

AN OVERVIEW OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND ITS RELEVANCE IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

The main focus of India's current education system is a means to future employment that creates an obsession with passing examinations, which in turn forces textbook-centered teaching. Learning has little relevance to students' lives and interests today and thus is not enjoyed and valued as an end in itself. With success attributed solely to science and technology skills, the development of creativity in artistic skills is mainly disregarded. The present education system does not produce desired outcomes. It may be appropriate at this time to look at the thoughts and ideas of Rabindranath and re-examine his educational views for their relevance today. Hence Tagore's concept of "narrative imagination" will be the most helpful model for nurturing creativity, empathy, and diversity. For him, one of the central skills needed for a democratic society was the ability to imagine and see things from varied perspectives. Starting the learning process with a textbook rather than with those things close to a child's heart had much to do with the endless desire for material goods and well-being and the meaningless pursuit of the instruments of war and power. Education needs to nurture students' souls and its purpose is not just employment but more importantly personal fulfillment and self-improvement. The inability to empathize with others' viewpoints is a key cause of apathy, oppression, racism, violence, and war in today's world. Tagore said that we may become powerful by knowledge but we attain fullness by sympathy which is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed. He used education as a tool for social change by making young people rational, independent thinkers rather than blind followers of rituals and traditions. Tagore considered the lack of education to be the main obstacle in the way of India's progress and it is the root of all problems. The basic objectives of any worthwhile national education system should be the promotion of creativity, freedom, joy, and awareness of the country's cultural heritage. Tagore's educational ideals have been agreed upon by other educationists and many of his innovations have now become part of general educational practices, but his special role lay in the emphasis on harmony balance between materialism and spiritualism in total development of personality. Talking about the crisis of education, Tagore said that a child should be permitted to read books. Our education system is lifeless as small children are burdened with piles of books. Tagore said that from childhood to

adolescence and again from adolescence to manhood, we are coolies of the goddess of learning, carrying loads of words on our folded books. The problems of modern education are attendance, use of other unfair means and discipline, etc. It is more certificates oriented, irrelevant to intelligence, and less correlated with nature. These problems can be solved by providing freedom that is not applied in classrooms. The core of Tagore's educational philosophy was learning from nature, music, and life. This is the reason why his education is easily acceptable to the human mind. The visionary in him solved the problem of today a century earlier.

Keywords: Education, creativity, personality, encouragement, awareness

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore is well known for composing beautiful literature, including the national anthem of India and Bangladesh, establishing Shantiniketan as a university and mesmerizing everyone through his powerful yet subtle writing. A poet, song composer, novelist, playwright, painter, teacher, and great scholar Rabindranath Tagore was a universal philosopher of the 20th century. Born on 7th May 1861, he was a thinker, social reformer, educationist, and also a great priest of Indian culture and tradition. Rabindranath Tagore, by his words, touched on one of the most sensitive aspects of absolute freedom for the Indians. He desired a country where the Indians could live with full dignity and respect. Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian to be awarded the Nobel Prize. For his work, 'Geetanjali', Tagore was awarded the laurels. His contribution to Indian literature is considerable and unforgettable. Apart from all of these, Tagore also influenced the Indian Nationalist Movement and opposed British rule. Rabindranath Tagore, by his words, touched on one of the most sensitive aspects of absolute freedom for the Indians. He desired a country where the Indians could live with full dignity and respect. Rabindranath was a great poet and a patriot too, who always believed in the oneness of life and its expression. Through his writings, he strived to bring people much closer to unite them in order to maintain love, peace, and brotherhood. He described well about love and harmony through his poetry and stories. His whole life also provides a clear view of love and harmony with each other. His devotion towards his country is shown by the following statement, "My country that is forever India, the country of my forefathers, the country of my children, my country has given me life and strength." And again, "I shall be born in India again." His contribution to Indian literature is very vast and unforgettable. Tagore saw education as a vehicle for appreciating the richest aspects of other cultures while maintaining one's own cultural specificity. As he wrote: I was brought up in an atmosphere of aspiration, aspiration for the expansion of the human spirit. We in our home sought freedom of power in our language, freedom of imagination in our literature, freedom of soul in our religious creeds, and that of mind in our social environment. Such an opportunity has given me confidence in the power of education which is one with life and only which can give us real freedom, the highest that is claimed for man, his freedom of moral communion in the human world.... I try to assert in my words and works that education has its only meaning and object in freedom from ignorance about the laws of the

universe, and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world. In my institution, I have attempted to create an atmosphere of naturalness in our relationship with strangers, and the spirit of hospitality which is the first virtue in men that made civilization possible. I invited thinkers and scholars from foreign lands to let our boys know how easy it is to realize our common fellowship when we deal with those who are great, and that it is the puny that with their petty vanities set up barriers between man and man.

Study of Objectives

1. To analyze the educational thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore and understand his fundamental philosophy of education.
2. To examine the role of creativity, imagination, and experiential learning in Tagore's educational philosophy.
3. To evaluate the relevance of Tagore's educational philosophy in contemporary Indian education.
4. To assess the impact of Tagore's educational philosophy on teachers' and students' perceptions of effective learning practices.

Research Methodology

This study typically takes the form of a descriptive study and secondary data available on the education system. To understand and conclude the emergence of innovative tools and techniques in the Indian education system so as to make it world-class, a number of reports and papers provided the advantages of imparting very rich information and avoiding the influence of others on the opinion of any individual. This study aims at determining the nature of Tagore's educational theory and practice, and its impact on Indian education. Material for the research was collected through the various studies about Tagore's philosophy of education was helpful in obtaining significant information from Tagore's voluminous writings on the subject. A discussion of the major educational problems that existed in the British period in India, added to the early educational experiences of Tagore is presented to give a complete background for the basis of Tagore's theory. The core of Tagore's educational theory puts greater emphasis on the complete harmonious development of individual personality.

Primary Sources

- Works of Rabindranath Tagore.
- Writings of Rabindranath Tagore.
- Letters of Rabindranath Tagore.

Secondary Sources

- Works on Rabindranath & his philosophy by several authors.
- The articles and reports on Rabindranath's ideas by different writers, published in newspapers, books, journals, and websites.
- The views of several biographers on Rabindranath given in books & websites.

Role and Impact of Rabindranath Tagore's Education Philosophy on Indian Education

In Tagore's philosophy of education, the aesthetic development of the senses was as important as the intellectual—if not more so—and music, literature, art, dance, and drama were given great prominence in the daily life of the school. This was particularly so after the first decade of the school. Drawing on his home life at Jorasanko, Rabindranath tried to create an atmosphere in which the arts would become instinctive. One of the first areas to be emphasized was music. Rabindranath writes that in his adolescence, a cascade of musical emotion 'gushed forth day after day at Jorasanko. We felt we would try to test everything' he writes, 'and no achievement seemed impossible...We wrote, we sang, we acted, we poured ourselves out on every side.' (Rabindranath Tagore, *My Reminiscences* 1917: 141) In keeping with his theory of subconscious learning, Rabindranath never talked or wrote down to the students, but rather involved them with whatever he was writing or composing. The students were allowed access to the room where he read his new writings to teachers and critics, and they were encouraged to read out their own writings in special literary evenings. In teaching also, he believed in presenting difficult levels of literature, which the students might not fully grasp, but which would stimulate them. The writing and publishing of periodicals had always been an important aspect of Jorasanko life, and students at Santiniketan were encouraged to create their own publications and put out several illustrated magazines. Rabindranath had understood that the educational system the British had enforced on India was meant only to train people to work as clerks in their offices, and if possible, to inculcate in the so-called educated men a feeling of inferiority for their own culture and philosophy. For this reason, Tagore pleaded for an education system in India independent of colonial British control. This idea of Rabindranath gave birth to - Santiniketan (abode of peace) an Ashrama-style educational institution in which he provided education based on the principle of freedom, natural trust, co-operation, and joy. In his opinion child's education would be more effective if teachers and pupils live and work far away from the din and bustle of the city, like the teachers and students of the past. He says, - this school should be home and a temple in one where teaching should be a part of a worshipful life. Placing teachers above the method of teaching Tagore was of the opinion that the fact that education is something vital makes the teachers' duties and responsibilities deserving of serious attention. The teachers should know that it is for them to inspire life in the students through their own living to enkindle the flame of knowledge in the students by their own knowledge. Rabindranath's educational philosophy was not a system in the prevalent sense of the term system. A system formulated by modern-day pedagogies with rules and regulations and ready-made methodology in which teachers are thought to teach particular subjects and prepare lessons and textbooks within set paradigms. Rabindranath discarded the notion of textbooks. He put the

responsibility of educating the students in a joyful manner upon the guru. He said the relationship between the student and the guru should be of companionship. He said, The teacher's heart continues to receive every moment of his life, and that is why he continuously gives himself totally. He finds proof of his truth and honesty in the process of giving and from the joy he receives from it. Joy emerges on its own when minds meet in a healthy spirit. That joy is the energy of creativity and its result is the transfer of knowledge. Those who are conscious of their duties, but do not experience joy, tread on a different path. He considered the person-to-person relationship between the guru and shishya the prime means of imparting knowledge. Being a naturalist Tagore was aware of the sensitivity of young children and he had a firm faith in the educative value of natural objects and events. According to him - The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. Children have an active subconscious mind which like the tree has the power to gather food from the surrounding atmosphere. The first important writing in this direction is "Tapovan"(Jan 1910) - Forest. In this article for the first time, Tagore introduced a new idea of the education of feeling (Bodhersadhana) and he distinguished it from the education of the senses and the education of the intellect. This education of feeling consists of the realization of man's bond of union with the universe through the spirit, through the soul, and through the deeper intuition of feeling. Through his national system of education India should endeavor to discover and attain the characteristic truth of her civilization pursued through the centuries by her prophets, thinkers, and saints and "that truth is not mainly commercialism, imperialism or nationalism; that truth is universalism" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 100). The highly significant point here is that while Tagore is still talking in terms of nationalism and swearing by the ideals of ancient India, he is interpreting the highest of these ideals in terms of internationalism. A letter entitled "Siksavidhi" - The Method of Education is devoted to the problem of the philosophy of educational method in some of the fundamental aspects as well as in the context of the existing socio-political and educational conditions in India. The stereotyped and mechanical educational atmosphere of India was obstructing the originality or initiative of children and he said that education can be imparted only by a teacher and never by a method. "Man can learn only from a man. Just as a water tank can be filled only with water and fire can be kindled only with fire, life can be inspired only with life. The mere pill of a method instead shall bring us no salvation" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 128) In "Strisiksa" (August 1915) - The Education of Woman, shedding some light on the philosophy of curriculum, Tagore writes, "Whatever is worth knowing is knowledge. It should be known equally by men and women, not for the sake of practical utility but for the sake of knowing" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 138) He makes it clear that knowledge is above the limitation of mere utility. He rejects the common notion that in learning some common subjects with men, women would lose their femininity. Later in the article, he makes his point clear. "Knowledge has two departments: one, pure knowledge; the other, utilitarian knowledge. In the field of pure knowledge, there is no distinction between men and women; distinction exists in the sphere of practical utility; women should acquire pure knowledge for becoming a mature human being, and utilitarian knowledge for becoming true women" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 139). There are many more

relevant works available that show his social and value-based education philosophy. The role and impact of Tagore's education philosophy as reflected in contemporary educational institutions of India are as follows:

Sources of Data

Primary information was collected through a structured questionnaire administered among educators and learners. The primary sources included: Responses from teachers and students, Opinions regarding Tagore's educational philosophy Perceptions about creativity, freedom, and holistic learning

Secondary Sources : Secondary information was collected from: Books written by Rabindranath Tagore, Tagore's educational writings and speeches

Research articles : Journals, Government education reports, Previous studies related to educational philosophy

Population of the Study : The population consisted of individuals associated with the education sector, including: Teachers, Research scholars, Undergraduate and postgraduate students
Education professionals

Sample Size The study included: Total Sample Size (n) = 65 respondents, The sample was considered appropriate for examining perceptions regarding Tagore's educational philosophy and its relevance in present-day education. Sampling Technique A **purposive sampling technique** was adopted. The respondents were selected based on: Educational background, Knowledge of Indian educational philosophies, Familiarity with Rabindranath Tagore's educational ideas

Research Instrument : A structured questionnaire was developed using a five-point Likert scale.

Response Scale

Response	Score
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral	3
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5

Variables of the Study Tagore's Educational Philosophy

Indicators:

- Freedom in learning
- Nature-based education
- Creativity and imagination
- Moral and spiritual development

Creative and Holistic Learning

Indicators:

- Artistic expression
- Independent thinking
- Emotional development
- Experiential learning

Contemporary Educational Relevance

Indicators:

- Learner-centered education
- Activity-based learning
- Skill development
- Value education

Educational Impact

Indicators:

- Student engagement
- Teacher effectiveness
- Meaningful learning
- Personality development

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 : Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 65)

Category	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	30	46.15%
	Female	35	53.85%
Age	Below 25 years	26	40.00%
	25–35 years	24	36.92%
	Above 35 years	15	23.08%
Profession	Students	28	43.08%
	Teachers	25	38.46%
	Researchers	12	18.46%

Interpretation : Table 1 presents the demographic profile of respondents. The study included 65 participants representing different categories of the education sector. Female respondents constituted 53.85%, while male respondents represented 46.15%. The largest age group was below 25 years (40%), followed by respondents aged 25–35 years (36.92%). The sample consisted mainly of students and teachers, ensuring diverse perspectives regarding Tagore’s educational philosophy.

Table 2 Perception Regarding Tagore's Educational Philosophy

Statement	Mean
Tagore emphasized freedom in education	4.42
Education should develop creativity and imagination	4.51
Nature-based learning improves understanding	4.36
Education should promote personality development	4.48
Overall Mean	4.44

Interpretation : Table 2 indicates strong agreement among respondents regarding Tagore's educational philosophy. The highest-rated statement was: "Education should develop creativity and imagination" (**Mean = 4.51**). The findings demonstrate that respondents strongly recognize creativity and freedom as central elements of Tagore's educational thought. The results support the view that Tagore considered education as a process of complete personality development rather than merely examination preparation.

Table 3 Relevance of Tagore's Philosophy in Contemporary Education

Statement	Mean
Tagore's ideas support learner-centered education	4.39
His philosophy promotes experiential learning	4.34
Tagore's ideas are relevant in digital education age	4.21
His educational model encourages creativity	4.47
Overall Mean	4.35

Interpretation : Table 3 reveals that respondents consider Tagore's educational philosophy highly relevant in contemporary education. The highest mean score was obtained for: "His educational model encourages creativity" (Mean = 4.47). The findings indicate that Tagore's ideas remain applicable in modern educational systems emphasizing creativity, innovation, and student-centered learning.

Table 4 : Impact of Tagore's Educational Philosophy on Learning Outcomes

Variable	Mean
Creativity Development	4.45
Holistic Personality Development	4.41
Value-Based Education	4.38
Student Engagement	4.43

Note: Significant at $p < 0.01$

Interpretation : Table 4 demonstrates the relationship between Tagore's educational philosophy and learning outcomes. The strongest relationship was found between: Student Engagement and Tagore's Educational Philosophy ($r = 0.81$). This indicates that respondents believe Tagore's approach promotes active participation, creativity, and meaningful learning experiences. The results suggest that Tagore's educational ideas continue to influence modern approaches toward holistic and learner-centered education.

- a) **Intellectual Development:** Tagore greatly emphasized the intellectual development of the child. By intellectual development he meant the development of imagination, creative free-thinking, constraint curiosity, and alertness of the mind and that the child should be free to adopt his own way of learning which will lead to all-round development. Tagore believed that education should not be limited to mere academic learning but should encompass the development of a person's physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual faculties. He emphasized the need for a balanced education that nurtures all aspects of a student's personality.
- b) **Natural growth in Natural Circumstances:** Tagore envisaged that nature is the best teacher to the pupil. Nature will provide the student with the necessary situation to earn knowledge. He was a strong advocate of learning from nature and believed that natural surroundings could provide valuable lessons. He established an open-air school at Santiniketan, where students could learn in harmony with nature. No pressure should be exerted upon the student to learn anything. It is nature that will be the guiding force to inculcate the spirit of learning in the mind of a student to pursue the education he likes. It will shape his behavior and character.
- c) **Freedom to Learner:** Tagore championed the cause of freedom. The same he wanted to implement in the field of education. With that object, he opened Santiniketan, Sri Niketan, and Brahmachari Ashram. Accordingly, he gave free choice to students to develop their interest in any field they like. To him, education should be after the heart of a man. He explained freedom in three-categorized ways i.e. freedom of heart, freedom of intellect, and freedom of will. One may pursue vocational education or education of intellect, or education in any branch of the arts but the education imparted in a natural way will lead to the fulfillment of these three freedoms.
- d) **Self-Realization:** Spiritualism is the essence of humanism. Manifestation of personality depends upon the self-realization and spiritual knowledge of an individual. Tagore advocated for a system of education that allows students the freedom to explore and express themselves creatively. He believed that creativity is stifled in rigid educational structures and encouraged an environment that fosters imagination and original thinking.
- e) **Love for Humanity:** Tagore held that education can teach people to realize the oneness of the globe. Tagore stressed the importance of understanding and appreciating one's own cultural heritage while remaining open to other cultures. He believed that a strong cultural foundation was essential for personal growth and global understanding. Education for international understanding and universal brotherhood is another important aim of his educational philosophy.

- f) **Physical Development:** Rabindranath Tagore's views on physical development were closely intertwined with his holistic approach to education. He believed that physical development played a crucial role in the overall growth of an individual and should be given

equal importance alongside intellectual and spiritual development. His educational philosophy also aims at the physical development of the child. He gave much importance to a sound and healthy physique. That's why, he prescribed Yoga, games & sports in Santiniketan as an integral part of the education system as he was of the view that physical exercises not only improve physical health but also instill discipline, teamwork, and a sense of sportsmanship among students.

- g) **Teaching - Practical and Real:** According to Tagore, teaching should be practical and real but not artificial and theoretical. As a naturalist out and out, Tagore laid emphasis on the practicality of education. That will definitely increase the creative skill of a learner. That creativity will bring perfection in the learning process and the student will be a master in his own field but not a slave to mere theoretical knowledge which one delves deep. Tagore believed that education should have practical relevance and should equip students with skills and knowledge that can be applied to real-life situations. He advocated for a curriculum that prepares students for active participation in society.
- h) **Co-relation of Objects:** Co-relation exists with God, man, and nature. A peaceful world is only possible when a correlation between man and nature will be established. He recognized the uniqueness of each individual and emphasized the need for personalized learning approaches that allow students to express their thoughts and ideas freely.
- i) **Place of Fine Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Poetry, etc.):** Tagore's involvement in fine arts and his exploration of beauty and creativity through painting and other art forms were reflective of his overall philosophy, emphasizing the importance of harmony between humanity and nature. He attached great importance to the fine arts in his educational curriculum. To him, games, dance, music, drama, painting, etc. should form a part of Indian education.
- j) **Mother Tongue as the Medium of Instructions:** Language is the true vehicle of self-expression. Man can freely express his thought in his mother tongue. Tagore believed that education should begin with the child's mother tongue. Children could grasp concepts more effectively and develop a stronger foundation for learning when taught in a language they understand and feel comfortable with. Tagore emphasized the mother tongue as the medium of instruction for the child's education.
- k) **Moral and Spiritual Development:** Tagore emphasized the significance of a strong bond between teachers and students. He believed that a nurturing and respectful relationship between the two fosters a positive learning environment. Tagore emphasized moral and spiritual training in his educational thought. Moral and spiritual education is more important than bookish knowledge for the integral development of human personality. There must be adequate provision for the development of selfless activities, cooperation, love, fellow feeling, and sharing among the students in educational institutions.
- l) **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 and creatures, so all are equal. Rabindranath Tagore, therefore, said, "Service to man is service to God". All should develop social relationships and fellow-feeling from the beginning of one's life. Education aims at the individual

personality as well as social character which enables one to live as a worthy being.

- m) **Goodbye to Book-Centered Education:** For the first time in the arena of education, Tagore established a new milestone. With boldness and firmness, he rejected a book-centered education for students. To him, it is not just to confine the mind of boys and girls to textbooks only. It will kill the natural instincts of a student and make him bookish. It will kill his creative skill. So, students should be freed from the book- centered education and should be given a broader avenue for learning.
- n) **Education for Rural Reconstruction:** Tagore was aware of the rural poverty of our country. 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.

Conclusion

Tagore's impact on education in India has not been well recognized and through discussion, it was found that the educational work of Tagore deserves more scrutiny. It needs to be recognized and evaluated by educationists around the world. His impact on education has been felt more but it has not been articulated by researchers or educationists. transcendental experiences. Tagore was a naturalist but his naturalism was not a narrow one. It was a sort of means to spiritualism that he wanted to develop among the students. Tagore was a great champion of education for international understanding. He loved his nation and wanted to improve its conditions, but in this connection, his nationalism was not a narrow one.

Rabindranath Tagore's impact on educational philosophy has been profound and far-reaching. His ideas and practices have inspired educational reformers, thinkers, and institutions both in India and across the world. Tagore's impact on educational philosophy lies in his visionary ideas, which challenged conventional norms and sought to create an educational environment that nurtured well-rounded, intellectually curious, and culturally aware individuals. His ideas continue to be relevant and continue to inspire educators to create more inclusive, holistic, and meaningful learning experiences for students.

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