

BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES : SAVITRIBAI PHULE AS FIERCE FEMINIST AND EDUCATIONIST IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

There is abundant evidence that men have been considered superior to women since the dawn of civilization (Scott, 1983). Almost every progressive country has a long history of maltreatment to women. It was women who eventually became rebel to revive social status and strengthen their current position in the world. Women have raised their voices for gender equality and continue to strive hard to empower themselves to achieve that equality, despite widespread mistreatment. At that time, it was essential for our society to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality. During those tough times, Savitribai Phule strongly advocated for the advancement of women's education and emphasized woman's empowerment. Education not only develops an individual's personality but also brings him out of the deep vortex of old and orthodox beliefs into the light. Education has done the same in the context of women. It does not only liberate them from the shackles of old stereotypes but also provides them manifold opportunities. Savitribai Phule was a personality who took a vow to educate girls despite society's opposition to girls' education. She was India's first female teacher who not only fought for women's education, but also established a girls' school for the first time. This paper aims to address how Sabitribai Phule as a social reformer and educationist has transformed the educational scenario in India.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Woman Education, Gender Inequality

INTRODUCTION

From times immemorial gender inequality persists in the entire society and this conception on gender has greatly influenced the entire education system in India. Gender inequality or discrimination can be defined as *the social phenomenon in which people (both men and women) are not treated equally on the basis of gender*. This gender inequality is experienced distinctively across societies.

From birth males and females are raised differently and they experience various situations for the duration of their lives. From the viewpoint of society, gender has a crucial role to carry out in

many significant achievements or attributes throughout everyday life. All through life, males and females are viewed as two altogether different species who have totally different characters and should remain on isolated paths.

GENDER PAY DIFFERENCES IN RECENT DAY

Throughout the world, the issues of gender discrimination are so intense that it is even found in the workplace. Even in some of the fields, women are not given access intentionally since they are thought to be less productive than men. Even, till date, they are not paid same remuneration for same work and they are discriminated widely across nations. The report by Statista Research Department (2023) proved that the gender pay gap is highest in the country like Korea Republic (31.06%) whereas the lowest can be found in Belgium (1.17%). The situation is worst in Indian context also. Though the average pay gap is reducing day by day, the disparities is still prevalent. The earning of Indian women, on an average, 48% less compared to their male counterparts in 1993-94. Though the gap declined significantly to 28% in 2018-19 as in the labour force survey data of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the pandemic degraded the whole situation. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020-21 exhibits an increase in the gap by 7% between 2018-19 and 2020-21. The data further denotes that faster decline in female wages during the pandemic contributed to this decline, compared to a faster growth in male wages, which requires urgent policy attention.

GENDER INEQUALITY IN RELATIONSHIPS AND GENDER INEQUALITIES IN RELATION TO TECHNOLOGY

Gender inequality is also found in the relationship between man and women in a family. Men as a first gender are often given priorities than women. While making decision in a family, men are given more priority than women and men are sometimes thought as more capable than women. Even, in a family women are expected to do all the household chores whereas men are free birds and women are often put restrictions while going out of the house frequently. These kinds of role conflict or work division in a family have generated a conflict among men and women and many progressive women are becoming the victims of these role conflicts in the countries like India.

PAST SCENARIO OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA

India was beset with several superstitions. These superstitions were mainly prevalent among Hindu communities. Most of the orthodox Hindu families never allowed their girls to go to schools since there were several proverbs associated with it like – if a girl become educated, her husband will die prematurely and she will become widow, the daughter of the family who is educated will be defiled and tarnished in the society, the woman who will be educated will be the kulata and will be the scum of the family, If a woman is wearing shoes, it would be bad for the family, the use of a

female umbrella is grossly abusive to men etc. There were numerous such restrictions in the lives of women in Hindu society. Orthodox Hindus realized that if women become educated, they could not be kept under control for long time. Therefore, they imposed various restrictions on women so that they can be kept under control. Even, this kind of situation is still prevalent in some of the states in India.

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION INDIA

In the above-mentioned context, Savitribai Phule, as a first woman social reformer did remarkable job to remove the disparities and inequalities which were prevalent in India. She was born on 31st January, 1831 in a small village in Satara District in Maharashtra, where the literacy rate among women is still very low. Khandoji, one of the leader in her village, used to say – “this is the girl who will one day jump for freedom in India”.

She is considered to be the principal female educator of India, for improving women's condition in India. She is viewed as the mother of Indian women's liberation. Phule and her better half established the principal Indian young ladies' school in Pune, at Bhidewada in 1848. She is regarded as a significant figure of the social change in Maharashtra.

In 1848, the Jyotirao vehemently protested against superstition of the society. He established the first women's school for the shudra women of India in the house of Pune Vivaji. Savitribai is the first female teacher of modern India to teach these women. On the soil of India, Savitribai raised the tide of the Renaissance for the education of the super-sudras and women. On September 18, 1851, a second women's school was established at a place called Rashtrambur. On October 15, 1851, the students of the women school had the opportunity to appear the first examination. On March 15, 1852, a third women's school was established at Patalonet. Savitribai Phule established a school for the women of Sang and Kulatri. In July 1850, Jyotirao also built another school for girls in the house of Annaasaheb Chipshukar at Buddha Pethe. He formed the Female Education Society for Women's Education.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

In a joint effort with her husband, she devoted herself to various social services, such as establishing a Christian missionary school, hospital, providing food for the famine sufferers, and providing assistance to the fallen wives. On the 18th of July 1880, Savitri participated in the protest against the licensing of liquor stores. In June 1887, Savitribai and Jyotirao started an anti-humanist movement all over Maharashtra. Jyotirao also opened an orphanage in his own home. It was the first orphanage in India. During the famine of Maharashtra, Jyotirao-Savitri used to provide various food for the premature victims. They draw the attention of the government through the society of truth-makers. In 1889, the widow Marriage, Savitribai organized a wedding ceremony for 15 days for widow marriage. This was the first meeting of women by the Women Liberation Movement of India.

OTHER SOCIAL WORK

Savitribai Phule published ‘Kavya Phule’ in 1854 and ‘Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar’ in 1892. Furthermore, a poem entitled “Go, Get Education” in which she energized the individuals who are mistreated to free themselves by getting instruction. Savitribai Phule became an ardent feminist. For issues concerning women’s rights, she established the ‘Mahila Seva Mandal’ for raising awareness. She gathered women in a place which was free from caste discrimination. She started two educational trusts in 1850, first one was the Native Female School, Pune and the second one was the Society for Promoting the Education of Mahars, Mangs and Etceteras. In Pune, with around 150 girl students, she was running three schools in 1851.

On April 14, 1870, a meeting of congressmen was called against the widow’s head mound at the Elfin Stone High School premises. Savitribai Phule was an anti-infanticide activist who opened a shelter for women which is called the ‘Home for the Prevention of Infanticide’. She battled against child marriage and strongly opposed Sati Pratha. She also was an advocate of widow remarriage and began a home for widows and forlorn children. She started the Satyashodhak Samaj for marriage without dowry.

CONSPIRACY TO MURDER

Savitribai’s impassioned society was on the verge of revolution. The religious leaders wanted to turn her away from religion by abusing her in obscene language. During Savitri’s walk, they tried to throw stones and dung at her. Orthodox Brahmins conspired to remove her from the world. They sent two young men from the lower classes to his house in the deep night to kill him for the greed of money.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the nineteenth century, plague took place in 1896 in Maharashtra. Finally, on the 10th of March, 1897, he left the head of the off spring and moved on. In India’s history of women’s education, the name of Savitribai Phule is written in golden letter. Today, the famous women’s college in Bombay is named as “Savitribai Phule College”. But unfortunately, in the history of India, this great woman has never been properly evaluated, who showed the light how to come out of the bondage of slavery and oppression which was imposed on women over thousands of years.

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