

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



D. Vijaya Bharathi
Digumarti Bhaskara Rao



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OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

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EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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Preface

Swami Vivekananda is an exemplary philosopher of India who made Indian religion popular all around the world. His philosophy has contributed much to the development of educational philosophy in India.

The educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda has been explained in this book with the headings Philosophy of Life, Education, Aims of Education, Methods of Teaching and Learning, Teacher, Curriculum, Discipline and Values along with his brief biography.

The book on Swami Vivekananda, though a brief one, would be helpful to teachers, students, parents, educationists, researchers, speakers, religious practitioners, etc., in enhancing their knowledge about the educational contributions of Swamiji.

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Introduction

"The art of education would never attain clearness in itself without philosophy, there is an interaction between the two and either without the other is incomplete and unserviceable". Fichte.

The most sacred of all creations of God is the human life and it has two aspects—one biological and the other sociological. If nutrition and reproduction maintain and transmit the biological aspect, the sociological aspect is transmitted by education. Man is primarily distinguishable from the animals because of power of reasoning. Man is endowed with intelligence, remains active, original and energetic. Man lives in accordance with his philosophy of life and his conception of the world.

What is Education?

Education is an important social activity planned and shared by the parents and the society. Education is a process of learning to live the life of a community. Education has been defined by different people in different ways. The meaning of education has been changing according to people, places and times. Some took education to mean the process, others the results, still others the methodology. Since the concept has changed the definitions have also changed. Yet, there are certain definitions, which are all time popular and also acceptable. Aristotle has defined education as

"creation of a sound mind in a sound body". By this we can understand that education should pay attention to our physical needs and also to the mental needs. Pestalozzi defined education as a "natural harmonious and progressive development of man's innate powers". By saying so, Pestalozzi has made the factors heredity and environment and their role in the personality development very clear. Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "By education, I mean an allround drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind and spirit". By this, we can very well understand that the Mahatma wants a harmonious development of the various faculties of human beings.

A comprehensive definition of education must take into consideration a few factors. They are (i) the individual who is to be educated, and (ii) the society in which education is to take place. Education can be best described as "the nurture of personal growth". When education is considered as the conservation transmission and renewal of entire culture, then it becomes an instrumental by which a community maintains itself.

What is Philosophy?

The list of achievements of human beings is very long and it is a big question to all philosophers. How has man achieved all that he has achieved? How has all this been done? Philosophy endeavours to understand all that comes within the bounds of human experience. It aims at the fundamental understanding of things, the problem of human conduct, the assumptions that underlie religious and scientific beliefs, the tools and methods of thinking or any issue that arises in any field of human activity. Philosophy seeks to provide a complete account of man's world, which is reflective and critical in nature. Philosophy wants to understand man in relation to the whole universe, nature and God. Philosophy deals with the nature of the human mind and personality and the ways in which man and all his institutions can be understood. Philosophy seeks to understand whether man is free or within bondage and whether he can change the course of history. Philosophy, therefore, may be understood as a search for a comprehensive view of nature, an attempt at universal explanation of the nature of things. Philosophy gives man that

knowledge and wisdom with the help of which he understands the whole universe and the implications of the same or relations to himself and all the people around. Philosophy is a consistent search for the consistent explanation of different realities around us. The eternal quest for truth lends the origin of philosophy. A love of wisdom is the essence for any philosophic investigation.

Philosophy has been defined by various scholars from various angles. The literal meaning of philosophy is love of wisdom. The word philosophy originated from the Greek language. The wise men of Greece had raised a number of questions about the origin of the universe, life and creation. It must be noted that philosophy is not anyone's belief or point of view concerning purposes or values. On the other hand, philosophy is a rigorous, disciplined and guarded analysis of some of the most difficult problems which man has faced. Philosophers are men of great intelligence and remarkable insight, who have been able to see the significance of the discreet events in human experiences.

Betrand Russel opines that "Philosophy is to be studied not for the sake of any definite answers to it's questions, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves, because these questions enlarge our conceptions what is possible but above all because—the mind also becomes capable of that union, with the universe, which constitutes its highest good". Needless to say philosophers differ in their answers to various eternal questions of life and there is no one philosophy which all of us may follow; yet every philosophy will enable us to derive knowledge of some kind. Philosophy as such is a mature reflection about any problem in its complete perspective. Some people regard it as an intellectual luxury but in fact it is life's necessity. Philosophy helps us to understand the significance of all human experiences and activity. The deepest questions of life are clarified by philosophy. Such a clarification is most essential if we do not want to lead a life of confusion and conflict, ambiguity and inconsistency. Philosophy is the supreme instrument by which man comes to terms with himself as he struggles to organise his existence within culture.

Several great thinkers have defined philosophy in many ways. If Coleridge defined philosophy as "the science of all

sciences", Cisaró called it "the mother of all arts and true medicine of mind". Both Alexander and Kant felt that philosophy is metaphysics. Philosophy, according to Alexander, is an attempt to study such comprehensive topics like reality and universe—he combines two concepts metaphysics and criticism in his philosophy. Kant also agrees with Alexander and further adds that philosophy should give up the attempt to know the ultimate realities like God and the self, and limit itself to the world of experience. Plato states that the knowledge of reality is a knowledge of the universe, unchangeable and eternal. Such knowledge cannot be given sense perception which does not reveal the reality of things but gives mere appearances.

What is Educational Philosophy?

Man philosophizes whenever he tries to express his belief and its various aspects. Education is one of the most important aspects of life. So whoever has tried to philosophize education has been called an educational philosopher or thinker. Philosophy, whether explicit or implicit, is always in the background for shaping things in education. It answers thousands of questions pertaining to the field of education. The importance of education is enormous. The over all meaning of education is given by Redden, "education is the deliberate and systematic influence exerted by the mature person upon the immature person through instruction and discipline. It means the harmonious development of all powers of the human being—physical, social, intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual. The essential elements in the educative process are a creative mind, a well-integrated self, socially useful purposes and experiences related to the interests, needs and abilities of the individual as a participant or social being". The chief task of philosophy is to determine what constitutes a life worth living—the chief task of education on the other hand is to make life worth living. Therefore, philosophy tells the essentials and goals of good life and education gives the means to achieve those goals and learn those essentials of good life. Philosophy is the contemplative and education is the active side of life. Education is nothing but applied philosophy. Philosophy deals with the abstract whereas education deals with the concrete. Both of them go together.

Whether it is East or West, Philosophy determines all the broad aspects of education. So long as we need aims of education, based on philosophy and based on the ultimate goals of life, this need will always be there. Philosophy will continue influencing and determining both the matter and the method of education. It will continue making a unique contribution to the development of the educational theory and practice. Modern philosophers have also a special impact. In the 19th century, there was the influence of the concept of mechanism on physics, psychology and economics. Neo-Darwinism gave rise to the acceptance of the principles of struggle for existence, cut throat competition, gradual process of adaptation of life, purposiveness of life, intellectualism and men's faith in reason. Emphasis of knowledge received universal acceptance. In the 20th century, the two world wars and the consequent mass destruction brought by the application of science, gave rise to loss of faith in mere intellect. Humanism, faith in higher principles and values of life, character development and emotional integration received greater impetus. There began a distrust of mere logic. New schools of philosophy originated, trying to synthesize science and religion and that is almost a synthesis of pragmatism and idealism. The present age is an age of reunion, the period of synthesis both in philosophy and in education. Philosophy not only lays down the ends, but also wishes that the means must constantly look to the ends so that they may not be leading astray.

All great philosophers are great educationists. Thales in Greece, Confucius in China, Buddha and Gandhi in India and many more have all reflected their philosophical views in their educational schemes. For example, Plato's idealism brought forth his cultural schemes of education, Rousseau's anti-social philosophy was reflected in his 'negative natural education', and Dewey's philosophy has resulted in the modern 'Project Method'. Truths and principles established by philosophy are applied in the conduct of educative process—several schools of thought have come into vogue, like, idealism, Naturalism, Pragmatism, Realism, Humanism and many more. Such schools of thought have cropped up because philosophers differ in their answers to several questions

of life. Despite all the differences, philosophers have all agreed on one point that education is the means to achieve life's ambitions and goals.

Retrospects and Perspectives

History tells us that most primitive tribes viewed education as a means for securing social solidarity and uniformity. During the medieval period education was used to serve political and religious ends. The Renaissance effected a change in the whole outlook of life and education was recorded as a means for independent personal culture and individual development. At first, the Reformation was a continuation of the best educational influences of Renaissance. But, many aspects of a new formalism crept into the educational practices, which are little different from the mediaeval scholasticism with realistic tendencies. During the seventeenth century we find the beginnings of the psychological, scientific and sociological movements in education which are trying to reach their peak today. There are three fundamental things in life—Mind (the self), Matter (the physical world) and Experience. A thinker who idolizes the "mind and the self" is an idealist. One who emphasises "reality, matter and physical world" is called a materialist. One who refuses to speculate and transcends beyond experience is called a pragmatist. Each one of these Schools of Philosophy analyses and interprets the different aspects of education in its own specialised way.

Man has two facets—spiritual and material. When the emphasis is on the realisation of spirituality, life is called idealism. An idealist does not have considerations for material values of life. To him, spiritual world is the manifestation of some great spirit behind it, while the material and physical world is destructable and changeable. To the idealists 'Mind and Soul' are more important than the 'Matter and the Body'. The idealists do not regard environment, physical or social, primarily responsible for creating a man. If scientists and artists have given us some masterpieces, they were not the results of reactions to a certain physical stimulus but they were characteristic creations of mind. 'Exalt the human personality' is the core of the philosophy of idealism. According to Ross "Human personality is of supreme value and

constitutes the noblest work of God". The development of personality therefore has been given the first position in idealist philosophy. Mind is totally idolised by the idealists. Believing in the theory of evolution, they advocate the evolution of the mind which is responsible for the progressive nature of man and the world. Mind is the creator of the new and the explainer of the existing phenomena. Man's works are due to his powers of symbolic thinking. The full evolution of mind enables man to know the truth and avoid the error, to appreciate beauty and avoid ugliness, to expose goodness and avoid evil. Truth, goodness and beauty are the spiritual ideals for which man should aspire and strive. This is the task of the idealists. Knowledge through the activity of mind rather than through senses is the first article of faith in idealism. Intelligence, creativity and dynamism of man differentiate him from other animals. Through the use of these powers man creates cultural environment. Another article of faith with the idealists is the emancipation of the spirit. They attach no importance to life of flesh, they are the high priests of life of spirit. Man's spiritual nature is the very essence of his being and he must create a spiritual environment, which is endowed with the choicest benedictions of God. The third essence of idealism is the realisation of higher values of life. Their ideals are to be discovered by man. Heaven lies about us and not above us. Life is glorious, hence it is to be lived in a glorified manner. Idealists believe that there is a divine power behind all things good in the world. A man's rational self is superior to every other self, physical and emotional. It is the rational self which discovers the truth.

The human personality grows because of the interaction of the personality with the environment. The Puritan settlers of America had to face many problems in creating their own civilization in those new environments. They possessed no readymade solutions for those problems. Old ideas would not help them. So they experimented upon many new ideas and adopted those which proved useful for them in solving their day-to-day problems. Consequently they built up a philosophy of life, based on their own experiments and experiences. They came to the conclusion that values are not fixed in advance. They are man-

made. In the words of John Dewey, the father of Pragmatism, an in and out American Philosophy, "Values are as unstable as the forms of clouds. They keep on changing from time to time and reality is still in the process of making. Ideal ends are remotely connected with immediate and urgent conditions. Men naturally devote themselves to the present conditions rather than the remote". According to pragmatism, whatever fulfills man's purposes and desires and develops his life is true. Truth is that which gives satisfactory results when put into practice. A pragmatist, believes in practical and utilitarian philosophy. He believes that man has the power to shape his environment to his own needs. The world is changing and nothing is true or good forever. What was good yesterday may cease to be good today. The old order changeth yielding place to new and one good custom may corrupt the world after some time. Pragmatism believes in change—hence it does not accept the existence of any static quality or virtue. Pragmatism in education is against armchair theorizing and hair splitting tendencies of traditional philosophers. Its theory of education is based upon close relationship between theory and practice of education. Our society is changing and dynamic. Very rapid changes are taking place and conditions of life are not static. Pragmatic education is progressive education, which stands for flexibility, change and adaptability. It advocates freedom and worth of the individual personality and the ideals accepted by a society at one particular time to maintain its existence.

Man is a purposive being with an essential nature of approving or disapproving nature, appreciating or criticising everything that he sees, does and feels. Everything in life makes its multiple impacts on man for better or worse. Everyone has needs, urges and aspirations, and anything that fulfils the needs, satisfies the urges and helps one in realising the aspirations has a value. Our conduct and attitude towards objects, ideals and persons, depends upon the values. These objects, persons and ideals have for us. Everything, therefore, is of value to man and he has been making efforts to evaluate as validity and as wisely as possible for him. Man does the evaluation everyday, every hour, throughout his life.

Values are the fruits which accrue from an activity in pursuit of some goals. In the realisation of certain aims in life we realise certain values. These values are experiences in the course of the fulfillment of our aims. The aim may be one but many values may be realised. For a long time, values were approached philosophically after long deliberation, meditation and reflection and they were determined. "To value" in the words of one great philosopher means "primarily to prize to esteem, to appraise, to estimate". It means "the act of cherishing something, holding it dear and also the act of passing judgement upon the nature and amount of its values as compared with something else". If the art of valuing means liking or desiring, then value may be object of any interest. Value is a person's idea of what is desirable, what he and others want, not necessarily what he actually wants. Ideal values are eternal. They flow from the spiritual nature of man. The spirit has moral, intellectual and aesthetic activities. These activities are inspired by the corresponding desires. "Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram" are the attributes of the Supreme Being. The love of God means the love of these divine attributes. Religion, which is the love of God, includes the love of these spiritual values. It is here that we seek the help of education, one of the most powerful instruments to cultivate values in the youth.

There can be no two opinions that education, as an organised social system, has an important function in the development of moral, spiritual and aesthetic values. Education is a process of bringing about desirable changes of behaviour in a learner; in the way he thinks, feels and acts in accordance with our concept of good life. The various goals of education, development of human resources, creativity, commitment to human values and social justice, national cohesion, scientific temper, independence of mind and spirit, socialism, secularism, democracy are no more than educational expressions of our concept of good life. It is through education that society seeks to preserve and promote values.

In the content of education, values have got a narrow meaning and also a wide meaning. In the narrow sense educational values are co-terminus with educational aims. In the wider sense, however, values influence every aspect of the educational process,

technique, policy and procedure. Apart from instructional aims, the questions of teaching methods, the motivation for learning, the selection of curriculum, the use of text books, the type of discipline, the administration and supervision are questions of values. There is always some values which arouses and sustains and perpetuates interests of learning. Values determine what we should do and how we should do. We always feel interested in those values which make a difference in our lives and which we can progressively explore and apprehend: The realisation of values stimulates us to make efforts. The values which retain the sap of flexibility have sufficient vitality to survive in this constantly evolving world. Dynamism of thought will constantly demand a revaluation and reinterpretation of values.

The growing concern over the erosion values and an increasing cynicism in the society has brought to focus the need for readjustments in the curriculum in order to make education a forceful tool for the cultivation of values-social and moral. If values are woven into the very concept of education where is the need for separate value education? It is true that all good education is, in essence, a process of developing the human personality in all its dimensions-intellectual, physical, social, moral and spiritual. When we talk of value education we should essentially mean the development of social, moral, aesthetic and spiritual sides of the human personality and not merely transformation of information. We are also passing through a phase in our social and political life which poses a special danger to the long accepted values. Values like secularism, socialism, democracy and professional ethics are coming under increasing strain. Population increase has seriously affected the quality of life. Crime, violence and indifference to human suffering have spread to all walks of life. Both physical and social pollution are effecting our lives. The world today faces a catastrophe, as never before in the history of mankind and we are in need of peace and understanding. All these problems cannot be solved in a piece-meal effort, educational or social. What we need is a drastic change in the very outlook of man in his own life, values and environment. This calls for a deliberate thrust on values in our life, through education.

The East and West have contributed to the philosophy of values. The concept of values is very important in education. It is only what is valuable that is transmitted to the younger generation by the elder generation. The concept of education is to be visualised as nothing but a set of values in essence. R.S. Peters has stated in his 'Ethics and Education' the following as one of the criteria for education. "Education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile in those who become committed to it". According to Harry Schofield value is "what is particular society values so highly that it finds it important to pass it on to each succeeding generations". Hence, what is deemed to be valuable only becomes the content of education. So it is obvious that values and education are correlated.

Values are defined as socially defined desires and goals that are internalised through the process of conditioning, learning of socialisation and those become subjective preferences, standards and aspirations. According to Radha Kamal Mukharjee values reflect different philosophical positions". Most of these are idealistic values. The concept of values is closely associated with the concept of man. Values are classified in different ways by the Eastern and Western philosophers.

Values are only vaguely or roughly understood by the Western philosophers. Schofield observes in this context that "in case education of and indeed in case of values the terms remain nebulous because we know vaguely or roughly what they mean and as a result never discipline ourselves to ask what exactly they mean". Values mean worth or importance. Value can only be thought of clearly when one thinks about the types of values. According to Western philosophers, values are commonly known as two broad types—Absolute and Pragmatic values. Absolute values are the contributions of idealism. They have universal validity. They represent true reality. They are not bound by time and space or other physical limitations. They may be stated to have been derived from Plato's concept of absolute ideas. Kant's philosophy contributed to the categorical imperative of 'doing good'. Schofield says, "For idealists, absolute values are the supreme authority, they represent the ultimate reality". Absolutes

are thought of to be determining the behaviour of man. Hence, they determine the content of education, according to idealists.

The values of pragmatism are quite different from that of idealism. Pragmatic values are sometimes known as instrumental values too. For John Dewey, absolute ideas are not the governing factors but the personal experiences of men governing their behaviours. The experiences of the persons is quite important to him, both in morality and education. So he described education, as the "continual reconstruction of experiences". Whatever works in right, knowledge that is useful is important. Schofield says "neither the idea of absolute values nor the idea of pragmatic values is entirely satisfactory". Perhaps a balancing position between the two has to be achieved.

According to the Indian philosophers, knowledge has two functions. Theoretical, that is revealing the existence of some object, and practical, that is helping in the fulfilment of a purpose in life. The first one is known as 'fact' and the other as 'value'. Both are interrelated because knowledge of facts leads to pursuit of a value. According to Indian philosophers, values are classified into four classes, viz. 1. Dharma (Virtue). 2. Artha (Wealth). 3. Kama (Pleasure). 4. Moksha (Self-realisation).

Values may also be classified as either intrinsic or instrumental. For example, in quenching thirst by drinking water, water is instrumental, while quenching thirst by it is intrinsic. Usually the term 'value' is used for the ends sought, but the means of their attainment is also called values. Of the above values, Dharma is a moral value, Kama is a psychological value, Artha is an economic value and Moksha is a spiritual value. Dharma is a moral value spoken in case of human beings only. It is superior to the other two values of Artha and Kama. Speaking truth, kindness, purity, etc., come under Dharma. Dharma is related to Kama and Artha. Artha is a means for Kama while Dharma furnishes the necessary criteria for Kama. Dharma is regulative philosophy of life. Hence, Dharma is a means as well as end. It is instrumental as well as intrinsic. It subserves Moksha. Moral purification helps in the conquest of lower self. Besides the above four values, this

philosophy also speaks of Trinity of values—"Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram". The Western philosophers have upheld the idealistic valuation of Truth (Satyam), Goodness (Shivam) and Beauty (Sundaram). The divergence in the conceptualisation of these idealistic values has resulted to some extent in the value crisis.

Various philosophers have different stands on values. Idealism stresses on the importance of the exaltation of human personality and higher values in life. Naturalism on the other hand lacks ideals. It lays stress on individual relation and assertion against social advancement or social co-operation. Pragmatism emphasises on child's individuality, his needs, interests and aptitudes, its principles of learning by doing, activity and experience. Pragmatism is an in and out utilisation philosophy. Each of these philosophies has something very useful and substantial to contribute to the field of education. No single philosophy is suitable and sufficient for all the times, places and people. Hence, it is essential to make an attempt to synthesise or to select and to draw together ideas and aspects from different philosophies, known as the Eclectic Tendency in education. It is also called a 'philosophy of fusion' or 'philosophy of compromise' which pieces together different beliefs in philosophy and finds harmony among the various philosophical positions and evolves a practical method of application of the finest principles needed in the educational field. An educator tries to put together and creates an educational philosophy and practice of his own to suit the contemporary environment. A close examination of various philosophies reveals that none of them provide all the answers for the ultimate questions of life. There are many rigid schools of thought, specially in India and such thoughts are not conducive to national and emotional integration. Thus, philosophies of education are complementary and not contradictory. Idealism is fundamental while naturalism and pragmatism are contributory in the theory and practice of education.

In the light of the above views, the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda would be explained with the following points of discussion.

1. The Biographical Sketch

The brief biographical sketch here in has been given to bring in a human touch and to create a rapport with the thinker, Swami Vivekananda.

2. The Philosophy of Life

A brief account of the philosophy the life of Swami Vivekananda was given to indicate the basic goal which he has and tried to achieve as this indication is likely to help to understand the essential spirit of Vivekananda.

3. The Education

Education is an essential human virtue. Without it, man is a splendid slave, a reasoning savage. It is to humanise him. Man becomes man through education. He is what education makes him. Man is an animal, both from his passions and his reason. Education fashions and models him for the society. Education has been widely discussed and interpreted by different thinkers, philosophers and educationists with reference to its aims, functions and implications. It is a historical fact that the framework of education is determined to a great extent by the sociological impact of a particular time. It was attempted to describe the concept of education of Swami Vivekananda.

4. The Aims of Education

Education, we are often told, is a system. It cannot be a haphazard undertaking. Education is a human necessity and an ornament that adorns human life. It is a living activity directed to some goal. If so, one may obviously ask, 'what is the aim' the goal or the objective of this activity? This question is bound to arise in the mind of either a lay person or even an expert in the field of education. This question becomes more urgent to be answered, clearly and precisely. In this category, an attempt was made to explain the aims of education according to Swami Vivekananda.

5. The Methods of Teaching and Learning

By method it is meant that a link is developed between the students, the teacher and the subject matter. Education is a process

of knowing things. It is an act of producing knowledge and an instrument of getting knowledge. Hence, education as a process actualises itself through various aids and devices which are mostly psychological in nature. Some of them are purely subjective or marked by external characteristics. These aids and devices of teaching and learning are generally known as methods of education. Different educationists and philosophers have prescribed different techniques of teaching and learning according to their bent of mind or mental disposition and scheme of education. In this category, an attempt was made to explain the methods of teaching and learning proposed by Swami Vivekananda.

6. The Teacher

In the process of education, teacher is the pivotal-point, and the heart of the matter. Education takes place through the interaction between the teacher and the taught. He is the maker of man. The true textbook for the pupil is his teacher. He trains the minds, cultivates the manners and shapes the morals of the members of the community at their most impressionable age. He is to be more honoured than the parents, because parents give children their life but the teacher teaches them the art of living well. Different philosophies of education have presented the role of a teacher in the light of their principles. Here, an attempt was made to explain the opinion of Swami Vivekananda about the role of the teacher in the process of the educating children.

7. The Curriculum

The concept of curriculum being the content of education may be deemed as the practical side of philosophy. The curriculum means 'a run way'—a course which one runs to reach a goal. In this sense, education becomes a race, run on the course of curriculum, to reach the goal of full development of a child's personality. It embodies all the experiences which are utilised by the school to attain the aims of education. It is constructed in accordance with the aims of education that are ultimately guided by the objectives of life, over which, philosophy has a great bearing. In the light of different philosophies, different types of curriculum

have been presented. Here, an attempt was made to explain the curriculum proposed by Swami Vivekananda.

8. The Discipline

The nature of concept of discipline is governed by the philosophy of life. In other words, discipline reflects the philosophy of life. It reflects the philosophical pre-possessions or particular ideologies. Here, it was attempted to describe the concept of discipline given by Swami Vivekananda.

9. The Values

The East and West have contributed to the philosophy of values. The concept of values is very important in education. The concept of education is to be visualised as nothing but a set of values in essence. Education is the transmission of what is worthwhile in those who become committed to it. It has been attempted to know the values suggested by Swami Vivekananda.



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Peculiar Birth and Childhood

The light of the world dawned for the first time upon the future Swami Vivekananda on Monday, January 12th, 1863. It was the holy hour of dawn, just a few minutes before sun-rise. It was the day of Makara Sankranti, a great Hindu festival. The millions of men and women who were observing the festival, unconsciously greeted the new-born baby with prayers and worship, little thinking that he who was to usher in a new age of glory and splendour for his country, who was to recognise the spiritual and national consciousness of Hindustan and become a great Apostle—another St. Paul—preaching unto the world the gospel of another redemption—the message of vedanta, had, on that day, first seen the light. It was to Vishwanath and Bhuvaneshwari Devi, that this child, who was to become the greatest man of his age, whose influence was to shake the world and who was to lay the foundation of a new order of things, was born.

Narendranath, as he was named by his parents, was a naughty child, subject of fits of restlessness during which he was beyond control. But for these outbursts from time to time, he was a sunny tempered, sweet, loving child, but of such an extraordinary restlessness that it took two nurses to take care of him. He had an

immense fancy for wandering monks and he would give them anything he had in his hands when they appeared.

The first education for anyone is on the knee of the mother and Narendra was no exception. It was from his mother that Narendra first heard the tales of Ramayana and Mahabharatha and it was no doubt that he thus caught some of the dramatic fire and force that he exhibited later. The first seen of spiritual life was sown in this period. Even as a child, Narendra was found meditating for more than two to three hours at a stretch.

Narendra at School

At the age of six, Narendra went to school where the boys were initiated into the 3Rs. At the school, during the initial days itself, Narendra picked up that sort of a vocabulary, which had scandalised and upset the entire family. It was decided unanimously that he be stopped from going to school, instead, a private tutor was engaged, who conducted classes for Narendra and a few boys of the neighbourhood in the ancient prayer hall, in his home. Narendra soon proved himself to be a very intelligent student with exceptional abilities. But the time he was seven years old, Narendra knew by heart a certain grammar text and also passages of great length in the Mahabharatha and Ramayana. At the age of eight he was in the 9th class. Narendra was very intelligent, but very restless, he never sat at his desk to study. Narendra played a lot and he played almost furiously. New games always fascinated him and he invented many to amuse himself and his friends. Even when disputes arouse in the classroom among his classmates. He set one team against the other only to amuse himself. When he had to learn English. Narendra was very much against it because it was a foreign language. But when his parents and teachers persisted, he learnt it with such speed and enthusiasm that he astonished everybody.

Young Narendra

Even as a young boy Narendra had very strong and steadfast ideas about various issues. 'Caste' was one great mystery to the boy. Many of his father's clients, belonging to different castes, used to come to Narendra's house. Every caste was provided with its

own tobacco pipe, provision was made for the Mohammedans. 'Why could not a member of one caste eat with the member of another caste or smoke his pipe? 'What would happen if he did?' Would the roof fall on him? Narendra decided to see for himself. He took whiffs from all the tobacco pipes and when he was reprimanded for his action, he said that he could see nothing wrong in what he did.

Narendra never evinced an importance with superstition and fear, no matter how hallowed by tradition. Narendra was in the habit of climbing a tree in the compound of his friend's house. Annoyed by his gymnastics on the tree, the old grant father of his friend, told Narendra that the tree was haunted by a ghost and it would wring the neck of whoever climbed the tree. Narendra did not stop what he did merely because the old man told him. He had to find the truth himself.

Narendra hated monotony of any kind. He organised an amateur theoretical group and presented plays in the worship hall of his home. He was even discouraged. Narendra then joined a gymnasium and began learning fencing, lathi-play, wrestling, rowing and other such sports. But soon he got tired of these too.

Narendra was a favourite of all, with every family in the locality, of high or low caste, rich or poor, he established some sort of a relationship. Naren would be the first to offer consolation to anybody who was in trouble or bereaved. His sensitivity was very deep. At the same time his ready wit and pranks kept everybody amused and sometimes made even the grave-minded elders burst in to roars of laughter. He was a favourite with the ladies whom he addressed as 'aunty' 'sister' etc. according to their age. He never suffered from shyness and always made himself at home everywhere. Perhaps, his association with the zanana (the women folk) made him want to learn cooking and he was indeed a very good cook.

Though Narendra was full of wild pranks he had no evil associates. His instinct kept him away from the dubious ways of the world. Truthfulness was the very backbone of his life. He began to seriously meditate in the nights and was soon blessed with some wonderful visions. As he grew older a definite change in his



temperament was noticeable. He began to show a preference for intellectual pursuits, to study books and newspapers and to attend public lectures regularly. He also began to discriminate in his choice of friends not accepting those, who were not his intellectual peers. Many noted scholars visited his father. Narendra would listen to their discussions and occasionally participated in them. In those days he demanded intellectual recognition from everyone. He was so ambitious in this respect that if his mental powers were not recognised, he would fly into a rage, not sparing even his father's friends and nothing short of an apology would quiet him.

Narendra had extraordinary power of reading, this, he described as follows "it so happened I could understand an author without reading his book line by line. I could get the meaning by just reading the first and last lines of a paragraph. As this power developed I found it unnecessary to read even the paragraph. I could follow by reading only the first and last lines of a page. Further, where the author introduced discussions to explain a matter and it took him four or even more pages to clear the subject, I could grasp the whole trend of his arguments by only reading the first few lines".

Naren's Encounter with Brahma Samaj

The playtime of childhood with its joys and sorrows, was over for Naren and a new life with more serious outlook dawned for him, when in 1879, at the age of sixteen, he passed the entrance examination and joined the college. He had grown to manhood stature, he was muscular, agile and inclined to stoutness. He was intensely intellectual. It was while he was in the first year at the college that he met, for the first time in November 1881, Sri Ram Krishna Paramahansa. The principle, Prof. William Hastie, the great scholar, spoke to Narendra's class about Wordsworth's "Excursion" in which the poet refers to the state of trance of which the poet had a glimpse while contemplating the beauties of nature. The students did not understand. Then the professor said "such an experience is the result of purity of mind and concentration on some particular object and it is rare indeed, particularly in these days. I have seen only one person who has experienced that blessed state of mind and he is Rama Krishna Paramahansa of

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Dakshineswar. You can understand if you go there and see for yourself". It was thus, Narendra had heard of his future master and not through the Brahma Samaj of which he was member.

Whatever Narendra took up in studies he would end up mastering it. He did not limit his studies to the curriculum alone. He was stood at signing and could play many musical instruments. In the college he attracted the attention of both Indian and British professors who recognised his ambitious mind and the latent powers of his personality. Narendra tested everything by argument. Even during recreation he continued the discussion, begun in the house of study. He was vehement, vigorous, of untiring energy and his topics of conversation were endless. During his collegiate life he underwent a wonderful psychological transformation. A born idealist and a seeker of truth he was not to be satisfied with mere worldly enjoyments. He was keen for adventure as ever and the first so see the humorous side of things.

It was at this time that he began to interest himself in the issues of the day, especially 'Brahma Samaj'. The Brahma Samaj was the outward expression of an endeavour to liberalise and at the same time to conserve the evolved instincts of the Hindu race. On the social side, reform in the way of breaking up of the caste system and the caste consciousness, the recognition of the equality of man, the education and emancipation of women with the raising of the marriageable age were demanded. This movement caught the imagination of the young Bengali. In Naren, was aroused a tumult of thought and feeling and he came to regard the Samaj, the meetings of which he often attended, as an ideal institute, in which might be solved all of life's problems-individuals or national. When the Brahma Samaj split into two in 1878, a new organisation with the name Sadharan Brahma Samaj came into existence and Naren identified himself with the new organisation. He also joined at this time, a movement, for education of the masses irrespective of caste, creed or colour.

The most important trait in Naren's character was purity. His mother, who had made purity a matter of loyalty to herself and to the family, was a very strong influence on him. Purity became the standard by which he judged all ideals and visions of the soul and God. It was a background to all his thoughts and

feelings and he felt that without it, the spiritual life was impossible. Brahmacharya was his ideal for students, Brahmacharya of hard intellectual labour combined with and governed by great personal purity, a necessary stage of preparation of mind and heart for the vision which the scriptures promise to those who are faithful to the ideal.

Naren's father began to urge him to get married and Naren would show dislike and rebel. Strangely, some unforeseen difficulty would arise and the matter always would be abandoned, at-least for the time being.

The inward spiritual urge was becoming strong at this stage. Even as a youth, whenever Naren fell asleep two strikingly similar issues of life would come up before his mind's eye—one, of the life of comfort, ease, luxury, the life of sense, the enjoyment of wealth, power, name and fame and the love of a devoted wife and family—in short a worldly life. The other picture was of a Sanyasi, a wandering monk, having no possessions, fixed on the consciousness of Divine Reality, living as fortune caused him adrift, eating only such food as chance might bring and resting at night under the canopy of the sky in the forest or on a mountain side. He believed himself capable of realising either of these ideals and he often pictured himself in both, for he felt, these two were within him—two painters, one the spirit of desire and the other the spirit of renunciation. The further he would go inward, the stronger the spirit of renunciation would become. Thus, the spiritual self of Naren held mastery choosing the renunciation of desire, which is the only way to gain the vision of God.

Naren's Discipleship

In his longing to know the 'truth' about the way to reach God, he turned to Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore, for spiritual guidance. He did not have a satisfying experience with the Maharshi and he suddenly remembered Sri Rama Krishna Paramahansa, whom he had met long ago, in a friend's house. Naren, now decided to go to Dakshineswar and ask Rama Krishna if he had seen God. This meeting marked the opening of a new chapter in the spiritual life of Narendranath.

On meeting Rama Krishna Paramahansa, Naren asked him the question that God was dominating his mind for quite some

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time 'Have you seen God, sir?' Rama Krishna Replied "Yes, I see him just as I see you here, only in a much intense sense. God can be realised, one can see him and talk to him as I am doing with you. But who cares to do so? People shed torments of tears for their wife and children, for wealth and property, but who does so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for him, he surely manifests himself". That impressed Naren immediately. For the first time he had found a man who dared to say that he had seen God, that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world—Naren had felt Rama Krishna's ways a little peculiar, for a moment, he even thought him to be a mad man, even otherwise, he thought him to be the holiest of the holy, a true saint and bowed his head in salutation.

Though Naren considered Rama Krishna to be a mad man, he was at a loss to account for the strange feeling of blessedness that came over him as he sat near the Master. Naren was slow in accepting Rama Krishna as his teacher. Rama Krishna had taken Naren into trances with a mere touch. Naren was the Master's form the moment the Master touched him. It was a possession, however, which meant the highest freedom for Naren's soul. He lost many of his cherished convictions, for instance, that Guru was not necessary. After his association with his Guru, he realised that it was impossible to realise God without the guidance of a Guru.

Naren was sceptic, with no faith in the Hindu Gods. He laughed at many of the injunctions of the Hindu scriptures. He would never drive away his doubts. His soul was always open to all that might come in Rama Krishna understood and loved Naren better for all the turmoil he was experiencing. He saw that Naren's intellect because of the very intensity of his desire, for the truth, would always doubt, but he saw as well, that Naren would conquer in the end, that he would transcend all limitations and become a spiritual giant. So he continued to guide and instruct him with infinite love and patience. From then on, Naren's life became, that of a Saint-in-the-making. He was to attain into the very highest possibilities of the mystical consciousness. Where in the Soul and the Supreme Reality are revealed as a perfect and indistinguishable unity.

Great teachers who have themselves realised the highest spiritual truth, when they come in touch with a fit disciple, are eager to impart that truth. Rama Krishna realised Naren's great potentialities. But at the same time Naren needed the inspiring influence of time, as we see by his terror of losing his individuality, when the master tried to put him into 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi'. The climax was reached when the spirit of the master before he left the body, descended upon the disciple. This relationship served a great impersonal purpose the revival, of the religion of the Vedas and the preaching of the Modern gospel to the people of the earth.

During the five years of Naren's discipleship he went to see the master once or twice a week. Sometimes he would stay over for a few days. During the last years, family troubles kept him away from Dakshineswar, this saddened the heart of the master, yet he consoled himself. Ramakrishna's greatest attraction according to Naren were his renunciation, purity and constant devotion to God, whereas in his disciple the master respected the unbounded self-reliance, mainly spirit and single minded devotion to truth, Sri Ramakrishna's relationship with and attitude towards Naren differed a great deal from his treatment of the other disciples. With them he always observed great restriction, as regards food, meditation, prayer, sleep and other affairs of daily life. There were no such restrictions with Naren. Ramakrishna would say that Naren was always cutting off the veils of maya with the sword of knowledge and the inscrutable maya could never bring Naren under her control. Rama Krishna was delighted when Naren engaged himself in arguments with the other devotees Naren would storm them with his knowledge and people who were much older than Naren were unable to withstand Naren's reasoning power, this delighted Ramakrishna a great deal. Naren was against image worship, but he also learnt to respect others' view points. The tendency to bigotry disappeared in Naren when he realised the oneness of all spiritual endeavour and religious belief. But he continued to argue with his master against image worship. Naren would never believe anything unless he had direct proof. Rama Krishna realised that Naren was a rebel, for without intellectual strain and struggles no one would arrive at real illumination.

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Besides, his own struggles would be helpful later in understanding and solving the difficulties of Naren. His whole struggle and gradual realisation prove the rare quality of Rama Krishna's teaching, revealing him as the living incarnation of Hinduism.

Ramakrishna's Efforts to Initiate Naren to Advaita Vedanta

From the beginning Ramakrishna tried to initiate Naren into the mysteries of Advaita Vedanta. To Narendra, a staunch adherent of the Brahma Samaj it was not very interesting and it also seemed incorrect. Narendra did not surrender easily even to his Guru, because whatever did not tally with reason, he considered to be false and it was his nature to stand against falsehood and he missed no opportunity to ridicule to Advaita Philosophy. But with the help of the teaching of and training of Ramakrishna, Naren was led from doubt to absolute clarity, from darkness to light, from anguish of mind to the certainty of bliss, from the seething vortex of the world to the grand expanse of universal oneness. He was taken little by little, and by the power of Sri Ramakrishna, out of bondage into infinite freedom, from the pale of a little learning into that omniscience which is the consciousness of Brahman'. Ramakrishna observed that Naren possessed a rare degree of spirituality, restraint and that never in the midst of the most adverse circumstances would his action be ordinary.

Narendra was also tested in certain other ways by Ramakrishna that is by ignoring him totally. Ramakrishna realised that his very presence in Dakshineswar was bringing a lot of difference in him and also the atmosphere. By and large Ramakrishna wanted to see if Naren would stop coming to him. If he was ignored, but Naren told his master that he came to Dakshineswar because he loved Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna realised that Naren could withstand so much of neglect and indifference only because he had very high mental calibre.

It was evident that Ramakrishna possessed a lot of powers, which had been given to him by Devi. One day when he called Naren and said that he was going to transfer all his powers to Naren, Naren refused. He said that he did not want them, because he had to realise God before he could possess such power. He did

not want to forget his ideal and start using such powers from some selfish reasons. Ramakrishna was very pleased when Naren refused to accept his powers. He realised that Naren wanted to attain powers, the harder way than the easy way, that the realisation of God was of utmost importance to him.

The Relationship Between Ramakrishna and Naren

It is quite difficult to give a complete idea of the relationship between Ramakrishna and Naren. Naren enjoyed a lot of liberty and love in the company of his Master. The master confided the innermost secrets of his heart to Naren. He helped him to develop independence of thought, thus increasing a thousand fold Naren's self-reliance, regard for truth and innate spirituality. The master's love for and faith in Naren, acted as great restraint upon the freedom of the young disciple and proved as an unconscious protection from temptations. Naren also confessed that Ramakrishna was the only person, who, ever since he had met him, believed in him uniformly throughout, even though his own mother and brother did not do so. *It was this unflinching love and trust of Ramakrishna for Naren that bound Naren to Ramakrishna forever.* According to Naren, Ramakrishna alone knew how to love another. Only those who have sat at the feet of the master can know the ocean of sweet intimacy and oneness with Sri Rama Krishna in which the disciples were bathed. It was a tender, natural human and easy relationship free from any affection and the repelling spirit of egoism and darkness which so often characterises the atmosphere which surrounds the guru. The spirit was indeed divine, the presence of God was always felt, and yet there was much laughter and fun beneath the spreading trees of Dakshineswar and in the master's room.

Ramakrishna's Influence on Naren

Thus, Naren's all-round development, physical intellectual and spiritual, was due to the influence of Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa. Naren had the native graceful bearing of a wild animal, with absolute freedom of motions. He would walk along, now slowly and then with speed, his mind absorbed in thoughts which literally swept his soul, and yet, he had certain boyishness

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of spirit about him and a spontaneity of manner which were a delight to all who knew him. The love which Sri Rama Krishna bore for him, struck a balance between his intellect and heart. By instinct Naren was a philosopher, Sri Rama Krishna made him a devotee. Insight tempered and softened by spiritual love, was the foundation of his spirituality. Naren's afflictions and poverty drew out one side of his character, his associations another. Sri Rama Krishna said that, had Naren been nurtured in luxury and comfort he would have become a great statesman, lawyer, social reformer or an orator, but poverty had given Naren sympathy with the poor.

For five years Naren had company of his guru. These years were a period of silent realisation, silent teaching and silent assimilation. The master gave him all that he had. Sri Rama Krishna, was like one who had struggled hard amidst impossible difficulties to acquire a great treasure and Naren was the son and heir who was to reap the treasure. Rama Krishna had built a great spiritual empire by conquering great invader's lust and gold. Naren was to extend the empire over the earth. Sri Rama Krishna had dived deep down into the spiritual ocean. Naren was to show the world, what his master had discovered. The training that Naren had at Dakshineswar, was all directed to making him realise. By a gradual process that all religions are paths to God and that all are essentially one. When Sri Rama Krishna started having persistent throat trouble he knew he was approaching the end of his mortal existence. He became more keen to kindle in the hearts of his chief disciples a burning desire for the realisation of God. Of all the disciples of his master, Naren, though very young, possessed the most penetrating intellect as was shown by his keen observation and comprehensive outlook on life. This, in a measure, made him their natural leader, competent to chide as well as to guide. The companionship with Sri Ramakrishna and wholehearted service to him gave devotees increased faith and devotion. They were unconsciously walking on a very dangerous road, full of commotion's. While Naren was himself, trying to balance his emotions, the conditions of the master was going from bad to worse. Medicines proved of no avail. He was removed to a garden house for good air and clean atmosphere on the afternoon of the 11th December, 1885, the master was removed to the new premises

and he felt much refreshed at the new place on account of its beautiful scenery, fresh air and solitude.

After being shifted to the garden house, though the physical condition did not improve for the master, spiritually he had reached great heights. Naren grew in power and spiritual vigour from day to day while Sri Ram Krishna grew worse, although in his mind and heart burned the same divine flame, all the greater in its luminousness and intensity because of his physical sufferings. The disciples nursed him faithfully, making their service to the Guru literally, an act of worship.

Towards the end of his life, Sri Ram Krishna's throat trouble increased so much and he suffered terrible pain and could speak only in whispers. A little before dusk the master complained of difficulty in breathing and he suddenly entered into samadhi. He regained consciousness of the physical world around midnight and said that he was hungry. He ate a small quantity of porridge and seemed better. He sat talking to Naren up to the last moment, then uttering the name of Kali, thrice, he lay back on bed. Suddenly, two minutes past one, on the 16th August 1886 he entered Mahasamadhi and never returned to consciousness. The curtain fell on a great spiritual life. The immortal spirit so long confined in a physical casement, burst through its limitations of name and form and became one with the infinite spirit. The body was carried to the cremation ground on the banks of the river Ganges and the last rites were performed by the devoted disciples.

Naren As A Moving Monk

The Master's relics were placed in an urn and they were preserved by the disciples, even to this day, they are there, along with certain other belongings of the master. Naren brought all the disciples of Sri Ram Krishna together. The boy, Naren, who had acquired spiritual power and realisation, became the saint and the prophet who distributed the fruits of realisation and translated personal power into impersonal service. Naren, the disciple, became Swami Vivekananda, the teacher. He who sat at the feet of Sri Ram Krishna was now the master of numerous devotees and disciples. He, who, as the disciple of Sri Ram Krishna sought spiritual illumination, became himself the focus of a contagious

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spirituality. Narendranath was transformed into the monk Vivekananda and the spirit of Sri Ram Krishna pervaded him.

With the death of the master, the days of discipleship were over and Vivekananda started leading a life of a wandering monk, throughout the length and breadth of India, deepening and broadening his knowledge of the Hindu scriptures and traditions of the people, by meditations, personal study and frequent contacts and consultations with Sanskrit pandits and scholars of the land. This period of parivrajaka (wandering monk) life replete with interesting incidents and experiences, lasted for nearly six years, until, at least he appeared on the stage of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, to win the applause and approval of the audience for his novel ideas of universalism and tolerance.

Parliament of Religions

His first words "Brothers and Sisters of America" enraptured the audience and brought such cheers, that they exceeded even the most sanguine hopes of Swami Vivekananda himself. That event set the seal for his subsequent popularity and extraordinary success in the parliament and after Vivekananda impressed the people so much that the New York Herald spoke thus of Swami Vivekananda "He is undoubtedly the great figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation".

One can hardly over estimate the self-assurance and the sense of mission, Vivekananda gained as a result of this success of the Parliament of Religions. On the eve of it he was a non-entity, but, he emerged out of it as a man with a message to the world.

Vivekananda, the Missionary

After the Parliament of Religions ten years of intense activity of preaching, writing and exhorting by Swami Vivekananda culminated finally in the establishment of a Monastic Order called the Ram Krishna Mission, first of its kind in the long history of Hinduism, to cultivate and propagate the Vedanta way of life and its ideals both in the East and the West. The Ram Krishna Movement has today not less than a hundred and twenty-five centres, scattered all over India and abroad. In America alone there

are fourteen centres. The order conducts four university colleges, besides training colleges and several schools. It publishes several periodicals in different languages from its own publication centres. Owing to these activities organised very much on the lines of a missionary movement, the influence of vedanta, as understood and preached by Vivekananda, has always been on the increase only.

Last Days of Swami Vivekananda

Vivekananda led a very active life as a disciple of Sri Rama Krishna Paramahansa and also a leader leading all other disciples. He became a very good and capable leader for all the members of the Rama Krishna Mission, members who were not only Indians, many of them being foreigners too. It was the over active life as a "Sanyasi" (a monk) that brought Vivekananda's end also soon. He died at a very early age of 39 years. It was in 1902 on the 4th July that Vivekananda breathed his last at 8 O' clock in the night in the middle of his disciples, who were still of the opinion that their leader was meditating. All through, on that particular day, Swami had been very active, he meditated for three hours at a stretch in the morning, gave talks on Sanskrit. Grammar, Philosophy, Vedas and Yoga for more than two hours, walked for two miles in the afternoon, enquired after each and every member of the matt (Monastery), spoke also on the rise and fall on the nations and then in the evening went into his room to meditate and entered 'Mahasamadhi'. Swami's body was cremated in the same spot that he had himself selected. Today, a temple stands in the same place.

Vivekananda's Philosophy of Life

Vivekananda devoted most of the last fifteen years of his life to communicating his universal message of unity and tolerance. In his famous address at the Parliament of Religion in 1893 at Chicago, he summed up his message and Philosophy by saying "Upon the banner of every religion, will soon be written, in spite of resistance. "Help and not Fight" "Assimilation and not Destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension". Religions of the world are not contradictory but they are various phases of one eternal religion. I accept all religions that were in the past and

worship them all. Not only shall I do these but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future; salutations to all the prophets of the past, to all the greatness of the present and to all that are to come in the future. 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 moment of life" (Parliament of Religions).

A True Vedantist

Vivekananda was a true vedantist, a true follower of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda regards the Dwaita, (duality, God and man are separate), Visitadwaita (that God and man have their own special identity) and finally the Advaita (the oneness of everything with God) as the different expressions of the Vedanta. To him they are merely the stages for helping the individual to proceed towards the realisation of higher and higher ideals. The ultimate goal of human life is to attain wonderful unity with the creator.

Vivekananda's Concept of God

Vivekananda describes God as the supreme power and omniscient. He is Infinite Existence, Infinite Knowledge and Infinite Bliss. Man is an incarnation of God. Vivekananda finds the manifestation of God in man. He emphasised the eternal communion of man with God. He considered the worship of man as the worship of God.

Vivekananda's interpretation of the Vedanta is based upon a scientific analysis. Both, the Vedanta and sciences maintain common principles. He stood for harmony between science and spirituality.

Swami Vivekananda has intense faith in the welfare of mankind. He stood for universalisation and spiritual brotherhood. He realised the dignity and diversity of human beings. According to him man is the divine, and the manifestation of God. He says "if you cannot worship your brother man, the manifestation of God, how can you worship a God who is unmanifested?" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, pp. 325-326).

3

The Philosophy of Life

Vedanta constitutes the essence of the highest spiritual and ethical values of mankind.

The teaching of the Upanishads have strength enough to provide solutions to our social problems.

Man is the incarnation of God.

The essential parts of all religions are the same.

Atma is the true reality.

Karmayoga, as a system of ethics and religion, is needed for the attainment of self-control and self-realisation.

Service of mankind is the highest goal of religion.

The best image for worshipping God is man who resides in every human heart.

4

The Education

According to Vivekananda, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. Knowledge is inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside, it is all inside. He also said "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. The end of all education, all training should be man making. The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow". The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful, is called education". (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV, p. 358).

"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". (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV, p. 302).

Vivekananda's educational philosophy emanated from his philosophy of eternal values and eternal religion. In the true idealistic spirit he considered the highest goal of human life to be unfoldment of the divinity within. Vivekananda believed every soul to be divine, education has to manifest this divinity by controlling nature, external and internal. For Vivekananda, knowledge, alone is not the only factor for individual good;

physical strength, moral strength and character are equally important to any system of education. Education according to Vivekananda is acquiring knowledge formation of character and development of social traits.

According to Vivekananda, education has to train in the assimilation of great values in this country and help in the assimilation of great values of humanity. Education should also be a clearing house of cultures and ideas, cultures migrating to distant lands. Education should lead to nationalism and wider-internationalism. Education according to Vivekananda is both for change and preservation. A dynamic education is forward-looking and welcomes changes.

Vivekananda's concept of education is reflection of his general philosophy of life. He considers education as something apart from human life. On one side, he interprets education as the manifestation of the perfection on the other side, the essence of education, as he contends, is concentration of mind and not collection of facts. His greatest concern was the common masses and he wanted to equip them for the struggle for life. He observed "The education" which does not help the common life, which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on his own legs" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. VII, pp. 147-148).

According to Vivekananda the child does his own growing; self education: He believed that each one of us is naturally growing. This means that growth is a natural process. He believed that men teach themselves. Education should only remove obstacles in the way of learning and provide opportunities for growth.

Nothing should be forced on children, they should be left free to carve out their own path. Kindness and encouragement will help their growth.

Concentration as the essence of education according to Vivekananda. "The treasure house of knowledge can be opened only with the key of concentration". Vivekananda recommended

Brahmacharya (continence) the Shraddha (eternal faith) to be the best techniques and tools of concentration. He believed that by observing strict Brahmacharya all learning can be mastered within a very short time (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 130).

Education must be for Character

According to Swamiji, intellectually is not the highest goal. 'Morality' and 'Spirituality' are the things for which we should strive. People should be pure and strive for goodness. Vivekananda says "I call him a Mahatma who feels for the poor. Let these people be your God—think of them, work for them, prey for them incessantly—the Lord will show you the way".



The Aims of Education

About the aims of education Vivekananda has summed up his ideas in one sentence. "The end of all education, all training should be man-making". He recommended several aims of education.

Education Should Create Faith in One's Own Self

This is the first step towards advancement and the first prerequisite to attain education and perfection. The main function of education is to make a person conscious of his latent powers. This will lead him to a life which is sublime and divine in all respects.

Education must Create Self-confidence and Self-reliance through Shradha (Concentration-self Regarding Sentiment)

Man devoid of this sentiment runs to ruin. This was strongly felt by Vivekananda. Education, must, therefore provide self knowledge which brings material prosperity and freedom from the bondage of worldly existence. Though self analysis and self insight, a man can attain perfection and achieve the glory of life. Vivekananda's call was "Be strong and have this shradha. Education must aim at this kind of knowledge of the 'self' and at creation of self-confidence and self-reliance.

Education must Develop Moral Character

Vivekananda clearly said "Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested in your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character making assimilation of ideas". All the time he spoke of formation of character through education. The beauty and glory of life lies in character-making (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 302).

Practical Side of Life

Vivekananda was very much concerned with the wretched poverty of his countrymen. His anxiety was to see that millions of starving and poverty stricken Indians were properly fed. He considered a system of education worthless, which ignores the practical side of life. By the practical side of life, he means that every one must be able to get his primary needs satisfied. Everyone must stand on their own legs. Here, he suggested the establishment of workshops and other centres to solve the problems of hunger and unemployment in the country. He equally favoured the study of Western technology and engineering. This was essential for the economic prosperity of India.

Education must Promote Universal Brotherhood

Education must promote the feeling that the Atman (soul) is the same in all, from the ant to the perfect man, the difference being only in its manifestation. He asserts that 'from the highest God to the meanest grass the same power is potent in all-whether manifested or not'. Education must call forth this power in every man. This spirit will certainly mean annihilation of all misery from this earth. Vivekananda stood for Internationalism, unity of mankind and transformation of the world society into a compact union of hearts and souls.

Mere Book Learning is No Education

Vivekananda was against bookish knowledge or mere book learning. True education is that which develops the will and enables one to realise the divinity latent in him. In the words of Dr. Chaube, "Education must aim at the development of infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage and infinite patience in man".

Spirit of Renunciation

Vivekananda said that education must generate the spirit of renunciation in man. This renunciation means the inculcation of feeling that we should work for others and it is a great privilege to be able to do something for the world. The man of renunciation views all alike.

Immense Faith in Man

Vivekananda's faith in man was immense. To him, "man is higher than all animals and angels, none is greater than man. Even the Gods will have to come down again to attain salvation through a human body". The teacher has to make the pupil conscious that he has to reach his perfection. (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 142).

With all the above aims, Vivekananda, established the glorious traditions of India which were form to form a basis for building up a model India.



The Methods of Teaching and Learning

Vivekananda was in favour of Indian system of educational organisation which was based on the criteria of learning by sitting at the feet of the Acharya, Guru or the teacher, through a close contact. For this control or discipline of mind and body are important and Vivekananda suggested "Concentration and Meditation, Brahmacharya, Faith and Reverence, Discussion, Study of Scriptures, Guidance, Service into others, Congenial atmosphere based on freedom and discipline. The success of education; according to Vivekananda, depends upon the initiative taken by the teacher in enthusing the child towards study, self-confidence self-realisation and self-reliance.

Vivekananda stressed the following with regard to the method of teaching and learning.

Education from Within

A child educates itself. We have to do only so much for the boys that may learn to apply their own intellect to the proper use of their hands, legs, ears, eyes, etc. and finally everything will become easy. "Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind, suggestion is the friction which brings it out" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 28).

Concrete to Abstract

The mind, works through various stages to attain its fuller development. First it lays hold of the concrete and only gradually deals with the abstract.

Individual Differences

The teaching must be modified according to the needs of the taught. The true teacher is one who can immediately come down to the level of the student and transfer his soul to the students soul, and see and understand through his mind.

Positive Suggestions

Positive suggestions encourage learning, negative thoughts only weaken the students.

Concentration

Concentration is the best method and is the key to the treasure house of knowledge. Vivekananda observed "To me the very essence of education is the concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. Brahmacharya is necessary for concentration. The learner must have great power of endurance. The learner must be able to control the internal and external senses. These must be a continuous struggle, a constant battle, an unremitting grappling with our lower nature, till the higher want is actually felt and victory is achieved". (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. V, p. 369).

Faith in Oneself

The pupils faith in himself will enable him to imbibe knowledge effectively.

Reverence

Reverence for the Guru or the teacher should be inculcated in the pupil.

Freedom

Learning and intellectual development can be fostered through frank and open discussion on all topics of study, between the teacher and the taught.

Purity

In thought, speech and act, purity is absolutely necessary in both the teacher and the taught.

Vivekananda strictly believed that "no one method can suit all". Education as a process actualises itself in and through various aids and devices which are mostly psychological in nature. These aids and devices used in the process of teaching and learning are known as methods of teaching. In the modern times various suitable methods, mostly of psychological nature have been invented by experts well versed in philosophy of education and psychology. Vivekananda, suggested many methods based on psychology and metaphysics of education. According to him "No one was ever really taught by another. Each of us has to teach one's own self. The external teacher offers only the suggestions which arouses the internal teacher to work to understand things. Then things will be clear to us by our own power of perception and thought and we shall realise them in our own souls". Vivekananda viewed that every child is a teacher to himself, he really learns nothing in the name of knowledge from the teachers external to him (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 93).



The Teacher

Vivekananda gives great importance to teachers. He strongly stated that a child can learn a lot better in the very presence of his Guru. He supports the Gurukul type of education, as in the ancient times. "Education should be done living with the Guru, in the same way as of old. But this education has to be combined with modern sciences". He contended that "no knowledge is possible without a teacher. There is no way to the attainment of knowledge unless it is transmitted through an apostolic succession from disciple to disciple, unless it comes through the mercy of the Guru and direct from his mouth". By saying so, Vivekananda increases the importance of the teacher in education. "The Guru" he says, "is the conveyance in which the spiritual influence is brought to you".

Vivekananda attaches a lot of importance to the personal life and character of the teacher. He is of the opinion that only a "a Tyagi (one who is ready to sacrifice and serve) can be a good teacher. A teacher must be dedicated to his profession and teach with devotion, purity of mind and heart" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 48).

The teacher, according to Vivekananda is one who teaches us the best in life and whatever maybe wicked in us, is our own doing. This he said because of his own experience as a disciple

with his Guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Teacher is one who is life giving, strengthening, purifying and with his holiness is an inspiration. Most of what Vivekananda speaks about a teacher is because of his experience with own teacher. Teacher must be a person who practices thoroughly what he preaches. Teacher should be one who would always see good in his students. He should be one who has renounced the pleasure of life. The should form his character develop his spirituality, then the results will come by themselves. "When the lotus opens, the bees come of their own accord to seek the honey, so let the lotus of your character be full-blown, and the results will follow" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV, p. 177).

Vivekananda spoke of four characteristics of a teacher. The first one being purity. The first condition necessary for the teacher is sinlessness. Why is the character and personality of a teacher important? To impart to others what he has learnt, the teacher definitely needs to be perfectly pure, because, only then value will be attached to the words he speaks.

Knowledge of the Spirit of Scriptures

The second condition that is necessary for a teacher is that he must know the spirit of the scriptures. "The whole world reads Bibles, Vedas and Korans, but they are only words, syntax, etymology, philosophy—the dry bones of religion. The teacher who deals too much in words and allows the mind to be carried away by the force of words and allows the mind to be carried away by the force of words loses the spirit. It is the knowledge of the spirit of the scriptures that constitutes the true teacher".

Spiritual Force

The third condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must remember that the only medium through which spiritual force can be transmitted is love.

Teacher as a Guide

The fourth condition is that the teacher should not think that he is making the child grow "you cannot teach a child to grow", he said, 'you can only help. A child teaches itself. The external

...raises the internal teacher
...his ideas about a teacher
...said "My idea of education is
...Gurugraha-basa, without the
...there would be no education". Teachers
...realise of giving dry and lifeless advice to their
...set an example in their own life and must live upon it.

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The Curriculum

"What is Education? Is it book learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education"—Vivekananda (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV, p. 490).

"To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will—Wide by side, in the child, should be developed the power of concentration and detachment."—Vivekananda (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. VI, pp. 36-39).

Vivekananda, as such, did not prescribe any typical curriculum to be followed rigidly. He, however, emphasised a curriculum based on the concept of all round development of the child personality. On one side he recommended the study of Vedanta, Religion, Philosophy and Technology the other side, he favoured Western Sciences, engineering and other modern subjects. He wanted to synthesise, these two trends, which was (and is) the burning need of the day.

Vivekananda has a comprehensive view of education and its contents. He recommended the study of languages, especially regional language, Sanskrit, link language and English. He also stressed on the importance of subjects like history, geography, economics, and other social sciences. Even home science and psychology were recommended by him.

Vivekananda wanted to make education self supporting in all respects. Economic independence should be an important aspect of education. For this reason, he favoured agriculture, technical education and physical education.

Physical education and health education were very important according to Vivekananda. He was very concerned about the proper care of the body and health development of one's physique. "Be strong, my young friends" he urged, "that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the 'Gita'. These are bold words, but I have to say them to you I know where the shoe pinches. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of 'Krishna's better with a little of strong blood in you. You will understand the 'Upanishads' better and the glory of 'Atman' when your body standards firm upon your feet and you feel yourself as man. "Strength", strength is what the 'Upanishads' speak to me from every page. "Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads. Strength is goodness. Weakness is sin". He clearly said, "Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel". Vivekananda himself was an embodiment of all these virtues and qualities. It is certain that Vivekananda was very keen in the spiritual development of people (specially the masses) as well as their economic and material prosperity. (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 242).

"If education were identical with information the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopaedias the Rishis". Education should not be like packing several articles into a box, that is putting a lot of information into the brain. Ideas that are received into the brain without being utilised are inert and

useless. White-head enunciated two educational principles. 'Do not teach too many subjects' and 'what you teach, teach thoroughly'. It was almost similar to what Vivekananda said, "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" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 302).

"What we need to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of knowledge that is our own, and with it the English language and Western science, we need technical education and all else that will develop industries, so that men instead of seeking for service may earn enough to provide for themselves and save against a rainy day"—Vivekananda.

While Vivekananda welcomed the impact of Western thought, science and technology, he cautioned his countrymen against being dazzled by its materialist success and going in for a slavish imitation of its customs and way of life. He advocated "what we want are Western sciences coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto and also Shraddha in ones self". He placed great emphasis on the inclusion of subjects on the cultural heritage of India in the school curriculum, and insisted on the learning of Western technology (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. V, p. 366).

Art, science and religion are but three different ways of expressing a single truth.



The Discipline

"We cannot see outside what we are not inside"—and whatever we are comes from disciplining our mind and body.

A perfect and disciplined man's body mechanically does what is right what is the character of any man, it is but the aggregate of his tendencies the sum total of the bent of his mind. As pleasure and pain pass before his soul, they leave upon it different pictures, and the result of these combined impressions is what is called a man's character. Discipline is an important aspect of a person's character.

"If you want to judge the character of a man, look not at his great performance. Watch a man do his most common actions. Those are indeed the things which will tell you the real character of the great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human beings to some kind of greatness, but he alone is really great whose character is great always—the same whatever he be" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 207).

Teaching a child, or disciplining a child from outside is only a myth. The development has to come from within, "you cannot teach a child anymore than you can grow a plant. The plant develops itself. What you can do is not of a positive nature but negative. You can take away the obstacles, and knowledge comes

The Discipline

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out of its own nature, loosen the soil a little, so that it may come out easily. Put a hedge around it; see that it is not killed by anything" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV, p. 55).

"Do you not find that parents are constantly taxing their sons to read and write, telling them they will never learn anything and calling them fools and so forth the latter to actually turn out to be so in many cases. If you speak kind words to boys and encourage them, they are bound to improve in time. If you give children positive ideas, they grow up to be men and learn to stand, on their own legs" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. VIII, p. 170).

Undue domination and excessive authority would stunt the natural growth of the child. "If you do not allow one to become a lion he will become a fox". The positive do's and don'ts are destructive, they have to be shunned. The attitude of the elders, towards the young ones, in disciplining them, should be positive. "If you speak kind words to them and encourage them, they are bound to improve in time. Negative thoughts only weaken men. What makes one man weak another great is 'Shradha' (faith in one's own self) and that is his strength. (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 170).

Right type of environment is important for the child. "If good impressions prevail the character becomes good, if bad, it becomes bad. If a man continuously hears bad words, thinks bad thoughts, does bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions, and they will influence his thought and work without his being conscious of the fact". But "when a man is under the constant influence of good work and good thoughts, there grows in him an irresistible tendency to do good, in spite of himself. Child's mind is very impressionable and his school and out of school experiences will blue print his future on it. If the atmosphere is good and congenial he cannot, but become good. Thus a man's good character is said to be re-established when he is completely under the influence of the good tendencies.

Excessive authoritarianism among some teachers in their attempts to develop character resulting in apathy, passive

conformity and subdued resentment. We may do wise to remember that the development of character depends on the inextricable influence of nature and nurture, of what the child is and what environment he is in and there is necessity to develop and strengthen the 'inner controls' upon the conduct. Vivekananda had repeatedly stressed the need to control the internal and external senses. It needs hard practice and rigorous training to assert the mind against the command of nature. The mind has to become the master of its thoughts and captain of its deeds. There is only one method by which to attain knowledge that which is called concentration. The more the power of concentration the greater the knowledge. How can concentration be developed? Power of concentration comes through observing Brahmacharya 'Chastity in thought, word and deed always and in all conditions is what is called Brahmacharya'.

Boys imbibe more from the teachers' own lives than they do from the books that they read to them, or the lectures that they deliver to them with their lips—let there not be teachers who teach one thing with their lips and carry another in their breast. Instead of trying to discipline the child the teacher can set an example with his own life. The teacher can do this through what he is than what he may say. The discipline that the child has to learn and maintain should come in an indirect manner and it should be self imposed.



The Values

By value education we mean "education which has a profound, content, based on our heritage, national goal and universal perceptions. In our culturally plural society education should foster universal and eternal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. Education as such should be made a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values. India, which is an ancient land, its greatness lies in its religion. Religion was the essence of education in ancient India. This hold of religion on education slowly decreased with the influence of the West on us. Vivekananda who had seen India, under the British, felt that India could not afford to abandon its age-old traditions of awarding supremacy to religious ideals. Vivekananda fully appreciated the value of religion in the Indian life. Vivekananda strongly believed that religion is very much concerned with the personality development of men. "Religion is the manifestation of divinity already in men" (Complete Works of Vivekananda, Vol. IV, p. 304).

The cultivation of values, is possible with a sound system of education. Vivekananda, was very strong in his opinion that any system of education and philosophy are invalid without the union of religion. His whole scheme of education, in the context of perfection of human personality, is based on the absolute values

of truth towards self-realisation. Vivekananda emphasised the need for a complete reorientation of human values to fight against hedonism and commercial fetishes. He suggested that education should not be for stuffing some facts into the brain, it should aim at reforming the human mind. Education must be able to produce men of integrity, dedicated administrators and socially conscious citizens. What one may call progress is nothing if it is not accompanied by inner change. Vivekananda suggested that religion and morality must get supreme consideration in education as they would bring good manners and strength of character in the growing generation.

The central ethical purpose of Vivekananda's educational system is to train up the pupil to develop good inner character as well as force of character resulting in good actions. Some educators think that morals should be taught indirectly. But Vivekananda believed that self effort is the sound principle for the attainment of a moral philosophy. No action which is not voluntary can be called moral.

The primary aim of education, to Vivekananda, should be to help the individual to realise his best self. It should cultivate values of life, like honesty, love, sympathy, non-violence, restraint, co-operativeness sacrifice and finally faith in man and God. Religion is a synthesis of values and an integration of experiences. It stands for the entire personality of man. Since divinity and perfection are one and the same there can be no antithesis between religion and education.

The whole idea of religion according to Vivekananda is to prevent man from falling into the bondage of the senses and help him to assert his freedom. This is possible only by a happy combination of the body, mind and intellect, by sticking on to one's own conscience and by listening to the silence of the soul. A pure heart sees beyond the intellect, it knows things which reason can never know.

Education is a continuous process. It should cover all aspects of life; physical, material, intellectual emotional, moral and spiritual and all stages of life from birth to death. Religion comes

into man's life at a very early stage, almost before his birth, and stays on till his death. Religion is the way of the heart. It is the heart which takes one to the highest plane, which intellect can never reach. Temples and churches, books and forms, are simply the kindergarten of religion to make the spiritual child strong enough to take the higher steps. Religion is the discipline which touches human conscience; it helps man in his struggle with evil, and frees him from greed and saves him from lust and hatred. It is religious inclination that cultivates values in men and unifies a society. To Vivekananda religion is not merely based on dogmas, creed or rites, but has a rational ethical and spiritual philosophy.

Vivekananda was fully convinced that yoga in education will help his student to develop his innate qualities like fearlessness, love, sympathy, etc. and equip him to lead an ideal life. It always brings about culture of the human heart. With regard to the two most major characteristics of the human personality. Vivekananda says they are strength and fearlessness, strength is goodness, weakness is sin.

The main objective values of education are fundamental and eternal, like, truth, beauty and justice. The virtues to be developed in the students are purity, real thirst for knowledge and perseverance, faith, humility, submission and veneration towards the teacher. The sense of humility is the basis of a man's character, the true mark of a balanced personality. The ideal of every educated man should be perfect unselfishness. Along with the spirit of independence the spirit of obedience is equally important.

To Vivekananda, duty is sweet only through love and love shines in freedom alone. To the educated mind all duties are good because there is no expectation for reward. Vivekananda's cherished desire was that "to accomplish his duties one should be pure, simple and sincere to the back bone. He must have tremendous integrity and sincerity.

India's mission to the world is to instill in the minds of the people the spirit of tolerance and love and this can be possible only with the resurrection of values of human life based on vedantic ideals which existed in ancient times. As a widely travelled teacher through out India, and a large part of the world. Vivekananda

could gain first hand knowledge and experience about the miseries of the masses and the deterioration of values of human life. Vivekananda found a difference in the attitudes of the people of the East and West. He found that in spite of the material advancement of the West, they had to learn lot from the East spiritually.

Vivekananda, an ardent patriot that he was, stressed on the importance of the values of patriotism, freedom and courage. About Vivekananda, Nehru said "his was a kind of nationalism which automatically slipped into Indian nationalism which was part of internationalism".



Summary

Swami Vivekananda is a legendary philosopher, educationist and social reformer.

Biographical Sketch of Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda was born in an orthodox family, in Bengal, on the 12th of January 1863. Narendranath, as he was named by his parents, was a naughty child, subject to fits of restlessness during which he was beyond control. He was a gay youth taking part in many kinds of activities like boxing, wrestling, swimming and riding, at the same time he was very eager for all kinds of knowledge. He was an earnest student of philosophy and poetry. He studied all systems of Western philosophy and became very well acquainted with Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. Wordsworth and Shelly were his favourite poets. As a student, Narendranath Dutta was very well known and popular with both the students and the teachers, for his genius and extraordinary talents. Narendra's association with Sri Rama Krishna Paramahansa brought a change not only in Narendra but it began a new chapter in the history of Hinduism.

Swami Vivekananda, that was what he was called later, did for the gospel of Sri Rama Krishna Paramhansa what St. Paul did for the gospel of Jesus Christ. He broadcasted the truths of Vedanta

in India, Europe and America. He demonstrated to the world that the great Indian spiritual tradition was still alive and vigorous. He showed, both by precept and by example, that, if the ancient Vedanta were reinterpreted in the light of Sri Rama Krishna's spiritual experiences and applied to modern life, India would rise once again to deliver a message to humanity. While he was explaining the philosophy of Vedanta to the public in America and later in Europe, he asked his countrymen to put those truths into practice. Thus, Vivekananda taught theoretical Vedanta in the West and practical Vedanta in India. He declared that the most practical form of Vedanta in India was the uplift of the masses. He was not a politician but he wanted to make the Indian masses strong and self-reliant. He was not a professional teacher but he observed that "education alone made the people in the West comfortable, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got". To Swami Vivekananda, an ideal society should combine the spiritual culture of India and the secular culture of America and England. According to him strength was the crying need of the hour in India. He was never tried of asserting that Indian needs strength giving religion and a man-making education.

Vivekananda's association with Rama Krishna Paramhansa resulted in his becoming a 'wandering monk' after the death of his master Rama Krishna. After wandering throughout the country and a few part of the world, Vivekananda established a monastic order called the Rama Krishna Mission and thus began the educational activities of this philosopher. The Rama Krishna Mission today has more than hundred and twenty-five centres all over the world. Swami Vivekananda's activities as a 'sanyasee' brought his end a little too soon. He died at a very tender age of just 39 years on the 4th of July 1902.

Vivekananda's Philosophy of Life

Vivekananda was a true vedantist. He regarded vedanta as eternal and believed both in Advaita (monotheism) and Dvaita (dualism). According to Vivekananda, God is all powerful and without attributes (personal qualities). He saw God in three forms,

Summary

viz., Being (sat), Awareness (chit) and Bliss (Ananda). He believes that the force of God prevails in all the things of this universe. He emphasises the universalness of soul and brotherhood.

Vivekananda's faith in man is tremendous. He believed that man is the highest creation of God. He believed that religion is progressive. The purpose of life is to experience God within one's own self. Once he does that he begins to experience himself in all other creatures. Then he applies himself to the service of each and every living being. The philosophy of life of Swami Vivekananda is based on universal oneness and spiritual brotherhood.

Vivekananda believed that perfection is inherent in man, that has to be manifested. Service to man is the greatest worship of God.

Vivekananda's Concept of Education

Vivekananda's concept of education emanated from his philosophy of eternal values and eternal religion. In the true idealistic spirit he considered the highest goal of human life to be the unfoldment of the divinity within. Swami Vivekananda believed every soul to be divine and that education has to manifest the divinity by controlling nature, external and internal. For Vivekananda, knowledge alone is not the only factor for individual good, physical strength, moral strength and character are equally important to any system of education. Education, according to Swami Vivekananda, is acquiring knowledge, formation of character and development of social traits.

Vivekananda's Aims of Education

Vivekananda has summed up his ideas about aims of education in one sentence "The end of all education and all training should be man-making". Education should create faith in one's own self. It must create self-confidence and self-reliance through concentration (Shraddha). Education should aim at developing a moral character. Education should be useful in the day-to-day life of the individual, that is, it should satisfy man's primary needs. Education should also promote universal brotherhood. Education should aim at the development of infinite energy, infinite zeal,

infinite courage and infinite patience in man. A spirit of renunciation must be generated in every man through education since man of renunciation views all alike.

Vivekananda's Methods of Teaching and Learning

To Vivekananda, there is only one method of attaining knowledge and that is concentration. The more the power of concentration, the greater the knowledge that is acquired. High achievements in arts, science, music and literature are the results of concentration. When the mind concentrates and turns back on itself, all within oneself, will be one's servant and not one's master. The world will readily give its secrets, if we only know and how to know and how to give the necessary blow. The strength and force of such a blow comes through concentration. The only key to the treasure-house of knowledge is the power of concentration. The very essence of education is concentration of mind and not collection of facts. If the power of concentration is developed, facts can be collected at one's own will. Vivekananda stressed on education from within, learning from concrete to abstract, keeping in mind the individual difference's giving positive suggestions to the learners, etc.

Vivekananda's Concept on the Role of Teacher

Vivekananda attaches great importance to the character and personal life of a teacher. A person with an attitude of renunciation can be a good teacher. A teacher should try to influence his students through his ideal examples. His teaching has to be in accordance with the needs, abilities and interests of the children. Vivekananda supported the ancient 'Gurukula' system, where a child secured education by going and living with the Guru and his family. Vivekananda spoke of four most essential characteristics in a teacher-purity, knowledge of the spirit of scriptures, spiritual force and finally a guide.

Vivekananda's Concept of Curriculum

Vivekananda was not in favour of the then prevalent system of education in the country as the education in India was influenced by the British system of education. Vivekananda believed that

getting by heart the thoughts of others in a foreign language, stuffing the brain with such thoughts and getting a university degree was not real education. The education that did not help the common people to equip themselves for the struggle of life and which did not bring out strength of character was not worth the name. Education should be that, by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's feet. For such a type of education, Vivekananda recommended the study of different branches of knowledge, quite independent of foreign control. He recommended the study of Sanskrit languages by all to enable them to go through the religious scriptures. He looked upon religion as the innermost core of education. Along with Sanskrit and other Indian Vernaculars, he also recommended the teaching of English language and literature and also the study of humanities with special reference to Indian culture, sciences, technology and physical culture. Vivekananda, as such, did not recommend any typical curriculum to be followed rigidly, but he emphasised on a curriculum based on the concept of all round development of the child's personality.

Vivekananda's Concept of Discipline

"We cannot see outside what we are not inside". Whatever we are comes from disciplining our mind and body. According to Vivekananda, discipline is an important aspect of a person's character. Vivekananda believed that teaching a child or disciplining him from outside is only a myth. According to him, each of us teach ourselves. The external teacher offers suggestions and the internal teacher starts working. Undue domination and excessive authority would only stunt the natural growth of a child. "If you don't allow a child to become a lion he will become a fox". 'Do's' and 'Don'ts' have to be reduced and the right environment must be created. An individual's good character is said to be established when he is completely under the influence of the good tendencies. Instead of trying to discipline the child the teacher can set an example with his own life. Children imbibe more from the teacher's own than they do from books and lectures. Discipline, therefore, is to be caught rather than taught.

Vivekananda's Concept of Values

Vivekananda's whole scheme of education is based on the absolute values of truth directed towards self-realisation. Education must produce men of integrity, dedicated administrators and socially conscious citizens. It must cultivate values of life like honesty, love, sympathy, non-violence, restraint, cooperativeness, sacrifice and finally faith in man and God. Religion is a synthesis of values and an integration of experiences. It stands for the entire personality of man. Since divinity and perfection are one and the same there can be no anti-thesis between religion and education. However, the virtues to be developed in the students are purity, real thirst for knowledge, and preservice, faith, humility, submission and veneration towards the teacher. Values of patriotism, freedom and courage were also advised, to be developed in the students, by Vivekananda.

At this point of time, we can say that the life of Swami Vivekananda is a model to many philosophies and educationists.

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