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Enhancing Teaching Practices by Applying Swami Vivekananda concept of Character-Building Education: Role & Responsibility of Teacher

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Abstract

"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"

- Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda, a revolutionary saint of contemporary modern times has influenced the entire world with inspirational thoughts and ideas. This paper tries to expand and analyze Swami Vivekananda views on character building education and the responsibilities of teacher as an endeavor to uplift and upgrade the society. The thoughts of Swami Vivekananda have implications in present day teaching process. In this perspective, Vivekananda strongly insisted that teachers as role models should have positive and active influence in developing students moral character under their guidance. They have to train and mould the minds of our young people so as to make them worthy citizens of our democratic nation. The essential component of educational pedagogy is to teach students to decide correctly what is right or wrong. Thus character-building education is the only answer to achieve the desired goal. Swami Vivekananda believed that a nation progresses on the basis of education and intelligence spread among the common people. Thus through his enriching scheme of character education he tried to inculcate democratic and national ideals on improving the quality of education within the school organization. This would ultimately lead to material progress of the country as well as to maintain India's spiritual heritage.

Key Words: *Character-Building, Teachers, Education Pedagogy, School Organisation, Nation progress.*

Introduction: Swami Vivekananda (1863, 12 January–1902, 4 July) a great Vedic-Hindu thinker-philosopher, revolutionary and a saint of contemporary modern times has influenced the entire world with inspirational thoughts and ideas. Education plays a vital role in democracy. It should act as a means to build the character of students. Swami Vivekananda gave a new terminology of Education which is in fact the most significant contributions of Swami Vivekananda in the educational parameters of the modern world. Swami Vivekananda argued that our nation must be strong only by sustainable regeneration of our common masses. Thus, in order to be worthwhile and effective, education must be rooted in religion – or, to be precise, in the realms of science and spirituality. The first essential requisite for attaining success in life is to have a strong and healthy body. “A sound mind in a sound body” is well known phrase given by the Greek philosopher (pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Thales Miletus, 624 – 546 BC). The arrogance, disobedience and lack of ethical conduct among students have dehumanized the educational practices of school. Vivekananda strongly insisted that teachers as role models should have positive and active influence in developing students moral character under their guidance. Teachers have to train, mould and sensitize the minds

of our young students so as to make them worthy citizens of our democratic nation. He stressed that classroom and schools are to serve as arenas for teaching. Only then the students will get the exposure to experience and practice moral values seriously and spontaneously. Under this circumstance, the ideas and thoughts of Vivekananda who dedicated his life and soul for positive social changes are so relevant. When the ideas and thoughts of Swami Vivekananda are analyzed in this context then it will be evident that character building was fundamental in his educational scheme.

What is Character-Building?

Character is the basis for one's own self development. Everything a person does, every action, every thought, every step, have an impact on the intellect and his personality. Further he realized three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great namely Conviction of the powers of goodness, Absence of jealousy and suspicion, Helping all who are trying to be and do we. Character-building education focuses on teaching what is right and wrong. The aim of education as self-development, therefore, leads to the aim of education for character. Realizing the aim of education as character formation, Swami Vivekananda said, "Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we think, leaves such an impression on the mind-stuff, and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface, they are sufficiently strong to work beneath the surface, subconsciously. What we are every moment is determined by the sum total of these impressions on the mind". More precisely in defining character, Swami Vivekananda further added that "the character of any man is the aggregate of his tendencies, but the sum of the total bent of his mind. As pleasure and pain pass before his soul, they leave upon it different pictures and the result of these combined impressions is what is called a man's character".

How to Form Character?

Regarding building character Swami Vivekananda has suggested (*Barman and Bhattacharyya*, 2012), some important guidelines or principles for character formation among the students. These are as follows-

- 1) **Hard work**-Character formation is possible only through hard work. It is not possible through comfort and enjoyment one receives in one's life. But rather through struggle, dedication and tedious labor one can build up good character.
- 2) **Moral and Spiritual Values**- Character-building requires traits such as thirst for knowledge, perseverance, faith, humility, obedience, sincerity, respecting the elders etc. These values can be inculcated among students by teachers setting personal example before them.
- 3) **The School**- In Vivekananda's opinion, the personal relationship between student and teacher is nourished or favoured through an educational environment i.e. the modern school. In ancient times it was the Gurukul system, where knowledge is transmitted from the teachers to the pupils.
- 4) **Habit formation**- Character is repeated habits, and repeated habits alone can reform character. Since character is so intricately connected with habits. Modern Psychology accepts the importance of habits in one life and it helps to shape the behavior of the individual. The teacher or the guardian helps one to shape and mould the conduct.
- 5) **Learning through mistakes**- Since errors or failures are the stepping stones to our progress and success in character. Vivekananda strongly believed that one should be allowed to commit mistakes in the process of character formation.
- 6) **Will make men great**- Vivekananda himself was an ideal teacher and educator. His words worked like magic upon men and women. Vivekananda asked the people to build up their character and manifest their real nature which is the Effulgent, the Resplendent the Ever Pure.

Therefore if an individual can internalize these ideas mentioned above he may realize the inner potentiality of himself, groom his self-confidence and lead a meaningful life while engaged in daily activities.

Role and Responsibilities of the School Teacher: Education according to Swami Vivekananda means not only the possession of academic degrees but also stressed on the character formation, sharpening of the intellect, increasing the strength of mind, power of concentration, developing the will power and thus helps to draw out the innate potentiality of man. Vivekananda who espoused the idea of

positive thinking believed that the man is endowed with hidden treasure which can be discovered and developed by introspection, concentration, contemplation and meditation. All these lead to his spiritual development and perfection among students. The modern teaching practices requires that every person should be developed. As a result of this, one can stand on one's own feet and emphasize on "man making and character building education."

Basically, the teacher's role and responsibility is to assist the students to reveal the dormant knowledge lying within themselves. In doing so, the educator can enlighten them to "uncover" the knowledge that is rooted within his mind. Moreover the best way to develop character of the students is by setting the personal example of an ideal teacher before the students. In ancient times, specifically in the Brahmanical and Buddhistic era, the teacher or the gurus used to present high ideals before students and as a result the students imitated these ideals. Swami Vivekananda says "without the personal life of the teacher there would be no education. One would live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire, and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching". However, in the truest sense, "The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else" (CW, vol. IV, p. 183). In addition, the teacher should cultivate the spirit of *shraddha* i.e. is having faith in one's own ability, being humble and respect for the teacher. However developing the sense of '*Shraddha*' in one self is the most important contribution of the great sage because such a man not only works vigorously for himself but also works for the development of others and the organization for which he works.

Sharing Responsibility in School Organizations: School as an epitome of knowledge flourishes when all the faculty members work in a team, cooperate with each other. Here again the opinion of Vivekananda is imperative. He said "Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succor you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future." His leadership qualities are revealed when as teacher, educator, manager he declared and convinced others by saying that "We are responsible for what we are, and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in future can be produced by our present actions; so we have to know how to act." Thus he opined that teacher should imbibe such qualities and learn how to act responsibly and be effective in moulding and reshaping the child character.

Swami Vivekananda suggested trying to give up jealousy and conceit and learns to work unitedly for others. He told, purity, patience and perseverance overcome all obstacles. He suggested taking courage and work on. Patience, honesty and steady work, according to Swami Vivekananda, is the ways to get success. Moreover classroom discussions on morality, ethics can facilitate and inculcate in human better well being. The current educational system has overemphasized the concept of blocking down the intellect with external knowledge at the cost of ignoring individual well-being. Lamenting over this Vivekananda strongly recommended all round development of the individual. Moreover he strongly believed that education system via teachers has the potentiality of developing good character among our students. This could be made possible only when a well-planned programme should be included and introduced in our school curriculum. The teacher as the pioneer should cover the following dimensions like (*Barman and Bhattacharyya, 2012*)-

1. Character Development Programme
2. Present Suitable Examples of ideal persons before students
3. Give moral education for developing a good character
4. Developing Nationalism among students
5. Developing good habits among students
6. Development of good attitude among students
7. Development of democratic ideals for building a good character
8. Organising Social Service activities

It is hoped that in near future by following such programmes under the guidance of teacher, the students would blossom successfully and would possess a positivistic approach towards life and

career. Thus teachers via educational pedagogy can mould pupil's character, make them strong, widen their intellect so that every student can become self-reliant, self-sufficient, earn their livelihood, secure their future and end up being a responsible member of a society.

Vivekananda's Views on Social Awareness & Nation Progress: Disappointed by the existing unethical moral value system prevalent in the society, Vivekananda argued that children should be made conscious of socialness. Moral values are being eroded. The fundamental principles of civilization are being ignored. Social fabrics are rapidly losing its significance. Rampant corruption, crime, unlawful activities, exploitation are inevitably increasing. The tremendous emphasis on the scientific and mechanical ways of life is fast reducing man to the status of a machine. In fact today's education produces only materialistic men or money making machines. Under such circumstances, school organization still continues to emphasize on imparting theoretical knowledge based education. As a visionary Vivekananda realized that our educational system badly needed a reform to cherish the goals of an empowered or progressive society. He further believed that via education all the existing social evils will be resolved.

In terms of economic prosperity, Vivekananda opined that India should establish her position in the world nations and to do so she should open her doors to outside world and interact. Thus in the educational sphere, his ideas may be considered as modern concept of globalization. Swami Vivekananda believed that a nation progresses on the basis of education and intelligence spread among the common people. Thus through his enriching scheme of character education he tried to inculcate democratic and national ideals on improving the quality of education within the school organization. In this respect he further stated that "Give and take is the law; and if India wants to raise herself once more, she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her". This statement amply proved his vision regarding the importance of exchange of intellectual ideas for the proper development of school organizational. This would ultimately lead to material progress of the country as well as to maintain India's spiritual heritage.

Conclusion: Our constitution guarantees right to education, freedom, religion to uplift the standards of living and to bring about total regeneration. Despite the promises made by our constitution India still seems to be faced with several problems like poverty, illiteracy, backwardness, caste and communal differences and so on. Under such circumstances the role and responsibilities of teachers is of utmost crucial in shaping and moulding the lives of the young citizens through character-building. The role of school teachers in the 21st century is often regarded as parent-substitute. As we all know character- building is the greatest power in an individual's life. Rather it is process of self-development.

Thus one can undoubtedly conclude Swami Vivekananda contribution in shaping and moulding the moral character of the students. Swami Vivekananda emphatically states that mere acquisition of knowledge i.e. information obtained from four walls of the classroom or gathered from books, periodicals cannot be termed as education. But rather it is the process of training the senses, widening the horizons, inculcating moral and ethical values and controlling the mind in order to make them self-sufficient individual. In this perspective, the role and responsibilities of teachers in building a sound and moralistic character among student is utmost important. The present day teachers via discussions, duties can motivate the students to imbibe the same values. However this goal can only be realized if our educational system aims at what Swami Vivekananda has said, 'we must have life building, man-making, character making and assimilation of ideas.' Thus through following the pathways suggested by swami Vivekananda one can aim at setting up an ideal society free from all kinds of social evils and corruption. Lastly as we have celebrated Swami Vivekananda 151th birth anniversary it should be remembered that the role and responsibilities of teachers is quite significant in realizing the goal put forward by Swami Vivekananda.

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