

On the Eve of Birth Anniversary of Social Revolutionary Rashtrapita Jyotirao Phule

Fighting Caste Discrimination: A Road to Social Justice



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Rashtrapita Jyotirao Phule: The Epitome of Social Justice

"Phule the greatest Shudra of modern India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery to the higher classes who preached the gospel that for India social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule." - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Jyotirao Phule (April 11, 1827 -November 28, 1890), the modern Indian philosopher, generated awareness among the backward sections of the society and stood against the repressive and discriminatory social system prevalent in India. He is a social reformer, philosopher, critique of orthodoxy in Indian social order, teacher of oppressed, and a revolutionary. He also revolted against the unjust caste system and demanded an integrated social and religious reform with equality and justice through Satya Sodhak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth, 1873). Jyotirao refused the sacrosanct of Vedas and Chaturvarna System. He was undoubtedly the leader of the depressed and downtrodden class in India. He placed a special focus on the education and emancipation of women. He started the task of women empowerment from his house which is evident from his wife Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule who went on to open a first girl's school on 15th May 1848 in Pune and became the first women teacher.

Jyotirao Phule's notion of Social Justice was two-fold. The first was concerning justice for downtrodden sections of the society and the second being gender justice. We need to question and analyse the current state of affairs about Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Women, and Minorities. Even to this day, women in India are subjected to multiple oppression and discrimination by the Caste ridden society. The path shown by Jyotirao Phule for achieving Social Justice is the need of the hour to achieve the goal of the annihilation of caste and patriarchy.

Still India is grappling with evils such as child marriage, devadasi, female infanticides, school dropouts, caste discrimination, ill-treatment towards widows, denial of women's rights, and sexual, physical and mental harassment. Jyotirao Phule is indeed relevant in contemporary times.

While there is all round attack on the Bahujan rights in the present times, Phule becomes more contextual today. In a situation where in places like JNU the rights of Bahujans is continuously being curtailed (recall recent recommendation of Dean Committee regarding OBC reservation and eligibility criteria for admission) we are required to get united and fight strongly against all sorts of Brahmanical attacks. At this point we must not forget Phule's words that "education is the prime source for the progress of deprived and marginalised communities".

We need to reinvent his philosophy which is grounded on the values such as Justice, Equality, and Fraternity. United OBC Forum offers rich tributes and resolves to imbibe the philosophy and thoughts of Jyotirao Phule on his 189th Birth Anniversary.

United OBC Forum