HISTORY, SOCIOLOGY AND FEMINIST STUDIES

# Insiders' Subaltern Historiography and Subaltern Feminist Approach of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule

K. B. Nayak

Department of Sociology, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati, Maharashtra, India

Published November 2026

## Abstract

Recently, the field of Subaltern Studies has emerged as one of the latest and most influential theoretical approach for studying social issues in academics. As a branch of post-colonial theory, a school of Subaltern Studies, being influenced by Marxism and Neo-Marxism, since early 1980s, has unraveled the inherent forms of inequality, injustice, oppression and exploitation of common people, especially the subaltern people in the history of South Asia. In fact, the school of subaltern studies emerged as the "revisionist historiography" of peasant movements in post colonial India. While following Antonio Gramsci's (an Italian Neo-Marxist leader and social scientist) prioritization of a history from below, Ranjit Guha (a social historian of India) and his followers of the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG),addressed a number of research gaps while producing a wealth of resources on Indian peasantry during the colonial period and they appropriated the Gramcian concept of "subaltern" in order to analyze Indian historiography, arguing that mainstream history had largely ignored the voices of peasants, tribal communities, lower castes, and other oppressed groups of people including women in India. The main problem for the SSG was to unravel the sources of knowledge in the history about the subaltern people. In reaction to the "historiography" of Indian nationalism as dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism, the SSG led by Ranjit Guha presented the "subaltern historiography". Despite its path breaking significant contributions to the field of academics, there have been several criticisms made against scholars within the Subaltern Studies Group, from their failure to adequately give agency to the oppressed, to the group's digression from its founding tenets. However, one of the most important observations in the field of "original" or "initial" subaltern studies is that except Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as a woman and as a feminist taking stand on "subaltern women" point of view, majority of the original or initial SSG scholars and writers are not "insider subalterns" as such (in terms of their social background), although, on behalf or for them, those scholars have significantly explored various facets/facts on the plights of subaltern people and have developed an alternative post-colonial theory or approach on the struggle of subaltern people. In this context, the author, in this paper, highlights that there were some dynamic subaltern scholars, social activists and reformers in the colonial history of India like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule who were truly "insider subalterns" - who wrote extensively on "subaltern historiography" and struggled hard throughout their life in order to bring about radical social reforms and progress in Indian society. In fact, their "insiders" approach to understand the "subaltern historiography" is somehow different from those of the original scholars of the SSG. In this paper, on the basis of a review of available literature, an attempt has been made to explore an "insider subaltern historiography" and an "insider subaltern feminism" of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule respectively.

## 1 Introduction to the background of subaltern studies

Recently, the field of Subaltern Studies has emerged as one of the latest subdivisions or branches of post-colonial theory in academics. Thus, as a branch of post-colonial theory, a school of Subaltern Studies, being influenced by Marxism and Neo-Marxism, since early 1980s, unraveled the inherent forms of inequality, injustice, oppression and exploitation of common people in the history of human society . From the beginning to the present time, the word 'subaltern' as a concept, its meaning has undergone several changes. It has been conceptualized as indicating different levels of meanings with different themes and aspects. Empirically, the concept "subaltern" implies the peasants and cultivators. Structurally, it represents the insurgent and marginalized groups of people. While in the sense of deconstruction, it personifies inferior groups of third world countries (Nayak,K.B. 2026).

However, in postcolonial theory, the term "subaltern" refers to the lower social classes and the other social groups as displaced to the margins of a society. Most studies conflate the word *subaltern* with several synonymous terms including *subordinated*, *downtrodden*, *marginalized* and *oppressed* sections of people (Simon and Varghese, 2012; Azad, 2014; Chowdhury, A. R.2016:1-16; Dharmaraj,M 2014, Mandal,T 2014; Mandal, M., and Karan, T.K. 2014; Mashori and Zaib, 2015). In Reading Subaltern Studies (2002) David Ludden has beautifully documented the changing meanings of the term "subaltern". According to him, the word has been used since long past. In late medieval English literature, it was applied to vassals and peasants. By 1700, it denoted lower ranks in the military, suggesting peasant origins. By 1800, authors writing "from a subaltern perspective" published novels and histories about military campaigns in India and America. For instance, G.R. Gleig (1796-1888), a British biographer who wrote biographies of Robert Clive, Warren Hastings, and Thomas Munro mastered in this genre. The great war provoked popular accounts of subaltern life in published memoirs and diaries, soon after the Russian Revolution and then the publication of Antonio Gramsci which further highlighted the concept (See : Nayak,K.B. 2026).

Later on, this term has gained wider currency and enormous popularity in the fields of social sciences through the work of an Italian Neo-Marxist leader and social scientist especially a critical theorist in Sociology - Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) who first systematically used the term 'subaltern' in connection with the proletariat in his Prison Note Books(1929-1935) in order to refer to any group of "inferior" rank or status based on ethnic class, gender or any identity as such. In fact, in his famous book on "Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci" (See it as edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, 1971/1992/1996/2005), Antonio Gramsci applied the term 'subaltern' to the downtrodden Italians, specifically Southern Italian workers who were marginalized by the hegemonic politics of the Fascist party(Louai, El. Habib 2012; Chowdhury,A. R. 2016:1-16). According to Marcus Green (2002:3), the Gramscian concept of subaltern and characteristics of subalternity are interrelated with his philosophical, religious, economic, social, cultural and political ideologies. Due to this complex interrelation among different notion of subalterns and some other ideologies, Gramsci never mentioned a last word but presented a fragmentary account of subalterns. Even then, Green (2002 :1) further highlights the dynamic notion of Gramscian subalterns.He states that, in Prison *Notebook-1* (1929-35), Gramsci called non-commissioned/junior military troops as subalterns. In Prison Notebook-*3* and *4*, he used the word subaltern to identify the lower class people of a society. In Prison Notebook-*25*, he further clarified this notion by calling slaves, labourers, peasants and women as subalterns (Green, 2002:2-3). While Kylie M. Smith (2010:39) sums up the Gramscian concept of subalterns as being non-autonomous politically suppressed social groups of people. Thereafter, Antonio Gramsci used the concept for studying colonial societies in order to understand the groups under cultural hegemony that were manipulated by colonial powers to ensure

their local dominance. In this respect, he has developed a critical social theory while analyzing the interplay between culture and politics (Francese J.2009). His main idea was that the colonial domination always produced local subaltern elites that were solely elites in the colonial locus, but subaltern outside it. However, Gramsci argued forcefully that all sorts of subaltern consciousness and insurgencies cannot liberate subalterns from the oppression of ruling classes. They are always the subjects of activities of the ruling classes. Their only liberty lies in their permanent victory and "autonomy" from the bondage of the society (Zaib,Sabah.2015:213-219). In this way, the concept of "subaltern autonomy" has been propounded by Antonio Gramsci.

This initiative work of Gramsci was essential in the formation of Subaltern Studies, as his work influenced and encouraged a group of South Asian scholars to look beyond economics and examine other structures within society that reinforce hegemony, for example in the field of schooling. Gramsci's concept of "subaltern" was applied by Indian scholars to study peasantry in India (For instance See Arnold, David. 2012. "Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India,"). Indian scholars, namely Ranjit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and others, applied the term in a broad sense in order to study the South Asian subalterns from both colonial and postcolonial times (Baverly,John 1999). Guha (1982a) provided a comprehensive definition of subalterns as the overall Indian population, excluding its elites. According to David Ludden (2002), Guha's subalterns are suppressed people due to several demographic factors including class, caste, culture, and religion. Guha (1982b) asserted that the insurgencies of subalterns against the mainstream defined them. But, Spivak being a woman subaltern scholar provided a critical notion of subaltern. Being critical of all the established conventions of subaltern (subalternity) and while taking a stand on women's side, she grounded her own theory of subalternity- a feminist approach to subalternity which challenges the voice of subalterns. By this, Spivak dismantles the Gramscian concept of subaltern autonomy. According to Sarah Harasym (1990), Spivak asserts that subalterns are always subalterns. There is no space for their elevation. Their unapproachability, un-accessibility, unreachability keep them as always subalterns and that's why their voice disperses into the shadows. She sums up the narrative of subalterns by noting that "the subalterns cannot speak" (See:Spivak, 1988b:104) or can never be heard (Mogio, J. 2007).

However, a group of South Asian scholars who formed the original Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) produced 12 volumes of Subaltern Studies during two and half decades of period between 1982 and 2005. In fact, these twelve volumes contain borrowed ideas and developed insights from structuralism, post structuralism and most of post-colonial theory. This group includes: Ranajit Guha, David Arnold, Gautam Bhadra, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, Sudipta Kaviraj, Gyanendra Pandey, Gyan Prakash, Sarojini Sahoo, Ajay Skaria, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Susie Tharu. This group consisted of heterodox historians of South Asia, who were critical of the nature of the historiography prevalent at that time because of its elitist biases and "bourgeois-nationalist" and "colonial" mode of history writing which distorted the real historical portrayal of the subalterns or the lower class people and neglected their role in the anti-colonial struggle (See : Nayak,K.B. 2026).

As a critical movement or approach, during 1980s, the Subaltern Studies basically arose as a critique of elite-based historiography schools of thought including Marxist and Cambridge historiography (Biswas,A 2009). Being opposite to Nationalist historiography, the Cambridge school aims to criticize national elitism (see: Anil Seal.2009). While the Marxist historiography began to give voice to the downtrodden people by rectifying the underlying flaws in the Cambridge school, as well as in the Nationalist historiography. But, neither the Cambridge school nor the Marxist school could fully identify with lower classes of people in society. Therefore, subaltern studies emerged to rethink the

history of lost souls (Parakash,Gyan 1994).According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2000:324-340), the historiography of subaltern studies was different from the Marxist historiography because of its emphasis on "the bottom layer of society" rather than just the implementation of Marxist' "capital logic" alone. While Chowdhury A. R. (2016:1-16) argues that the scholars of subaltern studies were dissatisfied in considering society at the lines of modern concepts of class, value and commodity. John Beverley(1999), founder of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, succinctly puts it that the school of Subaltern Studies is about power - who has it and who doesn't, who is gaining it and who is losing it. Power is related to representations - which have cognitive authority or can secure hegemony and which do not have authority or are not hegemonic. Thus, in this way, the Subaltern Studies was initiated during the 1970s (Ludden, 2002) in the discipline of history and came to its peak in the 1980s when some heterodox historians organized a group named as the *Subaltern Studies collective or Subaltern Studies Group* (SSG). The members of this group decided to work together on multiple themes of South Asian subalterns(Zaib,Sabah.2015:213-219). In this way, the Subaltern Studies emerged as a dominant trend in writing about South Asian history, in general, and of Indian historiography, in particular (Parakash, Gyan 1994; Chowdhury,A. R. 2016:1-16).

During 1980s and onwards, there has been a long academic debate and discourse in the field of Subaltern Studies in India. Among prominent contributors to twelve volumes of the Subaltern Studies, the most notable and initial work is Ranajit Guha's "Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India" (1982b, 1999a). This text examines the role of peasants in historical struggles against colonial rule, emphasizing their agency despite their subaltern status. While Partha Chatterjee, in his The Nation and Its Fragments - Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories (1993), analyzes the construction of national identity in postcolonial contexts, by focusing on how subaltern groups negotiate their identities among dominant national narratives. Going two steps ahead, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's(1985b, 1988b, 2010a-b) in her work on "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (as discussed below), critiques the limitations of representation by asking whether marginalized groups can truly voice their experiences in a way that transcends the frameworks imposed on them by dominant cultures (Morton, Stephen. 2003).

Actually, Ranjit Guha and his followers of the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG), appropriated the concept of "subaltern" in order to analyze Indian historiography, arguing that mainstream history had largely ignored the voices of peasants, tribal communities, lower castes, and other oppressed groups of people including women in India. The main problem for the SSG was to unravel the sources of knowledge in the history about the subaltern people. According to Guha, not only are sources of knowledge difficult to obtain, but also Indian history has for generations been written by colonizers and the Indian elite, which reinforced the Westernized values and justified colonization. In "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," Guha (1999b) argues that "the historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism"(See also Chaturvedi Vinayak in Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial, 2012). Further, Guha goes on to state that both these varieties of elitism share the prejudice that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the national consciousness – "nationalism" – which informed this process, were exclusively and predominantly elite achievements. In the colonialist and neocolonialist historiography, these achievements are mainly credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture. Additionally, it is also attributed to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas in the nationalist and neo-nationalist writings (See: Nayak,K.B. 2026).

In fact, one major challenge which Guha faced was that he was trying to access the subaltern history of India when the majority of historical documents and secondary sources of research have been written by colonial elites or the Indian bourgeois-elite. Thus, Guha questions about : 1) how then, are we to get in touch with the consciousness of insurgency when our access to it is barred by the discourse of counter-insurgency?; and 2) for counter-insurgency, which derives directly from insurgency and is determined by the latter in all that is essential to its form and articulation, can hardly afford a discourse that is not fully and compulsively involved with the rebel and his activities? (See in his Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, 1982b, 1999a). Indeed, there were some important challenges to recover subaltern history as follows:

- As subaltern classes are typically silenced, there will be substantially less written about or by these groups (many of whom may not be literate).
- The Euro-centric nature of schooling in South Asia during colonial rule renders it difficult to access these narratives.
- Attempting to recover the voice of the subaltern may result in another problem: speaking "for" the subaltern or filtering their experiences through another Westernized perspective.

However, Ranjit Guha attempted to mitigate this bias and produced a subaltern history of peasant rebellions by referring to numerous court transcripts and official documents. While, Partha Chatterjee (2011) stressed that one of the critical observations of the early phase of Subaltern Studies was that the state was always a distant entity in peasant consciousness. Peasants generally wanted to have nothing to do with magistrates or courts, police stations or hospitals. In the same way, the relation of the urban poor, many of whom were migrants from the villages, to the agencies of the state was also distant. Indian national identity is, therefore, erased as the formation of the Indian nation becomes accredited entirely to British occupation. This re-envisioning of history and reinforcement of British colonial values occurs through the westernized educational system that emerged in the country during the British rule in India.

In a similar vein, Sudipta Kaviraj (2010) pointed out that Indian students were exposed to a "more monolithic" rationalist culture than the "more inflected and critically engaged form in Europe". In India, the curriculum of the westernized education contained not only theoretical tools, resources, and techniques which could be applied to historical material critically to appraise and control them but also they contained and pressed upon their students a narrative of universal history, assigning values and places to civilizations. Kaviraj argued that this narrative served as a tool to legitimize the imperialist discourse, while giving references of an Indian novelist and poet Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's thoughts on "the asymmetry between Europeans and Indians on the question of history" that "If Europeans go duck-shooting, histories are duly composed of the affair, but a whole nation of Bengalis do not have a history to themselves". Chattopadhyay stated that : "The Bengalis must have a history; or else, they would never become human beings" (Chattopadhyay,B 1865; quoted in Kaviraj,S 2010). Thus, Sudipta Kaviraj (2010) argues that a people needs a history in order to provide an account, mortifying and uplifting, of their collective self.

This lack of history and sense of self for Indian subaltern groups is further discussed by Dipesh Chakrabarty(1996, 2000, 2002,2009). In "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History,"(2009), Chakrabarty writes that Indian history is discussed in terms of absence, construed as a "historic failure of the nation to come to its own" (See also in Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, *Mongia, P. (ed.)1996*). Dipesh Chakrabarty(2000) argues that this problematic approach to subaltern historiography translates into "inadequacy": India, under the influence of the imperialist ideology, is in need

of civilizing, since the "Indian was always a figure of lack". We can see similar discourses emerging in the division between the West and the Middle and Far East more broadly in the concept of "Orient" (Nayak,K.B. 2026). In fact, the concept of "the Orient" evolved from the Western colonial powers. It is a politically dangerous and culturally biased concept. This concept continues to infect Western views of the Eastern world. This powerful argument is made by Edward Said in his influential book on Orientalism (1978/2003) in which he has established the term "Orientalism" as a critical concept in order to describe the Western world's commonly contemptuous depiction and portrayal of the Eastern world (or, the Orient). Societies and peoples of the Orient are those who inhabit regions throughout Asia and North Africa. Edward Said argues that "Orientalism", in the sense of the Western scholarship about the Eastern world, is inextricably tied to the imperialist societies that produced it, which makes much Orientalist work inherently political and servile to power (See:"Orientalism" in Wikipedia).

Thus, in order to move away from this Euro-centric views of history in South Asia, the scholars of Subaltern Studies have attempted to work outside of conventional (and easily accessible) sources. As Gyanendra Pandey (2012) explains, while the narratives preserved in archives are overwhelming controlled by the ruling class, lodged in the records found in these institutions, however, are fragments (traces) of many lost (and usually irrecoverable) narratives, prised out by a predatory official or observer from earlier (often unknown) contexts and situated in others: the statement of a "mute" subject under trial; rumours heard in the bazaar; slogans shouted by rebels or rioters; – all are testimony not only to the power of British rule and its appropriation of the treasures of layer upon layer of history, but also to other's presences and other's pasts (See in: "Voices from the Edge," Chaturvedi, Vinayak. (ed.)in Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial, 2012).

Moreover, one of the reasons that the subaltern voice fails to be heard is due to the epistemic violence committed by scholars of subaltern studies. "Epistemology" analyzes how we obtain and trust knowledge, while "epistemic violence"as a term used in postcolonial studies to describe how the West produces discourse on colonized nations and colonized people and works to erode indigenous identities by controlling knowledge production — for example, through forced English schooling, or the adoption of English culture and history as the global baseline or model that to be adopted by the colonized people. In relation to this, the feminist epistemology also considers the epistemic injustice of how women are excluded from knowledge production and treated as untrustworthy or unreliable sources of knowledge (Nayak,K.B. 2026).

In this context, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak joined the SSG as an extravagant subalternist. She criticized Subaltern Studies as itself an elite based school of thought due to its ignorance of the issue of gendered subalternity. She revolutionized the existing course of Subaltern Studies via her philosophical essay entitled as "Can the Subaltern Speak?"(1985b, 1988b:90, 2010a-b). Her such complex hybrid text focuses on several themes including re-presentation, insurgency and passiveness of gendered subalterns. She also criticizes the shortcomings of Foucault and Deluze's methodology of representation. Then, by arguing against colonialism and nationalism in India, she raises an open ended question: "can the subaltern speak?". She further generalizes all double colonized, "black or brown poor rural women" as voiceless, illustrating her position with a specific case of suicide of the sister of her grandmother, Bhuvaneswari Badhuri (Zaib,Sabah.2015:215).

However,Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in the discussion of gendered subalternity, oriented the field of *subaltern studies* towards subaltern feminism, in general, and post-colonial subaltern feminism, in particular. In *The New Subaltern: A Silent Interview* (2012:324-340), Spivak claimed that "subaltern is

gendered and hence needs to be studied with the help of feminist theory". According to Zaib,Sabah (2015:216), being a critique of critics, Spivak relates the concept of the subaltern to the marginalized poor women of Third World countries (Tibile, 2012) and she also pointed out the shortcomings of traditional feminism as an unsuitable approach for voicing the situations of poor women all round the world. She introduced the concepts of class, caste and culture with regards to subaltern women (Morton, S 2003). Further, Subaltern Studies' projects also reconciled it with the deconstructionist approach. Being a kind of the Marxist feminist deconstructionist, Spivak applied the strategy of deconstruction to unveil truth and to recover marginal subjects against the grain of central discourses. In this regard, she contributed an essay entitled as *Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography (Spivak,G.C 1985a)* . But, according to Dipesh, Chackraborty (2013), the complex linguistic acrobatics of deconstruction disappointed many subalternists and so that deconstructionism became a disputed strategy in Subaltern Studies. Thus, in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (Chaturvedi, Vinayak.2012), Sumit Sarkar contributed a complaining essay on *The Decline of Subaltern in Subaltern Studies* which clarifies his dissatisfaction with deconstructionism.

Among all the original scholars of Subaltern Studies Group (SSG), Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, (as an "insider" in a sense of "being a woman" of upper class and taking a stand on behalf of the subaltern women in general) advocated for a feminist subaltern approach. According to John Beverley (1999), Gayatri Spivak formulated the problem concisely: If the subaltern could speak—that is, speak in a way that really mattered to us—then it wouldn't be subaltern. The subaltern cannot be represented adequately by academic knowledge because academic knowledge is a practice that actively produces subalternity. Scholars of subalternity often addresses the problematic nature of attempting to give voice to the subaltern. Some argue that this is another form of "speaking for" the subaltern and filtering their words through Eurocentric understanding. Spivak is one such scholar who has shed light on this issue. Though many scholars had been engaged with the study of the subaltern people and subaltern history, the position of the subaltern (specifically the subaltern woman) was popularized in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's groundbreaking essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"(1985b, 1988b, 2010a-b). In this extraordinary critical work, she has taken a kind of "subaltern feminist" stand point as such(See:1985b, 1988a-b, 1999, 2010a-b, 2012).

However, Spivak's theory of subalternity opens an unending debate. Contemporary scholars and theorists are now debating on the "voice of subalterns" (Spivak 1996). In Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction (2003), Robert Young excavates a methodology which favors the "voice of subalterns" under suitable socio-political scenarios (see also Dharmaraj, M 2014; Mashori and Zaib, 2015). Recently some eminent contemporary scholars, namely Heither Plumridge Bedi, Uday Chandra, Kaneth Bo Neilson, Alf Gunvald Nilsen, Indrajit Roy and Judith Whitehead, are actively working to rethink subaltern resistance with especial reference to Indian based subalternity for the exploration of new critical perspectives about the idea of resistance (see Bedi,H.P (2015); Chandra,U (2015); Neilson, K.B (2015); Nilsen, A.G (2015); Roy, Indrajit (2015); Whitehead,J (2015). Further more, some South-Asian scholars like Ghulam Mustafa Mashori and Sabah Zaib (2015) from Pakistan are attempting to initiate subaltern studies in Pakistan to rectify the elitism that has prevailed in the Pakistani context at the sociocultural, political and literary level (Zaib,Sabah 2015:216).

In fact, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has taken a kind of critical subaltern feminist stand point in her discourse of the subaltern studies. According to Spivak, the ultimate subaltern subject is the subaltern woman who tends to experience more oppression than the subaltern man. Spivak explains that the subaltern women have historically been subjected to both colonial violence, as well as patriarchal violence in the traditional Hindu society. The presence of these two oppressive forces had

silenced the subaltern woman, making it impossible for her to self-advocate. Spivak explores how the subaltern woman is denied her autonomy and voice, which continue to be erased by the Westernized academic discourse. In her intervention into the Subaltern studies, Spivak draws on a number of theoretical analyses on Indian History – such as deconstruction, Marxism and feminism. She was highly critical against the current histories of India about colonial perspectives. In this respect, in her essay on "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak narrates the incident of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri as the core issue about how "a young woman of sixteen or seventeen, no longer menstruating, in order to claim her dubious privilege."(Spivak 1985a: 330-63). Besides, Spivak wrote a number of articles and essays on the subaltern studies (Donna Landry, and Gerald MacLean. 2013). As a feminist, she also wrote on the first world and third world woman studies. In fact, she highlighted on the postcolonial subaltern studies in her different essays which are quite essential to understand the subservient passive nature of subaltern women in the history of India and elsewhere (Nayak,K.B. 2026).

Actually, the subaltern women, in the social history of India, have been suppressed, dominated and marginalized mainly due to their gender, caste, ethnicity and class background. They had faced systematic oppression and had also often been overlooked or left out of the mainstream discussions and narratives as available in different sources of history. The subaltern studies have emerged at least to give voices to these women's feelings, experiences and insights as well as have attempted to highlight their struggles against the so called domination and hegemony of mainstream elite class of "others". In this way, the subaltern women in Indian social history and literature have been a significant focus of post-colonial studies. Even they had participated in a number of national and social movements. Unfortunately, they might not have been significantly highlighted by media and researche3rs mainly because the subaltern women participants were either presumed as "behind the screen" while supporting their male counterparts or they might have been suppressed by the "politics of male participants" in various social movements in Indian history (Nayak,K.B. 2026).

## 2 Some criticisms of the Subaltern Studies Group

Despite its path breaking significant contributions to the field of academics, the project of Subaltern Studies has faced several criticisms:

- **Over-Romanticizing Subaltern Agency:** Some scholars argue that Guha idealizes peasant rebellions, ignoring their internal contradictions (e.g., caste , class, gender and ethinicity hierarchies within subaltern groups).
- **Neglect of the Modern State:** By focusing on autonomous resistance, the Subaltern Studies group sometimes underplays the role of state structures in shaping the lives of subaltern people.
- **Postcolonial Elitism:** Critics like Sumit Sarkar (1997, 2012) argue that the later Subaltern Studies scholars became overly theoretical, losing touch with grassroots historiography.One essay on the problems with the Subaltern Studies Group comes from its ex-member, Sumit Sarkar. In "The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies" Sarkar laments the changing direction of the group from its Marxist origins. Indeed, earlier editions of Subaltern Studies tended to focus on peasantry and class, whereas the later collections approached a more diverse range of topics. Sarkar argues that with the withering of hopes of radical transformation through popular initiative, conceptions of seamless, all-pervasive, virtually irresistible power-knowledge have tended to displace the evocation of moments of resistance central to the histories from below during 1960s and 1970s. (See:Vinayak Chaturvedi et al., 2012). Sarkar argues that there has been

a move towards Westernized discourse, resulting in a reinforcement of the subaltern-colonizer divide.

These critiques highlight the challenges of balancing academic rigor with political commitment and social activism—a tension that persists in critical sociology today. In fact, there have been several criticisms made against scholars within the Subaltern Studies Group, from their failure to adequately give agency to the oppressed, to the group's digression from its founding tenets. In Postcolonial Studies, Benita Parry (2004) argues that, from the discourse of Sati, Spivak derives largely general statements on woman's subject constitution/object formation in which the subaltern woman is conceived as a homogeneous and coherent category, and which culminate in a declaration on the success of her planned dis-articulation. Spivak in her project gives no speaking part to the colonized, effectively writing out the evidence of native agency recorded in India's two-hundred-years struggle against British conquest and the Raj – discourses to which she scathingly refers as hegemonic nativist or reverse ethnocentric narrativization. Parry argues that subaltern women have indeed self-advocated in numerous ways and that by focusing purely on hegemonic power sources, Spivak has failed to take this into account (Benita Parry 2004). However, Spivak clarifies in a later interview that when she says the subaltern cannot speak, she means the subaltern cannot speak in a way which the West can truly hear and understand (Spivak, 2012:324-340).

However, one of the most important observations in the field of "original" or "initial" subaltern studies is that except Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as a woman and as a feminist taking stand on "subaltern" point of view, many of the original SSG scholars and writers are not "insider subalterns" in the sense that they do not belong to the subaltern community or category as such, although, on behalf or for them, those scholars have significantly explored various facets/facts on the plights of subaltern people and have developed an alternative post-colonial theory or approach on the struggle of subaltern people. It is a fact that from the critical view point of Phenomenological and Ethno-methodological Epistemology in Sociology, the real and much clear picture of subaltern historiography can be revealed by the "insider" subaltern scholars "who live differently, experience differently and speak differently". In this respect, the author, in this paper, highlights that there were some dynamic subaltern scholars, social activists and social reformers in the history of India like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule who were truly "insider subaltern scholars" - who wrote extensively on "subaltern historiography" and struggled hard throughout their life in order to bring about radical social reforms and progress in Indian society (as discussed and highlighted in the following section of this paper). In fact, their "insiders" approach to understand the "subaltern historiography" is somehow different from those of the original scholars of the SSG. The Phule couple have heavily influenced some other later prominent subaltern social reformers, social activists and nation builders in India like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Nayak K.B. 2020, 2021) and others (among innumerable "insider" subalterns}, who have also struggled hard and brought about radical as well as liberal reform movements in Indian society during their life time. Their approach is reflected in the Indian literature of Subaltern Historiography in general and in the Subaltern Literature, especially in the Dalit Literature, in particular (Nayak,K.B. 2026). In the following section of this research paper, an attempt has been made to explore an "insider subaltern historiography" and an "insider subaltern feminism" of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule respectively.

## 3 Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule as insider subalterns

Within India, as a progressive state with a long history of social reforms, political movements, enriched cultural heritage, Maharashtra is a land of dynamic political leaders, social thinkers, social reformers and social revolutionaries who have not only molded and enriched all facets of life within Maharashtra but have also made spectacular valuable contribution to the growth and development of India. In this land, one of the greatest subaltern social reformers - Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, who was a contemporary of a world famous revolutionary political-economic and social thinker Karl Marx (https://mahatmaphule.net/). The former brought about "Caste Struggle" in the place of latter's "Class Struggle". Both thinkers were critique of socioeconomic inequalities, injustices, oppression and exploitation of the poor subaltern people, as inflicted by the dominant section of society. Karl Marx has given a "class analysis" while Jyotirao Phule has presented a "caste analysis" in this context. In this respect, both had struggled throughout their life life. Both were dynamic sociopolitical leaders, socioeconomic activists, reformers and revolutionaries. Karl Marx was basically a political economists, while Jyotirao Phule was fundamentally a social activist by nature. We consider Jyotirao Phule as the father of the Indian social revolution and the first leader of peasants and other subalterns. Throughout life, along with his wife Savitribai Phule, he struggled hard for the upliftment of the Dalits (the Scheduled Caste people), women, peasants, and laborers belonging to different lower castes of the subaltern people in the country. In true sense,Jyotirao Phule was an "insider subaltern leader" in India and his wife Savitribai Phule was also an "insider subaltern feminist" and social activist in the country. During British colonial period of Indian history, they were prolific writers who had extensively wrote on the plights of the subaltern people in the country, as "insider" subaltern historiographers. In fact, their contribution to the "insider subaltern historiography" in India is quite significant in the subaltern approach as developed in 1980s, by a group of Indian scholars led by Ranjit Guha and which emerged as the "revisionist historiography" of peasant movements in post colonial India(as discussed above).

Thus, in terms of the Subaltern Studies, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule, as "insider subalterns" (as born and brought up in a subaltern community discussed below), were revolutionary thinkers, social reformers, social activists and prolific writers during the British colonial rule in India who not only intensively and extensively wrote on "insider subaltern historiography" but also while taking "humanist" and "feminist" stand points, they drew and led a number of social reform movements for the empowerment and development of subaltern people including women in the country.

Jyotirao Phule, also known as Jyotiba Phule, was born on 11$^{th}$ April 1827 in Satara District of Maharashtra state, to a family that belonged to the *Gorhe caste as converted later into* Mali caste (lower Shudra Varna and OBC caste) and the people of which traditionally worked as flower, fruit and vegetable growers. In the Hindu Chaturvana system - traditional four-fold "*Varna* system" of caste hierarchy, the *Gorhe caste and* Mali caste people were placed within the Shudra Varna. Phule's great-grandfather, who had worked in Satara as a *chaughula*, or low-ranking village official, moved to Khanwadi in Pune district. There, his only son, Shetiba, had little income and led the family into acute poverty. The family, including three sons struggled in Poona while seeking for employment. The boys were taken under the care of a florist who taught them the secrets of the florist trade. Their proficiency in growing and arranging flowers became well known in Poona. Therefore, they adopted the surname *Phule* (flower-man) in place of *Gorhe*. Their fulfillment of commissions from the Peshwa, Baji Rao II, for flower mattresses and other goods for the rituals and ceremonies of the royal court so impressed him that he granted them 35 acres (14 ha) of land on the basis of the *Inam* system,

whereby no tax was payable upon it. The oldest brother machinated to take sole control of the property, while leaving the younger two siblings to continue farming and also flower-selling (For detail See: https://www.britannica.com › biography › Jyotirao-Phule ; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Jyotirao_Phule).

Jyotirao Phule's father, Govindrao married to Chimnabai and had two sons, of whom Jyotirao was the youngest. Chimnabai died before he was aged one. The then backward Mali community did not give much significance to education. Even then, his father encouraged him for education, but after attending primary school (where he had basic knowledge on the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic), Jyotirao was withdrawn from the Primary School by his father. He joined the other members of his family at work, both in the shop and in the farm. Being highly impressed by Jyotirao's intelligence and his love for knowledge, two of his neighbours, one a Muslim teacher and another a Christian gentleman persuaded his father Govindrao to allow him to study in a secondary school. However, a man from the same Mali caste recognized his intelligence and persuaded his father to allow him to attend the local Scottish Mission High School in Poona. Jyotiba completed his English schooling in 1847. It was in this school that he met Sadashiv Ballal Govande, a Brahmin, who remained a close friend throughout his life. Both Jyotirao and Govande were greatly influenced by Thomas Paine's ideas and they read with great interest Paine's famous book "The Rights of Man". Moro Vithal Valvekar and Sakharam Yashwant Paranjapye were two other Brahmin friends of Jyotirao who in later years stood by him in all his activities. After completing his secondary education in 1847, Jyotirao decided not to accept a job under the Government. As was customary, he was married at the young age of 13, to a girl of his Mali community named Savitribai at the young age of 9, as chosen by his father. Then onwards, the young couple struggled hard in Pune and devoted fully for social works throughout their life. Like Jyotirao Phule,Savitibai Phule also struggled hard in her early life (For detail See: https://www.britannica.com › biography › Jyotirao-Phule ; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Jyotirao_Phule).

While his wife, Savitibai was born on 3rd January 1831, in Naigaon, in Satara District of Maharashtra. She was the youngest daughter of four children born to Laxshmi and Khandoji Nevse Patil, both of whom belonged to the Mali Community. Savitribai was married to Jyotirao Phule, at a young age at 9 when he was 13 year old. She was initially illiterate. She was first taught to read and write by her husband Jyotirao Phule and his mother figure Sagunabai Shirsagar (his maternal aunt's daughter), at their home while working on their farm. Later on, she got training through private tutor under the mentorship of Sakharam Yeshwant Paranjpe and Keshav Shivram Bhavalkar (Somanaboina and Ramagoud 2021:59).In 1846–1847, she passed the third and fourth-year examinations in an English school. In 1848, at the age 21, Jyotirao Phule visited a girls' school in Ahmednagar run by a Christian missionary Cynthia Farrar where Savitibai received teacher training. Then, she had her second training course was at a Normal School in Pune (For detail See; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Savitribai_Phule; https://www.britannica.com › biography › Savitribai-Phule).

## 4 Their educational and social reform movement: Rise of subaltern feminism and subaltern historiography in India

During Mahatma Jyotirao Phule's life time, the 19th century in India was a period marked by profound and deep rooted social stratification, dominated by a rigidly enforced caste system and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms in the Hindu society. The Hindu societal structure systematically relegated vast segments of the population, particularly women and those designated or branded

as “lower castes” in the Hindu social hierarchy, to a life devoid of dignity and access to fundamental rights, chief among them being education. That time, acquiring knowledge was confined largely to the privileged few “upper caste” people especially men and thus, it became a potent tool for maintaining a patriarchal order of social hierarchies and perpetuating the oppression of the masses. The deliberate exclusion of the “lower castes” people and women in general from formal schooling ensured that ignorance flourished, thereby solidifying existing power structure dynamics and making any form of social mobility in the society as an arduous, if not impossible, task. It was against this background of pervasive social injustice and intellectual suppression that along with his wife Savitribai Phule, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule emerged as a pivotal figure - a futurist visionary social reformer in India. At first, he led a movement for educational reform in the society. He keenly perceived that education was not merely a pathway to literacy but the most formidable weapon against the very dominant oppressive patriarchal social structures that perpetuated inequality, injustice and human servitude in the traditional Hindu society.

It was in 1848, together with Jyotirao Phule and Sagunabai Kshirsagar, Savitribai opened the nation's first girls' school for marginalized communities of Maharwada at Bhidewada (which was the home of Tatya Saheb Bhide) in Pune. This school was not run by missionaries. Savitribai herself became India's first professionally trained female headmistress and teacher in India. As a dynamic teacher, Savitibai used to teach seriously the girls in the school. They developed a progressive syllabus of mathematics, science, and social studies. The curriculum reflected a modern and Western-style. She taught in the school in spite of strong opposition from the local community of Hindu society in Pune. Though conservative upper caste society of Pune didn't approve their work, but many Indians and Europeans helped them generously. Moreover, the conservatives in Pune also forced their own family to be ostracized. In fact, Savitribai experienced social exclusion, physical violence, and verbal abuse. On her way to school,while enduring daily harassment, she was frequently pelted with stones and cow dung for which she used to carry an extra sari to change following such assaults daily. Being under pressure, their families also disapproved their social work and even Jyotirao’s father in 1849 drove away the couple from his house based on religious texts while criticizing their work. During this period, their friend Usman Sheikh and his sister Fatima Sheikh provided them with shelter. Savitribai persisted in teaching despite these difficulties. She worked with Fatima Begum Sheikh, the first Muslim woman teacher in India, and together, they opened educational institutions serving girl students in underprivileged areas. It is mainly due to social opposition and ostracization from orthodox community, the Phule couple had relocated to the residence of their associate Usman Shaikh. There, Savitribai Phule and Fatima Sheikh –Usman’s sister, continued their efforts to educate girls in the local neighbourhood.

However, the Phule couple restarted the school on their relocated residential premises. Later, they started two more schools for the children of untouchable castes such as the Mahar and Mang communities. This was a radical act for education of women and weaker sections of society which was strongly opposed by traditional Hindu society. Against the strict caste divisions of the time, their inclusive schools welcomed children from all castes, including Dalits and other underprivileged categories. They also founded educational trusts to assist these initiatives, including the Society for Promoting the Education of Mahar, Mangs, etc. They advocated for such a dynamic curriculum that went beyond the rote learning of religious texts or the teaching of domestic chores. They emphasized practical knowledge, critical thinking, and self-reliance. Their aim was to equip girls with skills that would enable them to participate meaningfully in society, challenging restrictive gender roles and fostering intellectual independence. Their focus on practical and empowering education was revolu-

tionary, designed to cultivate agency rather than subservience.The curriculum in the schools not only focused on basic literacy and numeracy, but also crucially included vocational skills. This school education was also designed to equip the Dalit children with the means to earn a livelihood independently, thereby breaking free from hereditary, exploitative traditional occupations. Furthermore, the teaching-learning process in their schools instilled self-respect and encouraged them to challenge caste-based subservience, fostering a sense of awareness about their inherent human rights and capabilities.

Savitribai Phule's bravery against persecution motivated other teachers and students to question the accepted age old social mores.This pioneering effort was a direct challenge to the prevailing notion that women's place was confined to the domestic sphere and that education would make them "unfit" for their household roles.She not only taught with immense dedication but also actively trained other women to become good teachers, inspiring a new cadre of educators who were committed to social reform, often in the face of daunting social pressure. Today, millions of women teachers are proud of being teachers at different levels throughout India and consider Savitribai Phule as their model "Guru-Maa" "Mother Teacher" as well as a pioneer Indian feminist who struggled hard throughout her life and therefore, they demand that her birth day should be observed as "National Women's Day" in India.

Actually, Savitribai Phule's career was marked by her relentless efforts in advancing education for girls and marginalized communities. In her journey of life, the pathway taken by her from a small child in rural Maharashtra to India's first female teacher and a fearless social reformer shows the transforming power of education and social activism. Her strong commitment to women's social equality and education challenged the repressive customs and traditions of the patriarchal Hindu society and created opportunities for future generations of women and underprivileged subaltern groups of people. In fact, through her relentless and consistent works in schools, writings in publications, and social activism, she created a road map towards a more fair and inclusive society in India. Therefore, she is especially known as a champion of social reform and a forerunner of India's feminist movement. Thus, she deserves to be considered as an "insider subaltern feminist" in India. Actually, along with her husband Jyotirao, since childhood, she struggled hard to fight against inherent inequalities and inflicted injustices in the patriarchal social hierarchy mainly the caste system in India (For detail See; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Savitribai_Phule; https://www.britannica.com › biography › Savitribai-Phule).

Similarly, Jyotirao Phule's early life, marked by firsthand experiences of caste discrimination, instilled in him a fervent desire for social justice. Among many incidents, an incident in 1848 that made Jyotirao aware of the inequalities and injustices of the caste system in which the Brahmins did have the predominant position in the social hierarchy. In this incident, Jyotirao was invited to attend the wedding of one of his friends who belonged to an upper caste Brahmin family. But at the wedding the relatives of the bridegroom insulted and abused Jyotiba when they came to know about his social origin in a low caste. Jyotirao left the ceremony and made up his mind to challenge the prevailing caste-system and social restrictions. This incident sparked off Jyotiba's quest against the social injustice of caste discrimination and it incited a social revolution in the Indian society. He made it his life's work to hammer away tirelessly at the helms of social majoritarian domination. His movement aimed at emancipation of all human beings, including the subaltern people who were subjected to this kind of subjugation and social deprivation in the patriarchal social hierarchical order in the Hindu society.In fact, Jyotirao challenged the sacrosanct nature of the caste system, arguing forcefully that it was a man-made unjust social construct designed to exploit and subjugate the subaltern

people. Drawing inspiration from the Western Enlightenment thinkers and philosophers like Thomas Paine, he championed universal human rights and the inherent equality of all individuals. After thoroughly reading Thomas Paine's famous book "The Rights of Man" in 1848, Jyotirao became committed to his lifelong social movements against the caste system in India. He realized that exploited castes and women were at a disadvantage in Indian society. Therefore, he advocated that proper education of the subaltern people was vital to their emancipation. He believed that enlightenment of the women and lower caste people through proper education was the only solution to combat the social evils as deeply inherent and inbuilt into the age old patriarchal caste system. After reading Thomas Paine's famous book, he came to the conclusion that the only way to emancipate and uplift the oppressed subaltern people including minorities was empowerment through education and awareness. He also realized an urgent need of women's education in the age old tradition bound Indian society based on blind beliefs, rituals and orthodox customs (For detail See: https://www.britannica.com › biography › Jyotirao-Phule ; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Jyotirao_Phule).

According to Mahatma Phule, education is the only panacea for eradicating social evils in India. For him, the absence of education directly correlated with the perpetuation of slavery, both intellectual and social. He asserted that true liberation could only be achieved when individuals, particularly the downtrodden subaltern people, gained access to education and knowledge that would empower them to critically analyze their circumstances, understand their rights, and challenge the oppressive status quo in the society. Thus, his educational ideology or philosophy was too vibrant and dynamic that extended far beyond basic literacy which aimed to cultivate self-respect, critical consciousness, and a robust sense of social justice within the hearts and minds of the marginalized people. According to his futuristic vision, his educational endeavors were not simply philanthropic gestures but rather deliberate and strategically conceived instruments of social liberation which sought to dismantle the oppressive frameworks of caste and gender, thereby paving the way for a more egalitarian, inclusive and just society in India. It was his firm conviction that if social reforms are to be effective and long lasting, then persons at all levels, not only the subaltern people, should be truly educated. For this purpose, he worked hard, along with her life mate and followers, for the spread of proper education as his life time mission. In fact, Jyotiba's quest for providing women and girls with right to education was supported by his wife Savitribai Phule and some others of his friend circle. Their educational reforms were not merely about establishing institutions but also they were profound and strategic initiatives designed to directly challenge social inequality and empower the subaltern people of marginalized communities.Their work represents a radical re-imagination of futuristic educational vision, mission and strategies moving it from a tool of control to a catalyst for liberation and empowerment of weaker sections in India. They also recognized that the liberation and emancipation of women was intrinsically linked to their access to education and knowledge. They believed that educating the subaltern people including women would have a multiple effects, not only improving their own lives but also transforming families and, consequently, society as a whole. For them, an educated mother would raise enlightened children, thereby breaking cycles of ignorance and superstition in society(For detail See: https://www.britannica.com › biography › Jyotirao-Phule ; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Jyotirao_Phule).

Both Jyotirao Phule and his wife - Savitribai Phule at first concentrated on such aspects as the need for primary, basic and universal education, the essential qualities to be possessed by primary school teachers and the curriculum of primary education. They gave importance to the upliftment of lower castes and women through education and took necessary steps for achieving this end. During their early life, education for women and for those who were born into lower castes considered as

untouchable castes was like a distant dream. In such a situation, they launched a life long struggle for the education of women and lower castes, in-spite of threats to their life and works. Thus, for them, education was not just literacy but a tool of social change. Besides, they questioned the conventional public thought that viewed women and lower castes were unworthy of education by opening schools for girls and underprivileged communities. They decided to reorient people through social activism and awareness campaigns. They established India's first school for girls in Pune in 1848. This act was met with intense social resistance and condemnation from conservative elements who viewed female education as a threat to traditional social order in the country. In her schools, Savitribai, in spite of threats to her, seriously taught girls and women in order to improve their confidence, financial independence, social awareness, academic knowledge, and other skills. By the year 1852, there were three Phule schools in operation where 273 girls were pursuing education in these school surpassing the enrolment of government schools. Then, within five years, they had opened a total of 18 schools. But by the year 1858, unfortunately they had been all closed. According to Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi and Eleanor Zelliot (2002:35-37), the closure of schools was caused by a number of reasons such as : private European donations drying up due to the Rebellion of 1857, withdrawal of government support, and Jyotirao Phule's resignation from the school management committee because of disagreement regarding the curriculum.

However, the Phule couple's contributions of social activism not only revolutionized education for girls and boys of subaltern categories but also laid the groundwork for broader social reforms in Indian society. As a result of her experience and lifelong work for upliftment and empowerment of women in patriarchal Indian society, Savitribai Phule while being associated with her husband, became an ardent Indian feminist. Therefore, Savitribai Phule is widely recognised as the "Mother of Modern Education in India" (Chakrabarty, Bidyut 2024:515). Alongside her husband - Jyotirao Phule, she was instrumental in challenging the entrenched norms of patriarchy and caste discrimination that pervaded 19th-century Indian society. Along with his wife - Savitribai Phule, Jyotirao is also most well-known for his contributions towards the education of women and oppressed castes.In the social and educational history of India, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule stand out as an exceptional couple belonging to the subaltern community in the history of India, were engaged in a passionate struggle to build a movement for freedom and equality between men and women and also for social justice. They perceived that accumulated knowledge through education is a dynamic tool of power and that the progress of women and lower castes was impossible without it. Therefore, they dedicated their entire life for spreading education and bringing about critical awareness among the subaltern people in Indian society. Besides their pioneering contribution to the field of education, they strongly opposed the age old custom of child marriage and advocated for widow remarriage. Along with her husband Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule also campaigned against child marriage and was an advocate of widow remarriage (See in Wikipedia). Their main mission was to support women's rights, widows and the victims of sexual violence (Chakrabarty, Bidyut 2024:519). Widow remarriages were banned and child-marriage wasl opposed which was very common among the Brahmins and other upper castes in the then Hindu society. Many widows were young and not all of them could live in a manner in which the orthodox people expected them to live. Some of the delinquent widows resorted to abortion or left their illegitimate children to their fate by leaving them on the streets.The couple recognized that these practices were ways of subordinating women. Both Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule opposed child marriage, encouraged education for children and supported the right of widows to remarry. Although, their humanist approach and strategy was rejected particularly by high-caste Hindus in India during colonial period, but later on, during post colonial and post independent period of India, their dream has come into being true.This

is one of the greatest achievements for the subaltern people in the country. Their approach and strategy to empower the subaltern people is also reflected in their historiography.

In fact, their radical ideology and lifelong struggle for social reforms is reflected in their literary works and historiography. Both the couple were not only social activists and social reformers, but also they were the most active revolutionary thinkers and proliferate writers who had a rational humanist ideology which drew one of the greatest social movements in India through their writings and speeches.In a true sense, they advocated for "Insiders' Historiography" as such. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule wrote extensively on a wide variety of social issues as discussed below. Similarly, besides being an active social worker and social reformer, Savitribai was also a poet and wrote several works, including Kavya Phule (1854), which highlighted social issues and advocated for education as a means of empowerment.

Jyotirao Phule's clear-cut ideology is reflected in his Tritiya Ratna (The Third Eye, 1855).This play focuses on women's education and challenges orthodox age old customs,emphasizing the importance of educating women in society. Along with Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai was not only against the age-old custom of child marriage, caste discrimination, and the practice of Sati, but also was critical to blind beliefs, rituals and orthodox Hindu religion. She worked tirelessly to promote widow remarriage and fought against the ostracization of widows from society. In this regard, Mahatma Phule wrote on Vidhawa Vivah O Stree Shikshya Samadhi Lekh (Writings on Widow Marriage and Womens Education). Savitribai Phule also published Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar in 1892, and also a poem entitled "Go, Get Education" in which she encouraged those who are oppressed to free themselves by obtaining an education(Chakrabarty, Bidyut 2024:520).

Moreover, in terms of feminist movement, the couple Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule embodied intersectional subaltern feminism well before the term was coined – as they recognized the different ways in which oppression intersect in society and thus they strove hard for the upliftment of all the subaltern people including women and opened their schools to girls of all castes and religions with different socioeconomic background. For this noble cause, they are revered by the common masses in India as "Mahatma", but unfortunately, during their life time, they were ostracized for their social works, and often targeted by the upper caste elements who felt threatened by their social works. Even then, they did not give up their mission of social reforms. Actually, they drew a life long movement not only against the age old caste system but also against the patriarchal Hindu society. Actually, they worked hard for the rights and empowerment of the subaltern people including peasant, labourers, workers, Dalits and women who had been subjugated, oppressed and exploited in the patriarchal Hindu society. Throughout the time span of their mission of social reforms, Savitribai not only helped her husband Jyotiba Phule, but also played a key role as a true "insider subaltern feminist" in Indian society. Savitribai also took initiatives in establishing the "Mahila Seva Mandal" in 1851 to promote women's rights and empowerment (Chakrabarty, Bidyut 2024:523). Here Savitribai called for a gathering place for women that was free of caste discrimination or differentiation of any kind. She was also an anti-infanticide activist. In 1853, she and her husband opened a women's shelter called the Home for the Prevention of Infanticide"Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha". In 1863, out of pity for the orphans, the Phule couple also established an orphanage, possibly the first such institution founded by a Hindu couple of lower caste, as they are born and brought up in the Mali caste.This institution acted as a safe space where pregnant widows could give birth and stay to take care of their babies and where especially the Brahmin widows could safely deliver their children and leave them there to be adopted if they so desired. In fact, they gave protection to pregnant widows and assured them that the orphanage would take care of their unfortunate children. It was in this

orphanage that a Brahmin widow gave birth to a boy named as Yashwant in 1873 and after a few years, the couple adopted and took care of him as their own son. When grew up, Yashwant was ready for marriage, but it was difficult to find a suitable partner for him because he was born to a deserted widow. Hence, Savitribai managed to arrange his marriage to the daughter of Dynoba Sasane, a worker in her organization, in February 1889 (For detail See; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Savitribai_Phule).

Thus, Savitribai struggled hard not only for freedom, rights, equality and social justice of the subaltern people, but also she pioneered in service for sound education and health of people. Savitribai and her adopted son Yashwant, opened a clinic to treat those affected by the worldwide Third Pandemic of the bubonic plague when it appeared in the area around Nalasopara in 1897, during this period, she selflessly cared for the sick, ultimately succumbing to the disease herself. The clinic was established on the southern outskirts of Pune, in an area free of infection. But she succumbed to death here. Actually, Savitribai died a heroic death trying to save the son of Pandurang Babaji Gaekwad who had been contracted by the plague in the Mahar settlement outside of Mundhwa. First of all, Savitribai Phule rushed to his side and carried him on her back to the hospital. In the process, Savitribai Phule caught the plague and died at 9:00 pm on 10 March 1897. In this way, her dedication to social service exemplified her commitment to social reform in India (For detail See; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Savitribai_Phule; https://www.britannica.com › biography › Savitribai-Phule).

Despite often being viewed through the lens of her association with Jyotirao Phule, some scholars have noted that she developed an independent perspective shaped by her lived experiences as a lower-caste woman - a subaltern feminist (Chakrabarty, Bidyut 2024:500). According to political scientist Bidyut Chakrabarty, she envisioned an India free from gender and caste oppression, and considered "education" as one of the most powerful tools to awaken self-respect among the oppressed and challenge the Brahmanical dominance and hegemony in the Hindu society (Chakrabarty, Bidyut 2024:518). Her 1854 poetry collection "Kavya Phule" reflects her thoughts on social emancipation, particularly concerning the upliftment of Shudras and women. Chakrabarty argued that Savitribai Phule was the sole female reformer of 19th-century India in order to explore the interplay of patriarchy with caste(Chakrabarty, Bidyut 2024:515-516). While a biographer Dhananjay Keer(1960), in his work on Jotirao Phule, expressed regret over the inadequate recognition given to Savitribai's contributions. He highlighted that her decision to leave the security of her in-laws' home, endure hardships alongside her husband Jotirao Phule was a perfect decision. Ultimately, she became the first native female teacher in India. Keer remarked, "There is hardly any parallel example in the nineteenth century that can be compared to Savitribai's noble life devoted to the cause of the uplift of the Indian woman" (Keer, Dhananjay (1960:299). Her contribution to social reform in 19$^{th}$ century India and especially to education and empowerment of women in India has been highlighted by a number of social scientists,for instance See:Zelliot, Eleanor (2002),Rao, Parimala V. (2002),Thom Wolf and Susan Andrade. (2008),Sundararaman, T (2009),Rege, Sharmila (2009), Paik, Shailaja (2014), Desai, M. and. (2017), Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi; Gadre, S. (2018), Sperandio, Jill (2018).

However, no doubt, she was successful in her struggle for women's freedom from the age old social shackle and for empowerment through education and critical awareness, not only because of her husband Mahatma Jyotirao Phule's cooperation but also because of her own commitment and dedication to social reforms in India especially for the subaltern people who strongly supported her. In fact, her association with her husband Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was a life-long moral support to each other

for their struggle against all kinds of evils and challenges in society in order to bring about radical social reforms for the upliftment and empowerment of the subaltern people in India.

Where as Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was an active social activist and champion of equality for all people, including peasants, poor laborers and women. In those days, during his 63 years of his life, there was a conflict between the rationalist and the orthodox. His period can, therefore, be a aptly described as the dawn of revolution in the history not only of Maharashtra but of the country as a whole in the various fields like Education, Caste Systems, Agriculture, Economics, Women and Widow Upliftment, Human Rights, Untouchability, and Social Equality. He struggled hard in order to bring about radical reforms in the traditional Hindu society. For instance, in the field of education, Phule's reforms were underpinned by a scathing critique of the traditional Brahmanical education system, which he saw as a tool of oppression rather than enlightenment. He argued that traditional education, focused heavily on Sanskrit texts and religious rituals, served primarily to perpetuate the rigid social hierarchies - a systemically made unjust social order in order to reinforce the dominance of the Brahmins on the whole Hindu society. It did not foster critical thinking or promote the welfare of all sections of society. Therefore, he concentrated first on universal basic and primary education for all irrespective of caste, class and creed. In order to make education truly accessible to the subaltern masses, Phule vehemently advocated for instruction in local vernacular languages (like Marathi). He emphasized for a curriculum that included practical skills, scientific temper, and critical inquiry. He believed that real progress lay in the application of reason, scientific temper and sympathetic understanding, not in the blind adherence to ancient scriptures or superstitions. He had a very practical and secular humanist approach to education which was designed by him in order to empower the subaltern people with the knowledge and skills as needed to navigate and transform their material conditions, rather than simply accepting their pre-ordained fate. In fact, his educational reforms had a profound and multifaceted impact, resonating through both the immediate context of 19th-century India and the broader trajectory of its social reform movements during later period. His work laid foundational stones that continue to influence contemporary discourse on education and social justice in India.

In fact, Phule was the pioneer of revolutionary social thinker in India. He was a strong critic of the Hindu Caste system by which people are differentiated and ranked according to the social group or category into which they are born. He revolted against the domination of the Brahmins and struggled hard for the rights of peasants and all other lower and weaker sections of people (including women) in the age old patriarchal caste system of Hindu society. He was aware that religious bigotry and aggressive nationalism which dismantled or destroyed the unity of people in the country. Jyotirao Phule also refused to regard the Vedas as sacrosanct. He opposed idolatry and denounced the system of Chaturvarnya. In his book Sarvajanik Satya Dharma (Universal True Religion) published in 1889-1891, his views on religious and social issues are given in the form of a dialogue. He viewed that both men and women were entitled to enjoy equal rights and it was a sin to discriminate between human beings on the basis of sex, caste and creed. He stressed the unity of man and envisaged a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. He also expressed his ideology of liberalism in his poem Ishara (October,1885)-A prophetic poem that outlines Phule's vision for a just and equal society, it is included in various scholarly compilations of his works. For instance see his Akhandaadee Kaavyarachna (1855-1890)- Collected Poems and Poetry.

As a true “insider subaltern leader”, he was also critical to the nationalist elite and traditional leaders in the country. One of the many examples of the social reforms that his Satya Shodhak organization introduced was the Satyashodak marriage system, which consisted of alternative marriage rituals and

lines which were more progressive and egalitarian in nature. In a true sense of Subaltern perspective, Jyotirao Phule, as an "insider", attacked the orthodox Brahmins and other upper castes and termed them as "hypocrites". He campaigned against the authoritarianism of the upper caste people and urged the the subaltern "peasants" and "proletariat" to defy the restrictions imposed upon them. He opened his home to people from all castes and backgrounds. In 1868, Jyotirao decided to construct a common bathing tank outside his house and he opened his personal water well to all and invited people from all social classes into his home. He also wished all to dine with everyone, regardless of their differential social background. This was his "secular and liberal humanitarian approach" to exhibit his embracing attitude towards all human beings irrespective of caste, class and creed.

In a context of the Subaltern Studies, Mahatma Phule undertook a systematic "deconstruction" of existing dominate ideologies based on blind beliefs and rituals in the history in order to reconstruct a knowledge system based on freedom, equality and fraternity. Jyotirao vehemently condemned the Vedas, the ancient holy scriptures of the Hindus. He traced the history of Brahmanism through several other ancient texts and held the Brahmins as responsible for framing the exploitative and inhuman laws in order to maintain their social superiority and hegemony by suppressing the lower categories of people especially the "Shudras" or "Atishudras" in the periphery of traditional "Chatur-Varna" (four-fold hierarchical caste) system of Indian society. He viewed that it was the dominant Brahmans who intelligently and craft-fully stitched various vicious network of religious ideologies in order to justify and validate their hegemony through this caste system. Therefore, he wrote on "Brahmanache Kasab (Craftmanship of Brahmans) in 1869 which was very critical to Brahmanism. He also wrote on Powada: Vidyakhatyatil Brahman Pantoji in June 1869. He revolted against the discrimination of lower castes in the age old caste system, including the Shudras (artisans and labourers) and the groups called as the Scheduled Castes or Dalits and as a result, he led a movement for a new egalitarian social order where no one would be subordinate to the traditionally higher-caste Brhmins. He was the first leader to coin the term "Dalit" for the oppressed castes considered as untouchables by the Brahmins and laid the foundation for anti-caste movements in India.He explained the plight of the "untouchables" in his writings on Asprusyanchi Kaifiyat (Explanation of Untouchables). Later on, his movement was extended and transformed into "Non-Brahmin" movement in Maharashtra. While referring to this movement, a kind of dialectics between Brahminical and Non--Brahminical or Un-Brahminical ideologies was highlighted by a number of social scientists in India, as discussed in the next section (For instance See: Gail Omvedt 1976/2011 and Dahiwale S.M 2026).

The orthodox Brahmins were envious and furious at the activities of Jyotirao Phule. They blamed him for vitiating the norms and regulations of the Hindu society. Many accused him of acting on behalf of the Christian Missionaries. But Jyotirao was committed firm on his vision-mission and decided to continue his lifelong movements. Interestingly, Jyotirao Phule was supported by some Brahmin friends who extended their support to make his movement successful. Although Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was a staunch critique of orthodox Hindu religion and age-old shackle of caste system, but he had a passionate respect for the "sworajya" mission of greatest Hindu King Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja which he expressed in his Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharajache Povada (June 1869), Ballad of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (Life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, in Poetical Metre) and Shivaji Maharajaworil Lekh aani Bhashane (Writings and Speeches on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj). Actually, his "insider subaltern approach" to development heavily inspired a number of later social reformers like Chhatrapati Sahu Maharaj, Dr. Babasaheb Amedkar and attracted a large sections of the subaltern masses including peasants, labourers and women to directly or indirectly support his movements.

Even during his life time, Mahtma Phule often welcomed his followers to support his vission, mission and strategies of empowerment and development of the subaltern people. The most noteworthy is that on 24th September, 1873, Jyotirao convened a meeting of his followers and admirers and it was decided to form the "Satya Shodhak Samaj" (Society of Seekers of Truth) with Jyotirao as its first president and treasurer. Every member had to take a pledge of loyalty to the British Empire for its support to them. In this respect, he was a kind of pro-British and pro-colonial social reformer in India. This society was established with the foundational principles being that "all human beings are equal". Thus, its membership was open to all regardless of their background, and the society set out with various social reform movements, with the main aim being the upliftment of those most backward in society and spreading rational thinking among people in the whole society.Even some Jews were admitted as members. In 1876 there were 316 members of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'. All the members of the Satya Shodhak Samaj were expected to treat all human beings as children of God and worship the Creator without the help of any mediator.The main objectives of the organization were :1) to decontaminate the society from caste discrimination; 2) to liberate the oppressed lower-caste people especially the Shudras and Ati Shudras from the stigmas inflicted by the age old caste system; and 3) to prevent their exploitation by the Brahmins.In fact, the ideology of this organization is explicitly expressed in his Satyashodhak Samaajache Niyam (Principles of Satyashodhak Samaj) and Satya-Shodhak Samajache Nivedan (1873) (Memorandum of Satyashodhak Samaj). He also wrote on its all rules of rituals - Satyashodhak Samajokt Mangalashtakasah Sarva Puja-Vidhi in 1887.

In fact, Jyotirao Phule, as an "insider subaltern historiographer", was a prolific writer, committed social worker and a dynamic social reformer. His writings often addressed the social injustices faced by marginalized communities, particularly women and lower castes. His advocacy for education and social equality laid the groundwork for future movements in India. His works are included in various anthologies for scholars and general readers. Besides many other issues, his works include significant critiques of the caste system and advocacy for women's education. He published about 16 books in his lifetime. These books and writings not only reflect Mahatma Jyotirao Phule's thoughts and philosophies but also serve as crucial historical documents that highlight the subaltern peoples' struggles against caste discrimination and the fight for women's rights in India.

In this way, Jyotirao Phule was one of the greatest critical thinkers and writers among all subaltern historiographers, who articulated the real life of the oppressed, suppressed and exploited subaltern people against the stronghold and dominance of the Brahmin community.After tracing the history of the Brahmin domination in India, Jyotirao examined the motives and objects of cruel and inhuman laws as framed by the Brahmins. His famous book Gulamgiri (1873/1991) as about caste-based system of slavery was dedicated to the African American movement in the US against slavery.This book was written in the form of a dialogue. This book is a powerful critique of caste-based oppression, comparing the plight of lower castes in India to that of African slaves in America. It is one of Phule's most important works. This controversial book on Slavery was published in June 1873. Jyotirao included a manifesto into this book which declared that he was willing to dine with all regardless of their caste, creed or country of origin. It is significant that several newspapers refused to give publicity to the manifesto because of its critical and controversial contents. Because his book on Slavery was severely criticized for its "venomous propaganda" against the Brahmins. Jyotirao dedicated this book to the good people of the Unites States as a token of admiration for their sublime, disinterested and self-sacrificing devotion in the cause of Negro Slavery. Besides, being as an "Insider Subaltern Historiographer", he wrote on Shetkaryaca Asud (Cultivator's Whipcord) in 1881, in which Phule addressed the exploitation of farmers by landlords and moneylenders, highlighting agrarian

distress and social injustice. He also delivered his influential lectures on Shetkari, Mazdoor ani Bahujanache Hakka Vishai Bhashane (Speeches on the Rights of Peasants, Labourers and other Backward People).

Mahatma Phule had multidimensional personality. Apart from being a prolific writer, committed social activist and dynamic social reformer, Phule was also a committed businessman, a merchant, a cultivator and a contractor as well as a municipality council member in Poona, as blessed with multi-dimensional charismatic personality. Jyotirao Phule had a direct experience of working with the officials of the Public Works Department which was notorious as well as a hotbed of corruption. Jyotirao Phule also worked for anti-corruption drive against the virus which was widely pervasive in the government offices then. Except the British officers holding very high positions in the Department, the clerks and other officers were invariably Brahmins and they exploited the illiterate workers. Jyotirao felt it necessary to explain to the workers how they were duped by the Brahmin officials. In one of the ballads composed by him, he described vividly the fraudulent practices resorted to by the Brahmin officials in the Public Works Department (printed at the end of 'Slavery'). As a farmer and cultivator of floriculture, he owned 60 acres (24 hactres) of farmland at Manjri, near Poona. Besides, Phule was also engaged in social work alongside his profession – a merchant who supplied metal-casting gear to construction sites for the construction of a huge barrage at Khadakvasala near Poona (Pune). For some time, he worked as a contractor for the government and supplied building materials required for the construction of a dam on the Mula-Mutha river near Pune in the 1870s. He also received contracts to provide labour for the construction of the Katraj Tunnel and the Yerawda Jail near Pune. Additionally, Phule was appointed as a municipal council member as associated to the then Poona municipality in 1876 and served for seven years in this unelected position until 1883. He tried to help the people in the famine stricken areas of Maharashtra when a severe famine in 1877 forced people in the rural area to leave their villages. Some of them had to leave their children behind and an appeal issued on 17 May 1877 by Jyotirao indicates that the Victoria Orphanage was founded under the auspices of the Satya Shodhak Samaj to look after these unfortunate children. From the beginning, in the year 1879, Krishnarao Bhalekar, one of his colleagues, edited a weekly called Deenbandhu which was the organ of the Satya Shodhak Samaj. The weekly articulated the grievances of the peasants and workers. Deenbandhu defended Jyotirao when Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, a powerful spokesman of the conservative nationalists, attacked Jyotirao's writing in the most vitriolic style. Narayan Meghaji Lokhande was another prominent colleague of Jyotirao Phule. Lokhande is acclaimed as the Father of Trade Union Movement in India. From 1880 onwards, he took over the management of Deenbandhu which was published from Bombay. Along with Lokhande, Jyotirao also addressed the meetings of the textile workers in Bombay. It is significant that before Jyotirao and his colleagues Bhalekar and Lokhande tried to organise the peasants and the workers, no such attempt was made by any organisation to redress their grievances (See:https://mahatmaphule.net).

As a subaltern leader, Jyotirao Phule was also critical to a number of high level nationally recognized organizations and associations in India. One of the charges levelled by Jyotirao against the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj, the Sarvajanik Sabha and the Indian National Congress was that despite their programmes, in reality, they did very little to improve the lot of the masses. He felt that these organizations were dominated by the Brahmins and were not truly representative in nature. In his booklet called Satsara (The essence of Truth) Part-1 and Part-2 published in June, 1885, he criticised the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj. Addressing their leaders he declared, “We do not need to help of your organizations. Do not worry about us”. In his book, Sarvajanik Satya

Dharma Pustak Universal True Religion (April 1989/ 1991), a posthumous publication, he observed that the peasants and the untouchables were not members of either the Sarvajanik Sabha or the Indian National Congress. He warned that the persistent demand made by these organisations for Indianization of the administrative services, if accepted, would lead to Brahminisation of the services in India. He thought that it was difficult to create a sense of nationality so long as the restrictions on dining and marrying outside the caste continued to be observed by people belonging to different castes. Education of the masses would promote the process of nation building (See:https://mahatma-phule.net).

It should be remembered that just Jyotirao did not mince words when he criticized the leaders of the reformist movement, he was equally fearless in criticizing the decisions of the alien rulers which did not contribute to the welfare of the masses. For instance, when the Government wanted to grant more licenses for liquor-shops, Jyotirao condemned this move, as he believed that addiction to liquor would ruin many poor families. On 30th November, 1880, the President of the Poona Municipality requested the members to approve his proposal of spending one thousand rupees on the occasion of the visit of Lord Lytton, the Governor-General of India. The officials wanted to present him an address during his visit to Poona. Lytton had passed an Act, which resulted in gagging the press, and Deenbandhu, the organ of the Satya Shodhak Samaj, had protested against the restrictions on the right to freedom of the press. Jyotirao did not like the idea of spending the money of the taxpayers in honoring a guest like Lytton. He boldly suggested that the amount could be very well used for spending on the education of the poor people in Poona. He was the only member out of all the thirty-two nominated members of the Poona Municipality who voted against the official resolution (See:https://mahatmaphule.net).

Besides, when Jotirao was a part of the Poona (Pune) municipal council for many years, he stood in front of the Hunter Commission for Education in 1882 and demanded universal compulsory primary education for all and incentives for those who came from socioeconomically backward backgrounds. Jotirao Phule also fought for women's rights. Believing that education as essential means to bringing about social change, he established schools for girls and for children of lower castes, as discussed above in detail. He was a believer in gender equality and he exemplified his beliefs by involving his wife Savitribai Phule in all his social reform activities.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was basically an insider original subaltern leader. Not only he was born and brought up in a lower caste (Shudra Varna) of the Hindu society but also he had intimate relationship with the subaltern people including poor peasants and workers. As an "insider subaltern leader", Jyotirao Phule had a stormy struggling life in his own society and outside also. One of the incidents which revealed his close emotional attachment for the poor peasants and his courage in drawing the attention of a member of the British royal family to the sufferings of the peasants in rural area. One day, on 2nd March, 1888, Hari Raoji Chiplunkar, a friend of Jyotirao, arranged a function in honour of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught. Dressed like a peasant, Jyotirao attended the function and made a speech. He commented on the rich invitees who displayed their wealth by wearing diamond-studded jewellery and warned the visiting dignitaries that the people who had gathered there did not represent India. If the Duke of Connaught was really interested in finding out the condition of the Indian subjects of Her Majesty the Queen of England, Jyotirao suggested that he ought to visit some nearby villages as well as the areas in the city occupied by the untouchables. He requested the Duke of Connaught who was a grandson of Queen Victoria to convey his message to her and made a strong plea to provide education to the poor people in the country. In fact, Jyotirao's this speech created quite a stir. Being associated with peasants and labourers, throughout his life, Jyotirao Phule fought

for the emancipation of the downtrodden people in the country and the struggle, which he launched at a young age, ended only when he died on 28th November, 1890(See: Wikipedia). By the end of his life, the great people of Maharashtra realized the greatness of Jyotirao Phule and the title of Mahatma (Great Soul) in Sanskrit, was bestowed upon Phule, on 11 May 1888 by another social reformer from Bombay namely Vithalrao Krishnaji Vandekar. In the same year, he had a stroke that rendered him paralyzed. He died in Pune on 28th November 1890 at the age of 63. Although his dead body disappeared soon, but his soul of multidimensional personality consisting of his lifetime vision, mission, ideology and works for the subaltern people, has heavily inspired some great subaltern leaders of India and has remained deeply internalized in mindset of the subaltern people in the country for ever.

## 5 Phule's influence on the subaltern movement in India

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule occupied a unique position among the social reformers of Maharashtra and India in the nineteenth century. While other reformers concentrated more on reforming the social institutions of family and marriage with special emphasis on the status and rights of women, he revolted against the unjust caste system under which million of people had suffered for centuries. In particular, he courageously upheld the cause of the untouchables and took up the cudgels for the poorer peasants. He was a kind of militant advocate of their rights. The story of his stormy life is an inspiring saga of a continuous struggle, which he waged relentlessly against various forces of reaction and criticism. What was remarkable was his ability to stand up against all kinds of odds, pressure and challenges without faltering even once and he worked tirelessly always according to his self-made convictions and commitments. Perhaps the biggest legacy of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is the radical thought behind his perpetual fight against social stigma of social discrimination especially the discrimination inflicted by the age-old caste system. In the nineteenth century, people were used to accepting these caste discriminatory practices as social norm that needed to be enforced without question but Jyotiba challeged it and sought to change this discrimination based on caste, class, gender and colour. He started awareness campaigns that ultimately inspired not only the subaltern masses but also many successive subaltern political leaders, social reformers and social workers including Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Mahatma M.K. Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar - the stalwarts who undertook major initiatives against socioeconomic inequalities, caste discrimination and nation building in the country during later periods.

Among innumerable people in the country, Jyotirao Phule's ideology and movement highly influenced Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur princely state, who was considered as a true democrat and social reformer in the history of Maharashtra and India. Being deeply influenced by the contributions of social reformer Jyotiba Phule, Shahu Maharaj worked tirelessly for the development of the lower caste people in his princely state Kolhapur. Primary education to all regardless of caste, class and creed was one of his most significant priorities. As a result, among innumerable subaltern people and a few subaltern leaders in Maharashtra, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was greatly helped and influenced by Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. Then, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule's ideology and movement was taken up by Dr. Babasaheb Ramji Ambedkar who considered Mahatma Jyotirao Phule as his "Guru", out of main three teachers in his life time. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has truly maintained a subaltern approach through his lifelong works and considered it as an alternative approach to study on empowerment and development of the marginalized subaltern people in the country. Throughout his life, he has struggled hard and as an "insider subaltern leader", he has not only led a number of movements of subaltern people, but also he has implemented Phule's subaltern approach while drafting a dynamic Constitution of Independent India where he has provided many constitutional safeguards and

promotional measures for the empowerment and development of all the subaltern people including women in the whole country. Therefore, he is popularly considered as "messiah of subaltern people' in Independent India (Nayak, K.B. 2020:222-232; 2021:165-174).

In fact, Jyotirao Phule was the harbinger of unheard ideas for social reforms. He was a pioneer social reformer in many fields and among his contemporaries he stands out as one who never wavered in his quest for truth and justice. Though he was often accused of fomenting hatred between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins, very rarely an attempt was made to consider his scathing criticism in a broad perspective. The later generations also took considerable time to understand and appreciate the profound significance of his unflinching espousal of the "rights of human-beings" which remained till the end of his life as a major theme of his writings and strategy of his vision, mission and actions for the subaltern people in India (See:https://mahatmaphule.net). However, some social scientists in India have later realized and attempted to highlight Mahatma Phule's social revolution for the noble cause of espousing human rights approach to development in the country. For instance, See: Dhananjay Keer (1960,1974/1997), Gail Omvedt (1976, 1994, 2011), Pathan, Y. M. (ed) (1977),O'Hanlon, Rosalind (1985),Joshi, T. L. (1996), Bakshi, S.R. and Lipi Mahajan (2000), Bakshi, S.R. and Lipi Mahajan (2000), Gupta N.L. (2002), Deshpande, G. P. (2002), Mani, Braj Mani(2005), Marwaha,Navjoti.(2010), Desai, M. and. (2017),S.M. Dahiwale (2026).

According to Gail Omvedt (1976:1-14;285-303, 2011:1-10), the colonial period of India witnessed important social movements among which the strongest was non-Brahman movement in Maharashtra. Its founder was a remarkable intellectual and social activist - Jotirao Phule (1827-90). His writings laid the foundations of the movement, and the Satyashodhak Samaj (Truthseekers Society') which he founded in 1873, became its primary radical organization, lasting until the 1930s. His follower - Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, the Maratha Maharaja (king) of Kolhapur provincial princely state in Maharashtra state, who turned against Brahmans because they considered him as a Shudra (lower caste), and became radicalized from this, was a major patron. The heyday of the movement took place between 1910 and 1930, when the Satyashodhak Samaj carried the message of anti-caste ideology and anti-Brahmanism throughout Maharashtra. Consequently, one of its offshoots was a strong peasant movement in the country. In the 1920s, a political party emerged, as did Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Dalit movement, which drew sustenance also from support of the non-Brahmans and patrons such as Shahu Maharaj. While some young radicals such as Keshavrao Jedhe and Dinkarrao Javalkar challenged the Brahmans' cultural dominance in Pune and intervened in the Brahman-dominated Communist movement in Mumbai. By the 1930s, however, the movement died away as the majority of its activists joined Congress. It has left a strong heritage, but the failure to really link nationalism with a strong anti-caste movement has left a heritage of continued and often unadmitted dominance of caste in Indian society even today.

According to D.N. Dhanagare (2014:288), ' Gail Omvedt has argued that articulations of identity in the Bahujan Samaj movement, led by the Maratha and other Non-Brhmin castes in Maharashtra, were not only a form of protest against the exploitation of peasantry in the rural economy, but also a form of cultural revolt against the upper caste Brahmin landowners throughout the colonial period, especially during the phase of nationalist movement (Gail Omvedt 1976:1-14; 285-303). Omvedt has used this argument subsequently as a device to understand and explain the contemporary Dalit movements or anti-caste struggles in India. She has also painted some of the new social movements (farmers', women's, ecological and Dalit Movements) as the rise of alternative politics for reinventing revolution (Gail Omvedt 1993:257-319). Though the Dalit movement has been inspired mainly by Ambedkar's thought and ideological articulation, some of the Dalit struggles have also been the

outcome of agrarian distress being enmeshed with class struggles in different regions of India which she has termed them as "unfinished revolution" (Gail Omvedt (1994: 336-341)'. Then after, M.S. Gore (1989:18-78) has discussed the ideology, leadership and the nature of protests during the two phases of the Non-Brahmin movement : first-from the beginning of Mahatma Phule's Satyashodhak movement till 1880s (by the end of his lifetime); and second - the "Bramanetar" (i.e. Non-Brahmin phase in which the princely ruler of Kolhapur provincial state namely - Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj who took over the leadership of the movement. During the second stage of the Non-Brahmin movement, the dominant Maratha caste, while joining hands with the Non-Maratha middle castes of peasants, artisans and workers, turned the Satyashodhak Samaj into an anti-Brahman movement (Dhanagare 2014:289).

Very recently, while addressing the complex social fabric of Indian society, S.M. Dahiwale (2026) in a book on "Dialectics of Brahmanism and Un-Brahmanism - Historical Probings', explores history of social movements in India, marked by enduring conflicts between Brahmanic and Un-Brahmanic forces that have shaped its ideological and philosophical traditions. According to him, Brahmanism emphasised divine worship, purity, and hierarchy, while Un-Brahmanic traditions, including Shramanic systems like Jainism and Buddhism, championed humanitarian values, equality, and rationality, challenging the dominance of Brahmanic ideologies. He states that there has been a kind of dialectics between the two ideologies. While exploring the evolution of social reform movements in India, from those under the leadership of Bhakti saints to revolutionary figures like Jotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja, E.V. Ramasamy Periyar, Narayan Guru, and B.R. Ambedkar, Dahiwale examines how certain roles and perspectives, such as those challenging Brahmanic forces, contributed to resisting caste hierarchies, Brahmanical patriarchy, and oppressive traditions through education, legislation, and activism. He also highlights their contributions to civil rights, gender equality, and the establishment of democratic and secular values in modern India.

However, in the 1920s, the Non-Bramin movement and anti-Brahmin Dalit movement had taken higher speed and deeper impact in society with the leadership of Babasaheb Ambedkar and patronized support of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, among others. Although, during the 1930s, the anti-caste and anti-Bramin movement had been slowed down mainly because of nationalist movement against the British rule, but after Independence of India, during early 1950s, under the leadership of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar, the revolutionary ideology and reform movement of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule could be well popularized and strongly supported by the whole subaltern people in the country. Then after, the "Phule-Shahu-Ambedkarian" ideology has been continuously applied by the subaltern people especially by the Dalit people not only in Maharashtra but also in other regions of the country in order to protest against any form of inequality and injustice whenever found inflicted upon them. This subaltern ideology has not only deeply influenced a large number of research scholars and teachers in various subjects or disciplines but also it has guided innumerable students in the field of academics.

In the academic field of social sciences, especially in Sociology, although, along with David Hardiman, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has been considered as a Subaltern Theorist whose names have been incorporated, as advocating for the subaltern perspective, in the Post-Graduation syllabus of Indian Sociology throughout higher educational institutions of India, but Jyotiba Phule and Shahu Maharaj among others have not been included in the syllabus as such. In fact, in terms of their approach to social movements in India, there is a kind of ideological and practical asymmetry of subaltern approach among these three social reformers (Jyotiba Phule, Shahu Maharaj and Dr.B.R. Ambedkar) of Maharashtra (popularly well known as "Phule-Shahu-Ambedkarian" approach and movement among the

subaltern people throughout country) which has been working since independence of India as a driving force of subaltern movements not only in Maharashtra state but also in all other states of India. Most prominently, in the history of colonial India, these three social reformers were truly "insider leaders of subalterns" who not only fought against social evils in Indian society but also they have brought about radical as well as liberal social reforms for the empowerment and development of subaltern people in the whole country. Therefore, they deserve to be recognized and honored as the initial "insider" protagonists or forerunners of the subaltern approach and the subaltern movement in India. Among these three "insider" subaltern social reformers, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, because of his lifelong struggle along with his wife Savitribai Phule for the "subaltern people", deserves to be revered as the forerunner not only of subaltern movement but also of subaltern approach in India. (For detail See: Phule, Jotirao.1991. Collected Works of Mahatma Jotirao Phule. Mumbai: Government of Maharashtra; See also :https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Jyotirao_Phule; and https://www.britannica.com › biography › Jyotirao-Phule).Today, their "insider subaltern movement and historiography" and also their "insider subaltern feminist" approach is considered by general public of India as a beckoning light for "all-round" development of the subaltern people in the whole country.

## 6 Concluding remarks

No doubt, as a branch of post-colonial theory, the Subaltern Studies Group has unraveled the inherent forms of inequality, injustice, oppression and exploitation of common people, especially the subaltern people in the history of India and South Asia. Despite its groundbreaking contributions in the academic fields, the School of Subaltern Studies has faced several criticisms. In fact, there have been several criticisms made against scholars within the Subaltern Studies Group, from their failure, to adequately give agency to the oppressed, to the group's digression from its founding tenets. One more critical observation is that majority of the original or initial scholars of the Subaltern Studies Group who have significantly contributed to the literature of the subaltern studies while writings in favour of or from the view points of the subalterns, are not "insiders" as such, in terms of their social background. While on the other side, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule, as well as their true followers like Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who were not only "insider subalterns" who had struggled hard throughout their life to fight against social evils in Indian society but also through social movements, they have brought about social reforms for the empowerment and development of subaltern people in the country. In this paper, the author argues that Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule were revolutionary thinkers, social reformers, social activists and prolific writers who not only intensively and extensively wrote on "insider subaltern historiography" but also while taking "humanist" and "feminist" stand points, they drew and led a number of social reform movements for the empowerment and development of subaltern people including women in the country. Therefore, they are popularly revered as the original social thinkers of the "insider subaltern historiography" and "insider subaltern feminist approach" in India.

Note: This research paper is based on a review of available literature and google search documents.

## References

[1] Amin, Shahid, and Dipesh Chakrabarty.1996. (eds.) Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society. Vol. 9. Oxford University Press.

[2] Arnold, David. 2012. "Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India," in *Chaturvedi*, V. (ed) Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial. London: Verso. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/730873/mapping-subaltern-studies-and-the-postcolonial-pdf

[3] Azad, S. 2014. Sea of Poppies and Burnt Shadows in the Light of Subaltern Studies. *Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 1(1), 59-69.

[4] Bakshi, S.R. and Lipi Mahajan (2000). Jyotirao Phooley In Encyclopedic History of Indian Culture and Religion: Vol. 5: Social Reformers. Delhi: Deep and Deep.

[5] Baverly, John. 1999. Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory, Durham:Duke University Press. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/1467152/subalternity-and-representation-arguments-in-cultural-theory-pdf

[6] Bedi, H. P. 2015. Judicial Justice for Special Economic Zone and Land Resistance. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45(4), 1-22. DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2015.1048406

[7] Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi and Zelliot, Eleanor. 2002. Education and the disprivileged : nineteenth and twentieth-century India (First published). Hyderabad: Orient Longman. pp. 35–37. ISBN 9788125021926.

[8] Biswas, A. 2009. Research Note on Subaltern Studies, Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies, 1(2), 200-205.

[9] Chackraborty, Dipesh. 2013. Subaltern Studies in Retrospect and Reminiscence. Economic and Political Weekly, XLVIII (12), pp. 23-27.

[10] Chakrabarty, Bidyut. 2024. Indianizing India : Thinkers Whose Ideas Shaped a Nation (4th ed.). Taylor and Francis. ISBN 9781040111017.

[11] Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 1996 "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' *Pasts?*," in Mongia, P. (ed.) Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader. NewYork/London:Routledge. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/2094470/contemporary-postcolonial-theory-a-reader-pdf

[12] Chakrabarty,Dipesh.2000."Subaltern Studies and Post-Colonial Historiography." *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(1),Pp.9-32.

[13] Chakrabarty, Dipesh.2002. Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies. University of Chicago Press.

[14] Chakrabarty Dipesh and Ghosh, Amitav.2002. "A Correspondence on Provincializing Europe." *Radical History Review* 83.1 (2002): 146-172.

[15] Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2009.Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference, Princeton University Press.

[16] Chandra, U. 2015. Rethinking Subaltern Resistance, Journal of Contemporary Asia, 45(4), 563-573. *DOI-10*. 1080/00472336.2015.1048415

[17] Chatterjee,Partha. 1993. The Nation and Its Fragments - Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories, Princeton University Press.

[18] Chatterjee Partha and Pradeep Jaganathan. 2001. Community, Gender and Violence, Subaltern Studies, Volume-XI,(First Permanent Black Publisher) and (Second Columbia University Press :New York).

[19] Chatterjee, Partha. 2011. Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy. Columbia University Press. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/774913/lineages-of-political-society-studies-in-postcolonial-democracy-pdf

[20] Chattopadhyay, Bankim Chandra.1865. Durgeshnandini (1865), (in Bengali). Calcutta:Seagull Books.

[21] Chaturvedi, Vinayak. (ed.) 2012. Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial. London: Verso Books. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/730873/mapping-subaltern-studies-and-the-postcolonial-pdf

[22] Chibber, V. 2013. Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital. *Verso*. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/731129/postcolonial-theory-and-the-specter-of-capital-pdf

[23] Chowdhury, A. R. 2016. Subaltern Studies in The Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Studies, Sangeeta Roy and Henry Schwarz (Eds).Wiley and Blackwell.

[24] Dahiwale, S.M. 2026. Dialectics of Brahmanism and Un-Brahmanism - Historical Probings, Routledge, July 24, 2026.ISBN 9781032993652.

[25] Desai, M. (2017). "Intersectional Coloniality in 19th Century India: The Sociological Praxis of Savitribai Phule and the Women Activists of Satya Shodhak Samaj(Truth Seeker Society)." The American Sociologist, 53(3), 395-413.

[26] Deshpande, G. *P.2002*. The Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule. Manohar Publishers and Distributers:New Delhi. Left Word Books Publisher andDistributor .

[27] Dharmaraj, M. 2014. Indian Writing in English: Subaltern Literary Concept - Oppression of Untouchables in Rohinton Mistry's a Fine Balance. *International Journal on English Language and Literature*, 2(1), 36-38.

[28] Donna Landry, and Gerald MacLean. 2013.The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayati Chakravorty Spivak. Routledge.

[29] Francese J.2009. Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory, Routledge: Park Square.

[30] Gadre, S.2018. Savitribai Phule: The First Indian Feminist. Notion Press.

[31] Gore, M.S. 1989. Non-Braman Movement in Maharashtra, New Delhi: Segment Publisher and Distributors.

[32] Gramsci, A. 1971. Selections from the Prison Notebooks, (Eds) Quintin Hoare, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, International Publishers.ISBN-071780397X, 9780717803972.

[33] Gramsci, A. 2002.Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks -1929-1935, Transcribed: by Marcus Green in coordination with the International Gramsci Society, 2002. *(See: Gramsci Prison Notebooks: Contents)*.

[34] Green, Marcus. 2002. Gramsci Cannot Speak: Presentations and Interpretations of Gramsci's Concept of the Subaltern, Rethinking Marxism, 14 (3), 1-24.

[35] Guha, R. 1982a. (Ed). Subaltern Studies- I: Writing on South Asian History and Society. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

[36] Guha, R. 1982b. Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India. *New York: Oxford University Press*.

[37] Guha, R. 1999a. Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India. *Duke University Press*.

[38] Guha.Ranjit. 1999b. "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" in *Guha*, R (ed). Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian Society and History,Vol. VII, Oxford University Press.

[39] Gupta N.L. 2002. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule: An Educational Philosopher. New Delhi: Anmol Publications.

[40] Joshi, T. L. 1996.Jyotirao Phule. New Delhi: National Book Trust of India.

[41] Kaviraj, S. 2010. The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas, Columbia University Press. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/775109/the-imaginary-institution-of-india-politics-and-ideas-pdf

[42] Keer, Dhananjay (1960/1974/1997). Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule: Father of the Indian Social Revolution,Popular Prakashan:Bombay.

[43] Knox, Shauna. 2022. The Black Subaltern: An Intimate Witnessing, Routledge. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/3483851/the-black-subaltern-an-intimate-witnessing-pdf

[44] Louai, El. Habib. 2012. Re-tracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and New Applications, African Journal of History and Culture, 4(1), Pp. 4-8.

[45] Ludden, David. 2002. Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical History, Contested Meaning and the Globalisation of South Asia, London: Anthem Press and Orient Blackswan :New Delhi.

[46] Maggio,J.2007. Can the Subaltern Be Heard?: Political Theory, Translation, Representation, and Gayatri Chackravorty Spivak, in Sage Journals, Alternatives- Global, Local, Political, 32(4), 419-443. DOI:10.1177/03043754070320040 3

[47] Mandal, M., and Karan, T.K. 2014. Origin and Historiography of Subaltern Studies from the West to the East. *Langlit*, 1(1), 183-94.

[48] Mandal, T. 2014. Subaltern Voice in Shakespeare: A Study in the Tempest. *International Journal of Computational Research*, 4(5), 63-67.

[49] Mani, Braj Mani(2005).The Debrahmanising of History:Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society. *Manohar Publishers and Distributers:New Delhi*.

[50] Mani, Braj Mani. 2005.The De-brahmanising of History:Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society. Manohar Publishers and Distributers:New Delhi.

[51] Marwaha,Navjoti.2010.Mahatma Jyotiba Phule :An Educational Philosopher The Primary Teacher.Volume XXXV Number 3 And 4.July and October .

[52] Mashori, G.M. and Zaib, S. 2015. Subalterns Can Speak: Shahraz's Message of Hope for Human Equality in "Zemindar'*s Wife"*. ELF Annual Research Journal, 17(1), Pp.183-196 (https://www.researchgate.net› publication).

[53] Mathur, S. 2000. History and Anthropology in South Asia: Rethinking the Archive. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29, Pp.89-106

[54] Mongia, Padmini (Ed).1996. Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader. Routledge.

[55] Morris, R. (ed.) 2010. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Reflections on the History of an Idea. Columbia University Press. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/775134/can-the-subaltern-speak-reflections-on-the-history-of-an-idea-pdf

[56] Morton, S. 2003. Gayatri Chackravorty Spivak. *London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group*.

[57] Nayak.K.B.2020. "Humanism" *of "Human Rights" in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar's Constitutional Subaltern Approach to Tribal Development*, Nayak.K.B. Tribal Development and Underdevelopment in India - Interdisciplinary Alternative Perspectives to Study, APH Publishing Corporation : New Delhi; Pp. 135-178.

[58] Nayak,K.B. 2021. "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar'*s Constitutional and Subaltern Approach to Tribal Development in India"*, in the Journal of Innovation – The Research Concept, an International Journal (ISSN-2456-5474; RNI No-UPBIL/2016/68367), Volume-6; Issue-1;February 2021. Pp-E-165-174.

[59] Nayak,K.B. 2026. "Subaltern Historiography in Subaltern Studies- A Search for Insiders", in International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR), Vol-8 Issue-4, July-August 2026. E-ISSN: 2582-2160. Pp.1-30.

[60] Nielsen, K. 2015. Law and Larai: The (de)Judicialisation of Subaltern Resistance in West Bengal. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45(4), 1-22. DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2015.1040821

[61] Nilsen, A. 2015. Subalterns and the State in the Longue Duree: Notes from The Rebellious Century in the Bhil Heartland, Journal of Contemporary Asia, 45(4), 1-22. *DOI:* 10.1080/00472336.2015.1034159

[62] O'Hanlon, R. (1985). Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India. *Cambridge University Press*.

[63] Omvedt Gail. 1976. Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India (Maharashtra), Scientific Socialist Education Trust : Bombay.

[64] Omvedt, Gail.1977. Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and the Ideology of Social Revolution in India. Economic and Political Weekly, 6(37), September.

[65] Omvedt Gail. 1993. Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India, New York:M.E.Sharpe.

[66] Omvedt Gail. 1994. Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr.B.R. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

[67] Omvedt Gail. 2011. Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India (Maharashtra), Manohar Publications:New Delhi.

[68] Paik, Shailaja.2014. Dalit Women's Education in Modern India: Double Discrimination. Routledge. ISBN 9781317673309.

[69] Parakash, Gyan. 1994."Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism." *The American Historical Review*, 99(5), Pp. 1475-1490.

[70] Pandey, Gyanendra. 2012. "Voices from the Edge," in *Chaturvedi*, V. (ed.) Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial.London: Verso. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/730873/mapping-subaltern-studies-and-the-postcolonial-pdf

[71] Parry, B. 2004. Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique, Routledge. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/1618208/postcolonial-studies-a-materialist-critique-pdf

[72] Pathan, Y. M.(ed)1977.Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and Satya Shodhak Sumaj' In Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization,IIAS: Shimla.

[73] Phule, Jotirao. (n.d.). Satyashodhak Samajaci Prastavana (Preface to the Satyashodhak Society).Government of Maharashtra.(Available in various collected works).

[74] Phule, Jotirao. 1991. Slavery (Gulamgiri) (P.G. Patil, Ed.). Government of Maharashtra. (Original work published 1873).

[75] Phule, Jotirao. 2002. The Collectorate of Jyotirao Phule's Writings (Vol. 1-2). Government of Maharashtra. (Reprint includes Shethkariyancha Asud and Brahmananche Kasab).

[76] Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. (Eds) 1971/1992/1996/2005. Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, Edited, Compiled and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart;International Publishers :New York, ISBN 0-7178-0397-X (1992 Paperback); and Orient Blackswan:New Delhi. ISBN-071780397X, 9780717803972

[77] Rabasa, Jose., Sanjinés, Javier C.1994. Introduction : The Politics of Subaltern Studies, Subaltern Studies in the Americas, Vol. 19, No. 46, Pp. v-xi.

[78] Rao, Parimala V. 2002. "Educating Women – How and How Much: Women in the Context of Tilak's Swaraj". *In Bhattacharya*, Sabyasachi (ed.). Education and the Disprivileged: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century India. Orient Blackswan. ISBN 978-8-12502-192-6.

[79] Rege, Sharmila. 2009. Savitribai Phule Second Memorial Lecture, [2009]. National Council of Educational Research and Training. ISBN 978-8-17450-931-4.

[80] Rodriguez, Ileana and Lopez, M. M. 2001.(Ed.)The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader. Durham,North Carolina: Duke University Press.

[81] Roy, Indrajit. 2015. Sublтern in Crisis: Subaltern Imagination in Contemporary Bihar. Journal of Contemporary Asia, 45(4), Pp.1-20. DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2015.1045378

[82] Said, Edward. *1978/2003*. Orientalism, Reprinted with a new preface, (first published 1978).London: Penguin Books. ISBN 0141187425.

[83] Sarah Harasym.1990.(Ed.).The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues. New York and London: Routledge.

[84] Sarkar, Sumit. 1997. "The Decline of the. Subaltern in Subaltern Studies" in *his Writing Social History*, Delhi, Oxford University Press.

[85] Sarkar, Sumit. 2012. "The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies," in *Chaturvedi*, V. (ed) Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial. London: Verso. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/730873/mapping-subaltern-studies-and-the-postcolonial-pdf

[86] Seal Anil. 2009. The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in Later Nineteenth Century, Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 9780511563409; DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511563409.

[87] Simon, Shibu and Varghese, Sijo C. 2012. Art and Activism in Arundhati Roy: A Critical Study based on Spivak's Theory of Subalternity.New Dehli: Vendham Books.

[88] Smith, Kylie M. 2010. Gramsci at the Margins: Subjectivity and Subalternity in a Theory of Hegemony. International Gramsci Journal, 2,Pp. 39-50.

[89] Somanaboina, Simhadri and Ramagoud, Akhileshwari (2021). The Routledge Handbook of the Other Backward Classes in India: Thought, Movements and Development. *Taylor and Francis*. ISBN 978-1-000-46280-7.

[90] Sperandio, Jill (2018). Pioneering Education for Girls Across the Globe; Advocates and Entrepreneurs, 1742-1910. *Rowman and Littlefield*. ISBN 9781498524889.

[91] Spivak, Gayatri_Chakravorty. 1985a. "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" in *Ranjit Guha (ed)*, Subaltern Studies-IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society,New Delhi: Oxford University Press, Pp.330-363.

[92] Spivak, Gayatri_Chakravorty.1985b. "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow-Sacrifice." *Wedge (Winter-Spring* 1985), 7-8:120-130.

[93] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty.1988a.(ed)."Deconstructing Historiography." *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Pp.3-32.

[94] Spivak Gayatri_Chakravorty. 1988b. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.). Urbane

[95] Spivak, Gayatri_Chakravorty.1996. "Post-Structuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value," in *Mongia*, Padmini. (ed.) Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader. Routledge. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/2094470/contemporary-postcolonial-theory-a-reader-pdf

[96] Spivak, Gayatri_Chakravorty.1999. A Critique of Postcolonial Reason - Towards a History of the Vanishing Present, Harvard University Press.

[97] Spivak, Gayatri_Chakravorty. 2010 a. "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Morris*, Rosalind C. (ed.) (2010) Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea. Columbia University Press.https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/morr14384;Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/775134/can-the-subaltern-speak-reflections-on-the-history-of-an-idea-pdf

[98] Spivak, Gayatri_Chakravorty. 2010 b. "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in Sugata Bhaduri and Simi Malhotra (eds.)Literary Theory: An Introductory Reader, Anthem Press of India,2010. 263-318.

[99] Spivak, Gayatri_Chakravorty. 2012. The New Subaltern: A Silent Interview, in Vinayak Chaturvedi. Ed. Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial. London: Verso. 324-340.

[100] Sundararaman,T.2009. Savitribai Phule First Memorial Lecture, [2008]. National Council of Educational Research and Training. ISBN 978-81-7450-949-9.

[101] Thom Wolf and Susan Andrade. (2008). Savitribai and India's Conversion on Education.Vol.8.Oikos.WorldviewsJournal.

[102] Tibile, R. 2012. Gayatri Chackravorty Spivak: An Indian Literary Theorist. *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 1(4), 1-10.

[103] Whitehead, J. 2015. Gramsci's Reflections on Civil Society, Political Society and the State in South Asia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45(4), Pp.1-17. DOI:10.1080/00472336.2015.1045725

[104] Young, Robert J. C. 2003. Post-colonialism: A Very Short Introduction. New York: Oxford University Press.

[105] Zaib,Sabah.2015. "Subaltern Studies",EWIASVIEWPOINTS,Quality of Life, Number-02 December, 213-223.

[106] Zaib,Sabah.2015. "Subaltern Studies",Research Gate, December, 213-221.

[107] http://web.csulb.edu/~ssayeghc/theory/subalternstudies.htm

[108] https://www.britannica.com › biography › Jyotirao-Phule

[109] https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Jyotirao_Phule

[110] https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Savitribai_Phule

[111] https://www.britannica.com › biography › Savitribai-Phule

[112] https://www.britannica.com › biography › Jyotirao-Phule ; https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Jyotirao_Phule

[113] https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Savitribai_Phule; https://www.britannica.com › biography › Savitribai-Phule