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Education As The Mastery Of The Mind Through Yoga

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ABSTRACT;

Education, according to Swami Vivekananda, is not filling the mind with a lot of facts but changing the man by perfecting the mind. Perfecting and getting complete mastery of one's own mind is the ideal of education. It is not possible to change the mind by force. Nor is it possible to change it by one's own sweet will. One can change one's mind only by gaining complete mastery over one's own thoughts. The thoughts and the senses should be my servants not my masters. Then only it is possible to dispel evil. Education is a process of making man divine by the mastery over one's thoughts and senses. This is possible through the power of concentration. Concentration, according to Vivekananda, is the power of attachment of the mind to certain things. Concentration includes the power of detachment also.

KEY WORDS; EDUCATION, YOGA, SWAMY VIVEKANDA

The perfect mind is that which has both the power of attachment and detachment. It has the capacity to take itself off certain things. Education should enable the student to develop the power of attachment as well as the power of detachment. "If the man is equally powerful in both— that man has attained manhood"¹, says Vivekananda. An individual who has the power of attachment and detachment alone is the master of himself or herself. Nothing can make such a person unhappy. He does not become miserable even if the whole world crumbles. He cannot be disturbed even when the entire universe tumbles about his ears. He exists like the Buddha whose silence is so deep that even a thousand carts passing by him cannot disturb. Vivekananda holds that no book can teach us the powers of the mind. No amount of reading can help us in attaining the power of concentration, attachment and detachment. Crowding the mind of the child is of no avail in gaining concentration.

Teaching of all philosophies or theories is of no use. It is only through the science of Yoga, *Rāja-Yoga* in particular, that one can achieve the power of the concentration of the mind. Vivekananda maintains that *Rāja-Yoga* is the greatest science of the mind. It is the psychology which alone embodies the facts and secrets about the mind. *Rāja-Yoga* is the science of the mind that ancient India has offered to the world. *Patanjali* is its founder. He codified the *Yoga Sūtras* by collecting the materials from the Vedas and the Upanisads. Vivekananda has written a brilliant commentary on *Patanjali's Yoga Sūtra*. The title of Vivekananda's commentary is *Rāja-Yoga*.

Vivekananda regards Raja-Yoga as the science of mind par excellence. He hails it as the true education that every individual should obtain. The education in Raja-Yoga, otherwise known as, the science of the power of concentration, begins with the control of the breath (*prāṇayama*). *Prāṇayāma* is preceded by five abstentions (*Yamas*) and five prescriptions (*Niyamas*). The five abstentions are avoidance of harming others (*ahimsa*), false hood (*satya*), theft (*aparigraha*), continence (*brahmacarya*), and greed (*aparigraha*). And the five prescriptions are purity (*saucha*), contentment (*santoshā*), mortification (*tapah*), study (*svadhyāya*) and devotion to God (*Īśvarānidāna*).

Breathing exercise (*prāṇayāma*) is very beneficial to every student. It slowly and gradually takes us into the chambers of the mind. It ultimately enables us to get control of the mind. Of course one has to go through a long and hard struggle of breathing. One cannot practice breathing as something curious. It has to be exercised according to a plan. Practicing breathing systematically even for a few days will definitely give us benefits. "Practice a few days, and if you do not find any benefit, then come and curse me", say Vivekananda².

According to Vivekananda sublimation of the mind is an important aim of education. Sublimation means directing our impulses, desires and emotions towards higher states of mind. It is raising our activities from lower to sublime levels of integration and harmony. Education should involve the process of transforming the undesirable traits of the child into desirable qualities. It is a process of elevating the mind by substituting the bad thought with the good ones. It is converting the destructive attitudes of the child into constructive ones. For instance, the emotions like anger and jealousy towards others may be channeled towards self-improvement.

The students can be trained to respect the law and order through the sports activities. Besides these instances of sublimation, there may be sublimation through spiritual conversion which "is manifested through a sudden change of heart and emotional regeneration affecting vitally the outlook, inner adjustment and habits of life of an individual"³.

Vivekananda holds that the mind can be sublimated through work (*karma*), knowledge (*jnāna*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and love (*bhakti*). In all these ways of sublimation education plays a vital role. Education must enable the individual to sublimate his or her mind through work. Work is an essential part of our life. We are active by nature. Everyone must be doing something or other always. Action is inalienable aspect of life. No action is absolutely good or absolutely bad. Every action involves both good and bad. "There is no action which does not bear good and evil fruits at the same time"⁴. For instance, in the act of delivering a lecture one may be killing thousands of microbes. But it does not mean that we must abstain from work. Vivekananda maintains that we have to work and do well to others. But we have to work without a motive for results. We have to work disinterestedly. Disinterested action is the best means of sublimating one's mind. It is the best means of reaching perfection. Work without attachment to the fruits thereof is the way to sublimation and perfection. Education should enable the person to work not like a slave

but like a master. Working like a slave results in selfishness and attachment. Working as the master of our mind gives rise to the bliss of non-attachment. This is the secret of work that education has to reveal.

This is what Vivekananda calls *Karma-Yoga*. *Karma-Yoga* is working without a motive. It is work without selfishness and expectation. *Karma-Yoga* means doing good because it is good to do good. He who does good work even in order to get to heaven binds himself down. Work that is done even with the least selfish motive forges a chain on our feet. Vivekananda says “He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor for anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of *Karma-Yoga*”⁵.

Another means by which education has to sublimate the mind is through knowledge (*Jnāna-Yoga*). *Jnāna-Yoga* means realization of *that* by knowing which everything else is known. The Self or the Soul is that by knowing which all else is known. The Self is non-dual Brahman which appears to be manifold by the interpolation of name and form. It is one without the second, eternal, pure and unchangeable. The various changes in the universe are only the appearances of the Self. It is due to ignorance or Maya that we see the one as the many. Time, space and causality are at the root of our seeing the manifoldness of the universe. But the one who is knowledgeable and wise sees the one only. Such a person is called a liberated one and he alone is truly educated. “The man who has in this life attained to this state, for whom, for a minute at least, the ordinary vision of the world has changed and the reality has been apparent, he is called the ‘Living Free’ (*Jeevanmukta*). This is the goal of the Vedantin, to attain freedom while living”⁶. True education is the Vedanta which sublimate the mind through reasoning aimed at the knowledge of the Self. The one who attains the knowledge of the Self is called a *Jnāna-Yogi*.

Meditation is another means of sublimating the mind. In meditation the mind is sublimated by controlling it. This process of sublimating the mind by controlling is called *Rāja-Yoga* as advocated *Patanjali*. *Rāja-Yoga* is the science of attaining the powers and the immortal bliss. It consists of eight steps, namely, *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prānāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna* and *Samādhi*. Of the eight steps, the latter four steps are very important for sublimating the mind. *Pratyāhāra* means withdrawing the mind from the senses and their objects. *Dhāraṇa* means focusing the mind on any one of the objects without fluctuation. It is detaching the mind from the world and attaching it on any of object of our choice. The object of concentration may be an external one to begin with. It may also be a gross one. But gradually the mind should be directed towards the objects that are internal and subtle in nature. The concentration should be focused on an internal organ, called the *Buddhi*. Deep concentration of the mind on the *Buddhi* is called *Dhyāna*. It is called meditation in which the concentration is like the flow of oil from one vessel into another. At this stage, the Yogi attains the supernatural powers (*Siddhis*) which he has to abjure. It is only by relinquishing the powers that the Yogi reaches the final stage of *Samādhi*. *Samādhi* is the state of super consciousness which is free from the clutches of Nature (*Prakṛti*). It is the stage in which the mind (*citta*) is pure and devoid of all fluctuations. This is the state in which there is an end to all mental modifications. It is the state of meditation in which the Yogi attains the seedless state of *Samādhi* and experiences *Sachidānanda*. “Then the glory of the soul, undisturbed by the distractions of the mind or motions of the body, will shine forth in its full effulgence; and the Yogi will find himself as he is, as he always was, the essence of knowledge, the Immortality and the all-pervading”⁷.

The former four stages of *Raja-Yoga* are preparatory. They are external in character. They constitute the physical and moral aspects of Yoga. *Yama* and *Niyama* give the moral training to the Yogi. As it has already been mentioned, they involve certain abstentions and obligations that the Yoga should observe. He should abstain from speaking untruth, causing injury, taking others’ things and so on. He should observe the

norms like being happy and pure in thought, word and deed. He should also have faith in God and acquire the knowledge of the scripture. *Asana* is the next step which is required for sitting in meditation for long hours. So the Yogi should sit in such a posture which is firm and comfortable. Next is *prāṇayāma* which means controlling of the breath. It involves three stages, namely, inhaling, retention and exhaling of the breath. Prolonged exercise of the three processes leads to the controlling of breath. Controlling of the breath (*Prāna*) leads to the concentration of the mind. Breath-control leads to *Pratyāhāra* which means checking the outgoing powers of the mind, freeing it from the thralldom of the senses and their objects. “When we do this, we shall really have character. Then we shall have taken a long step towards freedom: before that we were more machines”⁸. *Pratyāhāra* leads to the remaining three stages of yoga, namely, *Dhāraṇa*, *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi* which have been explained above.

The fourth means of sublimating the mind is love. Vivekananda regards it as the greatest force of controlling the mind. He calls it *Bhakti Yoga*. *Bhakti Yoga* means devotion to God with utmost love. It is the science of spiritual love which gives the highest and glorious results. It is sublimating various passions like anger, envy and hatred to the level of pure love. The several emotions of the human heart are not wrong in themselves. They only have “to be carefully controlled, sublimated and directed until they acquire excellence”⁹. Vivekananda says that *Bhakti* or love for the Lord is the best means of sublimating the mind. It loves the highest by relinquishing the pleasures of the lower kind. “*Bhakti-Yoga* is the science of higher love. It shows us how to direct it; it shows us how to control it, how to manage it, how to use it, how to give it a new aim, as it were, and from it obtain the highest and the most glorious results, how to make it lead to spiritual blessedness”¹⁰.

Vivekananda distinguishes between two kinds of *Bhakti*, namely, *Para* and *Apara*. *Apara Bhakti* means devotion to the God of the form. It involves the worship of the idols, symbols or images of the formless God. Gradually the *Bhakta* evolves to the level of the devotion to the God who is formless. Loving the formless Almighty is *Para-Bhakti*. The Yogi goes beyond the limiting adjuncts of the Supreme God. He realizes the state of freedom wherein all the bondages will fall off from him naturally. Divine grace dawns on the *Bhakta* when he directs his emotions toward the formless without suppressing them. Here, the love of the pleasures of senses and of the intellect is thrown aside and cast into the shade by the supreme love for God Himself. Swami says, “The love of God grows and assumes a form which is called *Para-Bhakti* or supreme devotion. Forms vanish, rituals fly away, books are superseded; images, temples, churches, religions and sects, countries and nationalities— all these little limitations and bondages fall off by their own nature from him who knows this love of God”¹¹.

Thus Education means sublimating the mind through love for God. It means the realization of the Supreme Reality through *Bhakti Yoga*, besides *Rāja-Yoga*, *Jñāna Yoga* and *Karma Yoga*. Of all the four, sublimation through love for the Almighty is the shortest, direct and the most effective. It can be followed by all irrespective of whether one is learned or not. One moment of deep and mad love for God is enough to attain the knowledge of the Supreme, maintains Vivekananda.

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