



A COMPARITIVE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND ROUSSEAU ON CHILD CENTERED EDUCATION

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Abstract

In fame and greatness, Rousseau and Rabindranath were both two of the most formidable figures of their time in their own country, with their unique ability to inspire millions of souls with revolutionary ideas. Both strongly supported a child-centric approach to education. Both strongly believed in the naturalistic philosophy that human children should grow spontaneously like plants and remain in close contact with nature. This study is a humble attempt to understand the child-centered pedagogical ideas of these two great educators. A comparative analysis of their ideas on this point was performed, showing areas where they were similar and areas where they were different.

Keywords: Child-Centered Education, Natural Man, Activity-Based Curriculum, Self-Discipline.

Introduction

For centuries, human civilization has witnessed the birth of several outstanding figures that have impressed generations for their vision, mission, and contribution to fellow human beings. These followers have expanded their tremendous heights through their unique achievements, their ideas, ideals and their exemplary activities.

French philosopher and educator Rousseau and Indian philosopher and writer Rabindranath were the two such inflamed souls and spread the scent of their colorful personality around the world. The former was a great revolutionary in his philosophical

thinking, and the latter was a magician of poetic excellence and a rare literary genius. Both sought to raise the status of the child in the curriculum and placed him on the most important high pedestal.

Rousseau (1712-1778) and child-centered education

Rousseau, a natural philosopher who was one of the greatest thinkers of the 18th century, declared that education was the innate right of the common people, a crusade against the educational monopoly of the royal family and aristocrats. He can be called a modern child-centered parenting father because he freed the child from social ties and medieval restraints and gave him his legitimate status.

At the core of Rousseau's educational philosophy is the "natural man." "Natural man" means a child who grows up according to the laws of his own nature. There are no social system laws that interfere with this development process. Rousseau wanted his child to be a natural man, not a civilized person. He wanted to put it in a natural state and not in an artificial environment that hindered proper growth and slowed its natural development. Formal education is the invention of an artificial society. Good education is only possible through direct contact with nature.

For Rousseau, education is an internal development, not an external claim. Emile, a major study of Rousseau's education, written in 1762, describes an attempt to educate a simple, pure natural child for life in a world where social humans are estranged. Rousseau seeks to train Emile in the work of his life so that he becomes a human before becoming a soldier, priest, or judge. The first part of this book describes the upbringing of Emile from birth to the age of five. The most important thing for the healthy and natural development of a child of this age is to learn that it uses its physical forces, especially the sensory organs.

The second part covers the time from learning to speak to the age of twelve. Games and other entertainment should be allowed at this age and children should not be overwhelmed by schoolwork. Emile should learn by experience, not words. He should not give in to the commandments of others, but to the necessities. The third part is dedicated to the ages of 12 to 15. Of course, this is the time to learn, not only from course books but also from the book of the world. Emile must acquire knowledge in the specific situations created by his teacher.

He studies science not by being guided by facts, but by making the equipment necessary to solve scientific problems of practical nature. Emile studies human history and social experience and encounters the world of morality and conscience only at the age of 15, as described in his fourth book.

Monroe (1908) commented: "Before Rousseau's day, children were nothing more than adults seen from the wrong end of the telescope." Rousseau emphasized that children have different learning abilities and gradually build their personality. After all, he is a product of society, so he needs to have enough space to learn and grow on his own. People

are always looking for adults in society, even if they don't even know what a child is. Rousseau first felt the need for education tailored to the needs of his children.

Rousseau thought education should be fun. Children should enjoy while learning. This preparation for a particular area of activity is reflected in their interests. As a result, interest in the subject and interest in practice provides guidance to parents and teachers on the subject and teaching methods that children at a particular developmental stage are naturally prepared for.

Rabindranath on Child-Centered Education (1861-1941)

Rabindranath's educational philosophy is his very life philosophy, a unique blend of idealism, naturalism, humanism and internationalism. It talks about the fulfillment of life in harmony with everything in the world. He argued that education should be aimed at fully developing a child's potential for both individual and social perfection. He wanted boys and girls to be free from all sorts of fears and prejudices, open-minded, inquisitive and independent.

From his own childhood experience, he learned that nurturing, separated from social life and cultural traditions and deprived of contact with nature, is rude and burdensome to the child. He believed that true education was to harmonize his life with all beings. He saw education as a fulfilling life preparation. It comes only through the life of knowledge, service, joy, and creative work.

Rabindranath argued that "rather than straining memory, we should give reasoning and imagination a free exercise opportunity from an early age. Not only did he blame literal learning, but he always emphasized the importance of being able to learn directly from nature and life. "True education," he emphasized, "consists of knowing the use of useful materials collected, knowing their true nature, and building a true shelter for life with life".

Tagore believed that while developing children's cognitive, intellectual and social skills, education should also develop their cultural and aesthetic attitudes. The modern concept of extracurricular activity stems from Tagore's pedagogical thinking. In his ashram school at Santiniketan, the educational programs were set not only to cultivate the linguistic, social and scientific abilities of the child, but also to involve him in the activities like sports, music, painting, singing, recitation, acting, gardening, and community-service and so on.

Tagore insisted on the child's complete freedom to choose what to learn and how to learn. Education should be conducted in a natural environment so that children can learn to come into close contact with nature, understand its beauty and develop a love for everything around it. Like the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth, Tagore believed that nature naturally has the power to lead people from joy to joy and to overcome world problems and contempt. Leaving yourself to the contemplation of nature is the best way to get divine inspiration.

Resemblance in thoughts of Rousseau and Rabindranath

When it comes to Rousseau and Rabindranath's child-centered pedagogical thinking, there are some common areas where these two educators resemble each other.

- 1) Both believed that education fosters intimacy with the world in a natural environment. For them, nature is the focus of people's interests and aspirations. Therefore, it is essential not only to know nature but also to live in it. Nature is a wonderful book and a wonderful teacher.
- 2) Both had deep insights into the psychology of children. It is of paramount importance in the educational program they give children according to their needs, interests, and physical and mental preparation.
- 3) Tagore was not only interested in intellectual education, but also in full awareness of physical education. In fact, he was so focused on the healthy physical development of his childhood that he eloquently sacrificed his studies if needed. He insisted, "Even if they don't learn anything, they play, climb trees, jump into ponds, pick flowers, uproot, do a thousand and one mischief to Mother Nature, they would have gained nourishment of the body, happiness of mind and satisfaction of the natural impulses of childhood". This concept is similar to Rousseau's concept of "negative education". Negative education, as defined by Rousseau, is education that tends to complete the organs that are tools of knowledge before knowledge is directly transmitted and it strives to prepare the way for reason through the correct movement of the senses.
- 4) Both see education as a lifelong process, during which time all physical, mental, social, moral and spiritual abilities provide education according to his natural tendencies and needs. At his ashram school in Santiniketan, Tagore introduced great flexibility in choosing a learning course that suits his child's abilities and interests.
- 5) In both cases, the actual education is based on the laws of human motivation and needs. In their opinion, the nature, interests and needs of the child form the basis of the curriculum. Both wanted an activity-based curriculum for children. This curriculum is learner-centric and life-oriented.
- 6) Both advocate vocational training for learners, in order to make them productive members of society. Rousseau advocated professional training in woodworking, music, painting, etc. for children. In addition to learning traditional subjects such as language, science and social sciences, Rabindranath also offers children agriculture, woodworking, crafts, and other such subjects that may meet the child's actual needs. At Shantiniketan, he set up a specialized unit on a work-oriented subject.
- 7) Both wanted the child to develop an inquisitive mind and scientific thinking. Rousseau emphasized learning through first-hand experience and heuristics. Rabindranath has proposed a similar learning approach.
- 8) Like Rousseau, Tagore is an individualist and a naturalist. He says that everyone is different from others. He believes that natural teachers, such as trees, dawns,

evenings, and moonlight, voluntarily nourish children's nature. Nature inspires people at different stages of development.

- 9) Both were in favour of teaching children in their native language.

Differences in thoughts of Rousseau and Rabindranath

- 1) Unlike Rousseau, Rabindranath does not write a specific literature on educational philosophy. His thoughts on education can be infused through his expression of thought, through the medium of his literary works, such as his poems, lyrics, short stories, novels, essays, drama and letters.
- 2) Rousseau was a theorist, not a practical educator. He had great ideas, but he lacked the ability to implement them. Rabindranath not only spread the idea of child-centered education, but also implemented them, as evidenced by the introduction of the Vedic education system in Shantiniketan. In the case of Rousseau, such a concrete step towards the realization of his pedagogical ideas was not taken by the philosopher himself.
- 3) Rousseau was almost silent about the girl's education. He said, "Men are born to serve, women are born to please. She must be soft and sweet and learn to suffer and bear the wrongs of her husband." He further commented: "Educated women should be avoided like plague. She is the plague of her husband, her servants, and everyone". Tagore, on the other hand, was a strong supporter of girls' education. He believed that the country could not move forward while the female population was caught in the darkness of illiteracy. He believed that education was a means to becoming a true human being, and if education was considered the innate right of all human beings, women should never be deprived of that right. Even he outlines a girl's education plan and emphasizes that in addition to acquiring pure academic knowledge, one should study home science so that the girl can better play role of a mother and a wife.
- 4) Rousseau firmly believed that human children are born pure and free. He is polluted when he comes into contact with human society. Rousseau argued in his early writings that humans are inherently good, "noble savage" when in their natural state, and that good people are unhappy and corrupt due to their social experience. For Rousseau, everything is good because it comes from the hands of nature, but everything is degenerated by the hands of humans. According to him, one should be free from the shackles of society and he should be enabled to live in a "natural state". Rousseau thus condemned social and cultural heritage and placed it under personal authority. Rabindranath was not so caustic to human society. The mere personal development of the learner is not enough for him. The individual is inseparable from the society to which he belongs.
- 5) Regarding discipline in the child's curriculum, Rousseau believed in discipline through natural consequences. He wanted the child to suffer from the natural consequences of his actions. For example, if children put their hands in the fire, they

burn their hands and learn from the results. Rabindranath, on the other hand, believed in the self-discipline of children that appears spontaneously.

- 6) Tagore believed in the "International Brotherhood". Compared to Rousseau, his view of the world was more liberal. Narrow nationalism had no place in his way of education. He believed that education should aim to create a universal human being or " Vishwa Manav". He wanted his child to learn about other cultures, so he sometimes invited teachers from other countries to his ashram (school) to give students the opportunity to interact with men from distant countries.

Conclusion

"Like Copernicus destroyed medieval cosmology, Rousseau put an end to the traditional notion of children by showing that it is a natural creature, acting and growing according to its laws". Rabindranath, on the other hand, can be called the true prophet of the educational renaissance of modern India. Though men of different ages, countries and societies, both Rousseau and Rabindranath have advocated an education system that should give due consideration to children. The modern educational system, which puts the child at the center of the process, owes much to these seers.

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