



A study on the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore and its influence on elementary education with special reference to Assam.

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Abstract

Education is considered as the dynamic side of philosophy. According to Rabindra Nath Tagore, the aim of education is self-realization and this realization is the goal of education. Self-realization, according to him implies the realization of the universal soul in one's self. Individual's aim of life is to achieve this status. It is a process which cannot be realized without education. Factors which influence Tagore's educational philosophy are - influence of home environment, love for nature, love for nation, his extensive visits abroad and influence of school environment. In this study, the researchers try to find out the educational philosophy of Tagore and its impact on present system of education.

Keywords: Philosophy, Self-realization, Universal soul, Educational philosophy.

1. Introduction

The relationship between philosophy and education is very intimate. Philosophy determines the supreme aim of life and set standards and values that should guide and direct man's educational efforts to achieve them. Philosophy paves the way and education moves on in that direction. When we define education as the modification of behaviour, the direction in which modification is to be carried out is determined by philosophy. Philosophy is wisdom whereas ; education transmits that wisdom from one generation to the other.

Tagore(1861-1941) was not only a poet and artist of modern India but also a great sentinel of India whose moral principles stood out uncompromisingly on all occasions. Tagore's home environment produced in him a great reverence for the religion and for the cultural heritage of India. Philosophical outlook of Tagore was guided by the principle of harmony. Tagore was the Renaissance man of modern India – the bridge from an Indian cultural traditional education system.

2. Significance of the study

Realizing the importance of philosophy in the present system of education, the investigators desire to make a humble attempt to present and analyze the educational thoughts of Rabindra Nath Tagore with special reference to educational aims ,curriculum, methods of teaching and role of a teacher to the present educational system of Assam .Tagore's contributions are most relevant to present day requirements. The investigators also feel that a thorough study is needed on the educational philosophies of Rabindra Nath Tagore so as to know how far his educational philosophy has contributed to the modern practice of education.

3. Objectives of the study

1. To put forth systematically the educational thoughts of Rabindra Nath Tagore.
2. To study the implications of Rabindra Nath Tagore's educational philosophy to the modern

system of Elementary education of Assam.

4. Delimitations of the study

The proposed study is delimited to the following:

- The study is delimited only to Elementary education of Assam.
- The study is delimited only to the great Indian Philosopher Rabindra Nath Tagore.

5. Educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore

Education, according to Rabindra Nath Tagore, is an all round development of human beings for attainment of a full life. According to him, "That education is highest which not only imparts information and knowledge to us, but also promotes love and fellow feeling between us and the living beings of the world."

Tagore's philosophy of education conforms to his general philosophy. He was fully aware of education's innumerable implications. To him the object of education is freedom of mind and spirit. His principle of education in Indian context is "all educational processes should be based in our own cultural traditions".

While going deeper and deeper in to the life and works of Tagore, the fact that comes vividly to the fore is that the educational philosophy of Tagore was mainly the philosophy of his life itself. In this philosophy, there is a great contribution of the sum total of the four fundamental philosophies of naturalism, humanism, internationalism and idealism.

As an "Individualist", Tagore believed in the right and freedom of the individual to shape his life in his own way. Every individual is unique. Every child has his inborn capabilities which are different from another.

As a Naturalistic philosopher, Rabindra Nath 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.

As a "Vedantist", he had a firm belief in the philosophy of veda. As an "Idealist" he believed that man should live for the ultimate truth which liberates us from the cycle of birth and death. As a Spiritualist, he believed that every individual should try to attain spiritual perfection.

As a Humanist, he preached human brotherhood, having faith in fundamental unity of mankind. He advocated internationalism but not economic or political internationalism. He wanted the spiritual bondage of the universe.

Tagore's educational philosophy is based on the principle of- Freedom, Creative self-expression, Active communication with nature and man, Internationalism.

The main aim of education according to Tagore is to produce the moral and spiritual man and aim at harmonious development. He also emphasized intellectual and physical development of children. Another aim was to promote inter-cultural and inter-social understanding for unification of mankind. Chief aim of education should be the drawing out of the latent faculties of the child.

Tagore placed teachers in a very significant position. It is the teacher according to him who can "knock the doors of mind". Tagore advocates that teachers play a vital role in the development of society by bringing desirable social changes by providing proper education. Our education should be in constant touch with complete life, i.e. economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual aspects. The teacher should have feeling to maintain good relationship with all members of the community. Stressing upon the desire for mutual co-operation and social reconstruction, Tagore appeals for healthy and sound relationship between teacher and community.

Tagore did not approve the traditional methods of class-room teaching. He recommended those methods which provide knowledge of concrete situations. He emphasized on Activity Method, Heuristic Method, Teaching while travelling, Teaching by Walking, Debate, Discussion and Question Answer. Real education is based on real problems of life; hence question- answer method is effective wherein the teacher put the questions & ask the students to participate in discussions.

He favored frequent excursions and tours, during which the pupils with their senses alert might observe and learn various facts of interest. Education must be given in geographical, historical, economic and cultural perspectives. 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.

Tagore attached great importance to fine arts in his educational curriculum. To him, game, dance, music, drama, painting etc. should form a part of educational process. Tagore also attached great importance to Tapasya and Sadhana. Tagore emphasized such education which would help individual to earn livelihood.

Curriculum was meant to attain the aims of

education. He organized the curriculum keeping in view the spontaneous interest of the child. He struck a balance between the education of the nature and the education of man, through art, music and dance.

Tagore perceives that ideal teacher-taught relationship works as an instrument for smooth running of educational institutions. Favoring ancient Gurukul system of education, Tagore recommends ancient system of education in which teachers and pupils should live together as family members keeping sweet relationship among them.

Emphasizing that natural environment is favourable for students; Tagore advocates that students and teachers should live together amidst the beauties of forests. If a school is to be built, it should be situated in a quiet spot far from the crowded city having the natural advantages of open sky, fields, trees etc. It should be a retreat where teachers and students would live together dedicated to learning.

Shantiniketan and Viswabharati are the two greatest contributions of Tagore to the system of education. To give practical shape to his educational ideas, Tagore established an educational institution. He named it "Shantiniketan" The school had all the characteristics of a garden school, "asram" like and "gurukula". Tagore laid the foundation of Viswabharati, the international university at Shantiniketan. It is a place of universal knowledge and world culture. This university not only preserves the cultural heritages of India but it also combines best of the western culture, sciences, literature and art. It tries to develop human brotherhood and international understanding.

Tagore was aware about the rural poverty of India. So, he wanted to eradicate it through education. The practical training imparted in different crafts to the students will make them skilled artisans in their field. They can remove the poverty of the rural bulk by applying their education helping thereby in the process of rural reconstruction. He also supported in the education of women and girl child. He wanted to establish a link between East and West. Though he supported mother tongue as medium of instruction; yet he favored to include English in the curriculum.

According to Tagore, teaching should be practical and real but not artificial and theoretical. Tagore laid emphasis on the practicality of education. That will definitely increase the creative skill within a learner.

The heart of Tagore's philosophy is promotion of freedom of the child. Tagore insisted on an environment devoid of fear for students to have the confidence to express their thoughts freely and believe

in their own learning ability as the fear of making mistakes prevents an individual from being free to venture a new thought, to experiment, to ask questions, to be creative and innovative. He supported free-discipline. He was against rigid discipline, corporal punishment.

So, his educational philosophy is based on - Harmony with all things: harmony with nature, human surroundings, and harmony in international relations.

6. Findings related to the implications of Rabindra Nath Tagore's educational philosophy to the modern system of Elementary education of Assam.

Tagore's educational ideals have been agreed by many modern educationists and many of his innovations have now become part of general educational practices. The core of Tagore's educational philosophy is learning from nature, music and life because of which his education is easily acceptable by present educationists also.

1. It is found that the aims of present system of elementary education are also inspired by Tagore's educational philosophy which at enabling the child to – develop a positive self concept, establish a sound foundation for a good physique, adequate muscular co-ordination and basic motor skills, imbibe good health habits and basic life skills necessary for personal and social adjustment.
2. The present curriculum for Primary education, Assam gives great importance on Tagore's educational philosophy and it incorporated various activities for social, moral, spiritual, individual, aesthetic, physical development of the child like social service activity, field visit, moral lessons, morning assembly, art, dance, music drama, yoga, annual sports etc.
3. Yoga is practiced in schools to some extents. Govt. of Assam in collaboration with Elementary Education department and SCERT conducts Yoga Olympiad in every year. In this year also Yoga Olympiad -2017 was conducted in three phases-Block, District and State level respectively. The Block level Yoga Olympiad was conducted in 145 Blocks of Assam in which students of upper primary and secondary were taken part. The aim of organizing it is to make students aware about the benefits of yoga for maintaining good health.
4. Elementary school students of Assam also sing the Rastriya Sangeet or the Jatiya Sangeet during Morning Assembly everyday which helps to develop democratic feeling among students.
5. It is found that the present system of elementary

education also gives importance on manual labour and various craft based education such as-knitting, cutting, basic interior designing , waste material utilization etc. are included in the curriculum so that students can utilize their leisure time properly and they will be able to earn their livelihood in near future.

6. It is found that in present day also , teachers guides the students to conduct minor experiments for understanding a topic clearly. It helps in developing scientific temper. Govt. of Assam also conducts Science day in which students prepared various models, showed scientific activities. Beside this, various projects like collecting tree leaves, preparing charts etc. are also taught in schools. Students also plants trees in school campus which help to develop love for nature. It also helps to inhale fresh air.
7. In order to bring community nearer to school, community people are invited to school in various school functions by the principal/head teacher.
8. Following professional ethics emerged from Tagore's educational Philosophy which are also recommended by NCTE:-
 1. A teacher should be punctual, unbiased and dedicated in his/her profession.
 2. A teacher should be an embodiment of moral, mental and spiritual values.
 3. A teacher should have feelings of brotherhood

and fatherhood.

4. A teacher should make special efforts to make students creative learners.
5. A teacher should make efforts to inculcate a scientific temper in students.
6. Teacher should establish a link between school and community.

7. Conclusion

Quite rightly, Rabindranath Tagore can be considered as the prophet of educational renaissance in modern India. He advocated through his work and envisioned through his own life, a living example of universal brotherhood. He had upheld and supported the philosophy of satisfaction in one's life arising out of the harmonious existence of everything in nature. After an in depth study and analysis of the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore ,it is observed that he had regarded education as the best and most effective weapon for the modernization of our society. He envisioned the upliftment of the human civilization through education and supported the incorporation of different ideals of democracy into education. His educational thoughts and philosophy still belong to the 21st century and can be considered as quite relevant because whatever he advocated still found a place in the hearts and minds of countless modern minds. His contribution to make our education system, what it is today, is unparalleled and unforgettable.

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