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Sri Ramakrishna's Humanistic Philosophy and Value-Based Education in the Perspective of Mass Education

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Abstract: *Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886) never ran a school, wrote a textbook or proposed a theory of education. Yet the people who came to him at Dakshineswar, from Calcutta's educated youth to village householders, left with lessons that shaped how they lived. This paper asks what those lessons can tell us about value-based education, particularly when education is understood as something meant for the whole population and not only for those inside formal institutions. Drawing mainly on The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Saradananda's biography and the writings of Swami Vivekananda, the study looks at four strands of his thought: love for human beings as bearers of the divine, the acceptance of many religious paths, the stress on inner purity and self-discipline, and the ideal of service. It also examines how he taught, through parables, homely analogies and conversation, and compares this with present-day ideas of experiential and dialogue-based learning. The paper argues that these elements can support an education that is more inclusive and humane, provided they are applied within a secular, rational and rights-based framework. Because the study is qualitative and based on documents, its conclusions are interpretive rather than empirical.*

Keywords: *Sri Ramakrishna, Humanistic Philosophy, Value-Based Education, Mass Education, Religious Harmony, Moral Development, Social Harmony.*

Introduction: Most of us would agree that schooling is about more than examination results, though our systems often behave as if it were not. Knowledge and skills matter, "but so does the kind of person a learner becomes: whether they can live alongside people unlike themselves, act honestly when no one is checking, and feel some responsibility for those worse off. Rising competition, consumerism, religious polarisation and the thinning of everyday human contact have made these questions harder to ignore. Contemporary educational thinking also recognises that quality education must promote not only cognitive development but also values, attitudes, social responsibility and human dignity" (UNESCO, 2015). It is against this background that the present paper turns to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

Born in the village of Kamarpukur in 1836, Ramakrishna spent most of his adult life as a priest at the Kali temple in Dakshineswar, near Calcutta. He had little formal schooling and no interest in acquiring more. What he offered instead was the example of his own life and a way of talking about moral and spiritual matters that ordinary people could follow (Ramakrishna Math, Dakshineshwar, n.d.). His well-known saying "*Jato mat tato path*" (as many faiths, so many paths) sums up an outlook in which different religions are

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seen as different roads up the same hill. His experiences and teachings emphasised the harmony of religions and the possibility of spiritual realisation through different religious traditions" (Government of West Bengal, n.d.). He spoke constantly about truthfulness, giving up greed, humility and love for others. None of this was framed as educational theory, but much of it bears directly on what education is for.

The idea of mass education gives this inquiry its focus. Mass education is not simply a matter of building more schools or raising literacy rates. "At its core it is about making learning available to everyone, whatever their caste, religion, gender or income, and about learning that happens in families, neighbourhoods and communities as well as classrooms. This understanding corresponds with the inclusive and equitable vision of education articulated in the Education 2030 Framework, which emphasises lifelong learning, equal educational opportunities and the development of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes" (UNESCO, 2015). Ramakrishna's habit of treating every visitor, rich or poor, learned or unlettered, as worth his time fits naturally with this democratic idea.

His influence also travelled further through his disciple Swami Vivekananda, "whose idea of "man-making education" and whose work through the Ramakrishna Mission gave institutional form to his master's ideals. Vivekananda regarded education as the manifestation of the perfection already present in human beings and emphasised character-building and the development of human potential" (Das & Tiwari, 2024). The principle of "*Shiva jnanejiva seva*" (serving living beings as Shiva himself) became, in Vivekananda's hands, a basis for education and social service. This principle reflects the Ramakrishna tradition's emphasis on recognising divinity in every human being and serving humanity as an expression of spiritual practice (Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute, n.d.).

This paper, then, examines Ramakrishna's humanistic philosophy as a possible foundation for value-based mass education. It looks at how his ideas might support character development, social cohesion and inclusion, and it tries throughout to separate what can reasonably be claimed from what cannot.

Rationale of the Study: There are four main reasons for choosing this topic.

The first is practical. Access to schooling in India has expanded enormously, but complaints about dishonesty, intolerance and self-centredness have not gone away. It seems worth looking closely at someone who managed to teach moral lessons to ordinary people in a simple and practical way.

The second concerns how we write the history of education. That history tends to focus on institutions, reformers and policies. Some of the people who changed how others thought and behaved, however, never founded or ran an institution. Ramakrishna is a clear case. Studying him widens our sense of where education actually takes place.

The third reason is that mass education draws heavily on things outside the school: family life, religious practice, oral tradition, local knowledge and personal relationships. Ramakrishna used all of these. He built his teaching out of everyday objects and events, and his approach is therefore a useful window onto informal, experiential and lifelong learning.

The fourth reason is social. In a country as religiously and culturally varied as India, learning to respect others and live peaceably with them is not optional. Ramakrishna's views on religious harmony speak directly to this need.

Taken together, these points suggest that the topic is not just a study of a religious figure. It is a way into larger questions about the scope of mass education, the teaching of human values and the social role of schooling.

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Review of Related Literature: The literature relevant to this study falls into five broad groups.

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Mahendranath Gupta, "M."). This record of Ramakrishna's conversations between 1882 and 1886 is the most important primary source. It captures his parables, his humour, his exchanges with visitors and the way he adjusted what he said to the person in front of him. For an educational reading it is valuable precisely because it shows teaching as it actually happened.

2. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Swami Saradananda). Saradananda's detailed biography traces Ramakrishna's spiritual practices, including those he undertook along Islamic and Christian lines. It is the main source for his acceptance of different traditions and for the episodes from his life discussed later in this paper.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vivekananda's lectures and letters offer the most developed educational interpretation of his master's ideas. His definition of education as "the manifestation of the perfection already in man", together with his stress on character, self-confidence and service to the poor, links Ramakrishna's spiritual humanism to a programme of value-based education.

4. Indian thinkers on education and values. Gandhi's emphasis on character-building and Tagore's universal humanism help place Ramakrishna's ideas within a wider Indian conversation about education, morality and social renewal.

5. Contemporary writing on mass education. Recent discussion of access, equity, inclusion, lifelong learning and value-oriented teaching, including the *National Education Policy 2020*, provides a framework for asking how Ramakrishna's ideas might apply today.

Research gap. There is a large body of writing on Ramakrishna's spirituality and on Vivekananda's educational ideas. Far less work has examined Ramakrishna himself through the lens of mass education and value-based learning. This study tries to address that gap.

Delimitation of the study: This study only focused on theHumanistic Philosophy and Value-Based Education in the Perspective of Mass Education of Sri Ramkrishna the pieces of advice that he offered to the public as a message for building society.For that reason, other matters are not subjects of in-depth discussion here.

Statement of the Problem: The central problem of this study is how Sri Ramakrishna, with no connection to formal education, came to have a significant educational influence on ordinary people in moral, spiritual and social matters. Several further questions follow from this:

- What features of his life and personality made him an effective teacher of the masses?
- How did his conversations, analogies, parables and way of living work as means of instruction?
- How are moral education, self-purification, religious tolerance, universal love and social harmony reflected in his teachings?
- How did his ideas, directly and through his disciples, influence later Indian society and educational thought?
- How might these ideas be used in present-day education to support value-based, experiential and inclusive learning and the development of life skills?

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Objectives of the Study: The broad aim of this exploratory paper is to examine Sri Ramakrishna's contribution to mass education from educational and socio-historical perspectives. The specific objectives are:

1. To clarify the concept, nature and main characteristics of mass education.
2. To examine how Sri Ramakrishna's life, personality and socio-cultural setting relate to his educational role.
3. To analyse his teaching methods, especially his use of plain language, analogies, parables, anecdotes and conversation.
4. To identify the moral, spiritual, humanistic and social values in his teachings.
5. To understand the educational importance of his ideas on religious harmony and human solidarity.
6. To examine his contribution to building self-confidence, self-purification and positive change in the lives of ordinary people.
7. To analyse the relationship between his ideals and the later educational vision and humanitarian work of Swami Vivekananda.
8. To assess how far his ideas of mass education are relevant to, and usable in, the present educational system.

Guiding Propositions (Hypotheses): Because this is a qualitative and historical study, the following hypotheses are best read as working propositions that guide the analysis, not as claims to be statistically tested.

- **H1:** In many settings, teaching that draws on familiar experience and uses simple language is more accessible and acceptable to ordinary people than abstract discussion.
- **H2:** A teacher's own conduct, sincerity and empathy towards learners has a significant effect on how well teaching works.
- **H3:** Education that encourages respectful acceptance of religious and social diversity can help develop tolerance, mutual understanding and social responsibility.
- **H4:** The steady practice of values such as self-purification, truthfulness, self-restraint and universal love contributes to character formation and moral development.
- **H5:** Sri Ramakrishna's life-oriented approach to teaching has real conceptual links with current principles of value-based and experiential learning.

No experiment or survey was carried out, so these propositions are not presented as verified findings or proven causal relationships.

Research Questions: The research questions follow directly from the objectives:

1. What is mass education, and where does Sri Ramakrishna's thought fit within it?
2. How did his life, personality, spiritual experience and social environment shape his role as a teacher of ordinary people?

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3. How did his methods of communication help pass on knowledge and values?

4. Which moral, spiritual, humanistic and social values appear in his teachings, and how do they bear on character and ethical awareness?

5. How does his idea of religious harmony support mutual respect, interfaith understanding and peaceful coexistence?

6. In what ways did his teachings encourage self-confidence, self-purification and change in people's outlook and daily lives?

7. How did his ideals influence Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy and humanitarian work?

8. To what extent can his ideas be brought into present-day education to support value-based, experiential and inclusive learning?

Methodology: The study uses a qualitative approach that is descriptive, historical and analytical. It rests on documentary sources: books on Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings, records of his conversations and publications associated with the Ramakrishna Order.

The chief primary source is *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (*Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*), compiled by Mahendranath Gupta. It records his conversations, instructions, parables and meetings with prominent contemporaries. Biographies published by Belur Math, especially Saradananda's, were used for details of his life, his ways of teaching and his practice of different religious disciplines.

The work proceeded in five stages:

1. **Collection:** identifying primary and secondary sources on his life, teachings, conversations and outlook.

2. **Classification:** sorting the material into themes such as moral education, teaching methods, universal love, religious harmony, self-development and social influence.

3. **Content analysis:** interpreting the educational meaning of his teachings, parables and key life events.

4. **Comparative interpretation:** comparing his approach with modern ideas of value-based education, experiential learning and humanism.

5. **Application:** identifying where his ideas might be used today in schools, families and the wider community.

Delimitation. The study is confined to documentary and interpretive analysis. No fieldwork, interviews, questionnaires or statistical analysis were undertaken. What is said about Ramakrishna's social influence should therefore be read as historical and philosophical interpretation, not as empirical proof of measurable effects.

Concept and Nature of Mass Education: Mass education, as used here, means education that is tied to the lives, culture and experience of ordinary people. It reaches well beyond the school. What people learn from their families, neighbours, religious and cultural gatherings, folk traditions, stories and day-to-day dealings with others is all part of it (UNESCO, 1972; UNESCO, 1996).

Four features stand out. First, it is close to real life. Its content concerns practical matters: how to behave, how to cooperate, how to stay healthy, how to look after one another and how to keep cultural traditions alive (UNESCO, 1996).

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Second, it has to be simple and understandable. “People learn more readily when ideas come in their own language and connect with what they already know. This is why folk tales, proverbs, sayings and analogies have always been among its main tools” (UNESCO, 2015).

Third, it is social. It shapes not only what individuals know but also shared values, relationships and a sense of common responsibility (UNESCO, 1996; UNESCO, 2015).

Fourth, it is lifelong. People do not stop learning when they leave school; they keep picking up new knowledge, attitudes and values through observation and experience at every stage of life (UNESCO, 1972; UNESCO, 1996).

Ramakrishna’s way of teaching fits this description closely. He spoke the language of the people around him, drew his examples from everyday life and connected ordinary problems with larger moral and spiritual questions (Gupta, 1942). “That said, mass education should not be equated with religious instruction. Its scope is much wider, covering individual, social, cultural and moral development” (UNESCO, 2015). “When we look at Ramakrishna’s contribution, then, we need to pay attention not just to the religious content of what he said but also to his method, his humanism, his moral values and his commitment to social harmony” (Gupta, 1942; Nikhilananda, 1953).

Moral Ideals and the Formation of Character: Ramakrishna returned again and again to a small set of moral demands: truthfulness, self-restraint, freedom from lust and greed, humility and sincerity. He was known for insisting on keeping his word even in trivial matters, and he warned his listeners repeatedly about the pull of “*kamini-kanchan*”, by which he meant lust and greed. In his view there could be no real character without these values.

These ideals are not only for monks. Honesty, self-control and a sense of responsibility matter just as much in family life, at school, at work and in public affairs, and practising them is what keeps social relationships healthy.

Moral education, however, cannot work by preaching alone. Children learn far more from what parents, teachers and neighbours do than from what they say. This is where Ramakrishna’s example becomes important. His listeners trusted his teaching because his life matched it.

Love for Human Beings and Humanistic Values: One of the most important parts of Ramakrishna’s contribution to mass education is the place he gave to love for human beings. Respect, empathy, compassion and sincerity were central to how he lived (Nikhilananda, 1953).

He did not judge people by status, wealth, education or outward identity. “The Belur Math biographies stress his belief that the divine is present in every person, and his own behaviour reflected it: he treated the wealthy and the humble with the same openness, and some of his closest companions were people of little social standing” (Nikhilananda, 1953; Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, n.d.).

The educational consequences are significant. “When learners are taught to see the dignity of others, they are more likely to become empathetic and cooperative. In a school this might look like respecting classmates, helping those who are struggling academically or socially, recognising the rights of children with disabilities and being sensitive to marginalised groups” (UNESCO, 2017).

Ramakrishna’s teaching of universal love asks people to look past their own narrow interests to the welfare of others. When someone can feel another person’s difficulty as if it were their own, cooperation and shared responsibility become much easier (Gupta, 1942; Nikhilananda, 1953).

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This idea was later developed by Vivekananda into a philosophy of active service, showing how service to humanity could be joined to spiritual life. “We should remember, though, that the organised form these efforts took was largely the work of Vivekananda and his associates” (Vivekananda, 2006; Ramakrishna Mission, n.d.).

“One caution is needed. Ramakrishna’s universal love is not the same thing as a modern theory of human rights or social justice. It is more accurate to put the humanistic elements of his thought into dialogue with contemporary values than to treat them as identical” (United Nations, 1948; UNESCO, 2017).

Education for Religious Harmony and Tolerance: Nineteenth-century Bengal was full of debate about religion, social reform and the challenges of modernity. Against that background, Ramakrishna’s stance on religious harmony stood out.

Alongside various Hindu disciplines, he practised for periods along Islamic and Christian lines. According to the Belur Math accounts, a defining feature of his spiritual life was his attempt to reach the truth through different paths. His saying “*Jato mat tato path*” grew out of that experience. He often illustrated the point with a simple image: a pond with several bathing ghats, where Hindus draw what they call *jal*, Muslims draw *pani* and Christians draw “water”, though it is the same water.

The educational value of this idea lies in fostering respect and peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths. Dismissing someone because of their religion, rejecting beliefs without trying to understand them, or discriminating in social life all run against the spirit of humanistic education.

Tolerance in this sense does not mean claiming that all religious doctrines and rituals are the same. Ramakrishna recognised the distinctiveness of each tradition while looking for a deeper truth beneath them.

This matters for mass education. When people of different communities meet, work together and talk in families, villages, schools and public gatherings, misunderstanding and prejudice tend to fade.

In schools today, teaching about religious diversity has to be impartial, consistent with constitutional equality and respectful of every learner’s dignity. Ramakrishna’s ideas can offer a humane perspective on these values. But they should never be used to promote a particular religion or to shape students’ beliefs. The lasting lesson is about respectful relationships across faiths, the ability to live with disagreement and a commitment to human dignity above religious difference.

Self-Confidence and Self-Realisation among Ordinary People: Good education helps people recognise what they are capable of. Once they are aware of their own strengths, they are better able to face life’s difficulties.

Ramakrishna gave great importance to self-realisation and inner growth. For him, a human life was not measured by outward success, wealth or recognition alone. Inner refinement, purity of mind and a sense of life’s deeper meaning counted just as much.

For ordinary people this can be liberating. Someone who stops judging their worth purely by income or social position has room to develop self-respect, confidence and a steadier mind.

His teaching connects with personal development in several ways. Self-examination helps people see their own weaknesses. Self-restraint and regular practice build discipline and responsibility. Respect and empathy for others make people more aware of their own conduct. And treating difficulties as occasions for reflection rather than defeat builds resilience.

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These ideas line up well with current interest in life skills, self-assessment, emotional regulation and personal development. We should be careful, however, not to let a focus on individual growth hide the structural causes of inequality and injustice. Education has to work on removing social barriers and widening opportunity as well as on improving individuals.

Sri Ramakrishna and Experiential Learning: Modern educational thinking puts considerable weight on experiential learning, in which learners build knowledge through direct experience, observation, practical work, discussion and reflection rather than by listening alone.

There is a real parallel here with Ramakrishna's own path. He did not simply accept what others told him. He tested teachings by practising them himself, and he liked to say that hearing about milk is one thing and drinking it is quite another.

His spiritual experiences are, of course, not the same as experiments in modern science. The aims, methods and standards of evidence are entirely different. Still, his life points to a principle educators recognise: theory alone rarely produces deep understanding, and experience and practice are just as necessary.

The principle can be applied in school in many ways:

- In **environmental education**, students can observe local ponds, vegetation and waste disposal instead of only memorising definitions of pollution.
- In **moral education**, alongside discussions of honesty, students can take responsibility in group tasks and reflect on their own behaviour.
- In **social studies**, they can learn first-hand about the lives and cultures of other communities.
- In **language education**, collecting folk tales, local histories and oral traditions can deepen their understanding of their own society.

In each case, Ramakrishna's life-oriented approach helps clarify how knowledge and experience fit together.

Family and Social Education: The family is the first school. A child's language, behaviour, relationships, moral sense and cultural awareness all begin to form there, and schools and the wider community build on that foundation.

Ramakrishna did not shut householders out of spiritual and moral life. Many of his regular visitors were family men, and the Belur Math accounts describe how he advised them on living a spiritual life while meeting their family duties. He compared the ideal householder to a maidservant in a rich man's house, who does all her work faithfully while knowing that her real home lies elsewhere.

The point for education is that duty and values need not be in conflict. Honesty, cooperation, empathy, respect and responsibility practised at home do a great deal for a child's moral and social growth.

His ideas suggest several practical directions for family education:

- encouraging respectful communication among family members;
- setting an example of honesty and responsible behaviour for children;
- showing respect for people who hold different opinions or follow different religions;
- paying attention to others' needs and cooperating in everyday life;

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- giving children room to ask questions and share their experiences and opinions.

Family and social education will be very limited, though, if it is reduced to religious ritual. Modern mass education must also deal with health, the environment, financial literacy, civic rights, gender equality and scientific thinking. Ramakrishna's simple, life-centred method of teaching can be adopted, but the content has to grow with the needs of a modern society.

Respect for Women and Human Dignity: A notable example of Ramakrishna's respect for women is his treatment of his wife, Sarada Devi. In 1872 he worshipped her as the Divine Mother in the ritual known as the *Shodashi Puja*, an event recorded in the Belur Math biographies.

This act is usually read as an expression of his spiritual outlook, a symbolic recognition of the purity and dignity of womanhood.

A modern educational understanding of respect for women, however, cannot stop at religious symbolism. Equal rights, equal access to education, participation in decisions, personal safety and social dignity all have to be part of it.

What education can take from his life is the habit of treating every person with respect. Extended in the light of today's principles, this can help schools promote gender equality and resist discrimination. At the same time, we need to be historically careful. It would be wrong to present his personal conduct as a fully formed theory of women's rights. It is more reasonable to read the humanistic elements in his thought alongside current ideas of equality, dignity and gender justice.

Swami Vivekananda and the Spread of Sri Ramakrishna's Ideas: Any assessment of Ramakrishna's contribution to mass education has to give a central place to Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda drew deeply on his master's life and outlook and later connected these ideals to wider social, educational and organisational work.

Ramakrishna taught mainly through conversation, spiritual practice, moral guidance and personal example. Vivekananda put more weight on developing human potential, building self-reliance through education and lifting up the disadvantaged.

Through this continuity, Ramakrishna's thought reached many more people than it otherwise could have. In 1897 Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission, and the Order's own history acknowledges the close link between Ramakrishna's spiritual ideals and Vivekananda's practical initiatives.

The Mission's work has included schools and colleges, hospitals, disaster relief and a range of welfare programmes. These can be seen as later, organised expressions of Ramakrishna's ideals of universal love and spiritual humanism.

For the sake of historical accuracy, though, Ramakrishna's own contribution needs to be kept separate from Vivekananda's organisational work. Ramakrishna provided the inspiration; the building of modern educational and charitable institutions was the work of Vivekananda and later generations of monks and lay workers. Keeping this distinction clear allows a fairer assessment of Ramakrishna's own role in mass education.

Contemporary Relevance: Education systems today increasingly recognise that values, social responsibility, psychological well-being and humanism matter alongside knowledge and skills. Ramakrishna's ideas are relevant in several areas.

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Value-based education. Honesty, empathy, responsibility, self-restraint and mutual respect can be taught through examples from daily life. His life-oriented approach offers a useful model.

Inclusive education. Learners differ in language, religion, culture, background and ability. Ensuring their access to education while respecting the dignity of each is a basic duty of any modern system. His ideas of religious harmony and respect for persons support this.

Experiential learning. Schools can give students project work, field observation, group activities, discussion and real problems to solve. His use of analogies and everyday examples can enrich such teaching.

Dialogue-based teaching. When teachers encourage students to ask questions, voice opinions and argue their positions, learning becomes active and participatory. His conversational way of teaching is a natural point of comparison.

Peaceful coexistence. In a multi-religious, multicultural society, students need to learn to disagree respectfully. His ideal of religious harmony strengthens the humanistic basis for this.

The teacher–student relationship. A teacher's conduct, sincerity and empathy shape students' psychological and moral development. A teacher's job goes beyond explaining subjects to supporting students' confidence, character and ethical awareness.

Home–school cooperation. Values taught at school take deeper root when they are practised at home and in the community. This links naturally with what Ramakrishna taught about the duties of household life.

Applying these ideas in schools does not mean imposing any religious doctrine on students. What should be taken up are the humanistic, ethical and pedagogical elements of his life and teaching, in keeping with secular, inclusive and scientifically grounded education.

Analysis of the Objectives

Objective 1: The concept, nature and characteristics of mass education: Mass education rests on the idea that learning and human development should be open to everyone, regardless of caste, religion, gender, income or background. Unlike institutional education, which is organised through schools and colleges, it includes both formal and informal learning in families, communities and wider society.

It is democratic, participatory and inclusive, and it is capable of changing society. It treats education as a basic human need rather than a privilege of particular groups, and its aims go beyond literacy and academic success to moral awareness, social consciousness, cultural growth, self-reliance and responsible citizenship.

Seen this way, Ramakrishna's life helps us understand the wider reach of mass education. He set up no institution and designed no curriculum, but he conveyed spiritual, moral and humanistic ideas to ordinary people through plain speech, everyday experience, parables and personal contact. His teaching crossed social and religious lines and stressed the dignity of every human being. His example shows that education can be accessible, continuous and rooted in life, and that its spread depends on values and changes in outlook as well as on buildings and enrolment.

Objective 2: His life, personality, social setting and educational role: Ramakrishna's educational significance cannot be understood apart from his life, his spiritual experiences, his personality and the society of nineteenth-century Bengal. He grew up in Kamarpukur, a village steeped in traditional culture, religious practice, folk tradition and the ordinary rhythms of rural life.

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He was by all accounts simple, compassionate, emotionally sensitive and often childlike in his spontaneity, and he had an unusual gift for explaining difficult ideas with familiar examples. These qualities let him connect with people of very different backgrounds, from the Brahmo leader Keshab Chandra Sen to unlettered villagers.

The Bengal of his time was going through rapid religious, cultural and intellectual change. Reform movements, arguments over religious identity and the meeting of Indian and Western thought created a complicated environment. In that setting, his universal outlook offered an alternative built on religious harmony, inner purity and the unity of humankind.

His educational role came from personal example, not institutional authority. He showed that moral and spiritual teaching carries weight when the teacher lives by it. His life itself became a kind of informal school where people could learn truthfulness, humility, compassion, self-discipline and love. His personality and background, in short, were not incidental biographical facts; they were the basis of his way of teaching.

Objective 3: His teaching methods: Ramakrishna's way of teaching was informal, experiential and built on conversation. He did not rely on textbooks, lectures or classroom routine. He talked with people, gave practical illustrations and drew on what they saw and did every day, turning abstract ideas into lessons they could grasp.

His language was plain and conversational. He used rural images, household scenes and examples from nature and family life, so that people with little or no education could follow ideas that would otherwise have been out of their reach.

Analogies and parables were his main tools. He spoke of the salt doll that went to measure the depth of the ocean and dissolved in it, to suggest how the individual self merges in the divine. He told of the man who refused to step out of an elephant's path because he believed both he and the elephant were God, and ignored the mahout, who was also God, shouting at him to move. He told of the snake that gave up biting on a holy man's advice, was beaten half to death by village boys, and was then told that it should at least have hissed. Stories like these made people think, and helped them connect abstract truths with practical life.

He also taught through dialogue. He invited questions, responded to the needs and temperament of each listener, and did not force a single lesson on everyone. His approach was flexible and attentive to individual differences, much like what we would now call learner-centred teaching.

These features connect clearly with present-day principles of experiential learning, contextual teaching, learner participation and effective communication. They also show that good teaching does not depend on expensive resources; it can come from sensitive communication, practical examples and real human relationships. In the context of mass education, where accessibility and simplicity are essential, his method is a valuable model.

Objective 4: Moral, spiritual, humanistic and social values in his teachings: Ramakrishna's teachings bring together moral purity, spiritual realisation, universal love and concern for human welfare. He saw human development as more than intellectual growth; it also meant cultivating ethical awareness, spiritual sensitivity and compassionate behaviour. This gives his teaching clear relevance for value-based education.

The moral values most prominent in his teaching are truthfulness, honesty, humility, self-restraint, purity of thought, simplicity and sincerity. He held that real progress requires a cleansing of one's inner life and a change in conduct. On this view, character formation is central to education.

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His spiritual teaching was directed towards self-realisation, devotion, inner discipline and awareness of the divine in all things. But it was not a private, inward-turned spirituality. It was bound up with love, compassion and respect for others.

His humanism is most visible in his acceptance of different religious traditions and his sense of their underlying unity, which encouraged people to move beyond narrow identities, prejudice and sectarian thinking. The social values in his teaching, such as respect, tolerance, cooperation, sympathy and concern for human welfare, are especially relevant to mass education, since an inclusive system has to develop ethical responsibility and social sensitivity as well as intellectual ability.

His teachings suggest that education changes people when knowledge comes with character, cleverness with humility, and personal growth with concern for others.

Objective 5: Religious harmony and human solidarity: Religious harmony and the brotherhood of humankind are among the most important parts of Ramakrishna's humanism. His practice of several traditions led him to the view, summed up in "*Jato mat tato path*", that different religions can lead to the same ultimate truth.

The educational value of this idea goes well beyond religious instruction. It offers an ethical basis for respect, tolerance, interfaith understanding and peaceful coexistence among communities. In a plural society like India's, these values are essential for social cohesion and democratic life.

For value-based education, his outlook encourages learners to appreciate diversity without feeling superior or hostile, and to see that differences of belief and custom need not stand in the way of human relationships. His emphasis on the worth of every individual also supports inclusive education, in which every learner deserves equal respect and opportunity.

In schools, these ideals can be expressed through intercultural dialogue, cooperative activities, moral education and programmes that promote constitutional values, secularism and social responsibility. The underlying message is that education should produce not only informed people but compassionate ones who can respect diversity and help build a peaceful society.

Objective 6: Self-confidence, self-purification and personal change: Ramakrishna's teaching gives a central place to inner change, self-confidence, moral purification and the realisation of human potential. He urged people to overcome their negative tendencies, strengthen their inner life and take a positive attitude to living. From the standpoint of mass education this matters, because education ought to strengthen people psychologically and morally.

He stressed sincerity, faith, self-discipline and purity of intention. Change, for him, began with one's thoughts, desires and actions, and he urged people to overcome ego, jealousy, greed, narrow-mindedness and excessive attachment to possessions.

He was not concerned only with intellectual or spiritual progress. He also encouraged a balanced attitude to everyday life, and through simple examples and personal contact he helped ordinary people recognise their own dignity and believe they could improve.

The idea of a divine potential within every person was later given a clearer educational form in Vivekananda's "man-making education", which held that education should awaken people's latent capacities rather than simply pass on information. This is especially relevant for socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Education that builds self-confidence, independent thinking, ethical awareness and a positive self-image can contribute to both individual empowerment and social progress.

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Objective 7: The link between Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda: The relationship between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda is an important chapter in the intellectual and educational history of modern India. Ramakrishna's spiritual realisations, universal humanism and compassion inspired Vivekananda's later educational vision and humanitarian work. The two differed in style and practical emphasis, but they shared a commitment to human dignity, spiritual growth and the welfare of all.

Ramakrishna stressed the unity of religions, purity of character, universal love and the presence of the divine in human beings. Vivekananda turned these spiritual and humanistic ideas into a broader programme of social renewal, educational progress and service.

The clearest educational expression of this influence is Vivekananda's definition of education as the manifestation of the perfection already present in each person. His "man-making education" emphasised character, self-confidence, strength, moral integrity and the development of human potential.

Likewise, the ideal of "*Shiva jnanejiva seva*" found practical form in Vivekananda's philosophy of service. The Ramakrishna Mission, founded under his leadership in 1897, gave it institutional shape through educational, medical, relief and welfare work.

For mass education this continuity is crucial. Ramakrishna supplied the spiritual and ethical foundation; Vivekananda carried it into organised educational and social action. Together they held that education must reach the disadvantaged, strengthen character and serve society, and their example shows how spiritual humanism can be turned into practical programmes of social empowerment.

Objective 8: Relevance to the present educational system: Today's education takes place amid rapid technological change, intense competition, shifting social relationships and rising demand for professional skills. Alongside these, concerns about declining ethics, intolerance, inequality, emotional insecurity and weakening relationships have grown. Ramakrishna's humanism offers useful ideas for steering education back towards moral responsibility, social harmony and the development of the whole person.

His relevance lies mainly in his emphasis on universal love, religious harmony, compassion, truthfulness, simplicity and respect for human dignity. These values can strengthen the ethical base of modern education and help learners balance individual ambition with social obligation. In practice, his ideas can be applied in several areas:

- **Value education:** his teaching on truthfulness, humility, self-discipline and compassion can feed into school value-education programmes.
- **Inclusive education:** his humanism supports equal respect for learners of every caste, religion, gender, economic level and culture.
- **Experiential learning:** his use of parables, illustrations and everyday examples can encourage teachers to adopt contextual, interactive and learner-centred methods.
- **Religious and cultural harmony:** his acceptance of different faiths can underpin intercultural understanding and peaceful coexistence in schools.
- **Community service:** his ideal of serving humanity can motivate students to take part in community development, awareness campaigns and voluntary work for the disadvantaged.
- **Holistic development:** his stress on inner purity, self-awareness and character can balance intellectual learning with emotional maturity and moral strength.

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None of this requires replacing modern scientific or technical education. It calls instead for bringing humanistic and ethical values into existing educational goals. An education system should be judged not only by academic and professional results but also by whether it produces responsible, compassionate and socially committed people.

Major Findings: The discussion above leads to the following main observations.

1. **Example came first.** The foundation of Ramakrishna's educational role was the consistency between his life and his teaching. He was not an educationist in the institutional sense, but he influenced people through his conduct, his conversations and his personal relationships.

2. **His method was simple and experiential.** Through stories, analogies and everyday images, he made difficult ideas understandable to ordinary people.

3. **Morality was central.** Truthfulness, self-restraint, sincerity and freedom from greed were core elements of his outlook.

4. **Religious harmony was a major contribution.** His ideal of respect and coexistence among people of different faiths remains highly relevant.

5. **His influence widened through Vivekananda.** Through Vivekananda's work, his ideas moved beyond personal spiritual guidance into organised education and social service.

6. **His approach has modern parallels.** His life-oriented teaching, use of experience, illustrative explanation, dialogue and emphasis on values can be usefully compared with current educational thinking.

7. **Limits must be acknowledged.** His educational influence can be interpreted through historical and philosophical analysis, but its exact extent cannot be measured without fieldwork or statistical evidence.

8. **Application today must be balanced.** Using his ideas now means giving due weight to scientific temper, rational thinking, social justice and equal opportunity as well as to humanistic values.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Ramakrishna's significance for education is lost if his contribution is reduced to religious instruction. He is better understood as an informal pioneer of life-centred moral and humanistic education. His contribution operates at three linked levels: the individual (moral purification, self-confidence, character, spiritual awareness), the social (religious harmony, human dignity, social responsibility) and the educational (informal learning, experiential teaching, value-based and inclusive education).

Limitations of the Study: Like any study, this one has limitations.

1. It relies on published books, biographies and selected educational interpretations. No data were collected on how far Ramakrishna's influence reached different sections of society, during his lifetime or since.

2. In reconstructing his ideas from compilations and biographies, the views of individual authors and compilers may have shaped the material. Historical fact needs to be distinguished from later devotional interpretation.

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3. Although the study uses a broad idea of mass education, it does not apply specific indicators or statistical methods to measure his influence.

4. The comparison between his outlook and modern educational theory is interpretive. His ideas are not presented as identical to contemporary theories.

5. Much of the later social influence of his ideas came through Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. A distinction must therefore be kept between his direct contribution and its indirect historical effects.

Acknowledging these limits makes the conclusions more balanced and more credible.

Suggestions for Further Research: This study has explored the educational, philosophical, moral and social side of Ramakrishna's humanism through a qualitative, historical and analytical approach. Much more remains to be done. Possible directions include:

1. **Empirical studies:** field surveys and interviews to examine how his ideas influence learners, teachers and educational communities today.

2. **Comparative studies:** comparing his humanism with the educational thought of Vivekananda, Gandhi, Tagore and others to identify similarities, differences and complementary ideas.

3. **School applications:** examining how his ideals of truthfulness, compassion, tolerance, self-discipline and universal love can be built into curricula, classroom activities and value-education programmes.

4. **Inclusive education:** studying the relevance of his outlook for tackling educational inequality, social exclusion, religious discrimination and cultural diversity.

5. **Teaching models:** designing practical teaching–learning models based on his conversational method, parables, analogies and experiential approach.

6. **Community education:** exploring how his teachings can support adult education, community development, non-formal education and lifelong learning, particularly among disadvantaged groups.

7. **Interdisciplinary work:** drawing on education, sociology, philosophy, psychology, religious studies and cultural history for a fuller understanding of his ideas.

8. **The Ramakrishna–Vivekananda tradition today:** assessing how the educational and service activities inspired by this tradition have contributed to literacy, access, character formation and community welfare.

9. **Learning materials:** preparing age-appropriate texts, modules and digital resources based on his life and teachings.

10. **Longitudinal studies:** examining over time whether sustained exposure to value-based programmes inspired by his teachings develops empathy, responsibility, tolerance and ethical behaviour among learners.

Research that combines philosophical interpretation with empirical evidence and classroom experimentation would be especially useful in testing how far his ideas can be applied in practice.

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Conclusion: Sri Ramakrishna's place in the history of mass education rests on his spiritual life, his easily understood teachings, his moral ideals, his universal love and his commitment to religious harmony. He was not an educationist in the usual sense, but his life and words had a lasting effect on how ordinary people thought, felt and lived (Nikhilananda, 1953; Gupta, 1942). What set his teaching apart was his ability to explain difficult ideas through everyday experience (Gupta, 1942).

His stories, analogies and conversations made moral and spiritual ideas accessible. He emphasised truthfulness, self-restraint, sincerity and inner purity, and his respect for humanity, his tolerance of different religious paths and his vision of human unity gave his contribution a wider reach (Gupta, 1942; Nikhilananda, 1953). He also valued experience and personal realisation, showing the importance of learning through practice, dialogue and example. This helps us appreciate the place of experiential learning, values and humane teacher–student relationships in education today (Dewey, 1938; UNESCO, 1996).

It is important to be clear about what this does and does not mean. His thought is not a substitute for modern theories of scientific education, social justice or equal rights. What it offers is a set of humanistic and educational ideas that can be brought into productive dialogue with the needs and principles of contemporary education (UNESCO, 2015; United Nations, 1948).

Above all, his contribution lies in tying education to life, character, conduct and human relationships. His example reminds us that learning is not confined to classrooms and textbooks; everyday experience, conversation, moral practice and social relationships are also places where people learn (Dewey, 1938; UNESCO, 1996). At a time when intolerance, self-centredness and social division are pressing concerns, his teachings on universal love, sincerity and religious harmony have fresh relevance (Nikhilananda, 1953; UNESCO, 2015). If education can be made more humane, more connected to life and more inclusive by drawing on his example, it will move closer to the goals of mass education (UNESCO, 2015).

Sri Ramakrishna, then, may be seen not only as a spiritual figure but also as an informal pioneer of life-centred moral and humanistic education. His legacy points towards an education in which knowledge goes together with character, individual growth with social responsibility, and self-realisation with concern for humanity as a whole (Gupta, 1942; Vivekananda, 2006).

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