

Religion and social transformation: Christianity in Jyotirao Phule's life and work

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Abstract

Jyotirao Phule was a social reformer of Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. He sought to improve the condition betterment of the scheduled castes and tribes. He noted that they were victims of Brahmin domination. He was convinced that lack of education kept them in their deplorable condition. Hence, he worked for upliftment through education. He was associated with Christian missionaries and institutions. Therefore, Christianity played an important role in his life and work. Brahmins alleged that he had become a Christian because he was critical of them, undermining their dominance. But such allegations were false. He was a Hindu with sympathies for Christianity and Christian missionaries as he saw much good in them.

Keywords: Shudras, education, Brahmin exploitation, social reform, Christian missionaries.

I. Introduction

Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890) has been variously described as the father of social revolution in India, greatest Sudra of Modern India, pioneer of girls' education, saviour of dalits, etc. B.R. Ambedkar bracketed him with the Buddha and Kabir. Gandhi also called him a real mahatma. Dhananjay Keer says, "He wanted to remove the ignorance and superstition of the Shudras, Atishudras and Indian women and to break the shackles of their slavery."¹ He was the first to coin the term 'Dalit' to apply to all the people considered of lower castes and untouchables by the Brahmins. Now this term is in common parlance.

II. His life and work

Jyotirao's beginnings were humble. The original family name was Gorhe which was changed to Phule when it started working as florists. It was of kshatriya mali caste which was a low caste. His mother passed away when he was just nine months old. At the age of seven he joined a Marathi school for rudimentary studies and made good progress. However, someone poisoned his father Govindrao's ears against the idea of education who withdrew him from it. The boy wasted three years in doing agricultural work. Then two of their neighbours – one a Muslim named Gaffar Baig Munshi and another a Christian missionary named Lizit – advised Govindrao that the boy needed to study further. Therefore, he was admitted in a school run by the Scottish Missionaries in Poona in 1841. They freely admitted boys of even the lowest castes even though it led to conflicts with the Brahmin students.² He remained there till 1847. This was his first encounter with new ideas of social reform and religious radicalism.

He showed keen interest in studies and won the accolades of his teachers and classmates. He became conscious of the evils of the caste system. Western education and missionary teaching made an impact on him. There were times when he seemed to lose faith in Hinduism and thought of converting to Christianity. But after a comparative study of different religions, he felt that every religion had dogmas. All the same, he was inspired by the missionaries. Their example of service to people and their mission to spread education were worth emulating.

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Then an incident of far-reaching effect took place. His Brahmin friend was getting married and he joined the marriage procession to the bride's house. But his caste was recognized and he was asked to go back.³

Phule brooded over the suppression of the downtrodden at the hands of Brahmins and concluded that lack of education was the root cause. He began to toy with the idea of starting a school for girls of low castes. He visited Ahmednagar and the school for girls belonging to the American Mission was conducted by Ms. Farrar who expressed sorrow at the neglect of the education of girls. He was impressed by her perseverance. He wrote afterwards, "I opened a Low Caste Female school, allowing, however, such boys as wished to do so to attend also. In this I commenced to teach reading, arithmetic and the elements of grammar."⁴ The school had to be closed after a while because of financial crunch although his interest in spreading education persisted. One day he sent a Mahar boy to Rev. J. Murray Mitchell, a Christian clergyman. Once a boy with his good knowledge of the vernacular was admitted in the lowest English class in a missionary school on his recommendation. At this the Brahmin boys threatened to leave the school. Although he sat on a separate bench, the mat allegedly spread pollution and hence they could not eat food without a bath. Rev. Mitchell recollected, "I was puzzled. I did not wish to drive away the Brahmin boys, yet I could not in conscience dismiss the Mahar.... The Mahar boy never came back. I suppose he found himself like a fish out of water; the high and middle castes, no doubt, all shunned him."⁵

In those days the British Government believed in what came to be known as the filtration down theory. It propounded that once the upper classes of the society were educated, the benefits will trickle down to the lower classes. When it came to proselytization, Christian Missionaries held similar views. But Phule was not carried away by such ideas. His grievance was that while most of the revenue was collected by the government from the Shudras, it was largely spent on the education of the Brahmin boys who then appropriated government jobs. While the nationalist writers of the time talked about the drain of wealth from India to England, Phule grieved that financial resources of the weaker sections were drained for the benefit of the Brahmins. They naturally favoured their own caste people. He was critical of the British Government for neglecting the education of the Shudra boys which kept them in perpetual backwardness. In one of his ballads, he wrote, "Joti pines in his heart because the Government does not pay any heed to the needs of the Shudra children, while some Christian missionaries exert themselves (to improve the lot of the Shudra children)."⁶ He believed that as a result of the researches of Christians the cunningness of the Brahmins was exposed to the Dalits. In addition, Christianity could help to reduce social inequality.⁷

Afterwards he established some more schools. After the death of his father, he was shattered. He had to take the responsibility of the whole family. Christian Missionaries appointed him a teacher in a Scottish Missionary School. This gave him a chance to learn more about Christianity, and self-sacrifice and social welfare work of Christian Missionaries. He compared it with the exploitative behaviour of Hindu religious leaders.⁸ The report of the school says, "We have been happy in securing the aid in their instruction (for nearly four hours a day), of one of the most zealous and accomplished teachers in Poona – Jotee Govind Rao Phooley – a native philanthropist whose persevering efforts on behalf of the education of the females and of the low castes, have called for the warmest commendation of the Board of Education and of the Government itself. He has fulfilled our highest expectations; the progress of the girls has been most satisfactory."⁹

He was also a writer. One of his best literary compositions is a drama entitled *Tritiya Ratna* (*The Third Eye*) written in or slightly before 1855 but published much later. It has been hailed as a pioneering modern play in Marathi literature. It is not an action play but a play of ideas. It has been considered as "... a play astonishingly original in its theme and craft."¹⁰ Hindu mythology refers to the third eye of Shiva in his forehead which opens when he is in anger. This raises the question whether Phule wished the title to indicate the fury of the lower classes when they are conscious of their plight brought about by Brahmin hegemony. The dialogues of different characters have traces of Christianity. Phule was one of the first playwrights to have a low caste (Kunbi) couple on the stage with a child to be born. A Brahmin comes to blackmail them and warns them of by disastrous

effects because of the planetary configuration unless his exploitative dues are paid by them. They are willing to give in notwithstanding their straightened circumstances and even borrow money from a *sahukar*. The Kunbi argues with his wife, “You know the Christian *Padrees* go around advising people that Brahmins are forever warning everyone about planets and the misfortunes they bring: do you also think that the Brahmins are wrong?” He calls a Christian Missionary godless and talks to him about an idol of a goddess in the temple of *Mumma Devi* (Virgin Mother).

When *Vidushak* enters the stage, he asks, “It is written in the Christian *Shastras*: ‘You are weighed down by several burdens.’ Do you not see it becoming true here?” He laments, “In a British government underpinned by Christian ethics, an idiot like you (Kunbi) can be persuaded and duped by a Brahmin: this I don’t see anywhere else in the universe apart from *Hindustan*.” He also exclaims, “Praise be to your Saviour that he has, through this English government, devised to come up with several strategies to save the *Malis* and *Kunbis*.” When the Brahmin sarcastically comments, “Let your *Yesu Christ* come,” *Vidushak* retorts, “Little does this *Joshi* know that *Yesu Christ* will not hesitate to purify even his four-faced *Brahmadev* in a few days’ time.”

Then the Christian Missionary comes and explains the futility of worshipping stone and thanks his Redeemer for sending people to the ignorant and the Kunbi also praises Him for trying to save the *Malis* and *Kunbis*. When the Kunbi says that the Brahmins insist that according to traditions non-Brahmin children have no right to learn reading and writing, the Missionary says to the Kunbi, “*Baba*, my greatest desire is to speak and enlighten people.” He invites the Kunbi to his bungalow and “Then I can explain to you how he (Brahmin) has exploited and deceived you in the name of God.” In short, the Missionary points out the futility of worshipping a piece of stone and indirectly asks him to turn to the true God. The root cause of the plight of the *Shudras* is ignorance and superstition which could be overcome by education alone. This is also true of this couple. The play ends with the husband and wife preparing to join the night school.¹¹

In 1869 he wrote, *Vidyakhatyateel Brahman Pantoji* in which he lamented,¹²
 “No one cares for the *Shudra* child *Joti* grieves,
 Besides a few Christian missionaries.”

Phule was obsessed with education on the one hand and with Truth on the other. Truth, he believed, was the way to freedom and eternal happiness. It gave courage to martyrs like *Socrates*, *Jesus Christ* and others and enabled them to face death cheerfully.¹³ He, therefore, established the *Satyashodhak Samaj* (Society of Truth-seekers) in 1873. Its basic principles included: (i) all men are the children of God (*Nirmik*), (ii) there is no need for an intermediary (priest) between a devotee and God to save the *shudras* and *atishudras* from slavery and to promote brotherhood among them, (iii) fight against domination, exploitation and inequality in society, etc.¹⁴ There were no caste restrictions for becoming its members. It constituted the first social reform movement in *Maharashtra*. In stressing the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man, it exhibited the Christian impact on *Phule*. This naturally meant a challenge to the Brahmins. After the *Samaj* was established, he immediately put in practice its goals. For instance, it sponsored marriages among its members without the Brahmin priests officiating even though the ceremony was purely Hindu. This was also true of other ceremonies like sacred thread ceremony. The Brahmins became furious when they were bypassed and claimed that such ceremonies were invalid. They also alleged (falsely) that he had become a Christian. But *Phule* was unmoved and wrote in one of his ballads, “All of us should embrace (clasp to our hearts) Christians, Mohammedans, *Mangs* and Brahmins as our blood brothers. There is only one Universal Religion of Truth as ordained by our Creator.”¹⁵

In 1873 he wrote *Gulamgiri (Slavery)* in *Marathi* and dedicated it to the American people who abolished slavery, paving the way for India to follow suit. Slavery, in his view, can be physical as well as a state of mind. *Shudras* and *Atishudras* have faced it at the hands of the Brahmins since time immemorial. The book is written in the form of a dialogue. After tracing the history of Brahmin domination in India, *Phule* examines the motives of the cruel laws framed by the Brahmins to dupe the *Shudras* to keep them in perpetual servitude. He writes, “If all the *Shudras* regard themselves as

the co-disciples of the second Baliraja (Jesus Christ). We would, then, be constrained to condemn the spurious books (and scriptures) of the ancestors of the Bhats (Brahmins)... Their arrogant... superiority ... over other Shudras would be exposed and their idle priestly class will not be able to fatten itself at the cost of the Shudras."¹⁶

The book was reviewed by R.B. Gunjkar in *Vividhadnyan Vista*. He reminded the readers of similar books by Phule against the Brahmins. His antipathy to Brahmins was born out of the brain of a dwarfish Christian newly converted but frustrated man and who was a mere tool of Missionaries. The reviewer stressed that the book wanted to destroy the Brahmins and vest their rights in the Missionaries. A Christian weekly titled *Satya Dipika* had advertised this book at a cheap rate and the reviewer questioned the rationale for it. A reader wrote to *Dnyanprakash* that the book was modelled after Missionary booklets written to condemn the Brahmins.¹⁷

He adopted the son of a Brahmin widow named Kashibai who was born in 1873. He named him Yashwant, i.e., one who has achieved glory. Dipak Ulemale has surmised that "Yashwant (Yeshu), the very name is close to Yeshu Christ."¹⁸ Mokashi-Punekar says that it was Phule's name for Jesus Christ.¹⁹

Even though he was ruthlessly critical of the Hindu religious books, he wanted them to be read and that too in public as the Christians did in the case of their scriptures. Then the inequality, hypocrisy and injustice in them would be exposed. Christians read the Bible in public because unjust and impartial precepts were not found in it. Christians and Mohammedans should not be treated as inferior. On the other hand, Christians, Mohammedans, Mangs and Brahmins should be treated like brothers.²⁰ He also wrote that the Bible and Koran were open for all to read as Christians and Muslims had no fears if non-Christians read them. But the Vedas were not open to all as Brahmins were afraid that their weaknesses would be exposed.²¹ He also argued that if in a family a woman on reading Buddhism followed Buddhism, her husband on reading the Bible followed Christianity and her daughter followed Islam if she read the Koran, or if the son was a Satyashodhak Samajist, they should not hate the faith of one another. They should consider themselves as belonging to the family of one God.²²

Phule was also critical of Brahmins for unduly toeing the ruling class. They were caste consciousness in dealing with the non-Brahmin Indians but not while dealing with the English. In his dialogues with a Shudra Sadhu of Kabir Bhakti Sect, he pointed out that the Brahmins went to the houses of Christian Padres to teach them the Vedas for money. The Shudras and Atishudras were too poor to pay them well for the study of the Vedas and so they did not go to them. Nor did they go to the princely houses. Phule commented, "And wonder of wonders, are the rulers of Indian States – like the Bhonsles, Scindias, Holkers and Gaikwads so impoverished that they cannot afford the luxury of studying the four Vedas (from the Brahmins)? How is it that not even one of these rulers has got the means (financial competence) to enable his sons to study the Vedas (by paying the necessary fees)? Do you mean to say that all these above-mentioned Princes are worse off (poorer) than the European Padres."²³

When the Government of India established the Indian Education Commission under the chairmanship of W.W. Hunter, Phule addressed a memorial to it. He recalled, "About 25 years ago, the missionaries had established a female school in Poona but no indigenous school for girls existed at the time. I, therefore, was induced, about the year 1854, to establish such a school, and in which I and my wife worked together for many years."²⁴ At the same time, he regretted, "The missionary schools, although some of them are very efficiently conducted, do not succeed half so well in their results, nor do they attract half the number of students which the high school attracts. The superiority of Government schools is mainly owing to the richly paid staff of teachers and professors which is not possible for a private school to maintain."²⁵

Phule wished to unite subaltern groups and wished the British administration and Christian Missionaries to join hands. He wrote,²⁶

“Pollution! They cry, and drive Mahar children out,
But eagerly shake hands with the English.”
Again,²⁷
“No one cares for the Shudra child, Joti grieves,
Besides a few Christian missionaries.”

His last work was entitled *Sarvajanik Satya-Dharma Pustaka (Book of True Religion for the Public)* in Marathi and is in dialogue form. It covers issues of day-to-life. It is interspersed with his impressions about Christianity. Phule noted that Jesus Christ preached about the need for repentance and gave great hope of salvation to His disciples who believed Him to be the Son of God. He pointed out that a person who follows the principles of universal truth is a leader. He may be a Christian, Muslim or of any other religion. He exposed the hypocrisy of Brahmins who savoured non-vegetarian food in Christian homes. After returning to their own homes, they put on the *sovale* (the sacred thread) criticizing Christianity. He pointed out the message of Yashwant (Jesus Christ) that we should love our enemies and pray for them. Jesus Christ preached us about our Almighty God who is the Father to save the ignorant people. Today, Christians call Him son of God and a Saviour. The Bible did not suggest that we should like some and dislike others. It is open for all who are willing to take benefit of it. People were attracted by it. He gave the example of one of his friends R. Narayan Sheshadri who earlier followed Aryadharma. After he embraced Christianity, he became a landlord at Indapur, constructed a church and promoted it.

Govindrao commented: “Christians made popular the Christianity by translating the Great Bible in different languages in the world and promoted it among all the people, in all the communities and followers of all religions.” Phule replied, “It is up to you to believe or not.” The Bible could be read by all the people at all the time.²⁸

Dominic Vendell quotes Phule, “Our Creator has made all of humankind. Among them, each woman who takes one man for her husband, and each man who takes one woman for his wife, and so all men and women who together happily conduct themselves as brothers and sisters, are those who behave in accordance with truth.” Vendell adds, “Such a rule normatively joins a Christian conception of human equality with a heterosexual logic of marriage and reproduction in order to give some shape to the new *shudra-atishudra* community that Phule and his circle sought to produce.” Vendell thinks that Phule composed this work to stand alongside the Bible, Koran and Vedas. He reserved some praise for the Bible and Koran as they had been translated into multiple vernaculars, allowing individuals actively engage with them. While these two books were laid open to scrutiny, the deficiencies of the Vedas were concealed. He adds that a reading of this book as well as his life and work suggest that Phule was as much engaged in dissemination a Christian message for a Marathi audience as in one of emancipating lower caste people.²⁹

During his last illness he suffered a paralytic stroke. Rev. Baba Padmanji, a Hindu convert to Christianity and who was said to have written an introduction to Jyotirao’s *Priesthood exposed* under the name of B.P., came to inquire about his health. He asked Phule about his health. He desired to know if Phule had peace of mind and whether he was worried about the prospective end of his earthly journey. Phule calmly said that he had lived a useful and unselfish life, fulfilling the mission of his life. His mind was full of tranquillity and was at peace.³⁰ He had willed that his body should be buried. However, it was cremated and the pier was lit by his son Yashwant. It marked the end of an era.

III. Phule’s alleged conversion to Christianity

When he studied with the Scottish Missionaries, there were occasions when he lost his faith in Hinduism and seriously considered becoming a Christian. But after a comparative study of different religions, he and his friends decided that in every religion there were dogmas which had to be accepted. Hence, they agreed that the common principles in all religions should be followed in daily life. But they were also inspired by the Missionaries. Their example of service to the people

and their mission to spread education were worth emulating.³¹ Education of the Shudras and Atishudras was a subject of conflict between him and the Brahmins. The latter argued that they should not study as education should be confined to Brahmins alone. They felt that using pen with ink was against Hinduism. They also had a notion that studying in missionary schools was shameful to Hinduism and that children pronouncing and writing names of certain animals and birds was against the Hindu philosophy. As against this negative notion, Phule supported the Missionaries to establish schools as he believed that through education alone women, shudras and atishudras could have all-round development.³² He learnt about the French Revolution, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Thomas Paine, etc. He was impressed by the writings of Paine who questioned the sanctity of the Bible saying that it should be read like any other book. Paine analysed its specific portions to show that it could not be regarded as the revealed word of God. He also attacked religious institutions and denounced priests for their lust for power and wealth. This lowered the image of Christianity in Phule's eyes. Therefore, whatever chance was there of his embracing Christianity was gone.³³

However, his critics found it handy to allege that he had converted and became a Christian when his stand on social issues was against the Hindu traditions. Gail Omvedt has put it succinctly that it was clearly nonsense. Phule never became a Christian in any institutional form, nor did he show the same concern for the person of Jesus Christ that many other Indian socio-religious reformers like Keshab Chandra Sen did. She comments, "Given the conditions of the time in which Indian Christianity was a colonial dependency, to have converted would have been to give up the game entirely; an Indian Christian became part of another social system and gave up any hope of transforming or redefining *Indian* culture."³⁴ The undercurrent of his thinking was Aryan vs. non-Aryan conflict and he sought to muster the support of Christianity for it. It is worth-noting that while he was lukewarm to Brahminic deities, he was favourably disposed to peasant and low caste deities like Khandoba, Jotiha, Martand and Kualbhair.

That Phule was on good terms with Christian Missionaries was obvious. He never criticized the missionaries as he criticized the Brahmins. He wrote, "However, the (English) missionaries began their evangelical work (of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ). Though they genuinely desired to break down the evil barriers and distinctions (among the Hindus), they were also preaching to the natives here to embrace their religion (Christianity). That is why their efforts also (to break down these barriers) were of no avail."³⁵ The quintessence of Hinduism was dear to him. He abandoned Hindu rites, customs and dogmas only to simplify them and free them from Brahmin dominance. *Dnyanapraksh*, a Christian magazine, often wrote about him in glowing terms in this regard. We suggest that his good rapport with the Missionaries was enforced by his belief in monotheism as opposed to polytheism of the Brahmins. In addition, he was sympathetic to the British rule which brought semblance of social equality as opposed to the gross social injustice to the Shudras prevailing under the Peshwa rule when the Brahmins were attached so much sanctity that a mere dip of their foot in water made it as holy as the water at the holiest the shrines.³⁶ He congratulated the British for setting aside penal enactments for the Shudras and establishing equitable laws. What is more, a member at his initiation into the Satyashodak Samaj had to declare his allegiance to the British rule. His thoughts like these made him amenable to the Missionaries.

He was sympathetic to them for other reasons also. He argued that many Missionaries proselytised young Indians to Christianity, but they did not murder their parents as seen in Hindu mythology. More importantly, caste distinctions had no meaning for them. He said, "They thus emancipated the Shudras from the unnatural and inhuman slavery which was imposed by the wicked Brahmins on them. They thus cut the dog-collar of slavery from the necks of the Shudras and flung it definitely at the faces of the Brahmins." As against this, the Brahmins exhorted the Shudras to avoid Christian Missionaries like plague.³⁷ Jagadevappa T. Dharani remarks in this context, "His religious ideas were definitely influenced by Christianity but he never advocated conversion because he was also influenced by the radical religious argument of Paine, who had shown a number of defects in Christianity."³⁸

In 1868 he threw open the cistern near his house to the low castes who had to walk long distances to fetch water. This provoked the orthodox Hindus further who condemned him as a Christian because the Missionaries alone did not regard the touch of an untouchable as pollution. But he ignored all such futile gossip.³⁹ Such allegations were made about him subsequently also. When he established the Satyashodak Samaj to undermine Brahmin domination, then again the Brahmins alleged that he had become Christian. But he never supported the idea of conversion to Christianity. Whenever a Hindu expressed a desire to go over to any other religion, he dissuaded him. Once he discouraged a Mahar peon of his school from embracing Christianity. He took him to his friend Jagananth Sadashiv who helped the peon and had his salary raised.

In 1883, Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922), a Brahmin widow and a Sanskrit scholar aged 25 years, converted to Christianity and the reasons which she advanced were her disillusionment with the orthodox Hindu faith on the one hand, and feminist and equalitarian factors on the other. However, the people's imagination was let loose. She was accused of fickle-mindedness. Hinduism to Christianity was the initial step, and Islam would be the final step. Desire for a re-marriage as well as financial benefit were also speculated. While the social reformers by and large took a tolerant view, Phule alone voiced a positive reaction and supported her. In his *Satsar (Essence of truth)* written in 1885, he applauded her conversion as a rejection of bigotry and injustice of Hinduism. He hailed her as a champion of the oppressed groups of women and Shudras.⁴⁰

He said that when she had not studied other religions, she made brilliant speeches for exposition of Hinduism. After she went to England, she realised the true position of Hinduism and decided to convert. The Missionaries had simply sprinkled water over her head and had done nothing else. People who were full of vices had no right to condemn her.⁴¹ Archana Malik-Goure puts it in a nut shell when she writes that Phule did not favour conversion as such but he certainly favoured any movement against Brahmin orthodoxy.⁴² Mukashi-Punekar agrees with G.P. Deshpande and adds, "At a time even the so-called reformist Brahmins opposed her move in vitriolic terms, Phule's defence constitutes the only non-Christian defence of the learned Ramabai's revolutionary step."⁴³

Overall, Phule did not support conversion of people to Christianity. At the same time, he showed no interest in re-converting people to Hinduism who had become Christians. In Bombay there two social reformers involved in this movement, viz., Balshastri Jambhekar and Nana Shankarshett. But Phule kept away from their movement. The religion of a person per se did not matter to him in the least, be he a Hindu, a Christian, a Muslim, or a Jew.⁴⁴

IV. Conclusion

Phule was a great social reformer though his reputation largely remained confined to Maharashtra. His endeavours to free shudras and atishudras from the clutches of Brahminism have evoked appreciation. He is justly hailed as a pioneer. His efforts in this sphere bear testimony to the impact of Christianity on him.

References and endnotes

¹ Dhananjay Keer, *Jotirao Phooley Father of the Indian social revolution* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1960), p. vii. A good deal of information for this write-up was taken from this work. Laxmanshastri Joshi's book entitled *Jotirao Phule* (Delhi: National Book Trust, 2020) duplicates much of the information in it.

² Gundappa Singe, *Jyotiba Phule's concept of human rights* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis in Political Science, Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi, 2017), p. 119.

³ For an account of the deplorable social conditions of Shudras and Atishudras in those days, see Baba Sahib Kundlikrao, *Phulekalin Maharashtrachi samajik stithi, 1730-1903* (Swami Ramanand Tirth Marathwada Vidyapith, Nanded, 2002), pp. 129-239.

⁴ Keer, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

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- ⁶ “Our Brahmin-ridden policy – educational system”, *Selections Collected works of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule*, vol. II (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1991), p. 93. Hereafter referred to as *Selections*.
- ⁷ A.P. Patil, *Social and political ideas of Mahatma Phule* (Thesis submitted for the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy, University of Poona, 1969), pp. 73 & 108.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
- ⁹ *Orient Christian Spectator*, Feb. 1855. Quoted by Keer, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.
- ¹⁰ Rohini Mokashi-Punekar, *The third eye and other works Mahatma Phule’s writings on education* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2023), p. 38.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-111.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- ¹³ A.P. Patil, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.
- ¹⁴ Prashant V. Ransure & Pankajkumar Shankar Premsagar, “Understanding the contribution of Satya Shodhak Samaj and Neo-Buddhism for social awakening,” *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, vol. 8, issue 6, June 2020, p. 54.
- ¹⁵ “Poetic selections”, *Selections*, p. 103.
- ¹⁶ *Slavery (in the civilised British Government under the cloak of Brahminism)*. (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1991) (Translated by P.G. Patil), p. 74. Mokashi-Punekar adds here, “However, deeply concerned that his appeal should reach the colonial administration and Protestant missionaries, Phule not only wrote his preface to the book in English, but also added a translated title in English, *Slavery*, to his Marathi work.” *Op. cit.*, p. 165.
- ¹⁷ Keer, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-22.
- ¹⁸ “Mahatma Jotirao Phule’s contribution to subaltern studies,” *The Criterion An International Journal in English*, vol. 8, issue 5, October 2017, p. 032.
- ¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, 2023), p. 9.
- ²⁰ Keer, *op. cit.*, p. 248.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 257.
- ²³ Appendix B. “Phule’s dialogue with a Shudra Sadhu of Kabir Bhakti Sect,” *Selections*, vol. II, p. 72.
- ²⁴ “Memorial addressed to the Education Commission” dated Poona, October 19, 1882. *Selections*, pp. 82-83.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- ²⁶ “Brahmin teachers in the Education Department”, Mokashi-Punekar, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- ²⁸ This small book was published posthumously by his son Yashwant Jyotirao Phule from Poona in 1891. Given above are some quotations from it.
- ²⁹ Dominic Vendell, “Jyotirao Phule Satyashodh and the problem of Subaltern consciousness,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2014, p. 65.
- ³⁰ Keer, *op. cit.*, 267.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ³² Jagannathan Begari, “Jyotirao Phule: A revolutionary social reformer,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 71, no. 2, Apr-Jun 2010, pp. 403-04.
- ³³ Paine was an English and American political activist. He wrote a book entitled *The age of reason; being an investigation of true and fabulous theology* in 1794. He also wrote *Rights of man* (London: J.S. Jordan, 1792) in which he supported the French Revolution which gave the message of liberty, equality and fraternity.
- ³⁴ Gail Omvedt, “Jotirao Phule and the ideology of social revolution in India”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 6, no. 37, Sept. 11, 1971, p. 1970.
- ³⁵ “From: The untouchables’ “Apologia.” *Selections*, p. 59.
- ³⁶ Keer, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- ³⁷ *Slavery (in the civilised British Government under the cloak of Brahminism)*. (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1991) (Translated by P.G. Patil), pp. 60-62.
- ³⁸ Jagadevappa T. Dharani, “Modern philosopher Mahatma Jyotiba Phule: A critique”, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 10:7, Dec. 2021, p. 91.
- ³⁹ Keer, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
- ⁴⁰ Meera Kosambi, “Indian response to Christianity, church and colonialism Case of Pandita Ramabai,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 27, nos. 43-44, p. WS-68.
- ⁴¹ Keer, *op. cit.*, pp. 196 & 219.

⁴² “Feminist philosophical thought in colonial India,” *IRA International Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, vol. 4, issue 3, 2016, p. 582.

⁴³ Mokashi-Punekar, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ Hosamani Sangappa, *Mahatma Phule's concept of social justice* (Doctorate thesis, Department of Studies and Research in Political Science, Gulbarga University, Gulbarga, 2015), p. 120.