

CHAPTER - V

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VIVEKANANDA'S REFORMATIVE VIEWS IN THE FIELDS OF (A) EDUCATION, (B) SOCIETY & (C) SPIRITUALITY.

Education

Swami Vivekananda emerged as a social reformer and revolutionary in his application of ends and means to solve some of the problems of society. He looked at the reforms from the point of individual as well as social growth. Though a social reformer, Vivekananda kept himself aloof from other reformers. The reformers glued to evil and failed to diagnose – the cause of evil. But Vivekananda pointed out the necessity of removing the cause first, which will automatically be followed by the removal of the effect. He said, “To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root and branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction, mine is that of construction, I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth”¹.

Vivekananda believed that social evil was due to ignorance. Ignorance hinders individuals and social growth. He noticed that ignorance had to be dispelled by education. More than a reformer of society, he was a reformer of the individual. He wanted to usher a variable revolution in individual and social thinking by means of education. In this chapter I am going to discuss education, society and spirituality one by one as has been understood by Swami Vivekananda.

The Meaning of Education

According to Swami Vivekananda, all knowledge and all power are in the human mind. They are inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside, it is all inside. What a man 'learns' is really what he discovers by taking the covers off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge. In many cases, it is not discovered, but remains covered and when the covering is being slowly taken off, we say 'we are learning', and the advance of knowledge is made by this process of uncovering. Therefore, all knowledge and all power are within. What we call powers; secrets of nature and force are all within. All knowledge comes from the human soul. Man manifests knowledge, discovers it within himself, which is pre-existing, through eternity.

Swami Vivekananda remarked that each of us has to teach himself, no one was ever really taught by another. Teachers offer only the suggestions from outside. Things will be clearer to us by our own perception and thought and then we shall realize them in our own souls. He said that we cannot teach a child anymore. The child also teaches itself. We can only help him to go forward in its own way. We can take away the obstacles and knowledge comes out of its own nature. So the teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching. Within man is all knowledge and it requires only an awakening, and that much is the work of the teacher.

Swami Vivekananda advised to give positive ideas. Negative thoughts only weaken men. If we speak kind words to them and encourage them, they are bound to improve in time. If we give them positive ideas, people will grow up to be men and learn to stand on their own legs. According to him, the teaching must be modified according to the needs of the taught. So, we have to give to the pupil according to his tendencies. And for that liberty is the first condition of growth. He advised that we could not give woman and child salvation from their problems; they would solve their own problems. To him, education means the assimilation of life-building, man-making, character making ideas. "The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education".²

The education is not the amount of information, but the collection of ideas. The education that does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character – is useless. 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.

Concentration :- The most important method of requiring knowledge.

According to Vivekananda, there is only one method by which to attain knowledge, that which is called concentration. The very essence of education is concentration of mind. From the lowest man to the highest Yogi, all have to use the same method to attain knowledge. This is the one call, the one knock, which opens the gates of nature, and lets out floods of light. In this point the main difference between men and the animals is the difference in their power of concentration. An animal has very little power of concentration. He cannot concentrate upon anything for a long time. This difference in their power of concentration also constitutes the difference between man and man. The difference is in the degree of concentration. All success in any line of work is the result of concentration. When the mind is concentrated and turned back on itself, all within us will be our servants, not our masters. As for example, the Hindu

concentrated on the internal world, upon the unseen realms in the self and developed the science of Yoga. "The world is ready to give up the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow comes through concentration"³. The power of concentration is the only key to the treasure-house of knowledge. In the present state of our body we are much distracted, and the mind is frittering away its energies upon a hundred things. When we try to concentrate our mind upon any one object of knowledge, thousands of thoughts rush into the mind and disturb it. How to check it and bring the mind under control is the whole subject of study in *Rajayoga*.

To attain concentration of mind, unbroken Brahmacharya is necessary for that. Complete continence gives great intellectual and spiritual power. We have to transform the sexual energy into spiritual energy. The chaste brain has tremendous energy and gigantic will power. Without chastity there can be no spiritual strength. So we should be trained to practice absolute Brahmacharya and then faith and *shraddha* will come. The Brahmacharin must be pure in thought, word and deed.

Religious Education

Religion is the inherent core of education. Vivekananda thought that the secret of success lies in the obedience to the Guru without questioning and strict observance of Brahmacharya. He advised all young people to be strong and tell the truth boldly strength is life and weakness is dead. Infinite strength is religion and all truth is eternal, the nature of all souls. He also realized that the religions of the world are not contradictory. They are but various phases of one eternal religion⁴. To get success he advised us to pay as much attention to the means as to the end.

The teacher - taught relationship in Education

According to Swami Vivekananda, knowledge should be given freely and without any price. There must be some necessary conditions in the taught. They are purity, a real thirst after knowledge and perseverance. The necessary condition for the teachers would be sincerity. "He (the teachers) must be perfectly pure and then only comes the value of his words"⁵. Another condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive, for money, name or fame. There should be a free and frank relationship between the teacher and the taught.

The first condition for the disciple is that the student who wants to know the truth must give up all desires for gain. The second condition is that a disciple must be able to control his mind from external world. The next condition is to conceive an extreme desire to be free. There is only one real desire; to know what is true to be spiritual. No one desiring anything beyond the body. These desires of the body bring only momentary satisfaction and endless suffering. Renunciation of the senses and desires is the only way out of this misery. If we want to be spiritual, we must renounce.

Swami Vivekananda has observed that a man who wants to be a disciple must fulfill these conditions. Without faith, humility, submission and veneration in our hearts towards the teacher, there cannot be any growth in us. Moreover in this point he said that we should worship our Guru as God but need not obey him blindly. According to him, the true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the students' soul and see through and understand through his mind.

Women Education

Swami Vivekananda noticed that there was much difference between men and women in this country, whereas the Vedanta declares that

one and the same self is present in all beings. All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. So we should pay proper respect to women otherwise no country would become great. Manu says, "Where women are respected there the Gods delight, and where they are not, there all work and effort come to naught"⁶. Vivekananda said that women had many grave problems that only could be solved by education. Manu enunciated that women also should observe *brahmacharya* and be educated as men. Vivekananda suggested that we could not solve their problems; they must be in such a position to solve their own problems in their own way. Female education should be spread with religion as its centre. All other training should be secondary to religion. Our Hindu women easily understand what chastity means, because it is their heritage. The women of India must grow and develop in the foot prints of Sita. She is unique to them. In villages and towns they must open centres and strives for the spread of female education. Through such devout preachers of character, there would be the real spread of female education in the country. History and Puranas, house-keeping and the arts, the duties of home life and the principles that make for the development of character have to be taught. If the women are raised, their children will by their noble actions glorify the name of the country.

Mass Education

Another important point in this chapter is mass Education. Swami Vivekananda thought that the condition of the poor in India was the cause of downfall of this country. A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. It is national sin to neglect the masses. The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education to develop their individuality. Give them ideas, and then they will work out their own salvation. All castes, all classes have the right to get education. Some thoughtful people noted that Hinduism is responsible for the neglecting of the masses. But Vivekananda did not find fault in Hinduism. He taught that Hinduism teaches us that every being is only our own self multiplied. It is the want of practical application, the want sympathy – the want of heart responsible for the downtrodden condition of the masses. To uplift the masses Swami Vivekananda considered that spiritual and secular education was necessary for them. He wrote: “We have to give them secular education. We have to follow the plan laid down by our ancestors, that is, to bring all the ideals slowly down among the masses. Raise them slowly up, raise them to equality. Impart..... Secular knowledge through religion.”⁷ Moreover he remarked that for great achievement in this field, we need to fell from the heart and go on steadily towards are own goal.

Character making Education

Above all, the most important thing for Vivekananda was character making education. The character of any man is but the aggregate of his tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind. And the result of these combined impressions is what is called a man's character. Good and evil have an equal share in moulding character. If good impressions prevail, the character becomes good, if bad, it becomes bad. So we need to think always only positive thoughts that we can remove the bad habits forever from our life.

Man Making Education

Finally, Vivekananda stressed upon the man-making education. To quote him, "It is man-making theories that we want. It is man making education all round that we want."⁸ But what is man-making education? First, education that arouses self respect, secondly, the education that encourages the progressive upliftment of individual and society, poor and rich equally, thirdly, the education that arouses the spirit of patriotism and philanthropy, fourthly, the education that speaks of perfection in life temporal and life spiritual, fifthly, the education that helps to comprehend life in its totality, not simply in bits. Thus man-making education is all comprehensive, total and universal. It helps man to realize him as a part of humanity, as a part

of totality, as an inseparable part of integrality. A man secular, a man spiritual and a perfect man that is what the man making education means. The man-making education is the only means by which the external manifestation of internal perfection is possible.

Thus Swami Vivekananda gave vent to his thought in the field of education so elaborately that if follow him, we can expect a revolutionary change in our socio-religious life, in the educative life and in the moral life.

SOCIETY

Swami Vivekananda believed that an individual is born in a particular society, according to his past 'Karmas' to work out its own destiny. In this respect, society is not a human creation, but an institution created by God Himself, according to the past '*Sakama Karmas*' of the '*Jivas*' themselves. He added that love, renunciation, unselfishness—three great manifestations of spirituality— from these alone can raise any society and stand. Neither physical powers, nor economic superiority, nor practical dexterity can form such a basis.

According to Swami Vivekananda, Society is a perfect system, a full organic whole, a loving and a living union, a unity-in-difference. Its basis is religion, its purpose is spiritualism, and its instruments are scriptural injunctions. It is not a political organization and not a prudential concern at all. He also used the organic analogy in his analysis of society. He wrote: "The aggregate of many individuals is called Samashti (the whole), and each individual is called Vyashti (a part). You and I - each is Vyashti, Society is Samashti."⁹

Like the Vyashti, the Samashti has a body, an organic life, a developing mind and soul. Progressing of society, a Vyashti has to sacrifice his own interests for the sake of Samashti. The sacrifice of individual interest is essential for the happiness of all members of society. In Vivekananda's view, all men have to transcend their petty interests for the well being of the society through gradual transition. Gradual transition from ego-centricity to sociability will bring a man near to human goals. Therefore every individual must be one with Samashti.

His view of society is quite in consonance with the spirit of Vedanta.

Its main features may be summarized as follows:-

- i. Society is a divine creation.
- ii. It is the aggregate of different individuals.

- iii. Self-sacrifice is essential for the well-being of Samashti.
- iv. Gradual transition is needed for being one with Samashti.
- v. Co-operatively shared happiness will be the final result of human relations and
- vi. Religion is the backbone of Samashti.

According to Vivekananda society was not a natural but a social institution. As a social evolutionist, he believed in the gradual growth and decay of social institutions. He defined that society was a loose collection of individuals. As society was a collection of individuals, it was not totalitarian and cannot wield absolute authority over individuals and groups. Instead, each individual or group was an independent unit. Social relations in society were based on mutual cooperation and service. There was no struggle for power between one unit and another.

It may be said that Vivekananda reacted only against the materialistic society, which was evil, and he was one with the spiritualistic society, which was eternal and free. He observed that attempts had been made to base social life on materialistic and spirituality. He believed that "the objective society will always be a mixture of good and evil."¹⁰ Therefore he pointed out that "all societies and governments were comparative evils".¹¹ To obviate the weakness of materialistic

society, he gave emphasis on truth and prescribed it as the eternal ideal of society.

Vivekananda's concept of a spiritualistic society has morality as its basis. He proclaimed that the whole fabric was based upon that idea of restraint. He believed that the formation of society too was a form of renunciation and that society was social and organic. He held that if society was evolved on spiritual basis, it would last longer and remain eternal. Therefore that society is moral and self-restrained which clings to truth. According to him, "That society is the greatest where the highest truths became practical. That is my opinion and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so; and the sooner, the better."¹²

From Vivekananda's attitude towards law, Government and society, we can say that he was not a nihilist. He did not deny the past and present and he believed in a glorious future for humanity. The nihilists aimed at the destruction of law, Government and society, while Vivekananda's approach was only one of indifference to them. According to him, no society and Government was permanent and perfect. He did not want to create a void by abolishing society. He wanted only to replace the present society by the ideal society, the society of Brahminhood.

Society and its origin

The Indian view of society is that it is eternal organic and teleological in nature. If society is eternal and created by God, man cannot be conceived to have any role in its shaping. Vivekananda therefore conceives society to be partly naturalistic, both in the metaphysical and in the secular sense and partly mechanistic in character.

According to Vivekananda, society is founded by men out of their very nature and there have been 'great originators of society'. Here Vivekananda anticipates the modern interpretation of the Aristotelian maxim that man is by nature a social animal. Although society is natural, it is never eternal.

Though man is impelled by his impulse to lead a social life. Society was founded by man for realizing life. But unfortunately man could not agree as to what should be the mode of this realization. Consequently," two attempts have been made in the world to found social life: the one was upon religion and the other was upon social necessity; the one was founded upon spirituality, the other upon materialism. Although Swami Vivekananda's conception of society is partly mechanistic, he clearly attributes to it as a super organic nature. He again derived from Advaita Vedanta, the two import Components. One is the doctrines of unity of existence and the other

is *maya*. Faith in the unity of existence drives one straight way to the organic conception of society and acceptance of the doctrine of *maya* makes, it a well- grounded philosophic creed. According to Vivekananda, *maya* is not illusion; it is the super imposition of ego-idea upon man's real self; the Atman.

Social imperfections and Social regeneration.

Society is a pilgrimage in search of truth, so it can be regard as perfect only to the extent it has been able to manifest Truth. In Swami Vivekananda's own words, "that society is the greatest where the highest truths become practical"¹³. Again he declares: "Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth or die. Societies should be moulded upon truth, and truth has not to adjust itself to society"¹⁴.

Liberation of Society according to Vivekananda

Liberation may be described as social justice, for justice is the just ordering of things. Justice may be viewed either as an end in itself or merely as a means. According to Swami Vivekananda, social justice implies both. It is an end, because it is an index of purity of social relations; it is a means, for it is the condition of development both of the individual and society.

A Vedantins conception of justice must be in the nature of a permanent rebellion against every unjust order of things. It cannot tolerate social demination of the individual. Justice or just ordering is building up or recapturing the harmony between individual and society for assisting the progress to perfection. According to Vedanta, the world may be regarded as a dead or settled world. But it is completely alien to Swami Vivekananda. To him the world is never a finished one so long as every human being does not attain perfection in it.

In this unfinished world the individual is not only moulded by society, but can also mould it rather infinitely. On the other hand, it is a liberation philosophy; it postulates individual's deliverance from social determinism and support positive individual action for society's deliverance from the mechanics of determinism.

Harmony and Unity of Society

According to Vivekananda, the social harmony should be distinguished from social unity. Social unity means perfection of the social order. It is thus the end and social harmony is a means to it. In other words, harmonization of the discordant notes of social life only implies the removal of a hindrance to the unity movement. The means can depend upon the character of its technique, and

Vivekananda finds the technique in the social mutual aid of his Conception, as determined in the light of Vedantic principles of liberty, equality, justice, discrimination and love.

Vivekananda's mutual social aid is a scheme of co-operation, but co-operation here implies an altogether different thing from the ideal of fraternity, emanating not only from the principles of liberty, equality and justice but also from that of love. As such, it is founded upon the category of renunciation and service, which, as a maxim of life, can be well practiced by the ordinary householder who constitutes the cell of social organism.

In such a scheme as Swami Vivekananda's the problem of, caste is automatically solved, for, in the ultimate analysis, it is the ideal of a casteless, classless, egalitarian society to be brought to birth through the perception of the fundamental Vedantic tenet of unity and its extension to the social sphere. Such perception and extension are according to Vivekananda, the index of true freedom.

Social Progress

When the individual is able to manifest his personality, society marches towards progress. Society is perfect only when the individuals are so. Vivekananda's emphatic declaration in this regard

is: "Things do not grow better. They remain as they were and we grow better by the changes we make in them."¹⁵ Because of man's gregarious nature society is natural for him. But as a volitional creature he seeks to realize life, to march towards goodness and truth through it. To be able to do so, he must mould it properly and for this purpose, he himself must be properly equipped. Thus individual uplift and social development constitute a spiral process the initial stage of which is, self-reform starting from the individual. We should not forget that the progress of the society is linked up with the progress of the individual; such a progress is mutually interdependent. Hence instead of an antagonism there is a harmony between social and individual progress. We may call it a harmonious progress. This is how Vivekananda conceived of a social reformation; and dealt with problems connected with it.

SPIRITUALITY

In this section we shall discuss, after Vivekananda (1) the meaning of spirituality and (2) how can it be realized.

1. The meaning of Spirituality

Swami Vivekananda says that each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature external and internal. The knowledge of spirituality comes through the human soul when the ignorance is disappeared from it. Spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can destroy our miseries for ever. It is only with the knowledge of the spirit that the faculty of want is annihilated for ever. The meaning of spirituality consists in this truth that our soul inhabiting different bodies is essentially one. The truth of oneness is inherent in all different. To realize this essential nature of oneness is the kernel of all spiritual experiences. Multiple objects explain nothing if then miss this basic truth. So it is spirituality that explains how multiple objects exists without losing an inherent unity in them. The spirituality is not an abstraction but a realization of eternal soul in and through the manifested objects. This is the true meaning of spirituality.

2. How can it be realized?

Swami Vivekananda was a true Vedantin and a Vedantin's personality must exhibit same trend towards the identity of Brahmin and the Atman and all his teaching must be coloured by this. Vivekananda says that the purpose of human life is to realize the

divine in him, and to this end man, to the exclusion of other animals, has been endowed with the power of contemplation of experiencing and experimenting with truth. Swami Vivekananda says that our country made gigantic advances in spiritual ideas. At first we undeniably find various differences among our sects. Some are Advaitists, some are Dvaitists, some believe in Incarnations of God, some in image-worship while others are upholders of the doctrine of the formless. But in the midst of all these differences there is one unity among all. All religions of the world claim their authority as being delivered by a personal God or a special messenger of God. The mass of knowledge called the Vedanta was revealed to the *Rishis* of India. Through *Rishis* and sages India created a heritage of spirituality.

Swami Vivekananda points out that Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Puranas -differ very much from each other in certain points of spirituality. But the common ground of the essential principles of spirituality is also present there.

As the realization of multicoloured spirituality Vivekananda says that we cannot realize God or spirituality without knowing the soul. We handle the material world, but the spiritual world or the way to spirituality, the knowledge of the highest must come through the heart, the human soul. The souls are without beginning, and without

end, and immortal by their very nature. All powers, blessings, purity, omnipresence are buried in each soul. In every man and every animal, however weak or wicked, great or small, resides the same omnipresent soul. This soul is one but it manifests in multiple ways.

The Hindu believes that - God is a spirit. "Him the sword cannot pierce - Him the fire cannot burn- Him the water cannot melt - Him the air cannot dry".¹⁶ The Hindu believes that every soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is located in the body and that death means the change of this centre from body to body. This soul is separated from the mind as well as from the body. The goal of the soul is freedom and this earth is the *Karma Bhumi* from which we attain to liberation. The idea of liberation given by Swamiji as follows:

"No more is there life"; therefore no more is there death. No more enjoyment; therefore no more misery. It is bliss unspeakable, indestructible, beyond every thing. What we call happiness and good here are but particles of that eternal Bliss. And this eternal Bliss in our goal".¹⁷

How can we reach that goal? By overcoming ignorance. Ignorance leads to bondage, knowledge leads to liberation. Here knowledge

means knowledge of God. This knowledge comes through love, Bhakti, by the worship of God, by loving all beings as the temples of God.

According to Vivekananda, spirituality can never be attained unless all material ideas given up. We should work for work's sake without caring for the results. In fact the spirit of the Gita's '*Nishkamo karma*', disinterested work is one way of spiritual knowledge. Vivekananda gives stress on this point.

According to Yoga philosophy, spiritualism is a manifestation through *Pranayama*. The prana is the vital force in every thing. Thought is the finest and highest action of prana. But when the mind attained the super conscious state, it is called Samasthi. And when we are able to do that we can control the whole body. So the greatest help to spiritual life is meditation. In meditation we divert ourselves of all material conditions and feel a divine nature. The aim of all religions is a union of man with God.

So, this is the ultimate goal of all man kind, this is the aim and end of all religions, is but one- re- union with God. But while the aim is one, the method of attaining may vary. Both the goal and the methods employed for reaching it are called Yoga. There are various yogas, or

methods of union- but the chief ones are - *Karma- yoga*, *Bhakti- yoga*, *Raja- yoga* and *Jnana- yoga*. We classify then in the following way:

Karma- yoga - The manner in which a man realizes his own divinity through disinterested and duty.

Bhakti- yoga - The realization of the divinity through devotion to and love of a personal God.

Raja- yoga - The realization of the divinity through control of mind.

Jnana- yoga - The realization of a man's own divinity through knowledge.

These are all different roads leading to the same centre---God. And these are the four paths which lead to salvation.

But apart from them there is the *Tantra yoga*. To *Tantra* mother-force is the ultimate reality. Through some spiritual activities we can reach that state. So the goal of *Tantra* is same with the goal of the Vedanta.

So these are the different methods by which one can reach the highest spiritual state and realize the supreme spiritual power.

Swami Vivekananda – the very mention of his name motivates the youth. His message has influenced, inspired and transformed innumerable individuals globally over the last hundred years. In his writings, he has comprehensively touched upon all significant aspects of human life, societal concerns and national life. He has extensively discussed the criticality of education, its meaning, objectives, transactional strategies, and expectations and potentialities. Swamiji was concerned about the lack of self-esteem and self-confidence amongst Indians, particularly the youth in his times. The present-day youth of the country appears lost in the maze of enormous magnitude of changes taking place all around on one hand and deterioration of standards, ethics and values in the society on the other. Centres of creation, generation and transference of knowledge have almost given up their role of guiding the youth and assisting them in manifestation of their inner potentials. Under the influence of alien education systems, India has conveniently ignored the thinking, experiences and understanding of its own sages, savants, sufis, scholars and thinkers. Swamiji was all of these in one. One oft-quoted sentence of his 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man' could be a beacon light for any system of education or institution of scholarship and learning. In his perception, education is neither mere book learning nor acquisition of diverse knowledge, but a preparation for self-control and development of skills to restrain the 'current and expression of will'.

This cannot be taught by anybody else; it can only be experienced and internalized by the learner. Parents, teachers and others in the community can help in giving direction.

UNESCO appointed an independent Commission on *Education for the Twenty-first Century* under the chairmanship of Jacques Delors. The Commission's report is entitled *Learning: The Treasure Within*. It attempts to give a global picture of emerging scenario in education. It has been appreciated and is under discussion all over the world. The report is receiving accolades for the title itself, the logic and rationale for which has been explained in the preface. Majority of the members in any international commission, however, are generally unaware of the high ideals in the Indian culture which are contained in the rich Indian heritage and scriptures. It has always been made the basic premise of Indian thought that entire learning resides within the learner. Vedanta says that all knowledge is within the individual and it requires only an awakening. According to Swami Vivekananda this is the task the teacher is supposed to perform. Teachers have to motivate, demonstrate and persuade individuals to discover their own potential, intellect and to properly understand their body, mind and spirit.

India has in the post-Independence period, persisted with the alien model of education. Any effort to focus on the need for an indigenous

system for India is viewed with scepticism and grave apprehensions. The protagonists of modernization forget the words of Swami Vivekananda 'getting by heart the thoughts of others in foreign language and stuffing your brain with them and taking some university degrees, you consider yourself educated?' He further goes on to emphasize that 'education which does not help the common mass of the people to equip themselves for struggle for life, which does not bring out the strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy and the courage of a lion is not worth being called education'. Let these thoughts be examined in the light of the fact that most brilliant of India's young persons who manage a degree from apex professional institutions take the first available flight to the foreign land where life would be easy, luxurious and which would provide them avenues for future materialistic growth. Swamiji's statement made fifty years before Independence is true even fifty years after Independence. The situation has deteriorated. Is our education system a man-making system? Aping the West we have lost what was our own and which could provide strength to the youth of India. At present we observe much greater erosion of respect, *shradha* and faith. Those who talk of Gita, Upanishads and Vedas are immediately considered as backwards and rustics. The present education system inculcates a desire amongst the youth to master every detail of alien culture, traditions, and practices at the cost of what has evolved, grown and developed over the centuries in their own country. Positive education in life can be internalized by individuals only

when they get good quality indigenous education; an education which forms character, enhances strength of man, expands the intellect and helps individuals stand on their own feet.

Education for Masses

Alien influences are inevitable part of the process of change and need to be viewed analytically in the interest of the nation. Swami Vivekananda was firmly of the view that 'flash of lightning may be immensely bright but it could be devastating if not handled properly'. It is the duty of the nation to educate its people and give them positive education, an education that makes children familiar with the great men of the country. Only that would enable people to stand firmly on their feet and realize their own strength.

India has to be a scientific nation committed to the present development of scientific and technological literacy and scientific temper amongst all her men and women. This can be achieved only by educating the masses. Swamiji was of the firm view that the 'only service to be done to our lower class is to give them education, to develop their lost personality'. While travelling in Europe, his mind was always preoccupied with the poor people of India. He was concerned not only with the attendance in schools but also in creating

conditions that would enable children to avail of the opportunity. Even today children working in farms, fields, factories and other occupations are deprived of basic education mostly due to the economic conditions of the parents and non-availability of supportive services that would permit children to attend schools and compensate their parents for their absence from productive activities. Education of the masses is essential as 'any nation advances only in proportion of spread of education and intelligence amongst the masses'. Confinement of education and intelligence amongst a handful of people was the main cause of India's ruin and poverty. Educated people would be able to solve their own problems. Without education, reforms would remain mostly on paper and as ideals. These ideas of Swamiji appear to be so prophetic and also realistic.

Learning Environment

The personal life of the teacher is critical in several ways and influences the spread of education and the process of learning by the young ones. Imparting knowledge in India in the earlier times has been through men of renunciation. Even in the present times this basic task has to be handled by only those who have a genuine appreciation of renunciation, dedication, sense of commitment and preparedness for a value-based life. Love, affection, and empathy on the part of the teacher and the feeling of appreciation and respect on

the part of the learner could create an ambience in the teaching-learning process that would generate a true learning environment, essential for developing a learning society. Swamiji wanted teachers to know the spirit of scriptures like Bible, Vedas, Koran and Granth Sahib. In his words, 'It is knowledge of spirit of scriptures alone that constitutes the true teacher'. A pure heart and selfless motive characterizes the true teacher. The system of education must provide learning conditions in which the learner's mind is not restless. Only then the real knowledge can be assimilated and the learners become capable of appreciating and understanding the essence of higher human pursuits. Human life is not meant only for meeting the baser requirements but to achieve higher goals and values. Every individual has to learn to overcome the desires for materialism, egoism and tendencies to possess as much as possible. Education must light the pathway towards knowing the truth and in moving towards spirituality.

The deterioration in the functional environment within schools and institutions of higher learning is a serious national concern. One of the major causes has been the deterioration in the relationship between the teacher and the taught. The bonds of affection and empathy between the teacher and the learner either do not exist to have become just peripheral. The system provides only for transaction of the prescribed curricula aiming at the percentage of marks at the year-end examination. Institutional initiatives are

necessary to re-establish the close relationship between the teachers and the learners. This sound mutual relationship would enhance emotional and affective aspects of learner's personality development. The entire world is now realizing the significance of science of yoga which has enormous potentialities to develop human personality. The realities of physical world, mental world and spiritual world are in fact to be seen only comprehensively.

Present Context of Religion and Values

Value education can be supported to a great extent by adequate and appropriate knowledge of basic postulates and philosophies of all religions of India. The Committees and Commissions in the past have duly emphasized this aspect. These included the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), Kothari Commission (1964-66), National Policy on Education (1986), Ramamurti Committee (1990), Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), Committee on Education Policy (1992), Planning Commission Core Group on Value Orientation in Education (1992). Present day education is generally perceived as an information transmission process with little focus on values and character development. Swami Vivekananda has very aptly described the situation as: "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 education were identical with information, the libraries would be the greatest sages of the world and encyclopedias the *rishis*".

The context of values and religion has been examined in the 81st Report of the Committee on Value-based Education, headed by Shri S. B. Chavan and presented to Rajya Sabha on 26 February 1999. This report highlights the need to inculcate five essential values: truth, righteous conduct, peace, love and non-violence. The Committee terms these as core universal values which could form the foundation stone of any value-based education programme. Concerning religion the Committee makes the following recommendation:

"Another aspect that must be given some thought is religion, which is the most misused and misunderstood concept. The process of making the student's acquainted with the basics of all religions, the values inherent therein and also a comparative study of the philosophy of all religions should begin at the middle stage in schools and continue up to the university level. Students have to be made aware that the basic concept behind every religion is common, only the practices differ. Even if there are differences of opinion in certain areas, people have to learn to co-exist and carry no hatred against any religion."

Swamiji advocated all these values highlighting their role in our lives. To him 'it is a great faith which will make the world better. If faith in 'ourselves' has been extensively taught and practiced, 'a very large portion of evils and miseries that we have would have vanished'. To Swamiji strength is goodness and weakness is sin. One of the most profound statements made by him is 'truth is the nature of all souls'. He highlights the mention of the word fearless in Upanishads and exhorts every individual to be fearless, acquire inner strength and tell the truth boldly.

Education for Girls

Vivekananda has studied the position of women in India in the past as well as in his own times. Educated women, in his view, would inculcate virtues amongst the children and thus prepare the new generation of people who could distinguish themselves in virtues. He emphasized the role of women in housekeeping, religion, arts, science, and hygiene and wanted all girls to acquire suitable skills in these areas. He wanted them to move towards higher education. He was also in favour of educating the widow, which, in those times, was a pretty bold step. 'Women must be put in a position to solve their problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do for them, and our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world'.

To him upliftment of women and awakening of the masses was the first requisite before any real good could come to India. He desired that schools for girls be opened in every village. This was his pioneering effort in the right perspective and strategy.

Language Learning

There is a strong upsurge in India for English medium schools particularly amongst educated and literate parents. In this world of severe competitions, the only panacea, parents feel, is a good knowledge of English. Even those who are on the economically lower side of the ladder are cutting down other necessary expenses to put their children in the so-called public schools. A new generation is coming up in India which is not familiar with their own mother tongue. This situation though professionally unacceptable, is thriving because of ignorance and ambitions of the parents and craze for all that is 'western'. They fail to recognize that it is the mother tongue alone in which children naturally express themselves, in which they communicate love, grief or anger. No second language can have that force and that brevity and expressiveness. In fact the present generation is not being fair to the young ones by forcing them to begin their education in an alien language.

Sanskrit is a language whose perfection is being acknowledged also by the western world, particularly in the context of development of information technology. Sanskrit and its rich literature bring knowledge, wisdom and glory to India and to Indians. Learning of Sanskrit enhances the moral fibre of individuals. Swamiji said that Sanskrit gives prestige and power to the entire race. It is high time we pay heed to his advice and make maximum use of the treasure that is available to this country in the form of Sanskrit literature.

In the context of languages, Vivekananda gave a sutra to the teachers. 'The greatness of a teacher consists in the simplicity of his language'. This is very relevant for every teacher. This needs to be understood in the context of those schools where the school language and the home language are not the same. The number of such schools is very large, particularly in the rural and the tribal areas. Specific attention has to be given by the teacher to the socio-cultural context of the children including the language being used by the family and the community. A competent teacher has to put in extra efforts to plan not only activities and lessons but every word, sentence and sequence in local context. Teaching requires to be conducted in plain, simple and comprehensive language. That alone would generate self-confidence and prepare the learners for success. Swamiji described his own language as 'most colloquial and yet most expressive'.

Towards Higher Intellect

The quality in the context of higher education is a matter of serious concern. The objectives of higher education obviously include learning how to solve the problems of life. While the study of advancements and developments in western world is desirable and indeed essential, these must be studied in consonance with Indian spirituality which is now attracting the attention the world over. Higher education must develop a sense of self-confidence and self-assurance along with necessary skills and competencies. Higher education for women was very near to Swamiji's heart. In fact he appreciated the Calcutta University for having opened its doors to women earlier than Oxford, Harvard and Yale. He reinforced his views by asserting that religion does not prevent a woman from being educated. He had pleaded for technical education, if necessary, even at the cost of higher education. Self-employment and entrepreneurship would really transform the youth in any country. It is the practical knowledge which brings out the best in the individual for the service of others.

Education is not the process of filling the mind with a lot of facts alone. 'Perfecting the instruments and getting complete mastery of my own mind is the ideal of education'. In the times of information explosion this could be the guiding star for every young person.

Learning to find out relevant facts from the heap of information is itself an acquisition of a competence. Concentration could help the individual in so many ways. Control of internal and external senses needs to be acquired necessarily in modern times. Another aspect which Swamiji highlighted was acquisition of the great powers of endurance which needs to be possessed by every individual. Weaknesses of mind should not be allowed to overtake the inner strength of an individual's mind. All knowledge which the world has received comes from the mind. Anybody who wants to become an intellectual has to work out the individual strategies on the intellectual plan.

Swamiji considered intellectual education in isolation as one of the evils of western civilization. Over the years we have learnt that our school education system focuses only on memory and those areas of learning in which written examinations are possible and are dutifully conducted. The system does not take care of affective domain in the growth and development of every individual. It does not take care of the heart which needs to be cultivated in all situations. Only the heart can take one to the higher plain which intellect can never reach. Swamiji exhorted the youth to develop a strong physique to ensure a healthy mind and a healthy heart. India needs all the three: healthy body, sound mind and enlightened spirit.

Swami Vivekananda's inspiring personality was well known both in India and in America during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. The unknown monk of India suddenly leapt into fame at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, at which he represented Hinduism. His vast knowledge of Eastern and Western culture as well as his deep spiritual insight, fervid eloquence, brilliant conversation, broad human sympathy, colourful personality, and handsome figure made an irresistible appeal to the many types of Americans who came in contact with him. People who saw or heard Vivekananda even once still cherish his memory after a lapse of more than half a century.

In America Vivekananda's mission was the interpretation of India's spiritual culture, especially in its Vedantic setting. He also tried to enrich the religious consciousness of the Americans through the rational and humanistic teachings of the Vedanta Philosophy. In America he became India's spiritual ambassador and pleaded eloquently for better understanding between India and the New World in order to create a healthy synthesis of East and West, of religion and science.

In his own motherland Vivekananda is regarded as the patriot saint of modern India and an inspirer of her dormant national consciousness. To the Hindus he preached the ideal of a strength-

giving and man-making religion. Service to man as the visible manifestation of the Godhead was the special form of worship he advocated for the Indians, devoted as they were to the rituals and myths of their ancient faith. Many political leaders of India have publicly acknowledged their indebtedness to Swami Vivekananda.

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 unfailing source of wisdom and often presented them in the soul stirring language of poetry.

The natural tendency of Vivekananda's mind, like that of his Master, Ramakrishna, was to soar above the world and forget itself in contemplation of the Absolute. But another part of his personality bled at the sight of human suffering in East and West alike. It might appear that his mind seldom found a point of rest in its oscillation between contemplation of God and service to man. Be that as it may, he chose, in obedience to a higher call, service to man as his mission on earth; and this choice has endeared him to people in the West, Americans in particular.

In the course of a short life of thirty-nine years (1863-1902), of which only ten were devoted to public activities-and those, too, in the midst of acute physical suffering-he left for posterity his four classics: *Jnana-Yoga*, *Bhakti-Yoga*, *Karma-Yoga* and *Raja-Yoga*, all of which are outstanding treatises on Hindu philosophy. In addition, he delivered innumerable lectures, wrote inspired letters in his own hand to his many friends and disciples, composed numerous poems, and acted as spiritual guide to the many seekers, who came to him for instruction. He also organized the Ramakrishna Order of monks, which is the most outstanding religious organization of modern India. It is devoted to the propagation of the Hindu spiritual culture not only in the Swami's native land, but also in America and in other parts of the world.

Swami Vivekananda once spoke of himself as a "condensed India." His life and teachings are of inestimable value to the West for an understanding of the mind of Asia. William James, the Harvard philosopher, called the Swami the "paragon of Vedantists." Max Muller and Paul Deussen, the famous Orientalists of the Nineteenth Century, held him in genuine respect and affection. "His words," writes Romain Rolland, "are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books, at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what

transports, must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!"

On the occasion of America's Bicentennial Celebration in 1976, the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C., mounted a large portrait of Swami Vivekananda as part of its exhibition "Abroad in America: Visitors to the New Nation," which paid tribute to the great personalities who visited America from abroad and made a deep impression on the American mind. Among those honored in the exhibition, some influenced art or literature, some science, education or social reform. But Swami Vivekananda touched the very soul of American people. The commemorative volume of the exhibition says: "The Swami charmed the audiences with his magical oratory, and left an indelible mark on America's spiritual development." This is no exaggeration. Swami Vivekananda was the first Hindu monk from India ever to visit America.

Guided solely by the will of Providence, he embarked on this journey to the new world. The unknown wandering monk, lost in the streets of Chicago, suddenly became famous after his first day's brief address before the Parliament. A select audience of nearly 7,000 enlightened representatives of different branches of American thought became thrilled to hear his message and welcomed him with sustained and thunderous applause. He captured the hearts of the

American people. Crowds gathered in the streets of Chicago to see the picture posters of Swami Vivekananda placed on billboards around the city, and lecture bureaus vied with one another to enlist him for lectures in different cities. Leading newspapers and journals published his words in bold letters. Some of these newspapers described him as the "cyclonic Hindu," some as "Prince among men" or "Brahmin monk," while others chose to designate him by such epithets as "warrior prophet" and "militant mystic." Contemporary leaders of American thought who met him were entranced by the radiance of his spiritual personality and his powerful message. Professor John Henry Wright of Harvard University told Swami Vivekananda: "To ask you, Swami, for your credentials is like asking the sun about its right to shine." After hearing Swami Vivekananda, the correspondent of one journal wrote: "The impertinence of sending half-educated theological students to instruct the wise and erudite Orientals was never brought home to an English-speaking audience more forcibly." Professor William James referred to Swami Vivekananda as "the paragon of Vedantists." The Parliament of Religions, which was an afterthought of the planners of the Columbian Exposition, became a focus of historic importance because it served as a pulpit for the presentation of the message of Swami Vivekananda to the American public. Recalling this event, Romain Rolland wrote: "His strength and beauty, the grace and dignity of his bearing, the dark light of his eyes, his imposing appearance, and from the moment he began to speak, the splendid music of his rich

deep voice enthralled the vast audience.... The thought of this warrior prophet of India left a deep mark upon the United States." America thus had the blessing of directly hearing a person of the stature of Buddha, radiating purity, compassion, and love.

The message of Swami Vivekananda was the message of Vedanta - a spiritual teaching that again and again saved India during periods of decline and crisis. The keynote of this message is: "Truth is one: Sages call it by various names." Its four cardinal points are non-duality of the Godhead, divinity of the soul, oneness of existence, and harmony of religions. Religion, in the light of Vedanta, is the manifestation of the divinity already in man. The central theme of Vedanta is harmony of religions. This spiritual harmony is to be realized by deepening our spiritual consciousness. Vedanta asks a Christian to be a true Christian, a Hindu a true Hindu, a Buddhist a true Buddhist, a Jew a true Jew, Moslem a true Moslem. The message was timely and powerful. America had received a rude shock from the Civil War and its aftermath. Science had already shaken the very roots of religious beliefs and dogmas, and the ideas of Darwin were challenging conventional American thought and religion. Americans were looking for a philosophy that could harmonize science with humanism and mystical experience, and Swami Vivekananda's words gave them hope for the fulfillment of their spiritual aspirations. The message was powerful not because of its dialectical superiority or philosophical subtlety, but because of the personality

of Swami Vivekananda. The message was an ancient one, but it bore a fire of conviction that was new. One familiar with the life of Swami Vivekananda will recall that his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, saw in him the power and potentiality of a great world teacher. Before the Master passed away, he prophesied: "Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) will teach others Very soon he will shake the world by his intellectual and spiritual powers."

The news of Swami Vivekananda's success in America soon reached the shores of India and spread like wildfire. The country, lost in the slumber of inertia, woke up with its new vigour and confidence, and a spiritual renaissance was set into motion that would propel India to great intellectual and social development. Today Swami Vivekananda is regarded as the "patriot prophet" of new India. His words carry the power of inspiration and transformation.

Swami Vivekananda indicated Vedanta is the future religion of mankind. With his prophetic vision, he predicted that modern science and education would break down the barriers between nations and prepare the ground for the fulfillment of the age-old dream of one united world. But one world is possible only when there is one common Soul that transcends the limitations of race, culture, and religious denominations. Swami Vivekananda presents before humanity the World-Soul of Vedanta, the non-dual, nameless

and formless all-pervading Pure Spirit that alone can make the dream of one world a reality. He foresaw a new world order in which science and religion would cooperate, mysticism would combine with humanism and spiritual harmony would replace religious dissension. His final words at the Chicago Parliament of Religions were, "Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of resistance 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'" At a time when world peace is being maintained by continuous wars, divisiveness is glorified at the expense of unity, and the human soul is being buried beneath the debris of brutality, violence and hatred, the words of Swami Vivekananda give us assurance -- an assurance that we are not living the last days of our destiny and that the light of the Divine, shining in every heart, will triumph over the forces of darkness.

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