

Swami Vivekananda's philosophy and its impact on education

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Abstract

Early Life. Vivekananda's original name was Narendranath Dutt. He acquired the new name in 1886 when he took sanyasa. Educational needs of modern India are reflected in the Preamble to our Constitution. It is clear that educational aims, contents and methods of teaching and in fact the entire process of education must be based on these pillars-Secularism, Socialism and Democracy. From the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda as stated above, it is clear that he visualized the needs of independent India and accordingly he set forth his philosophical thought. His views are quite relevant today. He was a liberal approach to religion and accordingly advocated values of secularism. He believed that ignorance was the most important evil of the society.

Keywords: Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy, Impact, Education.

Brief Life Sketch of Swami Vivekananda

Early Life. Vivekananda's original name was Narendranath Dutt. He acquired the new name in 1886 when he took sanyasa. He was born in Calcutta in 1863. His father was a practicing lawyer at Calcutta High Court. Under the influence of his mother he made a deep study of Hindu scriptures. At college he was adept in boxing, riding, swimming and wrestling. He was an ardent student philosophy and poetry. He graduated with honors from Calcutta University.

Education. He has an excellent command over Bengali, English and Sanskrit. He was a voracious reader and had a sharp memory. He could often display a verbatim familiarity with the Encyclopedia Britannica. His principal Rev. W.W. Hastie once marked, "Narendranath is really a genius. I have travelled far and wide but I have never yet come across a lad of his talents and possibilities, even in German University, among philosophical students."

Meeting with Shri Ramakrishna – A Turning Point in Life

He was deeply interested in the study of philosophy and religion. For some time he was a classroom teacher also. His search for truth led him to Ramakrishna Paramhansa, at Dakshineswar in 1882. Through not literate, Swami Ramakrishna was an enlightened soul. During the next six years of his association with the master, he had a spiritual transformation and emerged as Swami Vivekananda. He left home and travelled all over India. His wandering left him deeply affected by the despair and poverty of the masses of India.

Swami Vivekananda organized the Ramakrishna Mission in 1886, after the passing away of his master.

In 1882, 2 years after his master's death, he set out to the Himalayas. He wandered for 2 years through deserts and forest. In Kanyakumari, after worshipping in the temple, Vivekananda sat on rock, and meditated for some time. He went to America in 1893.

Soul-stirring Address at the world Parliament of Religions at Chicago (USA) in 1893. On

September 11, 1893, on the opening day of the Parliament, he sat rapt in silent meditation. In the afternoon session he rose to

speak. He bowed down to Sarawati, the Devi (goddess of learning) and addressed the audience as, "Sisters and brothers of America". Before he could utter another word, people were so much mesmerized that there was applause for full two minutes. When silence was restored, he began his address. His wisdom coupled with universal message of love and tolerance made him a world teacher. In his address, he said that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, "HELP and not FIGHT", 'ASSIMILATION and not DESTRUCTION', 'HARMONY and PEACE and not DISSENSION'. The Parliament of Religion lasted seventeen days and Swamiji addressed six times.

Message of spirituality and Social Service. He addressed several meetings in the USA, UK, and Sri Lanka and spread the spiritual message.

Swami Vivekananda devoted the rest of his strenuous life in communicating his message of unity and tolerance.

In India, he organized social work also in addition to spiritual pursuits.

Major Publications of Swami Vivekananda

1. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda -9 Volumes.
2. Bhaktiyoga.
3. Advaita Vedanta
4. Education
5. Jnana Yoga
6. Lectures from Colombo to Almora
7. Memories of European Travels.
8. Philosophical and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda\
9. Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions.

Principal Features of Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy

1. God resides in every human heart.
2. The best worship of god is service to mankind.
3. Ethics and morality should be the real basis of life.
4. Love and renunciation should permeate the universe.
5. Religion means self- realization through self-control.

Swami Vivekananda' Philosophy of Education

Following are the main elements of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda:

1. All knowledge is the human mind.
2. Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.
3. Knowledge is inherent in man. No knowledge comes from outside.
4. Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind. Man discovers it.
5. The infinite library of the universe is in our mind.

Swami Vivekananda explains this as, "we say Newton discovered gravitation. The falling of an apple gave the suggestion to Newton and then he thought in mind and discovered a link among them, which we call the law of gravitation".

Swami Vivekananda on Various Aspects of Education

1. Aim of Education: man making

According to Swami Ji, education is the manifestation of divinity already existing in man. Education is not the imparting of facts. "If education were identical with information, the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopedias the rishis". He further observed, "will you consider a man as educated if only he can pass some examination and deliver good lectures? 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?"

Swami Vivekananda saw the 'divine' in the form of the poor whom he called Daridra Narayan.

Swami Vivekananda saw the 'Divine' in the form of the poor whom he called Daridra Narayan. This denotes the direction of 'man making' education should develop a spirit of service and the poor and the needy must be helped to raise themselves.

Man-making education also brings out the significance of the famous words said by Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions held in 1893 at Chicago. These were: HELP, ASSIMILATION, HARMONY and PEACE. Accordingly education should develop these qualities in man.

Man-making education is inherent in character development as well as vocational development. Man-making education is a very comprehensive concept.

Following are the chief elements of man-making concept for which education should be directed to:

1. Swami Vivekananda believed in the Vedanta philosophy which considers that the ultimate goal of human life is to attain 'Unity with the Creator.' An individual must fully understand this.
2. Service to man is equated with devotion to God. According to Swami Vivekananda, God resides in every human heart. Thus man should develop the spirit of service to his fellow beings.
3. Swami Vivekananda believed in the liberal concept of religion. Essential elements of all religions are the same. No religion is inferior to other religion. Man should follow an attitude of respect for all religions.
4. According to Vivekananda, love is the highest goal of religion. Man should imbibe love for all and hatred for none.

5. Swami Vivekananda was a prophet of humanity. His concept of man transcends the cultural boundaries of the East and the West. He was a rationalist and a man must develop rational attitude in life.

2. Role of the Teacher

Vivekananda laid stress on the following qualities that a teacher should have:

1. The first condition is that he should be sinless.
2. The second condition is that he should know the spirit of scriptures.
3. The third condition is the spiritual force of the teacher should be based on love for the students.
4. The fourth condition is that the teacher should think that he is only helping the child to grow. He is the external teacher and he offers the suggestion which arouses the internal teacher, i.e. the mind of the child.

3. Principles of Teaching-learning

Swami Vivekananda emphasised the following:

1. **Self-teaching:** "No one was ever taught by another. Each of us has to teach himself. A child educates itself."
2. **Living Examples of Teacher:** "Words even thoughts, contribute only one-third of the influence in making an impression - the man two-thirds."
3. **Teacher through Positive Suggestions:** "We should give positive ideas. Negative ideas only weaken men. If you speak kind words to them and encourage them, they are bound to improve in time."
4. **Concentration as the Only Method of Education:** "The power of concentration is the only key to the treasure-house of knowledge."
5. **Qualities of the Learner:** "The conditions necessary for the taught are purity, a real thirst after knowledge and perseverance."

4. Physical and Health Education

"Be strong, my young friends..... You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of Gita."

5. Education to be based on Western Science Coupled with Vedanta

"Living with the Guru and a similar system of imparting education are needed. What we want is Western science coupled with Vedanta-'Brahmacharya' as the guiding motto and also 'Shraddha' (faith) in one's own self."

6. Education of the Masses.

Vivekananda gave prime importance to the education of the masses. He asserted, "The chief cause of India's ruin has been monopolizing of the whole education of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men". He further observed, "The great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the chief causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well-educated, well-fed, and cared for. They pay for our education, they build our temples, but in return they get kicks they are practically our slaves, if we want to regenerate India, we must work for them".

7. Women's Education

Vivekananda was an ardent champion of the education of women. He marked, "Women have many grave problems but none that cannot be solved by that magic word: education!"

8. Secular Education

Vivekananda had great regard for all religions. "Let us take in all that has been in past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present and to all that are to come in the future."

Contribution of Swami Vivekananda to Education: Relevance of his views today

1. He laid stress on the character development education.
2. He advocated the education of the masses which implies adult education and free and compulsory education regardless of caste, creed or colour. He said, "I consider that the greatest national sin is the neglect of the masses."
3. He revived the spirit of humanism in education.
4. His clarion call to the educated people was, "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".
5. He considered the education of women as the chief instrument of national regeneration.

Summing up: Educational needs of modern India are reflected in the Preamble to our Constitution. It is clear that educational aims, contents and methods of teaching and in fact the entire process of education must be based on these pillars-Secularism, Socialism and Democracy. From the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda as stated above, it is clear that he visualized the needs of independent India and accordingly he set forth his philosophical thought. His views are quite relevant today. He was a liberal approach to religion and accordingly advocated values of secularism. He believed that ignorance was the most important evil of the society. He advocated mass education, i. e., free and compulsory education as well as, adult education. His advocacy of women education is in accordance with the present day needs. His stress on child-centered education is another remarkable aspect of his educational philosophy. He advocated a system of education that was egalitarian.

Swami Vivekananda's views on education may be summed up in his own words, "We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded any by which one stands on one's own feet."

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