



# A Comparative Study Of The Educational Philosophy Of Raja Mahendra Pratap, Mahatma Gandhi And Madan Mohan Malviya

Tarun Prakash<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Hradayesh Kumar<sup>2</sup>

Department of Arts Faculties of Humanities Mangalayatan University, Aligarh, Uttar  
Pradesh, India

**Abstract-** This article conducts a comparative study of the educational philosophies of Raja Mahendra Pratap, Mahatma Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malaviya amid colonial India's evolving educational landscape. It gives a short overview of Indian education from indigenous Pathshalas to Macaulay's Anglicised education recommendation and Woods Despatch. It critiques British policies of fostering cultural alienation, prompting nationalist alternatives rooted in self-reliance, morality and cultural revival. Raja Mahendra Pratap, often overshadowed as a revolutionary, established Prem Mahavidyalaya in Vrindavan as a free vocational, caste-inclusive institution blending Hindi-medium academics with modern science subjects. He Emphasised practical crafts (three hours study, three hours' work), ethical training and universal humanism inspired by "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." Gandhi's Nai Talim (Wardha Scheme, 1937) emphasised craft-centred basic education, mother-tongue instruction and character-building through non-violence and labour dignity, targeting mass rural upliftment. Malaviya's Banaras Hindu University (1916) integrated modern science with Hindu spiritual values for national consolidation. Similarities in these educationists include, experiential learning, vocational focus and rejection of colonial rote system. While differences emerge in scope—Pratap's technical emphasis in secondary education, Gandhi's primary mass orientation and Malaviya's cultural nationalism in higher education. The analysis underscores their enduring relevance for holistic, skill-based education promoting ethical global citizenship and social equity.

**Keywords-** Raja Mahendra Pratap, Mahatma Gandhi, Madan Mohan Malviya, Educational Philosophy, Prem Mahavidyalaya, BHU, Nai Talim, National Education, Vocational Education, Traditional Knowledge, modern Education, Vernacular, Self-reliance, Practical learning.

## I. Introduction

Education has played a crucial role in fostering a national spirit, promoting self-reliance and serving as a tool for resistance against colonial policies. While modern education, introduced by the British government, and inadvertently sparked nationalism among Indians through exposure to Western ideas of liberty and democracy. It was criticized by Indian leaders for being alien. It also undermined the glorious Indian knowledge and lowered Indians' self-confidence (Mukherjee, 1957, pp.6-8). The responses of Indian leaders, educationists and freedom fighters to British education have been mixed. While a few welcomed this system, other Indian leaders advocated an indigenous education model closer to Indian culture and needs, which could boost people's confidence in their own knowledge and culture, thus indirectly promoting nationalist fervour.



Though many educationists and reformers contributed to the education of the Indian populace, responding to the needs of the time and their own ideals. This paper limits itself to comparing the educational efforts and philosophies of three notable personalities who contributed to Indian education in their own way and influenced the education system in India. These three personalities are Raja Mahendra Pratap, Mahatma Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malviya. While, as educationists, Mahatma Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malviya are well known, Raja Mahendra Pratap is primarily known as a revolutionary, and this image of Raja Mahendra Pratap does not clearly depict his multilayered personality.

The selection of these personalities is based on their connection to central figure, Raja Mahendra Pratap. Our first figure for comparison is Mahatma Gandhi, who was not only impressed with the educational and patriotic efforts of Raja Mahendra Pratap but also visited the Prem Mahavidyalaya established by him and closely monitored the institute's education system and organisational activities. Gandhiji also sent teachers to this institute during the exile of Raja Mahendra Pratap. During the days of the Non-Cooperation movement and civil disobedience movement, Prem Mahavidyalaya served as a centre for the national movement (Singh, 2024, p.93 &96). Rakesh Rana writes, "Nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru camped at Prem Mahavidyalaya.

Mahatma Gandhi used to stay in the big room of the upper storey of the college hostel, and on one whole day, i.e. April 14, 1915, was devoted by him to the college affairs. Once, Gandhiji uncovered the picture of Raja Mahendra Pratap on the bank of the Yamuna River and expressed his emotion in these words, "You think me great, but he is greater than me" (Rana, 2006, p. 91). Mahatma Gandhiji commented on this institute in these words- "A visit to this Vidyalaya is giving rise to various ideas in my mind. There is nothing here, which is not worth seeing. The founder cannot be too highly thanked (Pratap, 1947, p.23)". Apart from this, Mahatma Gandhi exchanged letters with Raja Mahendra Pratap and made a very important effort to bring him back to India in 1946 after a long exile of 32 years.

The second figure of comparison is Madan Mohan Malviya, a person revered by Raja Mahendra Pratap and who was the chief guest at the opening ceremony of the technical institute established by Raja Mahendra Pratap. Apart from this, Pratap mentions his good relations with Malviya in his biography (Pratap, 1947, p. 21). It would be worth mentioning here that Malviya was impressed by the establishment of Prem Mahavidyalaya. He commented in the visitor book of this institute in these words- "The Institution is unique in character. We were thoroughly satisfied with what we saw (Pratap, 1947, p.24)". Further, Shah points out in her research that Prem Mahavidyalaya served as a model for Malviya's educational initiatives at BHU (Shah, 2024, p.121).

Although comparisons are rarely perfect, they are essential for a deep understanding of the ideas, motives and ideologies of notable personalities and their educational efforts.



- **Historical Background of Education in Colonial India**

In order to understand how formal education has developed into what we see today in India we have to consider the impact that colonialism had on this country. In pre-British era, India had a robust indigenous education system that ran through Pathshalas, Gurukulas and Madaras. In this system of education emphasis was placed on the teaching of subjects like Sanskrit, Persian, Arithmetic and ethics. Interestingly, this education was accessible to all (Dharampal,1983, pp,17-44). When East India Company established its rule in India, it started intervening in this system. This intervention came due to the orientalist approach of company and it established Calcutta Madarasa (1781) and Banaras Sanskrit College (1791). However, focus was shifted on western education after charter act of 1813 promised funding for western education (Grover, Mehta & Yashpal,1981, p.254).

In 1835 English education was imposed on Indians by Macaulay's minutes to produce an anglicised Indian Elite. The "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) authored by Macaulay, is well known for its influence on the direction of British colonial education in India. After this we see a clear shift in colonial education policy belittling native systems of knowledge. Macaulay advocated for the development of a group of educated Indians who would be Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes. Therefore, the colonial government promoted English language education, Western science and literature. Thus, the education traditions of the indigenous populations of India were cornered. (Grover, Mehta & Yashpal,1981, p.255).

The British system of education was institutionalised in India by subsequent measures, such as **Wood's Despatch of 1854**, which established universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Wood's Despatch standardised curricula and introduced teacher training. These reforms expanded access to modern education on one hand, while also strengthening colonial hierarchies on the other by privileging English-educated elites and producing a bureaucratic workforce loyal to the colonial state. Subsequently, education became increasingly examination-oriented, bookish, detached from social realities and the economic needs of India (Chaudhary,2007, pp.4-7).

Dissatisfaction with British education had grown among Indian intellectuals, particularly those influenced by the rising nationalism, Swadeshi Movement and Congress's resolution for National education. They felt that the system was not only detached from India's socio-economic needs but also imposed intellectual slavery on Indians. Intellectuals argued that it detached students from their cultural roots and neglected moral and character development. Dissatisfied with this system, nationalist intellectuals began advocating alternative educational experiments and philosophies. These alternative measures were aimed at reclaiming education as a tool for social reform, cultural regeneration and national awakening. Thus, in this historical context, educationists like Raja Mahendra Pratap and Madan Mohan Malaviya formulated their educational ideas. Though, Gandhi gave his education policy two decade later but he also tried to address the above-mentioned concerns.



- **Nationalist and Reformist Responses to Colonial Education**

Many Indians responded to the colonial education system in different ways. The response varied according to social location, religious background and political orientation. However, almost all Indian thinkers shared a common concern about the need to redefine education in a manner that would serve Indian society rather than imperial interests.

Madan Mohan Malaviya sought to integrate modern scientific education with Indian religious and cultural values, viewing education as a means of national consolidation (Shah,2024, p.119). Keeping this in mind, he established Banaras Hindu University in 1916. Mahatma Gandhi rejected the foundations of colonial education and proposed an alternative model rooted in indigenous values, productive labour and moral discipline which reflected in the Wardha Scheme of Basic Education in 1937. Raja Mahendra Pratap had strong nationalist concerns (Pratap,1947, p.9) and that is why he focused on vocational education combined with cultural and moral education. He believed that such education could not only generate employment, cultural pride and nationalist sentiments among students but also enable them to contribute to the country's economic growth. His vision went beyond mere political nationalism and articulated a vision of education grounded in the service of mankind. He founded Prem Mahavidyalaya in 1909 at Vrindavan, Mathura (Pratap,1947, pp.20-24).

Despite differences in their approaches, their thoughts converged on one point that education must be connected with ethical values, social responsibility and national regeneration. They rejected education as merely a means of producing clerks and administrators for colonial needs. Instead, they viewed education as a transformative force capable of reshaping individual character and collective destiny. In their view, education rooted in Indian value had the capacity of creating a self-reliant, peaceful and ethical society.

- **Historical Context of Raja Mahendra Pratap**

Raja Mahendra Pratap was born in 1886 into the princely family of Mursan in the United Province. During his developmental period, India experienced a time of significant political upheaval. This era was marked by the rise of Indian nationalist sentiment, revolutionary mobilisations and transnational anti-colonial movements. Like many of his contemporaries, Raja Mahendra Pratap also developed a nationalist outlook toward education. In shaping his nationalist perspective, the Congress session in Calcutta was very influential. Influenced by the agenda of national education passed during this session, he established a technical institute at Vrindavan and village schools in his estate by donating his personal property. The institutes established by him were aimed at providing free technical education to youths, regardless of caste and socio-economic status. (Pratap,1947, pp. 22 & 29)

As Pratap's family was influenced by the Arya Samaj, he imbibed ideals of social equality, rational inquiry and moral reform. The Arya Samaj's emphasis on universal brotherhood, rejection of caste discrimination and commitment to social upliftment had a lasting impact on his educational philosophy (Rana, 2017, p.716). However, these principles of Arya samaj were age old in India as they existed since Vedic period. Born into Hindu family, married to a Sikh family and educated at a Muslim



institute shaped his secular and tolerant outlook. At the same time, his travels across India and abroad provided him exposure to the various political, social, economic and cultural realities of India and global political movements. The idea of national education passed at the congress session of 1906, shaped his belief that educational development was a prerequisite for a nation to get political independence, economic self-reliance and cultural freedom. Basically, his educational efforts and educational philosophy were built on diverse experiences of his life and current political, social, economic and cultural conditions of India and the world (Pratap,1947, pp.11-19).

Raja Mahendra Pratap's historical significance lies in his synthesis of nationalism, ethics, humanity and social service. While deeply committed to India's freedom struggle, he tried to combine education as a means to political independence as well as moral and intellectual emancipation. This was the core belief of Pratap, which formed his educational philosophy.

- **Raja Mahendra Pratap's Educational Philosophy**

Though, Raja Mahendra Pratap was not a formal educational philosopher, his educational philosophy can be explored in his educational works and writings. He has explained his education system in his biography (Vol-2) edited by Dr Rajendra Kumar but it was written after independence. In this paper I have tried to focus more on his educational initiatives before independence. However, reading his educational thoughts expressed in vol-2 in light of his broader goal of World Federation and Religion of Love gives clearer picture. He propagated idea of internationalism, humanity and global peace through his circular named as World Federation started in Sep 1929.

After having a look on his educational efforts and examining his writings, it is clear that Pratap conceived education as a comprehensive process aimed at the moral, intellectual and spiritual development of the individual. He not only rejected the colonial emphasis on rote learning but also bureaucratic utility (Pratap,1947, p.23). For him, education was a means of self-reliance, national service, cultural regeneration and service of society.

Raja Mahendra Pratap has mentioned in his biography, "Various problems likely to lead to the uplift of a country present themselves to the patriots; and many of them succeed, according to their opportunity and capacity, in doing something substantial for the generations to come. The field of national work is very wide, and education occupies in it a unique position. Educational problems have always had to be faced in all civilized and progressive countries; in India, whence all the glory has departed, there is indeed very wide scope for them. Here, many of her true sons have laid their body, mind, and soul at the altar of the country, and thus have given a good account of their lives. Prem Mahavidyalaya is an index of the generous instincts of one such patriot (Pratap,1947, pp.23)".

The above statement by Pratap reveals his philosophy of pragmatic nationalism, rooted in "National Education", which has the capacity to reverse the degradation caused by the colonial education system and foster self-reliant generations through selfless sacrifice. Furthermore, he believed that every country must face the



educational challenge to progress and India must do so as well. As shown in the statement, Pratap was firmly convinced that India's past glory had been lost due to the flawed education system under British rule, but it could be restored through indigenous education that aligns with Indian needs and values. The core philosophy of Raja Mahendra Pratap behind the establishment of Prem Mahavidyalaya was national service, as he believed that the field of national service was very broad, with education occupying an important and unique place within it. For him, contributing to educational advancement was as pious as any supreme sacrifice for the nation.

While National education and economic self-reliance were at the centre of his educational philosophy, his ultimate and broader objective of education was the service of society and humanity, which is reflected in these words- "The College wants to implement the great teachings of its incarnations and prophets in its practical life. It should fulfil the needs of human society without any desire for reward. The college wants to meet the needs of today's society with the help of ancient ideals. We want to achieve those achievements in the industrial world that our ancestors had achieved on the high level of philosophy or spirituality. We hope that the guiding light of our students will not be only to earn money but also to serve society". (Chintamani, 1976, pp.324).

He suggested that every school should study for three hours and work for three hours to produce daily necessities. This approach was unique as it converted students into producers and earning members of the economy while they were still students. The philosophy of study and work also inculcated respect for labour. Pratap adopted this model in his institute from the very beginning. At Prem Mahavidyalaya, students spent three hours in classes and three hours producing items through crafting. (Premi, 1976, p314)

It is exciting to know that in his vision, education was not only an instrument for national emancipation but also a tool for unity, human development, peaceful coexistence, cultural upliftment and global peace. Pratap emphasized the need to promote arts and sciences to make a better society. Here is a part of his proclamation, he issued as president of first provisional government of India at Kabul in 1915, which reflects his educational philosophy, "All the races and religions of India should live together like brethren, they should encourage arts and sciences, turn the whole human race into one family by promoting civilization to the highest degree and turn the face of the earth into heaven and make it a fit abode for the pious." (Krishnteerth, 2013, p.59)

In his opinion, the role of education was to colour a man. In other words, a man is the product of education. Whatever worldview a person conceives is the result of the type of education imparted. Discussing his education system in his biography, he expressed that a man born in Russia will speak Russian, while a man born in China will speak Chinese and similarly, a man given an education at a French school will speak French. Giving an example, he said that if you dip a white kerchief in red ink, it will become red and if you dip it in black ink, then the kerchief will turn black and concluded that the present condition of the world was simply a result of the education given to mankind so far. (Kumar,2016, pp.355-356)



Central to his philosophy was the idea that education must foster compassion and cooperation rather than competition and domination. He said “It should be clear, we do not want a nation to rule other nations. We do not want to impose any faith on our students” (Kumar,2016, p.356). He believed that violence, exploitation and imperialism were products of distorted education systems that prioritised power over ethics. Consequently, he advocated an education system grounded in truth, love and service to humanity. While discussing his education system, he said, “Every religious group and every national state educate their people in their own way. ‘Our religion is the best and our nation is superior to all other nations,’ people were taught. They guard their dogmas with the fanatic faith of a Catholic, Hindu or Muslim. You will often hear. Thus, they make airtight compartments. It has gone on throughout the past ages”. (Kumar,2016, pp.355-366).

Further, he adds that “The minds of students must be daily cleansed of frictional thoughts, and they must know that all religions are different thoughts. Communism, socialism or nationalism are based on some or other thoughts. Further, he suggests that we should not provide an education that is centred to rule a nation by another nation, so we should not impose any faith on our students” (Kumar,2016, p.356).

Emphasising moral and social education, he said that “we should make our students joint proprietors of all the school property so that when they grow up, they feel like a commune having no dogmas and this way morality will rule the community” (Kumar,2016, p.356).

Indian philosophical traditions, particularly the concept of VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM, have been reflected in Pratap’s educational thoughts, which viewed the world as one family. However, Pratap did not uncritically idealise the past, unlike conservative revivalists. He believed and practised that Indian education must engage with modern science and technology while remaining rooted in ethical and spiritual values.

#### • **Raja Mahendra Pratap and His Contribution to Education**

Educational reforms of Raja Mahendra Pratap may be examined through his initiatives of establishing educational institutes and donations to educational institutes during the early twentieth century. He establishment of Prem Mahavidyalaya in Vrindavan in 1909. This institution not only focused on Vocational and technical education, which was largely neglected in the colonial system of education but also emerged as an alternative to colonial educational structures, emphasising moral pedagogy, principles of social equity and the cultivation of national consciousness.

Prem Mahavidyalaya adopted a policy of non-discriminatory admission and accepted students irrespective of caste or religious affiliation. This approach was very important those days as it challenged prevailing social strata (Saxena, 2008, p.30) The curriculum of Prem Mahavidyalaya integrated ethics, indigenous cultural traditions and community-oriented service alongside conventional academic disciplines. Pedagogical practice extended beyond traditional classroom instruction to encompass community engagement and the formation of moral character. (Premi, 1976, pp.314-316)



Apart from this, he donated three gardens outside of Vrindavan town to Gurukul University of Arya Samaj, when it relocated from Farrukhabad. Believing in the principle that all religions and sects are true and the same, he wanted to put a condition behind this donation that a Vaishnav temple should also be built on this land to bring harmony between the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan tradition, but on the repeated request of swami Nityanand, he withdrew it and donated the land unconditionally (Agrawal,1976, p.118).

During his reign, Pratap paid particular attention to educational institutions and the poor. His doors were always open to them. He donated land for D.A.V. College and Kayastha School in Aligarh and also contributed to Hindu University, Banaras. That is why he was a member of the university's board. Raja Saheb held substantial land in the Bulandshahar district and also generously donated to numerous institutions. He also contributed Rs. 25,000 to establish primary schools in villages under his estate (Agrawal, 1976, p. 117).

In 1910, Pratap was a member of the reception committee of the Indian National Congress. During this session of Congress, he tried to utilise the platform to hold the All-India Educational Conference; however, Congress leaders did not allow him to use the Congress pandal for this purpose. Nevertheless, Pratap decided to hold the conference anyway, so he arranged a large tent at his own expense and held the All-India Educational Conference at Allahabad, which was presided over by Maharaja Bhavani Singh of Jhalawar (Pratap, 1947, pp. 31-32).

- **International Dimension of Raja Mahendra Pratap's Educational Thoughts**

The educational philosophy espoused by Raja Mahendra Pratap cannot be comprehensively apprehended without acknowledging its transnational dimensions. During exile, his educational pursuits were aimed at advancing the ideas of humanity, equality and global peace. His engagements in Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East acquainted him with prevailing global intellectual paradigms and anti-imperialist movements. During the period of his exile, his dedication to education remained unwavering. Throughout those years, he engaged with educators, students and institutions wherever he travelled. This transformation was likely a necessary adaptation, as he was in exile and to advance the cause of national independence abroad, he incorporated notions of nationalism into his vision of internationalism and global harmony.

During his exile, he sought meetings with educational institutions and esteemed figures from various countries to promote his anti-imperialist agenda. To raise awareness and garner sympathy for India's freedom, he thoroughly exposed imperialistic oppression within India, linking it with the global suppression of colonies. He argued that subject nations and the world could achieve peaceful coexistence through some form of global governance and proposed the establishment of an organisation called the World Federation (Krishnteerth, 2013, p.114). Pratap championed the idea of the World Federation and the philosophy of love as instruments for making a peaceful and progressive world where equality and humanity will prevail among different nations, different races and different religions. His plan of world federation in China, took the shape of educational institute aimed at



making students self-reliant through training of sewing, embroidery and weaving (Krishteerth, 2013, p.131).

During his stay in Yokohama, he ran a free program to teach Hindi and English, besides professing his religion of love, which was well received by Japanese people (Krishteerth, 2013, p.91). His love for education is evident from the incident when he met President Comrade Muhidinov of Tajikistan during a train journey. During this trip and subsequent stay at the same hotel, they discussed educational issues in Tajikistan. Muhidinov took Pratap with him to show a newly developed university and introduced him to the university's director.

Commenting on the education minister and development officer of Tajikistan, Pratap writes, "He is one of the people and wants to do his utmost to bring his brethren to the modern level of education." (Krishteerth, 2013, p.112). On another occasion, Pratap addressed students at Tokushoku University and Daito Wanka College in Japan, organised by Japanese Prince Oki and Mr. Kinoshita, a member of the Diet. At these gatherings, Pratap spoke about his Religion of Love. During a visit to China, Pratap delivered lectures on the world federation, its proposed capital, provinces and electoral constituencies at various schools. Let me remind you that all these efforts of Pratap were aimed at global peace through his ambitious plan of establishing a federation of the world and promoting the religion of love (Krishteerth, 2013, p.121). There are so many incidents of his association with educational institutes abroad during his exile but it is not desirable to mention here all.

He conceptualised education as a vehicle for cultivating global citizenship and promoting harmonious relations among nations. In a period characterised by global conflicts and imperialistic antagonisms, his focus on education aimed at fostering peace was simultaneously innovative and prescient. While discussing the objective of education, he says, "It should be clear, we don't want a nation to rule other nations. We do not want to impose any faith on our students. Nor do we want to teach communism with its prophet Karl Marks or Lenin as its first Khalifa." (Kumar, 2016, p.356). He posited that solely an education rooted in universal ethical principles could avert future hostilities and guarantee enduring peace.

- **Significance of Raja Mahendra Pratap in the History of Indian Education**

In the history of Indian educationists, Raja Mahendra Pratap occupies a distinctive position. However, his educational efforts and their importance in the days of rising nationalism have not received proper attention from scholars. Unlike Mahatma Gandhi, who focused on mass education and village reconstruction, Raja Mahendra Pratap articulated a philosophy that combined nationalism with universal humanism (Krishteerth, 2013, p.59). His educational thought anticipated contemporary concerns about global citizenship, peace education and moral development.

Raja Mahendra Pratap has received no attention in mainstream history of Indian education in spite of his contributions. This neglect can be attributed to his unconventional nature of ideas and his marginal position within institutional politics. However, a re-examination of his educational philosophy reveals its enduring relevance and originality.



- **Prem Mahavidyalaya as a Nationalist Educational Experiment**

The establishment of **Prem Mahavidyalaya at Vrindavan in 1909** must be understood as a part of nationalist educational experiments that emerged in the early twentieth century particularly because of swadeshi Movement. The early twentieth century witnessed the founding of institutions such as the National Council of Education in Bengal, Gurukul Kangri at Haridwar and later Visva-Bharati at Shantiniketan. The common spirit these institutions shared was dissatisfaction with colonial education and a desire to create alternative education systems rooted in Indian values and national aspirations.

Universal love (prem) as the foundational principle of education makes Prem Mahavidyalaya distinct from many contemporary institutions. The name of the institute itself suggests that Pratap envisioned it not merely as a centre of learning but as a moral community where students would cultivate empathy, discipline and a sense of service. Further, the choice of Vrindavan for opening his institute carries cultural symbolism. As this place had been associated with lord Krishna, the epitome of love. This reflects his belief that education must be grounded in an environment conducive to moral reflection.

Colonial elitism and narrow sectarianism were both challenged by Prem Mahavidyalaya through its policies. Admission policies rejected caste distinctions, as students from all castes and social statuses were eligible to get admission and free education (Saxena,2008, p.30). It reflected the inclusive education in the days of intense discrimination. This approach distinguished Raja Mahendra Pratap from conservative revivalist educationists who sought to privilege specific religious traditions. His vision was ethical rather than sectarian, aiming to nurture individuals committed to social harmony and justice.

- **Curriculum and Pedagogical Orientation at Prem Mahavidyalaya**

After a review of available literature on Prem Mahavidyalaya, we can say something about the curriculum and pedagogical approach followed in Prem Mahavidyalaya. The curriculum was consciously designed to provide vocational and moral education to students in their mother tongue (Hindi). This institute included hands-on training for learning, which was lacking in the colonial system of education.

As Nirmala Shah notes in his research, the curriculum reflected a strong focus on scientific education and Prem Mahavidyalaya imparted practical education to arm its students with technical knowledge and help them become independent and self-reliant. Shah further adds that the institute had two departments, a school and a workshop. While the school provided literary education in the subjects of Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Geography, Maths, History and sciences, the workshop was designed to cater to practical and vocational education (Shah, 2024, p.118). Pratap strongly believed that education that did not include life experience and ethical teachings could not produce socially responsible individuals. Therefore, the curriculum integrated vocational training, moral instruction and social engagement alongside academic subjects (Premi, 1976, p.314).



For the development of students and to imbibe in them good values, students were made to follow a disciplined daily routine. They were required to maintain a record of their daily activities in a diary. They had to record waking time, daily course, brushing of teeth, bathing, cleaning activities, exercise, play and even bedtime. Teachers had to sign the diary, and thus the punctuality and regularity of students were examined. Even today, the volunteers of the National Service Scheme maintain a diary of their daily activities in the same manner as the students of Prem Mahavidyalaya maintained. Following the principle of 'work is worship', students spent three hours in a traditional classroom teaching and another three hours for hands-on training, producing crafted items. (Singh,2024, p.91)

Prem Mahavidyalaya emphasised dialogue and experiential learning in its pedagogy. While Pratap did not systematically theorise these pedagogical practices in the manner of later educational theorists, they nonetheless represented an important departure from colonial classroom practices and resembled the Indian education system.

- **Raja Mahendra Pratap's Educational Thought in Relation to Nationalism**

Raja Mahendra Pratap had a complex relationship with nationalism, which has historical significance. While he remained deeply committed to India's freedom struggle, his educational efforts were primarily aimed at economic self-reliance and cultural regeneration. His broader objectives included moral self-determination, service of humanity and a peaceful world. His educational philosophy reflected a broader understanding of nationalism, which perceived the whole world as one family. This is reflected in the following words: "Prem Mahavidyalaya deserves public support from all the lovers of humanity. It stands for the principle- 'No distinction among castes, creeds, classes or colours' (Pratap,1934, on content page).

Raja Mahendra Pratap emphasised the transformation of individual consciousness, in contrast to educationists who viewed education primarily as a means of producing administrative elites. In Pratap's view, political independence lacking moral education could produce new forms of oppression and violence. Thus, the role of education is to prepare individuals for responsible freedom by cultivating ethical discernment and compassion (Kumar,2016, p.356).

- **Mahatma Gandhi's Critique of Colonial Education**

In the backdrop of sustained critique of colonial modernity and its cultural consequences, Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy emerged. For Gandhi, colonial education was not only alienating and elitist but morally corrosive. He frequently argued that it was British education that had produced a class of Indians who were disconnected from society and indifferent to manual labour.

Gandhi's critique of colonial education was shaped in the backdrop of his experiences in South Africa and India, where he observed the dehumanising effects of industrial capitalism and racial hierarchy. In his view, education should resist these tendencies by promoting simplicity, self-discipline and ethical living. He believed that colonial education promoted competition, materialism and dependence on foreign systems of knowledge (Burke, 2000).



We must understand Gandhi's educational thoughts within the broader nationalist movement. While other leaders of the Indian National Congress prioritised political agitation, Gandhi emphasised constructive work as the foundation of national regeneration. That is why education occupied a central place in his programme for social transformation.

- **Concept and Historical Development of Nai Talim**

Gandhi formally articulated the concept of **Basic Education (Nai Talim)** in the late 1930s, particularly following the Wardha Conference of 1937. However, the philosophical roots of Basic Education can be traced to his earlier experiments with ashram life, community living, and vocational training in Africa and India. His experiences slowly and systematically reconstructed education as Nai Talim based on indigenous and ethical foundations (Brown,2011, pp.78-79).

Mahatma Gandhi conceived the idea of Nai Talim as a response to the twin problems of mass illiteracy and economic dependency. Gandhi was of the opinion that Indian education must be self-supporting and relevant to social needs. Gandhi's Nai Talim integrated productive crafts into the curriculum, thus seeking to make education accessible to rural populations and instilling in them the respect for labour.

In the Nai Talim, there was an emphasis on handicrafts such as spinning, weaving and carpentry, not only because of economic reasons but also, they suited to Indian social environment (Jena,2020, p.58). Gandhi believed that these activities would express self-reliance and resistance to industrial exploitation. Therefore, education through craft became a means of moral and political education in the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

- **Objectives of Education in Gandhian Thought**

Central to Gandhiji's educational philosophy was the idea of bringing out the best in the child and man's body, mind and spirit. This holistic approach to education reflected his belief that intellectual development without moral grounding was incomplete and potentially dangerous (Behera,2016,113).

According to Gandhi, character formation must be the primary objective of education. He advocated for value-based education and believed that qualities such as truthfulness, non-violence, humility and self-discipline were essential for both personal growth and social harmony. In his opinion, students must cultivate these virtues through life experience rather than through abstract instruction (Das,2023, p.696).

Gandhi's Nai Talim was a social reform programme, with education as one of its important objectives. Gandhian education aimed at social equality. By integrating manual labour into education, Gandhi sought to challenge caste hierarchies and reduce the stigma associated with physical work. In this sense, Nai Talim was both an educational and a social reform programme (Behera, 2016, p.113).



- **Medium of Instruction and Language Question in Gandhian Education**

Mahatma Gandhi insisted that the **mother tongue should be the medium of instruction**. This approach of Gandhi had a historical context. Colonial education prioritised English, creating a linguistic divide between the educated elite and the masses. According to Gandhi, education provided in a foreign language restricted the intellectual development of the students and alienated them from their cultural environment (Behera,2016, p.113).

Gandhi's advocacy for education in the mother tongue can be aligned with broader nationalist efforts to promote Indian languages and cultural self-respect. While he did not oppose the learning of English, he rejected its dominance in early education. Gandhi believed that language was not only a medium of communication but also a vehicle of cultural identity and ethical values.

- **Pedagogical Practices in Nai Talim**

In the centre of Nai Talim's pedagogy was learning by doing. Gandhi was of the firm belief that knowledge acquired through practical activity was more meaningful and enduring than rote learning. While the colonial classroom model prioritised textbooks and examinations, Mahatma Gandhi's educational model focused on learning by doing (Jena,2020, p.59).

In the vision of Gandhi, education must be rooted in community life, where schools serve as centres of social interaction and collective responsibility. Like Pratap, he wanted the expenses on education to come from the educational process, thus making the schools self-sufficient. The pedagogical ideals reflected in Nai Talim of Gandhi are part of his broader vision of a decentralised and self-sufficient society (Jena,2020, p.60).

- **Comparative Reflections: Raja Mahendra Pratap and Mahatma Gandhi**

A comparative examination of Raja Mahendra Pratap and Mahatma Gandhi reveals both convergence and divergence in their educational philosophies. Both rejected colonial education and emphasised moral development, social responsibility and ethical living. Both leaders focused on free education and village reconstruction (Pratap,1947, p.22 & Behera, 2024, pp.112-115). According to Rana, the handicraft based and self-sufficient education system of Prem Mahavidyalaya was later followed by Mahatma Gandhi in his Wardha Scheme of Education (Rana, 2006, p.68). Gandhi's Nai Talim was focused on primary education, while Raja Mahendra Pratap's approach was focused on secondary education, particularly on vocational education.

Historically, Gandhi's educational philosophy failed (Behera, 2024, p.114), yet it gained wider acceptance due to his central role in the nationalist movement, whereas Raja Mahendra Pratap's ideas and his educational efforts did not find a place in the historical debates on educational philosophy. Nevertheless, Raja Mahendra Pratap's emphasis on technical education and village education remains a pioneering effort in the history of the freedom struggle.



- **Historical Context of Madan Mohan Malaviya's Educational Philosophy**

The period of the early twentieth century was marked by intensified nationalist mobilisation and cultural self-assertion and it was under these circumstances that Madan Mohan Malaviya's educational philosophy emerged. Malaviya's educational philosophy tried to address the broader question of national identity and cultural continuity (Pandey & Mohanty, 2024, pp.522-523). Malviya believed that India's spiritual foundations had been weakened because of colonial education. Not only this, but he believed that colonial education had eroded respect for indigenous knowledge systems. Historically, Hindu reform movements of the nineteenth century shaped his ideas. Being influenced by Swadeshi Education and the growing nationalist demand for institutions controlled by Indians, motivated him to establish Banaras Hindu University. According to Nirmala Shah, Malviya's educational initiatives at BHU were inspired by the establishment of Prem Mahavidyalaya of Raja Mahendra Pratap and served as a model for BHU (Shah, 2024, p.121).

- **Madan Mohan Malaviya as an Educationist**

Madan Mohan Malaviya's status as an educationist is inseparable from the founding of **Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in 1916**. BHU was conceived as a nationalist institution that would integrate traditional Indian learning with modern scientific education (Shah, 2024, p.119). Malaviya believed that India's regeneration depended on the synthesis of spiritual wisdom and scientific knowledge.

His educational philosophy emphasised character formation, discipline, and cultural rootedness. Education was not merely preparation for employment but a means of cultivating moral integrity and national consciousness. Malaviya's insistence on residential education reflected his belief that learning extended beyond the classroom to encompass the total development of personality (Shah, 2024, p.119).

- **Curriculum and Language Policy at Banaras Hindu University**

The curriculum at BHU reflected Malaviya's integrative vision. While the curriculum included subjects like Sanskrit, Indian philosophy and religious studies (Naag & Majhi, 2024, pp.3&4). Subjects of modern disciplines such as physics, chemistry, medicine, and engineering coexisted with the traditional Hindu Curriculum. This curricular synthesis of traditional subjects with modern subjects distinguished BHU from purely Western-oriented institutions (Shah, 2024, p.119).

Malaviya strongly advocated Hindi and Sanskrit as a medium of instruction, while recognising the practical importance of English in higher education (Naag & Majhi, 2024, pp.4). This approach of Malviya sought to restore linguistic self-respect without isolating students from global knowledge systems. Historically, this balanced stance contributed to the promotion of Indian languages within higher education.

- **Historical Significance of Malaviya's Educational Vision**

The most important aspect of Malaviya's efforts in Indian education lies in institutionalising cultural nationalism within higher education. The Banaras Hindu University, established by his efforts, became a model for nationalist universities that



sought to combine tradition with modernity. His educational philosophy reinforced the idea that national regeneration required cultural confidence and moral discipline alongside scientific progress.

- **Comparative Analysis of Educational Objectives**

A comparative analysis of the educational objectives of these three thinkers reveals both shared concerns and significant divergences. Raja Mahendra Pratap viewed education as a means of cultivating self-reliance, economic growth and national service (Pratap,1947, p.23). In his ideas, universal humanism and global peace occupied prime importance and that is why he put forward the ideal of service to society at Prem Mahavidyalaya. His objectives of ethical unity among humanity are reflected in his education system, which he propagated in his writings.

Central to Gandhi's educational objective was self-reliance through skills, solve the problem of livelihood and develop good citizens (Behera ,2016, p113.). Gandhi viewed education as the foundation of his broader vision of a non-violent and just society.

The prime objectives of Madan Mohan Malaviya's educational thoughts were cultural nationalism, moral discipline and spiritual development. Through these objectives, Malviya sought to restore India's civilisational confidence (Pandey & Mohanty,2024, p.522).

- **Comparative Analysis of Curriculum and Pedagogy**

In terms of curriculum, Raja Mahendra Pratap placed importance on vocational and moral education that emphasised social responsibility and service to humanity. He advocated and established residential education as a means to achieve holistic development (Pratap,1947, p.23). Gandhi promoted a curriculum centred on life, integrating crafts with productive labour. Meanwhile, Malaviya aimed to blend Indian philosophy with modern scientific fields.

From a pedagogical perspective, Raja Mahendra Pratap preferred practical and learning through handicraft and community service (Premi, 1976, p.314). Gandhiji also focused on learning through action and community involvement (Behera, 2016, p.113). Like Raja Mahendra Pratap, Malaviya also supported residential education as a path to holistic development and he materialised it in BHU (Shah,2024, p.119). These similarities and differences highlight their unique responses to historical challenges.

- **Comparative Analysis of Medium of Instruction**

The question of language occupied a central place in their educational philosophies. The question of the medium of instruction finds convergence in their ideas. Raja Mahendra Pratap, Gandhi and Malaviya strongly supported Indian languages as mediums of instruction. Because each of them viewed language as a carrier of culture and ethical values. It was Pratap who first realised the need to give education in the vernacular language. He made it compulsory to conduct classes in Hindi, being the vernacular language in northern India. However, he welcomed the teaching of the English language at Prem Mahavidyalaya (Premi,1976, p.313). Malviya also adopted



a similar language policy at BHU and Gandhi also proposed education through Mother tongue in Nai Talim.

- **Historical Significance and Contemporary Relevance**

Historically, the trajectory of modern Indian education has been shaped by the collective educational philosophies of Raja Mahendra Pratap, Mahatma Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malaviya. Each of the above-mentioned thinkers responded creatively to colonial domination, social inequality and cultural disruption. The contemporary debates on value education, language policy and skill education need to be addressed in the light of these ideas.

Raja Mahendra Pratap's emphasis on technical education anticipates the current concern of skill education and his universal humanism anticipates modern concerns about peace education and international cooperation. Gandhi's Basic Education informs discussions on skill-based and value-oriented education. The synthesis of tradition and modernity in the educational philosophy of Malviya offers insights into culturally rooted higher education.

## II. Conclusion

It is clear after the analysis of their educational thoughts that all three thinkers viewed education as a transformative force essential for individual development and social regeneration. Raja Mahendra Pratap's Nationalistic and technical outlook with social service, Gandhi's ethical pragmatism rooted in the socio-economic realities of India and Malaviya's cultural nationalism in the period of British dominance collectively constitute a rich and diverse educational heritage.

Indian educational thought during the colonial period was a collective effort of many Indians and it was characterised by creative engagement with tradition and modernity. There is a huge amount of similarity among the discussed educationists. The similarity is reflected in their approach toward vernacular languages, practical and experimental learning and the broader objective. Their educational approach converged on the matters of Swadeshi nationalism, rejecting the colonial clerk-making system for self-reliant and value-based alternatives. They emphasised practical skills, moral training and Indian cultural values to foster holistic development and national pride. The enduring relevance of these educational visions underscores the need to revisit and reinterpret them in addressing contemporary educational challenges in India.

The difference lies in the timing, political environment and sectors that these educationists addressed. Educational efforts of Pratap and Malviya started in 1909 and 1916, respectively, as a result of the Swadeshi and national education movement. On the other hand, Gandhi's Nai Talim came into light when Congress ministries were formed in seven provinces in 1937. Since Congress had demanded free, compulsory and universal education, it became obligatory on Congress to bring an educational plan it had been pleading for a long time (Behera, 2024, p.112). While Nai Talim of Gandhiji was focused on addressing the problem of Basic and mass education, Pratap's educational efforts were centred on technical education at the



secondary level with village education in his estate. Malviya, on the other hand, focused on higher education, which had a blend of Indian cultural and religious education with modern scientific knowledge.

## References

1. Agrawal, R.N., 1976, 'Jivan Pravah: Raja se Krantikari', In Abhinandan Granth, Gyandeeep Printing Press, Mathura.
2. Ahmad, M.R. & Showkat, S., 2023. Educational Philosophy of Pandith Madan Mohan Malaviya and Its Relevance on Contemporary System of Education. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 5(2), pp.1-7.
3. Behera, H., 2016, 'Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi with Special Reference to Curriculum of basic Education', *International Education & Research Journal*, Vol 2, Issue 1, pp.112-115.
4. Brown, JM 2011, *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, Cambridge University.
5. Burke, B. (2000). 'Mahatma Gandhi on education', *The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education*. [<https://infed.org/dir/mahatma-gandhi-on-education/>]. Retrieved: 10 March 2026.
6. Chaudhary, L., 2007. 'An economic history of education in colonial India'. University of California, Riverside.
7. Chintamani, C.Y. Prof, "Prem Mahavidyalaya ki Aitihasic Jhankiya" In Agrawal, R.N.(Ed.), Abhinandan Granth (1976), pp. 326, Gyandeeep Printing Press, Mathura.
8. Das, S.C. (2023) 'Exploring Gandhi's Educational Philosophy: A Comprehensive Study', *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 11(8), pp. 694-698. ISSN 2320-2882.
9. Dharampal, 1983. *The beautiful tree: Indigenous roots of Indian education*. Biblia Impex.
10. Gupta, N. (2024) 'The Role of Industrial Education in The Economic Development of India: Revisiting Madan Mohan Malviya's Educational Philosophy', *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 12(8). Available at: [www.ijcrt.org](http://www.ijcrt.org)
11. Grover, B.L., Mehta, A. and Yashpal (1981), 'Adhunik Bharat ka Itihas', New Delhi, S. Chand & Company Ltd.
12. Jena, P.K. (2020) 'Mahatma Philosophy', in Kumar, C. (ed.) *Mahatma Gandhi from Holy Deeds to Unholy Death (Part-1)*. New Delhi: Anu Books, pp. 57-63.
13. Joseph, S.K.(n.d), 'Understanding Gandhi's Vision of Swadeshi', Mahatma Gandhi One Spot Complete Information Website. Available at: [www.mkgandhi.org](http://www.mkgandhi.org)
14. Krishnteerth, A., 2013, Rashtrapati Rajrishi Mahendra Pratap 'Rajaji', Agra, Gita Nidhi Press.
15. Kumar, R., 2016, 'My Life Story (1886-1979) Raja Mahendra Pratap', Delhi, Originals.
16. Meetal, P.D., 'Raja Mahendra Pratap Aur Prem Mahavidyalaya', In Agrawal, R.N.(Ed.), Abhinandan Granth (1976), pp. 320-321, Gyandeeep Printing Press, Mathura.
17. Mukherjee, H. and Mukherjee, U. (1957), "The Origins of the National Education Movement (1905-1910), Jadavpur University, Calcutta.



18. Nag, H. & Majhi, P., 'Revitalizing India's Traditional Knowledge: Integrating Malaviya's Vision into the National Education Policy 2020 and its Relevance in Modern Education', In, Mukherjee, S. & Heeralal, P.J. (Ed.), *Revitalizing Indian Education: Insights from the Indian Knowledge System*, pp.1-13, School of Education, Adamas University, Kolkata.
19. Pandey, P. & Mohanty, P. (2024) 'Tracing the Influence of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in Contemporary Educational System', *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 12(1), pp. 519–526. ISSN 2320-2882.
20. Pratap, M.,1934, 'Afghanistan: The Heart of Aryan', World Federation, Peping, China. Retrieved through Wikipedia sources.
21. Pratap, R.M.,1947, *My Life Story of Fifty-Five Years*, Meerut, Pragati Prakashan.
22. Premi, S.K., 'Bharat ka Pratham Audhougik Prashikshan Kendra: Prem Mahavidyalaya', In Agrawal, R.N.(Ed.), *Abhinandan Granth* (1976), pp.311-319, Gyandeeep Printing Press, Mathura.
23. Rana, R.,2006, 'Social and Religious Ideas of Raja Mahender Pratap (Thesis)' Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Agra. Available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/330295>.
24. Rana, R.,2017, 'Social and Religious Ideas of Raja Mahender Pratap' *Innovative Research Thoughts*, Vol 3, Issue 11, pp.714-719.
25. Saxena, R.K.,2008, 'Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh Vyaktitvya Evam Kartitvya (Thesis)', University of Lucknow, Available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/551160>
26. Shah, N.,2024, 'Bridging Traditions: Malviya and the Integration of Science in Colonial India' *Journal of Scientific Temper*, Vol 12 (4), pp. 114-124.114-124.doi:10.56042/jst.v12i4.12371.
27. Shukl, Chintamani. Prof, 'Prem Mahavidyalaya ki Aitihāsik Jhankiya' In Agrawal, R.N.(Ed.), *Abhinandan Granth* (1976), pp. 322-332, Gyandeeep Printing Press, Mathura.
28. Singh, V.,2024, 'The Last King', New Delhi, Rudra World Publication.