

Philosophical and Educational Thought of Tagore

Philosophical Thought of Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore was born in a cultured, prosperous and established family of Calcutta (Kolkata) on 6 May, 1861. His father, Debendranath Tagore was a scholar, art lover, religious, social worker, patriot and saintly man. Prosperity, but simple life and high thinking were the qualities of this family. Rabindranath Tagore was greatly influenced by all this.

Gurudev had read the Vedas and Upanishads in his childhood. Metaphysics of the Upanishads had profound influence on him. Later it became the basis of his life. Gurudev has not propounded any new philosophy, nor he has applied his energy in the analysis of any philosophy, but as a speaker, writer and poet, the thoughts he has displayed, give the clear picture of his philosophical thought.

Gurudev was a breeder of Upanishadic philosophy. He saw Upanishadic philosophy with humanistic viewpoint. He considered the existence of God in all beings of the universe and on this basis, emphasized on creating the feeling of union in all beings of the world. Some scholars term the philosophical thought of Gurudev as **Vishwabodh Darshan**.

Some scholars commit the mistake of analyzing the philosophical thought of Gurudev in the context of western philosophy. Gurudev believed in the soul and God, so some scholars consider him to be an idealist. Gurudev considered this material world as true and real, so some scholars consider him to be a realist. Gurudev loved nature, he considered it to be simple, pure and joyful, so some scholars consider him to be a naturalist. Gurudev emphasized on the practical aspect of human life, so some scholars consider him to be a pragmatist. In this context we have to submit that Gurudev was much influenced by the Upanishads and he has tried to look at the Upanishadic philosophy with humanistic attitude; his philosophical thought is fully Indian, it has no concern with western philosophies. We shall present the metaphysics, epistemology, logic, axiology and ethics of Gurudev's philosophical thought.

Metaphysics of Vishvabodh Darshan

Gurudev considered this universe as the manifestation of God's personality. According to him, this God-made world is as true as God Himself. He has accepted God in both forms — Nirankara (formless) and Sakara (with form). According to him, He is nirakara as a creator and is sakara in the form of universe (nature). Gurudev experienced God in every particle of the nature.

Gurudev has accepted the soul in three forms according to the Upanishads. In its first form, it inclines man towards self-defence; in its second form, it inclines man for the discovery of knowledge and attainment of infinite realization; and in its third form it inclines man towards understanding its infinite form. According to Gurudev, these three functions are the natural qualities of the soul. Gurudev considered self-realization as the ultimate aim of human life.

Gurudev considered man to be a being having the soul, and said that the ultimate aim of human life is attainment of self-realization. He has divided human life into two aspects — physical and spiritual. In the physical aspect he has included his own body, his natural environment, his family and his social, cultural, economic and political life; and in the spiritual aspect he has included his soul.

Gurudev had clear views about the development of man that physical means are needed for his physical development, and **social service** and **prem yoga sadhana** are needed for his spiritual development. He clarified that love for mankind can make man experience **Ekatmabhava** (unity of soul).

Epistemology and Logic of Vishvabodh Darshan

The greatest feature of our Indian philosophy is attaching significance to both physical and spiritual aspects of man. In this context, the following sukta from the *Ishopanishad* is worth mentioning :

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति ये अविद्यामुपासत।

ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायां रतः॥

(hat is, the people who worship only **avidya** (ignorance), that is, the world, they enter the darkness, and the people who are busy in only **brahma vidya** (spiritual knowledge), they enter even more darkness.)

Gurudev too favoured this opinion. He attached equal significance to both physical and spiritual knowledge. He called the knowledge of the physical world as useful knowledge and the knowledge of the spiritual world as pure knowledge. In his view, the feeling of unity in all living beings and non-living things of the world is ultimate truth and its experience is the ultimate aim of human life.

Regarding the means of attainment of knowledge, Gurudev has clarified that the knowledge of physical objects and activities is got through physical means (senses), and the knowledge of spiritual elements (soul and God) is got through

abstract means (yoga). Of the abstract means, he has accepted the significance of **prem yoga**. He clarified that for the knowledge of the spiritual element, the easiest way is the **prem marga** (path of love), love alone makes us sensitive towards the mankind, it makes us experience the feeling of unity and help us in attaining self-realization or God.

Axiology and Ethics of Vishvabodh Darshan

Gurudev considered man as the total sum of physical and spiritual powers, and laid emphasis on the development of both of them. For it, he emphasized on making man a good man, a man who is healthy by body, pure at heart and is sensitive, who have love for the mankind and loves every particle of the nature. He considered love as the universal value and wanted to make it the basis of thought and conduct of man. He argued that love is that feeling which makes man sensitive to another man and inclines man towards human service. He believed that love can also make physical life happy and can help attain spiritual wholeness. This is the reason that all programmes of Gurudev — village service, social service, national service, international understanding — were based on love. He reasoned that in the absence of love even the feeling for human service cannot be aroused. Gurudev considered human service as God's service.

Educational Thought of Tagore

☐ Gurudev was a man of a multidimensional personality. He has attained the most fame in the literary field. He occupies the same place in Bangla literature as is occupied by Kalidas in Sanskrit and Tulsidas in Hindi. Gurudev has also contributed immensely in other fields too. The tasks that he accomplished for social reform, national awakening and development of international spirit, we shall remain indebted to him for all times to come. Gurudev has also worked for educational reforms. He is established as an educationist in the educational field. ☐

☐ Gurudev had his own experiences of the educational field. He had to suffer the bindings of home education and evils of school education during his childhood. Later these experiences served as the basis of his educational philosophy. In 1892 when he was only 31 years old, he wrote the *Shikshar Herfer* and with it drew the attention of the people towards the demerits of the contemporary education. Besides, he gave his suggestions for reform in the educational field. By the end of nineteenth century, Gurudev's several literary creations and educational articles had been published. In 1901, he established the **Shantiniketan Brahmacharya Ashrama** at the Shantiniketan Ashrama situated near Bolpur, in order to give concrete form to his educational thought. After this, he had two chief functions — service to literature and development of the Shantiniketan. From 1901 to 1941, Gurudev thought and wrote much on education. ☐ After his *Shikshar Herfer* in 1892, the chief creations include *Hindu Vishvavidyalaya* (1911), *Dharma Shiksha* (1912),

Shiksha Vidhi (1912), *Stri Shiksha* (1915), *My School* (1915), *Vishva Bharati* (1919), *Shri Niketan* (1927), *Ideals of Education* (1929), *Shiksha Sar Katha* (1930) *My Educational Mission* (1931), *To The Students* (1935), *Shiksha aur Sanskriti* (1935) and *Gurukul Kangri* (1941).

↳ Gurudev has described the English medium education of his times as impractical and has emphasized on imparting education through mother tongue. He emphasized on this fact too that education should fulfil both types of needs of man — physical and spiritual. Here we shall present an analysis of educational thought of Gurudev. ↷

Concept of Education

↳ Gurudev considered education as essential need of human life. In his view, education is that social process by which man attain physical progress and spiritual wholeness. Gurudev has defined education from the physical viewpoint as follows : **“True education consists in knowing the use of any useful material that has been collected, to know its real nature and to build along with life a real shelter for life.”** Besides it, Gurudev considered God pervading every particle of the nature and considered that the ultimate aim of human life is to experience this spiritual unity. In his view, that is the supreme aim or function of education. In his own words, **“The highest education is that which makes our life in harmony with all existence.”** ↷

Aims of Education

Gurudev was in favour of such education which could effect physical and spiritual development of man, and he considered these as aims of education. His views about aims of education can be presented in the following way :

1. Physical Development ↳ Gurudev has laid foremost emphasis on man's physical development. Gurudev has taken physical development in some what wider sense. ↳ In his view, man's body should be healthy and beautiful, his muscles should be strong and senses should be capable in their functioning. ↳ He wanted to keep the children in the beautiful lap of nature; to allow them to climb up the trees and to dive in the ponds, and let them do different types of tricks with the nature. These activities will effect their natural physical development.

2. Intellectual Development : ↳ Gurudev laid stress on intellectual development too. But by intellectual development he did not mean the knowledge of certain subjects, rather by the development of different mental faculties — memory, imagination, thinking and logic, and their powerful organization by which man gets knowledge of different types, separates useful and useless facts, searches and constructs new useful facts, and thus succeeds to make his material life happy and experience spiritual wholeness. ↳ In his view, this intellectual development can take place by taking part in the real activities of life.

3. Individual and Social Development : Gurudev believed in the individual differences of men. He opined that education should be used to effect children's development according to their own interests, aptitudes and capabilities. But this development would take place in the society itself. In his view, every man has spiritual relationship with another, due to which they are motivated towards each other's welfare and create social organizations. Education should necessarily develop the spirit of welfare of all in all the children.

4. Cultural Development and the Development of National and International Spirit : Gurudev was the harbinger of national awakening. He emphasized on acquainting the Indians with their original culture and inspire them to conduct themselves accordingly. He believed that it can develop national unity. He feared that narrow nationalism can hinder the human progress, so he emphasized on the development of international understanding too. He reasoned that the difference in different human civilizations and cultures does not separate us, but acquaints us with the diversity of the world. On this basis he has given place to different languages and cultures of the country and the world in his *Shantiniketan*.

5. Moral Development Gurudev was a humanist. He has emphasized on good human behaviour. He had his own concept of a good man; a man who does not distinguish between man and man in the world. For it, Gurudev has laid stress on several moral rules — celibacy, discipline, contemplation and meditation, and for their abidance has considered the internal power, internal freedom, self-discipline and knowledge as necessary.

6. Vocational Development Gurudev wanted to provide economic skill to all people, so he laid foremost stress on the education for handicraft, artisanry and agriculture.

7. Spiritual Development According to Gurudev, true education is the one that acquaints us with the unity of the whole world. According to him, when man begins to feel one soul in all the beings of the world, then it should be taken that he has attained self-realization. For the attainment of this supreme aim, he has emphasized the knowledge of national and international cultures. He clarified that we should first experience social and cultural unity, after that spiritual unity can be experienced.

Curriculum of Education

In this context the first thing is that Gurudev has laid equal emphasis on the development of all the three aspects of man — natural, social and spiritual, and for their proper development, has constructed activity-centred curriculum. Secondly, he has laid emphasis on the knowledge of languages and cultures of national and international importance along side our own language and culture.

He was a great lover of nature and fine arts. He has given them important place in the curriculum. He has clarified that co-curricular activities contribute a lot in the development of the child. Therefore, games and drama should be given a place in the curriculum. Due to his wider viewpoint, the curriculum constructed by him is very extensive. The activity-centred curriculum that he prescribed for the Shantiniketan in the beginning, had the following form :

1. **Subjects** : Mother tongue, Sanskrit, English, history, geography, nature study, science, art and music.
2. **Useful Activities** : Gardening, agriculture, regional study, tour, collection of different articles and laboratory work.
3. **Other Activities** : Games, play, music, dance, creative writing, village development and social service work.

And as the Shantiniketan expanded, it came to include languages, literatures and cultures of national and international significance in its curriculum. Today it has become a prominent centre in the form of **Vishwabharati University** for international liberal and technical education. It has arrangement of education from pre-primary level to higher and technological education, and has specified different curricula for different levels. The curricula for classes 1 to 12 are according to the educational structure of 10+2+3, but it includes co-curricular activities and social service work as compulsory. The important feature of its curriculum is that there is no difference of national or foreign. In this context, Gurudev clearly expressed that knowledge is not meant for the people of any particular country, but for the whole mankind. This is the reason that the Vishwabharati University has arrangement for the education of languages and cultures, and science and technology of the country and abroad. Some special curricula are run for foreigner students (Indian music, etc.) too. Another high point of its curriculum is that it is still centred on art, culture, religion and village development.

Methods of Teaching

Gurudev considered man to be the total sum of physical and spiritual elements and said that man's development depends on these two faculties. He has not constructed any teaching method, but has suggested for the reform of the prevailing teaching methods. He staunchly opposed the bookish and telling methods of his time, and emphasized on the fact that whatever is taught to the students, should be taught keeping them in the real circumstances of life, by self-activity and self-experience. He opposed the English medium education imparted during his times and emphasized on education through mother tongue. The Vishwabharati established by him imparts education from pre-primary to class 12 in mother tongue Bengali. Keeping English as the medium at higher level is helplessness. The teaching principles as propounded by Gurudev can be presented as follows :

- (1) Don't teach anything to children forcibly, first motivate them to learn.
- (2) Whatever is to be taught to the children, teach them by life's real activities.
- (3) Give the children opportunities for the use of senses, let them learn by self-experience.
- (4) Teach the children with the mother tongue as the medium.
- (5) Use any teaching method, but it should be interesting and the students should take part in it actively.
- (6) Keep the children free from harsh control, let them think and work freely.
- (7) Behave with the children with love and sympathy under all circumstances.

It becomes necessary to discuss in some detail about the ancient and prevalent teaching methods as emphasized by Gurudev and as he himself used.

1. Oral Method : In the ancient times, the teachers taught their pupils using oral methods, such as preaching, lecture, question-answer, debate and reasoning methods. Gurudev accepted the significance of these methods, but with the precaution that these methods should be used only when it is not possible to learn by doing in real life circumstances and by self-experience. In this context, Gurudev said that any oral method should be used with giving opportunities to the children to think and resolve their doubts and they should be kept active continuously.

2. Self-Study Method : This is a very ancient method of teaching-learning. Gurudev had used this method for himself. He had studied the 'Vedas' and 'Upanishads' under the guidance of his father and elder brother. In the context of the use of this method, Gurudev gave three suggestions. First, the children should be made capable of self-study and mental ability of reading to understand, second, necessary directions should be given to the children for self-study; and third, discussion should be held with them after self-study in order to resolve their doubts.

3. Analysis and Synthesis Method : Gurudev considered this method as useful for clarification of facts, but emphasized on two precautions in its use. First, whatever examples are presented before the children should be related to their life; and second, children should have active participation in generalization and drawing inference.

4. Activity Method : Gurudev laid foremost emphasis on this that opportunities should be given to the children for learning by doing and learning by self-experience. The method of self-activity and self-experience is the activity method. But he has emphasized on certain precautions in the use of this method too. First, activity should pertain to the life of the children. Second, the activity should be interesting to the children. Third, the children should be free to execute the activity in their own manner. And fourth, activity should be such in the execution of which the children face no problem. He used nature observation, tour and play-way methods as activity method.

5. Experiment Method : Gurudev has supported and used the experiment method for skills, science and other practical subjects and activities. There are three steps of this method — first, demonstration by the teacher; second, imitation by the students; and third, exercise by the students. Thus, this method is the sum of three methods — demonstration, imitation and exercise methods. Gurudev clarified that in the use of this method too, the doubts of the students should be eliminated and 'how' should be replied along with 'why'.

Discipline

Gurudev accepted the significance of discipline, but he accepted discipline not as an external order but as an internal feeling. He opposed punishment for the development of this internal feeling. He clarified that punishment makes students rebellious and develops the feeling of opposition in them. Gurudev was in the favour of self-discipline and emphasized on the need of higher social environment for its attainment. His clear opinion was that if the teachers in schools are learned and are of high character and they behave with the children affectionately and sympathetically, the children will themselves abide by discipline. For the development of discipline, he considered the necessity of games and literary and cultural programmes in the schools. He experienced that man gets opportunities for meditation in the higher social environment and he learns to live in discipline. The students remain disciplined in such an environment, and if they happen to commit an error, they correct it themselves. The whole environment of Vishwabharati established by him is based on Indian culture; the teachers and students live a simple life there and remain fully disciplined.

Teacher

Gurudev was fully traditional as far as teacher is concerned. In his view, the teacher should be fully learned, patient and devoted to the children. He used to say that the students learn the methods of their manners sooner than the knowledge imparted by them, so the teachers should be learned, celibate, men of high character and ideal conduct. He expected of the teachers to understand individual differences of the students, to arrange proper education for them, and behave with them with love and sympathy. He termed despotic teachers as jail wardens. Gurudev supported nationalism and international goodwill. Such teachers alone can develop nationalism and internationalism in the children. For this all, he considered the need of teacher training.

Student

Gurudev respected the individuality of the students, and emphasized on providing suitable education for them. On the other hand, he expected of them to follow celibacy. In celibacy, sensual control, purification of mind, speech and deed,

and simple and natural life are especially important. According to Gurudev, the students should rise early, clean their body and abide by rules and orders; they should be polite in conduct, should worship nature and beauty, and should be curious for the attainment of both worldly and spiritual knowledge. So long they are not motivated by themselves and have not devotion to the teachers, they would not be able to learn anything. Besides, they should keep away from uncivilized, improper and censurable behaviour and thought.

School

In the viewpoint of Gurudev, schools should be located away from the noise of towns in the lap of nature just like the ashramas of ancient times. He believed that the teachers and students can worship education in the peaceful environment. He laid much emphasis on the fact that the schools should be the representatives of the nation; they should have proper educational arrangement for the education of national civilization and culture. Besides, there should be arrangement for education of languages and cultures of international importance by which the students are able to understand the world. His Vishwabharati University is presenting all these in the concrete form.

Today, Vishwabharati has arrangement from pre-primary education to higher education and technological education. This university is being run in two campuses — Shantiniketan and Sriniketan. Sriniketan is located at 3 km away from Shantiniketan. Both of them are located in the lap of nature. At present, the Vishwabharati has different buildings for different types of education at different levels which have been converted into departments.

1. Mrinalini Anand Pathashala : It is attached with Shantiniketan's Path Bhavan. It holds kindergarten classes.

2. Santosh Pathashala : It is attached with Sriniketan's Shiksha Satra. It holds kindergarten classes.

3. Path Bhavan (Secondary School) : It is a residential and co-education institution located in Shantiniketan. It holds education from classes 1 to 10.

4. Shiksha Satra (Secondary School) : It is a co-education institution located in Sriniketan. It also holds classes from 1 to 10.

5. Uttar Shiksha Sadan (Higher Secondary School) : It is a residential and co-education institution located in Shantiniketan. It holds classes for +2 (classes 11 and 12).

6. Vidya Bhavan (Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences) : It is located in Shantiniketan and it holds graduate, postgraduate, diploma and certificate courses in humanities and social sciences, and has arrangement for the research of all subjects of postgraduate level.

7. **Shiksha Bhavan (Institute of Science)** : This building is also located in Shantiniketan and it holds graduate, postgraduate, diploma and certificate courses in science and has arrangement for research in all subjects of postgraduate level.

8. **Kala Bhavan (Institute of Fine Arts)** : It is also located in Shantiniketan. It holds graduate, postgraduate, diploma and certificate courses in art and has arrangement for research in all subjects.

9. **Sangit Bhavan (Institute of Music, Dance and Drama)** : It is also located in Shantiniketan. It holds graduate, postgraduate, diploma and certificate courses in music and has arrangement for research in all subjects of postgraduate level.

10. **Vinay Bhavan (Institute of Education)** : It is also located in Shantiniketan. It holds B.Ed and M.Ed courses and has arrangement for research in education.

11. **Rabindra Bhavan (Institute of Tagore Studies, Museum and Archives)** : It is also located in Shantiniketan. It does not hold any type of instructional work, but there are available all types of Rabindra literature and research documents done on Rabindra. This is the centre of study for researchers on Rabindra.

12. **Rural Extension Centre (Department of Adult and Continuing Education and Extension)** : It is located in Sriniketan campus. In it, the rural youths are trained in the expansion of literacy, social education and mass education works; besides, rural women are trained in handicrafts. In it, the 'Jan Shiksha Niliyan' centre has been established under the National Education Policy, 1986, and through it are run programmes in adult education, continuing education and population education.

13. **Shilpa Bhavan (Centre of Rural Industries)** : It is located in Sriniketan campus. It holds diploma and certificate training courses in handloom weaving, wood work, pottery and handmade paper.

14. **Palli Charcha Kendra (Centre for Rural Studies)** : This centre is also located in Sriniketan. It has arrangement for the two-year postgraduate courses in rural development and anthropology and research work in social and economic problems in rural regions.

15. **Department of Social Work** : This department is located in Sriniketan campus. In it are run courses in bachelor of social work (BSW) and master of social work (MSW), and research work is conducted in social welfare and rural development fields.

16. **Palli Shiksha Bhavan (Institute of Agriculture)** : It is also located in Sriniketan. It is an agriculture university in itself. It holds graduate and postgraduate courses and research work in agriculture.

17. Agro-Economic Research Centre : This research institute is also located in Sriniketan campus. This institute holds research work in agriculture and rural economics.

18. Shiksha Charcha (Primary Teacher Training Centre) : This institute is located in Sriniketan campus. It has arrangement for the training of primary teachers.

Other Aspects of Education

Gurudev has expressed his thoughts on other aspects of education too. We shall present his educational thought on mass education, women education, vocational education, religious education and national and international education.

Mass Education : Gurudev had seen the poor and pitiable condition of India of his times and had also seen the prosperous life in the western countries. He had experienced that the root cause of our backwardness was the lack of education. So he emphasized on the need of mass education. Gurudev took mass education in some what wider sense. First, equal, general, compulsory and free education should be arranged for all children of urban and rural areas, and second, illiterate adults should be taught how to read and write. Gurudev clarified that 70% population of our country lives in villages, so rural problems be given a prominent place in education. According to Gurudev, progress of India is possible by the progress of villages. Gurudev emphasized on opening night schools for adult education and said that the teachers of primary schools and students of secondary schools should teach the adults in these schools.

Women Education : Gurudev has clarified the significance of women education and has presented a complete outline for their education. According to Gurudev, primary education should be equal for boys and girls. Home science should be compulsory for girls at the secondary level because they have to play the role of wives and mothers, and higher education should be equal for both boys and girls. Gurudev has laid much stress on this fact that both of boys and girls should get equal opportunities and equal facilities for education. He clarified that so long all men and women of the country are not educated and they do not march in every field shoulder to shoulder, the development of the country cannot be ensured. Though Gurudev was not in the favour of co-education, yet he permitted co-education at the places where separate schools for girls cannot be made available. It makes out that he was very conscious about women education.

Vocational Education : Gurudev has clarified that vocational education is very essential for the economic development of the country. Because our country is an agricultural and cottage industrial country, there should be special arrangement for the education of agriculture and cottage industries. He did not want to deprive us from science and technology too, and considered this type of education necessary for heavy industries.

Religious Education : Gurudev's viewpoint about religion was very-wide. According to him, religion is acute desire for the infinite and His blissful experience. He opposed superstitions, showy methods of worship and rituals. He said clearly that true religiosity resides not in worship and meditation, but in considering man a man; it lies in the service of the mankind, in the spirit of world's well-being and in experiencing unity in the whole world. Gurudev clarified that this religion cannot be taught by preaching, lectures or books; its education can be imparted by making it a part of life. For it, he emphasized on inclusion of morning prayers; celebrating the birthdays of founders of all religions and acquainting the children with their teachings; feeling of divine element in the beauty of nature, art and music; in the service of the poor and the deprived; raising the fallen; and work for the welfare of society, nation and world. Gurudev believed that unity can be experienced by the service to the mankind; he considered just this as true religion.

National and International Education : Gurudev has not presented any plan for national and international education, but his views expressed here and there clarify that he wanted to acquaint the people with their language, literature, religion and philosophy. But he was not a supporter of narrow nationalism; he supported internationalism. He has emphasized on the study of own language, literature, religion, philosophy, besides other languages, literatures, religions and philosophies of the world.

Evaluation of Educational Thought of Tagore

The evaluation of an object, activity or thought is done on the basis of some pre-specified norms. Education is the process of development of man, it is the process of enhancing his knowledge and skill, and is the process of giving proper direction to his thought, conduct and behaviour. In such a case, the evaluation of an educational thought or system can be done on the basis how far it has been or can be helpful in the development of man.

Of the great people who have taken birth in our country in the modern times, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore occupy the highest place. Though Gurudev is popular mostly in the field of literature, yet his contribution in the educational field is no less. He is well established as an educationist in the educational field. Now we shall present an evaluation of his educational thought and practice.

Concept of Education

Gurudev is the first Indian thinker who has accepted education as the social and multipurpose process and has clarified its form and its functions. According to him, "True education consists in knowing the use of any useful material that

has been collected, to know its real nature and to build along with life a real shelter for life." He further said, "The highest education is that which makes our life in harmony with all existence."

If we look at these two definitions of education as given by Gurudev, seriously, we find that he has accepted education as the means of preparing man for his practical life as well as for his spiritual life. At present, most of the educationist agree with it.

Aims of Education

Gurudev has classified aims of education into two classes — physical development and spiritual development. In physical development, he has included the aims of physical, mental, social, cultural, moral, character and vocational development and in spiritual development has included the aims of moral development and social service development.

If we look at the aims of education as determined by Gurudev, we find that these are universal and perennial aims of education. If a person thinks even one aim as unnecessary, in our view, his viewpoint towards life is equally incomplete. Of course, some aims are meant to be according to our age; such as the education of the political system and citizenship and attainment of national goals. During Gurudev's times our country was not free, perhaps due to this, Gurudev's attention was not drawn to these aims.

Curriculum of Education

For the attainment of above aims, Gurudev constructed a detailed curriculum. In the list of subjects he included language, literature, history, geography, nature study, science, art and music; and in the list of useful activities he included gardening, agriculture, handicraft, regional study, touring, collection of different objects and laboratory work, and in other activities, he has given place to games, play, music, dance, creative writing, village upliftment and social service. He has also included the teaching of languages, religions, philosophies and cultures of international significance in the curricula for secondary and higher studies. The Vishvabharati established by him conducts this type of curriculum. Technology has also been included in it.

There are no two views that all types of knowledge should be given place in the curriculum, but giving excessive emphasis on several languages, village and social service projects does not seem to be practical, though it may sound necessary. In this regard we are of the opinion that the children should not be imposed upon the burden of the study of more number of languages and social work. Everything is useful and necessary, but the children's ability and school's execution capability should also be kept in view.

Teaching Methods

Gurudev limited himself to the analysis of ancient and prevalent methods and discussing some basic maxims, as — don't impose anything upon the children; keep them in real circumstances to provide them opportunities for learning through senses; make teaching interesting through mother tongue; give freedom to children in learning; and behave with them with love and sympathy. He has not constructed any new teaching method.

If we look carefully, we find that teaching-related thought of Gurudev has certainly influenced the teaching methods in Indian schools in some measure, directly or indirectly. Mother tongue is made the medium of education in place of English, and the ancient teaching methods came to be used in their new form.

Discipline

As far as discipline in educational institutions is concerned, Gurudev laid emphasis on its need and considered higher social environment and teachers' ideal conduct as necessary for its attainment. What should be done if a student still involves himself in undue conduct? Gurudev talked of love and sympathy. He argued that in an environment replete with love and sympathy, the students admit their own errors themselves and reform their conduct by themselves. Gurudev opposed punishment to children under any circumstances.

In our view, the above thought of Gurudev as pertaining to discipline may be effective in individual teaching, but not in collective or group teaching. We are of the view that the punishment should be necessarily provided for, but it should be based on love and sympathy. The children should be made to feel that the punishment being given to them is for their own good.

Teacher

The views of Gurudev regarding teacher were traditional on the one hand, and psychological on the other. In his view, the teachers should be learned, self-controlled and devoted to the students. He also expected of the teachers to understand the individual differences of the students and arrange education for them accordingly, and behave with them with love, sympathy and cooperation. He termed the despotic teachers as jail wardens. Gurudev favoured nationalism and internationalism, so he considered that the teachers ought to have patriotism and international goodwill both.

If we look at the thought of Gurudev, it becomes evident that the teachers should be just like this. But it is not possible in this materialistic world. It would be enough if the teachers do their duty honestly and devotedly.

Student

The views of Gurudev regarding students were also traditional as well as modern. He expected of the students to adopt celibacy, and on the other respected their individuality. He emphasized on providing education on the basis of their individual differences.

The word celibacy may be taken by the people by surprise, but this should be the essential attribute in the students. They should display commendable conduct and should save themselves from polluted or improper conduct. It would be great to expect of them sensual control, devotion in teachers and loyalty to study.

School

According to Gurudev, schools should be away from noise, in the lap of nature, like ancient ashramas. He also wanted that the schools should be the true representatives of the nation and they should provide education of national civilization and culture. But he also wanted from them to provide education of languages and cultures of international importance, so that the students may be able to feel international understanding.

The first view of Gurudev is not possible today. In order to make education available to everybody, it is necessary that the schools be located in the population. Of course, the schools should function as the true representatives of the nation, in such a case, the honour of the nation can be defended. It is the age of internationalism, so the curriculum and environment of the schools should be such that may be helpful in the development of international understanding.

Other Aspects of Education

Mass Education : Gurudev has clarified the significance of mass education. He said that illiteracy is the root cause of all our sufferings. He has taken mass education in a very wide sense. According to him, at first, there should be arrangement for compulsory and free education for all children up to certain age, and second, knowledge of reading and writing should be imparted to all illiterate adults. The immediate influence of Gurudev's views could be seen immediately. We are in the process of this endeavour, and it has brought about some satisfactory results too. At the time of independence, literacy was only about 14%, which rose to 65.38% in 2001, and at present (2009) it might have gone to about 70%.

Women Education : Gurudev was a great supporter of women education. He has clarified about women education that primary and higher education for men and women should be equal, but home science should be compulsory for women at secondary level. Our country has provided education according to the views of Gurudev, but some educationists are not in favour of distinguishing between their education at any level. We also hold this view.

Vocational Education : Gurudev possessed very extensive views about vocational education. He was in the favour of imparting handicraft and agriculture education to average students, and education of heavy industries to able students. We followed the path illuminated by him, as a result of which we are proceeding on the path of continuous economic development.

Religious Education : The views of Gurudev regarding religious education, in today's context are very practicable. In the present intellectual age, religion cannot be bound in methods of worship; religion is, what is done for people's welfare, by which man, society, nation and the whole world get material and spiritual realization. Tagore established human service as a universal and perennial religion in order to look after human welfare. Modern secular India should accept religion in this form.

National Education : There are no two opinions that Gurudev was a harbinger of national awakening. He had awakened India in deep slumber, and infused the magic of national consciousness in them, but he was a foreseer too. He had known that no country can progress without international cooperation in the future. This is the reason that he emphasized on the education of languages, literatures, sciences, religions and philosophies of international significance besides those of national importance. As it is, Gurudev considered God as pervading all beings of the universe and talked of world's well-being from this viewpoint. Thus, he was the pleader of nationalism, internationalism and world's well-being.

Influence of Tagore

Gurudev did not distinguish between man and man. He emphasized on the feeling of unity in all men. It has greatly helped in the creation of classless society in our country. He favoured religious forbearance in place of religious narrowness. Religious fundamentalism has come to be eradicated to some extent in our country. He respected all cultures. It has helped in the development of cultural tolerance a great deal.

The greatest task of Gurudev lies in making the ancient Indian ideal 'world brotherhood' into modern 'international goodwill'. He looked at all languages, literatures, cultures and arts of the country and of the world with respect. He provided the study and training of languages, literatures, arts, music and dances of the country and of the world in his *Vishvabharati*. He acquainted the foreigners with Indian languages, literature, cultures, religions and philosophy, and art, music and dance systems. As a result, the education of Indian languages, literature, religions and philosophies, and art, music and dance came to be held in other countries. Gurudev leads those who endeavoured to start the process of internationalization of languages, literatures, arts, skills and science.

Gurudev has much influence in the educational field too. Education came to be provided through the medium of national and international languages, and steps were taken for mass education, women education, vocational education and adult education. The concept of native or alien came to be discarded and it replaced with the thinking that everything belongs to mankind, what is good is for mankind. Now all universities of India hold education for languages, literatures, arts, sciences of international significance.

Conclusion

In brief, it can be said that Gurudev will be ever remembered for the suggestions and functions that he did make for the reform of Indian education. He analyzed the form and functions of education and laid equal emphasis on the development of both physical and spiritual aspects of man. Besides giving place to national languages, cultures and sciences, he also included the languages, cultures and sciences of international importance, made the ancient methods useful by the use of new teaching principles; taught the teachers and students how to follow celibacy in educational field, emphasized on behaving with the children with love and sympathy, and turned the schools as the centres of social service and village upliftment. Not only this, he raised the slogan of mass education, women education and vocational education. He transformed religious education into humanistic education and commenced national and international education.

In order to give a concrete form to his educational thought, Gurudev started a school at the Shantiniketan ashrama near Bolpur in 1892. This school which was started with mere five students has soared into the Vishvabharati University where thousands of students study. It does not hold education under cool trees now, there are highrise buildings, it is an educational town in itself. The devoted teachers have been replaced by high salaried teachers and professors. However, some of its features remind us of Gurudev. There are separate buildings (institutes) for the teaching of fine arts and training in different skills; there is a provision for the education of languages, religions, philosophies and cultures of international importance; and the education of social service and village development activities are compulsory at all levels. The teachers and students live a simple life. The Vishvabharati is not meant solely for India, it is meant for the whole world. It is a university in true sense.

We can see the clear impact of Gurudev's educational thought and practice on Indian education. The medium of education in the whole country is the mother tongue, and almost all universities provide education in languages, arts, skills, and sciences of international importance. The educational system for mass education, women education, vocational education, humanistic religious education and national and international education was started by Gurudev first. Truly, he shaped the modern Indian education. In the words of **Dr. Mukherjee**, "Tagore was the greatest prophet of educational renaissance in modern India." We bow to him over and over again.

Test Questions

Essay Type Questions

1. Elaborate Tagore's Vishvabodh Darshan.
2. Discuss Tagore's thought regarding aims of education, curriculum and teaching methods.
3. 'Tagore was the greatest prophet of educational renaissance in modern India.' Discuss the statement.
4. Evaluate the contribution of Tagore to Indian education.

Short Answer Type Questions

5. What did Gurudev Tagore mean by the spirit of unity?
6. What were Gurudev's views about man?
7. How did Gurudev view man's development?
8. How did Gurudev's views influence the form and culture of Indian society?
9. Why is Gurudev considered to be the harbinger of the process of internationalization in the educational field?
10. What type of views did Gurudev hold about mass education?
11. What were the views of Gurudev about women education?

Objective Questions

12. Tick the right alternatives :
 - (i) In which field is Gurudev the most famous?

(a) Education	(b) Literature
(c) Religion	(d) Politics
 - (ii) What influenced Gurudev Tagore the most?

(a) Vedas	(b) Upanishads
(c) Gita	(d) Puranas
 - (iii) What is the present name of educational institution as established by Tagore?

(a) Shantiniketan	(b) Sriniketan
(c) Vishvabharati	(d) None of these
 - (iv) In which form Tagore accepted religion.

(a) Worship	(b) Rituals
(c) Human service	(d) Devotion to God

Answers

12. (i) Literature

12. (iii) Vishvabharati

12. (ii) Upanishads

12. (iv) Human service

