

Contemplating on Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy to Restore Consciousness in Retaining Human Dignity

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Abstract

In the prevailing situation, there is an alarmingly increasing rate of crime against humanity. There is an increase in crime against women and children, violence, homicides, terrorism, moral crisis etc. There is hardly a day when we glance through the newspaper where it does not mention about crime being committed by human being. Children of our era are more vulnerable than the olden days because of the exposure to crime and violence and due to misuse of electronic gadget, social media, internet etc. There are moral deterioration and degradation that are prevailing in every sphere of life. Therefore, there is an urgent need to rebuild our nation starting from the grass root level and by means of educating our children. This paper is an attempt to bring consciousness and awareness of the importance of character education, spiritual and moral renewal in relevant with Swami Vivekananda's philosophy in the present day situation.

Keywords: Vivekananda, Education, Human Dignity, Moral Development.

Introduction

We live in a world where there are endless struggle, fear and doubt. Human always strive for excellence, peace, harmony and a world without chaos or conflicts. Swami Vivekananda was a great educationist, philosopher, thinkers and a great social reformer. “He is a symbol of excellence manifested in man” (Purnatmananda, 2014). To live a more meaningful life and to build our world better, it would be worth reconsidering the dynamic philosophy of this great man of his time. When he returned to India after attending the “World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, he created a stir which was a colossus of strength, courage, confidence, love and manliness – the embodiment of the ideal of the man-making and character-building education he propagated.” According to him, education plays a fundamental role in eradicating the evils of the society and which helps in shaping and moulding hope of humanity. He has defined “education as the manifestation of perfection already in men”. His definition of education is something remarkable that every citizens of the modern society need to ponder deeply upon as it reflects the innate potentiality that is in man desiring to be reflected or express in different form. If only the society nurture and allow every individual to grow to the fullest without violating their natural pattern of expression by imparting Vivekananda’s philosophy of education, the world would have been better place to live in. His ideal nature of education is “to produce an integrated man who has the ability to foster his intellect, purify his emotion and be able to stand firmly on moral virtues with unselfishness”. To Vivekananda, education is not about merely collecting information, but something meaningful and practicable that of man-making, life giving and character-building. His philosophy of life influenced his educational thoughts and ideas. He believed in “Vedanta philosophy” which can be considers “as the ultimate goal of human life is to attain Unity with the Creator”. According to him the God is present in the heart of every man. Therefore, “the best way to worship the God is service to mankind”. To him development of a country is possible only through the real education. Education must therefore foster “development of good personality in every human being” to achieve or attain a desired nation. Vivekananda’s philosophy of life is to make an individual free from fear from his enmity and to face life with confident defeating every life challenges that encounter his way. It will restore back our lost human dignity that had fallen short of it. “The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practiced, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been

more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they were to be great, they became great”(Swami Vivekananda, 1989).

Swami Vivekananda's views on philosophy of education

According to Vivekananda the real education is to prepare man to be able to struggle for existence. Education is the means to transit from ignorance to enlightenment. He emphasized on self-learning and the teacher as a guide and a facilitator for the learners. Education therefore, is the preparation of man to be able to render their service for the welfare of the society, “to nurture his character and to imbue in him the spirit and courage of a lion”. Simply acquiring degree or certificate does not fulfill his aims of education. Education is more than that. Self-confident, self reliance and self- realization was his aim of education. The role of the teacher is to encourage and motivate the learner to discover the innate potential hidden within him. He is also against the bookish, rote memory education and theoretical way of learning. He strongly favored and spoke on practical and experimental education. He also warned all countrymen saying that “you will have to be practical in all spheres of work. The whole country has been ruined by mass theories.”

Importance of Swami Vivekananda's Views on Women Education

Women constitute nearly half of our nation's population. The contribution and the sacrifice women had made for the society can never be undermined. Yet, crime against women and children still continue to prevail in the existing society. Considering Swamiji's view on women education, our world would be a better place if women were given proper place and education in expressing their innate potential. According to Vivekananda, our women should be educated as to, “Make women strong, fear-less, and conscious of their chastity and dignity”. In the Indian context, women play a significant role at home. But the problem and obstacles confronted by the Indian women in India today still remain serious issues. Another discouraging and heartening trend is the crime against women that frequently occur in India. In a male dominated society, it is the women who are the most victimized and discriminated (Epstein, 2007). The classification and demarcation based on gender is the most basic social division that hindered the progress and development of our country. It is one of the most restraining factors to social change.

Vivekananda stresses on the importance of educating women to bring progress in a society. Unless women are being educated the progress and development of a country will remain incomplete. He emphasized skill enhancement of the women –vocational skills and training that

appropriately fit in to meet the demand of today's workforce. Though he suggested on various subjects like-sewing, nursing, culinary art etc. that seems to not fit in present scenario but more or less the notion of skills enhancement to match the skills what the employer is looking for remains the same. Self-dependent and self-reliance of women through education will restore back the lost dignity of the women as they have been under the suppression of the cruel social system for long.

Moral Values and Character Development

Unlike Vivekananda's day the rapid deterioration and degradation of moral values among the youth is very common in the present society. Children and youth of our era are more vulnerable than the olden days because of the exposure to crime and violence. Advancement in technology and the misuse of electronic gadget, social media, internet etc, many were lure into many undesirable and unhealthy situation. In the fast changing world, the dependency of the humans on the science and technology and mechanical way of living has rapidly reducing human dignity and building a tendency of machine mind. The moral and spiritual values are being undermined. "Recently our human civilization is passing through a dangerous situation. If we observe the present situation of our society sincerely, we can see that very dangerous anti-social activities, immoral activities, corruptions etc. are happening here and there in our society." (Barman & Bhattacharyya, 2012). There is a need to retrace and reconsider the life and philosophy of this dynamic man who once live a life to the fullest to pave a way for the world into the road of enlightenment. The most important aim of education according to Vivekananda is "to build good character among the students". Character is the cornerstone of self- development.

The principle of universal harmony

In order to peacefully co-exist, one must embrace the principle of universal harmony. We live in a multi-cultural world where there are lots of factor the can lead the nation to the abyss of violence and lawlessness. The principles must not be restricted in the sphere of religion but must apply from the basic level- family, workplace, politics, and in any sphere that we feel is suitable. With this principle, it will yield us a wonderful harvest. "Today, this will offer us the only panacea of all the threats and conflicts that confront us in every sphere of our life, society and religion. His message of harmony is based on the message of unity. The unity implies here is the unity of existence, the unity of religions and the unity of man. Man must therefore realize this

unity” (Purnatmananda, 2014). Intolerance, selfishness, fundamentalism, fanaticism, sectarianism, and dogmatism are the biggest hindrance in realizing peace and unity.

Conclusion

The right to education for all has been initiated by the “Constitution of India”, which was one of the dreams of Swami Vivekananda. His idea of “continual or lifelong education” has been already adopted by many countries around the world. But in the materialistic world of today, every country in the world is competing to be above the other, which create a major barrier in human dignity, everyone is striving for excellence now, nobody has time to caring others problems. So, “Vivekananda drew attention of the nations of the world in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago and spoke against the evils that exists in human society and called for crusade to fight against it”. Similarly, thousands of social reformers have come up with the teaching of human values and dignity and many more perspectives. “There is no doubt that today’s education system neglects training of the spiritual system of human values. People’s minds are not directed to higher pursuits of life with the result that their hidden potentials are not revealed. Only when wisdom, peace, strength, unselfishness, loving concern for others and other virtues become evident is a person transformed from a sensuous being to a true human being”. Swami Vivekananda also stresses the significance of women education. To Vivekananda, simply acquiring information is not real education but enabling the learner to be self-reliance and equipping them to face the life challenges. He also explains about how the female education retards the advancement of a society. Society cannot make a progress without improving the fate of the women. Educating the women will not only enable them to stand on their own feet but they will also be able to bring reformation in the society. Equal educational opportunity must be provided to both men and women if we want our country to compete with the other country as they are considered as two wheels of the society. The philosophy of Vivekananda and his contribution to the society is endless to say, one of the main focus of his teaching in learning is “to make the hidden ability of a learner to be manifest”. He believed that, “what a man learns is really what he discovers, by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge”. As we all are born in human society, we should have love, humanity in our heart, we should not be machine mind and machine heart, unkind and un-natural. We are human, supreme of all creatures.

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