

SWAMI VIVEKANAD'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract:

Amongst the contemporary Indian philosophers of education, Swami Vivekananda is one of those who revolted against the imposition of British system of education in India. He criticized the pattern of education introduced by the British in India. He pointed out that the current system of education only brings about an external change without any reflective inner force. Swami Vivekananda was one of the most influential personality in India in 19th century. It is the greatness of his thought and his work that even today we are looking up to him for bringing comprehensive and positive change in our educational and social system. He was the man with multi-dimensional personality, a powerful orator, a philosopher, an educationist, an ambassador of renaissance in India, an embodiment of divine quality, a great spiritual leader and one who generated pride and respect for Indian culture, tradition, education and knowledge in western world. Rooted in the past and full pride in India's prestige, Vivekanand was yet modern in his approach of life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present. His mission was to serve mankind through social service, mass education, religious revival and social awakening through education. Keeping faith in ancient Indian values, culture and tradition he was great admirer of scientific and modern approach towards learning, understanding, teaching and spreading the knowledge and education. Vivekananda believed a country's future depends on its people; his teachings focused on the development of the mass. He wanted to set in motion machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of

even the poorest and the meanest. He interpreted the understanding and difference between Science and spiritualism, beliefs and logic and knowledge and work. Such an impact he had in Indian society that once Rabindra Nath Tagore himself wrote, "If u want to know about India, it must be through Vivekanand." According to Swami Vivekanand every kind of knowledge is essential for all kind of developments. One of his important contributions to education is concept of self-employment education for the students so that they can be able to generate opportunities for themselves. He raised his voice for women`s education and their empowerment. Physical education and modern scientific education enriched with morality were his priority in education. Swami Vivekanad`s Philosophical thought`s were so revolutionary that even today educational bodies and institutions are trying hard to follow these process for the overall development of the students. Such is the impact of Vivekanad`s educational philosophy in today`s world.

Key words: *Bridge between past and present, mass education, women empowerment, self-employment through education.*

Introduction

Vivekanand was born as Narendranath in Calcutta, the capital of British India, on 12 January 1863 during the Makar Sankranti festival. He belonged to a traditional Bengali *Kayastha* (a caste of Hindus) family and was one of the nine siblings. Narendra's father Vishwanath Datta was an attorney of Calcutta High Court. Narendra's mother was a pious woman and a housewife. She used to tell him the stories of *Ramayan*, *Mahabharata* and *Purans*. The progressive rational approach of his father and the religious temperament of his mother helped shape his thinking and personality. Young Narendranath was fascinated by the wandering ascetics and monks.

Amongst the contemporary Indian philosophers of education, Swami Vivekananda is one of those who revolted against the imposition of British system of education in India. He criticized the pattern of education introduced by the British in India. He pointed out that the current system of education only brings about an external change without any reflective inner force. Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863 in Calcutta of a famous advocate of Calcutta high court. Narendra Dutta was his childhood name. From the beginning he was interested in religion and philosophy. But, he was totally transformed after a meeting with Rama Krishna Paramhans in 1888. Since then he had been a wandering monk. In 1893 he went to attend a

World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago. His views on education are found scattered in his lectures delivered at many places in India and abroad.

In the Neo-Vedanta humanistic tradition of contemporary Indian thought, Vivekananda presented a philosophy of education for man making. The chief objection raised by Vivekananda against the contemporary educational system was that it turned men into slaves, capable of slavery and nothing else. About the prevailing university education, he remarked that it was not better than an efficient machine for rapidly turning out clerks. It deprived people of their faith and belief. Vivekananda was very critical about this scheme of education. He compared it to the person who wanted to turn his ass into a horse, was advised to thrash the ass in order to achieve this transformation and killed his ass in this process. Vivekananda also criticized the contemporary system of education from the humanistic view point. According to Swami Vivekananda—*“Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.”* Vivekananda revitalized Hinduism within and outside India. He was the principal reason behind the enthusiastic reception of yoga, transcendental meditation and other forms of Indian spiritual self-improvement in the West. His educational thoughts were so progressive and modern in their nature that even today his thoughts are being followed in different forms in our educational system.

Meaning And Aim Of Education

Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy is deeply rooted in Indian *Vedanta* and *Upnishad*. It was his firm belief that nothing comes from outside. He used to say that education is the manifestation of the perfection already reached in men. Vivekananda believed a country's future depends on its people; his teachings focused on the development of the mass. He wanted “to set in motion machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest.” Vivekananda believed that the essence of Hinduism was best expressed in the Vedanta philosophy, based on the interpretation of Adi Shankara. He said that no one teaches others, they learn by themselves through their experience and efforts in life. Teacher only gives advises. Through this the teacher within motivates himself to learn and to understand things. He

criticized the educational system and said that, “ *You regard that man to be educated who obtains some degree, has passed out some examinations, and is able to deliver fluent lecturers. But this is not real education. It prepares a man for social service, develop his character and finally imbues him with the spirit and courage of a lion. Any other education is worse than useless.* ” Further he explained that people need to be practical in all spheres of work. The whole country has been reined by mass of theories.

Swami Vivekananda was an ardent critic of the education of his time. He used to call it *Negative education* because it does not prepare for the struggle of life. There is no use of such kind of education which is not emphasizing building good moral character, physical work and use of mother tongue and to generate the sense of nationality. Our present system of education is producing biological machines instead of producing human. Only clerks are being made. This education system is increasing inferiority complex. Students are mugging up instead of understanding the concept and implications of the subjects. No education can be called national unless it, inspires love for the nation, love to learn and love to nurture the ancient culture, value, tradition and valuable knowledge of the nation.

Vivekananda transformed *Vedanta* in practice. He simplified *Vedanta* so that even a normal person could easily identify and relate with *Vedanta's* terms in daily life. He considered that man is already reached in perfection and education is the manifestation of the perfection already reached in man. Once he said, “ *I, generally don't like to give any specific definition of the term education, but if I have to define it I must consider education as a development of mental, Spiritual, moral and physical power.* ” Mere knowledge of theories will lead mankind nowhere. It is not an education. The overall development of man and mankind should be the priority of education. Whatever educations are being given is useless. Present education system is insufficient to fulfill the objectives of education and the need of the time. This education is producing senseless and aimless people having only the knowledge of reading and writing.

According to Swami Vivekananda the following should be the main aims of education:

1. The Aim of Reaching Perfection

The prime aim of education is to achieve fullness of

perfection already present in a child. According to Swamiji all material and spiritual knowledge is already present in man covered by a curtain of ignorance. Education should tear off that veil so that the knowledge shines forth as an illuminating torch to enliven all the corners by and by. This is meant by achieving fullness of the latent perfection.

2. Aim of Physical and Mental Development

The second aim of education is the physical and mental development of the child so that the child of today, after studying Geeta, is able to promote national growth and advancement as a fearless and physically well developed citizen of tomorrow. Stressing the mental development of the child, Swamiji, wished education to enable the child to stand on his own legs economically rather than becoming a parasite on others.

3. Moral and Spiritual Development

According to Swami Vivekananda, a nation's greatness is not only measured by its parliamentary institutions and activities, but also by the greatness of its citizens. But the greatness of citizens is possible only through their moral and spiritual development which education should foster.

4. Character Development Aim

According to Swamiji character development is a very important aim of any education. For this, he emphasized the practice of Brahmacharya which fosters development of mental, moral and spiritual powers leading to purity of thoughts, words and deeds.

5. The Aim of Development Faith in One's Own self

All through his life Swamiji exhorted the individuals to keep full confidence upon their powers. They should inculcate a spirit of self surrender, sacrifice and renunciation of material pleasures for the good of others. Education should fasts, all these qualities in the individual. He gave this call to his countrymen. "*Arise,*

awake and stop not till the goal is achieved."

6. The Aim of Searching Unity in Diversity

The true aim of education is to develop insight into the individuals so that they are able to search out and realize unity in diversity. Swami Vivekananda has further asserted that physical and spiritual worlds are one; their distinctness is an illusion (Maya). Education should develop this sense which finds unity in diversity.

7. Religious Development Aim

To Swamiji religious development is an essential aim of education. To him, each individual should be able to search out and develop the religious seed embedded in him and thus find the absolute truth or reality. Hence he advocated the training of feelings and emotions so that the whole life is purified and sublimated. Then only, the capacities of obedience, social service and submission to the teachings and preaching's of great saints and saviours will develop in the individual. Education should foster this development.

8. Self-Development:

In contrast to the contemporary system of education, Vivekananda advocated education for self-development. Education according to most of the Western educationalists, aims at man's adjustment with the environment. According to the Indian philosophical tradition true knowledge does not come from outside, it is discovered with the individual, in the self which is the source of all knowledge. According to Vivekananda, the function of education is the uncovering of the knowledge hidden in our mind.

9. Freedom of Growth:

Vivekananda is a staunch champion in education. Freedom is the first requirement for self development. The child should be given freedom to grow according to his own nature. The teacher should not exert any type of pressure on the child. The child should be helped in solving his problems himself. The teachers should have an attitude of service and

worship. Education ultimately aims at realization. It is a means of sorority of mankind.

10. Character Formation:

Character is the foundation for self development. The aim of education as self-development, therefore, leads to the aim of education for character. The aim of education is character building. This depends upon the ideals cherished by the individual. The educator should present high ideals before the students. The best way to develop a character is the personal example of high character set by the teacher. In ancient Indian system of education, the teachers used to present high ideals before the pupils, who in their turn imitated these ideals according to their capacities.

11. Education For Weaker Section Of Society:

Vivekananda pleaded for the universal education so that the backward people may fall in with others. To uplift the backward classes he chooses education as a powerful instrument for their life process. Thus education should spread to every household in the country, to factories, playing grounds and agricultural fields. If the children do not come to the school the teacher should reach them. Two or three educated men should team up, collect all the paraphernalia of education and should go to the village to impart education to the children. Thus, Vivekananda favoured education for different sections of society, rich and poor, young and old, male and female.

Swami Vivekanad`s Thought Of Curriculum In Education

According to Swami Vivekananda, the prime aim of education is spiritual growth and development. But this does not mean that he did not advocate material prosperity and physical well-being. He feelingly advocated the inclusion of all those subjects and activities, in the curriculum, which foster material welfare with spiritual advancement. For spiritual perfection Swamiji prescribed Religious, Philosophy, *Puranic* lore, Upanishads, Company of saints and their preaching's and for material advancement and prosperity he recommended

Languages, Geography, Science, Political Science, Economics, Psychology, Art, Agriculture, Industrial and Technical subjects together with Games, sports and other Physical exercises.

Swamiji prescribed the same ancient spiritual methods of teaching wherein the Guru and his disciples lived in close association as in a family. The essential characteristics of those religious and spiritual methods were as under:-

1. *To control fleeting mental faculties by the practice of Yoga.*
2. *To develop the mind by concentration and deep meditation.*
3. *To gain knowledge through lectures, discussions, self- experience and creative activities.*
4. *To imitate the qualities and character of teacher intelligent and clear understanding.*
5. *To lead the child on the right path by means of individual guidance by the teacher.*

He was of the opinion that the schools should produce self-reliant individuals who can earn their living after finishing their education. Hence, it seems, he suggested that vocational courses should also form a part of curriculum crafts may be taught along with other subjects. The curriculum for girls may include "needlecraft, cookery, child-rearing, and other useful subjects.

Place of child

Like Froebel, Vivekananda emphasized the education to be child centered. According to him the child is the store and repository of all learning material and spiritual. Like a plant a child grows by his own inner power naturally. Hence advising the child to grow naturally and spontaneously, Vivekananda asserted-"Go into your own and get the Upanishads out of your own self. You are the greatest book that ever was or will be. Until the inner teacher opens, all outside teaching is in vain."

Teacher-His Place and Value

Swamiji believed in self-education. According to him each of us is his own teacher. The external teacher only guides and inspires the inner teacher (soul) to rise up and start working to develop the child. Hence discussing the role of teacher Swami

Vivekananda said- "*Teacher is a philosopher, friend and guide helping the students to go forward in this own way.*" It is the teacher whom the students trust most after their parents and sometimes more than their guardians. So, it is must for the teachers to maintain their dignity while being friendly and supportive to their students. Their distraction from the morality can lead the students towards the evil.

Education of Masses

In the times of Swami Vivekananda, education was not available to the common people. It was confined to the well to do persons only. The poor, the miserable and the lowly placed used to starve and die for hunger. Swamiji yearned to improve the condition of the masses and thus advocated mass education as the only way to achieve any improvement in individual as well as society. Swamiji exhorted his countrymen to know- "*I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses of India are once more well educated, well fed and well cared for.*"

Methods of Teaching

With regard to teaching methods Vivekananda was of the view that children should be made to learn themselves. As all knowledge is within them and learning is only a function of their mind, they should only be made active. The teacher and the curricula should act only as stimuli. This shows that he was against child's cramming of pieces of information. The child should not be a passive recipient of knowledge. Discussions with the teacher were considered most important a method of teaching learning by him. Meditation and concentration were also considered important by him as through them developed the mental powers of the child. It was also emphasized by him that the teacher should encourage children and develop in them self-confidence for learning. Thus, along with the teaching the teacher was advised to develop in children those qualities which are necessary for learning. The learner must be able to control the internal and external senses. He should control his lower nature and

concentrate on learning. It is high time that we give serious thought to his philosophy of education and remembers his call to every-body- '*Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.*'

Findings:

1. Vivekananda was truly an embodiment of amalgam of modern and value oriented educationist and a great philosopher. He was far ahead of his time, because of his thinking in education`s concern. He proved in western world that India is no more a country of snake charmers and magicians. He showed the real culture, knowledge and philosophical thoughts of India to the western world.
2. It was Swami Vivekanad`s firm belief that only right kind of education may help India to reestablish it`s ancient glory. He always emphasized that our present education has lost its soul. It is producing clerks only. We are being conspired to deprive from our language, culture, tradition and from self respect. Education and right kind of education enriched with modern approach, present need, value based, culture nurturing and consist with thought provoking qualities may bring revolutionary changes in Indian people and in society also.
3. It can be say that Swami Vivekanand was the greatest face of Indian renaissance. It was he whose vision was very clear and specific about India. He knew the loop holes and shortcomings of Indian culture. He knew very well that why we were being ruled by British Empire. He knew that education can be a panacea for almost every kind of national and social problems that Indian society were facing in that time.
4. Swami Vivekanad`s educational thoughts were very important and they had the quality to maintain their importance in future also. Swami Vivekanand`s educational thoughts are timeless. So that`s why even today his thoughts are being tried to follow. His concept of self realization, reaching towards the perfection, physical strength, self- employment oriented curriculum, mass education and women education are some of the main features of his philosophical thoughts. Present education system in all over the world trying hard and putting

utmost effort to follow above mentioned concept of Swami Vivekanand which he gave almost more than a century back.

- Swami Vivekanand`s contribution in education is long lasting. In his educational thought the most important thing is combination of modern approach in education with traditional values, preference to mother language, science and technology based subjects and inclusion of physical activity, study of foreign languages so that students could become able to understand and realize logically the differences between our and other country`s culture and thoughts and also to easily share and exchange their views and thoughts.

Conclusion

From the analysis of Vivekananda scheme of education, the uplift of masses is possible only through education. He views on education brings a light of its constructive, practical and comprehensive character. By giving education, he tries to materialize the moral and spiritual welfare and upliftment of humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, nationality or time. By the way of his scheme of education, we can get the strong nation with peace and harmony and without caste and creed. He builds a strong nation for our sake. According to swamiji educations main objectives are: self development, fulfillment of swadharma, freedom of growth and character formation. Vivekananda long ago had already realized that mankind is passing through a crisis and the predicament will keep escalating in due course of time. The tremendous emphasis on the scientific and mechanical ways of life is fast reducing man to the status of a machine. Moral and values are being undermined. The fundamental principles of civilization are being ignored. Conflicts of ideals, manners and habits are pervading the atmosphere. Disregard for everything, still old is the fashion of the day. **Vivekananda seeks the solutions of all these social and global evils through education.** With this end in view, he feels the dire need of awakening man to his spiritual self, lies the very purpose of education. ___The Goal or Objective of Education Vivekananda points out that the defect of the present-day education is that it has no definite goal to pursue. A sculptor has a clear idea about what he wants to shape out of the marble block; similarly, a painter knows what he is going to paint. But a teacher...if you dare to

ask, he will hesitate to answer saying - has no clear idea about the goal of his teaching. Swami attempts to establish, through his words and deeds, that the end of all education is - **man making**. According to him, the essence of man lies in his soul, which he possesses in addition to his body and mind. In true with this philosophy, Swamiji defines education *as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man.'* The aim of education is to manifest in our lives the perfection, which is the very nature of our inner self. This perfection is the self realization and acquiring the infinite power in form of confidence which resides in everything and every existence - consciousness and bliss. For achieving this, one will have to eliminate one's ego, ignorance and all other false identification, which stand in the way. Right kind of education is the only way to overcome all kind of hindrance in life.

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