CHAPTER – V

Conclusion: Towards Cultural Reconstruction

Broadly speaking, two cultures exist simultaneously – dominant culture of the elites and subordinate cultures of the masses. The construction of dominant culture by elites inherently is given to exploit, to subordinate and legitimize their targeted cultural construct. When we say exploitation, it naturally comprises economic, political social and religious and even psychological exploitation.

When we think of Indian culture, on the basis of the discussion in earlier chapters, it is clearly established that all the values of Indian culture are not respectable or preservable for that matter. Therefore, unless these values are seriously interrogated no reconstruction of society is possible. Jotirao Phule adopted this view in as early as 19th century and developed a comprehensive system to destruct brahmanic values and reconstruct an alternative value system. The most crucial to note is that, he developed this comprehensive system through creative writing. Therefore Jotirao Phule, probably, is one of those writers in the world who philosophically conceptualized the critique of domination and visualized the alternative ideal system through creative writing. But there is something highly individual that distinguishes him from other equally great reformers of the world writing with didactic creative stance. Jotirao Phule is the trend setting writer because many literary movements like, Dalit Literature, Feminist Literature, Pastoral Literature, Satyashodhaki Literature, especially in
India got inspiration from his writing. These literary movements are the major voices in current cultural scenario in India. Not only literary movements but social, political and cultural movements too got inspired by Phule’s writing. Hence, Phule’s literature embodies the philosophy of socio-political and cultural emancipation of masses in the present context.

In Indian context brahmaic religion is the chief source of cultural value system. As we have seen in earlier chapters that, brahmanic religion i.e. Hinduism is mainly based on discrimination, exploitation and oppression of the maliciously declared lowered majority, to establish, strengthen and perpetuate the brahmanic religions system. In fact, such a culture with religion as the chief tool, designs rituals and their constituent elements that finally constructs a value system that ingeniously endeavors to perpetuate its supremacy. Such an endeavor, to the dismay of any sensitive individual and enlightened mind is valorized.

So, to change or reconstruct the society means to change the cultural value system on the basis of which this society is built up. Phule knows this fact very well. Hence he outlines a comprehensive cultural value system through his creative literature which seeks to fundamentally reconstruct the society. But, at the same time, Phule is aware of the fact that no reconstruction of culture is possible without dismantling the earlier discriminatory and exploitative cultural construction. This awareness of Phule can be experienced in his literary journey from his dialogic satire Slavery (1873) to The Book Of The True Faith (1890).
Phule’s *Slavery* is a hard hitting critique of brahmanic mythology, history and religion. In this dialogic satire he has analyzed the entire construct of Varna and caste system with a sharp and poignant satire. This satire explores the dichotomies in Indian culture and questions the very validity of the foundation of brahmanic religion and culture. This book is treated, by many scholars, as destructive. Truly *Slavery* is a destructive book, but it is very positive destruction. This is the cultural destruction which emerged out of a dire need because without destruction reconstruction is not possible. So, as an initial and inevitable step towards reconstruction, Phule destructs the whole brahmanic cultural structure in *Slavery*. He again knows the fact that mere minor surgery is of no use, as perceived by his contemporary reformist thinkers, but cutting the whole organ off is essential. Therefore, Phule’s conceptualization is not a reformist’s perception but the perception of fundamental revolutionist.

But, as Phule believes, reading of *Slavery* only will be a half-truth, an incomplete argument, so detrimental in broader sense. Along with *Slavery* (*Gulamgiri*), one needs to read *The Book of the True Faith* (*Sarvajanik Satyadharm Pustak*), to complete the argument and also to envisage a fresher cultural reconstruction. *The Book of the True Faith*, therefore, is an answer to the question –what is to be there after destructing brahmanic cultural system? Phule is quite sure that farmers, laborers, workers, women and lowered caste people are the architects of the culture which emerges out of their hard work and productivity. He
believes that, by natural justice the lower working castes should be in power. But, ‘unproductive’ and ‘parasitic’ class of brahmans deprives these castes of their position in the power structure. Not only this, but the unproductive class of brahmans pushes the working ‘productive’ class into the darkness of slavery. Therefore, Phule maintains that the working mass and the deprived ones need to be awakened to their own cause and to the cause of everyone like. Therefore; Phule creates a potential counter discourse to attack brahmanic hegemonic discourse. As we have discussed earlier, hegemony cannot be created and perpetuated without cultural support. So, it becomes a prerequisite to destroy cultural corroboration of any hegemonic system. And, for that, a counter cultural attack is needed. When we seriously witness Phule’s literary Journey, we experience that he uses the same cultural symbols in a deconstructive fashion, which are established by the brahmanic system.

Religious domains have abundance of complex symbols; these symbols have been used for selfish gains by the priestly castes. Basically Hindu symbols have been created through religious myths. Phule’s dialogic satire Slavery is truly a great deconstruction of brahmanic myths. The myths of Matsyavatar (incarnation of fish), Varahavatar (incarnation of pork), Katchhavatar (incarnation of tortoise) etc. and ultimately the myths of Parshuram and Wamana, have been exposed to prove irrational and unscientific nature of brahmanic religious culture. This demythification of brahmanic myths is one of the crucial cultural agendas.
announced and implemented by Phule, which awakened the masses and prepared them for the cultural revolution. This, again, is an essential step towards examining the false cultural consciousness which Shudratishudras have been adhering to.

The present thesis has repeatedly insisted on the argument that Phule deconstructed the brahmanic myths, which ultimately means that Phule has not only saved the native myths of native culture of shudratishudra but glorified them as cultural necessity. For instance, king Bali and his entire ancient legacy had been declared as asura or rakshas legacy by brahmanic religious scriptures, which, Phule subverted and glorified it by according it greatest status in Indian political and cultural system. He believes Bali’s kingdom is the most ideal kingdom in the world. So, whatsoever is great for Brahmans is condemnable for Phule, and whatsoever is condemnable for Brahmans is great and ideal for Phule. Wamana and Parshurama are the greatest figures in brahamnic scripture, but, for Phule, these are the most cunning and treacherous figures. Again, the saints like, Dnyaneshwar, Eknath, Mukundraj, Ramdeas etc. are great and ideal for Brahmans, but Phule condemns and ridicules them.

Reinterpretation of misinterpreted past, demythification of exploitative myths, reestablishment of de-established myths and glorification of the condemned myths are some of the notable features of Phule’s creative writing. Through this, Phule explores the native identity of the lowered shudratishudras.
The deconstructive method that appears in every text of Phule undoubtedly proves him as one of the early practitioners of deconstruction before Derrida. In fact, Phule has brought many theoretical principles in the orbit of his philosophical interpretation much earlier than they appeared in the current intellectual debate.

Though, Shudratishudras’ whole life is affected by the brahmanic cultural system, yet there are certain areas of shudratishudras which still escaped the cultural attack of Brahmins. The so called greatness of classical culture (brahmanic in Indian context) is always proudly discussed in contrast with the baseness of folk or popular culture. The upholding and praise of classical culture by the upper caste media indicates their evil intention to look down upon the folk culture. But one must not forget that many forms of literature and fine arts have originated from the folk culture. In recent time, it is an accepted fact that all arts created by the elites are originally folk arts developed with classical methods. Means, lowered masses are not just productive castes or classes in economic and historical terms but they are productive castes or classes in artistic realms also. Phule knows this very well, hence, he writes in folk style, with folk themes rooted in folk culture. In fact Phule’s literary production is seminal addition in the great treasure of folk culture. And, to be more specific, his writing is a beautiful continuation of Kabir’s and Tukarams’s literary tradition. We must say that Phule’s literary creation is a great document of Indian popular culture which reshapes the consciousness of the masses. Though the term ‘popular culture’ may
not have been used by Phule but he practiced it successfully a century before it came into discussion on the intellectual platform created by Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

Since Phule belongs to folk culture, he tries to glorify it by practicing the folk literary forms in contrast to the classical literary forms. That is why; we can notice that he rejects the accepted formats of literature in classical literary tradition. Because he believes that the meaning in the work of art is different from its form, or meaning is more important than the form. That’s why he uses folk formats for his literary articulation. The shape and nature of his play *Tritiy Ratna* (*Third Jewell*) does not fit in the parameters of dramatics. But Phule deliberately uses this format for his play. His literature springs from folk culture. It is committed for the noble cause of emancipation of masses. Thus, through arts, language, religion and history Phule reconstructs an alternative culture. All the ideological and philosophical concepts of Phule which we have discussed in earlier chapters, are indeed dedicated to a singular ordeal i.e. reconstruction of culture.

Marx, on the other hand, does not dedicate his philosophic and ideological conceptualization for such sort of cultural reconstruction. Culture, in its complex form, as it is for Phule, is not the focal point for Marx; it is not the central aspect of his philosophic contemplation. For Marx, culture is just one of the several aspects of superstructure. His major philosophic concerns are economic relations,
means of production, ownership of means of production, alienation, production relations, bourgeois revolution, dictatorship of proletariat, socialism and communism in the end. But, Marx’s ultimate aim is to emancipate the humanity from every sort of bondage and establish communism in the world. ‘Exploitation’ is the starting point of Marx’s philosophic conceptualization; and, through criticism of history and traditional idealistic philosophy, he wishes to bring a comprehensive critique of ‘exploitation’. Marx theorizes private property, surplus value and ownership of means of production as the sources of exploitation. At the same time, if we closely look at Marx’s philosophic theorization, we find that, besides these aspects, religion, false consciousness and idealistic philosophic perceptions are equally responsible for exploitation of working classes. This theorization of Marx establishes an organic affinity with Phule’s cultural theorization.

If these two theoretical perspectives with their respective philosophic differences and resemblances are brought together, there emerges a comprehensive science of human emancipation. Hence, the whole discussion in this thesis proclaims a necessity to amalgamate all the progressive and reconstructive philosophies in the world. Marx and Phule, therefore, must be seen in totality, and then only one can understand the complementarity of their positions.

The major argument built up in this thesis is to show that there is no fundamental contradiction between Phule’s philosophic understanding and Marx’s
analysis of idealism and history because, as we have seen, Phule’s method is dialectical materialism, dynamically applied to the Indian society and history. In the Marxian scheme class struggle is the motive force of history. This is dialectical materialist stand of Marx which is very close to Phule who believes Varna struggle as the motive force of history in Indian context. Reading of Marxian and Phuleian texts proves that Varna system is more comparable to the class system. That is why this research believes that Phule is the first thinker in modern India who views Varna system in terms of class system. This may be considered as the seminal factor of close affinity between Marx’s and Phule’s ideological position.

Marx defines proletarian world view as the consciousness of the world historical being, which is nothing but the communist spirit. We have, in this thesis, thoroughly discussed how this world view is formulated in course of historical materialist development. Marx has a distinct perception of history. He has explored the changing realities in history and propounded the theory of historical materialism. Marx gave new direction to philosophic contemplation through his theory of historical materialism. It seems that the predecessors of Marx were idealists or materialists, but they did not speculate as scientifically as Marx did. Pre-Marx philosophers maintained that the universe is ruled by emotions or thoughts. This thought may be of some king, feudal lord or thinkers. Therefore, history was mere record of the wars of life of kings and queens, for those philosophers. Marx, for the first time, subverted this belief and declared that only
the kings and great people do not make history, but ordinary people, working classes play a determinant role in making of the history. This was the success of the theory of historical materialism.

While interpreting history and human development, Marx rejected the role of idealism, which was considered as the prime force by the pre-Marxist philosophers. Therefore, Marx stressed the production of food, shelter, cloth - fundamental needs of human being as the primary things and thoughts, arts, philosophy, science etc. as the secondary aspects. For the basic necessities, Marx believes, creation of essential material property is first and foremost task. This was the revolutionary analysis of human development. At this level, too, one can discern parities between Marx and Phule.

Marx’s theory of historical materialism focuses on the anthropological analysis of human development leading towards the stage of communism. According to Marx these are various inevitable stages in the history of mankind. The initial stage i.e. primitive stage, Marx maintains, is the communist stage of society, Emergence of primitive communism is marked with the emergence of mankind. In this stage man lived in troupes. This stage remained for thousands of years. Fishing, hunting and collecting fruits were the means of living for this man. Since the social system, in this stage, was collective in nature, distribution of earnings (fish, hunted animals, fruits) was on equal basis. Gradually, farming was
started along with animal rearing. Further, animal rearing was bifurcated from farming. Marx believes, this was the first division of labor in human history.

Growth in production culminated the primitive communist society into division of families, and emergence of private property became inevitable. Further, collective ownership of means of production came to an end and families captured the means of production. Thus, certain families owned the means of production and they started to produce excessively more than needed. According to Marx, this is the beginning of surplus production. Private property and its distribution started to destroy democratic society and dichotomous classes emerged with complex dichotomies of owner-slave relationships. Nature of these dichotomous classes was based on antagonism. This new system was, according to Marx, slavery.

Second phase, according to Marx is feudalism which emerged after the end of slave society. This phase was characterized with many developments in science and technology. Creation of windmill, trading by ship, creation of many iron tools, development of the art of sculpture, growth in textiles, and invention of paper and printing technique etc. increased the production in abundance. Feudalism was different from slavery in many ways.

In course of time, America and India were discovered by the western world and there emerged the new international market. Demands of various goods increased and it resulted into industrialism. There were two classes in feudalism
i.e. feudal lords and land laborers, but industrialism initiated to form new classes. These were – capitalist and proletariat. This, according to Marx is the beginning of capitalism.

The goods produced in industries damaged the whole cottage industry in feudalism, and the workers and artisans from villages began migrating to urban industry. Gradually, capitalist relationships emerged in society. Capitalist versus feudal lord was the new scenario. In this conflict capitalists defeated feudal lords and took its place. For Marx, this capitalist revolution is crucial in the whole historical development of society. The progress brought by capitalism is many times greater than the progress took place during all earlier epochs in human history. In this phase capitalism dominated all the spheres of life. But, since workers had no means of production in their hands, they had to suffer exploitation in capitalistic set up of society. Mere labor was the capital for them and selling of labor to the capitalists was the only alternative available. That is why they were victimized by the capitalists. Growth in production resulted into antagonistic relations between capitalists and workers because capitalists tended towards the surplus profit and workers got exploited in the process.

Marx therefore maintains that, capitalism carries some inherent causes of its own destruction. Thus, Marx analyses the nature, development and end of capitalism in his materialistic interpretation of history. He categorically states that the classes and class relations are based on antagonism which leads to class
conflict. In every stage of human history antagonist classes enter into conflict and there emerges a new social system, which means, every society has some intrinsic contradictions which result into conflict. That’s why Marx’s interpretation of intrinsic is contradictions of society called dialectical materialism. Contradictory class situation, in fact, is needed for development of society. Out of these contradictions only, development takes place Phule’s interpretation of Indian history is basically based on this principle. He believes, as we have thoroughly discussed in previous chapters, that Indian history is nothing but the history of Varna struggle. Thus we find close affinity between Marx and Phule on historical and dialectical materialistic interpretation of society.

According to Marx proletariat class must, in the process of revolution, capture the political power because, capitalists have been using political power to perpetuate misery and poverty in the life of workers. So, in class struggle, it becomes obligatory on the part of proletariats to grab political power to initiate new life. Political power is the important tool to subjugate the proletariats when it is in the hands of capitalists. That is why; to achieve this tool is the prime concern of the proletariat. For this, proletariat has to take weapons against capitalist political power. In fact, Marx has not given any sort of concrete opinion about whether violence is unavoidable or not. This issue is situational, according to Marx. Use of violence depends on what sort of tools are used by capitalists in class conflict. As a matter of fact, proletariat revolution intends to achieve political
power in order to drastically change the production relations. This is, according to Marx, ‘the dictatorship of proletariat’. When, out of capitalism, socialist revolution takes place and when dictatorship of proletariat prevails, then, this revolution does not remain mere political revolution. It turns into social and economic as well. Marx, that is why, maintains that there is fundamental difference between socialist revolution and the revolutions before socialist one because; socialist revolution is not only supposed to change the exploitative economic relations but also to reconstruct the new economic relations. Socialist revolution brings a fundamental change in society, that is – ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his contribution’.

For Marx, socialism is a transitional phase. It is a primary phase before communism. In order to achieve ultimate communist stage a pervasive and comprehensive movement of social enlightenment is needed. Socialist phase also witnesses contradictions which can be destroyed through the process of introspection and criticism. Every person in socialist structure is supposed to be active to destroy contradictions, then, according to Marx, the process of ‘withering away of states’ will start, and then, the ultimate communist stage will have the principle ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his need’. This shift in principles is the shift from socialism to communism.

Thus, the entire interpretation of social development is the concept of historical materialism which is according to J. V. Stalin, the extension of the
philosophic principle of dialectical materialism. It is an application of the principle of dialectical materialism to the phenomenon of the life of society, to the study of society and its history.

Marx’s vision of classless society and Phule’s dream of casteless society basically rest upon the negation of the ideological and philosophical construct which supports class and caste society. Jotirao Phule, after negating the Varna system and caste system, builds an ideal social system. This ideal system is nothing but his vision of Satyadharm, which is delineated by him in his posthumously published dialogic treatise The Book of the True Faith.

Phule’s religion of truth is certainly a scientific vision of a casteless modern man whose universe will be based on morality and universal brotherhood. He believes that all existing religions have the limitations of the needs of time. They have some ‘truth’ but several inadequacies as well. The dynamism, Phule was searching, could not be experienced in any of the orthodox religions. All these religions according to Phule are inadequate some way or the other. Phule’s concept of religion accepts the importance of the changing time and situation, and, accordingly it develops the value system which will be compatible to any age. Therefore his religion is not status quoits; traditionalism always results into status quoism- which is an indispensable characteristic of Hindu religion. Status quoism is the antithesis of dynamism, which denies the possibilities of investigation and creativity. Questions are not welcomed in status quoits religious system; doubts
are never entertained in such a system. The word of the makers of such religious systems is ultimate; nothing can be imagined beyond it. Means, where there is no questions, no investigation and no criticism, there is no dialogue, there is no room for any argument. Phule, therefore, believes that all the traditional religions may have some truth according to the needs of present time. And, that is why Phule does not embrace or recommend any of existing traditional religions; he announces a new one. But, one must appreciate Phule’s attitude about his own religion, he does not claim that his is the greatest and ultimate religion. Further, he accepts the existence of other religions.

Philosophically speaking, there are two kinds of values, one is time-proportionate and another is perpetual. For Phule, ‘Truth’ is a perpetual value and material reality is time-proportionate value. Material realities change according to the time, but perpetual value remain constant. That is why Phule has given central place to the value of truth in his religion. At the same time his religion also believes in time proportionate social realities. Hence, his religion is dynamic in nature where there is much space for change according to the needs of changing time. Phule too, like Buddha, believes in the truth -nothing is permanent in the world. But status quoism firmly believes in permanence of its religious value system. Phule rejects this sort of religious system and establishes a new and dynamic value system where man/woman and his/her material happiness is of utmost importance.
Phule, in his entire literary expression, gives a crucial place to the Creator of the universe. This aspect of his rationalist philosophy is much debated and discussed by scholars. No doubt, he believes in god, the Creator, but his god does not resemble with the gods in traditional religions. Therefore, we find, instead of using the traditional terminology i.e. God, he invents new one i.e. Creator. This very fact indicates Phule’s distinctive perspective of the concept of god. His creator does not intervene in the world, though he has created this universe. Therefore there is no need to offer prayer, supplication, fasting etc. to praise or appease him.

Though Phule has rejected and ridiculed the thirty three crores gods in Hinduism, he did not reject the very idea of god, is the fact. This aspect of Phule’s writing underlines, at least apparently, the contradiction in his philosophic perception. But, if we seriously read his dialogic satire Slavery and play The Third Jewell and try to understand the contemporary cultural context, we will certainly agree with Phule. Basically, Phule is an activist writer who has dedicated his life for cultural reconstruction of society. This cultural reconstruction, he knows, is not possible without awakening the masse who deeply believed in god. Had Phule written against the very existence of god, then, probably no one would have listened to him or taken him seriously. That is why he deployed same phrases, idioms and terminology which were used by brahman scriptures, in exactly opposite way. Therefore his god is not a brahmanic god but the creator. We have
seen in earlier chapters that Phule has used the theory of Aryan invasion in opposite fashion. Brahman thinkers boasted of kinship with the Europeans on the basis of Aryan race theory. But Jotirao Phule used the same theory in antithetical fashion and declared Aryans as outsiders in India. In the similar vein Phule used the traditional myths of Bali, Waman, Parshurama, Pralhad, Hiranyakasapu etc. in opposite way to counter attack brahmanic cultural superiority and re-establish shudratishudra’s cultural identity. Thus, there is no contradiction in Phule’s perception of concept of god, there is, in fact, a logical coherence in it. Because, he knows that the image of god is at the centre of the world view of shudratishudra and it is their psychological necessity.

Demythification, redefinition and reconceptualization of brahmanic mythology, history and philosophy are the inherent characteristic of Phule’s literary articulation. In fact, these are very important devices which have been adopted by him in the process of cultural reconstruction. Destruction of brahmanic culture and reconstruction of alternative yet nativistic culture is the fundamental driving force in Phule’s ideological journey reflected in his literature. The idea of cultural reconstruction appears in all of Phule’s works but one can especially see it prominently in *The Book of the True Faith*. Hence, this work humbly believes to be a seminal document which provides an alternative religious-philosophic grounding to Cultural Revolution perceived and expected by Jotirao Phule.
Established brahmanic religion has many contradictions. It insists, on the one hand, on the omnipresence and omniscience of God and at the same time, on the other hand, observes vertical and discriminatory caste system which manifests into exploitation of the lower castes. Upper castes enjoy every material pleasure of life at the cost of other castes’ misery. Jotirao Phule, on behalf of these ‘other castes’ announces a new religious system. This religious system clears and illuminates the path of happiness, liberation, equality, humanity and brotherhood.

It is certainly an alternative cultural position of Jotirao Phule that attempts to reconstruct the native culture of India. Indeed, the Universal Religion of Truth as propounded by Phule is a strong reply to the present religious dogmatism and cultural terrorism, because, it sincerely accepts the existence and importance of all religions except brahmanic religion. It never boasts that his religion is the ultimate one. In fact, Phule dreams of a universal family in which the mother will be Buddhist, father will be Christian, daughter will be Muslim and son will be Satyadharmi. So ‘the world’ as ‘one family’ is the essence of his religious conceptualization. There is, in fact, an urgent need to seriously ponder over Phule’s cultural conceptualization in order to save the world from the threats of religious dogmatism, egoism and cultural terrorism.

This research project, to conclude, insists on the necessity to acknowledge Phule and Marx as the strong guiding principles for all literary, social, political and cultural movements which, basically, dream of human liberation and human dignity.