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## Swami Vivekananda Philosophy In Relation To Education And Society

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## Swami Vivekananda Philosophy In Relation To Education And Society

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### Abstract:

*Swami Vivekananda (12 January 1863 – 4 July 1902), born Narendranath Dutta (Bengali: নরেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত) was the chief disciple of the 19th century mystic Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the founder of Ramakrishna Mission. He is considered a key figure in the introduction of Hindu philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga in Western World mainly in America and Europe and is also credited with raising interfaith awareness, bringing Hinduism to the status of a major world religion during the end of the 19th century. Vivekananda is considered to be a major force in the revival of Hinduism in modern India. He is perhaps best known for his inspiring speech beginning with "Sisters and Brothers of America", through which he introduced Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions at Chicago in 1893. He later sailed to Chicago and represented India as a delegate in the 1893 Parliament of World Religions. An eloquent speaker, Vivekananda was invited to several forums in the United States and spoke at universities and clubs. The investigator selected this topic in order to assess the contributions of Vivekananda in the field of education and society. Swami Vivekananda, the famous philosopher has his own separate place in history of India. The children of today should really be aware about the life and work of this great Indian knight, whereas will surely then to the path of success.*

### KEYWORD:

Philosophy, Relation, Education, Society, Religions.

### INTRODUCTION

The valiant monk who proclaimed in America the greatness of Hinduism and of Indian culture at a time when the West regarded India as a land of barbarians. The beloved disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He was the living embodiment of sacrifice and dedicated his life to the country and yearned for the progress of the poor, the helpless and the downtrodden. He was the great thinker and mighty man of action whose ringing words galvanized the slumbering Indians. For ages to come he will be a source of inspiration.

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: LIFE AND EDUCATION

Swami Vivekananda, known in his pre-monastic life as Narendra Nath Datta, was born in an affluent family in Kolkata on 12 January 1863. Narendranath is said to have studied the writings of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Baruch Spinoza, Georg W. F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, and Charles Darwin. Narendra became fascinated with the Evolutionism of Herbert Spencer, and translated Spencer's book on Education into Bengali for Gurudas Chattopadhyaya, his publisher. Narendra also had correspondence with Herbert Spencer for some time. Alongside his study of Western philosophers, he was thoroughly acquainted with

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Indian Sanskrit scriptures and many Bengali works. According to his professors, student Narendranath was a prodigy. Narendra went about asking prominent residents of contemporary Calcutta whether they had come "face to face with God". His first introduction to Ramakrishna occurred in a literature class in General Assembly's Institution, when he heard Principal Reverend W. Hastie lecturing on William Wordsworth's poem The Excursion and the poet's nature-mysticism. In the course of explaining the word trance in the poem, Hastie told his students that if they wanted to know the real meaning of it, they should go to Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar. This prompted some of his students, including Narendranath to visit Ramakrishna.

#### **VIVEKANAND AND THE SPIRITUALISM WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA**

At the threshold of youth Narendra had to pass through a period of spiritual crisis when he was assailed by doubts about the existence of God. It was at that time he first heard about Sri Ramakrishna from one of his English professors at college. One day in November 1881, Narendra went to meet Sri Ramakrishna who was staying at the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar. He straightaway asked the Master a question which he had put to several others but had received no satisfactory answer: "Sir, have you seen God?" Without a moment's hesitation, Sri Ramakrishna replied: "Yes, I have. I see Him as clearly as I see you, only in a much in tenser sense."

#### **DISCOVERY OF REAL INDIA**

During his travels all over India, Swami Vivekananda was deeply moved to see the appalling poverty and backwardness of the masses. He was the first religious leader in India to understand and openly declare that the real cause of India's downfall was the neglect of the masses. The immediate need was to provide food and other bare necessities of life to the hungry millions. For this they should be taught improved methods of agriculture, village industries, etc. It was in this context that Vivekananda grasped the crux of the problem of poverty in India (which had escaped the attention of social reformers of his days): owing to centuries of oppression, the downtrodden masses had lost faith in their capacity to improve their lot. It was first of all necessary to infuse into their minds faith in them. For this they needed a life-giving, inspiring message. Thus the masses needed two kinds of knowledge: secular knowledge to improve their economic condition and spiritual knowledge to infuse in them faith in themselves and strengthen their moral sense.

#### **DECISION TO ATTEND THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS**

It was when these ideas were taking shape in his mind in the course of his wanderings that Swami Vivekananda heard about the World's Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago in 1893. His friends and admirers in India wanted him to attend the Parliament. He too felt that the Parliament would provide the right forum to present his Master's message to the world, and so he decided to go to America. Another reason which prompted Swamiji to go to America was to seek financial help for his project of uplifting the masses. 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.

#### **THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS AND AFTER**

His speeches at the World's Parliament of Religions held in September 1893 made him famous as an 'orator by divine right' and as a 'Messenger of Indian wisdom to the Western world'.

#### **AWAKENING HIS COUNTRYMEN**

He returned to India in January 1897. In response to the enthusiastic welcome that he received everywhere, he delivered a series of lectures in different parts of India, which created a great stir all over the country.

#### **VIVEKANANDA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO WORLD CULTURE**

Making an objective assessment of Swami Vivekananda's contributions to world culture, the eminent British historian A.L. Basham stated that "in centuries to come, he will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world." Some of the main contributions that Swamiji made to the modern

world are mentioned below:

1. New Understanding of Religion
2. New Principle of Morality and Ethics
3. Bridge between the East and the West

“Let not the world be in you but you be in the world, just as a boat would be in the river and not the river-water in the boat”. (Shivaramkrishna, M. & Roy, S. 1993)

#### **VIVEKANANDA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN CULTURE**

In spite of her innumerable linguistic, ethnic, historical and regional diversities, India has had from time immemorial a strong sense of cultural unity. It was, however, Swami Vivekananda who revealed the true foundations of this culture and thus clearly defined and strengthened the sense of unity as a nation. Free India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: “Rooted in the past, full of pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present . . . he came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past.” Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose wrote: “Swamiji harmonized the East and the West, religion and science, past and present. And that is why he is great. Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-reliance and self-assertion from his teachings.” Swamiji's most unique contribution to the creation of new India was to open the minds of Indians to their duty to the downtrodden masses. Long before the ideas of Karl Marx were known in India, Swamiji spoke about the role of the labouring classes in the production of the country's wealth. Swamiji was the first religious leader in India to speak for the masses, formulate a definite philosophy of service, and organize large-scale social service.

#### **SELECTED TEACHINGS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

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. 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. 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. The older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new Gospel. Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success, and above all, love. Sharma, Ranjit (1987) Concept of Education by Swami Vivekananda

Vivekananda's definition of education is one of remarkable insight. First of all, the word 'manifestation' implies that something already exists and is waiting to be expressed. The main focus in learning is to make the hidden ability of a learner manifest. As Vivekananda said, 'what a man "learns" is really what he "discovers"', by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge'. According to the Vedanta philosophy, knowledge is inherent in a human being, like a spark in a piece of flint, and all that is needed is the strike of suggestion to bring it out. 'Manifestation' indicates spontaneous growth, provided that the impediments, if any, are removed.

#### **NEED OF THE STUDY**

To understand the Swami Vivekananda as a human being and as well as a saint.  
To analyse him as a teacher and as an educationist --again explain it fully  
To describe Swami Vivekananda as a person to find the relevance of the thoughts in the contemporary world

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To state & analyse the Vivekananda general philosophy.  
To state & analyse Vivekananda thoughts as education.  
To trace the uniqueness of thoughts of Vivekananda.  
To evaluate & critically analyse the educational concepts of Vivekananda from view point of society,

practicability in contemporary India..

#### **DELIMITATIONS**

The study is confined to the following aspects:

Swami Vivekananda as a human being and as well as a saint.  
Confined to the Educational Philosophy.  
Relevance of the philosophy to the contemporary times.

#### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Study of the related literature implies locality reading and evaluating reports of research as well as reports of research as well as reports of casual observation and opinion that are related to the individuals planned research project.

In the words of the Walter Roy, "The literature in any field the foundation upon which all future work will be built"

Rema (1993) revealed that an attempt to analyse and compare the educational thoughts of Vivekananda with reference to educational aims, curriculum, methods and role of teacher. It followed the historical-cum-comparative method based on library research. The findings are stated as usual in terms of what the thinker had to say on the different aspects of education. One hundred and seven references are cited.

Vijaya (1999) studied about the educational philosophy of Vivekananda to seek or find out how far his educational ideals have found place in the National policy on Education, 1986. The objectives of the study is to analyse the educational philosophy of Vivekananda with reference to philosophy of life, concept and aims of education, methods of teaching and learning, role of the teacher, concept of curriculum, discipline and values and to evaluate the philosophy with reference to the NPE.

Chakrabarti, Mohit (2004) Vivekananda philosophy of education for efflorescence of humanism is always based on that reality of human life which is not far away from one's very being in the form of one's becoming in and around the society in which one lives.

Athalye, D.V. (1979) Truth is my God and the Universe my country, I belong as much as to the world as to India\_ such was his general attitude.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

It is a philosophical inquiry using an analytical approach, involving critical interpretation of abstract and subtle ideas contained in the original works of Vivekananda and analysis of information from primary and secondary sources having a bearing on theme critical study of Vivekananda thoughts from primary sources (Books, letters, diaries written by him and his recorded and conversation and from secondary sources (Authentic reports, books written by others authors, journals, magazines and bulletins) collection of information through

Experts  
Readers  
Analysis of information & Data

#### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

##### **I. Analysis of Swami Vivekananda's Educational Philosophy**

Sister Nivedita used to say that those who knew Swami Vivekananda understood that he was one who had experienced in his own life all the truths about which he spoke. This is equally valid when he addressed the subject of education. To him education plays a vital role in curing the evils in society, and it is critical in shaping the future of humanity. In order to understand his thoughts, we should first consider his often quoted definition of education- 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man'.

Education, he said, must provide 'life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas'. The ideal of this type of education would be to produce an integrated person – one who has learned how to improve his intellect, purify his emotions, and stand firm on moral virtues and unselfishness. There are two levels designated by the ancient Indian scriptures as para vidya (spiritual values) and apara vidya

(secular values) respectively. This division is merely for practical convenience; otherwise vidya, or learning, is a continuum, leading one towards the ultimate goal which, according to Vivekananda, was complete freedom of the soul. Vivekananda also observed that, if education is to serve the entire human being, in all his/her dimensions, the pursuit of knowledge will be a lifelong process. Even an illustrious being like Sri Ramakrishna said, from his own experience, 'As long as I live, so long do I learn.' At the empirical level, today's knowledge explosion can keep people engaged for their entire lives. Therefore, education must be considered a continuous and lifelong process. So far, our discussion of Vivekananda's ideas on education has been a simplistic analysis centering round his definition of education. To this end, we can probe further into the expressions 'manifestation' and 'already in man', bearing in mind the situation in India in those days. In explaining the term 'manifestation', the Swami quoted part of one of the yoga aphorisms of Patanjali (author of an ancient Indian scripture – 4.3) – *Tatah kshetrikavat* [Therefore the obstructions]– that is to say, just as a farmer breaks the barriers to a course of water, which there after flows by its own force to irrigate his fields, so also a person's inherent power will spontaneously manifest itself when external and internal obstacles, if any, are removed at the proper time by the teachers or the education system. Such obstacles are of various kinds. External obstacles might be in the form of unfair distribution of educational resources and opportunities, inequalities in economic development and socio-political instability; whereas internal obstacles might have to do with the dynamics, of the education system, such as the teacher/student relationship, the student's capacity to make personal judgments or to adapt to changes, and the student's mental or physical capacities. In order to tackle these obstacles, the education system should take on two responsibilities:-

- (i) It should help a person build a healthy and dynamic frame of mind to enable him to meet the challenges of life; and
- (ii) It should try to prevent, through proper training of its present students, any future evils in people and society which are likely to further complicate the problems of human beings. At the same time, however, the teachers and the designers of education systems must always keep in mind the Vedantic idea that whatsoever good or bad impressions a mind carries, a human being is essentially pure and divine, and a repository of immense possibilities.

#### **TRAINING THE MIND**

Vivekananda concurred with contemporary thinkers when he asserted that the mind– the chief instrument of learning – deserves more attention than it had earlier received. Training the mind should be a student's highest priority, and not simply the accumulation, the memorizing and the repeating of facts. In the long run, stuffing one's mind with information, technical skills and useless trivia only creates more problems if one's mind is not nourished and strengthened and made healthy. Yet training of the mind in all its aspects is conspicuously absent in today's education. Learning to concentrate the mind was the focus in the Swami's scheme. He said, 'To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting off acts'. In doing anything – such as thinking, working with the hands, etc. – the better the power of concentration the better the outcome will be. And this power of keeping the mind on the task can be improved. Training the mind to concentrate on a specific subject has several stages, the primary one being learning how to collect the mind and preventing it from running hither and thither.

#### **CULTURE AND EDUCATION – THE TEACHER AND THE PUPIL**

Every society has its outer aspect called 'civilization', and also its inner aspect called 'culture'. In both of these a child is moulded and educated so that the beliefs and practices of his fore fathers are carried on and not forgotten. Nevertheless, as Vivekananda says, It is culture that withstands shocks, not a simple mass of knowledge. [ . . . ] Knowledge is only skin-deep, as civilization is, and a little scratch brings out the old savage. A society is forever adding to its learning and culture. To the brilliant mind of T.S. Eliot, education was but a manifestation of culture. He said, 'The purpose of education, it seems, is to transmit culture: so culture is likely to be limited to what can be transmitted by education'. In this process, several agents – such as his parents, peers and teachers – assist him. But nowadays, as formal education has become more and more institutionalized, teachers are expected to play a more significant role. A teacher needs to help a student learn how to think, what to think, how to discriminate and how to appreciate things. This is not just a matter of intellectual manipulation. As Vivekananda said, the only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else.

## II. Analysis of Social Aspects of Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy

### CHARACTER EDUCATION AND UNIVERSAL VALUES

Vivekananda's guru, Sri Ramakrishna, used to say that manush needs to become man-hush – that is, a man needs to become a true man. 'He alone is a man,' he said, 'whose spiritual consciousness has been awakened'. Following his Master, Vivekananda emphasized that 'the ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making'. Lamenting over the prevailing system of education, he said: But, instead of that, we are always trying to polish up the outside. What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. In order to rectify the defects in the existing system, man's limited view of himself, on which the existing system of education is based, needs to be reconsidered. A human being is not simply a composite of body and mind. He is something more. According to the Vedanta philosophy, a human being has five sheaths, or coverings: the physical sheath, the vital sheath, the mental sheath, the intellectual sheath, and the blissful sheath.

### VIVEKANANDA OBSERVED

Intellect has been cultured with the result that hundreds of sciences have been discovered, and their effect has been that the few have made slaves of the many – that is all the good that has been done. Artificial wants have been created; and every poor man, whether he has money or not, desires to have those wants satisfied, and when he cannot, he struggles, and dies in the struggle. Everything a person does, every thought, every move, leaves an impression on the mind. Even when it is not outwardly apparent, it is strong enough to work beneath the surface. A person's character is determined by the sum total of these impressions. When a large number of these impressions come together, they form a habit. This then becomes a powerful force, for character is but repeated habits. This is why, through the acquisition and repetition of desirable habits, one's character can be remodeled. The people one associates with, good or bad, contribute much to the development of one's character. In fact, their impact is greater than that of didactic teaching. That is why Swami Vivekananda said: '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. In one of his lectures he expressed the desire 'that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man'. And the Swami expected that the education systems would be suitably designed to produce such wholesome human beings. Interestingly, the UNESCO report learning to be published in 1972, while defining the aim of education, echoed this same idea.

### THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE POOR

So far we have discussed education primarily in the context of the society that already benefits from education. Vivekananda, however, was a genuine friend of the poor and the weak, particularly the helpless masses of India, and 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. Unless there was uniform circulation of national blood all over the body, the nation could not rise. He insisted that it was the duty of the upper classes, who had received their education at the expense of the poor, to come forward and uplift the poor through education and other means. In fact, the Swami's mission was for the poor. He once said, 'there must be equal chance for all – or if greater for some and for some less – the weaker should be given more chance than the strong'. The trend in recent years has been to shift the responsibility for education from the family, religious institutions, private charities and so forth, to public authorities, particularly the State. Yet, in spite of this shift to the State, education has hardly reached the most underprivileged.

### CONCLUSION

The present study gives an understanding that Vivekananda's values and philosophy is an increase in Jammu University

### EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION

Swami Vivekananda, the famous philosopher has his own separate place in history of India. The

children of today should really be aware about the life and work of this great Indian knight, whereas will surely then to the path of success.

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