

RAINBOW OF EDUCATION:-THOUGHTS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Tanusweta Chattopadhyay

Research Scholar,

Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan, India.

Abstract

Great creator appears with wondering personalities in the eternal space & time of the universe, they come & colored the world with all blessings of God, but very few of them shine like eternal luminaries to illumine the world with their creations & philosophy of them inspires our mind & soul...such as Rabindranath Tagore.

It is very hard to believe that a boy, who run away from school, and abhorred all kind of formal westernized school system, would one day initiate an institute of education being the head master of it. But it has happened indeed to Tagore's life. That is a strange history all together & that's why he somehow was forced to rethink deeply about the educational system through many experiment & experiences. He believed in harmony with nature, with human surroundings & with the whole world could be achieved through a proper approach of learning, if they follows some basic principles of teaching & education based on naturalism, humanism with a strong link to ancient philosophy of education & harmony. He always emphasized towards interdisciplinary approach for it. These valuable thoughts of Tagore's have various aspects, which can solve many recent educational problems also & guide the youth to a better world, they also can teach us to be better human being. Following writing offers some of Rabindranath Tagore's educational thoughts with approaches towards teaching & education.

Key words: Rabindranath, education, teaching, philosophy, harmony, interdisciplinary approach.

Main body:-

“ God reveals himself through nature more effectively than through man made institutions. Hence, the education of the child should be under natural surroundings so that he develops love for all things around him.”

Rabindranath Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore, the worldwide renowned name has enriched us with his philosophy, creations, unique educational ideas & ideologies. He always dreamt for a new world irrespective of country lines or boundaries. 'Gurudev' title was given by Mahatma Gandhi to Tagore for being a legendary teacher & educationalist as well. In current time while emphasis on interdisciplinary approach towards teaching learning process is being given, the Tegorian vision of a new world of education is very relevant i think. In this writing we will only take a spoon of water from his vast ocean of creation and try to illuminate his thoughts regarding teaching & education only. Tagore followed mainly three ideas of education such as

- 1) Harmony with nature
- 2) Harmony with human surroundings
- 3) Harmony with the world

These three basic idea are linked with three basic principles

- a) Principle of bonding between nature and human.

- b) Principle of creativity of one's own self.
- c) Principle of freedom from finite to infinite.

In this present discussion we will try to draw his thoughts & approaches about teaching & learning system.

Overview:

As we all know Tagore family was the most famous name of Bengal as the centre of all kinds of cultural interactions, also for their contributions in the field of art & education. Tagores were very fond of traditional art & culture, his idea of knowledge was always a mix of Vedic concepts of knowledge & modern education systems. At that time they were being counted as one of the most educated family in Bengal of India. Rabindranath's father Maharshi Devendranath Tagore was an ardent admirer of knowledge of Veda & Upanishads, his soul was always keen of wisdom, so he assured that his children were growing in proper environment of proper culture & education. So he designed daily routines starts with early morning prayers with Vedic Mantras chanting, then physical exercises, then science classes, arts classes etc. Devendranath had also arranged many programs by invited famous singers, dramatists, poets, sociologist and many more dignitaries at their 'Jorasanko Thakur Bari' at times. His vision was to create an environment of knowledge through the exchange of education and culture with a strong link to our origins. Even Devendranath recruited a retired school master as boys care taker. Boys were mainly kept in their care, everyday after finishing all day education boys used to listen stories of Ramayana & Puranas from them. Servant's interpretations of those stories was mysterious & full of imaginations but it somehow attracted Rabindranath's young mind & drift away his imaginations unconsciously. He was inspired by those ancient episodes. Young Tagore was also very close to nature from very early days of his life, so when he got free time alone he used to imagine freely, unboundedly, spreads his fancy wings in a world of joy & freedom. His imaginations were started traveling between conscious limits to unconscious suppositions. He loved the small outer world from his tiny window, the sides of ponds, the flying clouds, the setting sun & its red flame, the sweet voices of birds, the shadows in darkness etc. Nature was his biggest teacher so had deep impact on his philosophy of education. He truly believed that without being nature's part we and our society could not gain anything completely. We can learn our best lessons from nature as he had. Hence the idea of naturalism is an important approach of education. Nature is continuously imparting knowledge for us. That side of our existence whose direction is towards the infinite seeks not wealth, but freedom and joy as per Tagore's thought and freedom within limit of limitless only could be found in nature lap.

Problem of present system:-

Devendranath tried to school young Tagore in many schools but he left them all, because he did not like the formal way of study in materialistic way from beginning, in concrete school rooms where nature could not be seen at all, where child's creative mind or imaginations are being blocked by plenty of strict rules and regulations and above all loads of books, existing system of education puts them into the tracks of life race. They are never let be free to learn, to create, to do what they want in concrete system. As a result children become self centered, non creative, bounded by pressure, concentrated mind & prone to materialistic knowledge etc. Children are forgetting their creativity, unity with nature, other human or animals above all they are going far from harmony & unity of nature. As a result today's children are losing connections with their origins. Moral values or ethic are not growing somehow by this current educational system. So philosophy of life is disappearing and it harms the unity & harmony of the world too.

Young Rabindranath felt swallowed by the concrete manifestation of that modern westernized school system. As if all of his imaginations & personality stop breathing for those hours. Tagore wrote in Santiniketan periodical that " In childhood I suffered with huge agony from the educational system. I cannot forget the pain even now. Because children are put into machine like schools, robbing them from lap of

nature, away from humanity. This method of learning never get intimacy with life as it is detached from soul.”

New method of education:-

In Visva Bharati he said, “Far away of company of nature & devoid of liveliness of teachers, our soul seemed to be dried out.” For these bitter experiences he left all schools & started taking lessons from his elders & well known teachers who were appointed by his father at home. As time passed by his literature was crowned as the supreme among all the then writers & He wined the world with his pen. In this period two new things happened which compelled him to take the charge of an educationist .

1. One of his son Rathindranath was about to start his schooling, but Rabindranath did not want his son would go through same torture that he faced in his school days. So he thought to give his son a better schooling.

2. Second one was his inner dissatisfaction about the trending schooling system. He was not only a poet but an ardent God worshiper. He was not satisfied with ceremonial worshiping. Describing his feeling about this he told in ‘Religion of Man, “It did not give me any pleasure in meditating in lonely place, experiencing the infinite ”. He wanted to do something which would be beneficial for the whole society.

These two necessary thoughts encouraged him to be an educationist also. He decided to initiate a school where the students could learn from nature, ideal master & with a interdisciplinary approach of learning. Rathindranath was also one of the preliminaries. The educational system favored by the British according to him cut of the learners mind from nature. This system lacks delight & love. So he decided that his school would not copy the British system. He idealized a new school that would be build up over the values of Indian ancient culture & philosophy of education & unity. In which he followed the idea of our ancient heritage. In favor of this idea he has explained many thoughts of him in his lecture named as ‘Tapoban’. So Tagore had initiated a school in Santiniketan founded by his father, on 22nd of December 1909. It grew up to become a university, as Visva Bharati on 23rd December 1918. In this period Sriniketan institution was also founded. He wanted students to grow up as a complete persons for a better future world. So he emphasized on three points ;

- 1) Education & teaching process should go in a nature surrounded environment.
- 2) Where students could learn from the teachers being in a very cordial relationship. So that students can make friendship with nature & they can also earn love & affection from their teachers. Teaching methods should have a interdisciplinary approach, teacher should follow friend philosopher & guide’s approach towards each students equally.
- 3) Student should be get into a situation where he is free to ask or develop his own identity, he can give expressions to his own imaginations. But freedom should be use in good note only. Like in ancient India ‘Vaidik Tapoban’s teaching & educational philosophy was. Since Tagore was very fond of Upanishadik philosophy , So a boarding school was established with similar ideology. Named ‘Santiniketan ashram’.

Tagore’s vision for model education was, where students should follow simple lifestyle , away from all kind of luxury & lavish requirements. Due to which materialistic attachments can grow and divert his best approach towards study. In ‘Shiksha Samasya’ he said that , “ From the very beginning of life it is very much essential to preserve ones own nature from artificial causes that could destroy his true nature. The importance of Brahmacharya is to calm the intense excitements of luxury which could cause premature death of ones own true nature”. He also wanted that the students in their early life should follow the Upanishadik philosophy of harmony that tells us to take all required responsibility for the betterment of

society. Students can apply their knowledge simply by taking responsibilities & doing Karma(deed) without any expectations of returns. In this way one's character will not only become much bolder but also they get chance to be more creatively flourished.

Rabindrath wanted to shape & prepared his students for their future social life responsibilities from the very beginning of their learning period. He dreamed of a world where each one would stand by other's need. Because human is the outer most part of the society or the world. So the approach of the teachers and students should not only satisfy quality of living but also quality of life .. for a better world. He believed that education should deal with all kind of activities in regard to students livelihood & it cannot go on without other aspects of social life like social values, norms, taste, standards, responsibilities along with strong moral & ethical values. To maintain this correlation among education, teaching & other subjects he established such a simple approach by which it can go hand in hand activities of one influence the activities of the other. This would build their character & also would give them a chance to express their own creativity.

Interdisciplinary approach:-

To make one's personality complete & creative, interdisciplinary approach towards education & teaching is very much important. Tagore wanted his students to stay close to the nature. So he designed his school under open sky on the lap of nature, under the lovely shades of green trees. Children can touch them, speak to them & can also learn from them. Relevancy of this method has definitely a wider impact. He never wanted to make mechanical approach of teaching, so in his school system teachers were also friendly & coordinating. They all together work for their school need. They serve food, play, perform curricular activities all together hand to hand. That's why every teacher were concern about each students need. While studying physics, chemistry, and mathematics if the students could learn singing, drawing, clay work, weaving, writing then that will definitely help them grow with healthy minds.

Ideal Teacher:-

In "Ashram Shiksha" he mentioned about "Adarsha Guru" or ideal teacher. He wrote that a good teacher should have a lot of patience & affections towards teaching & his students first, then he must have a sound knowledge in his concerned area along with knowledge in other interlinked disciplines also. He should follow interdisciplinary approach of teaching. It is needed to ensure each & every queries to be answered. In this boarding called 'santiniketan ashram' with repeated exposure to interdisciplinary thoughts, learners elaborate more advanced epistemological confidence, enhanced critical thinking skill & ability to know life & responsibilities for the world better. This philosophy of education does not call for any extravagant arrangements rather it need a simple living with proper teaching methods in simple units across different curricular disciplines. Rabindranath had built that school of learning, which integrates with new interdisciplinary friendly approach to education & teaching for a healthy future.

Conclusion:-

It is a highly philosophical concept of educational thoughts, since Rabindranath did not want students' life to become monotonous. So he always liked every teacher students to participate in various cultural programs, like music dance drama literature events etc. Whether the students from science discipline or humanities or performing arts, he wanted everybody to join and make his own creative expressions grow. For this vision he started organizing such cultural symposium in Ashram area every weekend evening and then next morning in 'Upashana Griha' (prayer temple) he himself started reading 'Sloks' or hymns from Ved & Upanishads with their translations for both teachers & students. In this way he also wanted his institute's teachers to guide their students always closely & by heart. It also became a healthy process to get a stronger teacher student relationship. Going through this whole process students would be

delighted and could identify his own abilities & it helps him to remain tender & fresh. Tagore also wanted his students as well as his followers to not forget about their ancient root of knowledge. He firmly believed that this kind of engagement with nature, music, poetry, dance, drama & various kind of arts can simplify student's psychology, as well as it can show a fine interdisciplinary approach as well. Which involves both teachers & students. For this greater vision every student of his institute grows with interdisciplinary approach toward education with a creative mind set up. So it definitely give beneficial relevancies to one or more disciplines in case of researchers also. It gradually developed a new sphere of knowledge.

Every little child who is growing with these philosophical approach of education, is growing with Tagore lectures, poetry, drama, music and all, is truly developing himself for a better personality. In the long run they can be beneficial for the whole society. Rabindranath never thought education as a means to enhance his economical aspects of life which only fulfills the needs of stomach & luxury, rather he taught his foot print followers to take education as a means to flourish our knowledge & blossom our inner core of consciousness. As he earn most of his knowledge from real life experiences, so he wanted his students to do the same as well. Because real life experiences teaches us through practical scenarios. Education being the most crucial point of life around which psychological, moral, spiritual, religious and ethical sides of human being revolved. So this all aspects of life are correlated, so it is very necessary to have an interlinked door to each discipline with a appropriate approach.

Rabindranath Tagore had unique ideas & thoughts about educational disciplines. According to his vision the mission of education should be to develop a prominent personality of a man by making him complete with nourishment of knowledge. As unification of knowledge existing various branches of learning so complete education cannot be done only by the nourishment of intelligence or intellect but also require nourishment of love for humanity. Above all learners require extra scope to express themselves in a wider manner. According to his thoughts this can be done if we chose Art as a tool education rather than literature, science or technologies. For example in social science students have to study different aspects of human lives through its various activities it includes ups & downs of lives like in visual arts light & dark shades of colors used to show the different level of intensity of emotions. Again if we take a child and we would like to teach them music & some sort of drama can do magic in such teaching learning process. Basically nothing is beyond man, time & space so interdisciplinary approach as a method should be use in betterment of teaching learning process. If we think about science, technology or literature we notice these are the disciplines which only satisfies pure intellect or intelligence related to sharp mind, on other hand arts deals with pure emotions which mostly related to the heart or soft mind. Science & technology says right or wrong, arts speaks about grades of beauty... so they cannot make learner's personality completely bloomed without interdisciplinary approach or methods. Tagore said in "An Eastern University" that, 'The language of mouth is not the only language, there are many more language like language of lines & colures, language of music, language of body expressions etc'. So he always wanted the real language art along with abstract language art as a medium of expression to be established in all institutions to explore more knowledge. According to him

“ The education is highest which not only imparts information
& knowledge to us, but also promotes love & follow feeling
between us & the living beings of the world ”.

So he said in 'An Eastern University' that “ It should be every ones duty to bring under control some personality language & art's language without being concentrated by only intellect.” Sometimes really the gap which cannot be filled with bunches of words actually can be filled with language of art .. Tagore quoted

“Art – it is the response of man’s creative soul

To the call of the real ”

As education evolves our society so education should be like, which can cover up every important layer of the society. The existing system of teaching & education estranged from many real life layers. So that we can find many gaps between different disciplines, as a result through that kind of particular subjective education, the bigger interest like national development etc can not be achieved. For example, some education does not allow importance to agricultural fields. Some does not even flashes light on economical development, some does not gives importance to ethical, moral, spiritual values at all. So interdisciplinary approach is a must method to gain the bigger aim of education for the shake of a better world. These gaps had not been overlooked by Tagore so he decided to create ‘Sriniketan’, the land for agriculture, sericulture, social work etc beside ‘Santiniketan’ where artistic, language education, philosophical, economical along with all kind of pure science based educations are being offered. He always wanted his learners to face all real life problems and stand for problems of others also, because if a child grows up with helping others or thinking about what he could provide to his society for its betterment then he can definitely ensures a better society. Actually he wanted every teacher students to join the welfare for each layer of our society. Whether it for nature, animals, poor people or outer world. His philosophy of education means to unite all dimension of world with the approach of naturalism, humanism, internationalism and idealism as well. Since he was an ardent prophet of world unity & believer in brotherhood, he wanted his people to be united too. Since his own childhood Tagore was an ardent believer of Upanishik philosophy, so he believed in oneness. He written in many of his writings that we are unbreakable parts of that supreme almighty called ‘Brahman’, we are one big family, so we should live for the whole not only for a portion. His school carried forward that meaning of life successfully.

It shows a linear combination between nature, harmony & knowledge. It shows that with a good educational philosophy with a proper approach of interdisciplinary interactions you can still make a healthy society; at least you can make a try.

Bibliography :

1. Tagore, Rabindranath, ‘Chhelebalā’, Visva Bharati Granthana Bivaga, 2010
2. Tagore, Rabindranath, ‘Jeevan Smriti’, Visva Bharati Granthana Bivaga, 2005
3. Tagore, Rabindranath, ‘Rabindra Rachanabali 5- 13 th volume’, Visva Bharati Granthana Bivaga, 2009
4. Radhakrishnan, Dr Sarvapalli, ‘The Philosophy Of Rabindranath Tagore’, Niyogi Books, 2015
5. Jasimuddin, ‘Thakur Barir Anginay’, Balaka, January 2007
6. Prasad, Devi, Mitra, Maitreyi, ‘Rabindranath Thakur, Shiksha Aur Chitrakala’, National Book Trust, India, 2001
7. Bandyopadhyay, Hironmoy, ‘Nana Prasange Rabindranath’, Orient Book Company, 1981.