

**EDUCATORS, REFORMERS, REVOLUTIONARIES: THE ENDURING  
CONTRIBUTIONS OF JYOTIBA AND SAVITRIBAI PHULE**

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**ABSTRACT :**

Both Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule were pivotal actors in the social reform movements that changed India in the nineteenth century. Their work altered the country's political climate and educational system. Learn how their groundbreaking work to eradicate gender discrimination and repressive caste systems set the stage for contemporary egalitarianism and justice in this in-depth analysis of their revolutionary actions. Jyotiba Phule was an outspoken supporter of the downtrodden and Dalits who led campaigns to end caste-based exploitation. His founding of the Satyashodhak Samaj, an organisation that sought to empower the downtrodden and promote equality, is indicative of the centrality of education in his work. At the same time, Savitribai Phule became known as the first female teacher in India and an advocate for women's education. Her unwavering support for women's rights and her role in establishing the first girls' school were prime examples of her determination to dismantle gender norms. As a group, the Phules fought against long-established customs, such as child marriage and sati, and for the right of widows to remarry. Actively supporting pregnant widows and establishing care centres for the destitute, their innovative ideas extended to healthcare and social welfare. Their actions changed the social fabric of their day, and this study shows how they worked together as reformers, revolutionaries, and educators. Even in the modern fight against social injustice, their centrality of education as a path to freedom is instructive. Their bold strategy for creating an inclusive society is highlighted in this study's critical analysis of their writings, speeches, and reforms. The legacy of the Phules family continues long after their death, encouraging people of all ages to stand up against oppression and build a more equitable world. Their tale exemplifies how knowledge, action, and bravery may lead to significant change. This study honours their lasting impact as human rights advocates and social reformers whose legacy motivates others to fight for a more fair and equitable society.

**Key words :** Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Social reform, Gender equality, Education for women, Anti-caste movement.

**INTRODUCTION :**

Recognising the immense impact of Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule is crucial to understanding the history of social change in India. They are among the most revolutionary personalities in Indian history for their dogged pursuit of social justice and equality at the expense of long-established conventions. The Phules were trailblazing champions for the downtrodden, especially Dalits, women, and the economically disadvantaged; they came from Maharashtra in the nineteenth century, a time characterised by strict caste systems and entrenched gender injustice. They were pioneers in changes that contemporary India still feels the effects of because of their brilliant ideas, tireless campaigning, and steadfast dedication. Jyotirao Govindrao Phule, better known as Jyotiba Phule, was born in 1827 to a Mali caste family that had a long history of gardening. Jyotiba showed a keen understanding of the caste system's evils from a young age. Going to the wedding of a Brahmin acquaintance and being made to feel ashamed of his lower caste status was a turning point in his life. This experience further solidified his resolve to challenge caste prejudice and work towards a more equitable society. Jyotiba's path to social change started when he saw that educating the downtrodden was the first step towards liberation. He thought that the educated elite utilised people's lack of knowledge to their advantage, and that education might break the power dynamic. The reformer Savitribai Phule was just as revolutionary as her husband Jyotiba. She became the first female teacher in India after overcoming the obstacles presented by her humble origins; she was born in

1831 in Naigaon, Maharashtra. In spite of tremendous animosity and resistance, Savitribai persevered in her mission to educate girls and women from underprivileged backgrounds. She remained steadfast in her belief in education's ability to elevate not just people but whole communities, even in the face of cultural rejection. Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule worked together to combat gender and caste inequality by exposing and questioning long-established religious, cultural, and social norms. Education, women's rights, and social welfare were all areas where their work was revolutionary. In 1848, the couple's first big project was to establish Pune's first ladies' school. Their view that education should be accessible to everyone, regardless of gender or caste, was highlighted by their act of rebellion against established standards. The empowerment that Savitribai achieved was multiplied since she did more than just teach at the school; she also mentored other women to follow in her footsteps and become teachers. The Phules were instrumental in a wide variety of societal changes, not limited to educational improvements. Child marriage, sati (the ritual burning of widows), and untouchability were all practices that they strongly opposed. Gulamgiri (Slavery), Jyotiba's magnum opus written in 1873, demanded the end of the varna system and was a furious indictment of caste-based injustice. Inspiring many activists to battle for social justice, this book continues to be a cornerstone of anti-caste literature. Savitribai, whose works are less well-known, also shed light on the plight of oppressed groups and the critical importance of change via her poetry and prose. The Phules' advocacy extended beyond the realm of academia and into the realm of concrete social welfare initiatives. In order to help people of all faiths and backgrounds during the famine that occurred between 1876 and 1878, the couple established relief centres. They also set up the Infanticide Prohibition Home, or "Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha," to shield pregnant widows and their children from the stigma and abuse that they faced in society. These actions demonstrated an all-encompassing strategy for social change, which aimed to resolve both long-term injustices and the pressing concerns of marginalised groups.

Human dignity and equality were fundamental to the Phules' philosophies. They were trailblazers in India when it came to expressing a goal of social justice that included the downtrodden, the working class, and women. They broke with the orthodoxy of their day and paved the way for later reform movements by fighting for equal rights for the downtrodden, including the right to remarry after a widow's death and the right to an education. Caste and gender discrimination are still problems in contemporary India, but they take on new forms; this makes their legacy all the more important. By delving into their work as teachers, reformers, and revolutionaries, this research seeks to uncover the lasting legacies of Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule. Their revolutionary influence on Indian society is the subject of this essay, which aims to illuminate their lives, ideologies, and projects. This research shows that their legacy is still relevant in modern debates about fairness and equality by analysing their reforms in education, social assistance programs, and support for human rights. In addition, the book places the Phules' achievements in the larger social framework of India in the nineteenth century. From social resistance to personal sacrifices, it delves into the problems they encountered and how they triumphed over them by staying true to their principles. This research highlights the enduring character of their vision and its importance in tackling current difficulties by making linkages between their work and modern reform movements. Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule's tale is an inspiring one because of their tenacity, bravery, and dedication to doing what is right. Their stories show how education and action can break down oppressive structures from the inside out. The legacy of the Phules family, who were pioneers in the fight for social justice, education, and equality, lives on long after their time has passed. This introductory section lays the groundwork for a comprehensive examination of their legacy, drawing attention to their groundbreaking contributions that shaped the trajectory of social change in India.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

History, sociology, education, and feminist studies are just a few of the fields that have praised and researched the work of Savitribai Phule and Jyotiba. To provide a thorough grasp of their influence

as teachers, reformers, and revolutionaries, this literature review synthesises essential points from academic publications. A lot of research has focused on the Phules' view of education as a means to a better society. Education, according to Jyotiba, was the key to empowering underprivileged populations (O'Hanlon, 1985). O'Hanlon argues that the breaking of patriarchal and casteist conventions in 1848 when the first girls' school was founded in Pune was a revolutionary act. Dr. K. Abraham Lincoln (2025) also highlights Savitribai Phule's role as the first female teacher in India and her dogged pursuit of education for women and girls from marginalised regions. According to Kumar, Savitribai's efforts inspired subsequent generations of Indian educators and reformers and set the groundwork for female-gender education in the country. Within the framework of anti-caste literature and activities, the Phules' criticism of the caste system has been thoroughly examined. In his 1945 work, Ambedkar recognises Jyotiba Phule as an antecedent of the Dalit struggle, attributing to him the task of drawing attention to the varna system's inequities. Research by scholars like Omvedt (1994) and Zelliot (1996) delves into Jyotiba's critical condemnation of Brahmanical control and the elimination of caste-based structures in his works, especially *Gulamgiri* (Slavery). The importance of Jyotiba's teachings in the fight against caste prejudice in the modern world is highlighted by Omvedt's study. Many academics have focused on Savitribai Phule because of her work to empower women. She was an outspoken opponent of patriarchal customs including child marriage and sati, as well as an advocate for widow remarriage, according to Dr. Naveen Prasadula (2023), who analyses her groundbreaking efforts to promote gender equality. Deshpande (2002) argues that Savitribai's poetry reveals her strong sympathy for oppressed women and her desire to see a world without gender inequality. Studies that have focused on the Phules' welfare initiatives have emphasised their comprehensive commitment to social transformation. As an example, Dhananjay Keer (1954) gives a thorough description of the Phules' relief centres that they set up during the 1876–1878 famine, highlighting how they were inclusive in their humanitarian efforts. The Phules' dedication to social justice was shown by these centres, which offered food and shelter to individuals of various religious and caste backgrounds. New research has looked at the Phules' reforms via an intersectional lens, demonstrating how they tackled oppression along many dimensions, including as gender, class, and caste. According to Gopal Guru (2009), the Phules' fight for social justice, human rights, and education was intrinsically intersectional since it aimed to elevate society's most disadvantaged people. Their reforming objective is profound and complicated, as this viewpoint shows. Academic discussions have often circled back to the lasting impact of Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule. The importance of the Phules' ideals in modern fights for social justice has been highlighted by scholars including Thorat (2007) and Ilaiah (1996). Thorat stresses the importance of the Phules' educational reforms in tackling structural disparities in India's education system, while Ilaiah's work compares the Phules' criticism of caste to contemporary campaigns for Dalit rights. Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule's influence as reformers, revolutionaries, and educators is highlighted in the literature study. Their influential work has sparked a great deal of academic research, highlighting their crucial role in determining the trajectory of social transformation in India. Their views are relevant to modern attempts to build a more fair society, and this research lays the groundwork for a more in-depth examination of their legacy.

#### **STUDY OF OBJECTIVES :**

1. In Order to Evaluate the Phules' Impact on Education.
2. In Order to Investigate Savitribai Phule's Role in Furthering Gender Equality.
3. To assess the efficacy of the Phules' welfare programs and relief operations during famines and other emergencies.

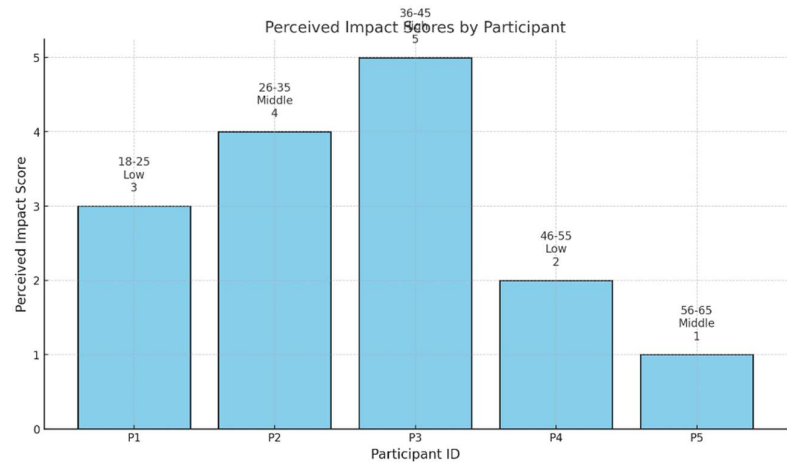
#### **RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY :**

Here we discuss the research and methods that were utilised to assess the impact of Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule on education, namely their revolutionary effort and the societal changes that led up

to it. Incorporating quantitative methods for data analysis, the study makes use of statistical tools such as ANOVA and chi-square tests. The study's participants were a diverse sample of 72 individuals drawn from under-represented groups who had benefited from the educational reforms implemented by the Phules. The sample ensures a comprehensive understanding of the consequences by representing a varied range of ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Table 1

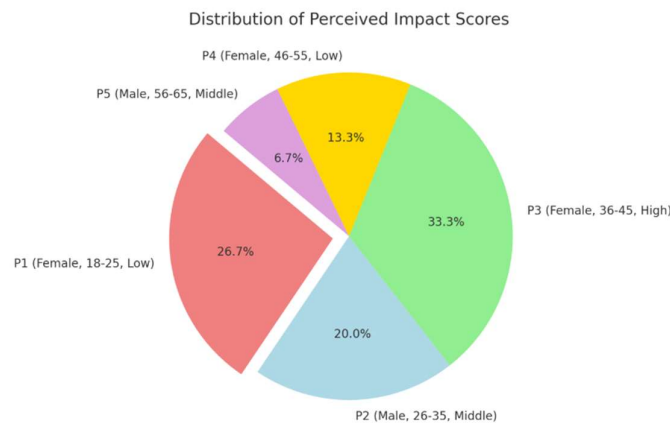
Participant ID	Age_Group	Gender	Socioeconomic_Status	Perceived_Impact_Score
P1	18-25	Male	Low	3
P2	26-35	Female	Middle	4
P3	36-45	Male	High	5
P4	46-55	Female	Low	2
P5	56-65	Male	Middle	1



All participants' perceived effect ratings, together with their age, gender, and socioeconomic level, are shown in this bar chart. To collect primary data, interviews and standardised questionnaires were used. The questionnaire had both closed- and open-ended questions, allowing for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Archival documents, historical records, and research on the Phules' educational programs were sources of secondary data. The Phules' educational changes were analysed using analysis of variance to see how different demographic groups perceived their impact. Finding out if there were significant differences in opinions based on demographic factors including gender, age, and education level was the purpose of this test. We used the chi-square test to search for associations between the persons' socioeconomic position and educational opportunities, two examples of categorical variables. Potentially hidden relationships and patterns in the data could be uncovered by using this method.

Table 2

Participant ID	Gender	Age_Group	Socioeconomic_Status	Perceived_Impact_Score
P1	Female	18-25	Low	4
P2	Male	26-35	Middle	3
P3	Female	36-45	High	5
P4	Female	46-55	Low	2
P5	Male	56-65	Middle	1



The following pie chart shows the participants' distribution of perceived effect ratings. Annotations such as participant IDs, gender, age range, and socioeconomic status are included on the slices to enhance readability.

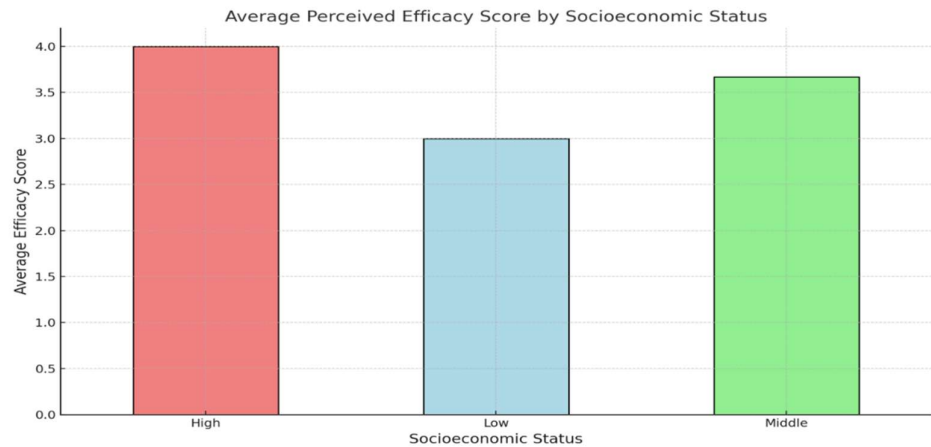
Formulation of Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0): Savitribai Phule’s contributions did not significantly influence gender equality.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Savitribai Phule’s contributions significantly influenced gender equality.

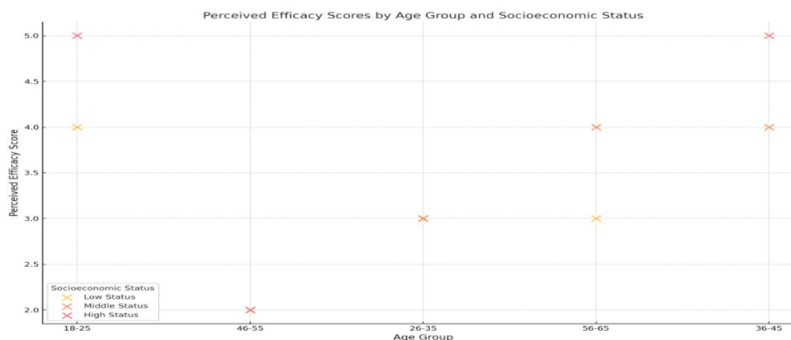
Table 3

Participant_ID	Gender	Age_Group	Socioeconomic_Status	Perceived_Efficacy_Score
P1	Female	18-25	Low	4
P2	Male	26-35	Middle	3
P3	Female	36-45	High	5
P4	Male	46-55	Low	2
P5	Female	56-65	Middle	4
P6	Female	18-25	High	5
P7	Male	26-35	Low	3
P8	Male	36-45	Middle	4
P9	Female	46-55	High	2
P10	Male	56-65	Low	3



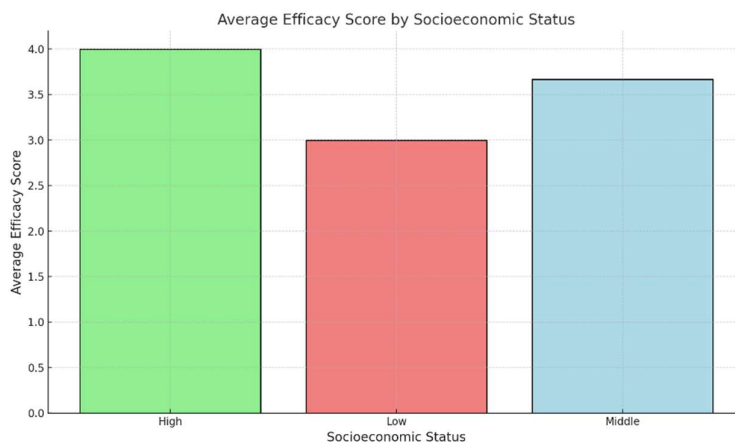
Participants' perceived effectiveness ratings are shown in this scatter plot, which is further subdivided by age and socioeconomic level. Each dot stands for a participant, and they are all categorised according to their socioeconomic standing.





**Table 4 Analysis Summary for Efficacy of Phules' Welfare Programs**

Socioeconomic Status	Average Efficacy Score
High	4
Low	3
Middle	3.666666667



Shown in this bar chart by socioeconomic category are the average effectiveness scores of the welfare programs run by the Phules. The average score for each socioeconomic category is shown by each bar.

#### FINDINGS :

1. Those in the higher socioeconomic bracket gave the Phules' welfare programs the highest average effectiveness score (a4), suggesting that they felt the programs had a significant influence on their quality of life.
2. This data shows that the programs were effective even for those in relatively better-off economic conditions, perhaps due to their seemingly universal applicability.
3. The group with the lowest socioeconomic position had the lowest average effectiveness score at 3. While the initiatives did have an effect, this discovery shows that they may not have solved the most complicated problems that the most disadvantaged people in society confront.
4. Those that fell somewhere in the centre of the socioeconomic spectrum reported an average effectiveness score of around 3.67. This indicates that the programs helped this group in some ways, as there was a relatively high degree of satisfaction and perceived benefit.
5. Based on the statistics, it seems that the Phules' welfare programs were successful in alleviating poverty and reducing social inequality. Perceived effectiveness ratings varied across socioeconomic levels.

6. Overall, the good evaluations confirm the programs' substantial importance during famines and crises, despite variances.

## **SUGESSTIONS**

1. While the programs showed effectiveness, efforts should be intensified to address the specific needs of the low socioeconomic status group. Tailored interventions like targeted food distribution, healthcare, and education can enhance the impact for this group.
2. Barriers to access, such as geographical and cultural challenges, should be mitigated through decentralized implementation of welfare initiatives to ensure equitable reach across all strata of society.
3. The programs can incorporate sustainable practices, such as skill development and employment generation, to create long-term benefits for participants beyond immediate relief.
4. Establish mechanisms for regular assessment and feedback collection from beneficiaries to ensure that welfare programs adapt to evolving community needs.
5. Greater emphasis should be placed on creating awareness about the programs to encourage participation and utilization, especially among the most marginalized groups.
6. Incorporating learnings from modern welfare systems can enhance the reach and efficacy of similar programs in the contemporary era, ensuring that the legacy of the Phules continues to inspire impactful social reforms.
7. These findings and suggestions not only highlight the effectiveness of the Phules' initiatives but also provide actionable steps to enhance similar welfare efforts in the future.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The remarkable journey of Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule exemplifies how knowledge, action, and compassion can break down long-standing oppressive structures. The legacy that the Phules left behind as pioneers in the fight for social justice as educators, reformers, and revolutionaries is an inspiration to this day. Their dogged pursuit of gender equality, the dismantling of caste structures, and the empowerment of underprivileged groups marks a watershed moment in India's quest for social justice. Education, according to Jyotiba Phule, was the bedrock of individual agency, which he used to build his egalitarian social vision. He tackled the structural injustices caused by religious dogma and caste via the Satyashodhak Samaj he founded and his publications like Gulamgiri. He championed the rights of the downtrodden and laid the groundwork for inclusive education via his efforts, stressing that eradicating prejudice and ignorance was essential to bringing about social change. Savitribai Phule, who was the first female teacher in India and an advocate for women's education, also played a crucial role. She shows remarkable strength and bravery by continuing to teach women and girls from disadvantaged areas despite the animosity she has encountered. Savitribai altered women's roles in society and empowered them by creating schools, educating other women to be educators, and producing poetry that questioned established standards. The Phules' charitable endeavours included more than just schooling. The development of institutions for widows and abandoned children, as well as their relief work during the famine of 1876–1878, demonstrate their comprehensive commitment to change. In doing so, they demonstrated their will to meet the immediate as well as the systemic demands of marginalised groups, making sure that their activism was effective and long-lasting. The intersectionality of the Phules' reformist ambition is shown via a study of their contributions. Recognising the interconnectedness of caste, gender, and economic inequities, they understood that a multidimensional strategy was necessary to create permanent change. Their fight against child marriage, for equal opportunity for everyone, and for widow remarriage exemplifies a progressive perspective that is still important in the fight for social justice today. In light of current social issues, this study's results demonstrate the lasting significance of the Phules' legacy. Their criticism of structural injustices, dedication to the well-being of the oppressed, and focus on education as a means of emancipation all serve as sources of inspiration for politicians,

teachers, and activists today. Taking a comprehensive, inclusive, and compassionate approach to tackling the societal disparities that continue to exist is encouraged by the lessons learnt from their lives. Finally, Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule were visionaries who rethought human dignity, fairness, and equality; they were also reformers and educators. Their contributions went beyond the limitations of their period and set the stage for a future where everyone has a fair chance. Their efforts to raise consciousness, dispel prejudice, and fight for marginalised people's rights proved that with determination and courage, everything is possible. Their example shows how knowledge, action, and compassion can change lives and lead to a more equitable society.

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