



# INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

( Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal )

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 6.865 (SJIF 2023)

## Educational Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda

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DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doilink/06.2023-74876569/IRJHIS2306004>

### Abstract:

*In this paper, we'll explore Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of education. The renowned Indian legend Swami Vivekananda was a mystic, philosopher, advocate for education, and yogic saint. He is acknowledged for his role in introducing Vedanta and yoga philosophy to the West. When he delivered his address at the "Parliament of Religion" in Chicago, United States, in 1893, he brought honour to India. Education, in Swami Vivekananda's opinion, does not refer to the bombardment of information that is forcibly implanted in a child's mind. He is insistent that education should firmly follow the route of human growth to the fullest extent because the development of any nation depends on the development of its people. His educational systems as well as the Vedant and Upanishads' philosophical tenets were fundamentally based on Indian nationalism and spiritualism. He supported a variety of educational goals, ranging from personal to societal to global. His ideology, which directly links self-development, capacity building, and global growth, is reflected in the curriculum he promoted. He only uses teaching strategies that are based on Western and Indian concepts. He has also set out a certain space for the teacher and another for the learner. He has placed a lot of emphasis on moral and value education, education for peace, and education for women in his educational philosophy.*

**Keywords:** *philosophy of education, awakening, man-making, spiritual teaching, nation building.*

### Introduction:

Swami Vivekanda opposed the modern educational system because it degraded men to being slaves with no other options. He stressed that education should be about creating a person's character, a man, and a life, and he said that knowledge without culture. Swamiji makes an effort to demonstrate that all education is created by humans through his words and activities. He develops the plan for this man-making instruction in accordance with his overall Vedanta worldview. Vedanta holds that a person's soul, which they also have a body and mind, is what makes them who they are. Swamiji defines education as "the manifestation of the perfection already in man" in accordance with

this philosophical outlook. Education's main goal is to help us become more excellent, which is what our inner selves are made of. This perfection represents the understanding of the inevitable power present in all things and all places, including existence, consciousness, and happiness. A sound mind resides in a sound body; hence Swamiji places a lot of emphasis on physical health in his educational philosophy. He frequently invokes the Upanishadic maxim "nayatmatmabalahinenalabhyah," which states that someone who is physically frail cannot realise themselves. For him, education refers to the process by which one develops their character, mental fortitude, and intelligence in order to be self-sufficient.

Therefore, he highlights the fact that the teacher's role is to simply remove barriers that stand in the way of the child's ability to express their knowledge. According to him, "Thus Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge, even in a boy it is so. It requires only an awakening and that much is the work of a teacher." For a child to develop properly, Swamiji places a lot of importance on the atmosphere at home and at school. 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 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 stronger, more tolerant, and compassionate. It will also assist man in extending his love and goodwill past racial, national, and community boundaries.

#### **Life in brief:**

On January 12, 1863, Swami Vivekananda was born in Calcutta in what is now a museum on Gourmohan Mukherjee Street. His mother, Bhubaneswari Devi, was a devoted, spiritual, and religious woman. Vishwanath Dutta, his father, worked as a lawyer at the Calcutta High Court. Although he left his family and became a monk, his grandpa, a famous scholar of Persian and Sanskrit, created an academic environment where he was born. Vivekananda was known to his parents as Narendranath Dutta. He comes from the Kshtriya caste. Narendra's early childhood was greatly influenced by his mother's spirituality and his father's contemplative, supportive temperament. Even though he was a mischievous boy, he had a dedication to monks and frequently meditated. His misbehaviour led his mother to remark, "I prayed to Shiva for a son but he provided me with a ghost." Datta entered the Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar Institution at Cultutta when he was eight years old. He enrolled in Presidency College after finishing his education and studied philosophy, theology, history, social science, art, and literature there. He also had a passion for classical music, dance, and physical education. Later, he became very interested in the Hindu

scriptures, such as the Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, and Puranas. At the Institution of the General Assembly, he also studied philosophy. He also studied David Hume, Kant, Gottlieb, Spinoza, Hegel, August Comte, Mill, and Darwin. Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution captured his interest, and he corresponded with him while translating his book Education (1861) into Bengali. He read Bengali literature and Sanskrit scriptures in addition to Western philosophers. Narendra became a member of Keshab Chandra Sen's Nava Vidhan in 1880. Tagore had an impact on him, but it was his encounter with Ramakrishna Permahamsa—and his subsequent conversion—that truly altered the course of his life.

On May 31, 1893, Vivekananda set off for the West, stopping in China, Japan, Canada, and the United States. He went to the 'Parliament of Religions' at the Art Institute of Chicago in September 1893 with the aid of Harvard University's John Henry Wright, where he spoke briefly on behalf of India and Hinduism. "Sisters and brothers of America today the entire world is happy because this Parliament has given proper foundation of the world religions because its foundation lies on Bagwat Geeta," he said at the start of his speech, despite his initial anxiety. Seven thousand people gave Vivekananda a two-minute standing ovation. Vivekananda got up early on July 4, 1902, meditated, went to his chamber, and asked to not be disturbed before passing away as he was doing so.

### **Educational Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda:**

Vivekananda once said, "Is education worth the term if it does not assist the common people prepare themselves for life's struggles, if it does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of charity, and the courage of a lion?" He insisted that the ultimate goal of education must be life-building, man-making, and character-making. And this can be achieved only through education. According to Swami Vivekananda, the best education is the one that equips a person to fight for their very existence. Education develops a man's character, equips him for social duty, and ultimately imbues him with the energy and bravery of a lion. Since receiving a degree does not constitute education, the right education must be evaluated in terms of a person's character, mental faculties, intelligence, and ability to instill confidence and self-reliance in others.

Swamiji has emphasised that everything of the knowledge we acquire, whether it be spiritual or worldly, is deeply rooted in the human mind. It was wrapped in an overcoat of mystery and ignorance. Education is a tool that helps people escape ignorance and darkness, and once they have it, their knowledge will shine brightly. The only method of processing is through teaching and learning. The teacher merely offers advice, makes suggestions, emphasises important topics, and assists the pupil in engaging in independent learning. The teacher only inspires and challenges the students to unearth the information that is hidden inside them. He rejected and denounced memorization drills and bookish learning. He strongly advocated for practical and experimental

education, criticising theoretical and academic education. “You will need to be practical in all spheres of work,” he advised.

According to Swamiji, one must get rid of their ego, ignorance, and any other false identifications that get in the way. Meditation aids man in letting go of the body, the senses, the ego, and all other transient non-self elements while being strengthened by moral purity and a hunger for the truth. His eternal divine self, who has the qualities of unlimited existence, infinite knowledge, and boundless happiness, becomes apparent to him as a result. At this point, man realises that all other selves in the cosmos are manifestations of his own self, which is identical to all other selves. So, for Swamiji, “man making” refers to arousing people to recognise who they really are.

However, the meaning of education in this context does not suggest that the soul can develop independently of the body and the mind. We must keep in mind that Advaita, which promotes unity in difference, is the foundation of Swamiji's philosophy.

In light of this, man-making for him refers to the harmonious growth of the body, mind, and soul. Vivekananda desired the holistic advancement of education for the heart and mind, to strengthen morality and national awareness, to aid in the development of courage and vigour, to nourish the mind and intellect, and to arouse feelings of compassion and empathy. We want education that develops character, builds mental fortitude, broadens the mind, and enables one to stand on one's own two feet, he declared strongly. We need to study many facets of our own knowledge, together with the English language and Western science; we also need technical education and everything else that will help establish companies, independent of foreign influence. So that men can earn enough money to support themselves and save for a rainy day rather than looking for work. Man-making should be the goal of all training and education. All training has one goal in mind: to help the man grow. Education is the process of bringing the current and expression of the will under control and making them productive. What our nation needs right now are giant wills, iron muscles, and steel nerves that can penetrate the mysteries and secrets of the universe and will do whatever it takes to achieve their goals, even if it means delving to the bottom of the ocean and confronting death. We want a religion that is created by men. We seek theories about how humans are made. We seek universal education that will make men.

Even though Swamiji believes that mother tongue is the best medium for social or public education, he also advises learning Sanskrit and English. While learning English is essential for understanding Western science and technology, Sanskrit opens the door to our enormous collection of classics. It is implied that social unity will advance unhindered if language is not allowed to remain a privilege of a select group of people.

According to Swamiji, a sound mind resides in a sound body, hence Swamiji places a lot of emphasis on physical health in his educational philosophy. He frequently invokes the Upanishadic

maxim “nāyamatmabalāhinenalabhyah,” which states that someone who is physically frail cannot realise themselves. He repeatedly emphasises the importance of focusing on mental culture in addition to physical culture. According to Swamiji, the pupils’ minds need to be taught and controlled by meditation, focus, and the practise of moral purity. He emphasises that the power of concentration is the key to success in all professions. One of the governing principles of his educational philosophy, Brahmacharya, includes concentration, which inevitably implies separation from other things. In a word, brahmacharya refers to the practise of self-control to ensure the harmony of the impulses. Thus, Swamiji drives home the point that education is more than merely the storage of facts; it is a thorough preparation for life. He said, and I quote, “Education is not the quantity of information that is put into your brain and runs free there undigested, for the rest of your life.” For him, education refers to the process that develops moral integrity, mental strength, and ability to think critically.

### **Vivekananda’s Principles of Education:**

Vivekananda advocated using the same age-old spiritual teaching techniques as Rabindranath Tagore, where the teacher and his students lived together as a close-knit family. The fundamental tenets of education are as follows.

- (i) Education should foster character, mental abilities, intelligence, and the development of self-confidence and self-reliance rather than just imparting facts.
- (ii) Education should help children grow spiritually, mentally, and physically.
- (iii) Technical education was important for obtaining educational credentials since it would promote industrial development, which would boost the country's economy.
- (iv) The practise of Brahmacharya is crucial for learning. The secret to all knowledge is attention.
- (v) Rather than using books, religious instruction should be spread by good deeds and sweet impressions.
- (vi) Education ought to encourage the individual's spiritual faith, commitment, and self-surrender as well as their complete growth through service and sacrifice.
- (vii) Education should foster moral character, intellectual prowess, intelligence, and the development of self-assurance and self-reliance.
- (viii) All subjects that support a child's intellectual and spiritual development must be part of the curriculum.

### **Purpose of Education:**

The problem with modern education, according to Vivekananda, is that it lacks a clear objective. Similar to how a painter knows what he is going to paint, a sculptor has a clear notion of what he intends to carve out of the marble block. But a teacher, he claims, is unable to define the purpose of his instruction. Swamiji makes an effort to demonstrate that all education is created by

humans through his words and activities. He develops the plan for this man-making instruction in accordance with his overall Vedanta worldview. Vedanta asserts that a person's soul, which they also have a body and mind, is what makes them who they are. Swamiji defines education as “the manifestation of the perfection already in man,” in accordance with his philosophical outlook. Education’s main goal is to help us become more flawless, which is what our inner selves are made of. This perfection represents the understanding of the inescapable power present in all things and all places, including existence, consciousness, and happiness.

### **Curriculum:**

Spiritual development and growth are the main goals of education, according to Swami Vivekananda. This does not imply, however, that he did not support material success and physical health. He passionately argued for the inclusion of all disciplines and extracurricular activities that promote both material welfare and spiritual development in the curriculum. Swami Vivekananda recommended religious, philosophical, upanishad, company of saints, and their teachings for spiritual perfection, and he advised studying languages, geography, science, political science, economics, psychology, art, agriculture, industrial and technical subjects, along with sports, games, and other physical activities, for material advancement and prosperity.

### **Method of Teaching:**

The ancient spiritual teaching methods that Swami Vivekananda advocated involved the guru and his followers living together closely as a family. These were the key traits of those spiritual and religious practises:

1. To use yoga as a means of controlling temporary mental faculties.
2. To cultivate the mind via intense meditation and focus.
3. To learn through lectures, conversations, first-hand knowledge, and creative activities.
4. To imitate the traits and personality of a knowledgeable, well-informed instructor.
5. To guide the youngster in the appropriate direction with personalised guidance from the teacher.

### **Role of a Teacher:**

Vivekananda said, “The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student’s soul and see through the student’s eyes and hear through His ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach none else. (CW, vol. IV, p.183)

According to Swami Vivekananda, a good teacher is someone who has an attitude of abandonment, influences children through his ideal example, loves his students, empathises with their struggles, adapts his instruction to their needs, abilities, and interests, and helps them develop spiritually. The teacher must not only have the knowledge he will be imparting to the pupil, but also

understand how to impart it. And in order for what the instructor imparts or transmits to be fully successful, it must also include a few other components. For instance, the instructor should instill in the pupil a sense of dignity and respect for themselves while also sharing with them the idea that they are actually one in spirit.

In India, the previous educational system was extremely dissimilar from the current one. Students were not required to pay. It was once believed that since information is so sacred, no man should trade it. Knowledge ought to be distributed without restriction or charge. To assist these teachers, the wealthy families offered gifts to them, and they in turn had to help their pupils, the teachers used to take students without charging them, and not only that, but the majority of them gave their students food and clothing. So the masters always lived in their disciples.

None of the teacher's lessons should be delivered with the intention of gaining fame, fortune, or money. His actions must simply be motivated by love, by a pure affection for all of humanity. Love is the sole means through which spiritual force may be communicated. Any self-serving motivation, such as the desire for money or fame, can instantly ruin this medium of communication. Modern-day teachers ought to think carefully about their responsibilities.

#### **Role of a Student:**

“Let's be human,” Swami Vivekananda had written to the nation's youth from Osaka, Japan. He also focused on the youth's potential and urged them to develop themselves so they might benefit humanity. ‘Muscles of iron’ and ‘nerves of steel’ were what he desired from the young person. A student should be motivated and interested in learning. He ought to be able to manage his senses. He ought to pay attention to the standards set set by his teacher. But his is very unfortunate that today's youth is too preoccupied with the 2GB of data allotted on his cell phone, disregarding his obligations to the country and to humanity.

According to Swami Vivekananda, “Whatever you think, that is what you will be. If you believe you are weak, you will actually be weak; if you believe you are strong, you will actually be strong.” “Seek the highest, aim for the highest, and you shall find the highest,” he added. His message was clear and effective for each and every student of this country to realise his/her duties towards the society and nation.

#### **Conclusion:**

Swami Vivekananda asserts strongly that since people are what make up society, education must be accessible to all, no matter their socioeconomic status. He works to balance the old Indian values with the modern ideals made possible by advances in science and technology. 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 materialise the moral and

spiritual wellbeing and upliftment of humanity, regardless of caste, creed, nationality, or period, through his educational programme. Swamiji also insisted for personality development, service of mind, universal brotherhood, self-sufficiency, physical and mental development, moral and spiritual development, unity in diversity, religious development, environment education, yoga education, value education, women education, peace education etc. His ideas on education are extremely important today because modern education has lost a lot of its connection to the principles of human life. He made an effort to convince Indians that cultural strength should be the cornerstone of political and social power. He truly understands the cultural backdrop of Indian educational thought. Although he is no longer with us, his memory will live on forever. Future generations will continue to be inspired by his missions and preaching. Today, we should seriously consider his educational concept and recall his message to everyone to “Arise, awake, and stop not until the goal is reached.”

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