



# Relevance Of Savitribai Phule's Educational Revolution In The Present Context Of India

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## *Abstract*

Education is a powerful tool for changing society. In the century India had a lot of social problems like caste hierarchy, patriarchy and religious orthodoxy. At that time educating women and lower-caste groups was an idea. Savitribai Phule was one of the people to challenge these social problems through education. She started a movement with her husband Jyotirao Phule to make education accessible to women, Dalits and other marginalized communities. Savitribai Phule opened one of the modern schools for girls in India in Pune in 1848 and played a key role in spreading literacy among socially excluded groups.

Her work laid the foundation for an educational revolution that questioned traditional norms and emphasized equality, dignity and social justice. She also worked against evils like child marriage, caste discrimination and the denial of education to women. Through initiatives like night schools for laborers and shelters for widows and abandoned children Savitribai Phule showed that education can be a tool for empowerment and reform.

Today even though we have made a lot of progress in literacy and educational access issues like gender inequality, caste discrimination and socio-economic disparities still exist in our systems. The ideas and practices introduced by Savitribai Phule are still very relevant in addressing these challenges. Her vision of inclusive socially conscious education aligns closely with modern educational policies and global goals like universal education and gender equality.

**Keywords:** Educational Reform, Women's Education, Social Justice, Inclusive Education, Gender Equality, Educational Revolution in India.

## ***I.Introduction***

This homage to Savitribai Phule has been used as an introduction because she took the lead, deploring 19th century India with respect to questions of social and cultural nature that were so deeply embedded in society. This was at a time when Indian society was rigidly hierarchical based on caste and gender, such that education and social mobility were confined to upper-caste males (Kumar,2005). Especially for women, particularly those from lower castes, education was prohibited or limited and oppressive traditions like child marriage and forced widowhood were practiced (Desai,2010). Savitribai Phule was a trailblazer who addressed these inequalities directly through her work in education and social reform.

The denial of education to women and marginalized communities was one of the most important barriers she fought. She co-founded one of the first modern schools for girls, in Pune, with her husband, Jyotirao Phule, in 1848. This movement was radical, in direct contradiction to the widely held belief that women were uninterested in formal education (Rege 2013). By allowing girls and lower- Her work in education and social reform challenged these inequalities head on caste children, Savitribai Phule broke the hegemony of upper-caste men over knowledge and education. Her work emphasized education as a source of agency and change in society.

Besides promoting education, Savitribai Phule also fought against the patriarchal and gender-based discrimination. During an era where widows were considered soulless and inhuman, she not only spoke against the evil of child marriage but also advocated for widow remarriage (Keer, 1990). She also set up a shelter for pregnant widows, where they were given care and dignity in a society that shunned them. These efforts directly battled the cultural practices that underpinned the subjugation of women and robbed them of agency over their lives.

Savitribai Phule's work extended to the social space and particularly caste-related discrimination, a core characteristic of Indian society. The caste system not only governed social ranking but also styled access to resources, education being one of them (Kumar, 2005). (V) Educating lower-caste children and advocating for their rights, she defied the Brahmanical social order and propagated the principle of equality. She saw her work as part of a larger struggle to address systemic injustices and promote social change (Rege, 2013).

She stood resolute even when facing social opposition, harassment and threats. Her perseverance exemplified the potential of education as an instrument of defiance and transformation. Not only did she challenge prevailing standards of her time, she offered feasible solutions through her initiatives. Her efforts set the stage for later movements advocating women's rights, social justice and universal education in India.

Savitribai Phule's role in fighting against the society and its traditions. Her Foundation was instrumental in changing the lives of many, as she devoted her life to education, gender equality and

social reform; re-imagining societies through Education. The work she left behind serves as a guiding force in striving for an equitable and inclusive educational system in the country.

## ***II. Review of Related Literature***

The educational and social reform movements led by Savitribai Phule have been widely studied by Indian scholars. They discuss her work in terms of gender equality, caste oppression, and inclusive education. Her groundbreaking efforts to set up schools for girls and marginalized communities in the 19th century are seen as a crucial step toward making education more democratic in India.

O'Hanlon, R. (1985 in u) *The Phule Movement: Its Challenge to Brahmanical Hegemony and Social Change*(1993). According to the study, Savitribai Phule's work is political; she attempted to reconstitute the social order through knowledge.

Gail Omvedt (2008) described arms and contributions of the Phule couple under larger anti-caste movements in India. According to Omvedt, Savitribai's work continues to be very relevant in modern India, where, despite constitutional provisions and policy interventions, caste-based barriers to education remain.

Uma Chakravarti (1993) developed on the interweaving of gender and caste, emphasizing that Savitribai Phule's work dealt with both at once. The research shows that her ideas of education as empowering women continue to inform feminist educational discourse in India.

In the Indian context, Sharmila Rege (2006) also highlighted the need for integrating Dalit feminist perspectives in mainstream education. Rege contended that the writings and practices of Savitribai Phule offer a caste and gender analysis framework that allows a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by women in education today.

Some recent works and papers have even tried to link her contributions with present day educational policy, like NPE 2020. While NEP 2020 prescribes inclusivity and equity, researchers argue that there exist implementation challenges to be overcome today which have a parallel in those concerning access, retention, and quality education for marginalized groups when Savitribai Phule started her pioneering work more than 130 years ago.

Additionally, Indian researchers like Kumar (2017) and Patil (2019) have mentioned how a focus on value-based and socially responsive education that Savitribai Phule advocated for is significant in today's education landscape where market-driven principles dominate. Being focused on strengthening these personality attributes is necessary for creating an equitable society, which is what her approach aims to do.

### ***III. Objectives of the Study***

The main objectives of this article are:

2.1 To analyze the revolutionary nature of her initiatives in promoting women's and marginalized communities' education.

2.2 To assess the relevance of her ideas and educational philosophy in the contemporary educational system.

### ***IV. Methodology of the study***

This study is based on an historical research approach. It relies on sources like books, academic journals, historical documents, biographies and scholarly articles related to Savitribai Phule and nineteenth-century educational reforms in India.

### ***V. The revolutionary nature of Savitribai Phule's initiatives in promoting women's and marginalized communities' education.***

#### **Establishment of Girls' Education**

The establishment of the girls' school in Pune in 1848 was a historic moment in Indian education. Many people believed that educating girls would disrupt traditions. However Savitribai Phule challenged these beliefs by showing that education could empower women and improve society (Paik,2014).

She not taught in the school but also developed innovative teaching methods and encouraged girls to pursue intellectual development. Within a years the Phules established several additional schools for girls.

#### **Education for Dalits and Marginalized Communities**

Savitribai Phule's work was revolutionary because it focused on educating children from castes. During the century caste discrimination prevented many individuals from accessing education.

By opening schools to students from all backgrounds Savitribai Phule challenged the caste-based system and promoted the idea that education should be accessible to everyone (Guru & Sarukkai, 2012).

#### **Advocacy for Women's Empowerment**

Savitribai Phule believed that women's education was essential for progress. She encouraged women to pursue knowledge and develop self-confidence.

Her writings, including poems and speeches emphasized the importance of education in achieving dignity and independence. Through these efforts she helped lay the foundation for the women's empowerment movement in India (Rege, 2013).

### Social Reform Initiatives

Savitribai Phule's educational work was closely linked with social reform efforts. She opposed child marriage supported widow remarriage and worked to protect women.

With Jyotirao Phule she established a shelter home for pregnant widows and abandoned children providing them with care and support (Keer, 1990).

### Night Schools and Adult Education

Savitribai Phule recognized the importance of adult education. She helped establish night schools for workers and laborers who could not attend schools during the day.

This initiative reflected her belief that education should be accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds.

## ***VI. The relevance of Savitribai Phule's ideas and educational philosophy in the contemporary educational system.***

Savitribai Phule's ideals remain highly relevant in modern India.

The Indian government has implemented policies aimed at improving access to education.

Programs like the Right to Education Act (2009) guarantee compulsory education for children. Initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao promote girls' education.

These policies reflect the principles advocated by Savitribai Phule.

Although significant progress has been made gender disparities still exist in regions. Many girls drop out of school due to poverty, marriage and social pressures.

Savitribai Phule's vision of gender equality continues to inspire efforts to address these challenges.

Caste discrimination remains a concern in parts of India. Educational initiatives aimed at marginalized communities, including reservations and scholarships seek to promote justice.

These initiatives align with Savitribai Phule's commitment to education.

Modern educational policies emphasize the importance of education that accommodates diverse learners. Savitribai Phule's approach to educating marginalized communities reflects principles.

Education remains a tool for addressing social inequality and promoting empowerment. Savitribai Phule's philosophy highlights the importance of using education to challenge injustice and promote equality.

Savitribai Phule's dedication and courage continue to inspire teachers, scholars and social activists. Her life demonstrates how education can be used to transform society.

modern educational policies, including inclusive education initiatives and gender equality programs reflect the principles advocated by Savitribai Phule.

### ***VII. Significance of the Study***

Savitribai Phule's contributions were a revolutionary phase in the history of Indian education. The first woman teacher in India As one of the first women teachers of India and a firm proponent of women's education, she broke through deep-set social inequalities, caste discrimination, and gender biases with her unquenched thirst effort in the field of education. In an India today, grappling with challenges like gender inequity, lack of access to education and social exclusion, a revisit to her way of looking at education becomes increasingly pertinent.

As the National Education Policy 2020 and many other policies have been made focussing on inclusive and equitable education in Indian context, yet still some challenges persist that need to be addressed along with the ethos of its thorough implementation. Though access to education is better than before, educational outcomes are still determined by socio-economic status, caste, gender and rural-urban divide. Savitribai Phule's life and work augur for education as a medium to social change, which can inform how these current Moreover, in the current situation of rapid technological advancement and worldwide-oriented globalization, education is becoming more skill-oriented, overlooking its significance in promoting social justice and human values. If only we line our education system towards inclusivity and holistic development, the principles set by Savitribai Phule viz equality, empowerment, and education for the marginalized people of society would form a strong base to make our citizens not only literate but also enlightened.

In addition to being a worthy recognition of her efforts in this area, it is also an important acknowledgement and focus on how relevant her work is in raising awareness about girls' education and empowerment especially in countries where female literacy rates remain low and participation among girls in higher education remains lower. Her work still inspires policies and movements working towards gender equality in education.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the scholarly conversation around how past educational reformers have impacted current educational challenges by connecting past and present issues that societies are facing regarding their educational systems in India today; helping educators, policymakers, and researchers to recognize strategies for implementing Savitribai Phule's beliefs/ideals into their current classroom practices to create fairer, more equitable societies.

Therefore, understanding the important role of Savitribai Phule's role in creating a better educational system today will help support the development of an inclusive and transformative education system in contemporary India.

### ***VIII. Conclusion***

The educational revolution initiated by Savitribai Phule represents a milestone in the history of reform and education in India. At a time when social norms restricted opportunities for women and marginalized communities she courageously challenged these barriers and worked tirelessly to create a more inclusive educational system. Through the establishment of schools, advocacy for women's rights and efforts to uplift communities Savitribai Phule demonstrated the transformative power of education. Her initiatives not expanded access to learning but also promoted values of equality, dignity and social justice. In society, where educational inequalities still persist her vision remains deeply relevant. By promoting education and empowering marginalized groups modern educators and policymakers can continue the legacy of Savitribai Phule's revolutionary work.

Ultimately Savitribai Phule's contributions remind us that education is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge but a powerful force for change. Her life and work continue to inspire efforts toward building an equitable and enlightened society.

Savitribai Phule also recognized the need to educate adults who had been denied access to education earlier in life. She helped establish night schools for laborers and working individuals.

These schools allowed people who worked during the day to attend classes in the evening thereby promoting the concept of learning.

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