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Savitribai Jyotiba Phule

Savitribai Jyotiba Phule (January 3, 1831- March 10, 1897) was a social reformer who along with her husband, Mahatma Jotiba Phule played an important role in improving women's rights in India during the British Rule.

Savitribai was the first female teacher of the first women's school in India and also considered as the pioneer of modern Marathi poetry. In 1852 she opened a school for Untouchable girls.

Mahatma Jyotiba is regarded as one of the most important figures in social reform movement in Maharashtra and India. He is most known for his efforts to educate women and the lower castes. Jyotirao, then called as Jyotiba was Savitribai's mentor and supporter. Under his influence Savitribai had taken women's education and their liberation from the cultural patterns of the male-dominated society as mission of her life. She worked towards tackling some of the then major social problems including women's liberation, widow remarriages and removal of untouchability.

However, apart from all these oppositions, Savitribai yet continued to teach the girls. Whenever Savitribai went out of her house, groups of orthodox men would follow her and abuse her in obscene language. They would throw rotten eggs, cow dung, tomatoes and stones at her. She would walk meekly and arrive at her school. Fed up with the treatment meted out to her, she even decided to give up. But it was because of her husband that she continued with her efforts. He told Savitribai Jyotiba who was working for women's education had started the first girl's school and required women teachers to assist him. Jyotiba educated and trained Savitribai, his first and ideal candidate for this job of a teacher. Savitribai and Jyotiba faced fierce resistance from the orthodox elements of society for this. Jyotiba sent her to a training school from where she passed out with flying colours along with a Muslim lady Fatima Sheikh. When Savitribai completed her studies, she, along with her husband, started a school for girls in Pune in 1848. Nine girls, belonging to different castes enrolled themselves as students.

Slowly and steadily, she established herself. Jyotiba and Savitribai managed to open 5 more schools in the year 1848 itself. She was ultimately honoured by the British for her educational work. In 1852 Jyotiba and Savitribai were felicitated and presented with a shawl each by the government for their commendable efforts in Vishrambag Wada.

The next step was equally revolutionary. During those days marriages were

arranged between young girls and old men. Men used to die of old age or some sickness and the girls they had married were left widows. Thus, widows were not expected to use cosmetics or to look beautiful. Their heads were shaved and the widows were compelled by society to lead an ascetic life.

Savitribai and Jyotiba were moved by the plight of such widows and castigated the barbers. They organized a strike of barbers and persuaded them not to shave the heads of widows. This was the first strike of its kind. They also fought against all forms of social prejudices. They were moved to see the untouchables who were refused drinking water meant for the upper caste. Both Jyotiba and Savitribai opened up their reservoir of water to the untouchables in the precincts of their house.

Savitribai was not only involved in educational activities of Jyotirao but also in every social struggle that he launched. Once Jyotiba stopped a pregnant lady from committing suicide, promising her to give her child his name after it was born. Savitribai readily accepted the lady in her house and willingly assured to help her deliver the child. Savitribai and Jyotiba later on adopted this child who then grew up to become a doctor and after Jyotiba's death, lit his pyre and completed his duties as a rightful son. This incident opened new horizons for the couple. They thought of the plight of widows in Hindu society. Many women were driven to commit suicide by men who had exploited them to satisfy their lust and then deserted them. Therefore, Savitribai and Jyotiba put boards on streets about the "Delivery Home" for women on whom pregnancy had been forced. The delivery home was called "Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha".

Jyotiba and Savitribai were also opposed to idolatry and championed the cause of peasants and workers. They faced social isolation and vicious attacks from people whom they questioned. After his demise, Savitribai took over the responsibility of Satya Shodhak Samaj, founded by Jyotiba. She presided over meetings and guided workers.

In 1868 she welcomed untouchables to take water from her well. She worked relentlessly for the victims of plague, where she organized camps for poor children. It is said that she used to feed two thousand children every day during the epidemic. She herself was struck by the disease while nursing a sick child and died on 10 March 1897.



भाषण ? : 2

Savitribai Phule

Savitribai Phule, first female teacher of the first women's school in India is a pioneer figure. She relentlessly fought against the dominant caste system and worked towards the upliftment of the marginalized. She demanded dignity for all women, for which she, along with her husband Jyotirao Phule worked their entire lives. The principles of humanity, equality, liberty and justice were of utmost importance to her. During a time when women were mere objects, she ignited a spark that led to equality in education – something which was impossible before. She strongly spoke against the discriminatory boundaries imposed on women, which led to their oppression. Her emphasis on secular education for social emancipation in India is the marker of her significant personality. By getting to know her better, by understanding her struggles and hardships, we will be looking into a life that not only changed the face of education in India, but also enlightened humanity in its real essence.

Early Life and Work

Savitribai Jyotirao Phule was born on January 3, 1831 at Naigaon, about 50 km from Pune. She was the eldest daughter of mother Lakshmi and father Khandoji Neveshe Patil. In 1840, at the age of 10, she was married to Jyotirao, who was 13 at the time. After marriage Savitribai and Jotiba lived in a Dalit-working class locality in Pune. Jyotirao educated his wife at home and trained her to become a teacher. The responsibility of Savitribai's further education was taken up by Jyotirao's friends Sakharam Yeshwant Paranjpe and Keshav Shivram Bhavalkar (Joshi). Savitribai also had taken teacher's training at Ms. Farar's institution in Ahmednagar and in the Normal School of Ms. Mitchell in Pune.

Savitribai went on to become India's first woman teacher and headmistress. It is her struggle and story that marks the beginning of modern Indian women's public life in India.

The extraordinary couple was engaged in a passionate struggle to build a movement for equality between men and women and a fight against the caste system. They dedicated their lives to spreading education and knowledge. They started the first school in the country for girls and the 'Native Library'. In 1863,

they started a 'home for the prevention of infanticide' in their own house, to ensure the safety of pregnant and exploited widows. They also established the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society for Truth Seeking), initiating the practice of marriage without dowry or overt expenses. They were against child marriage and supported widow remarriages. They had no children of their own but adopted a child of a Brahmin widow, educating him and arranging an inter-caste marriage for him.

Savitribai and Jotiba built a revolutionary social education movement for shudra and atishudra women of the country. After starting the school in 1848 and training Savitribai Phule, Jotiba started a school for the Mahars and the Mangs. But within six months, his father threw them out of the house and the school work came to an abrupt halt. Govande came to Pune and took Savitribai with him to Ahmednagar. After she came back, Keshav Shivram Bhavalkar took up the responsibility of educating her. Jyotirao and Savitribai focused on providing girls and boys vocational and practical education, to make them capable of independent thought. They believed that an industrial department should be attached to the schools where children could learn useful trades and crafts and be able to manage their lives comfortably and independently.

They insisted that "education should give one the ability to choose between right and wrong and between truth and untruth in life." They took special efforts to create spaces where the creativity of boys and girls could bloom. Their success is evident from the fact that young girls loved to study under their guidance, so much so that their parents would complain of the girls' dedication to studies.



भाषण ? : 3

Savitribai Phule

Savitribai Phule was a famous social reformer of India who was born in the family of an affluent farmer. She was born on 3rd January, 1831 in a small village Naigaum

of Satara district, Maharashtra, was married at a very tender age of 9 to Jyotiba Phule Savitribai. Phule was the first female teacher of India's foremost women's school. Savitribai Phule was also a poet and was considered a pioneer of Marathi poetry. Her husband encouraged her to get proper education and engage herself in the liberation of the female folk of Naigaum. In the year 1852, a school for untouchable girls was opened by her.

Early Life of Savitribai Phule

Savitribai Phule was one of the most important personalities who contributed considerably in adding glory to the mission of modern Indian social scenario. Jyotirao Phule, her husband, needed some female teachers to join his bandwagon of his reform works. Thus, he taught and trained his wife as a teacher. Slowly the news of his teaching Savitri reached his father who threatened to drive him out of his house, fearing attack from orthodox elements. When the choice before Savitribai was either going away with her husband or staying back with orthodox her in-laws, she preferred to be with her husband. After that her husband sent her to a training school. She passed out with flying colours. After completing her studies, Savitribai Phule opened a school in Pune for girls in the year 1848. Initially, nine girls enrolled themselves as students and they belonged to different castes. She used to leave for the school early in the morning. Orthodox society was not prepared for this 'misadventure', as woman's education was frowned upon.

Education of Women

Savitribai Phule continued with teaching the girls despite all oppositions from the society. She was even abused by the orthodox society. She lost all courage after facing such ill treatments and even determined to give up but she continued only because her husband's support. In spite of the entire ordeals, she continued with her teaching. Slowly and gradually, she established herself. Eventually, Savitribai Phule was honoured by the British government for her contribution to education. In 1852 Jyotiba and Savitribai were felicitated by the government for their commendable efforts in the field of education.

Other Social Reforms of Savitribai Phule Savitribai Phule not only contributed in the educational activities, but also supported her husband in every social struggle that he launched. Once Jyotiba stopped a pregnant lady from committing suicide and promised her to give the child his name, after it was born. Savitribai and Jyotiba later on adopted the child. This particular incident brought new horizons and the couple took serious steps for the troubles of widows in the society.

The next step was equally revolutionary. During those days marriages were arranged between young girls and old men. Men used to die of old age or some sickness and their young widows lived a weary life. Savitribai Phule and Jyotiba were moved by the condition of the widows as well as by the condition of untouchables in the society. Thus, Savitribai Phule shared every activity in which her husband was engaged. She suffered alike with him but she maintained own distinctive personality. After his death, she took over the charge of Satya Shodhak Samaj.

Publications of Savitribai Phule Savitribai's poems and other writings are still an inspiration to others. Her two books of poems Kavya Phule in 1934 and Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar in 1982 were published.

Personal Life of Savitribai Phule Ten years before Pandita Ramabai was born, this lady who was born in the backward Mali community, could express herself in the most radical and eloquent terms. She was the first woman teacher, the first woman educationist, the first poet and the foremost emancipator of women. If Savitribai were not to undergo the ordeals she went through, the women of India would not have attained even the status they have today in society.

Savitribai Phule worked enormously for social reform. During the time of epidemic, she herself fed around two thousand children. However, she also suffered from the disease and passed away on 10th of March, 1897. Her name would be scripted in gold whenever history of women development would be accounted.

