



Educational ideals and contributions of Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), is internationally known as a great poet. He was born on May 1, 1861, in Calcutta, Bengal, at a time when the first uncritical admiration for the West had worn off and there was a more balanced appraisal for it. Simultaneously, there was increased knowledge of and regard for the values of the East. His father, Maharsi (great saint) Devendranath, was a deep student of Indian and Islamic mysticism. From his earliest days, Rabindranath grew up in a house where all the surging tides of the Indian Renaissance were flowing around his daily life. Rabindranath Tagore was primarily an educationist rather than a political thinker. He put emphasis on 'naturalism' for framing educational model. In education, freedom is the basic guiding force for inculcating interest within a student who will derive inspiration from nature to pursue any branch of knowledge he likes.

Methodology: The present paper is primarily based on secondary sources like the Books, Journals and Articles etc. The method used is historic-analytic method.

Objective of the Paper: The objective of the paper is to analyze the educational ideals and contributions of Tagore.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, educational ideals, contributions

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

Placing teachers above the method of teaching Tagore said- “The fact that education is something vital makes the teacher’s duties and responsibilities deserving of serious attention. The teachers should know that it is for him to inspire life in the students by his own living to enkindle the flame of knowledge in the students by his own knowledge.” Tagore's ideas for creating a system of education aimed at promoting international co-operation and creating global citizens. Tagore planned 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 the curriculum should revolve organically around nature, with flexible schedules to allow for shifts in weather, and with special attention to natural phenomena and seasonal festivities.

The philosophy of Tagore

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

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.

1. 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.

2. **Freedom of mind:** The objective of education is the freedom of mind, which can only be achieved through the path of education.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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.

Santhiniketan and viswa bharathi

As an alternative to the existing forms of education, he started A small School of education in 1901.later this school was developed into a university and rural reconstruction centre, known as Viswa Bharati, where he tried to develop an alternative model of education that stemmed from his own learning experience. Students at Santhiniketan were encouraged to create their own publications and put out several illustrated magazines. The children were encouraged to follow their ideas in painting and drawing and to draw inspirations from the many visiting artists and writers. The main characteristics of the Santhiniketan School are the following.

- It is a community school where there is no distinction of caste and creed.
- Co-educational and residential institution.
- It is a self-governing institution – has a dairy farm, post office, hospital and workshop.
- It is based on the concept of freedom of the mind.
- Mother tongue is the medium of instruction.
- It is studied in natural surroundings and it provides for manual labor.
- There is well- equipped library.

Rabindranath Tagore envisioned as a learning centre where conflicting interests are minimized, where individuals work together in common pursuit of truth and realize that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered the secrets of the universe, philosophers solved the problems of existence, saints made the truth of the spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belong, but for all mankind.

Educational aims of Tagore

As we discussed above the philosophy of Rabindranath

Tagore, it is clear that Tagore believed in 'Simple Living, High Thinking', so educational aims are set on the bases of Indian Culture and Traditions. *Self-realization:* Spiritual is the essence of humanism. Manifestation of personality depends upon the self-realization and spiritual knowledge of individual. *Intellectual Development:* It means development of imagination, creative free thinking, constant curiosity, alertness of the mind. Freedom of child to adopt his own way of learning, which would lead to all-round development. *Physical development:* Sound and healthy physique through yoga, games, sports as integral part of education. *Love for Humanity:* Education for international understanding and universal brotherhood. Education should teach people to realize oneness. *Freedom:* Education is a man-making process, it explores the innate power that exists within man, it is not an imposition, but a liberal process that provides utmost freedom for development. *Co-relation of objects:* A peaceful world is only possible when correlation between man and nature will be established. *Mother-tongue as medium of instruction:* Language is the true vehicle of expression. *Moral and spiritual development:* It is more important than bookish knowledge for an integral development of human personality, by encouraging selfless acts, co-operation, sharing and fellow-feeling among students. *Social Development:* 'Brahma' the supreme soul manifests through men and all creatures. He is the source of all life. Brotherhood should be cultivated from the beginning of life.

Tagore's Contribution to Modern Education

Tagore's major contribution to modern education is the establishment of Shantinikethan 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' 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.

Conclusion

Tagore was fully dissatisfied with the prevalent system of education at that time and called the schools as factories of role 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. The establishment of Shantiniketan fulfilled the desired goal of Tagore in the educational front. Tagore's education marked a novel blending of the ideas of the East and West. The spiritualism of Indian philosophy and progressive outlook of the western people were blended together to give rise to an educational philosophy which marked its distinction in comparison to other educationists of India.

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