

Vision of Women Empowerment in the Ideology of Swami Vivekananda

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF HISTORY

By

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(2016-2017)

I

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree/diploma.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "Vision of Women Empowerment in the Ideology of Swami Vivekananda" is confided and original work done by Noor Alam Chowdhury, a student of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, under my supervision and guidance.

This subject of this dissertation is an original contribution towards the discipline of History and has not previously formed the basis for the award of the Degree, Diploma, Associated ship, and fellowship or other similar title to any candidate.

The Dissertation represents entirely an independent work of the candidate under my guidance.

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(Dr. Manu Sharma)

III

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank all the people who contributed in some way to the work described in this thesis. First and foremost, I would first like to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Manu Sharma, department of History at Lovely Professional University. The door to Manu Sharma's office was always open whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. She consistently allowed this paper to be my own work but steered me in the right the direction whenever she thought I needed it. I am very much thankful to her for giving me intellectual freedom in my work, engaging me in new ideas, and demanding a high quality of work in all my endeavors.

I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

Author

Noor Alam Chowdhury

IV

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 and intellectual development of human beings. Nowadays the profession of social work also plays a very important role in this matter. But it is also clear to us that in spite of the best efforts, the women's empowerment movement is not up to the mark. Emphasis is given on physical and economic development rather than intellectual development. Through this paper, the author tries to show that in the process of women's empowerment, the thoughts of Vivekananda were very much applicable. 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 be full of love and affectionate, gentle-natured, full of mother-kind etc.

GLOSSARY

- **Brahmacharya:** the stage of life of the student, entailing the study of the Vedas and complete celibacy, usually lasting for twelve years.
- **Hymn:** something resembling this, as a speech, essay, or book in praise of someone or something.
- **Dark Age:** the period 1191, the advent of Muslim rulers in India till 1757, when British conquered India from Mughals is known as Dark Age for women in India.
- **Atma:** the world Soul, from which all individual souls derive, and to which they return as the supreme goal of existence.
- **Bhikshu Sangha:** Sangha is a word in Pali and Sanskrit meaning "association", "assembly," "company" or "community" and most commonly refers in Buddhism to the monastic community of Bhikshu (monks) and Bhikhshuni (nuns).
- **Jehovah:** a form of the Hebrew name of God used in some translations of the Bible.
- **Bhalobasa:** to love, to be amorous towards; to have attachment or affection or fondness for; to like. love; attachment; amity, friendliness; friendship; affection; reverence; devotion; fondness; liking.
- **Sati:** Sati or suttee is an obsolete Hindu funeral custom where a widow immolates herself on her husband's pyre or commits suicide in another fashion shortly after her husband's death.

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Chapter-I

1.1 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.

India consists around 130 million total populations and sex ratio in India is 52% of men and 48% women. Thus India consists a huge number of female population and as per census report 2011, only 65% women are literate in India. Around 35% of women are illiterate in India and such a huge number of illiteracy acts as major obstacles for the development of the country. There are many reasons which are rooted in Indian Society which responsible for suppressed condition of women in India such as caste system, poverty, gender discrimination, traditional beliefs etc. There is lots of evidence in the history of India that women enjoyed a considerable position in society and their position was far better to compare to present scenario. Under the rule of various dynasties, the position of women deteriorated and gradually women position reached such level in the society that it can be considered as most deteriorated in the society. During the Vedic period, women enjoyed the highest level of freedom and empowerment compare to any other period. Veda says that **“Girls should train themselves to become a complete scholar and youthful through Brahmacharya and then enter married life”**. This shloka was explained by Kshem Karandas Trivedi in his book Atharveda-Hindi Bhashya (Part 2, Pg no.413-414). Women were given every right in the society; no

gender discrimination was there during the early Vedic period. All kind of social, religious, individual rights were given to women equally as men. Even it's written on Veda that no religious ceremony can be performed without the participation of women. During the early Vedic period, society was more prosperous and people were living prosperous life compare to any other period. But gradually during later Vedic, period scenario began to change and women's position started declining. Gender discrimination was visible in the later Vedic period. Various evil practice and belief gained ground in society during the later Vedic period. Freedom of women was confiscated, various rights of women were snatched and many restrictions were imposed on women. No religious and social rights were given to women and they were totally isolated from participation in any kind of public activities. Women's condition became more deteriorated and suppressed as many evil practices and blind belief or taboos on women came into existence in society such and as Sati system, child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage etc. These rituals fastened the Indian women under narrow mindset and made their condition worse in the society. Indian women's condition became worse in medieval period with the advent of Muslim rulers. Strong Muslim dynasties like Delhi Sultanate and Mughals ruled India around 600 years and during this time they tried to impose Islamic rules and regulation as much as possible on society. In the context of Islam, women were considered as inferior to men and this mindset was visible in the Indian society during Sultanate and Mughals rule. This time period is also known as '**dark age**' of Indian society, where women were suppressed most comparing to any other time period.

Several philosophers, thinkers, social revolutionaries came out with their views and ideas to restore women's position in Indian society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Dayanand Saraswati, and Mahatma Gandhi influenced Indian society to a greater extent with their revolutionary views about women. They realized women are as much important as men for the development of the society and they tried spreading this message among the people. First notable step for women empowerment can be marked when Raja Ram Mohan took a step forward against the society to put a ban on Sati system. In 1829 Raja Ram Mohan Roy convinced William Bentick, governor of British India to declare sati as illegal and put ban. This can be marked as starting point of women empowerment in India. Later on, 1856 when Widow Remarriage act was passed, it can be considered another important benchmark in Indian women empowerment. Thereafter many attempts were made to uplift women in the society and improve the condition of Indian women.

Among all the social reformers and revolutionaries of India **Swami Vivekananda's** contribution towards the women empowerment is remarkable. He gave special reference towards women empowerment throughout his all works and views. He was a philosopher, a thinker, a social reformer has great influence on India society. His views and ideas reformed our society to a next level. Swami Vivekananda's ideas are still relevant and can be applicable in modern society also. Since his

childhood he was seeker of spiritual knowledge. His thinking was greatly influenced by his religion and Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar's Metropolitan Institution. Which was religious spiritual primary education centre based on Hinduism. This intuition gave a proper shape to Vivekananda's idea and views to enhance. In Vivekananda's view relevancy of spiritual knowledge is much visible. Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar's Metropolitan Institution greatly influenced the base of his thought. As he was born in a staunch Hindu family in Calcutta 1863, he was attached with Hinduism since he born and borrowed many ideas and views from Hindu scriptures and religious text and his views are mainly centred on Hinduism. But he was not restricted to only Hinduism as he criticised many Hindu rituals and evil practices. His motive was to purify society from evil practices and narrow frame of mind through logical explanations of Hindu scriptures and texts. Proficiency on Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagwat Gita, and the Puranas etc made him a prominent reformer and teacher. It is very difficult to demarcate Vivekananda's activities and thought. He was man of a very positive identity and his view education based on applied Vedanta and western culture. Unlike other social reformers and thinkers, he did not criticise western culture rather he considered its necessary for development of nation. Along with western culture he gave importance to native culture of our country. According to Vivekananda "mother tongue is the best way to the mass and social education". In simple words he tried reform society by intermixing both the culture. It makes him unique and different from other Indian thinkers and reformers. He believed all the good elements from every culture need to be adopted to form a prosperous society. His main principle on education is man making and character building. These principles are also applicable to the field education of women. Vivekananda stated that the education is the element which is manifestation of perfection already in human being. According to him ability to gain education and knowledge is equally inbuilt in humankind, thus everyone has equal rights to gain knowledge and education irrespective to gender, caste, social class discrimination etc. By attaining education man can build self-respect and self-development. Vivekananda stressed on positive education and said negative education weakens men. Education is important as well as the quality of education is more important. He regarded it's the duty of society and intuitions to deliver positive education among young boys and girls so that they should not be deviant from right path of life. His views on education are originated on "Applied Vedanta". This theory inspired his various activities to expand the education in society. Education is must be to attain "Brahma-the ultimate truth" and everyone's objective of life should be gain Brahma. To make bridge between western ideas and Vedanta, Vivekananda claimed western science should coupled with Vedanta. He realized it is compulsory to acquire western knowledge to educate Indians. Western knowledge can be used in positive way to educate Indians. He gave special reference on the importance of education of Indian women for the up-liftmen of society. Since centuries Indian women were only indulged in domestic activities, they were not encouraged to come out and to participate in nation building activities. It was happening due to lack concentration on the importance of women

and underestimating women's ability. He has given his logical explanation that why there should not be discrimination in any field of society whether it is education or any other field by stating that **"Atma- the soul has no sex, no caste, and no imperfection"** (volume 4, Pg no.176). When human soul does not have any differences thus caste, creed and sex-based classification of people is unfair,. Further he stated in his 7th volume of his works **"If you don't allow one to become a lion, he will become fox. Women are a power, only now it is more evil 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). He blamed Indian society for the deteriorating condition of women in India. Indian women were suppressed and dominated by man that's why despite of having ability and power she can't develop herself and change her condition. He also firmly believed once women will be given a chance or no longer under the suppression of man, she can attain maximum self development and self respect and can contribute in the process of country building. One of his famous statements, in which reflects the importance of women for the development of world **"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless condition of women improved"**. It is very necessary to develop both men and women equally to attain maximum development and welfare society. Further he tried to explain his view with an example by stating the with one wing no bird can fly, both the wings are required and have equal importance. Similarly to gain maximum welfare of society empowerment of both man and women should be done without any discrimination. The condition of women during 19th century inspired Vivekananda to step forward and make reforms in the society. During 19th century there were lots of evil practices in Indian society. It was mainly due to miss interpretation of religion, people blindly believed on religion without any question and this was taken as advantage by various religious monks and interpreters. As Vivekananda gained knowledge about Vedanta; this is regarded as highest scripture of Hinduism. From hymns 121 to 147, Rig-Veda says- Women should be brave enough like men and should attain self-respect (Rig-Veda Hymn no. 122, 128), women should expert in all field of society and she should be given opportunity to develop herself (Hymn no. 122), women should earn fame and make her prosperous (Hymn no. 123), women should be scholar and she should be given foredoom to attain education (Hymn no. 123), women should be intelligent and knowledgeable (Hymn no 126). Many references are given in Rig-Veda which clears that according to Veda gender discrimination is against Hinduism and there is nowhere mentioned in Veda that women should be suppressed. It made him confuse and complicated that in reality how it was miss interpreted and miss-used in society. On reflection to the reality of society and Vedanta, Vivekananda said **"It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, where the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious self is present in all beings"**. Difference between man and women in India were very much, at one hand man were enjoying all the rights, freedom and authority in any field. On the other hand women were restricted within the four walls of house and her hands were fastened with household works. And more

importantly Indians were believed it's not discrimination or suppression as they are following religious rules and regulations. But Vivekananda raised question on this mindset by revealing what Vedanta says about man and women and what people were following in the name of religion. He tried to deliver the right message of Vedanta and he realized by following Vedanta, it is possible to change the condition of women. Thus he wanted Indians to follow Vedanta directly without any miss interpretation in the name of religion. Although he believed that man and women has different ability to understand and judging things but it does not mean that man is superior to women. Women has their own potentiality and ability which can be used in different ways than man's ability and if this different ability of women can be traced and give her a chance to develop then she can attain maximum development just like man. He stated **“we should not think that we are men and women, but only that we are human beings, born to cherish and to help one another”**(Complete Works Of Swami Vivekananda vol.5, Pg no.412-413). He believed that the day when Indian people will stop thinking like we are man and they are women, India will become most prosperous and welfare country in the world. It is very important to change the attitude of male people of society to improve the condition of women. Until and unless man will not co-operate in the process of women empowerment, it is almost impossible to gain success. An incident which impressed Vivekananda, he travelled United States of America in 1893. When he saw the condition of women in U.S.A. pleased Vivekananda. He expressed his view on American **“nowhere on earth have women so many privilege as in America, they are slowly taking everything into their hands; and strange to say, the number of cultured women is much greater than that of cultured men”** (Letter of Swami Vivekananda which he sent to Maharaja Ajit Singh of Khetri (Rajputana) in 1894). He saw a total different scenario on women empowerment in America compared to India. He expressed it was like dream to see women are so advanced and empowerment in America. He categorized “Eastern womanhood as- mother and Western womanhood as- wife”. In India and other eastern country mother is regarded as most respectable female in the family and all the other female member of family has to be subordinate under mother. In contrary to this Vivekananda found a different scenario in western countries, where wife holds most important position among all female members in the family, where all other female member of family has to be subordinate to wife even mother has to subordinate. He also pointed out some negative elements on American women. Such as he stated that there is lack of spirituality and religious sense in the women of America. He challenged in public lecture that no one can show a dozen of spiritual women in America and he stated that **Hindu women are very religious and very spiritual, perhaps more so than any other women in the world.** It is clear that according to Vivekananda both education spiritual and religious sense for women to attain maximum welfare and development. Spiritual and religious sense makes a human humble, patient, wise, tolerate person, which is very much essential to become success in life. If there is absence of spiritual and religious sense any human being then it's very difficult to gain these elements and it's almost

impossible to attain maximum welfare in life. He said morality and spirituality are very important element of life and it should be there along with intellectuality to attain maximum development of mind. Indian women may not intellectually so learned but they are far ahead in terms of spirituality and morality.

Vivekananda's views on women empowerment are still relevant in the 21st century. It is very interesting that Vivekananda predicted how women should be empowered and given freedom to attain maximum welfare of society in the 19th century and all his ideas are relevant to present day's scenario. Earlier women were discriminated and society justified it as women are inferior to men. Women were not allowed to chant Vedas as they are considered as impure and pollute due to the menstrual cycle. Vivekananda opposed this and he himself set an example by conducting various programs in foreign countries where women chanted Vedas and performed various religious rituals. Presently Indian constitution gave equal rights to men and women in any aspects. Vivekananda also opposed child marriage and advised to stress on education and self-respect of the girl before entering into marriage. Nowadays child marriage is illegal and almost all over the country in the world child marriage considered as offense and women education is major objectives of the society. Some other significant views accepted and adopted by all the countries in the world. Such as he said soul does not have any gender hence we should judge one by the outer structure and should not discriminate anyone. United Nations Organisation issued all the member countries should oppose gender discrimination. Men and women should be given equal rights and freedom. Vivekananda said the best parameter to judge a society is the rate of women empowerment. It is very much true in the present scenario. Those countries in which women are equally empowered like men, they attained maximum developed. Even first world countries have the equal empowerment of men and women.

1.2 SCOPE OF STUDY

This study concerned with the empowerment of women and importance of women education. The theme of the study is the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda about the development of women. This study can help to create a bridge between the philosophies of Vivekananda with present day society. The importance of women in the process of nation building analyzed with the aim to aware the readers and to encourage women empowerment.

Many examples of developed countries are given in this study to understand the fact that to gain overall development, underdeveloped countries should also adopt policies towards women as developed countries are following.

Furthermore justification of various malpractices performed against women in Indian society with the reference of religious texts. Specifically misinterpreted philosophy of Vedanta discussed with

reference to actual doctrines of Vedanta. To understand the historical background for suppression of women in Indian society, the position of women during the different time period starting from Vedic period to 20th century, are examined and pointed out the reason of gradual deterioration of women's position in Indian society.

The study also throws light upon the relevance of Vivekananda's philosophy in contemporary society. By this study, readers can easily point out the significance of the ideas of Swami Vivekananda which are still relevance in our society and every society has to follow these views to gain overall development. This study also generates a common assumption that problems related to women may change with the time but the solution remains almost unchanged, such as Vivekananda's philosophy is based on 19th-century society but it has still the same importance and worth for the 21st-century society.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive as well as analytical and provides the qualitative research based on the ideas and views of Swami Vivekananda on women empowerment. To accomplish the study theoretical method used. Information given in this study is mainly based on primary sources. Different books, autobiography, personal letters, speeches in conferences analyzed thoroughly to produce an authentic and unbiased research. Major religious texts used as a tool to justify the existing evil practices in Indian society on the basis of religion. Historical research data and information also considered making the study more authentic. For composing a practical research study, a comparative technique adopted to find out the differences and similarities between present day scenario and Vivekananda's time period.

This study completed the analysis of the secondary sources to gather additional information regarding the theme of the study. Articles, journals, archives utilized as per need to clarify the complicated and confusing information provided by the primary source from different libraries. To conclude the report both primary and secondary sources, reviewed in the context of each other to generate a comprehensive research study.

1.4 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

‘**Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda**’(Vol. V and Vol.VII) expresses the thoughts of Vivekananda on women education and empowerment. The 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 the Hindi language. It reflects the actual doctrines of Atharveda as well as the position of women, during the 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 to 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 a brief discussion by those Vivekananda expressed his ideology and approach towards women empowerment.

Chapter-II

Ideology Of Vivekananda On Women Empowerment

2.1 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 Smriti 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 equality is the most important element of society and he favored this idea by stating that in those family or country where women live in sadness there is no hope of rising for those family or country.

Vivekananda firmly believed in the equal rights and opportunities for women in perfect consonance with the Indian view. As a matter of fact, it is one of the strongest phenomena in the history of the mankind, that India, which, since time immemorial had honoured woman as shakti incarnate, the living embodiments of the Universal Supreme Mother, could even think it fit, to deprive them of their legitimate birthrights to education, freedom, property and what not, as bracketed with Shudras (Nari-Sudra). But such a strange thing really happened in India and that is why Swami Vivekananda linked the downfall of India with the degradation of the condition of the woman. However, at that time, there was no feminist movement, but Vivekananda supported their cause expressing that it is true that although there are lots of dissimilarity between men and women, but in terms of soul and eternity there is no difference. 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. Gender is not a social function that exists in a vacuity. Caste, class, ethnicity and race impinge on gender and form a complex matrix. Gender poisonings are crucial in the multidimensional meanings that are attached and formulated to the processes and outcomes of any development project.⁷ Gender as a relational dynamic, whereby communities organize themselves, plays itself out as a struggle over resources and labor. It also reconstitutes by its nature, the very axis of power relationships that determine, the social, familial and institutional locations of women and men.

2.2 Marriage:-

The Indian marriage context is not so simple but it had greater and deeper meanings as it evolved not at once but through many centuries. First of all, 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 times, the situation worsened when the farming became the main occupation. The bulk of productive labor fell on men and women were pushed further within the confines of their role as mothers and housekeepers. The division between the liberties allotted to men and women was not restricted to their economic and political rights only. While social norms allowed polygamy to men as their inherent right, women were not allowed to practice polyandry. The tradition of giving away women as gifts in sacrifices along with other material goods was practiced in India in earlier times. Women were also given away as gifts for entertaining guests and as dowry to priests and kings. Giving away girls to temples as devadasis were considered as a matter 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”**. 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.

Actually, Vivekananda neither favored the discarding of the ancient customs into nor accepted these customs as such. Every social custom, old or new, is to be judged strictly on merit and merit alone. For him, the reform is self-reform. But, good elements and bad elements exists in every society in the world. No society can claim neat and clean completely. Similarly, in Indian society child marriage, said paratha, prohibition of widow remarriage etc are negative elements. So it's not so serious matter that we should stick with these and keep trying to change immediately. As a factual matter, so-called social reformers and workers ordinarily assume a superior attitude, as if it is they who are really

leading the poor, the ignorant masses to salvation. He was against this attitude and took special pains to warn all against it repeatedly in all cases.

Vivekananda opposed child marriages. When orthodox Hindus opposed 'Age of Consent Bill', he remarked, **“And about your religious hypocrites, the less said, the better! As if religion consists in making a girl a mother at the age of twelve or thirteen!”** In the twenty-first century, this statement may be looked from the angle that where the modern girl under the garb of freedom and individuality is heading for before marriage. At the same time, he cautioned that girls should be educated to avoid the consequences of adult marriages. They should value and consequently hold the vow of chastity, even at the cost of their lives. Swami Vivekananda did not support widow marriages as such as he was in favor of protecting the marriages as sacred bonds. He advocated monogamy for men and women alike. No doubt in ancient India, polygamy, widow marriage even divorce was allowed but the idea was always monogamy, chastity, fidelity, self-control and self-sacrifice for both men and women alike. In his first tract on widow remarriage, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar claimed that this practice was permissible in Kali Yuga (The Dark Age), the age in which he and his contemporaries lived. Two thousand copies of this book were sold in the first week, a reprint of three thousand soon sold out and the third print was of ten thousand copies.¹²² But not everyone was convinced. On the streets of Calcutta, Vidyasagar found himself insulted, abused and even threatened with death.

2.3 Emancipation Of Women:-

Swami Vivekananda advocated liberty as the first condition of growth. 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 most of the contemporary social reform programs as inadequate. The change was essential but not through reliance on Western concepts. It must come from the people, guided and educated by the intelligentsia. 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 misinterpretation of these ideas. 'It is wrong, a thousand wrong, if anyone of you dares to say 'I will work out the salvation of this woman or child'. I am asked again and again, what I think of the widow

problems and what I think of the women questions. Let me answer once for all. Am I a widow, that you ask me this non-sense question again and again? Who are you to solve women's problems"? **“Total freedom and independence is the symbol of total womanhood”, Vivekananda believed.**

Vivekananda knew full well that total liberation means physical, mental, social and spiritual freedom. Unless a person, man or woman, learns to cultivate a sense of freedom from the biological demands of the body, the thousand cravings of the mind, and an unobstructed feeling of the essential divinity within, there is no freedom for an individual. He wanted to combine the breadth born of American freedom and the depth and intensity of Indian spirituality for the women of India tomorrow who would be women of towering spirituality, and outstanding achievements, combining the finest and noblest of the old and the new. The definition of the term ‘liberation’ changes from society to society and from time to time. The perspective of looking at the liberation of women creates conflicts and contradictions within women themselves, creating a society where a few women are considered to be representative of their respective nations, while millions of others lead oppressive, ignorant and humiliating lives. An Indian woman is no exception to that, rather is a classic example of this jarring anomaly.

No doubt women became much more powerful and empowered then recent times. **Swami Vivekananda recommended even Brahmacharya irrespective of sex** though this stage is difficult to follow and exist with it even, in a highly liberal society. But he said that **self-control is equally needed by all**. He further said, **“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 respect, **he even criticized Buddha**, whom otherwise he holds in highest esteem, who put the Bhikshu Sangha under the control of the Bhikshu Sangha. He further said, **“When you will realize that all illuminating truth of the atman (Soul), then you will see that the idea of sex discrimination has vanished altogether, then only you will look upon all women as the veritable manifestation of Brahma.**

2.4 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 worship should be for mother Mary who born Jesus and for that she had to go through so many challenges, but still, she holds Jesus in her arms. Further, he added when an emperor dies "'Mother" cries most, a field-marshal dies "'Mother" cries most', a soldier dies "'Mother" cries most, a seaman at helm dies "'Mother" cries most, the fisherman in his rags dies "'Mother" cries most. a beggar in the street dies "'Mother" cries most. It's nearly 150 years since Sri Ramakrishna worshiped Mother Kali. Today Kali is equated to the infinite creative power within "every woman. A feminist Judy Graham writes, "Woman can create; that is the power. Man can only control". Swami Vivekananda had a very great respect for Sita of the Ramayana and he was never tired of indicating her as the very idea of an Indian woman.

Modern girls may think this ideal of an Indian woman, rather old-fashioned and unsuitable for the modern age. But really Sita was a very modern girl - firm, courageous, self-dependent and yet at the end she also was a typical wife like other Indian women. Every Indian woman should envy their ideology as "Sita". He further added Sita is a perfect example of complete women. Every woman should try hard to adopt all the attitude of Sita to attain prosperity in society.

Vivekananda took the initiative which not even Buddha dared to do. He saw the weakness of body-consciousness behind Western chivalry. During an interview, Vivekananda criticized a female disciple by saying "why I should help you"? he stated chivalry is nothing but only sex. To Nivedita, Vivekananda said that if he could conquer India with his ideas, with five hundred monks within fifty years, with five hundred nuns he could conquer the same India within a few weeks. Today his words have proved true. Many women showed their capability what women can do that even man can't able to do.

2.5 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 head 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. Girls 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.

According to Vivekananda, "lack of education as the fundamental cause of the downfall of women from the high Vedic tradition. He saw remedy too in education. Education that will give strength and it must include the development of an ideal character". But the question is what kind of education, especially woman's education? Swami Vivekananda realized that it is the worship of Uma Kumari, divine goddess of shakti, should be in the girl students. And this education would, in time, bring out the purest and the strongest in all women, her infinite mother. Swami Vivekananda desired woman social workers who would work consistently, unselfishly, in full spirit with the doctrine of Karma. He even wished to start Math for women. According to him, such Maths for women will solve a double purpose. First, these training centers will be for Brahamcharnis or dedicated women workers who will live the lives of self-sacrificing nuns, serving all. Secondly, these will also serve as schools for girls, who will be taught the secular and spiritual matters by these dedicated women workers. Then they can, at will leave the Math or stay back. It will help them gain courage, confidence, and self-respect and will liberate them from the sense of dependency and a life 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.

The woman is the pivot around which the family, the society, and humanity itself revolve. In his speech on 'Women of India', delivered in America, **Vivekananda prophesied that the new**

civilization of the future will be created by modern women with Hindu spiritual 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.

2.6 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.

Swami Vivekananda even lamented that all laws, customs (smart), and the canons of love (bhalobasa) that are meant to keep women subdued cannot result in the prosperity of any nation. Vivekananda was highly critical of women being identified as sexual objects. He portrayed women as 'chaste wives' that are loyal to their spouses. Vivekananda, thereby said education should be given to women with the purpose to build a strong, tireless, optimistic and spiritual character.

Chapter-III

Conclusion

3.1 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 enviable 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 days 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 Organisations, which have membership almost 193 countries out 207 countries of the world. United Nations Organisation 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 upliftment of Indian women.

Regarding marriage of women, Vivekananda philosophy is quite bold. He opposed child marriage and said the girl should attain maximum physical and intellectual development before getting married. Hindu religion never allows a girl to become a mother at the age of twelve or thirteen. Nowadays the child marriage is considered as one of the highest levels of crime in most of the countries. Almost every country banned child marriage and declared it completely illegal. International Human Rights Organisation included child marriage as the violation of human rights. Furthermore, various medical institutes came up with a research report that child marriage poses danger for girl's physical

development and also not safe for baby. In India, the ratio of child marriage is maximum compared to any other country of the world. According to **United Nations Children's Fund census report 2016, 47% of girls in India get married before the age 18 years**. One of the main reason for such high rate of child marriage in India is poverty and traditional beliefs. Although Indian constitution says the minimum age of a girl to get married is 18 years, but it's not been implemented completely all over the India. Especially in rural areas child marriages are more commonly practiced. To tackle down the issue of child marriage Indian government enacted some strict laws against child marriage. In 2006, Child Marriage Prohibition Act was issued by Indian Government. According to the law, if any person tries to marry a girl who is less than 18 years old would have to face 2 years of imprisonment with some of fine. Although the ratio of child marriage in India reducing gradually but at moderate.

The need of emancipation of women gaining ground in all the society and countries. Vivekananda said, **"When you will realize that all illuminating truth of the atman (Soul), then you will see that the idea of sex discrimination has vanished altogether, then only you will look upon all women as the veritable manifestation of Brahma"**. By this statement, he tries to point out how to change the attitude of society towards women. Liberty is the most important boost need by women to climb the stairs of empowerment. Presently everyone is talking about liberty for women, but in a true sense, women are still lacking behind equal liberty and opportunity in society. There are many examples which show that if any country or society neglects the emancipation of women, then it like almost impossible for them to walk along with modernisation, Swami Vivekananda said this clearly that every society should keep changing their attitude towards women in a positive path. Although it may be not possible to change within a short period of time but they change gradually step by step. Once any society fully utilizes the women power then no one can stop them to gain full prosperity.

Most important and major issue of nowadays which can be regarded as the first step of empowering women is the education of girls. The issue of girls education is been discuss became the first concern when it comes to empowering women. Present days the girl's education gained so much popularity and importance that each and almost every society of the world accepted that the education of girls is as much important as boys education. During the 19th century, the scenario was different compared to today. Girls were considered as inferior to boys and education was not necessary for girls. At that time Vivekananda raised his voice in favor of girls education. Since Vedic period Indian society is based upon extreme religious beliefs and traditions. Thus Vivekananda tried to convince Indian society by giving references of religious texts, where the importance of education of girls is mentioned. Vedanta says every girl should to attain maximum intellectual development along with physical development before getting married. With reference to this citation, Vivekananda criticized those religious fundamentalists who mislead Indian society by opposing the education of girls. But gradually with the advent of western culture Indian society started changing their attitude towards girls education.

Although Vivekananda explained logically why girls should be given education by stating **“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). Here Vivekananda wanted to convey the message that if you don't provide a chance to then no one can become successful. Similarly, if boys are getting success by gaining education then girls also can but the thing is that they need the opportunity to prove themselves.

The importance of girls education in India can be demarcated by the report census report, 2011. According to which **65% of total population women in India are above literacy rate. During 1947, it was only 7-8 percent.** It's a great achievement of India to attain such a high change in the ratio of women empowerment. With the increasing rate of literacy, women also coming out from narrow walls of their houses and participating in the developmental process of the country. As Vivekananda already said that he hopes one day India will attain maximum welfare by encouraging women empowerment through education and intellectual knowledge, it seems that his prediction 100 years back is being fulfilled by the Indian society. Although it's too early to say but the path Indian society is approaching, soon it women would receive glorify position in the society.

The concept of western and eastern women is the philosophy given by Vivekananda by his personal experience during his visit to the United States of America in 1894. He explained that how American women are different from Indians. Both has different importance in their respective societies. He stated western women are more respected as a wife and contrary to which Indian women are more respected as a mother. Furthermore, he added western women are less spiritual and religious than Indian women. There is no doubt that Indian women are more religious than any other women in the world. Although India is adopting modernisation but the religious values and morals are still rigid in Indian society and every man and women more or less connected with their religion.

Vivekananda prescribed how women should build their character. He stated **“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.”** He was such high thinker that being the man he understood women so precisely and pointed what should be there in woman's character. According to Vivekananda, every woman should follow the footsteps of Sita and develop their character based upon Seta's personality. The present day also Sita is considered most sacred and pure woman of India. Vivekananda added a character is the most precious wealth of a woman and she should always keep her character soft and loving. Feminist of present day also agree with this statement and character is given high importance for the prosperity of women. The loyalty of women towards her

husband is the most significant sign of the good relationship between husband and wife. He added it is the duty of a wife to be loyal to her husband and husband to his wife. Nowadays most of the marriages break up due to lack of loyalty between husband and wife. More than hundreds of divorce cases comes on newspaper regarding divorce which is caused by disloyalty. Even some society have some strict laws towards disloyal husband or wife, to prevent the increasing trend of disloyalty among husband and wife.

All the above ideologies of Vivekananda are very much reflective in present day scenario. Although his views were constructed by experiencing Indian society but most of his philosophy can be applicable all over the world not only in India. Many international conferences held on the ideology of Vivekananda and his views on women empowerment discussed with great concern. A number of renowned international feminists appreciated Vivekananda's philosophy on women empowerment.

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