



## Upanishadic Influence on Educational Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo

### KEYWORDS

Upanishad, Rabindranath, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Brahmacharya, Education, Teaching, teacher, Psychic

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### ABSTRACT

*Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo – the great Indian educators look with discerning eye at the Upanishadic system of education framed by the Rishis of the Upanishadic age wherein emphasis has been laid on self-perfection through the light of the inner being.*

### Introduction

The present topic is indeed immensely significant as it is intended to highlight the very genesis of the fundamental aims and principles of the ancient Indian man-making educational parameters of the Upanishadic age that are responsible for India's inexhaustible and untiring vitality and prolific creativeness for many thousand years. And the great educators Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo who are seers as well of the contemporary world are sure that the genesis of the prodigious research work and intellectual creativeness right from the ancient period well upto the Muslim rule in India, having no parallel in the world history, lies in the continued efforts of the seer-teachers or the Rishis that enable the young learners – generations after generations to utilize the hidden potentialities of the spirit in man in order to make human life many times more powerful and attain further progress in all the fields of life.

Rabindranath, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo – the three leading educationists in their respective way give serious thinking over this concept of self-opening and self-realization. All of them are found trying to put efforts for making use of the exercise of the spirit by the young learners with a view to bringing out the wealth of the inner being

### ➤ Upanishadic education and the Educational thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath, the world poet makes sincere and careful attempt to awaken and develop the innate cognitive disposition of the learner. Never does he load the unwilling mental frame as genuine thirst for knowledge alone but only lays emphasis on the real growth of knowledge. In Svetasvata Upanishad the self-same idea has been expressed.

From Sunil Chandra Sarkar we come to know that at the time of setting up Ashram Vidyalyaya at Shantiniketan Rabindranath is found immensely absorbed in the ideals of Tapovan and the Upanishadic culture.

Sri Sudhiranjan Das is of opinion that the basic principles of Rabindranath's Viswabharati retain the real message of the Upanishads. The teacher-taught relationship in the Upanishadic age is remarkably an ideal one. The guru and his disciples are so close and integrated that as the day dawns a common aspiration and aim of preserving and propagating the sacred learning starts vibrating and creating an atmosphere showing its worth in their lives and conducts with the chanting of the mantra. Rabindranath is so much absorbed in the educational thoughts and ideals of the Upanishads that it seems he cannot do away with the role of the Rishis as educators from his mind.

The concept of Brahmacharya embraces not merely the preparatory phase of life only but the entire life. Regarding

self-restraint and discipline Rabindranath refers to the ideas of the ancient system of Brahmacharya. The world poet realizes that to keep human nature transparent and positive the little learner is in need of overcoming perversion. Rabindranath believes that one can acquire inner qualities of one's being getting in touch with one's inner light for which the practice of Brahmacharya can help him a lot.

### ➤ Upanishadic education and the Educational thoughts of Swami Vivekananda

Like the seer poet of the Upanishads Vivekananda views education as the manifestation of perfection already in man. 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 which undergo changes through the passage of time. 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....

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 -

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.

According to Mundaka Upanishad mere acquisition of information or self-study through mental exercise will offer only surface knowledge. This can give one material knowledge only.

Vivekananda says, without having the qualities of a Tyagi 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. Vivekananda believes that perfection is already in man 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.

Vivekananda has also shown equal zeal for making the students interested in the exercise of Brahmacharya which chief-

ly means practice of self-control. 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

He further says –

Swami Vevakananda advocates such a tie of relationship which is based on great respect and mutual confidence – the significant and meaningful congregational prayer of the acharyadeva and the learners which makes all concerned equally benefited.&

#### ➤ Upanishadic education and the Educational thoughts of Sri Aurobindo

In fact, Sri Aurobindo forms his educational philosophy by the study of the Upanishads.

My philosophy was formed first by study of the Upanishads.

Sri Aurobindo has categorically outlined the duty of the teacher in clear terms -

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and guide.

Upanishadic education has laid stress on self-concentration in respect of attaining higher knowledge through the exercise of human spirit. And his chief aim is to see that the pupil makes progress in the matter of attaining higher knowledge by dint of his persistent hard endeavour.

Sri Aurobindo points out —

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.

Here it may be pointed out that Upanishad has also stated some such things regarding the role of the teacher and much emphasis has been laid on it.

Once again Sri Aurobindo points out -

The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be.

In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad mention has been made of three processes of education. So here Sri Aurobindo fully endorses the views of the Upanishadic teachers in respect of teaching and the role of the learners.

The methodology for imparting knowledge to the young disciples in the Upanishadic age may not be the same as that of Sri Aurobindo's thought of education and surely there is a marked difference between the two methodologies viz, Brahmacharya-based education and Integral Education but the fundamental objective of both the schools seems to be one and the same with some degrees of changes of some terms and all that for when the Upanishadic teachers lay emphasis of self-knowledge Sri Aurobindo equally gives stress on psychic light in view of attaining a higher stage of life –

Undoubtedly... the Upanishads teach the equality which rises above sin and virtue, beyond good and evil... for the man who is on the path and advanced enough to fulfil the supreme rule.

The author, Sri Biswanath Sengupta in his book entitled 'A New Vision of Education in the light of Sri Aurobindo' points out -

Frankly speaking man is still a half animal. At the most, we may call him a reasoning animal with the faculties of mind and intellect. This is high time to explore his being's hidden realms.

#### Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo – the great Indian educators look with discerning eye at the Upanishadic system of education framed by the Rishis of the Upanishdic age. In the harmony of universal qualities Upanishadic system of education lays much emphasis of self perfection for the purpose of arriving at the ideal manhood and as such disciplines in this regard have been laid down so that flowering of the entire human nature may steadily take place along with the concomitant growth of all other faculties in addition to the moral aesthetic, intellectual, social etc. etc.

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