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Women Education as Swami Vivekananda's thought and it's Present Relevance

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Abstract

It is very difficult to draw lines which can demarcate swamiji's activities and thought. We know Swamiji's is a cyclonic monk and the man of positive identity. He always engaged to uplift society and try to abolish the absurd or faint social and educational untouchability. His educational perspective based on applied Vedanta and western culture. Swamiji identified the reason which was the hindrance for the progress of India i.e. the ignorance of women. Swamiji engaged throughout his life to develop women education. His objectives of education is man making and character building— these principles also applied in field of women education. 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. At the time of globalization, education is the key factor for the development and advancement. Today we vividly feel the importance of women education. That's why various women universities, colleges are opening. This will also help for women empowerment and make them strong and completely independent. In the present paper, the writer tries to clearly show the view and activity of swami Vivekananda for the development and advancement for women education. At present how Swamiji's thinking parallelly one important and appropriate the writer also tries to represent through this writing.

Key words: *Education, women empowerment, curriculum, chastity etc.*

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

Introduction: It is 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.” He did not think it a pity that the existing system of education did not enable a person to stand on his own feet, nor did it teach him self-confidence and self-respect. To Vivekananda, education 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.

“Education is not the amount of information that we put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life building, man making, and character making

assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library....”

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. So, on this point of view swamiji utmost emphasis on women education. Only education can bring the light in their path of journey.

Education as Swamiji's View: Swami Vivekananda stressed on giving the public only positive education, because negative thoughts weaken men. Swami Vivekananda told if young boys and girls are encouraged themselves mentally and physically they are bound to improve in time.

Like Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhiji, Arobindo, swami Vivekananda also prescribed the same ancient spiritual methods of teaching, where Guru and his disciples lived in close association as in a family. The following are the basic principles of education:

- i. Education is not only for getting information; rather it should develop character, mental Powers, intelligence and inculcate self-confidence together with self-reliance.
- ii. Education should develop a child physically, mentally and spiritually.
- iii. While giving educational qualification, the technical education was necessary for the industrial growth which would lead to the economic prosperity of the nation.
- iv. Practicing of Brahmacharya is very essential for getting knowledge. The concentration is the key to all the knowledge.
- v. Religious education should be imparted through sweet impressions and fine conduct in Preference to books.
- vi. Education should be foster spiritual faith, devotion and self-surrender in the individual and should foster full development through service and sacrifice.
- vii. Education should develop character, mental powers, intelligence and inculcate self-confidence together with self-reliance.
- viii. All the subjects must be included in the curriculum which promotes the material and spiritual advancement of a child.

The origin of thinking of swamiji on education is '*Applied Vedanta*'. Vedanta theory inspired his various activities to serve to man, to expand education. He also applied Vedanta theory to eradicate superstition, ignorance and illiteracy. According to swamiji-'*Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.*' He always says that-the aim of human life is to realize the 'Brahma: The ultimate truth' and it can be done only through education. Swamiji connected western culture with the Indian rituals. To assimilate western ideas, ideals and Vedanta, Swamiji said- '*what we want are western science coupled with Vedanta.*' To educate India in proper way, we should acquire the knowledge of western science. Swami Vivekananda also observed that, if education is to serve the entire human being, in all his or her dimensions, the pursuit of knowledge will be a lifelong process. Even an illustrious person like Sri Ramakrishna said , from his own experience, 'As long as I live, so long do I learn.' At the empirical level, today's knowledge explosion can keep people engaged for their lives. Therefore, education must be considered a continuous and lifelong process.

Needs and Importance of Women Education: The subject of women empowerment and development is burning issue all over the world, including India since last decades. Various international organization like united nation all-time alert about gender discrimination. Inequalities between men and women, discrimination towards women have also been age old issues all over the

world. Thus women's struggle for equalities with men is a universal phenomenon. If we focus light in the past we find many develop country there were no voting right of women but in that point India's position is too comfortable with comparison to other develop country. Women voting right in India began form the constitution's implementing time. The position and status of women all over the world has risen incredibly in the 20th century .we find that it has been very low in 18th and 19th century in India and elsewhere when they were treated like objects that can be bought and sold. For a long time women in India remained within the four walls of their household. Their dependence on menfolk was total. Women can empower, enrich, develop only through the positive education .In developing country like India economy largely controlled and depend on agriculture. Agriculture belongs to the primary activity. In India the main role of women as domestic worker or as a worker in the field agriculture. Due to their illiteracy they are also unable to find out their power, role and status in society. They always think themselves very weak and poor. As a result they are exploited day to day until they are properly educated. In rural society they work as parasite and they always busy to help their husbands in various activities. They have no idea about their power and capabilities. This sign is very negative for the social upliftment and economic development and cultural enhancement. They don't know what is human resource and the developmental role of women.

But the time is changing gradually towards the women. Provision of formal and functional education is needed for women folk, because—

1. It would help them to realize their ability, power, potentiality.
2. They would get self-confidence. Self-realization and also can take decision in their own way.
3. It also makes them strong, self-fulfillment and potential soul.
4. Educated women can play proper role of an ideal mother and can make her child a good citizen.
5. It would empower them to fight against the discrimination of their folk and they can take necessary action.
6. It would give them economic power and also enable them to contribute quota to the economic growth of the nation.

Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. A woman has to play three roles in the course of her life. Each of these roles expects some duties from her. It is only with the help of education that she would be able to do them successfully. The first duty of a woman is to be a good daughter. The second duty is to be a good wife and third duty is to be a good mother. Education teaches woman what she should be. It also teaches her how she should do it to be good daughter, a good wife and a good mother.

Swamiji's thought about Women Education: Swami Vivekananda warned it is completely unfair to discriminate between sexes, as there is not 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. Swamiji declared that the western ideals of women hood are wife, when the eastern ideals are mother. To make a beginning of women education his argument centered 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 vaidic 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.

We also find many monks in the past who took women as an obstacle of their path to meditation-but Swamiji is exceptional. Swamiji knows that- there is no chance of any welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing. Swamiji says- soul is eternal .There is no gender bias. Every soul is potentially divine.

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. The importance of such reforms was true practical but these types of reforms are projected on them. There was no scope to take part or advice from women. 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 defended the marginalization of women and empowering women and the poor a priority of Ramakrishna Mission. 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 November 1989, according to swamiji's instruction; she started a school for girls, allowing them basic education. The school is to day known as 'Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita girl's school', situated in Bagbazar in North Kolkata.

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, 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.

Present Relevance and Conclusion: The 2011 census report indicates the literacy among women as only 65.46 percent it is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women india is even much lower to national average i.e. 74.04. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Moreover education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact the literacy rate for the women is only 65.46% of men as per 2011 census.

Table: 1 Literacy rate in India

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8

1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: census of India 2011

From the above literacy distribution table, it is very easy to draw conclusion that literacy rate between male and female is very noticeable, yet the rate of female literacy is too low than male but positive sign for us is that literacy of women gradually increase it would take the important role for the development and enhancement of our society. It is only in the homes of educated and pious mother that great man is born. But now we treat women as a manufacturing machine. the first initiative for the development of women is the awareness among the masses. At the present time we are going through a crucial situation. Now we can realize why swamiji utmost emphasis for the women education as well as all-round development and advancement of women. In the present time knowledge explosion is expanded rapidly, development and advancement occur on flow. At present we realize the importance of women education. Women are working parallel to the man. Swamiji also says—"500 males can win India in 50 years which can be done with a few weeks by 500 women." Educational psychology also says- mother is the first school of the children and they always their mother and other family members. So education and ideal culture take an important role in case of children future. Swamiji vision for women education and present global emergent issues related to women education need to be addressed especially inaugurating women colleges and institution of higher learning.

A few days ago, we observed Swamiji's sesquicentennial birth anniversary. Tableau of Swamiji reached different part of the world. Indian train also engaged to spread Swamiji's thought and activities through 'Vivek Catena Express'. Various daily newspapers are also giving their helping hand in this work. Recently west Bengal government has taken a positive initiative through 'Vivek Catena Utsab' which will help to expand Swamiji's activities. We know Ramakrishna Mission is the institution where the monks are all-time engaged how to mobilize the society and enhance the youth people. Finally, I may conclude with Swamiji's word- Arise, Awake and Stop not till the goal is reached.

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