CHAPTER – I

Introduction: Towards Philosophic Conceptualization

The present thesis is an attempt to synthesize the basic conceptual designs of Karl Marx and Jotirao Phule, and examine their relevance to the concepts of cultural reconstruction in recent global context. All intellectual writings today invariably interrogate surreptitious or even at times obvious oppressive intents and endeavors. The thesis also attempts to validate the relevance of some of the basic concepts of Karl Marx and Jotirao Phule in the postmodern times. Both of them though contemporaries belong to different continents and different schools of thought. What is also interesting to note here is that Karl Marx has not ever written directly about culture per se; nor do we find his discourse exclusively devoted to scientific and microscopic analysis of culture. Similarly, Phule also is not a well trained philosopher nor is he a culture historian in its literal sense. The essence of their thinking and socio-historical and cultural analysis has stunning resemblance, which, the study believes can be fruitfully applied to an analysis of Indian socio-cultural and even literary situations. Alex Callinicos, for example rightly speaks of Marx in different context:

Karl Marx died 100 Years ago on 14th March 1883. So much has happened since then- two world wars, Awichitz, the atomic bomb, the internal combustion engine, television, the microchip. What point is there now in writing a book about the life and thought of this man? There are three answers to this question. First, Marx was one of a handful of thinkers who have fundamentally changed the way we see the world. In this
he ranks with Plato, Aristotle, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Freud and Einstein. The materialist conception of history – ‘the simple fact’, as Marx’s lifelong collaborator Frederick Engels put it at his graveside, ‘hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.’ (SW iii 162) – is so powerful that even Marx’s critics and opponents cannot ignore it. (2004, 9)

Marx was a revolutionist. For him theory was a means to understand the world around him, but only as an initial step to transforming that world. His life work—the materialist conception of history, and the enormous socio-economic and political studies - culminating in the concept of communism – was dedicated to a singular goal that is, the self – emancipation of the masses. He theorized everything related with this goal. His concepts proved to be seminal in the movement of the working classes of his times and still continue to be relevant and indispensable in the present situation. Marxian concepts especially have been influencing the entire literary and ideological schools and movements along with those of sociological, political and economic, and philosophical schools. The present research explores and examines the possible applicability of Marxian concepts in Indian literary and cultural fields. It also attempts to examine the role of Marxian concepts in the literature dedicated to the cause of emancipation of lowered castes and classes in India. However, the focus of this research will also be on Jotirao Phule and his ideological and literary contribution to bring about cultural reconstruction in India.
Jotirao Phule; creative writer, philosopher, social activist, educationist, and founder of a new religion, was the pioneer of the age of reason in modern India. All progressive movements have been influenced by his thoughts. Phule did not receive recognition and popularity like Marx because he wrote mostly in the Marathi language, and also because the proud and prejudiced Indian media, which has been always dominated by upper castes, never gave due recognition to his writing. Phule was also a revolutionist, whose primary concern was cultural reconstruction. Throughout his writing he adopts deconstructive method while analyzing the dominating culture and its mythology. He interrogates the supremacy of brahmanic religious system. He does not stop at merely rejecting the Hindu religious system but also offers an alternative religious system which he considers compatible with the indigenous spirit of the country. Braj Ranjan Mani states:

An ideologue-activist unlike any other in India of his time, Phule grappled with almost all important questions facing society – religion, caste, politics, education language, literature, history, mythology, the gender question, mass poverty, the state of agriculture and the lot of cultivators. (2005, 253)

Phule, the radical social revolutionary, presented a cultural analysis that was fiercely critical of brahmanic domination. Based on his pioneering historical – materialist critique of the caste and Brahmanism, he spearheaded multi-pronged struggle to reconstruct society on the basis of equity, justice and rationalism. The ideological political founder of the anti-caste movement, Phule also, as some
social scientists have argued recently, clearly saw a close relationship between knowledge and power much before Foucault and Edward Said did.

Jotirao Phule is not, like Marx, a systematic and disciplined thinker. He is very rough and straightforward in his creative and interpretive articulation. But the thoughts he has propounded and the in-depth analysis he has offered, is seminal and goes much beyond the established aesthetics of language.

Since the present research is chiefly concerned with cultural reconstruction in Indian context it seems necessary to explore the ideological and religious position of Jotirao Phule. Of course his ideas will be compared with some of the basic concepts of Marx in order to specify their socio-cultural and ideological stand. It also seems necessary to know the socio-cultural contexts in which these two thinkers were born and brought up.

Karl Marx was born on 5th May 1818 in Trier, an ancient cathedral town in German Rhineland. Both his parents were Jewish. Marx’s father, Heinrich however, had converted to Lutheran Christianity in 1817, in order to evade a decree excluding Jews from public office. Heinrich Marx, a successful legal officer, was a moderate liberal with a deep faith in the power of reason. Karl Marx, the future author of *Capital* was brought up in a comfortable and fairly prosperous middle class home. Educated at the high school in Trier, he received a liberal education with a strong emphasis on the classics. An important influence on the young Marx was a Prussian civil servant, Baron Ludwig von Westphalen,
who introduced him to Homer and Shakespeare, and whose daughter he was to marry.

In October 1836 Marx moved to Berlin University. His original intention was to pursue his legal studies, but he soon became distracted, as he explained to his worried father in a famous letter of 10 Nov. 1837. Dissatisfied with his love poetry as ‘moonshine’, Marx settled down to serious study. He was drawn first into philosophy of law and then into philosophy proper. Inevitably, he had to come to terms with the work of the most influential philosopher of the day, G.W.F. Hegel. German philosophy was in the 1830s and 1840s was a highly political business. Germany was then a politically divided and economically and socially backward country, a patchwork of petty princedoms each claiming absolute power over its subjects, dominated by the reactionary Holy Alliance of Austria, Prussia and Russia. Yet intellectually the country flourished. The early decades of the 19th century were the golden age of German philosophy.

The contradictions of German philosophy were reflected in Hegel’s thoughts. Afterward a number of younger philosophers began to interpret Hegel in an increasingly radical way. Hegel identified reason with God, calling it the Absolute. History was for him, simply the story of the Absolute’s gradual journey towards consciousness of itself, a process whose climax was the Protestant Reformation. For young Hegelians, the Absolute was simply humanity God vanished from the picture. Young Hegelians agreed with Hegel that the state
should be the embodiment of reason. They were atheists, rationalists and liberals. This was, at a glance, situation in German intellectual scenario.

Marx, into this intellectual and political scene, was drawn after his introduction to philosophy. He soon became the prominent member of Hegelian’s club and decided to pursue a career as a professional philosopher. He devoted much time to studying the early Greek thinkers, and in April 1841 received his doctorate for a thesis entitled ‘Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature.’ After returning to Trier, he became a political journalist. He began writing for the *Rheinische Zeitung*. It was the turning point for him. Marx, like the other young Hegelians, followed their master in believing that the state was, or should be, above classes: as the representative of the universal interests shared by every citizen; the function of the state was considered to reconcile the differences of interest and conflicts between classes.

Marx studied the debates in the local Rheinish Estate on proposal for making stringent law against thefts of wood. He realized that the preservation of private property was a common interest for both the industrial capitalists who financed his newspaper and the feudal landlords who supported Prussian absolutism.

It is from this point Marx set out to criticize Hegel’s idea that the state was above classes. He was clearly very much under the influence of the most radical of the Young Hegelians, Ludwig Feuerbach, whose *Essence of Christianity* created a
sensation when it appeared in 1841. He argued that Hegel’s philosophy should be rejected in totality. Philosophy’s starting point had to be, not God or the idea, but human beings and the material conditions in which they live. Obviously, this attracted those such as Marx, Engels and Hess, who belonged to a group who believed that only a social revolution could bring about radical political change in Germany.

Marx’s anti-establishment stand was the inevitable result of not only his vast reading and observations of the social and political injustice but also his own wretched condition and utter poverty. Therefore it will not be irrelevant to briefly focus on the family life of Marx.

Marx’s family had to suffer utterly pathetic life due to poverty. In 1862 things were so bad that Marx tried to get a job as a railway clerk but on account of his illegible handwriting he was rejected. A few days later he wrote as quoted by Alex Callinicos:

Every day my wife tells me she wishes she and the children were dead and buried. And really I cannot argue with her. For the humiliations, torment and terrors that have to be gone through in this situation are really indescribable…. I pity the poor children. (2004, 28)

Marx and his family survived during these days due to Engels’ self-sacrificing and constant support.
This was the very short information about Marx who lived a life of utter poverty and misery but thought and worked for the welfare of poor man. Alex Callinicos rightly points out,

Had he conformed politically and led a conventional academic career, he would have risen to the top of the intellectual establishment of the day. He could have died rich and famous.

(10)

A quick look at the life and work of Marx’s Indian contemporary Jotirao Phule can bring out the parities in the life situations of Marx and Phule which finally lead to their revolutionary conceptualizations targeting drastic socio-economic and cultural transformations. Chronology of his life and work will help us understand his concerns in literary writing and historical and sociological context. Phule was born on 11th April 1827 in a family of fruit-and-vegetable growers (Mali) in Pune (Maharashtra). He was educated in a Marathi medium school; married Savitribai and continued education in an English-medium school. In 1848 he established a school-the first in India-for untouchable girls; trained his wife Savitribai to teach in the school.

The year 1848 is very crucial in the world history for two reasons-one, the publication of Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels and establishment of the first school for untouchable girls in India by Jotirao and Savitribai Phule. One was the theoretical agenda for the emancipation of wretched people and other was the visible step towards emancipation of the wretched people. But unfortunately this ‘other step’ never got recognition in the world history. Phule wrote ample of
poems, non-fictional prose, drama, letters which are equally important along with
his social work on field. As mentioned above, he was not a disciplined and
systematic scholar nor was he a trained academic, but his literary writing made a
great impact on socio-cultural life of Indian, which could not have been an easy
task even for a well disciplined, learned literary figure.

Initiating a school for the downtrodden was a subversive act in Brahman
dominated society. Outraged by this, the dominant castes made an attempt on
Phule’s life in 1856. Phule wrote his most seminal book Gulamgiri (Slavery) in
1873 and established Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of the Seekers of Truth) on 24
September 1873. Mani quotes Dhananjay Keer who lucidly describes the socio-
historical conditions that shaped Phule’s ideology and his intellectual stance.

Phule was the product of the oppression of his social
environment. Born into a Shudra family in Maharashtra within
a decade of the collapse of Peshwa rule in 1818, Phule faced
the indignities and humiliations routinely heaped on the
lowered castes. The power and glory of the Brahman Peshwas
who had become de facto rulers of the Maratha kingdom after
Shahu’s death had declined, following the ascendancy of the
British, but the Brahmans still fancied themselves as the
chosen caste. (2005,255)

Phule was honoured in a massive public meeting with the title of Mahatma
on 11th May 1888. Throughout his life Phule kept working for emancipation of the
downtrodden people for liberating them from the stronghold of Brahmanism.

Braj Ranjan Mani has encapsulated Phule’s struggle:
In his battle against discriminatory Brahmanism, Phule was inspired by the egalitarian philosophy of the Buddha and Kabir. He was an admirer of the emergent liberal democracies of the West, but he consciously built his protest movement on the ideological and cultural bedrock of the indigenous shramanic tradition. (254)

In 1848, when Phule was twenty years old one shattering incident occurred, that was the turning point in his life. He was publicly humiliated for daring to participate into the marriage procession of his Brahman friend. On learning the caste of Phule, the incensed relatives of the bridegroom abused the ‘low caste shudra’ for rubbing shoulders with Brahmans. Deeply heart and with tears in his eyes, Phule returned home. He narrated the humiliating experience to his father, who tried to pacify him by suggesting that he should not take this incident to his heart: ‘How could we, the lowly shudras, aspire to be equal to the brahmans? Was it not very kind of them just to drive you away instead of giving you a good thrashing?’ His father gave many examples of such indignities inflicted on persons of ‘lowly origin’, and added that he had himself seen non-brahmans humiliated and trampled under an elephant’s feet for such offences. (Mani, 258)

Phule’s exposure to modern intellectual currents after coming in close contact with Christian missionaries in his school days, and his reading of Paine’s *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* in 1847 had left a deep imprint on him. Significantly, he was more influenced by the robust American democracy of the time rather than the tradition of british liberalism. Phule’s critique of Brahmanism drew sustenance from different sources including the Christian and European
rationalism but the most critical input, as stated earlier, was provided by the homegrown shramanic tradition of egalitarianism and rationalism coupled with his own experiences of socio-economic realities. British colonialism also played crucial role and provided the background and context in which Phule’s anti-caste ideology took radical shape. He started to find out panacea to the unfathomable grief and sufferings of lowered caste Shudra atishudra people. On every level, he worked ceaselessly, to emancipate these wretched people from yoke of the discriminatory brahmanic system.

With this brief information about life and work of Jotirao Phule, it seems necessary to locate and explain the issue, cultural reconstruction, undertaken for the study. In this connection, what is culture will be the basic point of discussion in order to understand culture as a term in general and culture in Marxist – Phuleist perspective in particular. And then, what it means to be cultural reconstruction in specifically Indian context. Culture is an umbrella term, and literature, social traditions and customs, religion, ideology, arts etc. come under its rubric. All these elements work to carry and strengthen the specific culture. In fact this is the modern context of the concept of culture. The concept of culture, as interpreted by anthropologists such as Victor Barnouw, is also in tune with the perception of the present study. Barnouw writes:

Culture refers to learned behavior shared by the members of a society. It is acquired by experience, as opposed to being inborn, genetically determined behavior. This use of the term must be distinguished from older colloquial meanings
expressed in phrases like “a man of culture”. In the anthropological sense, all humans have culture. (1979, 02)

While specifically defining the term culture Barnouw writes:

A culture is the way of life of a group of people, the configuration of all of the more or less stereotyped patterns of learned behavior handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation. (02)

This definition would be pertinent in order to discuss the process of cultural domination by the upper caste elite in Indian context. Because, ‘culture of superiority’ in the form of Brahmanism and ‘culture of inferiority’ in terms of lowered castes, has been handed down from one generation to the next through language, literature, traditions and mythology. Raymond Williams, one of the pioneers of Cultural Studies, traces the origin of the concept of culture and its various shifts in course of time. He writes:

The concept of ‘culture’, when it is seen in the broad context of historical development, exerts a strong pressure against the limited terms of all the other concepts. That is always its advantage; it is always also the source of its difficulties, both in definition and compression. Until the eighteenth century it was still a noun. The decisive changes in the ‘society’ and ‘economy’ had begun earlier, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century; much of their essential developments was complete before ‘culture’ came to include its new and elusive meanings. These can not be understood unless we realize what had happened to ‘society’ and ‘economy’; but equally none can be fully understood unless we examine a decisive modern concept which by the eighteenth century needed a new word – civilization. (2010, 13)

After tracing the historical development of the concept of culture, Williams famously defined culture in his essay Culture is Ordinary (1958) as:
Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land. The growing society is there, yet it is also made and remade in every individual mind. The making of a mind is, first, the slow learning of shapes, purposes, and meanings, so that work, observation and communication are possible. Then, second, but equal in importance, is the testing of these in experience, the making of new observations, comparisons, and meanings. A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. These are ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and we see through them the nature of a culture; that it is always both traditional and creative; that it is both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings. We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life - the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning - the special processes of discovery and creative effort. Some writers reserve the word for one or the other of these senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction. The questions I ask about our culture are questions about deep personal meanings. Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind. (2011, 53-54)

Though this is a too long quotation, the indispensability of it cannot be denied. Williams has very comprehensively defined the concept of culture. Two aspects of this definition must be taken into consideration as the demand of the present research. First – ‘The making of a mind is, first, the slow learning of shapes, purposes, and meanings, so that work, observation and communication are possible.’ The second is “…….. to mean a whole way of life – the common meanings; to mean the arts and ‘learning’. By these two aspects we can understand the socio-psychological conditioning of a person since his childhood. Culture is
sum total of various aspects and dimensions of human behavior; individual and public. Even the way of thinking, perception of things, attitudes and responses and reactions, to certain situations constitute the cultural construct. In fact a person’s social behavior is the outcome of traditions in which he or she has been brought up, and traditions are the most inevitable ingredient of culture.

In India, traditions have been incepted through mythology. Without myths traditions are impossible. In fact, more precisely, traditions are the tangible formulation of mythology that generates and carries certain ideology. Brahmanic ideology too has deep and firm roots in mythology which finds its expression in various social traditions. The whole brahmanic literature upholds the dominant brahmanic world view and at the same time designs the ways to exploit and enslave the masses. This ‘design’ is termed as ‘Indian culture’. The makers of this ‘design’ boast of its greatness and ceaselessly work to reinforce it, with the sole intention to perpetuate the domination of their own. Jotirao Phule interrogates, investigates and challenges this domination and tries to dig out the very roots of this domination through literature. He rejects everything in brahmanic cultural system and gives the alternative cultural system, which was based on the native cultural system of ‘Sindhu Sanskriti.’ This alternative cultural system can be termed as ‘cultural reconstruction’. Hence the present research attempts to bring out a comprehensive study of brahmanic culture and Jotirao Phule’s attack on it, in order to focus on cultural reconstruction in Indian context. This research also
intends to focus on the revolutionary concepts of Karl Marx so that the possibilities of relationships between Phule’s literary and Marx’s philosophical struggle can be checked and understood in global perspective.

The next stage of this project will be especially and wholly dedicated to the interpretation of Marx’s concepts which are important in the realm of Cultural Studies. Further the study will focus on Phule’s writing in order to bring out a comprehensive analysis of Indian cultural reality. Fourth chapter will be, obviously, the comparison between Marxian and Phuleian world view. The points of differences and resemblance; the arguments based on the cultural system and the significance, relevance, and necessity of their works will be assessed in this chapter. The fifth and last chapter will be the conclusion where the argument of cultural reconstruction which has been undertaken for research will be established and strengthened in the light of Marx’s and Phule’s arguments.

Before starting the detailed analysis and interpretations of Phule and Marx, let us locate the issue of Indian culture. It is very important to identify Indian cultural construct, what it means; what are the salient features of Indian culture, who are benefited with this culture, who are the representatives of this culture; and most importantly, does Indian culture really deserve to be reckoned as great as it has been claimed. These questions, along with the issues such as, place of Indian masses in Indian culture and religion; their role in power structure; the reasons
behind the wretchedness of masses; the role played by Indian culture to perpetuate hegemony over masses, will be thoroughly discussed.

As stated above, traditions always germinate from mythology and religious scriptures to construct the specific culture as a whole. A discussion on Indian mythology and religious scriptures will not be out of place, as we cannot understand the socio-religious worldview, caste ideology, ever-changing forms with unchanging hegemonic aspirations, or myths of brahmanism unless we understand the facts about Veda and Vedic religion. The Vedas are claimed as primary scriptures of the Aryan – brahmans, venerated as ‘apaurusheya’ (not of human origin), eternal and infallible. The Vedas were revealed, it is believed, to certain inspired rishis (sages), and are therefore referred to as shruti (heart, implying revelation). It is claimed that the Vedas existed in the divine from the beginning of time. The Vedas, as we know, consist of four collections (Samhitas) – Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda of which Rig Veda is the oldest and most sacred. Strictly the term Veda stands for the parts known as the Mantras and Brahmanas. The recent studies based on every possible source clearly show the considerable affinities of language, culture, mythology and rituals between Rig Vedic and Avestan Aryans as both formed part of one group – the Indo-Iranians-of Indo-Europeans (who got divided into the European and the Indo-Iranian), moving around the second millennium BC from their original home in
the steppes north of the Black and Caspian seas, southwards into the territories
now called Europe and central Asia respectively. (Mani, 2005)

Vedic people fought many battles with the indigenous inhabitants whom they called ‘dasa’ and ‘dassyu’, and succeeded in subjugating them due to their use of horses and possibly some better arms. Gradually the original invaders settled down amongst the native people, but antagonisms persisted, a fact amply attested by innumerable verses in the Rig Veda. In all likelihood, the Aryans devised the system of caste in purely secular terms – primarily to retain their racial purity and impose their authority over the ‘low-born’ natives – but in the later Vedic period (i.e. after 900 BC), their descendents attributed the genesis of caste to divine will so that it acquired halo of religious sanctity. (Mani, 2005, 47)

Many studies have pointed out, with concrete examples and insightful analysis that self-aggrandizement and dominance stand out as dominant Vedic themes in both religious sphere of ritual as well as in the secular domain. Violence and sacrifice are the crucial and indispensable aspects to Vedic ideology. In fact Vedic ideology advocates the brutality in such a way that it relates with the nature and its phenomena of strong eats weak. Braj Ranjan Mani puts:

The basis of Brahman supremacy over all others was established through control over the all important sacrifice. The Vedic brahmans contended that it was from a cosmic and primordial sacrifice that the universe was created, and it was because of the repeated sacrifices that the universe continued. The logic was quite clear: by presiding over sacrifice the Brahman plays the role of mediator between the divine deities above and the men below, and, thus, keeps the world going. So any one who is desirous of well-being must turn to the braham who will offer sacrifices on his behalf. (2005; 50)
In fact Brahmans were in a minority, but still they perpetuated hegemony by devising hegemonic caste ideology through religious scriptures. They constantly endeavored to institutionalize this ideology socially and religiously to maintain their ‘peaceful’ domination over the majority. If they could not conquer and consume others physically, they could enslave them mentally and psychologically, by breaking their confidence in themselves, by constantly underlining their worthlessness and base birth under the cloak of religion.

When we focus on the recent researches in brahmanic mythologies carried out by many Indian and Western scholars, we come to know the brahmanic thesis of human creation that has been propounded in Purush-sukta of Rigveda, we find the peculiar hierarchy that demonstrates Brahman supremacy. It is said, in Purush-sukta, that, the Brahmins come from the mouth of the Purush, the Brahma, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaishyas from his thighs and the Shudras from his feet. This mythical thesis was made the foundation of the Chaaturvarnya (four-fold) system. Initially, caste had the implications of colour. The first two Varnas or castes, especially the Aryan-brahmans, were fairer than the non-Aryans and Dravidians, the dark skinned aborigines, who were branded and relegated to shudras. That’s why the top two castes are known as ‘savarna’ (with colour) and the rest are despised as ‘avarna’ – (without colour). Varna meant a peculiar inequality in which brahmans were the controllers of society and custodians of religion and religious rites, and of intellectual pursuits in general; Kshatriyas were
warriors and rulers, agriculturists, and much later, as traders, and Shudras (some of them were later relegated as ati-shudras and branded as ‘untouchables’) were the servants of all the three higher classes, especially of the Brahmans and Kshatriya. The Shudra, being ‘born from the feet’, was condemned as das dasyu, antyaj, chandal. According to brahmanic sshastras brahma created the Shudra to be the eternal slave. The later Vedic period, during which various Aranyakas and Brahmanykas were composed, witnessed the systematic segregation of all productive communities – peasants, artisans and labourers – as Shudras, who were Krishnayounic (black people), and ‘twacham Krishname’ (balck skinned). This legitimized the Aryan-brahmans’ colonization and conquest of the indigenous people. Treated like social invalids, shudras were to be supported, to be fed, to be clothed with the remnants and castaways of food and clothes of the higher orders. They were not allowed to listen to the Vedas or wear sacred thread. They were kept out of all rites and rituals.

Brahmans, by creating pernicious scriptures, divided and ruled the shudras. They gave religious sanction to the division and exploitation of the masses (Shudras). The brahmanical order, both at material and ideological levels, gradually consolidated its position, and eventually emerged as the dominant social philosophy after prolonged process of conflict, (Shudras had waged many wars in resistance against brahmanical hegemony, which have never been recorded by brahman historians) hierarchization and exploitation. In retrospect, it appears that,
besides other factors, the shudras had to pay a heavy price for their inability to
develop a powerful language like Sanskrit which the brahmans used with deadly
effect to demean, destroy, and divide the Shudras.

How a dominating cultural construct can be formulated, is best known through the scholarly strategies invented by Brahmans to uphold their supremacy. They coined certain terms that glorified brahmans such as brahmajnani, vedadnya, acharya, upadhyay, devavani, shastradnya, pandit, bhudev, etc. On the other hand hundreds of terms were coined to abuse the shudras: danav, daitya, rakshas, pishacha, chandal, mleccha, kshudra, nikrishtha, dwijadasa etc. Braj Ranjan Mani argues,

The Manusmriti (II-31) sternly instructs the shudras to adopt names which should breed disgust, repulsion and hatred. Most brahmanical works, especially the Dharmashastras, prescribe the respectful vocative terms which the shudras must use to address brahman; and in reverse, they also mention the derogatory terms in which the brahman was to address shudras. (54)

The writers of the brahmanic literature who talked of brahmanic world view, such as; Smritis or Dharmashastras, envisioned their religion in terms of strict adherence to endogamy, hereditary occupation and the rules of purity-pollution. The shudras were treated, on religious ground, as two-footed beasts and bonded labourers. Despised as ritually impure, a section of Shudras, known variously as ati-shudras or antyaja, came to be regarded as a source of pollution, which gave birth to the practice of untouchability. Goldsmiths, blacksmiths, washer men, carpenters, physicians, cobblers, and even singers, dancers, and
actors were considered untouchables (Manusmriti : IV 210-15 cited in Mani) In fact, caste system was organized in favour of upper Varnas. Thomas Mathew argues:

One striking feature of the caste system is that the different castes do not stand as on a horizontal series all on the same plane. It is a system in which the different castes are placed in a vertical series one above the other. It is clear that Varna is the parent of caste. Manu who upheld gradation and rank based Varna system may be regarded as the progenitor of the caste system. (2007, 74)

According to Manu, slavery and inequality are the important forces of brahmanic religion. He recognizes slavery, but confines to the shudras. Only shudras could be made slaves of the three higher classes. But the higher classes could not be made the slaves of the shudras. Manu, along with systems of slavery, introduces marriage and rules of law. The rules governing intermarriage among the different classes are as follows:

I. For the first marriage of the twice born classes, a woman of the same class is recommended, but for such as are impelled by inclination to marry again, women in the direct order of the classes are to be preferred.

II. A Shudra woman only must be the wife of shudra: she and a Vaishya of a Vaishya; they two and a Kshatriya of a Kshatriya; those two and Brahmini of a Brahmin. (74)

This discrimination shows that Manu was very particular to preserve the rule of inequality which was his guiding principle. Regarding the rule of law, different principles are made applicable to different Varnas. The most striking
feature of Manu’s penal code which stands out in all its nakedness is the inequality of punishment for the same offence; inequality designed not merely to punish the offender but to protect also the dignity and to maintain the baseness of the parties coming to the court of law to seek justice. Basically, Manusmriti was based on inequality, servitude, exploitation and discrimination. Manusmriti compels the vast majority of shudras to act in the service of the ‘twice born’ (dwija), and must forever remain economically dependent on them.

The notion of education in the Vedas is also based on discrimination. As a matter of fact, a person cannot have new perspective without formal education. His horizon will not be widened and he will remain an ignorant slave. Formal education involves the establishment of special agencies like schools, books, planned materials such as studies etc. No one can take advantage of such special agencies of formal education unless one is literate. The spread of the arts of reading and writing and formal education go hand in hand. The notion of education in Vedic religion is of a very limited nature. It allows every kind of education to the upper varnas and denies the access to the Shudra. Vedvidya (knowledge of Vedas) was supposed to be the highest form of knowledge. Shudras were not allowed to study Vedas; they were not even allowed, consciously or unconsciously, to listen to the Ved mantrochar (Chanting of Veda hymns). If at all a shudra happens to listen to the Ved mantrochar, the punishments such as
pouring boiling lead into the ear were given by the brahmans. These kinds of punishments are, in fact, the indispensable parts of Manu’s Smriti:

The caste ideology was found on the twin religious doctrines of Karma and dharma. The doctrine of Karma expounded that one present caste status was the consequences of deeds done in previous existences; thus, birth in high caste was a reward, birth in a low caste a punishment. This implied that a person born in a high caste was intrinsically superior in intellect, ability and morality to a low caste person. The Kama theory reconciled the lowly person to his degraded condition. The related concept of dharma was to reinforce one’s caste duty. It is to be noted that dharma is now generally used to embody the religion of the highest moral order; it is often used as a suffix after the word ‘Hindu’ to show the humane, compassionate face of Hinduism. But it was not used in the same sense by the brahmanical masters who coined it. (Mani, 2005, 56-57)

Brahman (priestly class) hails *Manusmriti* as the most important work after Vedas. A famous Vedic verse announces- ‘All that Manu said is medicine, curer of all diseases’ (Mani, 2005). It was claimed that whatever has been prescribed by Manu in his *Manusmriti* as the duty assigned to every Varna is in perfect congruence with the Vedas, the embodiment of divine knowledge. In short *Manusmriti* was not only the code of conduct but the constitution long before the Indian constitution was promulgated. Jotirao Phule thoroughly investigated this so called sacred text and challenged the brahman supremacy through his creative expression. He waged a virtual war against Brahmanism and demonstrated the path towards cultural emancipation to the victims of Brahmanism. Marx too propounded the theoretical and philosophical concepts meant for the emancipation of the proletariat from the clutches of the capitalists. Of course, the coming chapters would make a detailed study of Marx and Phule in this context.
Manu says that Shudras are not entitled to education, to amass wealth, or bear arms. A Brahman can take away any possession from a shudra, since nothing at all can belong to him as his own (VIII: 417). Women, similarly, are debarred from property and other natural rights. Manu places all women, irrespective of caste, in the category of lowly shudra and expects them to surrender body and soul to men. The supreme duty of the king is to enforce this social arrangement under the guidance of his brahmans. His divinely-ordained duty is to sustain and strengthen the varna dharma. However, Manu makes it clear that no matter how mighty a king be, he is inferior to even a brahman child. Mani cites, as Manu says, ‘A ten-year-old brahman and a hundred-year-old ruler should be regarded as father and son, and of the two of them the brahman child is the father’ (11:135, 2005)

If we closely read the sacerdotal literature and situate the texts, such as Manusmriti, Geeta, Gautam Dharmasutra, Apastambha Dharmasutra, in socio-historical perspective, it becomes clear that they were written with the primary aim of establishing and maintaining the brahmanical hegemony. As written by various authors at different times, according to the requirements of changed socio-economic and cultural geography, there are obvious external differences in them but in their core and essence all these works were produced to uphold and maintain the brahmanical self-interest. If we contextualize them, their exquisitely-sounding Shlokas, Suktis, and Subhassitaas appear lovely and lofty only for the
brahmins and allied upper castes. In the brahmanical religion and literature, there is absolutely no place for broader social utility or individual justice and freedom which constitute the heart and soul of any true religion.

As a religion, Hinduism has certain salient features based on the social order recommended by *Manusmriti*. The Hindu social order does not recognize the sacredness of the human personality. All individuals do not enjoy the same status as the children of God. (100). The Hindu social order is based on the doctrine that men are created from the different parts of the divinity. The individual is not recognized as the centre of social purpose. Originally the Hindu social structure recognized four classes and subsequently a fifth class was added as the untouchables or *Panchamas*. Even the family is not regarded by the Hindu social structure as the unit of society except for the purposes of inheritance and marriage. Denial of property and educational and religious rights to women shows the point that even family was not recognized as the unit of society. The unit of Hindu society is the class or Varna to which the individual belonged. The basic Hindu doctrine about creation of human beings from different parts of the divinity negates the principles of fraternity and moral equality of individuals. The most comprehensive and barbarous manifestation of the spirit of isolation, separation and inequality is the caste system. (Ambedkar, 1987, 102-06)

Thomas Mathew argues with a Marxist perspective:

Class antagonism, hatred, rivalry and conflicts marked the relation between the ruling classes from time to time. The
bifurcation of Varnas to innumerable castes and sub-castes is based on claims of separate origin from Rishis or heroes as their progenitors. Each caste is engaged in establishing for itself a status superior to that of another caste. (2007, 107-108)

Jotirao Phule’s analysis of caste and Varna system is radically compatible to the present socio-cultural situations in India. This underlines the necessity to explore the arguments of Phule leading toward cultural reconstruction. Of course, a detailed interpretation of Indian caste and varna system, Phule’s literary contribution with a certain ideological position, and of its impact on Indian mass culture will be brought in the discussion of this research. However, it is important to understand the basic aspects of culture in general and cultural theory in particular. Lorimer, for instance, makes a comprehensive statement in cultural traits:

In its generic sense the term “culture” (derived from the Latin *cultura*) means cultivation and is normally used in contrast to nature, regarded as things in their natural state, independent of people and their labour. By culture we mean above all the modes and results of people’s activity. Culture is usually divided into *material* and *intellectual* culture. This is a conventional division, because the making of tools and the objects generally required to satisfy people’s material needs would be impossible without the participation of their thinking. On the other hand, the products of intellectual effort – ideas, artistic images, social norms and rules – exist in a certain material form – in books, paintings music, documents, and so on.

Intellectual culture comprises the results of people’s intellectual activity-science, philosophy, art, morals, politics law and their corresponding institutions (research centres, schools, theatres, libraries, museums, etc.) – and also the level of their intellectual, aesthetic and moral development. The concept of culture is connected with people’s accumulation of knowledge and experience in one or another field of activity, their assimilation and acceptance of a particular system of
values and evolution of certain pattern of behavior. Every individual from early youth comes under the influence of a certain culture-its objects, ideas, values and standards of behavior. The individual’s very upbringing and education consist, in fact, in his or her adaptation to the existing culture, in assimilating the knowledge, skills and abilities amassed by society, and also its intellectual values and standards of behavior. Upbringing and education, the development of the public system of education, are in themselves important indices of the level of culture of a given society. (2009, 39)

Since the study is mainly concerned with cultural reconstruction and intellectual attempts to conceptualization, it would not be out of place if we take into account what Chris Barker has to assert in this regard:

There is a difference between the study of culture and institutionally located Cultural Studies. The study of culture has taken place in a variety of academic disciplines—sociology, anthropology, English literature, etc.—and in a range of geographical and institutional spaces. However, this is not to be understood as Cultural Studies. The study of culture has no origins, and to locate one is to exclude other possible starting points. Nevertheless this does not mean that Cultural Studies cannot be named and its key concepts identified. (2012, 5)

Cultural Studies is an interdisciplinary field in which perspective from different disciplines can be selectively drawn on to examine the relations of culture and power as cited by Barker in his book Cultural Studies (7) The most important definition, for the convenience of present research, by Bennett is:

Cultural Studies is concerned with all those practices, institutions and systems of classification through which these are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life and habitual forms of conduct. (1998, 28)
By studying Marx’s basic concepts pertaining to culture and Phule’s creative writing, we can surely find the forms of power which are diverse and include gender, race, class, colonialism, religion, etc. that are major concerns for Cultural Studies’ exploration. Cultural Studies focuses on the relationship between dominant groups and subordinate groups and develops a discourse in order to bring about transformations. Dominant groups all over the world have developed their ideologies in order to perpetuate dominant culture. Dominant groups very intelligently create and cultivate certain beliefs, traditions and habits that ultimately constitute a culture of their orientation. These cultural elements are practiced in the interest of dominant groups/ruling classes. So culture plays a vital role in power politics. After all, ‘cultural power’ is much more powerful compared to the political power. Cultural power, in fact, is a precondition to achieve political and economic power. Cultural Studies, therefore, seeks to subvert the dominating system by propounding an antithetical cultural discourse. When we closely look at the agenda of Cultural Studies, we understand that, Cultural Studies is a theoretical and intellectual pursuit meant to deconstruct the dominant cultural ideologies and support the mass/popular culture. At the same time it seeks to bring about social, economic and political change. Hence, it can be stated that, Marxian concepts though seem to be economic, political and social, also serve as the crucial basis for cultural theory. While talking about culture, Stuart Hall says:

By culture, here I mean the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific society. I also mean the contradictory forms of
common sense which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life. (1996, 439)

Chris Barker, in his very seminal book, Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice, has interpreted some of the important concepts in Cultural Studies – signifying practices, representation, materialism and non-reductionism, articulation, power, popular culture, texts and readers, and subjectivity and identity. (2012, 7-11) Each concept, given by Barker shows a concern with the issues of subordinated groups. While talking about ‘signifying practices’ he says:

Culture is concerned with questions of shared social meanings, that is, the various ways we make sense of the world. However, meanings are not simply floating ‘out there’; rather, they are generated through signs, most notably those of language. (7)

Then, what sort of ‘signifying practices’ are made as shared social meanings and what role is assigned to these practices in formation of dominant culture would further specify the basic objective of this study. Further, Barker focuses on the issue of ‘representation’ because representation is one of the central aspects of culture. Barker points out:

A good deal of Cultural Studies is centered on questions of representation; that is, on how the world is socially constructed and represented to and by us in meaningful ways. Indeed, the central stand of Cultural Studies can be understood as the study of culture as the signifying practices of representation. This requires us to explore the textual generation of meaning. It also demands investigation of the modes by which meaning is produced. (7)
When we view the concept of representation in the context of present research, we notice that the issue of representation emerges as one of the central aspects in the process of domination. In Indian cultural history masses have always been represented by upper caste elite which is, in fact, a pseudo representation. Indigenous identity of the low castes has always been shrouded by the pseudo identity given by the elites. India is represented as a land of ‘great culture’ and spirituality, which is again a pseudo representation.

Another crucial concept Barker introduces is – ‘materialism and non-reductionism. He says:

Cultural Studies has, for the most part, been concerned with modern industrialized economies and media cultures organized along capitalist lines. Here representations are produced by corporations who are driven by the profit motive. (7)

Barker then raises three important issues to which Cultural Studies is concerned:

“Who owns and controls cultural production; the distribution mechanisms for cultural products; the consequences of patterns of ownership and control for contours of the cultural landscape.” (P-9) Here culture is seen in the forms of fine arts, literature, television programs etc. which are owned and controlled by the ruling classes. Cultural Studies wages battle against this profit motives of ruling capitalist class. The non-reductionism of Cultural Studies insists that questions of class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nation and age have their own particularities which cannot be reduced either to political economy.
Next concept Barker takes is ‘power’. He puts it:

Cultural Studies writers generally agree on the centrality of power to the discipline. For most Cultural Studies writers, power is regarded as pervading every level of social relationships. Power is not simply the glue that holds the social together, or the coercive force which subordinates one set of people to another, though it certainly is this. It is also understood in terms of the process that generate and enable any form of social action, relationship or order. In this sense, power, while certainly constraining, is also enabling. Having said that, Cultural Studies has shown a specific concern with subordinated group at first with class, and later with races, genders, nations, age groups etc. (8)

Marxism is basically and above all a philosophy of historical materialism. It pinpoints the historical specificity of human relations and the mutable character of social formations whose core features are located in the material conditions of existence. Marx maintained that the first priority of human beings is the production of their means of subsistence through labour. As humans produce food, clothes and all manner of tools with which to shape their environment, so they also create themselves. Thus the central categories of Marxism are labour, the forms of social organization that material production takes, and a mode of production. Barker argues,

The organization of a mode of production is not simply a matter of co-ordinating objects; rather it is inherently tied up with relations between people. These relationships, while social, that is, co-operative and co-ordinated, are also matters of power and conflict. Indeed, Marxists regard social antagonisms as being the motor of historical change. (2012,12)
Marxism believes that history is not a straight-forward and smooth evolutionary process. In fact it is marked by discontinuities of mode of production. Therefore, Marx focuses on the transformations from an ancient mode of production to a feudal mode of production and thereafter to the capitalist mode of production. These stages in the process of mode of production are characterized by various forms of material organization and different social relations. Then, each mode of production is superseded by another as internal contradictions, particularly those of class conflict, result into its transformation and replacement. Thus change in power structure becomes the chief concern for Marxism.

It is essential to show the influence of Marxism on Cultural Studies, for, the topic undertaken for research is based on the basic tenets of Marx. If we look into the past, we find that Cultural Studies writers have had long, ambiguous, but productive relationship with Marxian thought. Actually, Cultural Studies is not a Marxist domain, but some of the basic tenets play seminal and indispensable role in the study of culture. We live in such a social formations organized along capitalist lines that manifest deep class divisions in work, wages, housing, education and health. And cultural practices are commodified by large corporate culture industries. In that context Cultural Studies has been partisan in taking up the cause of change. (Barker, 2012,14)

Cultural Studies, in its engagement with Marxism, has been particularly concerned with issues of structure and action. On the one hand, Marxism suggests
that there are regularities or structures to human existence that lie outside of any
given individual. On the other hand, it has a commitment to change through
human agency. Cultural Studies has resisted the economic determinism inherent in
some readings of Marxism and has asserted the specificity of culture. Cultural
Studies has, to some extent, also been concerned with the apparent success of
capitalism. This has been attributed in part to the winning of consent for capitalism
on the level of culture.

Another very crucial intellectual strand in Cultural Studies is the feminism,
race and postcolonial theory studied as the politics of difference. Barker argues,
“There has been a growing emphasis on difference in the cultural field, and in
particular on questions of gender, race and nationality.” (23)

In general terms feminism may be located as asserting that sex is
fundamental and irreducible axis of social organization. In this social organization
women have been placed to subordinate position. Thus, feminism is centrally
concerned, as Barker puts, “with sex as an organizing principle of social life where
gender relations are thoroughly saturated with power”. (24) Male power and
female subordination are structures because the subordination of women is argued
to be evident across a range of social institutions and practices. The consequence
of this was, some feminist thinkers adopted the concept of patriarchy, with its
derivative meanings of the male headed family, ‘mastery’ and superiority. (24)
Equality of opportunity for women is stressed by liberal feminist thinkers. They believe that, this equality could be achieved within the broad structures of the existing legal and economic frame works. In contrast, socialist feminist thinkers believe that there are interconnections between class and gender, including the fundamental place of gender inequality in the production of capitalism. But the difference of radical feminist thinkers, instead of demanding for equality insist on the differences between men and women. They not only insist on the difference but glorify and celebrate as representing the creative difference of women and superiority of ‘feminine’ values. (24)

The difference between men and women is again stressed by poststructuralist and postmodern feminist thinkers by arguing that sex and gender are social and cultural constructions. Jotirao Phule, in 19th century argues that women are superior to men, and develops a very potential feminist discourse. Phule believes that gender difference is cultural construction which subordinates women and perpetuates brahman domination. There, brahman domination works as patriarchy. In Indian context, patriarchy is constructed by brahmanic religion, mythology and social traditions, which is not merely dominating but violent and inhuman in nature, if compared to the patriarchy in Europe. Phule’s play *Tritiya Ratna* (*Third Jewel*), nonfictional writings, and many poems bring a comprehensive critique of patriarchy which is a product of brahmanic cultural system.
The issues of race and ethnicity are very significant from the point of view of the present study. Because in India superiority and inferiority of races have been considered as the issues related to identity of castes which are located in specific caste framework. Progressive writers like Phule and Ambedkar insisted on equality and eradication of caste system. Phule’s controversial but seminal book *Slavery* which is in dialogic form is a radical statement on the issue of race and racial discrimination. His thesis, that Brahman/Aryan race is outsider, may be debatable, but the arguments and critique he has made is highly logical. Phule’s *Slavery* is a beginning of cultural reconstruction. Brahmanic cultural system, on the basis of race and ethnicity, evolves the concepts of superiority and inferiority. And, in order to legitimatize these concepts, certain traditions and myths are intelligently cultivated to perpetuate the designs of superiority and its validity.

The issues of race and ethnicity have received growing attention within Cultural Studies in postcolonial scenario. Barker says:

Ethnicity is a cultural concept centered on norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices that Mark a process of cultural boundary formation. The idea of ‘racialization’ has been deployed to illustrate the argument that race is a social construction and not a universal or essential category of either biology or culture. Races do not exist outside of representation but are formed in and by it in a process of social and political power struggle. (24)

Marx believes that culture is a material force located into the socially organized production of the material conditions of subsistence. Marxism maintains that the material mode of production is the real foundation of cultural
superstructure. (Marx’s one of the basic concepts of base and superstructure model, where Marx believes that economic system is the base, and legal and political system is superstructure.) But many Marxist thinkers add culture, art, religion, ideology in superstructure. It means the material is taken here as economic that determines cultural. This concept will be thoroughly discussed further.

Though Barker’s observation indicates that recent trends in Cultural Studies are detaching from classical Marxist principles, but still the indispensability of Marx’s theory of historical materialism cannot be rejected. Above all the roots of Birmingham Center for Cultural Studies are in Marxist philosophy, is the celebrated fact.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the word culture acquired a new meaning. Before that time, culture was associated with art, literature, and classical music. To be ‘cultured’ was to possess a certain taste for certain art form. Anthropologists have always used the word ‘culture’ in a much broader sense to mean forms of life and social expression. The way people behave in society, while eating, communicating with each other, interacting at work, engaging in ritualized social behavior such as family gathering, and the like constitute a culture. This broad perception of the term includes the regularities, procedures, and rituals of human life in communities. But since the emergence of Marxism in 19th century, the term culture assumed political connotation. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan argue:
Culture is both a means of domination, of assuming the rule of one class or group over another, and means of resistance to such domination, a way of articulating opposition points of view to those in dominance. (2002, 1025)

About this new perception of the term ‘culture’, Rivkin and Ryan further say:

Theodor Adorno and max Horkheimer, in their celebrated *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, argue that mass culture – the culture of television, radio, film, and cheap paperbacks – is a tool of domination, a way of capitalism to offer ephemeral gratification to people condemned to lives of work. In the 1960s in England a rather different concept of culture emerged that was to prove the foundation of a new discipline called “Cultural Studies.” Thinkers like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E.P. Thompson came to see culture as a means of resistance to capitalism. If illiteracy was a way of keeping poor and working people away from intellectual instruments that might impel them to rebellion, literacy in the form of clandestine pamphlets and undergrounds newspapers was a way of maintain alternative perspectives to those demand by the progress of industrial capitalism and the subsumption of the population to factory labor. (2002,1025)

Thus culture as domination and culture as tool for resistance is the central aspect in the modern discipline of Cultural Studies. The present research too views brahmanic culture as domination and masses’ culture as a tool of resistance.

But the question – whether resistance is the ultimate aim of culture on the part of the masses; is equally important in Cultural Studies. Deconstruction of the dominant culture and resistance to it is the systematic process which culminates into cultural reconstruction or establishment of alternative culture. As dominant culture achieves its domination by destroying or underestimating mass culture, same is true, with certain differences, of mass culture. Aim of dominant
castes/classes is always to control economic political status which is impossible without cultural control. Hence the cultural tools such as literature, language, dance, drama, philosophy, rituals, customs etc. are deployed to perpetuate cultural domination.

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o pertinently argues in this connection:

Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people’s culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. …… the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people’s culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer. (2003, 16)

Ngugi’s argument, though rooted in the context of European colonization of Africa, remains applicable to any situation where dominant culture is trying to destroy or undervalue the subordinate culture. Controlling people’s culture means controlling ‘their tools of self-definition in relation to others’, is, in fact, a very true conclusion made by Ngugi which may serve as the crucial parameter to analyse the processes of domination in cultural situations. If applied to Indian society, it reveals that the ‘tools of self-definition’ have been controlled by brahmanic culture. More precisely, these ‘tools’ are not only controlled but generated by the brahmanic culture, i.e. Indian masses have not adopted their caste identity on their own accord, rather, it has been conferred on the basis of their birth. This birth based identity is nothing but caste identity, which is the product of religious scriptures. Again, this birth based caste identity is permanent in nature; means, in India, caste is the definition of an individual. Caste identity is not
chosen by the people but imposed by the religion, hence, they have been deprived of the opportunity of creating the ‘tools of self-definition’.

Jotirao Phule’s literary discourse is a powerful effort to generate the ‘tools of self-definition’ which have been either destroyed or controlled by brahmanic culture and religion.

Now, it is necessary to see how caste identities have been formed in India and how they have been brought into practice. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the disciple of Phule, has made brilliant analysis of Hindu social order which is the source of caste identity. He says:

The Hindu social order is based on the doctrine that men are created from the different parts of the divinity and therefore the view expressed by Paul or the Pilgrim Fathers has no place in it. The Brahmin is no brother to the Kshatriya because the former is born from the mouth of the divinity while the latter is from the arms. The Kshatriya is no brother to the Vaishya because the former is born from the arms and the latter from his thighs. As no one is a brother to the other, no one is the keeper of the other. (2008,100)

The Hindu social order, according to Ambedkar is, based on the doctrine ‘that men are created from the different parts of the divinity’, which may be considered as the basic doctrine on which the whole structure of Varna/caste hierarchy is erected. This hierarchy, no doubt, culminates in discrimination, domination and subordination, and exploitation. Ambedkar interprets the consequences of this doctrine in such a way that no sociologist or scholar has interpreted in modern India. He says:
The doctrine that the different classes were created from different parts of the Divine body has generated the belief that it must be divine will that they should remain separate and distinct. It is this belief which has created in the Hindu an instinct to be different, to be separate and to be distinct from the rest of his fellow Hindus. (100)

Since the doctrine of difference created ‘an instinct to be different’, it became a birth based phenomena. Sigmund Freud theorizes the psychic faculties of human being as Id, Ego and Super Ego, of which, he maintains Id as a natural instinct that is associated with passion and pleasure principle. Freud believes that Id is that certain faculty which comes with birth itself. In the same fashion, Ambedkar believes that Varna difference or Caste difference is an instinct which comes with very birth of a Hindu person. Varna system, as given by Hindu Scriptures, is divine, hence no question of verifying its authenticity or validity. Ambedkar maintains that this doctrine of Varna difference is so rooted into the blood and psyche of the people that it has turned into an instinct. And, this instinct has been handed over by one generation to another generation. Therefore, we can experience that, caste difference based on Varna difference is still dominant in even twenty first century, and there are no chances, at least in near future, of its withering away.

Jotirao Phule’s war is against this caste and Varna system which has become ‘an instinct.’ In this war against caste difference, he believes, violent actions will not work. Hence he uses literary articulation as the weapon to fight against this doctrine because actual battle cannot defeat the values which are
deeply rooted in the blood for thousands of years. It requires an intellectual battle which will enlighten, educate and orient the masses and which will emancipate them from that ‘instinct of difference’. Therefore, comparatively Phule’s struggle is more complex than Marx’s struggle against capitalism. Describing Hindu social order, Ambedkar argues:

The Hindu social order is a ladder of castes placed one above the other together representing an ascending scale of hatred and a descending scale of contempt. This spirit has exhibited itself in the proverbs coined by one caste with the object of lampooning another caste. (106)

Thus, Hindu social order is such hierarchy that represents ‘an ascending scale of hatred and a descending scale of contempt’. In this kind of structure there can’t be equality, and of course, brotherhood too. Ambedkar very pertinently points out:

If the Hindu social order is not based on equality and fraternity, what are the principles on which it is based? There is only one answer to this question. Though few will be able to realize what they are, there is no doubt as to their nature and effect on Hindu society. The Hindu social order is reared on three principles. Among these the first and foremost is the principle of graded inequality.

That the principle of graded inequality is a fundamental principle is beyond controversy. The four classes are not on horizontal plane, different but equal. They are on vertical plane. Not only different but unequal in status, on standing above the other. In the scheme of Manu, the Brahmin is placed at the first in rank. Below him is the Kshatriya. Below the Kshatriya is the Vaishya. Below Vaishya is the Shudra and below Shudra is the Ati-Shudra or the Untouchable. This order of precedence among the classes is not merely conventional. It is spiritual, moral and legal. There is no sphere of life which is not regulated by this principle of graded inequality. (106-7)
According to Ambedkar the ‘principle of graded inequality’ is the exclusive and unique feature of Hinduism compared to other religions of the world. While illustrating this principle. He argues:

The Hindu social order does not recognize equal need, equal work or equal ability as the basis of reward for labour. Its motto is that in regard to the distribution of the good things of life those who are reckoned as the highest must get the most and the best and those who are classed as the lowest must accept the least and the worst.

…. Hindu social order is based on the principle of graded inequality. It pervades all departments of social life. Every side of social life is protected against the danger of equality. (111)

Through Ambedkar’s illustration we can understand that inequality is not just ordinary disparity in Hinduism but it is a ‘graded one’. Therefore ‘equality’ is a danger for this social order, as Ambedkar puts. The second principle of Hindu social order, according to Ambedkar, is also indispensable in this system. He argues in this connection:

The second principle on which the Hindu social order is founded is that of fixity of occupation for each classes and continuance thereof by heredity. This is what Manu says about occupations of the four classes.

1.87. But in order to protect this universe, He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations, to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet.

1.88. To Brahmans he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda) sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms).

1.89. The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts to offer sacrifices to study (the Veda) and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.
1.90. The Vaishya to tend cattle to bestow gifts to offer sacrifices to study (the Veda) and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.

1.91. One occupation only the Lord prescribed to the Shudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes.” (111-12)

Ambedkar, by citing the laws of Manu about occupation of the four classes, underlines the fact that in Hindu social order, fixation of occupation is hereditary and hence preserved for centuries. Means, the ‘doctrine of difference’ is confirmed by the law of occupation. In Marx’s scheme, it must be understood that mobility of occupation of the worker is not denied, but in Hindu social order as caste is birth based identity, occupation is caste based which plays role of complimentary adherent.

Further, Ambedkar writes about the third principle on which Hindu social order is founded. For him, it is “fixation of people within their respective classes. There is nothing strange or peculiar in the fact that the Hindu social order recognizes classes.” (113)

For Ambedkar, four Varnas are nothing but four classes. At one point he even challenges the supposition that class struggle, class consciousness and class war are the products of Marxian ideology. He claims that India has a long history of class struggle. He says:

Class consciousness, class struggle and class war are supposed to be ideologies which came into vogue from the writings of Karl Marx. This is a complete mistake. India is the land where there has been fought a class war between Brahmans and Kshatriyas which lasted for several generations and which was
fought so hard and with such virulence that it turned but to be a
war of extermination. (104-5)

Here, we notice affinity between Ambedkar and his guru Jotirao Phule,
because Phule is the first thinker in modern India who views ancient Indian history
in class terms. In fact this class struggle is at the centre in his dialogic satire
_Slavery_. In this book, Phule brings a detailed account of struggle between Aryan
Brahmans and Shudratishudra.

It seems that Indian history is nothing but struggle between Varnas. These
Varnas, in course of time, got transformed into various castes and sub-castes. As
upper Varnas dominated in ancient period, the upper castes dominated in modern
period. This domination, as we have seen earlier, is legitimatized by law i.e.
brahmanic religious scriptures. It has been declared as divinely ordained, hence no
question of doubt about its finality. For thousands of years Indian people
witnessed this domination of upper classes/castes. In Peshwa rule the domination
of brahmins reached to its culmination. This period was the most heinous and
inhuman in the whole history, where caste discrimination and exploitation had
reached at its utmost level. Shudratishudras were treated as just creatures, insects.
Brahmans enjoyed every pleasure of life at the cost of the misery of
Shudratishudras. Utter poverty, untouchability and exploitation are the features of
Peshwa and post Peshwa rule.
In this social-political scenario, Jotirao Phule started to write his ballads, poems, play and many of his dialogues. Therefore it was quite natural that socio-cultural and religious realities occupied, as central theme, in his literary writing.

Phule’s creative writings, in the light of the above discussions, gain immense socio-cultural and political-historical significance. One thing is obvious that Phule is not writing for entertainment, rather, he writes for enlightenment, education, and awareness of the masses. Therefore, criticism of his literature, on the basis of canonical literary parameters, is not possible. His literature goes beyond the canonical parameters. To understand and judge Phule’s creative writing, mere aesthetic paradigms would not operate as effective tools of evaluation. It requires the awareness of contemporary socio-cultural context. Without socio-cultural context, Phule’s writing cannot be fully appreciated. Noted Marathi critic Dr. S.S. Bhosle writes about Phule’s literary creation in his article Deshikar Lene in Mahatma Phule Gaurav Granth:

Mahatma Phule’s creation of literature comes from the furnace of peasant tradition. Robust, straight forward argument, clear and direct style are the characteristics of peasant tradition. Rejection of emotional delecacies is its temperamental tradition. Fragile narration or fragile weaving is not known to it. What is the use of fragile weaving when the manifesto of human rights has to be declared and brought into action? Therefore Phule’s literature is not a fragile weaving, deliberately, there is not even an iota of it. As stormy wind wrestles with rainy cloud, in the same fashion, a hair raising wrestling is there in Phule’s literature. (2006, 622)

The most important aspect of Phule’s creative expression is that it springs from the nativistic tradition of peasant literature. Therefore, straight
forwardedness, clarity in narration and naked criticism of the situations are the prominent features of his creative expression. Phule’s literary creation has the inherent tendency of enlightenment; hence it is different from canonical aesthetic or artistic literature. Dr. S.S. Bhosle’s another argument about Phule’s literary creation is also important: “Mahatma Phule’s entire literature is composed, and not embellished.” (2006, 622)

Because, Bhosle believes that there is a purpose in ‘composed’ literature which differs from the embellished literature. Embellished or adorned literature has dormant or micro purpose, whereas composed literature has direct, clear and concrete purpose. Phule’s literature is dedicated for the enlightenment of the poor shudratishudra, hence the purpose is clear and direct. A writer is required to clearly state his purpose if he expects his writing yield immediate and fruitful results. In every work of Phule, therefore, may it be poetry, play or non-fictional prose; we find clear mention of his purpose. Dr. Bhosle argues about Phule’s approach as literary person:

Phule never wrote under the disguise of “sahityacharya” (guru of literature), “Sahitya Samrat” (emperor of literature), “linguist”, “Historian” or “religious philosopher” He never claimed so. (2006, 623)

Phule, therefore, never indulges in any unnecessary debate on so called philosophic ‘isms’. His literary articulation categorically aims at the deconstruction and, at the same time, prepares the shudratishudra masses for the struggle of cultural reconstruction. Why does Phule write with certain purpose?
What is the inspiration behind his literary creation? These questions are crucial to understand the central theme of his struggle in actual field work. As a field work activist and as an intellectual Phule has dedicated his whole life for the emancipation of shudratishudra from the grips of Brahmanism. The will to emancipate the wretched humanity is the inspiration behind Phule’s literary articulation. S.S. Bhosle further argues:

Hence, this must be taken into consideration that, Phule’s literature is no to be studied merely through literary perspective but it is a study of contemporary context of time. With this perspective, study of Phule’s literature is the study on the basis of his field-work and contemporary wretched condition of shudratisudra. (2006, 623)

Jotirao Phule’s literary creation is an indispensable part of his cultural agenda which he successfully carried along with his social movement. Therefore, his works achieve a stature above mere literary work and becomes the science for the emancipation of humanity.

Now, some salient features of Phule’s literary style would also throw light on his mission and vision, his endeavors to effect changes in the very act of conceptualization of the cultural transformations. It seems that, though Phule lived in colonial period and under the cultural domination of brahmanic regime, he never bothered for the sophistications of English language and cultural complexities of Sanskrit language. He wrote in the people’s language. His literature is a continuation of Marathi folk tradition. Because his basic intention
was to jolt the common man out of slumber; to make him painfully aware of the precarious conditions he was placed in and also to, thereby, mobilize him to his own cause and to the cause of millions like him who lived a life worse than death.

Noted thinker Dr. B.L. Bhole in his article *Marathi Gadyashailila Jotiraoanche Yogdan* in *Mahatma Phule Gaurav Granth* rightly points out:

Jotirao’s language and style are unique in Marathi prose. Phule is not only first *Shivshahir* (ballad writer on Shivaji), first independent and social playwright, first satirist, but, he is the first stylist of *bahujanbhasha* (language of masses) and, since his tradition was not preserved today’s Marathi language is in deplorable state. (2006, 685)

Dr. Bhole’s argument proves that Phule is the first stylist, satirist, social playwright and *Shivshahir*. This mention is necessary because historians of Marathi literature have deliberately neglected Phule’s position and contribution in Marathi literature. Phule’s selection of literary genres, words and style are also a part of his cultural campaign and commitment.

Phule has declared his position as a writer in a letter he wrote to the Marathi Granthkar Sabha (conference of Marathi Authors) published in *Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule*. He says:

Dear sir,

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter regarding the proposed conference of the (Marathi) authors and I was delighted to receive your request that I should participate in the conference. But then esteemed sir, the conferences and the books of those who refuse to think of human rights generally, who do not concede them to others and going by their behavior are unlikely to concede them in future, cannot make sense to us, they cannot concur with what we are trying to say in our
books. The reason is that their ancestors, with a view to taking revenge on us, included in their pseudo-religious texts an account of how they turned us into slaves and thus gave our enslavement religious authority. Their dated and decadent texts are witness to this phenomenon. These upper caste authors who are forever miles away from reality and who can only make ceremonial and meaningless speeches in big meetings can never understand what we the shudras and atishudras have to suffer and what calamities we have to undergo. All this is not entirely unknown to the high-caste founders of various conferences and organizations. They pretend to be modernists as long as they are in the service of the British government. The moment they retire and claim their pensions, they get into their brahmanical touch-me-not attire, become caste chauvinists, incorrigible idol worshipers and, what is worse, treat the shudras and atishudras as lowly and contemptible. If they happen to be in their touch-me-not ritual dress they would not even touch paper notes as if that were a blasphemy! How can these Arya Brahmans improve the lot of this unfortunate land? Be that as it may. We shudras do not any longer wish to trust these people and their specious and dishonest stories, for they cheat us and eat off our labour. In a word, we shudras have nothing to gain by mixing with such people. We must ourselves think about our situation and how we should relate to these upper-caste people. If these leaders of men are genuinely interested in unifying all people they must address themselves to the discovery of the root of eternal love of all human beings. Let them discover it and may be formulate and publish it as a text. Otherwise to turn a blind eye to the divisions among the human beings at this hour is simply futile. Of course, they are free to do what they like. I would nevertheless be thankful if my short letter is placed before your conference for consideration. In any case accept the salute of this old man.

Your friend,

Jotirao G. Phule

[Tr. By G.P. Deshpande from Marathi] (2002, 201)

This short letter is, in a way, a manifesto of literary, social and cultural struggle that is initiated by Jotirao Phule. In this short piece, he directs our attention towards three crucial things which reveal his ideological and literary position. The first thing is, Aryan Brahmans’ ancestors have included the
revengeful stories in their religious texts to enslave shudratishudra and this enslavement has been given religious authority. Second thing is – the upper caste writers are always far away from the wretched condition of shudratishudras, in spite of their knowledge of the reasons behind it. Phule emphasizes on the fact that the brahmanic pseudo – religion is the root cause of the sufferings of shudratishudra. The third thing is – if the Brahman authors are really interested in unifying all people they must discover the roots of eternal love among all human beings. Phule condemns Aryan Brahmans for their cunning and pseudo-religion, and, at the same time appeal them to live in unity brotherhood and love.

This letter of Phule can be considered as a brief and encapsulated summery of his entire literature, because it brings out, in a nut shell, the entire history of cultural domination and intelligibly suggests was to come out of it. He ends the letter with an appeal to the brahman writers to unify the divided humanity.

Finally it can be stated that, Phule as a literary genius, is whole heartedly committed to the liberation of humanity from all sorts of domination. This commitment is well revealed in his last work ‘Sarvajanik Satya Dharm Pustak’ (The Book of the True Faith). The present research, therefore, attempts to explore Phule’s ideological position and his literary endeavors towards cultural reconstruction of Indian society. At the same time, this research also is a combined study of Marx and Phule. Of course, as the title of this thesis suggests, there is a
brief comparison between these two revolutionary figures. The comparison between Marx and Phule might seem to be unusual and it may rightly seem to be so, because Marx is a philosopher and Phule basically is a socio-cultural revolutionary, an activist and a committed creative writer. But the present study also strongly believes that Phule too is a potential philosopher because many philosophical concepts appear to have been propounded by him through his literary works. Of course they are not systematically outlined and designed like Marx.

The thesis also generates a logic and validates it with authentic primary and secondary sources in spite of apparent differences and distances in terms of spatial and contextual preoccupations of Marx and Phule. It validates the arguments, interpretations and evaluations in the light of the actual and ample evidence provided by their crusades to conceptualize the transformations that would finally lead to the emancipation of a considerably large section of society that has continually been oppressed and exploited by intellectually and culturally superior, ironically so to say, brand of humanity.

The following chapters, therefore, would focus on the basic concepts of Marxian thought such as ideology, historical materialism, base and superstructure, alienation, religion and communism, and Phule’s ideological and reformative precepts in order to bring out the conceptual and creative directions of these two Messiahs of mankind. Third chapter, especially, would streamline Phule’s literary
productions and his social-cultural struggle to grant human dignity to those who were reduced to the images of hunger and humiliation.

References


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