



An Overview of Contributions of Mahatma Jyothiba Phule towards Social Transformation

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule was a pioneering 19th century Indian social reformer and leading character in India. He was far ahead of nationalist discourse in weaker sections of 19th century Colonial India. He also encouraged his wife Savitribai Phule to inculcate literacy skills among women. Though the orthodox communities were strongly opposed the revolutionary works of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. But, Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule never afraid of their opposed activities and never stopped at a single point. With this backdrop, this paper investigates Mahatma Jyotiba Phule's contributions to the education, empowerment, emancipation and self-reliance of subjugated India's weaker sections. This paper is special emphasizes Women and backward-class people.

Keywords: Weaker Sections, Women's Education, Empowerment, Social Reformer.

Introduction

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule stand out as an exceptional couple in Indian history. They were restlessly fighting to create a movement for social justice and gender equality. They devoted their entire lives to promote education because they understood that knowledge is power and without education, women and weaker sections could not develop. They hold the distinction of founding the nation's first girls' school. In India, they started the "Literacy Mission" in 1854-55. They established a "shelter for the prevention of infanticide" at their home in 1863 for the protection of abused Brahman widows who were pregnant and to care for these children. Jyotiba and Savitribai raised their voices against

the oppressive social system. The cultural environment surrounding them had an extremely important role to play in their socialization. The school's headmistress, Savitribai, has generously decided to dedicate her life to reforming backward classes and women's education; she does this work without any remuneration. Their contribution revolved around rationality and human reasons such as truth, equality, and humanity.

Key Contributions of Jyotiba Phule towards Social Transformation

Educational Revolution

When Savitribai was still in her teen years, Jyotiba and Savitribai founded the first locally run school for girls in Pune. The school's first teacher was SavitribaiPhule. This school includes a social studies, mathematics, and science curriculum from the West. She did not receive any remuneration for doing this service. "Institutionalization" turned out to be modern India's fundamental premise. Jyotiba founded a school for native females. They organized the "Dakshina Prize" to increase participation in girls' education. With the support of JyotibaPhule, she opened 18 schools for girls. Savitribai and Jyotiba strongly emphasized giving both boys and girls a trade and vocationaloriented education to develop their independence and the capacity to think critically. They discovered that poverty and illiteracy were the root causes of the dropouts. She devised a curriculum tailored to the interests of girls from lower social classes and made plans to pay the students a "wage." SavitribaiPhule gave importance to the education of women to promote social transformation.

Empowering Women

With the support of SavitribaPhule, and Jyotiba started MahilaSevaMandal in 1852 to raise awareness and, worked to educate women about their human rights, the value of life, and other social issues. They founded the SatyashodhakSamaj (Society for Truth Seeking), and they pioneered the Satyashodhak marriage, which is a marriage without dowry or a wedding at a low cost. The bridegroom was required to take an oath of education and equal rights for women as part of the Satyashodhak marriage. Both also raised awareness against child marriage and asserted the right of widow remarriage. In their own home, Jyotiba ran a hostel where girl students from faraway locations would stay to further their education. Jyotiba and Savitribai determined that education should empower people to make moral and ethical decisions and distinguish between truth and fiction. They were working extra hard to establish areas where female creativity might flourish. They were remarkably successful on this front as well. His views on religious and social issues are presented in the form of a dialogue in his book SarvajanicSatya Dharma Pustak, which was published in 1891. He believed that both men and women had equal rights and that discriminating against people based on their gender was a sin. He emphasized human unity and envisioned a society based on liberty, equality, and fraternity. To keep infanticide in check, and to give care to lactating widows/rape survivors Jyotiba and Savitribai opened 'BalhatyaPratibandhakGriha' in 1863. Savitribai was deeply committed to women's empowerment. Savitribai and Jyotiba recognized that self-esteem through education is the key to achieving social and gender equality.

Anti-Caste Activism and Equality

Savitribai encouraged everyone to write and one of the essays written by her student Mukta Salve became the face of Dalit feminism and literature. She also tried to give a stipend to students to attend the school to decrease the dropout rate. Savitribai and Jyotiba were also associated with a social reform to Dalits, and other less privileged communities from getting oppressed and exploited. After the death of Jyotiba in 1890, Savitri carried forward the work of SatyaShodhakSamaj. This Organization worked on the bases of giving education to oppressed members of society. Savitribai went head-to-head with other social taboos that had long victimized women. Savitribai created an educational framework to revolutionize society. Jyotiba-Savitribai started the Society for Promoting the Education of Mahars and Mang's castes, which were regarded as untouchables. JyotibaPhule opened 18 schools and taught children from various castes over the years. He urged the oppressed caste and communities to get an education and get freedom from chains of oppression. He also worked for imparting education to the Dalits. JyotibaPhule supported Western education and advocated for free and compulsory primary education until the age of 12. JyotibaPhule advocated for lower-class technical education. He also desired that children in rural areas receive an education.

Welfare of Peasants

Advocating rights: Phule was a strong advocate for the rights of peasants and agricultural labourers, who were often exploited by landlords and middlemen. For example, he advocated for a shift in agricultural policy, emphasizing education for peasants to free themselves from debt and poverty.

Associated Writings: Phule's activism extended to the economic hardships faced by the economic hardships faced by the peasantry which was seen in his writings. In his book, *Shetkaryacha Asud*, he exposed how farmers were exploited by moneylenders, the bureaucracy, and the colonial state.

Legacy of JyotibaPhule

- JyotibaPhule's vision of an equitable and inclusive society laid the foundation for many social reform movements in India.
- His work inspired generations of reformers, including Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and played a crucial role in shaping modern India's commitment to social justice and equality.
- Phule's emphasis on education as a transformative force and his tireless efforts to eradicate caste-based discrimination continue to resonate in contemporary India.
- His life and legacy remind us of the power of compassion, resilience, and the unwavering pursuit of justice.

Conclusion

The primary goal of Jyotiba was to educate all people. And he established a lot of schools to accomplish those goals. Even though government initiatives like the "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan," the "Right to Education Act," and the "midday meal program" that rewards education may seem truly innovative today. Jyotiba Phule challenged caste-based exploitation and religious orthodoxy, and championed women's emancipation and access to public resources for the oppressed. His writings and social reforms made him a significant figure in the development of modern Indian social thought and feminist discourse. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule was a reformer and revolutionary who dared to challenge entrenched social norms and inspire change. His work is a cornerstone of India's journey toward social justice, equality, and progress. His relentless efforts to uplift the marginalised and his emphasis on education as a tool for empowerment continue to inspire generations. Phule's vision laid the foundation for a more inclusive and equitable society.

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