

**MAHATMA PHULE'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT FOR THE EGALITARIAN SOCIETY: A CRITICAL SURVEY.**

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Abstract:

Mahatma Phule is a father of the social revolution; he believes that education is important means to bring out desired changes. Women are an important part of society, they should not be bypassed at any cost, according to his belief man and woman should come together to bring out tangible progress in society. A vulnerable section of society lags behind because of the lack of education. Fabricated stories in various religious books enslaved these people for over a thousand years, for orientation of their injustice mass education should be started. He made a revolutionary attempt to awakens people of the vulnerable class by establishing the schools. He extends his thought that primary education is the basis for the manifestation of an individual's personality. Government should understand the importance of education and should be made education universal and compulsory. Through education, he envisages new social order which would be based on justice, liberty, and reason. Through this research, it is focused on his unflinching support and contribution for the comprehensive growth of society.

Key Words: *Egalitarian society, social justice, women education, comprehensive growth*



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Introduction

Education is one of the important instruments to ignite the people for their injustice and liberty. Education keeps society dynamic, social problems can be addressed and being solved through the means of education. Rational thinking is the basis for the ethical behaviour of society. If there are no norms of ethical behaviour then the speed of positive progress of the society has been restricted. Education brings out the tangible impact on the social set up, eventually it strengthens the economic structure of society. Mahatma Phule believes lack of education



among the Shudra and Ati-Shudra is the root cause of their problems. Due to the bad financial condition Shudra and Ati-Shudra lost their power and enslaved by dominant castes. Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule was the father of social revolution who ignited the downtrodden people for their basic rights. He advocated the vision of social justice for the comprehensive growth of society. Every individual should be incorporated in the overall progress of the society that was his ultimate desire.

Women education:

Mahatma Phule is treated as the pioneer and staunch supporter of woman education. He established special schools for women. In his time Christian schools were primarily engaged with gospels of the Christian religion. He started the first private school for girls at the premises of Tatyasaheb Bhide in 1948. Started school for girls of backward classes at Ganj Peth on the premises July 3, 1851. There were many other schools started by him and as per the government record, the strength of the girls in schools in 1853 rose 235 at Pune. He used the boldest steps to empower women in a true sense. Learning made them skilful and they came to what is wrong and what is right. They understood the importance of scientific thinking. Reformation instils constructive outcomes on an individual and they empowered and get the confidence to ask fundamental questions to the traditional society even they dared to stand against it. Mahatma Phule realized the importance of human resources therefore he treated man and woman with the principle of equality. He dared to stand against the established flow of the traditional society and asked structural questions. He was the first Indian to start a school for Untouchables and a girl's school in Maharashtra. He wanted to remove the ignorance and superstition of Shudras, Ati-Shudras, and Indian women and to break the shackles of their slavery. So, he heroically open the gates of knowledge to the lower classes and to Indian women. It was his aim to reconstruct the social order on the basis of social, equality, justice, and reason.

“ Women and the Shudras had no right to education. A woman by nature was regarded as a frail, untrustworthy, wicked though less, lewd person. If a woman was educated, she would elope with anybody, would easily be led astray, would destroy happiness at home. For a woman to receive education meant a sacrilegious act against the caste and society. If a girl received an education her husband would die prematurely.” (Kir, Mahatma Jotirao Phooley)

**Universal education and compulsory education:**

It emphasized vocational education to make the pupils self-reliant and independent. He sponsored the concept of universal and compulsory education. Universalization of education means extending all the facilities of education to all those needy people irrespective of caste, gender, religion, and physical and mental disability. Mahatma Phule advocated the principle of universal education for the comprehensive development of society. He envisages the new social order which would be based on egalitarian principles. This kind of reflection can be seen in the Indian Constitution Part III, article 45 its principle of universal, free and compulsory education, this is the core article of the socialist principle of the Indian Constitution. Mahatma Phule deeply felt sad by understanding the regressive approach of the British empire in regards to the universalization of education. He warned the British in his books, '*Shetkaryachya Asud*', '*Gulamgiri*' for the negligence of duty towards universal and compulsory education.

Education is an instrumentalist to demolish caste distinction:

Graded inequality is a fundamental principle of the India's caste system it further not only makes division of works but also division of labourers. Therefore, caste system forms system of sovereignties and high and low reflection which resulted jealous among them. Caste pride becomes the visible and it deteriorates problems further. Education is the ultimate way to find out concrete solutions for it, therefore Mahatma Phule took stringent efforts for spreading mass education.

He understood that the caste system is the dermatological wound for the Indian society, therefore it is required to cure for the creation of the egalitarian society. Defective social stratification made social life miserable especially for outcasts who scaled in the lowest place in the caste hierarchy. With the contribution of the Mahatma Phule, it opened the gate of knowledge to all the people after the 3 thousand years.

In the history of India, Mahatma Phule contributed outstanding works for the development of women and other downtrodden people through the means of education. In reference Mahatma Phule's social Movement, Mr. Faizal says:

“The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lionreal education is that which enables one to stand on one's legs” (Faizal)

**Education is the basis for social reform:**

He took constructive measures for the comprehensive growth of all sections of society. Therefore, he dedicated his book 'Gulamgiri' (Slavery) to those who worked for the eradication of slavery in the USA. He believed that the mental slavery of the Shudra and Ati-Shudra can be overcome by spreading education among the masses. He adopts the philanthropic view to understand the humanistic feeling of the entire world community.

He denounced all the religious scriptures which enslaved the majority portions of the society and the rested power in hands of a few people. These fabricated stories can be understood by all these vulnerable people therefore he laid emphasis on mass education.

Jyotiba Phule concentrated on the need for Primary education, the essential qualities of Primary Teacher, and the curriculum of Primary education. Through his wide experience in the field of Primary education, Jyotiba Phule expressed these views with profound foresight.

According to Jyotiba Phule:

- (1) Primary teacher should be trained person and sufficient salary should be paid to Primary teacher.
- (2) In order to safeguard the interests of the agriculturists and the so-called lower castes of the community, teachers from these castes should be provided opportunities for employment.
- (3) Primary teachers should be paid According to their Efficiency. Their work is more important than another usual teacher.

Curriculum development in Primary Education: -

- (1) In the curriculum of Primary education, preliminary knowledge about agriculture and health should be included
- (2) The curriculum of Primary education should be reoriented to provide the demands of rural areas. There should be a separate syllabus for urban and rural students.
- (3) Education should be utilitarian and practical so as to cover the needs of society. By understanding agriculture role model farming should be implemented for the understanding.
- (4) Practical knowledge and general knowledge should be offered to the students in regards to Marathi script), accounts, History, Grammar, Agriculture, Ethics and Health should be



imparted, special knowledge Modi Script should be given for the general understanding.

He believes that on regular basis the inspection of the primary school should be done on the regular basis for the maintaining standard of the school

Need of establishing government Primary Schools: -

The British government should render the duty to establish the government primary school for the common people of the society.

- (1) These schools are less in the number taking into consideration the needs of a growing population.
- (2) Many government schools are sub-standard schools and sufficient staff preferably trained staff, are some of the main deficiencies of the schools. Therefore, the reconstruction of government primary schools is urgently needed. Jyotiba Phule has quoted the example of Pune city proper whose population was at that time 5000 but there was only one government primary school with the strength of only 30 students.

Compulsory Primary education up to 12 years of age for all castes:

The British government should make available compulsory primary education up to the age of 12 years to all the people irrespective of any kind of discrimination. He believes that education can bring desired changes in the development of society. The British Government should put into practice the facilities of education for these backward classes as it has been assured in Queen's Proclamation.

According to Mahatma Phule, the theory of infiltration was wrong and its philosophy is utopian. He believes that this theory is viable in society therefore the government should emphasize the spread of mass education among the masses, for that he made correspondence to the British empire. He scolded the theory of infiltration and he made up his mind for the long struggle for that he contributed various valuable works in his life. N.G Pawar in his books writes:

“Plato in his educational theories justified these views. In his ideal State, the purpose of education was to enrich the elites. He never thought of extending facilities of education to the labourers and slaves. Rousseau was supporter of individual freedom, but he also expressed his narrow views in respect of woman education. In his concept of individual freedom, the freedom of woman was neglected. All round development of personality of



women through education was not conceived by Rousseau. ”. (N.G.Pawar)

But Mahatma Phule thinks for all the sections of the society and imagines a society free from any sort of exploitations.

For the upliftment of the farmers and laborers:

Lack of education the situation of the laborers and the farmers had been continuously degrading. The education makes awareness about one own injustice. Education is an instrument to prevent any sort of exploitation. In reference to that Dhanjay Kir says:

“The farmers and the toiling masses on the farms were in humanly harassed by the officers of the Peshwa and by his adopted brother Amritrao. If the farmers failed to pay him the desired amount even during a severe draught of famine, he poured over their children boiling oil from the frying-pan. Heavy stones were mercilessly placed on their backs. Flogging was performed on their stopping backs, and their heads were bent over suffocating smoke. Gunpowder was blown on their navels and ears.” (Kir, Mahtma Jotirao Phooley)

Farmers and laborers are the breadwinners of the society but this faulty order of the society intentionally put them out of the main path of development. Education brings out manifestations of the personality therefore these sections had been kept out of reach from the education. Dominants forces of the society created fabricated and false stories for their dominance if any individual from the vulnerable section of the society attempted, they would offer stringent punishments. Therefore, the views of Mahatma Phule on education are important for making an egalitarian society.

Pragmatic thinker:

He was pragmatic in his approach but he was not a blind follower of western pragmatism. He was well aware of the weakness of human beings. He was no doubt expecting the best human activities in the best form of society but at the same time, he was well aware of the limitations of human powers. He used to distribute books among the poor students on the occasion of his father’s birthday. He was a path-finder and torchbearer to all the people who have been struggled in the darkness of social evils. Mahatma Gandhi called him, “Joytiba was real Mahatma” (the Din Bandhoo Special Number)

In a true sense, Mahatma Phule envisaged an egalitarian society for that he took painstaking efforts and as per the say, ‘Charity begins at home, he started reformation from his family



itself. He taught his wife for the sake of woman's education. He dared to go against the established flow of society. He dreamed of a new social order which would be based on the principle of equality. Somehow, we can see his dream's fulfilment in the Indian constitution.

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