

Educational Philosophy and Educational thought of Rabindranath Tagore and its Relevance in Present Scenario

Mana Biswas

Research Scholar

Department of Education

University of Kalyani

E-mail: manabiswas0703@gmail.com

Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore, the first Nobel Laureate in Asia, was a child of a famous Tagore family in Calcutta. His family was very familiar with the education, financial, cultural and social status and religious movement during the Bengal Renaissance in 19th Century. He was not only a writer or poet; he was the bearer and carrier of education and Culture of India. He introduces India to the world through his Literature. He has presented himself in various ways through his huge activities like poet, writer, novelist, essayist, playwright, short story writer, composer, painter, actor, social reformer and philosopher and educationist currently, as an educator, his educational thinking and his educational philosophy have been highlighted. This research paper explores the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore and discusses how relevant it is to the current education system.

Keywords: Educational Philosophy, Freedom, Curriculum.

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was an Indian Bengali Polymath. He was called 'Gurudev', 'Kabiguru', 'Biswakavi', for his various talents. He won the first Nobel prize in Literature in Asia. Moreover, some aspects of art and literature are his own. In this case, 'Rabindranath', and 'Rabindra Nritya' is significant which is created in his own style. Moreover, he was the first successful short story writer in Bengali Literature. His painting is also painted in his own style.

His various thought on education is reflected in his essays written in Bengali and English and his biography as well as letters, novels and short stories in different Characters and their words. He may not have written an entire book on education enriching logic, but what he has written through his various writings is no less than the writings of any educator. His basic thinking about education is not only relevant then but also for today. And his writings are greatly influenced by his life philosophy.

Significant of the Study

This research paper provides an overview of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education and educational thought. Not only this, with the help of Rabindranath Tagore's educational thinking the situation of that time will also come to light in this research paper. Under the present circumstances, the importance of Rabindranath Tagore's educational thinking in educational institutions and in making any decision related to education can be understood.

Objectives of the study

- To study Rabindranath Tagore's thought and ideas on education.

- To explore the context of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education.
- To know the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore as reflected in his work.
- To see the relevance of Rabindranath Tagore's educational thought in the present situation.

Research Question

- What are the ideas and thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore about education?
- What was the context of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education?
- What educational thoughts can we get in various writings of Rabindranath Tagore?
- What is the relevance of Rabindranath Tagore's educational thought in the present situation?

Delimitation of the Study

Of the many writings by Rabindranath Tagore, only his educational writings have been selected for his study.

Methodology: Collected related data was analyzed through content analysis.

Source of Data

Primary source: Writings of Rabindranath Tagore.

Secondary source Various Research report and articles on Rabindranath Tagore by several authors published in newspaper, books, journals and website etc. have been taken into account.

Result and Discussion

Rabindranath Tagore was born into a joint family, where his other siblings were also quite masterpieces. His family environment and the ideals of his father Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore have played a significant role in shaping the life philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore and above all in shaping the philosophy of education. It would be pertinent to quote here a few lines from Tagore in this regard.

"Fortunately for me I was brought up in a family where Literature, music and art had become instinctive. My brothers and cousins lived in a freedom of ideas, and most of them had natural artistic powers. Nourished in these surroundings, I began to think early and to dream and put my thoughts into expression. In religions and social ideas our family was free from all convention being ostracized by society owing to our secession from orthodox beliefs and customs. This made us fearless in our freedom of mind and we tried experiments in all departments of life" (Tagore,1917, pp.169-170).

So, it can be said that his childhood life influenced his education in philosophy in different ways like on the one hand the influence of his father especially Upanishads helped to form the idealist attitude of Rabindranath Tagore and on the other hand colorless, joyless learning has helped the formation of idea to take importance of nature and the concept of freedom in his education system.

Ideal environment of learning

Rabindranath Tagore in his essay 'Shiksher Samasya' (Problem of Education) considered the conventional education as the sadness of the beginning of human life. He reviewed education is surrounded by walls, locked by gates, guarded by doorman, stung by punishment, hurried by bells; this type of education can never bring happiness in human life. Here his childhood experience can be mentioned.

As Rabindranath himself put it ". . .and to send me an exile, to the school, to the class with its bare white walls, its stare of dead eyes, frightened me every day. When I was once inside these walls, I did not feel

natural. It was absolute a fragment torn away from life and this gave me intense misery because I was uprooted from my own world and sent to surrounding which were dead and unsympathetic, disharmonious and monotonously dull" (Tagore, 1996, P.641).

According to him, if an ideal school is to be set up, it should be arranged in an open environment surrounded by trees and away from locality.

In the field of Education, Rabindranath Tagore, has given enough importance to 'Topoban' and 'Gurugriha'. Because he thought the teacher -student relationship was much closer through this. Rabindranath Tagore also thought when a teacher is placed flows towards the disciple as a whole with the power of heart and mind.

Growing up in harmony with nature

Rabindranath Tagore did not want to take detached from nature. Because he thought that nature is the best teacher for a child. From the movement a child is born, he begins to perceive every aspect of nature with the utmost curiosity. Meanwhile, nature adapts to the child mind and makes itself colorful and stimulated the child's desire to know. Isolation from that learning environment means suppressing the child's desire to know, so Rabindranath Tagore said to teach in the lap of nature according to the child's own needs. Through this the child becomes self-educated.

Realization of God: Rabindranath Tagore believe that in our Indian culture the realization of God and knowing oneself is possible only in the natural environment. This is quite clear when he said "Yes, it is that supreme person, who has made himself known to man and made this universe so deeply personal to him. Therefore, In India, our places of pilgrimage are there, where in the confluence of the river and the sea, in the eternal snow of the mountain peak, in the lonely seashore, some aspects of the infinite are revealed which has its great voice for our heart, and their man has left in his images and temples, in his carvings of stone, these words, - 'Harken to me, I have known the supreme Person" (Tagore,1917, P.45).

Self-realization: According to Rabindra Nath Tagore, education is self-realization. And this self-realization is possible only with the nature. And he also believed that every human being is a part of the universal soul. So, the ultimate goal of education is to reach people in the Universal Spirit (Puspanathan,2013). It would be pertinent to quote here a few lines from Tagore in his regard.

"This means that perfection as the ideal is immovable, but in its aspects of the real it constantly grows towards completion, it moves. And I say of the supreme man, that he is infinite in us the individuals "(Tagore,1931, P.118)

Rabindranath Tagore thought tat the goal of education was the holistic development of the student. Education is not a lifelong process. He wrote as follows:

"My idea was that education should be a part o life it self and must not be detached from it and be made into something abstract" (Tagore 1996, P.642).

Personality development: Rabindranath Tagore believed that education was the perfect development of the personality and the union of being with worldly personality. Education is not just a pursuit of knowledge, but also the pursuit of energy or the willpower with knowledge (<https://prernajibon.com>).As Rabindranath himself put it, "We have come to this world to accept it, not merely to know it. We may become powerful by knowledge but we attain fulness by sympathy. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence" (Tagore,1917, P.142).

Universalization: Rabindranath Tagore believed that one of the purposes of education was to unite people with the universal soul. Therefore, in the field of Education, the curriculum should be similar so that the student become self-aware through self-realization (Sarkar,2021). So, in order to harmonize the Indian tradition with the work, that is, self-action and modern knowledge, Rabindranath Tagore arranged for a joyous course in education. He wrote in this connection, “I tried to arouse their interest in all things, in nature’s beauty and the surrounding villagers and also in literature through play acting, through listening to music in a natural manner, not through merely class teaching” (Tagore,1996, P-642).

Freedom to learner: The term freedom played an important role in the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore. Because he thought “freedom is absolutely necessary for the intelligent growth of the mind as well as for the sweet nature of children” (Tagore,1996, P.506). In his book entitled ‘Personality’ he said – ‘In our schools the idea of the class hides the reality of the school children’s – they become students are not individuals’ (Tagore, 1917, PP.51-52). Rabindranath Tagore thought that his freedom was very important for a student to become an individual. As Rabindranath himself put it : “ I try to assert in my world and worked that education has its only meaning and object in freedom -freedom from ignorance about the laws of universe ,and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world” (Tagore,1996,p.612).As an individualist ,Rabindranath Tagore believed that everyone has the right to shape their own life .He said “Uniqueness of the individuals is great because that uniqueness has in it the essential element of universality ” Therefore ,in the field of education freedom is required in the development of individual personality so he said-

“So, in my institution I try to make provision for these three aspects of freedom – freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will” (Tagore, 1996, P.508).

Student-teacher relationship: Student and teachers are the two most important living elements in the field of education. Rabindranath Tagore in his essay ‘Shiksher Samasya’ (problem of education) has written about relationship between teachers and students. The attitude of teachers and student in the education system of that time made him very sad. He felt that teacher is shopkeeper and his business is to buying knowledge. And the student is the buyer. Teacher sells the knowledge to student for money and this is where the relationship with the student become ends. The teacher therefore looks for the buyers. So, Rabindranath Tagore was always saw that the teachers were looking for the student should have got the ‘Guru’ in their need. After describing the situation Rabindranath Tagore commended on the Character of the real teacher. Whenever a teacher knows that he is sitting in the seat of ‘Guru’ the life of the student should be lit by his knowledge of student should be achieve by his affection only then will that teacher be able to gain glory. Then he donates things that are not commodities that are beyond value. Then the teacher will be worthy of devotion to the students by the rules of nature and not buy punishment. Then the teacher tries to give much more o the student even he talks salary for livelihood and will glorify his duty.

In his essay entitled ‘Ashramer Shiksha’ he thought that those who were patient deserved to be teachers and patience is normal for those who have affection for students. Actually, Rabindranath Tagore did not consider the behavior of a teacher to be impulsive, insulting and punishing etc. Because he thought that whatever it was the state system or the education system, strict governance policy was proof of the incompetence of the ruler.

Child-centric education: He was in fact in favour of child-centered education system and he understood the student psychology very well in this connection he wrote – “I knew that I had very profound sympathy for children, and about my knowledge of their psychology I was very Certain. I felt that I could help them

more than the ordinary teachers who had the delusion to think that they had proper training for their work" (Tagore,1996, P.642).

He further added," And so when I brought these children around me, I allowed them to live a complete life. they had perfect freedom to do what they wished. as much liberty as was possible for me to give them. And in all their activities I tried to put before them something which would be interesting to them" (Tagore ,1996, P.642). The same opinion he made in another book entitled 'Personality', he said "I always try to impress upon their minds that it is their own world, upon which their life ought fully and freely to react. (Tagore,1917, P.177).

Duty of students: Rabindranath Tagore was equally aware of the duties of the student; this issue has come to light through his own speech thus: "In our school the boys rise very early in the morning before it is light. They attend to the drawing of water for their bath. They make up their beds. they do all those things that tend to cultivate the spirit of self-help" (Tagore,1917,176). Even he thought that there was a need for meditation in education. In this connection he said – ". . . it is absolutely necessary for their mental health and development that they must not have more schools for their lesson, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love" (Tagore ,1917, pp.178-179).

Mother tongue as the medium of instruction: Another aspect of Rabindranath Tagore's educational thinking's is that he has given importance to mother tongue in education. Because he thought it was much easier to study any language and any subject with the mother tongue.

Liberation from book-centered education: Rabindranath Tagore was opposed to the book-based education system. In his story 'Tota Kahini' (Parrot Story) sharply attacked school memorization education. Rabindranath Tagore showed how the students were being pushed to the brink of intellectual death by swallowing dry knowledge like a bird in a cage (<http://bn.m.wikipedia.org>).

Natural growth in natural environment: Rabindranath Tagore in his short story 'Chuti'(holiday) he showed what would happen if normal child growing up in the lap of normal nature was taken away from his nature and educated in the mechanical environment of the urban education. The protagonist of the story Fatic finally had to take leave from the world isolated from his normal environment when he was taken to a new environment, he wanted release from the new environment. But he was not released, he released from his life.

Activities and organization: In fact, Rabindranath Tagore not only completed a few essays on education but also fulfilled his purpose by establishing a school at Santi Niketan which was later transformed into Visva-Bharati University. He applied all his thoughts on education here. Or it can be said that here Rabindranath Tagore made his doubt as an educator.

Visva-Bharati & Santiniketan: Rabindranath Tagore introduced India to the world through the establishment of Visva-Bharati and made the world acquaintance with Indian Culture inevitable. He wanted to open the door of education for all irrespective of race, religion and caste. Even in the case of education, he did not want to keep the boundaries of any country or nation. His Visva-Bharati became the meeting place of all castes of all countries. Here he invited the scholars from all over the world. In this connection Awal has reviewed, "Tagore is truthfully a pioneer to the voyage of modern education. He blended the ideas of east and west wisely and rationally regarding education (Qtd. in Awal,2019, P.8). Actually, Rabindranath Tagore wanted to combined the spirituality of Indian philosophy with the progressive outlook of the west to create an education system that is suitable for all time.

Sri Niketan & Lok Shiksha Sangbad: Another identity of Rabindranath Tagore's progressive educational thought is found in the establishment of 'Sri Niketan', Rabindranath Tagore wanted the student of Ashram to know about the Santal people of their neighboring village. Another of his thought was to form model village. In this connection Choudhury highlights, "In 1922, the department of village welfare at Santi Niketan was further developed to include extended work on rural construction, village education, craft – Training, agricultural research and training and was named Sri Niketan" – (Choudhury,2015, P.65). Besides, the establishment of his Lok Shiksha Sangsad (Mass Education Council,1937) is another consequence of his educational thinking. its contribution in making education accessible to all is undeniable

Findings

In view of all the information previously discussed it could be said that Rabindranath Tagore ,As an educational philosopher was once of idealist and naturalist approach to real life (Bhattacharya ,1364BE).In this connection Dr. Jana hold similar views “. . .Tagore's integral approach help him avoid the discords among the different schools of educational philosophy . . . the curious blending of naturalism ,Idealism ,Pragmatism and Realism is the unique feature of his thought . . .in Tagore's educational endeavor all the dis coherent elements are found to miraculously blended by his extraordinary poetic genius”(Qtd. In Jana, P-80).

In fact, Rabindranath Tagore mean education for life, but if life goes away in exchanged for something, it is never education. Not that big schools and a lot of books are needed for education. Education is about increasing the real potential of the student in the natural environment in a natural way.

Relevance in modern age

One of the purposes of the current education system is to get a well-paying job by obtaining a degree. Therefore, in order to get good marks in exams, the current students have no time to desire to go deep into any subject and acquire knowledge. neither the parents nor the teacher making the students interested in acquiring knowledge .one of the aims of education system now is to get more marks in the shortcut way as soon as possible .Moreover, where numbers are the only means of judging the good and bad of the students ,their only purpose is to get numbers .The playground is therefore banished from the lives of the students .In the case of studies ,therefor it can be said that students are not attracted to any independent lesson outside the curriculum. Knowledge is now entirely book-Centric. So in this situation Rabindranath Tagore's educational thinking is very relevant.

Conclusion

So, Rabindranath Tagore's thought of education has become more relevant in this context, so that students can relate their education to real life. In order for the students to learn different tasks with their own hands, they can increase their performance by applying sophisticated thinking. As if they are free from pain of unemployed. In various vocational trainings, they have to look for work. So that the students can reach the highest level of their own latent potention and they can develop by making it suitable for life. And this is where the need for self-Realization, which we get through education.

References

1. Aggarwal , N.&Choudhuri ,M(2015).A study of educational thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore in Present era ,*International Journal of Education and Science Research* Vol.2 ,Issue – 2, April .PP.64-67

2. Awal , A. (2019) Tagore's Philosophy of Education ,A New Vista of Epistemology , *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)*,Vol.3,Issue 8,pp 8-11
3. Bhattacharya , B (1364 BE) *Rabindra Siksha Darshan* , retrived from <http://grantagara.com>
4. Das S.K.(1996), *A The English writings of Rabindranath Tagore Miscellany* ,Volume-3,Sahitya Akademi , Rabindra Bhaban ,35,Ferozeshan Road ,new Delhi.
5. Ghosh,A.(2017).*Shikhachinta Rabindranath Tagore* ,Karigar, Volume – 1 , Kolkata , ISBN – 978-93-81640-83-8.
6. Jana,M.(1974)*Educational Philosophy of tagore and its Relevance to current Educational Thought* , Unpublished Doctoral thesis , University of Calcutta, Calcutta, India
7. Puspanathan,T.(2013) Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education and its influence on Indian education ,*International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review* ,Vol.1,No.4,PP.42-45
8. Sarkar, K.(2021) Educational Thought of Rabindranath Tagore ,*International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)*,vol.5,Issue 2021,PP.866-867,
9. Tagore , R.(1917)Prsonality , lectures delivers in America with Illustrations , Macmillan And Co-limited , St.Martin street , London
10. Tagore,R.(1931) *The religion of Man, Being the Hibbert Lectures for 1930*, London , George Allen & Unwin LTD , Museum Street

Websites;

<https://bn.m.wikipedia.org>

<https://prernajibon.com>

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>

<https://granthagara.com>