Awakening Youth That swami Vivekananda Vision and Challenges in Education In The 21St Century.

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Abstract

The exposition and analysis of Vivekananda’s scheme of education brings to light its constructive, practical and comprehensive character. He realizes that it is only through education that the uplift of masses is possible. To refer to his own words: Traveling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people and I used to shed tears. When made the difference? “Education” was the answer I got. 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. The sense of dignity rises in man when he becomes conscious of his inner spirit, and that is the very purpose of education. He strives to harmonize the traditional values of India with the new values brought through the progress of science and technology.

It is in the transformation of man through moral and spiritual education that he finds the solution for all social evils. 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. Through his scheme of education, he tries to materialize the moral and spiritual welfare and upliftment of humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, nationality or time. However, Swami Vivekananda scheme of education, through which he wanted to build up a strong nation that will lead the world towards peace and harmony, is still a far cry. It is high time that we give serious thought to his philosophy of education and remembers his call to every-body-‘Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.’

INTRODUCTION

12th January 1863 was the day when Narendranath was born. On 12th Jan, 2012, India celebrated the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji needs no introduction; he was one of the greatest spiritual leaders of the modern world who bore unconditional love and compassion towards humanity. He was also a great patriot, who nurtured the dream of ‘Jagatguru
Bharat’ (India as the leader of the world). It is towards the realization of this dream that the entire nation pledged to stride, honoring his 150th birth anniversary this year.

In this paper, I 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, we shall observe, stem from this dormant theme of his philosophy which has its moorings in Vedanta. Vivekananda realizes that mankind is passing through a crisis. The tremendous emphasis on the scientific and mechanical ways of life is fast reducing man to the status of a machine. Moral and religious values are being undermined. The fundamental principles of civilization are being ignored. Conflicts of ideals, manners and habits are pervading the atmosphere. Disregard for everything old is the fashion of the day. Vivekananda seeks the solutions of all these social and global evils through education. With this end in view, he feels the dire need of awakening man to his spiritual self wherein, he thinks, lies the very purpose of education.

MEANING OF EDUCATION

Sister Nivedita used to say that those who knew Swami Vivekananda understood that he was one who had experienced in his own life all the truths about which he spoke. This is equally valid when he addressed the subject of education. To him education plays a vital role in curing the evils in society, and it is critical in shaping the future of humanity. Although Vivekananda did not write a book on education, he contributed valuable thoughts on the subject that are relevant and viable today. In order to understand his thoughts, we should first consider his oft-quoted definition of education – ‘Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man’ (CW, vol.IV, p. 358). Vivekananda’s definition of education is one of remarkable insight. First of all, the Word ‘manifestation’ implies that something already exists and is waiting to be expressed. The main focus in learning is to make the hidden ability of a learner manifest. As Vivekananda said, ‘what a man “learns” is really what he “discovers”, by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge’ (CW, vol. I, p. 28). According to the Vedanta philosophy, knowledge is inherent in a human being, like a spark in a piece of flint, and all that is needed is the strike of suggestion to bring it out.

VIEWS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION.

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civilization are being ignored. Conflicts of ideals, manners and habits are pervading the atmosphere. Disregard for everything old is the fashion of the day. Vivekananda seeks the solutions of all these social and global evils through education. With this end in view, he feels the dire need of awakening man to his spiritual self wherein, he thinks, lies the very purpose of education.

TEACHINGS AND PHILOSOPHY

Vivekananda was a renowned thinker in his own right. One of his most important contributions was to demonstrate how Aviating thinking is not merely philosophically far-reaching, but how it also has social, even political, consequences. According to Vivekananda, an important lesson he received from Ramakrishna was that "Jiva is Shiva" (each individual is divinity itself). This became his Mantra, and he coined the concept of daridra narayana seva - the service of God in and through (poor) human beings. If there truly is the unity of Brahman underlying all phenomena, then on what basis do we regard ourselves as better or worse, or even as better-off or worse-off, than others? - This was the question he posed to himself. Ultimately, he concluded that these distinctions fade into nothingness in the light of the oneness that the devotee experiences in Moksha. What arises then is compassion for those "individuals" who remain unaware of this oneness and a determination to help them.

As a sculptor has a clear idea about what he wants to shape out of the marble block; similarly, a painter knows what he is going to paint. Vivekananda points out that the defect of the present-day education is that it has no definite goal to pursue. A teacher, he says, has no clear idea about the goal of his teaching.

YOUTHS OF TODAY

The way which the Indian youths are following is a serious concern, I feel. Definitely, many are successful but what about the majority in the whole country. The top level students are focused and successful but the mediocre ones? The focus is also used in a very narrow sense. Earning huge money, living a luxurious life, reaching a top slot, become richer and more powerful individual are the ultimate thought process of the youths, but, is it for this Swamiji awakened us?

He said “live for others” but why the number of old age homes is increasing? Even so many aged citizens are living alone in their residence and the worst part is the criminals are taking the advantage of it and many aged citizens are getting murdered too. This is not the end even the aged members of the family are ill treated by the earning members. Sometimes it leads to
domestic violence too against the aged people. The youths are spending money exorbitantly in pubs and clubs while the number of homeless and poverty stricken people is increasing too and even giving their life while sleeping at pavements to the rash driving of the youths. We have people unlimited with torn clothes, no warm clothes, no medical care but the youths are blind towards them. The fast speed of technology has made them self centered. 

The mediocre students are busy in settling their own requirements because they are so much burdened as everything is so expensive. They lack strength to fight these curses. Then, what happened to the awakening messages of Swami Vivekananda? It seems, these messages are only found in the books now and not in real life.

HUMAN POTENTIAL

“Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, and 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.” Next in importance in the Swami’s definition of education is the expression ‘already in man’. This refers to a human being’s potential, which is the range of the abilities and talents, known or unknown, that he was born with. ‘Potential’ speaks of the possibility of awakening something that is lying dormant. Israel Scheffler, in his book Of human potential, considered three aspects of this: (a) the capacity to acquire a specific characteristic or to become someone who possesses it. For instance, we might say, ‘Amal has the capacity to become a Maradona, the world-famous soccer player’; (b) the propensity – an attribute which indicates what a person is likely to do when the opportunity comes and freedom of choice is available. It suggests something about a person’s motivation. For example, Rabindranath Tagore’s propensity, expressed in his Gitanjali, indicates his strong aspiration to discover the wonder behind this creation; and (c) the capability – i.e. a person’s motivation and efficiency in working towards an intended outcome. It refers to something more than a person’s capacity to perform. Rather, it is a person’s strength and capacity to get rid of obstacles to his learning – such as his lack of motivation or the obstacles in his environment. Thus, these three concepts – capacity, propensity and capability – emphasize three aspects of education, respectively: (a) that which makes learning possible; (b) the development of learning; and (c) self-development or self-empowerment.

EDUCATION OF WOMEN

This is one of the slogans of UNESCO on education for the 21st century. This leads us to the next idea of Vivekananda—education of women. Women in India were far behind men in the
field of education when Swamiji lived. Now the situation has somewhat improved but much remains to be done. Observing the state of women’s education in India, Swamiji lamented that he could not understand why so much difference was made between men and women, especially when Vedanta declared that one and the same Self was present in all beings. He quoted Manu to assert that daughters should be supported and educated with as much care and attention as the sons. **Swamiji was the first to identify the causes that prevented India from taking over the world.** More than a century later, his teachings are still relevant and it is in them that we can find a way to meet the challenges faced by contemporary India.

“One vision I can see clear as life before me that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on her throne- rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim her to the entire world with the voice of peace and benediction” thus proclaimed a great man. When India was in the clutches of imperialism, plagued by poverty, destitution and diminishing self-confidence, he went a step ahead and proclaimed that a resurrected India would be the leader of the world (Jagad Guru Bharat)! That great soul was Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda called for the awakening of India if at all the welfare of human kind was to be achieved. “Shall India die? Then, from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all identity will be extinct; and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force and competition its ceremonies, and human soul as its sacrifice. Such a thing can never be” he opined. In Swami Vivekananda’s world view, so engrained was the spirit or service and renunciation in our DNA that we will not awaken to serve Indians alone but will work for the betterment of the entire humankind. Seeing the various problems that plague the world today, one will understand the importance of what Swamiji’s words. It is because India has been unable to occupy what rightfully belongs to her that the world is suffering from the menace of terrorism, degradation of the environment and a topsy-turvy economy.

Swami Vivekananda was one of the greatest luminaries of India. He spoke of world religion. His speech at the meeting of the religious heads of the world in Chicago, USA was heard with rapt attention by the religious leaders of the world. His philosophy of religion suits the needs of the society today since the society today is torn apart by the parochial religious and rationalistic feelings. All efforts are made by some of our political leaders to divide the society on the grounds of region, caste, religion and language rather to work for the unity of the country.

**Reference**

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