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Mahatma Gandhi versus Rabindranath Tagore

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Why is in news? What was the difference between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore in their approach towards education and nationalism?

Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore are the two towering figures in India's struggle for independence, offered distinct and multifaceted perspectives on education and nationalism.

While their overarching goal was India's liberation from colonial rule, their approaches and philosophies diverged significantly.

While Gandhi led India to independence through non-violent civil disobedience. Tagore, the first non-European Nobel laureate, provided a robust intellectual foundation for the emerging nation.

Approach towards Education:

Mahatma Gandhi:

Education should be **practical and focused on holistic development**, emphasizing moral values.

Gandhiji **focused on use of Vernacular language** for education in early stage.

Gandhi advocated and **emphasised the idea of basic education**, emphasising skills that would be directly useful to the masses, such as farming and handicrafts. Established basic education institutions grounded on the **philosophy of 'Nai Talim'**.

He advocated for an education system that **drew from Indian cultural and moral values**, seeking to reconnect Indians with their rich heritage.

Gandhi advocated for education as a **means to make people self-reliant and self-sufficient**.

He was **less concerned** with aligning the education system with global trends.

He was critical of machines and technology, advocating a simpler way of life.

Rabindranath Tagore:

Tagore's perspective on education was **cosmopolitan and focused on nurturing a global outlook**. He founded **Visva-Bharati University** to combine Indian traditions with international values.

Tagore encouraged **self-expression, creativity, and individualism**, fostering an environment that celebrated freedom of thought and expression.

He was envisioned an education system that **fosters creativity through art, music, and dance**.

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He founded schools and a university in **Santiniketan**, which aimed to focus on holistic educational development and intercultural understanding.

His focus was on **nurturing universal human values** and fostering a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of all beings.

His focus was on **use of English Language** as global movement.

He supported the inclusion of modern science in education alongside traditional knowledge.

Approach towards Nationalism:

Mahatma Gandhi:

Gandhi's nationalism was **centred on non-violence and satyagraha**, advocating for India's independence without resorting to violence.

He led several mass movements against the British, including the Non-Cooperation movement and the Quit India Movement.

Gandhi emphasised the **inclusion of all sections of society**, including the marginalised, in the nationalist movement. For greater mass participation, he promoted Hindu-Muslim unity and upliftment of Dalits through his constructive programme.

He often critical of western civilization, emphasizing on Swaraj or self-rule

Rabindranath Tagore:

Tagore's approach to nationalism was **more cosmopolitan and humanistic**.

He **criticised narrow nationalism**, which he believed could lead to intolerance and chauvinism.

His contribution to nationalism is reflected in his **composition of national anthems** for both India and Bangladesh.

He believed that nationalism **should be inclusive and should respect the diversity of cultures and religions**. Tagore's internationalist perspective advocated global cooperation and understanding.

Tagore took issue with **narrow, self-centred, and exclusionary forms of nationalism**, characterizing them as dangerous and a potential source of power-driven conflicts.

Conclusion:

Though Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore had different perspectives on education and nationalism, both were united in their commitment to India's progress and betterment. Their differences in approach enrich our understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the Indian national movement and the diverse thought processes that shaped modern India.

Some other similarities and disagreements between Gandhi and Tagore:

Similarities:

Tagore and Gandhi both prophesied the **humanism and the love of nature** based on non-violence and tolerance to each other.

Both of them were **in favour of self-sustenance to alleviate the problems of poor India**.

Both of them had **love and sympathy for villages** and people who live in poverty and destitution and worked actively for the cause.

Both of them were in **agreement on the pride for ancient culture** of India and its spiritual history in which tolerance to every ethnicity and thoughts was the key principle.

Whatever, it was **god or truth**, both of them have same source of inspiration.

Gandhiji believed that the god is in 'Truth' but Tagore found his godhead in 'Love', but their paths were different. Gandhi tried to achieve the 'Truth' through the path of Non-violence but Tagore tried to achieve his God/love through co-operation, mutual respect and tolerance.

Disagreements:

Tagore heavily **criticized Gandhiji's Non-cooperation Movement**. Because he believed that the right of non-cooperation should not be given to public without any restraint from self-willed march. He further said that idea of Non-cooperation is negative nature which cannot abstain from violence instead violence was inherent in non-Cooperation

Tagore's second major disagreement was on **burning of foreign clothes for Swadeshi Movement**. But Gandhi did not accept his interpretations because he believed that by burning foreign clothes, a person was burning his 'shame', In other words people were obliterating the foreign domination over the country by burning their foreign clothes.

Tagore's third major criticism to Gandhi was his **idea of Charkha for sustainable life to downtrodden and poor** people who were living in hunger and destitution and neglected modern factories and machines. Tagore on Charkha, believed that it would lead India back into medieval age. He further said instead of Charkha, India should move forward and adopt the spirit of inquiry and innovation, which is only possible through scientific temperament. He believed that science is necessary to achieve prosperity and removing the country from poverty.