the disabilities which the Brahmans had imposed on the Shudras.¹⁷

*Chatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhonsle Yancha Pavada* (a ballad). This work was published in Bombay in June, 1869. The same was reprinted in the collection of Phule's works, edited by D. Keer and S.G. Malshe. Phule described Shivaji as the symbol for reconstructing a new identity in the ballad. The ballad undoubtedly extolled the exploits of Shivaji, it also powerfully served as a rallying point and a symbol for installing a sense of pride and creating a new sense of identity among the various lower castes of Maharashtra, Shudras and Ati-Shudras alike. The ballad represented the Shudras, and Ati-Shudras as the forgotten descendents of the heroic race of Kshatriyas of ancient India, led by the mythical Diatya King Bali. Phule draws a parallel between Shivaji and the mythical King Bali as the leaders of the lower castes against external oppressors. In the 'pavada' (ballad) on Shivaji, Phule attributed Shivaji's success to the skill of his Shudra and Ati-Shudra armies rather than to his Brahman ministers. The Kshatriyas (non-Brahman lower castes) are projected as the rightful leaders of Maharashtrian society and representatives of its traditions.

As part of his strategy to use Shivaji as a symbol for uniting the lower castes against Brahman domination, Phule inserted an imaginary episode. Shivaji's mother, Jijia bai, takes young Shivaji into the garden and narrates to him the story of his ancestors, the Kshatriyas of per-Aryan India. She explains how the country's weakness before the Muslims was due to the previous Brahman persecution of the marital races. She narrates how the forefathers (pre-Aryan Kshatriyas) lived happily on the land till they were
destroyed by Brahma and Parshuram, thereby weakening the country and paving the way for its eventual conquest by the Muslims. Shivaji's ange, the ballad tells us, against the Muslims rises when he realizes that this is the second time his country is being made to suffer in this way\textsuperscript{18}.

**Brahmananche Kasab:** (Priestcraft Exposed). This work was published in Bombay in 1869 and it was also reprinted in the collection of Phule's works edited by Keer & Malshe, which is a collection of *pavadas*. Phule depicts in this ballad that the miserable dependence of the *kunbi* on the Brahman priest at every stage of his life. He narrates how the Brahman priest plunders the poor and ignorant *kunbi* at the time of birth marriage his daughter reaches puberty death ceremony, Anniversary and when the *Shudra* builds his house. The picture that emerges is of a simple and hardworking peasant who earns by the sweat of his brow only to have the crafty priest loot him at every stage\textsuperscript{19}. In a short ballad entitled 'Brahman Teachers in the Educational Department' was published in the journal of *Vividhanyan Vistar* and *Satyadipika*. Phule tells us how Brahman teachers will give good education by repeat lessons and explain them well to the high castes students, whereas in the cases of others i.e. lower caste, students, they strike them with their fits, twist their ears sharply, and in general treat them such as to make them run way from school. Furtherly Phule narrates how Brahman school teachers send misleading reports to the Education Department regarding the aptitude of the children of cultivators, portraying them as unfit for higher studies, and accuses the British of taking no interest in the education of low castes. In Phule's colorful language, 'When a blind man grinds the corn, the dogs eat all the flour'. It reveals that dominance of Brahmans in the Educational
institutions of the British administration, their discouragement of the lower castes from educating themselves, and their hypocrisy in parading their social progressiveness before the British in order to win favours and employment while changing in private to their idolations religious practices and their unregenerate caste pride. His country as being made to suffer in this way 20.

Phule’s *Gulamgiri* (slavery) published in 1873. The aim of this writing is to attack on the Brahman domination in various farms. He dedicated the book to the good people of United States, “As a token of Admiration for their SUBLIME DISINTRESTED AND SELF SACRIFICING DEVOTION. In the cause of Negro slavery; and with an earnest desire, that my countrymen may take their noble example as their guide in the emancipation of their Shudra Brethren from the trammels of Brahman thradom 21.

In the first part of the ‘*Gulamgiri*’ Phule attempted to explain the History of Brahman dominance in India starts with their settlement in Indus.

According to Phule, the most important stories of popular Hindu mythology were actually the distorted reflections of the ancient struggle between the Brahmans, who originally came from some region beyond the river Indus, and the *kshatriyas*, the original inhabitants of this land, who came to be called *kshatriyas* by the invaders because they lived in ‘*kshetras*’ or fields.

Phule explained how the mythological accounts of the ten incarnations of Vishnu and Parshuram’s extirpation of the *Kshatriyas* from the earth were deliberately distorted versions of the actual historical conquest and defeat of the natives. Phule devotes the first
nine chapter of slavery to reconstructing the past end reinterpreting the ten incarnations of Vishnu in historical terms.

According to Phule, the Aryans fist attacked in small boats that moved in water like fish or *masa'* and hence the nickname of the first Aryan leader to attack the *Kshatriyas* came to be ‘*Matsya*’ (the first incarnation of Vishnu). Brahman writers distorted this historical event in the *Bhagwat Purana* to say that Lord Vishnu emerged from a fish. The second time the Aryans attacked, they came in larger boats which were slow moving and resembled the tortoise movement. This event was distorted in the *Bhagwat Purana* as the second incarnation of Vishnu. The *purana* describes Vishnu as emerging from the tortoise to recover things of value lost in the deluge. And in this way Phule goes on to give his unique explanation of the third, fourth and fifth incarnations of Vishnu as the *boar Varah*, as the man-lion Narsimha, and the dwarf *Vaman*, respectively. *Varaha*, Narasimha and *Vaman* were incarnations, Vishnu took in order to deliver the world from the tyranny of the *Datiya* or *demon* kings who were historically the defeated *kshatriya* rulers.

Then breaking with the conventional Hindu accounts of the incarnations, Phule describes the next leader of the Aryans to be Brahma. Brahma has a Central place in Hindu Mythology with the Brahmans claiming that they came from his head, the *kshatriyas* from his arms, the *Vaishyas* from his stomach and the *Shudras* (servants of the other three) from his feet. The *Vedas* are also claimed by the Brahmans to have come from Brahma’s mouth. Phule debunks all these stories as deliberate distortions by cunning Brahmans to fool the masses, and reinterprets Brahma in an ingenious way. After *Vaman* died, the Aryans had no significant leader, says Phule, and hence a cunning and avaricious Brahman clerk by the name of
Brahma, who first invented the art of writing on palm leaves, got a chance to take over. Brahma, says Phule, composed little poems like those of the Parsis (Phule is obviously referring to the Avesta and the Gathas of Parsi Zoroastrians) which along with a few magical incantations, popular in his days, he put down to palm leaves and this (according to Phule) gave birth to the subsequent belief that the Vedas came from the mouth of Brahma. Taking advantage of the death of the native King Banasira, Brahma invaded his kingdom of ‘Kshetra’ and after defeating the inhabitants (Kshatriyas sought to permanently humiliate them by reducing them to the position of Shudras by debarring them from education).

Parshuram, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, Phule goes on to tell us, succeeded Brahma as the head of the Aryans. It was at this time that the small group of Kshatriyas, still left unconquered, attacked Parshuram 21 times. The Aryans called them the ‘maha-ari’ or the ‘great enemy’ and described them as a demon race (daitya) who had rebelled against the Gods. Parshuram’s historical defeat of the ‘maha-ari’ is Mythologically described as the wiping out of the Kshatriya race from the face of the earth. However, the historical fact, says Phule, is that the banished ‘maha-ari’ were reduced to such misery and poverty that in order to survive they even had to eat the flesh of dead animals. Thus were born the Mahar and Mang communities whom the high castes consider unclean or untouchable because they eat dead animals’ meat. Since the brave ancestors of the present day Mahar and Mang communities were the valiant last resisters, the Brahmans marked them out for the most severe punishment. Thus they were forced to wear a black thread round the neck as a sign of identification and were to be treated as Ati-shudra, people whom even the other Shudras could not touch.
For the first time in the history of modern Maharashtra Phule rejected the whole system of superstitions, rituals traditions, and religious beliefs which were advocated by Brahmans. He treated all the scriptures as legends, which offered some insights into the past history. It was the history of the period when the alien invaders i.e. the Arya Brahmans sought to establish firm control over the aborigines. On the basis of the principle of equatity. Phule criticized the hierarchical structure of the Hindu society i.e. caste system. He was equally critical of the authoritarianism in Hindu family which denied equal opportunity and enjoyment of rights to the women who deserved a better position^{23}.

Phule considered the institution of caste responsible for the decadence of Indian religion and society. According to him, the caste system was the antithesis of the principle that all human beings are equal. The hierarchy of castes was the assertion of the inequality of man. Since caste was the part and parcel of Hindu religion, Phule denounced caste as well as the religion which justified and sanctioned inequality in society. The Brahmans who were creators of the scared literature in India received the maximum benefits from the irrational divisions in the social orders. The entire Brahmanical literature provided legitimacy to the caste system which helped the Brahmans in keeping the people in servility. Caste system meant a perpetual slavery for the Shudras and Ati-Shudras.

The historical situation in which the caste system was devised and forced upon the people, was characterized by the struggle between the Aryans and the non-Aryans. Phule held that the caste system reinforced the domination of the Aryans in socio-cultural, political and economic spheres. Phule substantiated his theory with support drawn from Sanskrit, as well as Prakrit literature. His
arguments as a logical support to his theory was that the severity of the caste laws and the hatred with which the Shudras are treated also indicate, the possibility of furious feuds between the two i.e. Aryans and non-Aryans in the initial stages of Aryan settlement\textsuperscript{24}.

The Aryans descended upon the plains of Hindustan from the regions beyond the Indus, the Hindukush and the adjoining tracks. They were progenitors of the present Brahmans. They were an offshoot of the great indo European race from whom the Persians, Medas and other Iranian nations in Asia and the principle nations in Europe like wise are descended. The close affinity between the Sanskrit, Zend and Persian languages also pointed at the common source of these languages\textsuperscript{25}.

The original inhabitants of this land were non-Aryans. They inhabited almost the whole of northern India from Indus in the northwest to the fertile coast land of Ganga and Brahmaputra in the East and to the Deccan or Maharashtra or even further in the south. They were civilized people, cultivated the land and lived in built up houses in villages and towns. They lived peacefully and their social system had no hierarchical structure like caste system. The trouble started with the advent of the Aryans in successive batches. They were attracted by the extreme fertility of the soil, its rich produce, proverbial wealth of its people and the other innumerable gifts which this land enjoyed. They came here not with peaceful intentions of colonization but with one of conquering, capturing, and dominating the whole country in terms of socio, cultural, economical and political. These Aryans intruders belonged to a different race and were imbued with high notions of self and were extremely cunning arrogant and bigoted. The aborgines were a brave and hardy people. This inference, Phule draws from the determined front
which they offered to these interopers. The firm resistance on the part of the native inhabitants created a strong hatred in the minds of the Brahmans against the aborigines which is reflected in such approbrious terms as ‘Shudra’ insignificant ‘Mahari’; the great of foe ‘Antyaia’, ‘Chandala’ etc. Under the leadership of Brahma, Parshurama and others, the Brahmans waged wars against the original inhabitants. They eventually succeeded in establishing their supremacy and control and some were exterminated.

The Aryans first settled on the bank of the Ganga and gradually spread over the whole India. Then in order of control people they devised that wired system of mythology, the ordination of caste and code of cruel and inhuman laws to which he find no parallel among other nations. The objectives in creating the caste system were to keep the natives divided among themselves. It was sustained with the help of priestcraft. They framed caste laws in such a fashion that all rights and privileges were enjoyed by the Brahmans whereas the Shudras and Ati-Shudras got duties and obligations. They were regarded with hatred and the commonest rights of humanity were denied to them. The cruel laws perpetuated this bondage and slavery of the Shudras. Further, they were cheated by the Brahman writers such as Manu, Kautilya and other who maintained that those laws were either divinely inspired or written by the God himself; The Non-Brahman masses treated these writings as gospel truth and to doubt their authenticity of divine character was considered as the most unpardonable sin.

Later on all Aryan conquerers called themselves as Brahmans and all the aborigines as Shudras. ‘Shudra’ is a perverted form of ‘Kshudra’ meaning mean or insignificant. Those of the Shudras, who fought bravely and persistently against them, were made into a
distinct class and were avenged by calling them Ati-Shudras and treating them as untouchables, and persuaded the Shudras like Kooli, Mali, Kunbi etc., not to touch them. Because of such inhuman restrictions on these brave people, their communication with the rest of the society was totally broken and their trade and other businesses vanished. No proper means of subsistence were left for them. They had to feed themselves on the common or the flesh of the dead animals. These Shudras were flattered by getting slightly higher rank in the hierarchy of caste and forgot their original fraternity with the Ati-Shudras and followed the Brahmans in degrading and exploiting them who had fought bravely to save the whole race from becoming a slave people. In this way these Brahmans grouped the aborigines into various classes and castes depending upon the serves those people gave them. The most cowardly of the natives who deserted their brothers and turned loyal to the conquerer Aryans were given a place higher than all others and nearer to themselves and were called as Brahmans. Thus even after seemingly taking them in their fold they maintained a distance with and distinction from these Brahmans. There had been no inter-marrying or inter-dining between the Brahmans and the Deshasthas.

Manu in his book viz. Manu Dharma says that Shudra is not suppose to touch or see nor hear or read the Vedas i.e. Shudras were band from the education, right from the later vedic period Shudras were band from the education still the establishment of company rule in India. Even education policy of the company also could not reach the rural poor. The benefits of the education policy of the company and British rule was enjoyed only upper castes of the Indian society. The first educated cream of the Indian society i.e. Upper Castes or so called reformers or elites do, not want
for a revolutionary social transformation but for Modernisation in other words a revitalizations of the old society. So, in view of the above Peasants tribals, workers, low castes, Untouchables were all adversely affected by the colonial regime as well as Indian elites. At the same time due to lack of access to education, lacking control over media of communication, their renaissance and their rebellion, their ideology and organization remained in a more incipient, crude, localized and incompletely form. All these led the majority of the people or productive culture castes became mentally slavery by accepting irrational myths, legends and superstitions etc. Which reflected in caste system as well as in socio-economic, politico-cultural domination by Brahmans\textsuperscript{29}.

In view of the above Phule’s main concern was to literate the such people from the mental slavery. So Phule started education to the peasantry and low castes people.

So Phule opened schools for girls peasants and low caste people not only he opened education centres to the girls, peasants and low caste people he appealed to the Govt. that the education policy of the Govt. is not reaching to the masses. All the benefits of the Govt. Education policy acruted by only upper castes people. These upper caste people not only benefited with education and they are trying to suppressing the choicess of the mass.

Once the masses were thrown into the den of ignorance it became possible for the Brahman’s to spread superstitions and blind faith among them. The introduction of the caste system meant perpetual degradation of the people. The ignorance of the people facilitated the exploitation of the masses by the Brahmans in the capacity of priests as also in various other capacities. Phule observed that even under the British rule the Brahmans continued to
exploit the *Shudras* because of their rituals monopoly and education. So Phule consistently exposed the caused of education in order to revolutionize; the outlook of the masses against economic and social slavery. He did not believe in the possibility of change of heart on the part of the Brahmans who were the beneficiaries of the existing set-up. His views regarding education must be appreciated in this background. Phule's ideas on education was exposed in Brahmans Teachers in the education Department (published in 1869) and Memorial address to the Education Commission (published in 1882) of Hunter Commission on education in India\(^{30}\).

Phule was dissatisfied with the educational policies of the British Government as follows:

- a) Weighed heavily in favour of Brahmans at the cast of the masses.
- b) Education was highly theoretical having no relevance to the practical life.
- c) Was not suitable to the masses and their rural environment.
- d) Lacked of trained teachers and training facilities.
- e) Defective scholarship system
- f) Hindered the recruitment of non-Brahman teachers
- g) Prescribed text-books which was full of falsehood.

The above contents of the education policy of the Government\(^ {31}\) resulted in the neglect of the education of *Shudras*.

The increasing expenditure of the Government on education did not increase the number of the educated *Shudras*. Because a large portion of amount was spent on higher education not on
primary education. He felt that concentrating on higher education in the cities gave a scope to the education of higher castes or Brahmans. This idea of the Government in patronizing "this virtual high class education" appeared, to Phule to be prepared scholars who would in time vend learning without money and without price. He further wrote that the Government feels that if we can inspire the love of knowledge in the mind of superior classes, the result will be higher standard of moral in the case of individuals, a large amount of affection for the British Government and an uncomparable desire to spread among their own countrymen, the intellectual blessings which they had received. This has reference to the 'downward filtration they' which dominated the educational policy of the Government despite the clear cut directives to the Government of India to assume direct responsibility for the education of the masses through the 'Wood's Despatch' of 1854. Commenting on this Philosophy underlying the educational policy of the Government Phule wrote in Memorial address to the educational Commission "we have never heard of a philosophy more benevolent and more utopian. It is proposed by men who witness wonderious changes brought about in the west purely by agency of popular knowledge to redress the defect of hundred millions of India by giving superior education to superior classes and to them alone". He requested to British to cite a "single example of the truth of their theory from the instance, which have already fallen in the scope of their experience". They have educated many children of wealthy men and have promoted their worldly prospects.

He felt that the 'British Government was mistaken in thinking that through education the Brahmans will come to senses and will be civilized and then stop cheating their Shudra brethren. Phule
admitted that the Brahman had tradition of education and learning but felt that they also had tradition of restricting the learning to themselves and concealing it from others. So he had no illusion that these Brahmans would never impart education to the masses. He was convinced that the Brahmans would draw all the material benefits from it and continue to exploit the illiterate masses. He laments that the British should help in breaking the Brahman monopoly of education and public service. He amend that we can not find a single educated person from Mahar, Mang, and Chamber (Chamar) caste - not to speak Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts. He felt the Government Policy unjust on economic grounds also. The greater portion of the revenues of the Indian Empire came from agriculture. “From the Ryots labour from the sweat of his brow” More ever it does not come from the surplus profits but from the capital, nor from luxuries but from the poorest necessities. It is the product of ‘sin’ and ‘tears’ Hence it was a great violence of justice to neglect the education of the masses and spend disproportionately on the higher education or the education of the higher caste. He agreed with Sir George Campbell, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, that this policy of giving priority to the education of the higher castes was “highly mischievous and pernicious to the interest of the Government” also. Hence, he suggested the Government to “look a little less after higher education and more towards the education of the masses”.

Phule attacked the Government system of scholarship’s as it gave undue encouragement to those only who already have acquired a taste for education to the detriment of the masses.

He suggested an alternative system reserving certain number of scholarships to such classes amongst whom education has made
no Progress. The prevalent principle of competition in forwarding scholarships, he felt, tended to obstruct spread of education among other classes\textsuperscript{35}.

Phule was also critical of the nature of education, the courses, the syllabi of higher education from the point of view of its utility in practical life except in public services. It is because of this he says, that all those educated seeks Government jobs. This increase unemployment. This is the situation when education is limited to a small class. What will be the situation if the education is made universal and brought within the reach of all a the number of unemployed will still increase. So he suggested that suitable changes in the course of studies be made so as to make the education capable of preparing students for independent careers\textsuperscript{36}.

He expected education to liberate the minds of the children from superstitions and dogma. But the text-books contained material which forstered it. Phule reminded the Government of its duty to see that nothing wrong was taught\textsuperscript{38}.

As a measure for making higher education accessible to the masses he recommended the introduction of the system of private studies. According to him this had two merits firstly it will defuse knowledge widely particularly among those of the rural areas who cannot afford to study at colleges, secondly it will not cause any additional burden to the public purse on account of higher eduation\textsuperscript{39}.

He was dissatisfied with the condition of primary education in the country. The reasons for his dissatisfaction were;
a) Existing indigenous pattern of school was defective

b) Number of Government and aided schools was very inadequate

c) The courses were defective

d) Almost all the teachers were Brahmans; and

e) They were neither. Learned in the sense not adequately trained.

Phule was thoroughly dissatisfied with the pattern of indigenous schools which were of two types Sanskrit schools and Prakrit schools. The Arya Bhats' did not allow the boys of Shudras cultivators to be admitted into Sanskrit schools. They admitted a few of them in Prakrit schools. There were 1049 schools with an enrolment of 27,694. The schools existed in cities and some large villages. The boys are generally taught the multiplication table, by heart, little modi reading and writing and reciting a few religious Slokas. The teachers were not competent as their knowledge hardly went beyond reading and writing Marathi. They were not trained either in the art of teaching so they are incapable of effecting any improvement. Phule deplered that the number of Government Primary Schools was very inadequate and that all the teachers in these schools were Brahmans. Their attainment in education and learning was low and only a few of them had any training. They were not suitable to teach the boys of the cultivators. They lacked honesty, and commitment for the spread of education. The maintained an aloofness and a distance from the pupils owing to their religious prejudice. They opposed any chance in the content of education particularly efforts to make the courses more practical as that would make them unfit as teachers.
Phule makes a number of useful suggestions for the improvement of the school education in the rural areas as well as in the towns and cities which shows tremendous insight and deep understanding of the problem of school education in India. His suggestion in this connection include such items as revising the courses in the training colleges and starting an adequate number of the same reforming the methods of selection of the trainees, higher and attractive salaries to the teacher in order to attract men of talent to this profession revising the courses of studies in the primary schools adding to it elementary knowledge of agriculture and lessons in moral duties and sanitation and some useful arts; attaching model forms to the schools etc. He also suggested to make primary education compulsory upto a certain age limit.

His suggestions of making primary education compulsory was in consonance with his concern for the diffusion of knowledge among the masses. But he felt that making education compulsory alone would not help. The appalling Ignorance, superstitions and poverty of the toiling masses would come in the way of the education of the poor. He therefore; suggested reservations in scholarships, awarding of degrees to them at comparatively lower standards of attainment, appointing them as Patils after passing VI standard and appointment in various offices like Mamlatdars on priority basis etc.

In pre-British period the Brahmanical dominance in Maharashtra had no parallel in the rest of India. Education was virtually the monopoly of Brahmans. Sanskrit Pathashalas were meant exclusively for the Brahmans and were supported by the Peshwas through liberal grants. In Poona alone there were 164 'Pathashalas' where the religious texts of Hinduism were taught through the medium of Sanskrit. Education in these Sanskrit
Pathasalas was free. But education in the Prakrit schools on the contrary was not free and the students had to pay fees for their education which was generally beyond the capacity of the common people. The cultivators, therefore did not send their children to schools and as a result 'Literacy in the rural areas was confined to the 'Kulakarnis' the 'Joshis' and the 'Vanis'\textsuperscript{50}.

The Government concentrated more on the promotion of higher education and spent large sums on it. In 1882 there were 6 colleges in the Bombay Presidency with an over all enrolment of 305 students, out of these 305, the Brahmans were 241, Vanis 51 and Kshatriyas 13, the average percentage of the Brahman students in the Bombay colleges in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century was 43 and that of Parsis 23, Gujarati and trading class 7, Goaness Christians 6, and no other single community averaged as much as 3 percent\textsuperscript{51}.

The lower education particularly the primary education was neglected. The number of Varnacarlar schools in the year 1876-77, for instance, in the whole of the Presidency was 4008 with an enrolment of 210, 370 pupils\textsuperscript{52}, most of these schools were in the town or big villages. For instance, in the city of Ahmednagar along there were 36 schools\textsuperscript{53}. These schools were attended by the childrens of Brahmans and the wealthier class. But they were very rarely frequented by the children of the cultivators or the other labouring classes of the people. Among the reasons listed by Robert Shorde for this were the high rate of fees in these schools and the overwhelming number of Brahman teachers among Whom "there is a inclination not to communicate knowledge to any, but those of their own caste. The Brahman teachers were careful to foster the prejudices of the people by persuading them that had no concern with reading and writing and reminding that their children are
required to tend the cattle in the fields instead of being sent to schools. As a result, the Brahmans maintained the monopoly of subordinate services in Government departments. Robert Shortrede made a pertinent comment. The exertion of European Officers cannot be expected effectively to check a buses which have been practised from time immemorial and for which opportunities can never be wanting while the great body of the people are ignorant of almost every thing conducive to their welfare particularly being unable to read and write they are unable to understand their own affairs in relation to Government towards them and thus become an easy prey to their designing countrymen in public situations. Against this background Phule was quite justified in his criticism of the Government education policy and the suggestions made by him were generally valid and important\textsuperscript{54}.

Mr. W.S. APTE, Supervisor of New English School, in his witness before Hunter Commission, demanded that the responsibility of Primary and Middle school education be left with the private agencies Phule did not agree with this view. He feared this would mean passing of education under Brahman control which will affect the advance of education among the lower castes. In this regard Mr. Kunte's remarks justified this fear and further Mr. Kunte submitted before the Hunter Commission that the demand for the admission of Mahar into the schools was not voiced by the Mahars themselves and that it was contrary to the practice and impracticable. It was a movement created by emotional British Officers and impractical native reformers. Such statements by the eminent Brahman educationists justified the fear expressed by Phule that Brahman did not want to each Shudras and that they would never
honestly perform the duty when entrusted with the responsibility of education\textsuperscript{55}.

Mention should be made of Phule's criticism of syllabi and curriculum. He suggested that the courses in the village schools should be more practical, that agriculture be included in the curriculum and that model farms be attached to each school. This throws light on the insight Phule had with respect to the problem of education. He wanted that education should not be looked upon as an instrument of creating competent clerks and loyal servicemen but should be seen in the wider perspect of varied human activity and should have relevance with the environment. Most of the education is today support this view\textsuperscript{56}.

From 1882, Phule, Patil and other leaders of the Samaj toured these rural areas, addressing large meetings of cultivators, and helping to organize a boycott of Brahmans and money lenders. Between 1882 and 1883 Phule wrote a series of speeches and lectures that were read out on these occasions. He then collected all these into a single manuscript work of five long chapters in order to present a copy to the Earl of Dufferin, the Governor-General of India. This work was entitled the Cultivator's Whip-Cord. The first two chapters were published serially in the Din Bandhu newspaper, by 1883 under the editorship of Narayan Meghaji Lokhande. To Phule's annoyance, Lokhande refused to publish the last three chapters on the ground that they were severely critical of British Government policy towards the cultivators, and might land the paper in trouble\textsuperscript{57}. The book remained unpublished during Phule's lifetime. It is nevertheless, an invaluable testimony to the dual direction of Satyashodhak efforts in this period. The work was intended to influence British policy, presenting a plain statement of the real
conditions and needs of the rural communities, and Phule chose the simple device of sending a copy direct to the Governor-General. At the same time the work was aimed at the rural audience of the *Satyashodhak samaj*.

Phule maintained the personal atmosphere in the account, now becoming the observer: "At last, having a great sign in the midst of his tears, the cultivator fell asleep. I wiped my own eyes, and went to look outside. This was followed by a most vivid description of the cultivator's house and small holding, and again the most familiar elements of the social and domestic life of any rural popular audience, were recounted and given a strong polemical twist. Phule described the country and filled with broken implements, piles of dung, and swept up rubbish; the storage jars for grain empty and fallen over; the makeshift cowpen with its few thin and mangy inhabitants; a strary dog wandering around, and swarms of flies attracted by the excrement. In the corner, a young woman sat making dung-cakes for fuel, with her legs caked in dirty an old woman lay on the floor amidst refuse from vegetables, with a baby near by crying continually and sending a trickle of water across the floor. Older children, with running noses and sores on their skin, played games in the mud and filth. The inside of the house portrayed the same gradual slide into squalor and poverty, and the sheer loss of will that accompanied it the dirty oven, with milk spilt around it, and the ashes beneath mixed with excrement from the cat; the walls stained red with betel nut juice and blackened by smoke; the niches in the wall holding leaky stone lamps; old bits of food covered with flies; a pair of worn-out sandals and some old underwear; the dust and cobwebs everywhere. Phule concluded the description here, as the cultivator's aged mother entered, bewailing her family's
destitution, and cursing the different kinds of Brahman power that had emerged and reinforced one another within the framework of British rule, from the Brahman priest to the Brahman revenue official, to bring honest families to their knees.\textsuperscript{58}

The acute poverty of the cultivator, whose labour supplied all the material needs of society, were contrasted vividly with the relatively leisured and prosperous lives of Brahmans in the employ of the British Government. Phule described the meagre diet of the cultivator; the cold leftovers in the morning livened up with a little chutney, the bhakaris with watery lentil dal in the afternoon, and the broken grains of maize or jondhall in the evening. When even these failed, the cultivators filled himself up with green mangoes, figs, and tamarind, or whatever came to hand in the fields as he went out to pick up the plough. Phule followed this with a description of a rich Brahman wedding feast, with its special pavilion nilt up by electric lights, its extravagant array of rich dishes, and the distribution of daksina to Brahmans afterwards. He appealed to the women in his audience, contrasting their own toil alongside their husbands in the fields with the life of ease that Brahman women led;

The Brahman women sleep on late in the morning, get up at Leisure and do their hair; sweep and wash their houses and do a bit of cooking and washing, and then sit around all day listening to old religious tales and puranas being read to them.

This led on to bitter attack on the distribution of social and economic resources in society.

The cultivators feel so ashamed of their poverty that they hesitate to invite the agents of the government and the governor even to take betel nut at their functions. But is it right that he, whose
labour provides for the armies of the government, the revenue from liquor, for the disproportionate amounts of leisure that are enjoyed by the British officials, and for the inflated pay and pensions and the affectations of ritual purity of the Indian officials, are not even paid this minimum of respect? What can we say when we see that these people often don’t even get enough bread to fill their bellies, or clothes to cover their bodies, as they suffer the harsh strokes of government taxes, when we see them reduced to such misery that even the *Saheb’s* hunting dog shrinks away from them\(^59\).

Besides their labour, the community of cultivators also represented the value of co-operation and honesty and fair dealing to others. This derived from the simple interdependence of rural communities, and the spirit of mutual sympathy created by shared social experiences. Phule accompanied this by a demand that administrative institutions at the local level, suitably reformed, should be filled from rural society at large, rather that from literate elites whose immediate interests as a social group were quite different from those of the cultivators who composed the bulk of the local population. This quality of the rural community emerged in a conversation that Phule reported having held with a visitor. The visitor, who answered Phule’s questions as to his caste with the claim that he was a ‘real Maratha’ asked Phule how he could be so sure that if the Brahmans at the local level of administration were replaced with cultivators, they would not exploit their fellow in just the same way. Phule asked the man to imagine that he had just been made Collector; what would be his attitude to his fellow villagers now under his authority? The man realised his dependence on the other members of the rural community, and in a very powerful passage
described the kind of social loyalty that would prevent him from abusing his position.

"Their children and my children have grown together all their lives. Their cowsheds and mine are next to each other. Their children and mine play in the same place. We both use the same well. We have the same dams and banks for storing water. We hold our pasture lands in common. In bad times, we share each other's sickles, pestles for pounding rice, snares, ploughshares, ropes, cable, and tools. We let each other use our buffaloes, and lend each other our bullocks for ploughing. The women of our families will drop in at any time of day or night to borrow oil, salt, or grain. When our women give birth, the others help out with the new baby, and bring round a cot to lend us. Our habits and customs are all the same. We eat similar food and wear the same clothes. Our Gods are the same as theirs, and we worship the same family deities. We help each other out if our houses catch fire, our funeral rites are the same, and we lend each other a hand at buryings, and visit each other's houses with bhakaris and rice water for the ceremonies of appeasement for our children. How could I possibly demand bribes from these people, my caste brothers, and set up feuds for generation to come between our families?"

To this polemical representation of village society, Phule added an account of its origins, stretching back to the time when primitive man had felt the need for the greater organization and security of social life. The description of man in his natural state also emphasised the real independence of human nature and intelligence from the artificial structures of social rank. Phule drew his material here from a catholic range of sources, from Charles Darwin to Captain Cook. The account of primitive man and the realities of
human nature in its raw condition were clearly intended to recruit popular science to the range of non-Brahman arguments, and to provide his audience with an instrument for rejecting conventional social hierarchies that, in its objectives and purely 'Scientific' nature, would simply undercut all arguments in their favour.

Phule turned to early man's first settlement in villages in pursuit of security, and the emergence of different village offices. Here, he is clearly hoping to provide his rural audiences with the rational and legitimation necessary for a direct attack on Brahman offices in the village, and in particular on the power of the Kulkarni. Those in the state of nature who were courageous enough to strike out on their own and found new villages were called Patil and Deshmukh; and even though the ignorant Patils and Deshmukhs of today's village were completely subject to the Brahman Kulkarni, the other villagers still obeyed them out of reverence for their ancient office. The Panch, or village council, had been developed as pressure on the land increased, and some mechanism was necessary to resolve conflicts. The inhabitants of the village also banded together to protect themselves against the gangs of robbers and bandits that had grown up with the settlement of villages, who preferred to live outside these early communities and to prey on their honest labour. The villagers decided to impose taxes on themselves to pay for the appointment of full-time soldiers, and nominated officials to collect the taxes.

The office of the Kulkarni, however, had come into existence only after the disruption of the peaceful communities of India by the Aryan invaders;

The Aryans gave the office of Kulkarni in every village to people like Pralhad amongst the original inhabitants, who were feeble
and cowardly and never supported the cause of their own
countrymen, and who had never opposed the Brahmans, and took
them into their confidence, hoping in this way to get the land that they
had conquered properly administered\textsuperscript{63}.

In this way, Phule hoped to make the office of the \textit{Kulkarni} into
a daily and living reminder of the original expropriation of the
\textit{Shudras} for his rural audiences,

In his account of the historical origins of village society, Phule
was able to resolve an internal contradiction in his earlier writing: that
between his assertion that the term \textit{Kshatriya} derived from the pre-
Aryan society of flourishing peasants, and its clear association with
the high-status \textit{Varna} of conventional Hinduism. Phule overcame
this by arguing that the original \textit{Kshatriyas}, the ancestors of the
Marathas of the ninety six families had, like the Aryans, come from
Iran. However, they came as friends and lived in harmony with the
\textit{Shudras} kingdoms already established, even helping them to resist
the subsequent Aryans attacks.

The representatives of the ninety-six families from Iran each
established their own kingdoms, and by all co-operating with each
other they managed their political affairs without any difficulty, and so
for hundreds of years there was nothing to spoil their prosperity, and
in the kingdoms of the \textit{Dasyus, Astiks, Ahirs, Agras, Pisacas,} and
\textit{Matangs,} all the people were very happy and the dust of gold
seemed to hang in the very air\textsuperscript{64}.

In this way the apparently "Aryan" overtones of the \textit{Kshatriya}
status are explained, while the term still retains anti-Brahman
overtones.
The Phule felt that this kind of clarification was necessary is an indication of the importance of *Kshatriya* ideology to the rural audiences of the *Satyashodhak Samaj*. Arguments of *Kshhatriya* status and Maratha identify featured strongly in non-Brahman polemic in the 1880s and these arguments seemed at times perilously close to a simple Sanskritising claim. Phule's colleague Bhau Kondaji Patil was to use the argument of *Kshatriya* identify and Maratha status as a conscious strategy for the recruitment of support amongst rural audiences.

As we have seen, Phule himself remained more ambivalent towards the claim to a Maratha identify, especially where such claims seemed to take in nothing more than the right to wear the sacred thread and have the *Vedic* religious rituals appropriate to *Kshatriyas*. In the Cultivator's Whip-Cord, he deprecated such claims to Maratha status. He described the assumption of the sacred thread amongst *kunbis*, lamenting, their failure to realise how all social divisions were part of the same engine for social oppression.

On the full moon day, on the pretext of its being the month of *Shravan*, the Brahmans put the white sacred thread instituted by *Gagabhat* around the necks of some pretentious *Kunbis*, and the *Kunbis* now fail to read the warning in the *Mahars* having to wear a black thread to signify their low status. The *Shudras* and never worn a sacred thread until *Gagabhat* had confirmed a *Kshatriya* status for Shivaji. It is also worth nothing that Phule regarded claims to a conventional *Kshatriya* and Maratha status to be a typical mark of the kind of middle-rank cultivator.

The ignorant and hopelessly indebted *Kunbi* in the community of the *Mali*, *kunbi*, or *Dhangar* cultivators, who just because his great-
grandfather's mother's sister, or his father's grandfather's daughter was given in marriage to a legitimate or even an illegitimate son in the house of Shinde or the Gayakavadas, goes about bragging and pretending to everyone that he is a real Maratha.

In an appendix to The Cultivator's Whip-Cord, Phule also recorded a conversation with 'one who calls himself a real Maratha'. Phule dismisses this pretention to an elite status; 'All classes of people in Maharashtra get called Maratha, from the Mahars to the Brahmans, and so “you have really tole me nothing about which particular caste you belong to”. At length, the man says that he is a Kunbi.

Linked with this depreciation of claims to a conventional Maratha status were arguments about the actual social representatives of that status, the ruling Maratha families of Western India. As potential leaders and patrons of a lower caste community, Phule was concerned with what he saw as the degeneracy of families like the Shindes, Holkars, Bhosales, and Gayakvads. In the introduction to The Cultivator's Whip-Cord, he argued that they had forgotten at what a cost the founders of Their families had won their lands, wealth, and reputation. Instead of devoting themselves to their ancestral duties, which was the leadership of the Shudra communities of wester India, and their proper education to meet the political challenges of the future, the princely families gave themselves up to a life of pleasure, squandered their wealth and allowed their real political power to fall into the hands of their Brahman Ministers, who were only too pleased to see their masters dissipate themselves in this way. Again and again, he stressed that their own lack of education had contributed most to the decline of the princely families of the Marathas, with Shivaji himself as the
outstanding example\textsuperscript{67}. In this way, the apparent impoverishment and political impotence of the princely families was linked with an even longer tradition, of brave warrior rendered politically helpless when conventional Hindu attitudes discouraged them from educating themselves.

Women and untouchables were the two worst sufferers in Hindu Society. They bore the burnt of unequal social structure and Hindu religious dogma. The social customs and traditions concerning the women in Hindu society had been inhuman to say the least. The institution of ‘Sati’ which relegated women to a position worse than a slave had ‘its origin’ in pre-vedic times\textsuperscript{68}. They did not enjoy any respect in Vedic times\textsuperscript{69}. Since than the general Hindu attitude has been one of paternalistic type subjugating women completely to men and treating them as a commodity for pleasure. They were never treated as equals with man. The women in their sphere of life was surrounded from all ideas with restrictions and limitations which were progressively increased by the subsequent law givers through generations – Manu, for instance, clearly enjoined a position of complete servitude and dependence for women in no uncertain words as ‘the father protects her in childhood, her husband in youth, her sons in the old age, a woman is never fit for independence\textsuperscript{70}.

Thus in the course of time they developed many taboos and restrictions on women’s life. Life long widowhood disfigurement of the widows, Sati, early marriages, Pradah system, prohibition on their getting education, female infanticide, polygamy etc. all these were the chains that tide women firmly into a position of the worst type of attitude. These were the traditions confined to the higher castes. In fact the lot of women was more miserable\textsuperscript{71}. 
The missionaries were the first to raise the voice against the degradation of Hindu Women. They criticised the customs of 'Sati' polygamy, lifelong widowhood, taboo on their education etc. They started schools for girls. The first day school for girls was started in 1807 by Mrs. Hannah Marshman, a missionary. In Bombay the American missionaries and Scottish Missionaries took the initiative in establishing the schools for girls. The enlightened Indians soon realised the gravity of the situation and started social reform movement. Rajaram Mohan Roy and Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar did pioneering works in this area.

In Maharashtra, Lokhitwadi was a great critic of the tradition and customs with respect to women prevalent in the Hindu social order. He stood for the equality of women men, it is interesting to note that he based his argument on rationality and went even to the extent of saying that if the law books came in the way they should be simply pushed aside. But the dominant trend in social reforms was to rely heavily on old text books rather than justifying it on the basis of the principles of rationality and equality.

The Lokhitwadi, Bhadarkar, Agarkar, as well as the Parsis like Wacha, Malbari etc. tried to create public opinion in favour of women's education against early marriage, widow marriage as well as their economic independence. But the movement encountered mounting opposition. In fact Tilak himself emerged as a leader in the agitation against the age of consent Bill of 1891, in which liberals like Renade and Agarkar were keenly interested.

To Phule the question of women's liberation was not an isolated issue. He considered the slavery of women as a part of general Hindu culture and the social, structure based on inequality and hierarchical divisions. Unless the whole social structure is
revolutionized, there was no chance of liberating women from their bondage. Picemeal efforts could be of little use. Nevertheless as a matter of strategy Phule accepted the validity of the picemeal reforms like the education of women, widow remarriage, abolition of polygamy etc., and supported such activities undertaken by others. He started a girls schools in 1851\textsuperscript{78}, offered patronage to the widows and provided \textit{asylum} in his house particularly to the illegally pregnant widows. He opposed early marriages on eugenic grounds as it damaged the health of both husband and wife and the offspring were weak and unhealthy\textsuperscript{79}. He held that the early marriages were responsible for polygamy as the bride-groom after growing mature disliked his wife whom he had married in his childhood without giving consent. So he used to marry another woman of his choice during his adulthood\textsuperscript{80}. Early marriages also stood in the way of woman's education and hence imposed a life of dependence on them Phule regarded Brahman accountable for keeping the women uneducated and slave of men. Phule's aim was to breakdown the authoritarian structure of the institution of family which bred unequal status for the women folk. In his '\textit{Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pusatak}' in which he has spelt out an outline of the new equalitarian order of society, he has stressed not only the equality of all men among themselves but also of the equality of all women with men in all respects. In the wedding (according to \textit{Sarvajanik Satya Dharma}) both bride and bride-groom were required to take a oath separately of Loyalty and equal treatment to each other. Particularly the bride-groom was to promise his bride the right of education\textsuperscript{81}.

Phule wanted that equality must guide the relationship between men and women. He assigned to women even a higher dignity than men as it is, she who gives birth to a child and nures it with motherly
affection and love. He regarded women as superior to men in every respect. Men are partial cruel, adventagous and wicked compared to women\textsuperscript{82}. He therefore argued that it was not right to overlook a moral fault in man and castigate a women for a similar faults. The moral law should be applied in the same to men and women.

**RELIGION:**

Phule should be regarded as the greatest critic of Hinduism or the Brahmanical religion in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. He ridiculed the Hindu faith in the multiplicity of God and Goddesses, the story of incarnation, the fables concerning the indulgence of Gods in the pains, pleasures and passions like the mortal men\textsuperscript{83}. In this sense he was great iconoclast. According to him these aspects of Hinduism served as the foundation of superstitions caste and sectarian dogmas and a number of other evils that degenerated the social febre of Hindu society and paved way for the slavery of the large bulk of the people. So all this must be buried down unceremoniously without with no meaningful reconstruction of society was possible. According to Phule the myriad superstitions were promoted in the name of religion by the Brahmans in order to exploit the masses. Phule ruthlessly exposed the exploitation strategy of the Brahmans. Every event in the life, like the birth of a child\textsuperscript{84}, marriage, occupying the new house\textsuperscript{85}, death\textsuperscript{86}, new year day, ordinary calendrical festivals in Hindu religion\textsuperscript{87}, the annual as well as the monthly fairs at Pandharpur and Jejun\textsuperscript{88} etc. were used for exploitation of the common people. The ignorance and superstition among the masses helped the Brahmans in grapping superior social and religious status in society. The exploitation was not only socio-economic but also ethico-cultural. Phule referred to the exploitation and spoiling of the
young women particularly the widow by the Brahman monks and Haridasas. Phule this attacked idolatry, ritualism and subjected ‘Karma-theory'; theory of re-birth and incarnation etc. to the criticism. He also criticised the principle of monism. The theory of ‘Karma' and re-birth and the concept of sin and virtue and ‘Moksha' made the people other worldly and led them to shrink social responsibilities. For instance, he asked ‘what kind of morality is it which teachers to construct temples such as in Banaras, Prayag— and Nasik etc. rather than inspiring to construct schools for the children of Shudras and Ati-Shudras. He wrote that the fables of Aesop were better than the Brahmanical sacred scripture. They thought some morality whereas Ramayana and Mahabharata taught immorality. He deplored that the orthodox Brahmans themselves had fallen a prey to the myth created by themselves that the scriptures are inspired by God and are inviolable.

Phule criticised and underestimated the work of the saints like Mukundraj, Dnyaneshwar and Ramadas because they recognised the importance of rituals and traditional ways of life. Any religion worth its name must essentially flower itself out into a well developed conception of morality. Morality based on the principles of truth and equality of all men should be the essence of any religion. So no creed that does not naturally bloom into a rational conception of social morality should be called a religion. It is dogma.

Phule rejected the concept of ‘fortune'. It was the result of fruit of our own doings and the cumulative effect of the various forces working in the society. It is our failure to understand the relationship between the causes and effects which led to the creation of the notion of fortune. He regarded this notion as detrimental to the
development of man and society. It absolutely rejects the role of
human will power and action and efficiency and leads to an inactive
and passive life. Phule however, should not be viewed as opponents
of religion. What he opposed was the irrationality and inequality that
were preached in the name of religion. He was opposed to the wrong
interpretation of the term ‘Dharma’ which separated it from any
sensible conception of morality. According to Brahmans theft was
the Dharma of thieves; falsehood was the Dharma of liar; cheating
the ignorant was the Dharma of clever, exploiting the Shudras was
the Dharma of Brahman⁹².

Phule had dismissed all the religious in general and the
dominant religious tradition of India and Hinduism in particular. His
main concern was redemption of Shudras from the bondage of
slavery and discrimination. The conversion of Christianity too has
creased to be an effective way to this redemption as the Brahmans
also have embraced Christianity and there too have started
discriminating against Shudra Christians⁹³. What was more
important to Phule that this is that though he preferred Christianity to
Hinduism, yet he could never reconcile himself completely with it.
He felt that it too fell short of the ideal of perfect equality of men
and non discrimination. The Christians discriminated against the
non-Christians and thus vitiated the principle of unity of mankind and
betrayed the truth and turned dogmatic.

His criticism of existing religion was followed by an attempt to
provide a new religion – the Sarvajanik Satya Dharma. Truth and
rationality were central to it. It was to pay the way for the healthy
growth of humanity on the principle of the unity of all men and women
as equals, abolishing all artificial distinctions that divided them.
Phule started with the notion of God. God is only one and there cannot be two. He is the creator of the whole of the universe. He is greater than the universe and so beyond human comprehension. He is impersonal. So he cannot be seen. He does not expect worship from his own creation and he cannot be pleased by offering him flowers. Also he cannot be pleased by ‘Namsamaran’ i.e. reciting his name. This does not mean that one should not remember God. On the contrary his presence should lead to honest and straightforward dealings with all fellow beings. God is never hungry so it is futile to offer him ‘Naivaidya’ (food offered at the time of worship). The food is for the use of man so it should be offered to the needy, the old, the handicapped or orphans or to those who have spent their lives honestly. God would be pleased with this. According to Phule there is no such things as heaven or hell. There are the creation of the fantasy of the old fashioned people whose knowledge was limited. Men accounts of sins and virtues are settled here and in this life only. Diseases that entry our life are the punishments for our misdeeds of sins. Hell means thus and nothing else.

He rejected the need of the institutions like priesthood. One of the conditions for the membership of ‘Sarvajanik Satya Dharma’ was to promise that for no religious functions would be employed and intermediary between him and God. It would created inequality. How can one be so pure as to make others pure by offering teertha (teertha is wash water of tumb). According to Hindu tradition the devotee is expected to wash the feet of the priest and drink the wash water as holy. Phule gave moral and social connotation to the religious concept like sin and virtue. Sin consisted in violating the dictates of one’s own conscience and acting otherwise, virtue meant following the dictates of one’s own conscience, honesty. He asserted know others from yourself
think of others as you would of yourself. If you do not some thing for yourself and yet you do it to others it is sin. If you do not trouble physically or mentally for pleasure or happiness that is virtue. Phule delineated the thirty three principles of truth. They included freedom and equality of men and women, impartially and dignity of labour.

God is the creator of the universe. Phule held that since all are created equal therefore all the entitled to enjoy equal rights. God created the universe for the use of all men and women and so every body has got equal right to make use of it, according to his need and capacity. Equality means nobody has right to dominate or subjugate other or even to regard him as low. Everybody has right to live and to live freely and to enjoy the fruits of his honest labour. He has also freedom of expression qualified only in one way that it should not hurt others. Everybody, being equal, has the right to practice the religion and cherish ideas political and otherwise as per his own conviction and faith. He has the right to enjoy political freedom. Polygamy is the antithesis of the equality of men and women. So everybody must regard all persons other than one's wife of husband as brothers and sisters. Equality demands the ends of discrimination in schools, of in the administrative services. Everybody is entitled to get such jobs according to his capacity. Justice must be done to all. There should be no partiality in delivering justice. Everybody should receive appropriate punishment for his wrongs.

It is respectful to eat the bread of one's labour. No work of profession is bad or low. What is low and mean is to live on others toils by Cheating and deceiving others in name of religion or otherwise. One should not believe in such persons neither should they be supported.

Other principles of truth are related to moral principles like not to tell lies, not to commit theft, to avoid use of narcotic and
intoxicating drugs, respecting parents and elderly persons, not to hurt animals even not to burn others houses honesty. The concept of liberty and equality are central to the new religion. The first principle that should guide right behaviour is to accept that all men and women are born free and, hence entitled to equal enjoyment of all rights.

His concept of liberty was profound. It included the liberation of men from the fetters of astrology, fortune, fear of another world and rebirth as also from such conceptions as salvation of souls etc. Phule wanted to be free from nonsense customs and traditions which restricted from freedom his own conscience and reason. Phule disapproved astrology, fortune, concepts of Heaven and Hell and rebirth as they made men meek, submissive and passive to the social and natural forces. Freedom of man must reflect in wrestling with the forces in an endeavour to achieve better standards of life. He rejected the concepts of sin and virtue or rather freed these conceptions from their traditional religious connotation and interpreted them as some intelligible phrases expressing some social attributes.

His religion had no conception of salvation, rebirth, heaven etc. Phule felt these notions created a kind of a social guest for God and a concern for their own salvation than for the good of the society. He abhorred the idea of religion narrowing down the spheres of sympathy. He also disliked the idea of religion being used as a safe anchor for escapism which killed initiative for change and progress. Phule’s concept of God is unique in many respect. He is neither hungry nor thirsty. He expects no offerings from men. He is all powerful, the creator of whole universe. He does not want man to pray or worship. He wants men to take their lives more enjoyable and worthliving. Man can please him only by doing what
he wants him to do. So in his religion there are no temples, no prayers, no *Bhajan* and *Kirtans*, no sacrifices in fact no worship. Phule used the notion of God and religion for creating a secular equalitarian society. Beyond this his concern was not religious in any traditional sense of the term.  

Consequently his *Satya Dharma* did not attach any importance to personal salvation. The world *Sarvajanik* meaning public, indicated two things—one that it was not individualistic, and so individual salvation was not its aim. Secondly that it was not concerned with the other world but with the social life of man in this world only. It was *Satya Dharma*, the religion of truth, meaning that it aimed at finding and establishing truth in this world. It did not aim at mental or spiritual bliss and peace. There were no rituals, no Saints and no priests. His *Satya Dharma* insisted on nothing but truth and the truth was not the truth coming to us through Divine revelation but by exerting one's reason and conscience. This truth alone can relive man from his plight and predicament.  

Phule was a great humanist. Man must be recognised as man whatever his race, religion of creed. As a man he is entitled to some fundamental rights and pleasures of life. Thus his humanism consisted of freedom, equality, and internationalism Phule's humanism was universal and recognised no barrier to the essential equality of man. This universal humanism in the Indian situation expressed itself in the form of the downtrodden classes like the *Shudras*, *Ati-Shudras* and the women. All these along with the depressed classes like *Negores* in America, according to him, belonged to one human family and were entitled to equal rights, for liberty and happiness.
Phule considered ritualism as a part of the overall mechanism of exploitation in Hindu religion. So he severely criticised it. But paradoxically he himself has given new rituals to the followers of *Satya Dharma* to be performed on various occasions and ceremonies. It appears as though he is trying to keep intact the outer form of all the rituals. Phule has completely changed the essence of these rituals. He replaced Sanskrit with Marathi, the language of the people, turning the rituals intelligible, foiled them with social content such as one by asking the bride and the bridegroom to take oath of loyalty and good behaviour to each other.

**SATSAR:**

In June, 1885 Jotirao Phule published a small entitled 'Satsar' (The essence of Truth). This book was written in dialogue form. Jotiba answered some of the question asked by Kondaji Rao Patil and Yashwanth. Pandit Rambai convention was mentioned many times in the discussion. Jotiba thought that Brahmans insulted Ramabai and they have no right to denigrate her. When questioned as to how the non-Brahman minority people came under the authority of Brahmans Jotiba replied it was much the same as the minority Indians coming under the authority of a minuscule Mohammedans, and Britishers.

To a question Jotiba replied that Brahmans in the name of religion pushed non-Brahmans to the status of beggars. When this is compared with what other religious people did, one does not get angry with Muslims and Christians. Women getting education, Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj – all these became possible because of English education. Jyotiba thought that in these texts, Brahmans gave many definitions to religion. Without giving a clear meaning they made their texts ambiguous and obscure. What
remained to Shudras in the name of religion was to serve Brahmans all the way\(^{101}\).

**ISHARA**

- Jotirao listed the sufferings of the farmers and the other oppressed section during the reign of Baji Rao-II - The poor and the dispossessed were treated shabbily and were always looked down upon. Their rule became synonymous with exploitation, torture and murder. Except Brahmans, all others were treated as their slaves. Jotiba wrote that those who were a witness to such rule, never wanted it again. They rather wished the British rule to be perpetuated. During the *Peshwas* rule, there was no safety to the crops and money of the tillers or even to their lives. During the British rule, justice was provided. Bridges, roads, canals, dams, schools, Hospitals, travelers' bungalows were within the reach of ordinary men Jotiba thought that the Brahman rule ravaged the nation's wealth. The money collected from the people were not utilized for people's welfare. It was used for inviting Brahmans to like pant in feasts and in giving away money and ornaments as gifts. Jotiba criticised the Brahman rule saying then were partial with no equal justice. The children of farmers used to die of starvation\(^{102}\).

**KAIFIAT:**

In the beginning of 1885 Jotiba wrote three books, of them, 'Asprishyanch Kaifiat is significant, It reads like a report on the condition of the Shudras. In this book Jotirao depicted an imaginary encounter between Queen Victoria and a *Mahar* and a *Mangs*. The queen being invited to their houses, requesting her to see if there were any changes in their conditions and narrating their woes which remained the same for so long, formed the crux of the matter in the book. They tell the queen how in the past they were treated as
worse than animals, they were subjected to inhuman suffering, and how they were burnt alive. They narrate their woeful story of discrimination, not being treated as fellow humans and how they were forced to labour as slaves. They tell her during the Britishers reign there was safety to their lives but there was freedom. They did not have freedom to walk on the streets and on account of poverty they could not send their children to schools. There was no improvement in their economic condition and there was no proper means of livelihood. Jotiba concludes this Kaifiat with the appeal by the Shudras to the queen to eradicate their poverty and sanction human rights; the queen, on her part assures them and instills confidence in them.

When asked by someone what his relegation was, Jotiba replied that since Brahman religion deceived God and imposed slavery on Shudras, it was not a religion at all. Now there is no need for Brahmans to shed ‘crocodile tears’. The Shudras can adopt Islam or any other religion, he said with bitterness and anguish.

Jotiba firmly believed that it was the selfish Brahmans who linked religion with politics and social customs with political system. At the same time Jotiba did not think that conversion to other religion, was the solution to all the problem of the dalits.

In October, 1885, the second number of Satsar was released. This issue running into 22 pages discussed the problems of women. As all the religion texts were written by males, women were not given their due place. They were looked upon, and they were not given equal social status. The British Government on the other hand, provided educational opportunities for women. Jotiba concluded that it augured well for the women, who are provided enough scope in the field of education and that way, then could improve their lot.
FOOT NOTES


4. Phule., Brahman Teacher in the Education Department, in Vividhadnyan Vistar (Marathi), Bombay, July, 1869 and Christian Journal of Satyadipika (Marathi) Bombay, June, 1869, p.87


10. Ibid, pp 413-415.

11 Ibid, pp 439-441

12. Vijaya Bharati, Mahatma Jotirao Phule (Telugu), Hyderabad


15. Ibid


22. Ibid


26. Ibid, pp. 118-119

27. Ibid, pp. 120-122

28. Ibid


32. Ibid, pp.234-235.

33. Ibid, pp.233-236.

34. Ibid, pp.234-236

35. Ibid, pp.243-244.

38. Ibid, p.137.
40. Ibid, pp 175-177.
42. Ibid,
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid. P.174.
45. Ibid.
51. Imperial Gazetter of India Vol. II, p.204.
54. Ibid, pp.97-98.
55. Ibid.

58. Ibid, pp. 244-246.
59. Ibid, pp 267-268

60. Phule quoted from James Cooks Vayage Round the world for his description of man in his primitive state. He only mentions Darwin's name, and does not refer to a particular work.


63. Ibid, p.221.


68. G.V. Devasthali., Religion and Mythology of Brahmans, Poona University, Poona, 1965, P.66.
70. Ibid, pp.271-306.

74. Ibid, pp. 64-65

75. Ibid, p.63.


79. Ibid, p.252.
84. Ibid, pp.50-52.
85. Ibid, pp.53-54.
88. Ibid, p.199.
95. Ibid, p.413.
96. Phule, Perface to Gulamgi, in Keer & Malshe (eds), Mahatma Phule Samagra Vangmaya, 1879 - p.80.
97. Phule., Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak, in Keer & Malshe (eds), Mahatma Phule Samagra Vangmaya, 1889 - p.387

98. Ibid, p.351.


102. Ibid, pp.691-700.