

## **Humanism, Naturalism, Multi-Culturalism, and Personality Development are the Teaching Approaches of Tagore's Educational Curriculum -A Brief Review**

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### **Abstract**

Humanism is considered as the most predominant term in all ages. Humanistic philosophy stresses that all human beings are born equal. Rabindranath Tagore's humanism, multi-cultural, and natural approaches as his major teaching methods in Shantiniketan in contemporary society are the focus of this study. Tagore's theory of humanism is universal since it analyzes the universal nature and creative existence of man. Naturalism is a system which is spiritual, from our philosophy of nature and man. It separates nature from God as supreme naturalism is concerned with 'natural self' or 'real self' which is distinct philosophy. Tagore's Philosophy of humanism can be studied in the light of his basic concept like 'Surplus in Man', concept of freedom and religion of man. Santiniketan symbolizes Tagore's vision of a place of learning that is liberated by religious and local barriers. Established in 1863 with the aim of improving education beyond the frontiers of the lecture hall, Santiniketan grew into the Visva Bharati University in 1921, grabbing the attention of the creative minds in the nation. Tagore found a curriculum that was a unique blend of art, human values, and cultural interchange. The article develops the argument that framing pedagogy centered on Tagore's basic philosophies of humanism, freedom of education and multicultural education to create open-minded citizens is to bring about social, political, and economic revolution at local, national, and universal level.

### **Introduction**

Tagore's theory of education is marked by naturalistic & aesthetic values. He had a belief that "The widest road leading to the solution of all our problems is education. "Education can develop a new pattern of life. Culminating in the realization of Universal man. Tagore's system of education emphasizes the intellectual, physical, social, moral economic and spiritual aspects of human life. By which a man can develop an integrated personality. Tagore was one of the

first to support and bring together different forms of arts at Santiniketan. He attracted artists and scholars from other parts of India and all over the globe to live together at Santiniketan daily and share their cultures with the students of Visva Bharati. He once wrote: “Without music and the fine arts, a nation lacks its highest means of national self-expression, and the people remain inarticulate.” Another unique feature of Santiniketan is its lush greenery and aesthetically laid out campus, which stands testimony to Tagore’s belief that the close connect between man and nature should be the founding principle of education. Tagore is one of the earliest educators to think in terms of the global village, his educational model has a unique sensitivity and aptness for education within multi-racial, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural situations. The tremendous excitement and cultural richness of his extended family facilitated young Tagore to absorb and learn subconsciously at his own pace, giving him a dynamic open model of education, which he later tried to recreate in his school at Santiniketan. As he wrote: I was brought up in an atmosphere of aspiration, aspiration for the expansion of the human spirit. We in our home seek 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 children in Shantiniketan were encouraged to follow their ideas in painting and drawing and to draw inspiration from the many visiting artists and writers.

### **Tagore’s Humanism**

Tagore was considered a great humanist. In his literary works, Tagore expresses universal humanism. He gives importance on all round development of women and the poor people of Bengali. Tagore declares that Man is the architect of his own destiny. Tagore rejected the concept of hedonism and utilitarianism. He believes in the intellectuality and morality of human beings. Tagore does not accept the existence of God as an absolute truth. He believes that this universe is not created by God, it is considered as the universe of human beings. According to him “In the large life of social communism, man feels the mystery of unity, as he does it music. From the sense of their unity, men come to the sense of their God.” According to Tagore, “In today’s eternity none of us are different from another but rather we should have feelings that every human being is identical between each other. We should not possess any vicious feelings about others. “Tagore expressed that service to mankind is service

to God. In “Gitanjali”, Tagore expresses a humanistic thought, it is purely humanistic. He writes in” Gitanjali”-

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground.

And where the path maker is breaking the stones

He is with them in Sun and Shower

And his garment is covered with dust.

Put off thy holy mantel and even like him.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense.

What harm is there if their clothes become tattered and stained?

Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

### **Naturalism**

According to naturalism the following things are the aim of education.

1. Self-expression
2. Individuality
3. Preparing for struggle for survival

Naturalism should be an interesting activity for children as an experimental learning. The methods of teaching must be inductive which is inspirational. It should be self-activity of child which is spontaneous. In aesthetic aspect naturalism draws attention to surroundings. Children share freedom as well as responsibility. It implies that the school should be in natural surroundings in the lap of nature. Tagore’s Shantiniketan represents the activities of this movement. Freedom of education presents a refreshing humanistic attitude towards learning and methods of teaching.

Naturalism,

According to naturalism, the material world is the real world with a physical environment. Nature is the source of all knowledge. It advocates education in accordance with the child. It prefers education with real values exist in nature in living close to nature. Tagore in his essay ‘Abaran’ pleads to let fresh air and free light into our mind and life. In his poet’s school he shows the place of nature in life and education. Children can become natural with Nature and humans with human society.

Multi-Culturalism refers to any form of education or teaching to incorporate the histories, values, beliefs from people from different backgrounds recognizes every child belongs to a

culture which produces a distinctive pattern of behavior, lifestyle, feeling, thinking and identity. Multicultural education also assumes that to teach diverse cultural background children really requires educational approaches that value and recognize their cultural backgrounds. Multi-Culturalism

Tagore visualized Visva-Bharati as the place where knowledge and culture of the world would come to one dais. Multi-Culturalism is the equity in education for all the children of different cultural backgrounds. Students learn to think deeply by their cultural identity and heritage.

The aim of this study is:

1.To explore the teachings approaches of Humanism, Multi-Culturalism, and Naturalism in Tagore's Curriculum. And to bring into more intimate relation with one another through research, the different cultures of the East based on their underlying unity. And with such ideals in view to provide at Santiniketan a center of culture where research into the study of the religion, literature, history, science, and art to pursue with that simplicity of externals which is necessary for true spiritual realization.

In terms of curriculum, Tagore advocated a different emphasis in teaching rather than studying national cultures for the wars won and cultural dominance imposed, he advocated a teaching system that analyzed history and culture for the progress that had been made in breaking down social and religious barriers.

## **Discussion**

To Tagore, the school appeared like a prison. While other students would focus on what the teacher was teaching, his mind would usually wander away. His idea of education is mostly influenced by his own school days. Classrooms in Shantiniketan were under the skies, so even if a student's mind wanders, it would dwell on the cosmos. He believed that by having classrooms open and under the trees, the students would be closer to nature and would learn from the environment. In 1901, Rabindranath Tagore established an experimental school in Shantiniketan called the Brahmacharya Ashram with five students and five teachers.

### **1.Perfection of man through personality development**

Education aims at developing the individual personality as well as social character which enables him to live as a worthy being. Tagore envisaged that the perfection of man is attained through the development of personality. Man is the architect of his own destiny. His perfection leads him to have a link with infinity. In his words' – "In knowledge, love and activity, my

development will reveal the infinite .... The veil of imperfection will fall away from our minds, will and action so that we shall even prove our kinship with the infinite; this is the religion of man". The perfection attained by the man should be applicable to the entire society but not to the individual alone.

Tagore believed that the colonial schools were robot-producing factories which made students fit for nothing but cogs in the wheel of colonial administration. Instead of teaching facts, Tagore believed in experiential learning and active engagement of the student with the world. This was an aim to build oneness amongst them, to educate them on international understanding and universal brotherhood. Aims of Education According to Tagore:

Tagore's Philosophy: Philosophy of Humanism: Tagore observed, "The best and noblest gifts of humanity cannot be the monopoly, of a particular race or country". Synthesis of culture: Tagore said, before we can stand in comparison with the other cultures of the world or try to cooperate with them. We must bear our own culture with a synthesis of all the different cultures we have.

## **2. Love for humanity:**

Tagore held that the entire universe is one family. Education can teach people to realize the oneness of the globe. Education for international understanding and universal brotherhood is another important aim of his educational philosophy. The feeling of oneness can be developed through the concepts like fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man all creatures are equal on this earth.

## **3. Establishment of relationship between man & Nature:**

Man bears the diverse qualities and potentialities offered by God. These qualities are inborn and innate. The relationship between man and God is strong and permanent. However, the dedication to spiritualism and sacredness will lead to the harmonious relationship with man, nature and God.

## **4. Freedom:**

Freedom is considered as an integral aspect of human development. Education is a man-making process, it explores the innate power exists within the man. It is not an imposition but rather a liberal process that provides utmost freedom to the individual for his all-round development. He says, Education has meaning only when it is imparted through the path of freedom".

## **5. Moral and Spiritual Development:**

Tagore emphasized moral and spiritual training in his educational thought. Moral and spiritual education is more important than bookish knowledge for an integral development of human personality. There must be an adequate provision for the development of selfless activities, co-operation and love fellow feelings and sharing among the students in educational institutions. Tagore's education marked a novel blending of the ideas of the East and West. The spiritualism of Indian philosophy and progressive outlook of the western people were blended to give rise to an educational philosophy which marked its distinction in comparison to other educationists of India. His spiritual humanism never accepted God as the Supreme Being in bringing perfection in men. On the other hand, it is human beings who by their endeavor get self-realization and implement it for the benefit of human society. Tagore describes the concept of 'universal man' someone who he himself desired to be, with a faith in universalism and humanity. He described this aspiration as the highest form of realization of human nature, to know oneself through the development of personality in its completeness, transcending to a level above the material world and physical life. He also believed that arts and music gave expression to this personality (O'Connell 2008). According to Tagore, with this supreme realization of oneself, humans become 'one' with God, or 'Manav Brahma', the 'complete man' and soul. Rooted in the spiritual basis of the Upanishads, Tagore's ideal of complete man transcends a narrow nationalistic focus and calls for a non-hegemonic global society.

#### **6. Tagore was a lover of human freedom.**

Influenced by western liberalism, Tagore preached that freedom liberalism will provide ample scope to its citizens to express their view openly. His idea on freedom contained enlightenment of soul through self-realization: Freedom will provide opportunity to attain enlightenment of soul. It is only because by pursuing a goal in an atmosphere of freedom, one will get scope to realize oneself. That self-realization will enlighten the soul and illumine it. Freedom, according to Tagore, has a spiritual root. It includes freedom of expression and freedom of conscience. His 'Geetanjali' reflects his idea of freedom thus.

“Where the mind is without fear, And the head is held high, where knowledge is free.

Where the world has not been broken up, into fragments by narrow domestic walls; Into that Heaven of Freedom O, God, let my country awake.”

Tagore envisaged that nature is the best teacher to the pupil. Nature will provide the student with the necessary situation to learn knowledge. No pressure should be exerted upon the student to learn anything. It is nature which 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.

## **7.Findings**

Farewell to book-centered education:

For the first time in the domain of education, Tagore established a new milestone. With boldness and firmness, he rejected a book-centered education for children. 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 child 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.

Teaching – practical and real:

According to Tagore, teaching should be practical and real but not artificial and theoretical. As a naturalist out and out, he laid emphasis on the practicality of education. That will increase the creative skill within 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.

Palace of fine arts

Tagore attached great importance to the fine arts in his educational curriculum. To him, games, dance, music, drama, painting etc. should form a part of the educational process. Students should take an active part in these finer aspects of human life for these are essential to enrich the soul. In his words “Speaking is for mankind and music for nature speaking is clear and limited by its needs, whereas music is mystic and expressive for a romantic eagerness. That is why; speaking creates nearness between man and man, while music helps us to identify ourselves with nature. When the harmonies of sounds are released with our expression then speaking loses much of its limited significance, but on the contrary getting together of the two muses had an all-pervading character”.

Tagore had an extreme impact on various fields, including education. His philosophy of education is characterized by naturalism, humanism, and multiculturalism. Let's explore each of these aspects:

### **Naturalism:**

Tagore's naturalism in education emphasizes the importance of a harmonious relationship between human beings and nature. He believed that education should not alienate individuals

from their natural surroundings but should, instead, foster a deep connection with the environment. Tagore's educational institutions, such as Visva-Bharati, were set in sylvan surroundings, allowing students to engage with nature as an integral part of their learning experience. He believed that nature could be a powerful teacher, offering lessons in aesthetics, science, and spirituality.

### **Humanism:**

Tagore's humanistic approach to education centers on the holistic development of individuals. He emphasized the nurturing of the whole person, including intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Tagore rejected rigid systems of education that focused solely on academic achievements. Instead, he advocated for an education that recognizes the uniqueness of each individual and promotes creativity and critical thinking. In his view, education should cultivate qualities such as empathy, compassion, and a sense of social responsibility. Tagore's emphasis on humanism aimed to create well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to society.

### **Multiculturalism:**

Tagore was a strong promoter of multiculturalism in education. He believed that exposure to diverse cultures enriches the educational experience and fosters a global perspective. At Visva-Bharati, Tagore aimed to create a community that transcended geographical and cultural boundaries. He encouraged interaction and exchange among students and teachers from various cultural backgrounds. The idea was to promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and appreciation for different traditions. Tagore's emphasis on multiculturalism sought to break down barriers and create a more inclusive and interconnected world.

Tagore's philosophy of education, with its naturalistic, humanistic, and blended with multicultural elements, continues to influence educational thought. His ideas emphasize the need for an education that is not only intellectually stimulating but also deeply connected to the natural world, committed to the development of the whole human being, and appreciative of cultural diversity.

### **Conclusion**

Tagore, being an educationalist, put emphasis on 'humanism and multi-culturalism', for framing educational models. In education, freedom is the basic guiding force for inculcating



interest within a student who will derive inspiration from nature to pursue any branch of knowledge he likes. Tagore's ideals of multicultural education have much to offer in this regard to current educational practice, as embedding cosmopolitan educational philosophy in practice and policy would help to shape the broader political–moral, social, and cultural agenda of a new progressive populist order. The establishment of Shantiniketan fulfilled the desired goal of Tagore on the educational front. The students in Shantiniketan are still taught in the open, close to nature. They celebrate seasons in Shantiniketan instead of celebrating festivals. Shantiniketan as a model of education was very different from the rest of the educational institutes during that time. The European model of education was being adopted that focused more on the textual and exam-oriented knowledge imparted in closed classrooms. Shantiniketan, unlike the regular schools, taught much more than just the facts.

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