

Swami Vivekananda's Perspective on Education

Dr.S.Santhi
Teaching Assistant
Department of History
Alagappa University
Karaikudi

Abstract

Education, according to Swamiji, is 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. To be religious for him means leading life in such a way that we manifest our higher nature, truth, goodness and beauty, in our thoughts, words and deeds. All impulses, thoughts and actions which lead one towards this goal are naturally ennobling and harmonizing, and are ethical and moral in the truest sense. He says, We need technical education and all else which may develop industries, so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for them-selves, and save something against a rainy day. He feels it necessary that India should take from the Western nations all that are good in their civilization. He says for the development of a balanced nation, we have to combine the dynamism and scientific attitude of the West with the spirituality of our country. The entire educational program should be so planned that it equips the youth to contribute to the material progress of the country as well as to maintaining the supreme worth of India's spiritual heritage.

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, assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library.(Saravanakumar.AR.,2007) If education were identical with information, the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopedias the Rishis.

Narendra was assailed by doubts about the existence of God. He first heard about Sri Ramakrishna from one of his English professors at college and in November 1881, he went to meet Sri Ramakrishna who was staying at the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar Without a moment's hesitation. Apart from removing doubts from the mind of Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna won him over through his pure, unselfish love. (Chattopadhyay, Rajagopal (1999) Therefore, Narendra now became a frequent visitor to Dakshineswar and, under the guidance of the Master, made rapid strides on the spiritual path. There, Narendra also met several young men who were devoted to Sri Ramakrishna, and they all became close friends. Sri Ramakrishna was diagnosed to be cancer of the throat and he gave up his mortal body in 16 August 1886. After the Master's passing, fifteen of his young disciples began to live together in a dilapidated building at Baranagar in North Kolkata. Under the leadership of Narendra, they formed a new monastic brotherhood, and in 1887 they took the formal vows of sannyasa, thereby assuming new names. (Gupta, N.L. (2003), Narendra now became Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji, however, wanted to have an inner certitude and divine

call regarding his mission. Both of these he got while he sat in deep meditation on the rock-island at Kanyakumari.

Meaning 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. He 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. (Saravanakumar.AR. 2017) this perfection is the realization of the infinite power which resides in everything and every-where-existence, consciousness and bliss. 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.

Vivekananda lays great stress on physical health because a sound mind resides in a sound body. According to him, the mind of the students has to be controlled and trained through meditation, concentration and practice of ethical purity. (Saravanakumar, AR., 2010) All success in any line of work, he emphasizes, is the result of the power of concentration, which necessarily implies detachment from other things, constitutes a part of celibacy, which is one of the guiding mottos of his scheme of education.

Method of Teaching

According to Vivekananda, knowledge is inherent in every man's soul. What we mean when we say that a man „knows“ is only what he „discovers“ by taking the cover off his own soul. Consequently, he draws our attention to the fact that the task of the teacher is only to help the child to manifest its knowledge by removing the obstacles in its way. In his words: „Thus Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge even in a boy it is so and it requires only an awakening and that much is the work of a teacher.“ Vivekananda's method of education resembles the heuristic method of the modern educationists. In this system, the teacher invokes the spirit of inquiry in the pupil who is supposed to find out things for himself under the bias-free guidance of the teacher.(Saravanakumar.AR.,2005) He gives too much emphasis on the environment at home and school for the proper growth of the child. The parents as well as the teachers should inspire the child by the way they live their lives. Swamiji recommends the old institution of gurukula and similar systems for the purpose. In such systems, the students can have the ideal character of the teacher constantly before them, which serves as the role model to follow.

Swami Vivekananda's Idea of Education

Swamiji's Concept of education is known as that of man-making education. This concept pointed out the practical need and value of education. His firm conviction regarding the practical value of education derived concrete support in his own experience. During his travel through the cities of Europe he had observed that even the poor people had comforts and education. This experience made him reason about the dismal plight of poor Indians and he found the answer, in education. Education alone was observed to have made a big difference in the living condition of the people of the two countries. (Adiswarananda, Swami, ed. (2006), so education was perceived to be an agent who elevated the level of individual human existence as well as the level social existence. Education was viewed as the primary need of Indian society. The lower classes would be able to develop their individuality only through education.

Swamiji perceived the ultimate aim of education as spiritual. (Saravanakumar.AR, 2007) He believed that it should help man to work out his own salvation. Education gives man the necessary ideas by which one is able to arouse the divinity within oneself and work out one's spiritual development. But dismal material conditions of human life obscure the process of spiritual development. In the scale of human values spiritual development comes highest. The aspiration for the higher values of life comes to a person whose basic necessities of life are fairly satisfied. Conditions of utter deprivation do not inspire higher sentiments. (Kashyap, Shivendra (2012), thus, a certain level of material well-being is essential even to realize that the foundation of one's existence is spiritual. The realization of the importance of man's material well-being was prominent in Swamiji's thought. Swamiji expressed the practical need for the prevailing secular education in the fields of humanities, social sciences, science and technology. This kind of education was considered necessary for improving the material conditions of man's life.

Important Teachings of Swami Vivekananda

Vivekananda was a great philosopher and a great social reformer. The important teachings of Vivekananda include that; Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. 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. 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. (Saravanakumar.AR. 2007) My ideal, indeed, can be put into a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be. (Majumdar, Ramesh Chandra (1963), If you have faith in gods, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith and be strong; that is what we need. Strength, strength it is that we want so much in this life, for what we call sin and sorrow have all one cause, and that is our weakness. With weakness comes ignorance, and with ignorance comes misery.

They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive. This is the gist of all worship – to be pure and to do well to others. It is love and love alone that I preach, and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe. (Mukherji, Mani Shankar (2011), Vivekananda believed a country's future depends on its people; his teachings focused on the development of the mass. He wanted “to set in motion machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest.” Vivekananda believed that the essence of Hinduism was because unexpressed in the Vedanta philosophy, based on the interpretation of Adi Shankara.

CURRICULUM

According to Vivekananda, 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. He, 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. (Saravanakumar.AR.,2006) 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.

CONCLUSION

He realizes that it is only through education that the uplift of masses is possible. Education brings to light its constructive, practical and comprehensive character. He states it emphatically that if society is to be reformed, education has to reach everyone-high and low, because individuals are the very constituents of society. The sense of dignity rises in man when he becomes conscious of his inner spirit, and that is the very purpose of education. He strives to harmonize the traditional values of India with the new values brought through the progress of science and technology. It is in the transformation of man through moral and spiritual education that he finds the solution for all social evils. Founding education on the firm ground of our own philosophy and culture, he shows the best of remedies for today's social and global illness.

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