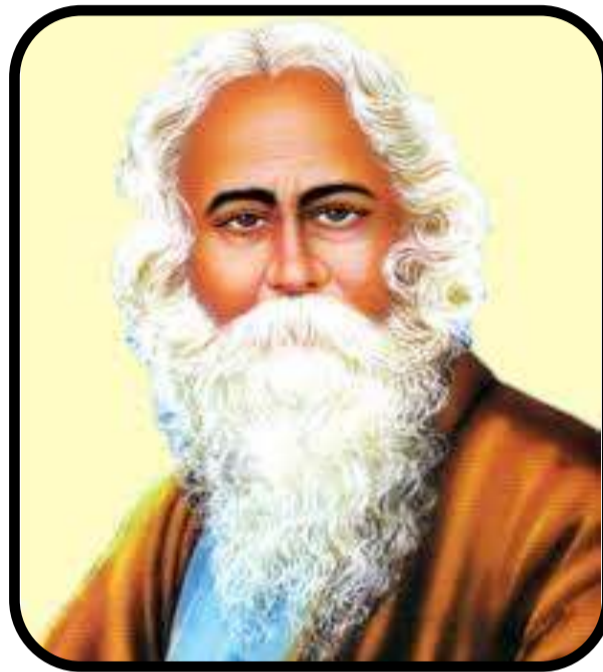


GURUDEV TAGORE AND HIS VISION ON SUSTAINABLE INDIAN EDUCATION AT PRESENT ERA



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Abstract:-Today in this 21st century among so many contemporary Indian philosophers of education, Rabindranath Tagore holds an eminent position in the versatility of his genius, the largeness of his sympathies, and the comprehensiveness of his world-view as a universal man. Gurudev Tagore (1861-1941) was a man of vision in modern India. He put in to practice his educational ideas by establishing the institutions of Visva-Bharati. Education is meant to enlighten human life. It is basically a social process which involves how the student develops the human relation. The real arena of education is where new innovations of knowledge are taking place. Rabindranath Tagore is one of the foremost thinkers in the world who had thought that education should be in general and all kinds of education in India should have for its people. His advocacy for education in natural setting and the concept of an ideal Indian university is extremely innovative. Now days if the children had to be properly educated, the process must begin from their childhood. Right from the childhood we have to make strong the child's power of thought and imagination. It was strongly reflected in his writing that, if development of the nation depends upon the learning of the majority of the people, and if the sustainability of that development depended on the depth of the people's knowledge, then learning practices is the only alternative. Not only that Gurudev does not want to make education as an instrument for earning bread alone, he admits that bread earning is a necessary part of any sound goal of education but acquiring knowledge should be sustain forever. It emphasized the development of human being who may be able to fulfill the needs of our country. With this realization, Tagore turned his attention and thought towards the sustainable development of education. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive perspective on Rabindranath Tagore as a creative thinker, taking on board his views on sustainable development of education.

Keywords: Tagore's Educational Philosophy, Creative Thinking, Sustainable Education.

INTRODUCTION :-

It was a period of social upheaval & reforms in India when the mystic Rabindranath Tagore a prominent poet & profound thinker were born in Calcutta on 6th May 1860. He was born into a prominent Calcutta family known for its socio-religious & cultural innovations during the 19th Bengal Renaissance. Rabindranath did not write a central educational treatise & his ideas must be gleaned through his various writings & educational experiments at Santiniketan. In general, he envisioned an education that was deeply rooted in one's immediate surroundings but connected to the cultures of the wider world. He felt that a curriculum should revolve organically around nature. The profound social & cultural involvement of his family later played a strong role in the formulation of Rabindranath's educational priorities. Although he was not educated in any university, he was clearly a man of learning with original ideas about education. Among the contemporary Indian philosophers of education Rabindranath Tagore, holds eminent position. He may be called as a humanist in the strict sense of the term. His humanist approach is not materialistic but integral in nature. His philosophy is cosmopolitan humanism & his theory of education is directly deduced from this philosophy. It should be noted that Rabindranath in his own person was a living icon of the type of mutuality & creative exchange that he advocated. His vision of education was not a static one, & he fought for a world where multiple voices were encouraged to interact with one another for educational peace & mutual inter connectedness. Tagore's educational efforts were ground-breaking in many areas. He was one of the first in India to argue for a humane educational system that was in touch with the environment & aimed at overall development of the personality.

ASPIRATION OF EDUCATION

Gurudev gives a new spiritual approach to education. He considers that the aim of education is self-realization. Innovative thought of self-realization according to Rabindranath means 'the realization of the universal soul in one's self'. Man's aim in life is to achieve this status. It is a universal process which cannot be realized without proper education. He doesn't find any dichotomy between thought & life, philosophy & education. Many contemporary Indian philosophers like Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda he believes that everyone is potentially divine & everyone can realize this potentiality. In 'Laksya O' Siksa'- Aims & Education, a letter written in August, 1912, Tagore makes it clear that the aims & ideals in the life of a nation should first be clearly apprehended & formulated before its educational system is determined for "What we want to be and what we want to learn are inseparably connected together" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 131). Tagore's educational philosophy is very much influenced by the Indian scriptures like the Gita & the Upanishads. However he is also very much influenced by the western classical & modern educational thought like Swami Vivekananda. To synthesize the ancient vedantic tradition with the modern scientific attitude in formulating the goal of sustainable education.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

In Tagore's philosophy of education, the aesthetic development of the senses was as important as the intellectual--if not more so--& music, literature, art, dance & drama were given great prominence in the daily life. Rabindranath Tagore was more than a resounding leading Indian thinker of 20th century. A prominent figure through his poetic brilliance, who belongs to the traditional group of Indian philosophers of education, inspired by the ancient Indian philosophy of education. He bitterly criticized the defects of British philosophy of education & western educational approach in India. Tagore considered that lack of education within the human in the society as the main obstacle in the way of India's progress & at the root of all its problems. According to him, academic learning becomes joyless & purely mechanical if it is looked upon merely as an instrument for getting jobs & for material & financial gains. He feels academic learning should enable us to understand the situations in which we are placed & to adopt proper attitudes towards them. Tagore viewed the traditional academic learning as merely a knowledge-factory, a mechanical system producing students with machine-ground knowledge for the purpose of being examined & graded. Thus the target of education should be to develop & nourish our beliefs, emotions, & imaginations, which enable us to assess, evaluate, sustain & take up appropriate attitudes towards our life experience.

IDEOLOGIES OF EDUCATION

Rabindranath Tagore believes that the education provides a sense of one's identity as a total man & to bring education in harmony with life; it is self-realization. In order to reach this basic identity of human being, one needs to undertake a process that can only be assisted through education. Besides, he believed

that self-education is based on self-realization, which its process is as important as education itself for every human being. The more important thing is that the educator must have faith in himself & universal self, underlying his individual soul. According to Tagore's concept of self-education, the educator must follow these principles:

Freedom

Tagore believed in complete freedom of any kind – intellectual freedom, decision, knowledge, satisfaction, heart, & actions then only one can turn to self-guidance.

Perfection

The entire student must try to develop every aspect of his personality, all the abilities & powers he has been endowed by nature. The sole aim of education is development of the child's personality which is possible only when every aspect of the personality is given equal importance.

Universality

It's an important aspect of an enduring faith in the universal soul, which exists within him. It is thus important to identify one's own soul with the universal soul. This search is achieved by knowledge, worship & action. Once this realization of the universal soul is achieved, it becomes easier to progress further in human life.

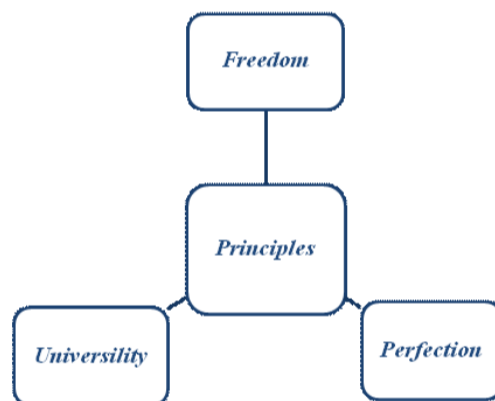


Fig-1: Tagore's Principle of Self-education

CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL MAN

Tagore philosophy of education cannot be understood without understanding his Meta Physical theory. In this theory the concept of universal man is very important. Referring to universal man as the ultimate reality Rabindranath elaborates the concept. He says - truth is the infinite pursued by science, while reality is the definite of the infinite, which relates truth to the person. Reality is human, it is what we are conscious of, by which we are affected, that which we express. According to Tagore this universal man is known by the individual not through direct realization. He says Reality, in all its manifestations reveals itself in the emotional & imaginative back ground of our mind. The universal man is at the back of all movements, all change, all order and system in the universal. Man is very much a part of him. Man & nature cannot be conceived separate from god. The universal man includes both. According to Tagore this universal man is in every individual person. Therefore we should not neglect even the most poor, illiterate & humble human being. It's depending on the human beings to exchange their experiences in this world for make a sustainable future.

INNOVATIVE THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

From our very childhood habits are formed & knowledge is imparted in such a manner that our life is weaned away from nature & our mind & the world are set in opposition from the beginning of our days. Thus the greatest of educations for which we came prepared is neglected, & we are made to lose our world to find a bagful of information instead. Gurudev himself as a person & his writings did not bounded in a central educational treatise; rather his ideas must be gleaned through his various writings & innovative educational experiments at Santiniketan (Visva-Bharati) spreads all over the world. In general, he envisioned a sustainable education that was deeply rooted in one's immediate surroundings but connected to the cultures of the wider world. He felt that a curriculum should revolve organically around nature. He also emphasized upon the importance of an empathetic sense of interconnectedness with the surrounding world. But, now days we find that his innovative idea of education is systematically ignored in most of the schools.

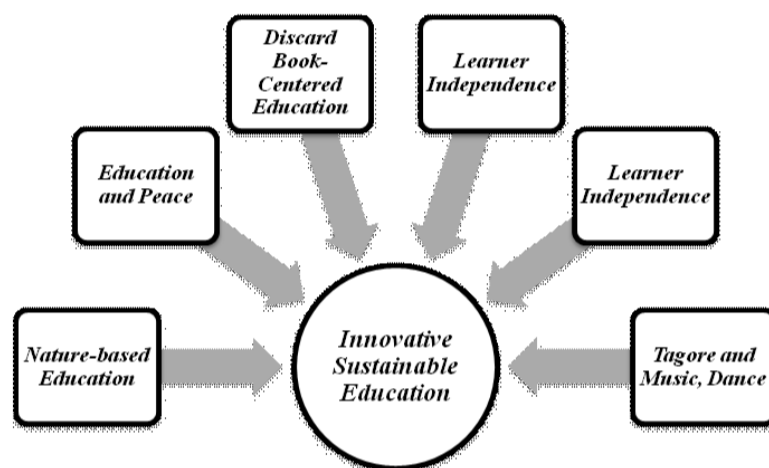


Fig-2: Tagore's Innovative Thought on Education

Nature-based Education

Tagore frustrated with the denatured situation of academic learning process & promoted the system on the model of forest solitude or under the open sky. He insists that no mind can grow properly without living in intimate communion with nature. Those situations present to the learner a situation, which stimulates his imagination & creativity, & combats the boredom of mechanical learning. Its aim was to develop individual personality by the means of harmonious interaction & union of the spirit with the environment. Tagore emphasized on 'naturalism' for framing educational model. He envisaged that nature is the best teacher to the pupil. Nature will provide the student with necessary situation to earn knowledge. It is the nature which will be the guiding force to inculcate the spirit of learning in the mind of a student to pursue the education & also will give a shape of his behavior & character.

Education and Peace

Tagore criticized the British educational process as it failed to develop attitudes & the spirit of inquiry. He wanted science to be taught along with India's own philosophical & spiritual knowledge at Indian universities for making peace in country. Because science without constraint of self-knowledge leads to an endless desire and the meaningless pursuit of the instruments of power, which are often the origin of conflict among nations & destroy the peace. That is why in education sector both spiritual & scientific knowledge are considered by Tagore as equally important.

Discard Book-Centered Education

For the first time in the sphere of Indian education, Tagore established a new mile stone to discard the bookish knowledge from the child. With boldness & firmness he rejected a book-centered knowledge for students. To him it is not just to confine the mind of boys & girls to text books only. It will kill the natural

instincts of a student & make him bookish. It will kill his creative skill. He said, "Books have come between our mind & life. They deprive us of our natural faculty of getting knowledge directly from nature & life & have generated within us the habit of knowing everything through books. We touch the world not with our mind, but with our books. They dehumanize & make us unsocial.... Let the students gather knowledge & materials from different regions of the country, from direct sources & from their own independent effort". So, students should be freed from the book-centered education & should be given a broader avenue for learning a better future.

Learner Independence

Tagore's approach to education was unique one. It gave much emphasis to the 'freedom of thought' & imagination for the children. The same thing he wanted to implement in the field of education. With that object he had opened Santiniketan, Sriniketan & Brahmachari Ashram; later it Visva-Bharati. He gave free choice to students to develop their interest in any field they like. According 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 & freedom of will. Education imparted in a natural way will lead to the fulfillment of these three freedoms.

Innovative Teaching Process

Teaching should be practical & real but not artificial & theoretical one, he believes. As a naturalist, Tagore laid emphasis on the practicality of education. That will definitely increase the creative skill within a learner. That creativity will bring perfection in the learning process & the student will be a master in his own field but not a slave to mere theoretical knowledge which one delves deep.

Tagore and Music, Dance

Tagore attached great importance to the fine arts in his educational curriculum. To him game, dance, music & drama, painting etc. should form a part of sustainable educational process. Students should take active part in these finer aspects of human life for these are very essential to enrich soul. In his words he explains that speaking creates nearness between man and man, while music helps us to identify ourselves with nature.

TAGORE AND SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

Rabindranath says "the fundamental purpose of education is not merely to enrich ourselves through the fullness of knowledge, but also to establish the bond of love & friendship between man and man". Thus, Tagore approach to education is humanistic & also to ultimate reality is integral. He believes in an inner harmony among man & nature & god. They are in fact three aspects of the same reality. In man, again the physical, mental & the spiritual aspects are equally important & internally related. Therefore, Rabindranath believes in a multi sided education with physical, intellectual moral & religious aims. Tagore's education at home & at school could be a study in contrast. While at home he was provided the best of education – though rigorous- that developed him physically, mentally & intellectually, the education at the English-medium schools where he studied exasperated him in body & spirit. Rabindranath Tagore was primarily an educationist rather than a political thinker. His education marked a novel blending of the ideas of the east & the west. The spiritualism of Indian philosophy & progressive outlook of the western people were blended together to give rise to an educational philosophy which marked its distinction in comparison to other educationists of India. Almost a century ago Rabindranath Tagore in his times finds the relevance of the nature of the 'education' that we as 'students' are subjected to the problems plaguing the current educational system.

TAGORE'S VISION IN TODAY'S INDIA

Tagore's progressive educational philosophy is largely forgotten today. The experimental models in his schools, Santiniketan & Sriniketan, remain mere experiments. His ideals have not found their way into India's schools; future generations have returned to rote-memorization as the predominant learning style. "If Tagore were to see the India of today, more than half a century after independence, nothing perhaps would shock him so much as the continued illiteracy of the masses. He would see this as a total betrayal of what the nationalist leaders had promised during the struggle for independence" –Shashi Tharoor. Yet

Tagore's vision for education is one that modern India cannot afford to forget. These ideas of a new education were founded upon an urge & an instinct to create a new type of humanity whose scientific-technological progress & economic development would grow through dialogue & respect for values. Many of these issues remain deeply relevant today. Tagore insisted that education is the most important element in the development of a country. But it is not hard to see why he saw the transformative role of education as the central story in the development process. It was on education rather than on sacrifice that the future of India would depend. The emphasis here was on self-motivation rather than on discipline, & on fostering intellectual curiosity rather than competitive excellence. Tagore realized the need for education in science as well as in literature & the humanities. Central idea of Tagore's education vision was the nurturing of students' souls. India's democracy is in great danger if it fails to take Tagore's legacy to heart. Only the kind of education that Tagore envisioned can equip our citizens to meet the challenges of our modern, globalized world.

CONCLUSION

Although Rabindranath Tagore was not educated in any university, he was clearly a man of learning. His own original innovative ideology of education, which led him to establish an educational institution named Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan with the intention of re-opening the channel of communication between the East & the West. Tagore's philosophy of education draws its inspiration from ancient Indian philosophy of education. Tagore's scheme was to transplant in modern India a slice of the ancient Ashramic principles where students & teachers would live together in familiar bondage. Learning would take place in a spirit of togetherness – both with human beings & the nature around. As one of the earliest educators to think in terms of the global village, Rabindranath Tagore's educational model has a unique sensitivity & aptness for education. He saw education as a vehicle for appreciating the richest aspects of other cultures, while maintaining one's own cultural specificity. Tagore devoted much of his life to advancing education in India & advocating it everywhere. Nothing absorbed as much of his time as the school in Santiniketan that he established. He was constantly raising money for this unusually progressive co-educational school. In his distinctive view of education, Tagore particularly emphasized the need for gathering knowledge from everywhere in the world & assessing it only by reasoned scrutiny. Rabindranath Tagore, by his efforts & achievements, is one of a global network of pioneering educators, who have striven to create non-authoritarian learning systems appropriate to their respective surroundings. His intention was to correct this conception, without ignoring science, technology, & efforts on rural empowerment. Therefore, Tagore did not neglect the lesser aim of life & education, where the focus of colonial system of education was ultimately on employment sustainability.

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