

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT :

Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902), a great thinker and reformer of India, embraced 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.

Swamiji laid great stress on physical health because a sound mind resides in a sound body. He often quoted the Upanishadic dictum 'nayamatma balahinena labhyah'; i.e. the self cannot be realized by the physically weak. 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 mentioned 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. According to 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. Founding education on the firm ground of our own philosophy and culture, he shows the best of remedies for today's social and global illness.

Keywords: education, physical health, educational philosophy

-2-

FULL PAPER : SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902), a great thinker and reformer of India, embraced 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.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

In the perspective of Swami Vivekananda the following are his views on education :

- Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.
- The training by which the current and expression of will is brought under control and become fruitful is called education.
- Education may be described as a development of faculty, not an accumulation of words, or, as a training of individuals to will rightly and efficiently.
- Real education is that which enables one to stand on his own legs.
- If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library.
- We must have life building, man making, and character making assimilation of ideas.

In the Neo-vedanta humanistic tradition of contemporary Indian thought, Vivekananda presented a philosophy of education for man making. The chief objection raised by Vivekananda against the contemporary educational system was that it turned men into slaves, capable of slavery and nothing else. About the prevailing university education, he remarked that it was not better than an efficient machine for rapidly turning out clerks. It deprived people of their faith and belief. Vivekananda was very critical about this scheme of education. He compared it to the person who wanted to turn his ass into a horse, was advised to thrash the ass in order to achieve this transformation and killed his ass in this process. Vivekananda also criticised the contemporary system of education from the humanistic view point.

AIMS OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

According to Smami Vivekananda there are several aims for education. They are as follows:

1. Self-Development
2. Fulfilment of Swadharma
3. Freedom of Growth
4. Character Formation

1. Self-Development: In contrast to the contemporary system of education, Vivekananda advocated education for self-development. Education according to most of the Western educationalists, aims at man's adjustment with the environment. According to the Indian philosophical tradition true knowledge does not come from outside, it is discovered with the individual, in the self which is the source of all knowledge. According to Vivekananda, the function of education is the uncovering of the knowledge hidden in our mind.

2. Fulfillment of Swadharma: Vivekananda supported the idea of Swadharma in education. Every one has to grow like himself. No one has to copy others. External pressure only creates destructive reactions leading to stubbornness and disorderliness. In an atmosphere of freedom, love and sympathy alone, the child will develop courage and self-reliance. He should be talked to stand on his own, to be himself. Each child should be given opportunities to develop according to his own inner nature.

3. Freedom of Growth: Vivekananda is a staunch champion in education. Freedom is the first requirement for self development. The child should be given freedom to grow according to his own nature. The teacher should not exert any type of pressure on the child. The child should be helped in solving his problems himself. The teachers should have an attitude of service and worship. Education ultimately aims at realization. It is a means of a sorority of mankind.

4. Character Formation: Character is the foundation for self development. The aim of education as self-development, therefore, leads to the aim of education for character. The aim of education is character building. This depends upon the ideals cherished by the individual. The educator should present high ideals before the educands. The best way to develop a character is the personal example of high character set by the teacher. In ancient Indian system of education, the teachers used to present high ideals before the pupils, who in their turn imitated these ideals according to their capacities.

Following things are required for character formation:

→Hard work- Character formation, according to Vivekananda, requires hard work. This is not possible by those who have a wish for all types of enjoyment. Struggle is the best teacher in character building.

→Moral and Spiritual Values- Besides hard work, character formation requires traits such as

purity, thirst for knowledge, perseverance, faith, humanity, submission and veneration, etc. These qualities may be developed by the teacher's example and the pupil's efforts.

→Gurukula System- Relationship between the teacher and the taught is possible only in a Gurukula system of education. Therefore, Vivekananda favoured the ancient Indian Gurukula system of education. In these Gurukulas, the pupils served the teacher, who in his turn helped the pupils everywhere to achieve knowledge.

→Formation of Good Habits- Character is intimately connected with habits. Habits express

P.T.O.

-4-

character Good habits make for good character.

→Learning through mistakes- The child should be allowed to commit mistakes in the process of character formation. He will learn much by his mistakes. Errors are the stepping stones to our progress in character. Strong will, is the sign of great character.

→Will makes men great- Vivekananda himself was an ideal teacher. His words worked like magic upon men and women. Vivekananda asked the people to build up their character and manifest their real nature which is the Effulgent, the Resplendent the Ever Pure.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VIEW ON THE ROLE OF A TEACHER IN ENHANCING EDUCATION

The person from whose soul such impulse comes is called the Guru – the teacher; and the person to whose soul the impulse is conveyed is called the Shishya – the student. To convey such an impulse to any soul, in the first place, the soul from which it proceeds must possess the power of transmitting it, as it were, to another; and in the second place, the soul to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a living seed, and the field must be ready ploughed. And when both these conditions are fulfilled, a wonderful growth of genuine religion takes place. Our duty is to encourage every one in his struggle to live up to his own highest idea, and strive at the same time to make the ideal as near as possible to the Truth. The function of the teacher is indeed an affair of the transference of something and not one of mere stimulation of existing intellectual or other faculties in the taught. Something real and appreciable as an influence comes from the teacher and goes to the taught. Therefore, the teacher must be pure. The teacher must throw his whole force into the tendency of the taught. Without real sympathy we can never teach well. Do not try to disturb the faith of any man. If you can, give him

something better, but do not destroy what he has. The only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice. The 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 and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA TO THE MODERN WORLD

Some of the main contributions that Swamiji made to the modern world and which are also important for all round development of man are mentioned below:

1. New Understanding of Religion: One of the most significant contributions of Swami Vivekananda to the modern world is his interpretation of religion as a universal experience of transcendent Reality, common to all humanity. Swamiji met the challenge of modern science by showing that religion is as scientific as science itself; religion is the 'science of consciousness'. As such, religion and science are not contradictory to each other but are complementary. This universal conception frees religion from the hold of superstitions, dogmatism, priestcraft

P.T.O.

-5-

and intolerance, and makes religion the highest and noblest pursuit – the pursuit of supreme freedom, supreme knowledge, supreme happiness.

2. New View of Man: Vivekananda's concept of 'potential divinity of the soul' gives a new, ennobling concept of man. The present age is the age of humanism which holds that man should be the chief concern and centre of all activities and thinking. Through science and technology man has attained great prosperity and power, and modern methods of communication and travel have converted human society into a 'global village'. But the degradation of man has also been going on apace, as witnessed by the enormous increase in broken homes, immorality, violence, crime, etc. in modern society. Vivekananda's concept of potential divinity of the soul prevents this degradation, divinizes human relationships, and makes life meaningful and worth living. Swamiji has laid the foundation for 'spiritual humanism', which is manifesting itself through several neo-humanistic movements and the current interest in meditation, Zen etc all over the world.

3. New Principle of Morality and Ethics: The prevalent morality, in both individual life and social life, is mostly based on fear – fear of the police, fear of public ridicule, fear of God's punishment, fear of Karma, and so on. The current theories of ethics also do not explain why a person should be moral and be good to others. Vivekananda has given a new theory of ethics and new principle of morality based on the intrinsic purity and oneness of the Atman. We should be pure because purity is our real nature, our true divine Self or Atman. Similarly, we should love and serve our neighbours because we are all one in the Supreme Spirit known as Paramatman or

Brahman.

4. Bridge between the East and the West: Another great contribution of Swami Vivekananda was to build a bridge between Indian culture and Western culture. He did it by interpreting Hindu scriptures and philosophy and the Hindu way of life and institutions to the Western people in an idiom which they could understand. He made the Western people realize that they had to learn much from Indian spirituality for their own well-being. He showed that, in spite of her poverty and backwardness, India had a great contribution to make to world culture. In this way he was instrumental in ending India's cultural isolation from the rest of the world. He was India's first great cultural ambassador to the West. On the other hand, Swamiji's interpretation of ancient Hindu scriptures, philosophy, institutions, etc prepared the mind of Indians to accept and apply in practical life two best elements of Western culture, namely science and technology and humanism. Swamiji has taught Indians how to master Western science and technology and at the same time develop spiritually. Swamiji has also taught Indians how to adapt Western humanism (especially the ideas of individual freedom, social equality and justice and respect for women) to Indian ethos.

CONCLUSION

The exposition and analysis of Vivekananda's scheme of education brings light its constructive, practical and comprehensive character. He realized through education that the uplift of masses is possible. He states it emphatically that if society is to be reformed, education has to reach everyone-high and low, because individuals are the very constituents of society. Swamiji also laid great stress on

P.T.O.

-6-

physical health because a sound mind resides in a sound body. He often quoted the Upanishadic dictum 'nayamatma balahinena labhyah'; i.e. the self cannot be realized by the physically weak. 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 mentioned 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. According to 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. Founding education on the firm ground of our own philosophy and culture, he showed the best of remedies for today's social and global illness.

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P.T.O.

-7-

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