

Tagore's Shantiniketan and Viswa Bharati as Centres of Psycho Osmosis

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan which was later converted to a university under the title 'Viswabharathi University' was an international educational centre during the first and middle parts of 20th century. Tagore is regarded a great personality who created a synthesis between antiquity and modernity. He had got such a fantastic foresight that he was able to execute fantastic psychological strategies in his educational institutions called 'Santiniketan' and Viswabharathi University even before modern psychological theories and principles became an integral part of education. His educational institutions were real centres of Psycho Osmosis, a modern psychological concept that states that the teacher's internal energy and characteristics can influence the academic and personal development of students. This internal energy is capable of offering great degree of invisible inspiration for the students to learn well, and to develop their personality into an accepted kind of personality in the society. Psycho Osmosis also conveys the view that the minds of the students become so relaxed with the dynamic nature of the teacher, and students become capable of finding out the answers of difficult questions through some intuition. In short, Psycho Osmosis tells that the cordial relationship between the teacher and students would create a comfortable and inspirational learning atmosphere at educational institutions. Lots of renowned personalities who had been educated at Tagore's educational institutions did mention about this comfortable and inspirational atmosphere they experienced at these educational institutions. This paper tries to present how Tagore executed Psycho osmosis in his educational institutions.

Keywords: Tagore, Shantiniketan, Viswabharathi University, Psycho Osmosis.

INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore is one of the greatest educational thinkers that India has given birth so far. He is also known as a great educational thinker at international level, too, with his unprecedented and multi-sided vision and philosophical doctrines. What makes him different and unique from most of other philosophers and educationists is his efforts to create a synthesis of east and west in his principles and views. Tagore and other great Indian educationists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Ram Mohan Roy made great efforts to spread this concept of synthesis of traditional thoughts with the modern doctrines social and academic life. See what Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India felt about the contributions of some of the great Indian leaders. According to Nehru, Ram Mohan Roy brought a sort of synthesis between old practices and modern trends; Swami Vivekananda presented the traditional thoughts in modern garments without destroying even the minute aspects of the traditional culture, and Mahatma

Gandhi and Tagore put forth some revolutionary political doctrines by making a synthesis between the traditional aspects and the modern democratic principles (Division, n.d.). This synthesis can be seen in the educational concepts of all these great people that all of them taught the world how modern educational strategies put forth by the modern schools of philosophy such as Naturalism, Pragmatism and Futurism and Modern Psychological Principles such as Psycho-Osmosis and Positive Psychology can be utilized in the field of education without ignoring the traditional values and culture. Indian philosophy of life has been based on spiritual aspects of life that give great importance to self-realisation through the realisation of the almighty and the divine existence of human beings.

Unlike the Indian approach to life, westerners always give importance to the utilitarian concepts of life put forth by modern pragmatic view of life which give importance to comfortability of material life (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). As Tagore was a great promoter of universal brotherhood (Srivastava, 2017), he could realise that India had to keep a proper balance between the traditional concepts and modern trends so that make the students of his era to overcome the challenges they had to face as an international citizen. Though Tagore just as Mahatma Gandhi, accepted some of the ideas put forth by pragmatism in the case of immediate aims of education and methodologies for teaching-learning process, both of them were not ready to compromise in the case of spiritual nature of values and selfless love for all the human beings. In short, Tagore never accepted the utilitarian concept of Pragmatism in the case of values and human relationship. Tagore was an ardent follower of Vedic Philosophy, and he accepted for his school called 'Santiniketan' the Vedic system of education called 'Gurukula System of Education' which was a residential school system in which students were used stay with Tagore just as students had used to stay with the 'Gurus' during the Vedic Period at the homes of the 'Gurus'. He was a devoted follower of Buddhism, too, which promoted universal brotherhood and 'Ahimsa' (Nonviolence). Though, he accepted the methodologies of the modern schools of philosophy such as Naturalism and Pragmatism, he offered unconditional love and affection to his students at 'Santiniketan' which was later converted to Viswabharathi University.

This tendency of Tagore i.e. his efforts to create a synthesis of traditional concepts with modern approaches to education can be seen in the case of his psychological approach, as well. His short stories are real examples for his fantastic knowledge on modern psychology. Look how skilfully Tagore depicted the features of adolescence in his famous short story titled 'Home Coming', "In this world of human affairs there is no worse nuisance than a boy at the age of fourteen. He is neither ornamental, nor useful. It is impossible to shower affection on him as on a little boy; and he is always getting in the way. If he talks with a childish lisp he is called a baby, and if he answers in a grown-up way he is called impertinent. In fact, any talk at all from him is resented. Then he is at the unattractive, growing age. He grows out of his clothes with indecent haste; his voice grows hoarse and breaks and quavers; his face grows suddenly angular and unsightly. It is easy to excuse the shortcomings of early childhood, but it is hard to tolerate even unavoidable lapses in a boy of fourteen. The lad himself becomes painfully self-conscious. When he talks with elderly people he is either unduly forward, or else so unduly shy that he appears ashamed of his very existence. Yet it is at this very age when in his heart of hearts, a young lad most craves for recognition and love; and he becomes the devoted slave of any one who shows him consideration" (Tagore, 2016).

Tagore's Santiniketan and Viswabharathi as the Centres of Psycho Osmosis

Psycho Osmosis is one of the latest trends in modern psychology, which tells that intuition plays a vital role in the case of learning and personality development of students. Psycho osmosis tells that the internal

energy and dynamic nature of the teacher can influence the learning standard and the personality development of a learner. If a teacher keeps extreme desire in his or her mind that all his students should understand what he teaches well, and teaches the items with internal energy and dynamic body movements, even the poor performers of the class may later feel that the topics discussed by the teacher emerge from an unknown world to their mind, though they mightn't have got any idea about what the teacher had taught during the time of the class. This may happen when such students sit alone at the school garden or the playground after the class. This happens as a result of intuition, according to modern psychology. See what Hathib K.K tells, "Psycho osmosis is a modern concept or theory that the answer of a question which a person fail to find out even after deliberately thinking and reasoning for hours and hours, may naturally emerge into his mind in the very next day when he wakes up from a deep sleep" (Psycho Osmosis, n.d.). At the same time, if the teacher is a charismatic personality, and if he or she is able to display this charismatic personality with its real beauty and unique features, the learners also start showing glimpses of charismatic personality. This personality development occurs inside the unconscious mind, and thus it becomes long-lasting. Psycho osmosis has got many educational implications such as the teacher should give enough time to relax after each learning task; should go on motivating the learners, though they do not show any progress at the initial stage; should keep a charismatic personality with great degree of innocence and unconditional love towards children, and should encourage students to practice meditation (Psycho Osmosis, n.d.).

Tagore's institutions called 'Santiniketan and Viswabharati were attracted by thousands of people from around the world. The fame of the institution was spread all over the world through the tongues of the alumni who become wordy when talking about these institutions. The experiences shared by most of the alumni of these great institutions show that Tagore could inspire the students of these institutions through the osmosis process. Padma Shri and late Hindi author Shivani, who had been a student of Santiniketan, has beautifully depicted the influence of the charismatic personality of Tagore. Look at her own words, "The evening shadows were falling and the blood-red earth turned dark as we neared Gurudev's chair. Dressed in a long black gown, the black cap he wore on his head highlighted his broad forehead and glowing face, and his eyes seemed lit up with an inner light. No wonder the Ashramites considered him the Guru of gurus. And yet, this towering figure was also among the gentlest and kindest of men. His serene and compassionate gaze included everyone in a warm embrace— rich or poor, big or small. All of us, whether we came from India or Japan, China or Sri Lanka or wherever, stood before him every morning as children who had come to an enchanted garden" (Aamader Shantiniketan, 2021). The sentence, 'his eyes seemed lit up with an inner light' is to be underlined. This inner light is the thing which most of the teachers of our era lack. This inner light is the internal energy which we have mentioned earlier in this article. Most of the teachers at present communicate with their tongues rather than with their heart, and this communication reaches only the physical ear of the students, not their hearts. Actually, communication and interaction becomes mechanical when it occurs between physical tongues and ears. 'Human mind is an enigma', as Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India told (Nehru, 2004). Tagore could not only possess these personality traits himself, but also was capable of influencing all the inmates of Santiniketan- the faculty as well as students- to keep these personality traits with all of them. Shivani continues, "At the morning prayer assembly held every day in front of the Ashram library, we met the Buddhist scholar Fan-chu, who had come all the way from China, as well as Khairuddin, a Muslim student from Sumatra, Susheela from Gujarat, and Kumudini from—what then seemed to us a foreign land—Kerala. All of us stood, with folded hands and closed eyes, as we sang the hymns he had composed.

Never once do I remember anyone trying to jostle someone or giggle or push. Such was the respect Gurudev evoked in all of us that whenever we were in his presence, we became better human beings. He looked up as we came near, and never, for as long as I live, will I forget that moment. Framed against the glow of the setting sun, he looked unlike any human being I had ever seen, and to my child's eyes, he seemed to be what I imagined God would look like. Of their own volition, our hands came together and Jayanti and I bowed at his feet. His hand passed lovingly over our heads and he smiled as he asked gently, 'Are you very homesick?' How did he know, I wondered? 'Learn to speak Bangla then,' his soft voice urged us, 'and you will never be homesick' (Aamader Shantiniketan, 2021). We live in a pragmatic world, and our educational systems have become pragmatic in any sense. Lots of methodologies and strategies have been introduced, and they are being practiced all over the world. Educated people, now a days, seem to be highly mechanical and indifferent. Though the teachers keep lots of qualifications and certificates, they hardly keep the cardinal element that Shivani depicted in the line 'His hand passed lovingly over our heads and he smiled as he asked gently'. The innocent smile on your lips can conquer even the hearts of your enemies (Gardiner, 1925). A question may be asked, then, "don't you see the contemporary teachers who always keep a smile on their lips after getting instructions from experts on 'personality development'? Of course, they, too, smile, but the smile is displayed on lips, which is not coming out spontaneously from their hearts. As a result, no psycho osmosis occurs.

Psycho osmosis occurs only when the students enjoy and participate in the learning activities with their whole self. "The idea of happiness the most fundamental emotions, was used innovatively in Santiniketan. There was a minimum of curriculum but a round-the-clock routine of varied activities. His idea was that children should be surrounded with the things of nature that have their own educational value. He attached great importance to self-expression. He expected his students to feel every happiness, big or small, by being given 'a full life' (Rabindranath and Santiniketan, n.d.). Tagore offered great amount of freedom together with unconditional love and affection to the students of Santiniketan and Viswabharati. As a result, the students of his educational institutions were so enthusiastic and passionate to engage in the educational activities. Such an atmosphere of psycho osmosis at these educational institutions gave birth to many great people across the walks of the society.

Conclusion

Teaching-learning process would not be effective only with the acceptance of some philosophical doctrines or psychological theories. Teaching learning process becomes effective and successful only when there is a sort of psycho osmosis i.e. the ability of the teacher to influence the hearts of the students with dynamic personality and unconditional love and affection. If modern educational systems are ready to accept what Rabindranath Tagore practiced at his educational institutions along with the modern methodologies and strategies, educated ones all over the world will become more enthusiastic and charismatic.

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