

Emphasis on Women Empowerment Through Learning and Social Enterprise in The Speeches of Sojourner Truth

Sunaina Devi

Research Scholar

Department of English

Gokul Das Hindu Girls College,

Moradabad (U.P.)

Email: sunainathakur2017@gmail.com

Prof. Charu Mehrotra

Principal

Gokul Das Hindu Girls College,

Moradabad (U.P.)

MJP Rohilkhand University, Bareilly, U.P.

Email: charubareilly@gmail.com

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Received: 16.01.2025
Accepted on: 23.03.2025

Sunaina Devi
Prof. Charu Mehrotra

Emphasis on Women
Empowerment Through
Learning and Social
Enterprise in The Speeches
of Sojourner Truth

Vol. XVI, Sp.Issue Mar. 2025
Article No.14, Pg. 125-131

Similarity Check: 02%

Online available at <https://anubooks.com/special-issues?url=jgv-si-gdhg-college-mdbd-mar-25>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31995/jgv.2025.v16iSI03.014>

Abstract

This paper converses about Sojourner Truth, as an abolitionist and feminist campaigner of 19th century. Truth required no discrimination, women's empowerment, and self-dependence, right to equality and right to education. Truth faced egalitarian fortitude in the features of institutional inequity. Truth escaped enslavement and in spite of being powerless to write or read anything, she grew up as a leader in the struggle of women's empowerment, their financial equal rights and encouraged them for enterprise. Truth was a renowned women's rights protester and raised her voice against the unfair treatment for women of African Americans. Truth was involved in structured groups of Black and White people who required ending slavery earlier than the Civil War. Prior to the Civil War, enslaved women were usually forced into the arranged marriages with enslaved men, and were forced to have children simply to have them and to carry them away and put on the market for sale. Afterwards, Mothers were not able to see them again in their life time. A Memoir of her life was published in 1850: 'The Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave'. She delivered her well-known "Ain't I a Woman?" speech at Ohio Women's Rights conference in 1851. This speech crafted that day as vigorous and inspirational recognition of Women's potentials and stipulated for their empowerment and equal standing in the field of social enterprise in American society. On one occasion, Truth facilitated to enlist free black men for the union Army. At the same time, she congregated and discussed to the President of America, Abraham Lincoln, about her beliefs and experiences concerning to women's conditions and their rights.

She is remembered, in the present day, as first high-flying feminist and leading abolitionist.

Keywords

Empowerment of women, Enslavement, Social enterprise, Abolitionists, Equal rights.

Introduction:

Sojourner Truth incorporated in her illustrious speech that learning empowered women to make option and outline their lives in a definite move towards gender characteristics in equality and constructed them high-ranking in different fields as well. If we see in these days, there are many developed countries which provide freedom and opportunities for self-luminosity to women. On the other hand, whether we talk about the countries that are developing or lack of squat income resources, could not able to make available required facilities. Understanding now enables right of entry to social enterprise and women empowerment, right to equality in society. Truth articulated to women that education manufacture everything as dream and postulate to each and every women that they should be knowledgeable and made themselves enterprised and empowered. Therefore, the aim of this study is to perform a methodical review of the connected literature and to achieve a cooperative vision of how education is being utilized to social enterprise and empower women.

Sojourner Truth: Championing Women's rights through Knowledge and Action

Sojourner Truth is one of the eminent historical personalities who are known for their contributions in the ground of anti-slavery, women's empowerment as women's rights movements and social enterprise to build up women. Truth was one of the Black and the only Black women to be the component of those Campaigns. During those movements, she encouraged women who were not educated, disgraceful in circumstances like Truth herself, and advised them to execute something innovative that prepared themselves dependent and could increase their authority in this male society. Truth participated in the first wave of feminism in the United State in 1830-1920, and centred on women achieving essential legal rights and the licence for their enterprise, education, freedom and equality. During this alliance, Truth added a tiny inspirational speech that clarifies the importance of feminism seeing as she uttered:

“I have given but a Faint sketch of her speech. I have never in my life seen anything like the magical, influence that subdued the mobbish spirit of the day, and turned the jibes and sneers of an excited crowd into notes of respect and admiration.” (Sojourner Truth, by F. D. Gage, National Anti-Slavery standard, May2, 1863, p.4.)

From Silence to Speech: Sojourner Truth and the rise of Empowered womanhood Feminism is the principle which provides us social, political and

economic equality to men. When the feminist movement began, the law treated all the women as fundamentally belonging to their fathers waiting, all when married appeared under the power of their spouses. Afterwards the fight was gone on, and subsequent to many years of this move violently, Women were provided the right to vote, at the time when the 19th amendment was approved in 1920. Later, women had the right to vote, they could able to prefer candidate according their desire. At that time, Truth utilized her real stories of adversities to motivate Women and men. She openly depicted her experiences and confronted against injustice through her words. Truth encouraged and inspired all the folks to do something for the enhancement of their lives. Like her name Sojourner, used to travel all over the Northern states and delivered her speeches against slavery, and for Women Empowerment and Women's rights. Since, Truth was uneducated; she uttered her life experiences and story to one of her comrade.

Sojourner Truth was born in slavery in 1797, as Isabella Baum Free. But later, she transformed her name to SOJOURNER TRUTH, who would turn into one of the most prominent and influential advocate for human rights in the 19th century. She spent her early childhood in slavery in a New York domain possessed by Colonel Johannes Hardenberg, a Dutch American. She underwent pains, heartbreaks and agony like other slaves of being sold and bought. She experienced the cruelty, mistreatment which was faced by all slaves. During her eighteenth, she fell in love with her fellow worker or slave Robert, and both sought to marry. But they were separated powerfully by Robert's master. Isabella was unaided at that time; she had to kneel down in front of Robert's master and accepted a slave named Thomas instead of Robert as husband. Isabella and Thomas both had five children. During 1827, the movements were on its pinnacle, but her master failed to execute his promise to free them or sustain the New York Anti-slavery Law. Isabella escaped with her infant daughter, and said to her master that 'I did not escape; despite I marched away by the day beam'. After shedding off slavery, Truth wandered aimlessly, and assumed alone in the woods, at that time, she felt, she baptized in the sacred fortitude, and experienced that she grew the strength, confidence, and diverse spirit in herself to defend against her previous master and society. Gradually, Truth turned into a spiritual woman who has the supremacy of faith and marched for Women Empowerment and Women Equality. She dedicated her life to hold up women's pains and sufferings, and was cheerfully clinched by those activities and their leaders.

Social Upliftment and Female Agency in Sojourner Truth's Speeches

Truth was converted into an itinerant priest in 1843, and as a voyager; she used to go to diverse places and met divergent people. Afterwards, Truth grew up as a great movement activist and abolitionist. She involved in the increasing antislavery alliance, and by the 1850s, Truth was totally mixed up with women's rights, educational and women empowerment campaigns. At the time, when Women's Rights Convention alleged in Akron, Ohio in 1851, Truth delivered her well known speech that we knew as "*Ain't I a Woman?*" During that convention, a variety of people were gathered there, and some men insulting women, behaved animosity and calling them 'The Weaker Sex'. Afterwards, Truth's speech was the answer for brought down all those arguments. She threw the light her own depressions and oppressions as a Black woman. She spoke out for women's conditions and their importance in different fields in real pedestal and rights of African American women. Truth depicting continued about the pathetic conditions of slaves, women's education and raised voice for women empowerment, social enterprise, and equality. Women were facilitated on account of their colour and beauty not for their qualities and potentials. She uttered in her speech, '*Ain't I a Woman?*' in this way-

"Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the Negroes of the South and the women at the North. All talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And Ain't I a women? Look at me!" (Carte De Visita, circa 1864, in the Collection of the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov)

Black men and women, both were perceived as downwards before White folks. After being sold and bought by others four times, Isabella escaped with her one of the infant daughters in 1826, Isabella hunted refuge with an abolitionist Quaker family, named Van Wagener, That family was rich in kindness and honesty and bought Isabella's liberty for twenty dollars. Afterwards she joined that family and acquired religious consciousness which soon after guided her to preach and pick the power inside her, and Van family supported her in her first primordial act as she filed a claim to a white man, the agricultural estate owner in Alabama, for the nurture of her enslaved five year old son, who had been vended illegally. But, after one year, she came across with her master in the court to fight for her child. Due to her spiky

intelligence and will power, she succeeded the case, which was the first time, when she proved herself as an appropriate individual. Additionally, she became very first black women who won a legal case of that terrible or disastrous environment.

Pedagogy of Liberation: Sojourner Truth's vision for Empowering Women of Colour and Slavery

Truth was considered as a prominent promoter who can be able to grip any case with wit. She was connected with many religious groups and considered as inspiration for many women. Later, she converted herself to Methodist and changed her name to 'Sojourner Truth', for the reason that, she measured that God instructed her to spread the knowledge of Truth and equality. She adhered to an organization that was essentially related to abolition and also believed in women's empowerment, social enterprise, social equality, and women's rights. Truth said one of her address about women's strength and significance: "Raising her voice still louder, she repeated- Where did your Christ come from, From God and a woman. Man had nothing to do with him." This organization principally forced to be educated of each and every woman, at any rate, and said education is the tool through that we can succeed in every war. Once she assembled, Abolitionist leader 'William Lloyd Garrison' and 'Frederick Douglass'. Truth stimulated a lot with these notable activists and began to preach on social themes as social justice, equality, women empowerment, social endeavour, and particularly talking about the major evil of that era slavery. She tried to focus more on the women rights and interconnected with anti-slavery. Truth's major and foremost target was regarding the rights of the Black women. However, the prominent personality like Frederick Douglass, who thought that women had the right to vote and that was enough for African-American men and women, and other one was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who sustained the Abolition association only on condition that it reflected encouraging them and positively her White women's rights movement. But Truth struggled for Women's rights as well as racism with the equal strength like she fought to gender discrimination. In favour of the struggles and dedication towards the country and society were showed by Sojourner Truth. On behalf of that, Truth entertained with many awards, enthusiasms, and acknowledgements. Like Truth amused 'The Marble statue', *The Libyan Sibyl* (1862). It was instigated by Sojourner Truth who accomplished an award, at an Exhibition in London World. Posthumously, monuments, paintings, lectures, sculptures and plaques, were contributed to the legacy and memory of Sojourner Truth. We can state about her as:

“Sojourner Truth spoke in her own peculiar style, showing that she was a match for most men. She had ploughed, hoed, dug and could eat as much, if she could get it. The power and wit of this remarkable woman convulsed the audience with laughter. I wish, I could report every word she said, but I cannot.” “Woman’s Convention,” (The Liberator Boston, MA June 13, 1861, p.4.)

Empowered to rise: Gender, Education and Enterprise in Truth’s Activism

During elderly years, Truth supported to recruit black troops for the Union army, all the way through, She helped the Black young boys and girls for social enterprise as well as she provided other entrepreneurship straight and circumlocutory to women. Truth comforted and aid in the form of supplies for their care in different pastures. As Truth’s grandson, James Caldwell, was assigned, the 54th regiment of Massachusetts. Truth was assigned by an Association in Washington D.C named ‘The National Freedman’s Relief.’ Through this Organization, Truth tried a lot to recover the surroundings of African-Americans. The actions of the Sojourner Truth helped numerous people conquer differences and modified this world more appropriate and unified. She had the authenticity and conscientiousness that made her as Hero and image of invincible strength. Truth was known for her characteristic of being the very first African American Woman who conquered a Lawsuit in U.S. if we depicted about her inheritance that would be her fights for justice for all. Some of her successful court cases, the Black women, Black and White women equality, and regaining the son of a Black woman named, Peter. This case became a turning point of her life. Throughout her speeches, where she sang songs, told stories to increase and teach memoranda of Women’s Conditions, women’s right, and Abolition. Her overall target was to inspire and change somebody’s mind to create revolutionize atmosphere, society in the world and its rules in order that young girls and women could survive without fear and anxiety. She pointed out individuals to escape from slavery and dependence and search for jobs, trade and build their homes and lives. Truth used to acquire contribution for enslaved women and soldiers with cash founded from her lectures and speeches, in this way; she helped out them to escape and find work and housing or to start new work as social project. Truth felt proud of who she was, and utilized her own experiences to maintain, why was she doing it? And what was she doing for? Truth persuaded many people of the society with her unavoidable speech towards Equal Rights and Women Empowerment. Truth did this exertion as social work until her death, November 26, 1883, in Michigan.

Her last words were: “I am not going to die; I’m going home like a shooting star.”- (Sojourner Truth, Codelamps.inc Aug.12, 2023) Today, at this century of 21st, Citizens think, they have obtained superior at behaving people equally. Citizens of the Country consider, as they need additional ‘SOJOURNER TRUTH’ to ultimately craft a better blow on what the common people scarcely handles on.

Conclusion

After profound study of this topic, we can gain knowledge, if one is in definite fortitude that will be able to change everything in optimistic way because, all says as proverb that ‘Struggle works certainly and fixed willpower reaches you at your destination.’ Sojourner Truth was a lady with iron will and strong believes, due to her dedication to the public reformation and social justice. Numerous Colleges, Activist, and Academicians have used the ideas and thoughts of Sojourner Truth as an example of well-built guidance and supervision. Truth is regarded as a pioneer on account of her Activism in all the areas of social as well as civil life. She had survived from the exploited life as slave, forced wife, pitiable mother, and a black woman. These complications made her sturdy and springy individual. Truth was not only successful in the terms of Abolitionist, Human rights, women empowerment, social enterprise for all men and women but also in religious fields, peace, honesty, and equality.

References

1. Niroo, Wolayat Tabasum, Crompton, Helen: Women’s Empowerment Through Learning Using Technology, Asian Journal of Distance Education, Vol.17, issue2, 2022. (Journal)
2. Mariella, Truth, Sojourner’s Movements and Powerful Lectures.28Feb.2018 rmnetwork.org
3. The Philosophy of Life Based on Sojourner Truth: Courage, Activism, and Empowerment. Codelamps.inc Aug.12, 2023
4. Truth, Sojourner: Ain’t I women? Women’s Rights National Historical Park, Carte De Visita, Circa 1864, in the Collection of the Library of Congress. Www.nps.Gov. (Article.)
5. Truth, Sojourner: Discovering Biography, Gale, 2003, 3 Feb. 2018.
6. Truth, Sojourner: Ain’t I women? Women’s rights in the United States Series. Academy4sc.org. (Article.)
7. Truth, Sojourner: Abolitionist and Women’s Rights Activist and Women’s Suffrage. 03.05.2019, PBS Education and Learning Media.