



# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA VIEWS ON WOMEN EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

Swami Vivekananda is one of the most influential contemporary Indian thinkers who has made significant contribution to education. Rooted in the Indian philosophical tradition and inspired by the sage Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda sought to transform India and the world through education. He strived hard for educating the young men and women of India by establishing monasteries for spiritual training and missionaries for social service. According to Vivekananda, education is neither book learning nor the collection of facts but the manifestation of the perfection that is already there in us. 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 insisted that women should be put in the position of power to solve their own problems 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 women education. In India women still suffering from many chronic problems such as physical, social, political, cultural, economical etc. This situation may be removed and empowering them through proper education. Because of the importance of the women education various women universities, colleges were opening today for women empowerment and make them strong and independent. The present paper clearly shows the thoughts and ideas of Swami Vivekananda on women education and women empowerment.

**Key words:** women education, women empowerment

## INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda wanted Indian women to be well educated. Women in India are no better than the Indian downtrodden. They are the victims of ignorance and exploitation. They are illiterate and suffer from superstition. Education is the best means of liberating women from all kinds subjugation. Women should be given that kind of education which gives them self confidence. Education should give them the capacity to stand on their own legs. It will liberate them from the custom of marrying them very early in life. Education protects women from becoming a mother at an early age. It saves them from becoming a widow too soon in life. Education should be such that it should give women strength of mind and formation of character. It should enable them to achieve the spirit of self-defence. Education should create women who are as courageous as the Queen of Jhansi. Education in the sense of mere book-learning is no enough. Education should expand the intellect and thinking power of women. With such education women will solve their own problems.

## EDUCATION FOR THE WOMEN OF INDIA IN THE VIEW OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious self is present in all beings. “Writing down smritis etc, and binding them by hard rules, the men have turned the women into mere manufacturing machines”<sup>1</sup>. In the period of degradation, when the priests made the other castes incompetent for the study of Vedas, they deprived the women also of all their rights .You will find that in the Vedic or Upanishadic age Maitreyi ,Gargi and other ladies of revered memory have taken the place of Rishis. “In an assembly of a thousand Brahmanas who were all erudite in the Vedas, Gargi boldly challenged Yanjnavalkya in a discussion about Brahman”<sup>2</sup>. Women have many and great problems, but none that are not to be solved by that magic word ‘education’. “Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. Our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world”<sup>3</sup>.

The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sita. Sita is unique. There she will always be, this glorious Sita purer than purity itself, all patience, and all suffering. She who suffered that life of suffering without a murmur, she is the ever-chaste and ever-pure wife, she is the ideal of the people. Sita has gone into the very vitals of our race. “Any attempt to modernize our women, if it tries to take our women away from that ideal of Sita, is immediately a failure, as we see every day”<sup>4</sup>.

Swami Vivekananda maintains that women’s position in Hinduism is not satisfactory. Women have

to be uplifted through education. The role of the reformers in regard to the position of women has to be confined to giving them education. Women should be put in a position to solve their own problems through education. Indian women are capable of solving their own problems. Women in India are subjected to inequality. They certainly need protection. The main source of making them equal is education. We need not do anything more to them. Our right of interference is limited to giving them education. “Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world”<sup>5</sup>.

Vivekananda is of the view that India is a home of illiteracy. Of the total literates, the percentage of women and masses is very low. India cannot progress “unless there is spread of education first among the women and the masses”<sup>6</sup>. Separate education centers have to be started for women. These centers have to teach women history, Puranas and arts. House-keeping and duties of home-life have to be inculcated in them. The principles of character development have also to be taught. Women must be trained in modern science, along with ethical and spiritual ideals. Women must be given an all-round education. It should include hygiene, cooking and sewing also. Swami Vivekananda reiterates that women are equal to men in all respects. They are capable of attaining Brahman knowledge also. Women are also the manifestation of one reality, namely, Brahman. The soul is devoid of sex. At the highest level of the parabrahman, there is no distinction of sex. So it is utterly false to regard women as inferior to men. Women are falling behind only because of the lack of education. They should be educated in such a way that they become self-reliant and wise. They have been deprived of education by men. So men have the duty of raising women again. Women have to be uplifted to the level of the ideal characters such as Sita, Savitri and Gargi. Swami also says that Indian women need university education also. He affirms that the Hindu religion is opposed to women pursuing higher education. He says that the status of women in respect of education depends on men. If men are educated and cultured. As to education and culture, it all depends on man. That is to say, where the men are highly cultured, there the women are; where the men are not, women are not. In modern times men are willing to send women to higher education. Men are allowing women to shape their own destiny. “All the mischief to women has come because men undertook to shape the destiny of women”<sup>7</sup>. There is now greater impetus towards higher education for women on the European lines. In this respect, Indian university, several girls also graduated successfully along with men. Swami holds that women had the privilege of pursuing higher education even in ancient India. It was only later that women

were denied higher education.

## CONCLUSION

Vivekananda wanted great contribution of Indian women to the culture and civilization of India. There are many superstitions, the accretions of ages in our religious observances in our personal conduct and social life by means of education women can discard them and adhere to eternal truths of spiritual life. The women education should include subjects like Religion, Arts, Science, History, Home management, cooking, sewing, and Hygiene. Swami vivekananda's objective of education is clear. According to Swami Vivekananda women have more right to education than men have, because they are going to be the mothers of future generation. It is important for mothers to be well educate. Otherwise children will not inherit those qualities which are great and inspiring. If we want to have the children strong and intelligent we should educate their mothers first.

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