

## Mahatma Phule: A Pioneer of Women's Emancipation and Empowerment

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Jyotiba Phule took up the problem of caste as well as gender. He revolted against the unjust caste system below which huge numbers of people had endured for hundreds of years. He emerged as the unmodified leader of the depressed courses in Maharashtra and was recognized as a leader of downtrodden category of all over India. He was the first leader who worked for the development of the society and tried to bring them into the mainstream of society. He was the man who started women's education first time in India. He started schools for girls and children backwards who belongs from backward classes of society. He believed in equality and tried to educate both men and women. According to him education is the only way of freedom. He used to tell 'lack of education' is the main cause behind the backwardness of schedule class people. He had demanded free education to the children of the age group of 12 years in the middle of the 19th century. He used to say emphasis should be on integrity ethics, intelligence in education. He focused on how education can develop good human.

He tried for bringing women into the mainstream of society in his entire life. Along with while doing this he thought about the women of all community, as he also gave support to upper caste women. He strongly believes that

women are at always gives less important despite their caste. He firstly taught his wife Savitribai and then started educate girls and orphanage for widow's children. He also got a widow's marriage. The first Indian woman teacher Savitribai Phule was with him for entire life. Females were residing in suppressed and subjugated position and the cultural position doesn't allow them to be free in the society. Widowhood and child marriages are forced/ imposed on the females. The role of windows was weak as they have been suppressed in the society. Women had been restricted to have employment as well as training in the society. Because of child marriages there was several young widows. Besides widow's remarriage was strictly prohibited. This affect the condition of females during 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though in India females constitute half of the population of its, but the role of theirs in society isn't the exact same, their role has been variously estimated and have diametrically opposing views during Mahatma Phule's time, the females weren't having any social status and they were subjugated even in their own families. They were deprived from all kinds of rights in society and family, they were deprived of education when new community reformer Phule opened the 1<sup>st</sup> school of his at Pune for untouchable females Phule's wife Savitribai herself had taken the challenge of coaching and quickly unrestrained excitement as well as anger swept over Pune against the couple. Mahatma Phule was the foremost to rise against this particular age old tradition. He thought that emancipation of the depressed as well as suppressed classes was possible only through social reforms and education. The institutions of his for Shudra females were a modest start of a larger public movement and sign of social reformation society didn't want that windows must marry again, which was actually must marry again, which was actually a heartless and cruel tradition. He removed females from the



wretched life in which they are living. He raised voice in favour of widow remarriage and many unmarried young males came forward to marry them. He condemned Sati tradition of Maharashtra which is a criminal act for females. Savitribai had to deal with bitter opposition from the orthodox society of the time for touching females and individuals. In spite of this opposition, Savitribai and Jyotiba continued their work sincerely for the empowerment of women. He believes in the equality of females and males. He worried on female's education, empowerment and emancipation of women. He stated equality along with oneness is needed for the improvement of the country. He opposed child marriage for the sake of empowerment of the women, and the improvement of the country. Mahatma Phule's bold initiatives to educate females, shudras and also the untouchables had deep impact on the values, ideologies and beliefs. Education made females more skillful. They started to be cognizant of what's wrong and right in the light of science. Women began questioning the age old customs which degraded them.

He understood besides illiteracy there was numerous community evils of the society, which have crippled the entire public order. It was all because of ignorance, superstitions and conventional prejudicial thinking. As a real reformer, Mahatma Phule practically destroyed all religious dogmas which were against explanation and opened the door to reforms. His goal was to reconstruct society on the foundation of equality, explanation as well as liberty.

Phule's contributions towards empowerment of females is far valued and he's truly a liberator of Indian women from the traditional shackles. Widow remarriages weren't permitted by several of the castes. Phule condemned Sati tradition. Mahatma Phule was the foremost to rise against this age old tradition. He knew that knowledge advances the people and spread of female education will awaken the

society. He believed that emancipation of the depressed and suppressed class was possible only through education and social reforms. He was a symbol of the revolution of social equality which was born of the impact of Western education and the great idea of equality brought by it to India. Equality as a force began to make for social, economic and national change all over India.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule laid the foundation of the mass movement for justice, equality and liberation in modern India. He was the first person to create a strong ideological and social movement for the total independence of peasants, untouchables, Anti-Shudras and women in the country. His solutions to problems facing Indian society were comprehensive and revolutionary.

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