

Empowerment of Women Under The Ideology of Swami Vivekananda

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Abstract

The word 'empowerment' is related to 'freedom', which is described in the dictionary as 'to make able'. More specifically, empowerment includes the physical, social, economic all these aspect's development. Lots of measures has been taken by various developing countries to boost the empowerment of women but yet do need some innovative strategies to uplift the women folk and hinder the gender equality in society. Understanding the importance of overall development is one the major objective of the paper, intellectual development is equally important as physical and economic development. Analyzing the thoughts and vision of Swami Vivekananda on women empowerment and possibility of their application present day scenario. These are related to the intellectual development of women and directed towards the total development process. After this process, women must find themselves free from superstitious beliefs, stronger and more self-confident in one hand whilst being full of love and affectionate, gentle-natured, full of mother-kind etc. in the other.

Keywords: - *Brahmacharya, Dark Age, Atma, Bikshu Sangha, Jehovah, Sati.*

Introduction

The weakest link of the chain is regarded as the strength of a chain. Similarly, nowadays women considered as the weakest part of society. Thus for the development of society, empowerment of women is necessary otherwise it's easier to break down weakest part. The only possible way for strengthening society is to develop women in all the fields. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India said if you wanted to measure a society's development then measure the development of women in the society if women are well empowered and uplifted then the whole society is well developed. Empowerment of women is not a simple task, it's a very sensitive and critical issue. Swami Vivekananda claimed the importance women empowerment that without the empowerment of women it is no possibility of the prosperity of the world. He gave an

example that a bird need both the wings to fly, with one wing birds can't fly, both the wings are equally important. Similarly, in a society, both man and women have equal importance. If one is lacking behind in terms of empowerment then the prosperity of society is not possible. Further, he also added the role of women is very important in a country's economy. Women constitute one-half of the world's population and but the majority of the poor are women in the world, not only in terms of financially but all the other prospects like education, poverty, health etc. Vivekananda tried to explain the capability by giving example that if some amount of money is given to men then there is possibility that he would not use it for benefit of family but in the case of women, she would definitely utilize it for the benefit of family, he also added women manage money much better than men. Developing women and their capability and empowering them is the safest and definite way of gaining economic growth.

Empowerment is nothing but giving the opportunity to show anyone's capability and provide required help. Empowerment has a different dimension in the social system. It gives people to handle their own livelihood and perform actively in the social process. Empowerment of people required in all the spheres economic, psychological, sociological, sometimes it requires as in an individual or sometimes as in a group. It's a lifelong process and which needs to keep happening in humans of throughout his life. The attitude of a person and mindset of a person can be denoted by empowerment. Through empowerment, people learns to handle their day to day life walking along with community and society. It improves human beings capability of expression.

Women Empowerment nowadays gained attraction all over the world. It has been a trending issue of the 20th century for almost all the countries of the world. Almost every country in this world facing problems related to women, whether it is related to empowerment or literacy of women or violation against women etc. No country has achieved the highest level of development without the contribution of women. In developed countries, literacy rate almost 100% irrespective of gender, both men and women equally literate and empowered. Thus these developed countries are far ahead of developing countries in all the aspects whether it development or moral values or individual development. In contrary to this a remarkable difference is visible in the rate of literacy of men and women in developing countries. For instance, India is a developing country and the problem of gender inequality is visible in every sphere of society. According to 2011 census report, almost 82% of literacy rate among men and 65% of literacy rate among women in India. This difference of gender- based empowerment regarded as a major obstacle for the developing countries. It shows the importance of women empowerment and participation of women in the state building issues of the nation. Although in 21st century, issues related to women empowerment gained strong ground all over the world compare to 19th or 20th century. Many organizations, institutions, and government agencies came out with various new ideas, programs, schemes, plans and strategy to empower women and improve the conditions of women all over the world. But still, the ratios of women empowerment in many countries are considerably low such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh etc. Mainly women condition is worst in the developing or under developed countries. The main cause for this is low literacy rate, traditional society, the structure of the society etc. Literacy poses a major obstacle for the development of human being and society. Literacy brings awareness among people and makes eligible for self-development. To make able any individuals, it is very important to develop them physically and intellectually. Physical and

intellectual development can be possible by educating and gaining knowledge thus literacy is very important for the development of humankind.

Gender Equality

All the nations that considered empowerment of women is essential, obtained the maximum level of development. Those countries neglected empowerment of women never attained the desired level of development and prosperity. Manu Simriti Says that god will be delighted on those places where women get respect, it shows the importance women's dignity in society. Vivekananda insisted gender quality is the most important element of society and he favored this idea by stating that in such families or Nations where women deal with sadness hence Vivekananda reveals that there is no expectation and ray of hope for the development among such families or Nations who consider women as brook and subordinate creature.

Vivekananda had confidence in equivalent rights and thus open doors for ladies in ideal acceptance of Indian view. In actuality, it is probably the most grounded marvel throughout the entire existence of the humanity, that India, since days of yore had respected lady as Shakti in bodily form, the onset of epitomes of the Supreme motherhood, can't be denied and compared with no right to education, freedom, property rights and so forth, thus by denying such rights we trend creating a category of womenfolk which Vivekananda termed as "Nari-Sudra". Such unfortunate things truly occurred in India and being the reason of the downfall of India with the rise of such evil practices against women. In any case, around then, there was no women activist or any feminist organization, yet Vivekananda bolstered their motivation communicating that the facts demonstrate that despite the fact that there are heaps of divergence among people, however human soul does not have any differences, whether it's male or female. Further, Vivekananda added, "**Atma- the soul has no sex, no caste, and no imperfection**" (volume 4, Pg no.176). When the human soul does not have any differences then classification human being in terms of caste, creed, race, sex etc is unfair. It is cleared that he wanted to follow the theory of all human are equal and should not be classified on any basis.

Marriage

The Indian marriage has strong fundamental base and beliefs as it has developed not once but through many centuries. Foremost, when a good character person knots the tie of marriage with bad character person then it would be difficult for both to live their life together. Secondly, prohibition of inter-clan marriages, getting married with own family members or cousins or any other close relatives, especially from father's side. Many religious laws do not allow to marry within the same clan. It is considered as one of the biggest sins in many religion, marrying from the same clan. In ancient time, the circumstance intensified when the farming turned into the fundamental occupation. The greater part of profitable work fell on men and women were pushed further inside the limits of their job as housewives or household work only. The division between the freedoms designated to men and women was not limited to their monetary and political rights as it were. While social standards enabled polygamy to men as their innate right, on the other hand women were not permitted to rehearse polygamy. The convention of parting

with female as endowments in penances alongside other material merchandise was polished in India since ancient time. Women were likewise parted with as presents for guests and as settlement to ministers and rulers. Parting with young ladies to sanctuaries as devadasis were considered as an issue of pride.

Vivekananda admitted this fact although there many of our religious book's passage denounce offering temptation by women but many passages are there in our religious book which dignify women as the power of god. Some religious books say that where there a drop of tears of women falls then that house will never gain prosperity and there will be no mercy or bless on that house from god. Even torturing women are given the highest level of crime in many religious textbooks. Such in Hinduism drinking alcohol, killing a female and killing a Brahmin are regarded as the most serious sin. Regarding this Vivekananda stated, "But here I claim the superiority of these Hindu books, for in the books of other races there is only condemnation and no good word for a woman" (Volume 7, Pg. no.113). Vivekananda postulated that the idea of marriage in religion is for the weak. He claimed if someone thinks feels complete then there is no need of getting married if those marries then it would be meaningless. Because by marrying one finds better half for himself and which completes their life. And Vivekananda put forwarded his strong view on widow remarriage. He said marriage is a one-time opportunity in human beings life and after that chance is over once then no one should take another chance in life by getting married again. Getting married more than one time also affects the spiritual thinking of oneself. He also glorifies widow by stating that those widows do not get married are more spiritual and religious than other.

Emancipation of Women

Swami Vivekananda advocated freedom as the foremost essence of development. Without liberty, no one can grow whether it's eternal or external. Liberty boosts up confidence in oneself and encourages to do more progressive work by self. Nowadays women got emancipation got much importance and everyone is showing consciousness about it. For instance worshipping female goddess shows the respect and dignity provided by society towards women. None can be a better gesture of showing respect to women by giving such a high position as a goddess. Another gesture which also dignifies women is following the concept of the motherland. Every country is regarded as motherland for its citizen because of the term mother itself a word of honor and high value in society.

Vivekananda regarded a large portion of the social change programs as insufficient. The change was fundamental however not through dependence on Western ideas. It must originate from the individuals, guided and instructed by the scholarly people. Instead of blaming Hindus, say "So far your work is wonderful, but that is not all. You have much more to do. God bless you that you have developed this side of woman as a mother. Now help the other side-the wife of men". Hinduism has so many ideas regarding women emancipation but it could be developed well due to many reasons like miss- interpretation of these ideas.

Vivekananda realized very well indeed that all out freedom implies physical, mental, social and profound opportunity. Except if an individual, men or women figures out how to develop a feeling of opportunity from the organic requests of the body, the thousands of carving of the brain, and an unhampered sentiment of the fundamental heavenliness inside, there is no opportunity for a person. He needed to consolidate the expansiveness conceived of American

opportunity and the profundity and force of Indian otherworldliness for the women of India tomorrow who might be women of transcending otherworldliness, and extraordinary accomplishments, joining the best and noblest of the old and the new. The meaning of the term 'freedom' changes from society to society and every now and then. The point of view of taking a gander at the freedom of female makes clashes and logical inconsistencies inside female themselves, making a general public where a couple of female are viewed as illustrative of their separate countries, while a huge number of others lead abusive, insensible and embarrassing lives. An Indian lady is no exemption to that, somewhat is an exemplary case of this jostling inconsistency.

Most likely ladies turned out to be substantially more empowered and enabled then late occasions. Swami Vivekananda suggested even Brahmacharya regardless of sex however this stage is hard to pursue and exist with it even, in a profoundly liberal society. In any case, he said that restraint is similarly required by all. He further stated, "My whole ambition of life is to set in motion machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody and then let men and women settle their fate". In this regard, he even reprimanded Buddha, whom else he holds in most noteworthy regard, who put the Bhikshu Sangha under the influence of the Bhikshu Sangha. He further stated, "When you will understand that all lighting up truth of the atma (Soul), at that point you will see that sex segregation has disappeared by and large, at that point just you will view all female as the veritable indication of Brahma.

Concept of Eastern and Western Womanhood

Swami Vivekananda gave the concept of womanhood in a boarder sense. When he visited America in 1894, he saw absolutely amazing environment for women in society. Women were much liberal and independent then Indian society. Participation of women in all the aspects of society was very high. Most important thing which attracted the Vivekananda's attention was the attitude of man towards women in America. There was no sense of discrimination in the society which is contrary to India. After seeing all these positive attitudes of women in America, Vivekananda gave the concept of Western Womanhood and Eastern Womanhood. He described in western society, woman as a wife has much importance in the house or in society. In the western home, the wife is superior to any female member of home, she controls all the matters of home. But contrary to this in India, the mother is considered as the superior of any other female member of the house. She controls all the matters of house unlike wife does in western society. Mothers are more respected in home or society than any other person. Now the question is "what is the importance of wife in Indian society"? Vivekananda justified we live in the home and our mother is the first person who took care of us, so everyone should be subordinate to the mother in the home. Now the next concern is "what is the importance of the mother in American society"? Further, he added mother has a different position in western society compare to Indian society. There is no doubt they also respects mother but the level is a bit low then Indian society.

Women can be regarded as the base of family, worshiped in temples and the planet is called 'Mother Earth'. No doubt man are physically stronger than women but mentally women are more powerful than man. There is lots of difference between strength and power, strength is something like related physical exposure but power is related to mental intellectuality and ability to handle a difficult situation. Women are the dignity of any family and position of women in

family shows the prosperity of the family. Swami Vivekananda glorified motherhood by stating mother is respected as god in our family because mother provide us, unconditional love, she bears all the suffering just to see a tiny smile on our face, the extreme pain a mother goes through while giving birth of a child cannot be compared with any other pain in this world, she sacrifices all his happiness for the happiness of her child, he manages entire house without expecting any personal benefit in return, she always forgives her child, does not matter how much the child hurt her. All these attitudes except mother only god poses. Thus no better place than the mother can be given rather than god. It is very much logical that why Indian society worships mother as the incarnation of god. The concept of motherhood of god gained more importance in Vivekananda's mind then the concept of fatherhood. That is why he remarked when someone in the West asked Vivekananda why he became a monk, he answered why we should get married when we can see only the divine and sacred mother in all women. It shows that his respect towards women reaches such a height that he saw every woman as respected as his mother.

Vivekananda wrote “Jehovah’, ‘Jesus’ and the Trinity are secondary. The love ought to be for mother Marry who conceived Jesus and for that she needed to experience such a large number of difficulties, yet at the same time, she holds Jesus in her arms. Further, he included when a sovereign passes on “Mother” cries most, a field-marshal bites the dust “Mother” cries most’, a fighter kicks the bucket “Mother” cries most, a sailor at steerage bites the dust “Mother” cries most, the angler in his clothes bites the dust “Mother” cries most, a beggar in the road bites the dust “Mother” cries most. It's about a long time since Sri Ramakrishna venerated Mother Kali. Today Kali is likened to the limitless inventive power inside each women. A women's activist Judy Graham states, "Lady can make; that is the power. Man can just control". Swami Vivekananda had an exceptionally extraordinary regard for Sita of the Ramayana and he was never tired of showing her as the general thought of an Indian women.

However women in modern social structure trend to modify their thought process accordingly and revert traditional outset of mind as a superfluous and conservative form. Thus they believe that if women follows the traditional stigma in today’s era it will be hard to coup up with social norms. In such regard Vivekananda argues with the women of modern societies by giving example of Sita in contrast. Vivekananda reveals that Sita being a cutting-edge young lady having enough firm, fearlessness, self-subordination at the same time she used to be a traditionally common wife. Thus Vivekananda actually regards modernity on the basis on modern sense and thinking and not with the changing customs and social norms. Sita in his views is a perfect example of being a complete women and every women should adopt and enhance herself with the characteristics of Sita that will lead to prosperity and moral values of the society.

Women and Education:-

Swami Vivekananda was bold enough to speak the plain truth without any fear of criticism or applause. “If you don’t allow one to become a lion, he will become a fox. Women are a power, only now it is eviler because man oppresses woman; she is the fox, but when she is no longer oppressed, she will be the lion” (Volume 7, Pg. no.22). Females are regarded Shakti (power) but that the unfortunately nowadays Shakti is only used for the bad purpose. The reason for that is

that men are oppressing them. So, they are like vixen only. But when there will not be any more oppression, then, they will surely become a lioness. There are serious gender biases existing in our culture which is one the most shameful drawback of culture. Terms decency, respect, dignity. Liberty, education, intellectuality becomes more meaningful when these are allocated is assigned to any women. Everyone one talks about these and shows concern to allocate these things to women but in real sense women in present days are lacking all these elements.

Swami Vivekananda pointed out that what is the importance of showing a mother holding her baby on school textbooks? The skin color of mother shown black but the skin color of baby shown white, what do these pictures mean? A clear discrimination is being ejected in heads of small school students, who does not even know the difference between black skin color and white skin color.

The beginning of the nineteenth century brought many changes in our society. India was entirely colonized by British and western culture slowly started gaining ground in India society. Many revolutionary changes brought by British especially in the field of education. Girl's education were given much importance and government started establishing institutions to provide education to girls and response of Indians were moderate. Initially, some Indian religious fundamentalists opposed the British policy but later on all the changes accepted by society. A Large number of girls from all over India started going to different educational institutes and these girls were termed as "new women" or "modern women" by Indian society. Regarding solutions to women's problems, Swami Vivekananda said, "Our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education" He said that very precisely women must be developed in such a way that she can solve her problem in her own ways or she should pose capability of solving own problems by herself without depending upon any other. He also further added that Indian woman is most capable in any work compares to any other country in this world. Sometimes he questioned, "In matters concerning women, who are you to solve a women problem? You are not god to show superiority over any female. The man has no right to show that they can solve problems much better than women. It absolutely rubbishes that if a man thinks that they can solve other women's problem better than themselves. Every individual has the own capability and god has gifted everyone the mental and physical power survive their life without depending on others. Thus Vivekananda said women should utilize their ability in solving their own problem, which is the best way to gain maximum liberty and independent in society.

As per Vivekananda, "absence of education as the essential reason for the downfall of women folks from the high Vedic custom. He saw cure too in education, that will invigorate and it must cooperate shaping the character of women". In any case, the inquiry is what sort of education, particularly women instruction? Swami Vivekananda understood that it is the love of Uma Kumari, divine goddess of shakti, ought to be in the young lady understudies. Also, this education would, in time, draw out the most flawless and the most grounded in all women, her unending mother. Swami Vivekananda wanted women to social specialists who might work reliably, unselfishly, in full soul with the teaching of Karma. He even wished to begin Math for women. As indicated by him, such Math for women will settle a twofold reason. Initially, these instructional hubs will be for Brahamcharnis or committed ladies laborers who will live the lives of generous nuns, serving all. Besides, these will likewise fill in as schools for young ladies, who will be shown the common and profound issues by these devoted ladies laborers. At that

point they can, voluntarily leave the Math or remain back. It will assist them with picking up mental fortitude, certainty, and confidence and will free them from the feeling of reliance and an existence of subservience.

He was very much hopeful by providing best education and knowledge to women, India can attain maximum development and prosperity. He believed Indian women are much capable than any other women in the world. They can adopt any situation and acclimatize with that situation perfectly. Strong emotional and sentimental thinking of Indian women makes them most unique and strong among all other countries women. Women is the person around which the family, society and humankind itself revolve. In his discourse on 'Ladies of India', conveyed in America, Vivekananda forecasted that the new Civilization of things to come will be made by present day women with Hindu profound culture. He believed that with a change of society and arrival of new modern civilization women will get more opportunity. Empowerment of women will be one of the prior agenda of many societies in future. He also added Hinduism will also saw some changes towards the woman.

Character Building

Swami Vivekananda, an ardent believer in the philosophy of self-abnegation, was proud of Indian civilization and Indian womanhood. He insisted every Indian woman should prosper herself admiring Sita as their ideal inspiration. There is no need to search any other ideology to find the right way of building character for Indian women, Sita is the perfect example of ideal character. The Hindu womanhood always remained within the barrier of loyalty towards the husband, but more or less it can be regarded as a narrow thinking. A woman should have given authority to find happiness for herself, if she is not happy with husband then there should be no force to stay with him rather she should have provided the rights to take divorce from her husband.

According to Vivekananda the concept of womanhood is Sita, Savitri, and Damayanti. Vivekananda maintained positive view towards the concept of Indian motherhood and supported that mother should be given highest respect at home. He claimed the ideal motherhood is a protector, loving, unselfish, all suffering, always forgiving mother. Thus every mother deserves to be worshiped because. Rather than motherhood, Vivekananda put forward the idea of a sannyasini - one who dedicates her entire life for the welfare of human. It is the noblest job to work for humanity and dedicating entire life for the welfare of mankind is the greatest gesture anyone can show. The relationship between Indian men and women, he acknowledged to be based on latter's servitude and this he felt was not good at all. Swami felt that a nation that accords no liberty to its women can never prosper.

Conclusion

Reflection of Vivekananda's Philosophy of Women Empowerment In 21st century

Although Swami Vivekananda passed away long back but his ideologies are still relevant in the 21st century. It's quite envious that ideas of Vivekananda on women empowerment which he gave almost 100 years back are proving absolutely right by each and every word. Even his

philosophies gaining more importance on present day's scenario. Someone well said that people may die but their philosophy makes them immortal.

Long ago during the 19th century, Vivekananda said about gender equality is the most important for the development of any society or country. He stated "Atma- the soul has no sex, no caste, and no imperfection" and there should be no discrimination on the basis of gender. This idea of Vivekananda has been following by almost all the countries in the world. Nowadays everyone accepted the fact that women should be given liberty as men without any discrimination then only she can develop fully and contribute in the process of nation building. Vivekananda's view that no country can attain maximum prosperity without empowering has been proving so true by each and every word, in present days no country achieved the maximum level of prosperity without having the contribution of women. There are many examples created by different countries like UK, USA, France etc, these countries obtained the very high level of development. One of the major reason for their marvelous progress is the empowerment of women. The Much international organization came with the objective of implementing gender equality all over the world. One of the most important among them is United Nations Organizations, which have membership almost 193 countries out 207 countries of the world. United Nations Organization made it mandatory for each and every member to follow the policy of gender equality. All the places in the world where women are empowered and provided equal opportunity as compare to man, those place are progressing much better than other places. India also realized the importance of women empowerment and slowly coming up with many schemes and program for the up-liftmen of Indian women.

Review of Literature

'Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda's (Vol. V and Vol.VII) expresses the thoughts of Vivekananda on women education and empowerment. Theme of these two volumes can be implemented in present day also. In this book Vivekananda depicted logical explanation of his views and ideas with practical examples. It provides first-hand information about the ideology of Vivekananda with no manipulation.

'Atharveda-Hindi Bhashya' concisely renders and translates Atharveda into Hindi language. It reflects the actual doctrines of Atharveda as well as the position of women, during Vedic period is outlined in this book. It also comprises moral laws and rules to be followed by society towards women.

'The Vedanta Philosophy' is a comprehensive source of Vedanta philosophy. It evaluates the philosophy of Vedanta and urges the society to implement the actual Vedanta philosophy in reality. By this work it is easy to understand the misinterpretation of Veda done by some religious priest time to time.

'Our Women' illustrates Indian women and their condition. Major obstacles for the development of Indian women pointed out in this book and demonstrate them with sound sense. Vivekananda pasteurized customs, traditions and culture of Indian women in this book.

'Swami Vivekananda-Women Empowerment' precisely explains the overall review of Vivekananda's approach to feminism. It comprised all the major quotes of Vivekananda with

brief discussion by those Vivekananda expressed his ideology and approach towards women empowerment.

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