

IMPLICATION OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S NATURALISTIC PHILOSOPHY FOR ENRICHING ECO-CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract : Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), not only Indian but was Asia's first Nobel Laureate, was born in Calcutta under the cultured family during the 19th Bengal Renaissance. The objective of this paper is to study the Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy and its implication on Eco-consciousness. The present Indian scenario lacks environmental consciousness. Our purported civilized society has alienated itself from Nature. Rabindranath Tagore was very conscious of Nature. The practices he introduced in the early 20th century in Bengal finds its relevance in present time. The analysis of the study of Naturalistic philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy can bring a positive change in the present environmental circumstances.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Naturalistic Philosophy, Eco-Consciousness.

Introduction: The natural problem was a crucial issue during Tagore's time. Tagore acquainted with the influence of the Industrial revolution. Tagore observed the destruction of the forest for the construction of the urbanization. Though environmental consciousness is more recent concern in literature, Tagore could think it about a century ago when environmental consciousness is not an issue in literature. In this sense Tagore can be considered a modern thinker. (Rahaman, Hossain and Islam, 2018)

Tagore's mind is extremely sensitive and responsive to Nature. When we go through his poems, song, music, dramas, we can meet bright sunshine, mellow evening, calm night and many other aspects of nature

Tagore was not only very much concerned with the harmony of social relations, but also with the people's harmony with nature (Sengupta, 2005).

The origin of Tagore's educational theory was his own life and the freedom he had experienced with it. Tagore's brothers and sisters were poets, musicians, playwrights and novelist and thus. Tagore's home was filled with the musical, literary and dramatic pursuits. As such Tagore got his education mostly at home by self-study. Education prevalent in the days of Tagore was rigid and lifeless that it did not confirm to the needs

of individuals and demands of society. Hence, he deadly opposed the current education and insisted that education should acquaint the child with the voice and mission of individuals as well as international life and achieve a harmonious balance between all the factors being free from all compulsions and restrictions.

From the early stage of his life he ignored the British system of education. He thought that the objective of colonial system of education was to transform the Indian people to the clerk. So he was a staunch opponent of British education system. He put out various drawbacks in the focus of British Indian teaching method (Gupta, 2004). He point out that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in teaching learning process. He also said, 'don't limit a child to your own learning, for he was born in another time'. (Radhakrishnan, 1918).

Tagore recommended that education should be provided in the company of Nature which will strengthen the ties between man and Nature. Both man and Nature are the creations of one and the same God. He considered Nature as a powerful agency for the moral and spiritual development of the child exerting a very healthy influence upon the heart, mind and body of the child. Under the natural and healthy environment, pupils can find a natural outlet for their capacities and great chance of their development. He was of the firm view that education is a vehicle of social reform. Hence, it should act as a life-giving current to modern society serving in various ways. He advocated that education should be according to the realities of life. Any education cut away from life is useless. Hence, any plan of education should involve both nature and needs of man in a harmonious program. (Tagore,1917).

He is of the view that the students practice Brahmacharya and live in close contact with his guru in the bosom of Nature. He advocated the Nature and the teacher as agents of education.

“The human mind is in the embryo stage in childhood and schoolboys should live in surroundings which protect them from all disturbing forces. To acquire strength by absorbing knowledge both consciously and unconsciously should be their sole aim, and their environment should be adapted to this purpose.”(Tagore,1961).

Tagore's importance on nature in education is perfectly applicable in environmental Consciousness in today's' education system. It is important to develop knowledge, understanding and concern for the environment through school education. Environmental consciousness is an essential part of every pupil's learning .It helps to

encourage awareness of the environment, leading to informed concern for active participation in resolving environmental problems. NCERT has published in collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Education, Ahmadabad a book titled “joy of learning “with lot of environmental activities.

Objectives of this paper :

- To study the Rabindranath Tagore’s Naturalistic Philosophy.
- To study the implication of Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophy for enhancing Eco- Consciousness in present context.

Methodology:

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

Rabindranath Tagore’s Naturalistic philosophy:

Tagore points out the ecological atmosphere of the educational institutions. He argues that healthy atmosphere of the schools ensures their smooth functioning. The autocratic and authoritarian atmosphere of the school only serves to spoil the atmosphere of the educational institutions. Tagore emphasizes favorable, adaptable and appropriate atmosphere, free from rigid disciplinary practices of teachers on pupils. (Tagore,1917). Tagore has argued that nature and international relations have created a strong bond among human beings. So true education, according to him, should induce the fellow-felling and love in all the present things. For this reason Visva Bharati University comes across from the pen of Rabindranath Tagore (Pushpanathan, 2013) .He mentioned the importance of the school environment of the children whose mind is very close to nature has the capacity to gather nourishment and sustenance from its surroundings. The good environment has the ability to build up good morality in present youths. The school environment should create compassionate soul and permit opportunity to the mind from oppression of ignorance and lack of concern (Tirath,2017).Tagore believed that education should be provide in the minds of the children in the environment of freedom .He should be free from all compulsions and restrictions otherwise he will remain sitting in the class like an exhibit of museum (Tagore, 1931). Like the British poet, William Wordsworth, Rabindranath believed that education should be provided on the lap of Nature. Like him, Tagore believed that nature has the power to guide human being from joy to joy, to overcome the troubles and sneers of the world. Losing oneself in the contemplation of nature is the best way to derive divine inspiration. Like Rousseau, Tagore acknowledged

that the Nature acts the most powerful and effective teacher for the child. He expressed his faith in Nature as teacher, as follows:

“I believe that children should be surrounded with the things of Nature which have their own educational value. Their minds should be allowed to stumble on and be surprised at everything that happens in the life of to- day. The new tomorrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life. This is the best method for the child .But what happens in school is, that very day, at the same hour, the same book is brought and poured out for him .His attention is never hit by the chance surprises which come from learning from Nature.”(Tagore,1925).

That is why Rabindranath selected a natural , isolated , secluded area near a open jungle place for the location and establishment of his ‘Santineketan’ and ‘Sriniketan’ in the district of Birbhumi under the state of West Bengal. Tagore’s Naturalistic philosophy is based on nature that means teaching learning will take place in close contact with nature .He also believed in the universal brotherhood and love for God. He also believed in the philosophy of existentialism which emphasizes the existence of the person as a free and responsible agent. (Tagore,1912).

Basic Principles to Rabindranath’s Educational Philosophy:

Tagore has discussed the nature of Education. According to him, education is the fullest growth and freedom of soul .He holds the view that education is a lifelong process beginning with childhood and progressing through adolescence into the maturity of adulthood.

Tagore was an incredible philosopher and educationalist. He expressed himself in these capacities by his own efforts. He was born in a family which was well known for its progressive views, social and cultural attainments, political awakening and also as centre for the struggle of independence .Artists, poets, dramatists, musicians, scientists and philosophers belonged to this family (Kathleen, 2002).Tagore grasping imbibing powers were so acute and sensitive that he inculcated all the refinements in his personality easily and smoothly under the educative environment of his family (Kripalini, 1941). The self education developed Tagore’s inherent capacities of the fullest extent. According to S.G.Sarcar-“he discovered for himself all the theories and principles of education which he was later to formulate for himself and use in his Santiniketan”.

Tagore’s philosophy of education was influenced by the following factors:

(I) Influence of the Home Environment

(ii) Love for Nature

(iii) His Extensive Visits

Following were the aims of education according to Tagore:

1. **Self Realization:** Spiritualism is the soul of humanism .Manifestation of personality depends upon the self realization and Spiritual knowledge of individual.
2. **Intellectual Development:** By intellectual development Rabindranath means development of imagination, creativity, free thinking, constant curiosity and alertness of the mind. Child should be free to adopt his own way of learning which leads to all round development.
3. **Physical Development:** Tagore’s educational philosophy aims at the physical development of the child .He gave much importance to sound and healthy physique. Yoga, games and sports are prescribed in Santiniketan as an integral part of the educational system.
4. **Love for Humanities:** Tagore held that 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.
5. **Freedom:** Freedom is considered as an integral aspect of human development.Education is a man making progress, it explores the innate power that exists within the man .It is not an imposition rather liberal process that provides utmost freedom to the individual for his all round development.
Tagore stressed on the concept of freedom in the education of the growing child. He clearly defines freedom as
“The gift of love which Nature has given the mother is absolutely necessary for children because this love is freedom, and so I felt in this Institution (Santiniketan), that our young pupils who came away from their mothers, should have their freedom of relationship[with their teachers.”(Tagore,1924).
6. **Co- relation of Objects:** Co- relation exists with God, man and nature .A peaceful work is only possible when co- relation between man and nature will be established.
7. **Mother tongue as medium if instruction :** Language is the vehicle of the self-expression .Man can freely express his thought in his mother tongue .Tagore has emphasized mother tongue as the medium of instruction for the Childs education.

8. **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.
9. **Social Development :** According to Tagore, ‘Brahma ‘ the supreme soul manifests himself through men and other creatures .Science is the source of all human beings and creature, so all are equal .Tagore said , “service to man is service to God”. All should develop social relationships and fellow feeling from the beginning of one’s life”. All should develop social relationships and fellow feeling from the beginnings of one’s life .Education aim at developing the individual personality as well as social characters which enables him to live as worthy being.
10. **Curriculum:** Tagore recommended a curriculum for the full man satisfying the spiritual, the creative, the aesthetic and the occasional aims of education. Besides proving for the teaching of ordinary schools, Tagore developed many educational ideas, year ahead of others. Now-a-days educationists talk so much about the educational value of crafts, projects, music, dancing, fine arts etc. But it is needed very significant to note that the poet provided for the teaching of most of these subjects from the very beginning in his school at Shantiniketan.
11. **Methods of teaching:** Tagore strongly criticized the bookish and examination oriented teaching. He stressed movement of the whole body in various learning activities .He followed the activity principle, and advocated constructive and creative activities.
12. **Children as Children:** It is a mistake to judge children by the standards of grown-ups. Adults ignore the natural gifts of children and this is men most cruel and most wasteful mistake.
13. **Discipline and freedom:** Living ideals cannot be set into clock- work arrangement .Tagore wrote,
“I never said to them. Don’t do this, or don’t do that I never punished them.”
14. **An Ideal School:** An ideal school is an Ashram where men gather for the highest end of life. Tagore observed: “**To give spiritual culture to our boys was my principal object in starting my school at Bolpur**” Children would be free’ to organize their own immediate environment.’ Shantiniketan (abode of peace), the

poet's first school was designed as an ashram community, modeled on the lines of the tapovana (forest colony) of the Vedic lore. It was established on the outskirts of a small town with surrounding villages wherein the sympathy for nature was quite visible.

15. Role of the Teacher: In teaching, the **guiding** spirit should be personal love based on human relations. In education the teacher is more important than the method. Tagore pointed out, "A teacher can never truly teach unless he is learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lessons to his students, can only lad their minds; he cannot quicken them. Truth not only must inform but inspire. If the inspiration dies out and the information only accumulates, then loses its infinity".(Tagore, 1922)

16. Religious Education: Tagore stressed religious education through practice. He wrote, 'Teaching of religion can never be imparted in the form of lessons; it is where there is religion and living- where life is simple'.

Tagore was born in a family practicing a monotheistic religion based upon the philosophy of the Upanishad. (Tagore,1953).

Tagore writes, "The highest mission of education is to help us realize the inner principle of unity of all knowledge and all the activities of our social and spiritual being."(Tagore, 1922). True education is the realization of inner quality of man, a realization that places human life in harmony with all existence. Therefore, the most important aim in education is the development of the individual leading to harmonious growth of personality.

Tagore's vision of Ecological Harmony:

Philosophically and realistically, Rabindranath had a deep concern between man and nature both. The poet's concept of Indian topovan is clearly evident in his experiments in the field of education at Shantiniketan and Sriniketan, West Bengal where he spent most of his life. This can be seen in the arrangement of boarding schools cum ashram of pupils and thus reflects his concerns with man's proximity to nature. He anticipated the transformation of the dry landscape around Santiniketan along with rural reconstruction. Under the guidance of British agriculturist L.K. Elmhirst, Sriniketan was developed in the 1920s, which is close to Santiniketan. On sociological point of view

Tagore attempts to harmonize nature and mankind through various ways which are reflected through his actions and deeds (Banerjee, 2018).

He was well aware of the destruction of the environment by fast urbanization, industrialization, deforestation and other related evils and condemned the same. Whether rich or poor, air/water/soil pollution affects every day but the poor is the most affected. He churned out poems, plays and short stories emphasizing the need to protect nature.

“There are invisible writings on the blank pages of these desolate places which tell the story of how some civilizations had for ages elaborately busied itself in preparing its own burial ground.” (Chaudhury, 2012).

He anticipated an introduction of a collective practice that would catch the popular imagination and make people plant trees together irrespective of class, creed, gender or religion; a practice that celebrates the love for nature. Consequentially, he introduced a community festival known as ‘Vriksharopana’ (planting of trees) in the year 1928 in Shantiniketan. He cherished this ceremony and said:

“Trees of the earth are cut for several necessities and the earth became naked by plundering its shadows of clothes. It increased the temperature of the air and damaged the fertility of the soil. The homeless forests tend to warmth by an unbearable heat of the sun. Keeping these words in mind, we held the ceremony of tree planting which is nothing but the function of filling in the gaps of plundered mother’s wealth”. (Tagore, 2007).

Conclusions:

The brutal consumers have created the damage of our environment day by day in the name of industrialization and urbanization. As a result, human society faces a list of environmental problems which snatch away our life from the blissful earth. COVID-19 situation is also the result of environmental labefaction. For this deadly virus many lives go to the house of death due to the lack of oxygen in our environment.

Present-day human being has lost the connection and harmonious relationship with our environment. Rabindranath was not against the modernization but he encouraged modernizing and rebuilding society by inculcating rational attitude through the knowledge of environmental education, changes in interpersonal relationship and behavior, collective and egalitarian ideology. (Sinha, 2019). He can be regarded as the greatest environmentalist of this age who preached the virtues of reverence, humanity, responsibility and care towards Mother Nature.

To cope up with the current ecological degradation, Rabindranath Tagore's Naturalistic philosophy of Education, though it flourishes in late 19th century and early 20th century is relevant in the present situation too. We hope that actual consciousness, seriousness, following proper environmental ethics, we can set up a sustainable development of our environment which is suitable for all our valuable life.

“ONE OF THE FIRST CONDITIONS OF HAPPINESS IS THAT THE LINK BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE SHALL NOT BE BROKEN “ - LEO TOLSTOY.

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