

Present Education System of India: A Study of the Educational Contributions of Savitribai Phule and their Contemporary relevance

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ABSTRACT

Education in India has undergone a significant transformation from a socially restricted institution to a broad-based system intended to provide learning opportunities to all sections of society. Yet, questions of gender equality, social exclusion, affordability, quality, digital access, and educational participation remain important concerns. In this context, the educational contributions of Savitribai Phule acquire continuing relevance.

The present study examines the contemporary Indian education system through the philosophical and practical contributions of Savitribai Phule. It particularly focuses on women's education, inclusive education, teacher development, social justice, community participation, critical thinking, and education for marginalized groups. The paper also examines the relationship between Savitribai Phule's educational vision and contemporary initiatives such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Gender Inclusion Fund, foundational literacy and numeracy, multidisciplinary education, vocational learning, and digital education. Recent official data indicate substantial expansion in India's educational infrastructure and female participation. UDISE+ reported more than one crore school teachers in 2024–25, while higher-education female enrolment reached approximately 2.18 crore in 2022–23. These developments indicate considerable progress, but they do not eliminate disparities in access, retention, learning outcomes, technology, safety, and social inclusion.

Keywords: - Savitribai Phule, Indian Education System, Women's Education, Gender Equality, Inclusive Education, Social Justice, NEP 2020, Educational Reform.

INTRODUCTION

Education occupies a central position in the economic, social, cultural, and democratic development of a nation. In a diverse country such as India, education performs an even broader function because it has to address differences in language, caste, gender, geography, income, disability, social background, and access to technology. The Indian education system has consequently moved through several stages of development, from limited educational opportunities under traditional social structures to a constitutional commitment to equality and universal education.

The present education system of India is considerably larger and more diverse than it was during the nineteenth century. It includes government and private schools, higher educational institutions, vocational and technical institutions, open and distance learning, digital learning platforms, skill-development programmes, and emerging technology-based educational models. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has attempted to restructure this system by emphasizing foundational literacy and numeracy, holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, vocational exposure, flexibility, multilingualism, technology, and equitable access. The policy envisages universal access to school education and seeks to raise the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to 50 percent by 2035.

Despite this expansion, education in India continues to face important challenges. These include unequal access between social groups and regions, school dropout, inadequate learning outcomes, gender-based barriers, digital inequality, insufficient career guidance, disparities in school infrastructure, and differences in the quality of teaching. Therefore, understanding education only in terms of enrolment and infrastructure is insufficient. Education must also be examined as a mechanism for social empowerment.

The life and work of Savitribai Phule provide an important historical perspective for such an examination. Born in 1831, Savitribai entered public life at a time when women's access to formal education was extremely limited. She became a teacher and worked with Jyotirao Phule to establish educational opportunities for girls and disadvantaged communities. NCERT's memorial lecture publication identifies her as the first woman teacher of modern India and records her educational and social activities, including her work in girls' education, adult learning, and the education of marginalized groups.

Her contribution was significant because she did not regard education as an isolated classroom activity. For her, education was connected with dignity, equality, social awareness, freedom from oppression, and the development of human capability. This approach has strong relevance to contemporary discussions about inclusive and equitable education.

The central argument of this paper is that Savitribai Phule's contribution should not be viewed merely as a historical episode in the development of women's education. It represents an educational philosophy that remains relevant to contemporary India. Her emphasis on opening educational spaces for excluded groups, empowering women through knowledge, preparing teachers, challenging discrimination, and connecting education with social transformation provides a valuable framework for evaluating the present education system.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SAVITRIBAI PHULE

Savitribai Phule was born on 3 January 1831 in Naigaon, Maharashtra. Her early life reflected the limited educational opportunities available to women during the nineteenth century. After her marriage to Jyotirao Phule, she received education and teacher training, which transformed the direction of her life.

The educational journey of Savitribai was itself significant. At a time when female literacy was socially discouraged, she became an educator rather than merely a recipient of education. In 1848, she began teaching girls at the school established at Bhidewada in Pune. NCERT records 1848 as the year in which she became the first female teacher in the first girls' school in Pune.

The initiative faced strong social resistance. Teaching girls, particularly girls from communities traditionally excluded from formal learning, challenged existing social arrangements. Nevertheless, Savitribai continued teaching. Educational accounts also associate her work with Fatima Sheikh, whose participation demonstrated the importance of cooperation across social and religious boundaries in the development of early women's education. The Phule educational movement gradually established additional schools and educational initiatives.

An important feature of this movement was its attention to children and communities who were excluded from dominant educational institutions. The educational work of Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule extended beyond girls' schooling to disadvantaged caste groups, adult learners, and socially vulnerable people. An educational resource published through INFLIBNET notes that schools for girls were established in 1848 and additional girls' schools followed in 1851, while other educational initiatives included schools for marginalized communities and night education.

Savitribai's educational activities were therefore connected with a larger social reform programme. Her work included opposition to caste discrimination, concern for widows and vulnerable women, support for social dignity, and participation in humanitarian activities. NCERT's memorial publication records her involvement in educational and social initiatives throughout her life.

Her contribution can consequently be interpreted through three interconnected dimensions:

1. **Education as a right**
2. **Education as empowerment**

3. Education as an instrument of social transformation

These three principles are especially relevant to present-day educational policy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of the present research are:

1. To examine the major educational contributions of Savitribai Phule.
2. To understand her philosophy concerning women's education and social equality.
3. To examine the major characteristics of India's present education system.
4. To assess the progress of women's participation in Indian education.
5. To analyse the relevance of Savitribai Phule's educational philosophy to NEP 2020.
6. To identify continuing challenges relating to gender and social inclusion in education.
7. To suggest measures for incorporating the values of equality, inclusion, and empowerment into contemporary education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study follows a **qualitative, descriptive, historical, and analytical research design**.

Nature of the Study

The research is primarily based on secondary information. Historical material concerning Savitribai Phule has been examined alongside contemporary educational policies and official statistics.

Sources of Data

The study uses:

- Government of India publications
- Ministry of Education reports
- UDISE+ data
- All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)
- NCERT publications
- Scholarly articles and research papers
- Educational policy documents
- Academic literature concerning Savitribai Phule and Indian education

AISHE is the Ministry of Education's major annual statistical mechanism for higher education and collects information relating to enrolment, teachers, programmes, infrastructure, examinations, finance, and other indicators.

Analytical Approach

The study compares the educational philosophy and practices associated with Savitribai Phule with selected dimensions of contemporary Indian education, particularly:

- access,

- gender equality,
- social inclusion,
- teacher education,
- curriculum,
- technology,
- community participation,
- higher education,
- and social justice.

MAJOR EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF SAVITRIBAI PHULE

Pioneer of Girls' Education

The most widely recognized contribution of Savitribai Phule is her pioneering work in girls' education. At a time when educational opportunities for women were severely restricted, she entered the teaching profession and helped establish schools for girls.

Her importance lies not simply in the establishment of a school but in challenging the assumption that formal education was inappropriate for girls. Her work transformed the question from "Should girls be educated?" to "Why should girls be denied education?"

This change in social thinking represents a major educational contribution.

NCERT records her as the first woman teacher of modern India and notes her involvement in the first girls' school in Pune in 1848.

Education for Marginalized Communities

Savitribai Phule's educational vision was broader than gender. It also addressed caste and social exclusion.

The Phule educational movement sought to provide learning opportunities to communities that had historically faced exclusion. This principle is important because gender disadvantage cannot always be studied independently of poverty, caste, social status, or geographical location.

Contemporary inclusive education similarly recognizes that disadvantaged learners may face multiple barriers simultaneously.

Education as Social Empowerment

Savitribai regarded education as a means through which individuals could develop awareness and challenge social restrictions.

Her approach therefore differed from a narrow understanding of education as literacy alone. Education was connected with:

- self-confidence,
- social awareness,

- independent thinking,
- economic opportunity,
- dignity,
- and resistance to injustice.

This perspective is highly compatible with contemporary approaches to empowerment-oriented education.

Teacher as an Agent of Social Change

Savitribai's own life illustrates the importance of teachers as agents of social transformation.

She was not simply an instructor delivering a prescribed curriculum. She entered a socially contested environment and demonstrated that teaching could challenge established inequalities.

This has continuing relevance for teacher education in India. A technically competent teacher must also be capable of creating inclusive classrooms, recognizing discrimination, encouraging critical thinking, and supporting students from different backgrounds.

Importance of Adult and Community Education

The educational initiatives associated with the Phules also extended beyond conventional school education. NCERT's historical account records Savitribai's association with adult learning and educational work among peasants and workers.

This aspect of her work is relevant to contemporary lifelong learning.

Modern education is increasingly expected to extend beyond childhood and adolescence. Adult education, continuing education, skill development, open universities, online courses, and workplace learning reflect the principle that education can continue throughout life.

Education and Women's Dignity

Women's education was closely associated with Savitribai's broader concern for women's dignity.

Education provides women with knowledge, confidence, economic opportunities, awareness of rights, and greater capacity to participate in public decision-making.

Her work therefore represents an early example of education being used as a foundation for women's empowerment.

Promotion of Critical Awareness

Savitribai's educational philosophy challenged unquestioned social practices. Her broader reform work indicates that education should encourage individuals to examine social conditions rather than merely accept inherited practices.

This principle is particularly important in the contemporary context of misinformation, social media influence, artificial intelligence, and rapidly changing employment patterns.

Students today require not only information but also the ability to evaluate information critically.

PRESENT EDUCATION SYSTEM OF INDIA

India's current education system is one of the world's largest educational systems. It includes school education from early childhood through secondary education, undergraduate and postgraduate education, professional education, technical institutions, vocational programmes, distance learning, and digital education.

The present system is undergoing substantial reform under NEP 2020.

New 5+3+3+4 Structure

NEP 2020 introduced a curricular and pedagogical structure based on:

- Foundational Stage – 5 years
- Preparatory Stage – 3 years
- Middle Stage – 3 years
- Secondary Stage – 4 years

The purpose is to align educational structure with children's developmental stages rather than maintaining the earlier 10+2 structure as the sole organizing framework.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

The present system places significant emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy.

This is important because later educational success depends heavily on whether children acquire basic reading, writing, comprehension, and mathematical abilities during the early years.

From Savitribai's perspective, this focus is consistent with the principle that education must reach learners at the earliest possible stage and prevent social exclusion from becoming educational exclusion.

Holistic Education

NEP 2020 promotes a broader educational approach rather than a rigid division between academic and vocational learning.

The policy encourages greater flexibility between arts, sciences, vocational education, extracurricular activities, and other forms of learning.

This approach recognizes that students possess different abilities and aspirations.

Vocational and Skill Education

Contemporary education increasingly emphasizes employability and practical skills.

NEP 2020 provides for vocational exposure from the school stage, including internships and practical learning opportunities.

This is relevant to Savitribai's practical understanding of education as a means of improving the social and economic condition of learners.

CURRENT STATUS OF EDUCATION IN INDIA: SELECTED DATA

India has made considerable quantitative progress in educational access and participation.

Table 1: Selected Indicators of Indian Education

Indicator	Recent Position
Total schools, 2025–26	14.67 lakh
Government schools, 2025–26	10.05 lakh
Total students, 2025–26	24.72 crore
Total teachers, 2025–26	1.02 crore
Female enrolment in higher education, 2022–23	About 2.18 crore
Total higher-education enrolment, 2022–23	About 4.46 crore

Source: UDISE+ and Ministry of Education/AISHE.

The scale of the system demonstrates that India has moved far beyond the educational environment in which Savitribai worked. However, the underlying issue of equitable participation remains relevant.

Growth in Female Higher-Education Participation

According to the Ministry of Education's annual report, total higher-education enrolment increased from approximately 3.42 crore in 2014–15 to 4.46 crore in 2022–23. Female enrolment increased to about 2.18 crore, representing a substantial increase over the 2014–15 level.

This is an important indicator of the transformation of women's educational participation in India.

Table 2: Higher Education Enrolment Growth

Year	Total Enrolment	Female Enrolment
2014–15	3.42 crore	1.57 crore
2022–23	4.46 crore	Approximately 2.18 crore

Source: Ministry of Education/AISHE.

The expansion of female participation demonstrates that the principle championed by nineteenth-century reformers has become a major component of national education policy.

SAVITRIBAI PHULE AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Women's education is one of the strongest areas in which Savitribai's legacy can be connected with current educational developments.

The increase in female enrolment in higher education represents a major social transformation. Women today participate in engineering, medicine, management, law, science, humanities, technology, research, entrepreneurship, and professional education.

However, access alone does not guarantee equality.

Women may continue to experience barriers such as:

- family expectations,
- financial constraints,
- safety concerns,

- unequal domestic responsibilities,
- limited access to digital devices,
- rural connectivity problems,
- social stereotypes,
- unequal career opportunities,
- and discontinuation of education due to marriage or family responsibilities.

Therefore, contemporary women's education requires a multidimensional approach.

NEP 2020 recognizes gender inclusion as an important component of equitable education. The Ministry of Education describes the Gender Inclusion Fund as an instrument intended to support equitable quality education for girls and transgender students.

This reflects a principle strongly associated with Savitribai Phule: educational equality requires institutional support rather than merely declaring that education is available to everyone.

SAVITRIBAI PHULE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education means creating educational opportunities in which students from different social, economic, linguistic, gender, and physical backgrounds can participate meaningfully.

Savitribai's work anticipated this idea in several respects.

Inclusion of Girls

Her earliest major educational intervention directly challenged the exclusion of girls.

Inclusion of Lower-Caste Communities

The Phule educational movement sought to expand learning opportunities among socially marginalized groups.

Inclusion of Adult Learners

Her educational activities were not restricted to children.

Inclusion Through Community Support

Her work demonstrates that educational reform can require cooperation among teachers, families, communities, and social reformers.

Contemporary Meaning

Today, inclusion must additionally address:

- students with disabilities,
- tribal communities,
- economically weaker groups,
- migrants,
- linguistic minorities,
- rural populations,

- first-generation learners,
- and digitally excluded students.

Thus, Savitribai's historical contribution can be reinterpreted as an early model of socially responsive education.

SAVITRIBAI PHULE AND NEP 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 provides a particularly useful framework for understanding the contemporary relevance of Savitribai Phule.

Table 3: Comparative Perspective

Savitribai Phule's Educational Orientation	Contemporary NEP 2020 Direction
Education for girls	Gender-inclusive education
Education for marginalized communities	Equity and inclusion
Education as empowerment	Holistic development
Teacher as social change agent	Teacher professional development
Wider access to education	Universal access
Practical learning	Vocational education
Critical awareness	Experiential and competency-based learning
Community-oriented education	Community participation
Education beyond social barriers	Multilingual and inclusive education
Social dignity	Equity and constitutional values

NEP 2020 seeks universal access to schooling, promotes foundational learning, supports multilingualism, reduces rigid divisions among disciplines, and emphasizes inclusive educational development.

The similarity should not be exaggerated: Savitribai lived in a very different historical context, and NEP 2020 is a contemporary national policy framework. Nevertheless, their broad ethical orientation toward access, inclusion, empowerment, and social justice can be productively compared.

TEACHER EDUCATION: A MAJOR AREA OF CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Savitribai's transformation from a young woman with limited educational opportunities into a professional teacher demonstrates the transformative potential of teacher education.

Teachers today operate in increasingly complex environments. They must address:

- diverse classrooms,
- digital learning,
- competency-based education,
- inclusive education,
- mental and social development,
- multidisciplinary learning,
- assessment reform,
- and changing employment requirements.

NEP 2020 seeks to strengthen teacher preparation and identifies a four-year integrated B.Ed. as the minimum teaching qualification by 2030.

Savitribai's example suggests that teacher preparation should not focus only on subject knowledge. Teachers should also develop:

1. social sensitivity;
2. gender awareness;
3. inclusive classroom practices;
4. critical thinking;
5. communication skills;
6. ethical responsibility;
7. community engagement;
8. digital competence.

A teacher who understands the social context of learners is better equipped to create meaningful education.

DIGITAL EDUCATION AND THE LEGACY OF SAVITRIBAI PHULE

One of the most important changes in Indian education is the expansion of digital learning.

Digital education offers several opportunities:

- online courses,
- digital libraries,
- virtual classrooms,
- educational applications,
- open educational resources,
- recorded lectures,
- online assessment,
- and remote teacher training.

However, digital education also creates new forms of inequality.

Students may differ in access to:

- smartphones,
- computers,
- reliable internet,
- electricity,
- digital skills,
- and quiet learning spaces.

Therefore, technology cannot automatically be equated with educational equality.

Savitribai's legacy suggests an important principle: **a new educational technology is meaningful only when it expands educational opportunity rather than reproducing exclusion.**

Contemporary educational policy must therefore combine digital expansion with inclusive infrastructure.

PRESENT CHALLENGES OF THE INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Although India has made significant educational progress, several challenges remain.

Quality Differences

Access to a school does not necessarily mean access to high-quality education. Differences in teachers, infrastructure, learning resources, school leadership, and local conditions can influence educational outcomes.

Rural-Urban Gap

Students in remote rural and tribal regions may experience greater difficulty accessing specialized teachers, laboratories, digital resources, and higher education.

Gender-Related Barriers

Female participation has increased substantially, but gender-based social expectations and safety concerns continue to affect educational decisions.

Digital Divide

The growth of online education has made digital access increasingly important. Students without appropriate devices or connectivity may be disadvantaged.

Socioeconomic Inequality

Economic conditions continue to influence the ability of families to bear educational expenses, particularly beyond compulsory schooling.

Dropout and Retention

Retention remains important because enrolment statistics do not fully capture whether students complete their educational journey.

Learning Outcomes

Educational success must be assessed not merely by attendance or examination results but by actual competencies, comprehension, creativity, problem-solving, communication, and application of knowledge.

Employability

Higher education increasingly faces the challenge of connecting academic learning with employment and entrepreneurship.

Social Discrimination

Educational institutions must continuously work to prevent discrimination based on caste, gender, disability, language, religion, socioeconomic background, or other social characteristics.

Teacher Workload and Development

Teachers require continuing professional development to adapt to changing curricula, technology, assessment practices, and learner needs.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION

Recent official data indicate substantial expansion in school-level educational capacity.

UDISE+ reported that the number of teachers crossed one crore for the first time during 2024–25, reaching 1, 01, 22, 420. It also reported improvements in pupil-teacher ratios across foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages.

Table 4: Selected School Education Indicators

Indicator	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Teachers	94,83,294	98,07,600	1,01,22,420
Foundational PTR	11	10	10
Preparatory PTR	14	13	13
Middle PTR	18	18	17
Secondary PTR	23	21	21

Source: UDISE+ 2024–25.

These figures suggest quantitative improvement in educational capacity. Nevertheless, teacher numbers should be accompanied by improvements in teacher preparation, subject expertise, classroom practice, and learning outcomes.

SAVITRIBAI PHULE'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH EDUCATION

Savitribai's educational contribution can be understood as part of a larger struggle for social justice.

Her work challenged two major forms of exclusion:

Gender exclusion: the belief that women should not receive formal education.

Caste exclusion: the denial of educational and social opportunities to marginalized communities.

This makes her particularly relevant to contemporary debates on equity.

Modern educational justice requires more than equal treatment. Sometimes students require additional institutional support because their starting conditions are unequal.

For example, a first-generation learner may require:

- mentoring,
- scholarships,
- language support,
- remedial education,

- counselling,
- digital assistance,
- and academic guidance.

Such interventions can be understood as contemporary expressions of the principle that education should actively overcome social barriers.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: NINETEENTH-CENTURY EDUCATION AND PRESENT INDIA

Table 5: Comparative Analysis

Dimension	Savitribai's Period	Present India
Women's education	Highly restricted	Broad institutional access
Girls' schools	Very limited	Extensive school network
Higher education for women	Extremely limited	Large female enrolment
Digital education	Not applicable	Major emerging component
Teacher profession for women	Socially restricted	Established professional pathway
Inclusive education	Strong social barriers	Policy-supported inclusion
Vocational education	Limited formal opportunities	Increasing policy emphasis
Constitutional rights	Not yet established	Education linked to constitutional values
Educational technology	Minimal	Digital platforms and AI emerging
Main challenge	Access and social acceptance	Access + quality + equity + learning outcomes

The comparison demonstrates the scale of India's educational transformation.

Yet one important similarity remains: education continues to be connected with social opportunity.

The barriers have changed, but the requirement for equitable access remains.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study identifies the following major findings:

Finding 1: Savitribai Phule transformed the meaning of women's education

Her contribution extended beyond literacy. She demonstrated that women could become learners, teachers, writers, and social leaders.

Finding 2: Her educational philosophy was fundamentally inclusive

Her educational work reached girls and socially marginalized groups, making inclusion a central feature of her approach.

Finding 3: Contemporary India has achieved significant quantitative progress

The expansion of school infrastructure, teachers, and higher-education enrolment indicates substantial development.

Finding 4: Female participation has improved considerably

Female higher-education enrolment has expanded strongly since 2014–15.

Finding 5: NEP 2020 contains principles compatible with Savitribai's educational vision

Equity, inclusion, universal access, holistic development, vocational education, and gender inclusion have become important elements of contemporary policy.

Finding 6: Access is no longer the only educational challenge

India must increasingly focus on learning outcomes, quality, digital inclusion, employability, and student well-being.

Finding 7: Teacher quality is central

The expansion of teacher numbers must be accompanied by professional development and social sensitivity.

Finding 8: Historical educational thinkers remain relevant

Savitribai Phule provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding education as a tool of empowerment and social transformation.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, the following recommendations are proposed.

Strengthen Gender-Inclusive Education

Schools and colleges should develop programmes that encourage girls to pursue STEM, management, entrepreneurship, research, and other non-traditional fields.

Improve Safety for Female Students

Safe transportation, adequate sanitation, secure campuses, grievance mechanisms, and gender-sensitive institutional practices should be strengthened.

Expand Scholarships

Financial support should be targeted toward students from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Strengthen Rural Education

Rural schools should receive adequate teachers, laboratories, libraries, internet access, and career guidance.

Reduce the Digital Divide

Digital education should be supported by affordable devices, connectivity, community digital centres, and digital literacy.

CONCLUSION

The development of Indian education represents a long historical movement from exclusion toward broader access. Savitribai Phule occupies an important place in this history because she transformed

the idea of women's education from a socially controversial proposition into a practical programme of institution-building, teaching, and social reform.

Her contribution was revolutionary because she worked against multiple barriers simultaneously. She challenged gender inequality, supported education for marginalized communities, entered the teaching profession, promoted social awareness, and connected education with human dignity.

The contemporary Indian education system is vastly different from the educational environment of the nineteenth century. India now possesses an enormous school and higher-education network, a large teaching workforce, digital educational infrastructure, expanded women's participation, and a comprehensive national policy framework. Recent official data demonstrate substantial progress in both school and higher education. UDISE+ reported more than one crore teachers in 2024–25, while higher-education female enrolment reached approximately 2.18 crore in 2022–23.

However, quantitative expansion should not be confused with complete educational equality. Challenges involving learning quality, gender-based barriers, digital inequality, socioeconomic disadvantage, regional disparities, safety, and employability continue to require attention.

In this context, Savitribai Phule remains relevant not simply because she was an early woman teacher but because she represented a particular philosophy of education. Her approach suggests that education should expand human freedom, challenge social discrimination, promote equality, and create opportunities for those who have historically been excluded.

The strongest lesson from her life is therefore that education becomes transformative when access, dignity, equality, and empowerment are treated as inseparable objectives.

For contemporary India, her legacy provides both a historical foundation and a practical ethical framework. NEP 2020's emphasis on universal access, gender inclusion, foundational learning, multidisciplinary education, vocational exposure, and holistic development provides an opportunity to translate some of these principles into a modern institutional context.

Thus, Savitribai Phule should be remembered not merely as a pioneer of girls' education but as an important educational thinker whose work anticipated contemporary concerns about inclusive, equitable, participatory, and socially transformative education. Her vision remains particularly relevant to India's continuing effort to build an education system in which every learner can access knowledge, develop capabilities, and participate with dignity in society.

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