

**Universalism in the Select Prose writings of Rabindranath Tagore,  
Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi**

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**Abstract**

The present paper is devoted to compare the prose works – speeches, letters, lectures and conversations, interviews- of Rabindranath Tagore, Ramana Maharshi and Swami Vivekananda. The theme of “Universalism” in the Select Prose writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi are taken in this paper. Literary articles, previous research works and papers published in various magazines obtained from different sources i.e., internet archive, digital library of India, infibnet, printed books, etc, are the secondary data of the research paper.

**Keywords:** Universalism – self-examination - religious dogmatism.

**Universalism in Tagore's works:**

Rabindranath Tagore, the multifaceted genius who won the Nobel Prize and brought recognition to India and all of Asia, was born in Calcutta on May 6, 1861, into a Brahmin family that had been at the forefront of Bengal's intellectual renaissance for over a century. Due to their early interactions with Muslims and their work with the English East India Company, the family adopted a traditional way of life that combined elements of British, Muslim, and Hindu culture.

Rabindranath won the Nobel Prize for his Gitanjali on November 13, 1913, when he was in Shantiniketan. "It was received everywhere with a shock of surprise and turned Rabindranath from an individual into a symbol-a symbol of the West's recognition of Asia's neglected humanity and its potential resurgence," notes Kripalani (216-217). Rabindranath received a D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) from Calcutta University during a special session on December 26, 1913. According to him, humanity is vast, diverse, and rich. When he sees how man is being mutilated and turned into a machine in the West, it deeply hurts him. When he discovered the same

process of humanity's extinction in his own nation under colonial control, he was just as unhappy. In Tagore's view, deliberately undermining one's own nature is a crime, a form of desecration, and the development of callousness (English Writings of Tagore 6: 357). After reaching a saturation point, he adds, he finds himself cut off from his own people, and his soul cries out, "The whole man must never be sacrificed to the patriotic man, or even to the merely moral man" (*English Writings of Tagore* 6:357). He was drawn to the world's issues and wished to create a link between the world's strong and its weak. "I am aware that I am being called to strive for the actual unification of East and West," he states (English Writings of Tagore 6: 411).

According to Tagore, the nations' mindset, which they had cherished fostered within the confines of a limited past, is not sustainable in a broader future. He argues that these powerful nations have never stopped proclaiming the blasphemy that physical might has the inherent right to cannibalism when the flesh is weak, and they have been using this to justify wrongdoing by continuing it. He says, "The dead that would cling to life, such an evil ghost of a persistent past, haunts the night to-day over mutually alienated countries" (*English Writings of Tagore* 5: 228).

According to Tagore, the biggest obstacles to realizing the vision of a vasudhaikakutumba—the entire planet as a family—for which the world's great thinkers have long been striving are prejudices based on race and color. He urges that unless this "greatest evil of modern times" is defeated, humanity will never be able to realize itself as one world and one spirit (English Writings of Tagore 8:1076). "It is regrettable that any race or nation should claim divine favouritism and assume inherent superiority to all others in the scheme of creation," he said in an interview with H. G. Wells, challenging the Western race pride (English Writings of Tagore 8: 1239).

According to Tagore, all of the world's civilizations are based on the same principles and are part of a divine unity. There is no impersonal communication barrier between them. He views the world's civilizations—Indian, Chinese, Persian, Judean, Hellenic, Roman, and so on—as distinct mountain peaks within a single hill range (English Writings of Tagore 5: 126).

### **Universalim in Maharshi's his teachings:**

Sri Ramana (1879-1950), the sage of Arunachala, personified in our own time the timeless Indian ideal of moksha,/nirvana,/ kaivalya, or the freedom from phenomenal existence, which is the ultimate goal and shared ideals of Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. This freedom can only be attained through enlightenment, or jnana, but the mind can be prepared for jnana's illumination through hard work,

discipline, and devotion. The Awakened One, or Jnani, lives an egoless life in eternal happiness.

Ramana Maharshi's writings, which are associated with universalism, stress the significance of self-examination and the realization of ultimate reality. The goal of universalism, according to Maharishi Vedic Science, is to help people become universal and exemplary human beings by allowing them to experience pure consciousness and infinite creativity. By assisting people in discovering their actual nature, Ramana Maharshi's teachings on Atma vichara (self-enquiry) seek to deepen their comprehension of the universal Self.

Ramana Maharshi's teachings transcend traditional religious boundaries, focusing on the universal principles of spirituality and self-realization. His philosophy emphasizes the importance of direct experience and inner reflection, encouraging individuals to look within themselves for answers rather than relying solely on external sources.

Viveka Chudamani, Jivanmukti Viveka, the Upanishads, the Gita, and other writings all provided detailed descriptions of the "one liberated in life's ways: Although he is a part of the world, he is not a part of it. He is fearless, and no one fears him. Everything is joyful and full of faith, hope, and courage when they see him, hear about him, and think about him. Between the paramarthika world of transcendental awareness and the vyavaharika, or empirical, world of space and time, he creates a living connection. He makes it possible for us to experience the "oneness of all selves" as a current aesthetic experience. He also persuades us that it is feasible for us to remain in the sahaja, or natural state of pure awareness, forever.

### **The Theme of Universalism in Vivekananda's Speeches**

Swami Vivekananda was born on the day of Makar Sankranti, at 6:33 a.m. On Monday, January 12, 1863, well known as the patriot monk of contemporary India. He was born into the Simla-based Datta family. Despite claiming to be Kshatriya, they were members of the Kayastha caste. Narendranath hated superstitions even as a young child and never trusted anything without first testing it out for himself. He would quickly finish his coursework and devote the majority of his boundless energy to extracurricular activities. Like his father, he disliked mathematics and excelled in English, history, and Sanskrit. He had a beautiful voice and a good hand at drawing. His personality drew everyone in, and he was close to his classmates. In addition to creating toy railways, aerated waters, gaslights, and other machines, Naren had a particular passion for lathe play. He was a gifted storyteller who would use the tales he had heard from his mother to amuse his siblings.

Narendranath first learned about Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in 1881, during his second year of F.A. classes, from Professor William Hastie, a renowned researcher and the Principal of the General Assembly's Institution. "Such an experience is the result of purity of mind and concentration on some particular object, and it is rare indeed, particularly in these days," Professor Hastie once said, citing Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar, when he was describing the meaning of "trance" as it appears in Wordsworth's Excursion. Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar is the only person I have seen who has lived through that fortunate state of mind. You can see for yourself if you go there (quoted in Eastern and Western Disciples 48).

Like his Guru Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda's character can be examined less as a religious theorist or preacher and more as a philanthropist who devoted his life to helping people. His dynamism while he was alive and his diffusion after leaving his mortal body define his influence both domestically and internationally. He made every effort to restore the dignity of everyone who has been subjected to exploitation at different levels under various names, regardless of caste, geography, or creed. It was a rare talent of Swami Vivekananda's to see the best in everyone and to accept the enemy as a friend. Swami Vivekananda's conception of a single world was ingrained in his mind. His all-encompassing views on universalism and his idea of a single world, one government, and one humanity foreshadowed the United Nations Organization's founding years before it actually happened.

India, according to Swami Vivekananda, was "fated by Divine Providence to play the spiritual note in this harmony of nations" (Complete works 3:165). Swami Vivekananda's rational approach to internationalism is demonstrated by his consideration of the existence of the divinities of various nations, provision of mutual contacts, recognition of the idea of interdependence for peaceful existence, advocacy for mutual exchange of knowledge, and assertion of India's spirited leadership of the world.

The Vedanta philosophy, which holds that all of knowledge's faculties work in harmony to achieve its declared goal of universal human welfare, had a significant influence on Swami Vivekananda's internationalism. He felt that the Vedanta suggests good neighbourliness and international brotherhood after being captivated by the Vedantic ideas of love and universal oneness. Swami Vivekananda sought to advance international equality by eradicating national privileges and prejudices, much like the Vedanta philosophy, which grants no privileges. He preached love for everyone because it was central to the Vedic philosophy of love. Love does not distinguish between a Brâhmana and a Pariah, between a man and a woman, or even

between an Aryan and a Mlechchha, he said. Love makes the whole universe as one's own home" (Complete Works 5:78).

The universalism of Swami Vivekananda is grounded in religion. Even the adversary is a part of God in his view. When he returned to India, he declared, "There is none among you here present, my brothers, who loves the English people more than I do now" (Complete Works 3:310). He claimed that no one had ever traveled to England with a greater dislike for the English than he did. He himself assumed the role of a global educator, disseminating the ideas of universal religion and brotherhood. "I belong as much to India as to the world," he wrote in a letter to his disciple (Complete Works 5: 95).

Swami Vivekananda, who was born in a nation where travelling overseas was viewed as sinful, promoted understanding between people and worked to eradicate Indians' narrow-mindedness. As he imparts the benefit of his foreign experience to the entire country, he declared that everyone who leaves the country will benefit from it. He also believed that this was the only way to broaden one's horizons (Complete Works 7: 475).

### **Universalism in the Select Prose writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi – A Comparison**

The enlightened universal souls who transcended geography, race, and colour and devoted their lives to the betterment of humanity as a whole were Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana maharshi. Their heart, like the pushpaka vimana of Indian mythology, grew larger and larger not only to embrace new people and places but also to claim them as their own, despite their deep love for their own motherland. Their mind is open enough to view all people, even enemies, as brethren.

The influences that sparked their amiable personalities to march toward the long-cherished goal of one humanity, one world—not the dull, lifeless uniformity, but the coexistence of all varieties without the benefits of location, color, or race—were similar. The Indian Vedantic philosophy served as the foundation for their development of universal consciousness. Buddhism, the life of Buddha, their experiences in both the East and the West, and their forebears who supported universalism—Raja Rammohun Roy in Tagore's case and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in Swami Vivekananda's—had all contributed to bringing out the The Trio Ramana Maharshi , Swami Vivekananda and Tagore were successful in escaping the rigid bonds of narrow, violent patriotism that would lust for power. They had an unwavering and deep love for their homeland. However, they were able to devote themselves to their motherland to the extent that was necessary. They had accepted the entire world as their home and transcended national boundaries. Their goal was

to bring the ancient Indian dream of **Vasudhaika Kutumba**—the World as One Family—to life. Patriotism was never final in Tagore's mind. According to him, the whole man shouldn't be sacrificed for the patriotic man. He loved his motherland very much at the same time. He said that instead of limiting oneself to the physical manifestations of one's own country, one should see the potential of his homeland and make an effort to find fellow citizens everywhere. After reaching the saturation point, he declared that he was personally obligated to leave his own land and people. In a similar vein, Swami Vivekananda declared that no land, whether Indian, two's dormant universal nature so that it would illuminate the world like a blazing sun. English, American, or any other country, had any claim on him and argued that everything must be sacrificed for universality.

Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana maharshi opposed to narrow nationalism that would erect insurmountable obstacles around the globe. Because every nation was different, they believed that no nation was better than any other. Tagore believed that the nation's desire for wealth and power, along with material possessions, split humanity. He declared that his final years had been devoted to freeing the world from the grip of national chauvinism. In a similar vein, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana maharshi promoted moral and spiritual nationalism that was neutral toward humanity rather than material nationalism. He argued that the notion of nations being isolated or seceded because of narrow-mindedness had been harmful to people as well as to the welfare of the world.

Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ramana maharshi's open-mindedness allowed them to embrace not just their homeland but all of humanity. The strict boundaries of caste, creed, culture, geography, and religion had no effect on them. While Swami Vivekananda was horribly shocked by the deadly earthquake in Fiji and boldly declared that he was indebted not only to the Aryan ancestors but also to the Mongolian and Negretoid ancestors, Tagore felt a deep sense of sympathy for the Negros suffering in America, the Koreans who had been the victims of Japanese imperialism, and all those races who had been insulted and bullied at the fangs of the venomous expansionism of the West on the East. Furthermore, he remained silent and refused to raise at the expense of another, despite being treated as a Negro during his wanderings as an unidentified monk in America. Ramana Maharshi's teachings transcend religious boundaries, offering a universal message of love, peace, and self- awareness.

### **Conclusion**

Possessing a critical and creative spirit that would delve deeply into things to find the essence of the idea being pursued, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami

Vivekananda and Ramana maharshi expressed their opinions on nearly every facet of human existence. In addition to creating amazing works in many literary genres outside of the epic, Tagore took advantage of every chance to share with the world what he had learned from his life's experiences. His great concern for the welfare of not only his nation's citizens but all of humanity is evident in his lectures, speeches, debates, interviews, essays, and letters. In a similar vein, Swami Vivekananda produced a great deal during his brief life, particularly in the final nine years. Because of their different backgrounds and professions, they also displayed differences in a few areas. There are some differences between the householder Rabindranath Tagore and the lifelong celibate and missionary monks like Swami Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi.

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