

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

DREAMSEA DAS

Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Women's College, Tinsukia, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

Rabindranath Tagore was a universal personality. His genius was versatile. He was influenced by the Christian conception of the fatherhood of God and by Shakespeare, Goethe, Wordsworth etc. But the roots of his intellectual creativism and emotional make-up lie in the Upanishads, in the poetry of Kalidas, in the lyrics of Vaisnavas, in the mystic poems of Kabir and the religious atmosphere of the Brahma Samaj. Tagore's inspired poetry and prose becomes the literary vehicle of the regeneration of a fallen race. His songs and messages were like inspirations to social and political workers. Tagore was venerated as a seer of Indian freedom. Apart from his political and social thoughts his educational thoughts were also standing as a landmark in the educational system of India. He tried to give India an educational system which can meet the spiritual and natural needs of human beings. The objective of the paper is to analyse the educational thoughts of Tagore, his basic conception of education and its process. The paper is primarily based on secondary sources like the Books, Journals and Articles etc. The method used is historic-analytic method. Tagore was a great champion of education for international understanding.

KEYWORDS: Creativism, Educational Philosophy, Humanism, Swadeshi

INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore was a universal personality. His genius was versatile, synthetic and original. He was influenced by the Christian conception of the fatherhood of God and might have been inspired in his early years by Shakespeare, Goethe, Wordsworth, Ruskin, Shelley, Keats and Browning. But the roots of his intellectual creativism and emotional make-up lie in the Upanishads, in the majestic poetry of Kalidas, in the lyrics of Vaisnavas, in the mystic poems of Kabir and the religious atmosphere of the Brahma Samaj.

Different philosophers have described the character of Tagore's philosophy differently. Hirendrenath Datta describes his philosophy as Concrete Monism.¹ It is monism because reality is conceived as one, and it is concrete because the one reality is not an abstract principle negating completely the reality of the many, but is a concrete whole, comprehending the many within its bosom. Radhakrishnan says, "We do not know whether it is Rabindranath's own heart or the heart of India that is beating here."² Tagore in his philosophy tries to revive the ancient ideals of life; and then, they have been re-stated in accordance with the needs of the present times. The traditional philosophical notions of India have been brought out by Tagore from the dark abyss of abstraction, where they were lying all the time, into the open to be viewed in the light of the present philosophical beliefs.

Tagore was a writer of deep originality and creative attainments. He was a patriot. During the day of the agitation against the partition of Bengal his stirring words rang with strength and he was later on venerated as a national poet. He stood for social reform, *Swadeshi* and the solidarity of the country. He was not a politician but a political prophet who taught unity, harmony peace and co-operation. He has given to modern India a philosophy of world-and-life-affirmation.³

Rabindranath was a believer in cultural synthesis and international unity. He decried the aggressive cult of the nation. He became one of the intellectual leaders of Indian nationalism. After Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, it was he who strengthened the movement of Bengalee literary renaissance. This literary renaissance was the intellectual background of a political ferment and consciousness. Tagore's inspired poetry and prose becomes the literary vehicle of the regeneration of a fallen race because in his writings he embodied some of the noblest ideals of Indian culture. His songs and messages were like inspirations to social and political workers. Hence, although not in the trick of the political fight for independence, Tagore was venerated as a seer of Indian freedom.⁴

Apart from his political and social thoughts his educational thoughts were also standing as a landmark in the educational system of India. He tried to give India an educational system which can meet the spiritual and natural needs of human beings.

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 analyse the educational thoughts of Tagore. His basic conception of education and its process.

SOCIAL VALUE OF THE STUDY

Educational Philosophy

Tagore was one of the great educational thinkers of the world. "Tagore was undoubtedly the greatest leader of the Indian Renaissance and his influence was felt in all sides of our culture. Education did not escape it". Tagore wrote 130 essays covering about 1750 pages on education. In 1892 his Article on education entitled "Sikshar Herpher" was published which created considerable stir in the field of education.

Rabindranath had understood that the educational system the British had enforced on India was meant only to train people to work as clerk in their offices, and if possible, to inculcate in the so-called educated men a feeling of inferiority for their own culture and philosophy.⁵ For this reason Tagore pleaded for an education system in India independent of colonial British control. This idea of Rabindranath gave birth to "Santiniketan" (abode of peace) an Ashrama style educational institution in which he provided education based on the principle of freedom, natural trust, co-operation and joy. In his opinion child's education would be more effective if teachers and pupils live and work far away from din and bustle of the city, like the teachers and students of the past. He says, "this school should be home and a temple in one where teaching should be a part of worshipful life". Placing teachers above the method of teaching Tagore said—

"The fact that education is something vital makes the teachers 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."

Dr. Zakir Hussain, himself an able educationist was very impressed by Rabindranath's ideas on education. He said: "Rabindranath's educational ideas were simple and straight forward, the reason being that he was fully aware of the importance of universal unity. In his educational system there was no place of narrow specialization, because he knew that 'specialisation' hinders the growth of the individual towards unity and universality. As far as I have been able to understand, Vishva-Bharati is based on this principle."⁶

Rabindranath's educational philosophy was not a system in the prevalent sense of the term system. A system formulated by modern day pedagogies with rules and regulations and ready-made methodology in which teachers are thought how to teach particular subjects and prepare lessons and text books within set paradigms.⁷

Rabindranath discarded the notion of text-books. He put the responsibility of educating the students in a joyful manner upon the guru. He said the relationship between the student and the guru should be of companionship. He said, "The teachers heart continues to receive every moment of his life, and that is why he continuously gives himself totally. He finds the proof of his truth and honesty in the process of giving and from the joy he receives from it. Joy emerges on its own when minds meet in a healthy spirit. That joy is the energy of creativity and its result is transfer of knowledge. Those who are conscious of their duties, but do not experience joy, tread on a different path. I consider the person to person relationship between the guru and shishya the prime means of imparting knowledge."⁸

Being a naturalist Tagore was aware of the sensitivity of young children and he had a firm faith in the educative value of natural objects and events. According to him "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. Children have their active subconscious mind which like the tree has the power to gather food from the surrounding atmosphere.

For them the atmosphere is a great deal more important than rules and methods, buildings and appliances, class teaching and text books" For atmosphere there must be for developing the sensitiveness of soul, for affording mind its true freedom of sympathy.

In agreement with the Gestalt Psychologist and believed that children gather knowledge with whole body, mind and senses. Like the pragmatist philosophers Tagore advocated that children should be allowed to stumble on and learn by every experience. Tagore wanted to implement the Upanisadic ideals of the Indian Saints in his educational system.

The philosophy of Humanism found formulation in the aims and objectives of Viswabharati viz., to study the mind of man in its realization of different aspects of truth from diverse point of views, to bring into more intimate relation with one another through patient study and research, the different cultures of the East and the basis of their underlying unity, to approach west from the standpoint of such a unity of the life and thought of Asia, to seek to realize a common fellowship of study the meeting of the east and the west and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the establishment of free communication of idea between the two hemispheres.

Rabindranath was not happy with the prevailing state of education in his time, which robbed the child of his creative ability and natural potentialities. According to him, "We rob the child of his Earth to teach him Geography, of language to teach him Grammar. His hunger is for Epic, but he is supplied with chronicles of the facts and dates. He was born in the living world, but he is banished into the world of living gramophones".

Rabindranath introduced some cultural subjects in his educational institution like singing, dancing, painting, acting etc. because he believed that education is a process of upholding the creative abilities of children and not a process which merely concerned with bookish learning. He had no faith in rigorous method of teaching and was not in favour of making the path of knowledge a very smooth one.

In keeping with his theory of subconscious learning, Rabindranath never talked or wrote down to the students, but rather involved them with whatever he was writing or composing. The students were allowed to have access to the room where he read his new writings to teachers and critics, and they were encouraged to read out their own writings in special literary evenings. In teaching also he believed in presenting difficult levels of literature, which the students might not fully grasp, but which would stimulate them. The children were encouraged to follow their ideas in painting and drawing and to draw inspiration from the many visiting artists and writers.

There is a touch of mysticism in Tagore's philosophy of education. But his mysticism is healthier than that of Froebels who limited it only to childhood. Tagore brought their mysticism to the level of realities of life and included in it all the stages of education. It is in this respect he was ahead of Pestalozzi experience, that is, elementary and pre-elementary stages of educative experience.

Tagore was a spiritualist in education. Generally, naturalism discards transcendental experiences. Tagore was a naturalist but his naturalism was not a narrow one. It was a sort of means to spiritualism which he wanted to develop among the boys.

Tagore was a great champion of education for international understanding. He loved his nation and wanted to improve its conditions but in this connection his nationalism was not a narrow one. His patriotism and nationalism leads to internationalism. He regarded the world as one and enables us to feel that we have to develop respect for world citizenship also.

REFERENCES

1. Dutta, Hirendranath., "*Rabindranath as a Vedantist*", Visva Bharati Quaterly, May-Oct 1941.
2. Radhakrishnan, "*The Philosophy of Rabindranath*" Macmillan 7 co, London, 1941 p.vii.
3. Rabindranath, *Personality*, Kessinger Publishing, U.K pp.25-26.
4. V.P. Varma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, Lskshmi Narayan Agarwal, Agra, 1987, p.76.
5. Prasad, Devi., *Rabindranath Tagore, Philosophy of education and Painting*, p.1.
6. *Ibid.*, p.xviii.
7. *Ibid.*, p.32.
8. Rabindranath Tagore, *Education in the Ashram*, in Shiksha, p.311.