

Swami Vivekananda's Perspectives on Positive Education and Ideal Womanhood: A Philosophical Analysis

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Abstract

This article aims to determine the meaning of education, positive education, woman education, educational philosophy and ideal womanhood in the light of Swami Vivekananda. According to him, "Education is manifestation of perfection already in men." His educational philosophy, Vedānta philosophy, and Upanishadic philosophy were all based on Indian nationalism. The modern educational system did not appeal to him. A man who receives positive education is better equipped to face life's challenges. Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of positive education does not imply that a large amount of information is forcibly ingrained in contemporary society. Instead, he underlined that education is what builds character, intelligence, and mental capacity; it also gives people self-assurance and self-reliance. The most effective way to help people develop these traits is through education. In addition to having his own educational ideals, Vivekananda created a solid set of principles to help him reach his objectives. According to him, women should be justly independent in order to be considered ideal women. We cannot live well in our society if womanhood does not exist. This essay aims to investigate how our society defines ideal womanhood. What would happen if there were no such thing as proper or just womanhood in our lives? Why is Vivekananda's theory of education still relevant today? What does the term "positive education" mean? Why is positive education necessary? How can the secret to success in life be found in positive education? How can our society be at peace with the ideal womanhood? How might ideal womanhood be a prerequisite for women's empowerment? Why and how men already possess perfection? Why do humans have the capacity for divinity or perfection?

Keywords: meaning of education, positive education, ideal womanhood, women's education, empowerment, Bhagavān = nature = God = Allah = human being (potentially)

1. Introduction:

Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda profoundly articulates the ontological significance of ideal womanhood and positive education as foundational pillars for societal regeneration. "The manifestation of perfection that is

already in men” is how he characterizes education (Vivekananda, 1996). His opposition to the modern educational system stemmed from his belief that it reduces people to nothing more than slaves. He discussed the importance of positive education in fostering human conviction and self-realization. We can only be lifted from darkness to light by education, including genuine and positive education. We learn from positive education that we should have complete faith in ourselves and work towards our greatest life ambition. We can say that self-confidence leads to self-realization, according to Vivekananda. According to Vivekananda himself, “the secret of greatness is faith in God and faith in ourselves” (Vivekananda, 2007). According to Vivekananda, unless women’s status is improved, there is no chance for the world to be a better place (Vivekananda, 2007). In this case, we could say that a woman must be empowered in order to think for herself about her social and domestic role. He believed that unless the status of women was improved, India would never regain its lost honor and pride (Vivekananda, 2007). World peace can be brought about by ideal womanhood. In our society, ideal womanhood is achieved through positive education.

Let us now explore the meaning of human divinity, ideal womanhood, and positive education. Prior to that, we must briefly understand Vivekananda’s views on education, women’s education, and educational philosophy.

2. Vivekananda’s Perspectives on Education and Women Education:

2.1. Education:

Education is that which liberates, according to Swami Vivekananda (Sa Vidyā Ya Vimuktaye). It frees one from unconstructive inclinations and unawareness of their true “Self.” According to Indian tradition, “Vidyā” (knowledge or learning) is the opposite of “Avidyā” (ignorance or lack of knowledge), and in order for it to be complete, it must lead to “Ātma-Vidyā” (knowledge of the Self). Pursuing both worldly and spiritual knowledge is emphasized in the “Yajur Veda” (Yajur Veda, XL.14) as means of attaining immortality and leading a holistic life.

Thus, education is not an end in and of itself; rather, it is a tool to help one become more self-aware and realize the ultimate Oneness of life, which has been rationally explained by the Vedic seers and powerful figures such as Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886), Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), and others in more recent times. Education is the manifestation of perfection already in men. Education was not only collection of information, but also something more meaningful. Education should be man making, life giving and character building (Vivekananda, 2007). Education was an assimilation of noble ideas.

2.2. Women Education:

Swami Vivekananda’s concept of women education was revolutionary for his time, aiming for national regeneration through empowered women. He believed that the progress of a nation was directly linked to the condition of its women, famously stating, “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of woman is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing” (Vivekananda, 2007). Swami

Vivekananda believed that women's education was essential to the revitalization of the country since it would enable them to address their own issues (Islam, 2018). Among his core concepts were:

Holistic Character Building: Education for women, like for men, should be “man-making, life-giving, and character-building” (Vivekananda, 2007). It should foster strength of mind, intellect, and the ability to “stand on one's feet”. He stressed the importance of developing moral values, integrity, and fearlessness.

Strength and Fearlessness: In order to create women as fearless as the Rani of Jhansi, he promoted an education that would foster bravery and the spirit of self-defense.

Chastity and Dignity: He emphasized the value of upholding the traditional Indian values of chastity and purity as a basis for strong character, even as he promoted contemporary knowledge.

Practical and Spiritual Curriculum: The curriculum should include not only religion, literature, and science, but also practical subjects like housekeeping, cooking, sewing, hygiene, and even self-defense. He also emphasized spiritual practices like japa, worship, and meditation, alongside learning self-defense techniques.

Practical Skills: Empowerment and Self-Reliance: Education would enable women to be economically independent and contribute to the nation's growth. He believed that women, once educated, would understand their own needs and bring about necessary reforms. Vivekananda insisted that women must be educated so they could “solve their own problems in their own way”. He vehemently opposed external interference in women's matters, asserting, “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”.

Mother Tongue as Medium: He advocated for education to be imparted in the mother tongue, especially for widespread literacy among the masses.

Equality, Dignity and Opportunity: Vivekananda strongly believed that there should be no discrimination between sexes, recognizing that a nation cannot progress “on one wing” (Vivekananda, 2007). He urged for equal opportunities for women to develop their full potential. Vivekananda championed the idea that women are equal to men in all respects and possess the capacity for the highest spiritual understanding. He challenged the notion of women's inferiority, stating, “It is completely untrue to consider women as lesser than males. Women are experiencing a disadvantage primarily due to a deficiency in education” (Vivekananda, 2007). He believed that true progress required recognizing women as individuals, not just in their roles as wives or mothers.

The well-known Indian philosopher and spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda was a fervent supporter of women's education. He asserts that women's empowerment, independence, and spiritual development depend on education. There is a statement, which says- “If a man is educated, an individual is educated, and if a woman is educated, a family is educated.” Manu says, “Where women are respected, there Gods delight and where they are not, there all work and effort come to naught” (Manusmṛiti). However, there are a lot of differences between men and women in India. By enforcing strict and inflexible rules, the men have reduced the women to nothing more than production machines and denied them their fundamental rights. “All nations”,

Swamiji said, “have attained greatness by paying proper respect to woman. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will it be in future.” - Swami Vivekananda.

3. Vivekananda’s Educational Philosophy:

The educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda emphasizes the development of each person’s physical, mental, and spiritual faculties in a comprehensive and inclusive manner. Swami Vivekananda was not an educational philosopher, such as John Dewey (1859–1952), Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), or Pestalozzi (1746–1827), but his theories are profoundly philosophical. The complete man—not just the flesh-and-blood outward man that most educationists talk about, but also the flesh-and-spirit inner man that extends into the limitless realm beyond space and time—is being developed. The foundation of Swami Vivekananda’s beliefs, in contrast to the great educator John Amos Comenius (1592–1670), is found in the true character of man, which he defined as fundamentally divine, rather than in religious and theoretical doctrine and dogmas. It appeared that Vivekananda concurred with Froebel. He added that the development of the human mind mirrors the evolution of nature and that education should support a person’s life’s harmonious progression. Like Froebel, he once more emphasized how humans can develop holistically and live peaceful, harmonious lives. Swamiji says, “We want to become harmonious beings, with the psychical, spiritual, intellectual, and working (active) sides of our nature equally developed. Nation’s individuals typify one of these sides or types and cannot understand more than that one... The idea is really that we should become many sided.” Rabindranath Tagore, who lived from 7th May 1861 to 7th August 1941, endorsed Vivekananda’s educational philosophy when he stated that, “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existences.” (Tagore, 1917)

4. Philosophical Reference of Bhagavān:

Many Indian spiritual and philosophical traditions, including Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, have a strong philosophical connection to Bhagavān. Although the specific details differ, the phrase always refers to a being of utmost importance, possessing superior attributes and acting as a center for spiritual knowledge and awe. Below is a summary of its philosophical aspects:

4.1. Etymological and Core Meaning:

The word “Bhagavān” comes from the Sanskrit root “Bhaga,” which means “fortune,” “wealth,” “opulence,” “glory,” “splendor,” “power,” “wisdom,” and “renunciation”. For the noun form Bhagavān, the suffix “-van” (or “-vat”) signifies “possessor.”

Thus, “Bhagavān” literally means “one who possesses all these opulences in full”. This is a comprehensive and full expression of spiritual, ethical, and existential perfection rather than just material ownership.

4.2. In Hinduism: The Personal God and Absolute Truth:

The Almighty Self (Para Brahman with Qualities): In various Hindu philosophical traditions, especially Vaishnavism, “Bhagvān” refers to the Absolute Truth (Brahman), also known as the Supreme Being, in its

active, relational, and personal form. This sets it apart from Nirguṇa Brahman, the attribute-less, impersonal Absolute. Saguṇa Brahman, or Brahman having divine qualities, is Bhagavān.

Shat Aiśvarya's Six Opulences: In philosophy, the full and simultaneous ownership of six distinct, limitless opulences is frequently used to define Bhagavān:

Aiśvarya (Lordship/Sovereignty): Total authority and control over everything.

Virya (Strength/Potency): Limitless ability to create, maintain, and destroy the universe.

Yāśas (Fame/Glory): Global fame, respect, and veneration in every field.

Śri (Beauty/Wealth): Magnificent grace, beauty, and universal wealth.

Jñāna (Knowledge): Omniscience is the total and flawless knowledge of the past, present, and future.

Vairāgya (Renunciation/Detachment): Complete apathy and detachment from the material world, although actively participating in its production and upkeep.

Object of Bhakti (Devotion): Bhagavān is the ultimate object of devotion, love, and worship in the many Bhakti (devotional) traditions. The underlying philosophical idea here is that devotion to Bhagavān can lead to liberation (mokṣa), or eternal communion, and transcend the cycle of birth and death (saṁsāra).

Transcendence and Immanence: Philosophers understand Bhagavān to be both immanent (residing inside and pervading all beings and occurrences) and transcendent (being outside the material cosmos, unaffected by its constraints). Both a personal relationship with the divine and an understanding of the divine as the essential reality of all creation are made possible by this dual nature.

Līlā (Divine Play): The phrase "līlā," which means "divine play," is frequently used to describe the activities and appearances of Bhagavān, such as through Avatārs like Krishna or Rama. According to this philosophical theory, God acts out of intrinsic joy and a desire to interact with creation, preserve dharma, and lead beings toward spiritual realization rather than out of necessity or karma.

4.3. In Buddhism: The Blessed One and Enlightened Teacher:

"Bhagavā" or "Bhagavān": "Bhagavā" or "Bhagavān" is a major epithet for Gautama Buddha in Buddhist literature written in Pāli and Sanskrit. In this context, it can be generally translated as "the Lord," "the Blessed One," "the Fortunate One," or "the Exalted One."

Overcoming Defilements: Buddhism's philosophical relevance stems from the Buddha's total victory over all mental defilements, or kleśas, including delusion, hatred, and greed. He is "fortunate" because he has achieved Nirvāna, or freedom from pain, and bodhi, or perfect enlightenment.

The Buddha, in his role as Bhagavān, is the embodiment of flawless wisdom (prajñā) and unending compassion (karuṇā). He is regarded as the ultimate teacher who revealed the way to freedom for all sentient creatures, highlighting the full potential of human consciousness, rather than as a creator god.

4.4. In Jainism: The Tirthankaras and Omniscient Beings:

For Tirthankaras: "Bhagavān" In Jainism, the Tirthankaras (such as Mahavira and Rishabhanatha) are

referred to as “Bhagvān.” These beings are fully free from karmic bonds and have achieved omniscience (kevalajnāna).

4.5. Ultimate Purity and Liberation:

Here, the philosophical significance highlights the Tirthankara’s supreme self-control and purity as well as their function as the best role models and mentors for those pursuing freedom from the cycle of reincarnation. They are “fortunate” because they have revealed the way to ultimate self-realization and vanquished all of their inner adversaries, including karma and passions.

5. Why and How Perfection is Already in Men:

In Hinduism, Bhagavān, also known as Ishvara, is ideal. In Islam, Āllah is flawless. In Christianity, God is flawless. Because some people believe that humans are the offspring of nature, humans can strive for perfection.

BHAGAVĀN = NATURE = GOD = ĀLLAH = HUMAN BEING (potentially)

Bh = Bhū (bhū means earth ‘soil’ or ‘mṛttikā’ or ‘kṣīti’)

G = Gagan (gagan means sky ‘ambar’ or ‘byom’)

V = Vāyu (vāyu means air ‘bātās’ or ‘marut’)

Ā = Ālo (ālo means Heat or light ‘āgun’ or ‘teja’)

N = Neer (neer means water ‘pāni’ or ‘ap’).

These five components are essential to both nature and humanity. Since Indian philosophy views these five components as panchamahābhūta, we can say that Nature = God = Bhagavān = Āllah = Human being (potentially).

Why are we not flawless or divine like the Sun, Earth, Air, Sky, and Water if we are the offspring of Ishvar, Bhagavān, or Nature? Nature includes all of these components. These elements of nature function continuously, equitably, and cooperatively. As a result, we can claim to be a part of nature. In a similar vein, humans possess divinity within themselves.

6. Meaning of Positive Education:

Even though Swami Vivekananda did not coin the contemporary term “Positive Education,” his educational philosophy is fundamentally “positive” in both its goals and approaches. His entire strategy is designed to maximize each person’s potential and promote his or her overall wellbeing. The emphasis on personal motivation and individual strengths in positive psychology is the foundation of the expanding field of positive education. Good education in contrast to traditional school approaches, where teachers attempt to modify their content to fit the mythical “average” student and use a single teaching and testing style to guide the class as a whole through the material, teachers use strategies that put the welfare of individual students first. The application of positive psychology in the field of education, or positive education, may offer a fresh approach to effective teaching. The future of college education and positive schooling appears bright. According to Swami Vivekananda, the education that young boys and girls receive is extremely detrimental. He thinks they

do not gain confidence or self-respect from these educations, According to Swami Vivekananda only positive education should be given to children. Positive education may be inspiring education, which can be helpful for bringing success in human life. Swami Vivekananda told, if young boys and girls are encouraged and are not unnecessarily criticized all the time, they are bound to improve in time. A man is prepared for life's challenges and social service through positive education. He has underlined that education fosters mental capacity and intelligence as well as patience, self-assurance, and independence in people. Swami Vivekananda believed that the only way to succeed in life was to work steadily and with patience.

6.1 Why Do We Need Positive Education?

Since education broadens one's knowledge and provides opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds, it is the secret to success. It is beneficial to visualize dreams and focus our attention on specific objectives. The only way to instill courage, bravery, and endurance in people is through positive education. It also instills cardinal virtue and eliminates fear from human existence. Students can develop conviction, self-reliance, moral character, and self-esteem through positive education. This means that students may believe that they are nearly finished and only need to work a little bit to succeed in life. They can also position themselves as the cornerstone of the country's and society's future. We are aware that every well-educated citizen of a country can contribute significantly to its development in a number of ways. The uneducated and less educated may contribute to the advancement of human society in the short term, but if we wish to see, long-term or sustainable progress in a variety of areas, including political, social, and economic, we must disseminate and instill positive education in the minds of the students.

6.2 How Can Positive Education be the Key to Success in Life?

When we think and speak, we should only use positive language. Using phrases like those that "I can," "I am able," "it is possible," "it can be done" and so on, can inspire and fortitude in people to strive for success in life. Only positive emotions like joy, strength, and achievement should be permitted to enter our consciousness. Negative thoughts should be ignored and disregarded. Refuse to think such thoughts by replacing them with positive, constructive ones. Whenever a negative thought arises, it should be immediately replaced with a positive one. Use language in our conversation that evokes emotions and conjures up visions of success, joy, and strength. Before beginning any plan or action, we should clearly envision its successful conclusion. We will be astounded by the outcomes if we visualize with faith and focus. Every day, we ought to read at least one page from an inspirational book. We want to surround ourselves with positive thinkers. Take a swim, go for a walk, or do something else physical. This practice contributes to the development of a more optimistic outlook on life.

7. Meaning of Ideal Womanhood:

Ideal womanhood, ideal woman are labels or terms used to describe ideas about idealized female characteristics. For a woman to be ideal, she must be completely free from oppression, depression, repression,

inequality, disadvantage, ignorance, and others' dependence. Swami Vivekananda cautioned that discriminating against one sex is totally unjust because the soul, or atman, is not sexed; it is not casted, sexed, or imperfect. He suggested not thinking that there are men and women, but only that there are human beings and it is impossible to get back India's lost pride and honor unless they try to better the condition of women. According to Vivekananda, men and women are like a bird's two wings, and a bird cannot fly on just one wing. Therefore, he argues that there is no chance for global welfare unless women's status is improved. There will be ideal womanhood in our society, if women may take decision independently about their domestic, political and financial matters as well.

7.1 Examples of Perfect Womanhood:

The ideal of perfect womanhood differs among countries, eras of history, and personal viewpoints. However, we may examine examples from a variety of industries who exemplified many of the values and attributes that are widely acknowledged to be important for a woman's success and positive influence on society. It is crucial to note at the outset that "perfection" is a vague and possibly unachievable ideal. These examples come from people who had extraordinary traits that are highly regarded and made a substantial contribution to their communities or society.

These are a few instances that are frequently used to illustrate what "perfect womanhood" is all about. (understanding perfection as an ideal to strive for, rather than a fixed state):

Sitā was the ideal Hindu or Indian woman. As "the personification of chastity, charity, cleverness, and wisdom," Odysseus's wife Penelope is portrayed in the Odyssey as the perfect woman in ancient Greek culture. Queen Victoria was the quintessential Victorian woman. The "woman of noble character" is described in the Old Testament book of Proverbs as having both trade and household management skills.

8. Why Do We Need Perfect Womanhood?

Sitā is a representation of India, the idealized India, according to Swami Vivekananda. Because Sitā is unique and the character was only ever portrayed once, Swami Vivekananda promised that even if all of the world literature from the past and the future is completely exhausted, there will never be another Sitā. Swami Vivekananda felt there might have been several Ramas, perhaps, but never more than one Sitā. He told, "The ideal womanhood of India is motherhood— that marvelous, unselfish, all suffering, ever-forgiving mother." He realized that India's decline began the moment it began to disregard its women. Vivekananda felt, in India, there are two great evils – trampling on the women, and grinding through the poor through caste restrictions.

One will turn into a fox if we do not let him become a lion. Women are powerful, but they are now more evil because men oppress them; they are the fox, but once they are freed, they will transform into the lion. Women are just as brave as men are. Women have faith. Become independent and achieve everything, but do not lose that quality! Every girl in India should strive to be like Sāvitri, whose tremendous love snatched back her husband's soul, from Yama, and whose love was unbeatable by death.

Perfect womanhood is the only thing that can strengthen a country. No progress would occur until women are truly empowered in our society, as only women are able to provide adequate care for the children and other family members, even though men also serve the family. An educated and capable mother can produce a child with strong moral qualities and character. In the future, this child might be the bearer or builder of the nation and society. Without educated, moral, self-assured, and sensitive citizens, no nation could be considered proper, ideal, and independent from all sides. No nation can achieve full-fledged development unless getting perfection of womanhood in society because one child's life may be all round developed by the particular mother's nursing.

9. Conclusion:

In conclusion, Swami Vivekananda foresaw that humanity would face a crisis. There are many conflicts between customs, etiquette, and values in the air. The current trend is to show disrespect for everything that is outdated. It is evident from the examination of Vivekananda's educational philosophy—particularly positive education—that only positive education can lead to the improvement of the masses. Swami Vivekananda's educational concept is a powerful example of what is now referred to as "positive education." It emphasizes the development of each person's inherent goodness and power, character development, holistic growth, and equipping people with the means to live satisfying lives that benefit both themselves and society. Education must come first for the advantage of all people, despite of their caste, creed, or religion. A good education makes a man flawless. Without receiving a good education, no one can identify "he or she." Since every essential component of nature functions impartially, a person who understands that they are a son or daughter of nature has knowledge of the entire world and has never done anything that would be detrimental to society. As if air were blowing and enveloping us without any self-interest.

According to Vivekananda, women's education is essential to their empowerment because it makes them strong, moral, and competent people who can make important contributions to their families, communities, and country. According to Vivekananda, women's education can enable them to reach their full potential, contribute to the advancement of the country, and live strong, independent, and dignified lives. Women should not only be viewed as members of society, but also as ideal human beings. If not, issues pertaining to ideal womanhood will remain unresolved. One woman resembles the natural world. If we take care of and preserve nature, it will respond favorably to us, allowing us to live in harmony. Similarly, we can have a beautiful society, if we treat women as valuable and ideal human beings and give them good conditions to grow up in.

In the end, a philosophical examination of Vivekananda's viewpoints indicates a mutually reinforcing relationship between ideal womanhood and constructive education. Women who receive an education grounded in his ideals are more prepared to transcend social constraints, recognize their innate divinity, and make significant contributions to the advancement of humanity. His lessons are a compelling reminder that real progress is made when people of both genders are encouraged to realize their full potential in order to build a society in which

men and women can thrive in an atmosphere of compassion, strength, and wisdom. Vivekananda's ageless wisdom provides not just historical context but also a dynamic and practical philosophy for building a genuinely good and egalitarian future as we traverse the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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