

## Swami Vivekananda, Indian Youth and Value Education

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Swami Vivekananda (January 12, 1863 – July 4, 1902) is considered as one of the most influential spiritual educationist and thinker of India. He was disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the founder of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. He is considered by many as an icon for his fearless courage, his positive exhortations to the youth, his broad outlook to social problems, and countless lectures and discourses on Vedanta philosophy. For him, “Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riots there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas.” It is rightly said that, “The Swami’s mission was both national and international. A lover of mankind, he strove to promote peace and human brotherhood on the spiritual foundation of the Vedantic Oneness of existence. A mystic of the highest order, Vivekananda had a direct and intuitive experience of Reality. He derived his ideas from that unflinching source of wisdom and often presented them in the soul stirring language of poetry.” For example:

“All love is expansion, all selfishness is contraction.

Love is therefore the only law of life.

He who loves lives, he who is selfish is dying.

Therefore love for love’s sake,

because it is law of life, just as you breathe to live.”

Swami Vivekananda’s personality was notable for its comprehensiveness and deep sensitiveness to the evils prevalent in the socio-economic and moral structure of the country. He preached both monistic asceticism and social service. His intellectual vision was immensely clear and he could easily penetrate into the currents and cross-currents that were manifested in the history of India.

By the lectures and speeches of Swami Vivekananda, many youth were inspired to ideas of social-service and character-building. Swami Vivekananda dedicated his life to teaching and guiding the youth the importance of social-service and laying the groundwork of character and leader attributes. His concept of service to the poor helped fire inspiration to many youth including many in Benares; these youth eventually formed the Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Mission Home of Service, which exists even today. The Ramakrishna Mission came into existence in 1897 and since then continues to function and inspire youth all over India. Swami Vivekananda was a mighty inspiration to youth throughout his lifetime, and continues to inspire the youth of today.

### **National Youth Day**

Swami Vivekananda's birthday celebrated as National Youth Day because, "In 1984, the Government of India declared and decided to observe the Birthday of Swami Vivekananda (12 January, according to English calendar) as National Youth Day every year from 1985 onwards. To quote from the Government of India's Communication,

'it was felt that the philosophy of Swamiji and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian Youth.'

Swamij's Birthday according to Indian Almanac (*Vishuddha Siddhanta Almanac*) is on ***Pausha Krishna Saptami tithi***, which falls on different dates of English Calendar every year. The Headquarters of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission as well as their branch centres observe **the birthday** of Swami Vivekananda with *mangalarati*, special worship, *homa*, meditation, devotional songs, religious discourses, *sandhyarati*, etc. on *Pausha Krishna Saptami tithi*, and as **National Youth Day** (12 January) with processions, speeches, recitations, music, youth conventions, seminars, Yogasana presentation, competitions in essay-writing, recitations, speeches, music, sports, etc. on 12 January."<sup>1</sup>

While talking about the needs of youth education J.S.Rajput says, "The youths are to be taught to point the vast canvas of life with ideas and activities that could help

them visualize the future they are to create for themselves and their fellow men. They need to strive to know what is real and what is unreal. They could also be guided to appreciate that the search for truth is the ultimate goal that one realizes only after understanding the transitory nature of all that is constant changing around every moment. An acquaintance with the history and heritage of Indian could give them a feeling of continuity and motivate them to assume responsibility to take the lineage ahead. Above all, cultural moorings and scriptures may motivate and instill in them sense of possession of the sublime, goodness and beauty, which they need to assimilate and internalize.”<sup>2</sup>

As Vivekananda was a great observer of the human mind and the human society at large. He understood that undertaking any social change needed enormous energy and will. Hence he called upon the youth to not only build up their mental energies, but their physical ones as well. He wanted ‘muscles of iron’ as well as ‘nerves of steel.’ He wanted the youth to possess indomitable will and the strength to drink up the ocean. What he wanted was to prepare the youth both physically and mentally to face the challenges that would lie ahead of social workers. He was also practical enough in warning the young of the pitfalls ahead and the way Society reacts to such endeavours. He said, “All good work has to go through three stages. First comes ridicule, then the stage of opposition and finally comes acceptance.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Teachings of Swami Vivekananda**

Swami Vivekananda is a treasure of motivation and inspiration for all of us, whether we are students, teachers, common people or any other professional. He said a lot which can be formatted in very simple quotations for everyone. Here is a beautiful collection of Swami Vivekananda’s ideas<sup>4</sup>:

- “Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, & know that you are the creator of your own destiny.”
- “Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached.”
- “To be good and to do good - that is the whole of religion.”
- “Strength is life, Weakness is death.”

- “All the power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that; don’t believe that you are weak. Stand up and express the divinity within you.”
- “Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourself weak, weak you will be; if you think yourself strong; strong you will be.”
- “Stand and die in your own strength; if there is any sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death.”
- “Neither money pays, nor name pays, nor fame, nor learning; it is CHARACTER that cleave through adamant walls of difference.”
- “He is an atheist who does not believe in himself. The old religion said that he was an atheist who does not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself.”
- “The greatest sin is to think yourself weak.”
- “Misery comes through attachment, not through work. As soon as we identify ourselves with work we do, we feel miserable; but if we don’t identify ourselves with it, we do not feel that misery.”
- “You must have an iron will if you would cross the ocean. You must be strong enough to pierce mountains”
- “Take up one idea, make that one idea your life, think of it, dream of it, live of it, let the brain, muscle, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way great spiritual giants are produced, others are mere talking machines.”
- “Your country requires heroes; be heroes; your duty is to go on working, and then everything will follow of itself.”

According to Vivekananda, “Three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great”:

- Conviction of the powers of goodness
- Absence of jealousy and suspicion
- Helping all who are trying to be and do good

Swami Vivekananda will be a best icon for youth of India. As J.S.Rajput says, “Who were the icons of the youth? They were men and women of character who

sacrificed their self-interests and suffered for others', for the nation, for the welfare of their fellow men and women. They also included people who strived hard for interfaith amity, global brotherhood and welfare of humanity... The young of India must internalize a sense of pride in their ancestors for their *tapasya* to explore the mysteries of nature and to create a symphony between man and nature. It must also motivate them to set higher goods in their life ahead."<sup>5</sup> Swami Vivekananda is the best youth icon because of his universal characteristics and thinking on societal needs.

### **Indian Value System<sup>6</sup>**

India's ancient wisdom and value system are great heritage of mankind. We took back into our history and culture; we find that our educational systems, leadership values and managerial process, designed by *Rishis* are great source of inspiration and motivation. The present education system is based on Western ethos, which ignores the polishing and development of the inner instrument of man, his mind and his life. It ignores the innate divinity, the self within and focuses only on the body, mind and intellect. This lack of focus on developing the powers of concentration of the mind and ignores the need for the unfoldment of the innate perfection, peace and happiness of self, is therefore, directly responsible for the lowering of our character and value. During the freedom struggle, some great leaders of modern India, who were also educationists, challenged the British systems of education and developed powerful philosophies of education so as to provide to the students not only the lessons of the Indian heritage but also to prepare them for the future greatness of India. These are as follow:

**Mahrishi Dayananda Saraswati:** He went back to the Vedic foundations and put forth a system of education that would reform India and make it progressive. He inspired the Gurukul system of education and underlined the great role of the teacher in uplifting the talent and character of the pupil.

**Swami Vivekananda:** He spoke of man-making education and accepting Vedantic knowledge as the base, acknowledge the truth of every religion and a synthesis of

Yoga, he opened the gates of the future before the youth, filling them with a new spirit of inspiration, heroism and dynamic action.

**Mahatma Gandhi:** He emphasized the training of the Hand, Heart and Head, overarched by the values of Truth, Non-violence, Self-control, Conscientiousness and Renunciation , as also equal respect towards all religion and life of simplicity that aims at reconstruction and reform of rural, social, political organizations based on equality, empowerment of the weak and the oppressed , decentralization and brotherhood.

**Rabindranath Tagore:** He established Santiniketan, and experimental Institute for a new aim and mode of education where the beauty and sublime of nature can serve as a living partner of teaching and learning, where the values of poetry, music and art can vibrate personality and mingling of cultures of Asia and of the world that would promote internationalism and world-citizenship, and universal fraternity that transcends all division of race and religion in the *Religion of Man*. And there also arose also the nationalist call of “*Vande Mataram*” that gave birth to the movement of the *National System of Education* with the aim of recreating the ancient Indian spirit that was at once spiritual, intellectual, scientific, artistic, productive, and empowered now with new vigour to assimilate all that is new and progressive, to create new forms of expression and synthesis of powers of personality and knowledge and harmony of the East and West.

**Sri Aurobindo:** He formulated the philosophy of education system in 1909 and developed it further in subsequent decades so as to embody the light and power of the synthesis of yoga and a programme of integral transformation of human life of the earth that would lead the evolution of the Nature into the birth of a new humanity and super-humanity.

**Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:** He was a revolutionary, rationalist and humanist, a man who looked ahead of his time. His philosophy of education aims at creation of a liberating consciousness which is not just formal education but the conscientisation process of education, agitation and organization, put together. Education enriches the intellectual powers of the learners and to promote a respect for reason. He

reintroduced the philosophy and spirituality of Buddhism, in modern India. For him, education is an instrument to change the destiny.

**J. Krishnamurti:** He gave new dimensions to religion, spirituality, philosophy, psychology and education by his vision. His philosophy of education is related to the question of youth which is related to their daily life. He aims at to draw a subject matter of education which is directly related to human efforts and his life. He leaves rigid philosophical, spiritual, religious, and psychological conceptions related to the nature of education and gave a more popular and acceptable conception of education. He was an eminent thinker and spiritual teacher of modern India.

**Sri Raman Mahrishi:** He was a silent Teacher. His most direct and profound teaching was transmitted in silence. Unique in our time, he perfectly embodied the ultimate truth of self-realization, or complete absorption in the Supreme itself. His highest teaching of 'self-inquiry' was understood in the infinite silence of his presence. Thorough this silence, countless numbers of devotees and visitors experienced the pure bliss of True Being. He was always willing to answer the questions of sincere aspirants and never failed to guide them in the right direction.

All these initiatives and experiments have been bold, great, inspiring and all of them are still in various stages of growth and development; great lessons have to be learnt from these experiments. We have here a great fund of educational research that can guide us in the talks of value oriented education and of the entire transformation of our educational system.

### **Swami Vivekananda and Value Education**

Swami Vivekananda, a philosopher preacher and a reformer, dedicated his whole life for the upliftment of humanity. In his dynamism of thought he laid emphasis on the amelioration of body and soul for human excellence. The central theme of his inspiring speeches for the whole world was man - his growth, development and fulfillment. Work and more work to strive for excellence of body, mind and spirit were conspicuous in all his teachings and preaching.

In the present day world, in most of the countries emphasis is laid on formal schooling rather than on man-making pursuits. The result is chaos and anarchy. Here acquisition of wealth should not overshadow the fundamental human values. Vivekananda being a seer could discern the cause of this human affliction long, long ago and propagated his philosophy of education for the solace and salvation of mankind. Vivekananda did not write a book on education, he contributed valuable thoughts on the subject that are relevant and viable today.

Since, several Indian and Western thinkers worked to develop and implement different value system, but they have restricted to their system of thought or philosophy of life. But in present time we need those human values which can be implemented without any restriction of creed, nation, and region. It is rightly said, “Education in modern times has turned in to a factory of producing job seekers. Lack of higher perspective of life has resulted in making the so called educated more and more ‘self centered’. The result is there for all of us to see. The educated youth live in constant fear and tension which is driving them to depression. In this situation the youth need a role model who can show them a way out of this hopeless situation. What is the way out? It is to adopt Swami Vivekananda’s philosophy of education. Swamiji was an inspirer of soul.”<sup>7</sup>

The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use. This attempt at perfection is part of the evolutionary game of the divine. Educational aim consists in the development of the head, hand and heart. Education should help the individual to develop physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. Such perfect ideal can be found in Indian thinkers like Sankaracharya, Buddha, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and others. It should be remembered that unlike in the west, in India education, life and religion are intertwined. As such the value aspect of education is kept in close touch with the aims of education.<sup>8</sup> As Vivekananda says, “Education is not the amount of information that is put into the brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life... We must have life-building, man-making, character-building assimilation of ideas.”<sup>9</sup>



Sheojee Singh explains, “Swami Vivekananda envisaged an education, which makes man worthy and capable of manifesting divinity in its full measure. His clarion call was *‘We must have life building, man-making, character making assimilation of ideas. 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’*. He further declared in no uncertain terms that the salvation of the race and for that matter the nation is possible only with man-making education, *‘A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion’s courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up- the gospel of equality’*. This zeal of holiness and the lion’s courage come only with such an education, which essentially starts with spiritual growth or the journey towards self-knowledge. Swami Vivekananda says, *‘The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man making. But, instead of that we are always trying to polish up the outside. What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside.’* Nurturing, shaping and polishing of this *inside* and helping it manifest properly is what man making education of Swamiji is all about. This education ensures man’s organic growth *from within outside* and not as an attempt to keep on adjusting from *outside-in* (which, more often than not, shuts the inner man in a chamber of obscurity and forgetfulness.)”<sup>10</sup>

Education should help every man to take up his own ideal and endeavor to accomplish it. According to Vivekananda, “there are four general types of men-the rational, the emotional, the mystical and the worker.”<sup>10</sup> So in the education of these different types of men different methods are to be followed. Vivekananda realised long ago that education should be liberal and always in the national lines. Education should include both conservative and creative aspects and bring about change in the society by giving us progressive ideas and new values of life. One of the important principles to be emphasised in the socialistic pattern of society is that individual fulfillment will come, not through selfish and narrow loyalties to personal or group interest but through the dedication of all to the wider loyalties of national development. Education in modern India has been wrongly planned and carelessly executed. The modern educators have ignored the fundamental

aspiration of man to realise his best self. This is much against the cherished ideals of the Indian democratic system and therefore every effort should be made to reinsulate the true spirit of Indian culture in the minds of the people.<sup>11</sup>

Vivekananda's main ideal of education was man-making, character building and assimilation of ideas. He was anxious to put into operation a scheme of education for women which would make them fearless, conscious of dignity and chastity. To him, most sound scheme of education for women is one which teaches them to develop a strong character by the force of which they will be prepared to lay down their lives, rather than flinch an inch from their chastity. It is this spiritual ideal that Indian women have been following from the time immemorial. Purity, simplicity, faithfulness and chastity have all along been valued by them more than any material object. Swami Vivekananda wanted to direct women to their own cultural ideal. Religious training and formation of character should be their primary concern. Their education should be imparted with religion as its centre. We can see the impact of Vivekananda's philosophy of education in the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru and S.Radhakroshanan , who expressed the view that science and religion should go hand in hand. Western science must be combined with spirituality. This is a synthetic trend in the formulation of the content of Indian education which Vivekananda expressed long ago. Universal teacher of humanity, Vivekananda keenly felt problem of both East and the West. As such solution laid down by him was both national and international.<sup>12</sup>

Swami Vivekananda was a great nationalist of India, who wanted to revitalize the nation through the vitality of religion. He believed that religion constituted the "centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life of India. In him, the Hindu renaissance became "self-conscious and adolescent." He was born at such a critical period of the history of India, when all the higher impulses were overborne by the onrushing tide of materialism. The educated people were imitating foreign habits as they felt that the real solution to the problems of India and her progress lay in the acceptance of the western methods and institutions. Vivekananda tried to stem this tide, and placed before his countrymen the splendid and invigorating message of the Vedanta which combined the spirituality of the East with the spirit of social service and organizational capacity of the West. This is what his philosophy of neo-Vedantism stands for, and which he used to affect a synthesis of cultures of the East and the West, and thereby to find out the real salvation of humanity.<sup>13</sup>

He attributed great significance to developing in Indians the feeling of patriotism, human dignity and national pride. He espoused the idea of equality of all people, inspiring Indians confidence in their ability to perform progressive historical actions 8

and also he preached universal brotherhood through his secularism. Swami Vivekananda's views as a progressive Indian thinker played a positive role in the development of the patriotic and national self consciousness of the peoples of India and he made a considerable contribution to our national struggle and his teachings continue motivating the masses in their lives. In the next chapters we will study his ideas on education, culture, religion and as a youth ideal.

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