

Current Relevance of Cultural, Religious and Educational Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda

Dr. Sarika Singh

M.A. Ph.D.in English, Teacher- Primary Education

Abstract:

The India of Swami Ji's dreams was such that every person should have character and also become self-reliant. He used to lay special emphasis on the youth becoming enterprising, fearless and brave. Swami Vivekananda used to say – Youth of the country, be brave, be courageous, say that fear is death, say that fear is sin, say that fear is hell, fear is irreligion and say that fear has no place in life. Just as Swami Ji's philosophy of life is broad and syncretistic, so is his philosophy of education. He was a strong critic of the current education system and a strong supporter of practical education, which is very much needed in today's circumstances. Today, when India or the whole world is on the verge of losing values, we need Vivekananda's spiritual education.

Keyword: Swami Vivekananda's philosophy in the context of culture, education, society and religion.

Introduction:

Swami Vivekananda is known as the greatest thinker among Indian philosophers. He was born on 12 January, 1863 on the day of Makar Sankranti in Kolkata in the house of a famous lawyer Shri Vishwanath Dutt. His mother's name was Bhuvaneshwari Devi. Swami Vivekananda's childhood name was Narendra Dutt, who was adept in sports and was endowed with sharp intellect since childhood. His life was influenced by the thoughts of Guru Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. After coming in contact with his Guru, he came to be known as Vivekananda. Swami ji traveled all over India and tried to understand the Indian society and their life closely. During this time, he became aware of the problems of the society, and became completely determined to revive this society. Swami Vivekananda saw the circumstances of that time when the entire Indian society was trapped in the chains of slavery of the British and was immersed in the darkness of deep despair. At such a time, Swami Vivekananda's thoughts and philosophy were illuminating the consciousness of the entire society like a lamp of light. He believed that the only reason for total darkness is illiteracy. He propounded the principle of 'Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye' i.e. education paves the way to liberation. Swami Ji told the youth that it is important to remove fear from their lives and in its place considered knowledge power, physical power, conduct power and moral conduct power important. With the changing times and circumstances, his philosophy is as relevant and exemplary in the present India and the world as it was in the then India. Swami Vivekananda was not a supporter of the then education system propounded by Lord Macaulay because the sole purpose of this education was to increase the number of clerks. The India of Swami Ji's dreams was such that every person should have character and also become self-reliant. He used to lay special emphasis on the youth becoming enterprising, fearless and brave. Swami Vivekananda used to say – Youth of the country, be brave, be

courageous, say that fear is death, say that fear is sin, say that fear is hell, fear is irreligion and say that fear has no place in life.

The spiritual path suggested by Swami Vivekananda can prove to be very effective for the aimless Indian youth of today who is suffering from mental stress and fatigue while running after material happiness. Swami Vivekananda is a big name among the great men who have influenced the youth of India and the world. His speech given in Chicago in the year 1893 made him the pioneer of Indian philosophy and spirituality. Since then, his thoughts have been influencing the youth. In today's era, when the youth are facing new problems, setting new goals and aspiring for a better future for themselves, the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda become even more relevant. Vivekananda believed that the life of a youth should be meaningful as well as successful, so that his mind, heart and soul are also nourished. His thoughts about a meaningful life can be understood in four points - physical, social, intellectual and spiritual pursuit. He used to say that do not fear anything. Be fearless. All the power is within you. Never think that you are weak. Get up, wake up and do not stop until the goal is achieved. He always used to talk about being mentally strong as well as physically strong. He also linked spirituality with social service and talked about serving the God present in man.

Swami Vivekananda emphasized on intellectual research along with physical strength and a sense of social service in the youth so that the youth can understand both types of worlds well. Talking about education for all, he said, education is not a bundle of information that can be kept in the mind and keeps troubling throughout life. We have to cherish such ideas that build society, build individuals, build character. He talked about a national education system in which physical and spiritual education is in the hands of the people of the country and is based on national thinking. Emphasizing the importance of education in rebuilding India, he said that education should be such that it helps the common man and helps him deal with crises in life, builds character, awakens the spirit of charity and provides courage like a lion.

Swami Vivekananda was a Karmayogi. He did not just preach and teach, but also put them first in his life. Along with being a yogi, he considered the weakest section of the society as his God and kept serving them. Along with his spiritual consciousness, he also kept his social consciousness awake and kept working for the society. Swami Vivekananda is still very relevant today because of his thoughts, ideals and goals. He told the youth how to achieve them through physical, social, intellectual and spiritual pursuits. Today's youth can achieve peace, prosperity and happiness by following any one of these paths. In place of the prevalent education, what kind of education Swami Ji wants for India, his following words are noteworthy in this regard - "We need that education, through which character is built, brain power increases, intelligence develops and man is able to stand on his own feet." Today, there is a great need to build good character in the youth. Swami Ji was in favor of giving equal education to girls as to boys in the field of education. With this type of education system, the neglectful behavior towards girls that is happening today can be stopped to a great extent.

According to Swami Ji, education should lead to physical, mental and spiritual development of a person, but today's education does not fulfill this objective. According to Swami Ji, only that should be called true education which builds character, increases mental strength, develops intellect and makes a person self-reliant. The present environment is such that people are forgetting their religion and the truth contained in it, whereas it is through religion that self-confidence, self-respect, self-reliance, self-sacrifice, humanity, cooperation and love and the feeling of universal brotherhood develop in a person. Swami Ji has said that religious education is necessary for this. According to him, religious education should not be imparted

through books but through conduct, behaviour and rituals. Vivekananda wanted that every person should know the truth or religion which is hidden within him.

Education and National Unity:

Today, the feeling of total nationalism and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' should be developed. According to Swami Ji, 'The education which does not inspire patriotism cannot be called national education.' Swami Ji believed in 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. He wanted to develop this feeling through education which provides universal brotherhood. He believed that through this feeling, the feeling can be awakened in the minds of students that from ant to human, everyone has the same soul. All the creatures of the world are children of the same God. Through education, he wanted to make them understand that "we have a great duty towards the world. We are indebted to it and it is not indebted to us. It is a matter of great fortune that we get an opportunity to do something for the world." Universal education - If there is any problem at the root of many problems of India, then it is illiteracy. Today, there is a great need for universal and mass education in India, about which Swami Ji had thought about about a hundred years ago. Swami Vivekananda was very sad to see the Indian people uneducated, downtrodden and hungry. Feeling the great need for mass education and universal education to fulfill the basic needs of such people, he wrote that "I consider neglect of the common people a great national sin. This is a big reason for our decline."

Intimate relationship between Guru and disciple:

Swami ji the ancient guru. Giving a broader form to the Namaskar tradition, 'Guru Sakshat Parmeshwar Tasmai Shri Guruve Namah' has been considered as 'Shishya A Sakshat Brahma Sakshat Parmeshwar Tasmai Shishyay Namah Guruve Namash'. This is the Vedantic ideal. In this, both the Guru and the disciple have been given a high position. Here the intimate and spiritual relationship between the two is shown. In such a situation, when the Guru says 'Tvamasi' to the student, the student will start realizing that 'Aham Brahmasmi' means I am Brahma myself. Such an experience will bring him spiritual perfection and he will attain true knowledge. One such Guru experienced by Swamiji. There is a great need for disciple relationship today. Swamiji Mansa. Vacha. Karmana was a strong supporter of self-discipline. He considers self-discipline essential in both the teacher and the disciple. His view was that the Guru himself should be disciplined, only then the students will also be disciplined by being influenced by his behaviour. This discipline of his can prove to be a strong support for the present social and personal welfare.

Employment oriented education for the youth:

Today the main problem facing the youth is unemployment. The youth do not have employment even after having various educational degrees. Swami Ji had found the solution to this almost a hundred years ago. In this regard, Swami Ji has said that. "If technical education is provided instead of higher education, then people will be able to earn their bread from it and by avoiding the cries of job, job, they will be able to make constructive contribution to the society." How relevant is this statement of his even in the present times. He considered technical and industrial education to be the main reason for the progress of western countries. He wanted to change the prevalent education system of India and in its place make arrangements for education that provides livelihood. According to him, the present education system is making people job oriented and unemployed. Therefore, they should be given western science i.e. vocational, technical, industrial and mechanical education. This will make Indians self-dependent and they will be able to develop themselves like the developed countries of the world.

Concentration and education:

Swami Vivekananda has considered concentration of mind as the best way to achieve true education. Only a concentrated person will be concentrated and his learning ability will be equally stable. The main reason for the bad state of education today is the lack of concentration in the world of education. As a result of this, many immoral activities like copying, corruption, stabbing etc. are being encouraged and the level of education is falling day by day.

Swami Ji's special emphasis on women's education. Swami Ji took the initiative to make women aware and wise by telling them the great need for women's education. He raised the question that when it is propounded in the Vedanta that every living being in the world has the same soul, then why should women be looked down upon? He felt that despite physical differences, both men and women are equal. Therefore, there should be proper arrangements for the education of both in the society. Even today it is being understood how much women's education is needed. Today when a person is suffering from confusion and pain in life, when society is suffering from the diseases of corruption, immorality and atrocities, when politics is destroying and corrupting human life instead of improving it, when science is sowing the seeds of poison in the air, water and earth instead of increasing human prosperity, then we will definitely have to think and contemplate thoroughly on how we can get freedom from this situation. Education is the medium with the help of which we can take human beings in a particular direction. Therefore, in the present situation, the study of Swami Vivekananda's educational thoughts has become an essential thought.

Solution of all problems through education.

While highlighting the importance of education, Swami Ji said that today education is the main reason for the progress of western countries. An educated person solves all his problems on his own, while an uneducated person remains deprived of all facilities. Therefore, for the progress of the people of India, there is a great need to make a system of education accessible to all. Swami Ji often used to say, "Today we need western science mixed with spirituality." (5) Thus, he wanted to present a syncretic view of humanistic Vedanta and western science. He wanted to achieve science and happiness through education, so that the person can progress in all aspects. He considers the purpose of education to be to solve the two fundamental problems of life, physical and spiritual. Through Vedanta philosophy, he suggested a wonderful combination of spiritual and material values. In short, he wanted to propound a philosophy of human-building education.

Contribution of education in character building:

He was in favour of character building of people through education because a person of character is disciplined and self-reliant. He used to say that we need such education which builds character. Swami ji wanted to develop people physically through education because a person who is physically strong is capable of doing all tasks. He can progress himself and also help others. According to him, "Shareermadyam khalu rdham sadhanam tatha naayatma balahinenalabhyah" means the body is the basis of religious practice and a person who is physically weak cannot attain self-realization. Thus, we see that Swami ji is the best among the educationists who provide the best system of education for different sections of the society.

Education of Western Science with Vedanta:

Impressed by the material progress of Western countries, Swamiji wanted to make the Indian youth financially prosperous by imparting them education of Western Science along with religious education. In this regard, he said - "Today we need Western Science with Vedanta." (6) Swamiji wanted to include both spiritual and physical subjects in the curriculum. Regarding imparting spiritual religious education, his belief was that - mere physical or worldly education leads to loss of human values in a person, as a result of which he becomes stagnant. The second reason is that religion is the backbone of education and is the main strength of India. Therefore, religious education must be imparted to make a person liberal and develop human values in him. Regarding teaching Western science, his argument was - India's main need is - bread. Therefore, to give employment oriented education to the people here, there is a great need to give them Western Science i.e. technical, industrial and mechanical education. Therefore, both types of subjects should be included in the curriculum. He was in favour of teaching subjects through mother tongue because learning from one's own language is easy. Sanskrit education is necessary because it contains the treasure of our culture. Along with this, this language gives strength and ability to a person. English language was suggested to be included in the curriculum because this language is useful in learning western science. Education of various arts, character-building and physical education were also made an integral part of the curriculum. That is why the curriculum expressed by Swami Ji is spiritual, secular, artistic, interesting, practical and useful. In short, it can be called a complete curriculum.

Today education in India has become dishonourable, selfish, based on sensuality and giving excessive importance to money. There is a serious lack of character, patriotism and self-confidence. Teachers and leaders do not consider education as a pious social work and it has also been made a business of earning money. Unity and mutual harmony, sympathy, spirit of service have disappeared. Every person is running after upward social dynamism. No one is concerned about the well-being of others. The soul of Indian education is dead today. In such a dishonourable society, the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda have great importance. Merely repeating them will not be of any benefit, they have to be implemented. Our education ministers, education administrators and teachers should learn from them and concrete constructive programmes for public welfare should be started in the world of education.

According to Swamiji's views, some sanyasis, religious preachers should be prepared for general social education along with religious education so that they can give proper direction to the society. Society can be educated to a greater extent through practical education.

Coordinationist Approach in Education: There is coordination between Swami Ji's educational philosophy and Indian educational philosophy or it can be said that Swami Ji is completely influenced by Indian educational philosophy. Swami Ji has understood the importance of both thinking and action very well. The combination of knowledge, action and power proves helpful in the educational process.

In Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy, a glimpse of all the main philosophical schools of thought such as naturalism, optimism and pragmatism is visible. Like naturalists, Swami Ji said that true education can be obtained only by staying in touch with nature. Like idealists, he said that the main objective of education is to develop the child spiritually and express his perfection, which is already present in him. Like pragmatists, Swami Ji suggested to coordinate the usefulness of art, industry and technical education of western countries with our art.

Meaning of education according to Swami Vivekananda –

- 'Education is the complete development of all the powers hidden in man, not just the collection of information.'

- ‘If education was related to information, then libraries would have been the best saints of the world and encyclopaedias would have become sages.’
- ‘Education is the light of that inherent perfection, which is already present in man.’
- ‘We need such education by which character is formed, mental strength is increased, intellect is developed and man becomes self-reliant. But he considered the ultimate goal of human life to be the realization of the soul hidden within him.’
- ‘Education is the expression of man’s inherent perfection.’

For achieving various objectives of education, Swami Vivekananda has instructed to use many methods – in which mainly lecture method, imitation method, reasoning and discussion method, guidance and consultation method, demonstration and experiment method, self-study method and yoga method etc. should be used for the all-round development of students.

References

1. Rahbar, Hansraj (1998) "Warrior Saint Vivekananda" Publisher Rajpal & Sons, Madrasa Road Kashmiri Gate, Delhi-6 First Edition.
2. Sarit, Sushil and Bhargava Anil (2004-2005) "Thoughts of Modern Indian Educationists" Vedanta Publications, Agra.
3. Swami, Vyomaranand "Vivekanand Collection" Ramakrishna Math Nagpur.
4. Swami Ranganand (May-August 2008) "Swami Vivekanand and the Future of India.
5. Swami, Vyomaranand "Vivekanand Collection" Ramakrishna Math Nagpur.
6. Swami Ranganand (May-August 2008) "Swami Vivekanand and the Future of India.
7. An Analytical Study of the Social Philosophy of Swami Vivekanand: University of Otago, Dunedin.
8. Swami Vivekananda's social philosophy: Santawana Dasgupta Ramakrishna Mission Sanskriti Sansthan