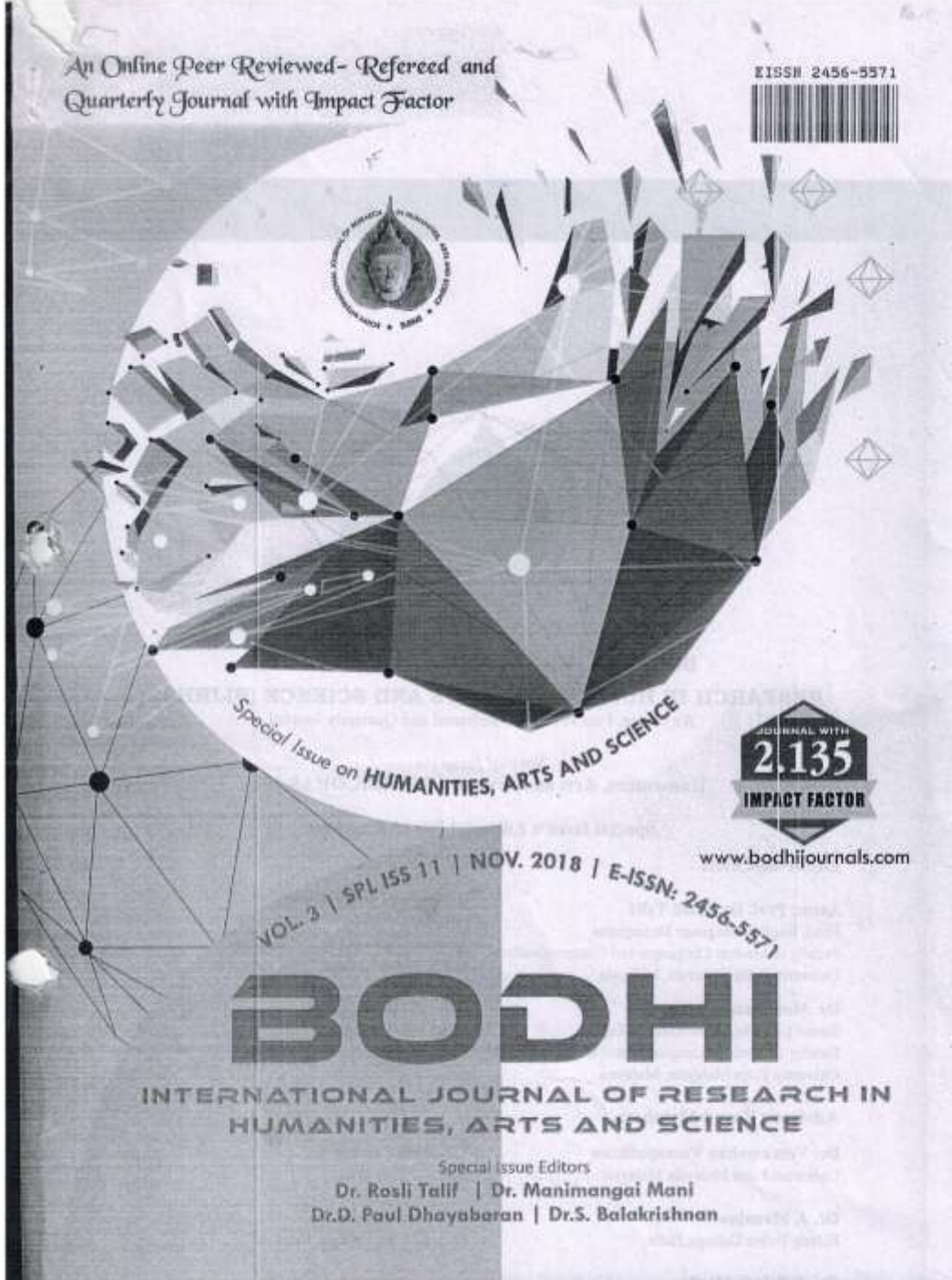


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# The Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda about Education

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### Abstract

*A person develops abilities, ideas, ideal behaviour and positive attitude through education. Carter V Good says, "It is social process by which people are subjected to the influence of a selected and controlled environment (especially that of the school) so that they may attain social competence and optimum individual development. 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. Education is not the amount of information that is put in to brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life- building, man making and character making education. Strength is goodness, weakness is sin. All sin and all evil can sum up in that one word: it is weakness that is the source of selfishness. It is weakness that makes men injure others. Does the modern education serve this purpose? Modern human beings are facing lots of problems in life and that education doesn't help them in solving their problems. Most of the people commit suicide are educated! What type of education is it? Most of the people involved in criminal activities are educated! Vivekananda's educational thoughts are not only revolutionary, but epoch making. Vivekananda expressed the outcome of self-knowledge in his words charged with his own great reason, Truth yourself, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul, see how it awakes; power will come, purity will come and everything that excellent will come, when the sleeping soul is roused to self-consciousness activity. Today the science of the matter must be combined with of the holistic perception of life, the 'Science of the Soul'. According to Vivekananda, Newton and Galileo are "prophets of physical science" and Upanishadic Rishis are "prophets of Spirituality". He hoped that in the days to come the ideal man would be equally intellectual, emotional, active and meditative. He also said "Science and philosophy will shake hands". Let's hope that dream of Swami Vivekananda will become reality in the 21st century.*

Vivekananda was a great educationist who revolutionized the field of education. His educational views were so perfect that even in today's world we have to find solutions of our problems from them. His views on education were based on the ground reality of India, as he had seen the contradiction between the glorious past of Indian culture and the present condition of India in his days. His deliberate thinking, vast reading and divine insight were at the base of his views. He wanted to bring change in India's future by changing education so he strongly advocated national education on national lines and based on national cultural tradition. Vivekananda's contribution to create New India was great. He opened the minds of Indians and reminded them their duty to the downtrodden people. He encouraged and appreciated the role of toilers and labourers in the growth of country's prosperity.

Vivekananda who had specified certain philosophical skill based education used to say,

"We must character in weakness is in that one of selfishness others."<sup>1</sup>

Present unemployment, technical education and reason based on Shakespeare or chair or is a different solved through so much of provide employment for their brethren talked about the aspect of daily bread.

I have education's problems of range of education leads to sp mainly on the skill base in solving unemployment to be considered Education. our present target to follow has a clear idea the marble is going to put the goal of the students about what Vivekananda

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ative attitude through people are subjected to fully that of the school based development. We mind is increased, the education is not the digested, all your life of education, strength that one word, it is a man injure others. ings are facing lots of problems. Most of it? Most of the people national thoughts are I the outcome of self-oh yourselves, teach amakes; power will, when the sleeping of the matter must be Soul". According to ce" and Upanishadic come the ideal man e also said "Science ni Vivekananda will

ized the field of even in today's them. His views, as he had seen culture and the thinking, vast ws. He wanted s so he strongly sed on national New India was hem their duty ted the role of ty.

Vivekananda was the first religious leader in India who had spoken for the common man and developed certain philosophy for them. He also recommended skill based education to make them independent. He used to say,

"We must have life building, man making and character making education. Strength is goodness, weakness is sin. All the problems, evils can sum up in that one word; it is weakness that is the source of selfishness. It is weakness that makes men injure others."<sup>1</sup>

Present day problems of poverty and unemployment are mainly the problems of lack of technical education. Education that is based on logic and reason is different from the education that is based on skills and practise. Enjoying the plays of Shakespeare is a different thing and making a table or chair or repairing a electrical problem at home is a different thing. The problems of India can be solved through skill based education as we have so much of population that it is a herculean task to provide employment to all the adult men and women for their bread and butter. Swami Vivekananda had talked about various aspects of education and one of the aspect or practical use of education is earning the daily bread.

I have analysed Vivekananda's thoughts on education in this paper that can eradicate the problems of present day India. However, Swamiji's range of thoughts on education varies from technical education to philosophical education and finally leads to spiritual education, I have concentrated mainly on the objectives of technical education or the skill based education and how it can be useful in solving India's major problems of poverty and unemployment of the common masses. The point to be considered first is about the purpose or aim of Education. Vivekananda once said that the flaw of our present day education is that it has no definite target to follow. Further he explains it as, A sculptor has a clear idea about what he wants to shape out of the marble block; similarly a painter knows what he is going to paint. But a teacher has no clear idea about the goal of his teaching.<sup>2</sup> We can add in it that even the students in higher education have no clear idea about what they are learning and why? According to Vivekananda,

"The goal of education is man making. Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man, which is the very nature of our inner soul."<sup>3</sup>

If we take this belief of Swamiji at the surface level and apply it in education, it means that every learner has different capacities and different likings. One can play a game of cricket masterly and the other can play the game in computer as well. One can make a beautiful painting with colours but the same person cannot make a beautiful statue. Everyone is imbued with different arts inherently and different skills by his likings. The aim of education is to find out the inherent capacities hidden in the student and to elevate it to higher level of execution.

In his idea of education, Vivekananda emphasised on physical health because a healthy mind resides in healthy body. He frequently quotes that one can not know his inner-self if he is weak by mind. Our education system does not provide any atmosphere for physical training. It lays great emphasis on the mental training. Our examination system also tests the cramming capacity of a student and not the practical knowledge he has received. The children are sent to nursery from the age of three and that prolongs up to the age of twenty two. No where there is a scope of physical development of a students. And this is the reason we produce more clerks than sportsmen. The performance of India in Olympics is the best example of it. In some of the games we cannot even qualify. We have a large coastal area but no swimmer from India has even qualified at world level. Such are the cases in so many areas. This is why Vivekanada believed that the ideal environment at home and school is crucial for the development of the child. The child has great influence of parents and teacher so they should inspire him by living an ideal life. Swamiji advocates the old Indian institution of Gurukuls for better growth of children. In this system of education, the students have the teacher always before them and the teacher who is an ideal of physique, skills, character and morality can inspire them more than any book. He is the best role model for them to follow. Vivekananda's views of education are similar to the scheme of contemporary educationists which is in nature heuristic. In this style, the teacher invokes student to ask questions, who becomes unable to find out answers for himself

under the guidance of his teacher. Unfortunately we have not been able to develop such systems in Indian education system and this is the root cause of the failure of our examination system and the cause of growing unemployment of the students in various specialized fields.

Many a people think that Swamiji's philosophy of education emphasises more on spiritual development and neglect the material side. Vivekananda has repeatedly focussed on the need for the removal of poverty and unemployment, in his plan for regeneration of India. According to him,

"We need technical education and all else which may develop industries, so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves, and save something against a rainy day."<sup>4</sup>

India may not be able to offer jobs to all the people reside in it, but as Swamiji said, we can develop our agriculture sector, domestic produce sector and our village system in such a manner that any person of a village need not think to go to cities for employment. For this we have to make our villages independent and develop a system that the products of villages are consumed by villages.

Swamiji also emphasise on women education. He believed that if the women of our country get the proper kind of education, they will be able to solve their problems with courage and confidence. The goal of female education is to make them bold and fearless, strong and aware of their modesty and dignity. He noted that Women have a special capacity and competence for the studies related with home and family. Hence he recommended that the knowledge of subjects like sewing, culinary, nursing, domestic science, arts, and embroidery etc. to make them independent and stable.

I would like to narrate an experience of mine here. On my visit to Kutch district of Gujrat which is a desert area with limited resources and limited scope of development as the region has rocky land throughout. The people of Kutch are considered innovative and hardworking and independent natured. In the Khavda and Bunny regions of Kutch, the girls from the beginning of their childhood are taught the art of embroidery. Any girl, from childhood to the marriageable age, embroiders more

than ten Lehengas and cholis artistically. As the region is attracting tourists from all over the world for its desert and arts, the girls can be able to sell their lehengas at a very high price to the foreign tourists and earn the expenses of their marriage and even help their parents. The price of the lehengas ranges from 50000 to 150000 according to the intricacies of their artistic embroidery.

Vivekananda, in this respect, said, "Life is a series of fights disillusionments...the secret of life is not enjoyment but education through experience. The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle of life, which does not bring out the strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy and the courage of a lion- is it worth of the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs."<sup>5</sup>

That is why Swamiji has often reiterated that "If the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain. If the poor cannot come to education, education must reach them at the plough, in the factory, everywhere." This is the duty of the government to provide free education to the needy and poor if they cannot reach the education.

Swamiji in one of his speeches has given the ideal of education and outcome of it. He said,

"The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making. But instead of that, we are always trying to polish up the outside. What use of it in polishing up outside when there is no inside? The end aim of all training is to make the man grow. The man who influences, who throws his magic, as it were, upon his fellow beings, is a dynamo of power, and when that man is ready, he can do anything and everything he likes."<sup>6</sup>

Swamiji knew that India is a country of masses and poor masses so he was aware when speaking on the objectives of education. He knew that a person cannot achieve his spiritual height until he would be able to earn his bread and run his family satisfactorily. He declared, "My countrymen! Stop weeping. You have wept enough. Make your nerves as strong as steel and stand on your legs. Today we are in need of a religion of humanity which may sustain all living in the country."

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Thus Swami Vivekananda, being a social reformer and social educationist, provided us with some of his great views on what education should be, what should be the objectives to be achieved from it and how we can achieve the fruitful results from this so as to make our country not only free from poverty and unemployment but to make it a best example of a country of sound social structure, superb innovative spirit and country of great adventures. This is how India can achieve the dream of being a Vishva Guru (Preceptor of the world) which was also a dream of Swami Vivekananda himself.

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