



RELEVANCE OF HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF INDIAN THINKERS IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to explore the holistic educational views of Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Mahatma Gandhi and its relevance in the present education. The common educational ideas and their relevance today were identified through a review and critical analysis of selected literature. Education was viewed as a process for the all-round development of human beings that included physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral and spiritual qualities. The ideologies discussed emphasised the significance of self-awareness, character development, creativity, critical thinking, freedom, ethical values, social responsibility, self-reliance and harmony with nature. The role of educators was framed as shifting from transmitters of knowledge to facilitators, mentors, ethical guides and creators of supportive and fear-free learning environment. The relevance of these educational ideals to the present-day reforms like NEP 2020 and technology- oriented education was also discussed. Holistic education was seen as being fundamental to the development of well- rounded, responsible, self-aware and socially conscientious individuals in general.

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Introduction

Holistic education is a fairly new movement, which began to take form as a recognizable field of study and practice in the mid-1980s in North America (Miller, 2004). Holistic education addresses the broadest development of the whole person at the cognitive and affective levels (Singh, 1996). It aims for the fullest possible human development enabling a person to become the very best or finest that they can be and develop fully 'those capacities that together make up a human being' (Forbes, 2003). Holistic education is defined as the "harmonious development of all the powers of the human being- physical, social, intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual" (Gautam, 2018). National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India strongly emphasizes holistic and multidisciplinary education to develop critical thinking, creativity, communication, and problem-solving skills among learners (Bauri, 2026). Education in the 21st century is moving away from rote memorization and focusing more on student centred learning methods (Roy, 2026). In the Indian context, this philosophy emerged as a critique of colonial education systems that prioritized intellectual labor over character and life skills. Swami Vivekananda posited that "education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man," emphasizing character-building and the realization of inner potential (Indian Knowledge Systems, 2025). Rabindranath Tagore advocated for "freedom of mind" and a deep connection with nature, viewing education as a tool for achieving harmony between humanity and the natural world (Indian Knowledge Systems, 2025). Mahatma Gandhi introduced the Nai Talim (Basic Education) model, which integrated ethical, intellectual, and manual labor to create self-reliant, socially responsible citizens (Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy, 2026). J. Krishnamurti focused on the "transformation of the mind," arguing that true education should liberate the individual from fear and conditioned thinking to foster a state of total awareness. This literature review explores the concept of holistic education through the lenses of four influential Indian thinkers: Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Jiddu Krishnamurti and Mahatma Gandhi. While each proposed a unique pedagogical framework, they shared a fundamental belief that education must transcend rote literacy to foster the complete development of the human being-body, mind, and spirit.

This holistic vision is further reinforced in contemporary studies highlighting Sri Aurobindo's integral education (Ghosh & Saha, 2024; Saha & Maji, 2013) and the synthesis of morality, freedom, and culture (Gorain et al., 2022). Similar integrative paradigms emerge from Radhakrishnan's ideals of ethical teacherhood (Paroi & Saha, 2013), Kalam's balance of science and spirituality (Pandit et al., 2016), and Tagore's community-driven Bratidal ethos (Saha, 2025).

Review of the Literatures

Insights into Vivekananda's Educational Thought

Banerjee (2025) has analysed the vision of education of Swami Vivekananda from a holistic point of view. The study showed his educational philosophy was focused on “man-making” education, targeting at the all-round development of individuals. Kasera (2025) did a SWOT analysis of Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy and NEP 2020. The study identified key strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and challenges for educational reform and found that both stressed inclusive, value-based and holistic education. Das (2025) studied the educational -ideas of Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore within the framework of a meaningful education system. The study highlighted the continuing importance of holistic, inclusive and transformative approaches to education in the ever-changing educational context. Debbarma and Banerjee (2024) studied the impact of the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda on the present-day Indian education. The study revealed that his ideas influenced curriculum, teacher training, skill development and ethical, strong and self-reliant individuals. Jabeen (2024) employed qualitative, descriptive and analytical methods to study the educational philosophy and contributions of Swami Vivekananda to education. the study found that Education was seen as the main way to raise up the masses and solve social and moral problems. Bhat and Chahal (2024) explored Swami Vivekananda's educational ideals and their potential to foster holistic learning in India. His philosophy stressed holistic development, self-development, practical learning, character building, lifelong learning, and social responsibility, the study found. Yadav (2024) studied Swami Vivekananda's Educational Thoughts with Special Reference to Holistic Development. The research revealed that his philosophy of education was constructive, practical and comprehensive covering diverse aspects of human development. Akanksha and Usmani (2023) studied philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and its relevance in modern education system. The study revealed that his philosophy of education is offering valuable insights for educators, policy makers and students in solving the problems of modern education. Rakshit (2023) studied the significance of Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy for the contemporary Indian education system through secondary sources and content analysis. The study revealed that his philosophy is still very relevant to education today, reflecting his roles as a reformer, thinker, idealist and pragmatist. Bharadwaj and Pradeep (2023) have studied the futuristic relevance of the educational thoughts of Swami Vivekananda through SWOC analysis. This research identified gaps in current education and stressed the importance of holistic development, values, character building, and manifestation of the inner self to NEP 2020. Thapliyal (2023) conducted a study on “A revaluation in education: Swami Vivekananda's teaching methods and their challenges and opportunities in the modern era.” This paper explores swami Vivekananda's approach to education, highlighting its revolutionary aspects and relevance in the modern era. Zai and Wani (2023) did content analysis of Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy and its relevance to present day education. The study concluded that his ideas were still relevant when considering holistic development, character building, self-realization, practical knowledge, global unity and social transformation. Shinde (2023) has studied the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. The study showed that Vivekananda has considered spiritual development and personal growth as the primary objectives of education. Bhat (2021) did a qualitative analysis of Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy from the available literature. The study showed that his Vedantic principles and new ideas of education had a great deal of influence on Indian education and inspired many generations of Indian youths. Gupta (2021) studied the educational ideas of Swami Vivekananda and their consequences in the contemporary education. His philosophy, the study said, was focused on harmonious and holistic development through physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual growth, character building and man-making education. Das (2020) has discussed the educational implication of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. The study revealed that his educational ideas were greatly influenced by Vedanta and had a great impact on transforming the field of education. Sharma (2017) explored philosophical themes for developing a holistic educational model for the 21st century. The study found holistic education needs to balance the inner and outer needs of learners and demands constant curriculum revision and appropriate teacher training. Roy (2015) studied the relevance of the teaching methods of Swami Vivekananda in the present time. The study found that his approach to self-education is still relevant and applicable to the present-day education system. Hooda (2014) carried out a study on “Swami Vivekananda's view on education.” The main goal of this study was to relate the Vivekananda's educational view to present education. The study found that Vivekananda's view on education give emphasis on all round development of a child. According to the research presented, the contribution of Swami Vivekananda has been researched widely by several famous researchers such as Roy and Saha (2021); Umashankar and Charitra (2021); Singh (2018); Mondal and Mete (2012); Banerjee (2007).

Review of related Literatures about Rabindranath Tagore

Marshal (2025) explored Tagore's educational perspectives on co-curricular activities through a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical method. The study revealed that co-curricular activities facilitated holistic development, independence, creativity and balanced personal growth, thus making education more meaningful and learner-centred. Debnath, (2024) conducted a study on “Relevance of Tagore's Literature in India's National Education Policy 2020.” The main goal of this study was to find out the relevance of Tagore's literature and educational philosophy to India's NEP 2020 lies in their shared vision of an interdisciplinary approach to learning. Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy, which emphasizes holistic development, creativity, and the integration of nature and culture into learning, finds significant relevance in India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Kundu (2024) conducted a historical survey method to study Tagore's educational philosophy and its relevance in modern education. The study concluded that Tagore's educational ideals have influenced modern educational practices and are still relevant for the cultivation of aesthetic awareness, intuition and holistic education. Sarma (2023) explored Tagore's educational philosophy and its significance for modern education. The study emphasised freedom, nature, creativity and self-realization. It highlighted the development of the intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual potential of the students. Bhattacharjee (2023)

studied Tagore's educational philosophy in the setting of Santiniketan. The study with qualitative methods revealed that the philosophy of Tagore advocates holistic development that nurtures the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions of the learners. Mustafa and Hussain (2023) carried out a study on "Rabindranath Tagore's Approach to Education: A Pathway for Modern Learning." The main objective of this study was to explore Tagore's educational philosophy, examining its core tenets, historical context, and lasting relevance. This study found that Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy, rooted in the ideals of holistic development, creativity, and ethical values, remains profoundly relevant in the contemporary educational landscape. Ansary et al. (2023) conducted a study on "For the Urge of a Better Future: A study on the Great Educators." The study found that how education is defined differently by different educators of the east and west, and at the same time how their perspective is contributing to social cause. Atole et al. (2022) conducted a study on "Tagore's Philosophy of Education: Harmony Between Nature, Culture, and Creativity." The study revealed that Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education continues to inspire educators around the world with its emphasis on holistic development, creativity, and cultural harmony. Tagore's vision of education as a process of fostering individual potential in harmony with nature, culture, and creativity challenges the narrow. Sarkar (2021) carried out a study on "Educational Thought of Rabindranath Tagore", looks at Tagore's emphasis on moral, spiritual, and social growth as well as his universalist curriculum approach. It describes Tagore's efforts to reconcile traditional Indian ideals with contemporary world viewpoints. The study emphasizes how his world-centric education is still relevant in today's globalized culture. Rani (2021) studied Tagore's educational philosophy and its impact on contemporary Indian education. The study revealed that his ideas promoted holistic development, intellectual curiosity, cultural awareness and learner-centred education, challenging traditional educational practices. Rath (2020) explored Tagore's educational philosophy and its relevance to holistic education using the historical-analytic method. The study revealed that freedom, fear free learning and learner-centred teaching could promote students' natural development and make education more meaningful for stressed learners. Awal (2019) conducted a study on "Tagore's Philosophy of Education: A New Vista of Epistemology", talks about how Tagore combined Western reasoning with Eastern spirituality. The essay makes the case that Tagore developed a universal epistemology based on moral development, human freedom, and creativity. The author emphasizes Tagore's criticism of colonial education and his conviction that learning happens outside of the classroom. Singh (2019) studied Tagore's educational philosophy and its relevance in the contemporary era. The study revealed that Tagore's focus on the connection between nature and human life still stood the test of time, especially when considering contemporary environmental concerns including pollution, deforestation, and global warming. Ghosh (2017) conducted a study on "Shikha Chinta Rabindranath Tagore", talks on Tagore's opinions on the role of music and the arts in education, teacher-student relationships, and child psychology. The author illustrates Tagore's view that emotional growth is essential to learning holistically. The book highlights that Tagore aimed to foster in students not just intellectual abilities but also thinking, feeling, and willingness. Goswami and Malviya (2016) have explored the relevance of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education in contemporary India. The study concludes that Tagore's ideas of education and methods of teaching are still relevant and applicable in present education in India and in the world. Aggarwal and Choudhuri (2015) discussed Tagore's educational ideas and their relevance in the present times. The study discovered that freedom, creativity, nature-based learning, and joyful education were key to creating compassionate and stress-free learning environments. In addition to the previously mentioned research, important studies on Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy have been carried out by others as well, Sen and Saha (2026); Gorain (2023); Sen (2022); Saha and Maji (2012).

Insights into Krishnamurti's Pedagogical Framework

Prakash & Kumari (2025) studied the educational philosophy of J. Krishnamurti and its reflection in NEP 2020. The study employed qualitative and historical research methods. The results suggest that Krishnamurti's educational ideas are very relevant in today's world of artificial intelligence and technology-based learning. Garo (2025) explored Jiddu Krishnamurti's idea of holistic education and its importance for world rankings and internationalisation in higher education. The study using qualitative content analysis found that world rankings and internationalisation can improve university status and foster competition in the global education market. Kumar (2024) conducted a study on "Jiddu Krishnamurti's philosophy of education and national education policy 2020: a review." The main goal of this study is to look at philosophy and pedagogical ideas of the famous contemporary Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti. The study revealed that the most recent National Education Policy 2020, Which reflect his vision, educational philosophy or philosophy of education, demonstrates the concept's applicability in the 21st century. Kumar and Gaurav (2024) compared the educational philosophies of Osho Rajneesh and J. Krishnamurti. The study found that both emphasised freedom and rejection of traditional rote learning, while Osho focused on creativity and experiential learning, and Krishnamurti emphasised self-awareness, critical thinking and psychological freedom. Jaiswal (2024) conducted a study on "Quantifying the impact of Jiddu Krishnamurti's philosophy on students' education and well-being." This article examines Krishnamurti's philosophy's long-lasting influence on education and student wellbeing, promoting a society that is more self-aware and compassionate. The study found that Jiddu Krishnamurti's philosophy of education, emphasizing self-awareness, psychological freedom, and individuality, has the potential to significantly impact student well-being. Quantifying this impact, however, presents challenges due to the multifaceted and subjective nature of well-being. Kapri and Santra (2023) adopted a qualitative and historical approach to examine the educational philosophy of J. Krishnamurti and its reflection in NEP 2020. His ideas are still relevant today, the study concluded, with a focus on holistic development, creativity, critical thinking, self-learning and a safe and peaceful learning environment. Majumdar (2023) analysed Jiddu Krishnamurti's educational ideas through a content analysis of primary and secondary sources. The study found his philosophy was based on fear-free, child-centred, holistic education and development of curiosity rather than mere transmitting knowledge. Pandey (2023) studied Jiddu Krishnamurti's educational ideology and its implications for Indian education. The study found that education should be a

process of cooperative exploration, focusing on nurturing the learner's unique nature, vocation and sense of purpose, rather than merely imparting knowledge. Pandey (2022) conducted a study on "Krishnamurti's philosophy & nep 2020." The main goal of this study is to find out the reflection of J. Krishnamurti's educational philosophy on the NEP 2020. The study showed that Krishnamurti's perspective is reflected in the most recent National Education Policy 2020 which places a strong emphasis on teaching students all of these talents and developing them holistically. Dhingra and Pal (2022) carried out a study on "Relevance of Jiddu Krishnamurti's educational philosophy in the context of national education policy 2020." The main goal of this study is to find out the relevance of Jiddu Krishnamurti's educational philosophy in the context of national education policy 2020. This study tried to find out the relevance of the educational philosophy of Jiddu Krishnamurti in the context of NEP 2020. Barman (2021) used a philosophical approach to investigate Jiddu Krishnamurti's educational philosophy and its relevance to the present education. The study found that Krishnamurti advocated fearless holistic development through child-centred, natural and technique free education. Ghosh Dastidar (2021) has explored the relevance of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy in the backdrop of NEP 2020. The study found his philosophy is still relevant in the modern era of AI and stresses independent thinking, problem-solving and preparing learners to confront everyday challenges. Malhotra (2018) has explored the relevance of Jiddu Krishnamurti's educational philosophy in the present education system. His ideas have influenced alternative Indian education, encouraging critical thinking, responsibility and moral development, but are less emphasised in formal secondary education.

Review of related Literatures about Mahatma Gandhi

Panda and Atta (2026) carried out a study on "Impact of Gandhi Educational Philosophy on the current education system." The main goal of this study to explore the key principles of Gandhi's educational philosophy. The study found that Gandhi's key ideas like- learning through productive work, dignity of labour, character formation, and the integrated development of body, mind, and spirit remain strongly reflected in contemporary educational practices. Sengupta (2025) discussed the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy within the framework of NEP 2020. The study revealed that Gandhi's focus on holistic development, moral values, self-reliance, inclusivity and vocational education are still relevant to modern education. Hasan (2023) conducted a study on "Gandhi's educational philosophy as a tool for social inclusion." The study explore how Gandhian principles promote social inclusion by intertwining intellectual growth, moral development and community engagement. Jana (2023) studied Mahatma Gandhi and basic education the main goal of this study was to explore understand and review Gandhiji's principle of basic education and highlight some important features of Gandhiji's basic education and its relevance with present world. The study found that Basic education is related to the basic needs and interest of the education for the development of a child. Biswas (2021) conducted a study on Gandhiji's basic education and its relevance in the modern Education. The main goal of this this study was to understand the Basic education system and its impact on the modern education system.

Critical Note

The literature reviewed was critically analysed to bring to the fore the importance of educators in the 21st century and their role in holistic education. Holistic education was understood to be an approach where the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral and spiritual dimensions of learners were developed harmoniously rather than academic achievement as the only goal of education. In the philosophies of education of Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi and According to J. Krishnamurti, education was a process of nurturing character, self-awareness, creativity, critical thinking, moral values and social responsibility. The teacher was thus expected to be transformed from a mere transmitter of information into a facilitator, mentor, ethical guide and creator of a supportive and fear-free learning environment. The role of educators as humans and value-based actors was seen to be even more significant in the 21st century with the increasing application of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in education. Technology could assist in learning but self-awareness, emotional maturity, ethical values, creativity and meaningful human relationships were not seen as achievable through technology alone. The literature reviewed has also pointed to the need for a safe, secure, tranquil and holistic learning environment. Furthermore, it was expected that education would produce self-reliant, morally responsible, socially conscious and psychologically balanced individuals. Hence, it was critically observed that the role of the educator was central in translating the principles of holistic education into classroom practice and education was required to move beyond information accumulation toward wisdom, self-awareness and the overall development of human beings.

Conclusion

The synthesis of literature regarding the educational visions of Krishnamurti, Vivekananda, Tagore, and Gandhi underscore a shared commitment to human-centric learning. The consensus across their works is that education's ultimate aim is not the accumulation of information, but the cultivation of wisdom and self-awareness. Gandhi and Tagore provide the external framework-advocating for social self-sufficiency and ecological harmony-while Vivekananda and Krishnamurti provide the internal roadmap for moral and psychological development. In conclusion, the literature suggests that a holistic approach is inherently interdisciplinary, blending ethics, arts, labor, and meditation. By moving beyond the 'banking model of education, these four philosophers offer a timeless critique of modern pedagogy, suggesting that for education to be truly effective, it must empower the learner to understand their relationship with society, nature, and their own consciousness. Their collective legacy continues to serve as a vital blueprint for contemporary educational reforms seeking to balance global competency with inner peace.

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