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Title: Need to confer 'Bharat Ratna' on Mahatma Jyotiba Phule.

SHRI B. VINOD KUMAR (KARIMNAGAR): Hon. Chairman, Sir, Mahatma Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was a pioneering social reformer. He campaigned extensively against the injustices of the caste system and for the rights of the lower castes and women. In 1851 he opened India's first school for girls and asked his wife Savitribai Phule to teach the students. He went to establish more such schools for girls and even opened an indigenous school for the Dalit castes or Mahars and Matangs. He championed the cause of widow remarriage, fought against female infanticide and even opened his own house to Dalits as part of his drive against untouchability.

Mahatma Phule was unsparing in his critique of Brahmanical orthodoxy and fanaticism. He published several works – notably *Ghulamgiri*, which highlighted the oppression against lower castes. His social reform against idolatry and superstitious practices were pioneering efforts that inspired many other social reformers across the country.

One of the criteria for awarding the Bharat Ratna is 'public service of the highest order'. Mahatma Phule ranks alongside towering personalities of modern India. In recognition of this, I request the Government to award him a Bharat Ratna.

HON. CHAIRPERSON:

Shri P. P. Chaudhary and

Kunwar Pushpendra Singh Chandel are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri B. Vinod Kumar.