

Jyotirao Phule – UPSC Notes

Jyotirao Phule was born in a Mali (Gardner) family of Poona in 1827. He was educated at a Marathi school, with a three-year break at a mission school in Poona. In 1848 Phule began his work as a social reformer interested in the education of low caste boys and girls, when he started a school for girls of low and untouchable castes.

About Jyotirao Phule

- Jyotirao Phule was born in 1827.
- Jyotirao Phule was a social reformer, thinker and social activist.
- He was born in Katgun, Satara District, Maharashtra.
- Amongst the “low-caste” leaders, Jyotirao Phule was one of the most vocal leaders.
- He was educated in a school established by the Christian Missionaries.
- Jyotirao Phule was from a caste society that was socially excluded.
- Jyotirao Phule was the founder of **Satyashodak Samaj**. It was founded in 1873. The primary emphasis of this Samaj was seeking truth.
- Satyashodak Samaj propagated **caste equality**.
- Satyashodak Samaj was devoted to secure **social justice** and **human rights** of low-caste people.
- In 1888, Maharashtrian social activist Vithalrao Krishnaji Vandekar had bestowed **Jyotirao Phule** with an honorific **Mahatma title**, meaning ‘venerable’ or ‘great-souled’.
- Mahatma Phule worked against Gender discrimination and caste discrimination.
- Mahatma Jyotiba Phule scorned the rules of pollution and purity.

Jyotirao Phule - Criticism of Indian Caste Society

- Jyotirao Phule worked for the upliftment of untouchables and women, these two groups were considered to be the lowest in the Brahmin culture.
- As he grew up, his own ideas started developing concerning the injustices that existed in the Indian caste society.
- The claims of superiority by the Brahmins were criticised and attacked by Jyotirao Phule. They were considered to be Aryans.

- Jyotirao Phule asserted that Aryans were foreigners who came to India. He argued that Aryans subjugated and defeated the true children of India. He contended that these subjugated people lived here even before the arrival of the Aryans.
- Jyotirao Phule opined that the defeated population was treated as low caste and inferior people by the Aryans as they went on to establish their dominance.
- As per Jyotirao Phule, the so-called low castes people who were the indigenous people had the rights over the power and land. As per Jyotirao Phule, the “upper” castes had no rights over power and land.
- Jyotirao Phule proposed unity of Ati Shudras (untouchables) and Shudras (labouring castes) to challenge caste-based discrimination.
- As per claims of Jyotirao Phule, before the arrival of Aryans, the Maratha countryside was ruled and tilled by warrior-peasants in a fair and just manner and it was considered to be the golden age.
- While freedom fighters like Bal Gangadhar Tilak emphasised the glory of the Aryan period, Jyotirao Phule recalled the glory of the pre-Aryan age.

Gulamgiri - Book Written by Jyotirao Phule

- In 1873, Phule wrote a book named **Gulamgiri**, meaning **Slavery**.
- 10 years earlier, slavery had ended in America after the American Civil War.
- Jyotirao Phule had dedicated Gulamgiri to all those Americans who had fought to free slaves, thereby establishing a link between black slaves of America and people of lower castes in India.
- In a letter to the Conference of Marathi Authors, Jyotirao Phule contended that conferences and various organisations founded by Upper caste people pretended to be modernists when they worked in the British Government. Once these people retire and get their pensions, they resort to discrimination.
- In the twentieth century, the caste reform movement was carried forward by Dr B.R. Ambedkar in Western India and E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker in Southern India.
- There are around 15 other notable published works of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule.

Jyotirao Phule - Women's Education

- Jyotirao Phule also fought against the discrimination meted out against upper caste women and miseries of labourers. This demonstrates that he argued against all forms of inequality.
- Some people had contested that education should be available only for privileged people.
- Some of the reformers argued that women have to be educated if a society has to progress.
- The **first school for women in Pune** was opened by social reformer, Jyotirao Phule.

Recognition of Jyotirao Phule - Mahatma Phule

- The Architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr B.R. Ambedkar had acknowledged that Mahatma Phule was one of 3 masters or Guru.
- There is an Indian Marathi-language biographical film named Mahatma Phule. It was released in 1954. This movie was about the social reformer Jyotirao Phule.
- There are statues, educational institutions, museums, and large markets named after the Mahatma Phule.

