

A few weeks ago I said I would tell you more about Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, the founder of the Mukti community. I still know only a little but here it is. Someone asked me the meaning of Mukti. All I've found is that it means freedom from the cycle of death and rebirth but I am happy to be connected.

Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (23 April 1858 – 5 April 1922) was an Indian social reformer a pioneer in the education and emancipation of women in India.

She was born into a Brahmin family. Her father, a Sanskrit scholar, taught her Sanskrit at home. It was very unusual even for Brahmin women to be educated in Sanskrit at this time. Dongre's extraordinary piety led him to travel extensively across India with his family in tow.

Ramabai gained exposure to public speaking by participating in the family's public recitation of the Purana at pilgrimage sites around India, which is how they earned a meager living.

Ramabai was orphaned at the age of 16 during the Great Famine of 1876–78, Ramabai and her brother Srinivas continued the family tradition of traveling the country reciting Sanskrit scriptures. She was the first woman to be awarded the titles of Panditita as a Sanskrit scholar and Sarasvati after being examined by the faculty of the University of Calcutta. She was one of the ten women delegates of the Congress session of 1889. In the late 1890s, she founded Mukti Mission. The mission was later named Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission.

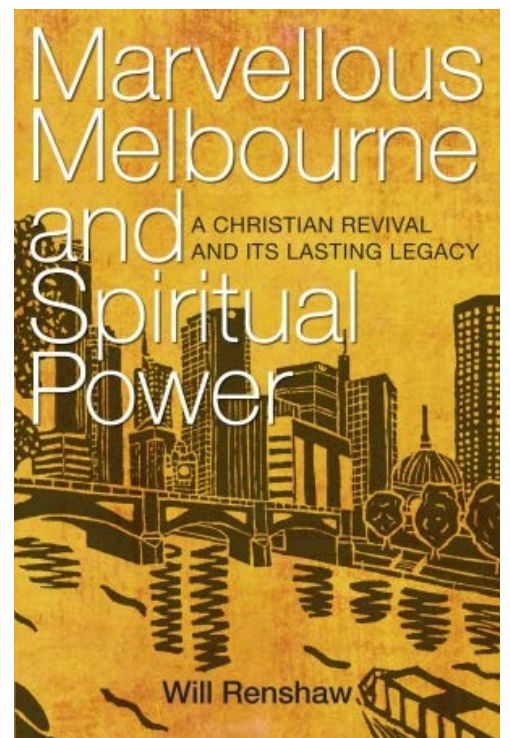
A 2008 article I read said she was unacknowledged in her homeland. I am grateful to Will Renshaw for pointing me to his book, 'Marvellous Melbourne and Spiritual Power', A Christian Revival and its lasting Legacy'.

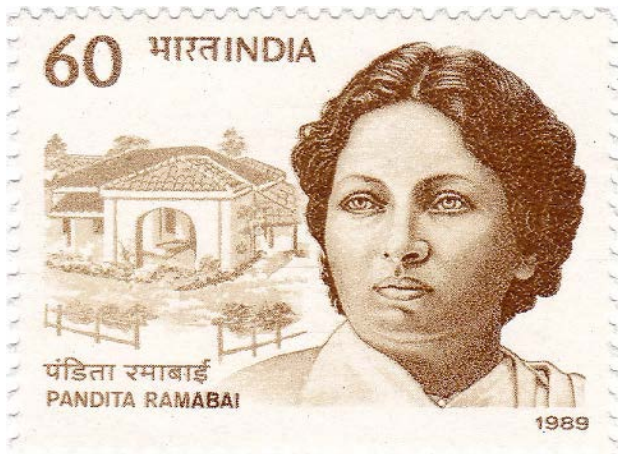
In fact, at the turn of this century, *The Times of India* named her Woman of the Millennium. In 2018 there was an article in The New York Times, 'Overlooked no more, Pandita Ramubai, Indian Scholar, Feminist, Educator.

So Ramubai was born into a Hindu family, and a very devout one at that. Although her father was considered by some Hindus to be a heretic because of his conviction that women should be educated. Sadly in the 21st century there are still some people who think that way.



Ramabai





Over the course of many years Ramabai encountered more and more Christians. She travelled to London. She says that she became converted to Christianity as a religion, especially when she saw the care that Christians gave to former prostitutes.

However, in her words, 'I needed Christ, and not merely His religion'.

And, as they say, the rest is history, well not quite. I quote from Will's book.

"The news of the revival in Australia encouraged Ramabai to send her daughter Manorama Bai and Miss Minnie Abrams to Melbourne in order that they might catch the inspiration of the Revival fire. Her message to Australian churches was 'brethren pray for us'. Ramabai also organised a system of prayer circles in 1905. She met with about 70 people every morning to pray. In June of that year the Mukti community experienced the start of a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit which lit a flame that spread coast across India.

Will quotes from Lorraine Francis;

'it is amazing to see how one woman whose life overflowed with love, compassion and dedication was used by God for the cause of the orphans and Hindu widows as a simple instrument in the hands of the master Potter. The Lord used her marvellously to shape broken lives and make them whole again.'

Many aspects of the life of Ramabai fascinate me. Her childhood shaped by her devout Hindu father. She had a loving family all of whom were to die when she was still quite young. This prepared her for this amazing work she began while still a practising Hindu. Mukti was then transformed into a Christian community which continues its life saving and life changing work today.

Matthew 7:16

By their deeds you will know them.

Christine Bradbeer

