

## **Relevance of Swami Vivekananda's thought on Education: A Historical Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Swami Vivekananda presented the true India to the whole world. The ancient learning and teachings of our learned sages and saints has explained and elaborated it in the global context by himself. The basic tenets of the Indian tradition of education, learning, teachings and the new concept of global village or the universal brotherhood had been expressed by swami Vivekananda to the world. But unfortunately, the Indian youths are now at the crossroads. On one side they are tempted to the life of wealth, luxury, consumerism and boundless enjoyments like western world, on other side they see the poverty, extreme misery of getting minimum requirements of life and livelihood. The T.V shows, electronic gadgets, social media and its boundless provocation makes them confused to choose the right way of life. In this historical juncture, the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda will be the path indicator to the stressful and aimless youths. His ideas on various aspects of education are more relevant and are more needed today. For the rejuvenation and re-building of our glorious Indian tradition the only way to introduce value-based education rather the career building or money-making mode of education. Swami Vivekananda passed away more than hundred years ago, but till his ideas on education and the society are harmoniously blended and relevant. Swami Vivekananda's thought on education ought to be seriously re-examined today for the betterment of our society.

**Keywords:** Vivekananda, Learning, Universal education, Value-based education.

The Ancient literature like the Vedas, Upanishads, epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata and the eighteen Puranas proved that education and learning was reached its culmination of knowledge. The places like Varanasi, Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Kedar, Badri, Ujjain, Takshila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila were prominent places for education and learning of the that time. Students came from all over India to study in these educational centres. Teachers, philosopher, Poets like Vyasa, Valmiki, Kalidas, Bhababhuti, Mahavira, Kanad, Kapil,

Patanjali, Ramanuja, Krishna, Gautama Buddha, Shankaracharya, Madhavacharya, Nanak, Chaitanya, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya, Brahmagupta, Barahamihir and many came from different parts of the country. In all sphere of education like literature, history, Political science, economics, philosophy, science, medical science, Ayurveda, Joga or the physical science, Astronomical Science, Mathematics and so on so forth. Education in our society in proper and real sense, is a life-long learning. 'Chhatranam Adhyayanang Tapah' (to students, the only tapasya is to study), in teachers' viewpoint the acquiring of knowledge is the only duty of the students or the sisya from Guru. By obtaining the proper knowledge 'shraddha' (respectful mind) will come out, without shraddha or respectful mind knowledge will not be received by any pupil, Swamiji said- what makes the difference between man and man is the difference in this shraddha and nothing else. What makes one man great and another weak and low is this shraddha."1

"The education that our boys receive is very negative. The school boy learn nothing; but has everything of his own broken down, want of "sradha" (respect) is the result. Therefore, are we so near to destruction".2 This apprehension or fear of swami Vivekananda become true in this current socio- political arena. We are truly and totally failing to give the proper education to our students. we are facing with the problems of the students unrest in the universities, colleges and schools. The students often behave like a mob. They are every now and then on a rampage; defying the authorities, destroying properties, and indulging in a free fight with the police. There is no end of their demand and they are bent on getting them fulfilled through atrocious means. Demands, slogans, procession and violent confrontation with the authorities; this is the picture everywhere. Students cares a very little to do his assign duties, for whom studies are only of tertiary importance at present. Now the students are most found of them are engaged with the political activities and the political leaders are using these youths for their own political benefit. The politics of the most unscrupulous and nefarious type has become almost staple of our society. It has contaminated and denatured everyone and has subverted the age- old moral order, and ruined our sense of values.

Now, in this socio- cultural crisis we have only way to remove this different type of malaise, have to return to the lotus feet of Swami Vivekananda; and his ideas. We must re-orient our education on the basis of Swamiji's Value based educational thought. The curriculum and the syllabi should be restructured to suit the needs of the young students. Whatever discipline they may belong to, the academic curriculum should not be lifeless or gathering the information from books or other sources, but should focused on the 'actualization of Self',

The supreme motto of education would be and should be the acquiring of knowledge, and know the truth, that education which help to increase his/her mind and spirit by which the all-round development of personality will possible.. According to the Hindu Sastras the ‘truth’ means the realization of the Self, or the ‘Atman’; Swamiji said “within man is all knowledge and it requires only an awakening Now, we need the proper education is an effort for this awakening of the perfection already within ourselves.” He also said inspiring for the youth that ‘every action and every thought that helps the Jiva to expand, to manifest its real nature, is good.’<sup>3</sup>

According to the Swamiji’s Vedantic philosophical thought, the Atman’ is the ultimate source of all knowledge, joy and power, but unfortunately which we are trying to gather from the material world. Traditional Indian philosophy denote that body and mind change but the ‘Atman’ never changes. Self, the Atman is a part of God; which Swamiji has stated as ‘each soul is potentially divine’. But the ordinary people are not aware of this fact due to ‘Maya’ or ‘Avidya’; only through the proper education or knowledge can be removed this Maya or ignorance and the light of the Atman manifest itself. So, education is the process of removing ignorance through empirical knowledge and manifestation of the perfection already in man. Swami Vivekananda in his fundamental thought of education also emphasise on the character building. in his own word “mere book learning won’t do. We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increase, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one’s own feet. <sup>4</sup>

Swamiji said, it is man that is the reservoir of all energy and power. He wanted man, young, self- confident, unselfish, man of heart, man of character, and man of education. Today’s youth is entangled in the complex web of science, ill politics and sensual enjoyment. Swamiji here pointed out that “man need to fulfil not only the demand of his body, but also the demands of his mind and spirit. Man is neither an animal nor an automation; he has’ Vivek’ (conscience), ‘Chaitanya’ (consciousness) and above all ‘dharma’(religion) of his own”<sup>5</sup>. All these are part and parcel of one’s life. A better balanced and morally equilibrium-oriented society can be founded through Swamiji’s man making education. Every educated person should always keep in mind the responsibility to our society. The aim of education is not at all to promote careerism or money-making only but service to the society is its main motto. Those who are fortunate to have the proper education they have the holy duty to eradicate the social injustice, poverty, irrational beliefs and practices for the betterment of our mankind.

Swamiji rightly stated that “So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor, who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them”.<sup>6</sup>

Politics is now a very destructing business in which political parties entice and induct students in their own narrow ends. To fight with these socio- political malaise we should generate an intellectual atmosphere on the basis of religious- philosophical values through youth can realize the inner power and strength. Let each student understand that his real nature is not the mind but the spirit, the ‘Atman’. This spirit is like an inner light (atmajyoti) by which students will not harm his own body through bad habits, he will not defile his mind by thinking bad thoughts or by seeing bad things, pictures in T.V or any other electronic gadget. Education has two-fold objectives: from the collective side, education is expected to turn the student into a good citizen as well as a good human being. On other hand, from the individual side, education will make him perfect and will help him to know ‘thysself’, the inner consciousness lying within. According to the Swamiji- Vedanta says that within man is Only by following the messages and path led by Swamiji these modern derailed youth can come out of their existential vacuity. All students or every youth should teach the glorious spiritual and cultural heritage of our age-old civilization, through national methods of teaching and learning, as far as practical. Our present system of education has taken the students and teacher far away from nature. We have to go back to our ancient ‘Ashramic’(Gurukula) method of education and encouraging our students to ‘communicate with nature, observe, watch, appreciate and get absorbed in the beauty of flowers and plants, animals and insects, rivers and ponds, stars and planets, the sun and moon. We have to emphasise nature- centric educational system by which the students learn to feel the high sense of beauty, concentration, respect to all creatures of the earth.

Education should have a definite purpose both morally and materially, aimed at welfare of the people. Every educated man and woman should strive for the up liftmen of masses. As Swamiji says- “The greatest national sin is the neglect of the masses.... they pay for our education; we must work for them.” He prayed to the educated youth for take initiatives to overall upliftment of the common masses. He said “make them realize that you all are their brother, as the essential parts of body, we love you all, not hate you, for this sympathy, they will encouraged hundred times and will come close to you.” <sup>7</sup>So, every educated man should always keep in mind the needs of society. The aim of education is not at all to promote careerism only.

The fundamental objective of education as Swamiji mentioned is to self – actualization of an individual person; with some Value based on our ancient socio- cultural heritage. A student or learner have to fixed up the hobby or passion. If they have the talent for music, they have to go for singing, if artistic talent then they have to go for painting, sculpturing or any other creative engagement. If they have the talent of machinery, then they should opt for mechanical innovation for new discovery for betterment of universal life. But Swamiji also advised us that these should not be aimed at earning or making lots of money only, this should be done for the expression of the inner qualities (potentiality) and aspiration. The innovative work of an individual person actualizes his or her socio- economic position and recognition of the talent. So, the learning shouldn't be offered for acquiring the higher degree only, it should base on various creative works. The purpose of education is to give sufficient knowledge and training so that the innovative or creative ability of a student may find successful expression in his or her life.

The educational thought of Swamiji totally based on integral philosophy of life which meant the Indian student or youth should follow the Age-old culture of India with deep understanding of human nature with life and reality. Therefore, the educational system should be help full for every youth or student rich or poor; cast or creed or religion. The education should provide the environment of learning for researching and attainment of universal truth. It should be bonded with emotional and social relationship, touched with the common people of the society. And above all, the fulfilment of spiritual learning as their inner aspiration. But it should be optional to enter in the spiritual world. Education should help the student or youth to feel his or her inner potentiality; as Swamiji has said “Each Soul is potentially Divine”. This means the student has realize that he or she also has inner potentiality, the object of education is only to express these inner abilities. Swamiji emphasise on integral education for the complete human being. This integral education based on four essential pillar- (Yogas): Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Dhyana, the true harmonization of Head, Heart and Hand. Swamiji said, “three things are necessary for great achievement, feeling from heart, deep thinking about the plan of action for eradication of social malaise and finally, strong will power to surmount all obstacles.”<sup>8</sup> This synthetization of Head, Heart and Hand should be the actual purpose of our educational system.

Another thing is that let each student understand that the real nature of life is not the body nor the mind but the spirit which is known as ‘Atman’, the inseparable part of ‘God’. If the student feels that the God dwells in his or her soul, then individual person will gain greater

inner strength. According to Swamiji education is the process of humanization and a process of manifestation of inner potentiality by which the spiritual actualization will be possible; and let the student understand that god dwells in the soul of all living creatures including the man. All work is the service to or worship of God. Swamiji rightly said that “the Karma-Yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realising selflessness; and he must have to work it out himself.”<sup>9</sup>

Swami Vivekananda strongly emphasise on the Women education for the betterment of our society. In his eye, women are the real power of Indian society since Ancient ages, they are the mother, and Indian society is the mother-worshipper. Durga, Kali and many more Goddess are there who were religiously worshiped and admired. Sita, Damayanti, Savitri, all are in his eye, are holy mother. Swamiji said “the women of India must grow and developed in the footprints of Sita and that is the only way.”<sup>10</sup> To Swamiji, all women are mother as like as his own mother, later to Srīma Sarada Devi, wife of his Guru (preceptor) Ramakrishna also give proper respect as his own mother. Swami Vivekananda firmly against the discrimination between sexes, as there is not any sex differences in ‘Atman(soul)'; in Indian philosophical outlook the soul has neither sex nor caste or imperfection, they should be treated as the human beings, nor male or female. In Swamiji’s view western ideals of womanhood are wife, but eastern ideals of women are mother. Swami Vivekananda strongly rejected the notion as women are the obstacles of salvation of a saint or monk, but he advocated for the overall upliftment of the women including spiritual achievement as women are treated as the ‘Mahamaya’ (real Power of Men), and eternal soul, and every soul is Potentially Divine. Swami Vivekananda’s proposal for the upliftment of Indian women by educating them as education in itself is social purifier and driver towards its betterment. He said “how can there be any progress of the country without the spread of education, the dawning of knowledge? Even no real effort or exertion in the cause is visible among the few in your country who are the promise of the future, you who have received the blessings of education. But know for certain that absolutely nothing can be done to improve the state of things unless there is a spread of education first among the women and the masses.”<sup>11</sup>

Swamiji believed that in Indian context the real education lies in religious education, in which the main objectives will be the character building, strongly on celibacy and education for internal upliftment. He advocated for the overall development of the society as women are the essential and half of the society, so the education of the women should not be neglected.

In his own word “the necessity of having education women, and educated mothers, was in order to secure the future of the civilization, in so far as it was the mother who played the most crucial part in molding the character of the child.<sup>12</sup> Swamiji said “we have the duty till to educate themselves, by which, they able to solved their own problem her selves’. So, Swami Vivekananda, was strongly against the women torture and treated her as domestic slave, rather he advocated for the equal right with the men. In his word “each is equally good in his or her way. What man can bring up a child with such patience, endurance, and love as the women can? The one has developed the power of doing; the other, the power of suffering. If the women cannot act, neither can suffer. The whole universe is one of perfect balance”.<sup>13</sup> Swami Vivekananda, as a futurist, viewed women as the harbingers of our civilization and as the architect of our future nation. He had immense faith in the ability of the women section and able to regain our worthy prestige and glorious position as before in this world. His views on women need to be thorough research to inculcate the ethics and values for our better society.

Thus, Swami Vivekananda through the education wanted to eradicate all the social malaise for the up liftmen of poverty-stricken and oppressed masses of our society. He strongly advocated the social reform on the basis of education as well as religion. He called all of the educated person not to forget the low caste people – the untouchables, the cobbler, the scavenger as they are the brother. His educational thought creates heart-based, disciplined, patriotic and dedicated human being for national development. His ‘Man making’ education, Value based education is the only way to make successes to the younger generation today. “what our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves 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 meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face.”<sup>14</sup> It is the duty of our part to carry on the message of Swami Vivekananda and lead a wholesome, meaningful life of sacrifice and service to India and the world.

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