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Relevance of Swami Vivekananda's Vision on Women's in the Context of NEP 2020

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Abstract-- Swami Vivekananda consistently argued that India's decline was primarily a result of the systematic neglect of its female population. As a fervent advocate for women's schooling, he viewed it as the cornerstone for both personal growth and national advancement. Vivekananda believed that education serves as a tool for empowerment, enabling women to become more resilient, conscious of their inherent dignity, and active participants in societal progress. His educational philosophy—centered on "man-making" and "character-building"—is deeply applicable to the upliftment of women.

By blending the spiritual depth of Applied Vedanta with the progressive elements of Western culture, he argued that education must transcend basic literacy. He advocated for a holistic model that includes professional expertise, moral development, and personality refinement. Vivekananda envisioned women as equal partners to men, fully capable of excelling in diverse sectors, including governance and public administration. He perceived education as a liberating force that allows women to overcome historical inequalities and redefine traditional boundaries.

His proposed curriculum was remarkably comprehensive, balancing academic rigor with practical life skills such as vocational training and domestic science. He famously remarked that the welfare of a nation is impossible without improving the status of its women. Given the persisting social, economic, and political challenges faced by Indian women today, Vivekananda's insights remain profoundly relevant. This article explores his visionary perspectives on female education and examines why his introspections are more vital and appropriate now than ever before.

Keywords- Applied vedanta, Character-building, Holistic Development, Man-making Education, Women's empowerment

"You educate a man, you educate a person; you educate a woman; you educate a family, a nation". - Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam

I. INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda was a profound spiritual visionary who reawakened the dormant Indian consciousness through his stirring philosophy of vigorous spiritual practice. Often hailed as the architect of modern India, his deep concern for the plight of women in the 19th century drove him to advocate for radical social transformation. His tireless efforts toward female liberation remain extraordinary, particularly his emphasis on female agency and authority.

Vivekananda identified that the primary obstacle to India's progress was the systemic disrespect shown toward women.

He understood that the advancement of any nation depends entirely on its human capital. To marginalize women is to neglect half of a nation's potential, thereby hindering the growth of society, the country, and the world at large. Consequently, Vivekananda placed the highest priority on women's education, believing it to be the only force capable of illuminating their life path. He envisioned that educated women would nurture a new generation of citizens who would contribute meaningfully to nation-building—a sentiment later echoed by the UN Development Goals (2000), which identified education as the primary catalyst for empowerment.

Historically, women were confined to domestic spheres and discouraged from participating in the broader efforts of national development. This exclusion stemmed from a failure to recognize their inherent value and capabilities. Vivekananda provided a rational and spiritual rebuttal to this discrimination, asserting that "The Atman (soul) has no sex, no caste, and no imperfection." Since the human soul is fundamentally uniform in essence, any classification based on gender, caste, or creed is inherently unjust. For a society to achieve its peak potential and ensure collective well-being, it is imperative that both men and women are developed with equal opportunity and dignity.

II. VIVEKANANDA'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

Swami Vivekananda was a staunch advocate for universal education, viewing it as the fundamental pillar for both individual empowerment and national progress. He believed that education—particularly for women—was the primary catalyst for social evolution and the liberation of individuals from oppressive traditional boundaries. His vision was centered on a holistic approach that integrated physical, mental, and spiritual growth, with a core focus on self-reliance and the forging of strong character.

Vivekananda insisted that education must reach the masses rather than being the privilege of the elite, as he believed it was the only path to true national awakening.



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He famously defined education as the "manifestation of the perfection already in man," prioritizing intellectual depth and moral integrity over mere rote learning. Furthermore, he envisioned a system that would make every individual economically and mentally self-supporting.

III. PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION

A. Empowerment as the Primary Goal, Vivekananda viewed education as a powerful instrument to dismantle patriarchal norms and free women from societal limitations. He believed it would instill the courage, character and intelligence necessary for women to govern their own lives.

B. The Power of Self-Reliance, He stressed that schooling should cultivate deep self-belief and resilience, allowing women to confront challenges and shatter existing barriers.

C. Beyond Basic Literacy, For Vivekananda, female education was not about "parroting" information; it was an all-encompassing process intended to build mental strength and advanced problem-solving skills.

D. A Catalyst for National Growth, He argued that a nation's prosperity is inextricably linked to the status of its women, famously stating that the world's welfare is impossible without the upliftment of the female population.

E. Defying Traditional Constraints, His progressive stance directly challenged the customary practices of his time that sought to restrict women's roles and stifle their potential.

F. Educational Parity, He campaigned for women to receive an education equal in quality to that of men, asserting that their competence and worth were in no way inferior.

G. The Mother's Influence, Recognizing the mother as a child's primary educator, he emphasized the need for women's education to ensure the healthy development of future generations.

IV. ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020

The educational ideals of Swami Vivekananda—focusing on character building, practical knowledge, and integrated development—are deeply embedded in India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The policy reflects his vision by prioritizing skill acquisition, experiential learning, and social accountability. By striving to produce well-rounded and self-sufficient citizens, NEP 2020 carries forward Vivekananda's dream of an education system that empowers the individual to serve the nation.

V. FUNDAMENTAL TIES BETWEEN VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHY AND 2020

A. Holistic Development, Vivekananda advocated for an educational model that harmonizes intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical growth. This vision is mirrored in NEP 2020's interdisciplinary framework, which seeks to integrate human values into the core curriculum for a well-rounded development.

B. Character Building, The NEP 2020 emphasizes the creation of ethical and responsible citizens, directly echoing Swamiji's conviction that the primary purpose of education is the formation of strong moral character.

C. Inclusive and Universal Education, Vivekananda's inclusive vision, which aimed to reach every stratum of society, is deeply embedded in the NEP's pledge toward equitable education. By addressing the diverse needs of learners—including those with disabilities—the policy makes quality education more accessible. This alignment reflects a shared mission to overcome social barriers and provide opportunities regardless of one's background.

D. Promotion of Indian Values and Heritage, Both Vivekananda and the NEP stress the necessity of reconnecting with India's vibrant cultural legacy. The policy integrates the nation's scientific and cultural history into the syllabus, affirming Swamiji's belief that cultural awareness is vital for individual and social well-being. This synergy highlights a joint commitment to preserving India's indigenous heritage within the modern academic journey.

E. Flexible and Multidimensional Learning, Vivekananda was a strong proponent of experiential learning—a principle the NEP adopts through its flexible and interdisciplinary approach. By allowing students to select subjects based on their personal interests, the policy encourages a passion for learning that transcends traditional boundaries. Swamiji's emphasis on an exploratory method aligns perfectly with the NEP's goal of cultivating multifaceted skill sets.

F. Emphasis on Research and Critical Thinking, Swamiji's focus on fostering empirical and analytical thinking is reflected in the NEP's dedication to research and innovation. The policy promotes a research-driven mindset at every level, encouraging students to engage in deep investigation. Vivekananda's view of education as a tool for intellectual expansion fits seamlessly with the NEP's objective of equipping learners with the analytical abilities required for the modern world.

G. Spiritual and Moral Values, Vivekananda's emphasis on spiritual ethics finds a clear reflection in the NEP's call for value-based education. The policy aims to instill social responsibility and moral integrity in students, echoing Swamiji's teachings on the inseparable link between education and character development.

H. Linguistic Diversity and Multilingualism, Recognizing India's rich linguistic landscape, both Vivekananda and the NEP advocate for the preservation of regional languages. The NEP's recommendation to use the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in early years aligns with Swamiji's belief that language is essential for safeguarding cultural traditions and practices.

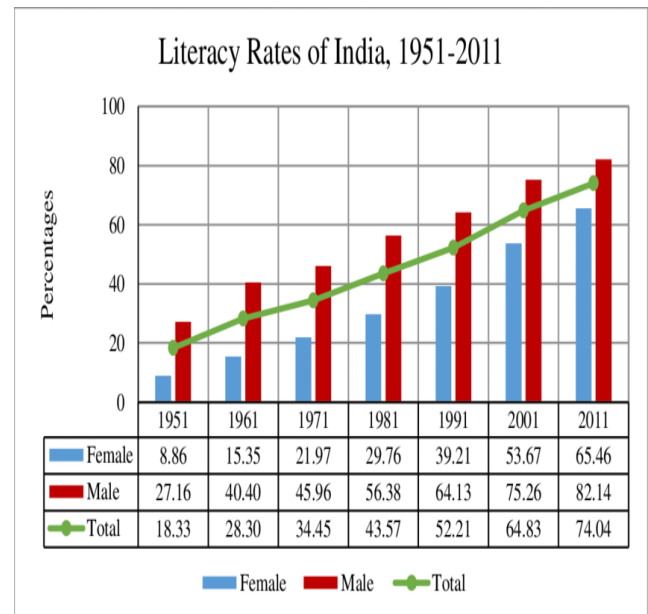
I. Global Citizenship and Exposure, Vivekananda's global worldview aligns with the NEP's focus on internationalization. By fostering a global perspective, the policy encourages students to become world citizens, promoting exchanges with international institutions. Swamiji's vision of education as a bridge to universal brotherhood resonates with the NEP's goal of preparing students for the global community.

J. Teacher Empowerment and Flexible Assessment, Swamiji's recognition of the teacher's pivotal role is reflected in the NEP's focus on teacher empowerment and continuous professional growth. The policy utilizes technology and modern training to enhance teaching quality, aligning with Swamiji's call to support educators. Furthermore, his critique of rote learning is mirrored in the NEP's move toward skill-based learning and flexible assessments. Vivekananda's dream of practical knowledge and conceptual depth is realized through the NEP's focus on evaluations that measure actual understanding and the application of expertise.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION

Educating women is vital for personal growth, social advancement and national development. It increases their economic opportunities, improves health and well-being and lessens gender inequality. Presently the importance of women education is burgeoning. It is not only important to educate women, as well as it is required to provide them with basic infrastructures. Most of the countries, especially in developing countries, the literacy rate of women is low in comparison to men. The principal reason behind this illiteracy rate among women is insufficient resources. In India most of the women are illiterate as they are not allowed to education due to customs and traditions which are still remaining in our society.

Emphasizing Vivekanand's goal towards women liberation, women's education got a major importance after independence. Various steps have taken to provide education to Indian women to achieve education in all directions of the households. The Mahila Samakhya Programme (Education for Women's Equality) as a test project launched in 1989 to interpret the goals of the National Policy on Education (NPE) and the programme of Action (POA) into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, especially of women from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. In consequence literacy rate in India have increased from 18.33 percent in 1951 to 74.04 percent in 2011 in which enlistment of women in education have also increased 8.86 percent to 65.46 percent. _



Source: Census of India 2011

From the above literacy distribution graph, the literacy rate between female and male is very prominent, despite the rate of female literacy is considerably low than male but hopeful sign is that literacy of women develops gradually it would involve in pivotal role for the development and advancement of our society. Presently, it is accomplished the importance of women education. Women are working equivalent to the men. Vivekananda also says, "500 males can conquer India in 50 years which feasible with a few weeks by 500 women"



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VII. CONCLUSION

In the Indian context, women's education is far more than a fundamental right; it is a critical engine for the nation's socio-economic evolution. Despite significant progress over the decades, the path to learning for women and girls is still obstructed by persistent challenges such as poverty, safety concerns, deep-seated gender biases, and restrictive cultural norms. While government-led initiatives like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* and *Udaan* have made commendable strides in promoting female literacy, substantial efforts are still necessary to bridge the gap and achieve true gender parity.

Swami Vivekananda's perspectives on women's education remain profoundly significant today. His philosophy underscores that empowering women through knowledge is the only sustainable way to ensure national progress and social balance. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 actively integrates these visionary ideals to benefit the youth and the nation at large. A practical manifestation of this alignment is the launch of the '**Jagriti**' programme by the Ramakrishna Mission. Targeted at students from Classes I to V, this initiative focuses on holistic character building, directly reflecting the core principles of both Vivekananda's philosophy and the NEP 2020 framework.

Ultimately, the NEP 2020 is not just a policy; it is a modern reinvigoration of Swami Vivekananda's timeless educational legacy.

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