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# JOTIBA PHULE

The Enlightenment refers to the intellectual cum- socio political movement of protest against all arbitrary authority in the wake of scientific revolution.

This enlightenment movement was prevalent in the 18th century in Europe.

In his essay 'What is Enlightenment' in 1784, Philosopher Immanuel Kant defined Enlightenment in the following words " Dare to know, have the courage to use your own reason.

Thus enlightenment gave importance to science and reason rather than religion and tradition.

## **The Role of British in Introducing enlightenment in India.**

**The Britisher under the influence of enlightenment were trying to understand how could India be ruled properly and to bring about Modernity.**

**The Britishers had two Policy choices to achieve their objectives in India**

**a) Utilitarianism and**

**b) Orientalism**

**But eventually orientalism was discarded and utilitarianism principles were introduced in India.**

**This tilt in favour of English education was possible (A) first by Thomas Macaulay's Minute on education which decided to introduce English as a medium of instruction in 1835 rather than vernacular language. William Bentinck who was a follower of Bentham and an Utilitarian immediately signed the policy .**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Raja Ram Mohan Ray was also instrumental to introduce western knowledge in English as he supported William Bentinck in his effort.**

# Thought of Jotiba Phule

Born in 1827, Jotiba Phule, (1827-1890), desired to form a social organization that would reflect the merits of the individual, rather than enforcing birth as the basis both for occupation and for religious status. The play, *Tritiya Ratna* (The Third Eye), which he published in 1855 is a powerful exposition of his ideology. The play is about the exploitation of an ignorant and superstitious peasant couple by a cunning Brahman priest and their subsequent enlightenment by a Christian missionary. Three important points stand out in this play. First, critical of Brahman domination, he

made a wider point concerning the oppressive nature of Hindu religion that, in its present form contributed to material impoverishment of the untouchables, Second , by highlighting the role of Christian missionary who rescued the couple from the clutches of the greedy Brahman, Phule seemed to suggest that the british rule was a boon in disguise for having struck at the foundation of the caste hegemony of the brahmans.

Third, underlying this story, there remained another major ideological point concerning the importance of education in sustaining the Brahmanic hegemony in Hindu society.

Phule was not so much against the Hindu scriptures per se as he was against the values and ideas sustaining the prevalent Hindu system. In other words, by deliberately articulating his opposition to Brahmanical discourses and not Hinduism as such, Phule was perhaps trying to distance himself from the Brahminical Hinduism. In his view, Hinduism is rooted in (Vedas) which have been distorted to rationalize the Brahmin hegemony. So, not only did he reject the Hindu system and its theoretical literature altogether, he also argued, rather persuasively, against the Brahmanic hegemony over the shrudras.

For Phule, Literacy and especially English education, was most useful in substantially eradicating the Brahmanical hegemony. Not only was literacy a powerful device in radically altering the existent social order, it would also bring about gender equality. Phule was perhaps the first nationalist to have seriously pursued women's literacy and an exclusive girls school was established in 1842 at his behest.



The other distinctive dimension in phule 's response is that he stands out among the early nationalist for having implemented his ideas, as far as possible, into practice. The satya shodhak samaj (The society of the Seekers of Truth) that came into being in 1873 was founded with this objective in mind. Not only was the Samaj involved in girls' formal education, widow remarriage and campaign against prohibition, it also led to vigorous debates on the nature of Hindu society and the scriptures, especially the Vedas on which it was based. By consistently arguing against the orthodox Hinduism, he provided a powerful social critique of the prevalent Brahmanical practices and values, justified in the name of religion and religious texts.

## **Conclusion:**

**The Indian enlightenment in relation to Jotiba Phule. He propagated two things , rationalism and egalitarianism.**

**Rationality could be achieved through education.**

**And egalitarianism could be achieved through breaking of the caste system and monopoly of Brahmins.**

**The problem with India reforms was that we did not have scientific revolution preceding enlightenment, nor did Indian society experience Renaissance which promoted values of Humanism.**



**THANK YOU**