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## SWAMI VIVEKANAND'S IDEAS TOWARDS WOMEN

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### **Abstract**

Swami Vivekananda was more in favor of women's subjugation than their liberation. During the 1800s, progressive social reformers such as Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Jyotiba Phule, Atmaram Pandurang, and Raja Rammohan Roy battled against severe discrimination against women. However, one name that has been long forgotten or disregarded is the renowned Indian yogi Vivekananda, who is in the middle of the current feminist debate. In contemporary Indian history, he is also regarded as a major nationalist leader, a Karmayogi, and a Vedic devotee. She predicted that Indian women in the future would achieve great things. Women ought to have the same freedoms and responsibilities as men. The first monk to advocate for women's independence, equality, and understanding of their significance for the smooth operation of the family and society was Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji believed that inadequate education was the primary cause of women's many faults in our nation. According to Swami ji, women who receive a quality education are capable of finding their own solutions to problems and should be aware of the significance of chastity since it is ingrained in their culture.

**Keywords:** Women, History, Karmayogi, Society, Education, Feminism



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## Introduction

Swami Vivekananda, a prominent figure in the Indian independence movement and a key proponent of Vedanta philosophy, had a distinct perspective on the role and empowerment of women in society. His ideas towards women can be found in his various lectures, writings, and interactions with people throughout his life. Vivekananda believed in the equality of men and women and advocated for the upliftment and empowerment of women in society. He emphasized the importance of education, self-reliance, and self-confidence for women to realize their full potential.

One of Swami Vivekananda's key ideas towards women was the concept of "Shakti," or feminine power. He believed that women possess innate strength and power that should be recognized and harnessed. Vivekananda considered women to be the embodiment of divine energy and believed that they have the ability to bring about positive change and transformation in society. He often spoke about the need for women to awaken their inner strength and tap into their inherent capabilities to contribute to the betterment of society.

Vivekananda also emphasized the importance of women's education and empowerment. He believed that education is the key to liberation and empowerment for women. Vivekananda advocated for equal educational opportunities for women and encouraged them to pursue knowledge and intellectual growth. He believed that educated and empowered women would not only benefit themselves but also contribute to the progress and development of society as a whole.

Swami Vivekananda, born as Narendranath Datta in Calcutta, India on January 12, 1863, was a prominent Indian monk and spiritual leader. He is best known for introducing Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world and for spreading the message of Hinduism and its teachings. Swami Vivekananda was a key figure in the revival of Hinduism in India, and his teachings have had a lasting impact on Indian society and culture.

One of the key aspects of Swami Vivekananda's teachings was his views on women and their role in society. In a time when women's rights were often neglected and marginalized in Indian



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society, Swami Vivekananda advocated for the empowerment of women and their equal status with men. His ideas towards women were progressive and ahead of his time, and they continue to inspire and influence people to this day.

This essay will delve into Swami Vivekananda's ideas towards women, exploring his background and the cultural context in which he lived, as well as analyzing his writings and speeches on the subject. It will also review the literature on Swami Vivekananda's views on women and how they have been interpreted and applied in modern times. By examining Swami Vivekananda's ideas towards women, we can gain a deeper understanding of his philosophy and vision for a more just and equitable society.

#### Background

Swami Vivekananda was born into a traditional Hindu family in colonial India, where societal norms and customs placed women in subordinate roles to men. Women were expected to be obedient and submissive to their husbands and fathers, and were often denied educational and economic opportunities. Swami Vivekananda grew up in this patriarchal society, but he was deeply influenced by his mother, Bhuvaneshwari Devi, who was a devout and strong-willed woman.

Bhuvaneshwari Devi's influence on Swami Vivekananda was profound, and she instilled in him a deep respect for women and their potential. She encouraged him to question societal norms and to seek knowledge and truth, regardless of gender. Swami Vivekananda's mother played a significant role in shaping his views on women and in inspiring him to advocate for their rights and empowerment.

Swami Vivekananda was also greatly influenced by his spiritual mentor, Sri Ramakrishna, who taught him the importance of seeing God in all beings, regardless of gender. Sri Ramakrishna believed that women were equal to men in spiritual matters and that they had the same capacity for enlightenment and self-realization. Swami Vivekananda internalized these teachings and carried them forward in his own teachings on women's rights and equality.

Swami Vivekananda's ideas towards women were also shaped by his experiences of social and political unrest in colonial India. He witnessed firsthand the struggle for independence and the



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fight for social reform, including the women's movement led by figures like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Swami Vivekananda was inspired by these social reformers and their efforts to improve the status of women in Indian society, and he sought to build upon their work in his own teachings.

Swami Vivekananda believed that women were not only capable of achieving spiritual enlightenment, but also of contributing to society in meaningful ways. He argued that women should be educated and empowered to participate in all spheres of life, including politics, education, and the economy. Swami Vivekananda believed that women were essential to the progress and development of society, and that their contributions were necessary for a more just and equitable world.

### **Review of Literature**

Swami Vivekananda's ideas towards women have been the subject of much scholarly analysis and debate. Scholars have examined his writings and speeches on the subject, as well as the cultural and historical context in which he lived. They have also explored how his ideas have been interpreted and applied in modern times, and the impact they have had on women's rights and gender equality in India and beyond.

One of the key themes in Swami Vivekananda's writings on women is the concept of Shakti, or feminine power. Swami Vivekananda believed that women possessed a unique and inherent power that made them equal to men in every respect. He argued that women were not weak or subordinate, but were strong and capable of achieving greatness. Swami Vivekananda believed that women's power lay in their ability to nurture, create, and sustain life, and that this power was essential for the well-being of society.

Swami Vivekananda also emphasized the importance of education for women, arguing that they should have the same opportunities for learning and self-improvement as men. He believed that education was the key to empowering women and enabling them to fulfill their potential. Swami Vivekananda advocated for the establishment of schools and colleges for women, as well as for the promotion of literacy and vocational training for girls.



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Furthermore, Swami Vivekananda challenged traditional patriarchal values and norms that restricted women's freedom and autonomy. He believed in the equality of men and women and spoke out against discrimination and oppression faced by women in society. Vivekananda advocated for the rights and dignity of women and called for their full participation in all spheres of life, including politics, religion, and social affairs.

### **Women in the Vedas**

"In which scriptures do you find the statement that women are not capable of knowledge and devotion? In the period of decline, when the priests made other castes incapable of studying the Vedas, they also deprived women of all their rights given. Otherwise you will find that Maitreyi, Gargi and other revered women in the Vedic or Upanishad era have taken the place of rishis through their skill in discussing Brahman. In an assembly of a thousand brahmins who are the knowers of all the Vedas Gargi boldly challenged Yajnavalkya in a discussion about Brahman. Since such ideal women were entitled to spiritual knowledge, why should women not be accorded the same privilege now? What has happened once can surely happen again. History repeats itself. All nations have achieved greatness by giving due respect to women. Those countries and nations which do not respect women never became great and will never be in future. The main reason for being is that you have no respect for these living images of Shakti in your mind. Manu says, "Where women are respected, the gods are pleased. And where they are not, all work and effort become fruitless."

"It is very difficult to understand why in this country [India] so much distinction is made between men and women, when Vedanta declares that there is one and only conscious soul present in all beings. You always criticize women, But say what have you done for their upliftment? By binding them with rigid rules, writing Smritis etc., men have turned women into manufacturing machines! If you don't nurture women who are Mother Goddess If you are the living embodiment of, don't think that you have any other way to rise."



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## **Social background of Vivekananda**

Before entering into the examination of the primary and secondary evidence available in the form of Swami Vivekananda's writings, speeches etc., let us take a brief look at the family and social background in which Vivekananda was brought up and assess the psychological forces at work. Do it. In shaping their perceptions about women.

Vivekananda was born in an affluent Hindu family, his mother Bhuvaneshwari Devi was deeply religious. She was a woman of high presence and graceful demeanor who certainly looked like 'belonging to the old tradition of Hindu womanhood'. Like any other common people, who was a passionate lover of Indian knowledge traditions, she was deep in the religious texts Ramayana and Mahabharata,

In fact she would recite some passages from them to a young Naren (like Vivekananda, or Narendranath Datta, who was loved in childhood) after having memorized them. It has been noted that "she became the special refuge of the poor and commanded universal respect because of her quiet resignation to God, her inner peace and her dignified detachment in the midst of her many arduous duties". Digging into the complete works of Swami Vivekananda reveals some rich material that deserves to be viewed and reflected upon again and again. First of all, a disclaimer must be placed in Swami Vivekananda's own words:

### **Swami Vivekananda's thoughts towards women**

“The best thermometer for the progress of a nation is the treatment of its women. There was no difference in the status of men and women in ancient Greece. The idea of complete equality existed. No Hindu can be a priest unless he is married, the idea that a single man is only half a man, and incomplete. The idea of complete womanhood is complete freedom. The central idea in the life of a modern Hindu woman is her chastity. The wife is the center of a circle, the stability of which depends on her chastity. It was the extreme of this idea that led to the burning of Hindu widows. Hindu women are very spiritual and very religious, probably more so than any other women in the world. If we can preserve these beautiful features and at the same time develop the intelligence of our women, the Hindu woman of the future will be the ideal woman of the world.



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Swami ji was a very disinterested monk. His supreme disciple Sister Nivedita says that 'he was not afraid of women. He had many disciples, colleagues were women and friends too. He saw the best qualities and character of these people. They used to worship the ideal of purity that appeared before them. He used to tell his disciples that 'we should not forget that our aim is to uplift the backward people and women. He was introduced to many women during his stay in western countries. He saw the qualities of a well-educated, confident, fearless and loving woman. The women took care of him with affection. They say that words will also fall short for the son's love received by women. He saw many worlds, saw spiritually advanced women. He called Mary Hell, whose house was his residence in Chicago, as 'Mother'. His two daughters and two daughters of his brother-in-law, all four were Swamiji's sisters. Oli Bull of Cambridge, who gave financial assistance to Sister Nivedita's school in Calcutta, was called SwamijiDheeramata. Swamiji used to keep his money safe with Emily John Lion of Michigan, just like one keeps it with his mother. Once Swamiji said that 'I have fallen in love', Emily Lion asked, 'Who is that lucky girl?' The effect of Karma was so much that many foreign women came to India and started service work. Mrs. Charlotte Sovier from England became a disciple of Swamiji along with her husband and later the couple sold their property and came to India. As per Swami ji's wish, he established Advaita Ashram at a place called Mayavati in the Himalayas. Josephine Mallillaud, Henrietta Müller, Christine Green Steidl, Madame Emma Kauf, etc., many virtuous, wealthy women were inspired by spirituality. Swamiji used to consider ShardaMaa, the co-religionist of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansji, who was eight years older than Swamiji, as his mother. And he considered Nivedita, only four years younger than him, as his daughter. His unique sense seems to be from this only.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Swami Vivekananda's ideas towards women were progressive and ahead of his time. He believed in the potential and power of women to bring about positive change and transformation in society. Vivekananda's emphasis on education, empowerment, and equality for women continues to inspire and resonate with people around the world today. His teachings



serve as a guiding light for those who seek to promote gender equality and women's rights in contemporary society. The ideas of Swami ji are really admirable and perfect. What practical ways may we use these ideas in the current circumstances? Is this exclusively a female responsibility? Rather of sitting about talking about the shortcomings, a lot of practice with Swami ji's teachings is necessary to establish a pleasant atmosphere. The poet for himself. Padma Gole claims, "I want to touch Shaktiswarupa; such confidence should be kept in mind." I have to accomplish this work and I can do it. We'll attempt to arrange. Then and only then can this community prosper in the future. Wherever there are women, they shouldn't be envious of one another. Activities like exercise, reflection, meditation, maintaining a healthy diet, social and political awareness of the wider world, self-assurance, bravery, and exercise, as well as traditions and patriotism.

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