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Mahatma Jotirao Phule's Contribution to Subaltern Studies

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Abstract:

The present paper collates and interprets literary perceptions of Mahatma Jotirao Phule's contribution to Subaltern Studies. The books selected for the present study are *Slavery* (Jotirao Phule, 1873, 1991, trans.), *Cultivator's Whipcord* (Jotirao Phule, 1883, 2002, trans.), and *The Universal Religion of Truth* (Jotirao Phule, 1891, 1991, trans.) In *Critical Theory* and Post Colonialism, subaltern is the social group who are socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. In describing "history told from below", the term subaltern derived from Antonio Gramsci's work on cultural hegemony, identifies social groups who are excluded from a society's established structures for political representation, the means by which people have a voice in their society. Non-hegemonic groups or classes are also called by Gramsci "subordinate", "subaltern" or sometimes instrumental. Thus it has been referred to any person or group of inferior rank and station, whether because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion. The Subaltern Studies Group arose in the 1980s, influenced by the writings of Eric Stokes and Ranjit Guha, to attempt to give shape to a new narrative of the chronicle of India and South Asia.

Keywords: subaltern, subaltern studies, shudra, ati-shudra, slavery, cultivator, whipcord, truth, universal, akhanda.

The present study is in interdisciplinary nature and explores on the contribution of Jotirao Phule's literature in the development of a subaltern point of view. In the State of Maharashtra during the nineteenth century there was a conflict between the rationalists and the orthodox groups. One prominent social revolutionary was Mahatma Jotirao Govindrao Phule, a rationalist, and a Mentor in the Indian Social Revolution. He wrote for the low caste or subaltern class of India such as farmers, the downtrodden, the oppressed, and for gender equality. His thoughts are still relevant today in the context of improving political, social, and educational condition of subalterns. Shudra and Ati-Shudra are alternative terms used for the Subaltern class in India Jotirao uses them many times in his literature. In 19th century India, during the lifetime of Phule, social injustice, inequality, castism, exploitation of farmers, untouchability and the suppression of women were the main social evils. He recognized the fact that illiteracy was behind the degradation of human beings. As a result, he opened the first girl's school, in August 1848, and the first school for Untouchables, in 1851, in Pune respectively. His memorial address before the *Hunter Education Commission* (1881) focused on the poor condition of education in India, especially among of the low caste citizens, for that reason, he suggested many important

educational measures to the *Hunter Education Commission* in an effort to enhance the India's education policy. He was the first Indian to argue for the free and compulsory education before this first *Education Commission of India*.

While exploring subaltern perspective the study aims to analyse the ways that Jotirao Phule ideas on the welfare of Shudra, Ati-Shudras. Shudra and Ati-Shudra are alternative terms for the subalterns of Hindu society in Indian intentionally used by Jotiba. At the same time the researcher highlights arguments and counter contentions by the writer and his friends, respectively, in the selected book like *The Universal Religion of Truth*. As well the present study focuses the way of degradation and humiliation of low caste men. Myths are adapted from the ancient scriptures and what changes are caused because of the adaptation by exploring the textual and contextual elements in the book like *Slavery*. It observed myths that address major issues in the religious and cultural context. After surveying a number of ways, the present study tries to prove the interrelatedness among myth, culture, and literature about the subalterns of India. The present research work most importantly not only attempt to show the misery and sorrows of the downtrodden, but it presents the healing suggestions given by Phule in every selected books of the researcher. The present research hypothetically presents issues that examine how the selected texts use literature to solve problems of subalterns in a present day context. In literature by Jotirao Phule there is immense potential to resolves the issues of the subalterns. In this direction there is the interpretation and analysis of the writing of Jotirao Phule by the researcher. This research works to discover how certain subaltern contextual studies reveals certain ideologies by different subaltern writers and social activists.

As far as the theoretical framework is concerned, the major focus is on using the concept of subaltern as perceived in social sciences, and not as used in the field of linguistics. Multidisciplinary approach is preferred in which different theories, terms and concepts are used as tools for investigation. It does not follow any particular theory of subaltern exclusively, but uses major arguments relevant for the study. Again the use of Subaltern theory does not confine to a particular school and movement, but it mingles many ideas of different theorists. Elaborating of its 'multidisciplinary' spirit, the present study skillfully makes use of many theories and concepts and arguments. The methods like close reading, textual element analysis, and comparison are used by the researcher. Analytical framework constitutes three major areas of investigation viz. i) finding the dominant, prevalent subaltern discourse in the text. ii) Finding the points of counter subaltern discourses in the text and iii) analyzing the textualization process of adaption and contextualization of subaltern. Contextualization of subaltern involves rearranging the content, emphasizing certain issues, events and characterization, along with creating metaphors, which assists in understanding the subject better. Strategies and counter strategies owe in between of subaltern and literature is attempted by the researcher. It presents a text with text of signification where every text provides context for locating a story into totally different time and space framework. For example, *Slavery* is relocated brahmical scriptures and mythologies. *Cultivator's Whipcord* deals with the low caste farmers of Pune and the rest of the

Maharashtra in general. *The Universal Religion of Truth*, in 1889-90's, is for same locality and it gives the modern religious experience. Contextualization of subaltern itself initially works in itself. The present subaltern study involves textualization as well as contextualization of selected texts in the time and place. This twofold process would lead to future betterment of low caste people. All the selected texts contextualized the age old stories to find out the solution for problem facing today. Therefore, the focus of analysis is not on the ancient stories isolation, but their contextualization in literature.

The first chapter introduces the outline of the present study, which charts research problem, significance of the study, and methodology. The second chapter presents the analysis of Cultivator's *Whipcord* as a real portrayal of farmers and his play *The Third Eye* explains the exploitation of one low caste peasant family on the name of religion by Brahman priest. The analysis is divided into five sub points as original in the selected text of the writer. The first part of Cultivator's *Whipcord* describes how a Brahmin priest persecuted a Shudra farmer all the year round from cradle to cremation, from pregnancy to pilgrimage, and how all this exploitation is going on under the cloak of religion and its unending rites and rituals. Further, we see some of the illiterate Brahmins pretend to be leading a saintly life and enjoy worldly happiness on the ignorance of the poor, illiterate farmers. The second part, observes the most of the white skin government official are engaged in seeking fun and pleasure that's why they don't have time to understand the real problems of farmers and the white government officers are dominated by the Brahmin officials. Thus we see the ill friendship among British official and the Brahmin official. It is for looting or exploiting farmers. As a result of this collective exploitation, farmers suffered a lot and in their hand didn't remain enough money for survival. The third part, criticizes the government policy of spending abundant money on the salaries and pension of its employees. For the accomplishment of salaries of government officials they impose new taxes on the farmers. Thus they bring out money from farmers with great craft. It causes farmers to debt ridden forever. Jotirao seems to be unhappy about the way of the working of government official whether black or white. The contemporary condition of agriculture and the farmers is elaborated in the fourth part. Jotirao pays homage to Dr. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine for their great work in the uplift of their countrymen. Jotirao was greatly influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine. The last part, deals with action to be taken by the government for the welfare of the farmers and in this context message to the Brahmin priests. Through the third chapter the researcher deals with sorrows and suffering in the life of Shudra and Ati-Shudra community by the grace of *Slavery* imposed on them in the name of religion. This book is divided into sixteen chapters. Jotirao added four more poems at the end of the book. The fifth chapter of this thesis is about the concept of ideal religion of Jotirao Phule. The issues handled in this book are simple and useful for leading peaceful and happy life. The content of this book are more talkative such as Happiness, The Creator, the ritual of worship, offering of food to and in the name of God, paradise, woman and man, sinful conduct, caste differentiation, the difference between human beings and other animals and birds, moral behavior, logic, fate and etc. To the follower of the *Universal Religion of Truth*, the researcher handles the thirty three rules given by Jotirao. The

fifth chapter focuses on the selected Akhandas (Unbroken poems), some short poems and ballads composed by Jotirao Phule which have scattered abundantly in his entire literature. Jotirao is well known for his unbroken poetic composition, patterned on Sant Tukaram's Abhangas. *The Ballad on the Life of King Shivaji* by Jotirao is beautifully composed in one thousand lines. The conclusion has been drawn from the discussions and analysis done in the earlier foregoing chapters regarding the selected works of Mahatma Jotirao Phule. It has reached to significant conclusions in this regard. The present work of the researcher is not the final conclusion in terms of on Mahatma Jotirao Phule's a contribution to the subaltern studies. There are still many areas which remain unexplored and could be studied with various dimensions.

The major findings of the study can be discussed in short. In the analysis of the texts by Jotirao Phule, contextualization of the subaltern study can be found in major role. Contextualization of subaltern study has taken here in two directions – relocation and parallelism. The relocation emphasizes the direct encounter between ancient situations depicted in *Puranas* and *Vedas* and Phule's observation and findings on them. Their parallelism subtly works the relation between the past and the present. *Cultivator's Whipcord*, *Slavery* directly exhibits contextualization of subaltern study, whereas *The Universal Religion of Truth* and akhanda or unbroken Poems, shows indirect concern to the contextualization of the subaltern study. More importantly whether it is relocation or parallelism, contextualized subaltern contribution by the writer provide a lot of scope for the interpretations. It is a situation open for variety of ways to look at the things. Contextualization attempts to situate the adaptation beyond the specific time and space framework. The term Subaltern Studies try to correlate subaltern with the contribution of Phule in the field of social discourses. There are many similar threads between the notion of subaltern and the contribution of Phule in this concern.

The term subaltern and the work by Phule show their concern to the ill-fated low caste oppressed people and the downtrodden in the hands of elites. The term subaltern shows the closeness to the real life of the low caste human beings, who live on ground level or at the bottom of the society. It presents the reality of the human experience of lower class. Jotirao was the first human right activist in the modern India; by writing a number of books he explored the matter of rights for the last neglected human being of this country. Many educated people at that time thought that the Christian religion was better than their own religion and some people even became Christian, but Jotirao and his friends did not become Christian. The reason behind this was that they believed on the thoughts given in *The Age of Reason* of Thomas Paine. Paine was the great revealer of Truth from the United States and he criticized the Christian religion. Taking inspiration from Paine to liberate to his subaltern brethren Jotirao preferred to criticize Brahmin made religious *Vedas i.e. ancient scripture* and *Puranas i.e. mythical texts*. Jotirao Phule's contribution a lot for peasant class depicts their adverse condition and gives the remedies to improve the life of lower caste peasants. So it has special significance in present farmers' suicide ridden context of India. At the first page of this book Jotirao Govindrao Phule says, "I have written this small book *The Cultivator's Whipcord* For The Defence of Shudra (Dasya)

Community”.(i/cv) According to Jotirao, Shudra means Dasya and Dasya means Slaves. In this way the low caste farmers of India have been treated as slaves. Since, the ages the farmers of India were not liberate, they have had been remaining slaves in the India complex stereotyped social system. He has clearly mentioned it is the book for farmers who are slaves and we know slaves are deprived from all their basic human rights. In comparison to the farmers of the rest of the world Indian farmers are living lower life than animals. In the title of this book the very word *Whipcord* is meaningful and symbolical which means the hunter in the hands of farmers and if they want their rights, farmers should do rebel against injustice. Otherwise they would be destroyed and compel to do suicides by giving different kind of power eliminating expired religious pills. As we see in the last decade in Maharashtra more than two lakhs farmers have committed suicide and the percentage of Vidarbha region among them is 70%, its horrible. (WY) The manuscript of this book is preserved at the National Library of Calcutta and the copy of the first edition is preserved in Cambridge University Library. Jotirao has dedicated this book for the kind consideration of His Excellency the Right Hon’ble Sir Frederick Temple Hamilton Temple Blackwood Earl of Dufferin, K.P., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., F.R.S.D.C.I., Viceroy and Governor General of India. Jotirao wanted adequate reforms in the life of farmers by the interference of positive action by the government that’s why he dedicated this book to the Governor General of India, he was the highest government authority of that time. This rank was similar to the Prime minister of India now, so he must look into the matter of this book, that’s the real relevance of the present study of this book. As Jotirao mentioned in this book it’s the duty of every learned citizen to look after to maintain the well standard of the primary schools. In the opening line of the preface Jotirao has clearly mentioned the need of education. Without education all things are impossible for the survival of the farmers. All the progressive cycle of human being is depended on the Government policy of education. If the Indian farmers become educate, they would get the versatile development of their virtues like intellect, morality, dynamism and certainly after all the financial progress. So as he quotes in beautiful poetic meter about the importance of education in the following way:

Lack of education leads to loss of intellect//

Lack of intellect leads to loss of morality//

Lack of morality leads to loss of dynamism//

Lack of dynamism leads to loss of wealth//

Lack of wealth the shudras perished//

All these sorrows sprang alone from illiteracy// (253/MSW)

There are a number of reasons for the poverty and miserable condition of farmers among them the political and religious reasons are leading in the rest. The present book is written to

discuss them all. Behind the exploitation of farmers the writer sees the Brahmin officials are one of them responsible factors. Farmers fall down prey to their exploitation because they trust on the unjust and false religious arguments of them. The priest Brahmins take the advantage of their ignorance who are the relatives of Brahmin officials, Phule observed the ill collaboration between these Brahman officials and their close relatives who know only priesthood. Jotirao says that in all government offices there are the majority of Brahmin officials. The white British officials are engaged in searching pleasures in different types of activities instead of showing interest in solving farmers' problems. The intention of Jotirao is to make farmers aware of their current exploitation and to prepare them for protest. Jotirao expected farmers to revolt against all adverse condition of life. This book is a manifesto for the survival of the fittest farmers. He has addressed to this book as *The Cultivator's Whipcord*. He suggested farmers instead of taking the Suicide cord, farmers would have to become brave and pick up the whipcord in their hands to lash out their exploiters.

The term 'farmer' comprises three sub- categories 1) Farmer pure and simple e.g. Kunbi 2) Mali or gardener or horticulturist, and 3) a shepherd. There are valid reasons for this three-fold classification. Those who were totally dependent upon dry farming for their livelihood were known as Kul-wadis or Kunbis, those who were cultivating irrigated land in addition to dry farming came to be called as Malis, and those who owned flocks of sheep and goats in addition to the two above-mentioned activities came to be designated as shepherds. Jotirao does not consider them as separate castes, in ancient times such caste distinction were non-existent rather all of them belong to the one peasant family before the law of Manusmriti. For this purpose, Jotirao gives the example of Khanderao of Jejuri, the family deity of the Shudras, married two wives from two different castes-Mhalsai from the Shudra Kunbi caste, and Banabai from the ShudraDhangar or Shepherd caste. This evidence show that inter-marriage was a common practice among the above mentioned castes.

He held Brahmin made religious scriptures responsible for the plight of farmers and making them slaves under the intoxication of religious books. A number of farmers have committed suicides in the different parts of the country. In this context, the measures suggested in the last chapter of *Cultivator's Whipcord* by Jotirao are relevant and useful for the Indian farmers even today. He suggests that the British government should provide a quality education to the farmers, modern equipments, cows of foreign breed, built up water reservoir in the villages with the help of army men, prohibition of farmer's remarriages by the enforcement of the law, provide guns to farmer to protect the farm from wild animals, to start the subject of farm techniques at the primary school level, suggest to arrange farm product related exhibition on international level, give prizes to the successful farmers for inculcating the healthy farming atmosphere in the country, at least one government job to the child of farmer to maintain the family like medieval time government policy. All these measures are relevant even today for our agrarian country. He considered western education, with its emphasis on secular and rationalist truths about the external world, as the most potent of weapons for the liberation of the lower

castes. The title of his play *The Third Eye* is exceptional. It has double meaning the first is probably to the third eye of Shiva in the centre of his forehead, whose use implies great anger and fury. The second is new kinds of education must be given to farmers. The three major works by Phule of the same period in order of their publication are *A Ballad of the Raja Chhatrapati Shivaji Bhosale*, published in June 1869 in Bombay; it was the first ballad on King Shivaji of Modern time. He wanted to place the ideal of the mighty king before his low caste fellows, as he addresses him Kulwadibhushan e.g. pride to the farming community. *Priestcraft Exposed*, published later in the same year, and then *Slavery*.

In his book *Slavery*, Jotirao discusses the mental slavery imposed by the evil force of the religion, and there is apple to intellect for opening the eyes of low caste people. In this book, there is the motivation to liberate the fellow human beings. Through the third chapter of the thesis a researcher deals with sorrows and suffering in the life of Shudra and Ati-Shudra community by the grace of slavery imposed on them in the name of religion. The title of this book is significant; '*SLAVERY IN THE CIVILISED BRITHISH GOVERNMENT UNDER THE CLOAK OF BRAHMANISM EXPOSED BY JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHOOLEY*'. He has written this book for the welfare of low caste people. This book is divided into sixteen chapters. Jotirao added four more poems at the end of the book. Jotirao strongly believed that education is the remedy which can remove all sufferings and miseries of innocent subaltern low caste people. Jotirao has dedicated this book with great respect to the people of America as he quotes, "To The Good People of The United States As A Token Of Admiration For Their Sublime Disinterested And Self Sacrificing Devotion, in the cause of Negro Slavery; and with an earnest desire, that my countrymen may take their noble example as their guide in the emancipation of their Shudra Brethren from the trammels of Brahmin thraldom". (xxviii/CWMJP) Jotirao appeals to the elite countrymen to take inspiration from the kind hearted white people of America who have eradicate the slavery of Negroes, in the same way to eradicate the slavery of Shudra people of our country. According to Jotirao eradication of Slavery is noble job and while doing this work in that country American people had shown great courage and generosity. In the same ground our elite citizens should show the greatness of mind and heart to abolish the slavery of lower caste people of our country like Shudras and Ati-shudras. He concludes the preface of this book outlining following thoughts on education:

"Let there be schools for the Shudra in every village; but away with all Brahmin school masters! The shudras are the life and sinews of the country, and it is to them alone and not to the Brahmins that the Government must ever look to tide them over their difficulties, financial as well as political. If the hearts and minds of the shudras are made happy and contented, the British Government need have no fear for their loyalty in the future." (xxxix/SY) As Jotirao hoped for the education of downtrodden new schools and in such schools the appointment of non Brahmin teachers for increasing intimacy among teacher and students because such teachers would understand the all types of problems of these low caste students. And they would not decrease the confidence of these low caste students like the Brahman teacher of that time. In those days

some orthodox Brahman teacher thought that teaching and learning is the monopoly of Brahman caste and have not right to education for others. As well he wanted the special attention of the British Government for the financial and political help for the welfare of these people. The entire economy of the country is depended on the toil of shudras so it is the responsibility of the Government to take necessary steps for the betterment of shudras. If the Government would do such complete satisfactions of the demands of them, there would remain no fear of upheaval in future from these indigenous low caste people.

The entire book is devoted to awakening the subaltern people. According to him, mental slavery is more fatal than physical slavery. He appeals to the conscious of subalterns to throw away thralldoms impose on them on the name of religion. He says that religion is useless which gives lower place to human beings than animal. The word slavery comes from the Latin word *Sclava*, meaning "Slavonic captive", referring to the ninth century slavery of Slavonic people. According to the Oxford English Dictionary slavery means, "Especially in the past a person who is the legal property of another and is forced to obey them." We see another meaning in the same dictionary, "a person who works very hard without proper remuneration or appreciation is called slavery". For hundreds of years in the United States, wealthy white landowners benefited from the institution of slavery, which forced millions of African slaves to work their entire lives on giant farms. But the good and kind hearted people of the United States of America raised the battle against this abusive practice and made their Nation free for ever from this dogma under the leadership of the President Abraham Lincoln. Jotirao Phule appeals to his countrymen to take inspiration to eradicate this abusive practice of our country and make them free who have been remaining slaves since the ages.

Jotirao was familiar with the thoughts of famous writers so he has quoted them in the preface of *Slavery*. In the preface he quotes Homer on slavery, "The day that reduces a man to slavery takes from him the half of his virtue." (xxix/*CWMP*) This epic master has clearly mentioned the virtues and good qualities could not go side by side at the same time until the person who is being treated as slaves. The book is divided into sixteen chapters and through them the writer tries to expose the truth behind myths, puranas and Brahman made scriptures. All these chapters are in the dialogue form. In the concluding chapter Jotirao and his friend Dhondiba came to the conclusion that the entire outmoded teaching through the outmoded religious books is intended for keeping Shudras and Ati-shudras in utter slavery. The collection of ballads entitled *Priestcraft Exposed* began with an account of the idyllic pre-Aryan realm of King Bali. It went on to describe how Brahman priests exploited its ignorant and illiterate peasant cultivators.

When we look at the traditional Hindu women a number of restrictions imposed on her. This fact recognized by Jotirao and tried to liberate her by opening the first girl's school in Pune in 1848. In this context Jotirao seems to be the champion of women's rights. As he suggests equal rights to women, in *The Universal Religion of Truth*, he traces the fact that our Creator has created all human beings, so all men and women are by birth independent, and are entitled to

enjoy all due human rights. (447/MSW) And he took the action from his home by giving education to this wife Savitri and made her the first lady teacher of India, and she gave active participation in the social reform movements of Jotirao. *The Universal Religion of Truth* is the final book written by Jotirao and postmously published by his adopted Brahmin son Yashwant (Yeshu), the very name is closed to Yeshu Christ. The main concern of writing this book is reform in Hindu mindset of worshiping many God and Goddesses instead of one and to eliminate the place of middleman between God and devotees. Jotirao calls that almighty supreme power The Creator instead of God. By writing this book Jotirao tried to examine religion in terms of what is right and wrong for the welfare of human beings. He attacked idol-worship and appeal for monotheism. Thus he tried to stop the exploitation on the name of religion. In all his major works Jotirao Phule uses the dialogue form of writing in the same way in this book. He had written this book during the last days of his life, when his right hand was totally paralyzed. To bring out his Shudra brethren from superstition and blind faith, was the inspiration behind writing this book. He completed this book learning writing skill by left hand. He preaches the philosophy that there is one God, whom he calls Creator and all human beings of the universe are His creation, so they should not fight with each other on the name of caste, creed, race, gender and religion. He viewed the dream of an ideal family in which religion or religious book reading should be choice based and there should be compassion for each other's religious faith. If father wants to read Bible, he may read it and walk on Christianity, if a woman wants to read Buddha's philosophy, she may read it and follow the principles of Buddhism, if their daughter wants to read Koran, she may read it and could walk on Islamic philosophy, and if their son wants to read *The Universal Religion of Truth* of Jotirao, he may read it and follow the principles of Satyashodhak Samaj. Thus, he puts before us an idea of the choice base religion. According to him, every person should have full freedom to choose any religion which preaches the philosophy of equal rights to all human beings without discrimination on all ground whether caste, creed, race and gender. And there would be no place for the discriminative religion in his ideal kingdom. In this book, Jotirao gives thirty three rules to the follower of his *Universal Religion of Truth*. He says those who implement the following thirty three rules in their life, they are the votaries or followers of the Truth.

Short poems, ballads, and Akhandas (Unbroken poems) have been composed beautifully by Jotirao Phule and they possess great significance in a present day context. Jotirao is well known for his unbroken poetic composition, patterned on Sant Tukaram's Abhangas. He calls his poems 'Akhandas' or unbroken poems. These Akhandas are in large number as we see them in his book *The Universal Religion of Truth* and others. In the last line of every Akhanda, he leaves his stamp "Says Joti", imitating celebrate saying of "Says Tuka". In some of these broken poems, he appears to show gratitude for the true God (Creator) instead of idol worship. Humanity is the main subject of his akhandas. His main object behind all these akhandas seems to be the welfare of the subaltern brethren. The earth is the beautiful creation of that Almighty Creator. And beyond this earth there is nothing to live. Therefore, the thought of life after death is useless. On this earth all subalterns should have equal right to make the progress peacefully.

He has divided *The Ballad on King Shivaji* into eight sections, as this ballad is known for its poetic quality. The source material for this *Ballad* has been taken from old Mohammedan records as well from the historical works of English historians like Captain James Grant-Duff, Murry, etc. Jotirao Phule first of all discovers the tomb of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and composed the ballad of one thousand lines on the ordeals and valour's of the King Shivaji and celebrated the first birth anniversary of Shivaji, in Pune. The poetic lines of this ballad are simple and easy to understand shows the great respect for the Hero and his heroic deeds. Jotirao is a beautiful poet as well as intellectual prose writer. His poems have a good flow. His prose is a wild fruit. It is not sweet, but has medicinal healing quality. Jotirao's poems reveal his wisdom and humanism. The language in his poetry is simple and heart touching, which shows the great compassion and sympathy for downtrodden and oppressed countrymen.

At the end of his book *Slavery*, Jotirao has given four poems composed by himself on the vexed question of the exploitation of the shudras and Ati-Shudras by the Brahmins. Besides a poem by Jotirao Phule, which brought to light for the first time by Dr. Y.D.Phadke. It contains thirteen stanzas. The title of this poem is *A Peasant Woman (Kulambin)* and it shows the hard life of lady farmer. The language of this poem is simple and easy to understand. As Jotirao quotes: "The Shudra's wife has to sit at the grinding stones (to grind the corn into flour)

At the first cock-crow (at early dawn)

Her husband is awakened by the noise (sound)

Of the rural ditties she sings while grinding the corn,

(111/PW)

Thus, he tries to make us aware of the hard life of lady farmer through this poem. In his book, *The Universal Religion of Truth*, one beautiful poem is there on Truth. Through this Akhanda, he attempts to provide the exact meaning of the Truth in simple manner. As he quotes:

Truth is the original home of us all,

It is the foundation of all religion.

All happiness in this world is,

The result of that Eternal Truth.

Truth is the shelter of happiness,

All else is sheer darkness.

Truth is almighty,

It destroys all sham, deceit or untruth.

That which is rooted in Truth

Easily exposes or destroys hypocrites.

Realizing the might of Truth,

The impostors or pretender is

Mortified or anguished in his heart.

A real happiness is not to pretender

As he tries to supplant the God of Truth.

Joti prays humbly to all,

Not to give shelter to hypocrisy. (131/URT)

The present poem is the essence of Jotirao's teaching. It shows his unflinching faith and an honor for Truth. There is an earnest appeal for leading a truthful life for its readers. Mahatma Jotirao Phule composed a number of poems called Akhandas, in which he preaches right conduct, reason, justice, toleration. Who is a truthful man? While giving answer to this question he replies that one who is pious, blame-less and purely rational and practices truth in his life. He gives light like the sun, and peace like the moon. He does not strut about as terrestrial God, like the Brahmins, nor does he inflict pain on human beings, like a serpent. Such a human being should be called a gentle man. And his greatness should be sung.

Mahatma Phule is one of important social reformers, thinkers, and literary figures in the context of subaltern studies. His entire literature is devoted to the cause of reform in the life of subalterns. But the conscious efforts have not made to explore his literature and ideology from subaltern point of view. This research work will be proved a significant in terms of Mahatma Phule's contribution to subalterns. The outdated customs and traditions against which Mahatma Phule waged a war. These customs are still prevalent in Indian society. The dream of annihilation of castes is yet to be achieved and is far away. Farmers are committing suicide on a large scale. The principle of right to free and compulsory quality education is not implemented in its true sense. The problems of woman are yet to be solved. In such scenario the study of Mahatma Phule's literature is the need of the time. To find out answers to the above mentions problems is the intention of this present study. The conclusion has been drawn from the discussions and analysis done in the earlier foregoing chapters by regarding the selected works of Mahatma Jotirao Phule. It has reached to significant conclusions in this regards. By writing books Jotirao Phule endeavoured to explore the real problem for the elevation of the life of low caste people. In today's context the ideas given by Jotirao are needed to implement for the welfare of the subaltern class of this country. On the one side, we are facing the religious

problems globally and on another ground we are facing the challenges created by privatization, liberalization and the globalization. Under the spell of religion human beings have forgotten the religion of humanity. As Jotirao deliberately tresses this fact through his major writings. He says in his book *The Universal Religion of Truth* that the Creator has created one planet Earth for us who sustains us by giving food, water, and oxygen without discrimination to all human beings, one Sun gives us light. If it was necessary the Creator would have created one religion for all human beings. So fighting and blood shade on the name of religion is in vain and its waste of time. And such religion is useless if the welfare of the last human being is not at its centre.

Phule was one of the prominent thinkers, social reformer and the educationist of the late nineteenth century India. His literary works give voice to the voiceless subaltern class of India. By writing books about subaltern class Jotirao Phule opened a campaign against idol worship, priest-craft, castism, polygamy, addiction to liquor, excessive expenditure on weddings and corrupt bureaucracy. He enlightened the hearts and minds of millions of his subaltern countrymen. Phule's thoughts as reflected in his writing have a significant place in tracing the history and development of Indian subalterns. As time passes, many of his observations in social, economic and political matters still relevant. If his solutions and remedies on various socio-economic problems are to be implemented, it may help us in present turmoil and will guide us in future. Thoughts reflected in his *Cultivator's Whipcord* can help for the betterment of the Indian farmers. Phule's thoughts in the *Universal Religion of Truth* are nothing, but the safeguard of entire humanity across the boundaries of nations, religions, class, creed, castes, and gender discrimination. The present research is not the final word on Mahatma Jotirao Phule and his contribution to the subaltern studies. There are still many areas that remain unexplored and could be studied from various dimensions.

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