ABSTRACT

“The Earth is enjoyed by heroes” – this is the unfailing truth. Be a hero. Always say; I have no fear”. These buzzing words are uttered by Swami Vivekananda, the hero of the youth, pride of India, icon of patriots, great and trustworthy disciple of Guru Ramakrishna and worthiest son of Bharatmata. He was not only a spiritual leader or monk, but also a philosopher, statesman, educationist and true lover of mankind. His scheme of education intends to make a man complete one having elegant intensity, strong will power, character and concentration. To him, education is the manifestation of divine perfection already exists in man. Being the messenger of Indian wisdom to the western world, Swamijee proved the value of Hinduism and Indian spiritualism to assign world peace. He gave a new understanding of religion, new view of man, new principle of morality and ethics and tried to bridge the gap between East and West. His scheme of education is mingling between science and religion (Vedanta), material prosperity and spiritual attainment, mother-tongue and other language, book-learning and experience and practical education. His vision in the field of education aims at attaining both secular (Apara Vidya) and Spiritual goals (Para Vidya). He says the three concepts – Capacity, Propensity and Capability – emphasize three aspects of education, respectively: - That which makes learning possible; the development of learning; and self-development or self - empowerment. Education, he said, must provide life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. To him, the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting facts. He rejects the system of education that merely intends the intellectual development of child. Rather he propagates true education should be capable to make a man an all-rounder. He protests against
the today’s education which neglects training of the mind in all its aspects, but it also neglects the spiritual sides of human beings. He over emphasised on education of masses more particularly downtrodden people and neglected women. He desired that the teacher’s life and personality should be like a blazing fire which could have a positive influence on the pupils in his care. He treats religion as the innermost core of education. Interestingly, the UNESCO report “Learning to be” published in 1972, while defining the aim of education, echoed the idea of Swamijee-harmoneous development of child. It reads: “The Physical”, the intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man is a broad definition of the fundamental aim of education”. Indian Government has also legislated Education as a fundamental right in RTE-2009 which was dream of Swamijee a century ago. Swamijee’s cry for the uplift of poor, neglected women has evoked a favourable response from all corners of the world. His vision of education – aims, curriculum, method, discipline, role of mother tongue, technical education, practical experience, religion, Vedanta and responsibilities of teachers greatly influences the present educationist and will promote fuel to the education planners, policy makers, curriculum framers and educationist forever.

Swamijee’s views on prevalent Educational System

Strongly criticizing the contemporary educational system, the chief objection raised by Swami Vivekananda was that it turned men into slaves, capable of slavery and nothing else. Regarding the prevailing university education, he remarked that it was not better than an efficient machine for rapidly turning out clerks. It deprived people of their faith and belief. The English educated people believed that Gita was false and the Vedas were no more significant than rural folklore. Criticizing this system of education Swamijee compared it to the person who wanted to turn his ass into a horse was advised to thrash the ass in order to achieve this transformation and killed his ass in this process. From humanistic point of view Swamijee criticized the contemporary British System of education. To him “it is not a man making education, it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education or any training that is based on negative education is worse than death. The child is taken to school, and the first thing he learns is that his father is fool, and the second thing is that his grandfather is lunatic, the third thing is that all his teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred books are lies. By the time he is sixteen he is a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless. And the result is that fifty years of such education has not produced one original man in the three presidencies. Even man of originality in this country, or they have gone to the old universities once more to cleanse themselves of superstition.”

Unfortunately, after seven decades of our liberation, Indian students are unable to get the education that was proposed by Swami Vivekananda- the architect of modern India. Till now our education system is incapable to turn out true Indians having self—confidence, self—esteem, self — reliance, selfless attitude and patriotic feeling. Today’s education is far away from religion, ethics and spirituality. Now instead of giving birth clerks, our education system produces so called intellectuals to run after multi — national companies not to spread the ideas of our cultural heritage, glory past but to earn dollars, pounds and becoming a member in the club of
millionaires. Instead of man-making, our present education system has become money-making process. Yet, our education system fails to fulfill the dream of Gandhi (Ram Rajya-an ideal state), Sri Aurobindo (Unified India) or Swami Vivekananda to make a destitute free India. Today’s education is not a happy blend between science and Vedanta, materialism and spiritualism. It is not aimed at the manifestation of divine perfection already exist in man. It is not based on the capacity (to acquire a specific characteristic or to become someone who possesses it), the propensity (an attribute which indicates what a person is likely to do when the opportunity comes and freedom of choice is available) and the capability (means a person’s motivation and efficiency in working towards an intended outcome). Today’s education at any levels (Elementary, Secondary & Higher) does not intend to provide life–building, man-making and character-making assimilation of ideas. It is simply the accumulation, memorization and repetition of facts. In short, the present Indian education system has become more and more institutionalized, commodified and commercialized.

Thus, to save our nation and also the world as a whole, the relevance of Swamijee’s idea of education is the need of the day. This paper attempts to reflect the vision of Swami Vivekananda on education.

WHAT TRUE EDUCATION IS TO SWAMIJEE?

What is education? Is it book learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge? No, even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education. (IV. 490)

To Swamijee, education is not the tit bits of knowledge or information inserted into the minds of children by force. According to Swamijee, if education means information only, then libraries could be the greatest saints of the world and encyclopedia had become seers and rishis. “Education is manifestation of the divine perfection already in man.”

Thus, merely passing examination or receiving degree is not education according to him. Education is that process which prepares a man for struggle of existence by making himself self reliant and by developing his character and intelligence.

So he frequently says, 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 his own legs. (VII. 147-48)

CHIEF TENETS OF SWAMIJEE’S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS

His philosophy of education is a reflection of his general philosophy of life. His main contention is that education is the manifestation of divinity already existing in man. He believes knowledge resides within the individual himself. Education is the manifestation of the same. Let’s in brief, jot down some ingredients of education according to Swamijee.

- Swamijee says we want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one’s own feet.
- Education has to attain four important goals – Self – development, fulfillment of Swadharma, Freedom of Growth and character formation.
Self – development

True knowledge does not come from outside, it is discovered within the individual, in the self which is the source of all knowledge. Thus role of education to unlock or uncover the knowledge hidden in our mind and child is allowed to develop himself a plant develops its own nature.

Swadharma

Swamijee condemns to copy others or to impose foreign education on child. He asked, “Getting by heart the thought of others in a foreign language and stuffing your brain with them and taking some university degree, you can pride yourself as educated. Is this education? True improvement is self-inspired and external pressure only creates destructive reactions leading to obstinacy and indiscipline. So everyone has to grow himself.”

Freedom of Growth

Swamijee is a staunch exponent of freedom is education as it is sine-qua-non for self-development. The child should be given ample freedom to grow according to his own nature. The teacher should not act as a/an director, dictator, imposer, task master, he should be a friend, philosopher and guide having an attitude of service and worship.

Character Formation

Character building which is need of the day was specifically emphasised by Swamijee not only for harmonious development of child but also to build a civilized, cultured and well developed nation. To Swamijee, character formation requires hard work, moral and spiritual values, Gurukul system, formation of good habits, learning through mistakes and willpower to make habits, learning through mistakes and willpower to make a man great.

- Education is a man-making, life-building and character forming process.
- Education should inculcate spiritual values (Para-Vidya) and secular values (Apara Vidya)
- Training of mind should be student’s highest priority and not simply the accumulation, the memorization and the repetition of facts. But training of mind in all its aspects is conspicuously absent in today’s education.
- To him, the essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collection of facts.
- Science coupled with Vedanta is the chief contribution of Swamijee to education.
- Vivekananda strongly recommended the adaptation of a spiritual & ethical culture and he looked upon religion as the innermost core of education.
- Swamijee’s most unique contribution to the creation of new India was to open the minds of Indian to their duty to the down masses. Being a genuine friend of poor and weak particularly the helpless masses of India, he was the first Indian leader who sought a solution to their problems through education. He argued that a nation was advanced to the extent that education and culture reached the masses.
- Swamijee was a strong supporter of female education. To him, women’s chastity is a strength and vitality for reaching perfect womanhood. He says women should be ideal like our puranic Sita, Savitri, Damayanti. Lilavati, Mira, etc.
- Vivekananda was one of the first among religious teachers to understand the
importance of science and technology. In the first place, Swamijee saw that poor countries like India would be able to overcome poverty and backwardness only by mastering technology. Secondly, he saw that science is not contradictory to the external spiritual principles, which is the foundation of Indian culture. Both science and religion are concerned with truth.

- To him “Religion as the rice and everything else, like the curries. Taking only curries causes indigestion and so the case with taking rice alone”. (V. 360)

- Regarding personality of teachers, Swamijee says, “Words, even thoughts, contribute only one-third of the influence in making an impression; the man, two thirds”. He therefore, desired that the teacher’s life and personality should be like a blazing fire which could have a positive influence on the pupils in his care.

- Swamijee emphasised on a close personal contact between the teachers and taught. To him “My idea of education is personal contact with the teacher – Gurugriha-Vasa. Without the personal life of a teacher, there would be no education. Take your universities. What have they done during the fifty years of their existence? They have not produced one original man. They are merely an examining body. The idea of the sacrifice for the common weal is not yet developed in our nation.” (V-224)

- To Swamijee, Love, Help, Guidance, Concentrations and Meditation, Brahmacharya, Faith (Saraddha) and Reference, Discussion and Contemplation, Study of scriptures, Service into others are the means of education.

- Swamijee is an advocate of mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. To him, “You will understand the difficulty when I tell you that I have been studying this languages (Sanskrit) all my life, and yet every now book is new to me. How much more difficult would it then be for people who never had time to study the language thoroughly! Therefore, the ideas must be taught in the language of the people. (W.3.290)

- Emphasizing technical education, Swamijee says, “If I can get some unmarried graduates, I may try to send them over to Japan and make arrangements for their technical education there, so that when they came back, they may turn their knowledge to the best account of India. What a good thing that would be ! (CW.5.32)

    Again he says, “I would be better if the people got a little technical education, so they might find work and earn their bread, instead of dawdling about and crying for service. (C.W.5.367)

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

A critical analysis of Swamijee’s vision in the field of education reveals that his scheme of education is not merely meant for fulfilling biological needs of human being but to make a man an all rounder-physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, morally and spiritually. His scheme of education intends to attain both Secular (Para Vidya) and Spiritual (Apara Vidya) goals. To materialize the goal of Swamijee, all most all education committee and commissions set up after independence recommended for harmoneous development of child through education. Swamijee was the advocate of both religion and science in the curriculum. He met the challenge of modern
science by showing that religion is as scientific as science itself; religion is the science of consciousness.

The present era is the era of science and technology. Through science and technology, man has attained great prosperity and power and modern methods of communication and travel have converted human society into a global village. But degradation of man has also been going on a pace, as witnesses by the enormous increase in the broken homes, immortality, violence, crime, corruption, etc in modern society. Vivekananda’s concept of “potential divinity” of the soul prevents this degradation, divinizes human relationships and makes life meaningful and worth living. Swamijee had laid the foundation for spiritual human which is really the boon and blessing to human civilization for good.

In his scheme of education, Swamijee emphasised on morality and ethics which are the need of the day to turn the violent human beings into peaceful, civilized Supreme Being of the universe. He has given a new theory of ethics and new principle of morality based on the intrinsic purity and oneness of Atman. He turned down the prevalent morality in both individual life and social life which is mostly based on fear – fear of the police, fear of public ridicule, fear of God’s punishment, fear of Karma and so on. To him, we should be pure because purity is our law of nature, our true divine self or Atman. Similarly we should love and serve our neighbours because we are all one in supreme spirit known as Paramatma or Brahman. This principle of morality and ethics is highly applicable in the present society to inculcate peace, non-violence, brotherhood ship in society. In short, this is nothing but Swamijee’s dream of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam which we call now "Global Village" in term of globalization.

Through the instrument of education, Swamijee called upon to bridge between the East and the West. He was India’s first great cultural ambassador to the west who made the western people that they had to learn much from Indian spirituality for their own well-being. He showed that, in spite of her poverty and backwardness, India had a great contribution to make to world culture. On the other hand, Swamijee’s interpretation of ancient Hindu scriptures, philosophy, institutions etc prepared the minds of Indians to accept and apply in practical life two best elements of western culture, namely science and technology and humanism. Swamijee taught Indians how to master western science and technology and at the same time develop spirituality.

Swamijee dreams to provide education to all Indians. Realizing the importance of education, he opines “Education education, education alone.” Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing them the comforts and education of even poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was answer I got. (IV.483)

Again he says, “The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, to develop their lost individuality…give them ideas…. That is the only help they require and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization comes in the law of nature……Now if the mountain does not come to Mohammed, and Mohammed must go to the mountain. If the poor but cannot come to education, education must go to him. (IV. 362-63)

The vision of the great stateman is going to materialize. After independence, our union and
state governments have been constantly endeavouring to provide universal education. For that a dozen of programmes like DPEP, SSA, RMSA have been launched. Fortunately, Education has become a fundamental Right (RTE-2009). Besides, special attention is given by both Govt. and NGOs to increase literacy rate by providing mass education through Non-formal agencies. Now the children are not compelled to go school. Rather education has become available at every child’s door. Of course, we have to do much to universalize education for masses. Still the steps of RTE is really a tribute to Swamijee, G.K. Gokhale, M.K. Gandhi and others who dreampt for universal education for Indians. Despite, Swamijee’s idea of continual or lifelong education, however, have been adopted in many countries already.

Now all most all countries of the world are crying for scaling up the status of women- the destiny makers of families and nations as a whole. Now we are observing National and International Women Day. The UNO and other organizations are giving emphasis on Women Empowerment. But hundred years before Swami Vivekananda advised for Women Education. Of course, now his idea has evoked a favourable response from different quarters. Regarding the importance of women education, but none that are not to be solved by that magic word “education”. (CW.V.231)

He again spells out, “Educate your women first and leave them to themselves’ then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them.” (CW.VI.115)

The approaches i.e. child centered, activity – oriented, experience based, etc were already suggested by Swamijee in his scheme of education. His vision in the field of education emphasizing mother – tongue as medium of instruction, language learning, technical education, practical experience, music and art in the curriculum are greatly influenced to the present educational system of our country and the other countries of the world.

Fortunately, there is a remarkable affinity between Swamijee’s thoughts and actions a century ago and the present concern of UNESCO.

- His commitment towards universal values and tolerance, his active identification with humanity as a whole.
- The struggle in favour of the poor and destitute, to reduce poverty and to eliminate discrimination against women – reaching the unreached.
- His vision of education, science and culture as the essential instruments of human development.
- The idea that education should be a lifelong process.
- And the need to move away from role learning.

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude, Swami Vivekananda was an/a original thinker, great educationist, pragmatist, idealist, naturalist, vedantist, supporter of science and technology, spiritualist and lover of mankind. To do away with all evils of the present day world his thought of education (Man-making and character building education) ought to be seriously re-examined today. His ideas of education and religion, materialism and spiritualism, science and Vedanta, should be taken into consideration to keep the globe from the threshold of annihilation.
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