

Swami Vivekananda's Life And Philosophy

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Abstract: Swami Vivekananda was one of the eminent personalities in the history of India. His work is always remembered as the big contribution to the history of India. He was an Indian Hindu monk who spent his whole life spreading the faiths and beliefs of Hinduism all around the world as well as in India. 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.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Stand up be bold, be strong, know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and success you want is within yourself”.

Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863 in Kolkata. His original name was Narendra Dutta. His father was a lawyer and an attorney in the Kolkata High court. Vivekananda inherited religious temperament and high intelligence from his father. In his childhood he was much influenced by his pious parents. He was enlightened and endowed with ‘Viveka’ and known as Vivekananda.

Vivekananda was a true vedantist. He concept of sages and saints. He was a practical saint, dynamic world mover and man lover, who loves mankind more than anything else. At the crossroad of Indian culture, he becomes its savior. He was a famous person of the world. In 1871, at the age of eight, Narendra Nath enrolled at Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Metropolitan Institution, where he went to school until his family moved to Raipur in 1877. In 1879, after his family return to Kolkata, he was the only student to receive first division marks in the Presidency College entrance examination. He was an avid reader in a wide range of subjects including Philosophy, Religion, History, Social science, arts and literature. Vivekananda was also interested in Hindu Scriptures, including the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. In 1881 he passed the fine arts examination and completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1884. While studying Western philosophers, he also learned Sanskrit Scriptures and Bengali literature. William Hastie (Principal of Christian college, Kolkata from where Narendra graduated) wrote, “Narendra is really a genius. I have travelled far and wide, but I have never come across a lad of his talents and possibilities, even in German Universities among philosophical students. He is bound to make his mark in life.”

In late 1881 or early 1882, Narendra went to Dakshineswar with two friends and met Ramakrishna. This meeting proved to be a turning point in his life. Although he did not initially accept Ramakrishna as his teacher and rebelled against his ideas, he was attracted by his personality and began to frequently visit him at Dakshineswar. Vivekananda travelled all over India for 12 years preaching the vedantic scriptures and philosophy. After the death of Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Vivekananda established Ramakrishna mission in 1876 with the help of his disciples and established relief centers. He spread the message of his Guru that was actually the principle and practice of Vedanta in Asia, Europe and America. Vivekananda was a profound scholar, an eminent vedantist, a philosopher and a Brahmachari. He was drenched deep in the nectar of Indian spiritualism.

2. PHILOSOPHY OF VIVEKANANDA

Vivekananda describes God as supreme power. He is omnipotent, omniscient and all pervading. Man is incarnation of God, God is manifested in man. He further says that soul is divine and immortal. Therefore there is no difference between absolute soul (Brahma) and individual soul. Vivekananda was much influenced by the Vedantic philosophy. To him Vedanta is eternal. The final goal of human life is to attain unity with the creator (God). Swamiji had a broader outlook on religion. His religion is universal in nature and based on universal brotherhood. To him worship of man is the real worship of God. In other words Service to humanity is service to God. According to him real happiness neither lies in body nor in mind, but in freedom of life. The goal of life is thus freedom. Freedom is the motive of the universe, freedom is the goal. In Gita, there is mention of Karma Yoga, Vakti Yoga, Raj Yoga and Gyan Yoga. He was a spiritualist, he happily blended spirituality with science. His interpretation of Vedanta is based on scientific analysis.

Vivekananda philosophy of education is an offshoot of his general philosophy. He believed that man at birth is complete. Therefore, education is the manifestation of perfection already in man. Perfection is already inherent in man and education is the manifestation of the same. All are entitled to attain perfection. In fact all are in the way of perfection and education is a means to attain the goal.

Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy is the reflection of Vedantic philosophy. Education according to him is the best means for the development of the inner man. It is also the means for making mankind arise out of his poverty and helplessness. Vivekananda expressed his opinion in the different aspects of education as:

3. OPINION ON AIMS OF EDUCATION

The ultimate aim of education and all training should be man making. Vivekananda is simply an individual. Thus through education individual is to be transformed into the personality of man. However he recommends the following aims of education:

- 1. Character formation:* Education should strive towards character development by which we mean the development of will power, leading to courage, stamina and fearlessness.
- 2. Creation of self confidence and self realization:* Education should help people to build up self confidence and self reliance based on balanced human relationships. Swamiji hold that faith in oneself and faith in god - this is the secret of greatness.
- 3. Development of personality:* Personality is the influence, the impression one creates on the others. Education therefore should aim at developing a child physically, mentally, morally and spiritually and thereby build a great personality.

4. *Promotion of universal brotherhood:* Vivekananda was not only a patriot and naturalist, but also a great internationalist. According to him education should lead to a feeling of brotherhood and the unity of mankind for the power of God exists in all from highest to lowest.

5. *Development of moral character:* Education should stress on the formation of good moral character. Education without character formation is no education.

6. *Development of faith in God:* Education should prepare such a people who are always prepared for self served sacrifice of material comfort for the benefit of others.

7. *Development of self sufficiency:* One of the important aims of education is self sufficiency according to Swamiji. The individual should be given practical and vocational training along with traditional subject.

8. *Physical and spiritual development:* Education should be aimed at physical and spiritual development in individual. He wanted that a man should possess a strong body with iron muscles and nerves steel.

Opinion on curriculum

In order to fulfill the different aims of education he has suggested the curriculum given below:

1. Children should be taught like Geography, Science, Political science, Economics, Arts, Agriculture, Industrial, Technical subjects along with physical education are recommended.
2. For spiritual development, the study of Religion, Philosophy, Purans, Upanisads should be included.
3. Vocational subjects should be included in the curriculum for every child.
4. The curriculum for girls should include cookery, needle, craft, child rearing etc.

4. OPINION ON METHOD OF TEACHING

Swamiji prescribed the same ancient methods of instruction which were practiced in Gurukuls. The methods recommended by Vivekananda are -

1. *Meditation and concentration method:* Vivekananda believed that the more the power of concentration the greater the knowledge that is acquired.
2. *Lecture and discussion method:* Swamiji believe that lecture and discussion method is very much helpful for elaborating essential facts.
3. *Self learning method:* Vivekananda also believed in the self learning method in the process of education. Here 'Guru' the teachers work as a guide and helper only.

5. OPINION ON TEACHER'S ROLE

Vivekananda has many words to tell to the teacher. Too much importance is given to the piousness and character of the teacher than his professional competencies. According to Vivekananda a true teacher is one who can come down immediately to the level of the student and can "Transfer his soul to the student's soul" and see through student's eye, hear through his ears and understanding through his understanding".

His philosophical thoughts on the role of teacher reflect that -

1. The personal life of a teacher is more important than the knowledge he possesses.

2. The teacher should through his magic as it were and influence his students.
3. His personality should help them (students) to become strong and Powerful.
4. Individual guidance should be given by the teacher to the students.
5. A teacher must have a great love of humanity. He should be a giver of himself and of his material good, in order to serve people.

6. OPINION ON DISCIPLINE

Swami Vivekananda emphasized child centered education in which child is given full freedom for activity and self learning. He should be given full opportunity to develop in a natural environment. Thus Swamiji believe in “self disciplined”.

According to him each child is his own teacher. He has knowledge talent in his mind. The task of the external teacher is only to guide and inspire the children so that his inner knowledge is brought out. Swami Vivekananda’s ‘Vedantic philosophy’ gave a new interpretation to the goal of life and that of education. He emphasized ‘man making’ nation building education. He further emphasized character building selfless service to the nation, freedom and equality. Swamiji was also a great champion of women education.

7. CONCLUSION

Swami Vivekananda spends his whole life spreading spiritual knowledge around the world and upliftment of poor in India. His contribution to Indian history will always be remembered. 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.

8. REFERENCES

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