



# CONTRIBUTION OF SAVITRIBAI AND JYOTIRAO PHULE IN EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF WEAKER SECTIONS IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Savitribai Phule and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule were important social reformers and leading characters in India. Savitribai was the first lady teacher of India's first girl's school. She was not only a teacher but also a great social reformer. She was a significant advocate for women's empowerment and education in the nineteenth century. They were far ahead of nationalist discourse in weaker sections of 19th-century Colonial India. In this context, the researcher intends to focus on assessing the contributions of Savitribai and Jotirao Phule to education and empowering the weaker sections of India. The study is a documentary study. It is also considered a qualitative study. The study investigates Jotirao and Savitribai Phule's contributions to the education, empowerment, and self-reliance of subjugated India's weaker sections. This paper is special emphasizes Women and backward-class people.*

**KEYWORDS:** Social reformer, Empowerment, Nationalist, Women's education, Weaker section.

## INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Jotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule stand out as an exceptional couple in India's social and educational history. They were vigorously fighting to create a movement for social justice and gender equality. They devoted their entire lives to promoting education because they understood that knowledge is power and that without it, women and Dalit-Bahujans could not develop. They hold the distinction of founding the nation's first girls' school and the "Native Library." In India, they started the "Literacy Mission" in 1854-55. They established a "shelter for the prevention of infanticide" at their home in 1863 for the protection of abused Brahman widows who were pregnant and to care for these children. Savitribai Phule was a pioneer of women's education in the country. Savitribai Phule was honored as the country's first female teacher. She works for the advancement of women and the lower castes. Savitribai and Jyotirao raised their voices against the oppressive social system prevalent in the society of Pune (Maharashtra) in the 19th century. Jotirao and Savitribai lived in a Dalit working-class neighborhood in Pune. The cultural environment surrounding them had an extremely important role to play in their socialization. The school's headmistress, Savitribai, has generously decided to dedicate her life to reforming backward classes and women's education; she does this work without any remuneration. Their contribution revolved around rationality and human reasons such as truth, equality, and humanity.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were:

- To assess the contribution of the Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule to women's education.
- To examine the contribution of the Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule in empowering women.
- To study the contribution of the Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule to the education and welfare of backward classes.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question of the study was:

- What contribution of Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule to women's education?
- What was the role played by Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule in women's empowerment?
- What is the significant effect of the Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule on the education and welfare of backward classes?

## METHODOLOGY

For the selection of the study, the present author selects Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule's contributions to India. In contrast, education and empowerment of India's weaker sections. This research work is historical research. The scientific process used to look into the



specifics and sources of historical events is known as historical research. Data was gathered from two main sources, namely the biographies of Savitribai and Jyotirao as the only source of data gathering and the various books, journals, e-papers, and articles written about Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule that were used as secondary sources. The two types of data are both of a qualitative nature. Because of this, this research is a qualitative one.

## LIFE SKETCH

### Savitribai Phule

Savitribai Phule was a social reformer of the 19th century, born on January 3, 1831, in Naigaon, Satara district, Maharashtra. In 1840, at the age of 10, she was married to Jotirao Phule. Government documents show that after their marriage, Jotirao educated Savitribai at home. The Education Report from 1 May 1851 to 30 April 1852 states that Jotirao educated and prepared his wife to teach at home. According to a news story that was published in the "Bombay Guardian" on November 22, 1851, Jotirao's friends Sakharam Yeshwant Paranjpe and Keshav Shivram Bhavalkar (Joshi) took responsibility for Savitribai's continued education. Savitribai has also completed teacher training programs at Ms. Mitchell's Normal School in Pune and Ms. Farar's Institution in Ahmednagar. If these documents are taken into account, Savitribai Phule may have been the first woman headmistress and teacher in India. The headmistress of the school, Savitribai, has generously decided to dedicate her life to the reform of women's education; she does this work without any remuneration. He worked on various development projects for society's lower classes.

**Published Books:** Savitribai Phule was also an author and poet. She published various books. Some examples are below-

- Kavya Phule, 1854
- Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar, 1892
- Go, Get Education (an entitled poem)

### Jyotirao Phule

He was born in Katgun, Satara District, Maharashtra, on April 11, 1827. He was uneducated, and the majority of his family came from the Mali caste of gardeners. He married early, at the age of 13, to a girl from his community selected by his father. His initiatives included eradicating untouchability and the caste system and educating women and caste members who were being exploited. Later, the Phule created schools for kids from the Mahar and Mang untouchable communities. He founded a home for pregnant Brahmin widows in 1863 so they could give birth in a safe environment. He started an orphanage to stop infanticide. In this regard, he is regarded as the first Hindu to build an orphanage for destitute children. To show his inclusive attitude towards all people and his willingness to eat with everyone, regardless of caste, Jyotirao decided to construct a communal bathing tank outside his home in 1868. To secure equal rights for members of oppressed castes, he and his supporters established the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of Truth Seekers). Joining this group focused on the betterment of the disadvantaged classes and was open to people of all religions and castes.

**Published Books:** More than 150 books have been written on Jotirao in Marathi. Along with books in Marathi, books have also been published in Hindi, English, Telugu, Kannada, Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, and Gujarati. Some examples are below-

- Tritiya Ratna, 1855
- Brahmananche Kasab, 1869
- Powada: Chatrapati Shivajiraje Bhosle Yancha, [English: Life of Shivaji, In Poetical Metre], June 1869
- Powada: Vidyakhatyatil Brahman Pantoji, June 1869
- Gulamgiri, 1873
- Shetkarayacha Aasud (Cultivator's Whipcord), July 1881

### Role of the Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule in promoting Women's Education

When Savitribai was still in her teen years, Jyotirao and Savitribai founded the first locally run school for girls in Pune (at the time, Poona). In this situation, a friend extended a helping hand. To start their education, they also gave up their accommodations. The school's first teacher was Savitribai Phule. This school includes a social studies, math, and science curriculum from the West. Savitribai Phule, the headmistress of the school, decided to dedicate her life to women's education; She did not receive any remuneration for doing this service. "Institutionalization" turned out to be modern India's fundamental premise. Jotirao-Savitribai founded a school for native females. They organized the "Dakshina Prize" to increase participation in girls' education. With Jyotirao Phule, she opened 18 schools for girls. Savitribai and Jyotirao strongly emphasized giving both boys and girls a trade and vocational-oriented education to develop their independence and ability to think critically. They discovered that poverty and a lack of interest in education were the main causes of the dropouts. She devised a curriculum tailored to the interests of girls from lower social classes and made plans to pay the students a "wage." Savitribai Phule gave importance to the education of women to promote social transformation.



### **Role of the Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule in Empowering Women**

Savitribai and Jyotirao also started Mahila Seva Mandal in 1852 to raise awareness and, worked to educate women about their human rights, the value of life, and other social issues. Savitribai wanted women from all the castes to participate in this. They founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society for Truth Seeking), and they pioneered the Satyashodhak marriage, which is a marriage without dowry or a wedding at a low cost. The bridegroom was required to take an oath of education and equal rights for women as part of the Satyashodhak marriage. Both also raised awareness against child marriage and asserted the right of widow remarriage. In their own home, Jotirao and Savitribai ran a hostel where girl students from faraway locations would stay to further their education. Jotirao and Savitribai determined that education should empower people to make moral and ethical decisions and distinguish between truth and fiction. They were working extra hard to establish areas where female creativity might flourish. They were remarkably successful on this front as well. His views on religious and social issues are presented in the form of a dialogue in his book Sarvajanic Satya Dharma Pustak, which was published in 1891. He believed that both men and women had equal rights and that discriminating against people based on their gender was a sin. He emphasized human unity and envisioned a society based on liberty, equality, and fraternity. To keep infanticide in check, and to give care to lactating widows/rape survivors Jyotirao and Savitribai opened 'Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha' in 1863. Savitribai was deeply committed to women's empowerment and upliftment. Savitribai and Jyotirao recognized that self-realization through education is the key to achieving social and gender equality.

### **Role of the Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule for Education and Welfare of Backward Classes**

Savitribai encouraged everyone to write and one of the essays written by her student Mukta Salve became the face of Dalit feminism and literature. She also tried to give a stipend to students to attend the school to decrease the dropout rate. Savitribai and Jyotirao were also associated with a social reform to Dalits, and other less privileged communities from getting oppressed and exploited. After the death of Jyotiba in 1890 Savitri carried forward the work of Satya Shodhak Samaj. This Organization was based on giving education to oppressed members of society. Savitribai went head-to-head with other social taboos that had long victimized women. Savitribai created an educational framework to revolutionize society. Jotirao-Savitribai started the Society for Promoting the Education of Mahars and Mang's castes, who were regarded as untouchables. Meanwhile, the Phule couple opened a night school in 1855 for agriculturalists and laborers so that they could work during the day and attend school at night. Savitribai opened 18 schools and taught children from various castes over the years. She urged the oppressed caste and communities to get an education and get freedom from chains of oppression. She also worked for imparting education to the Dalits. Jyotirao Phule supported Western education and advocated for free and compulsory primary education until the age of 12. Jyotirao Phule advocated for lower-class technical education. He also desired that children in rural areas receive an education.

### **DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

The primary goal of Savitribai and Jyotirao was to educate all people. And they established a lot of schools to accomplish those goals. Even though government initiatives like the "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan," the "Right to Education Act," and the "midday meal program" that rewards education may seem truly innovative today, Savitribai and Jyotirao established a precedent by providing stipends to keep kids in school 150 years ago. Before the early nationalists accepted social reform as a campaign strategy, both launched several projects for social change. Theirs is one of the primary areas of involvement, particularly in the context of caste and female illiteracy. Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule also devoted their entire lives to the cause of the upliftment of the weaker sections. It has been possible to reach this conclusion after analyzing various data and evidence and making a comparative judgment of the results of various previous studies. There was no end to their efforts to empower women through education. He made education a major part of the lives of backward-class students to give them back their fair share of rights in society. Savitribai was most likely one of modern India's first educated women. She and Jyotirao Phule were able to develop their voice and agency at a time when women of all classes and backward class peoples were ruthlessly suppressed and lived in subhuman conditions. Both are linked to the weaker section of education and equal rights. Savitribai had a strong commitment to the advancement of women. Along with providing education, they also enabled women and people from lower social classes to flourish in society. She aggressively sought to remove caste- and gender-based discrimination and advocated against untouchability. Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule strongly believed that society could not advance and develop without an appropriate distribution of knowledge, particularly for the weaker sections. both also fought for the rights of women and members of the lower classes. They started schools for girls and kids from lower castes because they thought that education was crucial to bringing about social change.

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