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## **REFLECTIONS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IDEAS ON EDUCATION**

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# Reflections of Swami Vivekananda's Ideas on Education

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**Abstract – Swami Vivekananda's ideas on Philosophy of Education.** According to Swami Vivekananda, education does not mean the mass of information which is inserted by force into the mind of a child. In his own words, education is the manifestation of perfection already reached man. Indian nationalism and spiritualism were the basic foundations for his philosophy of education and the philosophy of Vedanta and Upanishads. He was against the system of contemporary educational system; it turned men into slaves, capable of slavery and nothing else. He emphasized that the aim of education to be life-building, man-making and character-making and also he said that knowledge without culture was only skin-deep. The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Self-development, fulfillment of Swadharma, freedom of growth and character formation are the aims of education according to him. For him education means the 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. Real education is that which prepares a man for struggle of existence. It prepares man for social service and develops his character. He has emphasized that an education which develops character, mental powers, and intelligence gives self-confidence and self-reliance among the individuals. Swami Vivekananda stressed education for democracy and national development. Education was a powerful instrument to achieve these developmental qualities in the people. He wants to make the individual by giving recognizing of his cultural heritage and to struggle throughout his life, so that he emphasized education is the right choice to upcoming of human beings. Vivekananda not only possessed high ideals of education but also he developed a sound system of ideals, how it was achieved.

**Keywords:** Character Building, Humanism, Man-Making, Self-Confidence, Self Education, and Sympathy.

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## INTRODUCTION

The 19th century India produced a galaxy of great men who have enriched our national life by their talent and personality. Swami Vivekananda was one of them. Vivekananda believed in essential unity of man and God. He was an eclectic educationalist too. He tried to unite Indian spirituality and western materialism. He desired happy mingling or fusion of the two. He also wanted to unite Para Vidya and Aparā Vidya. He was revolutionary in the field of education and touched every aspect of it. His ideas on various aspects of education are more relevant and are needed more today than probably during his life time. Although Vivekananda did not write a book on education, he contributed valuable thoughts on the subject of education that are relevant and viable today. He had firm moorings in oriental culture, yet he had then broadness to welcome all that is worth borrowing from the west (Ghosal, 2012). No wonder that today, over a century after his death, we still try to enrich ourselves with the gems of Vivekananda's thoughts on education. If we attentively study the writings and

lectures of Vivekananda, we will find that his views on education are products of original reflection. Let us discuss the different aspects of Vivekananda scheme of education.

### Vivekananda's Philosophy of Life:

The main essence of his philosophy of life is to become fearless through struggle and serve humanity with peace. He wants to make a individual without fear from enemies, face all the challenges boldly and confidently without any suppression. By synthesising the idealistic philosophy of the west and creative philosophy of the ancient Hindu Dharm, he got a glory and greatness to the Hindu way of living.

### Vivekananda's Philosophy of Education:

The real education according to Swami Vivekananda is that which prepares the individual for struggle for existence. Education prepares a man for social service, to develop his character and finally iambuses him with the spirit and courage of a lion. For getting

degree is not an education, the proper education must be viewed on the basis of character, mental powers, intelligence and inculcates. Self-confidence and self-reliance in the individuals. Swamiji has emphasized that all the knowledge which we get from worldly or spiritual lies embedded in the human mind. It was covered with a veil of darkness and ignorance. Education is a tool to open from the darkness and ignorance, after getting of education, the knowledge will shine out dazzlingly. The teaching and learning are the one way of process. The teacher only guides, suggests, points out and helps the student. Self-learning and self-getting knowledge is the real education. The teacher only motivates and encourages the students to find out the hidden treasure of knowledge that lies dormant within him. He condemned and refused the bookish learning and rote memory education. Condemning the theoretical and academic education, he spoke emphatically for practical and experimental education. He warned his countrymen saying "you will have to be practical in all spheres of work. The whole country has been ruined by mass theories."

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

Vivekananda prescribed the ancient spiritual methods of teaching, where Guru and his disciples lived in close association as in a family. The following are the basic principles of education.

- i. Education should develop character, mental powers, intelligence and inculcate self-confidence together with self-reliance.
- ii. Education should be foster spiritual faith, devotion and self-surrender in the individual and should foster full development through service and sacrifice.
- iii. Religious education should be imparted through sweet impressions and fine conduct in preference to books.
- iv. All the subjects must be included in the curriculum which promotes the material and spiritual advancement of a child.
- v. While giving educational qualification, the technical education was necessary for the industrial growth which would lead to the economic prosperity of the nation.
- vi. Education should develop the child physically, mentally and spiritually.
- vii. Education is not only for getting information; rather it should develop character, mental powers, intelligence and inculcate self-confidence together with self-reliance.

- viii. Practicing of Brahmacharya is very essential for getting knowledge. The concentration is the key to all the knowledge.

### **Vivekananda's Views on Different Aspects of Education**

#### **Vivekananda's aims of Education:**

Vivekananda wanted all-round development of education to heart and mind, to strengthen character and national consciousness, to help in the cultivation of strength and energy, nurture the brain and intellect and stir feelings of kindness and sympathy. He emphatically said: "We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's own feet. What we need is to study, independent of foreign control, 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. So that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for them and save against a rainy day. 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 penetrate 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. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want."

Vivekananda's ideas on education had a democratic angle. He expressed deep concern for the mass, "The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out 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. The education that you are receiving now in schools and colleges is only making you a race of dyspeptics. You are working like machines merely, and living a jelly-fish existence."

According to Vivekananda, education is a process in which the young minds, will receive strength, energy and vigorous character. By the way of getting this process, the individual will mould themselves of their life. "All knowledge and all powers are within. What we call power; secrets of nature and force are all within. All knowledge comes from the human soul. Man manifests knowledge, discovers it with himself, which is pre-existing through eternity."<sup>5</sup> Education is a man-making and nation-making process. It is the process which awakens the sleeping soul to self-conscious activity. It will become a powerful instrument to achieve the developmental qualities among the people. The

prime aim of education is to achieve the full perfection already present in a child. According to Vivekananda, all the materials and spiritual knowledge are already present in the individuals mind, but it is covered by certain ignorance. The second aim of education is the physical and mental development of the child. "For 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."6The third aim of education is the character development of the child. He emphasizes the child should practice Brahmacharya which fosters development of mental, moral and spiritual powers leading to purity of thought, words and deeds. In the fourth aim of education, he emphasises the religious development. Every individual should search out and develop the religious seed and to reach the absolute truth or reality.

Vivekananda's aim of education had strong nationalist bias. He was not critical of Western system of education rather; he questioned the suitability of Western Model in India. The system of education in India was based on Indian Foundation that was supported with the broader argument that the every nation should develop a system of education based on his own nature, history and civilization.

#### **Vivekananda's and Curriculum:**

According to Swami Vivekananda, the prime aim of education is spiritual growth and development. But this does not mean that he did not advocate material prosperity and physical well-being. He feeling advocated the inclusion of all those subjects and activities, in the Curriculum, which foster material welfare with spiritual advancement. For spiritual perfection Swami Vivekananda prescribed religious, philosophy, puranic lore, Upanishads, company of saints and their preaching's and for material advancement and prosperity he recommended languages, Geography, Science, Political Science, Economics, Psychology, Art, Agriculture, industrial and Technical Subjects together with Games, sports and other Physical exercise. Swamiji prescribed the same ancient spiritual methods of teaching wherein the Guru and his disciples lived in close association as in a family.

#### **Method of Teaching according Vivekananda's:**

Having analyzed the goal or objective of education, the next question that naturally arises is about the method of imparting education. 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. To drive his point home, he refers to the growth of a plant.

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. Vivekananda's method of education resembles the heuristic method of the modern educationists. In this system, the teacher invokes the spirit of inquiry in the pupil who is supposed to find out things for himself under the bias-free guidance of the teacher. Anticipating the much acclaimed modern, student centered method of learning where the teacher plays the role of a facilitator, Vivekananda asks the teacher to come down to the level of the learner and 'give him a push upwards'. So there should be least intervention and the ideal teacher should consciously under-teach so that the learners get ample scope for learning themselves: 'No one can teach anybody. The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teacher' (1993: 56).

#### **Place of child:**

Swami Vivekananda emphasized the education to be child centered. According to him the child is the store and repository of all learning material and spiritual. Like a plant child grows by his own inner power naturally. Hence advising the child to grow naturally and spontaneously, Vivekananda asserted-"Go into your own and get the Upanishads out of your own self. You are the greatest book that ever was or will be. Until the inner teacher opens, all outside teaching is in vain."

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

It is true that today's education does not produce properly developed personalities having faith, hope, confidence, motivating power, balanced outlook on life, conscious of their rights as well as their duties. The reason does not lie with the youth or with their mind as such as but with the agencies responsible for moulding a person's character—parents, teachers, social conditions in which he/she grows, and the system of education to which we trust his/ her future. Our schools and universities still continue to be merely examining bodies (V: 224) turning out mechanically every year in huge numbers men and women destitute in faith and poor in culture – in the knowledge of our ancient literature, arts (V: 364: 5) unable to think originally (V: 224), incapable of standing on their own feet (VII: 147), and virtually untouched by religion which Swami Vivekananda regarded "the innermost core of education" (V: 232). The teacher should share with the student the conviction that they are both truly one in Spirit – at the same time cultivating in the student a feeling of dignity and self-respect". As 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 and none else" (IV: 183).

The ideal of all education or training is to make the mind grow (II: 15). Knowledge exists in the mind, like fire in a piece of flint. Friction brings it out (I: 26). Swami Vivekananda believed that "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man" (1970:438), therefore, a teacher's job is only to remove obstruction from the pupil's path. What we call learning is actually 'unfolding' or 'unveiling'. Each of us is naturally growing and developing according to our own nature. The children teach themselves. They grow by themselves like plants from within (II: 385). Our duty is to offer them opportunity and remove obstacles; that is, if we provide conducive environment the rest will happen by itself. The teacher's role is not unimportant. It necessitates the teacher's personal, constant contact with the student. The student must live with his / her teacher like in the Upanishadic times (V: 224). And the teacher, on his / her part, has to undergo a proper training to equip himself / herself better for his / her task.

### **All Round Development:**

Although Swami Vivekananda's vision of education lays extreme emphasis on the training of the mind it does not undermine the importance of an all-round development of the human personality. Its aim is the untrammelled development of the personality in all spheres – physical, mental and spiritual.

In this scheme of education, 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'; the self cannot be realized by the physically weak. Accordingly, he recommends that physical exercise of some kind or the other must form part of an educational training. The mind acts on the body and the body acts on the mind (VI: 39). They run parallel to each other (VII: 172). 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. 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.

### **Physical Education:**

Without the knowledge of physical education, the self-realization or character building is not possible. One must know it is not possible to keep a

strong mind without a strong body. In particular, Vivekananda stressed the need for physical education in curriculum. He said, "You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of Gita. You will understand Gita better by your biceps, your muscles a little stronger. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman, when your body stands firm on your feet and you feel yourself as man."

### **Man Making Education:**

The educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda is a harmonious synthesis between the ancient Indian ideals and modern Western beliefs. He not only stressed on the physical, mental, moral, spiritual and vocational development of the child but also he advocated women education as well as education of the masses. The essential characteristics of his educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda are idealism, naturalism and pragmatism. In a naturalistic view points, he emphasized that real education is possible only through nature and natural propensities. In the form of idealist view point, he insists that the aim of education is to develop the child with moral and spiritual qualities. In the pragmatists view point, he emphasized the great stress on the Western education of technology, commerce, industry and science to achieve material prosperity. In short, Swami Vivekananda an idealist at heart. First of all he emphasized spiritual development, then the material prosperity, after that safety of life and then solving the problems of flooding and clothing of the masses.

### **Self-Education:**

Self-education is the self-knowledge. That is, of our own self is the best guide in the struggle of our life. If we take one example, the childhood stage, the child will face lot of problems or commit mistakes in the process of character formation. The child will learn much by his mistakes. Errors are the stepping stones to our progress in character. This progress will need courage and strong will. The strong will is the sign of great character will makes men great.

### **Women Education:**

Women education is not in the hands of others, the powers are in the women. Vivekananda considered that women to be the incarnation of power and asked men to respect them in everywhere. He rightly pointed out that unless Indian women secure a respectable place in this country, the nation can never march forward. The important features of his scheme of female education are to make them strong, fear-less, and conscious of their chastity and dignity. He insists that men and women are equally competent not only in the academic matters, but also must have equal companion in the home and family. Vivekananda being a keen observer could distinguish the difference in perception about the status of women in the West and in India. "The ideal women in India is the mother, the

mother first, and the mother last. The word woman calls up to the mind of the Hindu, motherhood; and God is called mother."

#### **Education for Weaker Section of the Society:**

Vivekananda pleaded for the universal education so that the backward people may fall in with others. To uplift the backward classes he chooses education as a powerful instrument for their life process. Thus education should spread to every household in the country, to factories, playing grounds and agricultural fields. If the children do not come to the school the teacher should reach them. Two or three educated men should team up, collect all the paraphernalia of education and should go to the village to impart education to the children. Thus, Vivekananda favoured education for different sections of society, rich and poor, young and old, male and female.

#### **Moral and Religious Education:**

Vivekananda said, "Religion is the innermost core of education. Religion is like the rice and everything else, is like the curries. Taking only curries causes indigestion and so is the case with taking rice alone." Therefore, religious education is a vital part of a sound curriculum. Vivekananda considered Gita, Upanishads and the Vedas as the most important curriculum for religious education. For him, religion is attainment of self-realization and divinity. It helps not only in individual's development but also in the transformation of total man. The true religion cannot be limited to a particular place or time. He pleaded for unity of world religion. He realized truth while practicing of religion. The truth is the power, untruth is the weakness. Knowledge is truth, ignorance is untruth. Thus truth increases power, courage and energy. It is the source of light and therefore, necessary for the individual as well as collective welfare. In Vivekananda point of view, ethics and religion are one and the same. God is always on the side of goodness. To fight for goodness is the service to God. The moral and religion education develop the self confidence among the young men and women.

#### **Medium of Instruction:**

As regards to medium of instruction, Vivekananda strongly advocated for mother-tongue. He a true nationalist and a champion of national education argued instruction through mother-tongue. He visualized to Indianise Indian education. He also wanted to spread mass education through mother-tongue so that it will reach to everyone.

Although Swamiji is of the opinion that mother tongue is the right medium for social or mass education, he prescribes the learning of English and Sanskrit also. While English is necessary for mastering Western

science and technology, Sanskrit leads one into the depths of our vast store of classics. The implication is that if language does not remain the privilege of a small class of people, social unity will March forward unhampered.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

From the analysis of Vivekananda's scheme of education, it is clear that the upliftment of masses is possible only through education. His view on education brings to light a constructive, practical and comprehensive approach to education. By giving education, he tries to materialize the moral and spiritual welfare and upliftment of humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, nationality or time. By the way of his scheme of education, we can get to build the strong nation with peace and harmony and without caste and creed. But contrary to following his ideas, we are giving bookish knowledge to our kids without giving exposure to other areas of education with the result that when they complete the education, they get degrees but they fail to develop strong moral and spiritual character.

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