

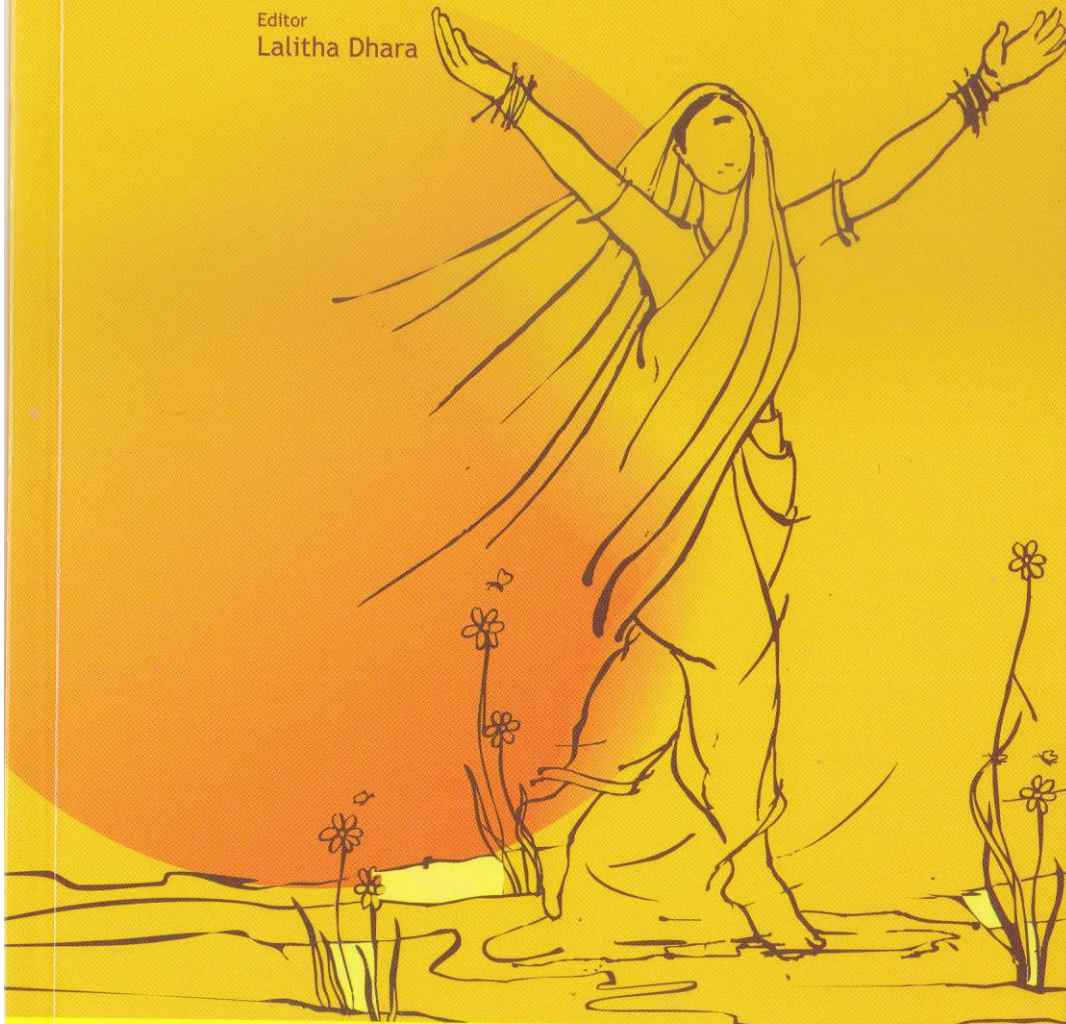


Kavya Phule

Savitri Jotirao Phule

Translated into English by Ujjwala Mhatre

Editor
Lalitha Dhara



Dr. Ambedkar College of Commerce & Economics
(Opp. Wadala Bus Depot, Mumbai - 400 031)

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January 2012



People's Education Society's

Dr. Ambedkar College of Commerce & Economics

presents

Kavyaphule

(poetic blossoms)

A collection of poems in Marathi by
Savitri Jotirao Phule (1854)

translated into English by
Ujjwala Mhatre

Editor
Lalitha Dhara

brought out with the support and cooperation of
Principal Dr. S.R.Kamble

for
Women Development Cell, Dr. Ambedkar College Unit

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With deepest respects to

Tathagata Bhagwan Gautam Buddha, Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Chhatrapati, Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Principal Dr. Siddharth Kamble trusted me enough to promptly sanction the book when I approached him with a proposal to translate Savitribai. He also gave me complete freedom to shape it as I thought fit. I am extremely grateful to him.

Prof. Mrs. Latifa Kadu, a dear friend and colleague, has always stood by me in whatever I do, whether in the college or outside. I am ever thankful to her for her blanket support.

I am extremely thankful to Ms. Ujjwala Mhatre who took great pains to translate the poems and Ms. Jaswandi Wamburkar who contributed a special article on Savitribai. In fact, it was Jaswandi's article which brought home to me the immense significance of Savitribai's creativity and inspired me to conceive this book.

I am indebted to Ms. Seema Pradeep Kamble, Asst. prof., Rachana Sansad College of Applied Art and Craft, for the wonderful cover design. I am even more thankful to her principal, Ms. Savita Saraf, for encouraging Seema to take up the assignment and giving her the space and freedom to complete it.

Many thanks are due to my office colleague, Karnik, who is always available for any computer-related work.

I am grateful to Mr. Gawde of Amar Printers who displayed keen interest and commitment in the project.

Lalitha Dhara
January 2012

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INTRODUCTION

No iconic figure in nineteenth century Maharashtra is as little or as partially understood as Savitribai Phule. It is true that her photograph adorns every government-aided school and educational institution in Maharashtra. Ritual worship such as garlanding of her photograph is religiously carried out before the start of any function but ask any of these educational authorities about her identity and you will get a pat reply that she was the wife of Mahatma Phule. Further probe will elicit the reply that she was the first native woman teacher. Everything else is subsumed in these two statements of fact.

Her work has been ignored, suppressed in her own home state, Maharashtra, for almost a hundred years. Whether the suppression of facts about this warm, passionate, fiery, rebellious woman was by omission (the gender factor) or by commission (the caste factor) or both is difficult to say. Some sporadic efforts to put together her life and work were undertaken but these were piece-meal. Full-fledged biographies of Savitribai began to see the light of day only in the nineteen eighties, the most noteworthy ones being Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule by Dr. M.G. Mali in 1980 and Agniphule by Dr. K.P. Deshpande in 1982. Thanks to the efforts of these scholars, Savitribai has belatedly found her place in the sun. Sadly, all of this work is in Marathi, save one book titled 'A forgotten liberator', published in 2008, in English. Hence, she is virtually unknown outside Maharashtra. This booklet is a humble effort towards introducing Savitribai to people outside her home state.

The first article is a life sketch of Savitribai Phule by Lalitha Dhara. It knits together the sequence of events in her life to enable the reader to understand and appreciate her life and work.

Hardly anyone is aware that Savitribai is considered the first modern radical poet of Maharashtra. In fact, her first book of poems

'Kavyaphule' was published in 1854 when she was merely 23 years old. What is more amazing is that her creative work was published before any of her illustrious husband, Mahatma Phule's writings saw the light of day. All this at a time when women were neither seen nor heard in public, much less published! Jaswanti Wamburkar elaborates on the historic significance of Savitribai's creative contribution in her piece titled, 'Savitribai, the first modern, radical poet of Maharashtra'.

Despite being a pioneering work, Savitribai's 'Kavyaphule' has not been translated so far, except in bits and pieces. One can't but pose the same question again. Is this caste bias at work or gender bias or both? This booklet attempts to make amends, belatedly, humbly. Ujjwala Mhatre has put her heart and soul into the challenging task of translating Savitribai's first collection of poems into English.

Savitribai's poetic creativity forms the core of this booklet. Wamburkar places Savitribai's creativity in a socio-historic context and Dhara attempts to place the Poet herself within a socio-historic context.

Here's hoping our labour of love generates a genuine interest in Savitribai within Maharashtra and a healthy curiosity about her outside the state.

Lalitha Dhara

January 2012

