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**Aniruddha Saha**  
Research scholar,  
Department of Education,  
University of Calcutta  
Assistant Teacher, Gourisail  
Gouripur Ananda Vidyapith,  
Gangsara Majhergram, Nadia

## Educational thoughts of Swami Abhedananda: A Critical study

**Aniruddha Saha**

### **Abstract**

Swami Abhedananda's thoughts on education have profound implication on the theory and practice of education. His philosophy of education was based on the Vedanta. He advocate man making education and suggested brahmacharya during student life. He focused on the training of the mind through meditation. He felt education should be imparted in mother-tongue and through real life experience. The philosophy of Abhedananda's educational thought was based on practical Vedanta which has been enshrined in this article.

**Keywords:** Vedanta, brahmacharya, meditation

### **1. Introduction**

Swami Abhedananda took his mortal physique with huge Yoga Shakti (power of meditation) and his mind was also that of a yogi with the propitious ideas in it. He was born with an uncommon studious zeal. Thoughts of such a great man enlightened the educational reforms of the country and the importance of this fact is really worthy for our realization. It is for his jogi like mentality that he could perhaps realize in his heart the main stream of Indian education and its original concept. In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century he clearly declared the need of India in the present day education system--- 'India needs today, free education and free industrial and technical schools and colleges. India needs schools and colleges for girl.....India needs a National University'. As he was closely connected with the modern educational institutions of the developed countries like America, England, he could easily feel the need of Western Education in India. But it is necessary to accept Western Education to make adaptation with the gradual change of education in this country that has happened for years and it (Western Education) will have to be accepted not separately because -'Education of a nation depends upon its ideal of Civilization.' As a tourist he observe the real situation of present India. He wanted that this degenerating nation should be rejuvenated and made familiar with her traditional glories. What is the way out of this problem? He realized that only Education is the smooth and easy way to reach it, the panacea for all problems and diseases. So it is certain that later he deeply thought of the problem in education in India for a long times and he also suggested the solution of this problem in the appropriate context of his saying and writings. The well thought opening of Swami Abhedananda was that the real foundation of education should be established on the concepts of Vedanta. He has said that in different manner- 'Among all special religions there is an undercurrent of true religion and that nameless religion should be brought forward and education should be based on this'

### **Emergence of the problem-**

In modern education there is lack of value system and in ability to cope up with present crisis. Besides consumer culture has contaminated the modern system of education. Till now the educational ideas of modern Indian philosophers like Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, Mahatma Gandhi have come to the forefront. But Swami Abhedananda's education thinking was not given Importance. From his educational thinking the ideas like – the aim of education, curriculum, method of teaching, discipline, role of teacher, medium (language) of given education, women education etc. are to be critically examined. In spite of all these and thoughts are yet his educational philosophy and thoughts are yet unexplored

### **Objectives of the Study**

Every investigation is being investigated in the purpose to fulfill some objectives. Thus, this study also has some objectives to achieve-

**Correspondence**  
**Aniruddha Saha**  
Research scholar,  
Department of Education,  
University of Calcutta  
Assistant Teacher, Gourisail  
Gouripur Ananda Vidyapith,  
Gangsara Majhergram, Nadia

- 1) To identify the basic components of educational philosophy of Swami Abhedananda with special reference to aim of Education, Curriculum, Methodology of teaching, discipline, teacher, mass education, etc.
- 2) To discover Abhedananda's educational core laws where process of unfoldment of soul-force can be manifested.
- 3) To evaluate the usefulness of Swami Abhedananda's educational thoughts in the changing circumstances.
- 4) To explore the importance and utility of Sanskrit language as the source of Indian heritage.
- 5) To discover how Vedanta can guide to achieve successful educational system.
- 6) To discuss about the quality level of women which was revived by Swami Abhedananda.

### Research Questions

The present research will be concentrating towards finding the answer to the following questions:

- (1) Do Swami Abhedananda's epistemological, ontological and axiological ideas endure any philosophical as well as practical importance?
- (2) What according to Swami Abhedananda are the aims and objectives of Education?
- (3) Infinite possibility within human consciousness; how far is it feasible to unfold?
- (4) Urge of God- Consciousness within an individual; how did he relate his ideas with this urge.
- (5) Should students of school going age be taught Indian values and ideals to lead a fruitful conjugal life?
- (6) Should Sanskrit be taught as a compulsory subject to imbibe richness of Indian Heritage?
- (7) What was the Swamiji's thoughts and opinion on women?

### Methodology of the study

For documentary analysis the following methods (which are generally used in philosophical research.) will be used:-

- (1) Content Analysis.
- (2) Concept Analysis.
- (3) Inductive Analysis.
- (4) Speculative Method.
- (5) Perspective Method.
- (6) Exegetic Method.
- (7) Synthetic Method.
- (8) Iterative Method.

### Sources used in the study

The present study will be a Qualitative biographical piece of research belonging to the area of Philosophy of Education.

For pursuing this research Primary, secondary and tertiary sources will be used.

- (i) Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda (as primary source)
- (ii) Writings of revered monks and house-holders who received documents on Abhedananda through His direct disciple (as secondary source)
- (iii) Writings of other monks and scholars who reflected upon Swami Abhedananda on the basis of those primary and secondary sources (as tertiary source)

### Delimitations of the study

Swami Abhedananda is a multi-talented personality. He has great expertise in different sectors like religion, social reform and he has great contribution of other aspect of life. But the present research will be delimited to the educational thoughts of Swami Abhedananda

### Analysis and interpretation

While discussing the process of education he remarked that man received new lessons in him in accordance with his own taste, disposition and power. Knowledge cannot be injected into the learner's mind from outside. The learner can grasp the thought current of a teacher only when he can elevate his own thought level to that of the teacher. Not only that he can even explore the new realm of knowledge and thought. This is what the process of education is. In ancient India this method used to be followed. So in that period the arrangements were made in different seats of learning for tutelage of the learners in Gurugriha.

If a teacher has no personal influence his learning becomes futile. The teacher's radiating character, his continuous high thinking, creative exercise of mind, used to awaken the educands to new inspirations.

In cause of speaking on the education process, Swami Abhedananda has drawn attention to the use of vernacular as the medium of instruction. He has said- 'when a suggestions in thrown into a child's mind, it begins to react and in that the child gathers what is called knowledge.....suggestions in mother tongue creates the reaction more quickly. Hence the importance of mother tongues in education....' Learning through mother tongue can derive a hasty reaction from the child's mind. Giving special emphasis on this mystery of human psychology Swami Abhedananda has repeatedly advocated the need of vernacular as medium of instruction.

He also gave equal emphasis on the lessons of Sanskrit along with that of vernacular. The grammar of Sanskrit is better than of any other language. The causes of it are as follows-

- 1) The rules and usages of Sanskrit are systematic and scientific.
- 2) There is a scientific resemblance between the phonetics and the alphabets of Sanskrit.
- 3) Many sounds and languages of the world have originated from Sanskrit.
- 4) The Sanskrit is the container and carrier of Indian heritage and tradition.

So the elimination of Sanskrit from the arena of education is nothing but making the national life stagnated in the mind of paralysis.

He even gave the opinion adult education is equal necessary along with the child education, because -'unless parents are properly educated, they cannot properly educate their child.'

Another objective of education is to develop the common sense in man. If it is not so the main objective of education becomes futile and it makes a man a scholar but a fool. So parents, kins and the teachers all must be ever conscious and the surrounding must be made favorable for the development of common sense in the child's mind.

Swami Abhedananda has mentioned in many ways importance of learning Handi the art of Work as a part of education. He said that through this work man gets the taste of a delightful freedom. So he thought if the Vocational learning is introduce as a part of education, it will help in removing the problem of unemployment.

The best saying of Swami Abhedananda coming from his thought of education is -'we do not gain any knowledge from outside. It comes from within; our soul is all knowing.' But he has also said that this knowledge is darkened under the veil of ignorance and a continuous creative exercise of mind is needed to manifest that latent knowledge. And that exercise of mind required simultaneous possession of cynicism and deep concentration. Only then our whole being becomes free from ignorance gradually and that results in the diffusion of the ever shining light of knowledge.

It is the duty of every parents to foster and educate their children properly. Swami Abhedananda echoed the perception of Lord Sri Ramakrishna that every woman irrespective of age is the living icon of that great invisible mother of the world. He could realize the prevalence of the omnipotent world mother in her own stature in every women. Truly speaking it is he who preached in the world that every woman is the world. Mother herself even in the envelope of her mortal body.

Swami Abhedananda used to say that the half portion of the whole population of the nation is women but they are still far from the light of Education. The real education consists in the proper practice of religion, science and philosophy. And this education itself can enrich us with real knowledge and glory. The women are the mother of the future family men. So in every matter the women's education should be given priority over men's everyone should feel the need of imparting learning to all girls who are certainly the would be mother of the nation. It is not so done, the children of the country with themselves fit for serving. At first, all mother should be properly educated to get their children potent and talent in all respects. But we still sorrow fully lag behind in this matter. It is a disgrace for our human race. The stagnation has its root even in our education system itself. Our hindu women are also engulfed in this darkness. In the vedic era importance was given to women's education. At that time good education was to enlighten all women. Even that ancient era setup the instances of many noble and spiritually illumined women like Gargi, Maitry etc. In the vedic Sanskrit literature there is the mention of many leader women like God-gifted orator Gargi. In the legends and many other older scriptures there are references to their depth of knowledge and learning. But at present our indifference to the spread of this effective education has caused a huge heap of back log in our social progress. It is my earnest appeal to all parents not to be careless of their children's education. Swami Abhedananda said that once he was very much shocked to hear a comment. He heard that the national school of madras were run by the missionary ladies. But he firmly believed that the Hindu women are more efficient in this deed and that would ultimately do welfare of the nation. He remarked that the competence and the workmanship of the Hindu ladies is not less than that of the Christian ladies in any respect. Rather in some matters they ever outrun the Christian ladies. Truly speaking he is looking forward to that golden age when our Hindu women will grace the posts of the principal of our girl colleges and those colleges will be run under their careful supervision and free benevolent inspiration. He said that mode of work of America is quite different and innovative. According to his opinion a single visit to America will show us how women's education is prospering there day by day. The girls of that country have already acquired higher education and knowledge and made them the object of real glory for the country. His mode of leaving very beautiful from all angle. The customs of early marriage is not in vogue there. The women spent their whole life there through the acquisition of knowledge and education. Swami Abhedananda said we have also the duty to make them educated and worthy. The Indians should resist the ugly influence of all evil customs with the cumulative efforts the fair, intention and the enthusiastic energy of all. The future prosperities and glory of nation depends on proper carrying out of the responsibility by the parents. Therefore Swami Abhedananda has made an earnest appeal or request to all parents that they should offer all kinds of assistance to establish the education centre of the

nation. He hoped that the noble effort would be fully fruitful and effective.

### Findings of the study

1. Method of teaching according to him included content, concentration, self-experience, question-answer etc.
2. Swami Abhadananda stood for expansion, growth, progress and all-round perfection – physical, mental and spiritual.
3. According to Abhadananda, no teacher could educate a child because it grow according to its nature. His application of the analysis of the human mind as sattva, rejas and tamas had a great bearing on the modern educational psychology.
4. Education according to him was not only a collection of various bits of information but was a manifestation of the individual inner capacity.
5. Abhedanandaji advocates the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at the lower level, but at the higher level other languages could be used. He strongly favoured the study of Sanskrit.
6. Education was open for all casts, creeds and women.
7. His philosophy of education was a combination of ethics, religion and moral.
8. Swami Abhedananda believed that the foundation of all religions of the world was directly or indirectly based on Vedanta philosophy.
9. Along with spiritual education, Swamiji emphasized vocational education also. In a broader sense, this was his basic curriculum design.
10. Swamiji had great faith in the Vedas and upanishadas.

**Conclusions-** In the sky of Indian education the life of Swami Abhedananda is ever shining like a bright star. He made his learning from cradle to grave. So when we consider his thought of education his greatness brightly comes out in our eyes. His thoughts of education were not at all a luxurious project of imagination having no substantiality. It was a truth that he realizes in his life. So we believe that educational thought of Swami Abhedananda and implication of his life story will give the inspiration and guidelines to the succding learners of India.

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