

“An Analytical Study of Rabindranath Tagore's Principles of Education and Culture”

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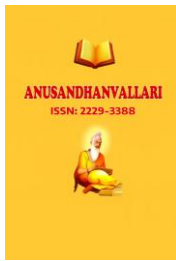
Abstract: Education and culture are two strong pillars of a progressive society. While education paves the way for mental and intellectual development of an individual, culture connects him with moral values and social identity. Education is the seed that gives birth to the tree of knowledge and culture is the soil that provides nourishment and strength. Studying the principles of Rabindranath Tagore, the creative artist of modern India who received the Nobel Prize for "Gitanjali" (1913), on 'Education and Culture' is like a "lighthouse" for the present education system. Education is the foundation of any country's national development, and culture is the soul of society. "Atithi Devo Bhava" (Guest is God) has been a distinctive feature of ancient Indian culture, where even today in India, guests are treated like gods. Education and culture are crucial tools for a child's holistic development. For Tagore, culture meant "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." His Shantiniketan model serves as a guide for modern education systems today, demonstrating that art, dance, and music are not merely forms of entertainment but essential components of self-realization and character building. In Tagore's vision, the purpose of education was to empower individuals economically and develop them into global citizens who can embrace the world's diversity while respecting their local culture. This study explores the relevance of Tagore's principles of freedom, creativity, and nature as an alternative to the current mechanized education system.

Keywords: Quality education, Education and culture, Shantiniketan, Rabindranath Tagore etc.

Introduction

Education is the ladder by climbing which one can touch the stars in the sky. It is the torch that illuminates every dark corner of ignorance. No situation in the world can defeat the one who has the weapon of education. He has the power to build an empire even from nothing. Education is a dynamic process that continues in the students throughout their life. "A child is a mirror in which the future sees its reflection; hence, true education lies in not allowing that mirror to become blurred."

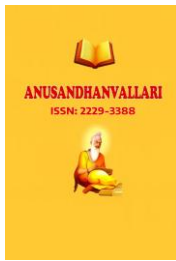
The English word "education" is derived from the Latin word "educare" which means "to bring out", i.e., to bring out the hidden talent in children. Thus, education means developing a person's physical, mental, and spiritual powers and abilities. In a broader sense, education is an ongoing social process in a society, through which a student's innate abilities are developed and behavior is transformed. An aware and educated citizen is the strongest bulwark of any country's democracy. When we learn something, new connections are formed between the neurons



of our brain. Scientifically, education means the changes in the structure of the brain that occur due to experience and practice. Education is the process of enhancing the brain's ability to analyze data, reason, and solve problems. According to Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, "The main goal of education is to create human beings who are capable of doing new things, who are creative, inventive, and discoverers." According to him, the basis of education is cognitive development. Piaget believed that a child is not an empty vessel to be filled with information, but rather a "little scientist." Providing children with an environment where He can discover knowledge by experimenting himself. In literary language, education is "transformation". Education is that philosopher's stone which makes the ordinary personality of a human being as valuable and shining as "gold". According to Rabindranath Tagore, the author of the Indian national anthem, education means all-round development of the inherent powers of a human being. Education is a process of "self-realization" and free development in the company of nature, whose aim is to achieve perfection by nurturing physical, mental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual qualities. From a literary and philosophical perspective, education for Tagore was not a mechanical process, but a path to self-realization and expansion of consciousness.

Education is that which develops the vision to recognize Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram in a person. Tagore considered education as the 'laboratory of nature'. According to Tagore, "The meaning of education is to make the mind capable of discovering the truth and adopting that truth, as well as to reach that study." In his words, education is the intellectual development of a person, which includes the power of thinking and understanding apart from rote learning, physical development, moral and spiritual development, which includes love, kindness, patience, loyalty towards truth, cultural coordination, which should remain connected to the roots of one's culture and respect other cultures. The aim of education is to change the behavior of the child. Culture means "Sanskhaar" i.e. the behavior and social qualities learned by humans are called culture, in which the personality of a human being grows and flourishes. According to Tagore, culture is the flower of man's inner practice, whose fragrance lies in the welfare of humanity. "Culture" is the Latin word for "culture". The word "culture" is derived from "cultura," which means to care. Culture is a group of social qualities, including religion, tradition, customs, way of life, law, literature, language, and social behavior. Culture is a man-made part of the environment. In the words of Tagore, "Culture is the light that dispels the darkness within man and shows him beauty and truth." Culture includes all those social qualities, religion, tradition, customs, moral principles, which a person acquires as a member of society. The culture of a society refers to the entire way of life of that society.

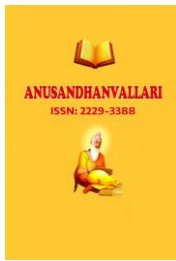
Culture is an ocean, vast, deep, and eternal. It contains all the knowledge and experience of our ancestors. Education is a wave that rises with time, reaches new heights, and leaves its mark on the shore. Every wave is part of the ocean. No matter how modern education becomes, its water comes from the ocean of culture. Tagore considered the "mother tongue" as essential as "mother's milk" for the protection of education and culture. Tagore advocated a culture that frees the human mind from stereotypes and old superstitions. For the holistic development of a child, both education and culture are the light that shows the path to life. Culture brings out the "spiritual perfection" within a person. For Tagore, culture meant "the pursuit of beauty." The development of human civilization is the result of education and culture. According to Tagore, "The plant of education grows in the soil of culture and breathes the air of nature. Only when these three meet can a complete human being be created." The purpose of education is to make a human being To become a "world-human", he considered 'art' and 'music' as essential in education. Education should be such that it teaches to respect one's culture. If the interrelationship of education and culture is woven in literary and philosophical terminology, then they appear to be two sides of the same coin. While education is a sadhana, culture is the 'siddhi' obtained from that sadhana. Humans are like animals without education and culture. Only a best education and culture makes society and human beings superior. Humans are known only by their education and culture. The function of education is preservation and promotion of culture. Education is that 'bridge' through which one generation hands over its cultural values to the next generation. Education without culture is 'mechanical' and culture without education is 'inert'. When education is colored with culture, only then it becomes 'sanskhar'. Education and culture play an important role in the



development of a nation, country, state and society. When the whole world is focused on 'mental health' 'experimental education' Talking about "holistic development" and skill-based education, Tagore, the "cultural ambassador" who spread Indian culture across the country and abroad, had given its blueprint 100 years ago, and Shantiniketan is its living laboratory. Today, in the 21st century, Tagore's principles related to education and culture are influential and important. In today's fast-paced world, digital mobile and computer technology have turned students into robotic machines, confined to the four walls and screens of the school. They are machines, not students, because they lack original thinking, contemplation, cultural qualities, and good conduct. Indiscipline, insolence, lack of values, and lack of human qualities are continuously increasing among students today. Social evils are flourishing in society. The character of students is being eroded. The entire society is suffering from the declining standard of education over time, the main reason for which is the lack of a good education and culture. Currently, chaos and corruption are prevalent everywhere. In such a situation, 'Gurudev' Rabindranath Tagore Tagore's theories on education and culture are influential and exemplary. Today, the nation and society need Tagore's theories on education and culture. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which talks about experiential education, practical education, holistic education, etc., is a product of Tagore's philosophy, and his Shantiniketan is a living example of this. Studying the ideas or theories of Rabindranath Tagore, one of the greatest figures in world literature, regarding education and culture is an inspiration for the modern education system. He achieved excellence in literature, philosophy, education, and culture. This research paper follows Tagore's theories or ideas on education and culture, which were closer to the interrelationships of nature, personality, education, and culture. Tagore's educational experiments, which he conducted primarily at Shantiniketan, challenged colonial concepts of education and proposed an education system that nurtures the spiritual, emotional, nature, and cultural needs of students, emphasizing the importance of nature-based education and activities. These include debate, learning by action, learning by experience and discussion methods.

Tagore's principle of education in a natural environment was that Tagore considered education a natural laboratory. Nature is the greatest teacher. Education should take place in direct contact with nature, a joyful and experiential process. Shantiniketan (1921) is an example of this, where he held classes in an open environment and emphasized the importance of boarding schools located away from cities. Nature inspires creativity and awakens curiosity in students, which develops a lifelong love of learning. In 1921, Tagore established Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, a unique example of his vision. Here, students studied in open classrooms, engaged in artistic pursuits, and participated in agricultural and social welfare activities. This initiative epitomized Rabindranath Tagore's contribution to education and provided an alternative to the rigid European-style schooling system. Nature is not just a collection of trees, plants, or mountains; it is an open book that can teach us everything. It is a lesson that no amount of degrees can teach. Thousands of species of animals and plants live together in a forest. Nature teaches us that diversity is not a weakness, but beauty and strength. "Nature is the greatest teacher," which indicates that nature itself is a "teacher" who, through its behavioral transformation and beauty, imparts to humans the lessons of life, coexistence, discipline, creativity, and self-discipline without words. "Nature—trees, plants, rivers, mountains, weather, and sky—all of these in the world around us not only reveal beauty but also teach us how to live." In the lap of nature, students can easily learn through experience and experimentation. Nature's beauty and power inspire creativity, and nature provides the ideal environment for learning. Learning through nature is what Tagore calls the "nature method," in which guesswork and experimentation are superior to understanding. Unconscious learning and sudden surprises are superior to concentrated effort, and direct experience and discovery of the world is what is possible. It is better and more effective than books. Education should take place in a joyful and experiential process in a natural environment, which inspires creativity and develops original thinking, reflection and curiosity in students. Tagore was an advocate of naturalistic education, which emphasized on imparting education in a natural environment.

Students should be given freedom while receiving education and the opportunity for self-realization to develop creative tendencies. Tagore opposed strict discipline and punishment and emphasized freedom during education.



Students should be stress-free; only then can they learn effectively. Education should foster the holistic development of all faculties. Students should be given the opportunity to learn independently by doing in a stress-free environment. Unless they experience it themselves, their development remains incomplete.

"True education develops where the mind is free from fear and knowledge is free."

Students should be given freedom while receiving education so that they can develop according to their temperament, interests, and abilities. Freedom is crucial for true education, personal expression, and creativity. Emphasis on freedom promotes self-control and rational thinking. Intellectual freedom, creative freedom, a natural environment, the form of discipline, and the freedom of students' rights were established in education, thereby enhancing students' multifaceted abilities. Development can occur. If students feel free, they can gain the right to act, speak, and think as they wish, which is crucial for the all-round development of students.

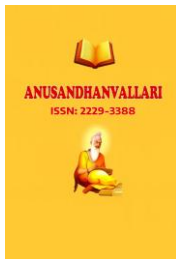
Tagore believed that creative expression is not merely an aesthetic pursuit, but a path to "self-realization." "Self-realization" or "enlightenment" is knowing oneself or recognizing the power that lies within us. "Self-realization" is recognizing the divine presence within us and understanding the interconnectedness of all life." In education, Tagore considered self-realization crucial for students' development. It involves understanding one's inner qualities, feelings, and thoughts, and knowing who one is. This includes self-awareness, personal development, authenticity, meditation, yoga, inner wisdom, etc. Tagore emphasized the importance of preserving and respecting one's culture along with education. Tagore was the country's "cultural ambassador," spreading Indian culture throughout the world. He spread the knowledge of Indian culture through his literary works and considered culture to be crucial for the development of students. Tagore took Indian philosophy and literature to the world and also acted as a bridge between the ideas of East and West. The National Education Policy (NEP-2020) revives Tagore's idea of HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT.

According to Tagore, the main objective of education is to prepare the individual for the service of the nation and education is for human upliftment, cultural representation, and intellectualism. Based on his Indian culture, Tagore laid the foundation of Indian education. His works showcased the mysticism and emotional beauty of Indian culture.

Tagore said that education through mother tongue is the best. Language is a structured system of communication used by humans. Children can easily express their thoughts in their mother tongue. Therefore, Tagore emphasized that a child's education should be in their mother tongue. His view of a teacher in the mother tongue was very clear, progressive, and humane. Thinking and understanding are possible only in the mother tongue, because the language a child first connects with is their natural language of thinking, understanding, and expression. If education is imparted in that language, it is more effective and profound. He considered the development of not only knowledge but also culture, tradition, and the soul through the mother tongue essential. Education in the mother tongue keeps students connected to their cultural identity. Mother tongue is the mother of creativity, because when students think and write in their own language, they become more creative and independent. Education in the mother tongue develops thinking power, creativity, and cultural consciousness.

"A child's mind can grow freely in its mother tongue; a foreign language hampers the natural development of thought."

- According to Tagore, mother tongue is like mother's milk in education. Education imparted in the mother tongue connects a child to their culture, thinking, and personality. This is not just a question of a language, but a question of a person's identity, self-respect, and creativity. Tagore's principles are equally relevant today when we discuss the language of education in a multilingual India. Tagore's principle is that students should have a clear knowledge of Indian ideology, values, culture, and the background of Indian society. His Indian ideology is based on humanity and universal brotherhood. Indian ideology means the basic principles of Indian philosophy such as the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, and the Gita, as well as knowledge of religion and morality in life. Through



education, moral values should be developed in students, which include respect for teachers, parents, and elders, duty, honesty and self-control, cooperation, service, and social responsibility. These moral values help students develop good values. Knowledge of culture connects students with culture and art. Indian language, literature, folk tales, music, dance, painting, drama, festivals, customs, traditions, traditional lifestyle and the spirit of collectivism make education lively and joyful.

Without art and culture, education becomes lifeless. Knowledge of the background of Indian society requires students to understand the reality of their society, which includes its diversity, caste, language, religion, and traditions. Without understanding society, education cannot connect with life. Students must understand the reality and diversity of their society. Tagore's principles are crucial in today's modern education system. Students should acquire modern knowledge, but they should also have a clear understanding of Indian ideology, values, culture, and the background of society.

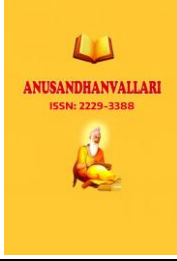
The Principle of Spiritual and Cultural Development: According to Tagore, true education is that which paves the way to freedom of the soul. He considered Indian culture and values, yoga, meditation, and simple living as integral parts of education. Music, dance, acting, and painting are essential in education to preserve and develop Indian cultural traditions. A fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, where education is accompanied by a "universal understanding." Tagore supported the Gurukul system of education, where there was a deep dialogue between nature and humanity. Gurukul emphasized not just intellectual pursuits but also physical and spiritual development. Art and music, painting, cleaning, gardening, and self-help were part of the education system. Tagore valued the ancient Gurukul tradition, where the relationship between guru and disciple is based on love and respect. The guru is not just a teacher but a guide to the student, living life alongside the student.

Child-Centered Education: John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, and Gijubhai are prominent thinkers who have made significant contributions to child-centered education. Like these thinkers, Rabindranath Tagore emphasized child-centered education. Child-centered education is a system that focuses on the child, taking into account their interests, abilities, mental level, and learning speed. The teacher plays the role of a guide. Child-centered education is highly nuanced, humane, and artistic. He considered education a living process developed in the "lap of nature." Child-centered education prioritizes the child, with curriculum, timetables, and teaching methods tailored to children's needs. Emphasis is placed on learning by doing, experimental work, and activities. Children are free to ask questions, express their opinions, and choose subjects of their interest. Tagore's "child-centered" education was not limited to the individual; he wanted to develop the qualities of a "global citizen" within the child. This is a psychological foundation. Tagore believed that a child learns more among trees, plants, the open sky, and birds than from books in a closed room. To give concrete shape to this idea, he founded "Shantiniketan," where classes were held under trees. Tagore was a staunch opponent of rote learning. "Learning on the go" was part of his philosophy. He considered excursions and handicrafts as integral parts of education, so that both the child's hands and mind could develop. His ideas continue to inspire the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Conclusion

Tagore's ideas on education and culture are like a philosopher's stone, capable of transforming even an ordinary child into an extraordinary personality. His ideas are a path that leads from the "dark tunnel of rote learning" to the "light of self-realization," a path shaped by quality education and culture. If we want to build a strong nation and an enlightened society, we must preserve the child's natural smile and curiosity, where education is the foundation of the nation and culture is the soul of that society.

The National Education Policy (NEP-2020) advocates education in the mother tongue, multilingual education, holistic development, experiential education, creative education, critical thinking, baggage-free learning, 360-degree evaluation, and road learning, which ensure the all-round development of children. Tagore has been



successfully implementing all these principles and approaches in his Shantiniketan for over 100 years. Shantiniketan and Visva-Bharati are living proof of this. Rabindranath Tagore's principles clearly demonstrate that education is a process of "humanization." His philosophy is even more relevant today, as he desired an education system that, rather than reducing humans to machines, would empower them with sensitivity, nature-loving, and global citizens. For him, culture was not a rigid tradition but a flowing stream that constantly assimilates new ideas. Education and culture are not merely a means to individual development, but rather the foundation of nation-building and national development. Only when education empowers individuals with self-reliance can a nation's true economic development be possible. He emphasized education that cultivates creativity, original thinking, logic, and scientific temper. A nation develops when its citizens innovate rather than imitate. Therefore, studying Tagore's principles of education and culture is both effective and essential in the current education system.

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