

# Rabindranath Tagore's Philosophy on Indian Education

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of learning and development. Education aims to change a man from normal to perfect. Education is the fundamental process to change a man to complete man. It is a process of all – round growth and development of physical, mental, social, emotional, moral and spiritual. Education is an enlightenment and empowerment of total behaviour. It develops the cognitive, affection and cognitive aspects of the learner's behaviour. Tagore aimed to develop an ideal educational system in India. He emphasis not only body and mind to change through education but also soul, including physical, mental, religious and spiritual.

Tagore was born during a period of strife in pre-independence India. He stood for the development of a free mind, free knowledge and a free nation. According to him, the primary objective of education was to enable the preservation of the perfect symphony between one's life and the world outside.

“The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence”. -Rabindranath Tagore

## II. TAGORES EDUCATIONAL IDEAS

Tagore was a highly prolific Indian poet, philosopher, writer, and educator who wrote novels, essays, plays, and poetic works in colloquial Bengali. He was a key figure of the Bengal Renaissance, a cultural nationalist movement in the city. In 1901, he established a school at Santiniketan, Bolpur, which he later developed into an international institution, Visva-Bharati, based on his education principles.

He has established these two educational institutions, for giving practical shape to his educational ideas, named as Shantiniketan and Viswabartati. Shantiniketan has all characteristics like as “Gurukul system of education” i.e. Student teacher lives together far from crowded city and has natural benefits of field, trees, rivers, etc.

Viswabharati, the international university of Shantiniketan, combines Indian as well as western cultural, science, literature art. It emphasizes on human brotherhood and International understandings. Through this Tagore wants to establish a link between East and west that is why he supported mother tongue as medium of instruction; but he talks about importance of English as well.

Tagore was also a social critic and an educator. He rejected the mechanical, formal system of learning in favour of a curriculum that encouraged creativity, imagination, and moral awareness in students. His philosophy of education incorporated the synthesis of nationalist tradition, Western and Eastern strands of philosophy, science and rationality, and an international cosmopolitan outlook.

## III. TAGORE'S PHILOSOPHY

Tagore also helped to shape the development of Indian philosophy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His philosophical works have religious and ethical themes. His best-known philosophical writing is *The Religion of Man*, based on the Hibbert Lectures he delivered at Manchester College, Oxford, in May, 1930, which contains his reflections on the spirit of religion and explores the themes of spirituality, God, the divine experience, and humanity. His body of literary works also expresses universal humanism, in particular his sympathy for the lives of women and the poor people of Bengali. His view about nature was also closely aligned with the philosophical aspects of the Hindu tradition in which nature is seen as a manifestation of the divine. His verse about the natural world expresses a sense of wonder and a human longing to be with

the divine. Apart from this love of nature and humanity, he believed that the highest religion of man is to try to enhance creativity, which is “the surplus in man.”

As a close friend of Mahatma Gāndhī, who called him the “Great Sentinel” of modern India, Tagore opposed British rule and initially had an influence on the Indian nationalist movement. However, Tagore later embraced a humanist internationalism, preferring instead to harmonize eastern and Western world views. His critique of nationalism and its violence is expressed in his key philosophical essay, “Nationalism” in which he called for a spirit of cooperation and tolerance between nations. To this day Tagore is regarded as a cultural icon for India, and a key figure for innovations and modernization of Bengali literature and his formative influence on many modern Indian artists.

#### IV. EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF TAGORE

There are four fundamental principles in Tagore’s educational philosophy; naturalism, humanism, internationalism and idealism. Shantiniketan and Visva Bharathi are both based on these very principles. He insisted that education should be imparted in natural surroundings. He believed in giving children the freedom of expression. He said, “Children have their active subconscious mind which like a tree has the power to gather its food from the surrounding atmosphere”. He also said that an educational institution should not be “a dead cage in which living minds are fed with food that’s artificially prepared. Hand work and arts are the spontaneous over flow of our deeper nature and spiritual significance”.

According to him, “Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of dust and gives us wealth not of things but of inner light, not of power but of love. It is a process of enlightenment. It is divine wealth. It helps in realization of truth”. The aim of education is to bring about perfection of man by dispelling ignorance and ushering in the light of knowledge. It should enable us to lead a complete life – economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual.

The main objective of his school – Shantiniketan was to cultivate a love for nature, to impart knowledge and wisdom in one’s native language, provide freedom of mind, heart and will, a natural ambience, and to eventually enrich Indian culture. For Tagore, religion was an ideal. His ‘Visva Bharathi World University’ stood for his nobility of soul. In the pamphlet named ‘The Centre of Indian Culture’, the poet expresses the ideals of Visva Bharathi.

There he writes, ‘In education, the most inspiring atmosphere of creative activity is important. Primary function of the institution must be constructive; scope must be for all kinds of intellectual exploration. Teaching must be one with culture, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, economic and social. True education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have an organic connection with our surroundings”.

Tagore says, “We should know that the great task of our institution is to provide for the education of the mind and all the senses through various activities”. Referring to religion, Rabindranath Tagore likens an educational institution to ‘a wide meeting place where all sects may gather together and forget their differences’. In the memorandum of association of the Visva Bharati, Tagore writes the objectives as, “To study the mind of man in its realization of different aspects of truth from diverse points of view, the culture of Visva Bharati is the culture of man and its keynote lies in the truth that human personality is not a mean trifle, it is also the Divine personality”.

He also lays emphasis on the learner’s contact with nature. Apart from physical activity, nature teaches a man more than any institution. Educational institutions should realize the importance of this fact and inculcate co-curricular activities to good effect. Tagore believes that, one of the main aims of education is to prepare the individual for the service of the nation and education stands for human regeneration, cultural representation, harmony and intellectualism. Educational institutions should build on the power of thinking and imagination in an individual and help turn herself / himself into a self-sustained building block of human society and a creative canvas of nation on the whole.

To quote Tagore: “A day will come when the unvanquished man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost heritage”.

- **Self Realization:** Self realization is based on self education it perceive oneself as an individual who is differ from others. It is a way to understand one’s existance with fully awareness. In another words to realize as one is thinking being and to think about ones thoughts and channelize it according to demand of situation.
- **Intellectual Development:** it combines development of thoughts, creativity, curiosity, freedom, mindfulness through which learner can develop his/ her learning style and lead to perfection in life.

- **Realism in Education:** education should make everyone to realize how our life related with training and knowledge has organic connection with our surrounding.
- **Idealism in Education:** the aim of our life should realize the values of supreme truth, goodness and beauty. One has to know the ultimate truth of deliverance between birth and death.
- **Spiritualism in Education:** It includes sharing, caring and cooperation etc.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

The freedom of mind & spirit, self-realization, and live together with Harmony is the main pillars of Tagore's education in which every learner is unique and possesses some unique qualities; through this unique traits one can handle the hurdles of life and achieve success in life.

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