**Rabindra Nath Tagore: Educational Thoughts**

**Paper 1-Educational Thoughts and Practices**

**Unit 1- Educational Thoughts of Indian Thinkers**

**B.A Education (Semester -4)**



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**Rabindra Nath Tagore(1861-1941)**

**Educational Thoughts**

* Life Sketch
* Philosophy of Education
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* Curriculum
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* **Life Sketch**

Rabindra Nath Tagore, the Noble Prize winner was a great philosopher, poet, novelist, dramatist and a prophet. He not only put India on the world map of culture and literature, but proved to the world the values of the Indian way of life and thinking. He was born on May 07, 1961 in Calcutta in a family of aristocrats in Bengal, an educated, rich and respected family. His father Mahrishi Devandranath Tagore himself, took the charge of his education who taught him Sanskrit language, Indian philosophy and astronomy. For higher education, Rabindranath went to Bengal academy. Soon he was fed up with the rigid and lifeless education imparted there. He developed aversion for the prevalent dull education and he left the Bengal academy. In 1877, Rabindranath was sent to England to study law. There too he got fed up and returned to India without obtaining any degree. So Tagore got his education mostly at home through tutors and private readings. He had started writing articles for Bengali magazines very early in life. Gradually, love of learning increased by leaps and bounds in him and he wrote many stories, novels and poems which earned repute and appreciation for him. Rabindranath Tagore popularity as a renowned poet, writer, dramatist, philosopher and painter grew and people began to address him reverently as Gurudev. Tagore translated Gitanjali into English which brought him noble prize and worldwide recognition. In the same year, Calcutta University adored him with the degree of Doctor of Literature. In 1915, the Indian government endowed him with knighthood which he returned after the notorious Jallianwala Bagh massacre to express his emotions of anger at the episode. Tagore travelled widely throughout the world. He went to Japan, Europe and U.S.A. In 1921, his school previously known as Shantiniketan ashram became a world famous university known as Vishwa Bharti University. The aim of this university was to bring about a synthesis of the East and West. For the development of Vishwa Bharti, he toiled ceaselessly and untiringly for twenty years and established his seat of worldwide reputation on stable foundations. Tagore died in 1941 and his death was mourned all over the world.

* **Philosophy of Education**

Tagore’s home environment, love for nature, love for nation, his extensive visits abroad and influence of school environment influenced in shaping up of his educational philosophy. Education prevalent in those days was rigid and lifeless that it did not confirm to the needs of individual and demands of society. Hence, he deadly opposed the contemporary education and insisted that education should acquaint the child with the voice and mission of individual as well as international life. As Tagore found the education of his times inadequate, he wished that education should facilitate an individual’s all around development and result in the perfection of the individual and society at large. He prefers education that nurtures the spirit of open mindedness, self-reliance and a spirit of inquiry in the learner’s mind. Education must be closely associated with nature, social life, the culture and traditions of the learner. He desired that education should help one to achieve perfection in life. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. Tagore believed that children should be brought up in an atmosphere ringing with freedom and liberty and restrictions should not be imposed on the students. He says that without liberty the schools would degenerate into *'educational factories, lightless, colorless, and disassociated from the context of the universe within the bare white walls staring like eyeballs of the dead'.* The education should be natural not only in its content material but also in its quality and the way of imparting it. Tagore recommended that education should be provided in the company of nature to strengthen the ties between man and nature. 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. Next to nature the child should be brought into touch with the stream of social behaviour. 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 programme. In this philosophy there is the sum total of the four fundamental philosophies of naturalism, humanism, internationalism and idealism.

 Thus the three cardinal principles of Tagore’s educational philosophy are-

 (1) Freedom

(2) Active communication with Nature and man

(3) Creative self-expression.

* **Aims of Education**

Tagore was not in favour of mere intellectual development. He stressed that education should promote creative self-expression. The environment of freedom given to the learner and then creating situations for him will automatically make the learner to do something original. Education should aim at the attainment of inner freedom, inner power and enlightenment. Tagore's aims of education are enumerated below-

1. **Self-Realization**-Self Realization is an important aim of education .Manifestation of personality depends upon self-realization and spiritual knowledge of individual. Education should enable the child to acquire the knowledge through independent efforts and critical examination of ideas.

2. **Intellectual Development**- By intellectual development he means creative free thinking, constant curiosity and alertness of the mind.

**3. Physical Development**- Tagore believed that a healthy mind lives in a healthy body. He gave much importance to sound and healthy physique. Yoga, games, sports were integral part of his curriculum.

**4**. **Inculcation of Moral values**-Tagore emphasized on moral and spiritual training of children. There must be adequate provisions for philanthropic activities, co-operation, love for fellow beings and sharing among them to inculcate moral and spiritual values in children.

**5. Self-Expression**-Development of creative tendencies of the child is essential for healthy development of the personality. This can be achieved by providing opportunities for self-expression. He suggested that creative self-expression can be promoted through subjects of life crafts, music, drawing and dramatics

**6. Social Development**- According to Tagore 'Brahma' the supreme soul manifests himself through men and other creatures. Since he is the source of all human being so, we all are equal. Service to mankind is service to God. Education should aim at developing fellow feeling and social relationship and a sense of social service in pupils and teachers.

* **Curriculum**

Tagore was a naturalist and an idealist so he wants things of virtue and beauty to be an important part of his curriculum. In the curriculum of Shaniniketan since the very beginning of the institution, he gave place to the teaching of science, especially experimental science in various classes of this institution which was much ahead of time. Subjects recommended by him to be taught are history, geography, nature study, language and science. Activities or finer subjects including teaching of craft, music, fine art, dancing and dramatics etc. also occupy an important place in his curriculum. He was very particular about Music and Drama, music according to him is the essence of life and drama release children's anxieties and tensions

* **Methods of Teaching**

 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. 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.

* **Teacher Taught Relationship**

Tagore recommends ancient system of education in which teachers and pupils should live together as family members keeping sweet relationship among them. The pupils should be surrounded by an atmosphere of culture and teachers should be dedicated to their vocation, living a simple life, without any material interest or luxury to distract their minds. Advocating that relationship between teacher and pupils should be friendly in nature. Tagore believes that only man can teach another man i.e. teacher and pupil and regards the relationship between two as most important medium for human development. According to Tagore real teaching is a gift, sacrifice it is a living thing, it is the fulfillment of knowledge for the teacher himself. Tagore also stresses that the gulf which ordinarily exists between teachers and pupils should be bridged by true spirit of friendship and brotherliness. Teachers should develop cordial relationship with each their students. They should work with mutual respect. Love and affection plays an important role in establishing human relationships. Both student and teachers should work with proper team spirit and set an example of their work and conduct for others.

* **Role of a Teacher**

 Tagore gave a very important place to the teacher. 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. 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 also stated that the teachers and students are considered to be learners together, seeking truth and following the right path of pure simplicity as well as renunciation. The teacher should always motivate the creative capacities of children so that they remain busy with constructive activities and experiences. Tagore describing true position of a teacher among students states that a teacher is the infinite ideal of man towards whom the students move in their collective growth. Tagore desires that the teachers should be dedicated to their vocation. Tagore emphasizes, *“A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. The teacher, who has come to an end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lessons to his students, can only load their minds; he cannot quicken them.”* He remarks that teachers and students should live their complete life together, dominated by a common aspiration for truth and a need of sharing all the delights of culture. He opines that the teacher and not the method are ultimate in Tagore’s educational thought. According to Tagore only he can teach who can love. The greatest teachers of men have been lovers of men. Stressing upon the role of teacher regarding teaching, he assumes teacher as a guru who touches the life of pupils with his own life and baptizes them in acquiring necessary knowledge, skills, and values and in maintaining dynamism in their activities so that students may attain the fullness of growth in body, mind and spirit.

* **Nature of Discipline**

Tagore felt that children should be treated with sympathy and compassion. One should not harsh to students. Students mind is quiet sensitive and pick up the things on its own and the problem of discipline would not arise. He believed in self-discipline .He would enjoy the children expressing themselves with joy and enthusiasm but not tolerate repression of the children's freedom. He believed in self-imposed discipline which is not imposed from outside but drawn out from within. Tagore attached great significance to the moral values and ethics in education.

* **Relevance of Tagore's Educational Philosophy**

Tagore stressed on compulsory free education for all Indian children disregarding their caste, creed and socio-economic status. It is sure that the educational ideals of Gurudev have paved the way for the general education policies and practices in the country. The models of education they have put forward were quite apt for the multi-cultural background of India. Their insistence on developing the problem-solving skills of students will help the modern learners to meet the challengers of the present. In the materialistic world of today, their desire for acquiring aesthetic and intuitive knowledge is very relevant. In this era of globalization and cut throat competition, the educational philosophy of Tagore is a real blessing which will enable the new generation to proceed in the proper path.

 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. Education should aim at harmony with our life and education i.e. existence. Tagore implemented all his views regarding education in his school called Shantiniketan which is opened in a natural surrounding i.e. natural environment. As a whole, Tagore’s main aim of education is to prepare the individual for the service of community. Rabindranath Tagore has been one of the topmost educationists of India. His name will ever shine like a star in the galaxy of the educationists who contributed handsomely to the cause of education.

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