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Swami Vivekananda's vision and Indian education system

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Abstract

Education plays an important role in the development of nation and life of every person, especially in globalized competitive environment as we know it today. India is a country with varied and rich cultural heritage. Numerous great educationists came with their individual ideas and philosophy of education to place education system in a perfect frame in the 19th century. Among all, Swami Vivekananda (12th January, 1863 - 4th July, 1902) was the most influential and renowned personality, educationist, and reformer of India with his ideas and philosophy of education. His thoughts and teaching ideas still influences our education and all aspects of life. Swami ji believed in the philosophy of Vedanta, which believes that the goal of human life is to achieve "oneness with the Creator". Vivekananda was not only a great supporter of Vedanta but also, he had given Vedanta a practical form. Swami Vivekananda is one of the most famous philosophers and educational thinkers in the history of Indian education. He forced a truly men-making education system. Such an education, he says, the manifestation of perfection is already in man. Swami Vivekananda always believed that development a nation is possible with a quality education. Quality education give a safe passport for a comfortable life, because it guarantees a good job, higher education opportunities at prestigious Institutions and many good progressive things. One of the most important Swami Vivekananda's themes is the issue of building strong character in youth. According to him, the development of a good personality in each man is necessary in the case of nation building. He says "The creation of man means the harmonious development of body, mind, and soul but modern India has put tremendous emphasis on the scientific and mechanical ways of life which is fast reducing man to the status of a machine. Moral and religious values are being diluted. The fundamental principles of civilization are being disregarded. While according to Swami Ji aim of education should be to help a human being grow from the human to being human and social animal to the divine state, through self-effort, self-realization, and proper training. Modern India needs to work in the field of producing genuine human beings. We can establish a developed society through the complete education system which was suggested by Swami Vivekanand. The present thematic paper aim to highlight Swamiji's ideas of education. It tries to analyse the relevance and need of his educational ideas in the light of the twenty first century education system in India.

Keywords: Men making education, Swami Vivekananda's ideas and philosophy of education, creation of humans, manifestation

Introduction

"Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man making, character making and assimilation of ideas. 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." - Swami Vivekananda.

"Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach of life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present. His mission was the service of mankind through social service, mass education, religious revival and social awakening through education." Jawaharlal Nehru (14th November, 1889- 27th May, 1964).

We all would agree to the fact that a 'proper' education in a 'good' educational institute is very essential to make a 'bright' career.

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The general advice given to the students is that they should thoroughly study the 'parts' of the prescribed syllabus and clear the examination with 'good' marks. There is, however, an awareness that a 'proper' education, must include more than just the study of a few subjects. More than a century and a half has passed since the birth of Swamiji. But even today his thoughts are equally relevant. He gave great importance to education in the creative thoughts and vision given by him. When Swami ji saw the condition of the poor and downtrodden while traveling in India and inquired about it. In this enquiry, he found that there was a huge difference in the education system between India and Europe. To bridge this gap, he built an instant bridge built on the central truths of Vedantic philosophy as the architect of the spiritual bridge connecting East and West. Swami ji saw that the neglect and exploitation of the public is the main reason for the backwardness of any country. To improve their economic condition, it was necessary to teach them better methods of agriculture, village industries and clean lifestyle. That's why he gave importance to the education of human creation. India and the world can be uplifted through a holistic education system. According to him 'the only service that can be done to our lower classes is to educate them and develop their lost personalities.' In present times we need to think deeply on Swamiji so that we can regain our lost pride to make India the leading country of the world.

Critical review of the present education system

There are some good points in the education that is being provided to the students today, but there are also very big and serious problems in which the good things are less in the balance. Modern education, which is career-oriented, cares little for the cultivation of virtue, the disciplining of the mind, the strengthening of the moral will or formation of positive character. It does not teach self-control or how to be in harmony with friends, neighbours, or colleagues. It does not instil the values of truth, honesty, love, compassion, which make one a true human being. It does not explain how to deal with stress and how to remain calm in difficult situations. Does not prepare for life's challenges and how to look inside your mind. It does not teach how to keep yourself remain positive after failure. Nowadays we see that students of young age are gripped by serious problems like anxiety and depression. The spurt in cases of students committing suicide after failure or poor performance in examinations, or indulging in violence clearly shows that they are not prepared to control negative emotions. Moreover, the modern education which is negative in nature does not emphasize respect for teacher, women and elders, compassion for love, conviction in the power of truth and goodness, feeling for poor, downtrodden, oppressed, ignorant and weaker sections of the society. It does not help human beings to become gracious, intellect, fearless, self-confident, self-reliant, and man of values, morality, honest and empathy through self-effort, self-realization, and proper training as it was in the traditional system. What is the use of high position, if a doctor, teacher, engineer, scientist, technocrat, or some other, disrespects his/her parents and leaves them to spend their evening of lives to the old-age home, shows violence on helpless-woman, and does not have feeling for the deprived sections of the society? The rate of social evils like poverty, ignorance, fear, physical weakness is continuously increasing in India. In which caste

and untouchability, selfishness, exploitation, lack of confidence, female illiteracy and violence, mass oppression, perversion of religion, corruption, dishonesty etc. are nothing but examples of failure of modernity. Therefore, it was felt by Vivekananda that there is an urgent need of finding out a perfect education system which is competent to eradicate all the social evils and promote imperishable development of the nation by regenerating human beings, the key components of the society. This paper presented a systematic discussion of Swami Vivekanand vision for Indian Education System.

Swami Vivekananda's concept on education

Education is not tit-bits of information inserted into the minds of children by force. According to Swami Vivekananda if education means information only, then libraries could be the greatest saints of the world and encyclopaedia had become rishis. "Education is the manifestation of perfection already reached in a man." Therefore, according to him, passing examination and receiving degree is not education. Education is that which liberates (Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye). It liberates one from negative tendencies and ignorance about one's real 'Self'. In Indian tradition, 'Vidya' (learning or knowledge) is posited as antithetical to 'Avidya' (ignorance or non-knowledge), and it ought to culminate in 'Atma-Vidya' (knowledge of the Self) to be complete. The pursuit of both worldly and spiritual knowledge for holistic living, and for gaining immortality, is emphasized in the 'Yajur Veda' (XL.14). Education is that process which prepares a man for struggle of existence by making him-self-reliant and by developing his character and intelligence. Learning always help a person grow into self-consciousness to make realize the ultimate oneness of life. So, it is a lifelong process.

Swami Vivekanand's educational philosophy

As a philosopher he proved that the ancient philosophy of Vedanta could successfully meet the challenge of today and solve the modern problems very effectively. He synthesised the Idealistic philosophy of the west and creative Vedantic philosophy of Hindu religion. Preached universal brotherhood and interpreted Humanism in his idealistic manner. According to him human life is a constant struggle between the strong and weak. So, Education should prepare men for this struggle and face all the challenges boldly and confidently. It should prepare a fearless people. Education should be conducive to the harmonious unfoldment of a person's life, and that the evolution of nature reveals itself in the evolution of the human mind. Swamiji says, "We want to become harmonious beings, with the physical, spiritual, intellectual, and working sides of our nature equally developed. Nation's individuals typify one of these types and cannot understand more than that one... The idea is really that we should become many sided." The essential characteristics of the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda are Idealism, Naturalism and Pragmatism. As a Naturalistic view point, he emphasized that real education is possible only through nature and natural propensities, form of Idealist view point, he says that the aim of education is to develop the child with moral and spiritual qualities. In the Pragmatists view point, he emphasized on the Western education of technology, commerce, industry, and science to achieve material prosperity.

Swami Vivekananda's ideas and reformation of 21st century education in India

Swami Vivekananda, was aware of threats of current system of education. Current education system not a man-making, life-building, character-making and assimilation of ideas. He wanted that education should prepare self-dependent and fearless person. He laid a lot of importance on education. According to him 'the only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, to develop their lost individualities...' The present education is completely a negative education. Any training based on negative education is worse than death. The child is taken to school, and learns firstly that his father is a fool, secondly that his grandfather is mad, thirdly that all his teachers are hypocrites, fourthly that all the holy books are lies. In the Indian education system, the development of moral and mental qualities was essentially emphasized for the students. Learning has always been a part of Indian culture. It was regarded as a process of discipline through which one served God and society. Knowledge is the most sacred and necessary thing for man. We students should be instructed to get and apply it properly. Students are expected to be willing to learn, study regularly, have intelligence, apply what they learn, have concentration, have a sharp memory, and have good judgment. With all these qualities lead a disciplined life, show due respect to parents, teachers and other elders, and learn the art of living. Swami Vivekananda had understood that mankind was 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. Today human beings, the key component of society, are hardly human in nature. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda envisaged the creation of man who is compassionate as well as intelligent, "great in heart and great in mind", and who, by dynamism, can bring about positive change in society. Swami Vivekananda understood that such qualities of mind were possible only in a strong body, with 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel', as he put it. He wanted the students first to be physically strong and active. He said: 'Be strong, my young friends, that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. He wanted such an education which would promote strength and effort. An education that develops the personality of each student completely. It is man-making education.

Swami Vivekanand and Aim of Education

Move forward to Perfection Personality: First and most aim of education is perfection a man or a complete man by diagnosing the perfection which is already in him. Swami Vivekananda believed education is the process by which these inherent potentialities in human personality manifest themselves in completing his or her total development. According to Swami Vivekananda, all kinds of knowledge (Material and Spiritual) is inherent in man but it is covered by the veil of ignorance. The aim of education is to remove the veil of ignorance so that self-knowledge can develop within us and we can develop as a complete personality.

Development of Personality

Swami Vivekananda was in favour of developing the complete personality of the child by developing him

physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. By studying Geeta child knowing the philosophy of karma. He become fearless and physically strong citizen of tomorrow. For mental and logical development of the child the study of Vedanta and modern science is necessary. Spiritual and moral development of children is possible through education, so we should also give place to spiritual books in education.

Character Building

Character formation is very important for everyone and it should be on the top of the educational aims. The first and the foremost issue that one can see in a person of true character is that strength and gentleness will coexist. Swami Vivekananda said, "The character of any man is but the aggregate of his tendencies, the sum of the bent of his mind. As pleasure and pain pass before his/her soul, they leave upon it different pictures and the results of these combined impressions is what is called a man's character." Brahmacharya should be practiced for building a strong character formation. The best way to develop a character is the personal example of ideal set by the teacher or elders. Education should prepare such a person in whom there is no conflict between words and actions. According to swami ji if strength leads to oppression, restriction, and subordination of others, it merely points to improper and inadequate development of character. On the other hand, a fully developed character will also forebear a great deal of gentleness.

Scientific and technological development

Swamiji's vision of technical education can be understood if we have an idea about conception of work, wealth & human society. We need to understand about 'wealth generation'. Wealth generation is most important for stability of society and nation. Wealth can be generated by work. India is yet to become fully investor-friendly and attract private enterprise. The requisites of training that the Indian Engineer needs to have, so that he can shape this country the way Swamiji had dreamed. Swamiji has repeatedly pointed out that professional outlook, conjoint effort & and entrepreneurial spirit are the Indian Engineer. Swamiji said very categorically, "What we need in our country today are Western Science coupled with Vedanta, with Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and Shraddha or faith in oneself."

Swadharna

The educator should not constantly tell him to do this or that. Such negative directions tend to blunt his intelligence and mental development. Therefore, each child should be given opportunities to develop according to his own inner nature.

Swami Vivekananda accepted the idea of Swadharna in education. Everyone must grow like himself/herself and should not copy others. It is hence that he condemned the imposition of foreign education. He asked, "Getting by heart the thoughts of others in a foreign language and stuffing your brain with then and taking some university degree, you can pride yourself as educated. True improvement is self-inspired. There should not be any type of external pressure on the children. External pressure only creates destructive reactions leading to obstinacy and indiscipline. In an atmosphere of freedom, love, and sympathy alone, the child will develop courage and self-reliance.

NEP 2020 and Swami Vivekananda Vision on Education

NEP 2020 follows Swami Vivekananda's vision for nation and youth. In this sequence Indian government Launched 'Jagruti' program of Ramakrishna Mission for students of classes I to V to ensure complete personality development of a child in alignment with the philosophy of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. As per this mission, 'Jagruti' program will identify the potential of children. This mission is linked to NEP which will serve as the foundation to implement it properly and smoothly. NEP 2020 is deeply inspired by the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. From Swami Vivekananda to Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi, many of our greats envisioned an education system that is progressive and rooted in our civilizational values to take the country forward. We must prepare 21st century citizens who can take global responsibilities. That is why our education system should be in line with the national priorities. NEP 2020 is a step in that direction with a focus on teacher-based holistic education system for the students.

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