**Swami Vivekanand: Educational Thoughts**

**Paper 1-Educational Thoughts and Practices**

**Unit 1- Educational Thoughts of Indian Thinkers**

**For B.A Education (Semester -4)**



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**Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902)**

**Educational Thoughts**

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* **Life Sketch**

Swami Vivekananda whose original name was Narendranath was born on 12nd January 1863, a day of festival in Calcutta which at that time was the centre of an intellectual upsurge. Born into an upper middle class family of the kayastha caste in Bengal went to school for a brief period, he was taught by a private tutor at home. He was an extraordinary learner. Prof. William Hattie the principal of his school once remarked "*Narendranath is really a genius. I have traveled for & while, but I have never yet comes across a lad of his talents & possibilities even in German Universities amongst philosophical students. He is bound to make his mark in life*" For higher education he went to a western style university where he was exposed to western philosophy and science. He later became the most notable disciple of Ramakrishna who demonstrated the essential unity of all religion. The influence of Shri Ram Krishna was very strong on Vivekananda. After the death of Ramakrishna he became an ascetic and wandered from place to place. Swami Vivekananda was a man of versatile genius. The world found in him a patriot saint, a lover of art and architecture, a classical singer, a commanding orator of great charm, a visionary, a philosopher, an educationist, and above all a worshipper of humanity. On 11 September 1893 he addressed a religious conference in Chicago which brought him great name and he became well known identity at international level.

* **Philosophy of Education**

Swamiji defines education as “*The manifestation of divine perfection already existing in man”.* Knowledge is inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside. The aim of education is to manifest this perfection which is the very nature of our inner self. Education is a life-long process towards the fullest development of human personality, self-discovery, self-perfection, self-awareness and self-manifestation. By all round development he implies development of man's heart and mind, strengthening of character and awakening national consciousness. He believed that all knowledge and all powers are within; all knowledge comes from the human soul. Man manifests knowledge which is pre-existing in him through eternity. The prime aim of education is to achieve the full perfection already present in a child. According to Vivekananda, all the materials and spiritual knowledge are already present in the individuals mind but due to our ignorance we cannot approach it.

He remarks that the end of all education is man making. His scheme of man making education is based on the philosophy of Vedanta which remarks the essence of man lies in his Soul, body and mind. For Swamiji the very essence of education is the concentration of mind and not the collection of facts. Accordingly, man- Making for Swamiji stands for arousing men to awareness of his true self. Education must provide *“Life-building, Man-making and Character-making assimilation of ideas*”. Swami Vivekananda says that it is wrong to think that a child is taught by a teacher. Each one of us develops according to our own nature. One cannot educate a child. The child educates himself, a teacher’s job is to provide the necessary opportunity to him and remove the obstacles in his path. Just as a plant grows itself, the gardener provides the necessary environment to it a teacher should act like a facilitator for a child's development. Thus Swami Vivekananda advocates the principle of self– education.

* **Aims of Education**

According to Swami Vivekananda the following should be the aims of education-

* **The Aim of Self Realization**

The main aim of education is to achieve extensive perfection already in man. Swamiji opined that all material and spiritual knowledge is already present in man hidden due to our ignorance. Education enlightens us and removes the veil of ignorance and the knowledge shines forth awakening a man. He states, “*Getting by heart the thoughts 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. 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

* **Freedom for Growth**

According to Swamiji freedom is the first requirement for self-development. The child should be given freedom to grow, according to his/her own nature. Vivekananda said, “*You cannot teach a child any more than you can grow a plant. All you can do is on the negative side- you can only help. You can take away the obstacles, but knowledge comes out of its own nature. Loosen the soul a little, so that it may come out easily. Put a hedge around it; see that it is not killed by anything else and there your work stops. You cannot do anything else. The rest is a manifestation from within its own nature.”* The teacher should not exert any types of the external pressure on the child. The child should be helped in solving their problems himself. The teachers should have an attitude of service and worship. Education ultimately aims at realization.

* **Character Formation**

Character formation is one of the most important aims of education. Swami Vivekananda said, “*The character of any man is but the aggregate of his tendencies, the sum total 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.”* The educators should present high ideals before learners. The best way to develop a character is the personal example of high character set by the teacher. For character development Vivekananda emphasized on the practice of Brahmacharya which foster development of mental, moral and spiritual powers leading to purity of thoughts, words and deeds. According the Swamiji the students should be trained to work hard, formulate good habits and learn from mistakes. Besides these, character formation requires traits such as thirst for knowledge, perseverance, faith, humility, submission and veneration etc.

* **Physical and Mental Growth**

One of the important aims of education is physical and mental development of the child so that the child, after completing his/her education can become able to promote national growth and advancement as a fearless citizen of tomorrow. Stressing on the mental development of the child, Swamiji wished education to enable the child to stand on his own legs economically rather than becoming a parasite on others.

* **Moral and Spiritual Development**

According to Swamiji, a nation’s greatness is not only measured by its parliamentary institutions and activities, but also by the greatness of its citizens. But the greatness of citizen is possible only through their moral and spiritual development which education should foster. Development of faith in one’s self, shraddha and spirit of renunciation, all through his life Swamiji exhorted the individuals to keep full faith and confidence upon their internal powers. They should inculcate a spirit of self-surrender, sacrifice and renunciation of material pleasures for the good of others.

* **Religious Development**

According to Swamiji religious development is an essential aim of education. To him, each individual should be able to search out and develop the religious seed embodied in him and this will help in finding out the absolute truth or reality. Hence he advocated the training of feelings and emotions so that the whole life is purified and sublimated. Then only, the capacities of obedience, social service, and submission to the teachings and preaching of great saints and various other good qualities will develop in the individual.

* **Teaching Methods**

Swami Vivekananda advocated concentration and meditation as the most important methods of study. Concentration is the essence of education and determinates one's success in life. Other techniques which he emphasized were oral lecture method, discussion and question answer method. Beside these he promoted experiments and project methods. Yet he says that success of education depends upon the initiatives, self-realization & self-reliance. So it is quite clear that Vivekananda also believed that the child does most of the learning while teacher is the facilitator.

The true education, gives the growth and expansion of personality. Vivekananda strongly pleaded for development of character through the service of his fellowmen, the utilization of his talents for ensuring the happiness and welfare of the millions of his less fortunate fellow-citizens.

* **Curriculum**

The supreme mission of the Vivekananda’s life was to spread the gospel of the Vedas and Upanishads “*Arise Awake and stop not till the goal is reached*”. This was the corner stone of the education according to the Swami Vivekananda .For this he stressed on religious education in this context he recommends that children should be taught lives of great saints of all lands. “One must enter into the heart of the religion, that is, one must realize it in one's own life. According to Vivekananda,” *religion must be a living experience with oneself.*” Vivekananda was very keen for the spiritual development of the masses.

Swami Vivekananda recommended the study of languages especially regional language, Sanskrit, link languages and English. He also stressed on the importance of the subjects like history, geography, economics and other social science and psychology. He favored the western sciences, engineering and other subject. He advocated a synthesis of the study of Vedanta, Religion, Philosophy and Western education.

Physical and health education was one aspect of education received a special treatment in the hands of Swami Vivekananda. *“Be Strong, My young friends*” he argued, *"That is my advice to you. You will be near to heaven through football than to Gita*" Vivekananda said, "*Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel*.”

* **Role of a Teacher**

Swami Vivekananda attaches great importance to the personal life and character of a teacher. Placing a lofty ideas before teachers Swami Vivekananda further say’s *“The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student soul and see through his mind .Such a teacher can really teach and none else .”*

He thinks that only the one who has renounced his personal gains and the one who has dedicated to his life to the service of others can be a good teacher .The teacher should be of a very high character and he should be sinless .He must be pure in mind and heart ,only then his words will be valuable . The function of the teacher is indeed an affair of the transference of something and not of mere stimulation of the existing intellectual or other facilities in the taught. Something real and appreciable as an influence comes from the teacher therefore the teacher must be pure.The teacher must have love for his students .Without love he cannot contribute anything to them. He should have no ulterior selfish motive of any kind. Love should be the only guide to him Love is the best medium to transmit the spiritual force. Any of selfish motive or the part of the teacher will destroy this medium .The teacher must have full sympathy for his students .He can never teach without sympathy. Great teacher help to create great students. Teachers play a crucial role towards the development of the society. They are an architect of our future generations.

* **Discipline**

Swami Vivekananda was an idealist thinker but his views on the nature of discipline are very much in proximity with those of naturalists. He was against any physical punishment and prohibited putting extraordinary pressure for studies on students. He said that students should be given freedom so that their development is not curbed owing to the imposed restrictions. Instead students should be encouraged for self-discipline. Swamiji states that both teacher and student should be self-disciplined. He favours impressionistic discipline - when students will notice their teachers following discipline they themselves will imbibe it.

* **Relevance in Contemporary Education System**

Swami Vivekananda's ideas on man making education are very much relevant in our day to day society. He emphasizes that education should be vocation - oriented, value - oriented, thought provoking and man - making. It should never be moneymaking business. He strongly pleads for persistent struggle against illiteracy and exploitation .He has made it clear that man is the creator of his own destiny. Vivekananda has influenced the spiritual teachings of the yoga and the Vedanta .He has stated that anything worth the name of modernization should have its root in the culture of India .It should promote patriotism and love. Vivekananda has been able to create in the modern minds a sense of national identity, participant competence, social trust and civic co-operations. His educational ideas have touched every aspect of Indian social and economic life .They can be taken as guideline for complete reconstruction of present system of education. His message is valid for all times. His views regarding the development of complex skills, healthy muscles, right play habits etc. have become current carriage in modern times .The basic purpose of education repeatedly stressed by Vivekananda is the development of character, service minders, humanity and self-confidence. Swamiji has expressed many time his deep concern and resentment against tendencies in educational institutions like intolerance fear, hatred, inadequate information, sectional imbalances, etc. and suggested that there must be concerted effort to fight against these evils. ‟Equilibrium and synthesis‟ were the worth words of swami .Contemplation and devotion of duty were unified in his personality. Swami inspired his contemporaries to work hard and acquire freedom from bondage .The awakening and liberation of modern India as viewed by him was a stage for the realization of universal love and brotherhood.

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