

THE PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS OF RAJA MAHENDRA PRATAP SINGH

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the multilayered philosophical perspective of Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh—a visionary freedom fighter, educator, and worldwide intellectual—emphasizing the lasting significance of his ideas in the 21st century. Pratap's philosophy, grounded in a distinctive amalgamation of Indian spiritual traditions and contemporary socio-political values, advocates for universalism, anti-casteism, religious pluralism, ethical socialism, and global humanism. Through his notion of the "Religion of Love," he envisioned a spiritually cohesive world that transcends sectarian boundaries. His promotion of social transformation, especially via inclusive and ethical education, contested the hierarchical frameworks of both colonial and traditional Indian society. He established India's inaugural polytechnic to advance technical education integrated with ethical principles. Rejecting caste markers, encouraging interfaith cooperation, and upholding spiritual egalitarianism were all aspects of Pratap's secularism. His advocacy for a World Federation and his condemnation of ethically weak political ideologies established him as a forerunner to contemporary concepts of global citizenship. This study contends that Raja Mahendra Pratap's life and philosophy provide a significant framework for tackling modern issues such as communal divide, educational disparity, caste prejudice, and geopolitical strife.

Keywords: Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, Religion of Love, Religious Universalism, Anti-Caste Philosophy, Secularism, Interfaith Harmony, Educational Reforms, Ethical Socialism, Global Humanism, World Federation, Pluralist Socialism

1. INTRODUCTION

Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh was not only a courageous freedom fighter and global revolutionary but also a thinker whose social and religious philosophy holds enduring relevance. His ideas embodied a progressive vision that fused Indian spiritual traditions with modern ideals of democracy, education, equality, and international cooperation. A deep reading of Literature available, provides insight into the foundational values he carried and worldview.

Pratap's worldview was deeply spiritual yet non-dogmatic. His commitment to social equality, anti-caste reform, interfaith harmony, and internationalism stood out in his lifetime and continue to resonate in the 21st century. His philosophy cannot be seen in isolation from his life experiences, including his international travels, participation in anti-colonial movements, educational initiatives, and spiritual practices.

2. RELIGIOUS UNIVERSALISM AND THE 'RELIGION OF LOVE'

Central to Pratap's religious philosophy was the idea of a universal, formless God. He rejected ritualism and sectarianism and advocated for what he termed the "Religion of Love." He wrote a book *Religion of Love* in 1916 at Bagh-e Babur, Kabul. According to [Sharma \(2005\)](#), Raja Sahab Preached that Om, Deva, Allah, Jehovah, whatever seen or unseen is the body and spirit of one God, the only and only one. Different religions give different name to One God. This concept emphasized compassion, service to humanity, and a belief in ethical conduct over dogmatic adherence. For Pratap, all religions were valid paths leading to the same ultimate truth. When talking about his religious beliefs he writes in his circular 'World Federation' in November 1929-"A creative force, nature, or God initiated the creation or evolution of our universe, planet, and humanity. The laws of Nature are functioning in the pursuit of creation. The revolution of our globe and the evolution of growth facilitate the sustenance of life on Earth. Hunger and sexual desire compel all creatures to seek sustenance and reproduce. Concepts compel individuals to transcend their immediate desires. All religions constitute a collection of concepts provided to the human race for the purpose of promoting human well-being. They differ because to their production at distinct times and locations. They vary since they are designed to offer spiritual fulfilment to distinct temperaments. I propose that we select the most suitable religious doctrine and implement it in our lives. The purpose of religion is to maintain our spiritual well-being. Individuals who dispute over religious matters are seldom genuinely religious. I hold no animosity towards any faith. My faith embodies the unity of all religions. My faith is the Religion of Love [Pratap \(1947\)](#) contested the priesthood and the rites prescribed by religion. He asserts that the essence of all religions is love. He believed that possessing a pure heart was more important than adhering to traditions. He demonstrated what he taught. He conducted the naming ceremony for his son, Prem Pratap, and daughter, Bhakti, alone, without the presence of a priest. He stated in his biography that a priest is expected to conduct the Hindu name-giving ritual according to the individual's birthdate and time; nevertheless, he did not seek the counsel of any priest regarding this issue. He called his son Prem Pratap, signifying the brilliance of love, and his daughter Bhakti, denoting devotion [Krishnteerth \(2013\)](#).

His inclusive vision led him to participate in the religious practices of all major faiths [Rana \(2006\)](#). He prayed in temples, mosques, churches, and gurudwaras, embracing spiritual pluralism in both word and deed. This was not a superficial or strategic move, but a genuine commitment to spiritual inclusivity rooted in his own mystical experiences and philosophical reflections.

This idea of a universal religion anticipated the modern secular values of mutual respect and co-existence among communities. Pratap believed that spiritual love could be a unifying force for humankind, which made his ideology both deeply Indian and universally relevant.

3. ANTI-CASTEISM AND SPIRITUAL EGALITARIANISM

A defining feature of Pratap's social philosophy was his outright rejection of the caste system. He considered untouchability and caste-based discrimination as major obstacles to national unity and spiritual progress. His biography details several incidents where Pratap dined with Dalits and insisted on their inclusion in all public and religious functions. For example, he took food with TAMTA family of Almora and sweeper family of Agra [Krishnteerth \(2013\)](#). He once refused to enter a temple

because it prohibited the entry of lower castes, declaring instead that he would not support a religion that rejected fellow human beings [Krishnteerth \(2013\)](#). He referred to himself as a "sweeper," symbolically identifying with the most marginalized, to protest social hierarchies and promote dignity of labor.

This commitment was not limited to rhetoric. Pratap actively campaigned against caste injustice in his writings and public speeches, for that purpose he started a vernacular 'NIRBAL SEWAK' in 1914 [Pratap \(1969\)](#) from Dehradun. He believed true religion uplifted the lowest and promoted fraternity. As such, his spiritual egalitarianism became a core plank in his broader campaign for national and human liberation.

4. EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL REFORM

Pratap considered education the most effective instrument for bringing about social equality and enlightenment. He founded *Prem Mahavidyalaya* in Vrindavan in 1909—which became India's first polytechnic institute in 1945—to promote technical and moral education [Premi \(1976\)](#). This institution was designed not only to impart skills but also to build character, promote patriotism, and bridge the gap between different social classes.

It was his belief that education needed to have a holistic approach [Pratap \(1969\)](#). It had to be nationalistic, scientific, moral, and egalitarian. Pratap often criticized the colonial education system for being elitist and disconnected from India's real needs [Kumar \(2016\)](#). He wanted youth from all castes, creeds, and economic backgrounds to access quality education and become agents of social transformation [Premi \(1976\)](#).

In this respect, his educational philosophy anticipated the modern principles of inclusive education and participatory democracy. He also supported women's education and rural education, well before they became widespread national concerns.

5. PERSONAL SECULARISM AND INTERFAITH PRACTICE

Pratap's secularism was not merely political; it was deeply personal and ethical. He deliberately refrained from using caste identifiers like "Singh" and avoided wearing religious symbols, believing such markers created unnecessary divisions. He addressed himself in his letters with name Mahendra Pratap (Raja). He liked to be called with name Peter Pir Pratap, symbolising three major religion Christianity, Islam and Hinduism which shows his philosophy of secularism and commitment to interreligious faith. No doubt this secularism practiced by him might have had some political motives as we see, he wanted to garner support from Muslim world particularly from Turkey and Afghanistan for his holy aim of freeing India from British Clutches, also we should not forget that majority of his allies in first provisional government were Muslims. But we can not doubt his secularism.

He was known to offer prayers and attend ceremonies at places of worship of various religions, including Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, Christian churches, and Sikh gurdwaras [Singh \(2005\)](#). This interfaith practice earned him respect across communities, and it was a practical demonstration of his belief that all religions are expressions of the same divine essence.

Such practices made him an embodiment of Gandhian Sarva-Dharma-Sambhava, even though his spiritual approach was distinct and independently evolved. He attended conference of all religion at Allahabad in 1910 and wrote his

book *Religion of Love* in 1916. His secularism, thus, was experiential, ethical, and centered on shared human values.

6. SUPPORTER OF ETHICAL AND PLURALIST SOCIALISM

Pratap, although advocating for socialism, underscored the necessity of a social and political framework to achieve social equality among individuals; nonetheless, he categorically dismissed the concept of class conflict, deeming it incompatible with Indian culture and religion [Goswami \(2013\)](#). His views on socialism can accurately be described as ethical, and in a robust belief in moral principles and humanity. In his perspective, contemporary socialism emerged to curtail the exploitation of the impoverished by the affluent, a role that religion was intended to fulfil; nevertheless, it ultimately failed to benefit society as the leaders of socialism became corrupt and degenerated. It was devoid of morals. He believed that democracy, socialism, and communism were merely instruments for acquiring power, and that whenever any ideology succeeded in doing so, it inevitably led to corruption. Therefore, he championed morality as the sole means to uphold transparency and fairness within society. He dismissed Western socialist doctrine due to its deficiency in moral principles [Pratap \(1962\)](#).

Raja Mahendra Pratap embodied a pluralist socialist ideology, envisioning a system where each individual serves others to ensure collective happiness. He always opposed the democratic notion that permits fifty-one to govern forty-nine, as it fosters division among the populace and incites conflict and hostility between factions. In his journal from November 1950, he asserts that the term democracy has been skillfully manipulated by the Anglo-American group to mislead their own populace and to deceive others globally. However, he further asserts that we should refrain from condemning individuals or groups. Referring to a concept of the Development of Indianness [Chaudhary \(2013\)](#)

7. VISION OF GLOBAL HUMANISM AND WORLD FEDERATION

Pratap's global experiences, including his travels to Afghanistan, Turkey, Japan, Germany, and other countries, shaped his internationalist vision. According to [Rana \(2006\)](#), his most ambitious proposal was the establishment of a World Federation Centre in Tokyo in 1929—an organization that would unite humanity beyond national borders through ethical governance and mutual cooperation.

He viewed nationalism not as an end in itself but as a stage toward global unity. He believed that love for one's nation should lead to respect for all nations. His idea of a "United States of the World" prefigured the formation of institutions like the United Nations.

His vision was not utopian; it was rooted in ethical realism. He wanted a federation of cultures, values, and civilizations that would replace the politics of war with the ethics of peace. This made him one of the few early 20th-century Indian thinkers to promote what today is called "global citizenship."

8. SYNTHESIS AND RELEVANCE TODAY

Raja Mahendra Pratap's ideas remain significantly relevant in today's fractured world. His "Religion of Love" challenges growing religious intolerance. His anti-caste activism addresses the ongoing struggles against social injustice. His educational reforms echo in contemporary debates and National Educational Policy 2020 which

talks about skill oriented, inclusive and value-based learning. His internationalist vision resonates in a world confronting war, migration, and climate crises.

Pratap's philosophy is not confined to idealism. It is action-oriented, deeply rooted in experience, and broadly applicable to many modern problems. He showed how spiritual values can be used not to divide, but to unify; not to dominate, but to liberate.

9. CONCLUSION

The philosophy of Raja Mahendra Pratap presents a coherent and visionary framework. It brings together spiritual universalism, anti-caste ethics, educational empowerment, secular conduct, and international humanism. Far from being a historical curiosity, it offers a philosophical roadmap for present and future generations seeking a more just, compassionate, and unified world.

His belief in humanity over dogma, action over orthodoxy, and unity over fragmentation makes him a towering figure in both Indian and world history. It is time his ideas are studied not just as part of India's freedom movement but as part of its intellectual and ethical heritage.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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