

## Rabindranath Tagore and his educational philosophy

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Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, which was a new religious sect in nineteenth-century Bengal. He was educated at home; For higher education, Rabindranath was sent to Bengal academy. Soon he was fed up with the rigid and lifeless education imparted there. Thus, he developed aversion for the prevalent dull education and he left the Bengal academy. In 1877, Rabindranath was sent to England at seventeen for formal schooling, he did not finish his studies there. In his mature years, in addition to his many-sided literary activities, he managed the family estates, a project which brought him into close touch with common humanity and increased his interest in social reforms. He also started an experimental school called Visva-Bharati at Santiniketan where he tried his ideals of education and would become "The Centre of Indian Culture" as Tagore himself wrote of his vision in an article by the same title in 1918.

There are four fundamental principles in Tagore's educational philosophy; naturalism, humanism, internationalism and idealism. Santiniketan and Visva Bharati are both based on these very principles. Tagore's philosophy of education conforms to his general philosophy. Factors which influenced Tagore's educational philosophy were influence of home environment, love for nature, love for nation, his extensive visits abroad and influence of school environment.

Education prevalent in the days of Tagore was rigid and lifeless that it did not confirm to the needs of individual and demands of society. Hence, he opposed the current education and insisted that education should acquaint the child with the voice and mission of individual as well as international life and achieve a harmonious balance between all the factors being free from all compulsions and restrictions. He wanted an education system which would assemble knowledge, love and action together. The religion to be practiced would be a confluence of the likes of Upanishads, Buddhism, Christianity.

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 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. Harmony would be achieved by seeing the world as a whole.

Tagore was not in favour of mere intellectual development. He stressed that education should promote creative self-expression. He suggested that creative self-expression can be promoted through subjects of life crafts, music, drawing and dramatics. The environment of freedom given to the learner and then creating situations for him will automatically make the learner to do something original. ['Creative Unity' (1922), p.200]

Tagore gave a very important place to the teacher. He assigned an important role to him in the education of child believing that only man can teach another man. To him, the teacher is a Guru like ancient Indian Rishis who is to keep the students on the right track by remaining a learner throughout his life. ['Towards Universal Man' (1961), p.71]

A teacher is to stimulate and guide but it is the child who is to choose and react according to his natural inclinations. Believing in purity and innocence of child, the teacher should behave with him with great love, affection, sympathy and consideration. Tagore did not approve the traditional methods of class-room teaching. He recommended those methods which provide knowledge of concrete situations. He favoured frequent excursions and tours, during which the pupils with their senses alert might observe and learn various facts of interest.

In order to enable children to learn new things, it is necessary to maintain an educative atmosphere where children are not compelled to learn things from text-books, but from the natural surroundings which are most educative. ['Doctrines of the Great Indian Educators' (2004), p.116]

The three cardinal principles of Tagore's educational philosophy are (1) Freedom (2) Active communication with Nature and man (3) Creative self-expression. Tagore felt that education divorced from the streams of life and confined within four walls becomes artificial and loses its value.

According to him, there are three sources of knowledge: Nature, life and teacher. Tagore gave a message of mankind, brotherhood, internationalism and service to humanity. A child according to him, should be given full freedom so that he may learn by Nature, love as well as affection. Following principles of professional ethics emerged from Tagore's educational philosophy:-

1. Teachers should be dedicated to their profession.
2. Teachers should be embodiment of moral, mental and spiritual values.
3. Teachers should always remain learners.
4. Teachers should have feeling of brotherhood and fatherhood.
5. Teachers should make all possible efforts for the creation of an environment in which their pupils have no difficulty in receiving education.
6. Teachers should make special efforts to make students creative learners.
7. Teachers should make efforts to inculcate a scientific temper in students.

#### 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 Bolpur.

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.

#### TAGORE'S CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN EDUCATION

Tagore was fully dissatisfied with the prevalent system of education at that time and called the schools as factories of rote 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.

Tagore's major contribution to modern education is the establishment of Santiniketan at Bolpur, in 1901. The school which was modelled 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 centred 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's 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.

For further reading on Tagore's holistic education refer to this link,  
<https://scotstagore.org/rabindranath-tagores-educational-ideas-and-experiments-by-christine-kupfer/>

Ref:

<http://assisiaruvithura.blogspot.com/2013/10/ravindranath-tagores-educational.html>

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1913/tagore/biographical/>

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