

Contemplations of Swami Vivekananda on Emerging Paradigms in Educational Philosophy

Soma Neogy

Assistant Professor

Uluberia College, West Bengal, India

e-mail: somaneogy123@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

Swami Vivekananda, great patriot saint educationist who dedicated his entire life to the upliftment of humanity, tirelessly working for the spiritual, social, and intellectual advancement of individuals. This philosophical and documentary study employs a purely qualitative approach to examine the contemporary relevance of Swami Vivekananda's thoughts on emerging educational paradigms such as holistic development, mass education, women's education and empowerment, peace education, and value education. The findings of the study affirm that Vivekananda's perspectives on these aspects of education hold immense significance in the current context. His vision aligns with the goals of creating a more equitable and harmonious society. The study highlights that the Indian government, various state governments, educational policies, committees, and commissions, as well as the planning bodies, acknowledge the enduring relevance of Vivekananda's educational philosophy. His emphasis on holistic development, mass literacy, women empowerment, peace-building, and value education resonates deeply with the current global challenges and aspirations for sustainable progress. In the present scenario, there is no viable alternative to the educational philosophies articulated by Vivekananda to ensure the effective functioning of democracy, the promotion of equality, equity, and the cultivation of the ability to live harmoniously in a diverse world. His thoughts provide a robust foundation for fostering sustainable development, as they integrate the essential dimensions of human growth with the broader social and ethical goals required for global well-being.

Keywords: Swami Vivekananda, Educational Philosophy, Emerging Paradigms.

INTRODUCTION:

Swami Vivekananda, the great patriot-saint of India, remains an eternal source of inspiration as a philosopher, educationist, preacher, and reformer. He dedicated his entire life to the upliftment of humanity, tirelessly working for the spiritual, social, and intellectual advancement of individuals. His ideas were deeply rooted in the ancient wisdom of India but radiated a universal appeal, resonating with people across cultures and generations. Vivekananda's dynamism of thought emphasized the development of both the body and soul as a means of achieving human excellence. The central theme of his life and work revolved around "man" - his growth, development, and fulfillment as a complete being. He believed that the

ultimate goal of education and social reform was the creation of strong, enlightened, and morally upright individuals capable of transforming society.

The concept of an “emerging image” aptly describes Swami Vivekananda’s impact as an educator and visionary. An emerging image suggests someone or something that continuously proves their relevance and excellence over time. This idea is profoundly compatible with Vivekananda’s legacy, as his thoughts and actions continue to resonate with contemporary challenges, making him a guiding light for modern education and social philosophy. His persona and teachings have gradually evolved into a towering image that transcends time, igniting the scope for exploration of unknown truths and offering an iconoclastic interpretation of India’s soul rediscovered. Vivekananda’s awakening spirit urged Indians to look inward, rediscover their spiritual and cultural roots, and simultaneously embrace modernity and progress.

Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, aptly articulated Vivekananda’s relevance when he described him as “rooted in the past and full of pride in India’s prestige,” yet modern in his approach to life’s challenges and solutions. Nehru recognized Vivekananda as a bridge between India’s rich historical heritage and its contemporary aspirations. Nehru also highlighted the core mission of Vivekananda’s life, which was the service of mankind. This mission was expressed through his efforts in social service, mass education, religious revival, and social awakening. For Vivekananda, education was not merely an academic endeavour but a tool to empower individuals and uplift society as a whole (Nehru, 1960).

Swami Vivekananda’s contributions spanned far beyond the realm of education. His insights extended to critical issues such as poverty eradication, economic development, modernization of agriculture, industrialization, and the cultivation of managerial and organizational skills. These contributions remain profoundly relevant to modern India, offering practical solutions to contemporary challenges. Vivekananda emphasized the interconnectedness of all these domains, asserting that the holistic development of individuals was the foundation for a prosperous and harmonious society. He believed that the eradication of poverty and inequality required not only economic and technological progress but also moral and spiritual awakening. Education, according to Vivekananda, was the cornerstone of human development. He famously asserted that education is the “manifestation of the perfection already in man,” highlighting its transformative power to bring out the best in individuals. For him, education was not confined to the accumulation of knowledge or the pursuit of academic excellence. Instead, it was a lifelong process of self-realization and character building. He envisioned an education system that focused on nurturing self-reliant, strong, and morally upright individuals who could contribute meaningfully to society. Vivekananda’s educational philosophy revolved around what he called “man-making education,” which emphasized the development of physical strength, intellectual clarity, emotional stability, and spiritual enlightenment.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The study involves with the educational philosophy of Vivekananda and its relevance to the emerging trends. For this the researcher uses various primary and secondary documents as sources of the data. So, the present study adopted document based historical method followed by qualitative approach.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the Vivekananda's contributions to educational thought and their reflection in the paradigm of holistic development.
2. To explore Swami Vivekananda's vision on education in relation to its evolving paradigm, particularly in the area of mass education.
3. To explore Swami Vivekananda's vision on education in relation to its evolving paradigm, particularly in the domain of women's education and empowerment.
4. To explore Swami Vivekananda's vision of education and its relevance to the emerging paradigm of peace education.
5. To explore Swami Vivekananda's vision of education and its relevance to the emerging paradigm of value education.

SOME EMERGING PARADIGMS AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA:

Holistic Development:

Swami Vivekananda, one of India's most influential spiritual leaders and educationists, advocated for a comprehensive approach to education that aimed at the holistic development of an individual. He strongly believed that education should not merely be about acquiring information or academic success but about nurturing the physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human personality. In his words, education should be used to "manifest the perfection already in man" (Vivekananda, 1970). This statement he made for sure goes against the existing educational practices that value achievement and professional training over everything else. Moreover, this school of thought overlooks the necessary care to be provided to emotional health, moral values, and spiritual development.

Education is supposed to improve one's mental faculties, but it should also be the reason for the cultivation of one's physical strength and stamina. Swami Vivekananda illustrates this concept through one of his quotes, where he mentions, "You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita" (Vivekananda, 1999). Through this saying, he brings to everyone's attention the need for fitness in achieving self-growth. His emphasis on physical strength is in line with modern educational practice, which incorporates sports and physical activity into the curriculum to promote health and teamwork. However, Vivekananda went beyond physical fitness and advocated intellectual clarity and critical thinking. He believed that education should enable students to think independently, question doctrines and search for truth, developing a rational and scientific temperament. Emotional stability was another essential component of holistic development, according to Vivekananda. He recognized that individuals cannot thrive in the absence of emotional balance and mental peace. In today's context, this

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aspect resonates with the increasing awareness of the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL) in education, which focuses on cultivating empathy, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. Vivekananda's philosophy further stressed the significance of moral and ethical values, as he considered character-building the essence of education. He stated, "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" (Vivekananda, 1970). Vivekananda's philosophy of education was centered on spiritual knowledge, which set it apart from most contemporary perspectives. He saw spirituality as a unifying force that transcended religious boundaries and promoted universal values such as compassion, non-violence, and the interconnectedness of all beings. This is consistent with modern discussions of education for global citizenship, which emphasizes inclusion, tolerance, and a sense of responsibility towards humanity and the environment.

In today's education system, the emphasis is primarily on academic achievement and career preparation, often ignoring the holistic aspects of Vivekananda. Research highlights the detrimental effects of such an approach, including increased stress, anxiety, and lack of purpose among students (Goleman, 1995). Vivekananda's insight serves as a poignant reminder of the need to balance emotional and moral development with intellectual development. His philosophy calls for an education system that not only equips individuals with technical knowledge and skills but also nurtures their inner potential, helping them live meaningful and fulfilling lives. To incorporate Vivekananda's vision into modern education, schools and universities need to adopt a multi-dimensional approach. The curriculum should include not only academic subjects, but also physical activities, ethical discussions and opportunities for spiritual reflection. Teachers should act as mentors who inspire students to think critically, act with empathy and develop a sense of purpose. Policymakers must prioritize the overall well-being of students, ensuring that the education system not only produces workers but also responsible and enlightened citizens.

Therefore, Swami Vivekananda's emphasis on holistic development remains a timeless and transformative idea. His educational philosophy offers valuable insights into addressing the shortcomings of modern education systems. By integrating physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions into the educational framework, we can create a system that aligns with the true purpose of education: the all-round development of individuals and the betterment of society. Vivekananda's ideas challenge us to rethink education not as a means to an end but as a journey towards self-realization and universal harmony.

Mass Education:

The issue of universalizing education, which would allow all individuals to receive an education, has arisen in modern India. In actuality, Vivekananda was the first to see this issue and advocate for universal education in India. According to Roy and Ghosh (2015), Vivekananda used the term "mass" to refer to "men, women, and children who are the workers, peasants, students, and working classes of the world." Each country's population is made up of the

aforementioned groups, and they form its foundation. In order to advance a country forward, we must first educate its citizens. As intelligence and knowledge spread among the populace, a country advances proportionately.

Swami Vivekananda strongly criticized the upper castes for their prolonged neglect and disdain toward the lower classes in India. He foresaw a time when the roles would reverse, and the once-despised lower classes would become the source of contempt for the upper classes. His contemporary, Rabindranath Tagore, echoed similar sentiments in his poignant words, “Oh my unhappy country, you have degraded men, and now you must share the woes of such degradation” (*Hey mordurbhaga desh, yader korechho apaman / Apamane hote hobe tahader sabra saman*). Both visionaries highlighted the urgent need for societal reform to address these systemic inequalities, and Vivekananda identified education as the primary solution. According to him, education was the key to empowering marginalized communities, enabling them to solve their own problems and achieve self-reliance.

Vivekananda passionately advocated for universal access to education, stressing that it must reach even the most disadvantaged sections of society. He famously remarked, “If the poor boy cannot come to education, education must go to him.” This statement underscored his commitment to breaking down barriers that prevented the masses from accessing learning opportunities. He further observed, “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 in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.” Vivekananda believed that the neglect of the common people was at the root of India’s decline and insisted that regenerating the nation required a focus on their welfare through free and compulsory mass education (Vivekananda, 2016d).

Swami Vivekananda envisioned a model of mass education that aimed at shaping character, fostering self-confidence, and expanding intellectual capacities, ultimately enabling individuals to become self-reliant. He firmly believed that enlightened citizens, equipped with strong moral character, a philanthropic mindset, courage, and resilience, would lead the transformation necessary for societal progress (Bandyopadhyay, 2018). In this context, Vivekananda sought to create a harmonious fusion between India’s rich cultural heritage and the scientific advancements of the West. He proposed a comprehensive framework of “man-making education,” which was deeply rooted in his overarching philosophy of Vedanta. For Vivekananda, education was not just a tool for personal growth but a means to address the nation’s challenges and pave the way for collective advancement. He famously regarded the ignorance of the masses as a national sin, emphasizing the urgent need to illuminate their minds. He believed that empowering the masses through education would enable them to perceive and understand the rapidly changing world around them. By opening their eyes to new possibilities and knowledge, Vivekananda envisioned an educated populace capable of shaping their own destiny and contributing meaningfully to societal development. For him, education was the

ultimate solution for overcoming social and economic challenges, fostering both individual and collective progress.

Women Education and Empowerment:

Swami Vivekananda placed significant emphasis on women's education as a means of empowering them and enabling their active contribution to nation-building. He firmly believed that the progress of society and the welfare of humanity were intrinsically linked to the improvement of women's condition. As Vivekananda stated, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing" (Vivekananda, 2016c). Inspired by the advancements he observed in progressive nations where women worked alongside men and contributed significantly to national development, Vivekananda was deeply pained by the plight of women in India. He recognized that the true strength or "shakti" of a country lies in its women and envisioned a future where women would be free, self-respecting individuals with the autonomy to make their own decisions.

Vivekananda strongly advocated for providing women with an education that would empower them to overcome societal challenges and achieve their full potential. He argued that women should receive training that would instill strength and self-reliance, enabling them to address the issues they face independently. As he famously remarked, "Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them. In matters concerning them, who are you?" (Vivekananda, 2016e). This statement highlights his belief in women's agency and his rejection of patriarchal dominance over matters concerning women's lives.

Empowerment, according to Vivekananda, is a pathway to increased participation in decision-making, enabling women to achieve equal opportunities alongside men in political, economic, social, and cultural domains. He drew a strong connection between women's emancipation and empowerment, underscoring that the root cause of women's social degradation was the lack of education. Vivekananda firmly believed that education was the only means by which women could secure their rights, freedom, and empowerment. Through education, women could rehabilitate themselves and attain positions of equality and independence in society. His vision extended beyond the material domain to include spiritual independence, recognizing the holistic nature of empowerment. Vivekananda's dream of empowering women found expression in the establishment of Sri Sarada Math, which became the first monastic organization in the world exclusively managed and maintained by women. This initiative was a testament to his commitment to women's spiritual and social independence, reflecting his progressive and inclusive vision.

In modern India, Vivekananda's ideas on women's education continue to find resonance. The National Policy on Education (1986) is one of the many governmental efforts aimed at promoting women's education. This policy emphasizes widening women's access to vocational,

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technical, and professional education, with the ultimate goal of fostering their empowerment and economic independence. These initiatives align with Vivekananda's vision of education as a tool for self-reliance and societal transformation. As India strives to achieve the status of a developed nation and global superpower, the empowerment of women remains a critical priority. Realizing this vision requires adhering to the principles articulated by Swami Vivekananda. His dream of an India where women are educated, independent, and empowered continues to inspire and guide efforts toward creating a more equitable and progressive society. By following Vivekananda's ideals, India can ensure that its women contribute meaningfully to the nation's progress and development.

Peace Education:

Across the globe, there is a growing emphasis on peace education as the quest for global harmony demands extensive knowledge and unwavering dedication. The importance of fostering peace has directed attention toward integrating it into the teaching-learning process. The preamble of the UNESCO Constitution aptly highlights this need, stating, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." Swami Vivekananda's vision resonates with this ideal, as he firmly believed in the necessity of peace for human progress. His profound conviction in favor of peace is evident in his assertion: "...Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'" (Vivekananda, 2016a). Moreover, Vivekananda expressed immense joy at the prospect of individuals embracing the principles of peace, saying, "My heart leaps with joy... when I find anybody thoroughly launched into the midst of the doctrine which is to shower peace on earth" (Vivekananda, 2016e). His teachings and writings are filled with such messages, emphasizing the boundless expansion of one's heart and mind to embrace all of creation with profound, universal love (Atmapriyananda, 2017).

Education, according to Vivekananda, plays a pivotal role in aligning the human mind with the infinite and fostering harmony and peace among all beings. He believed that peace education aims to instill a deep and enduring commitment to peaceful ways of living in human consciousness. Through such education, individuals learn to address and resolve various forms of violence - whether they arise from wars, ethnic conflicts, domestic disputes, civil unrest, or environmental degradation - on both micro and macro levels. In contemporary times, peace education has emerged as an essential aspect of educational institutions, recognizing that peace is not merely the absence of conflict but a state of mind that can be cultivated through the right kind of education. It is crucial to understand that peace education is not a separate academic subject to be added to the curriculum but rather a foundational orientation infused into existing subjects, textbooks, and teacher discourses. As Udayakumar (2009) notes, peace education involves reorienting the educational process to embed values of harmony and understanding across all areas of learning. This approach ensures that education becomes a tool not only for

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intellectual growth but also for fostering a culture of peace, enabling students to contribute meaningfully towards building a harmonious and sustainable world.

Value Education:

Since India's independence, various educational commissions, policies, and frameworks, including the National Curriculum Frameworks (NCF) of 2000 and 2005, have consistently emphasized the urgent need for value orientation in education. These documents and committees have expressed significant concern over the erosion of essential values and the growing sense of cynicism prevalent in society. They argue that such challenges can only be addressed through the transformative power of education. Education, as envisioned, must foster universal and enduring values, guiding society toward unity, integration, and a sense of collective harmony. The necessity of incorporating value education into the curriculum across all stages of learning aligns closely with the perspectives offered by Swami Vivekananda, who underscored the importance of ethical and moral development long before these modern educational discussions emerged.

Vivekananda's greatest contribution lies in his advocacy for the cultivation of lofty humanistic ideals, rooted in the ethical and cultural heritage of India. His emphasis on universal human values remains as relevant today as it was during his time. He believed that ethical values are central to the well-being of both individuals and society. Vivekananda's assertion that "One idea stands out as the center of all ethical systems, expressed in various forms, namely, doing good to others," reflects his unwavering commitment to altruism and service. He further elaborated on the interrelationship between morality and intellectual development, stating, "My idea is to show that the highest ideal of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest metaphysical conception, and that you need not lower your conception to get ethics and morality. On the other hand, to reach a real basis of morality and ethics, you must have the highest philosophical and scientific conceptions" (Vivekananda, 2016b).

In this context, values represent the higher normative needs of humanity, which individuals experience as inner moral or aesthetic imperatives. According to Vivekananda, the development of such values is only possible through the acquisition of inner strength and moral discipline, which can be attained through practices like yoga. He believed that yoga not only strengthens individuals physically and mentally but also elevates them spiritually, enabling them to live a life guided by ethical principles. For Vivekananda, the ultimate goal of education was to empower individuals to lead a morally upright life, where intellectual achievements and ethical behavior coexist harmoniously. Vivekananda's insights into value education resonate strongly in today's context, where societies face challenges such as materialism, ethical erosion, and social division. His vision of integrating values into education serves as a timeless blueprint for nurturing responsible, compassionate, and morally empowered individuals capable of contributing positively to society.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy embodies a timeless relevance, addressing emerging paradigms in education from both national and global perspectives. His vision of education extends beyond the confines of academics, offering a source of hope and empowerment to the marginalized, oppressed, and dispossessed. Vivekananda's philosophy advocates for the restoration of fundamental human rights through education. He not only emphasized the importance of women's education but also encouraged women's empowerment in its true sense. His advocacy aimed at eradicating visible and invisible gender gaps, as well as eliminating social and cultural discrimination. By envisioning education as a tool for peace-building, Vivekananda underscored its necessity as a prerequisite for the progress of human civilization.

For Vivekananda, universal values were deeply rooted in the spiritual oneness of the world. He emphasized the idea of unity in diversity and encouraged looking upon one's neighbour as an extension of oneself. He passionately believed that education should be accessible to every child, asserting that denying a child access to education is a violation of human rights. His altruistic vision of education was grounded in selfless dedication, where one's actions and words contribute to the betterment of others. According to him, altruism represents the highest ethical practice and serves as a pathway to human liberation. Vivekananda's educational philosophy is a unique synthesis of Western scientific thought and the spiritual depth of Vedanta.

Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of education emphasizes holistic development, which encompasses the growth of an individual in every dimension - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. This concept of holistic development was comprehensive, focusing on the development of the body, mind, and spirit. His educational philosophy aimed to create well-rounded individuals capable of contributing positively to society while maintaining a strong sense of self and universal harmony. For Vivekananda, education was not merely the acquisition of knowledge but a process of awakening all aspects of human potential. He believed that true education should aim at the overall development of an individual, nurturing both intellectual and moral capabilities. In his view, physical strength is foundational to human development. He stressed the importance of physical fitness and discipline as the basis for a healthy mind and a productive life. Along with physical development, he believed that emotional stability and mental clarity were essential for personal growth and societal contribution. He encouraged the cultivation of qualities like self-confidence, resilience, and equanimity, which enable individuals to navigate life's challenges with strength and composure.

Few individuals of his time were as deeply connected with the soul of India as Swami Vivekananda. His travels across the country allowed him to intimately understand the struggles and aspirations of the people. These observations formed the foundation of his profound educational insights. Vivekananda's educational philosophy addressed many pressing issues of his era, most of which remain relevant even today. His approach prioritized holistic

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development, mass education, women's education and empowerment, peace education, and value-based education, all of which he viewed as transformative forces for societal regeneration. The enduring relevance of Vivekananda's vision is evident in the educational policies and frameworks of modern India. Successive governments, state agencies, education commissions, and planning committees have acknowledged the importance of his ideas.

In conclusion, Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy is as significant today as it was over a century ago. His ideas provide a roadmap for creating a just and equitable society through education. By embracing his principles of mass education, women's empowerment, peace-building, value education, inclusivity, and technical learning, we can address the challenges of the modern world. These paradigms not only promote social harmony but also contribute to sustainable development, ensuring a brighter and more inclusive future for all.

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