

## Swami Vivekananda View's on Education

C. Neela Devi

Assistant Professor

Department of Philosophy, Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu

Paper Number: 240012

**Abstract:** *Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), the ideal speaker for Hinduism is well-known globally for his spiritual wisdom of Hindu religion. Among the modern Indian religion reformers, Vivekananda argued for equality of men and women. Because, educating women was the most important way of salvation for India according to Swamiji. Education develops thought capacity and enhances creativeness through awakening women on the value of their own humanity and enabling them to strive for distinction denied by patriarchal cultural norms and backward traditions. Swami Vivekananda is the first monk to uphold and do work for freedom and equality of women and realized the importance of women for the society as well as the nation. He identified that the ignorance of women was the main hindrance for the progress of India. He insisted that women should be put in the position of power to solve their own problem in their own way and this cannot be possible without education. He engaged throughout his life for the development of women education. His objective of education is man making and character building– these principles also applied in field of women education. His educational perspective is based on applied Vedanta and western culture. Thinking the different social status Swamiji prepared different curriculum for the women. He also said mother tongue is the best medium for the social and mass education. In the post independent India, still women are still suffering from many chronic problems such as physical, social, political, cultural, economical etc. In the present paper, the author tries to clearly show the thoughts and ideas of Swami Vivekananda's regarding women education and also tries to present his views with the present scenario.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Swami Vivekananda, Women Education.

### Introduction

It is well known to all that Swamiji is not only a monk, teacher, great leader, mystic, philosopher but also the incessant worker for India who has represented India as unique culture, rituals, and religious country in the world. He also represented India as a country which is potentially divine. According to Swami Vivekananda “education is the manifestation of perfection already in men” and it was not only collection of information, but something more meaningful; he felt education should be man-making, life

giving and character-building. To him education was an assimilation of noble ideas. Swamiji identified and realized the main hindrance for the development of India is neglect towards the women. Development and advancement of any country depend on human resource. So if we neglect women as parallelly, we neglect the human resource and also curb the development of any society as well as country and world. Vivekananda presented a philosophy of education for woman making. Swamiji had a great respect for women. He was the first person who realized the difference between Western and Eastern women, as a cause of it he told, "They have education but, we have not." Therefore, he emphasized on women education.

Swami Vivekananda felt, the thermometer to progress of a nation is its treatment of its women and it is impossible to get back India's lost pride and honour unless Indians try to better the condition of women. He considered men and women as two wings of a bird, and it is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing. So, according to him, there is no chance for welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. Education of women is essential for both all round development of the nation and also for the improvement of

women's condition in India. But the magnitude of illiteracy among women is very high in India. 35 per cent of women are still illiterate as per 2011 census. It reflects that India is not utilizing the potential workers in a proper way. There is either unutilisation or under utilization of women's capacities and skills. Even though the education system expanded very rapidly, the gap between male and female literacy still persists.

### **Research Objectives**

Every investigation is being investigated in the purpose to fulfil some objectives. This study tries to achieve the objectives which are as follows:-

1. To identify the thoughts, ideas, aims and philosophy of Vivekananda into the area of women education.
2. To identify the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda's curriculum for the women education.
3. To portray the role of Vivekananda in uplifting of women's status in education.
4. To discuss the Swamiji's view on education and its present relevance.

### **Methodology**

The methodology followed in this study is content analysis. The study has analyzed Vivekananda's philosophy and thought on women education. Also the study has discussed the relevance of his ideals in today's context. The secondary data has been used; collected from books, published articles, internet websites etc.

**Swami Vivekananda about Women Education**

Swamiji said “A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence is spread among the masses. The chief causes of India’s ruin have been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land under handful of men. If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it by spreading education among masses” (Singh, 2007). The supreme resource which can exceedingly uplift the status of women in any society is education. Swamiji believed that the main reason behind the various problems of the women of our country was due to lack of proper education. Now the need is the way out to save and elevate Indian women. Education was the way. They (women) have many grave problems, but none that are not to be solved by the magic word ‘education’ (Singh, 2007).

He defined education as ‘the manifestation of the perfection already in man’ (Pani & Pattnaik, 2006). In his thought, ‘manifestation’ is a spontaneous growth where all the impediments are removed. The term ‘perfection’ is the goal of actualizing the highest human potential. For Vivekananda, perfection means achieving the stage where one stands on one’s legs, well-equipped to win the struggles of life with a spirit of philanthropy and the courage of a lion. Swami Prabhananda interpreted ‘Perfection’ that is mentioned in Swamiji’s definition of education as the human beings’ potential which has three aspects. The first is capacity which means the acquisition of a specific characteristic or competence that makes the learning possible. The second is propensity of doing something when the opportunity comes in implying the development of learning. And the third aspect is capability which associates the competence of working towards an intended outcome with the strength of getting rid of obstacles to learning (Sanyal & Bikas, 2012). It implies self-development for self-emancipation. In the spiritual sense, education is the process of discovering the capacity, propensity and capability of a human being to realize his/ her own soul’s ever-perfection. In the secular sense, education is the process in making a human being’s capacity, the propensity and the capability of self-development and self-emancipation in order to be self-reliant. The main essence of his philosophy of life is to become fearless and serve the humanity with peace. When a woman becomes fearless, she can face all the challenges bodily and confidently without any suppression (Chandra & Rajendra, 2004).

True education builds character and develops personality. Therefore, Swamiji viewed that, “women should be taught sciences and other things which would benefit, not only to them but to others as well, and knowing this they would easily learn these things and feel pleasure” (Siddiqui, 2009). Swami Vivekananda presented a comprehensive, curriculum for women. Regarding the curriculum he said that other matters such as sewing, culinary art, rules of domestic work, and upbringing of children will also be

taught. Education is the lifelong process towards the fullest development of human personality, self discovery, self perfection, self awareness and self-manifestation for their overall emancipation. Education is a tool to open an individual from darkness and ignorance, and the knowledge will shine out dazzlingly.

Swami Vivekananda warned it is completely unfair to discriminate between sexes, as there is no any sex distinction in "Atman (soul);the soul has neither sex, nor caste nor imperfection. He suggested not thinking that there are men and women, but only that there are human beings. To make a beginning of women education his argument cantered on chastity because it is the heritage of Hindu women. When we look back into the past we found the glory of women v.i.z- Sita, Savtree, Maitrayee, Gargy: are known to us as a nature of purity and chastity. In the Vedic age we found women belonged to an uplifted social status. But the beginning of the mediaeval age to colonial era we found women are dominated and exploited by the society (Arora, 1968).

Before Swamiji, Raja Ram Mohan, Vidyasagar were also engaged for the service of women. They eradicated the burning of a chaste wife on the funeral pile of her husband, child marriage and polygamy and so on. But Swamiji was the man of different pole .The main objectives of his scheme of women education was to make them strong, fearless and conscious of their charity and dignity. Women must be put in a position, so that they could solve their problems in their own way.

Swami Vivekananda protected the marginalization of women. He visited England in 1895 and met Margaret Elizabeth noble and Irish lady who was in the midst of learning about the Buddha. Influenced by swami Vivekananda's teaching she became the first western women to be a Sanyasini named Bagini Nivedita. Nivedita played a major role in promoting the rights of women in rural India.in November1989, according to swamiji's instruction; she started a school for girls for the basic eduction (Sayyed, 2011). The school is to day known as "Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita girl's school", situated in Bagbazar in North Kolkata."

### **Swami Vivekananda's Curriculum for the Women Education**

Swamiji says mother tongue is the best medium of social and mass education. Thinking the different social status and works of women he arranged a different curriculum which includes -1.moral value 2.literature and Sanskrit 3.grammer 4.craft and cooking 5.home science along with Yepa, worship, meditation. The main objectives of education are man making and character building. There is no different in case of women education. Swamiji instructed to build schools in rural areas.He formed devoted nuns who were engaged to teach them. Swamiji instructed that, being educated women should not imitate man. Instead of that through this

education they would be modern “Sita”, “Savtree”, “Maitrayee” and “Gargy”. In this purpose Swamiji established “Sarda Math”. He wanted women are to be Ma Sarada. Ma Sarada says– example is more important than advice– which she showed throughout her life.

### **Role of Education**

Swamiji wanted to mix past and present into his taught and practice. He stressed on language, Literature, mathematics, science, religion, philosophy and home management through his curriculum. Thus Swamiji, as Humanism, wanted to develop self-potentiality of the women. During his visit to England in 1895, he met with Margaret Elizabeth Noble, an Irish woman who was in the midst of her learning about the Buddha. Influenced by Vivekananda’s teaching she became the first Western woman to become a Sanyasin named Bhagini Nivedita. Nivedita played a major role in promoting the rights of women in rural India. In November 1898, according to Vivekananda’s instruction, she started a school for girls, allowing them to receive basic education (Nithiya, 2012). The school is today known as Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita Girls’ School, situated in Baghbazar of North Kolkata.

### **Status of Women Education in India**

In India the Education system has extended rapidly. But still a large number of women are in dark and the gender gap in literacy rate remains startling by its presence. The following facts and figures throw light on the criticality of the problem which is a harsh reality and demonstrate that we have a herculean task ahead. Emphasizing Vivekananda’s goal towards women emancipation, women’s education got a prime importance after the country got independence in 1947 and the government had taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women (Vina, 2002). As a result, literacy rate in India have risen sharply from 16.7% in 1951 to 74.04% in 2011 in which enrolment of women in education have also risen sharply 7.3% to 65.46% (Census of India, 2001 & 2011).

### **Literacy rates in India (1951-2011)**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Persons</b> | <b>Males</b> | <b>Females</b> |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1951        | 16.7           | 27.16        | 7.3            |
| 1961        | 28.30          | 40.46        | 15.35          |
| 1971        | 34.45          | 45.96        | 21.97          |
| 1981        | 43.57          | 56.38        | 29.76          |
| 1991        | 52.21          | 64.13        | 39.29          |
| 2001        | 64.84          | 75.26        | 53.67          |
| 2011        | 74.04          | 82.14        | 65.46          |

**Source:** Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

### **Swamiji's Views on Education and its Presents Relevance**

The 81 Report of the Committee on Value Based Education of 1999, highlighted the need to inculcate the principles of truth, righteous conduct, peace, love and non violence, which are the religious values propagated by Swamiji.

The development agenda of the 21 century also acknowledged education as the key to women's empowerment for the same reasons as Swamiji foresaw in the 19 century. The millennium development goals envisage that education of women increases their productivity, raising output and reducing poverty. It promotes gender equality within households and removes constraints on women's decision making which parallel quoted by the Swami Vivekananda in the 19<sup>th</sup> century itself.

Vivekananda's ideals have a strong commitment to the emancipation of women and he had great concern with the oppression of women in the contemporary Indian society. Following the footsteps of Sarada Devi and Sister Nivedita, hundreds of women all over the world are coming forward with a combination of 'the mother's heart and the hero's will,' a combination of the purity of holy mother and the dynamism of Rani of Jhansi or Joan of Arc (Jitatmananda, 1998).

Women are liberated when they become aware of the unfair power relations they face and are able to take the challenge to overcome inequality through making themselves as self-confident. Emancipation as well as empowerment enables women to take control over their lives and builds self-confidence and self-reliance. He tried to raise awareness, develop and emancipate women not only through education but also by enlightening them through the philosophy of Indian spiritualism which might be considered as an effective system of approach in the process of emancipating women. The educating women will gain courage, confidence and self-respect and will liberate them from the sense of dependency and a life of subservience.

Vivekananda's two primary ideals of education are: a) Individualistic internalisation of education, and b) Searching for and awakening of active enlightenment. This attempt is to search for the power and strength inherent in oneself. And his thoughts and activities regarding the awakening of empowered women force and education of women were always prompted by his firm conviction in this potentiality of education of stimulating the self-reliant self and kindling a kind of conscious enthusiasm. Women must find strength from within. Vivekananda realized that right type of education is very important for females in our country because once they get right type of education; they will be in a position to solve their own problems. He was against the contemporary education system which turned man into slaves, and capable of slavery. Self-development, fulfilment of Swadharma, freedom



of growth and character formation is the aim of education. The modern period just revised this curriculum and subjects became modified such as introduction of home-science, work-education, physical education and other vocational courses in school syllabus. In order to involve women efficiently in the modern Indian economy, self-employment and skill-training initiatives are needed. Emphasizing yoga according to Swamiji's recommendation, the modern school of yoga and meditation have got importance through the United Nations General Assembly's declaration of 21<sup>st</sup> of June as an International Yoga Day on 11<sup>th</sup> of December in 2014, accepting the present Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposal. Without perfect Brahmacharya, an individual cannot have substantial spiritual progress. There is no half measure in the spiritual path. Women have to control the body first, and then purify thoughts through prayer, Japa, yoga and meditation.

### Conclusion

Swami Vivekananda spread of his thoughts in mass education as well as women education which is most valuable in the present Indian society. Swami Vivekananda rightly pointed out that unless Indian women secure a respectable place in this country, nation can never march forward. Swami said, the progress of a nation depends on its treatment of women. So, according to him, there is no chance for welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is one of the foremost concerns of the Government of India as well as of the society at large. All the official body consisting of representatives of the government and voluntary association have to function as a coordinating agency. Emancipation well as empowerment of women is a necessity for the sustainable development of a nation. So, development practitioners should be women friendly in its various schemes. Surely, the women's movement needs to take a hard look at the gaps on the ground, if the women of tomorrow are to find the 'international women's day' as anything more than a meaningless farce.

### References

- Abhedananda, S. (2000). *India and Her People: A Study in The Social, Political, Educational, Cultural and Religious Conditions of India* (pp. 143). Ramakrishna Vedanta Math: Calcutta.
- Basu, S. P. (1978). *Vivekananda o Samakalin Bharatvarsha* (Bengali book) (p279). Volume III.
- Chandra, S. S. and Rajendra, K. S. (2004). *Philosophy of Education* (p. 212). New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (p) LTD.
- Indiresan, J. (2002). *Education for Women's Empowerment*. Konark Publisher Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi, 110092.

- Jitatmananda, S. (1998). *Swami Vivekananda Prophet and Pathfinder* (p. 254). Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama: Rajkot.
- Nithiya, P. (2012). *Swami Vivekananda's Views on Philosophy of Education*. *Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research*, 1(6), ISSN 2278-4853.
- Vina, M. (2002). *Evolution of Women's Studies in India. Dialogue with Researchers: Linking Policy and Research—A Consultation on Women's Studies*. New Delhi: Centre for Women's Development Studies.
- Pani, S. P. and Pattnaik, S. K. (2006). *Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education* (p. 80). New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. limited.
- Sanyal and Bikas, C. (2012). *Revisiting Educational Thoughts and Actions of Swami Vivekananda* (pp. 416-423). *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*.
- Sayyed, M.H. (2011). *Swami Vivekananda*. Himalaya Books Private Limited: Mumbai.
- Siddiqui, M. H. (2009). *Philosophical and Sociological Perspectives in Education* (p. 74). New Delhi: A. P. H. Publishing Corporation.
- Singh, Y. K. (2007). *Philosophical Foundation of Education* (p. 233). New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation.