CHAPTER : V

Upanishadic Education and
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5.1. Introduction:

Since Vivekananda has been fully drenched in the pure and fresh ideas of the direct knowledge attained by the Rishis or seer-poets of the Upanishads in their revelation he is fully convinced that some such pure ideas will be sufficient for the man-making educational programme needed for the revival, nay, renaissance out of the distressed condition of the nation. The scattered educational ideas viz., the inspiring writings, powerful utterances etc. that are found here and there may be looked upon as the most valuable gems although Vivekananda, the great educator does not construct any systematic theory of education as such. His educational ideas represent a synthesis of the educational thought of the Upanishads and the modern ideas of the west. Like the seer poet of the Upanishads he views education as the manifestation of perfection already in man. A versatile genius as he is, he not only masters the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bible, the Koran etc. but also the western thoughts from Plato to Spensor. Nevertheless, his chief stress is on the educational ideas of the Upanishads for he says,
Before flooding India with sociological ideas first deluge the land with spiritual ideas\textsuperscript{160}.

He views education as the most powerful means of social change. Since he is bent upon social and cultural emancipation of India his emphasis lies on spiritual ideas which alone can lead men to self-realisation – without which one is not capable of discharging selfless service. According to him the most important task of education is to remove selfishness, superstition, weakness etc. of the people of this land on the one hand and preserve the human values by man-making programme on the other. To him progress is nothing if it is not accompanied by inner change. For the survival of Indian people he says –

\textit{…..the ideal for India, therefore, is that we must have the whole education of our country, spiritual or secular in our own hands and it must be on national lines, through national methods as far as possible\textsuperscript{161}.}

Vivekananda, believes that every child is a product of heredity and environment and as such every individual student has his own peculiarities as each race of the world has a peculiar mission to fulfil in this world. The great educator observes –

\textsuperscript{160} Complete works of Swami Vivikananda, Vol- III, 1973, p. 221 (PS)
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid. Vol- II, 1971, p. 362 (PS)
An individual’s life is marked out for him by the infinite past life, - by all his past Karma.\textsuperscript{162}

He further points out that within the learner there is all knowledge, - the teacher has to help awakening it and in this regard the role of concentration is indeed very great. In this connection once again Vivekananda refers to the ancient ideals of the Upanishads. He says –

\begin{quote}
If you have assimilated five ideas and made your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a library.\textsuperscript{163}
\end{quote}

According to Mundaka Upanishad\textsuperscript{164} mere acquisition of information or self-study through mental exercise will offer only surface knowledge. This can give one only material knowledge. To remove one’s ignorance one has to integrate one’s knowledge by receiving education in the true sense of the term. Conventional education fails to educate one’s whole being. Through the exercise of the spirit light of true knowledge enters into one’s whole being. And in such a state alone an integrated outlook develops and man becomes \textit{Pranga} (प्राङ्ग) as he enters into the kingdom of wisdom.\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{162} Complete works of Swami Vivikananda, Vol- III, p.108 (PS)
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid. p.302 (PS)
\textsuperscript{164} Mundaka Upanishad, III.2.3 (PS)
\textsuperscript{165} Mukherjee Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.89 (SS)
\end{flushright}
5.2. **Philosophy of Education**

Vivekananda gives serious thought to the tremendously crisisful situation of the day which has reduced man to the status of a machine. The mechanical ways of modern life have undermined lofty and transcendental ideas of man. He feels that such evils ought to be eradicated through proper education. As awakening of man to his spiritual self can alone do a lot in this regard Swami Vivekananda is bent upon spreading spiritual education and surely his ideas are based on Brahmacharya and Upanishadic ideals. Through spiritual education he wants to solve social as well as other evils when disregard for human values since old fashion has been the go of the day\(^\text{166}\). Some such idea of Swamiji is analogues to Isopanishad which declares –

अन्यं तम: प्रविष्टांति यो:विद्यामुपासते।
ततो भुक्तः ह्व ये तमो यो विद्यायाम् रत्ना।\(^\text{167}\)

According to the Upanishads the real knowledge or the knowledge proper cannot be had only by resorting to the acquisition of information from different sources. In the educational programme of the Upanishads the main stress has been laid on the *Para Vidyā* (परा विद्या) which is also called the real subject matter of the

\(^{166}\) Roy, Dr. Sudipa Dutta (2001). Education in the vision of Swami Vivekananda, Prabuddha Bharata, July 2001 (SS)

\(^{167}\) ईशापनिषत, ९ (PS)
Regarding *Para Vidyā* (पर विद्या) it is said that it is the supreme knowledge or the guiding principle of human life that enables man to see the problems of human life with a higher consciousness which acts like an effulgent light that removes all shades of darkness. It is also stated that the knowledge of the Atma cannot be attained by the exercise of the reasoning intelligence only nor by obtaining knowledge from books, - nor by the Veda. It is quite different from *Apara Vidyā* (अपर विद्या) or the material knowledge of the worldly life.

Swamiji recommends spiritual education on the basis of Brahmacharya and aims at preventing the very birth of evil from the beginning of the journey of human life. He says -

*Man in every country is on the one hand producing the brutal children and on the other hand multiplying the police force to keep the brutes down – the question is not how to destroy evil that way but to prevent the very birth of evil.*

Swami Vivekananda believes that a human being whether a child or a grown up man belongs to the Transcendental Force. Hence, perfection is already in man

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168 Mukherjee Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.110 (SS)
169 Mandukya Upanishad I.1.4/I.1.2/I.1.5 (PS)
170 Katha Upanishad, I.2.23 (PS)
171 Selection from the Complete of Swami Vivekananda, p-256 (SS)
and as such, he possesses immense potentialities which are latent in him waiting for manifestation under congenial circumstances.

*Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.*\(^{172}\)

In fact, the question of ‘Manifestation’ comes only when something exists already hidden in the learner which can come out of him under certain favourable conditions\(^{173}\). *While* explaining the term ‘manifestation’ Swami Vivekananda refers to ‘तत्त्व शैविकता’\(^{174}\). The suggestion is that as soon as a farmer removes the barrier placed on the flow of water the self-same water runs by its own momentum and helps irrigating the arable land, so also the latent power of the young learner hidden in him comes out when the teacher removes the hindrances and impediments that stand on the way of surging out from within. As in the case of Newton who discovers the law of gravitation the teacher has to inspire the little learner to discover knowledge from within. We have already learnt that Swami Vivekananda, the great educator has observed saying –

*What a man ‘learns’ is really what he ‘discovers’, by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge.*\(^{175}\)

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172 The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. IV, p. 358 (PS)
174 पतञज्योति, ४.३ (PS)
175 The complete works of Swami Vivekananda. Vol.I, p. 28 (PS)
Here Swamiji means to say that an individual learner is born with some potentialities which lie dormant in him\textsuperscript{176}. In other words Swami Vivekananda’s indication is that the child is born in the infinitude i.e., born with numberless possibilities. So there is the ample scope for his awakening which helps bringing out his capabilities and latent talents, - of course, obscurities within him must again be done away with by the teacher. In the similar way the Rishis of the Tapovan also inspire the disciples to remove their hurdles and acquire their knowledge in the light of their souls.

Israel Scheffler\textsuperscript{177}, an outstanding educationist of the West also mentions three aspects of some such idea, viz., (a) \textit{the capacity} to acquire a specific Characteristic, (b) \textit{the propensity} – an attribute which indicates what a person is likely to do when the opportunity comes. (c) \textit{the capability} – i.e. a person’s motivation and efficiency in working towards an intended outcome. Thus, these three concepts – capacity, propensity and capability – emphasize three aspects of education, respectively.

Another thing of relevance is that the Greek word ‘\textit{Teleics}’ means ‘perfect’, which suggests striving for actualizing the sublime potentialities in man. Thus, Swami Vivekananda says-

\begin{flushright}
176 Hebbar, Dr. Neria H. Swami Vivekananda: The Man and His omes only when Mission (SS)  
177 Israel Scheffler, Of human potential, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul (SS)
\end{flushright}
It is like a lamp in a cask of iron, no gleam of light can shine through. Gradually, by purity and unselfishness, we can make the obscuring medium less and less dense, until at last it becomes transparent as glass.\textsuperscript{178}

To Swami Vivekananda education does not mean acquisition and compiling of some data. To him education in the true sense of the term is a process which gives one a thorough and comprehensive training to evolve one’s life in the right direction of illumination. According to him it is not a piecemeal thing to be acquired but to assimilate the synthetic idea contained in it. Let us see what he has said in this connection –

\textit{Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there undigested, all your life.}\textsuperscript{179}

From the ancient records it is learnt that the seer-educators of the Vedas and Upanishads aim at leading learners to a higher and sublime manhood through perfection and development in the harmony of broad universal powers and forces on the one hand and removal of limitations and obscurity of human consciousness on the other. This idea is contained in the saying - सा विद्या या विमुक्तः. The methodology to make this idea practical is unique. It is a method of direct

\textsuperscript{178} The complete works of Swami Vivekananda. Vol. VII, p. 21 (PS)
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid. (PS)
knowledge which helps one to enlarge, purify and revolutionize psychological faculties.

In the Upanishadic age while a young learner joins an education centre in the heart of the forest surcharged with a congenial surroundings in the presence of the mighty and revered seer-teacher and some other disciples of the Gurukula, practising disciplines vigorously he cannot but feel of his own an urge and inclination for self-knowledge through the practice of Brahmacharya (ब्रह्मचर्य) that can enable him to exceed pettiness and littleness of his personal life and inspire him to embark upon pursuit of harmony, truth, justice, modesty, intelligence, wisdom, courage, love, ahimsa and many other lofty qualities for flowering of his total higher nature that alone can make him Shrestha (श्रेष्ठ).

Similarly Swami Vivekananda has said education must be thorough. It has no meaning if it is one-sided. Outward fulfillment does not exhaust the whole being of a man. It may at best add glamour to it. But if the inner nature of man remains untouched the surface culture of a man is not education proper. Swamiji always points out that education in the proper sense of the term means a man-making programme culminating in the perfection of the full-fledged man. Here Vivekananda strictly holds the view of the complete man including the real man within of the Upanishads in this regard. Listen to what he says -
What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow\textsuperscript{180}

The same sort of idea has been expressed by S.P. Pani and S.K. Pattanaik in their book ‘Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education’. The following lines will speak in its support -

\textit{It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want}\textsuperscript{181}

Swamiji fully endorses the views of education that we find in the Upanishads. Every child carries a light in him according to Upanishads and that light has to be evoked. This is what the Upanishad says. So we hardly find any difference between the educational ideas of Swami Vivekananda and that of the Upanishads. In fact, the influence of the Upanishads in some such matters on Swami Vivekananda is irrevocable. Santilal Mukhopadhyay in his essay ‘Swami Vivekanander Sikshachinta’ holds the same opinion with us -

\begin{quote}
কেউ কাটুকে কিছু শেখাতে পারে না। এই ধারণা স্বামীজীর জীবনে বেদবোধপ্রসূত। বেদান্ত আনুসারে জ্ঞান মানুষের অস্থিতিহীন। সুতরাং শিক্ষা উপলক্ষি বা জ্ঞাপণ ছাড়া তার কিছু নয়।
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{180} The complete works of Swami Vivekananda. Vol. II, p. 15 (PS)
\textsuperscript{181} Pani, S.P.& Pattnaik, S.K. Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education, pp.59-60(SS)
\textsuperscript{182} Mukhopadhyay, Santilal (1996). Swami Vivekananda, p.432 (SS)
\end{flushright}
(No one can teach anything to anybody. Swamiji had some such impression or vision which he had attained out of the Vedas and Vedanta. According to the Vedanta wisdom lies within. Hence, education is nothing but realisation or awakening.)

Nithiya, a leading scholar in his essay ‘Swami Vivekananda’s views on Philosophy of Education’ expresses the self-same view while discussing the educational thought of swami Vivekananda. An excerpts of his essay is shown below:

Education is a life-long process towards the fullest development of human personality, self-discovery, self-perfection, self-awareness and self-manifestation.... He emphasizes that the child should practice Brahmacharya which fosters development of mental, moral and spiritual powers leading to purity of thought, words and deeds.183

Nithiya further gives us to know that Vivekananda’s philosophy of education is chiefly based on the philosophy of Vedanta and Upanishads. He writes as under -

Indian spiritualism was the basic foundations for his (Swami Vivekananda) philosophy of education and the philosophy of Vedanta and Upanishads[^184].

He further adds –

Upanishads are the most important curriculum for education. It is not only individual’s development but also for the transformation of total man[^185].

Dr. V.K. Maheswari in her ‘Vivekananda – concept of personality’ writes

Vivekananda’s concept of development of personality coming through proper education of the child is very much influenced by the Upanishads which are the richest sources of ancient Indian thought.[^186]

Dr. Sudipta Roy in his ‘Education in the vision of Swami Vivekananda’ states -

According to Swamiji, the culture values of the country should form an integral part of the curriculum of education. The culture of India has its roots in her spiritual values. The time-tested values are to be imbibed in the thoughts and lives of the students through the study of Vedas and


[^185]: Ibid. (SS)

[^186]: Maheswari, Dr. V.K., Vivekananda – concept of personality, Philosophical commentary on issues of today, 2011 (SS)
Upanishads. This will keep the perennial flow of our spiritual values into the world culture.\textsuperscript{187}

Swami Vivekananda now confirms all such views in the following words. Here he also gives stress on the concentration, detachment from consumerism and communion with nature along with Brahmacharya which happen to be the fundamental basis of the Upanishadic education -

\begin{itemize}
\item भारतेर पक्षे या प्रमोजन ता हंस बेदान्त ओ विज्ञानेन समनुष, मूलप्ररणार व्रतार्थ, शक्ता एवं आत्मविश्वास। एखादां आपार अत्तिनिबेश (Concentration), भोगवासनाशूनात (detachment), प्रकृतिर संग्ले योगायोग्यस्थापन (communion with nature)\textsuperscript{188}
\item (Right from the young age concentration, detachment and communion with nature which are essential, for India is now in need of a synthesis of vedantic culture and modern science, of course, the fundamental source of their inspiration lies in the discipline of Brahmacharya which instils self-confidence and respect.)
\end{itemize}

Keeping eyes on the modern trend of scientific advancement he encourages the learners to make use of the modern technology and science but the working

\textsuperscript{187} Roy, Dr. Sudipa, Education in The Vision of Swami Vivekananda, Prabuddha Bharata, e-samskriti, the Indian culture, www.esamskriti.com, July 2001 (SS)
\textsuperscript{188} The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-V, Ed.8th , 1964, p-366 (PS)
hypothesis of life must always be in his opinion based on the truths of the Vedanta. He says -

What we want are western science coupled with Vedanta

Perhaps Vivekananda has been greatly shocked to note that the contemporary people of this land mostly have miserably failed to give the proper importance of the concept of self-discipline that prevailed in ancient times as an essential element of the Upanishadic system of education in this land of ours. Let us see what Nirvedanandaji says regarding this -

The greatest misfortune of the Indian nation today is that large numbers of people have not realized that the importance of self discipline as an essential aspect of educational process.

While pointing out the views of Swami Vivekananda Dr. V. Sukumaran Nair has said that the modern system of education that prevails now in this land should also be supplemented by the aspect of the exercise of the spirit as it is found in the ancient system of education in the Upanishadic age which alone can help students harnessing human values in them otherwise only academic learning would be futile in the long run.

189 Nirvedananda, Swami Vivikananda on India and her problem, p.41 (SS)
190 Ranganathan Swami, The message of the Upanishads, p.302 (SS)
191 V. Sukumaran Nair, Swami Vivekananda, the Educator, p.84 (SS)
5.3. **The Teacher and The Taught:**

Swami Vivekananda has said with much emphasis that education is the manifestation of perfection already in man. Hence, according to him learning means unfolding the truths or knowledge that lie hidden in man. The little learner has to be inspired and offered congenial surroundings to enable him to find his own truths and unlock the store-house of knowledge within his own self. Moreover, the learner possesses a powerful light in him and like the Rishis of the Upanishads Vivekananda suggests to make proper use of such a light in the discovery of knowledge. Let us see what Swami Vivekananda states in this regard–

*Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind, suggestion is the friction which brings it out.*

The above statement has again been confirmed by the statement of Swami Vivekananda shown below. He points out that the seer poets of the Upanishads are sure that the knowledge cannot be had from outside as it is already in one’s possession. What the learner has to do is to find out that from within and one is not in need of looking for elsewhere. Here is the statement of Swami Vivekananda referred to above –

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192 Complete works of Swami Vivikananda, Vol-I, p.28 (PS)
No one was ever really taught by another; each of us has to be teacher himself\textsuperscript{93}

The role of the guru or teacher like the Rishis of the Upanishads is the role of a leader of the march – he only suggests and inspires and leads his pupil to unearth the wealth in his possession by the light in him. What Swami Vivekananda means is that there is a profoundly learned as well as an able teacher within him who is capable of opening the door of the store-house of wisdom already in one’s self.

As nothing can be imposed from without the role of the teacher is to give the momentum and allow the natural and innate knowledge of a child to find its way from within just like a growth of a plant. If the plant is supplied with water, air and manure in the right moment it grows from within. So is the case of a human child. What the teacher has to do is to see that the learner develops his knowledge spontaneously in a congenial atmosphere. At best the teacher’s task is to invoke the spirit of enquiry in him and remove the obstacles on the way so that the child can manifest its knowledge unhampered. Let us see what Vivekananda has said in this context -

Thus Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge even in a boy it is so and it requires only an awakening and that much is the work of a teacher.

\textsuperscript{93} Complete works of Swami Vivikananda, Vol-I, p.93 (PS)
According to Vivekananda student must come in close contact with their Guru without which proper flowering in the learning process can hardly be had. The guru is the living example and all sorts of his movements have great significance to them. In fact, the great educator in so many words lays emphasis on the importance of the Upanishadic concept of the Gura, Gurusishya relationship and Gurugriha for imbibing human values in the life of the little learners. Here he says -

_Without the personal life of the teacher there would be no education._ ¹⁹⁴

The great educator further says -

*Words, even thoughts, contribute only one-third of the influence in making an impression, the man, two-thirds._ ¹⁹⁵

Once again Vivekananda gives us to know that the little ones need a burning example before them to move in the positive direction and attain human values in life. He says -

_একটা জ্বলন্ত ‘Character’ এর কাছে জ্বলন্ত দেখা চাই, জ্বলন্ত দৃষ্টী দেখা চাই।_ ¹⁹⁶

(Right from the early days one has to live in intimate contact with a burning character and to witness burning instances.)

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¹⁹⁶ Bani O Rachana (Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Bengali), Vol.IX, pp.262-63 (PS)
In the Upanishadic system, education in the ultimate analysis is the attainment of ‘Brahmavarchasa’ which means knowledge of the Absolute. It enables one to have uniformity of mental attitude, development of intelligence and capability of perfecting the people. It also makes poised, unbiased and self-restrained and by virtue of being the best physician for himself\textsuperscript{197}. Hence, for education proper, the necessity of a guru\textsuperscript{198} who entirely dwells in Brahma\textsuperscript{199} is essential as well as indispensable to knowledge\textsuperscript{200}. And as such, the teacher, who as the leader of the march not only helps the learner to walk on the road of learning but also goads him to genuine success. In order to understand this, the learner has to take fuel and approach a guru who is a seer-teacher as well\textsuperscript{201}.

It is gathered\textsuperscript{202} that the gurus or the seer-teachers are of the highest moral and spiritual stature.\textsuperscript{203} The duty of the teacher of the Upanishadic age is to help the truth-seeking Brahmacharin to find truth for himself exactly as much as he

\begin{itemize}
\item[197] Mukherjee Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.89 (SS)
\item[198] Chāndogya Upanishad, IV.14.1-2 (PS)
\item[199] Mundaka Upanishad, I.2.3 (PS)
\item[200] Katha Upanishad, II.8 (PS)
\item[201] Mundaka Upanishad, I.2.3 (PS)
\item[202] Mukherjee Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.101 (SS)
\item[203] Katha Upanishad, I.2.8 (PS)
\end{itemize}
(guru) knows it.\textsuperscript{204} According Prasna Upanishad\textsuperscript{205} & Taittiriya Aranyaka\textsuperscript{206} the guru has to carry on his teaching with all his heart and soul.

Biman Bihari Bhattacharya mentions that Swamiji equally appreciates the importance of the direct contact with the teacher as it obtains in the Gurugriha in the Upanishadic age -

\begin{quote}
(\textit{It occurred to Swamiji that in ancient India (in the Upanishadic age) since the learner had the privilege of coming in direct and intimate touch with the preceptor his deservingness in respect of forming his character was beyond measure.})
\end{quote}

In course of Swami Vivekananda’s concept of teacher-taught relationship Swami Nirvedananda also points out that true teaching cannot be imparted without an intimate tie of relationship between the teacher and the taught –

\begin{quote}
(\textit{গুরুকুলপ্রথিত মূলকথা গুরুর সঙ্গে একত্র বসা। তিনি (যামী বিবেকানন্দ) বলেছেন শিক্ষকের ব্যক্তিত্বে জীবনের সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠতা ব্যতীত প্রকৃতশিক্ষা সম্ভব নয়।})
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{204} Mundaka Upanishad, I.2.13 (PS)
\textsuperscript{205} Prasna Upanishad, VII.1 (PS)
\textsuperscript{206} Taittiriya Aranyaka, VII.4 (PS)
\textsuperscript{207} Bhattacharya, Bijan Bihari, Sikshacharya Vivekananda O Rabindranath, Chintanayak- Vivekananda, p.829 (SS)
(The essence of the system of Gurukul is to live in company with the preceptor. He (Swami Vivekananda) observes that without having intimacy with personal life of the teacher it is hardly possible to derive education in the proper sense of the term.)

Vivekananda adds that teaching from without does not help at all. Here are the words of his warning -

_No one can teach anybody. The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching._

Regarding the role of the teacher Vivekananda has reiterated that the teacher has to bring home to the students that through regular and sincere practice of Brahmacharya they will have to take the help of the divine light in them for a thorough change by unfolding hidden powers in their individual life and character. V. Sukumar Nair observes –

_In his (Swami Vivekananda) opinion the ideal teacher is one who can initiate his students to practice the essential virtue of Bramacharya and help them to attain or experience the divinity in them._

208 Swami Nirvedananda, Swami Vivekananda on India and her problems, pp. 45-46 (SS)
210 Nair, V. Sukumaran, Swami Vivekananda, the Educator, p.65 (SS)
Swami Vivekananda believes that teacher in the modern system as well should be very intimate with the student. In fact, he has to come very close to the level of the student and his role should be so significant that his soul and the soul of the student should be the one and the same and they will understand each other with clarity of thought. To him an ideal teacher is one who like the Rishis of the Upanishads is capable of reading the young learners through their eyes, ears, appearances and their mental frames and is quite capable to make them work in the proper way. Here are the words of Swami Vivekananda -

_The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student’s soul and see through the student’s eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else._

What a wonderful teacher-taught relationship that is also maintained in the Upanishadic age! The teacher is looked upon not only as the guru or Acharya to the young learners he is also deva - thus the teacher is the Acharya deva to his disciples or students – ‘Acharyadevo bhava’ according to the Upanishads.212 Here we find a reverential element that makes the usual respect more and more deep-rooted and Swami Vevakananda advocates some such tie of relationship which is

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211 The complete works of Swami Vivekananda. Vol. IV, p. 183 (PS)
212 Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.2 (PS)
based on great respect and mutual confidence. Kireet Joshi advocates the
Upanishadic education as an ideal one –

_The ancient Indian teacher-pupil relationship came to be determined by
the profound and even inscrutable ways by which the teachers and the
pupils, Gurus and Shishyas, developed their modes and methods of
exploring knowledge, discovering the aim and meaning of life and
practising disciplines for arriving at psychological perfection^2\textsuperscript{13}. _

Another very interesting feature of the Upanishadic system of education is
that Swami Vivekananda also prefers that the significant and meaningful
congregational prayer of the Acharyadeva and the learners which makes all
concerned equally benefited.^2\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
\textit{ॐ सह नावबलः, सह नौ भुनकः, सह वीर्य कर्पवहे।

tेजस्मि नावध्येतत्तस्तः, माविद्यावहे।}^2\textsuperscript{15}
\end{center}
\end{quote}

Once again Swami Vivekananda looks back at the gurus of the Gurugrihas
and categorically points outs that the personal life of the guru or the teacher, his
out-look and manners, his gestures and postures, all his movements have great
influence on the taught particularly when the learner is a young one and is in the

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\textsuperscript{213} Joshi, Kireet, The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil, p.29 (SS)
\textsuperscript{214} Swami Prabhananda, Swami Vivekananda, Prospects, vol. XXXIII, no. 2, June 2003, p-239
\textsuperscript{215} केनोपनिषदः, शान्तिपालः (PS)
\end{flushright}
habit of imitating his ‘Acharyadeva’ who is no more an ordinary human being to him but one of the divine incarnates. Here are the relevant words -

*Without the personal life of the teacher there would be no education*\(^{216}\)

In this connection Vivekananda also reminds us that the teacher of an ancient centre of learning in the age of the Upanishads imparted lessons to his students without fees, - of course, wealthy families come forward and do what is necessary on the occasion. Swamiji says, without the *Tyagis* there is no ideal type of relationship between the teacher and the taught. He also appreciates the efficacy of the *Brahmacharya* system that prevailed in the centre of learning in the Upanishadic age and asks the modern teacher to look upon the ancient guru of the *Tapovan* as a model. Once again, Swamiji refers to the Upanishads and says that education should unveil the divinity in man which unfolds all the hidden powers in man which will ultimately lead one to creativity, originality, excellence, humility etc. etc. According to him such ancient ideas of the Upanishads will give one visions by taking the animal man out of one’s sense life\(^{217}\). The great educator further says that such education will not only make one dutiful but also inspire one to work without expectation for reward. It will also promote qualities like patriotism, discipline, leadership etc.

\(^{216}\) Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-V, 1970, p.224 (*PS*)

\(^{217}\) Nair,V. Sukumaran, Swami Vivekananda, the Educator, pp.42-43 (*SS*)
Vivekananda also wants to bring about levelling of the degenerated caste system by giving out the ancient cultures of the Vedas and Upanishads to those men and women and especially the poverty-stricken masses of people who form the bulk of the population of the country and who are not properly acquainted with such a valuable ancient culture of this land. Here he reminds us of Maitreyi and Gargi and the like of the Upanishadic age who attain the status of the Rishis through their wonderful attainments and eruditions.

By creating a tradition of customs, conventions, rules and other means the system of education has given predominance of higher self, society and humanity by subordating the demands of the ego. The concept of the reverence has been encouraged all along so that right from the tender age a pupil is habitually accustomed to it and regularly carry on its practices, and look upon the teacher, father, mother and such other seniors – requiting them with the supreme absolute being. Here is a common Sanskrit verse where the guru is supposed to get a very high position –

\[ \text{गुरुः साक्षात् गुरुष्क्रम तस्मै श्री गुर्वे नमः} \]

The guru of the Upanishadic school part from his scholastic attainments and profundity of worldly knowledge is much advanced in spiritual realization.

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218 Brihadaranyak Upanishad, II.4.3 (PS)
219 Nair, V. Sukumaran, Swami Vivekananda, the Educator, pp.43-45 (SS)
and this is why he is quite capable of satisfying fully the young pupil approaching him with unquenchable thrust for knowledge. One has to remember as well in this connection that the pupil belonging to this system is not only a candidate for intellectual training only he is a Brahmacharin and he essentially seeks after spiritual training. As this search for a genuine spiritual knowledge happens to be an arduous task beset with hazards of various kinds it needs proper guidance for the simple reason that a young pupil having no such experience can hardly accomplish some such queer endeavour without help of the guru who alone has attained such a knowledge and a man of effulgent light only is competent to transmit it effectively. Kireet Joshi remarks in this connection –

> According to the secret processes of expansion of faculties and attainment of the goal, one should not be centred on oneself but should impart the gains of one’s efforts with pupils and with humanity\(^ {220}\).

Another thing to be noted here that the tender-aged Brahmacharin must also be a devoted sishya who is capable of surrendering to the guru and is always in readiness to obey him as he (sishya) is aware that without a seer-teacher he cannot accomplish the spiritual search successfully. Thus the Rishi has to be doubly revered and he also deserves it both for his scholastic guidance concerning worldly affairs and his psychological operations leading to spiritual realizations.

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\(^ {220}\) Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.91 (PS)
Thus reverence here is not an imposition on the young learner by the guru, rather for his unique spiritual knowledge, discoveries and guidance he is assigned high reverence. By awakening the true self of the Brahmacharin for blossoming all the his (sishya) faculties through his (guru) able guidance the guru represents the Supreme Brahma, the real teacher within him (pupil) and thus induces the sishya to discover for himself the inner teacher seated within. Again the reverence due to the Transcendental Being i.e. the inner teacher goes in favour of the guru of the worldly life who happens to be the pupil’s friend, philosopher and guide in all respect. Kireet Joshi also finds this in the Upanishadic system of education –

*For the purpose of education for spiritual development in ancient India, this was considered to be the qualification of the teacher. The pupils contact with the teacher who is seated so high, who has aspired so high in his life was a part of spiritual education. Not merely through any scriptures*.\(^{221}\)

He further adds –

*The teacher should possess the necessary qualifications of various attainments or at least the aspiration for the highest attainments*.\(^{222}\)

\(^{221}\) Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.88 (SS)

\(^{222}\) Ibid. p.90 (SS)
Considering his position as well as the function the guru always discharges his duties, conscientiously as a divine assignment till arrival of the direct guidance to the sishyas from above.

5.4. **Brahmacharya - Privation in education**

Education is a process which urges the learner to toil from imperfection to perfection. In fact, such a process aims at unfolding the inner self which contains the light of perfection. By degrees it helps one to set aside or remove the egoistic element as well as obscurities that hamper to proceed. Swami Vivekananda this way or that very often refers to this view which is chiefly constructed on the basis of the Upanishadic dictum – ‘असतो मा सदगमय तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय मृत्योमयांत गमय।’

And he is of opinion that a scholar has to resort to concentration based meditation on the one hand for keeping contact with the light of the self and on the other keep his body, life and mind supple for attaining purity through physical and mental exercises. The suggestion is that the young learner has to train his body, life and mind as the light in him cannot be realized if he is physically, mentally and vitally weak. This is why he refers again and again to the dictum of the Upanishad ‘नाथमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्य।’ For this also the Upanishadādic modus operandi of Brahmacharya vidyā is essentially needed according to Swamiji.
Swami Vivekananda says –

*The education which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion – is it worth the name?*²²³

Swami Vivekananda has also shown equal zeal for making the students interested in the exercise of Brahmacharya - চাই ব্রহ্মচর্য।²²⁴ He further says -

.....বিদ্যালয়ে ব্রহ্মচর্য শ্রেষ্ঠরূপে পরিগণিত। অপরিত্য হইলে এবং ব্রহ্মচর্যের অভাবে চরিত্রকল ও মানসিকতজ সবই চলিয়া যায়। ........কার্যকৃতকে পূর্ব ব্রহ্মচর্যপালন করা নিতান্তই কর্তব্য।²²⁵

Vivekananda thinks that without Brahmacharya education in the true sense of the term cannot be had. He believes that the Brahmacharya of the Upanishadic age is a part and parcel and the bedrock of a true system of education. As it helps to control the mental powers on the one hand and on the other paves the way for concentration and meditation without which the real man within cannot come out of the shackles and cannot receive from the brain what is necessary for flowering. He says -

*Every pupil should be trained to practise absolute Brahmacharya”*²²⁶

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²²³ The complete works of Swami Vivekananda. Vol. VII, pp. 147–148 (PS)
²²⁴ Bhattacharya, Bijan Bihari, Sikshacharya Vivekananda O Rabindranath, Chintanayak-Vivekananda, p.401 (SS)
²²⁵ Bani O Rachana, Vol.1, Ed.5th, pp.262-63 (PS)
²²⁶ Complete works of Swami Vivikananda, Vol-V, p.369 (PS)
In support of this V. Sukumaran Nayar points out -

*He is convinced of the fact that all knowledge is in the human mind and that the same can be experienced by practicing concentration and meditation.* \(^{227}\)

Vivekananda has laid much importance to concentration which is, so to say, the guiding principle of Brahmacharya. He says –

*If I had to do my education once again, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment and then with a perfect instrument collect facts at will.* \(^{228}\)

And Brahmacharya which chiefly means practice of self-control also brings about harmony of the impulses. Brahmacharya cannot be properly observed without concentration and meditation. To him education is a comprehensive training for life and not a mere acquisition of facts only. He says –

*To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts* \(^{229}\)

Swami Vivekananda further says –

*The very essence of education is concentration of mind.* \(^{230}\)

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227 Nair, V. Sukumaran, Swami Vivekananda, the Educator, p.64 (SS)
228 The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. IV, p. 490 (PS)
229 Ibid. vol. VI, p. 38 (PS)
In the age of the Upanishads concentration of mind is regarded as the highest rank in regard to the academic discipline especially in the formative part of the human. Kireet Josh, an eminent scholar describes how it plays a vital role in the process of learning and perfecting one’s knowledge –

*Meditation or concentration in thought is itself the Eternal and that it is by concentration in thought that the knowledge of the Eternal can be attained. The pupil continues the process of concentration from stage to stage and he discovers, successively, that breath or life-force is the Eternal, that mind is the Eternal, that the supermind is the Eternal and that bliss is the Eternal. At the end of the culmination of his discovery, the teacher asks his pupil to pursue the Self which, when discovered to be the bliss, brings about the perfection and one attains to the very heart of immortality.*)

On another occasion Swamiji says –

*The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow comes through concentration.*

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230 The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-IV, p.38 *(PS)*

231 Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.94 *(SS)*

232 Sarkar, Sunil Chandra, Rabindranather Sikshadrashan O Sadhana, p.78 *(SS)*
The span of human life is usually very short and in the formative period how to make the best use of the life force has to be attained by the learners and see that the valuable human energy is not flittered away. For this one must be on one’s guard and learn how to control the impulses for proper utilization of one’s faculties. Concentration enables the mind to organize the entire function of the learning process. When the mind is disengaged unnecessarily by unwanted impulses concentration regularizes the mind by setting aside such unnecessary things and rightly focuses on the particular subject in view. Hence, concentration helps one to perform a job or study a thing accurately and satisfactorily. Swamiji points out –

_How to check these impulses and bring the mind under control is the whole subject to study._

As a matter of fact, concentration cannot be separated from Brahmacharya and as such, the idea of concentration of the mind is a legacy of the Upanishadic system of education. For all these reasons the Rishis of the Upanishads lay so much emphasis on concentration.

In short, concentration leads one to attain perfection by preventing one from doing wrongs. Swamiji’s illustration in this regard is cited below –

233 Complete works of Swami Vivikananda, Vol-II, 1971, p.490 (PS)
A convex lens gathers sunlight and focuses it on one point to burn a piece of paper. Will-power is necessary not only to conduct the learning process, but also to strengthen one’s character.

Kireet Joshi opines that –

Indian literature has described various methods by which concentration can be attained. Speaking of the application of the powers of concentration in the processes of education, Swami Vivekananda once said that if he knew early enough the secret of concentration, he would have first attempted to master concentration rather than to read a number of books, since, by the employment of concentration, knowledge can be gained more easily and readily234.

Swamiji believes that education must make one on one’s own feet and make him self-sufficient in all respects. By education he means not only enhancement of the mental faculty and the sharpening of the intellect he also means the formation of character as well. When he turns to the so-called educated people of modern India he is aggrieved and utters the following words -

234 Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.96 (SS)
A few hundred, modernized, half-educated, and denationalized men are all that there is to show of modern English India – nothing else.\textsuperscript{235}

In the next place, Swami Vivekananda turns the attention of the learners on cultivating will power. Regarding will power Vivekananda says,

\textit{The current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful}\textsuperscript{236}.

It is also one of the important features of the Upanishadic system of education. The essence of learning propounded by the seer-poets of the Upanishads is concentration-based education on the one hand and observing Brahmacharya all through for self-control on the other. Swami Vivekananda fully endorses this view although he does not frame any separate theory of education. What he really wants is to see the bringing out manifesting the real man within through the process of learning.

In fact, the infrastructure of the Upanishadic system of education in due course induces the young Brahmacharins, charged with inclination of spiritual seeking so effectively that sooner or later he imposes self-discipline upon himself by endearingly practising Brahmacharya while carrying on in his heart of hearts an ardent aspiration for the sublime knowledge. As all his inclinations and

\textsuperscript{235} The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. VIII, p. 476 (PS)

\textsuperscript{236} Ibid. Vol. IV, p. 490 (PS)
feelings revolve round his urge for self-knowledge all his physical, vital and mental energies lead him to a unified concentrating effort and he by degrees is uplifted towards self-mastery and as a consequence on the one hand his pursuit of truth, harmony and love also start within him and on the other grow his inclination for renunciation of covetousness, personal hankerings for possessions etc. etc. Nor is this all. The gurukul as it usually stands in the heart of the woods enables the Brahmacharins to be very intimate with the fresh features of Nature, that again brings in his spontaneous feelings, imaginations etc. which also subsequently helps him in developing powers of the higher mind. When he is engrossed in his Swadhyaya in the natural surroundings of the Āshram all his inner powers of memory, comprehension, imagination etc. along with subtler spiritual knowledge and lofty philosophical ideas flash on the canvas of his inner self and float all along unhindered.

Having been guided by insight as well as experience the teacher depends more on awakening than on instruction and as such he lays stress on concentration and quatitude of mind by doing away with impatience and excitement for the sake of carrying on the pursuit of truth and simultaneously striving to make free choice of a discipline, between Shreyas (श्रेयं) and Preyas (प्रेयं) – good and pleasant with full dedication and devotion. In the Upanishadic system of education freedom of choice and spiritual freedom are of fundamental
importance and they seem to be blended together. Without spiritual freedom the question of free choice does not work, for free choice does not mean unrestrained preference caused by personal egoistic indulgence.

The Upanishads invoke Brahma as the source of the real knowledge since every bit of thing in the creative world issues forth from Him and without Him nothing can exist in the universe. Although infinitesimally small he is, man is a part and parcel of the Transcendental Being. Here lies the whole essence of the Vedanta - प्रज्ञानं वहैं २३७ From the seer-teacher or Rishi the tender-aged pupil also learns how to draw and utilize the higher conscious Force that essentially belongs to the source or the Transcendental Power and Light for attaining the elevated and sublime stature of humanity by excelling and exceeding his crude instincts himself.

One must not confuse Satyam of the Upanishadic education with the concept of value education on which much stress is laid in the teaching method in recent times. The methodology that is adopted in the Upanishadic school is quite different from that of the one engaged in imparting value education of the ethical type today. The former leads his pupil from darkness to Light – अततो मा सदगमय तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय मृत्योमंगतं गमय। – in the search for true truth which enables one to arrive at the real knowledge through a process of purification by degrees and

237 Aitareya Upanishad, 3.3 (PS)
elimination of falsity in the ultimate analysis. In fact, the Upanishadic education does not neglect value education, on the other hand it rather helps one to take cognisence of the values of the physical and mental world as well from within and to cling to it for good. The Aitareya Upanishad says – 

In Taittareya Upanishad one learns -

Thus the Upanishadic system of education not only paves the way for one’s all round progress and upliftment but also makes one quite capable of discharging one’s duty towards all other members of the society conscientiously. On the other hand in the absence of a comprehensive education both the individual and the entire society suffer from degradation. Hence every one has to undergo an integrated course of training for an all-round development of oneself as well as the society.

It occurs that although the Upanishadic system of education has been deeply spiritual all through at the same time it brings within its purview all the exteriorized aspects of human life and as such, fortunately the comprehensive system induces the young pupil to practise self-discipline in such a manner that

238 Aitareya Upanishad, 3.2 (PS)
239 Taittireeya Upanishad, 1.17 (PS)
both his inner being and the exteriorized aspect grow hand and hand. Right from
his seeking after the sublime to the social obligations of all kinds as son, father,
friend etc. etc. he equally has to be faithful in the discharge of his sacred duties.
He must be rational, firm, patient, tolerant, in all intricate situations etc. etc. His
individual attainments and capacities must also be utilized in the greater interest
of the society he belongs to. It is interesting to note that the system does not in
any form neglect the affairs of the worldly life rather it aims at turning the young
Brahmacharins to develop as a complete man – of course, the inner being of the
individual pupil has to take the entire charge of both the inner and the exteriorized
aspects of his being.

5.5. Conclusion:

The impact of the Upanishads on Swami Vivekananda is really very deep-
rooted and the ideas of the seer-poets or Rishis are of great importance to this
great educator. He is fully convinced that the young learners of this land of ours
are privileged as they have the Upanishadic truths before them and such truths
which are products of direct knowledge have been attained by our seer-poets and
they (the truths) are of eternal values and do not however belong to acquisition of
surface knowledge only which undergo changes through the passage of time. His
stress is on the spiritual heritage and the cultural synthesis as it has been
continuing before all of us throughout the ages. Regarding the Upanishads which serves as a great mine of strength he says -

*The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them up, live up to them...*²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-III, p.225 (PS)