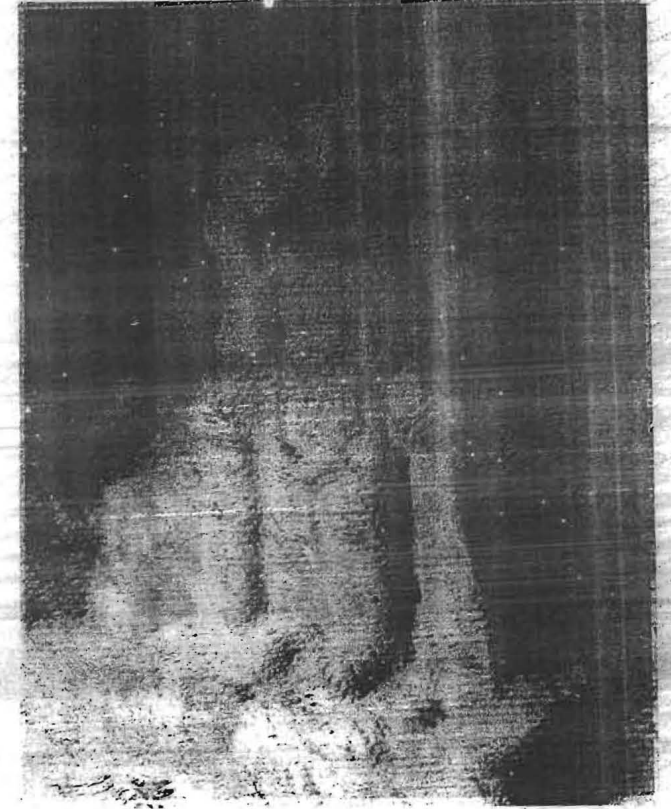


# संशोधक

वर्ष : ८३ • डिसेंबर २०१५ • अंक ४



मुंबई येथे इतिहासाचार्य वि.का.राजवाडे संशोधन मंडळाच्या नवीन वेबसाईटचे उदघाटन करित असतांना यशवंतराव चव्हाण प्रतिष्ठाणचे अध्यक्ष मा.शरदचंद्रजी पवार सोबत ज्येष्ठ शास्त्रज्ञ श्री.अनिल काकोडकर, राजवाडे मंडळाचे कार्याध्यक्ष श्री.संजय मुंदडा, यशवंतराव चव्हाण प्रतिष्ठाणचे सरचिटणीस श्री.शरद काळे, वरळी नेहरु सेंटरचे श्री. सहानी



इतिहासाचार्य वि. का. राजवाडे संशोधन मंडळ, धुळे

# Basaveshwara and Jotiba Phule as Social Reformers

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## Introduction :

To establish a new society free from the irrational notion of discrimination on the basis of caste, class, and sex in the mid-dense darkness of 12th century a beacon of divine light dawned upon Karnataka in India in the form of Basaveshwara and Shivasharanas. Mahatma Jotirao Phule was a well-known social reformer of Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. He worked ceaselessly for education of the women and the Dalits, for upliftment of the underprivileged and the downtrodden, and for reform of the Indian social structure. He was revolutionary in his thinking and is a constant source of inspiration for new generation of intellectuals.

## Basaveshwaras Social Reforms :

Basaveshwara who was not only a great spiritual leader but also a social revolutionary created a great history in attempting to annihilate caste system and his message of social and economic equality throughout the length and breadth of the country.

## Eradication of Untouchability :

The upliftment of the depressed classes and the reformation of Hindu life constitute the alpha and omega of Basava's thought. To emancipate the depressed the downtrodden, the despised, the denigrated section of human fraternity was his motto, his mission in life and he strived towards this end unto his death. According to Basaveshwara the spirit within the body knows neither the difference of male and female nor that of master and servant. This common humanity implies that all men have an equal right

### Anubhava Mantapa :

In the Anubhava Manatapa where without considering high and low participated in the discussions. The very untouchables, whom the high-born had kept at a distance, were provided with equal opportunities to participate in the deliberations of Anubhava Manatapa. He taught equality and so the Anubhava Mantapa was open to all without distinctions. Old and young, rich and poor, men and women, high and low king and servants, were all there equal."<sup>2</sup>

### Emancipation of Women :

Basaveshwara accorded religious equality on woman. Woman was entitled to undergo the process of "Linga Diksha" on par with man.<sup>3</sup> She was allowed to wear and worship 'Linga' even during her course period. Basaveshwara despised woman's susceptibility to pollution. He declared that the "Linga" worshipper has no religious taboos.<sup>4</sup> He insisted that one ought to worship 'Linga' by oneself. No one can have a deputy in this regard.

Basaveshwara liberated woman from her social chains. Woman was allowed to participate in religious deliberations and social activities. Akkamahadevi, Muktakka, Neellocane and a host of other Saranas participated freely in the deliberations of "Anubhava Mantapa" founded by Basavanna-irrespective of age, Kayaka and spiritual height, women got free entrance into "Anubhava Mantapa". From "Sunya sampadane"<sup>5</sup> (Dialogues of Saranas) it becomes crystal clear that some Sharanas excelled Sharanas in reaching spiritual heights and in deliberations.

### Economic Reforms :

Kayaka (work is worship), Dasoha (Service to society)

Basaveshwara was the first medieval prophet to preach that poverty is not a spiritual sin but it is a social evil. It is not a legacy bequeathed to us through sin committed either by us or by our forefathers. It is rather an outcome of social conditions. Being urged by this motive he strove hard to set right the economic conditions of the defunct society. He

collected all people belonging to different vocations and laid the foundation of a brotherhood of labour, the members of which were required to follow these rules :

1. Each member should earn his bread in the sweat of his brow.
2. Each member should take to any work suited to his temperament.
3. Each member should earn only as much as his needs require, he condemned beggary, even if it is religious, as a curse to life.<sup>6</sup>

Basaveshwara main goal of life was not merely to bring about the economic upliftment but also spiritual advancement of the entire society. In this connection Basaveshwara's unique contributions to world philosophy are the concepts of Kayaka and Dasoha. In this regard the principles of Kayaka and Dasoha have special significance which aims at both-economic and spiritual advancement. Dasoha cannot become private property; its essence is to become socialized and communalized resources.<sup>7</sup>

### Vachana Shastra :

Basaveshwara period is also called Vachana Yuga, because along with him, other Shivasaranas also wrote Vachanas. Instead of Sanskrit Kannada become a popular mass language of the people. His life and teachings have been a source of inspiration to millions of people in South India for the last nearly Nine hundred years, and influenced and molded their lives and continues to do so even to this day.

Basaveshwara translated the truth of all the planes of consciousness in the language of the common people. His Vachanas incorporated all the feelings and all the levels that elevate and ennoble our life. "The high spiritual ideas that he attained, his vision of life, the path he stood, the heights he sacred all these have found expression in the form of Vachanas."<sup>8</sup> The number of Vachanas composed by Basaveshwara is 1426, and more Vachanas are discovered each year with the discovery of new manuscripts.<sup>9</sup>

### Mahatma Phule (1827-1890) :

Among the pioneers who revolted against social and religious

inequalities in the early 19th century was Jotirao Govindrao Phule, who came to be known as 'Mahatma' in Maharashtra. While other reformers concentrated more on reforming the social institutions of family and marriage with special emphasis on the status and rights of women, Jotirao Phule revolted against the unjust Caste system under which millions of people had suffered for centuries. In particular, he courageously upheld the cause of the untouchables and took up the cudgels for the poor peasants.<sup>10</sup>

Awakening self-respect in the peasants and toiling masses, he infused courage in them to stand up against the poverty and social injustice, and against oppressive, unjust and inhuman Hindu priestcraft and the caste system. He also imbued them with new thoughts, new ideals of human dignity, equality and self-salvation.<sup>11</sup>

#### Phule and his social reforms :<sup>12</sup>

After founding educational institutions, Jotirao turned his attention to social reforms by striking at age-old social traditions. The issue of widow remarriage was extremely sensitive and Jotirao was deeply moved by the plight of Hindu widows.

1. Women's Education : Education of women and the lower castes, he believed, deserved priority. Hence at he began educating his wife Savitrabai and opened a girl's school in August 1848. Jotirao Phule opened two more girl's schools during 1851-52.
2. Widow Remarriage : The issue of widow remarriage was extremely sensitive and Jotirao was deeply moved by the plight of Hindu widows. In 1864 he got a widower of the Shenvi caste remarried. He founded an anti-abortion centre where widows could deliver their babies and have them cared for. This was the first institution of its kind. It saved the widows from loneliness and from the killing of their infants. Jotirao gave protection to pregnant widows and assured them that the orphanage would take care of their children. It was in this orphanage run by Jotirao that a Brahmin widow gave birth to a boy in 1873 and Jotirao

adopted him as his son.

3. **Equality of Sex** : Jotirao refused to regard the Vedas as sacrosanct. He opposed idolatry and denounced the Chaturvarnya. In his book Sarvajanic Satya Dharma Pustak Published in 1981, his views on religious and social issues are given in the form of a dialogue. According to him, both men and women were entitled to enjoy equal and it was a sin to discriminate between human beings on the basis of sex. He stressed the unity of man and envisaged a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity.<sup>13</sup> He was aware that religious bigotry and aggressive nationalism destroy the unity of man.
4. **Upliftment of Untouchables** : Jotirao took an important step towards solving the problems of the untouchables by training activists from the untouchable castes. He taught them to write and give speeches and guided them in social work.
5. **Primary Education** : Jotirao Phule was aware that primary education among the masses in the Bombay presidency was very much neglected. He argued that 'a good deal of their poverty, their want of self-reliance, their entire dependence upon the learned and intelligent classes' could be attributed to the 'deplorable state of education among the peasantry.'
6. **Orphanage** : In 1876, Jotirao was nominated as a member of the Poona Municipality. He tried to help the people in the famine stricken areas of Maharashtra when a severe famine in 1877 forced people in the rural area to leave their villages. Some of them had to leave their villages. Some of them had to leave their children behind and an appeal issued on 17 May 1877 by Jotirao indicates that the Victoria Orphanage was founded under the auspices of the Satya-Shodhak Samaj to look after these unfortunate children. From the beginning of the year 1879 Krishnarao Bhalekar, One of his 'Deenabandhu' which was the organ of the Satya-Shokhak Samaj. The weekly articulated the

grievances of the peasants and workers.

### His writings :<sup>14</sup>

Joritao wrote numerous books of prose and abhangas in Marathi in persuasive style. He called his abhangs, akhanda (endless). He also composed Mangalashuktas to be sung at weddings. These songs were included in the Sarvajanic Satyadharma.

1. Gulamgiri (1873)
2. Shetkaryacha Asud (1883)
3. Sarvajanic Satya Dharma (1891)
4. Shivaji Powada (1869)
5. Tritiya Ratna (1885)
6. Eshara (1885)
7. Brahmanache Kasab (1869)

### Satya Shodhak Samaj :

Accordingly Jotirao Convened on September 24, 1873 a meeting of all his admirers and disciples at Poona. About 60 men from many important centres of Maharashtra assembled. Jotirao made an impressive upon his followers the necessity of a central institution for the guidance of the movement. After some discussion and several other speeches, it was agreed to form an institution. There was much enthusiasm among the chosen lieutenants of Jotirao. They decided to organize the mission and to spread the message of the movement. Jotirao named this institution Satya-Shodhak-Samaj-Truth Seeking Society.

### Objectives of the Samaj :

The objects of the Samaj were to redeem the Shudras and Atishudras from the influence of Brahmanical Scriptures under which the Brahmin priests fleeced them to make them conscious of their human rights, and to liberate them from mental and religious slavery.<sup>15</sup>

### conclusion :

Great men of all ages speak in different languages, but their teaching

is the same. Each sun brings a new day, so every great man offers a chance to society for improvement. Mankind has been greatly benefitted by the religion, society, culture and philosophy propounded by Basaveshwara. In them we find a noble attitude. As long as the world lives values will not fade in the present world of chaos and confusion. malice and hatred, wars and quarrels, the message of Basaveshwara would sprinkle the nectar of peace co-existence and brotherhood to mankind. Basaveshwara is not of an age but for all times. His conception of the welfare of human beings and of the world is unique to him the world is his family. The sum total of his doctrines is to attain international integration and fraternity.

Filled with a heroic ethical purpose, Jotiraos ethico-religious personality stands on a high spiritual plane. By his emphasis on truth, equality and humanism, Mahatma Phule occupies a place in the pantheon of great thinkers and sages of India. When our society will attain the goal of social and economic equality and every man will uphold every right of every other man which he himself enjoys, Jotirao aim will be fulfilled. Both Basaveshwara and Phule tried to build a casteless society and welfare of all.

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