

# Jyothiba Phule as a Social, Educational, Political Reforms in India

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## **Abstract**

This paper examined the various social, political, and economic difficulties that India encountered in this essay. We are providing an overview of the Indian national movement by prominent freedom fighters, the history of the movement's reforms, and how the British colonial administration ruled the people of India. The Ambedkarite movement is well-known as the Dalit movement. They are gradually freed from the oppressive class fights and social disgrace. Additionally, we want to draw attention to the feminist movement, also known as the women's liberation movement. The article mostly concentrates on Jyotiba Phule's reforms to the educational system, but it also discusses the farmer movement and the environment. One of the pioneers in India's education reform movement was Jyotiba, the founder of Satya Shodhak Samaj. He supported farmers' rights and inspired them to claim their dignity and value. In order to advance their economic status movement, he also urged them to organise cooperatives and cooperate. In order to bring about true progress and modernization, Jyotiba Phule felt that education was a vital weapon in the struggle against the oppressive caste system and that education for all people, regardless of caste or social rank, was required. Phule was a fervent supporter of women's equality and rights; she thought that women and men should have the same opportunities and rights.

Jyotiba Phule was an Indian writer, activist, and social reformer who lived in the 1800s. He is most recognised for his criticism of the caste system and for working to advance women's and Dalits' (formerly known as "untouchables") access to education.

Jyotirao Phule's primary accomplishment was founding the first school for females from the poorer classes of society. In addition, he supported women's education and started the anti-caste campaign.

Phule requested assistance in supplying lower castes with an education during a session of the education commission in 1882. He supported requiring primary education in villages in order to put it into practice. Also, he requested extra rewards to encourage more members of the lower caste to enrol in colleges and high schools.

The three pillars of Phule's socio-political philosophy were social justice, humanism, and rationality. He founded a number of schools and educational institutes for girls and people of lower castes because he thought that education was crucial for social and political emancipation. In 19th-century India, Jyotirao Phule and the

Satyashodhak Samaj were instrumental in opposing the repressive caste system and advancing social justice and equality.

**Key words:** Emancipation, Women's rights, Indian National Movement, Environmental Movement, Abolition of Caste System, Farmer's Movement, Agricultural Reforms.

### **Introduction:**

India is a vast country with diverse cultural, social, and political backgrounds. India has experienced along and vibrant tradition of social and political movements, aimed at empowering people, protecting the rights of marginalized communities, and fighting against oppressive systems. The Indian social and political movements can be traced back to the colonial period when people started raising their voices against British colonial rule. Post-independence, India faced numerous social, economic, and political challenges, and this has given rise to several socio-political movements. These movements are driven by a range of motivations, including economic inequality, social injustice, environmental degradation, and political oppression. In this research paper, we will examine the various socio-political movements in India and their impact on Indian society and politics. India has experienced good fortune throughout its long history of producing many outstanding people who devoted their entire life to uplifting the underprivileged and improving society. Some of them include Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule, Anne Besant, Mother Teresa, Vinoba Behave, Dr. B.R Ambedkar etc. We will studying the famous socio-political reformer Mahatma Jyotiba Phule life and we acknowledge his contributions to the development of contemporary India. Jyotiba Phule was a visionary reformer who played a crucial role in bringing about socio political reforms in India.

### **Early Life:**

Jyotiba Phule was an Indian social activist and reformer who fought against caste discrimination and advocated for the rights of women and lower-caste people during the British colonial rule in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the major socio-political reforms initiated by Jyotiba Phule (Begari, 2010) Before learning about his reforms we see his birth and childhood.

Jyotiba Phule was born on April 11, 1827, in a small village in the present-day state of Maharashtra, India. He was born into a family of farmers belonging to the lower-caste Mali community. Despite facing significant social and economic obstacles, Phule received some formal education as a child and went on to become a pioneering figure in the Indian social reform movement. Phule was married at a young age, as was common in India at the time, to a girl named Savitri. Later this husband-wife duo was influential social reformers in India during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Together, Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule (Raj, 2018) worked towards breaking down the barriers of caste and gender-based discrimination in India and advocating for the rights and empowerment of marginalized communities, including women, Dalits, and the poor. They established the first school for girls in India and worked to promote women's education and empowerment.

Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule's legacy has been significant and enduring, and their work continues to inspire social activists and reformers in India today. They are remembered as pioneers of the social reform movement in India, and their efforts to promote equality, justice and human rights remain an important part of India's cultural heritage. Throughout his life, Phule remained deeply committed to his beliefs and the cause of social justice. He was a vocal critic of the caste system and its associated inequalities, and he worked tirelessly to promote the rights of the lower castes and to challenge the status quo.

He led the effort to end the pervasive caste system in India. He stood up in rebellion against the Brahmins' dominance and battled for the liberties of peasants and other members of lower castes. His most socio-political reforms (Omvedt, 1971) are discussed below.

### **Education Reforms**

Phule's foremost contribution was to the field of education. He established schools for girls and for the lower castes, which aimed to provide equal educational opportunities to all (Mathur). He also opened a night school for the lower castes, who were unable to attend regular school because of their work obligations. Phule's efforts to educate the lower castes and women helped to challenge caste-based discrimination and break down the barriers to equality. Jyotiba, the founder of Satya Shodhak Samaj, was a pioneering figure in the field of education reform in India. He believed that education was a key tool in the fight against the oppressive caste system and that it was necessary to provide education to all people, regardless of their caste or social status, to bring about true progress and modernization.

Phule's educational philosophy was rooted in his belief that all individuals, regardless of their caste or social status, were entitled to an equal opportunity to learn and develop their full potential. He was a strong advocate for girls' education, and his school for girls in Pune, established in 1848, was one of the first in India to admit girls from all castes. He was also an advocate for education in the local language, and his schools taught in Marathi instead of traditional Sanskrit or English. He believed that education in the local language was more accessible and relevant to the needs of the people and that it would help to bridge the gap between the educated and uneducated classes. In addition to his work in establishing schools, Phule also wrote extensively on education and social reform. He saw education as a means of challenging the caste system, and as a way of empowering the lower castes and promoting equality. His writings, which include essays, poems, and speeches, continue to be influential in the field of education reform in India.

Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, and Fatima Sheikh (Desai, 2017) played a significant role in advocating for the rights of women and lower castes in India. As well as they established the need for education.

### **Fatima Sheikh:**

Fatima Sheikh was a social reformer and educator who worked closely with Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule. She was one of the first Muslim women in India to receive an education and was a strong advocate of women's

rights. She was a key figure in the Satyashodak Samaj, a social reform organization founded by Phule, and worked towards the education and empowerment of women and lower castes. Together, this trio was a powerful force for social and political reform in India. They worked towards the education and empowerment of women and lower castes.

He also started the *Jyotiba Phule Backward Class Welfare Scheme*, a scholarship program in India established in memory of the social reformer Jyotiba Phule. The scholarship is designed to provide financial assistance to students from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly students from lower castes, to help them pursue higher education.

The scholarship is open to students from lower castes, including Dalits (formerly known as "Untouchables"), who are pursuing higher education in recognized institutions in India. The scholarship provides financial assistance to cover tuition fees, books, and other education-related expenses. His Scholarship is also aimed at promoting the ideals of equality and justice that Phule advocated for during his lifetime. It is seen as a way to honor Phule's legacy and continue his work toward the empowerment and education of lower castes.

In this context, the Jyotiba Phule Scholarship is also seen as an important tool in promoting the ideals of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who was also a social reformer and advocate for the rights of lower castes in India. The scholarship provides financial support to students from lower castes, including Dalits, and helps them pursue higher education, which was a key goal of both Phule and Ambedkar.

Today, the legacy of Jyotiba Phule's educational reforms remains important in India, where efforts to provide education to all people and to promote equality continue. Phule is remembered as a pioneering figure in the field of education reform, and his ideas continue to inspire activists and educators working towards a more just and equitable society.

### **Abolition of Caste System**

Phule's Satya Shodhak Samaj (Rosenthal, 1973), (Sengupta, 2017) aimed to abolish the caste system, which he saw as a source of oppression and inequality. He advocated for the rights of the lower castes and encouraged them to assert their dignity and worth. He also encouraged inter-caste marriages to break down the barriers of caste-based discrimination. Phule's efforts to abolish the caste system helped to challenge the age-old traditions and customs that perpetuated caste-based oppression. He started Satya Shodhak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth)

### **Satya shodak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth)**

Satyashodak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth) was a social reform organization founded by Jyotiba Phule in 1873 in the state of Maharashtra, India. The organization was founded with the goal of promoting equality and justice for all castes, including the lower castes, and was a response to the oppressive caste system and discrimination faced by lower castes in India.

This aimed to bring about social and political reforms by promoting education and empowering lower castes. Phule believed that education was the key to ending the caste system and promoting equality and justice, and the organization worked toward the education and empowerment of lower castes, women, and other marginalized groups. It was also a platform for Phule to voice his criticisms of the caste system and advocate for the rights of lower castes. He used the organization to organize public gatherings and rallies to spread his message and raise awareness about social and political issues.

In addition to promoting education and empowering lower castes, the Satyashodak Samaj also worked towards improving the status and rights of women in India. Phule was a strong advocate of women's rights and was one of the first voices to raise concerns about their status and discrimination. Overall, the Satyashodak Samaj was an important and influential organization in the field of social and political reform in India. It continues to be remembered as one of the pioneers of social reform in India.

### **Women's Rights**

Jyotiba Phule was a strong advocate for women's rights and equality. He believed that women were equal to men and deserved the same rights and opportunities. He established the first school for girls in India and encouraged women to assert their dignity and worth. He also wrote extensively about the importance of educating women and providing them with equal opportunities. Phule's efforts to promote women's rights helped to challenge the traditional views about gender and lay the foundation for future feminist movements in India (BarathI, 2018). He was a strong advocate for women's rights in India. He believed that the oppression of women was closely tied to the caste system and that it was necessary to promote equality and justice for women to bring about true progress and modernization in Indian society. He was particularly critical of the treatment of women in India, where they were often denied education, property rights, and basic freedoms. He saw women's oppression as a form of enslavement and argued that educating and empowering women was necessary to break the cycle of oppression.

One of Phule's key contributions to the women's rights movement was his establishment of a school for girls in Pune in 1848. This was one of the first schools in India to admit girls from all castes. Phule established the first school for girls in India in 1848 in Pune. This school was a significant milestone in the history of women's education in India, as girls were traditionally excluded from formal education. The school provided education to girls from lower castes, including Dalits, who were often marginalized and discriminated against in society. He believed that education was the key to empowering women and breaking the cycle of oppression. He saw

educating girls to empower them to assert their independence and challenge the patriarchal norms of Indian society. His efforts towards promoting women's education inspired many other social reformers and played a significant role in the history of women's education in India. Today, his work continues to inspire efforts toward improving access to education for girls and promoting gender equality.

In addition to his work in education, Phule also wrote extensively on women's rights and social reform (Kesalu). He was a vocal critic of child marriage, sati (the practice of widows being forced to immolate themselves on their husband's funeral pyre), and other forms of oppression faced by women in India. He argued that women's rights were fundamental to the struggle for justice and equality and that they were essential to the progress and modernization of Indian society.

### **Jyotiba Phule's Thoughts on Religion:**

Phule had a critical view of religion and its role in perpetuating inequality and oppression in society. He believed that religion was often used as a tool to justify the oppression of lower castes and marginalized groups, and he was a strong advocate for secularism and religious tolerance. Phule believed that religion should be a personal matter and should not be used to impose social norms and restrictions. He was a critic of the caste system and the idea that birth determines one's status and believed that all people were equal regardless of their caste or religion. He was a strong advocate for rationalism and humanism and believed that people should seek knowledge and truth through reason and scientific inquiry. He saw religion as a barrier to progress and encouraged people to embrace reason and reject blind faith. His views on religion were ahead of their time and were met with resistance by many in Indian society. Despite this, his ideas continue to inspire efforts toward promoting secularism and equality, and his legacy continues to be an important part of Indian history and culture.

### **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha**

He was one of the first Indian social reformers to raise the issue of sexual violence against women and worked towards providing support and justice for rape victims.

Phule was a pioneer in establishing a home for rape victims, known as the Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha, in Pune in 1873. This was one of the first institutions in India to provide support and care for rape victims, who were often ostracized by society. The home provided medical care, legal assistance, and shelter to rape victims and aimed to empower them to rebuild their lives.

Phule was also a strong advocate of women's education and believed that education was the key to empowering women and breaking the cycle of oppression. He established several schools for girls, including the first school for girls in India, and worked towards educating women about their rights and encouraging them to assert their independence.

Today, the legacy of Jyotiba Phule's work on women's rights remains important in India, where efforts to promote equality and challenge the oppression of women to continue. Phule is remembered as a pioneering figure in the struggle for women's rights, and his ideas continue to inspire activists and thinkers working towards a more just and equitable society.

### **Agricultural Reforms**

Jyotiba Phule was also a champion of agricultural reforms. (Mallik, 2016) He believed that the lower castes, who were mostly farmers, were exploited by the upper castes. He advocated for the rights of farmers and encouraged them to assert their worth and dignity. He also encouraged them to form cooperatives and work together to improve their economic status. Phule's efforts to promote agricultural reforms helped to challenge the traditional power structures and provide a voice for the lower castes. He was a social reformer in India who believed that the caste system and its associated inequalities were closely tied to the economic structure of India, particularly concerning agriculture. He was a strong advocate for agricultural reforms, which he saw as essential to bringing about progress and modernization in Indian society.

Phule argued that the existing system of land ownership and agriculture in India was unjust and that it was necessary to promote the rights of farmers and promote equality in the distribution of land. He believed that the existing system, which was dominated by the upper castes, was responsible for perpetuating poverty and inequality, and that it was necessary to challenge this system to bring about real change. One of his key contributions to the field of agricultural reform was his advocacy for the rights of farmers, whom he saw as the backbone of Indian society. He argued that farmers were entitled to fair treatment and compensation for their labor and that it was necessary to promote the interests of farmers to promote the progress of Indian society.

In addition to his advocacy for the rights of farmers, Phule also believed in the importance of promoting agricultural innovation and progress. He encouraged the adoption of new technologies and techniques and believed that this was essential to improving agricultural productivity and promoting economic growth.

He was a predominant writer of his era he penned several scholarly articles and books were trying to bring some of them into forefront.

### **Slavery:**

This book is considered a seminal work in the field of social and political reform in India. It is a critique of the caste system and the oppression of lower castes by upper castes. The book is seen as a powerful call to action for social and political reforms and continues to be widely read and studied.

### **Gulamgiri:**

This book is a critique of the practice of slavery and the exploitation of lower castes and untouchables by the upper castes. It is a passionate call for social justice and equality and is considered one of Phule's most important works.

**Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak:**

This book is a collection of Phule's writings and speeches on various social and political issues. It covers topics such as the caste system, women's rights, education, and the rights of farmers and laborers. The book is seen as a testament to Phule's commitment to social and political reform and is widely read and studied.

Jyotirao Phule also started Deenbandhu (Ratnamala, 2012) a Marathi language newspaper in 1881. It was one of the first newspapers in India to be published in the Marathi language and was an important platform for Phule's ideas and activism. The newspaper was an important tool for Phule to reach a wide audience and promote his ideas about social justice and equality. He used the newspaper to raise awareness about issues such as the caste system, the oppression of lower castes and marginalized groups, and the importance of education and progress. It played an important role in promoting the ideas of the Satya Shodhak Samaj, the organization that Phule founded to promote social equality and challenge the caste system. Through the newspaper, Phule was able to reach a wide audience and mobilize support for his cause.

**Ideology of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule**

A social revolution in Indian society began in 1848 as a result of an incident that motivated Jyotiba to fight against the social injustice of caste discrimination.

Jyotirao received an invitation from one of his friends wedding who was from a high caste Brahmin family. But when the bridegroom's family learned about Jyotiba's roots, they humiliated and tortured him at the wedding.

Mahatma Jyotirao fled the ceremony because he was determined to oppose the existing caste system and social constraints.

He made it his life's mission to relentlessly push against social majoritarian dominance and worked toward the emancipation of all people who were affected by this social injustice.

Thomas Paine's beliefs had a big impact on Jyotirao after reading his well-known book, "The Rights of Man." He thought that the only way to tackle social ills was to educate women and members of lower castes.

**Jyotiba Phule's Contribution to Education**

Savitribai Phule, Jyotiba's wife, backed his efforts to guarantee women and girls the right to an education. Savitribai, one of the few literate women of her day, learned to read and write from her husband Jyotirao. Jyotiba founded a ladies' school in 1851 and invited his wife to instruct the students there. Later, he established two additional schools for girls as well as an indigenous school for people from lower castes, namely the Mahars and Mangs.

After realizing the miserable conditions faced by widows, Jyotiba founded an ashram for young widows and finally came to support the concept of widow remarriage. His era's society was patriarchal, and women's status was especially appalling. Female infanticide and child marriage were both common occurrences, with minors occasionally becoming married to much older men. Before they reached adolescence, these ladies frequently



lost their husbands, leaving them without any familial support. Jyotiba, who was distressed by their situation, founded an orphanage in 1854 to protect these poor children from dying at the brutal hands of society.

### **Jyotiba Phule as Social Reformer**

The traditional Brahmins and other upper castes were attacked by Mahatma Jyotirao and labelled as “hypocrites.” He ran an anti-authoritarian campaign and exhorted the “peasants” and “proletariat” to resist the limitations placed on them.

He welcomed guests of different backgrounds and castes into his home. He supported gender equality, and he put his views into practice by including his wife in all of his social reform initiatives. He thought that religious figures like Rama were used by the Brahmin to oppress the lower caste.

The society’s traditional Brahmins were incensed by Jyotirao’s actions. They accused him of corrupting societal rules and regulations. He was charged with representing the Christian Missionaries by many.

However, Jyotirao was adamant and chose to carry on the movement. It’s interesting to note that Jyotirao had several Brahmin acquaintances who lent their support to the movement’s success.

Jyotiba Phule founded the SatyashodhakSamaj, a social reform organization that campaigned for the rights of women, Dalits, and other marginalized communities.

He wrote some books and pamphlets, including Gulamgiri (1873), which is considered a classic of Indian social reform literature.

He was a strong advocate for women’s education, and he founded the first school for girls in India in 1848....  
Read more at: <https://www.studyiq.com/articles/jyotiba-phule/>

### **What are the Contributions of Jyotiba Rao Phule to Indian Society?**

Jyotirao Govindrao Phule, also known as Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, was an Indian social activist, thinker, anti-caste social reformer, and writer from Maharashtra. Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was born in Pune in 1827. His father’s name was Govindrao Phule and his mother was Chimnabai. He was born to a family that belonged to the Mali Caste. In the four varna system caste, they were placed within the Sudras or the lower ranking class. Jyotiba Phule died on November 28, 1890.

The turning point in his life came in 1848 when he attended the wedding of a friend who was a Brahmin. Jyotiba Phule attended a regular wedding procession but was later accused and insulted by his friend’s parents. They told him, that as part of Shudra’s caste, he should be wise enough to leave these rituals and should leave the ceremony. This case was unfair in the caste system and had a profound effect on Jyotiba Phule.

## **Contribution of Jyotiba Rao Phule to Indian Society**

Jyotiba Phule initiatives included eradicating untouchability and the caste system, as well as educating women and caste members who were being exploited. The following are Jyotiba Rao Phule's primary contributions to Indian society.

### **Jyotiba Rao Phule's Contribution Towards Elimination of Caste Discrimination**

Jyotirao attacked the Orthodox Brahmin and other high-ranking castes, calling them "hypocrites". He fought the authoritarianism of upper castes and called on "farmers" and "proletariats" to resist the restrictions imposed on them. He believed that religious icons such as 'Rama' or 'Krishna' were used by the Brahmin as a means of conquering lower castes.

The orthodox Brahmin of society was furious at Jyotirao's activities. They accused him of violating social norms and regulations. Many had accused him of acting on behalf of Christian missionaries. However, Jyotirao remained firm and resistant to them and decided to continue the movement started by him. Interestingly, Jyotirao was assisted by some of his Brahmin friends who expanded their support for the success of his movement.

### **Jyotiba Rao Phule's Contribution Towards Women's Education**

He believed in gender equality and embodied his belief by involving his wife in all social reform activities. He witnessed how a young widow had to shave his hair and had to reject all kinds of joy in her life. He saw how untouchable women were forced to dance naked. And then, he decided to educate women by witnessing all these social illnesses that promote inequality.

Jyotirao's quest to give women and girls the right to education was supported by his wife, Savitribai Phule. One of the few educated women of the time, Savitribai, received her literacy instruction from her husband, Jyotirao. In 1851, Jyotirao founded a girls' school and asked her wife to teach girls at school. He later opened two more schools for girls and indigenous schools for lower castes, especially for Mahar and Mang caste.

### **Jyotiba Rao Phule's Efforts Toward Stopping Child Marriage and JauharPratha**

In his time, society was patriarchal and the status of women was particularly dire. Female infanticide and child marriage were two main stigmas in society. Girls were sometimes married to much older men. These women often became widowed before even reaching puberty and were left without family support. Suffering from their plight, Jyotirao founded an orphanage or ashram in 1854 to protect these unfortunate souls from the cruel hands of society. And eventually became an advocate of the widow's remarriage idea.

## **Conclusion**

Jyotiba Phule was a visionary reformer who played a pivotal role in bringing about socio political reforms in India. He fought against caste-based discrimination and oppression and advocated for the rights of the lower

castes, women, and farmers. He was referred to as "Mahatma" by his followers and admirers in recognition of his status as a great leader and champion of social justice. The term "Mahatma," which means "great soul" in Sanskrit, is a title of respect and honor that is often used to describe leaders and thinkers who have made significant contributions to society.

The ideas that inspired Mahatma Jyotiba Phule in his never-ending battle against social stigma may be regarded as his most important legacy. He campaigned to abolish the caste, class, and race prejudice that people in the nineteenth century were used to accepting as societal standards that had to be kept without question. He was a pioneer of cutting-edge social reform ideas. He started awareness efforts that eventually served as an example for leaders who later took substantial steps to eradicate caste injustice, including Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. His contributions towards education and equality continue to inspire generations and remain a testament to his legacy. His legacy lives on as a symbol of hope and inspiration.

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