



Philosophical Vision of Swami Vivekananda for Man-making Education

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“We want man making, character-making and life building ideas of education.”

Swami Vivekananda

Abstract

Education is a journey towards a perfect human being. It is developing the natural potential that may translate into professional being or a person with a job. This is just one gain, if it is, but all the other gains of education make that job even worthier for the whole society than just learning a skill and getting job. Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy deals with that virtue of education which produces not only a person with one single goal of earning rather making a 'man' with full potential and making a life of the natural human character. Developing the character is the ultimate goal of education and this can be realized through 'man-making'. Present paper theoretically develops the 'man-making' discourse of education with the quotations of Swami ji in this context. The major aims are to represent the ideas of Swami ji and to understand the barriers of man making education. It deals with the application of the process that is required to realize the goal.

Keywords: education, Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy, human character, man-making.

Introduction

First of all, it should be clarified that the word used by Swami ji is 'man' however it is not to take in a narrow sense i.e., contradictory to woman rather it is for 'human' and complies to all entities who can be educated. It is quite evident in the other terms used by him viz., 'character' and 'life'. Now, narrowing down the sense to 'man not woman' is unjustified as character or life building is not a gender specific goal. Educational philosophy of Swami ji is so pervasive that it is quite relevant even today and seems to be applicable in future, beyond the particular culture, community, time and era.



Rightly pointed out by Tiwari (2012), “Swamiji educational philosophy has so many aspects and one aspect is this ‘Satchitanada’. Others are also of their huge boundary like Doctrine of Divinity, Man Making (humanitarianism), and Service of Mankind etc.” Humanitarianism in its applicable form of education needs proper attention as character education related to philosophical vision of Swami ji is not even initiated in many parts of the country, however the related ultimate goals are more or less similar to that. According to Swami Ji character is “a bundle of habits which can be checked by new and better ones. Character is repeated habits and repeated habits can alone reform character” (Govt. of India, 1966). “We want that kind of education by which character is formed, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one’s own feet.” And Swamiji further says that man is so long man as he tries to rise above his nature-both external and internal. and while defining education he said,” The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education”. We can only rise above our nature only when the current and expression of will can be brought under control at will. Unfortunately, enough these aspects of education are rather unwisely ignored in every phase of conventional system of education, and the result is obvious—the more the students advance in terms of degree the less is their control over observance of time-honored values like honesty, integrity, discipline, self-reliance, self-respect, sympathy for others, respect for seniors and law of the land. And the consequences are quite obvious-since the days of the introduction of the British system of education the most treacherous, most corrupted and perverted, selfish hypocrites have been always from among the so-called educated section.

So, according to Swamiji, education must make one capable of controlling his uncensored emotive outbursts in the form of thought, speech and action. Every action precedes a corresponding thought. When the same action is repeated it becomes a habit and ripened habits are called propensities. Hence the power of controlling the mind is the first and foremost precondition for any kind of education worth the name. This is why Swamiji says that “To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind and not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again” (CW, vol 6-p38-39).

This is another important part with which the present system of education has little familiarity. The students in the name of education gets detached from everything that is really essential and feels drawn to things that develop in them craving for sensuous pleasures and thereby making the mind blunt and unresponsive to subtler matters demanding greater amount of concentration.



Hence Swamiji in his plan of man-making education attributed much stress on the need of developing the power of detachment. He says, “My development has been one-sided all along. I developed concentration without the power of detaching my mind at will; and the most intense suffering of my life has been due to this”.

Ancient India produced great scholars in almost every field of human enterprise encompassing spirituality, philosophy, science and technology, art, literature, music, political science, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, economics, diplomacy etc. We have world moving personalities like Shankara, Buddha, Charak, Aryabhata, Chanakya, Kalidasa, Tansen etc., only to name a few. They were giants in their respective field of study at one end and at the same time men with sterling qualities and human attributes characteristic of the noble souls of all ages and of all races at the other.

What was the secret of their success? It is due to the man-making system of education adopted by the ancient teachers that produced giants in every field. And Swamiji wanted this system to be reintroduced combined with the scientific approach of the west.

The man –making system of education as preached by Swamij, must first have its focus fixed on one central idea pivoting which all the different disciplines should thrive. And it is always be aimed at manifesting the innate immense potentiality termed as *perfection by Swamiji*.

According to him, what every sect in India believes,

...infinite power is latent in this Jivatman (individualised soul); from the ant to the perfect man there is the same Atman in all, the difference being only in manifestation ... That power manifests as soon as it gets the opportunity and the right place and time. From the highest God to the meanest grass, the power is present in all—whether manifested or not.

(CW, Vol.4, p.483-484).

Swamiji’s Man-making education aims at exploring both the ennobling aspects of a being .That he/she must be a giant in terms of his knowledge and mastery over the specified faculty and simultaneously he must also stretch out himself to his utmost to serve the humanity or to uphold it .For the youths of India Swamiji made their motherland their object of worship above all other considerations, even more important than God realization as the emancipation of the



individualized soul, commonly regarded as the principal concern of the recluse. However, Sister Nivedita has clarified that love for motherland as professed by Swamiji was not by any means contrary to the common welfare of mankind at large. India has been upholding the values like oneness of all (akam sat vipra bahuda badanti). Hence, the rise of India as a powerful nation will never be a threat to the progress of civilization. Therefore, Swamiji wanted us to rise to the occasion and put our heart's blood to this one goal— conquering the world by the reawakening of the motherland. And this can only be materialized only if the condition of the millions and millions of the descendants of the sages and gods who, forgetting their innate divine nature are being forced to live the lives of beasts, is raised. And every educated youth must have a lifelong plan to exert themselves to their utmost to serve the cause of raising the masses of India. That everybody turns charitable at the sight of a poor, diseased or disabled person and will perhaps toss a coin or two, or take up some relief work to help the distressed whenever there is a flood or famine or some other sort of natural or man-made disasters. Within this kind of piety-fringed charity we Indians have been contented with for long. But Swamiji's has been a dynamic concept of education and spirituality. The man-making education as conceived by Swamiji must be all inclusive, along with a lifelong devotion for the specified field of study he /she must carry out a simultaneous well-devised plan to execute for the uplift of the masses. And India ranks 136 among 186 nations of the world in terms of human development indices like poverty, illiteracy, child labor, unemployment, empowerment of the women etc.

As teachers perhaps we have no serious objection and rather we are relieved that the students at least have learnt this much, but when s/he is outside the school and is a conscious and responsible guardian it matters a lot to him/her. that his beloved son or daughter for whom s/he has sacrificed hundreds of appointments and thousands of nocturnal explorations can be so ungrateful is unthinkable to them. But then he revels at when he comes to know that his child has finally realized that to again quote from Swamiji from the same extract— “...., the second thing, that his grandfather is lunatic, the third thing, (respected teachers can see how their rejoice is short-lived), that all his teachers are hypocrites.” If we have the courage to face the truth and if we can make an internal survey in our respective institutions, we, the teachers can easily have a taste of the bitter truth that even after more than a century how much the observations are still relevant. The next part of the observation does not matter much to the teachers and parents and also our present-day educationists and planners of education when we hear Swamiji say – “the fourth that all the sacred books are lies”. -though if understood properly



one can perceive that this self-destructive attitude towards our scriptures, this sheer indifference to the live giving principles of the scriptures on the part of the so-called enlightened is at the root of all degradation and disaster to our national life. However, we must try our best to keep our cool and move forward to have a crystal-clear view about the grand ideals of Swamiji's concept of man-making education. Let us conclude the remnant part of the relevant quote." By the time he (the child of our story) is sixteen, he is a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless." And what is the consequence! Swamiji again answers "The result is that fifty years of such education has not produced one original man in the three Presidencies." Then, what about Rammohan, Vidyasagar, J. C Bose and the likes? Are not they product of the 'present system of education' as meant by Swamiji? Certainly not. Then how they could turn so original? Replies Swamiji," Every man of originality that has been produced has been educated elsewhere, and not in his country." Exactly so. Stalwarts like P. C. Roy, J. C. Bose had certainly got their education in England. And there was a gulf of difference between the system of education in their homeland of the British rulers and what they introduced into our midst. And those rare few who could eventually came out as men with originality "have gone to the old universities once more to cleanse themselves of superstitions." We must guard ourselves against the misconception about the 'superstitions' Swamiji has pointed out here.

Now it is clear that the system of education which fills the mind of the child with negative thoughts to the extent that s/he turns out to be 'a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless', was denounced by Swamiji as useless. And unfortunately, enough we have not departed one inch from there rather, it has worsened by geometrical progression by dint of unscrupulous politicization of education and the resultant patronization and usurpation of the semi-educated, mediocrity who are even unable to conceive of what true education is.

Therefore, Swamiji says that "The end of all education, all training, should be man-making" (CW, Vol.2p.15). What kind of man that Swamiji professed for! This is never polishing up the outside. There is no use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside.

Swami ji clarified as,

The end and aim of all training is to make man grow. The man who influences, who throws his magic, as it were, upon his fellow beings is a dynamo of power, and when that man is ready, he can do anything and everything he likes: that personality put upon anything will make it work.

(CW vol. 2: p,15)

Along with the power of developing the concentration of mind and detachment, man-making plan of education must ensure that the student possesses a good physique and a large heart, as sufficiently large as could embrace the whole of the suffering humanity and resolve all his life to engage himself to the service of them and this will begin with their own country –men eventually graduating in encompassing the whole world.

As to the importance of physical fitness, Swamiji observes,

Physical weakness is the cause of at least one third of our miseries. We are lazy; we cannot combine. We speak of many things parrot-like but never do them. Speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not being able to do anything. We must strengthen it.

(CWVol-3p.241-242).

Regular physical exercise, at least for fifteen minutes will be enough to keep the body fit and healthy. Study reveals that exercise helps the secretion of certain hormones that keep the body energized for the whole day. Thus, equipping the student with a sound health, controlled mind and sensitive heart always prepared to respond to the sufferings of the teeming millions, Man-making education of Swamiji will enable the student to “find out how to solve the problems of life.”

It is the education that develops the virtues among learners to fight with the problems. This is reiterated by Jha & Tiwari (2020), “Education is pervasive in nature and in the form of knowledge and values when it reaches to its required level among the persons, they feel that ‘strength of mind’ which leads to an unconditional and actual pleasure. It should help a person to build a healthy and dynamic frame of mind to enable him to meet the challenges of life”. Other important aspect of man-making education is that it will not remain content with the collecting of facts only.

According to Swamiji,

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. 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. If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopedias are the Rishis.

(CW, Vol-3p.302)

A student learns honesty is a great virtue, yet he cheats in the examination at the slightest opportunity to do so. He is taught to always speak the truth and not to steal but he is not told why should he not steal and speak the truth. Therefore, we are having intellectual giants in almost all the fields of higher education—teachers, professors, engineers, doctors, scientist, chemists, politicians who succumb to temptations and threats and resort to corrupt practices. The most educated persons in the high positions are the most corrupted ones easily gullible at the slightest hint of compromising with the life of ease and comfort. They are mostly insensitive to the sufferings of millions of their country-men who are being continually deprived of the minimum sustenance of life like food, education, health care etc. And this is due to the faulty system of education that only produce a race of dyspeptics unable to digest the higher aims of life the great masters of yester-years devised for our sons and daughters.

Swamiji points out to another aspect of our system of education while differentiating between blind imitation and assimilation.

According to him,

“In Japan you find a fine assimilation of knowledge, and not its indigestion, as we have here. They have taken everything from the Europeans, but they remain Japanese all the same. And have not turned Europeans; while in our country, the terrible mania of becoming Westernized has seized upon us like a plague.”

(CW, Vol-5, p.372).

It does not help one stand on one’s own feet. And Swamiji was himself a testimony to this.

When addressing his foreign audience he remarked,

I studied hard for twelve years and became a graduate of Calcutta University; now I can scarcely make \$5.00 a month in my country. Would you believe it? It is actually a fact. So, these educational institutions of foreigners are simply to get a



lot of useful, practical slaves for a little money -to turn out a host of clerks, postmasters, telegraph operator, and so on.

And ironically enough the scenario has not changed rather aggravated. In a single state there were 45 lac applicants for the vacancy of 35 thousand primary teachers, and there are nearly ten million registered unemployed in West Bengal only. After leaving the colleges and universities they do not know how they can earn their livelihood with the help of their university degrees. A Ph.D. researching scholar distributed sweetmeats to his fellow boarders when he got the job of a group D staff in a post office, and he did not think twice before quitting his research work.

Perhaps this is not enough, to add to the dismal picture of hopelessness there were the successful employed moral fathers like headmasters of secondary schools and S.I.s in the examination hall during the examination for this year's primary teachers' selection test, not as invigilators or observers but as examinees with their wife, children and in-laws around them as co-aspirants only to ensure that they could qualify in the eligibility test by copying from their answer sheets. Only a few cases of fraud could be detected where some junior doctors were caught red-handed while impersonating some examinees for the medical entrance examinations. The scene is more or less the same whether it is England or America. Even in the Harvard University it was found that some researchers produced fake papers as their own work for Ph.D. This only accentuates Swamiji's clamour for character-building as the basis of all sorts of education. Unfortunately, enough, this is still being widely overlooked in every field of education. Very few even admit this to be worthy of any concern at all.

Swamiji's concept of Man-making Education, as we have already hinted at the beginning, is that education should never teach a student to hate or drift away from his ancestral profession. In the wake of fake political industrialization, it was propagandized that it would be a deprivation to let the son of a peasant always remain a peasant and not to allow him to become a labourer in the industries developed at the cost of high-yield agrarian lands. Swamiji remarks, "Even with the awakening of knowledge, the potter will remain a potter, the fisherman a fisherman, the peasant a peasant. Why should they leave their hereditary calling? —Don't give up the work to which you were born, even if it be attended with defects. If they are taught in this way, why should they give up their respective callings? Rather they will apply their knowledge to the better performance of the work to which they have been born. A number of geniuses are sure to arise from among them in the course of time. (Ibid: p.149-150). He then



continues “Either a clerkship, or being a lawyer, or at the most a Deputy magistrate, which is another form of clerkship-- isn't that all? What good it will do you or to the country at large?” And now, Swamiji addresses to such a crisis of which even after so many years of Independence and after so many five year- planning we have no answer to the grave situation, Swamiji accentuates, “Open your eyes and see what a piteous cry for food is rising in the land of Bharata, proverbial for its food. Will your education fulfil this want?” Perhaps not. How many educated and established persons are in our country who can proudly proclaim that he is the child of a peasant, or a daily wager! And thought of the child from a peasant family who after getting the job of a teacher in a secondary school and marrying the educated daughter of another educated father denied pecuniary to his widow mother.

Swamiji observed,

The basis of all system, social or political, rests upon the goodness of men. No nation is great or good because the parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good. Men are more valuable than all the wealth of the world.

He then substantiates his argument that way “Suppose the Government gives you all you need, where are the men who are able to jeep up the things demanded? So, make men first.” With the help of our present system of education we have produced money making machines in the shape of teachers, doctors, engineers, chemists, physicists, doctorates, economists, lawyers, magistrates, collectors, entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, politicians, ministers, and so many others but failed to produce men of character ,who are not only sympathetic to the suffering of the millions and are content with donating some money to the Ramakrishna Mission or Prime Minister's relief funds ,or open an NGO for earning some extra bucks or for name ,fame or rewards form the hand of the President of India, or to evade the wrath of god or taking part in some charitable work like blood donation camps, flood and famine, they must be honest, truthful, hard-working and sincere, in their own field and at the same time should have a well-defined life-long plan to work out so that the non-stop supply of more and more men like him is ensured. That he or she must consider it as noble a work to engage themselves to the mission of making men all their life as the work for earning bread and bringing up their children or the upkeeping of their family members or cherishing some personal dreams or ambitions.” Man – making is mission” said Swamiji. And to ensure that others are inspired by one to become Man in the true sense of the term; one has to himself become a man first. Thus, to be a man and at the same time help others to become a man (Be and Make) is the greatest service to the nation



in the shape of philanthropy or patriotism is the highest goal for one and all in the purview of Swamiji's "man-making" concept of education. Unfortunately, enough educational institutions even run by all renouncing followers of Swami Vivekananda and claiming to be dedicated to the work of man-making as preached and practiced by Swami Vivekananda, remain complacent only by producing toppers in the state and all India level examinations and competitions for lucrative jobs of which thousands of other institutions both national and international, have been staking their claims since long. We, the teachers and educationists and planners of education should know that in the plan of Swamiji's Man –making education there is room for any kind of self-abnegation or deprivation. It is always life –giving, energizing, inspiring and immensely profitable in terms of drawing out the very best in a man. It simply asserts the utmost utilization of human potentialities and the supremacy of humans over any other being in the universe. Only science at its most developed stage can perfectly appreciate the scope and purpose of Swami Vivekananda's concept of man-making education.

Conclusion

On the particular background of man-making education, it can be pointed out that education actually is meaningful and applicable to life in view of Swami ji. If it is not fulfilling the role of character building and man-making then it is really irrelevant to life. Moreover, it is actually due to ill-defined pedagogy and a sort of contamination in the educational process. The enriched sources put by educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda should be applied at any cost and everywhere to realize the natural human being with human character.

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