

# Educational Ideals of Rabindranath Tagore

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Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian who wanted to introduce a totally scientific system of education, which can make a real human being. He was the humanist and he wanted to uplift the human values and cultures through proper education curriculum. He wanted a system of education, not hired from the western country but which had deep roots in the Indian soil and its glorious culture.

Tagore observed, “The best and noblest gifts of humanity cannot be the monopoly, of a particular race or country”. Tagore said, before we are in a position to stand in comparison with the other cultures of the world or try to cooperate with them, we must bare our own culture on a synthesis of all the different cultures we have. True Culture brings fulfillment from the depths of the self to the aptitudes of a man as a whole; under its influence man spontaneously attains an all-round fulfillment and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and the enthusiasm for unselfish action become natural. True culture sets greater store by natural courtesy than mechanical observance of custom and convention. A cultured man will rather injure than humiliate himself. To be envious of others success is to humiliate himself. As a messenger of freedom of mind and peace, Tagore has expressed his feelings in the following verses.

“Where the mind is without fear  
And the head is held high,  
Where knowledge is free.  
Where the world has not been broken in to  
Fragments by narrow domestic walls...  
Into that heaven of freedom, my father  
Let my country awake”

## TAGORE’S VIEWS ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF EDUCATION:

The aim of education, according to Tagore, is creative self-expression through physical, mental, aesthetic and moral development. He stressed the need for developing empathy and sensitivity and the necessity for an intimate relationship with one’s cultural and natural environment. He saw education as a vehicle for appreciating the richest aspects of other cultures, while maintaining one’s own cultural specificity.

**1. Meaning of education:** Education is short of the highest purpose of man, the fullest growth and freedom of soul. To the child, the environment will provide an ever-ready back ground for its spontaneous activity. Our true education is possible only in the forest through intimate correct with nature.

**2 Freedom of mind:** The objective of education is the freedom of mind, which can only be achieved through the path of education.

**3. Children as children:** It is a mistake to judge by the standards of grownups. Adults ignore the gifts of children and insist that children must learn through the same process as they do. This man’s most cruel and most wasteful mistake. Children’s subconscious mind is more active than their conscious intelligence.

**4. Discipline and Freedom:** Living ideals cannot be set into clockwork arrangement. Tagore wrote, I never said to them; don’t do this, or don’t do that. . . . . I never punish them. An ideal school is an Ashram where men have gathered for the highest end of life.

**5. Living contact between the teacher and the taught:** In teaching, the guiding should be personal love based on human relations. In education, the teacher is more important than the method. The teacher is Guru. He is to guide and stimulate the students. He remarked, a teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn in its own flame. So a teacher must always be teacher

## Shantineketana and Viswa Bharathi

As an alternative to the existing forms of education, he started a small school of education in 1901. Later this school was developed into a university and rural reconstruction centre, known as Viswa Bharati, where he tried to develop an alternative model of education that stemmed from his own learning experience. Students at Shantineketana were encouraged to create their own publications and put out several illustrated magazines. The children were encouraged to follow their ideas in painting and drawing and to draw inspirations from the many visiting artists and writers. The main characteristics of the Shantineketana School are the following.

- It is a community school where there is no distinction of caste and creed.
- Co-educational and residential institution.
- It is a self-governing institution – has a dairy farm, post office, hospital and workshop.
- It is based on the concept of freedom of the mind.
- Mother tongue is the medium of instruction.
- It is studied in natural surroundings and it provides for manual labor.
- There is well-equipped library.

Rabindranath Tagore envisioned as a learning centre where conflicting interests are minimized, where individuals work together in common pursuit of truth and realize that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered the secrets of the universe, philosophers solved the problems of existence, saints made the truth of the spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belong, but for all mankind

### **EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF TAGORE**

Tagore believed in 'Simple Living, High Thinking', so educational aims are set on the bases of Indian Culture and Traditions. He viewed that Indian students should realize the Indian culture as an inseparable part of the cultural heritage of the whole humanity. But to grasp the reality, the children must be made aware first of their own culture. So, the function of

education should be the transmission of the age-old spiritual edition of our land to enable them to achieve greater height in future. Tagore's own educational system had its implication in the field of natural education. For him education should take the children nearer to nature and being a spiritualist, Tagore added, in close proximity to God.

The three cardinal principles of Tagore's educational philosophy are :-

- (1) Freedom
- (2) Active communication with Nature and man
- (3) Creative self-expression

Children enjoy absolute and unrestricted freedom in the mind, nature and reality. The process of acquisition of knowledge thus becomes a joyful one in contrast with what is being done in regular schools. This process gears up their spirit of curiosity and a feeling of joy to discover them. He advocated wholeness of life and education and states education is a permanent adventure of life. Tagore also said that an education divorced from the streams of life and confined within the four walls of the classroom becomes artificial and lost its value. Education leads from freedom from ignorance and ignorance is one of the root causes of our poverty. Tagore felt that education life cannot be separated from the economic life of people. He also fulfills this aim in his Shantineketana to reconstruct the educational curricula. So, for this he introduced crafts in his curricula, which leads to different life activities. Tagore attached great significance to the moral values and ethics in education. Accepting the intellect of the people of West, it would be a great degrading to forget our moral wealth of wisdom. Stressing on the importance of mother-tongue, Tagore considered that foreign language makes the learner alienated and lifeless from the living world of freedom and joy. So, education should be intervened with life and society.

According to him, there are three sources of knowledge: **Nature, Life and Teacher**. Education is based on these three sources. Among them Nature can be considered as the generous donor but the sensitivity of the child and its respective power are to be enkindled by independent and creative thinking and this hard job belongs to the teacher. He wanted

to introduce education system, which was related with the truth and life. So, he prepared a curriculum that would help the student to improve their faculties of mind and improve their knowledge. Nature is a source of inspiration and revolution for the child, it teaches him for the first lesson of freedom and gives him immense delight and enables him to find his own solution to the problem he faces. Tagore gave a message of mankind, brotherhood, internationalism and service to humanity. A child according to him, should be given full freedom so that he may learn by Nature, love as well as affection. Education should aim at harmony with our life and education i.e. existence. Tagore implemented all his views regarding education in his school called Shantiniketan which is opened in a natural surrounding i.e. natural environment. As a whole, Tagore's main aim of education is to prepare the individual for the service of community. Rabindranath Tagore has been one of the topmost educationists of India. His name will ever shine like a star in the galaxy of the educationists who contributed handsomely to the cause of education.

Tagore was fully dissatisfied with the prevalent system of education at that time and called the schools as factories of rote learning. Then he advocated the principle of freedom for an effective education. He said that the children should be given freedom so that they are able to grow and develop as per their own wishes. A man through the process of education should be able to come out as a harmonious individual in time with his social set-up of life. He suggested creative self-expression through craft, music, drawing and drama. It was therefore, the endeavour of Tagore to create positive and mind nourishing surroundings for his children to enable them to enjoy their freedom and develop their natural faculties. The establishment of Shantiniketan fulfilled the desired goal of Tagore in the educational front. Tagore's education marked a novel blending of the ideas of the East and West. The spiritualism of Indian philosophy and progressive outlook of the western people were blended together to give rise to an educational philosophy which marked its distinction in comparison to other educationists of India.

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**Rabindranath Tagore**