

RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MODERN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore, an eminent philosopher of the twentieth century has explored himself as a poet, writer, painter, dramatist, educationist and philosopher. His philosophy of education is based on human regeneration through the self-realisation by means of communion with nature and God. He believes that the aim of education is not merely to enrich ourselves through understanding but also to establish the bond of love and friendship among human beings. Through his imagination, Tagore tries to realise the universal soul within himself and in nature. It is a philosophy of compassion and love which is restored to human hopes and despair. Tagore believes that education should be imparted in the midst of freedom and cultural surrounding which is relevant today as it was during his time.

The objective of the paper is to highlight on Tagore's concept of philosophy of education and its relevance to educational execution of recent times.

Key-words: Nature, God, Reality, Humanism, freedom

Rabindranath Tagore, a great son of India, is an educator and enlightened philosopher who dedicates his whole life on human regeneration on the base of his philosophy and education. His educational philosophy is an attempt at self-accomplishment by means of affinity with nature and God. He thinks that the ultimate goal of education is not merely to improve ourselves through wisdom and cognition but also to set up the bond of friendship and love between human beings. Tagore realises the universal soul within himself through his imagination. This realisation is the goal of education. He views nature as a supreme entity. In nature, he imagines the manifestation of the creator. His naturalistic outlook is tempered with idealistic philosophy and his spiritualism is the progress of his study of ancient Indian literature and Indian philosophy. So, as a realist he tries to regenerate the traditional culture of India.

Tagore opposes the current educational system of India. He says, "It was of foreign origin having been imported from beyond the seas..... English as medium of instruction created the first insurmountable difficulty and students ill-equipped at school could not assimilate what they were taught in colleges. Again,

school and university education was valued here only as passport to administrative and clerical posts, and students and teachers alike thought mainly of examination and not of intellectual culture.”(Pandey 203)

Regarding the aim of education, Tagore says in the essay, *A Poet's School* as “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”(Tagore116) He aims at perfection of man by means of education. He wants the development of the individual in all aspects which includes the perfection of soul. Tagore considers that spiritual, physical and intellectual life is one and one should convey this idea to the coming generation.

The social and cultural atmosphere of Tagore's family plays a strong role in the formulation of his philosophy of education. Without having any professional degree, Tagore develops a well integrated view of life and about the important role of education in society. From his own practical knowledge, he strongly feels that there should be a new approach in education and he put it in practice in his own school. As a poet philosopher, he later advances his theory of education for international unity among the various cultures between the East and the West.

According to Tagore, the aim of education is to develop a person's character. So he has given stress that education should be balanced and complete without neglecting any part of man's quality. To achieve this goal, education should aim to improve all sides of man's nature- his intellectual, physical and moral power. The object of education is to give man the unity of truth. His educational philosophy contains three main features- they are freedom, creative self expression and active communion with man and nature. He emphasises on the attainment of an inner freedom, an inner power and enlightenment.

Philosophy of education of Tagore cannot be understood without the knowledge of his metaphysics. According to him, reality is one where man, nature and God are intimately related. In fact, they are the three dimensions of Reality. His approach to ultimate Reality was integral. He believes in an inner harmony between man and nature on the one hand and nature and God on the other.

Aims of Education

Tagore is not an educationalist in a strict theoretical sense. He never methodically talks about his aim of education which is mirrored in his educational institution named Santiniketan are as follows:

Self Realization:

According to Tagore, the aim of education is self realisation. It means the realisation of the Universal Soul in one's life. The individual will not be able to attain self realisation without education. He believes that individuals are potentially divine and they can realize this potentiality. Every individual has a spark of divinity in him which inspires him for self attainment. Self realisation is the true nature of human beings. Spiritualism is the essence of humanism which reflects in his educational philosophy. Exhibition of personality is based upon the self-realization and spiritual knowledge of individual.

Intellectual Development:

Tagore lays stress on the intellectual development of the child. By intellectual development he means the development of child's imaginary power, curiosity, creative free thinking, and attentiveness of the mind. Child should be given freedom to choose his own way of learning to attain all round development.

Physical Development:

Tagore also emphasises on the physical development of the child. He gives importance to healthy and sound body of child. He believed that a healthy mind lives in a physically fit body. In Santiniketan, games & sports, yoga and different physical activities are considered as a part and parcel of the education system.

Love for humanity:

As a humanist, Tagore considers the whole universe as one family .It can be realized only by means of education. Education for universal brotherhood and international understanding is another important goal of his educational philosophy. If we believe God as our father and we are His children, the feeling of oneness can be evolved. All individuals are equal in this world.

Foundation of correlation between human & God:

Man bears some inborn and innate qualities and potentialities given by God. There is a strong and permanent relationship between man and God. Due to the spiritualistic nature of human beings, it is possible to build a harmonious relationship between man, God and nature.

Freedom:

One of the integral aspects of human development is human freedom. Education is a man-making process which explores the innate potentialities exists within the man. He believes that freedom should be given to a child during education so that he can enjoy learning. The child should be free from any kinds of restrictions and compulsions. He says that education has inclination only when he can communicate through the path of freedom. He believes that a child should enjoy complete freedom so that he can develop his mind and soul in an environment of affection love, sympathy.

Mother tongue as the medium of learning:

Language is considered as the way of self-expression. A child can freely express his thoughts and feelings by means of mother-tongue. Tagore believes that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction for the child's learning process.

Moral and Spiritual Development:

Tagore believes that moral and spiritual training should be given to the children in educational institution. Academic knowledge is not able to develop the personality of man. For an integral development of human personality, moral and spiritual training is very essential. There should be provisions for the development of

selfless activities and co-operation among the students in educational institutions. Education should teach children about tolerance, discipline and freedom.

Social Development:

Tagore thinks that the supreme soul whom he calls 'Brahma', manifests Himself through men and other creatures. All human-beings and creatures are originated by Him and are considered to be equal. Tagore, therefore says "service to man is service to god". Every individual has to develop social relationship with his fellow-beings and it is education which helps to build individual personality as well as social characters. It enables him to live as worthy being.

Tagore tried to convey his philosophy of education to the contemporary generation and made it relevant to the future generation. As a social and educational reformer, he initiated to establish institutions like Vishwa Bharati and Shantiniketan as effective models of new education system. He stressed on compulsory free education for all Indian children discarding their caste, creed and socio-economic status. The educational ideal of Tagore has paved the way for the general education policies and practices in India. In the materialistic world of today, Tagore's desire for acquiring aesthetic and intuitive knowledge is very relevant. His contribution to our educational system is unparalleled and unforgettable.

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