
Education through Advaita: Views of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi

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Abstract:

This article explores the educational philosophies of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and Ramana Maharshi, highlighting their emphasis on Advaita (non-dualism) and its implications for humanism, universalism, and women's empowerment. By analyzing their views on education, we can gain insights into how their spiritual and philosophical perspectives can inform a more holistic and inclusive approach to learning. This study reveals the significance of integrating Advaita principles into education, promoting a deeper understanding of human interconnectedness, and fostering a more compassionate and equitable society.

Keywords: Advaita- Education- Humanism- Universalism- Women Empowerment- Holistic Education, Spiritual Education.

Introduction:

Education is the cornerstone of societal transformation, and the philosophies of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and Ramana Maharshi offer valuable insights into reimagining education through the lens of Advaita (non-dualism). These three Indian thinkers, known for their profound spiritual and philosophical contributions, shared a common vision of education that transcends conventional boundaries. Their emphasis on Advaita principles – the ultimate reality of a unified existence – has far-reaching implications for humanism, universalism, and women's empowerment.

This article delves into the educational philosophies of Tagore, Vivekananda, and Ramana Maharshi, exploring how their ideas can inform a more holistic and inclusive approach to learning. By examining their views on education, we can gain a deeper

understanding of how Advaita principles can be integrated into educational practices, promoting a sense of human interconnectedness and fostering a more compassionate and equitable society.

The convergence of Advaita, humanism, and universalism in the educational thought of these three thinkers offers a powerful framework for reimagining education. As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, their ideas can inspire a new generation of educators and learners to cultivate a more profound understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them.

Advaita Vedanta is a school of Hindu philosophy that emphasizes the non-dual nature of ultimate reality. The term "Advaita" means "not two" or "non-dual," suggesting that the ultimate reality, known as Brahman, is a unified, all-encompassing consciousness that underlies all existence.

1. Non-duality: The ultimate reality is a single, unified consciousness, and all distinctions, including subject-object duality, are illusory.
2. Brahman: The ultimate reality, often described as existence-consciousness-bliss (sat-cit-ananda).
3. Atman: The individual self, which is ultimately identical with Brahman.
4. Maya: The illusory nature of the world, which veils the true reality of Brahman.
5. Self-realization: The goal of Advaita is to realize one's true nature as Brahman, transcending the limitations of the ego and individual self.

Introduction of Three Authors:

The timing was perfect when Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana maharshi took the stage. It was a very dismal time, both in India and around the world. Conversely, the West was losing its soul as a result of the remarkable material advancements that led to exploitation, imperialism, the subjugation of foreign territories, and strong religious dogmatism that fostered bigotry and racial fanaticism. One of the great individuals who worked to change their motherland's appearance was Rabindranath Tagore, who produced amazing prose. His feelings, candor, sense of equilibrium, and tolerance are all evident in his prose. He constantly ruminated on his motherland's issues and looked for potential solutions. He was the first reformer in his nation to attempt educational reform and rural reconstruction. Despite his advanced age, Tagore bravely became a bilingual writer in order to convey his message to a wider audience. His internal and external struggles to come up with answers for his motherland's problems are reflected in Tagore's prose. His English prose is full of feeling and thought, and it is written with a reasoned passion. About 40% of Tagore's writings are in English, despite the fact that he was a poet and writer who wrote mostly in Bengali. This shows his desire to reach as many people as possible. He has been

expanding horizons and spreading his amazing ideas throughout the world with his English prose, which demonstrates his universalism, broadmindedness, and foresight.

The Advaita Ashrama published up to nine volumes of Swami Vivekananda writings, which include speeches and lectures he gave both in India and overseas, interviews, talks, debates, and magazine articles. Everything that Swami Vivekananda said was infused with warmth of feeling, uncommon force, profound emotion, and sincerity. The ideas he conveys in his writings demonstrate his persuasive style, his capacity for logic and reason, his remarkable personality, and his capacity for creativity and imagination.

Ramana Maharshi at the age of sixteen describes the overwhelming experience of Self Realization or merging with God, which according to Hindu belief is the goal of human existence, but which takes many lifetimes to achieve. Obviously such a momentous occurrence in the life of a mere schoolboy, with no special spiritual training, brought changes that his family and friends were bound to notice. He lost all likes and dislikes with regard to food. He became submissive where he had earlier been assertive with other boys, not complaining or retaliating no matter what happened. He stopped going out to play games with his friends, preferring to stay by himself, and became even more disinterested in his studies. Almost every evening he went to the temple.

The Maharshi is close to the Buddha despite his deep respect for and frequent allusions to the gods because of his primary focus on impersonal jnana. Sri Ramana is concerned with orthopraxis, not orthodoxy, by arguing that right meditation is the foundation of right action and by keeping a strict silence on unimportant, hypothetical topics like the nature of God and our past and future lives. He is similar to the scientist in his method of self-examination and the investigation of consciousness, which infuses all human existence with vitality and significance and dissolves the boundaries between the sacred and the secular. The Maharshi's teachings more than partially address the need of contemporary man for a philosophy and way of life that could reconcile in practice the two highest human values, moksha (freedom) and dharma (responsibility), through this fusion of jnana with karma, of awareness with everyday action. One learns that all meaningful work is service and that all service is pure joy when Being spreads out into relationships and moves forward as function. Inner awareness and outward action, or Jnana and Karma, become alternating motions of the same self. We inhale the universal air and exhale it. In and with the universal mind, we are conscious. Unseen and unheard, the selfless man does not harm his circle like grit in the eye, but rather makes it sweeter like sugar in milk.

Sanatana Dharma is found in the everyday lives of Hindus and in the poetry of the gods they worship, where they can enjoy things they may not fully comprehend, rather than in any book, set of doctrines, or established church. The consubstantiality and interaction of God and man, as well as the amphibian aspect of human existence that alternates between

elements—the transcendental and the immanent—are its inexpressible message. He who saw Narayana everywhere became a master of yoga, the boy who loved Siva overcame death and lived among mortals the life immortal through four and fifty years, the worshipper of the Mother Goddess found the bliss of beatitude in Christian and Muslim modes of worship, and the servant of Sri Rama sought to extend the sovereignty of dharma to the public sphere as in private life.

There had been a difference in education as well. For a while, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana maharshi were linked to Adi Brahmo Samaj and Brahmo Samaj, respectively, during the early days of India's political awakening, which included reformatory movements in a number of fields. They underwent a sort of apprenticeship to hone their skills in their fields: Swami Vivekananda at his guru, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and Tagore at his nephew, Jyotiprakash. In order to bring their missions—Tagore's Shantiniketan and Swami Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission—to life, the writers were influenced by the western organizational principle. Both Swami Vivekananda and Tagore succeeded in impressing and persuading the Rajas of British India to support their respective missions—the Raja of Khetri for Swami Vivekananda and the Raja of Tripura for Tagore. Both of them fought for the well-being of all people, not just those in their own homeland. In addition to seeking support for their missions, the writers travelled to several other nations to spread their beliefs. Swami Vivekananda and Tagore both had the capacity to uplift the spirits of those who encountered them. The profit-driven mindset of the American lecture tour organizers disgusted the writers. Swami Vivekananda and Tagore both envisioned the East and West coming together but in case of Ramana Maharshi he never moved out of Arunachalam. The central theme of society is the fundamental unity of humanity. He believes that society should be free from religious superstitions and should not tolerate any form of discrimination. He promoted the idea of a perfect society in which women would be treated equally to men. He pleaded for the uplift of the poor. He stressed on the necessity of education, science and technology and balanced economy for the well being of a society

Tagore's opinions on women also demonstrate his unquestionable recognition of their potential. He considered women to be the embodiment of Shakti. He declared that women are God's sent guardians of the defenceless and denounced the inequity between men and women. He argued that women could acquire all the skills that men had acquired without compromising their primary role as the noble ones who shape the world's future citizens. According to Tagore, women cannot be pushed back because they are just as necessary as men, if not more so.

Three cardinal principles—freedom, creative self-expression, and active communion with man and nature—are at the heart of Tagore's educational philosophy. He was an

outspoken critic of the British educational system. He emphasized the importance of nature in a child's education. According to Tagore main goal of education has been the blending of different cultures from around the world. He opposed the brick prison that was the schools and colleges. He denounced the contemporary mindset that subjugates students to money and greed. He believes that a teacher ought to be the person who inspires his students.

Tagore's religious beliefs demonstrated his desire to develop universal Vaishnavism. The Bhagavat Gita, Raja Rammohun Roy, and the Brahmo Samaj all had an impact on his religious beliefs. The notion of God's humanity or man's divinity is central to Tagore's religious philosophy. He believed that religion was the source of everything. He asserted that the basis of all religions is truth. He opposed sectarianism in religion. The inherent goodness in everything is God, who pervades everything. "Man is the dignified and unique personality," he declared. He disapproved of the idea of Maya. Tagore is upbeat and thinks that the world is ultimately good. His universal beliefs made it clear that he opposes small-scale rivalries and arguments over names. He disapproved of patriotism as definitive. International jealousy, in his opinion, is a hindrance to maintaining national unity. He believes the foundations of the world's civilizations are the same. He promoted the unification of the West and the East. These concepts were also discussed by Swami Vivekananda's prose writings. Analyzing the selected concepts showed that Swami Vivekananda was impacted by his guru, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and his spiritual knowledge as well as his personal experiences with the terrible state of women and the plight of his nation's poor. According to him, the ideal society should meet people's material and spiritual needs. He sees society as a living thing. He opposed the privileges that resulted from the caste and varna systems, but he did support them. He was against women being suppressed and untouchable. He worked to improve the lot of the masses. Religion and science were equally important to him. He supported fraternity and thought that people were inherently good.

Swami Vivekananda's views on women demonstrated his recognition of the crucial role that women play in human society. He believed that women could be freed through spiritual awareness. He contends that a society's advancement is reliant on the advancement of its women. He equated men and women using the Vedantic idea of "basic oneness of all." He believed that women could solve their own problems with education. He viewed marriage as a partnership for the purpose of preserving the race, not for personal fulfilment.

Swami Vivekananda's educational theories demonstrated that he placed equal value on the inner man of spirit and the outer man of flesh. His theories were grounded in human nature. He promoted education for man-making. He criticized contemporary British schooling as a factory that produced clerks for the British Raj. He was more interested in assimilating ideas than accumulating facts. He opposed education being monopolized.

According to him, education is the realization of a child's innate knowledge. He believes that the teacher's role should be restricted to setting the stage for learning. He emphasized the value of detachment as well as the necessity of concentration. He was adamantly against memorization and believed that education should instil pride among students.

Ramana Maharshi's teachings emphasize the importance of self-inquiry and recognizing the non-dual nature of reality. His teachings can be applied in educational settings to promote holistic learning, self-awareness, and compassion. By recognizing the illusory nature of the world, students can gain a deeper understanding of the ultimate reality and their place in it. According to him, the ultimate reality is a unified consciousness that underlies all existence. His teachings can be applied in various aspects of life, including education, to promote holistic learning, self-awareness, and compassion.

Regarding women, Ramana Maharshi's teachings emphasize the equal potential for spiritual realization, regardless of gender. He believed that everyone, including women, can attain Self-realization through self-inquiry and devotion. In fact, many women devotees were drawn to his teachings, and he guided them on their spiritual journeys. For instance, a young girl was encouraged by Ramana Maharshi to pursue her spiritual aspirations, despite her family's traditional expectations. His teachings also highlight the importance of compassion and empathy towards all beings, which can help foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for women and individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Based on the analytical research conducted, we provided a comparison among the trio Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi in Analysis part. Regarding women, they shared similar opinions about their equality with men, acknowledged their inherent worth, emphasized the importance of education, and supported spiritual education for women. There were also parallels among Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi's religious ideas. They are similar in that they believe that religion is the source of everything, emphasize the need to purify religion by removing impurities like sectarian conceit, bigotry, and mutual trust, argue that God is reality, elevate man to the status of God, support the reality of the world, and accept the diversity of religions. Additionally, they discovered that Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi and Tagore's universal concepts are echoed. Similarities existed in regards to the detrimental effects of narrow nationalism, the unification of the East and the West, respect for the virtues of the West, detestation of Western vices, and the establishment of institutions that serve as examples of universal unity.

Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi and Tagore left behind a wealth of knowledge on nearly every facet of life for future generations. One person or a small work like this cannot possibly cover all of the authors' thoughts, ideas, and perceptions. This provides the researchers with plenty of room to carry out further research. The topics of

society, women, education, religion, and universalism in the prose works of Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore were the sole focus of this study. In addition to comparing their styles, future research can focus on the non-fiction prose of the individual authors or compare the various other themes that the authors presented in their works. For example, a comparison of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi's political concepts, their ideas on a balanced economy, the ideal state, etc. Their individual works, including letters, interviews, and talks, can also be the subject of research. In a nutshell, it can be said that Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi's prose is an arch of knowledge that illuminates the themes, concepts, and ideas that need to be investigated in depth. The more that is revealed, the more that remains hidden.

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