

Relevance Of Swamiji's Philosophy In Modern Higher Education System

Archana Singhal

“Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs right there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library – The ass carrying its load of sandalwood knows only the weight and not the value of the sandalwood. If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopaedias are Rishis.” Swami Vivekananda, Harmston Circus Pavilion, Madras – 14 February 1897(Swamy, 1994).

Mother India had given birth to certain glorious sons in her gloomy moments. Swami Vivekananda was one among them. He was one of the greatest educationists of India. He not only enlightened India but also the whole world by his outstanding

Swami Vivekananda and Global Education (ISBN: 978-93-80135-32-8),
Editors: A. Pathak & J.G. Valan Arasu , Vedant Publications, Lucknow, 133-136,
2014.

personality and intellect. He tried his best to revive and reshape the ancient Indian culture and wisdom in a crucial period. He had many deep and insightful ideas on education. His far reaching vision of education had influenced people all over the world. His educational ideas were based upon love, peace and equity which facilitated harmony throughout the world.

According to Swami Vivekananda, education does not mean the mass of information that is inserted by force into the mind of a child. In fact, education is the manifestation of perfection already reached by a man. Indian nationalism and spiritualism were the basic principles of his philosophy of education. He was not in favour of British system of education which was not based on our culture, traditions and values. No country can be prosperous and unique unless it has got its own education system based on its national ideals and identity. He emphasized that the aim of education should be life-building, man-making and character-making. Real education is that which prepares a man for his struggle for existence. An education that develops character, mental power and intelligence bestows self-confidence and self-reliance in pupils. Education is the only instrument to achieve these qualities in the people. Swami Vivekananda not only possessed unique ideas of education but also developed a sound system of ideals to achieve it.

If the education system has failed to prepare the people in their struggle of life and building up strength of their character, it is our responsibility to examine the causes and to find out where we have gone wrong.

We begin our study with a brief look at the education system that prevailed in India prior to independence. In the ancient time, our education was based upon a personal relationship between the teacher and his disciples. The students used to live in their teachers' houses like a family member and had a great thrust for knowledge. The institutions (Gurukuls) were managed by teachers and students themselves without any interference from the society or administrators. The Rishis and Munis (the great teachers) showed the path of truth, wisdom and peace to the world.

Things began to change with the arrival of East India Company in India. Lord Macaulay introduced a system of education in 1835 which was totally alien to our culture. This was precisely what Swami Vivekananda did not want it to be. Mere imparting of information does not prepare the students to face problems in their life. The rote learning does not empower students with the skills of articulation, problem-solving and knowledge capital. This system neither nurtures talent nor helps in its search among the students. Every year an army of graduates is prepared having no moral and social responsibility. This is the reason why day-to-day social crimes like corruption, nepotism, dowry, etc. are becoming rampant. It is an indisputable fact that society makes progress through science and technology, but it is also well known that this development needs to be tempered by moral and spiritual values. Equally important is the development of mind and heart. This is where the stress on moral education as was envisaged by Swami Vivekananda becomes relevant and important in man-making and character-building through education. According to him, a comprehensive system of education should have secular and professional values along with moral and spiritual ones.

Second milestone requirement is the role of teacher in this process. The interaction between a teacher and a student should be intimate because it can act as a channel for communication of information and knowledge. The influence of the noble qualities of a teacher on the students is very important in their motivation and character-building. An ideal teacher is the one who is not only an expert in teaching but also a human being who can inspire his students. Class room teaching need not be geared to examinations alone, which unfortunately is the case now-a-days. It should be possible to make class room contact more personal and interesting, so that personality of the students develops at the same time as they acquire knowledge. This is after all the aim of education. Unfortunately, nearly all the stakeholders consider the examination as the sole criterion for measuring success as well as talent of students.

The teaching community, therefore, has a great

responsibility to follow the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda in development of the nation and shaping its future generation. His messages covering practically all aspects of national life have been available to us for more than a century. If we are still running from pillar to post looking for remedies to our problems, it is only due to our own short-sightedness as highlighted by a short story below :

A man who felt an urge to have a smoke in the dead of the night went to neighbour's house for some fire to light his chillum. The neighbour laughed and pointed out towards the lighted lantern the man was carrying in his own hand.

We are no wiser than this man who went about in search of something that he carried all along in his own hands. Let us earnestly hope that at least in this 116th year of Swami Vivekananda appearance at the Parliament of Religions, wisdom will dawn upon us to find our way out of the muddle we have created for ourselves and set our country back on the path to real progress, which it has deserved all along.

REFERENCES

- Chattopadhyaya, R. (1999). Swami Vivekananda in India : A Corrective Biography. Motilal Banarsidass Publ., New Delhi.
- Swamy, N. V. C. (1994). Swami Vivekananda and the Indian education system. In : Swami Vivekananda : A Hundred Years since Chicago – a Commemorative Volume (Eds. ; R. K. Dasgupta). Ramakrishna Math, Belur, Howrah.
- Vivekananda, S. (1910). Inspired Talks. The Ramakrishna Mission. Madras.
- Vivekananda, S. (1989). The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I. Advaita Ashram, Calcutta.
