

SAVITRIBAI PHULE: LIGHTING THE IDEOLOGY OF EDUCATION AND HER CONTRIBUTION IN RELEVANCE TO NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

Savitribai Phule was a renowned Indian educator and social reformer who made significant contributions to society and education in the middle of the nineteenth century. She placed a strong emphasis on women's empowerment and education for everybody. Because she started a wave of revolution in numerous parts of education, her thoughts and principles had to be infused into present-day education. She made an effort to undermine society's traditional educational structure and aimed to rebuild it as a free and inclusive system for all. Like Savitribai Phule, India's first education policy of the 21st century aims to address many growing developments and revamp educational aspects. The NEP 2020 is a significant policy document laying out the national-level strategy for the new millennium. The study is a wholly qualitative strategy related to content analysis, and both primary and secondary data sources are used. Savitribai's beliefs are compatible with the general education system. These ideas ought to be applied to the current educational system. The knowledge of the Indian educational system would be enhanced by this. Teachers and students will follow Savitribai Phule's lead in ensuring that the educational system is acceptable to all social classes and that everyone is aware of how to overcome prejudice. By doing this, current education will be more successful and contribute to maintaining its value and relevance at all levels. The objective of the present study is to light illuminate Savitribai Phule's ideology & her contribution to the new education policy of 2020.

Keywords: Ideology, Superstition, Relevance and National Education Policy.

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can
use to change the world.”*

- Nelson Mandela

INTRODUCTION

Education is the source of enlightenment, and it is the basis of changes in emerging society. Keeping in view the need for education, Indian thinkers and scholars emphasized making education universally accessible. Savitribai Phule also

made a lasting impact on India's social and educational history. She worked for social justice as well as gender equality (Sengupta, 2023). The National Education Policy also places particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. Savitribai Phule was a crusader, meliorist, and pioneer in India's modern feminist movement. She is well known for being India's first female teacher and for her work to advance women and members of the untouchable community in the fields of education and literacy. She relentlessly tried to advance the downtrodden and undermine the prevailing caste structure (Maity, 2016).

The National Education Policy is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive abilities but also fundamental capacities and higher-order cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and problem-solving. She spoke out vehemently against the limitations placed on women that contributed to their subjugation. Her commitment to secular education for social liberation in India is a manifestation of her strong character (Biswas & Bhattacharyya, 2022). By getting to know her better and comprehending her hardships, we would be able to examine a life that not only transformed Indian education but also educated mankind to its true nature. Alongside B. R. Ambedkar and Annabhau Sathe, she is recognized as a key figure in Maharashtra's social reform movement and a representation of the Dalit Mang caste. She aggressively sought to remove caste and gender-based discrimination and spoke against untouchability (Das & Das, 2021).

One of the most significant individuals who made a significant contribution to elevating the purpose of the contemporary Indian social scene was Savitribai Phule. She was the first female educator and instructor, inspiring the oppressed to pursue education and therefore significantly contributing to their freedom. Her thoughts and activities are observed in the present educational field to a large extent, which is strongly emphasized by Savitribai Phule. India pledged in the 2020 National Education Policy to modernize and revitalize the whole education system. NEP 2020 is a more diverse policy than the previous two policies. It is ambitious and claims universal access to quality education as its key aim. NEP 2020 single-handedly laid the foundation for the education system of the 21st century's education. Savitribai Phule's ideology who is also aiming for the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and truth as the highest human goal, which is quite similar to New Education Policy 2020.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In present day a key duty of the government in modern India is to ensure that everyone has access to education. This is because our educational system is focused on fairness and equality. But due to caste, gender, and religious difficulties, women are marginalized.

Savitribai Phule, one of India's earliest contemporary feminists and a social reformer as well as an educational reformer for women, was born on January 3, 1831. Her contribution to the advancement of women and the untouchables in the fields of

education and literacy is not only remarkable, but also her ideology is most renowned for the growth of Indian education and thoughts about women empowerment. This paper aims to explore the ideology of Savitribai Phule and relevance to 21st century's first education policy.

DEFINITION OF TECHNICAL TERMS USED

Ideology is an adjective used to characterize cultural, religious, or political views. An ideology is a person's or a group's set of views or convictions. A group of widely held beliefs about society is called an ideology, and it is typically used to support a particular course of action.

Relevance translates to "Important to the matter at hand" when used as a noun form of the adjective "Relevant." There is a connection between two topics such that thinking about one while thinking about the other is helpful.

Superstition can be called a manner of thinking or doing that is based on magic or luck and a fear of the unknown: the conviction that certain occurrences or objects will bring good or bad luck.

National Education Policy The National Education Policy (NEP) serves as a framework for restructuring the governance and regulations of the Indian educational system in order to achieve the nation's (sustainable) developmental goals. The goal of NEP is to provide an inclusive, egalitarian educational system that can benefit all students. Earlier two policies were formed in 1968 and 1986. After a gap of 34 years, a new policy came into existence that is NEP 2020.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To serve as an example of Savitribai Phule's educational philosophy in relevance to new educational policy.
- To know the ideology of Savitribai Phule in terms of NEP 2020.
- To understand Savitribai Phule's impact on modern education in twenty first century.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a wholly qualitative strategy related to the content analysis. For the purpose of the study, data have been collected from two sources: primary sources and secondary sources. The data from primary sources includes works from Savitribai Phule such as Kavya Phule (1854), Bavan Kashi Ratnakar (1892), etc., and secondary data includes eminent workers like Thom Wolf's changing Education: A note on the "original and unusual" world voice, world view and world venue of Jan Comenius and Savitribai Phule (2011), R. Pandey's Two distant feminist standpoints in Nineteenth century India: case studies of Savitribai Phule and Pandita Ramabai (2022), and P. J. Bhikhubhai's A critical study of NEP 2020 (2022). Also, the poetry, essays, publications, and other works by Savitribai Phule served as the main sources. Thesis, books about Savitribai Phule, published

journals, essays, and periodicals are examples of secondary sources.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE OBJECTIVES:

Savitribai Phule's educational philosophy in relevance to new educational policy:

Education was once seen as a privilege reserved for the upper castes until the middle of the nineteenth century, but Savitribai Phule placed a strong emphasis on secular education as well as universal education, NEP 2020 also places great emphasis on promoting multidisciplinary and holistic education. She thought that if learners had access to food, drink, and shelter, they might receive a thorough education.

Savitribai Phule believed that education might be used to improve the lives of socially downtrodden castes. Promoting education aimed to dispel the then-dominant notion that women and members of lower castes had the necessary aptitude for it (Mondal & Farabi, 2023). Savitribai Phule placed a high value on the education of women in order to advance social change. In "Kavyaphule," which she referred to as "golden chance," Savitribai Phule also discussed her views on education. Here's how it works:

To attain self-reliance, let us pledge
And accumulate a wealth of knowledge
Without learning, life is an animal existence, waste
Don't rest, get an education, make haste
She put up the question, "should they be called animals?"
No knowledge, no learning
No affinity for either
A brain that lies fallow
Should they be called humans? (Pandey, 2015).

Savitribai Phule's thoughts on education, societal reforms and activities are also reflected in new national education policy. Those are:

Aim of education: According to Savitribai Phule, education should have the following aims-

Education for all: Savitribai Phule supported free education for everyone. She wished for all kids to have an education. All people, regardless of religion, caste, ethnicity, creed, colour, etc., must have access to education. It should not be exclusive to the upper castes.

National Education Policy also emphasised, recognizing, identifying and fostering the unique capabilities of each student. The rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thoughts has been a guiding light for this policy.

Equality between men and women: Men and women in our society are equal,

according to Savitribai Phule. She gave women a lot of attention. The country can prosper if women are treated with the respect they deserve. Both men and women contribute significantly to the growth of a nation. In contrast to centuries-old custom, modern Indian women have not only achieved their place in the corporate world but also, they have ascended on the throne of leadership and entrepreneurship. The Indian Constitution guarantees that men and women are treated equally without any gender discrimination (Shetty M & Hans, 2019).

NEP 2020 also focused on inclusion and equality as an important aspect in the education system so that all students can survive in the education system.

Development of Humanism: Savitribai Phule has struggled for Dalit, members of lower castes, women, and widows for her entire life. She was the first woman to discuss Bahujan in India. She was active not just in the Muslim community but also in the reform of her own community. She made the Muslim woman Fatima Sheikh entirely secular by joining the organization and offering her a position as a teacher. She made efforts to influence the community's mindset as well as those of other communities. The Phule couple welcomed members of all castes and worked to abolish caste prejudice. This demonstrates her commitment to human religion. She felt that the advancement of humanism should be the goal of education (Santra & Madhu, 2023).

Regarding inclusiveness, we might state that segregation is against the law of nature. According to the new policy, inclusiveness encompasses not only educational perspectives but also it incorporates multilingualism, conceptual understanding as opposed to memorization, rote learning and disrespect to diversity.

Education for liberation: Savitribai Phule criticised the Brahmanical education system because it restricted education to high caste boys and forbade it for lower caste males. She saw education to be a tool for emancipation. She aimed to create an educational system in India that would enable downtrodden Shudras, Atishudras, and women to pursue their educations and advance society.

Phule's thought about liberation is very relevant even today. Her thought was very modern, updated, and relevant to the present context. Despite the change of times, her modern thinking is widely observed in current education policy. Like Jnan, Pragyaa and Satya are considered the highest human goals.

Curriculum: Curriculum is one among the four pillars of education. In order to complete school education efficiently, the curriculum is crucial and the proper implementation of it brings major success in the education system. Law, mathematics, history, geography, science, social science, medicine, English, and the arts are therefore the topics that Savitribai Phule has placed an emphasis on in order to promote social transformation in the community.

In terms of curriculum, the current education policy upholds a paradigm that is comparable to that of Savitribai Phule. In addition to science and math, it must incorporate fundamental arts, crafts, humanities, games, language, literature, culture, and values to develop all facets of the learner and make education more comprehensive, practical, and rewarding. By lowering the amount of curriculum content, giving students more freedom to select their subjects, and promoting flexibility.

Methods of teachings: Savitribai Phule used pragmatic philosophy in her education system. She used a variety of teaching techniques in the classroom to meet the requirements of her pupils, including recitation, lectures, experience-based learning, hands-on activities, and question-and-answer sessions. She has used the teaching method which has a strong influence till date. Her approach was student-centered, enquiry based, away from rote-learning and more pragmatic which is emphasized by NEP 2020.

Teacher: Society's support system is its teachers. They represent a free-spirited and unbiased group. In the evolution of society, they are very crucial. They will possess knowledge, engage in educational work without personal prejudice, be effective teachers in their field, serve as mentors to their pupils, inspire and motivate them, and preserve moral standards (Sheikh & Jahan, 2013).

The NEP 2020 grants teachers' autonomy in choosing appropriate pedagogy and encourages them to ensure the socio-emotional learning of their students, which is a critical component of holistic development. This is because it recognizes the contribution of teachers in reforming pedagogy to improve learning outcomes.

The ideology of Savitribai Phule in terms of NEP 2020

Savitribai Phule was a social reformer of the 19th century who worked in the field of women's education. She was the eldest daughter and both of her parents belonged to the Mali community, now an Other Backward Caste (OBC). Savitribai Phule is credited with founding feminism in India by bringing the feminist idea to the country for the first time. She was often referred to as contemporary India's first feminist. According to Rai and Sujata (2013), feminist ideology aims to achieve gender and sex equality.

First Girl's school: When Savitribai was still in her teens and eager to improve the position of women, she and Jyotirao founded the first locally administered school for females in Pune (at the time, Poona) in 1848.

Savitiri served as the headmistress of the ladies' school that Jyothirao Phule built a year after Savitiri finished her training in 1848. She established India's first women's school. People were against her conducting a school for females at that time

since female education was only given a minimal amount of priority. In particular, the higher castes were adamantly against Dalit education (Biswas & Bhattacharyya, 2022).

NEP 2020 also acknowledges a "light but tight" regulatory framework for autonomy, good governance, and the empowerment of women's education, while also focusing on the education system as a whole, much like Savitribai Phule's concept.

Enthusiastic teacher: The first and youngest female teacher in India was Savitribai Phule. In opposition to that period's Brahmanical culture, she battled for women's suffrage and the education of children of all faiths. Every day as she walked to school, she faced harassment from others who threw stones, dirt, and excrement at her (Pandey, 2015). She used to wear two saris to school and switch out the soiled one for the clean one. She experienced a lot of persecution from religious men as a result of her fight for women's education. She told people who called her names, "God bless you; I'm just doing my duty." The British government praised the Phule family for their educational contribution on November 16, 1852, and Savitribai was named the best teacher.

The future of our country and our children is being shaped by our teachers, according to the new education policy 2020. The reason Indian teachers are held in the highest regard by society is due to their noble profession. Teachers are just the best and most knowledgeable among us. In addition to having a solid foundation in Indian knowledge, ethos, and customs, a teacher or guru needs to be up-to-date on the latest developments in pedagogy and education.

Women's empowerment: The concept of empowerment may have many faces, dimensions, and layers. Therefore, it is not this or that; rather, it is the activity and interaction of several aspects, including those that are physical, economic, political, mental, psychological, and attitudinal. Women's empowerment can be defined as a process by which women obtain a larger proportion of control over resources, including those that are material, human, and intellectual like knowledge, information, and ideas as well as financial resources like money and control over decisions that are made in the home, community, society, and country. The phrase "women's empowerment" is now associated with women's fights for equality and social justice (Islam, 2018).

Savitribai Phule made numerous contributions to women's empowerment as a trailblazer. NEP 2020 stipulates that in order to increase the country's ability to offer equitable, high-quality education for all girls and transgender students, a Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) specifically for girls and transgender students must be established. In addition, NEP 2020 highlights the significance of giving girls access to high-quality education and the role that women should play in decision-making in

educational institutions.

Women's education: Girls are less likely to succeed in school due to a number of reasons, including being expected to take care of the home, being brought up to accept a domestic role, having mothers who are illiterate and unable to educate their children, depending on men for financial support, and occasionally having to deal with child marriage (Thakur, 2012). When Savitribai Phule tried to raise awareness of women's education during the time, she had to face boycotts and criticism, mostly from males. One of her strongest supporters as she strove to raise the status of women in India and disseminate awareness of the value of women's education. When Phule was nine years old and uneducated, she wed Jyotirao Phule. Savitribai Phule taught 150 pupils while founding three schools in 1851 including 18 schools later for upper cast women. She also started schools for Dalit and lower caste women. She gave stipends to women to encourage them to enroll in education (Mondal & Farabi, 2023).

A nation cannot develop without its proper education system. A nation's educational standards require its education policy to be well-defined and forward-looking, as education promotes both social and economic prosperity. By means of curriculum alignment at all educational levels, appreciation for diversity, encouragement of multilingualism, adaptability, and comprehensive education NEP 2020 aims to establish an educational framework that fosters a critical and creative thinking environment among students.

The contribution of Savitribai Phule on education in 21st century in relevance to NEP 2020

This research attempts to explain why she is considered as the "mother of contemporary girls' education" and how her views may help to emancipate women and how her actions have continued to have an influence on the educational system of the twenty-first century.

Equitable Education: Phule and her husband founded the first Indian run girls' school in Pune. They worked together to abolish the discrimination and unfair treatment of people based on caste and gender. As per new education policy, if equitable education is to be attained three things must be given special importance, those are – the pursuit of knowledge (Jnan), wisdom (Pragyaa), and truth (Satya). This policy is also focusing on inclusive education.

Universal access to Education: Phule's didn't want education to be limited only higher class (Brahmin) people of society. She wanted education for all and to spread it among all. So, she took various initiatives for the development of education. By following her footsteps, NEP also emphasized universal access to education for all and curtailing the dropout rate.

Fundamental Literacy and Numeracy: The new education policy defines it as an urgent and essential precondition for learning. The fundamental literacy may be described as the capacity for learning the basic numerical operations, reading, writing, and comprehension of simple material.

Savitribai Phule has fought against injustice in the 19th century to assure Dalit education. She also advocates for the bare minimum of education required to pursue one's legal rights. Since conventional schools were only open at night, many marginalized and poor people had no choice but to attend them. This is why she founded special night school in 1855.

Holistic & Multidisciplinary Education: Phule's philosophy went beyond a book-centric approach to education; she stressed the importance of soft skills and care in education. The new education policy in India draws on India's long history of holistic and multidisciplinary learning, as well as the vast body of literature that spans multiple disciplines. This approach aims to develop all aspects of human development—intellectual, artistic, social, physical, emotional, and moral—in an integrated way.

Life-long Learning: Savitribai Phule opposed restricting education to a set of rules or skills, such as basic literacy and numeracy. She advocated for universal and lifelong education. She therefore made a number of decisions at that time. People can advance both individually and professionally by making use of the vast array of personal, civic, economic, and lifetime learning opportunities that come with literacy and basic education.

The management of the RTE and Mid-Day-Meal programs: The Mid-Day Meal Program was started by the central government in 1995 for children of I to VIII classes (ages 6 to 14). According to a 2013 Pratichi Trust survey, the Mid-Day-Meal program has decreased the dropout rate (Majhi, 2022). The Right to Education Act's midday meals program is a fantastic initiative for keeping pupils in school today, but Savitribai Phule and her husband established it nearly 180 years ago. The Phule couple launched programs to eradicate the malnutrition by offering health care to every kid at their school. They launched the RTE and Mid-Day-Meal programs in 1850.

The Mid-Day Meal program will also be expanded to elementary school preparatory classes, according to new education policies. In the context of putting NEP 2020's guiding principles—access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability—into practice, it is crucial. The Pradhan Mantri Poshan Yojana (PMPY), often known as the PM POSHAN Scheme, has replaced the Mid-Day Meal program.

CONCLUSION

Savitribai Phule placed a strong emphasis on universal and secular education which currently NEP 2020 also has given importance. She observed education as a tool for improving the living condition of the socially disadvantaged caste. She has a significant impact on women and their access to education. Not only as an educationist but also as a social reformer, Savitribai Phule promoted widow remarriage and founded Mahila Seva Mandal. She also advocated against infanticide and created a centre for the rehabilitation of infants born outside of marriage. For the benefit of single mothers and their children, Phule established an anti-infanticide home, which helped many pregnant Brahman widows. Her finest humanitarian endeavours include founding the “Satyashodhak Samaj” and promoting inter-caste unions. She fights and works for women's equality in all fields. Her creation of the night school and connection to RTE in the mid-day meal program are having a good influence on the current situation. NEP 2020 also promotes the professional development of female teachers, ensuring that they are well-equipped to provide quality education. Additionally, the policy encourages the recruitment of female teachers in rural and remote areas, where the gender gap in education is often more pronounced.

It is clear how she contributed to numerous facets of general education at that time. Since the beginning of schools, she has aided in the eradication of gender disparity in education, the advancement of equal rights, and the modernization of the educational system. It is genuinely unmatched how she plunged right into promoting education while being a married woman with a successful career. Her primary areas of focus include the women's education movement and the expansion of women's education. She has been referred to as an Indian feminist because of her contributions in different fields.

Savitribai Phule's thought and her educational ideology is very much relevant to present educational context. Its effect is also observed in new education policy. It cannot be denied that Savitribai Phule encourages kids to work hard in school and pursue an education. Actually, she wants to empower everyone through knowledge mainly practical knowledge. That's where his thoughts and keynote of NEP 2020 come to this particular point. Lastly, to conclude with her poem entitled “Go, Get Education,” in which she encourages those who are oppressed. She has advised them to get education. Like Savitribai Phule, NEP 2020 is also against the segregation of learning since it believes that – “Segregation is against the law of Nature.”

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