

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S THOUGHT ON WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing. So for the development of a nation women should be educated properly. Among the modern Indian religion reformers, Swami Vivekananda, a cyclonic monk and the man of positive identity argued for equality of men and women. He said that there is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. He identified that the ignorance of women was the main hindrance for the progress of India. He declared that the western ideal of womanhood is wife, while the eastern ideal is mother. He was empathetic on women since they can transform the next generation and hence the destiny of the country. His objectives of education is man making and character building – these principles are also applied in field of women education. His educational perspective is based on applied Vedanta and western culture. He prepared different curriculum for women belonging to different social status. He also pointed out that mother tongue is the best medium for the social and mass education. He emphasized that women will study science, religion, art, housekeeping, cooking, sewing, hygiene etc. along with japa, worship and meditation. He said, “Ideal characters must always be presented before the girls to imbue them with a devotion to principles of selflessness”. Today we feel vividly the importance of women education. That's why various women universities, colleges are opening which will help to make them strong and completely independent.

Keywords: Women Education, Women empowerment, Equality

INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a cyclonic monk and the man of positive identity defines education as the manifestation of perfection already in man. He felt that education should be man-making, life giving and character-building. He represented India as a country which is potentially divine. He opined that women must be educated who can transform the next generation. Singh

(2014) in her study has pointed out the opinion of Swami Vivekananda that it is impossible to get back India's lost pride and honor unless they try to make the condition of women better. Till now gender gap in literacy rate in India exists (female illiteracy rate is 35%, as per the data given by census of India 2011) although it is gradually decreasing through the implementation of different policies and programmes. According to educational psychology, mother is the first school for the children. So, for the development of children, education and ideal culture take an important role. Mandal (2015) in his study mentioned Swamiji's vision for women education and contemporary issues related to women education which need to be addressed especially inaugurating women colleges and institution of higher learning. He also mentioned that Ramakrishna Mission is the institution where the monks are engaged in mobilizing and enhancing the capacity of the young people. According to Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru if you educate a man, you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. When women are empowered, India is empowered. Gender discrimination still exists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. Bhat (2015) in his study mentioned that for dilution of gender bias schools, colleges and universities even exclusively for women should be established in the state. The education develops the idea of participation in public matters, panchayats and government etc. In this paper, an attempt has been made to reflect whether Swami Vivekananda's vision is implemented by the government to promote the growth of women education in India.

CONCEPT OF WOMEN EDUCATION

In India mainly the women are engaged as domestic workers or as workers in agriculture field. They are also unable to find out their power, role and status in society due to illiteracy. They always think themselves very weak and poor. As a result, they are exploited mostly until they are properly educated. "Just as boys acquire sound knowledge and education by the practice of Brahmacharya, so should girls." - Atharva Veda, XI/6i (Basu, 1970, p. 203). The position and status of women was very low in 18th and 19th century in India. It has risen incredibly in the 20th century. Proper education helps women to realize their ability, power, potentiality. It makes them strong and potential soul and they can play proper role of an ideal mother. It would give them economic power and also enable them to contribute quota to the economic growth of the nation. Education can bring about a positive attitudinal change of women which is crucial for the socioeconomic and political progress of India. So, there cannot be an educated people without educated women. If general education had to be limited to men or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for them it would more surely be passed on to the next generation (Siddiqui, 1993, p. 2).

SWAMIJI'S THOUGHT ABOUT WOMEN EDUCATION

Swami Vivekananda explains the point about how female illiteracy retards the progress of a society.

“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of woman is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing”

“Our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are capable of doing it as any in the world”

“There is no hope of rise for that family or country where there is no estimation of women, where they live in sadness.”

Swami Vivekananda well understood the importance of women education. Before Swamiji, Raja Ram Mohan, Vidyasagar were also engaged in empowering the women and by eradicating the social practices such as child marriage, polygamy, Sati Dahan pratha etc. which have victimized the women. According to him, women education is needed to make them strong, fearless and conscious of their dignity. He realized that right type of education is essential for women so that they could solve their problems in their own way. According to Swamiji, mother tongue is the best medium of social and mass education. Taking into consideration the different social status and works of women, he arranged different curriculum for them which includes moral value, literature and Sanskrit, grammar, craft, sewing, nursing, culinary art, cooking, home science along with japa, worship, meditation. He defended the marginalization of women and empowering women by establishing girls' school. Influenced by Vivekananda's teaching, Margaret Elizabeth Noble, an Irish lady started a school for girls, allowing them to receive basic education. The school is today known as Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita Girls' School, situated in Baghbazar of North Kolkata.

WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

After independence many committees and commissions were framed for empowerment of women. They suggested many recommendations for girls' schooling, quality education, eradication of early marriage etc. University Education Commission (1948-49) has recommended that if a mother is open minded, inquisitive, and practical, the children will imbibe these qualities from her. According to the recommendations of National Committee on Women Education (1958-59), the government of India has appointed a national committee for women education under the chairmanship of Smt.

Durgabai Deshmukh. This Committee recommended few programme for empowering women like provision of school uniforms for students, provision of free transport especially for the students from remote area, construction of sanitary blocks, awareness campaign towards the need of women education etc. On the other hand, committee indicated that provision for an adequate number of scholarships should be there to encourage the girls to continue their education (Karan, 2017). A staunch feminist, Hansa Jivraj Mehta drafted the Indian Women's Charter of Rights and Duties in Hyderabad in 1946 during the 18th All India Women's Conference (AIWC) session. As a reformist, Hansa Mehta played an integral role as a part of a strong women's movement that pushed for abolition of the devdasi system, abolition of child marriage (Sarada Act., 1930), insistence of better educational opportunities for women (Ravichandran, 2016). National Council for Women Education appointed Bhaktavatsalam committee in 1963 under the chairmanship of Shri M. Bhaktavatsalam, the then Chief Minister of Madras. Major recommendations of this committee were the establishment of private organization for women education along with the cooperation of public effort, books and hostel facilities for the girls, clothes at free of cost for the girls, free and compulsory women education up to a certain stage, etc. Reservation of seats for women in training institutions, living accommodation and conveyance charge etc. should be incorporated for empowerment of women (Kaur, 2016). Kothari Commission (1964-66) suggested two ways to develop the education of girls and women. The first one is to emphasize the special programme recommended by the National committee on Women Education and the second one is to give attention to the education of girl students at all stages. According to the suggestion of National committee, commission recommended that women education should be regarded as the major programme to close the gap between the education of men and women in as short a time as possible by preparing the special scheme, providing required funds on priority basis. (Report on Education commission; 1964-1966). Redesigning the curricula, text-books, training and orientation of teachers and the active involvement of educational institutions the National Policy on Education (1986) played a positive, interventionist role for women empowerment. The policy of non-discrimination on sex ratio should be pursued vigorously in professional and vocational courses (Singh, 1992). Thus Government of India had been taken several steps for all round development and harmonious growth of nation through women empowerment and by implementing the recommendations of various committees and commissions since independence.

PRESENT POSITION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

In India, education system acquired a special significance which has been supported by the government from time to time through different policies and programmes. But till now a large number of women are in dark position. Let's see the literacy rate of female.

Table 1: Female literacy rates of census 2011 with National Sample Survey (64th round)

States of India	Female literacy rate (%)
Jammu & Kashmir	58.01
Himachal Pradesh	76.60
Panjab	71.34
Chandigarh	81.83
Uttarakhand	70.70
Harayana	66.77
NCT of Delhi	80.93
Rajasthan	52.66
Uttar Pradesh	59.26
Bihar	53.33
Sikkim	76.43
Arunachal Pradesh	59.57
Nagaland	76.69
Manipur	73.17
Mizoram	89.40
Tripura	83.15
Meghalaya	73.78
Assam	67.27
West Bengal	71.16
Jharkhand	56.21
Orissa	64.36
Chhattisgarh	60.59
Madhya Pradesh	60.02
Gujarat	70.73
Daman & Diu	79.59
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65.93
Maharashtra	75.48
Andhra Pradesh	59.74
Karnataka	68.13
Goa	81.84
Lakshadweep	88.25
Kerala	91.98
Puducherry	81.22
Andaman & Nicobar Island	81.84
All India	65.46

Source: Census of India-2011

Data from Census of India - 2011 as mentioned in table 1 indicates that in Kerala female literacy rate (91.98%) is highest and least literacy rate of female (52.66%) is found in the state of Rajasthan. Average female literacy rate in India is 65.46%.

Table 2: Female literacy rates of census 2011 with National Sample Survey (64th round) in rural and urban area

Year	Rural	Urban
2011	57.93 %	79.11%

Source: Census of India-2011

Table 2 indicates that female literacy rate in urban area (79.11%) is higher than rural area (57.93%). Thus, female literacy rate specially in rural area is worrisome.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOW LITERACY RATE

In spite of taking various measures to educate girl child by Indian government, the literacy rate is not satisfactory. Factors responsible for low literacy rate are identified and listed below:

- Defected curriculum (no separate curriculum for boys and girls).
- Child marriage (dropout rate increased).
- Economic exploitation.
- Parental attitude (girls born only for domestic chore and nourish children).
- Inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities etc).
- Shortage of female teacher.
- Lack of employment.

DISCUSSION

Swami Vivekananda rightly pointed out that the progress of a nation depends on its treatment of women. He suggested to frame separate curriculum for both boys and girls. But, till now government follow same curriculum for both. Therefore, many girls are deprived of higher education. At present, the enrolment rate of female candidate in the field of education is gradually increasing. In spite of it the dropout rate is significantly higher among female candidate. The effective literacy rate for Indian female is 65.46 %. Thus, two out of every three females in the country are literate. Child marriage and economic condition of family are the crucial factor behind this phenomenon. Swami Vivekananda's Vision on women education and today's mission of eradicating gender gap in literacy

rate both indicate one goal, the progress of women and thereby the progress of entire nation. –

“Many paths, one goal”

“Arise, Awake & Stop not still the goal is reached”

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