

Pandita Ramabai: A pioneer in Challenging Patriarchy and Advocating Women's Rights.

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Abstract:

This article through historical and contextual analysis as well as interpretation delves deep into Ramabai's critique of patriarchy and advocacy for gender equality, situating her contributions within the broader contours of 19th century India. As a pioneering social reformer, educator, and advocate for women's rights, Ramabai's work laid the foundation for subsequent gender equality movements in India. It also validates her consistent support for women's education as a panacea of systemic gender inequalities and subsequently paved the way for women's autonomy and empowerment.

Key Words: Gender, Patriarchy, gender equality, patriarchal structures, systemic gender inequalities, women's rights, autonomy, Women's Education, Arya Mahila Samaj, Mukti Mission, social reform, marginalized women, women's empowerment programs.

Background and Context

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) was a great social reformer and women's rights activist. Her life and work encapsulate a radical critique of patriarchy and gender norms and through education she advocated bringing positive changes in women's life and their subsequent empowerment. In her life span she made significant contribution towards the feminist discourse in India through her seminal works like *Stri-Dharma-Niti* (1882), *The Cry of Indian Women*, *The High Caste Hindu Women* (1887) which was later known as India's first Feminist Manifesto. She was an epitome who had defied patriarchy through her life as well as her work. She dared to learn Sanskrit (*a language considered for high caste Hindu male*). She married outside her caste and had a public life even after becoming widow at early age. She chose to convert to Christianity on her own terms without accepting it in entirety. She was also awarded as Kaiser-e-Hind Gold medal for her Social Reform activities. The socio-cultural landscape of 19th century India

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