
Swami Vivekananda's Views on Philosophy of Education and Its Relevancy with Modern Life

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper, I would focus on Swami Vivekananda's views on Philosophy of Education and its relevancy with modern life. According to Swami Vivekananda, education does not mean the mass of information which is inserted by force into the mind of a child. In his own words, education is the manifestation of perfection already in man. Indian nationalism and spiritualism were the basic foundations for his philosophy of education and the philosophy of Vedanta and Upanishads. He was against the system of contemporary educational system; it turned men into slaves, capable of slavery and nothing else. He emphasized that the aim of education to be life-building, man-making and character-making and also he said that knowledge without culture was only skin-deep. The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Self-development, fulfilment of Swadharma, freedom of growth and character formation are the aims of education according to him. For him education means the process by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased and intellect is sharpened, as a result of which one can stand on one's own feet. Real education is that which prepares a man for struggle of existence. It prepares man for social service and develops his character. He has emphasized that an education which develops character, mental powers, and intelligence gives self-confidence and self-reliance among the individuals. Swami Vivekananda stressed education for democracy and national development. Education was a powerful instrument to achieve these developmental qualities in the people. He wants to make the individual by giving recognizing of his cultural heritage and to struggle throughout his life, so that he emphasized education is the right choice to imminent life of human being. Vivekananda not only possessed high ideals of education but also he developed a sound system of ideals, how it was achieved.

Keywords: *Man-making, Self-confidence, Education Character building, Humanism, and Sympathy.*

INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda views that education is not information of knowledge which will insert into the mind of a child by force. In his own words – “Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man.”¹ He illustrates that the libraries could be the greatest saints of the world and encyclopaedias have become seers and rishis. He further said that the education was not of getting huge amount of information; it would be an undigested material of our brain. The good quality education must have the life building, man-making, character building, and assimilation of ideas. This would help to the common people to

prepare themselves for the struggle of life. The main essence of his philosophy of life is to become fearless through struggle and serve humanity with peace. He wants to make a individual without fear from enemies, face all the challenges boldly and confidently without any suppression. By synthesizing the idealistic philosophy of the west and creative philosophy of the ancient Hindu Dharma, he got a glory and greatness to the Hindu way of living.

VIVEKANANDA’S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

“Real education is that which enables one to stand on one’s own legs”.² Education prepares a man for social service, to develop his character and finally infuses him with the spirit and courage of a lion. For getting degree is not an education, the proper education must be viewed on the basis of character, mental powers, intelligence and inculcates, self-confidence and self-reliance in the individuals. Swami Ji has emphasized that all the knowledge which we gets from worldly or spiritual lies embedded in the human mind. It was covered with a veil of darkness and ignorance. Education is a tool to open from the darkness and ignorance, after getting of education, the knowledge will shines out dazzlingly. The teaching and learning are the one way of process. The teacher only guides, suggests, points out and helps the student. Self learning and self getting knowledge is the real education. The teacher only motivates and encourages the students to find out the hidden treasure of knowledge that lies dormant within him. He condemned and refused the bookish learning and rote memory education. Condemning the theoretical and academic education, he spoke emphatically for practical and experimental education. He warned his countrymen to be practical in all spheres of work. The whole country has been ruined by mass theories.

According to Vivekananda, the means for education is love. Love and character building are the best means for education. Love is the best inspiration in character building. Love in the minds of the educator is the real source of his influence upon the educated. The true education, gives the growth and expansion of personality. He wanted that the education for total human development was the main vision. “Character, efficiency and humanism should be the aim of all education. Vivekananda strongly pleaded that development of character through the service of his fellowmen, the utilization of his talents for ensuring the happiness and welfare of the millions of his less fortunate fellow-citizens should be the aim of the education.”³ The child should be taught through by love, it makes fellow feelings and love for human beings. Education must help the individual to recognize his cultural heritage and to use it in his struggle of life. Education is a life-long process towards the fullest development of human personality, self-discovery, self-perfection, self-awareness and self-manifestation.

Vivekananda realizes that mankind is passing through a crisis. The tremendous emphasis on the scientific and mechanical ways of life is fast reducing man to the status of a machine. Moral and religious values are being undermined. The fundamental principles of civilization are being ignored. Conflicts of ideas, manners and habits are pervading the atmosphere. Disregard for everything old is the fashion of the day. At this situation, Vivekananda seeks the solutions of all these social and global evils through education. Vivekananda emphasized on such education through which moral values can be developed among the students so that

they can conduct their life morally. They can decide what is right or wrong; what is good or evil; what is justice or injustice.

Vivekananda believed that if we can make a student as a good human being, the development of moral values within him is the prior task of education. According to him, morality is the important aspect of personality. For this, Vivekananda laid stress on religious education. Swami Vivekananda believed in the liberal concept of religion. Essential elements of all religions are the same. No religion is inferior to other religion. Man should follow an attitude of respect for all religion. According to Vivekananda, love is the highest goal of religion. Man should imbibe love for all and hatred for none.

VIVEKANANDA'S AIMS OF EDUCATION

Vivekananda wanted all-round development of education to heart and mind, to strengthen character and national consciousness, to help in the cultivation of strength and energy, nurture the brain and intellect and stir feelings of kindness and sympathy. He emphatically said: "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. What we need is to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of the knowledge that is our own and with it the English language and Western science; we need technical education and all else that will develop industries. So that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for them and save against a rainy day. The end of all education, all training, should be man-making. The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. The training, by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful, is called education. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and a nerve of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the universe and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it means going down to the bottom of the ocean, meeting death face to face. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want."⁴

According to Vivekananda, education is a process in which the young minds, will receive strength, energy and vigorous character. By the way of getting this process, the individual will mould themselves of their life. "All knowledge and all powers are within. What we call power; secrets of nature and force are all within. All knowledge comes from the human soul. Man manifests knowledge, discovers it with himself, which is pre-existing through eternity."⁵ Education is a man-making and nation-making process. It is the process which awakens the sleeping soul to self-conscious activity. It will become a powerful instrument to achieve the developmental qualities among the people. The prime aim of education is to achieve the full perfection already present in a child. According to Vivekananda, all the materials and spiritual knowledge are already present in the individuals mind, but it is covered by certain ignorance.

The second aim of education is the physical and mental development of the child. "For 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."⁶ The

third aim of education is the character development of the child. He emphasizes the child should practice Brahmacharya which fosters development of mental, moral and spiritual powers leading to purity of thought, words and deeds. In the fourth aim of education, he emphasizes the religious development. Every individual should search out and develop the religious seed and to reach the absolute truth or reality.

Vivekananda's ideas on education had a democratic angle. He expressed deep concern for the mass, "The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion - is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs. The education that you are receiving now in schools and colleges is only making you a race of dyspeptics. You are working like machines merely, and living a jelly-fish existence."⁷

Vivekananda's aim of education had strong nationalist bias. He was not critical of Western system of education rather; he questioned the suitability of Western Model in India. The system of education in India was based on Indian Foundation that was supported with the broader argument that the every nation should develop a system of education based on his own nature, history and civilization.

VIVEKANANDA'S PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION

Like Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda also prescribed the same ancient spiritual methods of teaching, where Guru and his disciples lived in close association as in a family. The following are the basic principles of education.

- i. Education is not only for getting information; rather it should develop character, mental powers, intelligence and inculcate self-confidence together with self-reliance.
- ii. Education should develop the child physically, mentally and spiritually.
- iii. While giving educational qualification, the technical education was necessary for the industrial growth which would lead to the economic prosperity of the nation.
- iv. Practicing of Brahmacharya is very essential for getting knowledge. The concentration is the key to all the knowledge.
- v. Religious education should be imparted through sweet impressions and fine conduct in preference to books.
- vi. Education should foster spiritual faith, devotion and self-surrender in the individual and should foster full development through service and sacrifice.
- vii. Education should develop character, mental powers, intelligence and inculcate self-confidence together with self-reliance.
- viii. All the subjects must be included in the curriculum which promotes the material and spiritual advancement of a child.

VIVEKANANDA'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

Vivekananda's views on education deals with physical education, moral and religious education, medium of education, women education and education for weaker sections of

society.

1. Physical Education: without the knowledge of physical education, the self-realization or character building is not possible one must know, how to make our body strong through physical education, to attain a complete education, it is necessary to develop both the mind and the body. In particular, Vivekananda stressed the value of physical education in curriculum.

He said, “You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of Gita. You will understand Gita better by your biceps, your muscles a little stronger. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman, when your body stands firm on your feet and you feel yourself as man.”⁸

2. Medium Education: Like Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda also emphasized education through the mother tongue. Besides mother tongue, there should be a common language which is necessary to keep the country united. Vivekananda appreciated the greatness of Sanskrit that it is the source of all Indian languages and a repository of all inherited knowledge; with the absence of this knowledge, it will be impossible to understand Indian culture. It is like a store house of ancient heritage, to develop our society it is necessary that men and women should know this language, besides the knowledge of the mother tongue.

3. Moral and Religious Education: Vivekananda said, “Religion is the innermost core of education. I do not mean my own or anyone else opinion about religion. Religion is as the rice and everything else, like the curries. Taking only curries causes indigestion and so is the case with taking rice alone.”⁹ Therefore, religious education is a vital part of a sound curriculum. Vivekananda considered Gita, Upanishads and the Vedas are the most important curriculum for religious education. For him, religion is a self realization and divinization. It is not only individual’s development but also for the transformation of total man. The true religion cannot be limited to a particular place of time. He pleaded for unity of world religion. He realized truth while practicing of religion. The truth is the power, untruth is the weakness. Knowledge is truth, ignorance is untruth. Thus truth increases power, courage and energy. It is light giving, therefore, necessary for the individual as well as collective welfare. In the Vivekananda’s point of view, ethics and religion are one and the same. God is always on the side of goodness. To fight for goodness is the service to God. The moral and religion education develop the self-confidence among the young men and women.

4. Education of Masses: The individual development is not a full development of our nation, so he needs to give education to the society or common people. The education is not only confined to the well-to-do persons only but also to the poor people. Vivekananda emphasis to improve the conditions of the masses and he advocated mass education. He takes this mass education as an instrument to improve the individual as well as society. By this way, he exhorted to 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.”¹⁰

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- 5. Man Making Education:** The educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda is a harmonious synthesis between the ancient Indian ideals and modern Western beliefs. He not only stressed on the physical, mental, moral, spiritual and vocational development of the child but also he advocated women education as well as education of the masses. The essential characteristics of his educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda are idealism, naturalism and pragmatism. In a naturalistic view points, he emphasized that real education is possible only through nature and natural propensities. In the form of idealist view point, he insists that the aim of education is to develop the child with moral and spiritual qualities. In the pragmatists view point, he emphasized the great stress on the Western education of technology, commerce, industry and science to achieve material prosperity. In short, Swami Vivekananda an idealist at heart. First of all he emphasized spiritual development, then the material prosperity, after that safety of life and then solving the problems of food and clothing of the masses.
- 6. Self Education:** Self education is the self knowledge, “education, education, education alone!”¹¹. That is, of our own self is the best guide in the struggle of our life. If we take one example, the childhood stage, the child will face lot of problems or commit mistakes in the process of character formation. The child will learn much by his mistakes. Errors are the stepping stones to our progress in character. This progress will need courage and strong will. The strong will is the sign of great character will makes men great.
- 7. Women Education:** Women education is not in the hands of others, the powers are in the women. Vivekananda considered that women to be the incarnation of power and asked men to respect them in everywhere. He rightly pointed out that unless Indian women secure a respectable place in this country, the nation can never march forward. . The important features of his scheme of female education are to make them strong, fearless, and conscious of their chastity and dignity. He insists that men and women are equally competent not only in the academic matters, but also must have equal companion in the home and family. Vivekananda being a keen observer could distinguish the difference in perception about the status of women in the West and in India. “The ideal women in India is the mother, the mother first, and the mother last. The word woman calls up to the mind of the Hindu, motherhood; and God is called mother.”¹²
- 8. 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.

CONCLUSION:

From the analysis of Vivekananda's scheme of education, the uplift of masses is possible only through education in present day life. He views on education brings a light of its constructive, practical and comprehensive character in the life of human being which are still relevant in the day to day life of the human beings. 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. Lastly, we can say that, the thoughts and ideas of Swami Vivekananda regarding moral values and character building is bearing a great significance in the field of our present school education. Because, only the real school education can motivate our students to think, to do something in a right path or right ways. According to Vivekananda, thus we can make a society or nation or universe, where everything is good, no corruptions, no anti-social activities, no immoral activities exist at all.

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