



**Novel Insights**, An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) ISSN: 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-III, February 2025, Page No. 190-195

Published by Uttarsuri, Sribhumi, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsight.vol.1.issue.03W.020



## Swami Vivekananda's Role in Women Empowerment In Today's Society

**Nilava Patra**, Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy and the Life world,  
Vidyasagar University, Midnapore, India

Email- [nilavapatra555@gmail.com](mailto:nilavapatra555@gmail.com)

Received: 23.01.2025; Accepted: 18.02.2025; Available online: 28.02.2025

©2024 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

### Abstract

*At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the western education created a stir in Indian life; the people of the country were living in misery. At such a time Swami Vivekananda, a brave monk from India, came forward to awaken these poor oppressed people to new activities. In the last ten years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he devoted his life to restoring the heritage of the people of India as well as energizing the youth of the country into national life. Discussing the life and philosophy of Swami Vivekananda, it is known that the outstanding work he has done for the progresses of India. We will focus on those issues in the present discussion.*

**Keywords:** Women, Empowerment, Education, Vivekananda, National.

At present time, the first thing that is needed to guide people in the right direction is to lead them to live in an atmosphere of equality and friendship. Eliminate all differences between men and women and join them in equal rights. As long as there is no equality between men and women, any society cannot progress. According to Swami Vivekananda the progress of women depends on getting real education. If women are properly educated in the society, not only they will be developed, but India as a whole will be developed with them. That is why Swami Vivekananda brought education into the society as an essential element for empowering women along with food, clothing, and shelter. Swami Vivekananda's chosen education was not just getting a degree or just getting a job. So according to Swami Vivekananda education is "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man."<sup>1</sup> Education helps develop the infinite potential within man. Swami Vivekananda's teaching brings awareness to people's minds. So the picture that emerged in Swami Vivekananda's mind has an equation of past, present, and future society. So the path he showed for women empowerment is equally applicable to today's society because he never chose man and woman as two elements. The same spirit that is in the

women is the same spirit that is in the man. According to Vedanta Shastra, if the same Brahman is present in all living beings, then they can never be any fundamental difference between man and woman.

Discrimination between man and woman has been going in the society through different levels of development of human civilization. From the most primitive period onwards we see this discrimination sometimes naked, sometimes hidden, sometimes flexible and sometimes so terrifying that it is thought about. From ancient times till today, patriarchal social systems have assumed that this inequality between man and woman is eternal. This discrimination in society has always been and will continue to be a pre-determined decision for the past few centuries. The RkVedic social system was patriarchal, but even then the status of women within the society was immense. Even if a girl child was born, she was accepted with joy in the society. Women wear trend was in proper educational system. Women wears were allowed chanting with Vedic mantras. Women were taught in different schools. Women used to participate in *yāga yajñas* despite being concubines of their husbands. Women like Ghosa, Apala, Mamata, Lopamudra etc reached a high level of women education and women empowerment during the RkVedic period. But after the later Vedic period the position of women was greatly reduced. It was considered shameful for a woman to give birth to a daughter. The rules in the society regarding the marriage of women started to become stricter then before. The Maitrayani Samhitā States that women's drinking wine and gambling were treated as almost the same level in the society. Uttariya Samhitā states that women are worse than dishonest men. Child marriage, polygamy, etc are all observed in society during this era.

Mahrshi Manu, the author of ManuSamhitā, a famous book of Hindu scripture says that, girls should be brought up with care. They need proper education; even the gods of heaven are pleased when women are respected in the society. From this discussion of Manu it is understood that the days of bad luck for women in Hindu society has begun. As a result, women were not allowed to laren education, women were married as minors, men attracted to polygamy and child marriage was practices in the ancient time. In the 18th and 19th centuries the condition of girls becomes increasingly dire. Women are deprived of these two birthrights of education and freedom. They were confined only to the bonds of the household. In the 19th century women's education gained great prominence under the leadership of Raja RamMohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, as well as Henry Louis Vivian Derozio as a result of their life-long efforts and agitation, oppression and violence against women has been greatly reduced. The society became aware of the employment of women and their education the effort for the development of women empowerment which had been fulfilled by Swami Vivekananda, because Swami Vivekananda wanted to make Indian women equal in society. He was not a believer in the special power of women by making some new laws. For him the real purpose was to develop all aspects of women in the society. While pointing out the reasons for this degradation of women in the society, he saw extreme oppression of women as the main reason. A woman was always humiliated in the society by men. That is why Swami Vivekananda wanted to develop the personality of

women in the society in such a way that they can establish themselves successfully anywhere. So Swami Vivekananda hopes that if the women of India were educated, then fearless courage would automatically emerge in them. Therefore he said, "Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them."<sup>2</sup>

So Swami Vivekananda wanted to make women proficient in religion, arts, science, cooking, swimming, homemaking, all these things. Along with that he talked about all-round empower of women by keeping ideal characters in the society. So he said, "Sītā is unique; that character was depicted once and for all. There many have been several Rāmas, perhaps, but never more than one Sītā! She is the very type of the true Indian women, for all the Indian ideals of a perfected women have grown out of that one life of Sītā; and here she stands these thousands of years, commanding the worship of every men, women, and child throughout the length and breadth of the land of Āryāvṛta"<sup>3</sup>. Swami Vivekananda repeatedly spoke about the fundamental education of women in society so that they themselves can overcome all the adversities of the society and move forward. But most of the girls in our country are mentally and physically week. If there is a little problem, they cry. That's why Swami Vivekananda wanted to awaken the strength of a lion in the body of girls. Vivekananda talk about self-defence to empower women so he said, "In the present day it has become for them also to learn self- defence. See how grand the Queen of Jansi was! So shall we bring to the need of India great fearless women- women worthy to continue the traditions of Sanghamittra, Lila, Mira Bai"<sup>4</sup> Swami Vivekananda was greatly inspired by Sri Ramakrishna Dev in the question of women's empowerment. This is what Swami Vivekananda said about Sri Ramakrishna, "He was the savior of women."<sup>5</sup> The manner in which Sri Ramakrishna Dev showed respect and motherhood towards the woman is unforgettable in the pages of world history. He always worships women as mother. The Goddess in whose service Sri Ramakrishna Dev was always immersed was Bhavatarini, the adorable Goddess women power. So it can be stated that Swami Vivekananda learns how to respect women from Ramakrishna deva. That's why he could say if *jīva* is Shiva then a woman is Ishwari. So Swami Vivekananda believes that what is needed to educate all forms of ignorance of a nation is the provision of all forms of empowerment and development of women as well as man. In fact Swami Vivekananda wanted women to find a higher life in the society. For this reason he also focused on the spiritual development of women along with improving the way of education.

We already know that India's literacy rate for women was very low after independence. Although the enrollment of girls in various fields of education is greatly increasing, but another major problem shown among them is that of dropout. According to Government of India MHRD report 2003-2004 half of girls do not complete their upper primary education. While it is true that, the number of schools and colleges in urban and rural areas have increased to a great extent according to statistics. Discrimination against women in the workplace is highest in rural areas. In our current society men are trying to maintain their dominance by using their physical strength. The status of women in society as a whole has

reached a very dangerous level. The birth of a girl child in the village is tantamount to a curse. At present, feticide is happening almost everyday in the society. Difference of behavior towards boys and girls are still present within the family. That's why opportunities for education and other curriculum activities are given to boys more than girls. Conservatism in the society especially among the Muslim community, and scheduled castes, and tribes is creating a lot of obstacles in the expansion of women's empowerment and their education. Many illiterate mothers fail to give proper education to their children. These mothers believe that their main responsibility is to make girls good at house work by arranging their marriage. Educating girls by sending them to school is a waste of time. That is why we have to think about the upliftment of village girls according to Swami Vivekananda. So Swami Vivekananda wanted to identify educated Brahmacharini within the village. They can educate all the women from within the village. So he said, "The duty of teaching in the school for girls ought to devolve absolutely on education widows and Brahmachārinis"<sup>6</sup>

So finally it can be said that the realization of an idea happen only when a bright burning paradigm is in front of our eyes. That signing example is Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda by applying his dispassion and spirituality has awakened the self-esteem and self-respect of the entire female race throughout the history of the world. So Swami Vivekananda's first plan in India was to empower women. For this empowerment of women, he first chooses their enlightenment. Today it has to be said that various commissions have played their important role in the field of women's development like Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), Mudaliar Commission (1932-34), and National Committee of Women Education (1958). At present, various schemes have been launched by the central and state government of India by women empowerment. The schemes approved by the Central Government are Beti Padhao Beti Bachao, Shiksha Samridhi Yojana, Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme etc. Schemes run by the state government are Kanyashree, Ruposhree, Shikhasree, etc.

The social status of women has remained the same. Today we have reached the 78th year of independence. But the place of social freedom for women is still bound in the darkness of subjugation. At present the cases of violence and rape against women are increasing in the society. In India many women have been raped in police custody, hospitals and workplace. According to statistics about 275 women were raped in India between 2017-2022. In our country women are worshipped as a source of power, but women face various social oppression in the society. We must not forget one thing; women's contribution to India's freedom of independence is undeniable. Brave women like Matangini Hazra, Rani Lakshmi Bai were born on the soul of India, those who sacrifice their lives for the freedom of the country. It is true that India is independent today, but has women's freedom and women's empowerment become a real in the society? We must keep our eyes on that. Swami Vivekananda realises long ago that the progress of India could not be made by man alone. Therefore, he wanted to empower women replace their educational and cultural values in the society. Because we all know women are like the field of grain and men are the seeds of

that grain. The union of this field and the seed made possible the origin of the animal world. In Sāṃkhya Philosophy we also see the creation process of the world as a result of the union of Prakṛti and puruṣa. Today, not only in India, but the whole world women have shown their talent in education, administrative activities, sports, in various international competition, and female astronauts have been reached the moon and develop their talents. So we must remember Swami Vivekananda's words today, "O India! Forget not that ideal of thy womanhood Sītā, Sāvitrī, Damayantī; forget not that the God thou worshippest is the great Ascetic of ascetics the all-renouncing Śaṅkara, the Lord of Uma."<sup>7</sup> If we can understand the values of Swami Vivekananda's message of women empowerment and awaking of women's power in the entire society, then surely many problems of women will be eradicated very soon. Only then will the idea of Swami Vivekananda's women empowerment in the society surely take a seat in the world assembly.

### References:

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, Mayabati, 'Almora: Ashram', 1966, Page- 304.
2. 'Vivekananda, Swami: *My India The India Eternal*', Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata, August 2018, Page- 77.
3. Ibid, Page- 72.
4. Vivekananda, Swami, '*Education*', published by Adhyaksha, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai, 1943, Page- 86.
5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VI Advaita, Ashram, 1985, Page- 335.
6. Swami Nirvedananda, '*Our Education*', Dhankuria, West Bengal' S. Mondal, Vidyamandira, 1945, Page- 21.
7. Vivekananda, Swami, '*My India The India Eternal*', Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata, August 2018, Page- 20.

### Bibliography:

1. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. 2, Advita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2003
2. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. 3, Advita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2004
3. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. 4, Advita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2002
4. The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. 5, Advita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2004
5. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. 6, Advita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2003
6. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. 7, Advita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2002
7. Dr. Radhakrishnan, '*Our Heritage*', Hind Pocket Books , Delhi, 1973
8. Ranganathananda, Swami, '*Swami Vivekananda, the Spiritual Teacher of Modern India*', in prabuddha Bharata, may, (1963).

9. Satprakashnanda, Swami, '*Vivekananda's contribution to the present Age*', Vedanta Society of Louis, Kolkata & USA, December. (1978).
10. Provananda, Swami: *Bhagvad Gita*, Adivita Asharam, Kolkata, December, 1987.
11. Vivekananda, Swami, *Education*, T.S. Avinashi lingam (Comp. & Ed.) Sri Ramakrishna Mission, Coimbatore, Madras 1967,
12. Nirvedananda, Swam: *Our Education*, S. Mondal, Vidyamandira, (Ed.) Dhankuria, West Bengal, 1945.
13. J. Liddle and R. Josh: *Daughter of Independence* Gender, caste and class in India London, 1986.
14. Babb, L.A. Redemptive Encounters: *Three Modern Styles in the Hindu Tradition* New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
15. Baird, R. D (.ed.): *Religion in Modern India*. New Delhi: Manohar 1981.
16. Basu, T.et al, '*Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*', New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1993.
17. Clothey, F.W.(ed.), '*Images of man: Religion and Historical Process in South Asia*', Madras, New Era, 1982.
18. Clothey, F.W, '*Rhythm and Intent: Ritual studies from South India*', Madras, Blackie and Son, 1982.
19. Delhi, C.G, '*Instrument and Purpose: Studies on Rites and Rituals in South India*', Lund, Gleerup, 1956.
20. Morinis, E. A, '*Pilgrimage in the Hindu Tradition: A Case Study of West Bengal*', New Delhi, Oxford university press, 1984.
21. Underhill, M.M, '*The Hindu Religious Year*', Calcutta, Association Press, 1921.
22. Jonathan, Z. Smith, '*Relating Religion Chicago*', University of Chicago Press, 2004.
23. Wadley, S. Shakti, '*Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion*', Chicago University of Chicago Press. 1975.