

TAGORE & HIS CONTRIBUTION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Tagore's theory of education is known by naturalistic & aesthetic values. He had the faith that "The widest road leading to the solution of all our problems is education". Education can create a new pattern of life. Tagore's system of education lays stress on the intellectual, physical, social, economic, moral and spiritual aspects of life. He was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally considered as the creative artist of the modern Indian subcontinent. Tagore gave the same importance to both aesthetic development and intellectual development—if not more so—and music, literature, art, dance and drama were given great importance in the daily life of the school. Tagore was one of earliest educationists who think in terms of the global village. His educational model has a sole sensitivity and aptness for education within multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural situations, amidst conditions of acknowledged economic discrepancy and political imbalance.

Keywords: *Creative Artist,
Integrated Personality,
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Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was born in Calcutta. His family was known for social-religious and educational innovations. The cultural richness of his family encouraged Tagore to learn subconsciously at his own pace, giving him a dynamic, open model of

education, which he later on tried to rebuild in his school at Santiniketan. His experience at Jorasanko provided him with a permanent confidence about the importance of freedom in education. Tagore also realized the importance of the arts for developing empathy and sensitivity, and the need for a close rapport with one's cultural and natural environment. From participating in



the cosmopolitan activities of the family, he came to reject narrowness. To him education is a vehicle which appreciates the aspects of different cultures, while maintaining one's own cultural specificity. Tagore wrote "I was brought up in an environment of ambition, aspiration for the expansion of the individual spirit. We, in our home sought freedom of power in our language, literature, religious creeds & mind in our social environment". Such an opportunity has given me confidence in the power of teaching. Highest of that is claimed for man, his freedom of moral communion in the human universe. I try to preserve in my words and works that education has its only importance & freedom and freedom from unawareness of universe laws & freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world. At my institution I have attempted to create an atmosphere of naturalness in our rapport with strangers, and provide hospitality that provides primary virtue that made civilization possible. I invited thinkers and scholars from foreign lands to let our boys know how easy it is to realize our common fellowship, when we deal with those who are great, and that it is the puny that with their petty vanities set up barriers between man and man. Rabindranath Tagore did not write a central educational treatise, and his ideas must be gleaned through his various writings and educational experiments at Santiniketan. In general, he envisioned an education that was deeply rooted in one's immediate surroundings which connects the cultures. He felt that a curriculum should revolve organically around nature with classes held in the natural surroundings under the trees. Walks and outings were made as a part of the curriculum and children were encouraged to follow the life cycles of insects, birds and plants.

Educational Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore

In Tagore's educational philosophy, the aesthetic development was important. Music, art, literature, dance & drama were given great fame in the daily life of the school. Drawing on his home life at Jorasanko, Rabindranath tried to make an atmosphere in which the arts would become natural. The area which he first emphasized was music. Tagore writes that in his adolescence, a 'cascade of musical emotion' gushed forth day after day at Jorasanko. "*We felt we would try to test everything*" he writes, '*and no achievement seemed impossible... We wrote, we sang, we acted, we poured ourselves out on every side.*' (Rabindranath Tagore, My Reminiscences 1917: 141). Tagore involved students with whatever he was writing or composing. The students were allowed access to the room where he read his new writings and were encouraged to write in special literary evenings. The writing and publishing of periodicals had always been an important aspect and the students were encouraged in creating own publications. The students were also encouraged in painting and drawing and to draw inspiration from the many visiting artists and writers. The core of Tagore's educational theory puts greater emphasis on the complete, harmonious development of individual personality. He believed that education should help an individual to attain complete manhood, so that all his powers may be developed to the fullest extent for his own individual perfection as well as the perfection of the human society in which he was born. He believed that education was not merely a means for the growth and fullness of the individual, but it was also concerned with the whole physical and social milieu in which his life was lived. He wanted the male children and young ladies to be fearless, free and open- minded, self-reliant, full of the spirit of



inquiry and self- critical, with their roots deep in the filth of India, only reaching out to the world in understanding, neighborliness, cooperation and material and spiritual progression. Tagore's concept of ideal education covered the description of ideal atmosphere, institution, teacher, and method. Actually Tagore's success lies in the fact that he did not try to manipulate directly the ideas, beliefs, and values of his kids, but imaginatively designed an environment and a plan of body processes and experiences which drew out the desired reactions. He too considered that the pedagogy of a country acquires shape and substance only against the entire ground and it is significant that there is a substantial relationship between teaching and companionship.

Educational Practices

Tagore's theory has been branded in the titles- Aims of Education, Ideal Education, and Congruency between Education and Social Life. His educational theory was put into practice in his school at Santiniketan, in which only five students were rolled at the commencement. The origin and development of the institution reveal that from such a small start the school has grown to a University, Visva-Bharati, with different departments in humanities, science, art, music, education, Chinese studies, and advanced studies in philosophy and village welfare. In 1922, the Department of Village Welfare at Santiniketan was further developed to include extended work on rural reconstruction, village education, craft-training, agricultural research and training and was named Sriniketan. Tagore ' s practical aspect of education also includes a description organization of daily activities in which freedom, games and sports, art, and entertainments at night are emphasized. Tagore's organization of the curriculum was not narrowed down

to only textbook learning, but it provided a fullness of experience for children from multiple sources. Tagore interpreted the curriculum in terms of certain activities to be undertaken.

Aims of Education

An assessment of Tagore's educational writings makes it obvious that in several places he has evidently mentioned the aims, but in other places they have to be inferred from contexts. It also becomes clear that though he never lectured about them in a unified way, they have an integral unity. Tagore had developed a well-integrated view of life and of the role of education in it. These were not just a set of attractive and high-sounding views on various unconnected problems of life, but represented an attempt to see life steadily and see it whole and interpret the relationship between its various fascinating and complex aspects. The aims of education prescribed by him did not emerge from a world outside, but emerged from his experience, practice and experiments. Here for the clarity of the subject it is planned to present his broad, all-inclusive, comprehensive aim first and then his minor aims will follow. According to Tagore the broad, inclusive aim of education is the development of all the potential faculties of an individual leading to an all-round, harmonious development of his personality. This broad aim was the product of his philosophy towards life that is of total acceptance of life. This is the reason that he mentioned, "The highest education is that which makes our life in harmony with all existences"(Tagore, 1917g, p. 142). Early childhood experiences of school life made him believe that the educational system of that time was not concerned with the growth of children, it was rather preparing children for a society of clerks. Since that time Tagore had been aware of this discrepancy and tried to



build an institution where children would have more freedom to explore and learn by themselves in the open learning environment of nature. In his very first educational writing, 'Siksar Herpher,' he advocated a free, joyous, spontaneous life of impulses for young children in the twofold field of nature and imagination so that it may serve to make their body alert and develop them in all respects (Tagore, 1351 B.S.). In another article, 'Siksa Saraasya,' he mentioned the "laying of the foundation of human personality as a whole 'to be the aim of education'" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 51). Thus, all other aims prescribed by Tagore at different places, mainly emphasize the aim of complete personality growth. Not only was Tagore concerned with the education of the intellect, but also he was duly conscious of the education of the body. In fact, he attached so much importance to the healthy physical development of children in early years that he eloquently advocated their free, spontaneous movements and play in joyous natural surroundings, even at the expense of studies, if necessary. "Even if they learned nothing," he says, they would have had ample time for play, climbing trees, diving into ponds, plucking and tearing flowers, perpetrating thousand and one mischief's on Mother Nature, they would have obtained the nourishment of the body, happiness of mind, and the satisfaction of the natural impulses of childhood"(Tagore, 1351 B.S., pp. 9-10). Tagore has given religion a place of high importance in education, but for him it did not involve the formal teaching of any religious dogma. True religiousness, he believed, is as natural as breathing; it is as much a vital portion of our existence as breathing. Religious training for him is a spirit, an inspiration, pervading every aspect of human life, affirming its relationship with the highest of values and giving a sense of kinship with the Real. If education fails to cultivate

the quality of human understanding and strengthen the sense of human unity, then that education is considered superficial and misguided. Similarly, Tagore emphasized the importance of discipline in a moral life and he suggested that real discipline means protection of raw, natural impulses of unhealthy excitement and growth in undesirable directions. Tagore's moral and spiritual aims of education were varied in nature. He advocated the power of self-determination, the ideal of peace and tranquillity, liberation of the self from all kinds of slavery, and his educational institutions provided opportunity for it. Tagore believed in social aims of education too. Social and Human values were considered as an important characteristic in educated person. He regretted that people were living in an artificial world of books and not in the real world of living men and women. "We have become learned, but have ceased to be human" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 71). For the fundamental purpose of education is not merely to enrich ourselves through the fullness of knowledge, but also to establish the bond of love and friendship between man and man." .This idea of fellow-feeling was not limited to one's own countrymen but spread the message of internationalism in Tagore's writing. This social aim gets expressed in Tagore's message for the education of the feeling or 'Bodher-Sadhana ' as he puts it. He felt sorry that education of sympathy was not only systematically ignored in schools, but was severely repressed, because we may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy. Education is considered highest which does not only give information rather makes our life in harmony with all existence (Tagore, 1917c, p. 142).



Aims of education as reflected by Tagore in Santiniketan are:

Development of Intellect:

Tagore emphasized the need of the development of intellect. By this Tagore means development of imagination, creative free thinking, constraint curiosity and alertness of mind, a Child should feel free to learn this will lead to all round development.

Development in Natural Situation:

Tagore envisaged that nature is the best teacher to the student. Nature provides the student necessary situation to learn and earn knowledge. The student should not be pressured to learn anything. Nature is the guiding force which inculcates the strength of learning in the mind of a student to pursue the education he likes. Nature will shape his behavior and character. He also stressed that pupil should be provided free and conducive natural atmosphere for learning.

Freedom to child:

Tagore was having the opinion of giving freedom to the child. He wanted to implement the same in the field of education. That was the only purpose he had opened Santiniketan, Sri Niketan and Brahmachari Ashram. Tagore provided freedom of choice for students to develop. According to Tagore, education should be after the heart of a man. He explained freedom in three ways, i.e. freedom of heart, intellect and will. Education imparted in a natural way will lead to the compilation of these three freedoms. One may follow the vocational education or instruction of an intellect, or education in whatever arm of the humanistic discipline or one may become a sense by observing celibacy.

Self Realization:

The expression of personality depends upon the self-realization and spiritual knowledge of the individual. Love for Humanity: Tagore believed that education can teach people to realize oneness. Education for international understanding and universal brotherhood was another important aim of his educational philosophy.

Development of physical character:

Tagore's educational philosophy also aims at the development, physical character of the child. He gave a great deal of importance of sound and healthy body. Yoga, games & sports are given in Santiniketan as a fundamental part of the education system.

Real & Practical Teaching:

According to Tagore, teaching should be real & practical, but not artificial and theoretical. As a naturalist, Tagore laid emphasis on the practicality. It will help in increasing the innovative abilities. That creativity will bring perfection in the learning process and the student will become a master in their field and not a slave hypothetical knowledge which one delves deep.

Medium of Instructions through mother tongue:

One can express himself and communicate properly in his mother tongue. Tagore emphasized mother tongue as the medium of instruction for the child's education.



Moral and Spiritual Development:

Tagore also laid emphasis upon moral and spiritual development. Moral and spiritual training is significant. There must be a sufficient provision for the development of self less activities, co-operation and love fellow feeling and sharing among the students in educational institutions.

Social Development:

Tagore was of the opinion that "Service to man is service to God". Social relationships should be developed. Educational aims at the individual personality as well as social roles which enables him.

No space for Book-Centered Education:

Tagore rejected a book-centered education for students. It is not only to confine the idea of boys and girls to textbooks only. This will destroy the natural instincts of students. It will also destroy the creative abilities. So, students should be freed from the-book-centered education and should be given a broader path for learning.

Education for Rural Modernization:

Tagore was worried about the rural poverty of India. He wanted to get rid of poverty through education. Practical training in different crafts will make them skillful artisans in their respective field. They can remove the poverty of the rural mass by applying their education, serving in the process of rural modernization.

Conclusion

Tagore held that all faculties of human beings, intellectual, physical, moral, aesthetic should be nurtured, refined in a good educational system. He

emphasized the cultivation of intellect in order to correct emotional immaturity and instability where it exists, and he longed-for the contribution that western science can make to the progress of India. He strongly believed that if reason, with its uncompromising dedication to truth is not reinstated on its lonely pedestal, rejecting superstition and the undue cult of the supernatural in every field, neither education nor the general intellectual life of the people will be released from its fetters. However, this intellectual cultivation, power of reasoning cannot be gained through mere book reading. He was aware that "since childhood, instead of putting the entire burden on the memory, the power of thinking, and the power of imagination should also be given opportunities for free exercise" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 12). Tagore's impact on education in India has not been well recognized and through discussion, it was found that educational work of Tagore deserves more scrutiny. It demands to be acknowledged and evaluated by educationists around the globe. His impact on education has been felt more, but it has not been articulated' by researchers, or educationists. Present writing open avenues for further research on Tagore as an educationist by making further suggestions and presenting an extensive bibliography of Tagore's writings on education.



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