Vivekanand’s Contribution on Women Education and Its Present Relevance

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Abstract:
Vivekananda said ‘‘The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle of life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion- is it worth the name? Real education is that which enable one to stand on one’s leg. Education must provide ‘life building, man-making, character-making assimilation of idea’’. Vivekananda realized that right type of education is very importance for female 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 subject 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 skill and training, the dynamic of which changes with time and technology and also way of living. 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 various women universities, colleges are opening. This will also help for women empowerment and make them strong and completely independent.

Key-Words: Women education, Man-making, Character-making, Women empowerment, emphasizing skill enhancement.

Introduction:
Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902), a great thinker and reformer of India, embraces education, which for him signifies ‘man-making’, as the very mission of his life. 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”. In this paper, which purports to expound and analyze Vivekananda’s contribution on women education, an endeavor has been made to focus on the basic theme of his philosophy, viz. the spiritual unity of the universe. Vivekananda also stresses the importance of women education. 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.

Vivekananda realizes that mankind is passing through a crisis. The tremendous emphasis on the scientific and mechanical ways of life is fast reducing man to the status of a machine. Moral and religious values are being undermined. The fundamental principles of civilization are being ignored. Conflicts of ideals, manners and habits are pervading the atmosphere. Disregard for everything old is the fashion of the day.

Defining Education:
Vivekananda 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. Potential speaks of the possibility of awakening something that is laying dormant (Prabhananda, 2003). 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”.

**Objective of education:**
Vivekananda points out that the defect of the present-day education is that it has no definite goal to pursue. A sculptor has a clear idea about what he wants to shape out of the marble block; similarly, a painter knows what he is going to paint. But a teacher, he says, has no clear idea about the goal of his teaching. Swamiji attempts to establish, through his words and deeds, that the end of all education is man making. He prepares the scheme of this man-making education in the light of his over-all philosophy of Vedanta. According to Vedanta, the essence of man lies in his soul, which he possesses in addition to his body and mind. In true with this philosophy, Swamiji defines education as ‘the manifestation of the perfection already in man.’ The aim of education is to manifest in our lives the perfection, which is the very nature of our inner self. This perfection is the realization of the infinite power which resides in everything and every-where-existence, consciousness and bliss (satchidananda). After understanding the essential nature of this perfection, we should identify it with our inner self. For achieving this, one will have to eliminate one’s ego, ignorance and all other false identification, which stand in the way. Meditation, fortified by moral purity and passion for truth, helps man to leave behind the body, the senses, the ego and all other non-self elements, which are perishable. He thus realizes his immortal divine self, which is of the nature of infinite existence, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss.

**Vivekananda Thoughts on Education:**
- Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.
- All power is within you; you can do anything and everything.
- Arise, Awake and Stop not till the goal is reached.
- The secret of life is not enjoyment but education through experience.
- You are the creator of your own destiny.
- There is only one purpose in the whole of life education.
- We may read books, hear lectures, and talk miles, but experience is the one teacher, the one eye-opener. It is best as it is. We learn, through smiles and tears we learn.
- The present system of education is all wrong. The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think.
- Educate our people, so that they may be able to solve their own problems. Until that is done, all these ideal reforms will remain ideals only
- It is man-making education all round that we want.
Books are infinite in number and time is short; therefore the secret of knowledge is to take what is essential. Take that and try to live up to it.

The very essence of education is concentration of mind.

**Womanhood:**
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. Swami Vivekananda felt, the best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women and it is impossible to get back India's lost pride and honor unless they try to better the condition of women. Vivekananda 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 woman is improved.

Swami Vivekananda noticed almost everywhere women are treated as playthings. In modern countries like America, women have more independence, still, Vivekananda had noticed, men bow low, offer a woman a chair and in another breath they offer compliments like "Oh, how beautiful your eyes.." etc. Vivekananda felt, a man does not have any right to do this or venture so far, and any woman should not permit this as well. According to Swami Vivekananda such things develop the less noble side of humanity. They do not tend to noble ideals.

According to Vivekananda, the ideal of womanhood in India is motherhood – that marvelous, unselfish, all-suffering, ever-forgiving mother. Vivekananda felt, in India, there are two great evils – trampling on the women, and grinding through the poor through caste restrictions.

**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. Article 21-A in the Constitution of India provides free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards. The Article 15 of the Constitution of India prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex (Constitution of India Article 15(1) (3)). The Article 26 of Declaration of the Universal Declaration of Human Right declares: —Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.

After Independence:
India independence in 1947, the University Education Commission was created to recommend suggestions to improve the quality of education. However, their report spoke against female education, referring to it as: "Women's present education is entirely irrelevant to the life they have to lead. It is not only a waste but often a definite disability." In 1958, a national committee on women's education was appointed by the then government, and most of its recommendations were accepted. The crux of its recommendations was to bring female education on the same footing as offered for boys. Soon afterward, committees were created that talked about equality between men and women in the field of education. For example, one committee on differentiation of curricula for boys and girls (1959) recommended equality and a common curriculum at various stages of their learning. Further efforts were made to expand the education system, and the Education Commission was set up in 1964, which largely talked about female education, which recommended a national policy to be developed by the government. This occurred in 1968, providing increased emphasis on female education.

Present Position of Women education in India:
In Independent India, education acquired special significance and has been supported by the government from time to time through its policies and programmes. Therefore, in recent years the Education system has expanded rapidly. But still a large number of women are in dark and the gender gap in literacy rate remains startling by its presence. The following facts and figures throw light on the criticality of the problem which is a harsh reality and demonstrate that we have a herculean task ahead.
Table 1: Literacy rates in India (1951-2011):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Male rate</th>
<th>Female rate</th>
<th>Male-Female Gap in Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>27.16</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>18.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>28.30</td>
<td>40.40</td>
<td>25.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>34.45</td>
<td>45.96</td>
<td>21.97</td>
<td>23.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>43.57</td>
<td>56.38</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>26.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>39.29</td>
<td>24.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>64.84</td>
<td>75.26</td>
<td>53.67</td>
<td>21.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>74.04</td>
<td>82.14</td>
<td>65.46</td>
<td>16.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001 & 2011

(Literacy rate for year 1951 relates to population aged 5 years and above.) According to the census of 2011, —Every person above the age of 7 years who can read and write in any language is said to be literate. According to this criterion the Literacy Rate in India is around 74%. Table 1 shows the Percentage of Literacy rates among males and females in India. The gap which was 18.30 percent in 1951 increased to 25.05 percent in 1961 and 26.62 percent in 1981. After 1991, there was a slow decrease in the gap as the literacy rate among women started increasing gradually due to interventions taken by the government. The Gap of 21.59 percentage points recorded between male and female literacy rates in 2001 census has reduced to 16.68 percentage points by 2011-12. The 2011 census report indicates that literacy among women as only 65.46 per cent which is much lower to national average i.e. 74.04 per cent. Gender inequality in education is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is only 65.46% against 82.14% of men as per 2011 Census. Though there is tremendous increase in the female literacy rate after independence, the gap between male and female literacy rate is declining very slowly.

Table 2: Gender wise Literacy rate in Rural- urban areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>India</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>58.74</td>
<td>70.70</td>
<td>46.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>67.77</td>
<td>77.15</td>
<td>57.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001 & 2011
Table 2 compares the gender wise literacy rate in rural and urban area in census of India 2001 & 2011. The literacy rate went up from 64.84% in 2001 to 74.04% in 2011 showing an increase of 9.21%. Female literacy in 2001 stood at 53.67%, it has gone up to 65.46% in 2011. The male literacy in comparison rose from 75.26% to 82.14%. The data shows that the improvement in female literacy is more than males in both rural and urban, during the decade 2001-2011 which represent women’s are growing well in the last 10 years. The gender gap in literacy has come down from 24.57 in 2001 to 19.22 in 2011 in rural areas and from 13.41 in 2001 to 9.65 in 2011 in urban areas. And the gap between the literacy rate in urban and rural areas is also declined from 21.18 percentages in 2001 to 16.34 percentage in 2011.

Factors of Low Literacy Rates:
In spite of various plans and policies formulated and implemented by Indian govt. to eradicate illiteracy from our country, especially among women, the gap between male and female literacy still persist. In this context, the Factors responsible for low female literacy rate in India are identified and listed below:

- Gender bias in the curriculum (female characters being depicted as weak & helpless)
- Social discrimination and economic exploitation.
- Low enrollment of girls in schools.
- Low retention rate and high dropout rate.
- Shortage of female teachers in schools.
- Schools established in faraway places etc.
- Inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities etc).
- Rapid growth of population which leads to the neglect of girl child and put more emphasis on the boy education.
- women is considered as liability who will one time get married and will not contribute to the economic and social development.

Current policies:
Before and after Independence, India has been taking active steps towards women's status and education. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, has been a path breaking step towards the growth of education, especially for females. According to this act, elementary education is a fundamental right for children between the ages of 6 and 14. The government has undertaken to provide this education free of cost and make it compulsory for those in that age group. This undertaking is more widely known as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Since then, the SSA has come up with many schemes for inclusive as well as exclusive growth of Indian education as a whole, including schemes to help foster the growth of female education.

The major schemes are the following:
- **Mahila Samakhya Programme**: This programme was launched in 1988 as a result of the New Education Policy (1968). It was created for the empowerment of women from rural areas especially socially and economically marginalized groups. When the SSA was formed, it
initially set up a committee to look into this programme, how it was working and recommends new changes that could be made.

- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV):** This scheme was launched in July, 2004, to provide education to girls at primary level. It is primarily for the underprivileged and rural areas where literacy level for females is very low. The schools that were set up have 100% reservation: 75% for backward class and 25% for BPL (below Poverty line) females.

- **National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL):** This programme was launched in July, 2003. It was an incentive to reach out to the girls who the SSA was not able to reach through other schemes. The SSA called out to the "hardest to reach girls". This scheme has covered 24 states in India. Under the NPEGEL, "model schools" have been set up to provide better opportunities to girls.

The very first step towards women education and empowerment is to achieve the desired literacy rate. At the same time a notable reconsideration needs to be made regarding imparting an enhancement of certain vocational skills as visualized by Vivekananda.

**Recommendations to promote the women education:**

Some recommendations to promote and foster the women’s education in India:

- Involving women’s group like self help groups to promote women’s literacy.
- Free and compulsory education for all girls up to 20 yrs.
- Establishment of more no. of primary school.
- Bringing out change in the attitude of parents and in the society.
- Removal of gender bias in the school curriculum.

**Conclusion:**

Vivekananda conviction that education alone can bring a change in the socio-economic conditions of Indian society, was based on his thorough and keen observation of the society of his time. Vivekananda was actually the greatest synthesizer of ever time. He wanted to remove the evils of the society by giving re-orientation to politics, sociology, economics and education. Vivekananda laid stress on education as a powerful weapon for this change. Education should be the preparation for life. It should develop a feeling of nationalism and international understanding, it should leads to the development of character and make individuals self-dependent. 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 and 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.

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