



## “Raktakarabi” in the Light of Tagore’s Educational Philosophy

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**Abstract**— Rabindranath Tagore, the first Nobel laureate of Asia was a great visionary, a social thinker and also a great educationist. He was a champion of education for international understanding. The three cardinal factors of Tagore’s educational philosophy are – i) Freedom ii) Creative Self-expression and iii) Active communion between nature and man. All these are will reflected in “Raktakarabi”. From the very beginning the king is behind the framework of net. Nandini first knocks at the net-window and asks the king to come out. The People of ‘yakshapuri’ are bound to dig out earth searching for gold and they are not allowed the freedom of their will. Nandini frees the oppressed human souls from the machinized bureaucracy. The king is guided by his greed for power and wealth. There is no space for love or beauty or anything creative. King has turned the humans into machine. They are not even called by their names but by identification number. The King alienates his people from nature -- the green meadows, the bright sun shine. They are toiling underground, in darkness at a great sacrifice. Nandini appears in the drama as an epitome of all the traits that belong to Tagore’s Educational philosophy. She is nature herself. She asks the king to come out of his net window and enjoy the seasonal beauties of nature. She bears the message of self expression which manifests in her love for Ranjan. In this oppressed dark, stagnant world of ‘Yakshapuri’ Nandini brings the shower of freedom. She whispers in everybody’s ears the chant of freedom. And finally the king responds to her call to break open the net and unveils himself.

**Keywords**— International understanding, machinized, bureaucracy, educational philosophy, manifests,

### Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore, the multitalented persona to the highest degree of the term, is perhaps the most interesting as a topic to explore from the point of view of a researcher. There are endless themes and topics hidden in his mammoth world of writing which provoke thoughts in many scholars and researchers. Tagore, the great intellectual and one of the best social thinker was also a great educationist as well. His notion of education was completely different from the customary stereotypical idea of education. And this found expression in his dramas, essays novels and in many more genres of works. This present dissertation work also focuses on Tagore’s idea of education as represented in his one of the most famous epic-drama “Raktakarabi”. Hence this dissertation paper is titled as “Raktakarabi: In The Light of Tagore’s Educational Philosophy”.

## Significance/ Relevance of the study

Here the researcher attempts to understand Rabindranath Tagore's educational views as it is reflected in Raktakarabi, the much popular and perhaps most discussed epic-drama. To understand the educational impact of Raktakarabi, the researcher analyses some of the main aspects of Tagore's educational philosophy. The tension and fragmentation of modernity was rightly felt by Rabindranath Tagore. He prescribed salvation throughout his educational thoughts. To find peace in a fragmented world, an aesthetic vision could be source of inspiration. And Tagore's educational philosophy would provide with the space to find the aesthetic vision. It is very much true that modernity has transformed the world in the name of progress, of betterment but it is not always real and Raktakarabi is one of the finest example of that. Yakshapuri is the symbol of the modern world. The landscapes of Yakshapuri reminds us of that of Charles Dickens's "Coke town" and Eliot's "unreality". So here Tagore depicted the real scenario in a symbolie way which he named as Yakshapuri. Tagore could not find out a solution from this mechanized, lifeless, broken world and he assumes that an aesthetic vision might be a possible solution from which inspiration could be derived. The educational plan implemented by the British education system in India did not provide any scope to build an aesthetic vision. Instead prosperity dehumanized people and made them mechanized in the name of making them a civilized race. In this situation a free, self-expressive and natural outlook would help the people. Therefore the aim of this researcher in this dissertation paper is to speculate on how Tagore used his educational thoughts in his writing ( here it is in Raktakarabi) to develop a vision which he himself believed in. To him the object of education is freedom of mind and spirit and also the active communion with nature and man. Nature to him was the focus where the interest and aspirations of human being meet. Not only knowing nature but by living nature man can attain greater and deeper freedom. Tagore's philosophy was learning from nature and life. Education must be of the whole man, as of his emotion and senses as much as of his intellect. He was one of the first in India to argue for a humane educational system that was in touch with the environment and aimed at overall development of the personality.

## Objectives of the Study

The word objective denotes the motive or the purpose of something. In the matter of study it suggests in what the study aims at. This dissertation paper aimed at achieving some goal. That is the objective that the researcher tries to analyze in the achievement of the goal. The objectives of this dissertation paper are as follows:-

1. To know the main factors of Tagore's educational philosophy
2. To know Raktakarabi as the reflection of Tagore's Educational Philosophy
3. To understand the relevance of Tagore's educational message in Raktakarabi in the present scenario.

## Statement of the Problem

Many researches have already been done on Raktakarabi, one of the most critical epic-dramas of Tagore. Here the researcher attempts to find "Raktakarabi" in the light of Tagore's Educational Philosophy. The researcher tries to dig out some of the main aspects of Tagore's educational philosophy which are reflected in the play.

## Analysis of the Objectives

### The main factors of the Educational Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore :

Rabindranath Tagore, the first Non-European to receive the Nobel Prize in literature, was a polymath, and education is one wing of his wide-ranging knowledge in different fields. As an educationist he did not write any central educational treatise. But his ideas must be gleaned through his various pieces of writing. Tagore postulated an alternative discourse in education by refusing the stereotypical patterns. It is really hard to believe that a boy who ran away from school and abhorred all kinds of formal westernized education system, would one day initiate an educational institute himself. But it was indeed the reality in Tagore's life. This is absolutely strange altogether and that is why Tagore was compelled to think in depth about the education system through many experiments and experiences and he has poured all his ideas in his vast ocean of writing.

Tagore's philosophy of education conforms to his general philosophy. He approached life with a totality of vision. He had in his mind the innumerable implications of education. According to his vision the mission or aim of education is to develop an all round personality of a man by making him complete with the nourishment of knowledge. As unification of knowledge means assembling existing various branches of learning so complete education cannot be done only by the nourishment of intelligence or intellect but also requires the nourishment of love for humanity. In Tagore's words –

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

The three cardinal principles of Tagore's educational philosophy are – i) Freedom, ii) Creative self expression and iii) Active communion with nature and man. These three principles are closely linked with the three ideas i.e. i) Harmony with Nature ii) Harmony with human surrounding and iii) Harmony with the world. Acceptance of the concept that the real education is possible only through a life in harmony with all existence, in a way, implies that freedom must be given to the individuals. To tell otherwise freedom is a requisite of the ideal life as well as of education. While speaking of freedom Tagore upholds three kinds of freedom – i) freedom to act ii) freedom to think and iii) freedom to express emotions. Tagore thinks that freedom in the mere sense of independence is meaningless. Perfect freedom lies in the harmony of relationships.

Tagore interpreted his idea of freedom by referring to the 'freedom of will'. He wrote -

“ We have our own freedom of will which can only find its true harmony in the freedom of other wills”.

Tagore believed that activities define a person's freedom so people must be allowed to create their own world of activities. Such a world comprising of people with free activities would be a complete world – self-sustaining, rich with ever renewing life, radiating light across space and time and imparting lifebreath to the complete man, who is at the same time bound by the social bonds and aspiring towards spiritual freedom. Tagore's concept of freedom is also associated with the freedom of thinking. People must have scope for independent thinking. Any person or authority should never dominate the thinking of a man. Tagore believed that man has an additional fund of emotions which seeks an outlet in the creative something. And a person must have that freedom to express his inner emotions. The psychological studies have revealed that the repressed or misdirected emotions are the root of all “rationalization and abnormalities” observed in man. When the emotions are liberated, Tagore thinks, the nobler sentiment of man ( especially the sentiment of love) find expression to creative art like music, poetry, dance and dramas.

### Raktakarabi as the reflection of Tagore's Educational Philosophy:

The philosophy of freedom reverberates throughout the whole drama, 'Raktakarabi'. The King of Yakshapuri lives hidden behind a mysterious “ network of intricate pattern”. The Governors and Headmen run the administration on behalf of the king. The workers dig out gold from beneath the ground and fill the King's treasury. In this lifeless fortress enters the other pivotal character of the play, Nandini. She was summoned from her village by the rude king. She, undaunted by the king, bring along the spirit of freedom and sparkles of joy. The digger boy Kishor bunks his digging duty in order to find out the favourite flower of Nandini. The Professor who “ burrow [s] day and night in a mass of yellow pages” and is fascinated by her charms, sees her as “ the light which never owns any bound” but “the light that breaks through the crack walls [and] startles”(242-243). Bishu finds his free spirit reflected in Nandini's radiance. Everybody in this mechanical society, from the miners to their masters, all are in some way or another overwhelmed by her spirit of freedom and vivacity. Moving forward we see, the King of Yakshapuri stands inside the wall and Nandini pleads him to let her in. As the King refuses, she invites him to the freedom of the open fields

outside his place. The King could not reply to her calls as he cannot leave his possession of “dead wealth” which he “ extracts from the fearsome depth of secrecy “ and that makes him the super power. The King believes that the prowess with which he plunders gold from the bosom of the earth, he can pluck Nandini out for his own. Nandini warns the King that he shall entangle himself in his own net. The King is jealous of Ranjan, whose appearance Nandini awaits , as the King realizes that his own “ image of strength “ fails to “ play the magic” which Ranjan possess to sway Nandini’s heart. In the mean time, the Governors suspect that the strength of Ranjan’s free spirit along with Nandini’s vigour of life can bring a revolution in Yakshapuri, They, therefore, stops Ranjan from reaching Nandini. They even take away her only friend Bishu from her. Nandini cannot trace Ranjan anywhere. She desperately bangs the closed door that hides the king. The door opens and Nandini finds Ranjan dead. He lies on the ground holding the red oleanders in his hand that Nandini sent him. At that moment the King realizes the potency of freedom in life and death. He steps out of his palace to embrace the spirit of freedom that he had so long been incognizant of. Before the news of people breaking down the prison reaches, Nandini falls to the ground, on way to her “last freedom”.

In the play Nandini and the Red Oleanders both symbolize ‘freedom’. Oleander is compared to Nandini as well as the diggers. Nandini challenges the beauty and love in a world dominated by machine and money. With her fearless love, care and belief in freedom, she is capable to free men from their ‘slavery and set back brute authority’. In the opening scene, the blossoming of red oleanders symbolizes freedom and death and at the end, Nandini’s red oleander bracelet, found in the dust, is also freedom itself.

Another trait of Tagore’s Educational philosophy is creative self-expression. Tagore felt that only the intellectual development of a person does not mean the complete development of his self, his emotions and senses must also develop along with his intellect. Touch of colours as well as sounds are essential for the satisfaction of the aesthetic urge and creative self-expression. Manifestation of personality depends upon the self-realization and spiritual knowledge of the individual. In Raktakarabi “ The King is driven by his greed for power and wealth. In order to satisfy his greed he has compelled his country-men to dig out gold from underground to fill his treasury. He has turned them into machines devoid of any human qualities. They are not even called by their names but by identification numbers. They are not allowed to listen to their hearts. There is no space for love, joy or the expression of their inner soul. In this stagnant mechanized world of Yakshapuri , Nandini bears the message of self-expression which manifests in her love for Ranjan. In this dark, oppressed kingdom Nandini whispers in everyone’s ear the chant of self-expression. And at last it is the King himself who responds to her call and breaks open the net and unveils himself.

Another pivotal principle of Tagore’s philosophy of education is the active communion with nature and man. Tagore considers nature and human life as integral part of the universe. So he emphasizes symbiosis and symmetry between man and all other aspects of nature. Nature inspires human beings differently at different stage of human development. The highest development of the personality of an individual is possible only through the close contact with nature and other fellow beings. This relationship between nature and man and their communion is observed again and again in ‘Raktakarabi’. The King cruelly exploits nature by excavating tunnels for collecting gold from underneath earth and develop a mechanized bureaucracy and alienates all along with himself from nature. Here Nandini emerges as an emblem of natural beauty to destroy the ugly capitalistic endeavour of the half-hidden king. In this purpose Sankar Seal in the book “ Bishwayan O Rabindranath (2009) says:

In this social system man is alienated from the nature, alienated from the society, alienated from other people and even alienated from his own personal identity - in Rabindranath’s own word “personal man is eliminated to a phantom” ( Bishwayan O Rabindranah,p-85)

The beautiful natural backdrop, the songs on nature and Nandini with pristine beauty prove in the play that mechanized world is in sharp contrast with the natural world. The King himself is not normal anymore being marooned from nature. Nandini represents here nature herself. Tagore delineates the abominable condition of the ever advancing civilization. In Tagore’s own words – “ The history has come to a stage when the moral man, the complete man is more and more giving way, almost without knowing it, to make room for the commercial man, the man of limited purpose.”

The western demonic utilization of nature has made them benchmark usurper of nature’. Here the people are unaware of the fact that they are exploiting nature. The King being separated from nature gradually saps up his strength. Eventually coming into contact with Nandini, the King compares himself with a gigantic desert and Nandini with a spear of grass. The play centres round the active communion between nature and man is suggested by the very title of the play “Raktakarabi”. Nandini wears red oleanders which insists belief in the power of virtue. The autumn song makes us visualize the picture of the field. The perfumed wind, the sky, shivering corn, bright sunlight and joy of people outside the town are clearly

depicted through the distant song, which refers to the cosmic harmony of nature. This nature song is a song of selfless love.

In Yakshapuri, love and relationship among human being is a forgotten fact. After Nandini's arrival, everybody is attracted by her charm. The King stays behind the wall and concentrates on gold but he fears Nandini. His conversation with Nandini reveals that the king is weak towards Nandini. She awakens the slaves and make them realize their oppression and sets them free. Finally the workers break the prison and start to fight with the authorities. The final song establishes the freedom of the people and consequently the King's excessive greed is punished and normal, natural life is restored in Yakshapuri.

### **The Relevance of Tagore's Educational Philosophy in the Contemporary Scenario :**

Tagore was the Renaissance Man of modern India – the bridge between the Indian cultural tradition and the postmodern progressive thinking. He lived ahead of his time both in life and thought. Having born into a prominent Calcutta family known for its socio-religious and cultural innovations during the 19<sup>th</sup> Bengal Renaissance, this man felt and saw the society and the political turmoil of his time. The profound social and cultural involvement of his family played a dominant role in the formulation of Rabindranath's educational priorities. His grandfather Dwarkanath was a prominent figure in supporting medical facilities, educational institutions and arts and he fought for religious and social reforms and the establishment of a free press. His father Debendranath also played important role in social and religious reform, which opened up a scope for multicultural exchanges in the family mansion, 'Jorasanko Thakurbari.' Within the joint family, Rabindranath was brought up with his thirteen brothers and sisters who were mathematicians, journalists, novelists, musicians and artists. The tremendous excitement and cultural richness of his extended family permitted young Rabindranath to learn at his own pace, giving him a dynamic open model of education which he later tried to recreate in his school at Santiniketan. Quite obviously, he found the formal westernized school to be inferior and boring, and after some attempt here and there, he refuses to attend school. The honorary degrees bestowed late in his life were the only degrees that he ever received. His experiences at Jorasanko provided him with a lifelong cognition concerning the importance of education.

Tagore believed that education should help an individual to attain complete manhood, so that all his powers may be developed to the fullest extent for his own individual perfection as well as the perfection of the human society in which he was born. Tagore's philosophy of education is marked by naturalistic and aesthetic values. He had a belief that the widest road leading to the solution of all 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 through which an integrated personality can be developed. In Tagore's philosophy of education, the aesthetic development of the sense is as important as the intellectual. In his view the quest for knowledge and physical activity in an agreeable environment were integral parts of the process. Freedom and creativity are linked in Tagore's thoughts, one conditioning the other. The more people go beyond the line of their animal nature, the closer they come to humanism, freedom and unity and then become capable of developing their creativity.

This quest grants a meaning to life, and education is an effort to make life meaningful. Here the aims of individual and that of society become almost one.

Tagore believed that man and nature have an original integration. Nature is intimately connected in every stage of human life. For young child nature is an unconscious symbol of super personal growth and evolution which provides a ready background for its dreams and play. For the adolescents, nature is an object of either scientific or lyrical curiosity and the adult see in her the soil on which his country and his people grow, the cultural and economic background of human existence. Tagore felt that nature is the focus where the interest and the aspiration of the human beings unite. Therefore, not only to know but also to live nature is necessary for the complete blooming of human personality. By this man attains the greater and deeper freedom.

As Tagore did not write his educational thoughts in a single book, whatever he wrote for example the poems, essays, novels, short stories, songs and dramas he has engulfed something educational that he worked for mankind throughout his life. In the play 'Raktakarabi' also his educational thoughts have been reflected in many ways. The present researcher has already discussed those in the analysis of the first objective. While analyzing those the researcher has realized that Tagore's educational philosophy is very much pertinent in the context of the present day modern education system. Tagore's educational ideals have been agreed by other educationists and many of his innovations have now become part of educational practices. Here the researcher tries to find out how Tagore's philosophy is reflected in the contemporary education system in order to show the relevance of his philosophy even today-

Tagore greatly emphasized the intellectual development of the child. By intellectual development he means development of imagination, creative free thinking, curiosity and alertness of the mind. Child should be free to adopt his own way of learning which will lead to all round development. Modern educational curriculum is also developed by keeping this view in mind. Natural growth in natural circumstances is another view Tagore envisaged. The contemporary education system is joyless, colourless, lifeless which does not always produce the desired outcome. Tagore thought nature will provide the student with necessary situation to earn knowledge. It will be the guiding force to inculcate the spirit of learning in the mind of a student to pursue the education. It will shape his behaviour and character.

Tagore had championed the cause of freedom and the same he wanted to implement in the educational field too. Keeping this objective in mind he had established Santiniketan, Sriniketan and Brahmachari Ashram. He interpreted freedom in three categorized ways i.e. freedom of heart, freedom of mind and freedom of will. These have been discussed by the researcher earlier in detail. Tagore insisted on an environment devoid of fear for students to have the confidence to express themselves freely. The contemporary education system has also gradually moved towards the learner centric education.

Self-realization and love for the humanity are the inner and outer side of a human personality which is insisted by Tagore's educational ideals. Manifestation of personality depends upon the self-realization and spiritual knowledge of the individual. Tagore held the view that education can teach people to realize oneness of the globe. So, a very important aspect of his educational philosophy is the education for international understanding and universal brotherhood. In the present day world when people are very much self-centered having been brought up in the nuclear families, these philosophies of Tagore are very much relevant to make people think in a broader perspective.

Tagore's educational philosophy aims at the physical development as well as the artistic development of the individual. In the contemporary education system yoga, games and sports etc. are included in the curriculum for the physical development and Fine arts like dance, drama, music poetry etc. are incorporated in the curriculum.

Tagore highly emphasized moral and spiritual development in his educational thought. Development of moral and spiritual self of an individual is significant for and integral development of human personality. Tagore felt that there must be adequate scope for the self-less activities, co-operation and fellow feeling and sharing among the pupils in educational fields. Keeping this view in mind the modern education system has developed the concept of group - discussions, group -studies, team - talks etc. and these have been included in the curriculum. But this is not sufficient as now modern people are engaged in a rat-race and money has become more important than the moral values or ethics. So, to be rid of this money mindedness, more effective implementation of Tagore's principles is necessary as it is so relevant today.

In Tagore's philosophy social development has also been emphasized. Tagore said that social development of the individual will enable him to live as a worthy being of the society. In the present day situation it is very much essential for the steady growth of a healthy society. Tagore raised his voice to reduce Book centric education. But still we are not able to reduce the burden of books, rather the heavy load of books gradually bend the back of our next generation. So it is high time to think deeply on this view of Tagore for the well being of the next generation as this is very much pertinent to the contemporary perspective.

Education is the way to relate to the world, to experience, to understand and attempt to change the world and understand ourselves and our relations with others. In the contemporary modern education, knowledge is not a set of proposition but means of how to live, listen and thus how to learn. It is the way of interpreting the reality and achieving one's own rights. The focus of contemporary education is not to depend on a single right, single type of discourse but to create pluralist, participating education environments. In Tagore's opinion, education is meant for holistic development of the individual. Education can develop a new pattern of life, culminating in the accomplishment of universal man who is the ultimate reality. Only education can teach people to realize their oneness with the other individuals of this planet leading to the harmonious developments of the personality.

At the end of the analysis of the fourth objective the researcher realizes that Rabindarnath Tagore's philosophy of education is still relevant in the contemporary scenario, which he proposed approximately hundred years ago.

**Conclusion:**

Being a man of wisdom, Tagore was as brilliant as a social thinker also as an educationist. For him, education is meant for the complete all round development of an individual. He believed that education is not merely a means for the growth of the individual, but it was also concerned with the whole physical and social milieu in which his life was lived. One should be developed to the fullest extent for his own individual perfection as well as for the perfection of the society around him. The three cardinal aspects of Tagore's educational ideals are-freedom, creative self-expression and active communion with nature and man. All of these are well reflected in the theme of the play. Tagore's social concerns and educational thoughts are intermingled in 'Raktakarabi' and through this he has conveyed his message to the world.

Through all the analysis the researcher comes to the conclusion that in this play Tagore decided to speak for the marginalized groups. He raised his voice against the oppression of the downtrodden and imbalance in the division of labour and power in the society. Tagore wished for the 'emancipation of mankind through close communion with nature and his fellow being. This was Tagore's philosophy of life. And in the field of education also Tagore complied with the same philosophy. This truth is established through the discussion of the reflection of educational philosophy of Tagore in Raktakarabi. There should be much more discussions and analysis of Tagore's educational ideals as it is reflected in 'Raktakarabi'. Modern educationists should dig out the thoughts of Tagore and implement those for the betterment of the society .

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