

# Calendar, booklet bring pathbreaker women alive

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FROM a class in session at Hingne to the girl guides movement started by Gangutai Patwardhan in 1900, from Fatima Shaikh - the first Muslim teacher who helped Savitribai Phule - to Ibrahim Jaffer who started a school for Muslim girls at the beginning of the 20th century, 1998's unique calendar offers a glimpse of the pathbreakers in women's education in Maharashtra.

But that's not all. For Aalochana, a centre for documentation and research on women, who realised that there was hardly any research work on the efforts of Muslims or tribal communities to further women's education, needless to say, it was only befitting that an entire section was devoted to the marginalised lot in their resource booklet which was released today by 97-year old Gangutai Patwardhan, a champion of women's education.

At a function organised by

Aalochana at the Vidyarthi Sahayak Samiti hall, Gangutai and Phulwant Akka released the unique calendar and a resource booklet on the History of Women's Education in Maharashtra. The calendar for 1998 consists of rare photographs of some of the pioneering figures and institutions. Ink sketches of some of the unknown educationists have also been included.

If the pioneers of women's education in Maharashtra were none other than the illustrious couple of Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule, then it is a pitiable comment that even at the brink of the 21st century, a controversy exists as to whether women should be educated or not. However, Aalochana decided to put together heroic efforts and tremendous sacrifices made by the pioneers of women's education to keep the sense of history alive in the younger generation.

Nirmala Sathe, trustee, Aalochana said that the booklet was compiled with the intent of providing some information about

the early educationists in Maharashtra and which can also be used as resource material in schools and educational institutes or NGOs working in rural areas where there is paucity of reference material.

Nirmala Purandare who realised the important role that nurseries or balwadis played in shaping the child's development and set up a rural centre called Vanasthali also figures in the booklet apart from Dr Chitra Naik and Renu Dandekar.

Speaking on the occasion, Purandare stressed that women in the rural areas are the strength of the village and by empowering them alone, would it lead to the child's development.

The pages from history then unfold as the Phule's, Maharashi Karve, Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Modak, Anutai Wagh, Gangutai Patwardhan, Dr B R Ambedkar, Bhikshuni Naik, Shantabai Dane, Shakuntala Paranjpye, Kashibai Kanetkar, Dr Anandibai Joshi, Ramabai Ranade and a host of pathbreakers provide an insight into their life and times.

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Aalochana / calendar