

Be and Make – In the process of achieving the objectives of True Education

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Abstract - Education is used to refer both to a process and to a product. As a product ‘education’ is the sum total of what is received through learning – the knowledge, skill, ideas, values that are the outcomes of learning as a process, it refers to the act of developing these in someone else or in oneself. Therefore education is an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit. Swami Vivekananda philosophy of education is a reflection of his general philosophy of life. He believed that a pure spiritual life, shown of superstitious beliefs and strange notions of religion, is the sure foundation of real education and culture. If perfection in the truest sense of the term is equated with divinity, then there is no difference between education and religion. At a particular state in the cultural cum-spiritual evolution of man, he attains a degree of excellence manifesting in him certain edifying virtues and graces and conducting himself in an ennobling manner in his relationship with his fellow-beings. This is the attainment of perfection in character. If this is pursued still further, his entire life, thought, and behavior express themselves in such a manner that he can be considered almost divine. Such are the saints and God men in this world, in whom education and religion do not have any separate identity, but they both become one and identified with each other. This is the ideal of true education and true religion.

Index Terms - Swamiji: Swami Vivekananda, Religion: Divinity in Man, True Education: All-round development, Manifestation: Self-Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Swamiji’s statement “Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man” assumes that the various capabilities are already present in the child in some form. Education is just the process of drawing out the making manifest (visible) what is latent in child. This manifestation has been conceived by some as a process of unfolding or opening out the same way a seed ‘opens out’ into a plant. All that the teacher has to do is to allow the child to grow, avoid interfering

with his growth, and remove factors that hinder growth. Some consider this unfolding as selective manifestation, a process which draws out ‘the best’ in the child. Since the child alone does not know what constitutes the best, the individual and the society, the student and the teacher become important in this view. The best example of his view of education is to be found in the Upanishadic dialogues (the story of Nachiketa). These dialogues proceed in such a way as to suit the spiritual growth levels of the disciple and help the seeker of divine truth to manifest the best that is hidden in him. In the later sense, ‘education’ is the molding of the child after a pre-conceived model. This pattern has varied with the socio-political-philosophical temper of the times and of the society. Different periods in history have projected different pictures of an educated individual.

“Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in Man”. This is the definition of education formulated by Swami Vivekananda who reached the great height of spiritual development and opened a new chapter in the spiritual history of India. Here the word ‘manifestation means ‘awareness’ or more clearly ‘self-awareness. ‘I manifest a thing’ means ‘I am aware of the thing’. ‘I manifest knowledge’ means ‘I am aware of the knowledge’. His philosophy of education centers on the study of human soul. Self-manifestation, self-realization, self-perfection and self-awareness – all are identical terms giving out this key-note of his educational philosophy. The perfection alluded to here is the perfection of the human soul-the Self, which by its very nature is perfect. The part ‘already in man’ means that perfection is innate and not acquired. This is a well-known Vedantic concept. According to Vedanta, man’s real nature is pure consciousness, known as the Atman, which is beyond body and mind. According to Swamiji, the Atman is the ultimate source of not only all knowledge and happiness, but also of all noble qualities and capacities

inherent in man. Education is the process by which this innate perfection is manifested.

According to Swamiji knowledge is inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside, it is all inside. What we say a man 'knows' should, in strict psychological language, be what he/she 'discovers' or 'unveils'. What a man 'learns' is really what he/she 'discovers' by taking the cover off his/her own soul which is a mine of infinite knowledge. All knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind; the infinite library of the universe is in your own mind. The external world is only the suggestion, the occasion, which seats you to study your own mind. What is the end aim of education? Swamiji answers: "The end of all education, all training should be "life-building, man-making, character-making, and assimilation of ideas". The aim of education is to make man competent to solve the problems of life. When a person receives this kind of character-building education, he will not remain a playing in the hands of nature. He exercises control over both external nature, by mastering the several physical forces with the help of the knowledge of science and technology, and internal nature, by mastering his own inborn tendencies and aptitudes with the help of self-culture and spiritual growth. This is termed as 'total education' by Swami Vivekananda. (Science is our struggle in the outer world. Religion is our struggle in the inner world- Swami Ramakrishnananda)

Levels of Manifestation of potentiality: Let us look at this from the particular point of view; survival is the most basic instinct in man-survival of himself and the race. So whether we have schools or not, every individual's first concern is with his survival. All the developments of the human race from time immemorial to the present time-like invention of fire, agriculture, tools, wheel and so on where all hidden in the human beings. It requires but a situation, a challenge or a suggestion to bring it out. When that stimulus is available, it works towards survival strategies. When man reaches a certain stability in the struggle for existence, he looks towards other finer things, like improvement in living conditions, art, culture, etc. these also are hidden in human but only in a potential form waiting to manifest, requiring only stimulus from outside.

When he crosses these two minestrone, i.e., bare survival and for some, a comfortable living, he searches for the meaning of his existence. This urge

takes him deeper into himself and takes him to the manifestation of his full spiritual potential. This he may acquire from a teacher or by communion with nature or may be by diving deep within his own self. Thus we see that manifestation of the perfection already in man is the aim of all education through it may be in survival stages according to the state in which the particular human being is placed. For a man who is struggling for existence, his education and the corresponding manifestation of perfection is limited to the acquiring of the bare necessities like food, clothing and shelter. But as he evolves, and with the right type of education, he progresses towards arts and culture and finally towards the spiritual fulfillment. Right type of education is important at every stage because if a poor man gets more wealth but not the right education, he squanders it. Even a slightly evolved person, if he does not understand the real fulfillment as the manifestation of the perfection, he wallows in his wealth or gets into other desires.

This present education system is aimed mainly at the first stage, i.e., how to equip people for earning their livelihood; that too in an undesirable manner by cramming a lot of information without assimilating and internalizing the ideas. It does not give any stimulus that is required for assimilation of help towards opening the higher faculties and potentialities. Thus even those who are earning handsome amounts are stuck with their wealth. An education system modified to give stimulus to people of all cultural, moral and spiritual content can improve the situation. This can be achieved by teachers acting as facilitators instead of only information providers, thus allowing students to grow by themselves in the path of least resistance by assimilation of ideas and also by laying due stress on good character by teachers' own exemplary lives. In any situation from primary education to higher education the teacher is the key figure in providing the right type of environment and stimulus to the students. That is why we treat our teachers with utmost respect with prayers like: Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnuh Gurudervo Maheshwarah.

Curricula: Swamiji's views on curriculum for school education have three unique features.

1. In the first place, Swamiji advocated incorporating science and technology in school curricula. In the course of a conversation, Swamiji once said; We need technical education and English

knowledge and western science, that will develop industries, so that mean instead of seeking service may earn enough to provide for themselves.

2. The second characteristic feature of Swamiji's views on curricula is his concept of man-making education. Swamiji advocated the concept of total development of man which includes the physical, mental and spiritual.

3. The third characteristic feature of Swamiji's views on curricula is his emphasis on certain values in education. On the concept of 'value', scholars differ widely. Taking swamiji's concept of man-making education into consideration we can give the following definition of values: Values are attitudes or states of human mind which appraise things and courses of actions, and select and pursue that which tends to improve the quality of individual and collective life. Though Swamiji never used the term 'Value' in the sense we use it now, we can identify certain important values which Swamiji stressed in education. These values are Shraddha or faith, strength and fearlessness, selflessness, moral purity etc.

Method of Instructions: Having analyzed the goal or objective of education, the question naturally arises here, how can these values be communicated to children and youths? Swamiji's answer is clear – 'One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching'. Everyone who has dealt with children and adolescents knows the truth of this statement. It is not possible to instill virtues and noble qualities in youngsters merely through sermons. It can be done only through living contact. Swamiji plays a lot of emphasis on the environment at home and school for the proper growth of the child. The parents as well as the teachers should inspire the child by the way they live their lives. Swamiji wanted the ancient tradition of Gurukula vasa (living with the preceptor) to be revived. That is why he said, 'Believe that the soul is immortal, infinite and all-powerful. My ideas of education is personal contact with the teacher- Gurugriha vasa. Without the personal life of a teacher there would be no education. Consequently, he draws our attention to the fact that the task of the teacher is only to help the child to manifest its knowledge by removing the obstacles in its way. In his words: 'Thus Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge even in a boy it is so and it

requires only an awakening and that much is the work of a teacher'. To drive his point home, he refers to the growth of a plant. Just as in the case of a plant, one cannot do anything more than supplying it with water, air and manure while it grows from within its own nature, so is the case with a human child.

Fields of study: Swami Vivekananda, in his scheme of education, meticulously includes all those studies, which are necessary for the all-round development of the body, mind and soul of the individual. These studies can be brought under the broad heads of physical culture, aesthetics, classic, languages, religion, science and technology. According to Swamiji, the culture values of the country should form an integral part of the curriculum of education. The culture of India has its roots in her spiritual values. The time-tested values are to be imbibed in the thoughts and lives of the students through the study of the classic like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gita, Vedas and Upanishads. This will keep the perennial flow of our spiritual values into the world culture.

Religion is the Manifestation of divinity already in Man: Swamiji reiterates that religion is the innermost core of education. However, by religion, he does not mean any particular kind of its but its essential character, which is the realization of the divinity already in man. Defining religion: He wrote "Religion is the realization of Spirit as spirit!" "Religion is not in books, nor in theories, nor in dogmas, no in talks, not even reasoning. It is being and becoming. To be religious for him means leading life in such a way that we manifest our higher nature, truth, goodness and beauty, in our thoughts, words and deeds. All impulses, thoughts and actions which lead one towards this goal are naturally ennobling and harmonizing, and are ethical and moral in the truest sense. It is in this context that Swamiji's idea of religion, as the basis of education should be understood. We note that in his interpretation, religion and education share the identity of purpose. Why religion forms the very foundation of education becomes clear in his following words: 'In building up character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing ease to others, and peace to one's own self, religion is the highest motive power, and therefore, ought to be studied from that standpoint. Swamiji believes that if education with its religious core can invigorate man's faith in his divine nature and the infinite potentialities of the human soul, it is sure

to help man become strong, yet tolerant and sympathetic. It will also help man to extend his love and good will beyond the communal, national and racial barriers.

Be and Make: When all these strands of body and mind are twisted together, namely, concentration of mind, purity of life, faith in oneself, strength of body, and fearlessness of mind, in a single personality, the force of that character becomes invincible. Such one will not give in to any stress or strain in life. Such a character still be a powerful force to reckon with in society. It can neither be hidden, nor can it go unnoticed. It is bound to influence and react on others, among whom the possessor thereof lives and functions, and help them also to shape themselves into good characters. It is to such conscious and conscientious minds that Swami Vivekananda's unforgettable and resounding exhortation, 'Be and Make', is applicable and addressed.

It is to be emphasized in particular that character or human excellence is not a gift from God. It is a human achievement, attained by self-effort and self-effacement, by devotion to duty and dedication to high ideals, and by prayer and meditation. May there be more, and yet ever more, men and women of such character, working for the progress of our human society materially, socially, and spiritually Bahujanahitaya, Bahujanasukhaya.

CONCLUSION

The exposition and analysis of Vivekananda's scheme of education brings to light its constructive, practical and comprehensive character. This is the complete picture of education which Swamiji visualized. This education is, in no way, poor, because it is replete with national feelings and sentiments, with the development of heart and mind, with improvement of character and moral consciousness, with the cultivation of strength and energy, with the culture of brain and intellect and finally with the feeling of kindness and sympathy. He wanted this all-round education. "The end of all education", he continued, "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".

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