

EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S AND IT'S RELEVANCE IN PRESENT EDUCATION

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Abstract: Geniuses are born. But the flowering of the multifaceted personality of Rabindranath Tagore was the result of interaction of a variety of favorable environmental factors in producing the genius. The contribution of Rabindranath Tagore in this respect as well as in other fields, especially in education, has been paramount. Rabindranath Tagore, one of the epoch-making figures of the twentieth century, is one of the most widely acclaimed wordsmiths of India. Often hailed as Gurudev or the poet of poets, Tagore, through the sheer brilliance of his narratives and incommensurable poetic flair, laid an ineffaceable impression on the minds of his readers. He was not just a mere poet or writer; he was the harbinger of an era of literature which elevated him to the stature of the cultural ambassador of India. Even today, decades after his death, this saint-like man, lives through his works in the hearts of the people of Bengal who are forever indebted to him for enriching their heritage. He was the most admired Indian writer who introduced India's rich cultural heritage to the West and was the first non-European to be bestowed the prestigious Nobel Prize. Rabindranath Tagore's educational model has a unique sensitivity and aptness for education within multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural situations, amidst conditions of acknowledged economic discrepancy and political imbalance.

Key-Words: Multifaceted personality, Wordsmiths, Harbinger, Cultural heritage, Multi-racial, Multi-lingual and Multi-cultural situations.

Introduction:

“A teacher can never truly teach, unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp, unless it continuous to burn its own flame”

- Rabindranath Tagore

Geniuses are born. But the flowering of the multifaceted personality of Rabindranath Tagore was the result of interaction of a variety of favorable environmental factors in producing the genius. The contribution of Rabindranath Tagore in this respect as well as in other fields, especially in education, has been paramount. In the galaxy of modern educational thinkers the name of Rabindranath Tagore, popularly known as “Gurudev”, is famous not only in our country for his contribution in the field of education, but all over the world. One of the most striking features of his educational thinking is that he considered education as the most effective tool for modernizing Indian.

Rabindranath Tagore, one of the epoch-making figures of the twentieth century, is one of the most widely acclaimed wordsmiths of India. Tagore, through the sheer brilliance of his narratives and incommensurable poetic flair, laid an ineffaceable impression on the minds of his readers. He was not just a mere poet or writer; he was the harbinger of an era of literature which elevated him to the stature of the cultural ambassador of India. Even today, decades after his death, this saint-like man, lives through his works in the hearts of the people of Bengal who are forever indebted to him for enriching their heritage. He was the most admired Indian writer who introduced India's rich cultural heritage to the West and was the first non-European to be bestowed the prestigious Nobel Prize. Rabindranath Tagore's educational model has a unique sensitivity and aptness for education within multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural situations, amidst conditions of acknowledged economic discrepancy and political imbalance. Rabindranath 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 but connected to the cultures of the wider world, predicated upon pleasurable learning and individualized to the personality of the child. He felt that a curriculum should revolve organically around nature with classes held in the open air under the trees to provide for a spontaneous appreciation of the fluidity of the plant and animal kingdoms, and seasonal changes. Children sat on hand-woven mats beneath the trees, which they were allowed to climb and run beneath between classes. Nature walks and excursions were a part of the curriculum and students were encouraged to follow the life cycles of insects, birds and plants. Class schedules were made flexible to allow for shifts in the weather or special attention to natural phenomena, and seasonal festivals were created for the children by Tagore. In an essay entitled "A Poet's School," he emphasizes the importance of an empathetic sense of interconnectedness with the surrounding world.

Childhood and Early Life:

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7th May 1861 to Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi in the Jorasanko mansion (the ancestral home of the Tagore family) in Calcutta. He was the youngest son among thirteen children. Though the Tagore family had many members, he was mostly raised by servants and maids as he lost his mother while he was still very young and with his father being an extensive traveler. At a very young age, Rabindranath Tagore was part of the Bengal renaissance, which his family took active participation in. He was also a child prodigy as he started penning down poems at the age of 8. He also started composing art works at a tender age and by the age of sixteen he had started publishing poems under the pseudonym Bhanusimha. He also wrote the short story, 'Bhikharini' in 1877 and the poem collection, 'Sandhya Sangit' in 1882. He drew inspiration by reading the classical poetry of Kalidasa and started coming up with classical poems of his own. Some of his other influences and inspirations came from his brothers and sisters. While Dwijendranath, his elder brother, was a poet and philosopher, Satyendranath, another brother of his, was in a highly respectable position. His sister Swarnakumari was a well-known novelist. Tagore was largely home-schooled and was trained by his siblings in the field of gymnastics, martial arts, art, anatomy, literature, history and mathematics among various other subjects. In 1873, he accompanied his father and toured the country for many months. During this journey, he accumulated knowledge on several subjects. His stay at Amritsar paved the way for him to learn about Sikhism, an experience which he would later on use to pen down as many as six poems and many articles on the religion.

Major Works:

(i) Gitanjali', a collection of poems, is considered his best poetic accomplishment. It is written in traditional Bengali dialect and consists of 157 poems based on themes pertaining to nature, spirituality and intricacy of (human) emotions and pathos.

- (ii) A proficient songwriter, Tagore composed 2,230 songs, which are often referred to as 'Rabindra Sangeeth'. He also wrote the national anthem for India - 'Jana Gana Mana'- and for Bangladesh - 'Aamaar Sonaar Banglaa' for which, both nations will forever be indebted to him.
- (iii) 'Galpagucchaccha' a collection of eighty stories is his most famous short story collection which revolves around the lives of rural folks of Bengal. The stories mostly deal with the subjects of poverty, illiteracy, marriage, femininity, etc. and enjoy immense popularity even today.

Awards & Achievements:

- (i) For his momentous and revolutionary literary works, Tagore was honored with the Nobel Prize in Literature on 14 November 1913.
- (ii) He was also conferred knighthood in 1915, which he renounced in 1919 after the Jallianwallah Bagh carnage.
- (iii) In 1940, Oxford University awarded him with a Doctorate of Literature in a special ceremony arranged at Shantiniketan.

Aims of Education According to Tagore:

The aims of education as reflected in educational institution founded by Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan are as follows:

(i) Self Realization:

Spiritualism is the essence of humanism; this concept has been reflected in Tagore's educational philosophy. Self-realization is an important aim of education. Manifestation of personality depends upon the self-realization and spiritual knowledge of individual.

(ii) Intellectual Development:

Tagore also greatly emphasized the intellectual development of the child. By intellectual development he means development of imagination, creative free thinking, constant curiosity and alertness of the mind. Child should be free to adopt his own way learning which will lead to all round development.

(iii) Physical Development:

Tagore's educational philosophy also aims at the physical development of the child. He gave much importance to sound and healthy physique. There were different kinds of exercises. Yoga, games & sports prescribed in Santiniketan as an integral part of the education system.

(iv) Love for humanity:

Tagore held that the entire universe is one family. Education can teach people to realize oneness of the globe. Education for international understanding and universal brotherhood is another important aim of his educational philosophy. The feeling of oneness can be developed through the concepts like fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man all creatures are equal on this earth.

(v) Establishment of relationship between man & God:

Man bears the diverse qualities and potentialities offered by God. These qualities are inborn and innate. The relationship between man and God is strong and permanent. However the dedication to spiritualism and sacredness will lead to the harmonious relationship with man, nature and God.

(vi) Freedom:

Freedom is considered as an integral aspect of human development. Education is a man-making process, it explores the innate power exists within the man. It is not an imposition rather a liberal process their provides utmost freedom to the individual for his all round development. He says, Education has leaning only when it is imparted through the path of freedom".

(vii) Co-relation of Objects:

Co-relation exists with God, man and nature. A peaceful world is only possible when correlation between man and nature will be established.

(viii) Mother tongue as the medium of Instruction:

Language is the true vehicle of self-expression. Man can freely express his thought in his mother-tongue. Tagore has emphasized mother tongue as the medium of instruction for the child's education.

(ix) Moral and Spiritual Development:

Tagore emphasized moral and spiritual training in his educational thought. Moral and spiritual education is more important than bookish knowledge for an integral development of human personality. There must be an adequate provision for the development of selfless activities, co-operation and love fellow feeling and sharing among the students in educational institutions.

(x) Social Development:

According to Tagore, "Brahma" the supreme soul manifests himself through men and other creatures. Since He is the source of all human-beings and creatures, so all are equal. Rabindranath Tagore therefore said, "service to man is service to god". All should develop social relationship and fellow-feeling from the beginnings of one's life. Education aims at developing the individual personality as well as social characters which enables him to live as a worthy being.

Literary Works:

During his lifetime, Rabindranath Tagore wrote several poems, novels and short stories. Though he started writing at a very young age, his desire to produce more number of literary works only enhanced post the death of his wife and children. Some of his literary works are mentioned below:

Short stories – Tagore began to write short stories when he was only a teen. He started his writing career with 'Bhikharini'. During the initial stage of his career, his stories reflected the surroundings in which he grew. He also made sure to incorporate social issues and problems of the poor man in his stories. He also wrote about the downside of Hindu marriages and several other customs that were part of the country's tradition back then. Some of his famous short stories include 'Kabuliwala', 'Kshudita Pashan', 'Atottju', 'Haimanti' and 'Musalmanir Golpo' among many other stories.

Novels – It is said that among his works, his novels are mostly under-appreciated. One of the reasons for this could be his unique style of narrating a story, which is still difficult to comprehend by contemporary readers, let alone the readers of his time. His works spoke about the impending dangers of nationalism among other relevant social evils. His novel ‘Shesher Kobita’ narrated its story through poems and rhythmic passages of the main protagonist. He also gave a satirical element to it by making his characters take jibes at an outdated poet named Rabindranath Tagore! Other famous novels of his include ‘Noukadubi’, ‘Gora’, ‘Chaturanga’, ‘Ghare Baire’ and ‘Jogajog’.

Poems – Rabindranath drew inspiration from ancient poets like Kabir and Ramprasad Sen and thus his poetry is often compared to the 15th and 16th Century works of classical poets. By infusing his own style of writing, he made people to take note of not only his works but also the works of ancient Indian poets. Interestingly, he penned down a poem in 1893 and addressed a future poet through his work. He urged the yet to be born poet to remember Tagore and his works while reading the poem. Some of his best works include ‘Balaka’, ‘Purobi’, ‘Sonar Tori’ and ‘Gitanjali’.

Tagore’s Philosophy:

Philosophy of Humanism: Tagore observed, “The best and noblest gifts of humanity cannot be the monopoly, of a particular race or country”.

Synthesis of culture: Tagore said, before we are in a position to stand in comparison with the other cultures of the world or try to cooperate with them. We must bare our own culture on a synthesis of all the different cultures we have.

True culture: Culture brings fulfillment from the depths of the self to the faculties and aptitudes of a man as a whole; under its influence man spontaneously attains an all-round fulfillment and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and the enthusiasm for unselfish action become natural. True culture sets greater store by natural courtesy than mechanical observance of custom and convention. A cultured man will rather injure than humiliate himself. To be envious of others success is to humiliate himself.

Tagore – A Universalist: As a messenger of freedom of mind and peace, Tagore has expressed his feelings in the following verses.

“Where the mind is without fear
And the head is held high,
Where knowledge is free.
Where the world has not been broken in to
Fragments by narrow domestic walls,
.....
Into that heaven of freedom, my father
Let my country awake”

Major Ideas of Tagore:

Rabindranarg Tagore’s writings especially of “Gitanjali” with its lyricism and untranslatable delicacies. It is his own perception of life that is reflected in his creative works and philosophical and educational ideas. As a naturalist he gave importance to nature. In his view, both man and nature are the creations of one and the same

God. This will naturally strengthen spiritual relationships between the two. Thus his naturalism was different from the one advocated by Rousseau. The different thought being that Tagore's naturalism was based on humanism. Love and harmony among all the things that exist in nature was the basis of his philosophy. Tagore was a realist and an idealist too. According to Dr. Ratha Krishnan, the soul of ancient India is mirrored in Tagore's writings. It embodies all the ancient ideals of religion, philosophy and art. As a true religious in spirit, his spiritual journey was guided by the Upanishads, the traditional Hindu spiritual scriptures. He speaks of the immanent Brahman, the supreme reality, an all – suffusing force that transcends personality and any sort of description. The idea is that all things in the cosmos are only temporal manifestations of Brahman. Tagore exhorts, let us find god, let us live for the ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of the dust and gives us the wealth, not of things but of inner urge, not of power, but of love”.

According to Tagore, the aim of education is self realization. It means the realization of universal soul in one's self. It is a process which cannot be realized without education. He synthesizes the ancient Vedantic traditions with the modern western scientific attitude in formulating the goal of education.

Tagore's Views on Different Aspects of Education:

The aim of education according to Tagore is creative self expression through physical, mental, aesthetic and moral development. He stressed the need for developing empathy and sensitivity and the necessity for an intimate relationship with one's cultural and natural environment. He saw education as a vehicle for appreciating the richest aspects of other cultures, while maintaining one's own cultural specificity.

(i) Meaning of education: Education is short of the highest purpose of man, the fullest growth and freedom of soul. To the child, the environment will provide an ever-ready back ground for its spontaneous activity. Our true education is possible only in the forest through intimate correct with nature.

(ii) Freedom of mind: The objective of education is the freedom of mind, which can only be achieved through the path of education.

(iii) Children as children: It is a mistake to judge by the standards of grownups. Adults ignore the gifts of children and insist that children must learn through the same process as they do. This man's most cruel and most wasteful mistake. Children's subconscious mind is more active than their conscious intelligence.

(iv) Discipline and Freedom: Living ideals cannot be set into clockwork arrangement. Tagore wrote, I never said to them; don't do this, or don't do that..... I never punish them. An ideal school is an Ashram where men have gathered for the highest end of life. Tagore observed to give spiritual culture to our boys was my principal objective in starting my school at Bolepur.

(v) Living contact between the teacher and the taught: In teaching, the guiding should be personal love based on human relations. In education, the teacher is more important than the method. The teacher is Guru. He is to guide and stimulate the students. He remarked, a teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamb can never light another lamb unless it continues to burn in its own flame. So a teacher must always be teacher.

Tagore's Contribution to Modern Education:

Tagore was fully dissatisfied with the prevalent system of education at that time and called the schools as factories of rote learning. Then he advocated the principle of freedom for an effective education. He said that the children should be given freedom so that they are able to grow and develop as per their own wishes. A man through the process of education should be able to come out as a harmonious individual in time with his social set-up of life. He suggested creative self-expression through craft, music, drawing and drama.

Tagore's major contribution to modern education is the establishment of Santinikethan at Bolepur, in 1901. The school which was modeled on the ancient ashrams grew into a world university called Viswa Bharati. It is an abode of peace where teachers and students live together in a spirit of perfect comradeship. The motto of the institution is 'where the whole world forms its one single nest. It has open spaces and atmosphere of freedom surrounded by natural environment. It is open to, all irrespective of country, race, religion, or politics. It is centered around simple living and high thinking and has spiritual and religious atmosphere.

Tagore advocated teaching while talking as the best method and stressed on tours and excursions. He supported teaching and learning through debates and discussions which develop the power of clear-cut thinking. He adopted activity method which makes the learner physically sound. He also held heuristic method where the student is in the position of a discoverer. He stressed on free environment which makes learner self-disciplined.

In Tagore's philosophy of education, the aesthetic development of the sense was as important as the intellectual; and music; literature; art, and dance were given great prominence in the daily life of the school.

Tagore's Thoughts and Relevance in Present Education:

Tagore is critical of the prevalent system of education which lays role emphasis upon bookish learning. The intellectual aim of education, according to him, is the development of the intellectual faculties' which should be developed through education. These are the power of thinking and of imagination. Tagore's educational ideas have been shared by other educationists and many of his innovations have now become part of general educational practices, but his special contribution lay in the emphasis on harmony balance and total development of personality.

The visionary and the great educationist in Tagore solved the problem of today as far back as fifty years. Economic forces compel the teachers of today to look for pupils, but in the natural order of thing it is the pupil who should look for the teacher. The teacher student relationship designed by Tagore is a model in this context. It became one of earliest coeducational programs in South Asia. Its establishment led to pioneering efforts in many directions, including model for Indian higher education and mass education as well as pan Asian and global cultural exchange. As one of the earliest educators to think in terms of the global village, Tagore's educational model has a unique sensitivity and aptness for education within multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural situations amidst conditions of acknowledged economic discrepancy, political imbalance and social evils.

Conclusion:

Rabindranath Tagore, by his efforts and achievements, is part of a global network of pioneering educators such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Frobel, Montessori, Dewey and in the contemporary context, Malcolm Knowles. Although Tagore is a superb representative of his country –the man who wrote its national anthem, he is truly a man of the whole earth, a product of the best of both traditional Indian and modern western cultures. The core of Tagore's educational philosophy was learning from nature, music and life. He created Santiniketan to realize his educational ideals. This is the reason why his education is easily acceptable by human mind. Tagore extended the meaning and functional importance of certain aspects of personality as

nobody else had done before him. The ideal educator must combine in himself the gifts of a philosopher, a poet, a mystic, a social reformer, a scientist and a veritable man of action can he has to take into account all types of men and their aspirations ,all facets of the human personality, all levels man's experience, all fields of endeavor and achievement. Rabindranath Tagore is immortal in the world by his work today.

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