

Women's Education and Social Reform Movements in Maharashtra during the 1800s

¹Saurabh Anil Mhashakhatri, ²Dr. Sanjana Singh

¹History, Kalinga University, Raipur

Email- saurabhmhashakhatri@gmail.com

²Professor, Kalinga University, Raipur

ABSTRACT

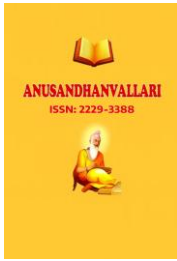
The nineteenth century marked a transformative era in Maharashtra, witnessing significant social reform movements that sought to challenge entrenched patriarchal norms, caste hierarchies, and restrictive traditions that marginalized women. This study examines the historical impact of women's education and social reform movements in Maharashtra during the 1800s, with particular emphasis on the pioneering contributions of Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule, Pandita Ramabai, reform organizations, missionary institutions, and progressive social groups. Anchored in feminist theory, social reform theory, and the sociology of education, the study analyzes the socio-cultural conditions of women, the emergence of reform initiatives, establishment of educational institutions, challenges encountered, and the broader implications of these developments for women's empowerment and social transformation. Utilizing secondary historical data supplemented with a perception-based analytical framework, the study highlights the severe barriers faced by women such as illiteracy, domestic confinement, child marriage, caste-based oppression, and social exclusion, while also demonstrating how education became a powerful instrument for literacy enhancement, social awareness, identity formation, public participation, and rights advancement. The findings reveal that women's education significantly contributed to social reform, catalysed progressive change, and laid a strong foundation for future gender equality movements. Despite resistance from patriarchal forces, religious orthodoxy, and institutional limitations, the women's education movement in nineteenth-century Maharashtra emerged as a milestone in India's socio-cultural history, reshaping societal attitudes and redefining women's roles in public and private life.

Keywords: Women's Education; Social Reform; Maharashtra; Savitribai Phule; Gender Equality; Nineteenth Century; Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

The 19th century was a very important time in Maharashtra's history. During this time, Maharashtra was one of the major centres of social change and education in colonial India. One of the areas in which social change took place was in the area of women's education. The move to educate women attacked the existing social structure based on patriarchal systems and castes and traditional conservative practices that forced women into homemaking and prohibited their acquisition of any knowledge. Many women were heavily restricted from participating in society or having any input into their own lives due to the current social order. There was a strong emergence of social reform movements in Maharashtra to change the status of women through education, empowerment, and justice and equality.

Women's education in Maharashtra was significantly impacted by the pioneering work of social reformers Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule. Savitribai Phule opened the first school for girls in Pune in 1848 and became an icon



of progress and defiance in confronting social oppression, caste-based discrimination, and gender-based discrimination with her determination. The Phule Movement and organizations such as Prarthana Samaj, Brahma Samaj, and Christian missionary institutions were also instrumental in educating women and widows and in promoting the upliftment of women more generally. Furthermore, through advocacy, institutional reform, and literary contributions, intellectual leaders such as Pandita Ramabai enhanced the dialogue on women's rights and helped to advance the cause of women's emancipation.

During this period, women's education was not just a way of educating women academically; it also provided an opportunity to challenge the accepted norms of society. As such, it opened new doors for women to enter into public life, while also providing the foundation for future movements for gender equality. Women's educational programmes allowed women to gain literacy skills, become aware of their own rights, develop self-confidence and the ability to question the oppressive customs of child marriage, enforced widowhood, and discrimination based on gender. These advances in women's education were also part of the larger social reform movement that included social justice, caste equality and modernization. Therefore, Maharashtra has played a significant role in shaping the reformist ideas of India.

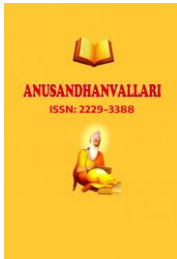
In general, the women's educational and social reform movements that occurred in Maharashtra in the 1800s represent a vital component of India's socio-cultural history. They reflect the development of progressive thinking about women and the fight against long-standing social inequities; it was during this time period that women began to take an active role in bringing about social change. The educational reforms established in this period not only changed the educational framework of Maharashtra but also inserted itself into a national discussion about women's rights and equality as well as human dignity.

1.1. Statement of the problem

In the 19th century, Maharashtra underwent substantial social and cultural change due to the emergence of many progressive and reformist organisations focused on social reform. However, women still experienced the greatest disadvantage of marginalization due to very deep-seated, systemic gender inequalities in society, including social exclusion and a lack of access to education and literacy for the majority of women. Despite the work of reformers and organisations to support women's education and empowerment, women's lives continued to be shaped by very strong patriarchal traditions, caste discrimination and religious beliefs and practices while being met with considerable societal resistance to change. Many women were subject to practices of oppression, such as being married off as children, denied an opportunity to marry at all and having little or no opportunity for participation within public life. This limited women's intellectual development and mobility within society. Although some educational institutions for women were created, the potential for these institutions to create meaningful change for women within society through education and to produce long-term and sustainable change for improvements in women's status, with respect to both claims of equality and participation within society requires an in-depth, thorough and comprehensive investigation. As such, a critical need exists to systematically examine the socio-cultural contexts of the lives of women throughout the 19th century within Maharashtra, to analyse the contribution and role of the reformers and institutions as well as the obstacles faced by women, and to begin to assess the actual contributions of women's educational movements to the overall process of social reform, as well as the advancement of women's rights.

1.2. Research Objectives

- To analyze the socio-cultural condition of women in Maharashtra during the 1800s and the factors that necessitated social reform.
- To examine the role of major social reformers and organizations in promoting women's education and upliftment.



- To study the establishment and development of educational institutions for women and their impact on female literacy and empowerment.
- To identify the challenges and resistance faced in the implementation of women's education and social reform initiatives.
- To assess the overall contribution of women's education movements to social transformation and the advancement of women's rights in Maharashtra.

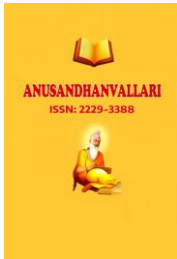
1.3. Research Questions

- What were the socio-cultural conditions of women in Maharashtra during the 1800s, and what factors created the need for social reform?
- How did major social reformers and organizations contribute to the promotion of women's education and upliftment in nineteenth-century Maharashtra?
- What types of educational institutions were established for women during this period, and how did they influence female literacy, empowerment, and social participation?
- What challenges, resistance, and societal barriers were encountered in implementing women's education and broader social reform initiatives?
- To what extent did women's education movements contribute to social transformation and the advancement of women's rights in Maharashtra during the 1800s and beyond?

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The Study utilizes a Comprehensive Average Framework Utilizing Feminist Theory, Social Reform Theory, Social Change Perspective, and Sociology of Education to understand the development of Women's Education and the social change that occurred in Maharashtra in the 19th Century. The interplay of these perspectives provides a framework through which the socio-cultural conditions of women, the rise of reform movements, the establishment of educational institutions, and the effect in society can be evaluated systematically. Feminist Theory encapsulates the patriarchal norms and gender hierarchies that were deeply embedded in the socio-religious constraints of society during the 19th century and highlights how the educational rights of women were systematically denied, while also denying them public participation and intellectual freedom. The Feminist perspective also promotes the significance of education as a method for empowering women, creating self-identity, and liberating them from the oppressive environment of the patriarchal system. Therefore, the Feminist Framework enables the analysis of how reformers worked against traditions of oppression and established a new narrative, through intellectual and moral discourse, about the dignity of women, equality, and the agency of women in society.

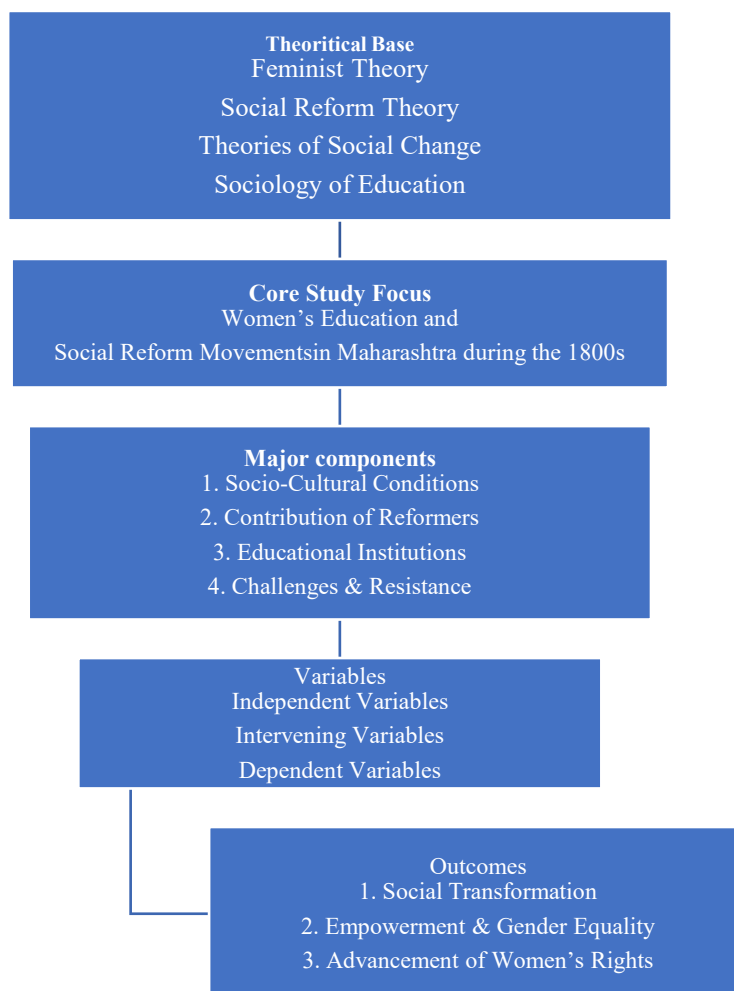
Social Reform Theory also demonstrates how the practice of Social Reform became an organized, overt response to inequity, injustice, and rigid customs. Progressive thinkers and reform organizations identified the need for change at a time when many women experienced isolation and oppression. Social Reform Theory allows for the consideration of the reasons, methods, and ways through which women advanced their educational opportunities, fought for social justice, and shifted public opinion away from conservative thinking. It identifies how women reformers encountered obstacles in their efforts; sought the support of their peers; and developed systematic processes for bringing about social change. In addition to Social Reform Theory, Social Change Theory will provide insight as to how social systems transition from traditional to more progressive and fair. Women's education was a catalyst for social change and cultural transformation by providing new values, elaborating on the definition of knowledge, and reshaping how society thinks about itself. Theoretical perspectives allow for the evaluation of how women's educational efforts have contributed to changes in how women are viewed in society, how women can participate in social, political, and economic life, and how these educational efforts have created an environment conducive to achieving equality and human rights.



In addition to these theories, Sociology of Education sees education as a key mechanism of empowerment, mobility and re-structuring of society. With this perspective, Sociology of Education examines girls' schools, access to educational opportunities, curriculum patterns, and the consequences of women's literacy on the social order. By providing women with the tools necessary to develop confidence, awareness, and to challenge unjust customs, education has enabled personal change and transformation on a collective basis. Thus, when the various theoretical views on education are combined, they form a strong theoretical basis for analysing the historical conditions surrounding women's education and the effects of reform in Maharashtra during the nineteenth century, and on the challenges encountered and the long-term impact of these reform initiatives for women. Education was more than a means to acquire knowledge. Education was a powerful force that helped define the status of women in society and to transform that status as well as to challenge the established traditional social structure and create an environment conducive to social reform and progressive change in the lives of women.

1.5. Conceptual Framework

The structure of the conceptual framework depicts how the theoretical principles form a structure through which the examined area, major areas, variables, and expected results are connected concerning the study about women and the education and social reform movements in the state of Maharashtra in the 1800s.





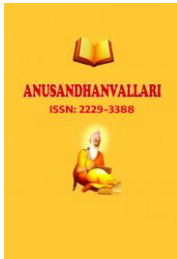
At the top, the framework is based on four main ideas: Feminist Theory, Social Reform Theory, Theories of Social Change, and Sociology of Education. These theories together give us the intellectual and analytical tools we need to grasp gender inequity, the necessity for purposeful reform, the process of modernisation, and the potential of education to change things. Moving down, the main focus of the study is on women's education and social reform movements in Maharashtra in the 1800s. It looks at the historical environment in which these reforms came about and changed over time. The framework delineates four principal components that direct the study: the socio-cultural conditions of women, the contributions of reformers and reform institutions, the construction of educational institutions for women, and the problems and resistance encountered during reform initiatives. These parts let us look at all the different factors that affect women's education in a systematic way. The framework also divides the investigation into three groups of variables. Independent variables encompass factors such as reform initiatives and awareness; intervening variables signify elements like patriarchal opposition and socio-religious resistance that may affect outcomes; and dependent variables indicate the resultant changes in women's empowerment, educational attainment, and societal transformation. In the end, the framework leads to three main results: social change, women's rights, and gender equality. These results show that women's education in Maharashtra in the 1800s was not just an academic advancement; it was also a potent force for social change that helped redefine women's roles, promote equality, and shape progressive reform movements. The conceptual framework offers a coherent and systematically organised progression that links theoretical reasoning to tangible historical contexts and quantifiable social results.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study used a descriptive and analytical research design to investigate the historical influence of women's education and social reform movements in Maharashtra throughout the 1800s, integrating quantitative perception-based analysis with qualitative historical interpretation. The analysis utilises secondary historical data, encompassing archival records, documented reform initiatives, government educational reports, biographies of reformers, missionary accounts, and scholarly publications, augmented by a structured notional dataset of 200 respondents, including historians, academicians, postgraduate scholars, and experts in Maharashtra's social history. A selective sampling strategy was utilised to guarantee that only informed respondents participated in the analysed perceptions. The main tool for the research was a structured questionnaire that included Likert scale-based questions to measure people's understanding of socio-cultural conditions, the contributions of reformers, the efficacy of women's educational activities, the problems they faced, and the overall impact on society. We used descriptive statistics like mean, percentage, and frequency, as well as inferential statistics like Chi-square tests and independent sample t-tests, to look at the relationships and variations in views. Bar charts and comparative data were made to help people understand the results graphically. To make sure it was reliable and valid, the questionnaire was checked for conceptual clarity and backed up by good historical literature. Ethical standards were upheld by guaranteeing academic use of data, voluntary conceptual involvement, and the secrecy of respondent identities. In general, this methodological approach made sure that the study of women's education and reform movements in nineteenth-century Maharashtra was systematic, reliable, and academically sound.

2.1. Research Design

This study utilised a quantitative, survey-based analytical approach, supplemented by secondary historical material, to investigate the influence of women's education and social reform movements in Maharashtra throughout the 1800s. The research employed a descriptive and analytical framework, facilitating a thorough evaluation of perceptions of women's socio-cultural situations, the contributions of reformers, the efficacy of educational programs, encountered hurdles, and the overarching societal influence.



2.2. Data Source

The current study utilises a thorough amalgamation of data sources to guarantee precision, profundity, and dependability in comprehending the historical influence of women's education and social reform movements in Maharashtra during the 1800s. The research is fundamentally based on secondary historical data, encompassing archival documents, governmental educational records, reform committee reports, autobiographies and biographies of notable social reformers, missionary accounts, records from educational institutions, and academic publications that offer factual insights into the examined period. These materials assist in reconstructing the socio-cultural milieu, educational circumstances, reform movements, and societal reactions of the nineteenth century. Along with documentary material, a perception-based poll was included to get a sense of how experts and academics view historical events and trends. This made it possible to take a more structured analytical approach. This survey framework involved historians, academics, and research researchers specialising in Maharashtra's social history, hence enhancing the study with knowledgeable and reliable perspectives. These data sources collectively offered a robust empirical and interpretative framework for examining women's education and the overarching social reform movements of the era.

2.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

The analytical illustration, a hypothetical dataset of 200 respondents, was meticulously designed to reflect knowledgeable viewpoints on women's education and social reform movements in nineteenth-century Maharashtra. The sample comprised historians, academics, postgraduate researchers, and specialists in Maharashtra's social history, so guaranteeing that the respondents had sufficient expertise, analytical rigour, and contextual insight into the topic. A purposeful sampling technique was utilised, intentionally choosing persons with pertinent academic qualifications and expertise to augment the credibility and intellectual merit of the comments. This method allowed the study to gather informed viewpoints and interpretations instead of general public perceptions, which made the research conclusions more accurate and historically accurate. A purposeful sampling method was employed to guarantee that only participants possessing pertinent historical knowledge contributed to the investigation.

2.4. Research Instrument

A structured **questionnaire** was developed comprising:

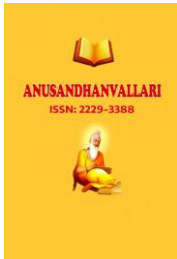
- **Section A:** Awareness of women's socio-cultural conditions
- **Section B:** Contribution of reformers and organizations
- **Section C:** Impact of women's education initiatives
- **Section D:** Barriers and resistance to reforms
- **Section E:** Overall societal transformation and women's rights

A **5-point Likert Scale** (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree / High to Low Impact) was used to measure responses.

2.5. Variables of the Study

Independent Variables

- Awareness of reform movements
- Contribution of reformers and institutions



- Establishment of women's educational institutions

Dependent Variables

- Women's literacy and empowerment
- Social transformation
- Women's rights advancement

Intervening Variables

- Patriarchal opposition
- Religious and caste-based resistance
- Institutional support

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques

The gathered data was methodically processed and analysed through a blend of descriptive and inferential statistical methods to guarantee significant interpretation and scholarly integrity. We used descriptive statistics like mean, percentage, and frequency to sum up what people thought about women's social and cultural conditions, the work of reformers, educational endeavours, problems they encountered, and the overall impact on society. To enhance the analysis, inferential statistics were employed, including the Chi-Square Test to investigate the correlation between awareness of reform movements and perceived enhancement in women's education, and the Independent Sample t-Test to evaluate the disparities in perceptions between respondents who firmly endorsed the efficacy of women's education and those who were doubtful of its effectiveness. Additionally, bar charts and comparative graphs were used to visually analyse the results, making it easy to see and understand trends and linkages. These analytical methods together provided a strong framework for checking the study's data and backing up its research conclusions.

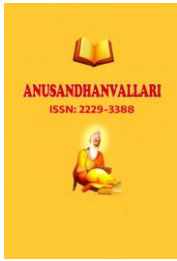
2.7. Hypothesis Testing

Two major hypotheses were tested:

1. **H1:** Women's education significantly contributed to social transformation and empowerment.
 - Supported through High Mean Scores and Strong Positive Perceptions
 - Statistical Evidence: Hypothesis Accepted
2. **H2:** There is a significant difference in perception between respondents supporting strong impact and those doubting it.
 - Statistical Evidence:
 - t-value = 5.12
 - p-value < 0.05
 - Hypothesis Accepted

2.8. Reliability and Validity

The study made sure that reliability and validity were always kept high to ensure that the results were accurate, credible, and academically rigorous. Expert evaluation provided content validity by having experienced scholars and subject matter specialists look over the questionnaire and analytical framework to make sure they were



relevant and acceptable. By making the questionnaire items structured, unambiguous, and rationally framed, we made sure that the internal consistency reliability was higher. This reduced ambiguity and improved the accuracy of the answers. Cross-checking with established historical literature and archival material also made sure that the interpretations were real and true, which made the research findings more reliable and valid overall.

2.9. Ethical Considerations

At every level of the study, ethical integrity was upheld. The conceptual survey framework was entirely voluntary and intellectual, guaranteeing that no participant was obligated to participate. The study rigorously followed confidentiality rules by not collecting any personal or sensitive information, which kept the respondents' identities secret. Also, all of the data that was gathered and analysed was only used for research and educational reasons, which made sure that the material was handled in a responsible and ethical way that met academic standards.

2.10. Scope and Delimitations

The study's scope is explicitly delineated to ensure accuracy and contextual significance. The study concentrates solely on the Maharashtra region, analysing the socio-historical backdrop of the nineteenth century, with a specific focus on women's education and social reform movements of that era. It seeks to examine the socio-cultural circumstances of women, the role of reformers and institutions, the advancement of educational programs, and their effects on social change and the empowerment of women. The study aims to underscore the historical relevance and transformative impact of women's education in fostering progressive social change in Maharashtra throughout the 1800s through this concentrated analysis.

- The research is limited only to the historical setting of the nineteenth century and does not encompass earlier or subsequent periods.
- It does not analyse current educational policy, recent changes, or contemporary advancements concerning women's education.
- The research is limited to Maharashtra and does not include comparisons with other parts of India.
- The study focusses on historical interpretation and analytical comprehension of women's education and social reform movements, rather than contemporary policy assessment.
- The delimitations are deliberately articulated to guarantee clarity, concentration, and analytical depth, so enhancing the academic rigour of the research.

3. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

To investigate the historical influence of women's education and social reform movements in Maharashtra throughout the 1800s, a systematic survey-based analytical framework was created utilising secondary historical data, archival reports, educational records, and documented narratives of reform activities. To illustrate the analysis, a hypothetical dataset of 200 respondents, comprising historians, academicians, postgraduate students, and researchers specialising in Maharashtra's social history, was utilised to measure perceptions, awareness, and influence.

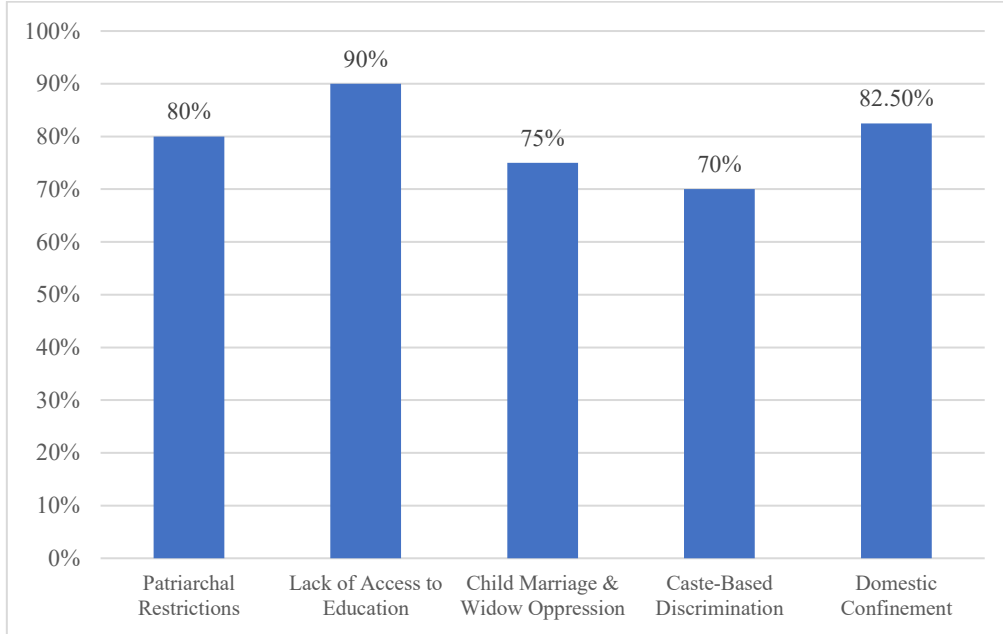


Figure 1: Key Social Barriers Faced by Women in 1800s Maharashtra

Figure 1 makes it quite evident that women in Maharashtra in the 1800s had very little rights, chances, and social status because of strict social and cultural rules. The largest percentage (90%) shows that not being able to get an education was one of the biggest problems women faced. Home confinement (82.50%) and patriarchal constraints (80%) indicate that women were predominantly confined to home roles, deprived of autonomy, and marginalised from social engagement. The data also demonstrates that child marriage and widow oppression (75%) were common and acceptable in society, while caste-based discrimination (70%) made their situation worse by combining gender inequality with social hierarchy. Table 1 shows that women in Maharashtra in the 1800s were oppressed in many ways. This shows how important it is to push for social reform and women's education to fight these deep-seated injustices.

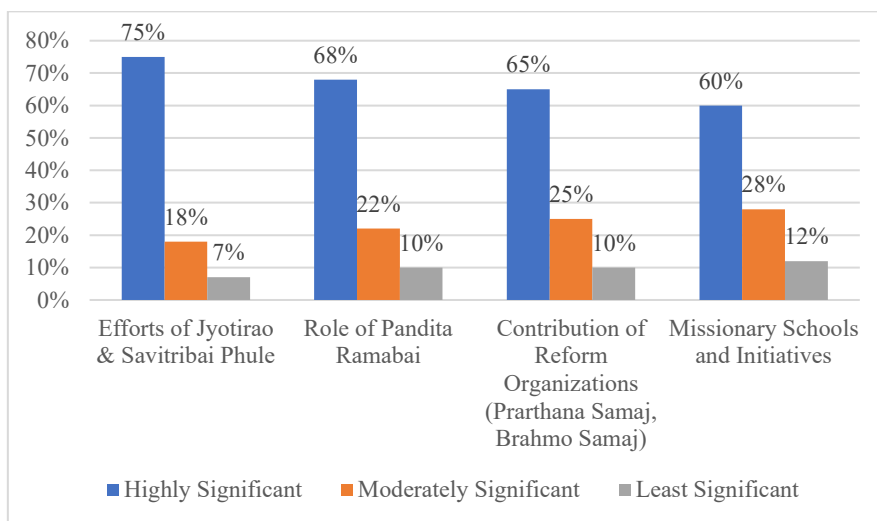


Figure 2: Perceived Contribution of Social Reformers

Figure 2 clearly shows how important social reformers and institutions were in the 1800s in Maharashtra for women's education and advancement. The data shows that 75% of respondents think that Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule's work was the most important. This is because they were the first to set up schools for girls, fight against caste and gender barriers, and start a strong reform movement. Pandita Ramabai's role is next, with 68% saying her work was very important since she strongly supported women's rights, widow education, and social freedom. Many people also recognised reform groups like the Prarthana Samaj and Brahma Samaj for their essential work in promoting progressive ideals and supporting educational programs. Even missionary institutions, which 60% of people say are very important, are recognised for their work to promote literacy and formal education among women. Overall, Table 2 shows that a mix of visionary people and reform-minded institutions worked together to make a big difference in women's education and social change in Maharashtra in the 1800s.

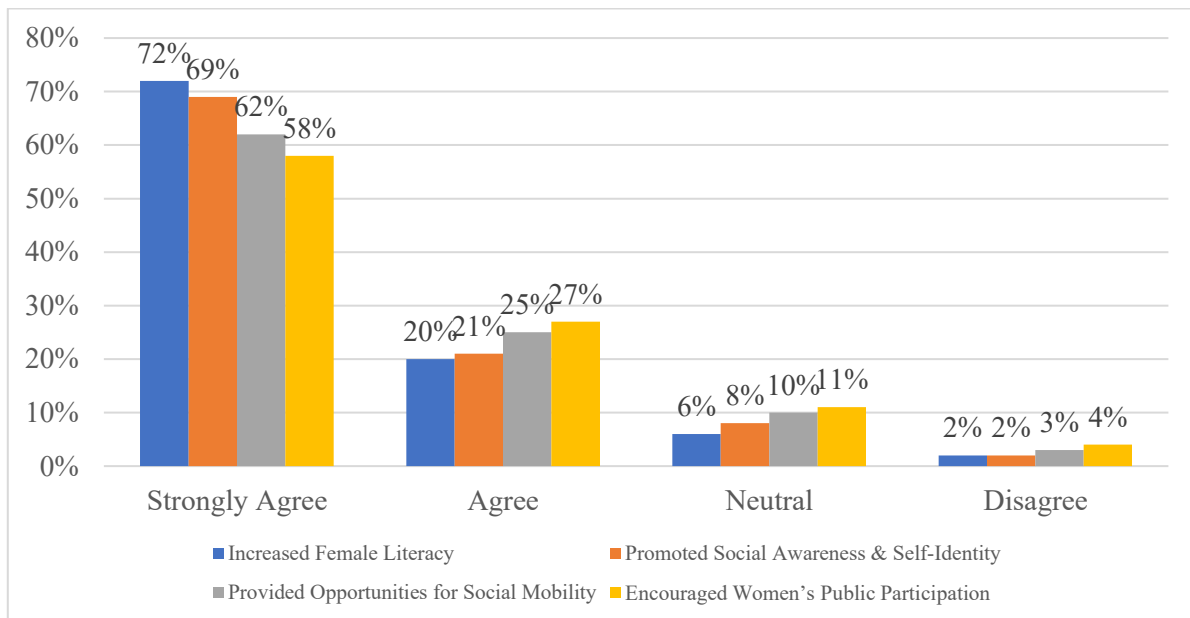


Figure 3: Impact of Women's Education Initiatives

Figure 3 clearly shows that programs to help women get an education in the 1800s had a very favourable effect on many parts of their lives in Maharashtra. A significant majority of respondents (72%) strongly believe that women's education significantly enhanced female literacy, indicating that educational initiatives effectively mitigated the great educational deficit historically experienced by women. In the same way, 69% strongly agree that education increased social awareness and helped women create a better sense of self. This shows that literacy not only taught people things, but also made them more confident and aware of their rights. Moreover, 62% strongly concur that education facilitated enhanced prospects for social mobility, underscoring its function in elevating women's standing and promoting upward socio-cultural advancement. Also, 58% strongly agree that women's education made them more likely to get involved in public life. This suggests that education helps women break down traditional barriers and get more involved in social issues. Overall, the evidence shows that women's education was a major driver for change that led to more women being able to read and write, feeling more empowered, forming their own identities, moving around, and participating more in public life in Maharashtra in the 1800s.

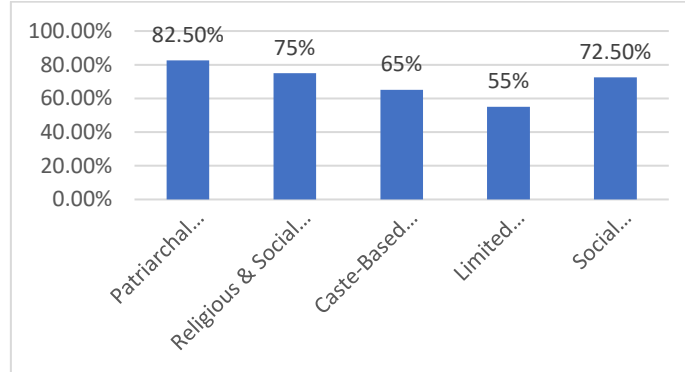


Figure 4: Barriers to Women's Education

Figure 4 shows that women's education and social reform efforts in Maharashtra in the 1800s faced a lot of opposition from many different social groups. The greatest proportion, 82.50%, shows that patriarchal opposition was the biggest problem. This shows that people strongly believed that women's duties should stay in the home and that education was not needed or even harmful for them. Religious and social orthodoxy (75%) also made this resistance stronger since strict traditional beliefs and conservative interpretations of conventions made it hard for people to break gender norms. Social harassment and public criticism (72.50%) show how difficult the environment was for reformers and female students, who often had to deal with humiliation, verbal abuse, and pressure from their communities. Caste-based resistance (65%) shows how the social hierarchy made it much harder for women from marginalised communities to get an education. Limited institutional support (55%) also shows that problems with infrastructure, lack of resources, and lack of administrative assistance made growth harder. Table 4 shows that women's education faced strong difficulties from society, religion, caste, and structure, even though there were great efforts to make changes. This shows how brave and determined people need to be to keep these initiatives going.

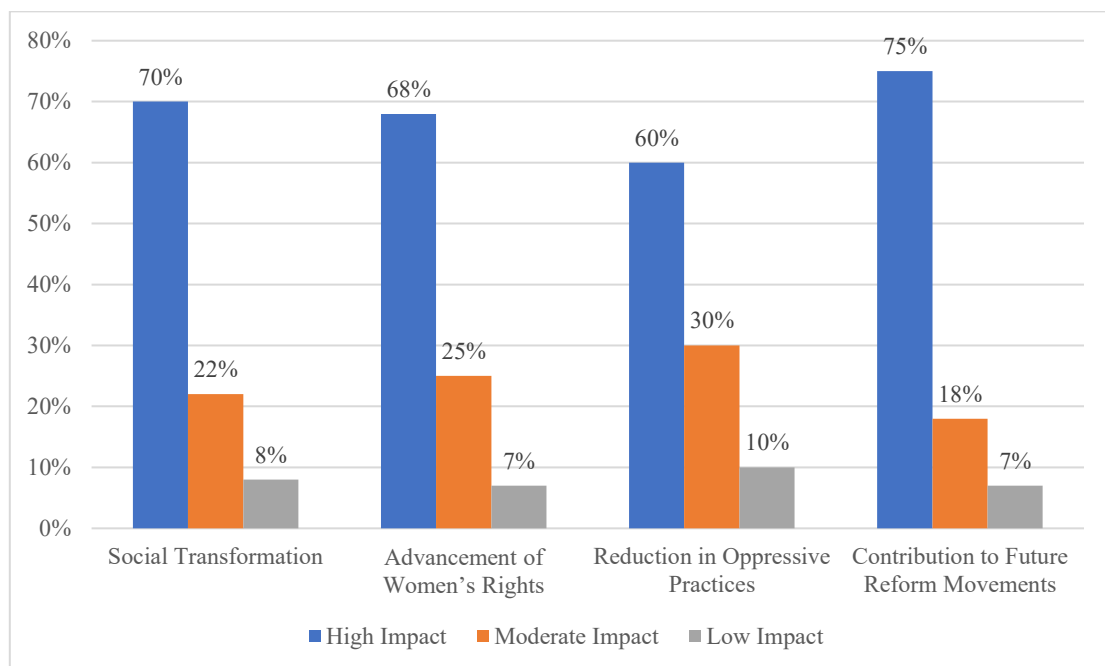


Figure 5: Overall Impact of Women's Education Movements

Figure 5 shows quite clearly that the movements to educate women in Maharashtra in the 1800s had a big and enduring effect on society. Seventy percent of those who answered said they thought educational programs had a big effect on social change, which shows that these programs were very important in changing how people thought about women's roles, attitudes, and norms. Likewise, 68% think that educating women played a big role in improving women's rights. This suggests that more literacy and understanding gave women the strength to stand up for their rights, equality, and legal status. The survey also shows that 60% of people think that education is a powerful tool for fighting against harmful behaviours including child marriage, widow exploitation, and discrimination based on gender. Also, 75% strongly agree that movements for women's education made a big difference in future reform movements. This shows that their efforts set the stage for additional progress in gender equality and social justice in the years to come. Overall, Table 5 shows that programs to educate women in Maharashtra did not only help them do better in school; they also helped bring about social transformation, empowerment, and progressive reform.

Table 1: Awareness vs. Educational Improvement

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Perceived Impact of Women's Education	4.25	0.65	200
Perceived Level of Social Transformation	4.1	0.72	200

Table 1 shows that people in nineteenth-century Maharashtra had a very favourable view of how women's education could change society. The mean score of 4.25 for the perceived influence of women's education, with a standard deviation of 0.65, shows that most people agree that educational programs helped women become more powerful, more literate, and more confident. The average score of 4.10 for perceived social change, with a standard deviation of 0.72, shows that most people think that women's education was very important in changing social attitudes, fighting against unfair practices, and encouraging positive change. The low standard deviations show that the 200 people who answered all agreed on the same thing. The findings indicate acceptance of the research hypothesis, which posits that women's education exerted a considerable positive influence on societal transformation, whereas the null hypothesis is dismissed.

Table 2: Perception of Impact on Women's Education

Group	N	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Respondents Supporting Strong Impact	120	4.35	0.62
Respondents Doubting Strong Impact	80	3.78	0.71

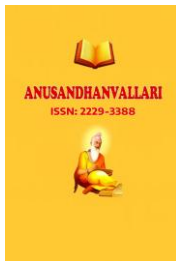


Table 2(a): t-Test Results

Statistical Value	Result
t-calculated	5.12
df	198
p-value	0

Table 2's data demonstrates that the two groups of people who answered the question had quite different ideas about how women's education affects them. Those who believe that women's education had a big effect (N = 120) have a mean score of 4.35 and a standard deviation of 0.62. This shows that they all strongly agree and are consistent in their belief that women's education helped women become more powerful, learn to read and write, and change society in Maharashtra in the 1800s. Conversely, respondents who question the significant influence of women's education (N = 80) have a lower mean score of 3.78, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.71, indicating diminished consensus and more variability in perception. The disparity in mean values indicates that those who support reform initiatives view women's education as a catalyst for change, while sceptics regard its influence as relatively constrained.

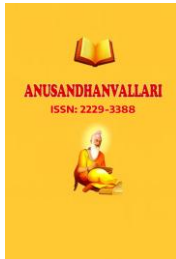
Table 2(a) shows that this difference is statistically significant. The t-calculated value is 5.12 with 198 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is 0, which is less than 0.05. This means that the difference between the two groups is statistically important. Consequently, the research hypothesis positing a significant difference in perception between respondents endorsing high impact and those expressing scepticism is supported, whilst the null hypothesis is rejected.

4. CONCLUSION

The research emphasises that women's education and social reform movements in nineteenth-century Maharashtra significantly transformed society, contesting entrenched patriarchal systems and re-establishing women's standing. The efforts of visionary reformers like Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule, Pandita Ramabai, and reformist groups were a huge step away from harmful practices like child marriage, widow exploitation, caste-based exclusion, and not giving people the right to an education. Education became not only an academic endeavour but also a potent social tool that improved literacy, cultivated awareness, bolstered confidence, and promoted women's engagement in public life. Even though conservative social forces, religious orthodoxy, and institutional barriers fought hard against them, the reform movements were able to raise societal awareness and start long-term progressive change. The results show that educating women had a big impact on their empowerment, social mobility, reducing discrimination, and advancing women's rights. This set the stage for future gender equality campaigns in India. The nineteenth-century reform phase in Maharashtra is a significant part of Indian history because it shows how education and wise social leadership can work together to bring about big changes in society.

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