Educational Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda

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ABSTRACT

Swami Vivekananda, the great Indian legend who is known as mystic, philosopher, educationist and Yogic saint. He is recognised for his contribution in spreading the philosophy of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world. He has made India proud when he gave his speech in 'Parliament of Religion' in Chicago USA in 1893. He has a firm belief that the development of any nation is dependent upon the development of its people and the role of education should strictly follow the path of human development to its fullest extent. The advocated various aims of education which goes from individual to social to universal levels. The curriculum he advocated is also a reflection of his philosophy which has a direct link with the self development, capacity building and universal development. His methods of instruction are purely based on Western and Indian philosophies. He has also devoted a special space to Teacher and a separate space to the student as well. In his educational philosophy, he has given much stress to women education, peace education and moral and value education.

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda was born on 12 January 1863 in Calcutta at Gourmohan Mukherjee Street which has now been converted as museum. His mother Bhubaneswari Devi was a very pious, religious and spiritual lady. His father, Vishwanath Dutta, was an attorney at the Calcutta High Court. He was born in a scholarly environment created by his grandfather who was a great scholar of Persian and Sanskrit though he left his home and became monk. His parents called Vivekananda with the name of Narendranath Dutta. His ancestry belongs to Kshtriya caste. The reflective, encouraging attitude of Narendra's father and the spiritual temperament of his mother helped a lot to shape his early life. Though he was naughty child but he had devotions towards monks and he often spent his time in meditation. He was so naughty that one his mother was forced to say, " I prayed to *Shiva* for a son but he provided me a ghost. At the age of eight years Datta was admitted in Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar Institution at Cultutta. After his schooling, he joined Presidency College where he studied philosophy, religion, history, social science art and literature. He was also interested in classical dance and music and physical education. Later he developed much interest in

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the scriptures of Hindu religion which include_Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and Puranas. He also studied European philosophy at General Assembly's Institution. He studies various philosophers like_David Hume, Kant, Gottlieb, Spinoza, Hegel, August Comte, Mill and Darwin. He became fascinated with the evolutionism of Herbert Spencer and corresponded with him translating Spencer's book *Education* (1861) into Bengali. While studying Western philosophers, he also learned Sanskrit scriptures and Bengali literature. In 1880 Narendra joined Keshab Chandra Sen's *Nava Vidhan*, and became a member of a Freemasonry. He was influenced by Tagore but the real influence which changed his life was contact with Ramakrishna Permahamsa and became his disciple.

Narendra's father's sudden death in 1884 left the family bankrupt; creditors began demanding the repayment of loans, and relatives threatened to evict the family from their ancestral home and he requested Ramakrishna to pray to goddess Kali for their family's financial welfare. Ramakrishna suggested him to go to the temple himself and pray. Following Ramakrishna's suggestion, he went to the temple thrice, but failed to pray for any kind of worldly necessities and ultimately prayed for true knowledge and devotion from the goddess. Narendra gradually grew ready to renounce everything for the sake of realising God, and accepted Ramakrishna as his Guru. In 1888, Narendra left the monastery and became monk and was wondering from place to place in search of solace and truth.

Vivekananda started his journey to the West on 31 May 1893 and visited Japan, China, Canada and USA. In Art Institute of Chicago, he attended "Parliament of Religions" in September 1893 with the help of John Henry Wright of Harvard University where he gave a brief speech representing India and Hinduism. He was initially nervous, and began his speech with "Sisters and brothers of America today the entire world is happy because this Parliament has given proper foundation of the world religions because its foundation lies on Bagwat Geta." Vivekananda received a two-minute standing ovation from the crowd of seven thousand. On 4 July 1902 Vivekananda awoke early, meditated and went to his room, asking not to be disturbed and died while meditating.

Philosophy of Vivekananda

Vivekananda believed that the future of any nation depends upon its human resource and the main aim of education should be to develop this human resource. He says each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or mental discipline, or philosophy- by one, or more, or all of these- and be free. Vivekananda correlated ethics with control of the mind, seeing truth, purity and unselfishness as qualities which strengthened it. He advocated his followers to be divine, pious and unselfish. He emphasised that success was an outcome of focused thought and action; in his lectures on Raja Yoga he said, "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life- think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that

idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, that is way great spiritual giants are produced".

His Literary Works

Vivekananda was a complete artist", composing many songs and poems. He blended humour with his teachings. The following works were ***published during his life time***:

1. Bartaman Bharat
2. Karma Yoga
3. Lectures from Colombo to Almora
4. My Master
5. Raja Yoga
6. Sangeet Kalpataru
7. Vedanta Philosophy: An address before the Graduate Philosophical Society
8. Vedanta philosophy: lectures on Jnana Yoga

Works published after his death:

1. Addresses on Bhakti Yoga
2. Bhakti Yoga
3. Complete Works: a collection of his writings, lectures and discourses in a set of nine volumes
4. Inspired Talks (1909)
5. Narada Bhakti Sutras – translation
6. Para Bhakti or Supreme Devotion
7. Practical Vedanta
8. Speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda; a comprehensive collection
9. The East and the West (1909)

Educational Philosophy

His educational thought has very great significance today because modern education has lost much of its connection with the values of human life. He tried to make the people of India understood that political and social strength should have their foundations on cultural strength. He has a true vision of philosophy of education in India in its cultural context.

He is no more but he will be remembered for ever on this earth. His missions and his preaching are will continue inspiring the coming generations. Vivekananda said: "The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle of 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. Education must provide 'life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas". The ideal of this type of education would be to produce an integrated person. His philosophy of education revolves around the following aspects:

Knowledge within

Knowledge is inherent within the individual himself. The individual finds out this knowledge by experiencing it within himself. Perfection is inherent in everyone. It is the function of education to lead one to perfection. Therefore, education should be made available to all.

Child Promotes his Own Development

Swami Vivekananda says that it is wrong to think that we promote the development of a child. In fact, he furthers his development himself. He says, "Everyone develops according to his own nature. When the time comes everyone will come to know this truth. Do you think you can educate a child? The child will educate himself, your job is to provide the necessary opportunity to him and remove the obstacles in his path. He will educate himself on his own. A plant grows itself, does the gardener grow it? He just provides the necessary environment to it, it is the plant itself that does its own growing." Thus Swami Vivekananda advocates the principle of self–education.

Education as per the Nature and Needs

In order to make education useful, it must be according to the nature and need of the child. It is not the teacher, or the parents who will determine his needs and nature. His education should be patterned on the lines of these tendencies. The teacher has to visualize God in the soul of each child. Each child should be considered as manifestation of God. In fact, we have to serve God. Therefore we have to serve each child.

Concentration as Essence

For the acquisition of knowledge, concentration or attention is very necessary. For the success in life also, this power is very helpful. Everyone does not have the same power of concentration. With the help of this power one can acquire useful knowledge and arrange it in mind for use whenever necessary.

AIMS Of Education

The ultimate aim of all education and all training, according to Swami Vivekananda, is man-making and also he recommends the following major aims of education.

Self Realization

Man has an immortal soul which is the treasure –house of infinite power. Man should, therefore, have full confidence in himself and strive to reach the highest goal of his life, self-confidence leads to self - realization. In his own words: "Faith in us and faith in God – this is the secret of greatness." Education of the right type should aim at removing the veil ignorance from our mind and make us understand that what actually we are.

Character Formation

Character is the aggregate of a Man's tendencies, the sum –total of the bent of his mind. We are what our thoughts have made us. It is, therefore, that education should aim at sublimating the evil tendencies of our mind. Vivekananda said, "We want that education, by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's on feet." Education must build up character and manifest our real nature.

Personality Development

Personality is the influence, the impression, one creates on the others. It is the personality of a man that counts. "According to Vivekananda, personality is two – third and his intellect and words are only one – third in making the real man." The ideal of all education and all trainings should be this man – making.

Service of Mind

Another important aim of education is serving the God in man. It is the God in the sick, the poor, the miserable, the ignorant and the down – trodden what we should worship. In Swami ji's own words, "if you want to find god, serve man." He was pained to see the wretched poverty of his countrymen. He, therefore, wanted that education must enable everyone to stand on his own feet and satisfy his own primary needs.

Universal Brotherhood

Swami Vivekananda' s love for mankind knew no geographical boundaries. He always pleaded for the harmony and good relationship of all nations. He said,' through education, we should gradually reach the idea of universal brotherhood by flinging down the walls of separation and inequality. In every man, in every animal, however weak or miserable, great or small, resides the same omnipresent and omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul, but in manifestation." He insisted the education must call forth this power in every person and broaden it to such an extent that it may cover the whole world.

Self Sufficiency

To Swami Vivekananda, the practical aspects of life must not be ignored in any

scheme of education. Only then, it will be possible to make an individual self-dependent and the nation prosperous. He said: "It will not do merely to listen to great principles. You must apply them in the practical field, turn into constant practice." So he has emphasized the importance of education in agriculture and other practical arts.

Physical and Mental Development

The second aim of education is that the child should able to promote national growth and advancement as a fearless and physically well developed citizen of tomorrow. Stressing the mental development of the child, Swami ji 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 Swami Vivekananda, 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 citizens is possible only through their moral and spiritual development which education should foster.

Unity in Diversity

The true aim of education is to develop insight into the individuals so that they are able to search out and realize unity in diversity. Swami Vivekananda has further asserted that physical and spiritual worlds are one; their distinctness is an illusion (Maya). Education should develop this sense which finds unity in diversity.

Religious Development

To Vivekananda, each individual should be able to search out and develop the religious seed embedded in him and thus find 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's of great saints and saviours will develop in the individual. Education should foster this development.

Role of Teacher

According to Swami Vivekananda a person with an attitude of renunciation, influence children through his ideal example, love his students, sympathize at their difficulties, teaching according to the needs, abilities and interests of the them, contribute to their spiritual development can be a good teacher.

Role of Student

A student should have an inclination and eagerness to learn. He should be an observer of celibacy. He should have control over his senses. He should follow the ideals laid down by his teacher.

Curriculam

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 feelingly advocated the inclusion of all those subjects and activities, in the curriculum, which foster material welfare with spiritual advancement. For spiritual perfection Swami Vivakananda prescribed Religious, Philosophy, 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 exercises.

Methods of Teaching

Swami Vivekananda prescribed the same ancient spiritual methods of teaching wherein the Guru and his disciples lived in close association as in a family. The essential characteristics of those religious and spiritual methods were as under:-

1. To control fleeting mental faculties by the practice of Yoga.
2. To develop the mind by concentration and deep meditation.
3. To gain knowledge through lectures, discussions, self- experience and creative activities.
4. To imitate the qualities and character of teacher intelligent and clear understanding.
5. To lead the child on the right path by means of individual guidance by the teacher.

Major Implications of Vivekananda's Educational Ideas

Vivekananda's educational ideas have been influenced by three major factors; 1) love for his master 2) love for the nation, and 3) personal convictions.

Base for Modern Education

Vivekananda felt that modern education all over the world has so far concentrated on 'the learning to do' aspect and not on the 'learning to be' faculties of education. He says that education must focus on the requirement of the human mind. His philosophy of education is based on universal principles of morality and ethics. He wanted to teach the common masses of India the ideals of synthesis, tolerance and universal harmony. His philosophy gives equal importance to the claims of spirit and matter. To him diversity is as real as unity. Matter is only 'veiled

spirit'. Thus he creates a metaphysical synthesis reconciling the claims of spirit and matter, and makes it one of the chief bases of its philosophy of education.

Importance of 'Yoga'

Vivekananda wants to place maximum emphasis on concentration and meditation in the teaching-learning process. In the practice of yoga as it is in the practice of general education, five elements are necessarily involved-the teacher, the taught, the aim, the subject and the method. He convinced of the fact that all knowledge is in the human mind and that the same can be experienced by practicing concentration and meditation.

Knowledge Transmission

To Vivekananda, all teaching implies giving and taking; the teacher gives and the student receives. Here he stresses the need for effective participation in the teaching-learning process. Teacher should motivate the students to acquire knowledge and develop in them scientific temper, secular outlook and civic responsibility.

Activity Method

Vivekananda anticipated many modern thinkers in suggesting that learning through activity should be the guiding principle of any scheme of education. He wanted every activity in Indian schools and colleges-dance, drama etc; Inter-school and inter-collegiate competitions are also required in order to enable the students learn how to sacrifice personal and selfish interests for the sake of the larger interests of society.

Women Education

Vivekananda suggested that the women should be made ambitious through a good system of education. He made a strong appeal for raising the status of women along with that of man. He felt that it was much against the ancient ideal of India that women were not given enough opportunities for self-development.

Value Education

Here, education is conceived in the broad sense; everything in the society plays an educational role. The formal education system is but part of the culture and values in the system are inevitably determined by the culture. Education is seen as an instrument for harnessing human drives, and as consequences, it becomes to some extent a method of behaviour modification. Education preserves rather than changes social values. Education is seen to abide by existing culture norms of the society.

Peace Education

Constructive education for peace must aim to reform humanity so as to permit the inner development of human personality and develop a more conscious vision of the mission of mankind and the present conditions of social life as was so emphatically averred by Swami Vivekananda as well. What we need today is an education that is capable of saving mankind from the present predicament. Such an education involves the spiritual development of man and the enhancement of his value as an individual and preparing the young people to understand the time in which they live.

Environmental Education

Environmental education is viewed as an integral part of the education process. It is taken to be centred on practical problems and can be an interdisciplinary character. It should aim at building up a sense of values, contribute to public well being and concern itself with survival of the human species. Its force, therefore, should aside mainly the initiative of the learners and their involvement in action and it should be guided by immediate and future subject of concern. Environmental education enables them to manage the environment in which they live through a judicious use of resources.

Education for Citizenship

The concept of citizenship education should target to mould the future citizens into the frame of a civic society where citizens are aware of their rights, respect democratic ideals and work for a welfare society with shared responsibility. Education for democratic citizenship is a set of practices and activities aimed at making young people and adults better equipped to participate actively in democratic life by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society.

Conclusion

Viewed in the light of contemporary thought, Vivekananda was actually an epoch capsule into a life span of less than forty years updating his mother country to fight against all kinds of social evils. 'Equilibrium' and 'synthesis' were the watchwords of Vivekananda. Contemplation and devotion to duty were unified in his personality. He had gone deep into the social and political decline of India and attempted to prescribe a workable formula to eradicate all social inequalities. The awakening and liberation of modern India as viewed by him was a stage for the realization of universal love and brotherhood. He gave his fellow brethren, a dynamic gospel of supreme fearlessness and strength. He mercilessly denounced the arrogance and sophistication of the upper classes of Indian society. He was one of the great thinkers in India to offer a sociological interpretation of Indian history.

Swami Vivekananda was actually the greatest synthesizer of ever time. He wanted to remove the evils of the society by giving re-orientation to politics, sociology, economics and education. Swami Vivekananda laid stress on education as a powerful weapon for this change. As an educationalist he believes in absolute values which have to be realized by a good system of education. Education should be the preparation for life. It should develop a feeling of nationalism and international understanding, it should leads to the development of character and make individuals self-dependent. Today there is a deterioration of cultural ethics and standards. The supreme need of the hour is to counteract this emotional, moral and cultural collapse. Only a process of a good system of education can bring about a healthy political and social life. Swami Vivekananda stands for this and his message is for all time.

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