

Education is Freedom

Knowledge has always been represented by light, and ignorance has been symbolized by darkness. Hence education, the key to all knowledge and yet more knowledge, dispels the darkness and ushers in the light. Freedom too has always been associated with light whereas servility, imprisonment have been relegated to the depths of darkness. Prisons and dungeons have been always conceived as dark and gloomy whereas free men have all the access to light. This completes our equation that education equals freedom since both are symbolized by light.

Freedom can be of many kinds. We can have economic freedom which is the freedom to earn one's livelihood and maintain a decent standard of living. There is social freedom in which the individual is allowed to develop his own kind of relationship vis-à-vis society. Then there is political freedom in which the individual has a say in the way in which he is governed. We also have intellectual freedom which is the liberty to think as you please without restrictions and impediments. And just as one can be allowed freedom of thought so also can there be freedom of action, of belief, of faith etc. For every kind of freedom to be truly effective education is necessary and with education every one of these types of freedom becomes truly justified.

Education must not be confused here with literacy and learning the 3R's. Nor is education confined to the 10+2+3 system. Education does not consist in collecting degrees or burying oneself in research. Education is a continuous process of learning which broadens our mental horizons and with it our perspective. Education leads to the dissemination of knowledge, to the breaking down of all mental barriers and to a greater realization of self-worth and a better understanding of fellow beings.

If a person is uneducated, he cannot think for himself. He is forced to blindly accept the dictates of others and this makes him servile as he lacks the ability to judge right from wrong. With education he is able to make this distinction, to realize the reasons behind his forced servility and to stand up and demand redressed. This frees him from the shackles of servility and makes him a free individual. Nowhere is this more true than in women's education which has been the single most important factor in women's emancipation.

Swami Vivekananda had said "I don't consider a man to be educated who has learnt libraries by heart. If a man learns 5 ideas, and applies them in his life, in consider him educated". Thus, Swamiji believed true education helped person to think for himself. Let us all pledge ourselves to Shiva the destroyer as he goes

about his tandava-nritya to stamp out ignorance and let us make education transport us in the words of Tagore to that “heaven of freedom”.