

3. R.N Tagore's Educational Philosophy:

The educational philosophy of R.N. Tagore reflects his general philosophical doctrines. He succinctly remarked, "Education is a permanent part of the adventure of life..... it is not like a painful hospital treatment for curing students of the congenital malady of their ignorance, but is a function of the health, the natural expression of their mind's vitality."

The highest education is that which does not merely give information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. "Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of the dust and gives us the wealth not of things but of inner light, not of

power but of love, making this truth its own and giving expression to it.”

His educational philosophy professes five cardinal principles which are discussed under the following heads:

(i) Freedom for the Child:

Tagore was a radical to the prevailing system of education where freedom was a distant dream for the full flowering of personality. Instead, he was the ardent supporter of granting, ample freedom to the children.

He added, **“Freedom does not mean mere independence of control and right to self-will. It means the liberation of all aspects and powers of the personality, viz, the senses, the vital energies, the various mental capacities including intelligence and imagination, as also the**

✓ **functions of the heart – feelings, emotions, sympathy and love.”**

Education has its only meaning in the context of freedom which essentially means child's own experiences and activities and “freedom from ignorance about the laws of universe and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world.” Therefore, freedom was the guiding principle in the entire gamut of educational activities.

(ii) Active Communication with Nature and Man:

Nature, according to him, is a manuscript of God where God resides and education should enable a person to realize his immediate relationship with nature and should help him to learn freely and spontaneously from the book of nature. His spontaneous development and

✓ natural growth could be possible through his active contact with nature.

In addition to the above, he advocates the communion of men with his fellow-men for gathering essential qualities to live amidst social groups, for he is fundamentally a gregarious animal. He said, “next to nature, the child should be brought into touch with the stream of social behaviour.” The child is indoctrinated into the stream through socialization process and social contacts.

In other words, the child learns all forms of social behaviour through social contacts, and for the learning a good deal of opportunities should be provided to them. Meaningful education is that which enables the child to be in contact with the complete life of people – economic, social,

✓ intellectual, aesthetic and
spiritual life.

Education to be real must be of the whole man which includes all faculties including his emotions, senses and intellect. Education must provide full-scale opportunities to the children for self-expression. For self-expression which is creative in nature, Tagore forwarded the following, activities like art, craft, music, drawing, painting, dramatics etc.

He said, “Hand-work and arts are the spontaneous overflow of our deeper nature and spiritual significance.”

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In Shantiniketan the above activities were vigorously undertaken by the children. Tagore viewed, a large part of man could never find its expression in the mere language of words. It must have many other languages – lines, colours, sounds and movements for the satisfaction of his aesthetic urge and the highest means of self-expression.



Tagore emphasized the physical well-being of the children. In order to achieve this, he said that education in nature; play activities, dancing, exercise, body and sensory training were the tools. Education of the body is necessary for acquiring the capacity to adjust itself to all sorts of weather conditions and health hazards.

He said, "However great a scholar may be, if he has not educated his body, he has to live a life of dependence on others = in many ways he is an incomplete man. There is a close and inseparable connection between the faculties of mind and body. If the education of body does not proceed along with the education of the mind, the latter cannot gather strength."

Tagore was dead against the prevailing British system of education which was life-less, monotonous, listless, useless, colourless, lop-sided, purely academic, and dissociated from the life-line of the society.

In his scheme of education he has struck a balance between the education of the nature and education of man, and between the culture of east and the that of west (oriental and occidental culture), His curriculum was flexible, dynamic and child-centred and aimed at development of personality in all its aspects.

He emphasized a list of subjects, albeit, he did not favour book learning and he wanted the best book was the 'Nature' where the child would get adequate knowledge. He favoured the study of mother-tongue and at the higher level of education; he favoured

✓ of education; he favoured learning of English to know the treasure of knowledge in the fields of culture, literature and science.

He also suggested the study of world history, culture of India, literature, geography, science etc. Besides he suggested the following activities for the promotion of aesthetic and emotional faculties. They are music, fine arts, painting, drawing, dance, dramatics, and crafts like book-binding, carpentry, weaving, serving, gardening etc.

Moreover, Tagore stressed upon community living and community services for the realization of truth from the standpoint of spiritual development. To sum up, his curricular framework emphasized subjects, activities and services.

He believed in activity and dynamic methods of teaching based upon the interest, need, experience, attitude, ability and mental development of the child. He labeled the then system of teaching as bookish, mechanical, stereotyped, dull and uninteresting.

Therefore, he strongly suggested independent study and efforts (heuristic method). Learning should proceed from familiar to unfamiliar, near to far and known to unknown.

Learning should be linked with joy and ecstasy. He wanted to give education in a natural surroundings characterised by freedom and creativity. He said that teaching while walking is the best method of teaching. He suggested that social science subject could be better taught through excursions and study tours. He favoured discussion and activity or

9. R.N Tagore's Shantiniketan: An Experiment:

As Pondicherry Ashram brought Aurobindo immortality, Shantiniketan also brought Tagore a spark of immortality. Popularly it means an abode of peace took its shape in 1901 and turned into an international university, named Vishwa Bharati in 1921. Vishwa Bharati became a National University in 1951.

Situated at Bolepur, 100 miles away from Calcutta Shantiniketan Ashram had beautiful surroundings. Life at Shantiniketan was very simple and it was a residential institution having self-governing Republic. Pupils were taught the art of managing their own affairs smoothly.

There was perfect community life at Shantiniketan, with common dining, cooperative living, and freedom was the watchword of the institution. Love, sympathy, joy and peace scented the institution. Full-scale opportunities were given to pupils for realizing their potentialities. It was a community school without any distinction on the basis of caste, creed and other forms of distinction.

This infant school became an international university in 1921 with the following purposes:

(i) The institution has to teach the culture of the East,

(ii) A synthesis of eastern culture and that of western culture is to be made possible for facilitating unification of mankind,

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(iii) The institution has to prepare itself for the work of the rural reconstruction with a view to ameliorating the condition of poor and deprived people.

There prevailed a serene atmosphere amidst joy and freedom and nobility and co-operation. The work of the institution starts from 5 O'clock in the early morning and it continues till afternoons emphasizing subjects and activities. Perfect discipline overshadows the institution. There is perfect inter-personal relationship in the institution. Students from far and near, east and west are enrolled into it.

There is complete fusion of occidental and oriental culture with a view to fostering international understanding. It stands as a cosmopolitan university. The motto of Biswa

✓ Bharati is, "Where the whole world forms its one single unit." It is regarded as modern Nalanda without barriers. It belongs to the humanity as a whole.

There have different sections and departments in it, viz. Sishu Bhawan, Path Bhawan, Kala Bhawan, Sangit Bhawan, Sriniketan (Department of Rural Reconstruction) Silpa Sadan, Cheen Bhawan, Rabindra Bhawan, Hindi Bhawan, the institute for studies in Islamic culture, etc.

In short, Viswabharati University is the unique contribution of Gurudev Tagore where four-fold principles of education are followed, viz, freedom, creative self-expression, active communion with the nature and man and internationalism. It preaches spiritual unity of mankind and universal

✓ mankind and universal brotherhood. Rural development through education is another chief contribution of Tagore.

His concept of freedom and teacher still brings him immortality which the present generation and posterity cannot forget. He, unlike Rousseau, was a realist giving practical shape to his ideology. He made a happy blend between the two opposite cultures-western and eastern through his brain-child-Viswabharati.