

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMAN THROUGH EDUCATION AND FREEDOM: DAYANAND SARASWATI AND SRI AUROBINDO'S VIEWS

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality is the main social issue in India in which women are getting back in the male dominated country. Women empowerment needs to take a high speed in this country to equalize the value of both genders. Uplifting of women in all means should be the utmost priority of the nation. Inequalities between men and women in the society generate lots of problems which become a big obstruction in the way to success of nation. It is the birth right of the women to get equal value to the men in the society. Really to bring empowerment, every woman needs to be aware of their rights from their own end. They need to take positive steps and involve in every activities instead of only involving in the household chores and family responsibilities. They should know about all the happenings in their surroundings and country.

The real meaning of the women empowerment is to make them well educated and leave them free so that they can be capable to take their own decisions in any field. Women in India are always subjected to the honour killings and they are never given their basic rights for the proper education and freedom. They are the victims who have to face violence and abuse in the male dominated country.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati opposed many oppressed practices of Hindu tradition and insisted upon going back to the Vedas. He worked for abolishing several social stigmas such as child marriage, disqualification of woman and Casteism. He not only helped society get rid of a myriad of orthodox practices, but also built the social structure for future reforms in India. He said "an educated man needs an educated wife". Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said "To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened.

And on the other hand Sri Aurobindo said that, a spiritual reality is the basis of all others; the divine world is the eternal foundation on which are built all the other worlds. In regard to this supreme Reality, all are equal, men and women, in rights and duties. The only distinction which can exist in this domain being based

on sincerity and ardour of aspiration is the constancy of the will. And the recognition of this fundamental spiritual equality is the only serious and lasting solution for this problem of the relation of sexes.

Keywords: woman empowerment, education, freedom, human Rights

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is the main social issue in India in which women are getting back in the male dominated country. Women empowerment needs to take a high speed in this country to equalize the value of both genders. Uplifting of women in all means should be the utmost priority of the nation. Inequalities between men and women in the society generate lots of problems which become a big obstruction in the way to success of nation. It is the birth right of the women to get equal value to the men in the society. Really to bring empowerment, every woman needs to be aware of their rights from their own end. They need to take positive steps and involve in every activities instead of only involving in the household chores and family responsibilities. They should know about all the happenings in their surroundings and country.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women empowerment can be defined in very simple words that it is making women powerful so that they can take their own decisions regarding their lives and well being in the family and society. It is empowering women to make them able to get their real rights in the society.

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Through the Art of Living's women empowerment programs women across India and many other countries have been able to gain financial freedom and stand up against social injustice about finding their voice and standing up themselves. The Art of Living's women empowerment programs are a catalyst that has unsettled centuries of restrictions and given women the much deserved platform to set them free and rise as equals.

According to the provisions of the constitution of India, it is a legal point to grant equality to women in the society in all spheres just like male. The Department of Women and Development functions well in this field for the proper development of the women child in India. Women are given a top place in India from the ancient time

however they were not given empowerment to participate in all areas. They need to be strong, aware and alert every moment for their growth and development. Empowering women is the main motto of the development department because an empowered mother makes the bright future of any nation.

There are many formulating strategies and initiating processes started by the government of India in order to bring women into the mainstream of development. Women constitute half population of the whole country's population and need to be independent in every area for the holistic development of women and children.

BARRIERS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equity lie ingrained in cultural norms. Many women feel these pressures, while others have become accustomed to being treated inferior to men. Recent studies also show that women face more barriers in the workplace than do men. Gender-related barriers involve sexual harassment, unfair hiring practices, career progression, and unequal pay where women are paid less than men are for performing the same job. While much of the public discussion of the "wage gap" has focused around women getting equal pay for the same work as their male peers, many women struggle with what is called the "pregnancy penalty." The main problem is that it is difficult to measure, but some experts say that the possibility of having a baby can be enough for employers to push women back from their line. Therefore, women are put in a position where they need to make the decision of whether to maintain in the workforce or have children.

As we all know that India is a male dominated country where males are dominated in every area and females are forced to be responsible for only family care and live in the home including other many restrictions. Almost 50% of the population in India is covered by the female. In such condition, we cannot say that our country would be a developed in the future without empowering its half population means women. If we want to make our country a developed country, first of all it is very necessary to empower women by the efforts of men, government, laws and women too.

The need of women empowerment arose because of the gender discrimination and male domination in the Indian society since ancient time. Women are being suppressed by their family members and society for many reasons. They have been targeted for many types of violence and discriminatory practices by the male members in the family and society in India and other countries as well. Wrong and old practices for the women in the society from ancient time have taken the form of well developed customs and traditions. There is a tradition of worshipping many female goddesses in India including giving honour to the women forms in the society like mother, sister, daughter, wife and other female relatives or friends. But, it does not mean that only respecting or

honouring women can fulfill the need of development in the country. It needs the empowerment of the rest half population of the country in every walk of life.

Some of the ill practices against women have been eliminated by the open minded and great Indian people who raise their voices for the discriminatory practices against women. Through the continuous efforts of the Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Britishers were forced to eliminate the ill practice of Sati paratha. Later, other famous social reformers of the India (Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand Saraswati ,Sri Aurobindo Ghosh etc) also had raised their voices and worked hard for the upliftment of women in Indian society. In India, the Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 was initiated by the continuous efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in order to improve the conditions of widows in the country.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETIES

Entire nations, businesses, communities and group can benefit from the implementation of programs and policies that adopt the notion of women empowerment .Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development. The human development and capabilities approach, the millennium development goals, and other credible approaches or goals point to empowerment and participation as a necessary step if a country is to overcome the obstacles associated with poverty and development.

The present paper attempts a study of woman empowerment through education and freedom with special reference to the philosophical traditions of Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Sri Aurobindo's views.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION; SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI;

Swami Dayanand Saraswati opposed many oppressed practices of Hindu tradition and insisted upon going back to the Vedas. He worked for abolishing several social stigmas such as child marriage, disqualification of woman and Casteism. He not only helped society get rid of a myriad of orthodox practices, but also built the social structure for future reforms in India. He said “an educated man needs an educated wife”. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said “To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened.

Education is a potent tool to progress in life. And what better way to uplift and empower women than by educating them? Through its various initiatives, The Art of Living has empowered young girls and women alike with quality education, even in the remotest corners of the rural India.

In this regard Swami Dayanand Saraswati The Kanya Mahavidyalaya in Jalandhar was set up in the 1890s in response to the need to impart to women a special kind of education which would enable them to adapt themselves to the new demands made by the educated men of the family without losing their cultural moorings. It was one of the most successful experiments of its kind as well as the most daring and radical in its innovativeness. Its founder, Lala Devaraj an Arya Samajist and his supporters most of whom were women, faced criticism and attack from conservative opinion both inside and outside the Samaj. The battles they fought and the way the internal contradictions in the Arya Samaj theory and practice were resolved are significant because they are typical of the legacy inherited by women's education today from its nineteenth century beginnings.

The Education Department of the British government began to take some interest in opening female schools from 1862 onwards. But this effort remained very half-hearted largely due to the government's reluctance to spend more than a token amount.

In any case, most upper class families were reluctant to send their daughters to government schools, because of the presence of male teachers and inspectors. It was women from the lower castes and classes who went to these schools because they were attracted by the stipends and the prospect of employment as teachers. This further strengthened the prejudice against government schools; upper caste parents were not willing to let their daughters be taught by 'lower' caste women teachers. Thus, within no time, government schools began to languish and decay because of lack of support either from government or from local patrons. Simultaneously, however, the missionaries launched their own educational institutions. They were much more vigorous in their activity and much better funded. They received generous support from the government, both financially and politically. Female missionaries also made special efforts to reach upper caste women through zenana (women's section of the house) visiting or house to house tutoring classes for women while the men were away at work. This provoked a sharp reaction; it was charged that the missionaries were out to subvert the stability and sanctity of the Indian family by their denationalising influence.

Another factor which appeared as a threat to the stability of the family was the situation with regard to widows. In 1881, 24.8 per cent of women over 15 years of age among all communities in Punjab were widows.

Upper caste widows were in a particularly vulnerable position since they were restricted from obtaining employment outside the home and were also forbidden to remarry. The forms of home-based employment that had traditionally been available to them, such as hand spinning, were on the decline, due to the flooding of the Indian market with British manufactured goods.'

Upper caste widows were, therefore, being forced into greater dependence on their families, which rendered their position very vulnerable. They were often subject to neglect and maltreatment and made helpless victims of sexual abuse. Contemporary newspapers are full of reports of how some of these widows were abandoned by relatives or condemned to such a miserable life that they were forced to fend for themselves. The reformers were alarmed by these phenomena. It seemed to them that upper caste widows constituted a readymade recruiting ground for prostitution which, they claimed, was on the increase in urban areas. Though the number of women who actually left home and were lured into prostitution is likely to have been very small, even stray cases evoked a near-hysterical response. An important reason for special concern with bettering the status of widows seems to have been the fear that if they continued to be maltreated, they would be compelled to seek undesirable escape routes, thus jeopardising the stability of the family structure. There were stray cases of women who had been victimised by their families being given shelter and protection by missionaries, who offered material incentives such as shelter, stipends for studying, and employment.

For these reasons, the question of women's education, came to assume a central position in the nineteenth century reform movement. In a situation where men were rapidly taking to British education, the reformers argued that an educated man needed an educated wife. They argued that if women remained illiterate, they would indulge in fooligh talk and unnecessary squabbles which destroyed the harmony of the family and encouraged men to look for companionship outside the house. Hence, men took to visiting brothels and courtesans. Education for women was advocated primarily as a means to bridge the mental gap between husbands and wives, mothers and sons. The conditions of seclusion under which these upper caste women lived meant that for the most part they lived in a world of their own. Enjoying very limited contact even with their husbands, they had been largely left to themselves to devise their own outlets within the repressive culture of the zenana. In the process, their thinking had become inaccessible to men. But this extreme form of seclusion no longer suited the new needs of the men. It became necessary for women to adapt their lives and attitudes to the men's requirements.'

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH FREEDOM: SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH

And on the other hand Sri Aurobindo said that, a spiritual reality is the basis of all others; the divine world is the eternal foundation on which are built all the other worlds. In regard to this supreme Reality, all are equal, men and women, in rights and duties. The only distinction which can exist in this domain being based on sincerity and ardour of aspiration is the constancy of the will. And the recognition of this fundamental spiritual equality is the only serious and lasting solution for this problem of the relation of sexes.

In view of the above the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother devotes a place to the understanding of women in the society. The Mother's writings on the subject form a crucial and enlightening study of women and their true role. She has highlighted various natural qualities of woman like a great organizing capacity, and psychic and intuitive faculties etc. The Mother reminds woman that she should remember that she comes from the same supreme source as man, and so is in no way inferior to him. According to Mother, woman has a distinct, a unique role to play for the future humanity. The Women's Council, an integral part of Sri Aurobindo Society, lays emphasis on 'Woman' herself than on her rights, condition and circumstances. The Mother has studied the role of woman as a mother, as a conscientious worker, as a shakti the goddess of power. The paper attempts a comprehensive study of the views of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as enshrined in their writings.

Sri Aurobindo said that, there are species in which there is no difference. And in the beginning there was no difference, number one. Number two, earthly creation is a purely material creation, it is a sort of conclusion and condensation of the universal creation, but in the universal creation this difference does not exist as a matter of necessity. All possibilities are there, all possible things have existed and still exist, but this differentiation is not at all at the basis of creation.

Someone inquired if Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had made any remarks on differences between men and women. This is a compilation of remarks that I was able to find right now. It addresses topics such as: What are the cosmic origins of gender? Are women less polyamorous than men? Are women better at Yoga? Can gender change across incarnations? If I find more remarks, I will add them in the comments section to this blog post. A zoologist could tell you that there are species which are not like that at all. Nature has tried this method tries many things; it has made all possible species, made the two in one, made every possible thing... It tries like this because probably this appears more practical to it! I don't know. That's all. But on other planes, even in the terrestrial world, in the subtler planes of the terrestrial world, even in the subtle physical, in the vital and in the mental, if there are beings who are so differentiated, there are also others who are neither male nor female. This exists. For example, in the vital world, it is extremely rare to come across sex difference, the beings there are generally without sex. And I strongly suspect that the world of the gods as described to us by men, has been largely influenced by human thought. In any case, there are many deities who are without sex. In all the stories told of the pantheons of all countries, there is a good deal that has been strongly influenced by human thought. So, this difference is simply a means used by Nature to achieve its aim, that's all, nothing more than that. We must take it like that. It is not an eternal symbol – not at all. Now, there are many people who are very keen on this distinction – they may keep it if they like! – But it is not at all something final or eternal...or perfect in itself.

Sri Aurobindo said that, there is no universal rule. Women can be as sexual as men or more. But there are numbers of women who dislike sex and there are very few men. One Sukhdev in a million, but many Dianas and Pallas. The virgin is really a feminine conception; men are repelled by the idea of eternal virginity. Many women would remain without any weakening of the sexual instinct if men did not thrust it on them and that cannot be said of many, perhaps of any man. But there is another side to the picture. Women are perhaps less physically sexual than men on the whole, — but what about vital sexuality? the instinct of possessing and being possessed etc., etc.?

CONCLUSION

So, this difference is simply a means used by Nature to achieve its aim, that's all, nothing more than that. We must take it like that. It is not an eternal symbol – not at all. Now, there are many people who are very keen on this distinction – they may keep it if they like! – But it is not at all something final or eternal...or perfect in itself.

These three things are in fact the nature of the soul; for Freedom, Equality, Unity is the eternal aspects of the Spirit. It is the practical recognition of this truth, it is the awakening of the soul in man and the attempt to get him to live from his soul, and not from his ego, which is the inner meaning of religion, and it is that to which the religion of humanity must also arrive before it can fulfill itself in the life of the race.

In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, it needs to be educated and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of the society. It needs to be open-minded and change the old mind set against women together with the constitutional and other legal provisions.

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