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Educational Implications of Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy of Education

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Abstract:

Swami Vivekananda's comprehensive view of education may be summed up in two words: equilibrium and synthesis. He was a great and forceful personality and his sayings on education are as inspiring as the rest. According to Swamiji, education should be character building, life-building and human building. To Him, good education is only that which unfolds the hidden powers in man requiring the cultivation of a sense of humility which is the basis of a man's character the true mark of a balanced personality. He had foreseen the emergence of various social evils due to the imperfect education system in India. So He stressed on 'man-making education which is a very comprehensive concept, encompassing character development and vocation, large scale mass-education and a good amount of 'womens' education. In the present paper, an attempt has been made to cover (of course, in short) some of the important aspects of his philosophy of education.

Keywords : *Equilibrium, Synthesis. Man-making education.*

Introduction: Since time memorial, India has had a strong sense of cultural unity. But towards the last century, India has witnessed a close conflict between the cultural values of the East and West, between our deep rooted civilization and European civilization of the British and between the spiritual attitudes of the East and Materialism of the West. Politically every inch of Indian soil was conquered by the British and also has been successful in dominating the minds of the intelligentsia. This was possible through a subtle cultural cohesion by thrusting an English system of Education relegating the Indian traditional arts and literature to the background. Indian mind was totally dominated by cultural slavery totally. In this stressful context alien civilization, our countrymen lost the tracks and they themselves placed under the influence of British education,

It was at this stage towards the last decades of the 19th century two personalities arose to fight against the storm of Western culture by reviewing India's heritage and spiritual wealth, Swami Vivekananda in Bengal and soon afterwards Swami Rama Tirtha in Punjab. In the nectar of India's spiritualism, both were drenched, even both were erudite scholars, born patriots, both teacher-philosophers, saints and a strong revivalist of Indian culture, an apostle

of practical Vedanta etc,etc. Swami Vivekananda was the one who revealed the true foundations of culture and was the one who revealed the true foundations of culture and was able to define and strengthen the sense of unity as a nation. He gave Indians proper understanding of their country's great spiritual heritage and thus gave them pride in their past. He pointed out the drawbacks of Western culture and the need for India's contribution to overcome these drawbacks. Thus he made India a nation with a global mission.

India's nationalist movement by implanting a sense of unity, pride in the past and sense of mission was strengthened by Swamiji. Several eminent leaders of India's freedom movement have acknowledged their indebtedness to Him. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India wrote 'Rooted in the past and full of India's prestige ,Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present ,His mission was the service of mankind through social service, mass education ,religious revival and social awakening through education. Sri Aurovindo feels, "The Swamiji possessed vast knowledge of Eastern and Western culture and was drenched deep in the nectar of the Indian spiritual philosophy of Vedanta .He was an ascetic who dived into the foundation of self-realization (atmasaksathara) and stood at the summit of hill of the Vedantic philosophy of India. Besides being a *Brahmajnani*, he acted as a human being ,a lover of humanity and with broad human sympathy. He was a matchless patriot, an apostle of national resurgence and harbinger of the re glorification of India. With a burning spirit of nationalism ,he proclaimed to the whole world especially to the westerners the glory that is India and placed before the world the treasure of India's thought and wisdom. Netaji Subash Chandra Bose also reiterated the same feeling when he said "Swamiji harmonized the East and the West ,religion and science ,past and the present and that is why he is great. Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-reliance and self-assertion from his teachings.

Swami Vivekananda's unique contribution to the creation of new India was to open the minds of Indians to their duty to the down trodden masses .He was the first religious leader in India to speak for the masses, the role of laboring classes in the production of country's wealth, formulate a definite philosophy of service and organize large-scale social service.

Various Aspects of Vivekananda's Philosophy of Education: Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy is based on his general philosophy when he says 'education is the manifestation of divine perfection, already within man'. Being a Vedantist, Swamiji advocates that Atman dwells within everyone. To realize the self, the perfection of God in man is the goal of true education. He developed the concept of inner powers, According to Him, Education is spontaneous and positive, accordingly book learning is not education, rather education is life building assimilation of ideas. In his own words 'if you have assimilated five ideas and made as your own character ,you have more education than any man who has got by heart the whole library and if education were identical with information ,the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopedias of the greatest Rishis.'. So he believed that education is the training by which the current expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful.

Again according to Vivekananda, knowledge is inherent in man. No knowledge comes from outside. Knowledge exists in the mind. Man discovers it. What a man 'learns' is really what he discovers by taking the cover off his soul. In his own words, 'All knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind, the infinite library of the universe is in your mind'. The falling of the apple gave the suggestion to Newton and he studied his own mind. He rearranged all the previous links of thought in his mind and discovered a new link among them, which we call the Law of Gravitation.

Regarding *aims of education*, Vivekananda feels that it is a part of human life and real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own feet. In his own words: "the end of all training should be man-making. Through the process of education, we should reach the general idea of brotherhood by flinging down the walls of separation and inequality. In every man, in every animal, however weak and miserable, great or small, resides in the same omnipresent and omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul but in the manifestation. His aims can be classified into two heads: Proximate and Ultimate.

Proximate aims of education

- I. Physical Development
- II. Mental Development
- III. Development of Character
- IV. observation of Brahmacharya for concentration
- V. Vocational Aim

Ultimate aims of education

- Development of integrated Personality
- Faith in One's own self.
- Developing Shraddha
- Developing a spirit of renunciation
- To promote universal brotherhood.

On *curriculum*, Swamiji did not specify any subjects to form the content of education, rather it was a broad approach, not purely western, but a synthesis of both Vedanta and science. Some of the important aspects of his curriculum are:

Physical culture: Religion, Science and Technology, Aesthetics, Classics and language are to be taught as it helps in the development of the body, mind and soul. Stressing on the importance of physical education, Vivekananda remarked, what our country wants are our muscles of iron and nerves of steel. According to him, physically unfit persons are unfit for realization of self itself. Himself being had a well-built athletic body, he reasserted, 'you will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of Gita.

Another remarkable notable feature of his curriculum is the advocacy of *music* and along with music; he advocated the study of *Fine-arts*. In this connection, he cited the example of Japan who could only become great on account of its arts.

'For material development of masses, utilization of latest technology in all fields of Indian Education is a must' Swami Vivekananda feels. In this connection he even thought of sending unmarried graduates to Japan for technical education which in turn will benefit India with that knowledge.

With regard to *method of instruction*, Vivekananda observes,; you can supply the growing seed with the materials for making up of its body, bringing to it the earth .the air that it wants. And there your work stops. It will take it wants by its own nature. So is with the education of the child. A child educates himself. he teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching .With man is all knowledge and it requires only an awakening and that much is the work of the teacher .We have to do only so much for the boys that they learn to apply their intellect to the proper use of their hands, legs, ears, eyes etc and finally everything will become easy. As education must develop reasoning power, he was against the uncritical acceptance of any form of knowledge. He also asserted on 'meditation 'as a method of attaining knowledge.

Swami Vivekananda had laid emphasis on the following elements of method of instruction:

There is only one method of instruction by which to attain knowledge that which is called : *Concentration*. From the lowest man to the highest Yogi all have to use the same method to attain knowledge. A chemist who is working in a laboratory, concentrates all the powers of his mind for coming of his knowledge .According to Vivekananda, the more the power of concentration, the greater the knowledge is acquired.

But precisely even , the important methods to be followed in teaching-learning are :

lecture method : To make the children know the basic concepts of spiritual ideas, a lecture method is a must for them.

Discussion and Contemplation method : Discussion and concentration was very much there in ancient Gurukula system. By borrowing the idea from there Vivekananda wants them to followed in modern system of education.

Imitation method : In the formation of character and personality,the children to imitate the higher ideals and nobler patterns of behavior.

Individual guidance and counseling : To develop divine wisdom in the children in the children, the method of individual guidance and counseling is a must.

Activity method : Teaching-learning process should always be activity centred. It is the activity only which can provide direct experiences to the children, accordingly He preferred activities like dance, drama, song and techniques like story-telling for the students. And to understand the value of social service, he advocated the introduction of activities like excursions, camps etc.

Travel :Another ideal method of learning is 'travel', but not within India ,but to other countries. He urged the pupils and teachers to go out, observe and listen for learning from outside. This will help to observe other nations functions By keeping free communication with other countries, by assimilating the best knowledge from them ,it could be adapted according to the local needs. On the contrary, with other pupils of country, those knowledge and philosophy could be shared.

Another remarkable contribution of Swamiji to the field of education is His advocacy of *Women education*. At the very outset he was very astonished seeing the social status of men and women whereas Vedanta declares that one and the same Self is present in all beings. But writing down Smritis etc and binding them by hard rules ,the men have turned the

women into mere manufacturing machines. In the period of degradation, when the priests had made the other castes competent to study the Vedas, they deprived the women also of all their rights, but in the Vedic and Upanishadic age Maitreyi, Gargi and other ladies of revered memory have taken the place of Rishis.

All nations of the world, Swamiji asserted, have attained greatness by paying respect to women. In America, men look upon their rights in this light and treat their women as well as can be desired, and hence they are so prosperous, so learned, so free and so energetic.

Women have many and grave problems, but none that cannot be solved by that magic word, 'Education'. What does our Manu enjoin? 'Daughters should be supported and educated with as much care and attention as the sons. 'Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way.

After seeing the condition of women of progressive countries, like America, England and Japan, who were contributing a lot to national development, Swamiji championed the cause of Women's education in India and their emancipation in his own way. He sincerely believed that a nation could only rise only by paying proper respect to women and raising their status. For women, there should be the ideal of chastity. In this context, he cited the example of Sita, Savitri and Damayanti, all symbols of purity and chastity. Although both men and women are equally competent in academic matters, yet women have a special aptitude and competence for studies, Swamiji feels. Accordingly he recommended the introduction of subjects like Sewing, Nursing, Home science etc, which were not prevalent that time in Women's education curriculum.

Education of the Masses : 'A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's ruin, according to Swamiji, may be due to the monopolizing of whole education and intelligence of the land among a handful of men. So He asserted 'if we are to rise again, we shall have to do it by spreading education among the masses, The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education to develop their individuality. Moreover, masses should be taught in the vernaculars. They should also be given ideas, also information, something more is necessary for them. They should be given culture because until they are given that, there can be no permanence in the raised condition of the masses.'

At the same time, Sanskrit education must go along with it, as the very sound of Sanskrit words gives a prestige, a power and a strength to the race. They should also be told stories as this information is more through the ear than what they get in a life time through books. Their knowledge should also be kindled with the help of modern Science. They should be taught History, Geography, Science, Literature and along with these the profound truths of Religion through these.

The teacher and the taught : In this context we can quote Swamiji : " My idea of education is *Gururgha Vasa*. Without the personal life of the teacher, there would be no education. One should live from his very boyhood with on whose character is a blazing fire and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching. In our country, the imparting of knowledge has always been through men of renunciation. The charge of imparting knowledge should again fall upon the shoulder of Tyagis."

The old system of education in India was very different from the modern system. The teachers used to take without charge and not only so, most of them gave their students food and clothes. To support these teachers, the wealthy families made gifts to them and they in their turn had to maintain their students. The disciple used to repair the hermitage of the Gurus, fuel in hand and the Guru after ascertaining his competence, would teach him the Vedas, fastening round his waist the threefold filament of Munja, a kind of grass, as the emblem of his vow to keep his body, mind and speech in control.

But there are conditions necessary taught as well as for the teacher. The conditions necessary for the taught are purity, a real thrust after knowledge and perseverance in thought, speech and act is absolutely necessary.

In regard to the teacher, we must see that he should know the spirit of the scriptures, which truly makes him a true teacher. The second condition necessary for the is sinlessness. The sine-qua-non of acquiring truth for one self and for imparting to others is purity of heart and soul. The function of the teacher is indeed, an affair of the transference of something and not one of mere stimulation of existing intellectual and other faculties in the taught. Something real and appreciable comes from the teacher and goes to the taught. Therefore the teacher must be pure.

The third condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must not teach with any selfish motive, name or fame. His work must be simply out of love as the only medium through which spiritual knowledge can be transmitted is love.

With regard to the role of a teacher, he feels a teacher is to suggest, not to teach. Swamiji laid emphasis on self-teaching or self-learning. Vivekananda is a strong supporter of freedom in education because he believes that it is the first requisite of development, hence no teacher should exert any pressure on the pupils. Education must be based on the needs of the child.

Contribution: Relevance of Vivekananda's views today

In the Preamble of our constitution the educational needs of modern India are reflected. It is that clear that educational aims, and method teaching and in fact the entire process of education must be based on these pillars – Secularism, Socialism and Democracy. Long time back, the educational needs of independent India was visualized by Swami Vivekananda and accordingly set forth his philosophical thought which is quite relevant today. By putting liberal approach to religion, he advocated the values of secularism. Since ignorance happens to be the most important evil of the society, he advocated Mass-education i.e. free and compulsory education as well adult education. Another important contribution of Swami Vivekananda in the field of education is his advocacy of Womens' education which is perfectly in tune with present day tunes. His stress on 'child being the center of educational process' is another remarkable aspect of his educational philosophy. He advocated a system of egalitarian education. In His own words, " We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one stands on one's own feet."

Swamiji's contribution may be summed up as under:

- I. He laid stress on character development as one of the important aims of education.
- II. He revived the spirit of humanism in education.
- III. Advocacy of mass-education which implies adult education and free and compulsory education regardless of caste, colour and creed is in perfectly in tune with modern democratic system of education.
- IV. His consideration of Women education as the chief instrument of national regeneration is note-worthy.
- V. He insisted that it was the duty of the upper classes ,who had received their education ,at the expense of the poor and come forward and uplift the poor through education .

Conclusion: A great educationist like Swami Vivekananda who revolutionized almost the entire field of education and it could be seen that his educational views were immensely influenced by the eternal truths of Vedanta. Millions of Indian youth were inspired by His revolutionary ideas of education. 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached' was one of his clarion call. He infused a new spirit by advocating national education on national lines and based on natural cultural tradition. His great contribution in the field of education include self-knowledge , self-reliance ,concentration ,universal mass education, women's education, physical education ,man-making education, character-building education ,education through the medium of mother-tongue, religious and moral education ,value education and self-dedicated teachers etc. The teachings of Swamiji are of great importance in the reorganization of our present system of education.

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