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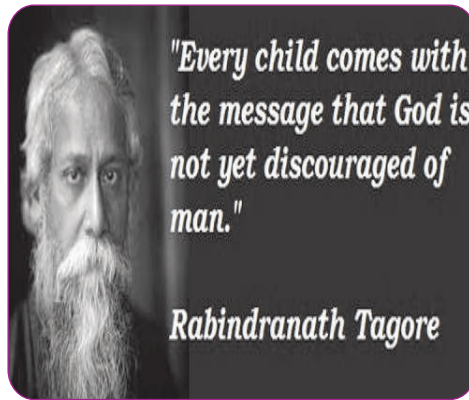
VIEWS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON MASS EDUCATION

Apurba Saha

Assistant Professor , Dept. of English ,
S. K. B. University, Purulia (WB)

ABSTRACT: -

Tagore believed that the foundation of a nation should be based on mass education. He could understand that the people were suffering because they lacked consciousness and this consciousness can never be aroused without the help of education. So he had emphasized



on education of the masses. Tagore believed that it is education that can provide a voice of protest among the exploited mass of India. So to raise their consciousness, education is the only path. In *Russiar Chithi* he elaborately discusses about mass education and its good effects. He had dreamt of an India where the weak

would be powerful, the dumb would speak, and the ignorant would gain knowledge. Swamiji also believed that the development and progress of a nation depends upon the dissemination of knowledge among the masses. In an interview to the 'Madras Times' he had said: "I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall." Compulsory education for all was Swamiji's dream.

KEYWORDS: Mass education, exploitation, consciousness, compulsory education.

INTRODUCTION :

Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda, the two most illustrious sons of Bengal were equally great educationists. Their views on education are relevant even today, or perhaps more relevant today. Their views need to be analyzed and implemented today for the uplift of India. Both of them had emphasized on the importance of mass education.

Tagore believed that the foundation of a nation should be based on mass education. Then that nation would be able to face any odds. Mass education develops the consciousness of a nation. At Pabna Conference Tagore had suggested that if the downtrodden and the masses are educated then only the country would develop. Tagore had been to Russia and observed the development of the nation. He realized that Russia had developed because the nation had paid a lot of emphasis on mass education. He had observed the poverty of the people of his estate in the then Bangladesh and also around his dream project at Santiniketan. He could understand that those people were suffering because they lacked consciousness and this consciousness can never be aroused without the help of education. So he had emphasized on education of the masses. He realized that the education system which was introduced by the British government only aimed at producing a few clerks who would help the British to run their government smoothly. The British were least interested in the educational development of India. So Tagore suggested that what was most important for India was to educate the masses.

Tagore believed that it is education that can provide a voice of protest among the exploited mass of India. He realized that it was lack of education which had made them mute and dumb to all sorts of exploitation. So to

raise their consciousness, education is the only path. During his second visit to Russia he was surprised to see the development of the common people within a very short span. In *Russiar Chithi* he elaborately discusses about mass education and its good effects. He even says that he had seen the realistic fulfillment of his dream of the young age in Russia and he had dreamt of such an India where the mass would be educated. He had dreamt of an India where the weak would be powerful, the dumb would speak, and the ignorant would gain knowledge. And he believed that it can be achieved only by the magic wand of education for all. As our farmers lacked power and education, Tagore says that they should be provided with these. And in *Russiar Chithi* he writes that education is the remedy for all the problems of the society. Unfortunately most of the Indians then were deprived of the benefits of education. Tagore goes on to say that providing education to the masses is the greatest service to the nation. Even in the nineteenth century, he could realize that even the differences among races, tribes, and even religions were actually the results of lack of education among the masses. He had pointed out that even the Simon Commission had accepted only one crime in the then India – the faulty educational system. All other crimes were actually the ill effects of the lack of education.

Swami Vivekananda, a contemporary of Rabindranath, had also emphasized on mass education for the development of the nation. Swamiji also believed that the development and progress of a nation depends upon the dissemination of knowledge among the masses. He firmly believed and even declared that the main cause of the ruin our country is “the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men” (Letters, 328). The masses should be educated, and this should be the first and foremost duty of all the educated Indians. Swamiji had requested all the educated Indians to come forward. In an interview to the ‘Madras Times’ he had 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 in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for. They pay for our education, they build temples, but in return they get kicks. They are practically our slaves. If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them. (*Complete Works V*, 222-223)

Swamiji even considers the educated class traitors who do not come forward to help the poor and the downtrodden. He writes to one of his most famous followers Alasinga Perumal:

So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense pays not the least heed to them! I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages! (*Complete Works V*, 58)

Swamiji had fought throughout his life for the development of the downtrodden and uplift of the hapless mass. He was perhaps the first who had thought their condition can be changed only through education. He wanted that the fortunate few who are educated should come forward for the development of the poor and the downtrodden. They should take the responsibility to uplift their conditions. Swamiji also believed that it is education only that can help the nation to remind of the lost glory and manhood. The mass should be provided with ideas and they would do the rest themselves. “Our duty is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will come through” (Letters, 114). Swamiji knew that it was quite possible that the poor boys would go to the fields to plough the land than attending the school. So Swamiji suggested: “If the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go the mountain. If the poor cannot come to education, education must reach them at the plough, in the factory, everywhere” (Letters, 114). Swamiji reasserted that good and selfless people should carry education by moving door to door in the villages. In a letter to the Maharaja of Mysore, Swamiji had written that the Maharaja should also provide food along with founding the schools for the common mass, otherwise his project would fail. And it is to be mentioned here that the Government of India has started mid-day meals in schools to check drop-outs. Compulsory education for all was Swamiji’s dream. The Government of India has very recently introduced the Right to Education Act. Thus it is observed that Swamiji’s thoughts are perhaps more relevant even today and it is our duty to follow his path for the prosperity of the nation.

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