

Ethics of Education as Conceived by Swami Vivekananda

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Abstract: On the basis of Swami Vivekananda's vision of education, in the succeeding paragraphs, efforts have been made to concentrate on the ethics of education as conceived by Swami Vivekananda. These ethics can be embedded in the contemporary education system and also to attend to those important indicators which will be helpful in rectifying the existing system of education in our country. As regards to ethics of education as conceived by Swami Vivekananda, the key components that have been taken care of are character building as aim of education, curriculum, the teacher, concentration, the secret of work, conditions necessary for becoming a disciple, discipline, and the yoga way in education.

Character Building as aim of Education

Aim of education is to mould the character of pupils and to draw out the best in them. It is an endeavor to develop the latent talents in them. It is advocating the whole person, rather than concentrating on one. Teaching learning is a process in this context. It is a highly moral activity (Ethical) to create a learning environment in which education is just means. It is the transmission of values such as : truthfulness, firmness, patience, kindness, dignity, diligence and other virtues. Indeed, education for life was the objective in the ancient Indian system through "Gurukula".

Education is training for the completeness of life. Its aims as the manifestation of the divinity in man touch the highest point of knowledge. Best teaching learning process was in existence in ancient India. Education was an intimate relationship between the teachers and taught. To begin with oral means was a mode of transmission of ideas and ideals. Subsequently institutional form of imparting learning came into existence. Typically, it was the Gurukula system (where pupil resided in the house and with the family of the teacher). Student had to convince the teacher of his desire, determination and the required intelligence to pursue purpose studies and undergo rigorous tests before he was taken as a student. Students were supposed to live in complete celibacy and in a very austere environment. Objectives of education were to develop his personality, his innate and latent capabilities. The guiding principles of education were Sat, Chit, Ananda, Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram and are the supreme values of ancient indigenous culture.

Education for life should lay the foundation of goodness from the beginning of one's life. Child grows good if it sees good. This leads to the ability to appreciate values in life as it grows. In the ambit of ethics drawn from the Gurukula system, a modern technology taught makes the education more purposeful education for livelihood. In Gurukula culture, students were advised to behave ethically as this would spiritually elevate them. The students whose acts are in consonance with moral rules attain spiritual perfection. Even if a student wanted to become an asset to the society by mastering the technologies ought to attain spiritual perfection by doing. Thus character and competence shall be the watchwords in the present day's living. Students should be taught and educated about their social responsibilities. Institutions shall have a goal of promoting social and national welfare. Encouragement in the form of practice through case studies is to be ensured at all levels of professional education. When students leave the universities and face life, they ought to be told to remember as a citizen of the country and as a member of the community, that it was their duty to assist in the process of social progress and social development through ethical behavior.

The role model student should not adopt ego-centered individuality, but replace it by ethic-centred altruistic personality. Every walk of life has its own potential ethical behavior which should be imbibed in students. The life of Adi Sankara and the objectives of Ramakrishna Mutts established by Swami Vivekananda with special reference to the leadership qualities, shines as inspiration for the present student community regardless of the passage of time and expertise. It is no secret to proclaim that "Learning by Values" in any profession is the order of the day. It is more demanding in computer and

Information Technology areas. According to our traditions 'service without sacrifice is a sin'. Such a conviction in the stakeholders provides a moral strength and determination.

Values of life enhance full growth resulting higher knowledge and also the better quality of life. These values cannot be fragmented. Any attempt to separate them from the system or profession or human security can only diminish the purpose of professional education. It is necessary to provide an anchor to the students who are facing uncertainty and loss of faith in the system. Though science and technology has given enormous power to the students, they are incapable of coping with consequences because personality has not grown commensurately with the developmental demands. In such a situation, life becomes bitter. It is felt that a value system that is integral to India's ethos with deep roots in the Vedas and the Upanishads can still be a shelter for preserving and enhancing the quality of life. The obligation in Education began around 5000 BC when the Indian priests taught the principles of Vedas other sacred text of Vedic period, to imbibe social responsibility among its followers.

In Gurukula, the concept was taught to make him realize his obligations towards his Mother, Father and Society. They are made to be aware of essential of education viz. Spirituality, which is the foundation of education. Manifestation of the inner strength and co-existence with all living beings; all round development of personality. Attempt must be made to bring awareness amongst the students, the cherished values of life so that they could lead a better life. According to the Upanishads, the essence of good life is – dama, Dana, daya (Self-control, sacrifice and kindness). It is the duty of the teacher to inculcate these qualities in their students. Religious stories or incidences instill into us a great moral strength which lay down the lines on which we have to conduct ourselves. In this context students should be made to study our ancient scriptures. Values are nothing but truth, goodness, fairness, restraint, feeling for the fellowmen, righteousness, moral integrity, loyalty, sacredness and the sacrifice. For achieving these guidance can come from within and hence the quest for perfection of the student and the system.

According to Swami Vivekananda (1987) one of the important aims of education is the physical development. On this he says the body is considered to be the basis for the performance of duties, and therefore this basis must be kept in perfect order through the appropriate exercises, Asanas and Pranayam. Swami Vivekananda gives a definite place to Asanas and Pranayams in the life of a student. Swami Vivekananda has likewise recognized the value of a sound mind in a sound body and has advocated the inclusion of physical exercises, games and athletics in any scheme of education, for the well being of the individual. Swami Vivekananda (1987) has emphasized the ideal in Brahmacharya (celibacy) for the student. In this emphasis he has advocated self control on the part of the student. By self-control he means the mastery not only of the body but also of the mind. He says, "It is owing to want to continence that everything is on the brink of ruin in our country. But observance of very short Brahmacharya all learning can be mastered in a very short time."

Curriculum

Craft work is a value addition to education. The craftsman is the mating place of the nature and man. Co-operative work or Group Work is quite significant in the nation building process. Also, abstract knowledge is born out of concrete work experience. Thus, concrete productive craftwork or industry is not an obstacle in the search for abstract knowledge. Infact they are friendly to each other. As such, practical craft work is a promoter of pure and abstract knowledge. Today's education has to relevance to the local culture and needs. Thus, it is required to have different curriculum in different universities, thereby strengthening people in their locality. Virtue is not learnt by reading alone, it is acquired by doing good deeds. As education is the total experience of individuals, students should be made to associate more and more with the community around so as to enable them to identify themselves with the community at large.

Universities in Ancient India adopted rigorous tests while selecting students. Punishments were also severe. Teachers need to regain their authority as models of character, Institutions should have a goal of promoting social welfare. Admissions must be based on competence and character, Glorification based on patronage shall have to place. Inculcate among students their social responsibility. Introduce curriculum which is need-based according to the circumstances and geographic situations. Vivekananda has advocated fundamental process of reading, writing arithmetic, elementary hygiene, physical education, study of scripture, elements of civics, history, Economics, home science, psychology and Sanskrit by Vivekanand with certain modification by introducing the subject of computer science and commerce and some vocational subjects in order to give our education system a desired direction.

The Teacher

According to Swami Vivekananda (1987) the conditions necessary for the taught are

- Purity
- a real thirst for knowledge
- and perseverance
- Purity in thought, speech and act is absolutely necessary for any one to be religious. No impure soul can be really religious. As to the thirst for knowledge, it is an old law that we all get what ever we want. None of us can get anything other than what we fix our hearts upon.
 The students who set out with a spirit at perseverance i.e. a continuous struggle, a constant fight will surely find success and realization at least.
 In regard to the teacher, Swami Vivekananda says that it is the knowledge of the spirit of the scriptures alone that constitutes the true religious teacher
- The second condition necessary in the teacher is singleness. We have to look into the character and personality of the teacher as well. In the spiritual science, teacher must have purity of heart and soul and then only the teacher would be able to transmit the values of his world to the taught.
- The third condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must not teach with any selfish motive for money, name or fame his work must be simple out of pure love for mankind at large. The only medium through which spiritual force can be transmitted is love. Any selfish motive, such as the desire for gain or for name, will immediately destroy this conveying medium. God is love, and only he who has known God as love can be a teacher of godliness and God to man.

Swami Vivekananda says that, "He who is learned in the scriptures, sinless, unpolluted by lust, and is the greatest knower of the Brahman is the real teachers."

Thus Vivekanand has pointed out emphatically the need for making certain changes in the teacher education programme in order to give meaning to our educational system, ideas as given by him need to be incorporated.

Concentration

According to Swami Vivekananda, (1987) concentration is the essence of all knowledge. Nothing can be done without it. When our mind will be concentrated, trained all will be servants, not our masters. Swami Vivekananda quoted examples of the results of concentration. The Greeks applied this concentration to the external world, and the result was perfection in art, architecture, sculpturing, literature and philosophy. The Hindus concentrated on the internal world, upon the unseen in the self, and developed the science of Yoga. Yoga is controlling the senses, will and mind. The benefit of its study is that we learn to control instead of being controlled. Concentration is restraining the mind into smaller and smaller units. There are eight processes for restraining the mind. The first is yama, controlling the mind by over avoiding externals. All morality is included in this. Beget no evil. Injure no living creature. If you injure nothing for twelve years, then even lions and tigers will go down before you practice truthfulness. Twelve years of absolute truthfulness is thought, word and deed gives a man what he wills. Be chaste in thought, word and action. Chastity is the basis of all religions. Personal purity is imperative. Next is Niyama, not allowing the mind to wander in any direction. Then Asana, posture. There are eighty four postures : but the best is that most natural to each one, that is which can be kept longest with the greatest ease.

After this comes pranayama, restraint of breath. Then partyahara, drawing in of the organs from their objects. Then Dharana, concentration, then Dharana, contemplation and meditation. This is the Kernel of the Yoga system and last Samadhi, super consciousness. The purer the body and mind, the quicker the desired results. One must be perfectly pure. Do not think of evil things such thought will surely drag your down. If you are perfectly pure and practice faithfully, your mind can finally be made a searchlight of infinite power. There is no limit to its scope. But there must be constant practice and non-attachment to the world. When a man reaches the super conscious state, all feeling of body melts away. Then alone does he become free and immortal to all external appearance, unconsciousness and super consciousness are the same, but they differ as a lump of clay from a lump of a gold. The one whose soul is given up to God has reached the super conscious plane.

The Secret of Work

The Secret of Work is an extract from Swami Vivekananda's Karma Yoga. Here Swamiji dwells upon the idea of non-attachment of action, which is a famous precept from the Bhagavad Gita that unequivocally declares:

deZ.;soof/kkdkjLrs ek Qys"kq dnpkpuA
 ek deZQygsrq HkwZekZ rs les% LrdeZf.kAA

The meaning of this sloka is that any work good or bad, done with a selfish desire to gain, something or get something in return, will naturally and necessarily result in the bondage of man's soul. The real cause of all miseries or evils of the world is the desire of man for material possessions. And these evils or miseries of the world will be cured or removed only when he changes his character. Ignorance leads to evil and evil to misery. So the solution to the problem is to make men educated and spiritually strong. The Bhagwad – Gita preaches that we all must work continuously. But the problem is how to keep one's soul free of the bondages sentiments and reactions. The solution provided in the Gita in regard to this painful influence of work is detachment. Now the question is as to what this non-attachment signifies. The first stage is when a man attains total control over his senses. That is how the character of man is formed. The second stage is when he aspires for full freedom – freedom from the slavery of good and evil. "Attached" becomes "Unattached" only when both the tendencies – are removed. One must work continuously but the result should not be allowed to affect one's mind, should not be allowed to leave deep impressions on the mind and when a man remains unperturbed, unmoved, untouched either by good or bad result of work, then comes the stage of non-attachment.

Now, the next problem is as to how to achieve this stage of non-attachment. Solution suggested here is that one must work without binding oneself as this world is only a temporary stay of man. One must work here like a master and not as a slave. He must work with full freedom inspired by love because only an act of love brings true happiness and real love makes one untouched. Love means freedom and not bondage. Work is duty, so one must work, incessantly, but work without expecting anything in return. Remaining always on the giving end but expecting nothing in return helps one achieve non-attachment. Attachment is the natural and necessary result of working like masters inspired by love. Expecting anything in return hinders or obstructs one's spiritual progress and finally brings misery. If one looks upon work as worship, selfless and mercy naturally follow the work. A selfless and unattached man can remain unaffected and untouched by sin while living among the crowds. Conditions necessary for becoming a disciple.

According to Swami Vivekananda, (1987) it is not easy to become a disciple. For this purity, a real thirst for knowledge, perseverance, purity in thought, speech and act are absolutely necessary. Swami Vivekananda (1987) recalls an old proverb of India with regard to these subjects of discipleship "There are hundreds and thousands of teachers but it is hard to find one disciple". It seems true the one important thing is the attitude of the pupil. When the right attitude is there, illumination comes easily. According to Swami Vivekananda, (1987) to become a true disciple four principal conditions are laid down by the Vedantists, which are as follows:

1. The first condition is that the student who wants to know the true must give up all desires for gain in this world or in the life to come. The disciple seeks to know the truth and truth alone and does not want the sense life in any form.
2. The second condition is that the disciple must be able to control the internal and the external senses and must be established in several other spiritual virtues.
3. The external senses are the visible organs situated in different parts of the body. We have the external eyes, ears, nose and so on. The internal senses are intangible. We are continually at the beck and call of both these groups of senses.
All these senses, external internal must be under the disciple's control. The mind must be made to quiet down. Swami Vivekananda says no spiritual knowledge is possible so long as the mind is restless and out of control. The disciple has to learn to control the mind. The disciple must have great power of endurance.
Swami Vivekananda says mind should not lose its balance. It should bear all evil and misery without any thought of unhappiness and resistance. Swami Vivekananda quotes the example of Jesus Christ for his evidence.
4. Swami Vivekananda says that a true disciple must forget that he/she is body or mind, is in pain or pleasure, has name or fame but is the pure spirit. Swami says that a true disciple is one who has faith in the Guru (teacher). A disciple must worship the Guru as God.

Discipline

Swami Vivekananda (1987) pleaded for the ancient system of self-imposed discipline in place of the discipline imposed from without, because he was quite conscious of the evils of the authoritarian types of discipline as generally prevalent in the modern schools. The teacher should be competent enough to command respect by his very reverent personality, which is an embodiment of all virtues, and the pupil should lead moral and chaste life so that he may develop a sense of self-discipline from within. This is what he calls idealistic method of maintaining discipline.

The Yoga Way in Education

The Science of Yoga claims that it has discovered the laws with which man can very easily strengthen his power of concentration and meditation. To Vivekananda this is one of the great practical things and this is the secret of all education. In the Yoga system, there are impersonal principles that one can practice and find full expansion of his inherent powers. Proper food, exercise, sleep and wakefulness we require for keeping the mind steady, in its pursuit of knowledge. The Yoga way is to keep the body and mind pure and strong for self-development as well as total fulfillment. The teacher should make a careful study of the nature of the trainee and show him the path which suits him the best.

The practice of yoga requires a high degree of concentration. In fact, all success in any type of work is the result of concentration. As soon as a person tries to concentrate on a particular object of knowledge, thousands of undesired impulses may rush into the brain and consequently disturb the mind. "How to check these impulses and bring the mind under control is the whole subject of study in "Raja-Yoga". The Physical body is the gross part of the mind and so in the training of the mind it is easier to reach it through the body. Swamiji is fully convinced that the Yoga – will help the student to develop his innate qualities like fearlessness, love sympathy etc, and equip him to lead an ideal life. It always brings about culture of the human heart. Thus while framing curriculum the advice of Swami Ji can be incorporated which will help the new generation of become fearless, have a tension free life and to acquire a high degree of concentration.

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