

Swami Vivekananda's Thoughts on Education in Modern Day Relevance

Anima Roy ¹ & Dr. Debjani Mukherjee ²

Received: 16 June 2026 / Accepted: 28 June 2026 / Published: 30 June 2026
Copyright © 2026 Author(s). Published by Siri Research Foundation. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

Abstract

Swami Vivekananda placed great importance on education as a tool for both personal and societal transformation. He emphasized that education should not be limited to the acquisition of knowledge for material success but should focus on holistic development, encompassing the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of life. His philosophy of education centered on the study of the human soul (Jiva atmanam). Self manifestation, self realization, self perfection and self awareness are the pillars of his educational philosophy. The characteristic feature of Vedanta philosophy is unity in diversity, the oneness of reality. It is fundamentally believed that the human soul is identical with the divine soul. Therefore, the study of the human soul and perfection is the principal aim of education. Thus, his philosophy of education gives a soul centered theory of education. According to him, human minds are actually minds of boundless knowledge. This infinite source of knowledge is in every individual. Thus, in his theory of the origin of knowledge, he states that all knowledge is within every individual; nothing comes from outside; it is all inside. To correlate with Vedantic oneness of reality, Vivekananda believed in the unity of mankind. Education must take an interest in promoting human relations and their understanding at both national and international levels.

Keywords: Vivekananda, Education, Vedanta, Human development.

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda was a most influential and renowned theorist, educationist and reformer of India in the 19th century. His idea and philosophy of education is the efflorescence of moral and spiritual culture. Vivekananda was not only a supporter of Vedanta, but he also gave Vedanta a practical form. His concept of education was something new in its sense. According to him, education is that which liberates one from negative tendencies and ignorance about one's real 'self'. He said, "Education is

¹ Research Scholar, Seacom Skill University, Bolpur, Birbhum, West Bengal

² Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Seacom Skill University, Bolpur, Birbhum, West Bengal

✉ Anima Roy, E-mail: animaroy1988@gmail.com

the discovery of the inner self.” He believes in comprehensive development of personality through proper education. He believed that “Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man”. “Perfection is already inherent in man, and education is the manifestation of the same”. All knowledge is inherent in man; no knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside.” We all have the capacity to do something good. Each of us has that inner competence. We can prepare this inner competence with the help of education. Manifestation means bringing out what is latent in every human being. He identified the problem, which is the root cause of all other problems. The problem is our inertia, which kills our initiative, self reliance and self confidence. Swami Vivekananda’s concept of education transforms people socially, morally, physically and spiritually.

So, according to Vivekananda, education is for making people self reliant. In contrast to the present educational system, Vivekananda advocated education for self development. He said, "We must have 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. What we want is western science coupled with Vedanta, 'Brahmacharya' as the guiding motto, and also Sraddha and faith in one's own self ". Thus Vivekananda's ideas of education are highly relevant to contemporary discussion on human development. Modern education systems are increasingly recognizing the limitations of traditional models that focus solely on academic performance. Vivekananda's Vedanta provides a framework for reimagining education as a tool for personal growth and societal progress, encouraging students to cultivate values such as non- violence, empathy, self-discipline, and a sense of purpose.

Objectives of the study

The requirement today is to cultivate qualities like the spirit of sacrifice, selfless service to society, cooperation, adherence to truth and non-violence in students and society. The objectives of this topic are -

- To find out Vivekananda's vision of education.
- To find out Vivekananda's collective well being and Human development through education.

Review of Literature

Hossain, M. (1973): Investigated “Swami Vivekananda’s philosophy of education through a psycho-metaphysical approach”. It was depicted through Vivekananda’s philosophy of education that his educational plans were embedded completely in Vedanta, which were found to be pertinent to the Indian society. Vedanta was found to be the only means to resolve the problem of Indian society. Hence, it was inferred from the study that the kind of education a child got in schools and colleges could not help him/her facing the problems of life so the crisis could only be resolved by following Vedantic concept of education; and the aim of education given in Vedanta was to promote the sense of understanding so that a sense of unity at national and international level could be developed.

Singh, L. (2014): Highlighted the importance of women's education in the present time. Vivekananda believed that without women's education it is not possible to develop the nation as both men and women complement each other.

According to Swami Vivekananda, education should be aimed at “man-making” and “character building”. For him, education was to develop an integrated person with

all his possibilities, emotional maturity, intellect, morality and selflessness. For youth, his message was, "Let India arise! Onward forever! Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, and even unto death-this is our motto." He said 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." Character is positively related to habit. When the habits are good, they lead to the formation of good character, and the bad habits lead to bad character. Therefore, habit formation should be given importance in the education system. Formation of character also requires purity of mind, quest for knowledge, faith and obedience. All these qualities could be learnt from teachers' personalities.

M.K. Gandhi emphasized the training of the Hand, Heart and Head, overarched by the values of truth, non-violence, self-control, conscientiousness and renunciation. According to Gandhi value based education is essentially education for self-realization. Gandhi said, "Education means all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit." As such, education becomes the basis of personality development in all dimensions-moral, mental, and emotional.

Research Methodology

The present paper is totally based on the basis of "philosophical method" and the data collected from all primary and secondary sources. The research on Vivekananda's education has a very wide range of areas. But in this study, the scope taken here is the role of Vivekananda's education in human development for a specific and concise discussion on the matter. The main purpose of this research is the description of the existing present theories and follows proper research methods.

Result and Discussion

Aims of Education

According to Swami Vivekananda, the aim of education is "man-making" and "character building". He believed, "Education is not measured by the amount of information that is imparted to the pupil but that it must lead to life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas." Character is the solid foundation of self development. For building character, he points out that the following are the chief aims of education.

- Education for character formation, morality and spirituality.
- Education for physical development
- Education for religious development
- Education for universal brotherhood
- Education for self confidence and self reliance

Education for making people self confidence and self reliance: In contrast to the present educational system, he suggested education for self development. According to Vivekananda, "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. What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, 'Brahmacharya' as the guiding motto, and also Sraddha and faith in one's own self". Thus for him, the function of education is the uncovering of the knowledge hidden in our mind.

Positive Education and Self learning

Swami Vivekananda believed in 'positive education' and 'self learning' which encourages students to think for themselves with confidence and morals. This positive and moral education is mostly needed in the present education system. In the present education system, moral education is one of the most important core subjects in all sort of educational institutions and also for our day to day life. It helps us to become the person we are meant to be and to understand the value of human life. Moralities are principles of life that guide the standard of human behaviour. Positive thinking and morality teach us to believe in what is right and what is wrong and what is important in our life. They are conducive to one's physical and mental health as well as to social welfare. It reflects one's attitudes, choices, decisions, relationships, judgments, dreams and vision. Vivekananda encourages self learning by saying that, "You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul." His 'Positive' and 'self learning' education inculcates in a man the spirit of service, social sensitivity, cooperation, sacrifice and high moral character. He said, "Education has yet to be in the world, and civilization-civilization has begun nowhere yet".

Curriculum of Education

Education is an important parameter of human development. The greatest gift of education is the knowledge of unconditional love and a set of values. Vivekananda believed that the curriculum should be designed so that it leads to holistic development of a student. The curriculum is to be based on the training of mind, body and soul. This type of curriculum integrates culture and technology, the hunt for the goal which liberates man from fear, inertia, ignorance, greed and superstition. It helps students apperceive qualities like non-violence, love and kindness, compassion, towards all living beings, honesty, integrity and tolerance. It enhances self-realization and purified human resource development.

Medium of Instruction

Swami Vivekananda said that, "Besides mother tongue, there should be a common language which is necessary to keep the country united". Vivekananda emphasized education should be imparted through the mother tongue. He not only gave importance to mother tongue as the medium of education but gave equal importance to English and Sanskrit as a medium of instruction. Presently, the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction at the school level, but English and Hindi are used as official languages in India.

Teacher

According to Swami Vivekananda, "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". He said that teachers should lead an exemplary life for students. The relationship between teacher and students will be friendly with faith and respect.

Women Education

According to Swami Vivekananda, it is completely wrong to discriminate between genders and castes because there is no distinction of gender and caste in the 'Atman' or soul. The soul has neither gender, nor caste, nor imperfection. So there is no gender bias. He said that the soul is eternal. Every soul is potentially divine. He suggested not thinking that there are men and women, but only that there are human beings. The

characteristic feature of Advaita Vedanta philosophy is unity in diversity, the oneness of reality. It fundamentally believes the human soul is identical with the divine soul. But in present India, the condition of women is still deplorable. Domestic violence, female feticide, sexual harassment or rape and other types of abuses are still there. In this crucial situation, the empowerment of women has become very necessary. To reduce the inequality between men and women, every country should give more importance to women's education. Swamiji said, "There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved". He believed that a nation cannot progress without including women in the mainstream. He believes without uncovering the possibilities of women, we cannot reach to our goals. Women's education is first and foremost a requisite of the development of a nation.

Mass Education

According to Swami Vivekananda, education will remain incomplete if its doors are closed to the masses. Every member of the nation should be well educated to build a healthy and developed country. He said, "I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses of India are once more well-educated, well-fed and well-cared for." Swamiji believes the reason for all miseries is the pathetic condition of the masses. He considers education to be the only solution to change the condition of the masses. It is only through education that there self esteem can be restored. He regrets that nothing substantial has been done for educating the poor. He pleaded for mass liberation.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be stated that today our society is running through an acute crisis. Human values are deteriorating day by day at a rapid rate in each and every corner of our society. Raping, cheating, snatching, rioting, and stealing are a common phenomenon in our society. Another burning issue or problem that our society is facing today is the uncompromising conflict of one religion with another, which leads to unwanted inhuman events. After all, erosion of values is found in every sphere of life. From the analysis of Swami Vivekananda's scheme of education, it is clear that the uplift of the masses is possible only through education. For the betterment of humanity, education should be given first irrespective of poverty, religion, or caste. He suggests that the solution of all problems of mankind is through a comprehensive education structure. Highlighting the needs of value based education, Swami Vivekananda says that, "Education means that process by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, and intellect is sharpened, as a result of which one can stand on one's own feet". Swamiji believes the education system should have its foundation on character building, morality, spirituality, universal oneness and freedom from fear. He defines education as the means to realize the truth of human life that we all are the incarnation of the same God.

Reference

- Chakraborty, Mohit (2008). *Swami Vivekananda: The Educator*. New Delhi: Sterling Publication.
 Datta, D.M. & Chatterjee, S. C. (1984). *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. The University of Calcutta.
 Maitra, S.K. (2017). *The ethics of the Hindus*. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press.
 Mohanty, A. K. (2006). *Comparative Religion: Concepts and Issues*, Dept. of Special Assistance in Philosophy, Utkal University.

Mundakopanishad 3.2.4

Narayan, Arvind (2010). *Vedanta and Modern Education: The Legacy of Vivekananda*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Bharati, Swami Paramananda (2010). *Vedanta Prabodha*. Caukhamba Surabharati Prakasana.

Radhakrishnan, S. (1935). *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: S Chand Publishers.

Ranganathananda, Swami (1971). *Eternal Values for a Changing Society*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Tilakaratne, A. (2020). *Buddhist Ethics*. Srilanka: Sarasavi Publishers and SLABS.

Vivekananda, Swami (1897). *Lecture from Colombo to Almora*. Madras: Vyjayanti Press.

Vivekananda, Swami (1985). *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (8 Volumes)*. Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.

Vivekananda, Swami (1993). *My India: The India Eternal*. Kolkata: Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture.