




# EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARS

When being asked to take part in this project I was excited to delve deeper into my own heritage and find theories and scholars that influence education in South Asia. What I actually found is many similarities to theories here in the UK and Europe, in fact I was able to make so many links to Froebelian practice, Reggio Emilia, and Margaret McMillan's ideas. I found that South Asian theories may have already been influencing European practices way before we realised.

What I found was that South Asian philosophy looked at bringing together the body, mind and soul/spirit. These ideas are in contrast to many practices which want to separate each of these things and focus on education as something for the mind. Only now are we beginning to understand the importance of a holistic approach to education coming full circle to the ideas that have been shared by South Asian philosophy for many, many years.



Whilst researching I became increasingly frustrated as I was unable to find sources that were translated by people from South Asia. Most of the translations I found were from German professors who were interested in studying India in the early 1900s. I was reminded that the world wasn't separate at this time and in fact there were many trade routes and movements between Europe and South Asia. We need to be aware of being critical readers and reflecting on what information we consume. We have to think about the number of layers that are added to this project - translation, colonisation and then our own layer of an educational lens to the philosopher's work.

The scholars that have been chosen come from a range of time periods, have various routes into education and their own influences (including colonisation). I'm excited to see where these short pieces of information take you in discovering new ways of thinking about education. I hope that you find connections to what you already know and find a way to reaffirm or build upon what you already practice.

*Rachna Joshi*

# SAVITRIBAI PHULE



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Savitribai Phule (1831 - 1897) was known as the 'mother of modern Indian education'. She was a teacher, a poet and a social reformer, considered to be a pioneer in India's feminist movement.

Along with her husband, she opened 13 schools for girls and children. She saw education as a way to bring about reforms in society, and much of her work involved opposing the caste system.

Phule received a lot of criticism for her activism but this did not deter her from making sure girls and children from lower castes had access to an education.

## SAVITRIBAI PHULE'S WORK

Savitribai Phule believed that education should be **universally available, child-sensitive, socially reforming** and **intellectually critical**.

Awake, arise and educate  
Smash traditions-liberate!  
We'll come together and learn  
Policy-righteousness-religion,  
Slumber not but blow the trumpet  
O Brahman, dare not you upset.  
Give a war cry, rise fast  
Rise, to learn and act.

(S. Phule)

### **Universally available and child-sensitive**

Savitribai Phule sought to provide an education to children who faced discrimination due to their gender and/or caste.

Phule maintained that children deserved to have an education that was relevant to them. She created a curriculum that reflected the intersections of the children's lives (for example, their gender, caste, religion). This curriculum was mindful of the skills and knowledge children needed to thrive both in their immediate environment and the greater world.

### **Socially reforming and intellectually critical**

Phule believed that education was the path to social change and reform. She saw how it could provide knowledge and power to the oppressed, in particular girls and children in lower castes. Phule encouraged students to question authority and religious texts. She wanted students to think critically about gender stereotypes, patriarchal social norms and social hierarchies, in the hope that education can bring about social reform.



## REFLECTIONS ON SAVITRIBAI PHULE'S WORK

Do you model questioning and not taking things at face value when you are with children? What kinds of questions do you, and the children, ask?



How much does your curriculum reflect the intersectionality of children's lives? How can you learn more about the children you teach? And reflect this in the experiences you offer them?



Do you see being an educator as social activism? Take a moment to list the ways you are an activist.



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