

Empowering Educators: Lessons from Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy of Education

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the vision of Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy and its relevance for modern educators. According to Swami Vivekananda, education does not mean the accumulation of information, which is fed into the mind of a child by force. In his own words, education is the manifestation of perfection that already exists within individual. 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; which he believed reduced individuals to mere slaves, lacking in true autonomy. Swami Vivekananda stressed education for democracy and national development. Education was a powerful instrument to achieve these developmental qualities in the people. Vivekananda not only possessed high ideals of education but he also articulated coherent framework for achieving these ideals. The enduring impact of Vivekananda's educational philosophy is so substantial that it continues to be relevant in the modern world."

Keywords: Swami Vivekananda, Philosophy, education, democracy, spiritualism

Swami Vivekananda was born in 12 January, 1863 during the Makar Sankranti festival. Narendra Dutta was his childhood name. He belonged to a traditional Bengali Kayastha (a caste of Hindus) family and was one of the nine siblings. Narendra's father Vishwanath Dutta was an attorney of Calcutta High Court. Narendra's mother was a pious woman and a housewife. She used to tell him the stories of Ramayan, Mahabharata and Purans. The progressive rational approach of his father and the religious temperament of his mother helped shape his thinking and personality. Young Narendra Nath had great admiration for the wandering ascetics and monks. He was always in search for scholars and spiritual leaders in order to find out answers to his questions

Amongst the contemporary Indian philosophers of education, Swami Vivekananda is one of those who

revolted against the imposition of British system of education in India. He criticized the pattern of education introduced by the British in India. He pointed out that the current system of education only brings about an external change without any reflective inner force (Mukherjee, 2014). From the beginning, he was interested in religion and philosophy. But he was totally transformed after a meeting with Ramakrishna paramhans in 1888. In 1893 he went to attend a world's parliament of religions at Chicago. His views on education are found scattered in his lectures delivered at many places in India and abroad and his valuable thoughts on education are very much viable and relevant

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today. According to Vivekananda, education is a vital institution towards curing evils exist in the society and it has critical role with regard to shaping the future of humanity (Verma, 2013).

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 (Joshi, 2010). 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 also criticized the contemporary system of education from the humanistic view point. 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 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 is an idealist at heart. First of all, he emphasized on spiritual development, then the material prosperity, after that safety of life and then solving the problems of fooding and clothing of the masses (Sharma, 2011).

Vivekananda and Means of Education

According to Vivekananda, the means for education is love. Love and character building are the best means for education. Love is the best inspiration in character building. Love in the minds of the educator is the real source of his influence upon the educated. The true education gives the growth and expansion of personality. He wanted that the education for total human development was the main vision. The child should be taught through by love, it makes fellow feelings and love for human beings (Mukhyananda, 2006; Rao, 2001). Education must enable the individual to recognise his cultural heritage and to use it in his struggle of life. Education is a life-long process towards the fullest development of human personality,

self-Discovery, self-perfection, self-awareness and self-manifestation. On other hand, Education is the appearance of the perfection already in man. Vivekananda stressed that there is immense need of kind of education to be provided 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 (Singh, 2015).

Vivekananda's Aim of Education

Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy is deeply rooted in Indian Vedanta and Upanishad. It was his firm belief that nothing comes from outside. He used to say that education is the manifestation of the perfection already reached in men. Vivekananda believed a country's future depends on its people; his teachings focused on the development of the mass. He wanted "to set in motion machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest". Vivekananda believed that the essence of Hinduism was best expressed in the Vedanta philosophy (Prabhananda, 2003). He said that no one teaches others, they learn by themselves through their experience and an effort in life. Teacher only gives advises. Through this, the teacher within motivates himself to learn and to understand things. He criticized the educational system and said that, "You regard that man to be educated who obtains some degree, had passed out some examinations, and is able to deliver fluent lecturers. But this is not real education. It prepares a man for social service, develops his character and finally imbues him with the spirit and courage of a lion. Any other education is worse than useless". Further he explained that people need to be practical in all spheres of work. The whole country has been reined by mass of theories.

Swami Vivekananda was an ardent critic of the education of his time. He used to call it Negative education because it does not prepare for the struggle of life. There is no use of such kind of education which does not emphasise on building good moral character, physical work and use of mother tongue and to generate the sense of nationality. Deliberating upon the education of his times, he was of the opinion that it is producing biological machines instead of producing human. Only clerk is being prepared. This education system is increasing inferiority complex. Students are

mugging up instead of understanding the concept and implications of the subjects. No education can be called national unless it, inspires love for the nation, love to learn and love to nurture the ancient culture, value, tradition and valuable knowledge of the nation (Singh, 2014).

Vivekananda attempted to transform Vedanta in practice. He simplified Vedanta so that even a normal person could easily identify and relate with Vedanta's terms in daily life. He considered that man is already reached in perfection and education is the manifestation of the perfection already reached in man.

The overall development of man and mankind should be the priority of education. Whatever education are being given is useless. Present education system is insufficient to fulfill the objectives of education and the need of the time. This education is producing senseless and aimless people having only the knowledge of reading and writing.

Vivekananda's Views on Education

Vivekananda's views on education deals with physical education, moral and religious education, medium of education, women education and education for weaker sections of society.

1. *Physical Education*: The self-realization or character building is not possible without the physical education. Physical education is indispensable to develop both the mind and the body. Everyone must know that how to make our body strong through physical education, for to attain a complete education. So in particular, Vivekananda stressed the value of physical education in curriculum (Das, 2013).
2. *Medium of Education*: Like Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda also emphasized on education to be provided 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 that it is the source of all Indian languages and a repository of all inherited knowledge; with the absence of this knowledge, it will be impossible to

understand Indian culture so it is necessary that men and women should know this language, besides the knowledge of the mother tongue (Sharma, 2016).

3. *Moral and Religious Education*: Religion is the innermost core of education. It is a vital part of a sound curriculum. Vivekananda considered that Gita, Upanishads and the Vedas are the most important curriculum for religious education. For him, religion is a self-realization. It is not only individual's development but also for the transformation of total man. The truth is the power; untruth is the weakness. In the Vivekananda's 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.
4. *Man Making Education*: The educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda is a harmonious synthesis between the ancient Indian ideals and modern Western beliefs. Swami Vivekananda mainly emphasized on Man making education. Man making means development of a child in respect to their emotionally, morality, humanity, character, physically, health etc. 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 (Panda, 2015).
5. *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, In the childhood stage, the child has 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 make men great.
6. *Woman Education*: Woman education is not in the hands of others; our powers are in the women. Vivekananda considered that

women to be the life 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, fearless, and conscious of their chastity and dignity. He insists that men and women are equally competent not only in the academy 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 Hindu, motherhood; and God is called mother (Mukerji, 2001; Kaur, 2016).

7. *Curriculum in Education:* According to Swami Vivekananda, education must aim to achieve spiritual growth and development. But this does not mean that he did not advocate material prosperity and physical well-being. He strongly advocated the inclusion of all those subjects and activities, in the curriculum which foster material welfare with spiritual advancement. For spiritual perfection, Swamiji prescribed Religious books, Philosophy, Upanishads, Company of saints and their preaching's and for material advancement and prosperity. He recommended for study of 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.
8. *Methods of Teaching:* With regard to teaching methods Vivekananda was of the view that children should be made to learn themselves. As all knowledge is within them and learning is only a function of their mind, they should only be made active. The teacher and the curricula should act only as stimuli. This shows that he was against

child's cramming of pieces of information. The child should not be a passive recipient of knowledge. Discussions with the teacher were considered most important a method of teaching learning by him. Meditation and concentration were also considered important by him as through them developed the mental powers of the child. It was also emphasized by him that the teacher should encourage children and develop in them self-confidence for learning. Thus, along with the teaching, the teacher was advised to develop in children those qualities which are necessary for learning. The learner must be able to control the internal and external senses. He should control his lower nature and concentrate on learning.

9. *Teacher-Student Relationship:* In the present times, formal education has become more institutionalised and thereby, the system demands significant role of teachers. The teacher is expected not only to acquire the knowledge but also transmitting them to the students. He must also know how to transmit the knowledge. As far as students concerned, they need to cultivate the spirit of Shradha – that is "faith in himself, humility, veneration and submission towards the teacher". This is very much required towards creation of a favorable learning environment. The main basis of the teacher-pupil relationship is 'respect and mutual trust, which is considered as the edifice of the Vivekananda's scheme of education (Prabhananda, 2003; Saha, 2015).

Vivekananda's Philosophy Relevant for Modern Educators

Education for good citizenship requires effective training human nature, impulses, emotion and desires in the longer interest of the nation. There must be different avenues for student to develop proper standards in art, science and literature as also in the basic culture of their native land. It is a fault of the modern age that students in general are announcing about primary certain examinations by merging of answers to related to question with help of their teachers. This is not a worthwhile virtue for rich returns. Vivekananda gives proper emphasis to the fault that education should be vocation-oriented,

value-oriented through provoking and man-making. It should never be money-making business. To him, education is the only way to raise the electorate from a culture to a proficient culture. He strongly pledged for determined movement against illiteracy and exploitations. He has made it clear that man is the creator of his own future (Mishra, 2005; Choudhary, 2014).

Vivekananda suggests that education in Indian school to be for the presentation and transmission of Indian culture which cannot be attained by mere book-learning. This become possible only when every individual is prepared to follow the principles of introspection and involvement for self-improvement and for the upliftment of society. He pledged for through reformation and Indian society be free from that tales and foibles of modernization.

Vivekananda has influenced the spiritual teachings of the yoga and the Vedanta. He has stated that anything worth the name of modernization should have its root in the culture of India. It should promote patriotism and love. Vivekananda's idea of education has been influenced in the modern minds a sense of national identity, subject and participant competence, social trust and civic co-operations. His educational ideas have touched every aspect of Indian social and economic life. They can be taken as guideline for complete reconstruction of present system of education. His message is for all times. His views regarding the development of complex skills, healthy muscles, right play habits etc. have become current carriage in modern times. The basic purpose of education repeatedly stressed by Vivekananda is the development of character, service minders, humanity and self-confidence. Swamiji has expressed many time his deep concern and resentment against tendencies in educational institutions like intolerance fear, hearted inadequate information between parents and teachers sectional imbalances, etc. and suggested that there must be concerted effort to fight against these evils. (Gupta, 2016)

Vivekananda believed that with desirable changes affecting the mental structure, it is possible to control the undesirable social forces. It means selected were pure and fair; he believed the end would always be automatically good. Updating his mother country to fight against all kinds of social evils. "Equilibrium and Synthesis" were the worth

words of Swami. Meditation and Devotion of duty were unified in his personality. The awakening and liberation of modern India as viewed by him was a stage for the realization of universal love and brotherhood. Swami was one of the first thinkers in India to offer a sociological interpretation of Indian history.

Vivekananda realized that alienation in any form from the masses of the society, particularly who are poor-weakens the country's leadership. Hence, for a sustainable regeneration of India, education of masses must be given top priority and this will enable them in restoring their lost individuality. Providing education to masses will help them not only in making self-reliant, it will support them in understanding of their own historical situation so that they can strategise to work out their own salvation (Prabhanananda, 2003). The uplift of women and the masses also provided the highest priority in educational scheme of Vivekananda. Interestingly, what Vivekananda had envisioned century ago are the present concerns and developmental goals of many national and international agencies including the Sustainable Development Goals. Swamiji has also advocated for a model for education of poor and insisted that upper class need to come forward and give their time and resource to educate poor (Sarkar, 2018).

CONCLUSION

There have been many noticeable changes found in the system of education since the times of Swami Vivekananda. However, his vision and thoughts for education system as a whole is very much significant still today in 21st century. His ideals of education to produce an integrated person " who has learned how to improve his intellect, purify his emotions and stand firm on moral virtues and unselfishness" , is also the concerns of present day society. Swamiji has also emphasised on the all-round development, which is echoed in the 'UNESCO report Learning to be, published in 1972. The report defines the aims of education as "the physical, emotional, intellectual and ethical integration of individuals into a complete man".

Vivekananda has also emphasised for the uplift of masses and he advocated that it is possible only through education. He has also His thoughts on education bring a light of its constructive,

practical and comprehensive character. 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 the strong nation for a sustainable future. According to Swamiji, main objectives of education are: self development, freedom of growth and character formation. Vivekananda was of the opinion that the solutions of all these social and global evils can be achieved through education. Vivekananda points out that the present-day education is in a state that it has no definite goal to pursue. A sculptor has a clear idea about what he wants to shape out of the marble block; similarly, a painter knows what he going to paint. But a teacher.... if you dare to ask, he will hesitate to answer saying- has no clear idea about the goal of his teaching. Swami attempts to establish, through his words and deeds, that the end of all education is man making.

According to him, the essence of man lies in his soul, which he possesses in addition to his body and mind. In tune with philosophy, swamiji defines education as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man.' The aim of education is to manifest in our lives the perfection, which is the very nature of our inner self. Swamiji has propounded for "man-making and character-building education". While degradation of moral values among youth has become an emerging concerns, thoughts of swamiji on education needs a serious re-examination and effective implementation in present times.

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