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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: TEACHING, LEARNING AND MODERN EDUCATION

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Abstract: In India, both in the modern and in the ancient age, there were many thinkers who dwelt on the philosophy of teaching-learning which is an integral part of the education process. Amongst them, Swami Vivekananda's views on the meaning and the process of imparting education are comprehensive and appropriate in the context of Indian culture and economy. Though a good deal of his thinking has been appreciated and acknowledged through various alternative models on education, his contribution has not been rightly reflected in the policy framework designed by the authorities connected with education. The result is that the system of education being pursued at present does not help improve the value system of a person; it can at best give him a degree and employment. Implementation of Swami Vivekananda's views on teaching- learning process in the educational system is very much relevant and deserves attention of the policy-makers. Man making and character-building education alone is real education which strengthens democracy and facilitates national development idea of swami Vivekananda.

Keywords: Education, Value Education, Character building, Democracy, & Nation.

Introduction

In India, both in the modern and in the ancient age, there were many thinkers who dwelt on the philosophy of teaching-learning which is an integral part of the education process. Amongst them, Swami Vivekananda's views on the meaning and the process of imparting education are comprehensive and appropriate in the context of Indian culture and economy. Though a good deal of his thinking has been appreciated and acknowledged through various alternative models on education, his contribution has not been rightly reflected in the policy framework designed by the authorities connected with education. The result is that the system of education being pursued at present does not help improve the value system of a person; it can at best give him a degree and employment.

Study: Vivekananda, in his scheme of education, meticulously includes all those studies, which are necessary for the all-around development of the body, mind and soul of the individual. These studies can be brought under the broad heads of physical, culture, aesthetics, classics, language, religion, science and technology. According to Swamiji, the culture values of the country should form an integral part of the curriculum of education. The culture of India has its roots in her spiritual values. The time-tested values are to be imbibed in the thoughts and lives of the students through the study of the classics like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gita, Vedas and Upanishads. This will keep the perennial flow of our spiritual values into the world culture. Education, according to Swamiji, remains incomplete without the teaching of aesthetics or fine arts. He cites Japan as an example of how the combination of art and utility can make a nation great.

What is education? Swami Vivekananda's views on education said that of all education is 'man making'. It is the manifestation of perfection already in man. It is a process by which character is formed, strength of mind is increases and intellect is sharpened as result of which one can stand on one's own feet. According to Swami Vivekananda, education is an act or process which facilitates the development of a person's character. It enhances his physical, mental and spiritual powers, intelligence and self-consciousness so as to prepare the individual to become self- confident and self-reliant, and finally gives him motivation to serve the society and nation at large. Education, according to Swamiji, is essentially life-building, man- making, and character-making. It means assimilation of ideas based on swadharma. It is not just a means to make money only.

Swami Vivekananda's views on education are based on Vedantic philosophy on one hand and nationalistic philosophy, on the other. In his nationalistic theme of education, humanistic concept of economic development of our country was in his mind. By economic development, he meant development of all the segments of society so that the gap in the economic and social status of people as a whole in a state is reduced. He realized that the economic state of a people would not emerge simply from the preceding economic conditions, but from the preceding total situation. As knowledge and wealth are concomitant, more knowledge we have, the more wealth we can create; for efficient work inspired by knowledge can gain wealth. He thus stressed the dissemination of education among the masses for that could only change the total situation. He opposed vehemently against the monopolization of education by a handful of men. 'From the day when education and culture, etc, began to spread gradually from patricians to plebeians, grew the distinction between the modern civilization as of Western countries, and the ancient civilization as of India, Egypt, Rome, etc. I see it before my eyes; a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's



ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men.

Vedantic philosophy of education: Education for all is essential for the country to escalate and reach up to the global level. In his Vedantic philosophy of education, he views education as the means to arouse the infinite inner strength and knowledge which exist within every individual. But this enormous strength and knowledge within are shadowed by one's ego, ignorance and other false identification, keeping them in dormant stage. Education thus should be a tool to help remove this veil of darkness and ignorance by virtue of which an individual is turned around from this moribund state of mind to a self-conscious mind. 'Through education comes faith in one's own Self, and through faith in one's own Self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant'.

Education, according to him, should bring in oneself the sense of shraddhà, for the scripture says, 'samshayàtmàvinashyati'. That is, 'The ignorant, the man devoid of Shraddhà, the doubting self runs to ruins. This is possible only when education fosters spiritual faith, devotion, self-surrender and imparts a set of values relating to one's attitude, respect for elders, the society and environment at large. According to Swamiji, forging a new national unity by removing mass poverty and developing a welfare society is the prelude to economic development on a sustained basis. A system of education based on both Vedantic and nationalistic philosophy of Swamiji makes an individual self-reliant, economically independent and self-enlightened. Methods of education which preach for transmission of information collated and collected from different books were opposed by him. Vivekananda's philosophy of education can be put into practice if education is imparted by the teaching-learning process.

Thoughts of Vivekananda regarding character –formation through Education: According to Swami Vivekananda, man making education results in character development as well as vocational development. Education without character is like a flower which fully blooms but spreads no fragrance. The main purpose of education is to build up such a personality who thinks character is destiny. Character is the foundation for self-development. The prime aim of education should be enabling the students to build up good character. This necessitates that educator must present high ideals before their students. His best way to develop good character is by practice rather than precept. Formation of good habits, learning through mistakes, dedication and hard work moral and spiritual Values are the certain important principles of character building among the students suggested by swami Vivekananda.

What is teaching-learning? 'To teach is to learn'. 'I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. I practice and I learn'. These two proverbs give the inner meaning and purpose of teaching-learning. Teaching and learning are inseparably entangled. Both are equally important and proceed simultaneously. In teaching-learning, two entities are involved—a teacher and a learner. In our ancient times, teachers and students used to live in close association as a family. They used to know each other intimately. From the Taittiriya Upanishad, we find that every day, they used to pray to God for peace and prosperity of both by chanting: 'Om, sahanàbavatu, sahanaubhunaktu, sahaviryamkarvāvahai, tejasvi-nāvadhitamastu, māvīdvishāvahai'. Om Shanti Shanti hi' (Om. May He protect us both? May He help us both to enjoy the fruits of scriptural study? May we both exert together to find the true meaning of the sacred text. May our studies be fruitful? May we never quarrel with each other?). Swami Vivekananda believed in this spirit of relationship between an educator and a learner. According to him, teaching-learning is not a linear sequence of events but a dynamic phenomenon. In this process, the teacher being more experienced and knowledgeable should act as a mediator and inspire the students to share their knowledge with him. According to Swamiji, knowledge does not belong to a teacher who delivers it ad personam; it is the result of social interactions and the meanings the teacher and the students construct together. All approaches to learning and teaching are organized attempts to bring some kind of meaning to our lives by nourishing the faculties of self-expression, observation and appreciation. What teachers usually get back from their students is what they themselves bring to the teaching-learning process.

In this process, the teacher only guides, suggests, points out and helps the student to find out the hidden treasure of knowledge that lies dormant within him. He said that the teacher must have the power to transfer knowledge to the student who should be fit to receive it and when both these conditions are fulfilled, wonderful growth of knowledge takes place. He was of the view that the teacher's responsibility is to take away the obstacles so that the individual's potential thirst to learn comes out of its own nature. 'Loosen the soil a little, so that it may come out easily. Put a hedge round it; see that it is not killed by anything, and there your work stops. You cannot do anything else. The rest is a manifestation from within its own nature'.

Teaching-learning promotes not only practical and experimental education; it facilitates self-development by harnessing one's inner energy and talent. The model of the teaching-learning process in line with Vivekananda's concept of education can be developed if we consider students' achievement as output, characteristics of teachers and students as input and educational institutions as a processing centre. Characteristics of teachers and students depend on community and family in which they are brought up and nourished. Efficiency and quality of academic institutions depend on institution's policies which determine behaviour of teachers and students. Students' achievement again depends on state policies for utilizing its immense human resources. Main characteristics of both teachers and students, according to Swamiji, are purity of thought, knowledge about the spirit of the subject to be taught, the



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motive, power of endurance and having faith in each other. ‘Sine qua non of acquiring knowledge for one’s self or for imparting it to others is the purity of heart and soul’. He also said ‘The conditions necessary for the taught are purity, a real thirst after knowledge and perseverance’. ‘The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive. His work must be simply out of pure love for mankind at large’.

The Goal or Objective of Education: Vivekananda points out that the defect of the present-day education is that it has no definite goal to pursue. 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. But a teacher, he says, has no clear idea about the goal of his teaching. Swamiji attempts to establish, through his words and deeds, that the end of all education is man making. He prepares the scheme of this man-making education in the light of his over-all philosophy of Vedanta. According to Vedanta, the essence of man lies in his soul, which he possesses in addition to his body and mind. In true with this philosophy, Swamiji defines education as ‘the manifestation of the perfection already in man’ The aim of education is to manifest in our lives the perfection, which is the very nature of our inner self. This perfection is the realization of the infinite power which resides in everything and every-where-existence, consciousness and bliss (satchidananda). After understanding the essential nature of this perfection, we should identify it with our inner self. For achieving this, one will have to eliminate one’s ego, ignorance and all other false identification, which stand in the way. Meditation, fortified by moral purity and passion for truth, helps man to leave behind the body, the senses, the ego and all other non-self elements, which are perishable. He thus realizes his immortal divine self, which is of the nature of infinite existence, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss.

Education and Society: Vivekananda rightly realized education as the manifestation of the perfection already in man. Rightly for him the real education is that which enables one to stand on his own legs. It helps in life-building, man-making and character-making. As knowledge is inherent in man and helps to the development of society.

Real social reform will happen when the people learn to help themselves: A Nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India’s ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it in the same way, i.e. by spreading education among the masses. All the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves. Our work should be mainly educational, both moral, and intellectual.

Our mission is for the destitute, the poor, and the illiterate peasantry and laboring classes, and if after everything has been done for them first, there is spare time, then only for the gentry. Those peasants and laboring people will be won over by love. ‘Uddharedatmanatmanam’ – that is ‘One must raise oneself by one’s own exertions’ this holds well in all spheres. This moment they will come to understand their own condition and feel the necessity of help and improvement, known that your work is taking effect and is in the right direction. The peasants and laboring classes are in a moribund condition, so what is needed is that the moneyed people will only help them to regain their vitality, and nothing more. Then leave the peasants and laborers to look to their own problem, to grapple with and solve it.

Modern Education: For making the model for teaching-learning process a success in the present days’ environment, the followings are important: learning environment, learning programme, support systems for students, assessment practices and institutions-community linkage. The learning environment should be such that would not only promote a culture of values and respect for individual but also improve skill, self-confidence and willingness to take challenges. Learning programme should be designed on the basis of student’s prior experiences, knowledge and skills in such a manner that would be responsive to the values, needs and interests of individual students. Support systems for students should promote sustained learning that builds over time and helps develop investigating and problem-solving skills and foster imaginations and creativity. Assessment practices should encourage frequent constructive feedback that supports further learning. Linkage with the society can be built up through regular interaction with local and broader communities. The process being need -based, teachers should inspire the students with updated inputs so that students’ intrinsic talents and faculties are developed. If this process is properly employed, teacher may come down to the level of the student and transfer his knowledge. This is what Swamiji expected from a teacher. Thereby, the students also get opportunity to learn things that really matter to them; things that have any bearing upon the jobs that they will later do. Thus, students get scope to create great things from nothing and learn to solve the problems in their own way.

Scheme of education: Vivekananda, in his scheme of education, advocated a system that will help all-round development of an individual on one hand and the society at large on the other. This is possible only when the system creates in an individual the desired integration of the four different faculties, namely physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. The greater the integration, the greater is the freedom from the thralldom of the challenges in life. Any method of education which fails to integrate these four faculties may cause degeneration of an individual’s personality and create disturbances and chaos for the individual and the society at large. If teaching-learning process is made an integral part of educational system, these objectives can be achieved. The present educational



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system being followed in the educational institutions makes an individual a money-making machine. In contrast, the system of education suggested by Swamiji helps an individual to be endowed with values. The result is social and economic development. His views on education combine the power of dynamism and technical competence of the West with the power of spirituality of our country. His views would equip the youths to contribute to the progress of the country as well to retain the supreme wealth of India's spiritual heritage. The system would not only turn out good individuals, it would as well make a good society. Vivekananda realized that mankind was passing through a crisis by virtue of which moral and religious values were being undermined and the fundamental principles of civilization were being ignored. By changing the educational system and introducing teaching-learning process, he sought the solutions of all these social and global evils. It is, therefore, necessary for us to put forth our efforts in the direction suggested by Vivekananda to enable us to grow inwardly and help in bringing about a progressive and healthy society. It is in this context; implementation of Swami Vivekananda's views on teaching- learning process in the educational system is very much relevant and deserves attention of the policy-makers.

Conclusion: As a famous philosopher and educationist, Swami Vivekananda has offered astounding views on education which have made him memorable in the history of Indian education. He opines that true knowledge is essential for every human being. Hence, he emphasized man-making education which means a harmonious development of the body, mind and soul. The acquisition of true knowledge also implies acquisition of sound moral values. Moral values must be inculcated among our students through a value-based school curriculum. Students must be taught that dishonesty, disloyalty, greediness laziness etc, will lead them nowhere in the future. True education enables us to produce good citizens, with admirable qualities and capabilities, so as to promote national development. Instead of blaming people or institutions for lack of morality among students, we should concentrate our efforts at finding ways of successfully implementing charter building education in institutions of higher learning. Education can be panacea for all social evils. Real education is that which prepares a man for struggle of existence. It prepares man for social service and develops his personality. Hence man making and character-building education alone is real education which strengthens democracy and facilitates national development idea of swami Vivekananda.

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