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EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

T. SIYONU KUMARI

Research Scholar
Dept. of Philosophy,
Andhra University,

Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh, India)

PROF. K. R. RAJANI

Dept. of Philosophy
Andhra University,

Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh, India)

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Abstract:

Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902), a great thinker and reformer of India, embraces education, which for him signifies ‘man-making’, as the very mission of his life. In this paper, which purports to expound and analyze Vivekananda’s views on education, an endeavor has been made to focus on the basic theme of his philosophy, viz. the spiritual unity of the universe. Whether it concerns the goal or aim of education, or its method of approach or its component parts, all his thoughts, we shall observe, stem from this dormant theme of his philosophy which has its moorings in Vedanta. 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 ideals, manners and habits are pervading the atmosphere. Disregard for everything 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 wherein, he thinks, lies the very purpose of education.

Keywords: Education, Conflict of Ideals, habits, Solution.

Introduction:

Swami Vivekananda’s teachings and ideas of education gave equal weightage to both material and spiritual development. Swamiji advocated, that the objective of the curriculum should be all-round development of the body, mind, and soul. We need to have proper training of ourselves in all of these domains to make ourselves a complete individual. Only a complete individual is capable of taking the country forward. Swami Vivekananda insisted that we need “*nerve of steel, muscles of iron and minds like a thunderbolt.*” One of the central points of Swami Vivekananda’s teachings is, ‘Youth should be ready to live for his motherland. They should continue to carry it forward through their ideals and be strong enough to defend it through physical prowess.

Swami Vivekananda’s ideas resonated with the cosmos and created during his lifetime and

continue to do the same to date. In contemporary India, Swami Vivekananda's teachings on education for all-round development is taken as a broader objective. Even though a wide range of organisations like Ramkrishna Mission itself is running schools to cater to this objective, yet the realisation far from desired. The life of a child in school remains way different from his life outside the school. The focus on experiential learning, the required emphasis on acquiring moral education to make a fully aware citizen is still non-existent in school curriculums. Modern education is developing human-machine incapable of physical and moral rigour.

Education Aligning With Indian Civilisation:

There is a lack of awareness about the Indian culture and civilizational roots in today's education system. Our education is heavily influenced by the blind imitation of the west. Swami Vivekananda's teachings never discarded the idea of incoming knowledge from foreign cultures. But he insisted that we aligned with our civilisational cumulative wisdom first. He always strived to keep harmony between the traditional Indian values and the new values brought due to the developments in science and technology. Taking a cue from the depth of Swami Vivekananda's teachings on similar lines, our education system needs to have the component of our cultural sensitivity embedded in it. The curriculum should have topics from Gita, Upanishad, etc., that can propel moral, metaphysical and social education, among India's future leaders. This would also instil the age-old values of this land.

According to Swami Vivekananda, the ultimate aims of education are:

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, he says, has no clear idea about the goal of his teaching. Swamiji attempts to establish, through his words and deeds, that the end of all education is man making. He prepares the scheme of this man-making education in the light of his over-all philosophy of Vedanta. According to Vedanta, 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 realization of the infinite power which resides in everything and every-where-existence, consciousness and bliss (satchidananda). After understanding the essential nature of this perfection, we should identify it with our inner self. For achieving this, one will have to eliminate one's ego, ignorance and all other false identification, which stand in the way. Meditation, fortified by moral purity and passion for truth, helps man to leave behind the body, the senses, the ego and all other non-self elements, which are perishable. He thus realizes his immortal divine self, which is of the nature of infinite existence, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss.

Education, which has the goal of creating people, is one of the most crucial aspects of human life, according to Swami Vivekananda. One can achieve self discovery, self perfection, self awareness, and self manifestation through a lifelong process. According to him, education is more than merely learning things; it is the "manifestation of excellence that already existed in man." He claimed that if education and knowledge were the same, then encyclopaedias and libraries would be the world's greatest sages.

The overall goal of education, in Vivekananda's opinion, should be the holistic development of the kid, which further develops his or her religious and spiritual faith, devotion, and capacity for service to the community and the country. Vivekananda frequently questioned the value of the current educational system by asking, "Is education worth the name if it does not help the common mass of people equip themselves for the struggle of life, if it does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion? His educational programme encouraged a comprehensive, useful, and productive attitude. He emphasised that education was necessary for all members of society.

He claimed that the only way to learn was by doing it yourself through experience. As Vedanta sought to expand, grow, advance, and achieve all-around perfection, Swami ji claimed that the Vedanta philosophy of education was the answer to the Indian educational dilemma. physical, mental, and spiritual and encouraged the unification of humanity on a global and national scale. It helps us recognise our genuine nature, gets rid of ego, ignorance, and false identification, and creates healthy human connections.

Generations of youth and aged alike consider him their role model and hero for the personality he was the kind of life he lived and the ideas and ideals he taught. On a personal note, I humbly recommend you to do study the life history/ Biography (if you haven't read before.) of this great man for at least for once in life; it will transform you to your best. As, Life is incomplete, till we know Swami Vivekananda!

- "What is education? Is it book learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education."
- "If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world and encyclopedias are the Rishis."
- "Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible."
- "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man"

These are some of Swami Vivekananda's quotes. Swami Vivekananda embraced education. According to him, education is incomplete without the teaching of aesthetics or fine arts. The knowledge of values and not of facts was his aim of education. He saw that education now only

focused on scoring high marks so that students can become doctors, engineers, lawyers, or something else with the main goal being to earn as much money as possible. He wanted to re-introduce value-based education and imbibe human values in people. He said that education should cover all parts of life like physical, intellectual, material, emotional, moral, and spiritual. His teachings were based on Ramakrishna's spiritual teachings of the Divine manifestations.

Purpose of Education:

He preached philosophies, spiritualism, and principles of Vedanta. Swami Vivekananda was a great teacher. He promoted faith in Advaita Vedanta or non-dualism. He was taught and educated that service to living beings meant service to God. He believed that a person must discover himself or herself and when that happens, it will help them in the expansion and the enrichment of their soul. He also believes that knowledge is inherent in man and it already exists in the individual. One only has to discover it. He believed that education is a part of human life and that it helps create self-confidence and self-realization and that it makes an individual aware of their hidden powers. He stressed personal contact with the teacher and that without the teacher, there won't be education.

- Achieve perfection – knowledge is already present in man, one has to discover it.
- Fulfilment of Swadharma – to grow like yourself and not copy others.
- Creating self-confidence and self-realization – one has many qualities within them but they are not conscious of it. Swami Vivekananda said that – “Faith in us and faith in God – this is the secret of greatness.”
- “Wake up, rise, and do not stop till your aim of life is achieved.”
- Unity in Diversity – individuals should develop this sense through education.
- Formation of Character – “We want that education, by which character is formed, the strength of mind is increased, intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's own feet.”
- Personality Development – According to him, “Personality is two-third and his intellect and words are only one-third in making the real man.”
- Physical and Mental Growth – education should aim at the physical and mental development of a child.
- Moral, Spiritual and Religious Development – a nation's and an individual's greatness are possible only through these.
- Universal Brotherhood – “Through education, we should gradually reach the idea of universal brotherhood by lining down the walls of separation and inequality. In every man, in every animal, however weak or miserable, great or small, resides the same omnipresent and omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul, but a manifestation.”

Swamiji lays great stress on physical health because a sound mind resides in a sound body. He often quotes the Upanishadic dictum 'nayamatma balahinena labhyah'; i.e. **the self cannot be realized by the physically weak**. However, along with physical culture, he harps on the need of paying special attention to the culture of the mind. According to Swamiji, the mind of the students has to be controlled and trained through meditation, concentration and practice of ethical purity. All success in any line of work, he emphasizes, is the result of the power of concentration. By way of illustration, he mentions that the chemist in the laboratory concentrates all the powers of his mind and brings them into one focus-the elements to be analyzed-and finds out their secrets. Concentration, which necessarily implies detachment from other things, constitutes a part of Brahmacharya, which is one of the guiding mottos of his scheme of education. Brahmacharya, in a nutshell, stands for the practice of self-control for securing harmony of the impulses. By his philosophy of education, Swamiji thus brings it home that education is not a mere accumulation of information but a comprehensive training for life. To quote him: 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there undigested, all your life.' **Education for him means that 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.**

Method or Procedure:

Having analyzed the goal or objective of education, the next question that naturally arises is about the method of imparting education. Here again, we note the Vedantic foundation of Swamiji's theory. According to him, knowledge is inherent in every man's soul. What we mean when we say that a man 'knows' is only what he 'discovers' by taking the cover off his own soul. Consequently, he draws our attention to the fact that the task of the teacher is only to help the child to manifest its knowledge by removing the obstacles in its way.

According to him, "Thus Vedanta states that within man is all wisdom, even in a boy it is so. It requires only an awakening and that much is the work of a teacher." He uses the development of a plant to emphasise his point. Just as in the case of a plant, one cannot do anything more than supplying it with water, air and manure while it grows from within its own nature, so is the case with a human child. The heuristic approach used by contemporary educationalists is similar to Vivekananda's approach to education. In this technique, the teacher encourages the student to have an open mind and seek out information on his own with the teacher's impartial supervision.

Swamiji emphasises the importance of the climate at home and at school for a child's optimal development. Parents and teachers should set an example for their students by leading positive lives. Swamiji advises the traditional gurukula (where students live with a preceptor) and other similar arrangements for this. Students in such systems might always see the ideal teacher in front of them, serving as a role model for them to follow.

Swamiji recommends learning Sanskrit and English in addition to mother tongue, even though he believes that mother tongue is the best medium for social or public education. While learning English is essential for understanding Western science and technology, Sanskrit opens the door to our enormous collection of classics. The inference is that social unity will advance unhindered if language does not remain the preserve of a select group of people.

Pasture of Study:

Vivekananda carefully included all the subjects in his educational programme that are essential for the overall growth of the person's body, mind, and soul. The broad categories of physical culture, aesthetics, classics, language, religion, science, and technology can be used to group these subjects. The country's cultural values ought to be incorporated into the curriculum, according to Swamiji. The spiritual principles of India are the foundation of her civilization. The study of classics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gita, Vedas, and Upanishads can help students instil time-tested principles in their ideas and lives. This will maintain the ongoing infusion of our spiritual ideals into global society.

According to Swamiji, education is still lacking without the study of aesthetics or the beautiful arts. He uses Japan as an illustration of how a country may become great through the fusion of art and usefulness.

Swamiji affirms that the innermost foundation of education is religion. However, he does not imply a specific type of religion; rather, he is referring to religion in its most fundamental sense, which is the recognition of the divinity inherent in every human. He often points out that religion is not based on creeds, dogmas, or any other set of procedures. According to him, being religious entails living our lives in a way that allows us to express our higher nature—truth, kindness, and beauty—through our words, actions, and ideas. All urges, ideas, and deeds that propel one in this direction are inherently elevating and harmonising, as well as wholly ethical and moral. Swamiji's concept of religion serving as the foundation of education should be understood in this context.

The following quote from him makes it clear why religion is the very foundation of education: "Religion is the highest motive power and, therefore, ought to be studied from that standpoint. It is the highest motive power in character building, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others, and peace to one's own self. According to Swamiji, education with a religious foundation can strengthen a person's belief in their divine nature and the limitless potential of the human spirit. This, in turn, will make people more resilient, tolerant, and compassionate. Additionally, it will enable man to transcend racial, national, and communal boundaries in his love and goodwill.

It is a misconception of Vivekananda's educational philosophy to believe that he completely neglected the material side in favour of spiritual development. In his plan for the renewal of India,

Vivekananda emphasises the necessity of eliminating poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. He claims that we need technical education and anything else that can help build industries so that men can stop looking for work and instead make enough money to support themselves and store some money for a rainy day. He considers it important for India to adopt all of the positive aspects of Western civilisation.

However, just like a person, every nation has its individuality, which should not be destroyed. The individuality of India lies in her spiritual culture. Hence in Swamiji's view, for the development of a balanced nation, we have to combine the dynamism and scientific attitude of the West with the spirituality of our country. The entire educational program should be so planned that it equips the youth to contribute to the material progress of the country as well as to maintaining the supreme worth of India's spiritual heritage.

Women's education is a key component in Swamiji's educational plan. He understands that women in our nation will be able to find their own solutions to challenges provided they receive the appropriate education. His plan for educating women is to instil in them a sense of strength, courage, and awareness of their chastity and dignity. Men and women are equally capable in academic areas, he notes, but women have a particular affinity and competence for courses that pertain to the home and family. Therefore, he urges the inclusion of courses that were not taught during his period, such as sewing, nursing, household science, culinary art, etc.

Conclusion:

The explanation and critique of Vivekananda's educational programme highlight its beneficial, useful, and all-encompassing nature. He understands that the best way to improve the lot of the majority is via education. Using his own words as a guide: "Traveling through various cities in Europe and watching in them the comforts and education of even the impoverished people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people and I used to cry." When did things change? I received "education" as a response. He makes it quite clear that everyone, regardless of income level, ought to receive an education since people make up society as a whole. Man's feeling of dignity increases when he is aware of his inner soul, and education is intended to help him do just that. He works to balance the old Indian values with the modern ideals made possible by advances in science and technology.

Swami Vivekananda's journey is highly inspirational in the context of Indian nationalism and its spiritual renaissance. To carry forward the teachings and legacy of his guru Sri Ramkrishna he founded Sri Ramkrishna Mission. He travelled across the globe met people and wrote extensively. He travelled the length and breadth of India, gave lectures to motivate youth to live up to the ideals set ours by ancestors. His ideas encouraged a generation of nation builders that strengthened the foundations of a post-colonial independent India.

To quote him, *“Know your past ... out of the past is built the future. Look back, therefore, as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind, and after that, look forward, march forward and make India brighter, greater, much higher than she ever was”*. On his birth anniversary let us pledge to learn from the ideas, work, life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Let us pledge to stand up to the ideals he stood for and make our future public leaders fully trained in body, mind, and soul for the nation and the entire humanity.

The answer to all social ills can be found in the reformation of man via moral and spiritual education. He provides the finest treatments for the social and global illnesses of our time by establishing education on the rock-solid foundation of our own philosophy and culture. He seeks to manifest the moral and spiritual well and upliftment of humanity, regardless of caste, creed, nationality, or period, through his educational programme. But Swami Vivekananda's educational programme, which he intended to use to create a powerful country that will guide the globe toward peace and harmony, is still a long way off. It is imperative that we reflect on his educational concept and keep in mind his admonition to everyone to "Arise, awake, and stop not until the goal is reached."

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