

## **Educational contributions of Swami Vivekananda (with sp. ref. to women education)**

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a great philosopher, thinker and reformer of India, defines education as the manifestation of perfection already in men. 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. He states it emphatically that if society is to be reformed, education has to reach every one high and low, because individuals are the constituents of society. He was also emphatic that women must be educated, for he believed that it is the women who mould the next generation, and hence, the destiny of the country.

In Vivekananda educational scheme for India, the upliftment of women and the masses received the highest priority. 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 honor 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.

Defining Education Swamiji defines education as „the manifestation of the perfection already in man“. This implies that something already exists and is waiting to be expressed. According to him, knowledge is inherent in man, not acquired from external sources. Like sparks in a flint, knowledge is potentially there in human mind. The stimulus of education causes the friction that ignites the fire of knowledge. And refers to a human being's potential, which is the range of the abilities and talents, known or unknown that is born with. The word 'perfect' implies completion, or something being made whole. Again, we can see that every act

connected with learning, training etc. is part of a process directed towards an end. Swami Vivekananda also defines education as “life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas”, and not a certain “amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life”.

**Swami Vivekananda’s views on Women Education:** Vivekananda also stresses the importance of women education. He 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” “Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them” “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”.

These golden quotes of Swami Vivekananda, explain how significant female literacy is. Unless the gap between males and females literacy is abridged, it is very difficult to steer and propel national development. 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 had suggested introducing subjects like sewing, nursing, culinary art, etc because he believed that women should be imparted training emphasizing skill enhancement. Then, his intention and focus was on vocational skills and training, the dynamics of which changes with time and technology and also way of living.

Vivekananda strongly believes that there is a huge difference in the attitude of Indian men and their western counterparts. Indian men believe that the women are born to please them. The real Shakti-worshipper is he who knows that God is the omnipresent force in the universe, and sees in women the manifestation of that force. In America men look upon their women in this light and treat their women as well as can be desired, and hence they are so prosperous, so learned, so free and so energetic. The men and the women are the two wheels of the society. If one of the two falls defective, the society cannot make progress. Hence we need education for the females as we need for the males.

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. And it is impossible to get back India’s lost pride and honor unless they try to better the condition 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. It is Due to the fact that at the present time, the educated women play a very significant role in overall development and progress of the country. India is now optimistic in the field of women education. After Independence, Women education acquired special significance and has been supported by the government from time to time through its policies and programmes.

Planners and policy makers have recognized that education can bring a reduction in inequalities and functions as a mean of improving their status within the family, society and nation. In spite of various committees created and plans & programmes executed by the government to promote women education, still a gender gap in literacy rate is existent. No doubt, this gender gap is gradually getting reduced but still, female illiteracy rate is 35%, as per the data given by census of India 2011. Keeping this in view the plan and programme of action has to be formulated and implemented in the future to reach the target of maximum women literacy rate and propel the progress of nation. Swami Vivekananda's Vision on women education and Today's mission of eradicating gender gap in literacy rate both indicate one goal....progress...progress of women and thereby the progress of entire nation.

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