



## SPIRITUAL EDUCATION IN TAGORE PHILOSOPHY

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### Abstract

*The paper deals with the spiritual education with special reference to the Tagore's Naturalist Philosophy in which Tagore's life philosophy influence spiritual education. The paper also deals with the Cardinal Principles of his educational philosophy based on Freedom, Creative self-expression, and Active communion with nature and man which are the integral part of spiritual education. In this paper an attempt has been made to recognize, analyze, evaluate and critically examine the dominant factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore's philosophy. The paper concludes 'Spiritual Education' as "it is education which helps to fulfill the potentialities of the individuals through the Doctrine of Mother Nature, Universal Brotherhood, Freedom, Service, Co-operation, Love, Sympathy, Wisdom, Peace and Harmony, Truth, Tolerance, Self-control, Self-Confidence, self-expression, and Self-Realization and to prepare them to solve the everyday problems for life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining the highest values and ideas of education, if the teachers enable to modify such kind of behavior patterns of individuals in the lap of Nature, - this is spiritual education."*

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Education, Tagore's Naturalistic Philosophy.*



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### Introduction :

Tagore as 'the poet with the head of a thinker' and Einstein as 'the thinker with the head of a poet'. -----Dimitri Marianoff ( A relative of Einstein)

Why does the journey start from Rabindranath Tagore's life philosophy to spiritual world necessary?

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) - India's first Noble Prize Winner, was one of the greatest literary figures of India. He was a poet, writer, novelist, dramatist, actor, painter, prophet,

musician, sculptor, philosopher, educator, a great nationalist, a great internationalist, idealist, realist and naturalist, a social reformer, an experimentalist, a thinker, educationist, saint, mastermind of educational renaissance, karma yogi, humanitarian, a leader of thought and action and above all, also a great spiritualist.

In this respect, the first Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1945) significantly quotes in 'The Discovery of India', "These vedic hymn have been described by Rabindranath Tagore as a poetic testament of a people's collective reaction to the wonder and awe of existence (pp-81) -----The Tagore family had played a leading part in various reform movement in Bengal during the nineteenth century. There were men of spiritual stature in it and fine writers and artists, but Rabindranath towered above them all and indeed all over India his position gradually became one of unchallenged supremacy. His long life of creative activity covered two entire generations and he seems almost of our present day.....His constructive work in the field of education, quietly begun, has already made Shantiniketan one of the focal points of Indian culture. His influence over the mind of India, and specially of successive rising generations, has been tremendous. Not Bengali only, the language in which he himself wrote, but all the modern languages of India have been moulded partly by his writings. More than any other Indian, he has helped to bring into harmony the ideals of the East and West, and broadened the bases of Indian nationalism. He has been India's internationalist par excellence, believing and working for international co-operation, taking India's message to other countries and bringing their message to his own people. And yet with all his internationalism, his feet have always been planted firmly on India's soil and his mind has been saturated with the wisdom of the Upanishads (pp-372).....Even Rabindranath Tagore, highly individualistic as he was and not attracted towards some aspects of the communistic system, became an admirer of this new civilization and contrasted it with present conditions in his own country (pp-409). Rabindranath Tagore, in line with the great succession, was full of the temper and urges of the modern age and yet was rooted in India's past, and in his own self bult up a synthesis of the old and the new (p-628)."

Rabindranath Tagore, popularly known as Gurudeva, was born on May 6, 1861 in Calcutta. His father's name was Maharshi Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and his mother's name Sarada Devi (1830-1875). He was influenced by his home environment, Upanishad, the Ramayana, his

visits and tours to different parts of the earth such as Europe, Japan, Russia, and the United States, and love for 'Nature'. He was also influenced by the Naturalistic philosophy of Rousseau and Wordsworth. Tagore was a versatile genius with multi-dimensional personality. He started to compose verses in Bengali at the age of eight years. In 1887, he went to England to study Law, but soon returned back to India. Rabindranath Tagore established a school 'Santiniketan Ashram' i.e Tapovan System of Education on the model of ancient ashramas in 1901 which grew into a world university, known as 'Vishvabharati University, Santiniketan' a unique university of the universe in 1921. He was awarded Nobel Prize in Literature on the English Translation of his 'Gitanjali' in 1913. He was also awarded with D.Litt. (Hony.) Degree in 1913 by Calcutta University, Calcutta. Moreover, he received Knighthood from the British Government in 1915, but he returned back the Title on account of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in 1919.

His general philosophy is based on idealism, realism, naturalism, humanism, nationalism, supernaturalism and internationalism.

As a naturalist, Tagore was a great lover of 'Mother Nature' and assumed there is a harmony between life and nature and also believed that manifestations of nature representing Creator. Further, he believed in potentialities of individuals who differ from each other's and each individual is an ambassador of God. So there is spiritual bondage between man and man, but he wanted to know the existence of God and realization of God through 'Mother Nature' and to achieve the highest aims of education i.e. the realization of God. He wanted to have spiritual knowledge and experiences through nature. Having spiritual experiences, he taught the individuals on the line of Naturalistic Philosophy saturating the spiritual paths of 'Mother Nature' and recognized the spiritual potentialities of the individuals at "Santiniketan or The Abode of Peace".

Tagore's publication on education are 'Shiksha Samasya', 'Shikshar Herpher', 'Abaran', 'Tapovan', 'Dharamashiksha', 'Hindu Visvavidyalaya', 'Strishiksha', 'Shikshar Bahan', 'My School', 'Shikshar Milan', 'A Poet's School', 'Shikshar Vikiran', 'Ashramer Shiksha' and 'Bodher Sadhana'.

**Need and Significance of the Study :** Very few researches have been developed to study spiritual education with respect to Tagore's Naturalistic Philosophy in India and its contribution

to the field of education, spiritual education is less explored. The study is philosophical in its nature because it indicates normative aspect of education as for examples- what should be the process, aims of education, curriculum, and method of teaching in spiritual education? Where to educate spiritual doctrines? This study has sociological bases of education because of being related to society. This study covers psychological aspect of education for instance growth and development of the students, learning, motivation, personality development and adjustment, etc. Spiritual education plays a vital role in Indian society. It is well known to all that Indian society is a spiritual based society. Tagore felt that ‘An education divorced from the streams of life and confined within the four walls of the classroom becomes artificial and loses its value.’ Some of the scholars felt that after independence the spirituality gradually disappear and it will have no impact on Indian educational system. India is a neither developed nor undeveloped country but where development is required in each and every sphere of human life. Spiritual education and its implications are increasing day by day. For the appearance of the spirituality in the development of the educational system, in this connection, Kothari Commission (1966) points out, “In the development that we envisage in the future, we hope that the pursuit of men, material affluence and power would be subordinated to that of higher values and the fulfillment of the individual. This concept of the mingling of ‘Science and Spirituality’ is of special significance for Indian Education.”

The article indicates that the cementing relationship between Tagore’s Naturalistic philosophy with spiritual education may be accepted by the researchers and practitioners of spiritual studies for carrying out research on what is required is that the people internalize the understanding of the Spiritual Education and bring about a dynamic change in their living patterns in the natural surroundings. In a nutshell there is need and significance that we subscribe to the emerging spiritual culture. It is clear that Tagore’s philosophy is playing a significant role in determining the process of spiritual conscious and awareness within the framework of modern spiritual society.

In this paper an attempt has been made to recognize, comprehend, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and critically examine the dominant factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore’s Naturalistic philosophy. This study may help the students to understand and to solve the problem of education more efficiently. They may flower into excellent of our nation. Hence

the investigator has decided to conduct the present study. On this background, the problem may be stated as: ***“Spiritual Education in Tagore’s Naturalistic Philosophy”***

**Objectives of the Study:**

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To recognize factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore’s philosophy
2. To critically examine factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore’s philosophy
3. To analyze factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore’s philosophy
4. To comprehend factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore’s philosophy
5. To synthesize factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore’s philosophy
6. To evaluate factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore’s philosophy

**Review of Related Literature**

**Spiritual Education Regarding Tagore’s Naturalistic Philosophy:** Tagore’s experiment on education, he highlights the spiritual world as, “The object of education is to give man the unity of truth. Formerly, when life was simple, all the different elements of man were in complete harmony. But when there came the separation of the intellect from the spiritual and the physical, the school education put entire emphasis on the intellect and the physical side of man. We devote our sole attention to giving children information, not knowing that by this emphasis we are accentuating a break between the intellectual physical, and the spiritual life.....I believe in a spiritual world, not as anything separate from this world, but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw, we must always feel this truth that we are living in God. Born in this great world, full of the mystery of the infinite, we cannot accept our existence as a momentary outburst of chance, drifting on the current of matter towards an eternal nowhere.....We have a personality to which matter and force are unmeaning unless related to something infinitely personal, whose nature we have discovered, in some measure, in human lore, in the greatness of the good, in the martyrdom of heroic soul, in the ineffable beauty of nature, which can never be a mere physical fact nor anything but an expression of personality.....Experience of this spiritual world, where reality we miss by our incessant habit of ignoring it from childhood, has to be gained by children by fully living in it and not through the medium of theological instruction.

But how this is to be done is a problem difficult of solution in the present age. For nowadays, men have managed so fully to occupy their time that they do not find leisure to know that their activities have only movement but very little truth, that their soul has not found its world (My School, 1988, pp-27-28).”

Rabindranath Tagore observes, “Children are not born ascetics, fit to enter at once into the monastic discipline of acquiring knowledge. At first they must gather knowledge through their love of life, and then they will renounce their lives to gain knowledge, and then again they will come back to their fuller lives with ripened wisdom (My School, 1988, pp-26).”

Tagore feels the importance of ‘Mother Nature’ for the personality development as, “This feeling of perfection in love , which is the feeling of the perfect oneness, opens for us the gate of the world of the Infinite One, who is revealed in the unity of all personalities , who gives truth to sacrifice of self, to death which leads to a larger life, and to loss which leads to a greater gain, who turns the emptiness of renunciation into fulfillment by his own fullness (The Second Birth, 1985, pp-84). ”

**Methodology:** Methodology takes a significant role in any type of research as the reliability and validity of the findings depend upon the methods adopted and applied in the study. This paper is descriptive in nature. It is mainly based on secondary data and is largely collected from different sources like books, journals, articles, and periodicals. This study is conducted mainly by drawing upon the works of Tagore’s naturalistic philosophy by applying analytical cum descriptive method for the research. The investigator has made effort to express spiritual education in the light of Tagore’s Naturalistic philosophy.

**Analysis and Interpretation:** Before we discuss the factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Tagore’s Naturalistic philosophy, it is essential for us to know the meaning of spiritual education. The term ‘spiritual education’ has different meanings to different thinkers in different context. According to Tagore, “Education is a permanent part of the adventure of life. It is not like a painful hospital treatment, curing them (students) of the congenial malady of their ignorance, but is a function of the health, the natural expression of their mind’s vitality.” He says, “Our true education is possible only in the ‘Tapovan’ through intimate contact with nature and purifying austere pursuits.” He further asserts that the highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. Tagore

encouraged the individual's spiritual worth on the basis of the 'Nature' which means the world of physical world, the non-human world and the original nature of man.

His philosophy aims at moral and spiritual developments for the creation of spiritual knowledge, emphasized by scientific experimentation for the betterment of the society as a whole.

Modern education lays great emphasis on moral and spiritual education. Perhaps, this is precisely the cause why the learner seeks only to learn and study in the lap of the Nature. With this consideration of mind, the Tagore's Naturalistic Philosophy is purely and surely to please the modern learner. It is, however, a spiritualized education in which there is emphasis on education is the making our life in harmony with all existence. Tagore Philosophy helps a lot in curriculum development and transaction in modern education regarding spiritual needs and training.

Thus it may be said that Gurudeva Tagore's philosophy is a looking glass that reflects the ever-changing faces as well as the cerebral aspect of spiritual science and its implication to the society. It not only encompasses all the ideas of spiritual essence in the field of knowing science, and doing science, but also equally concentrates on feeling sciences

**Limitation of the Study:** Keeping in view the limitation of time, resources and energy, the study is limited to one aspect of the subject which is spiritual education in Tagore's Naturalistic philosophy. It is entirely based on the secondary data as for examples-books, journals, periodicals, newspapers etc. this constitutes a major constraint of the study.

**Major Findings:** The study under consideration has been carried out with the recognizing, comprehending, examining critically, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating that the spiritual vision of Tagore's Naturalistic Philosophy has great relevance to the present-day inside schools or outside schools and it can bring about a dynamic change in the educational system not only of the country, but also the world. Here, the impact of modifying patterns of the Indian educational system in the light of Tagore's Naturalistic Philosophy in the terms of positive and negative educations has been analyzed in depth and thus it can contribute in solving the everyday problems of individuals' life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for their wellbeing. The spiritual world and its impact in the field of education- the concepts which have been identified based on the analysis of Tagore's Naturalistic Philosophy are mainly based on the Freedom, Creative self-expression, and Active



communion with nature and man, Peace and Harmony, Love and Sympathy, nationalism and internationalism. Tagore recognized that the education is imparted at the heart of Nature under the influence of natural phenomena; fulfill the individuals' mind with spiritual needs and training. He also recognized the contribution of music, songs, paintings, drawings, dancing, dramatics, poetry, fine arts and other artistic activities towards the development of individuals' mind, heart, and spirit. It is from his understanding of the role of such activities in purifying the individuals' mind, heart and spirit and also essential part of the spiritual curriculum.

The most dominant factor of strengthening spiritual education is the introduction of a new idea the 'Bodher Sadhana' - Education of the Feeling- in the Tapovana which delivered message to enrich Feeling Science to develop sensitiveness of the soul and allow freedom to the mind in the lap of the nature. In the respect of feeling science, he proclaims that 'We must remember that neither the education of the senses, nor the education of the intellect, but the education of the feeling should receive the place of honour in our schools.'

**Conclusion:** After reviewing the related literatures on Tagore's Naturalistic Philosophy, it is felt that there is a great deal has been done by his lectures and writings to trace the development of naturalistic philosophical and non-material thought and action with special reference to spiritual doctrines and assumptions, much has also been done to spiritualize education at Santiniketan and then in Sriniketan in West Bengal (India) to draw in broad an outline of spiritual training to the students and much has so far been also done to investigate the spiritual intelligence of individuals' work for recreating and constructing a spiritual society in our country. Tagore survived the Tapovana System of Education that nurturing spiritual education through simplicity, high thinking, truth, love, sympathy, peace, harmony and freedom and attempted to introduce naturalistic philosophy of education as the centre of education, the co-ordination of curriculum based on nature-study related to spiritual needs with everyday life, the methods of teaching such as activity method, non-cognitive outlooks viz- a sense of responsibility, initiative, love and sympathy, co-operation, social -justice and a great importance was given on scientific demonstration and experiment in the lap of natural surroundings under influence of natural phenomena for discovering truth. Greater emphasis is being paid to spiritual world and a great deal has also been done.



In his views on Naturalistic Philosophy of Education, Tagore made a considerable contribution for attaining of the spiritual goal of education. Thus, his perceptions on Naturalistic Philosophy are therefore, a knowledge-hub of spiritual education. All the books and writings of Tagore, of course, yield useful information regarding spiritual learning and training, and also give details of spiritual basis of education as well as help in progressive basis of education for the betterment of the individuals of the spiritual society as a whole.

Although, the author was the student of Vinaya Bhawana, Vishva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, has no much intelligence, competence and skill to evaluate the Tagore's Philosophy with special respect to spiritual world and essence and its subsequent doctrines and assumptions as well as its development, yet when he thinks of his naturalistic philosophy, the feeling science arises in his mind that Tagore's perceptions based on virtues of love, truth, sympathy, peace and harmony, high thinking, simplicity, wisdom, as well as patriotism significantly remarks, of course, he was a practical naturalistic-spiritualist.

To have an access to the realization of thought and action with respect to Naturalistic Philosophy which serves as a foundation of nurturing spiritual education, Tagore strongly teaches us positive and negative education which reflects spiritual education. Keeping in view the Tagore Philosophy, the author concludes the 'Spiritual Education' as "the education which helps to fulfill the potentialities of the individuals through the Doctrine of Mother Nature, Universal Brotherhood, Freedom, Service, Co-operation, Love, Sympathy, Wisdom, Peace and Harmony, Truth, Tolerance, Self-control, Self-Confidence, self-expression and Self-Realization and to prepare them to solve the everyday problems for life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining the highest ideas and values of education, if the teachers enable to modify such kind of behavior patterns of individuals in the lap of Nature, - this is spiritual education."

In the words of the first Hon'ble President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad significantly remarks, "Tagore was not only the poet and artist of modern India but also a great sentinel of India whose moral principles stood out uncompromisingly on all occasions. For fifty years and more he was great teacher- the Gurudeva, as he was lovingly called of India."

There, of course, would be a revolution in the field of the spiritual education on the way of Tagore Philosophy. That is why, therefore, it may be said that Rabindranath Tagore appears to

have made a considerable progress and development of spiritual world and potentialities of individuals for their spiritual uplift. So, therefore, he was a great spiritually intelligent and competent personality not only in India, but also in the world.

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