

Humanistic Approach of Swami Vivekananda Reflected Through Sublimation of Work, Love and Service in Higher Education

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Abstract

Swami Vivekananda is unarguably the most influential spiritual giant and educationist of modern India, who with his eloquent speech and perennial ideology, brought revolution in each and every sphere of human life in general and higher education in particular. Although he had never been a formal classroom teacher, yet he emerged to be a great master of utmost height who taught to the entire world a paradigm educational system which is the need of the hour. This paper intends to bring forth Swamiji's humanistic ideas on sublimation of work, love and service in higher education to make it serve its purpose in its true sense.

Introduction

In Neo-Vedanta humanistic tradition of contemporary Indian thought, Vivekananda presented a philosophy for higher education which is holistic in its approach comprising work, love and service at the same time. Among contemporary Indian philosophers, educationists and thinkers; Vivekananda is one of those who revolted against the British system of higher education affirming that the higher education existing in India does not conform to the Indian culture in its true spirit. Vivekananda pointed out that present higher education system brings the external changes and hence lopsided because it does not help a person in developing the person internally. That is why he brought forth a unique indigenous concept of education which can develop a citizen holistically, empathetically and spiritually by sublimating and assimilating a sense of duty, love and service as the core elements in higher education which is humanistic in approach.

Swami Vivekananda's criticism against university higher education

Vivekananda criticized the present British system based university higher education which develops the person externally totally overlooking the innermost core of an individual which is the real development highly needed for man-making education. Stating the lacuna of higher education, Vivekananda points out that higher education turns the men into slaves who are capable of slavery and nothing else.

He also remarked that the higher education is not better than an efficient machine for rapidly turning out clerks. He further criticized the present system by citing an example of a man who wanted his ass to become horse. He was advised to thrash the ass in order to achieve this transformation and killed his ass in this process. Vivekananda harshly condemned higher education remarking "The education that you are getting now has some good points, but it has a tremendous disadvantage which is so great that the good things are all weighed down. In the first place it is not a man-making education, it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education or any training that is

based on negation is worse than death. The child is taken to school, and the first thing he learns is that his father is a fool, the second thing that his grandfather is a lunatic, the third thing that all his teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred books are lies! By the time he is sixteen he is a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless. And the result is that fifty years of such education has not produced one original man in the three Presidencies. Every man of originality that has been produced has been educated elsewhere, and not in this country or they have gone to the old universities once more to cleanse themselves of superstitions. 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 you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library "The ass carrying its load of sandalwood knows only the weight and not the value of the sandalwood." If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopedias are the Rishis. The ideal, therefore, is that we must have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our own hands, and it must be on national lines, through national methods as far as practical".

Solution suggested by Swami Vivekananda for higher education

Swami Vivekananda as a prudent and great master envisioned such a higher education which can lead an individual to holistic development developing his/her innermost potential and originality. For this question how it is possible?, he suggested that all round development is only possible through developing a sense of duty, love and service in an individual with which he/she has been deprived of till now.

Solution no. 1: Sublimation of work in higher education

As per Vivekananda, human being is active by nature. He must be doing some work or the other, physical or mental. Every work that he does leaves an impression on his mind. Further he added that no action could be totally good or bad that is why we should not delude ourselves into thinking that we are helping the world by doing good. The desire to do good is highest motive power in man if only we have proper attitude of service. He remarks that we must work and constantly do well, because it is a blessing to us. That is the only way to reach perfection.

Vivekananda states that attachment with any work and its result is the sole cause of misery. Hence "be unattached; let things work; let brain centres work; incessantly, but let not a ripple conquer the mind". The whole gist of Swami Vivekananda's teaching about sublimation of work in higher education is that we should work like a master not as a slave. Ninety nine percent of mankind work like slaves and the result is misery; it is all selfish work. Hence he suggested that we should work through freedom and love. He wanted to bring home that we should love the work and do it with unselfish motive without getting attached to it.

Solution no. 2: Sublimation of love in higher education

While talking about sublimation of love in education, Vivekananda points out that "Of all the forces that have motivated human mind to action, love is perhaps the greatest. Selfishness, enjoyment, amassing of wealth, jealousy, fear and hatred have also moved

men and women towards action. But these have not been motivations strong enough to achieve great purpose in life.” He further added that, “We have to begin by loving God first. Love manifests itself through reverence.

The best means of education, according to Vivekananda is love. Education should be based upon love. The students should be taught through love. The only motive in imparting education should be love for the educand and for the man in him. That is why Swami Vivekananda’s philosophy of education is known as man making education. The teacher’s aim should neither money making nor attainment of fame but only bestowing human love. The love within the educator is the real source of his influence upon the educand.

Solution no. 2: Sublimation of service in higher education

Besides work and love, Swami Vivekananda gave a lot of importance to service in higher education to achieve its goal in true sense. According to Vivekananda, an important teaching he received from Ramakrishna was that Jiva is Shiva (each individual is divinity itself). So he stressed on Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva, (to serve common people considering them as manifestation of God). According to Vivekananda, man is potentially Divine, so, service to man is indeed service to God. He always planned for a social service for the masses of the country. He pointed out that with the present colossal poverty with the majority of people living in squalor, dirt and malnutrition, the first thing to give them was employment and the wherewithal to get at least two square meals a day. He said, “To the poor, providing food is the first step to Godliness”. Therefore, higher education should not be merely literacy but must consist in improving the capacity of those taught and quality of their work in agriculture, industry and in the art of living. Swamiji thus foresaw the need for functional literacy movement to give a purposive slant to education so as to raise their capacity for work and achievement.

Conclusion

Higher education ideals proposed by Swami Vivekananda are supported by even most of the modern thinkers and educationists. By emphasizing sublimation of work, love and service in higher education, Vivekananda, in its true spirit, presented humanistic and holistic approach in higher education.

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