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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION IN MODERN INDIAN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

India is a country with varied and rich cultural heritage. Numerous great educationists came with their individual ideas and philosophy of education to place education system in a perfect frame in the 19th century. Among all, Swami Vivekananda was the most influential educationist and reformer of India. Vivekananda was not only a great supporter of Vedanta but also he had given Vedanta a practical form. Modern India has put tremendous emphasis on the scientific and mechanical ways of life which is fast reducing man to the status of a machine. Moral, religious and spiritual values are being diluted. According to Swami ji man is a compound of animalism, humanity and divinity. The aim of education should be to help the man to grow from the animal to the divine state, through self effort, self realization and proper training. If modern India has failed in any domain, it is undoubtedly in the arena of producing genuine human beings, the key component of developed society, through a perfect education system. The present paper attempts to highlight views of swami Vivekanad's educational philosophy and contribution in modern Indian education.

INTRODUCTION

Today, Swami Vivekananda is universally accepted as the greatest son of mother India as well as one of the world's greatest personality. He established relationship between the past and the future, traditional and modernity, religion and science, and spirituality and education. His opinion was that spiritual bridge connected the East and the West- a bridge built on the central truths of Vedanta Philosophy. Swami Ji has presented before us constructive ideas and philosophy for the regeneration of India and world through a perfect education system. His dynamic ideas and philosophy of Education was based on the nectar of Vedanta Vision of the innate divinity of human beings which would lead to human growth and development. Swami Ji declared thought must be imbibed among all of us through his perfect model of education system, if India wants to achieve its lost glory and become a leading country in the world.

REVIEW OF THE MODERN EDUCATION

As per Swami Ji opinion the education that we are getting today, has some good ideas but it has some drawbacks also which are so great that the good things are all weighted down. Modern education, which is more or less career-oriented, cares little for the cultivation of virtue, the strengthening of the moral will or formation of positive character. It does not teach self-control or how to be in harmony with friends, neighbours or colleagues. It does not instill the values of truth, honesty, love, compassion, which make one a true human being. It does not teach how to minimize tension, remain calm in difficult situations, or how to turn the mind inward to experience supreme bliss. The spurt in cases of students are committing suicide after failing or under-performance in examinations, or indulging in violence, clearly shows that they are not prepared to control negative emotions. However, the modern education which is negative in nature does not emphasize respect for teacher, women and elders, compassion for love, conviction in the power of truth and goodness, feeling for poor, downtrodden, oppressed, ignorant and weaker sections of the society. It does not help human beings to become gracious, intellect, fearless, self-confident, self-reliant, and man of values, morality, honest and empathy through self effort, self realization and proper training as it was in the traditional system.

Constant increase rate of the social evils in India like poverty, ignorance, fear, physical weakness, caste and untouchability, selfishness, exploitation, lack of faith on oneself, woman illiteracy and violence, mass oppression, distortion of religion, corruption, , etc., represent nothing but the failure of modern education system. Hence it was realized by Vivekananda that there is an urgent need of finding out a perfect education system which is competent to eradicate all the social evils and promote imperishable development of the nation by regenerating human beings, the key components of the society. Hence he had emphasized on the reformation of education system in India. He did not engage himself and his companions only in the propagation Vedanta; he contributed immensely in the expansion and popularization of mass education. He will always be remembered for providing Indian a perfect scheme of Indian Education.

VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Swami Ji assumed the education is that liberates (lk fo|k ;k foeqDr;s). It liberates one from negative tendencies and ignorance about one's real 'Self'. In Indian tradition, 'Vidya' (learning or knowledge) is posited as antithetical to 'Avidya' (ignorance or non-knowledge), and it ought to cultivate 'Atma-Vidya' (knowledge of the Self) to be complete. Learning is thus not an end in itself, but only a means of to help a person grow into self-consciousness, to make him realize the ultimate oneness of life, a fact so logically explained by the Vedic seers and by puissant souls of personalities like Sri Ramakrishna (1836- 1886), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), and others in recent times.

VIVEKANANDA'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Swami Vivekananda was not a philosopher of education, but his ideas have a deep philosophical value. It relates to the development of the total man, and not just the outer man of flesh and blood, which most educationists speak of, but the inner man of flesh and spirit, extending towards the infinite world beyond space and time. Unlike John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), the great educator, the nucleus of Swami Vivekananda's ideas does not lie in religious and theoretical doctrine and dogmas but in the real nature of man, which he described as inherently divine. Vivekananda seemed to agree with Froebel. He also stated that education should be conducive to the harmonious unfoldment of a person's life, and that the evolution of nature reveals itself in the evolution of the human mind. Again like Froebel, he stressed the integrated development of human beings, who can lead a life of harmony and peace. Swamiji says, "We want to become harmonious beings, with the psychical, spiritual, intellectual, and working (active) sides of our nature equally developed. The idea is really that we should become many sided." Vivekananda's philosophy of education has been supported by that of Rabindranath Tagore (7th May 1861- 7th August, 1941) when he (Tagore) also opined that, "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existences."

PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF VIVEKANANDA'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS

The essential characteristics of the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda are Idealism, Naturalism and Pragmatism-

- In a **Naturalistic** view point, he emphasized that real education is possible only through nature and natural propensities.
- In the form of **Idealist** view point, he says that the aim of education is to develop the child with moral and spiritual qualities.
- In the **Pragmatists** view point, he emphasized on the Western education of technology, industry commerce, and science to achieve material prosperity.
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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IDEAS AND REFORMATION OF MODERN EDUCATION

Swami Vivekananda had understood that mankind was 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. According to Swamiji man is a compound of animalism, humanity and divinity. The aim of education should be to help him grow from the animal to the divine state, through self effort, self realization and proper training. If modern India has failed in any domain, it is undoubtedly in the arena of producing human beings of genuine character. Today human beings, the key component of society, are hardly human in nature. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda believed the creation of man who is compassionate as well as intelligent, “great in heart and great in mind”, and who, by dynamism, can bring about positive change in society. Swamiji said that, “We want the man whose heart feels intensely the miseries and sorrows of the world...And (we want) the man who not only can feel but can find the meaning of things, who delves deeply into the heart of nature and understanding.

According to him, education is not just cultivation of mental faculties as Plato thought. The development of the intellect must go along with the development of the heart, of hands and of the spirit. The heart must bleed for the poor and the downtrodden; hands must work dexterously, and the spirit must provide motivation for social work. According to him the education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out the 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.” According to Vivekananda “Education is not the amount of information that we put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life building, man making, and character making. Therefore, it is evident that we want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, and the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one’s own feet. In addition to this, what we need today is 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. Vivekananda says, “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 enter 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.

AIMS OF EDUCATION

According to Swami Vivekananda the following should be the aims of education-

THE AIM OF REACHING PERFECTION

The main aim of education is to achieve extensive perfection already in man. Swamiji opined that all material and spiritual knowledge is already present in man covered by curtain of ignorance. Education should tear off the veil so that the knowledge shines forth as an illuminating torch to enliven all the corners.

FULFILLMENT OF SWADHARMA

Swami Vivekananda accepted the idea of Swadharma in education. Everyone has to grow like himself/herself. No one has to copy others. It is hence that he condemned the imposition of foreign education. He asked, “Getting by heart the thoughts of others in a foreign language and stuffing your brain with them and taking some university degree, you can pride yourself as educated. Is this education?” True improvement is self inspired. There should not be any type of external pressure on the children. External pressure only creates destructive reactions leading to obstinacy and indiscipline. In an atmosphere of freedom, love, and sympathy alone, the child will develop courage and self-reliance.

FREEDOM OF GROWTH

According to Swamiji freedom is the first requirement for self-development. The child should be given freedom to grow, according to his/her own nature. Vivekananda said, "You cannot teach a child any more than you can grow a plant. All you can do is on the negative side- you can only help. You can take away the obstacles, but knowledge comes out of its own nature."

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The true aim of education is to develop insight into the individuals so that they become able to search out and realize unity in diversity. Vivekananda said that physical and spiritual worlds are one; their distinctness is an illusion (Maya). Education must be capable of developing this sense which finds unity in diversity.

CHARACTER FORMATION

Character formation is one of the most important aims of education. Swami Vivekananda said, "The character of any man is but the aggregate of his tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind. As pleasure and pain pass before his/her soul, they leave upon it different pictures and the results of these combined impressions is what is called a man's character." The educators should present high ideals before learners. The best way to develop a character is the personal example of high character set by the teacher

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL GROWTH

One of the important aims of education is physical and mental development of the child so that the child, after completing his/her education can become 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.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

According to Swamiji, 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 citizen is possible only through their moral and spiritual development which education should foster.

- Development of Faith in one's Own-self, Shraddha and Spirit of Renunciation
- All through his life Swamiji exhorted the individuals to keep full faith and 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 foster all these qualities in the individuals.

RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

According 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 embodied in him and this will help in finding out 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 of great saints and various other good qualities will develop in the individual. Education should foster this development in the learners.

MEANS OF EDUCATION

1. **Love:** The best means of education according to Swami Vivekananda is love. Education should be based on the love. Love is the best inspiration of character building. Children should be taught with love and care. This love is the love for men, for human beings. The only motive for imparting education should be love for the learner and for the man in him.
2. **Help:** The task of the educator is to help the learner in expressing his abilities and capacities.

Educator should also help the learner to recognize his cultural heritage and use it in his struggle of life. Educator only will help the learners to grow from insight.

3. **Guidance:** Education is not a bed of roses. Every learner has to face problems in his own life. He solves them by his own efforts and with the guidance of the teachers. The teacher should only instruct the learner to pay concentration/attention to his problems. The greater the attention, the more is the effort effective.
4. **Brahmacharya:** According to ancient Indian thinkers the Brahmacharya is the first means of achieving concentration. It gives spiritual and mental power of the highest kind. It transforms the sex drive into a spiritual force. Brahmacharya implies the purity of thoughts, words and deeds. It helps to develop and sharpen various psychological processes, e.g., learning, attention, remembering, thinking etc.
5. **Discussion and Contemplation:** Except concentration, the other means of education are discussion and contemplation. It is only through these that the learner may remove his difficulties. Discussion should be carried out in an informal atmosphere and contemplation should be practised in a calm and quiet atmosphere with the mind full alive. In the end of education the learner should inculcate the faith and reverence for his/ her teachers. Without faith and reverence no true knowledge will be achieved.

MEDIUM OF EDUCATION

Like Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda also emphasized that education should be imparted 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'. It is the source of all Indian languages and a storehouse 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. So men and women should know this language, besides the knowledge of the mother tongue.

TYPES OF EDUCATION

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical weakness is the cause of at least one third of our miseries. The youth of India have become lazy. They cannot combine our thoughts and actions. Swamiji noticed that, "We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it. First of all, our young men must be strong.

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION

According to Swamiji religion must be an integral part of the twenty first century education system. Undoubtedly, it can be stated that misunderstanding or misconception of the term "Religion", in India, is one of the major social harms. Religion, which is, according to Swamiji, "manifestation of divinity already in man", has been misunderstood and misinterpreted to serve to selfish ends of a few educated and upper class people. Religion, which is realization, has been reduced to certain ceremonies and rituals. The most people have been made to believe that religion is performance of certain ceremonies on certain auspicious days and there is nothing beyond that.

SCIENCE EDUCATION

Swami Vivekananda had experienced the ancient truths through inward journey under the guidance of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji had really understood that "Religion without science is blind; science without religion is lame" (Einstein). Along with it he had the pulse of western scientific approach. He felt the need for bridging the gaps between western science and eastern philosophy. For this, he took a holistic approach of the western science & eastern religion. He said, "We need to study, independent of

foreign control, different branches of 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 themselves and save against a rainy day.” While Vivekananda has talked about the need of western thoughts, science and technology.

EDUCATION FOR WEAKER SECTION OF THE SOCIETY

Swami Vivekananda respected human individuality, everywhere and pleaded for freedom for everyone. He believed that, “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling nature, external and internal. Swami Vivekananda, throughout his life, worked for the uplift of backward classes. He pleaded for universal education so that these backward people may fall in line with others. He said, “A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence is spread among the masses. Thus, Vivekananda favored education for different sections of society, rich and poor, young and old, male and female.

WOMEN EDUCATION

There is a statement which says- “If a man is educated, an individual is educated, and if a woman is educated, a family is educated.” Manu says, “Where women are respected, there Gods delight and where they are not, there all work and effort come to naught.” Yet in India so much difference is made between man and woman. The men have turned the women into mere manufacturing machines and they deprived from getting their basic rights, binding them by hard and rigid rules. “All nations”, Swamiji said, “have attained greatness by paying proper respect to woman. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will it be in future.” Swami Vivekananda regarded woman as the embodiment of Shakti, the primordial energy of the universe. He said that male and female can contribute equally for the development of the nation. Therefore, education for woman is as much important for a nation’s development as that of men, with the difference that they required to be trained differently in view of the difference in their physical and mental make-up and their social roles. can never march forward.” He advised that, “Ideal characters must always be presented before the view of the girls to imbue them with a devotion to lofty principles of selflessness.”

CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be stated that Swami Vivekananda has foreseen that mankind is passing through a crisis. Conflicts of ideals, manners and habits are pervading the atmosphere. Disrespect for everything old is the fashion of the day. From the analysis of Vivekananda’s scheme of education, it is clear that the uplift of masses is possible only through education. For the uplift men of humanity. “Education! Education! Education alone” is the answer he himself has given and firmly advised his disciples: “Let the reading of the Vedanta and practicing of meditation and chanting of Gita be left for the next life. Let this body go in the services of others, then I shall know that your coming to me has not been in vain.” He says “Feel, my children feel; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden!” It is only through the scheme of education of Swamiji we can instill in our forth coming generation the passion for excel and compassion to service and share, the indomitable will to serve the poor, ignorant and downtrodden based on whose we have become intellect, rich & independent. To appreciate the educational ideas and Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.

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