

Education as *Trutiya Ratna*: Towards Phule-Ambedkarite Feminist Pedagogical Practice

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“New times” in the university are marked by narratives that bemoan a “decline in plurality and standards” especially in places where a new generation of scholars and students from historically disadvantaged sections in Indian society is posing challenges to the social homogeneity of the classroom, boards of studies and other academic bodies, leading to obvious frictions on issues related to standards and merit. A new generation of dalit scholarship has raised questions both about the accessibility of higher education and the limitations in making it enabling for those who struggle to gain entry into it. This has enabled an open debate on the absence of transparency in higher education and the nexus of networks of exclusion that operate formally and informally on campuses to reproduce caste inequalities in the metropolitan university.

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O learned pandits wind up the selfish prattle of your hollow wisdom and listen to what I have to say.

–(Mukta Salve, *About the Grief of Mahar and Mangs*, 1855)

Let me ask you something oh Gods!...You are said to be completely impartial. But wasn’t it you who created both men and women?

–(Tarabai Shinde, *A Comparison of Men and Women*, 1882)¹

I begin this paper with words written by Mukta Salve, a 14-year-old, a girl student of the Mang caste in Jotiba and Savitribai Phule’s school, and Tarabai Shinde, a young Maratha woman trained in the Satyashodhak (Society of Truth Seekers) tradition. For these words of fire with which students talked back to the injustice of their times are embedded in writings and practices that addressed the complex relations between culture, knowledge and power and sought not only to include girl students and students from the ex-untouchable castes but also to democratise the very processes of learning and teaching.

This paper in many ways is a collection of “stories”; of our classrooms, relationships between students and teachers and the political frameworks which constitute these stories. Like all narrators, I have selected some and ignored or postponed other stories, interpreted them in one way rather than another. These stories, I imagine, are a dialogue with fellow teachers on addressing caste and gender in the metropolitan classroom. The present set of stories has been put together from regular diary notings made on teaching, discussions with colleagues and students, notes written by students of their experiences – often in moments of disruptions or departure, comments made on formal course evaluation sheets, the comments they half scratch out from these sheets, questions raised in class and those asked hesitantly outside the class, their silences that one rushes past in the business-as-usual mode during peak periods of the semester and gestures that defy narrative expression.

“New times” in the university are marked by narratives that bemoan a “decline in plurality and standards” especially in places where a new generation of scholars and students from historically disadvantaged sections in Indian society are posing challenges to the social homogeneity of the classroom, boards of studies and other academic bodies leading to obvious frictions on issues related to a decline in standards and merit. A new generation of dalit scholarship following the Thorat Committee Report on the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the suicide of Rajani (a dalit girl student who committed suicide because the banks did not find her creditworthy for a student loan) and Senthil Kumar (a dalit PhD student whose fellowship was stopped) has raised questions both about the accessibility of higher education and the limitations in making it enabling for

those who struggle to gain entry into it.² This has enabled an open debate on the absence of transparency in higher education and the nexus of networks of exclusion that operate formally and informally on campuses to reproduce caste inequalities in the metropolitan university.³

While there are at present several efforts at “talking/writing back”,⁴ I would like to mention a few by way of examples – *Insight: Young Voices*, a journal published by students and researchers from Delhi, the work from Hyderabad of young research scholars like Murali Krishna M who employs his autobiography to theorise educational practices, Indira Jalli, Swathy Margaret, Jenny Rowena who bring caste to the centre to interrogate feminist practices in the academy, the film *Nageshwar Rao Star* which starts with reflections on the star/asterisk, the marker of caste identity in the admission list and moves to reflect on and recover new knowledge on the Tsundur massacre, *Out-Caste* an informal, public wall-journal which looks at caste as a category that structures both exclusion and privilege, discussions on caste on campuses on several list-serves like Zest-Caste, and ongoing MPhil and PhD thesis across campuses in India. Closer home, in Pune University, mention may be made of Dilip Chavan’s caste-class critique of the debate on reforming the University Grants Commission’s (UGC) National Entrance Test (NET), the efforts of the Sajag (conscious) students’ research group to reinvent the relationship between social movements and the academia and the “Research Room Diaries” put together by researchers in women’s studies reflecting on their diverse histories of hidden injuries and privileges experienced as students.⁵

These and several other efforts are seeking to challenge disciplinary regimes of caste, opening up new ways of looking at the present of our disciplines and pedagogical practices and suggest that critical teachers should be “listening” rather than bemoaning the loss of better times. I wish to argue that these are “new times” in the university, the suicides and other forms of “routine” pedagogical violence notwithstanding. Men and women from excluded castes and classes are entering higher education for the first time and those for long considered “unteachable” are talking/writing back. This makes it possible to throw back the gaze of the students who have long been “invisible” and “nameless” in the classrooms on to disciplinary and pedagogical practices. These new times interrogate the confidence and certainty of the teacher which comes with acknowledged expertise in an area outlining how expertise may embed us in certain kinds of arguments so that we foreclose other possible ways of looking and listening.⁶ This paper is an exercise that is both restitutive and exploratory; reflecting on one’s own teaching practices which ferret out inconsistencies in stories offered by students, I seek to re-listen, reflect and assign new value to “stories” and “voices” ignored and discarded earlier as also to present recent experiences from the classroom for exploration.

Recently, a dalit doctoral student and colleague narrated to me his experiences of the school and the university, the ways in which the curricular, extra-curricular and academic success (lesson on Ambedkar in the textbook, elocution competition, becoming a UGC-Junior Research Fellow (JRF) scholar) were all instances that reproduced caste by reducing him to a

“stigmatised particular”.⁷ Pointing to a paradox, he asked “why do even sociologists whose ‘object of analysis’ is caste, believe that caste identities do not matter in academic practices”? I wish to take his question for consideration in the next section, reframing it a little provocatively to ask – Why are “we” afraid of “identity”? Why do we assume neutrality when it comes to identities of caste, ethnicity, and gender and presume that they do not affect the content and practice of our discipline? Do we disavow caste – say it does not exist in our context and talk of it in other terms and codes – like standards, language and so on? It is common for many of us teaching in state universities and colleges not only to categorise our students into neat categories of English and Marathi medium or English and Gujarati medium but also reduce these students to this singular identity (for instance in a local college where I taught it was customary to ask students to add an EM (“English medium”) or MM (“Marathi medium”) when they introduced their names in any gathering). However, we may not always be open to discussing the different and contradictory identities of teachers, students and other players in the social relations of teaching and learning. In the next section, I want to explore this issue of medium of instruction – the “language question” so to say and fear of identity on the grounds of a more established discipline, namely the practice of sociology and seek suggestions from this experience for the newly emerging teaching programmes in women’s studies.

Hidden in the ‘Language Question’: Tracing the Fear of Identity⁸

The hierarchy of standards between central and state universities, it might help to recall, draws not only on superior infrastructural facilities but also on English being the medium of teaching and research in the former as against the local/regional language in the latter. As teachers in state universities and local colleges, we may counter this logic through an opposition that assumes all social science practised in English to be elitist and that in the vernacular to be more down to earth. At other times, we may respond to the “language question” through efforts to find quality reading material in Indian languages and develop English language proficiency through remedial classes. Interestingly, this “language question” appears quite prominently in some of the discussions that sociologists have had on their discipline being in “crisis”.

Sociologists, more than other social scientists in India, have from time to time described and reflected upon the crisis in the discipline, with a more concentrated debate happening in the 1970s and 1990s. If we revisit some of the articulations of “crisis in the discipline” in the 1970s, it is apparent that the “language question” is strongly implicated in the salient features, causes and solutions suggested to the crisis. The crisis is described in terms of unrestricted expansion of sociology at the undergraduate level and in Indian languages, market-driven textbooks and takeover of “pure” pedagogies by politics. The script is one that narrates the story of expansion of sociology at the undergraduate levels and in regional languages as “provincialisation” of higher education in general and sociology in particular. Rereading this debate one is struck by two rather paradoxical anxieties of the

sociological community. On the one hand is the angst with academic colonisation (why do we not have “our own” theories and categories), while on the other is the apprehension about the new and diverse “expanding public” (what will happen to “standards”, if teaching and learning is no longer to be done in English). The new “publics” of sociology are denigrated and assumed to be “residual”, those who are in sociology, not because they want to but because of a politically imposed expansion of regional universities/colleges.

The calls of “crisis” in the discipline surface again in the 1990s with comments on the increasing number of students registered in doctoral programmes and their ignorance of elementary facts and concepts. It comes to be argued that both teaching and research are in a deplorable condition because most of our universities and other centres of higher learning have become cockpits for caste, regional and linguistic conflict and intrigue. As the enrolment rates of the “upper caste”,⁹ middle class metropolitan students mark a relative decline and the sociology classroom comes to be more diverse in terms of caste, region and linguistic identities the anxiety about the expanding “public” turns into a script of accusation. The accusation operates at two levels; the upsurge of identities in Indian society and politics is seen as causing the demise of merit and any appeal to questions of identity and language on the campus and in the classroom comes to be viewed as part of interest group politics. In times of Mandal, these narratives of a decline of the discipline from its golden age have to be contextualised in the battle between the pan-Indian English educated elite and the new regional elites moving on the national scene.

Interestingly, it is practitioners located on the institutional and organisational margins of “national” sociology who shifted the axis of the debate from standards to questions of equality; inquiring into the legitimacy of sociological knowledge and the pronouncements of decline. Further, the 1990s were marked by prominent “national” sociologists lending support to the anti-Mandal position which dominated the middle class urban perception of the issue. Additionally, the debate on dalits joining the Durban Conference against discrimination based on race and caste underlined the ways in which sociologists in the name of objectivity valued the opinion of experts while rejecting perspectives emerging from the lived experience of caste and the horror of atrocities. If in the 1970s, as seen earlier, “national sociology” described the expansion of sociology in regional languages as provincialisation of the discipline, in the 1990s the claims of “national” sociology stood “provincialised”. “National” sociology was “provincialised” as it failed to say anything beyond popular commonsense on the Mandal controversy though its identity hinged upon theorisation of caste; as also because several questions came to be raised about nation as the “natural” unit for organising sociological knowledge and about selective processes that equated happenings in the elite set of institutions in Delhi to Indian sociology.

So if we go back to my colleague’s question with which we began – why do even sociologists assume that these identities have no consequences for the content and practice of their discipline? Why was there an expectation on his part that sociologists would

be different from other social scientists? Probably because caste, gender, and ethnicity are explicitly stated objects of inquiry and they have been the first to include courses and modules on women, dalits and tribals in the sociology curriculum? Yet as we just saw, it is sociologists more than others who seem to be afraid of any claims to caste or gender identities. They appear to assume that avowal of gender and caste identities will lead to feminification of theory or demise of merit – in other words to “pollution” of academic purity. It might help here to focus on the ways in which sociological knowledge and practice are organised by the professional bodies and the curriculum. Women, dalits, adivasis, may be included as substantive research areas of sociology and in optional courses but this inclusion keeps the cognitive structures of the discipline relatively intact from the challenges posed by dalit or feminist knowledges.¹⁰ Thus “good sociology” continues to be defined in terms of the binaries of objectivism/subjectivism, social/political, social world/knower, experience/knowledge, tradition/modernity and theoretical brahman/empirical shudra.

So every time problem of expansion of the discipline in Indian languages or the language question comes to be discussed, we gloss over the several layers of identities and assume simplistic binaries of sociology practised in English being national and rigorous, and those in Indian languages being provincial and simplistic. Alternatively, indigenists and nativists assume sociology practised in English to be elitist and incapable of grasping “our culture” and that in regional languages down to earth and applicable to “our culture”. While the former position seeks to resolve the tensions through remedial English courses, translation of textbooks or a simple commitment to bilingualism, the latter proposes teaching and writing in Indian languages as a “cultural duty”. These positions though they seem different are similar in that they see language only in its communicative aspects as if separable from power relations and the cultural and symbolic effects of language. In contrast, dalit imaginations of language wedge open the symbolic and material power of language. In the next section, I shall bring to centre some dalit imaginations of language to underline ways in which caste and gender identities remain hidden in what we discuss as a “language question”.

Dalit Imaginations: Wedging Open the ‘Language Question’

Now if you want to know why I am praised – well it’s for my knowledge of Sanskrit, my ability to learn it and to teach it. Doesn’t anyone ever learn Sanskrit? ...That’s not the point. The point is that Sanskrit and the social group I come from don’t go together in the Indian mind. Against the background of my caste, the Sanskrit I have learned appears shockingly strange. That a woman from a caste that is the lowest of the low should learn Sanskrit, and not only that, also teach it – is a dreadful anomaly

–(Kumud Pawade 1981:21)

In a word, our alienation from the Telugu textbook was more or less the same as it was from the English textbook in terms of language and content. It is not merely a difference of dialect; there is difference in the very language itself. ...What difference did it make to us whether we had an English textbook which talked about Milton’s *Paradise Lost* or *Paradise Regained*, or Shakespeare’s *Othello* or *Macbeth* or Wordsworth’s poetry about nature in England, or a Telugu textbook which talked about Kalidasa’s *Meghasandesham*, Bommera Potanna’s *Bhagvatham*....We

do no share the content of either; we do not find our lives reflected in their narratives.

—(Kancha Ilaiah 1996:15)

Through his initiatives, Lord Macaulay was to re-craft a new intellectual order for India which threatened the dominance of the brahmins and questioned the relevance of the *Varna*/caste order. This was to give dalits a large breathing space ... Should we know our past the way we like to, or we know the past as it existed? Or should there be any distinction between History Writing and Story Telling? Those who condemn Lord Macaulay for imposing a 'wrong' education on India do never tell us what kind of education system which Macaulay fought and eventually destroyed.

—(Chandra Bhan Prasad 2006: 99 & 115)

While giving calls of 'Save Marathi', the question I am faced with is 'which' 'Marathi' is to be 'saved'? The Marathi rendered lifeless by the imprisonment of the oral in the standardised written word? The Marathi with its singular aim of 'fixing meaning' which loses rhythm, intonation, emotion, *Rasa*? The Marathi that generates inferiority complex in those speaking 'aani-paani'¹¹? The Marathi that forms centres of power through processes of standardisation of language? Or the Marathi sans the Word that keeps the bahun knowledgeable?

—(Pragnya Daya Pawar 2004:45)

.....I dream of an english
full of the words of my language.
an english in small letters
an english that shall tire a white man's tongue
an english where small children practise with smooth round
pebbles in their mouth to the spell the right zha
an english where a pregnant woman is simply stomach-child-lady
an english where the magic of black eyes and brown bodies
replaces the glamour of eyes in dishwater blue shades and
the airbrush romance of pink white cherry blossom skins
.....
an english that doesn't belittle brown or black men and women
an english of tasting with five fingers...

—(Meena Kandaswamy 2007:21)¹²

Kumud Pawade's story of her Sanskrit, Kancha Ilaiah's comment on the sameness of the English and Telugu textbook, Chandra Bhan Prasad's counter commemoration of Macaulay, Pragnya Daya Pawar's interrogation of the power of the printed word over the spoken word and Meena Kandaswamy's dream of a global English in small letters offer immense possibilities for wedging open the "language question".

Kumud Pawade, a dalit feminist intellectual in her testimonio "Thoughtful Outburst" (1981), reflects on her journey into Sanskrit, teasing out in the process the complex character of the "language question" in our academia. Kumud Pawade foregrounds memories of her schoolteacher Gokhale Guruji, a prototypical brahman dressed in a dhoti, full shirt, a black cap and the vermilion mark on his forehead, who she expected would refuse to teach her Sanskrit. However, expected responses stand interrogated as he not only taught her but also became a major influence in her life. People in her own community often discouraged her from pursuing a master's degree in Sanskrit arguing that success at matriculation need not embolden her to this extent. At college the peons as also the higher-up officials usually commented on how "they" were taking strides because of government money and how this had made them too big for their boots. At the university, the head of the department, a scholar of fame, took great pleasure in taunting her. She would find herself comparing this man apparently modern in his ways to Gokhale Guruji.

However, on successfully completing her master's in Sanskrit achieving a place in the merit list, her dreams of teaching Sanskrit received a rude shock as she could overhear the laughter and ridicule in the interview room about people like her being "government-sponsored" brahmins. Those passing these comments, she recalls were not all brahmins, many of them were from the Bahujan Samaj who thought of themselves as brahman haters and even traced their lineage to Mahatma Phule and yet the idea of a Mahar girl who was a part of this Bahujan Samaj teaching Sanskrit made them restless. After two years of meritorious performance at the master's level, unemployment and her marriage to Motiram Pawade, a Kunbi Maratha, she finally got an appointment as an assistant lecturer in a government college and in later years went on to become a professor in her alma mater. However, a thought continues to trouble her – it was "Kumud Pawade" and not "Kumud Somkuvar" who got the job. Pawade's critical work of memory unfolds the complex gender and caste parameters in the "language question" and lays bare the dynamics of a dalit woman acquiring an authorised tongue. Importantly she underlines the operation of language as a marker of subordination and exclusion in our academia and thus the impossibility of viewing the "language question" as a matter of communication separable from power relationships and cultural and symbolic effects of language.

Ilaiah comments on the sameness of Kalidasa and Shakespeare, despite the former appearing in the Telugu textbook and latter in the English. He draws attention to the difference between brahmanical Telugu and the Bahujan renderings locating the difference in the latter emerging from production-based communication. He argues "the communists and nationalists spoke and wrote in the language of the *purohit*. Their culture was basically sanskritised; we were not part of that culture. For good or ill, no one talked about us. They never realised that our language is also language, that is understood by one and all in our communities..." (p 14). Ilaiah further underlines the sameness of the English and Telugu books in being "alien" to the bahujan; their only difference being that one was written with 26 letters the other with 56. Ilaiah's reflections problematise the secular vernacularist position, underlining the complete domination of Hindu scriptures and Sanskritic cultures in vernacular education. Any easy equation between English as alien and Telugu as "our language" – yielding "our categories" of analysis stands interrogated. Further, Ilaiah suggests that the question of culture mediates between the axis of equality and the academia and the "language" in which education takes place is an epistemological issue more than a matter of mere instruction.

Prasad's celebration since 25 October 2006 of Macaulay's birthday and installation of a "dalit goddess of English" to underscore the turn away from tradition, has been brushed aside often as an attention seeking gimmick. This counter commemoration of Macaulay has significance for destabilising the hegemonic memory of Macaulay as the "villain" who declared that a single shelf of Shakespeare was worth more than all the Sanskrit and Arabic literature of the East. Prasad re-reads "Minutes on Education" to underline Macaulay's argument about the British having to give scholarships to children to study in Sanskrit and Arabic,

even when they were ready to pay for English education. This re-reading disrupts the ongoing processes of collective remembrance of language and education in colonial India. Prasad's act of counter commemoration renders Macaulay's argument as not directed against the vernaculars; but against the outmoded literature of the Vedas and Upanishads, and thus an important moment in the history of dalit access to education. It is important to note Prasad's comments on discovering the top secrets of the language politics of Macaulay in his explorations into the tensions between history writing and storytelling, thereby suggesting that an engagement with the "language question" is also essentially an engagement with "reinventing the archive" – the very methods of knowledge.

Pragnya Daya Pawar (2004) talks back to those giving calls in Maharashtra to "save Marathi"; asking them the pertinent question "which Marathi?" and teases out the collusion of state and elites in framing the "language question". Interrogating the processes of standardisation of the language, she points out to the homogenisation of meaning constituted by the processes of standardisation. She draws attention to the efforts of the Maharashtra state to empower Marathi as a language for science and technology which freeze and de-root the diversity of words into the singular "Word". Standardisation on the one hand brutalises/marginalises/fails the dalit Bahujan who bring into the system the "non-standardised" language practices. On the other hand, more violently, it wipes away the epistemic value of all oral forms of knowing of the Bahujan. She recalls that the dictum of the liberal humanists "society will improve when its people gain wisdom from education" – was first called into crisis in India by Jotiba Phule. That a Bahujan struggling against all forms of cultural colonisation, should have been the first to call this liberal agenda into question – she observes "is logical and not coincidental". The "language question" thus opened up, traces the politics of internal fragmentation and hierarchisation of the vernacular in postcolonial Indian states and sees these processes as inseparable from those that monitor the differential epistemic status of different knowledges – particularly of the printed and the oral.

Meena Kandaswamy in "Mulligatawny Dreams" dreams of an "English" full of words selected from her language, an "English" that challenges both the purity of standardised vernaculars and the hegemony of English. It is an "english" in small letters, a language that resists imperialist racism and casteism of both English and the vernacular. Such hybrid formations of language are seen as enriching English by opening it up to appreciate brown bodies, black eyes and eating with five fingers. English as the language of modernisation is disrupted suggesting that in the present conjuncture spread of English has gone beyond the worldwide elite thus opening up possibilities of challenging the hegemony of imperialist English with many resisting "Englishes". Further, "the dreams of English" point to the limitations of framing the language question in terms of proficiency in English language, leaving little space for playful radical innovations in pedagogy.

It is not coincidental that dalit imaginations engage with the power relations that are glossed over in debates on "language question" discussed earlier and thus wedge open and interrogate not only the right wing and state agendas of the "language

question" but also that of the liberal humanists. We can see that the liberal humanist fear of identity, of decline in standards comes from a commitment to a particular idea of democracy. It is not as if those who complain of a decline in standards are opposed to including "all others" in their system of knowledges – be it the university or the cognitive structures of the discipline. Within this idea of a democratic university, the masses will have to wait until they receive a degree of formal training (learn to "speak like us") to comprehend requirements of a plural and democratic university. However, since the 1990s, those considered incapable of comprehending democratic requirements have come to the fore to defend democracy, even as it pertains to the knowledge of democracy, while the imagined champions of democracy began moving away from processes that inform it.¹³ "All others" are entering the university with new vocabularies and moral economy, and, as the dalit imaginations on language suggest, are interrogating the assumed hierarchy of different knowledges, archives and methods of knowledge. For critical researchers and teachers fear of identity and masses can no longer be an option as the radical instability of the many languages of the subaltern citizens of mass democracy calls for careful "listening". If we as teachers are to participate in the "new times", exercises in re-imagining the content and methods of knowledge becomes inseparable from those in reinventing pedagogical practices. In the next section, I argue for reinventing pedagogies through Phule-Ambedkarite-Feminist (PAF) perspectives, asking why these perspectives came to be excluded in debates on education in postcolonial India.

Phule-Ambedkarite-Feminist Pedagogies: Location and Exclusion

Having neither the expertise nor the intention to draw a set of guidelines for PAF pedagogies, what I seek to do in this section is to historically map the "difference" of Phule-Ambedkarite perspectives on the project of education and the probable reasons for the exclusion of these from imaginations of "alternative" perspectives on learning and teaching. If following Paulo Freire¹⁴ we see critical pedagogy as contesting the logic and practices of the "banking method" for a more dialogical and transformative project of education, then PAF pedagogies, simply put, may be seen historically as constituting one school of critical pedagogy. Historically, we can read in the colonialist and nationalist discourses on Indian society, a battle over the function and nature of knowledge. While the colonialist project represented India as the spirit of Hindu civilisation and therefore distinct and disjunct from the west, the regime of classification and categorisation of "Indian tradition" created norms for colonial rule enhancing the status of brahmins as indigenous intellectuals. While, colonial knowledges were structured on binaries that distinguished India from the west, the orient from the occident; the nationalists imagined alternate knowledges by reversing the claims of superiority of the west, locating the superiority in the Vedas. Thus, though the colonialists and nationalists contested the function of knowledge in colonial India, for both, the nature of knowledge of India was essentially Hindu and brahmanical. After the second world war, social science discourse refashioned the binaries of Orient/Occident through the

tradition/modernity thesis or indigenous approaches, both of which glossing over the structural inequalities in Indian society normalised the idea of knowledge and the educational project of/ in India as Hindu and brahmanical.¹⁵

Phule and Ambedkar in different ways, by weaving together the emancipatory non-Vedic materialist traditions (Lokayata, Buddha, Kabir) and new western ideas (Thomas Paine, John Dewey, Karl Marx, for instance) had challenged the binaries of western modernity/Indian tradition, private caste-gender/public nation and sought to refashion modernity¹⁶ and thereby its project of education. Phule and Ambedkar in several writings and speeches but more particularly the former in *Gulamgiri* (1873), and the latter in *Annihilation of Caste* (1936), *The Riddles on Hinduism* (compiled and published in 1987) and *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (1957) undertake a rational engagement with core analytical categories emerging from Hindu metaphysics which had been normalised as “Indian culture and science”.¹⁷

Throughout the text of *Gulamgiri*, Phule stresses that Hindu religion is indefensible mainly because it violates the rights and dignity of human beings. He turns the “false books” of the brahmins on their head by reinterpreting the “Dashavataara” of Vishnu to rewrite a history of the struggles of the shudras and atishudras. He moves swiftly between the power and knowledge nexus in everyday cultural practices, myths and history. In his “Memorandum Addressed to the Education Commission” (1882) for a more inclusive policy on education and in his popular compositions like the short ballad on “Brahman Teachers in the Education Department” (1869), Phule demonstrates how state policy and dominant pedagogical practices are intrinsically interlinked. He comments at length on the differential treatment to children of different castes and the collusion of interests of the Bombay government school inspectors and teachers. He calls for more plurality in the appointment of teachers and the need to appoint those committed to teaching as a truth-seeking exercise. Ambedkar in *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) argues against the absolute knowledge and holism idealised by brahmanical Hinduism and critiques the peculiar understanding of nature and its laws (karma) in the Shastric texts. Both Phule and Ambedkar underline the preference for truth enhancing values and methods through an integration of critical rationality of modern science and the scepticism and self-reflection of ancient non-Vedic materialists and the Buddha. It is clear both in and through their works that they see organisation of knowledge as complexly related to the interlocking connections of different identities. This leads them to value-situated knowledge but such that they do not collapse all experience into knowledge but do highlight how certain experiences (oppression based on caste, gender) do lead people to certain kinds of knowledges.

Phule in the first modern Marathi Play *Trutiya Ratna* draws complex linkages between religious-cultural and educational authority and reimagines education therefore as the *Trutiya Ratna* (third eye) that has the possibilities to enable the oppressed to understand and transforms the relation between power and knowledge. Ambedkar in a speech in Nagpur in 1942 at the All India Depressed Classes Conference, advises the gathering to “Educate-Agitate-Organise” (a motto that became central to the

Ambedkarite movement and community) arguing that this was central to the battle for freedom. Phule’s conscious adoption of the dialogical form of communication and Ambedkar’s insistence in the Bombay University Act Amendment Bill (1927) to move beyond the examination-oriented patterns of learning and teaching underline their conviction on the centrality of dialogue in the project of education. Ambedkar, debating the Bombay University Act Amendment Bill, highlights the linkages between issues otherwise thought to be disjoint, namely, understaffing, dictation of notes and the lack of adequate representation of backward castes on administrative bodies such as the senate. Countering arguments regarding examination-centric education as a safeguard for promotion of standards; he underscores how this exam-centric mode in fact reproduces caste inequalities in the university. He underlines the significance of combining efforts to increase access to education for vulnerable sections with those to reconceptualise administrative and curricular practices of higher education.

Both Phule and Ambedkar, as may be apparent from the discussion above, seek a rational engagement with the pedagogy of culture to see how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within particular contexts and re-imagine a culture of pedagogy based on truth-seeking. The “difference” of Phule-Ambedkarite pedagogical perspectives lies in a double articulation that conceives education then not only in terms of cultures of learning and teaching but also dissenting against that which is learnt and taught by dominant cultural practices. This entails constituting teachers and students as modern truth seekers and agents of social transformation who seek to become “a light unto themselves”. The methods are those that seek to integrate the principles of *prajna* (critical understanding) with *karuna* (empathetic love) and *samata* (equality). This democratisation of method of knowledge marks the difference of Phule-Ambedkarite perspectives from methods based on binaries of reason/emotion, public/private, assumption of neutral objectivity/celebration of experience that inform much of our teaching and research. One sees significant intersections with African-American feminist pedagogies that directly link pedagogy with political commitment in envisioning education as the practice of freedom and thereby seek to challenge the assumed divide between mind/body, public/private and reason and emotion.¹⁸ Why then have social scientists in search of alternative pedagogies rarely turned to Phule, Shahu or Ambedkar? Why did the search for alternatives usually end with Gandhi, Aurobindo and Nehru? How might this “dalit phobia”¹⁹ or exclusion in the academia and its cognitive structures be explained?

Baburao Bagul, the revolutionary dalit writer has explained the exclusion of this discourse in the formation of knowledges in post-colonial India in terms of the intelligentsia turning the national movement into a form of historical, mythological movement and ancestor worship thus reducing the other movements to a secondary status.²⁰ The nationalist labelling of the dalit discourse as anti-national, ideologically particularistic, specific to certain castes or as emergent from the British policy of divide and rule resonated in the practices of higher education in postcolonial India. In the 1970s the ideology and practices of the Dalit Panthers and dalit

literature including the compositions of the mud-house cultural activists – the *shahirs* (composers of ballads) foregrounded the experience of caste to challenge the feudal backwardness of Hinduism normalised in educational practices.²¹ This challenge was co-opted in the academia through frames that included dalits in disciplinary knowledges while keeping intact the core of disciplinary knowledges. Since the 1990s, as discussed earlier, tensions between different forms of modernities in Indian society are being played out and a new scholarship is making convincing arguments about appeal to caste not being casteism and of claims unmarked by caste made by the dominant to represent and classify the modern as being situated, local and partial.

Since the 1990s, this “secular upsurge of caste” at the national level interfaced with local dalit movements and international contexts like the UN Conference against Racism is shaping varied trajectories of dalit studies in different regions in India.²² PAF pedagogies are enabled by this conjuncture and the assertion of dalit feminisms which has opened up possibilities of new dialogue between Phule-Ambedkarite and feminist perspectives. PAF pedagogical perspectives are critically different from the two much discussed projects in higher education of the same decade, viz, value education and autonomy. They are different in that they contest the logic of projects based on essentialist a priori set of morals or on neoliberal rhetoric of choice that comes without freedom. The practice of PAF pedagogies thus seeks to develop cultures of dissent through analyses of the various categories of oppression underlying the structures and organisation of knowledge, but without reducing them to a mere additive mantra of caste, class and gender differences. The practice of PAF obviously needs more than a simple transplantation of the guidelines through which PAF perspectives work to our situations. In the next section, I shall try to grapple with some of the issues that emerge in the practice of PAF pedagogies in our academia.

Interrogating Teacher as God or Saviour: Pedagogy, Authority and Canon

In the present conjuncture how is the relationship between the teacher and the taught performed? How does the intersection of generational and “other” differences between them disrupt this relationship? We may as practitioners of PAF pedagogies reject the brahmanic principle of teacher as “god embodied” (*Guru sakshat paraha brahma*) but then do engaged pedagogies such as PAF install teachers as the new “saviours” of the students? Since the classroom seems to be the best place to start from to discuss these issues, I would like to put for consideration here two autobiographical notes on disruptions from the classroom²³ which I believe are situations commonly encountered by teachers. The first refers to the shock, anger, disgust and pain that one recognises in the body language of a student who has just been handed her test paper with the marks or grades. The student often lets some time elapse before contesting the evaluation, probably checking the marks, grades of others in the class comparing and contrasting, thereby estimating the level of injustice (imagined and real), done to her.

Three students and not by coincidence, one from a nomadic tribe (NT) and the other two from the scheduled tribe (ST) community in Maharashtra and Manipur mustered enough courage

to encounter me – and asked in different ways if their lower grade had anything to do with the less space they had given in their answer to Phule-Ambedkarite critiques of “mainstream” perspectives on caste. As a teacher, I had at that point at least three options – respond in terms of some absolutes (it is not really good, you have not covered it all, your expression could have been better) thereby exercising my authority as final judge of the standards or legitimise my authority as an evaluator by making transparent the parameters of my evaluation. Most difficult of all options seems to be the third one, that of calling into question my juridical authority as a teacher-evaluator by translating the student’s contestation of grade into an opportunity for dialogue. Dialogue here is not suggestive of a strategy of appeasement (of increasing the marks) – but of “listening” to the contestation and reflecting upon and reviewing in this context the very parameters of evaluation and possibly transforming them. Obviously these students were raising questions that moved within and outside the classroom, for one they were raising questions about the possibilities of an evaluation remaining “fair” in the context of the teachers avowed commitment to a Phule-Ambedkarite politics and about their own alienation from a curriculum that hardly engaged with “their” histories and experiences.

The second autobiographical narrative relates to the comments of a girl student from the Bhil community in Nandurbar, one of the most underdeveloped regions in Maharashtra who had opted for three of my courses in consecutive semesters and who I saw as bringing considerable enthusiasm and intensity into the classes. However, at the end of the master’s programme, she told me, to my dismay, that the classroom experiences had been profound but troubling because of the immense loss of “certitude of definitions” that she had experienced. That sometimes I seemed to her (and probably to many others) like a person who does not know the basics of the discipline (for instance when I reply to a query with another query rather than give a definition/definitive answer). For the student, the unlearning and problematising of much that she had grasped through undergraduate textbooks and excelled in was rendered into a state of confusion. As Phule-Ambedkarite feminist teachers contesting the canons, one has often come up against similar criticism from colleagues who argue that students get confused in “our” classes because we introduce critical debates before students have mastered the canons of the discipline.

These cases of students contesting evaluation and efforts at building critical thinking in the class room raise questions about the relations between pedagogy, authority, canons and transformation. The second narrative allows us to ask awkward questions – do we as teachers of particular disciplines have responsibility and accountability to the canon – so to say initiate the students into the discipline? When is the “right time” at which the critique can be as if introduced? In other words are we saying that in introducing students to the discourse of caste “canons” must be taught before the critical perspectives of Phule, Ambedkar and more contemporary dalit-Bahujan-feminist critiques of the discourse are introduced? Does such a move not gloss over the ways in which knowledge comes to be categorised and organised into legitimate/canonical and illegitimate/non-canonical through the design of courses, assignments, list of prescribed and “supplementary”

readings, selection and elimination of topics as legitimate for classroom discussion? At the level of classroom practice this would amount to attributing value to the canonical per se and not to the labour of interpretation. Am I then suggesting that the Phule-Ambedkarite feminist teachers do away with the canon? Far from it, the canon to be deauthorized and demystified must be seen relationally, so that the canonical and the non-canonical emerge in oppositional confrontation in specific historical conjunctures.

The first narrative pushes us to question the canon built on the conviction of the radical teacher – does she too build a canon to render “her truth” as natural and beyond the conflictual politics of interpretation? There is a desire for a stable “saviour” ideology and easily identifiable home,²⁴ or fixed truth; but as Jenny’s account discussed earlier more than bears out, a Phule-Ambedkarite feminist teacher must guard against the exclusions and oppressions which such a desire would entail. The problem therefore is not only about teaching the canon but canonicising whatever we teach and the challenge is to make the learning process always uncertain and contingent. Often the most difficult question for progressive pedagogies like PAF is to retain passion and partnership of the oppressed and yet break through the canonical compulsions that exist at the heart of all pedagogy.²⁵

While the relations of power organised by the curriculum and the approaches to the curriculum have been discussed to some extent, those related to the organisation of college-university classroom as a physical and intellectual space have been relatively unaddressed. Discussing pedagogies requires that we discuss the ways in which power is enmeshed in the discourses and practices of the more mundane everyday of the classroom. The classroom is a relatively autonomous space which can both empower the teacher and render her vulnerable. The everyday of this classroom is routinely managed through the regime of timetables and rules published in the handbooks. But on the field so to say, the real questions are – How do we manage the conflictual imperatives of quiet and talk, responsibility and control, risk and safety? Often these conflicting imperatives mean that classroom learning comes to be achieved through issue of threat (threat to cut marks, freeze on classes) competition and point scoring (setting groups or individuals against each other to get them to be responsible) and status consciousness (sanctions for those who talk and interact within given parameters and achieve learning within approved terms). Intentionally or unintentionally our strategies of getting the immediate done may often conflict with strategies of PAF that seek to encourage collaboration and foster democratic and social justice values. Are there models of progressive pedagogy that may guide us to move beyond these brahmanical-patriarchal practices of discipline and control in the classroom? In the next section, I will address some of the issues emerging from this question.

Circuitous Relations between Educate-Organise-Agitate: The Risky Paths of *Trutiya Ratna*

Generally speaking, teachers who believe that learning is linked to social change, struggle over identities and meanings, may practise variants and combinations of three possible models of progressive pedagogical practice.²⁶ The first model is the one in

which the PAF teacher believes that she understands the truth/ the real relations of power and imparts it to the students. The second model believes in a dialogical mode and making the silenced speak. While in the third the focus shifts on developing skills – so that students are enabled to understand and intervene in their own history. It is possible that different combinations emerge from these models, for common to all three are a set of similar assumptions. The first model believes that the teacher can and does know the truth – the real interests of different groups brought together in the classroom and has to just impart the truth to them, the second overlooks the real material and social conditions which may disenable some from speaking and others from “listening to silences” and the third assumes that the teacher knows and can impart the “universal skills”. These assumptions become problematic, for as PAF pedagogues, we agree that students are neither cultural dopes that have to be brought to predetermined positions but this is not to say that the dominant institutions do not seek to dupe them. There is then a loss of certainty for the teacher, she does not have a readymade mantra to save the world nor can this be replaced with a set of relativist celebration of different voices and experiences.

This kind of a rendering of the PAF pedagogical model which rejects convincing predefined subjects to adopt the teacher’s truth draws upon not a unilateral but circuitous understanding of the Phule-Ambedkarite principle of “Educate, Organise and Agitate”. Education, organising struggles over recognition and redistribution identities and social transformation related in a circuitous path are constitutive of each other and as such the possibilities and constraints on agency as it intersects with social formation cannot be predefined. If we look again at Mukta Salve’s essay with which we began, it is clear that education becomes “*Trutiya Ratna*” in Jotiba and Savitribai Phule’s school because what was demanded from students was not conformity to some image of political liberation but of gaining understanding of their own involvement in the world and its future. This makes the task of the PAF pedagogues slippery and hazardous – since the focus is on contextual practice, one of multiplying connections between what may seem apparently disjoint things.

This returns us once again to the question of authority in the pedagogical process – to ask if the critical pedagogue practising such a model needs to make a difference between abandoning all claims to authority and offering new forms and positions. The teacher still remains responsible for production of knowledge in the classroom but is required to traverse risky grounds that interrogate the binaries of knowing teacher/ignorant students, public/private and rational/emotional. She recognises that often the students are uninterested in the classroom not because they do not want to work or because of the difficulties of jargon or theory but they do not see reason. Probably the questions being asked and answered are not “theirs”. This realisation cannot be followed up with a simple dictum that from now on students will define the questions. The challenge is to discover the questions on the terrain of everyday lives and popular cultural practices.

Such a model throws open to question then a simple model of authority – one that poses an opposition between mind and body as also authority and affection. African American feminists²⁷

have underlined the ways in which the body is erased in the process of learning. Entering the classroom is as if about giving up to the mind and making the body absent. It is assumed that denial of passion and Eros as if is a precondition for learning to take place. They remind us that Eros is the moving force that propels life from a state of potentiality to actuality and therefore central to the energy of the classroom. It is often argued that there is no place for the affective in the classroom because this may affect effective control or neutral evaluation of students. And yet all of us know there have always been teacher's favourites – there have been and are affective ties that are exclusive and privatised. The Eklavya narrative is a reminder of the violent consequences of selective, exclusive affective ties between students and teachers.

The pedagogical power in critical practices cannot be wished away by giving up claims to authority and following feminists like hooks²⁸ persuasion of students may be seen as an option. In a diverse classroom, hooks argues there will always be students who are afraid to assert themselves as critical thinkers. Counter to several feminist claims that the silenced come to voice in atmosphere of safety and congeniality, she prescribes a “confrontational” style of dealing with this. This can be very demanding, painful, frightening and never makes the teacher “instantly popular” or the classes “fun” to be in. Hooks problematises the rather easy opposition between risk and safety, affect and authority by putting at centre processes of democratic persuasion as crucial to the goal of enabling all students and not just the assertive few in the classroom.

Critical pedagogies do not in themselves constitute a method, and micro-level pedagogical implications of PAF which are crucial to the everyday work of the classroom need to be discussed and developed through dialogues in and across classrooms. We need to dialogue more on our efforts in the everyday of the classroom to develop different tools, methods, strategies. This dialogue is crucial if we are to combine social critique with skills of doing critical work in developing new undergraduate and post-graduate teaching programmes in women's studies. In the concluding section, I would like to share some notes on this process, more specifically implementing PAF and collective efforts to develop models, tools and methods.

'Pappu Can Dance....' (?): Possibilities and Limitations of Pedagogical Experiments²⁹

Located in a UGC-sponsored Women's Studies Centre, in a state university with affiliated colleges, some of us are presently engaged in a project that seeks to reimagine some of the practices in higher education. The project seeks to build new comparative and relational curricula, knowledge resources through “translation” projects that seek to translate knowledges across locations through inter-institutional models of collaboration, production of innovative resource books and capacity-building workshops for teachers and researchers for “new times” in the university. The propelling force of the project is pedagogical innovation operationalised through curricular and co-curricular programmes such as the Bridge Course, Modular Training and Block Placement Programmes.³⁰

The Bridge Course which runs as a co-curricular course is distinct from the “Remedial English Programme” in that it explicitly addresses fractures of the English Medium education too.³¹ The

Block Placement and Internship Programme has evolved through seminars, meetings and focused dialogue with the state, corporate and non-governmental sector to explore mutually beneficial partnerships and seeks to introduce students to the critical areas of practice in the fields of development and culture. This programme is closely linked to intensive semester long training programmes that are integrated in the curriculum through specially designed theme/sector based modular workshops conducted by professionals. The bridge course, modular workshops and block placement components are integrated as a part of reflexive learning – of seeing the “field” in the classroom and experiencing the “classroom” in the field. The project is driven by the need for teachers to “reinvent” with changing social composition of our classrooms and changing economy of higher education wherein we can no longer continue to cultivate students whose futures we imagine will be identical to ours. In what follows, I detail the experience of teaching courses on “Popular Culture and Modernity in India” and “Caste and Gender: History and Memory”; least because I or anyone else involved imagine it to be a narrative of success but by way of opening a dialogue with fellow critical pedagogues on the nuts and bolts of developing pedagogical methods and tools for our present.

The course on “Popular Culture and Modernity in India” has been floated over three semesters in classrooms that were socially very diverse and where the co-learners sometimes shared very little in common by way of nationality, caste, region, language and also in terms of their investment in desire and pleasures of what they saw as constituting and constituted by the popular. The course it was mutually agreed would be constituted through integrating dialogue, participation, experience³² the important elements of PAF pedagogies. More specifically the dynamics of learning and teaching was sought to be rethought and reinvented through a research-based approach to the course. This posed challenges for both the students and the teacher and in our case the teaching assistants³³ became very important resources in enhancing dialogue and participation.

The course sought to build in experience, dialogue and participation through conscious selection of resources materials that came from the everyday/ordinary of students' lives, continuous group work and intra group evaluation, and developing writing and research as a method of classroom learning. Group work and evaluation met with considerable resistance as groups were drawn once by lots and another time by introducing a diversity quotient. Disruptions in dialogue were taken up as an opportunity to view the complex linkages between practice and content – for instance, impatience and tensions between group members (emerging from differences of language, investment in different genres of the popular, access and ease with using audiovisual equipment, ways of reading a text and discussing it) became a ground to reflect on the central theme of the course – namely “our modernity/ies”.

One batch of students (2007-08) produced a film on “Cell-phone Cultures”; researched and produced collaboratively. The process involved developing new intellectual, practical and technical skills as students researched the biography of the product, its travels to different constituencies, SMS (text messaging) as cultural consumption, the perceived dangers and anxieties related to the product, celebrity scandals with camera phones and

so on. The film focused on how cellphones were organising and conducting students' own lives. The second and third batch of students (2008-09 and 2009-10) wrote and published a collection of researched articles in English and Marathi entitled – "Exploring the Popular: Texts, Identities and Politics" and "Plundering Popular Culture". The essays not only showcase student writings but as Uma Chakravarti in the foreword to the collection comments "*they* tell us something about why and how we make meaning of life around us and they do so with zest and enthusiasm."³⁴

Food and the Boundaries

Two controversies centring on "meat" as served in branded fast food restaurants and in the student mess caught the imagination of students opting for the course on "Caste and Gender: History and Memory". Arguing that eating habits and food mark the boundaries between the pure and the polluted, the upper and lower classes, male and female, humans and god, students undertook a project that sought to untangle caste, class and gender inequalities on the food plate and in the assumptions that go into the making of national and regional cuisines. The project had its beginnings in reading of dalit life narratives which as opposed to other life narratives deal explicitly with the question of food and suggest that food cannot be equated to personal choice and taste. All participants in this project visited book stores to survey the cookbooks on the shelves and map the history of cuisines of India therein. Propelled by an analysis of the cookbooks and the tensions in representation of regional cuisines as national cuisine and "upper" caste recipes as regional cuisine, participants in the course produced a collection – Is not the plate of dalit food Indian?³⁵ The collection documents the memories of food and recipes in practice in dalit households by doing memory work with 10 dalit men and women from different castes, arguing thus that the memories of food and the culinary skills and knowledges they make in the process could not be separated.

The students had in the process of producing the bi-lingual books wedged open inequalities hidden in the language question and engaged with tasks of calling for submissions, reviewing, editing, designing and publishing and were pleasantly shocked by the quality of the product.³⁶ Individual and collective research projects not only reinvented the pedagogic space but helped establish mutually rewarding links with academics inside and outside the university and external community groups. The "social utility" of the several group projects, film or the collection of essays lies in their capacity for inducing conjectural questioning. However, there could have been more effort on our part to ask significant questions about how these skills of combining critical thinking with social critique, of writing academic papers, making films, scripting might transfer to other contexts of collaboration or employment.

The teacher, the teaching assistants and several students often commented on how otherwise "quiet types", those who rarely spoke in class (those considered "pappus") were talking so much in class when it came to engaging with the "popular" or documenting the "everyday". At one level, it appeared as if contrary to the popular Hindi film song "Pappu Can't Dance...", investigations into the world of the popular could make "pappus" dance. But, at another level, could they really? For as students worked in English, Hindi and Marathi, in different settings, the uneven flow of knowledge and methodologies was more than apparent. The student research projects made apparent how the study of culture has emerged differently in different regions and languages and a question worth asking but not risked in the classroom was – how might the course have looked if studies of popular culture did not speak only English but also spoke, for instance, Tamil, Ahirani, Bundeli or Marathi?³⁷ In a socially diverse classroom there are "many languages of studying culture" and specific understandings of "popular" are constituted differently and differentially through them. Our collective efforts at "dialogue" through research and writing as methods of learning did to some extent disrupt established understanding of power and knowledge but were constrained by the limits set on "dialogue" by powerful languages.

Lest we celebrate prematurely the "success" of dialogue of our PAF pedagogies; the words of Bhujang Meshram, an engaged Adivasi poet who passed away recently, are a reminder of the ways in which power is already enmeshed in dialogue.

The Teacher asked,

'Name any three tribal villages',

So I told.

Slap me if I was wrong

But do tell me do closed doors open without a push?

I only told – Shelti, Varud, and Kondpakhandi'.

The teacher asked,

'For what are these villages famous?'

I only told,

Shelti for Holi,

Varud for the woman – Gowarin Bai,

And Kondpakhandi for the theft of cotton.

The teacher roared and slapped with his hands

He broke a couple of staffs of the Mehendi bushes.

Go get a reference from three people

Or else no entry for you in this school – he said.

That's when I decided to get introduced

to Birsa kaka, Tantya nana and Ambar Singh Maharaj!!

–(Bhujang Meshram, *Mala Bhetlelya Kavita* (The Poems I Met) 2007)

Meshram's words historically grounded in the struggles over resources, identities and meanings are a reminder that power is never really external to "dialogue, participation and experience" and that the task of making education "Trutiya Ratna" is indeed an arduous long march.

NOTES

1 English Translations of Mukta Salve and Tarabai Shinde's writings were first published in Susie Tharu and K Lalita, *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to Present* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). Vidyut Bhagwat, the regional editor of this section highlighting the politics of selection and erasure involved in the building of archives discusses how Tarabai's writing was "retrieved" in 1975 by S G Malshe and that there is no

account found of later writings of Mukta Salve. Scholars like S G Mali and Hari Narke have countered the doubts raised about the authorship of writings of Savitribai Phule with historical documents, thus highlighting the erasure of intellection of women and women particularly of the non-brahman and dalit castes from the processes of established archiving.

2 See Senthil Kumar Solidarity Committee, "Caste, Higher Education and Senthil's Suicide" in

Economic & Political Weekly, 16 August 2008, pp 10-12, as also Anoop Kumar, "Casteism in Higher Education" in *Insight*, Vol 1, No 1, September-October 2007, pp 8-10 and "Excerpts of Thorat Committee Report" in *Insight*, op cit, p 10.

3 See Anveshi Law Collective, "Caste and Metropolitan University" in *Economic & Political Weekly*, 23 March 2002, pp 1000-02 and also Sanjay Palshikar and Arun Kumar Patnaik, "Violence in a University: Defending the Indefensible" in

- Economic & Political Weekly*, 20 April 2002, pp 1490-91.
- 4 I use writing back/talking back in the sense post-colonial and Black feminist scholars employ the term; see, for instance, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989) and bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989).
 - 5 See www.insightfoundation.org, M Murli Krishna, *Autobiography as a Resource For Educational Theory: A Dalit Life Story*, MPhil dissertation in English Literature (Hyderabad: CIEFL, 2004); *IAWS Newsletter* (Pune: Women's Studies Centre, December 2003); *Nageshwar Rao Star*, is a film made by Nikhila Henry, Shonreichon, Rajesh and Nageshwar Rao, a group of mass communication students at HCU, Hyderabad; *Out-Caste* is an informal, public wall-journal started by the Dalit Studies class under the guidance of course instructor, K Satyanarayana. This is an open forum that engages with the caste question in a specifically Indian context see http://out-caste.blogspot.com/2008_02_25_archive.html. See also Dilip Chavan, "Bharatiya Uchh Shikshanati Gunavatecha Prashna", *Vatsaru*, Vol 8, No 4, 16-30 June 2008; the Saja Vidhyarthi Shodharthi Gaat edited issue of *Vatsaru*, Vol 8, No 15, 1-15 December 2008 and *Research Room Diaries*, Pune Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune, November 2008.
 - 6 The Department of Sociology, University of Pune tried to address this question by organising a two-day national workshop in January 2008 for teachers and students on "Caste in the Curriculum: Documentary Films as Pedagogical Tools", I am grateful to the speakers, film-makers and participants in this workshop for suggesting new ways of listening and addressing caste in the curriculum and the classroom.
 - 7 I am grateful to Sanjay Kumar Kamble for the conversations we had on reproduction of caste inequalities in education, particularly his insights on the renderings of the issue in Marathi Cinema which I hope to pursue in the near future.
 - 8 The debates on the "Language Question" and the "Fear of Identity" as they appear in the calls of sociology in crisis have been detailed in Sharmila Rege, "Exorcising Fear of Identity: Interrogating the 'Language Question' in Sociology and Sociological Language" in Sujata Patel (ed.), *Critical Reflections on Sociology of India Identity, Perspectives and Practices* (New Delhi, OUP, forthcoming). I am thankful to a number of colleagues for their insights from diverse positions and locations on pedagogical practices; to Sujata Patel for continued conversations and discussions on the history and politics of formation of sociology and its implications for the pedagogical; Kushal Deb, Shruti Tambe, Maitreyi Chaudhari and Satish Deshpande for periodic exchanges on the experiences of teaching and "translating" sociology, Sadhana Natu and Vaishali Diwakar for sharing experiences on the diverse and exciting worlds of undergraduate pedagogies in Maharashtra.
 - 9 Words like 'upper castes', 'lower castes' are put into single inverted comma to mark a disagreement with and distance from the ideology in which such linguistic practices emerge.
 - 10 For accounts of this marginalisation, distortion and erasure in cognitive structures of sociology, see Vivek Kumar, "Situating Dalits in Indian Sociology", *Sociological Bulletin*, 54, 3 (2005), pp 514-32 and Edward Rodrigues, "Dalit Struggle for Recognition within Indian Sociology" in Maitreyee Chaudhari (ed.), *The Practice of Sociology* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2003), pp 221-258, S M Dahiwalé (ed.), *Understanding Indian Society: The Non-Brahmanic Perspective*, (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005) and Sharmila Rege, "Feminist Challenge to Sociology: Disenchanted Sociology or 'For Sociology'?" in Sharmila Rege (ed.), *Feminist Sociological Knowledge* (New Delhi: Sage, 2004).
 - 11 Aani Paani – literally means "and water" but as a phrase it refers to the brahmanical colloquial reference to dalit rendering of Marathi which is considered "impure" and technically incorrect.
 - 12 For details see Kumud Pawade, *Antasphot* (Aurangabad: Anand Prakashan, 1981); Kancha Ilaiah, *Why I am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy* (Calcutta: Samya, 1996); Chandra Bhan Prasad, *Dalit Phobia: Why Do They Hate Us?* (New Delhi: Vitasta, 2006); Pragnya Daya Pawar, *Kendra Aani Parigh* (Mumbai: Dimple Prakashan, 2004) and Meena Kandaswamy, *Touch* (Mumbai: Peacock Books, 2006).
 - 13 I am drawing this argument from Javeed Alam, 2004, *Who Wants Democracy?* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman).
 - 14 See Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1973).
 - 15 I am drawing this argument from Bernard S Cohn, "African Models and Indian Histories" in *An Anthropologist among Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp 224-54); Sujata Patel, "Beyond Binaries: A Case for Self Reflexive Sociologies", *Current Sociology*, Vol 54, 3 (2006), pp 381-95 and Sharmila Rege, "Dalit Studies a Pedagogical Practice: Claiming More Than a 'Little Place' in the Academia", Malcolm Adiseshiah Memorial Lecture (Chennai: MIDS, 2006).
 - 16 For details see Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India: 1873 to 1930* (Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976); Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth Century Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Meera Nanda, *Breaking the Spell of Dharma and Other Essays*, (New Delhi: Three Essays, 2002); Gopal Guru, "Dalits in Pursuit of Modernity" in Romila Thapar (ed.), *India: Another Millennium* (New Delhi: Viking, 2000) and Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonies* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2006).
 - 17 All references to the writings of Phule and Ambedkar are drawn from Y D Phadke (ed.), *Mahatma Phule Samagra Vagmay* (Bombay: Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Sanskruti Mandal, 1991) and volumes particularly volume 2, 4, and Vol 11 of Vasant Moon (ed.), *Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches* (Government of Maharashtra: Education Department, 1987) and Changdev Khairmode, *Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*, Vols 1-12 (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1992).
 - 18 See for instance bell hooks, op cit, 1989.
 - 19 Chandra Bhan Prasad, *Dalit Phobia: Why Do They Hate Us?* (New Delhi: Vitasta, 2006).
 - 20 See Bagul quoted in Arjun Dangle (ed.), *Poisoned Bread: Translation from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1992).
 - 21 For details see Sharmila Rege, *Caste, Identity and Public Sphere: Mapping Ambedkarite Counter Publics in Maharashtra* (Kolkata: Samya, forthcoming).
 - 22 For a nuanced and critical review of the local, regional and international contexts of emergence of dalit studies see K Satyanarayana, "Dalit Studies as a New Perspective in the Indian Academia" in Arun Kumar and Sanjay Kumar (ed.), *Dalit Studies in Higher Education: Vision and Challenges* (Delhi: Deshkal, 2005), pp 81-95.
 - 23 I am thankful to the several batches (from 1991 to the present) – of Masters, MPhil and PhD students at the department of sociology and since 1995 at the Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre for the collective efforts in building and disrupting the pedagogical space. Their classroom interactions, "traditional" day celebrations, parties, note and letters of criticism and appreciation – in fact makes the very exercise of this lecture possible.
 - 24 For a provocative and evocative account of "home" see Biddy Martin and Chanda Talpade-Mohanty, "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?" in Teresa De Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
 - 25 This is a question R Radhakrishnan pursues profoundly in his accounts of cultural politics of parenting and pedagogies in the diaspora. See R Radhakrishnan, *Between Identity and Location: The Cultural Politics of Theory* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2007).
 - 26 I draw upon and seek to rework the models of progressive pedagogies outlined by Lawrence Grossberg; op cit, 1994.
 - 27 See bell hooks, "Eros, Eroticism, and the Pedagogical Process" in Henry A Giroux and Peter McLaren (ed.), *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994: 113-19).
 - 28 For a nuanced discussion on confrontation as against safety in the classroom, see hooks; op cit, 1989.
 - 29 This draws upon the hit Hindi film number "Pappu can't dance..." from the film *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na*. Pappu in the vernacular generally refers to those young people considered to be "not so smart or happening" by those who name what is in and out. This section will look at moments in which it seems that "pappu can also dance – but do they?"
 - 30 This project is being done at the Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre and is supported by the Higher Education Initiative of the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust. Dialogue with Tejaswini Niranjana, Rekha Pappu, Ashish Rajyadhya, Anoop and Ashwin of CSCS, Bangalore has helped shape this project.
 - 31 See Sharmila Rege (ed.), *Building Bridges: On Becoming a Welder: Manual 1* (Pune: KSP, Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune, 2010).
 - 32 For more on critical feminist pedagogies of dialogue, participation and experience see Esther Ngan-Ling Chow, Chadveck Fleck et al, "Exploring Critical Feminist Pedagogy: Infusing Dialogue, Participation and Experience in Teaching and Learning" in *Teaching Sociology*, Vol 31, No 3, July 2003, pp 259-75.
 - 33 I would like to thank for their insights, interventions, energy and affection – Anil Jaybhaye, Nag-nath Shelke, Deepa Tak and Tina Aranha who assisted in teaching the Popular Culture course over the last two semesters.
 - 34 Uma Chakravarti, "Foreword" in MA Class of 2008 (ed.), *Exploring the Popular: Texts, Identities and Politics* (Pune: KSP, Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune, 2008).
 - 35 See *Isn't This Plate Indian/Hi Thali Bharatiya Nahi Ka? Dalit Histories and Memories of Food*, University of Pune, Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, April 2009.
 - 36 See Batch of 2005-07 (Course on Dalits and Public Sphere). *Dissonant Democracy*, University of Pune: Department of Sociology, April 2007; Batch of 2006-08 (Course on Popular Culture and Modernity in India). *Sansanati Youth News: A Short Film on Mobile Cultures Shot on Mobiles*, University of Pune: Department Of Sociology, April 2008; Batch of 2007-09 (Course on Gender and Popular Culture in Modern India). *Exploring the Popular: Texts, Identities and Politics*. A bilingual edited volume with a foreword by Uma Chakravarti. University of Pune: Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, December 2008 and WS 10 Class of 2009 (course on Gender and Caste: History and Memory). *Isn't This Plate Indian/Hi Thali Bharatiya Nahi Ka? Dalit Histories and Memories of Food*, University Of Pune, Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, April 2009 and WS 8, Class of January 2010 "Plundering Popular Culture". These documents may be accessed at the libraries of the department of sociology or by writing to wsc@unipune.ernet.in
 - 37 I am rephrasing the title of Mariscal's article – see Jorge Marsical "Can Cultural Studies Speak Spanish?" in Toby Miller (ed.), *A Companion to Cultural Studies* (MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2006).