



**Research Article**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON 'PROPAGATION OF EDUCATION' THROUGH THE LENSES OF JEAN JAQUES ROUSSEAU AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The 'love for wisdom' among philosophers gave birth to several schools of philosophy, which later influenced and widened the scope of education to a greater extent. The dominant among those schools which influenced the renowned thinkers and nation builders of the gone era are Idealism, Naturalism and Pragmatism. While the most of the Oxidants embraced pragmatism after experiencing the pros and cons of Naturalism and Idealism, most of the Orients adhered to the convictions of the latter two. The present study therefore showcases and compares the ideologies and postulations of Jean Jacques Rousseau, a great western thinker and Swami Vivekananda, an effective Indian thinker, to show the magnitude of influence of the different schools and exchange of thoughts that occurred in the area of 'education' irrespective of their zone.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Education is a concept which has a very wide meaning as it encompasses the entire life of an individual and society. Different thinkers, philosophers, psychologists, educationists and teachers have expressed their own views according to their own outlook on education. It is like a diamond which appears to be of a different colour (nature) when seen from different angles (point of view or philosophy of life). It is considered a vital instrument in bringing about a peaceful economic and social revolution for ushering in an era of harmony, peace, progress and prosperity. To this revolution in the field of education various thinkers from the eastern and western countries have made valuable contribution. They have provided a definite basis to education by their exceptional educational ideas. Two of the eminent thinkers one from eastern and one from western tradition are Swami Vivekananda and Jean Jacques Rousseau respectively, are taken into account for detailed comparative study.

Jean Jacques Rousseau was a philosopher and composer of the enlightenment whose political ideas influenced the French Revolution, the development of both liberal and socialist theory, and the growth of nationalism. With his Confessions and other writings, he practically invented modern autobiography and encouraged new focus on work of thinkers as diverse as Hegel and Freud.

Swami Vivekananda on the other hand was a spiritual genius of commanding intellect and power who influenced the Indian freedom movement to a greater extent. He is considered as a key figure in the introduction of Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western World, mainly America and Europe. He is credited with raising interfaith awareness and bringing Hinduism to the status of a major world religion during the end of 19th Century. He participated at the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in the year 1893 and the inspiring speech he delivered there made him famous as an 'Orator by Divine Right' and as a 'Messenger of Indian wisdom to the Western world'.

**Philosophy of Education**

Rousseau saw a fundamental divide between society and human nature. He believed that man was good when in the state of nature (before the creation of civilisation and the society) but is corrupted by the society. In Rousseau's philosophy, society's negative influence on men centres on its transformation of the positive self-love into pride. Rousseau's naturalist philosophy shows three forms: Social naturalism, Psychological naturalism and Physical naturalism.

In his 'social naturalism' Rousseau devices education as a method to develop society. According to him one cannot become a man and citizen at the same time. As a bitter critic of society Rousseau condemned old traditions opposing new reforms. His book Social Contract speaks of his social naturalism. The child should be left to behave naturally. He learns in the contact of plants, animals, birds and natural objects. Society and man spoil the child. According to him education means, "Natural development of organs and powers of the child." According to Rousseau the first education ought

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to be purely negative. By negative education, Rousseau means not teaching truth or virtues to a child but shielding his heart from evils and mind from errors. According to him, real education is not to acquire or impart knowledge. Negative education is self-education by use of sense organs.

Rousseau's 'psychological naturalism' encompasses a second meaning given to nature that is the instinctive judgments, primitive emotions and natural instincts, are more trustworthy as a basis for action, than are the reflection or experience that comes from association with others. Thus Rousseau constantly attacks the formation of habits in education.

His 'physical naturalism' uses nature to indicate inanimate and subhuman nature. The mal-education that comes from man must be counteracted by contact, fearless and intimate, with animals, with plants, and with physical phenomena and forces of all kinds. Rousseau was a lover of nature and through his teachings began a movement of finer and fuller appreciation of nature. This movement found its expression in a wide school of literature in England. Rousseau hated society and its institutions, so he advocated education away from the polluted environment of the society. According to him, the school should have such a natural environment where a child's physical, intellectual and emotional faculties can be developed properly. Rousseau said that school system should be based on freedom, equality and fraternity. The school's tasks should be managed by the teacher and the child in co-ordination. Poor and rich children should study together in school and all types of facilities should be available for them.

Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of education involves Idealism, Naturalism and Pragmatism unlike Rousseau who emphasized on Naturalism only. Like naturalists, he emphasizes that real education is possible only through nature and natural propensities. Like idealists, he insists that the chief aim of education is to develop full moral and spiritual nature of child, and like pragmatists he stresses on the western education of technology, commerce, industry and science to achieve material philosophy, which marks his difference to a greater extent from that of Rousseau's philosophy of education. But the similarity in their philosophy lies in the way they advocated self-education, providing freedom to the child to commit mistakes in order to learn.

His philosophy of education was also the philosophy of Vedanta and Upanishads. Knowledge worldly or spiritual according to him lies embedded in the human mind. It lies latent and dormant covered with a veil of darkness and ignorance. Education is to tear this veil of darkness and ignorance. His philosophy of education says that all learning is self-learning and external teacher only guides, suggests, points out and helps. al service, develops his character and finally imbues him with the spirit and courage of lion."

#### **Aims of Education**

In the opinion of Rousseau aims of education are different at different stages of child development. The following are the various aims according to stages of development:

**Infancy:** This stage begins at birth and continues up to five years of age. This is essential for the child to grow healthy and strong. Rousseau expressed his opinion, "All wickedness comes from weakness. The child should be made strong so that he will do nothing which is bad."When the child is allowed to

freely engage in playing and exercising his body, he remains active and has no time to indulge in undesirable activities.

**Childhood:** This stage lasts from fifth to twelfth and it is a period of development of the sense organs of the child. This development is achieved through experience and observation.

**Adolescence:** Adolescence is believed to last from twelfth to fifteenth year. By this time the child gets prepared for systematic education, which aims at developing the personality of the child, through guidance, hard work and study. An individual is provided with various kinds of knowledge at this stage to fulfil one's individual needs.

**Youth:** From fifteenth to twentieth year is the span of youth where an individual undergoes development of emotions and sentiments. Development of sentiment will lead to development of moral and social qualities, but it is essential to pay attention to the religious emotions too.

According to Swami Vivekananda, the aim of education doesn't differ with different stages of development. Education is not the imparting of knowledge or information into the minds of children by force. He opines that if education means information only, then libraries could be the greatest saints of the world and encyclopaedia had become seers and rishis. According to him, education should make a person perfect by diagnosing the perfection already present in him or her. It is that process which prepares a man for struggle of existence by making him or her self-reliant and by developing his/her character and intelligence. The main aims of education according to him are:

**The aim of reaching perfection:** The prime aim of education is to achieve fullness of perfection already present in a child. All material and spiritual knowledge is already present in man covered by a curtain of ignorance. Education should tear off this veil and help in achieving fullness of the latent perfection.

**Physical and mental development aim:** Stressing the mental development of the child Swami Vivekananda wished education to enable the child to stand on his own legs economically rather than becoming a parasite on others.

**Moral and spiritual development:** Education should foster mental and spiritual development that would help the nation to grow.

**Character development:** According to him the practice of Brahmacharya which fosters development of mental, moral and spiritual powers leading to purity of thoughts, words and deeds.

**Aim of developing faith in one's 'Ownself', 'shraddha' and spirit of renunciation:** All through his life Swamiji exhorted the individuals to keep full confidence upon their powers. They should inculcate a spirit of self-surrender, sacrifice and renunciation of material pleasures for the good of others. Education should foster all these qualities in individuals.

**Searching unity in diversity:** Education should aim at developing insights into the individuals so that they are able to search out and realize unity in diversity. He has further asserted that physical and spiritual worlds is one, their distinctness is an illusion (Maya). Education should develop this sense which finds unity in diversity.

**Religious development:** According to him each individual should be able to search out and develop the religious seed embedded in him and thus find the absolute truth or reality. He advocated the training of feelings and emotions so that the whole life is purified and sublimated.

### **Curriculum**

Even in framing the curriculum Rousseau paid attention to the four stages of development. Instead of giving controlled information of various subjects to the child at this stage, it is far more important to pay attention to the development of his body and senses. The child can be taught great things through his or her mother's tongue which will develop his linguistic ability. Education of this kind is based on the concept of negative education which suggests that the child's mind should not be stuffed with information of different kinds. Liberty should be given for the development of mental power and reasoning ability. Rousseau opined that the child will learn his morality by the natural consequences of his or her actions. Rousseau opined that books do not give knowledge, but only train to talk. It is better if the curriculum for adolescence is based on active work than on books.

With the aim of education as man-making Swami Vivekananda developed a curriculum which could lead to multisided and all round development of a child. He tried to synthesize science and Vedanta, modern and ancient knowledge so that the curriculum may involve whatever is best in these. He realised that the curriculum should help in developing every aspect of the child's personality. According to him a harmony is needed between the Western Science and the Indian Vedanta to curb down the improper usage of the inventions of Science.

### **Methods for Educating or Teaching**

Methods of teaching or imparting education suggested by Rousseau are based on his Philosophy of Naturalism. Rousseau has contributed several methods like Laboratory method, Heuristic method, Learning by doing and Learning by sensory experience. The basic principles on which his methods of teaching or educating are based on are:

**Avoidance of Books and adherence to self-experience:** Rousseau condemned the usage of books especially during the childhood stage. He has suggested that students should learn from experience rather than from books.

**Heuristic attitude:** Rousseau advocated the use of Heuristic method which places a child in the place of a discoverer. The child should learn all the subjects like Mathematics, History, Geography, Social Relations and morality through practical methods.

**Against rote memory:** Rousseau was against the method of teaching which emphasized mere memorisation. He felt that the child should be allowed to gain knowledge through activities and experiences.

**Child-centred education:** Rousseau was against the method of teaching through instructions. He believed that children pay little attention to long lectures and retain very little. The child needs to be an active learner where he learns by doing rather than just listening.

Swami Vivekananda prescribed the same ancient spiritual methods of teaching wherein the Guru and his disciples lived

in close association as a family. The essential characteristics of those religious and spiritual methods are:

1. To control fleeting mental faculties by the practice of Yoga.
2. To develop the mind by meditation and concentration.
3. To gain knowledge through lectures, discussions, self-experience and creative activities; which talks about activity method.
4. To imitate the qualities and character of teacher by intelligent and clear understanding.
5. To lead the child to the right path by means, of individual guidance by the teacher.

### **Discipline**

Rousseau believed in giving the child complete freedom. He was of the view that natural capacities of the child will develop only in an atmosphere of freedom. The child should learn from moral consequences of his action and the teacher should not impose any discipline on the child, because anything that is forced will not produce desirable results. Punishments will not lead to the correction of the child. Hence the child should be provided with a natural atmosphere free from evil things, whereby he will learn good things and grow into a good human.

Swami Vivekananda believed in the concept of internal discipline. When an individual develops the power to control his mind and his senses through yoga and meditation, he automatically develops internal discipline. This will enable him to lead a life of purity and spirituality.

### **Women Education**

Rousseau has discussed about the education of the imaginary girl Sophie. He believed that the main purpose of a woman's life is to obey and please her husband. A woman should be capable of bringing up the boy in childhood, tend him in his youth, provide him with support and make his life pleasant. Hence mere literacy education will not help her to realise this aim. Rousseau suggested that physical education, housekeeping and religion as important subjects to be taught to woman. Physical education will help her to maintain a healthy and good body, to bear healthy children and also fill her domestic life with happiness. Housekeeping should be taught to take care of her home. Religious education should be given for conformation of woman. Rousseau did not believe in giving freedom to women.

Whereas Swami Vivekananda believed that only where a woman is respected, the family and country would progress. He suggested that subjects like Religion, Philosophy, Ethics, Fine Arts, Housekeeping, History and scriptures of ancient India could be taught to the woman. This would help in the development of the character of the woman and also make her independent and strong to face the challenges of life.

### **CONCLUSION**

Education which is the essential weapon to eradicate all ignorance, evil, dogmas and attain perfection of self, gain knowledge, skill, clarity of the content has been dealt with rigorously by the Eastern and Western thinkers. Jean Jacques Rousseau based his way of educating and education on naturalistic philosophy whereas Swami Vivekananda's philosophy consisted of Idealism, Naturalism and Pragmatism. Rousseau encourages negative education which is self-

learning without any guidance but Vivekananda talks about teacher's role as a guide. Rousseau delayed moral education which would come only after experience but Swami Vivekananda advocated moral education as a principle, such as helping the poor and needy. There are many ways in which both the thinkers differ, but a contradictory nature of the philosophy practiced by both makes them stand out, as Rousseau being a western thinker was a naturalist and not a pragmatist. But Swami Vivekananda in spite of having influence of Indian spiritualism embraced pragmatism too to some extent. Both the thinkers emphasized on self-education and therefore, focused on the learner, making learning active and child-centred.

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