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INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FELLOWS ASSOCIATION'S
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Two Days Interdisciplinary International Conference on
**Role of Social Reformers in
Nation Building**

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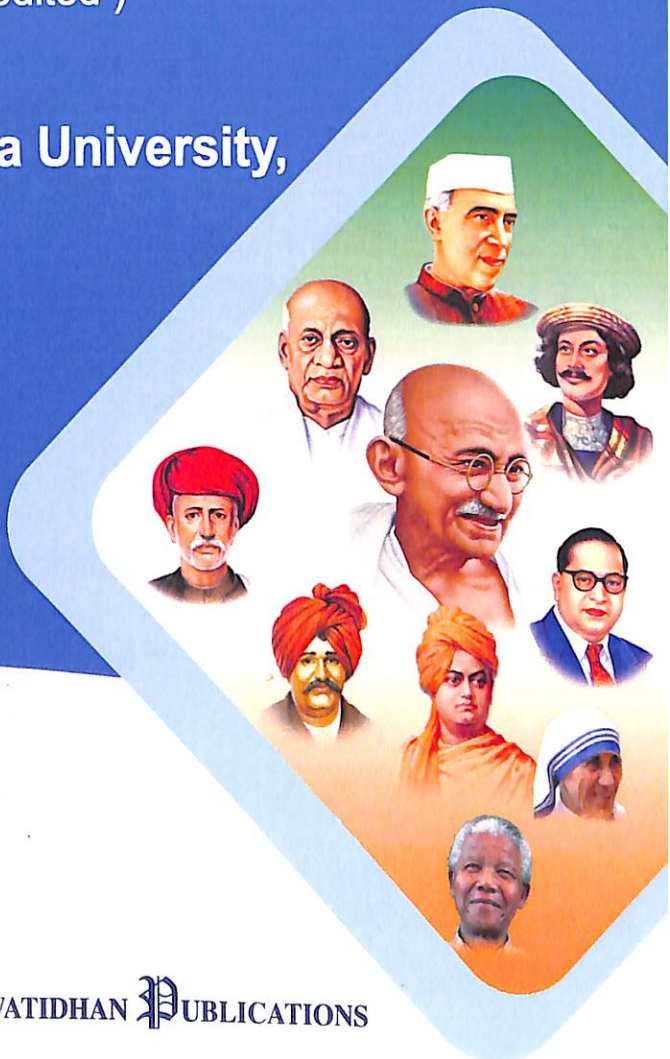
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Role of Mahatma Jotirao Phule in Nation Building

- Dnyaneshwar M Bansode

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Jotirao Phule occupies a distinctive position among the social reformers of India in the nineteenth century. He is an architect of Indian social revolution. Jotirao Phule revolted against the unfair caste system under which millions of people had suffered for centuries and developed a critique of Indian society. During nineteenth century, many social and political thinkers started movement against such unfair social systems. These socio-political thinkers have organized movement for striving equality for dalits, backward classes and women.

Jotirao Phule wanted to transform Indian society on different heads. One such area that came under the analysis of Jotirao Phule was women's education & her social enrichment. During the span of 63 years (1827-1890), there were incredible events in his life. His contributions in the field of social reforms and education, particularly women education, are really magnificent and memorable. His social realism is the outcome of social conflicts based on the realities of life. He was a reformer and an educationist with profound foresight and optimism.

Jotirao Phule was born in 11 April 1827. His father, Govindrao was a vegetable vendor at Pune. Originally Jotirao's family known as Gores, Came from Katgun, a village in the satara district of Maharashtra. His grandfather Shatiba Gore settled down in Pune. Since Jotirao's father and two uncles served as florists under last of the Peshwa, they came to be known as 'Phule'.² Jotirao's mother passed away when he was nine month old. After completing his primary education, Jotirao had to leave the school and help his father by working on the family's farm. Jotirao's marriage was celebrated when he was not even thirteen. The turning point in Jotirao's life was in year 1848. One incident made him aware of the qualities of the caste system, the predominant position of the Brahmins in the social setup. After this incident Jotirao made up his mind to defy the caste system and serve the downtrodden and women who were deprived of all their rights as human beings under the caste system.

Mahatma Phule's some of the notable published work:

Tritiya Ratna (1855), Brahmananche Kasab (1869), Gulamgiri (1873), Shetkaryanch Asud (1883), Ishara (October, 1885) Satsar Vol.1 (June, 1885), Satsar Vol. 2 (October, 1885), Gramjoshya sambandhi Jahir kasab (1886), Satyashodhak Samajokt Mangalashatakasah Sarva Puja-vidhi (1887), Sarvajanic Satya Dharma Pustak (April, 1889), Sarvajanic Satya Dharmapustak (1891).

Philosophy of women Education:

He started women education from the educating

wife Savitribai with a view to educating the women first, in order to bring in the value of equality at home. Savitribai was the first women teacher in India. According to him, Education should be based on equality because such education fixes the society together. It does not destroy the society; hence it is beneficial for the welfare of the country. He emphasized that the principle of universalization of education should be followed and to some extent, education should be made compulsory. Women, who were neglected and those who were deprived of education since long, should be given top priority in educational facilities and thus social justice should be established.

It was his firm belief that no social equality and social justice could be achieved without proper education of women. His revolutionary vision filled his entire thinking, from identifying the social problems to formulating strategies to solve these problems. He was firm that education is only tool in the task of social transformation and clearly demarcated the area and extent of its utility in this respect. Accordingly, mass education was regarded constituted an important part of his strategy of social transformation. He wanted that women should not only be emancipated but that they should also be well educated and be fully aware of their human rights and in this way, he helped them to lead a secured life of happiness and gratification. A woman should never be scared about her future. He persuaded the British Government to enact laws so that women could raise their voices against exploitation.

He said that British rule made available an opportunity for the masses to get themselves Liberate from the slavery of the unjust social system. But at the same time, he also criticized the British bureaucracy for its policy of supporting higher education.

Action on Philosophy:

He started spreading education without any means and sources while convincing the people of the importance of education. He started the first school for girls at premise of Tatyasaheb Bhide, Budhwar peth Pune in August 1848. He advocated education for female students from the

downtrodden communities and adults. Jotiba started another school for girls on 17 September 1851 and a third school on 15 March 1852 at Vetal Peth. Within four years, he had opened 18 schools in Pune and its vicinity. This remarkable work was appreciated by J.S. Mill. He established institutes like the 'Pune Female Native Schools' and the 'Society for Promoting Education for Mahar, Mangs'. Savitribai had to face bitter opposition from the orthodox society of the time for teaching girls and people from the underprivileged groups in the school. Despite this bitter opposition, Jotirao and Savitribai continued their work with sincerity. He was honoured by the Board of Education for the work he did for girl's education in 1852. By 1858, he gradually retired from the management of these schools and entered into a broader field of social reform. He turned his attention to other social evils.

Conclusion:

Jotiba Phule was the first Indian educationist whose pragmatic views on education were honouring the generations. He was the most practical man with profound philosophical background. The Indian educationists of his period and after him were profoundly impressed by the richness and originality of his thoughts. His educational ideas and principles especially in the field of women's education and universal free and compulsory primary education are most welcome in the modern Indian society. The history of women's education in India will

just be incomplete without referring to the contribution of Mahatma Jotiba Phule. He is rightly called the Mahatma. For his subtle and substantial contributions he is regarded as Martin Luther of Maharashtra.

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