

Revisiting the Santiniketan Model: Educational Synergies with NEP 2020

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP-2020) is a framework for coordinating the nation's entire education system. The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the development of the creative potential, critical thinking, problem-solving, social, emotional and ethical capacities of every child in our country. This education policy aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education by promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, as mentioned earlier in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-4). This policy discusses employment enhancement, environmental protection, multidisciplinary learning, and research. The above-discussed aspects are closely associated with Rabindranath Tagore's educational praxis and thoughts. This is reflected in the educational experiment popularly known as Santiniketan and Sriniketan. Through his educational experiment, Tagore wanted to revive and reconstruct the Ancient Indian educational process. Hence, Tagore implemented the value of the multidisciplinary concept of education for the fullness or harmonious development of children. Education for fullness, Vedic slogan 'ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥ (ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम् पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते। पूर्णं पूर्णं नागे एवम् पूर्णं अवशिष्टं থাকে। ॐ শান্তি, শান্তি, শান্তি।)'Om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyatē. Pūrṇa pūrṇa lāgē ēbam pūrṇa abāśiṣṭa thākē. The verse is a powerful Sanskrit śloka' from the '*Isha Upanishad*', which reflects the concept of fullness or completeness in the universe. Here is the English meaning: 'Om. That is full (the Absolute or Brahman). This is full (the manifested world). From that fullness, this fullness emerges. When fullness is taken from fullness, fullness still remains." Om. Peace, peace, peace. 'This verse expresses the idea that the ultimate reality, or Brahman, is infinite and complete. Even though the universe and individual beings emerge from it, the source remains whole and complete. The concluding chant, 'Om Shanti Shanti Shanti,' invokes peace on three levels: physical, mental and spiritual.

In this regard, our National Education Policy also talks about Education for 360-degree or all-around development, Holistic development among children. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the National Education Policy 2020 through the lens of the Tagorian Educational Experiment, which serves as a model for it. With the analysis of Tagorian writings and educational experiences of Santiniketan and Sriniketan, it was reflected that the shadow of Tagorian thoughts has present relevance in the sense of environmental protection cum eco-centric approach to child-centric education. That is further important in discussing NEP-2020, which is most welcome in this 21st-century educational process. NEP-2020 also focused on ancient Indian knowledge systems (Gayana, Pragyana, and Satya, knowledge, wisdom, and truth. Tagore has already given the utmost importance to Tapoban-centric education, in which nature plays a crucial

role in the harmonious development of children. According to Tagore, natural reality can only help students realize the self and soul; that is a way to attain a true sense of freedom with knowledge, wisdom, and truth.

Keywords: Santiniketan Model, National Education Policy (NEP), Education.

1. Emergence of the Problem:

Education is the backbone of society. Education is the most powerful weapon of society, protecting it from obstacles and destroying harmful elements. Therefore, we need to recognize that education has a profound effect on society. The National Education Policy unites all the different education systems in a common framework into one umbrella. If we look at the history of the Indian education system, the first national education policy was developed in 1968. After a long gap, a new education policy was declared in 2020 with many expectations. After preparing a draft, many suggestions were accepted, and finally, the National Education Policy (NEP) was proclaimed on 29th July 2020.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was not only an eminent poet who received the Nobel Prize, the first in Asia, in 1913, but he was also an educationist, philosopher, and a person of multiple talents. Philosopher Tagore perceived social change as the character of society, and education as the vital factor in society's change. His profound understanding of the connection between education and societal change remains relevant today. Gurudev Tagore implemented a unique educational system at his institutions in Santiniketan and Sriniketan (Visva-Bharati). Gurudev Tagore conveys his educational thought into practice through his educational experiment in Sriniketan, where he puts his educational principles into practice. Practical educational doctrine promotes life-centered education. NEP-2020 also advocates for an activity-centered curriculum, through which we seek to bring about desirable changes and associate education with social entrepreneurs. Many similarities are found between the NEP-2020 and the educational system of Visva-Bharati, which proves that Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was a great educator and philosopher who perceived the need for such an educational system to better society.

2. The rationale of the Study:

The Visva-Bharati model of education, conceived by Rabindranath Tagore, is critically needed today for its holistic approach that addresses both students' intellectual and emotional development. In contrast to modern systems that often emphasize standardized testing and rote memorization, Tagore's philosophy fosters an integrated learning environment that prioritizes creativity, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. This comprehensive approach is vital in a world where the challenges are complex and multi-dimensional, requiring technical knowledge, empathy, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of oneself and the world. In fact, this model goes beyond classroom education, where children are knowledge creators, meaning-makers, independent learners, and curious. Tagore believed that true learning occurs through engagement with the world and direct experiences, not merely through textbooks. At Visva-Bharati, students often learned outdoors, connected with nature, and interacted with their surroundings. This approach contrasts sharply with the modern tendency to confine education within rigid classroom settings. In today's age of ecological degradation and increasing urbanization, the Visva-Bharati model offers a much-needed reconnection to nature and a path toward fostering environmental consciousness and sustainable living.

This type of Imaginary thinking by Tagore was reflected in NEP-2020. Tagore's holistic approach emphasizes the development of the whole individual—intellectually, emotionally, creatively, and socially parallels NEP 2020's emphasis on multidisciplinary, student-centered, and experiential learning. While modern education often focuses on standardized testing and rote memorization, Tagore's model and the NEP 2020 advocate for an integrated learning experience that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and values-based education. So, from this perspective, it is necessary to understand Tagore's educational thoughts and practices and how they are reflected in NEP 2020.

3. Objective of the Study:

To explore Rabindranath Tagore's Educational Thoughts and Practices with special reference to NEP 2020

4. Methodology of the study:

Keeping the above objective in mind, the researchers conducted extensive library work, visited the Santiniketan Ashram, interacted with the Rabindrik and Ashramik students and Teachers of Visva-Bharati, and explored various perspectives on Tagorian Educational Thoughts and Practices through analytical approaches to contemporary Education Policy. Through the analysis of various documents, researchers found many similarities between Rabindranath Tagore's educational praxis and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and it was surprising to know what we think today; Tagore thought it a hundred years before, that is, the vision of Rabindranath Tagore regarding child, society, nature, and Education.

a. Data Analysis: Triangular Analysis, Juxtaposed, and Harmonious Analysis.

b. Expressed the Data through tabular expression, Association of thought, concepts, principles, and doctrine of Rabindranath Tagore.

5. Seeds of NEP 2020 inherent within Rabindranath Tagore's Educational thoughts and practices:

National Education Policy (NEP) -2020 was declared on the 29th of July 2020 by the Ministry of Education. Former ISRO chief K. Kasturirangan was the committee chairman for preparing the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020. Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) transformed into the Ministry of Education. This Visva-Bharati model of education, envisioned by Rabindranath Tagore, aligns deeply with the principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, making it particularly relevant in today's educational landscape. It was declared that 6% of GDP will be spent on education. The Education Ministry should fix the fees for private schools. The student's results will be based not only on examination marks but also on assessment and all-around activities, and all of these will play an important role. Different departments should be built for the education sector for syllabus formation, implementation, supervision, financial activities, and conducting examinations and results.

Many similarities are found between the National Education Policy 2020 and the vision of Rabindranath Tagore of the Education system of Visva-Bharati, which have been discussed below:

- a) Tagore's writings find a unique synthesis between the modern approach and India's spiritual, cultural-ancient orientation in his educational experiment, known as Santiniketan. Where he revives the ancient tradition, qua 'Tapabon' centric education system with modern accomplishment cum orientation, this is exactly what is reflected in NEP 2020. It wants to transform education in the age of globalization without affecting India's cultural ethos.
- b) NEP 2020, through the flexible approach of multiple entries, comes very close to representing a similar model to Tagore's. It is well known that the purpose orientation of the human mind, as Tagore

prophetically observed, is ‘where the world is not broken up into fragments, by narrow domestic walls’ (Gitanjali,1910). In our NEP 2020, we also talked about the multidisciplinary education system (beyond the discipline), where the curriculum or course context is not cut into narrow, fragmented parts; the curriculum means the total experience the individual seeks, directly or indirectly. In the language of NEP 2020, there is **no hard separation** between arts and sciences, curricular and extracurricular activities, and vocational and academic streams.

- c) Therefore, the main challenge to humanity in this modern age is eliminating the leviathan called AI (Artificial Intelligence). Here, Tagore's suggestion was reassembled from Rousseau's, with a focus on the call to return to nature. So, nature is both the means and the end. So, Tagore always stressed the spontaneity of thought that naturally flows from the proximity of nature. The NEP-2020 essentially followed the path by stressing social outreach programs and the flexibility of the curriculum that helps us develop our inner nature.
- d) In another aspect, we find an interesting similarity between Tagore’s philosophy and the National Education Policy (NEP-2020). i.e., learning through joy and happiness. The essential convergent points derive from ‘Anandam’ or bliss, happiness, or joy. To attain Joy and Happiness, Tagore proposed and practiced the ‘*Ananda Yoga*,’ *the path of blessing*, through which one can achieve the supreme or absolute reality. In other words, learning remains mechanical until or unless it produces inner joy, inner happiness, and the children's feelings, which require a paradigm shift in education. That is why NEP-2020 ushered in remarkable changes not only in the curriculum but also in the underlying thought and structure of education. Nevertheless, the methods and findings help cultivate knowledge of NEP-2020. Leaves the space wide open for creature maturity in one interest that brings happiness to him, and, from this angle, knowledge is not a dry formula of rigorous experiments in a laboratory, nor is it the progressive elite section. Still, it is like a shared resource awaiting the creation of inclusive humanity.

‘Who will break me free and take me out, ‘O’ My friend!’

‘ভেঙে মোর ঘরের চাবি নিয়ে যাবি কে আমারে

ও বন্ধু আমার’¹

Rabindranath Tagore reflects a deep thirst for liberation, both physical and spiritual. Tagore often explored themes of inner freedom and release from its constraints—whether societal, emotional, or existential.

In this context, the speaker is calling out to a friend, possibly representing a divine figure, a close companion, or even an abstract force, asking to be freed from the bonds that hold them back. It could symbolize a desire to transcend limitations, seek enlightenment, or escape the confines of mundane existence.

Tagore’s works frequently explore the idea of freedom, not just in a political or social sense but also in a metaphysical or spiritual realm, where the soul yearns to break free from the material world and unite with something higher or more meaningful.

So, now is the time to consider education through meaning-making, joy, and happenings, which leads toward the absolute, natural, or reality. Moreover, pedagogical intervention is essential for realizing the truth and natural cosmic reality.

- e. Tagore’s educational experiment finds a unique amalgamation between the modern approach and India’s spiritual, cultural-ancient orientation in his educational experiment, commonly known as Santiniketan and Sriniketan. Where he revived and reoriented, restructuring the ancient tradition qua ‘*Tapabon*’ centric education system with a contemporary orientation. So, newness does not merely play the role of new technology. Rather/true education is an amalgamation of rational faculty and

devotional spiritual orientation, which is reflected in NEP 2020. It wants to transform education in the age of globalization without affecting India's cultural ethos.

- f. Tagore is recognized and upheld by all modern philosophers and academicians worldwide as a prolific and versatile genius who visualized Mukti/liberation of mind as the ultimate goal of humanity. Likewise, NEP 2020, through its flexible approach to multiple entries and exits, comes very close to serving as a model, much like Tagore's. It is well known that the purpose orientation of the human mind, as Tagore prophetically observed, remarks, '*Where the world is not broken up into fragments, By narrow domestic world walls*' (Gitanjali,1913). Our NEP 2020 also talked about the multidisciplinary education system (beyond the discipline), where the curriculum or course content is not cut into narrow, fragmented parts; the curriculum means the total experience the individual seeks, directly or indirectly.
- g. Therefore, in this modern age, humanity's main challenge is getting rid of the Leviathan called AI (Artificial Intelligence). It requires the creative exercise of one's intellectual property. It is only possible when the human mind is free from the newer restrictions imposed by the compulsion of technological tools. Here, Tagore's suggestion was reassembled from Rousseau's, with a focus on the call to return to nature. So, nature is both the means and the end. It means nature's closed association with nature brings back harmony. Often, it is close to the unrest of modernity. So, Tagore always stressed nature, beauty, aesthetics, the spread of the mind, and the spontaneity of thought that naturally flows from proximity to nature. The NEP2020 essentially followed this path by stressing social outreach programs and a flexible curriculum that helps flourish our inner nature, or the inner tendency of an individual.
- h. In another aspect, we find an interesting similarity between Tagore's philosophy and the National Education proposed by NEP 2020. The basic convergent points derive from 'Anadam' or bliss, happiness, or joy. In other words, learning remains mechanical unless it is a product of the children's inner joy, happiness, and feelings, which require a paradigm shift in education. That is why NEP 2020 ushered in remarkable changes not only in the curriculum but also in the underlying thought and structure of education. So, knowledge is integrally connected to unhappiness, unlike modern skeptical Western philosophy, which teaches respect for everything. In a sense, knowledge is unlimited and unfathomable. Nevertheless, it imparted the findings of the method joy in the cultivation of Knowledge NEP 2020. Leaves the space wide open for creature maturity of one interest that brings happiness to him, and socially as well, seen from this angle, knowledge is not a dry formula of rigorous experiment in a laboratory, nor is it the privilege of the elite section. However, it is like a shared resource that waits for the creation of inclusive humanity.

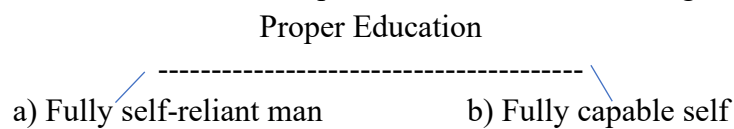
5. CONCLUSION:

The comprehensive exploration of Rabindranath Tagore's educational thought and practices reveals a synthesis of various educational ideologies worldwide. Gurudev Tagore's ideas draw from diverse philosophical, psychological, sociological, pedagogical, socio-economic and Environmental perspectives, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the complexities of education. Tagore's educational principles encompass many concepts that resonate with contemporary academic discourse. From a philosophical standpoint, his (Tagore) emphasis on the holistic development of individuals aligns with current trends in education, which prioritize nurturing learners' cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical aspects. Psychologically, Tagore's approach acknowledges the uniqueness of each learner and advocates for

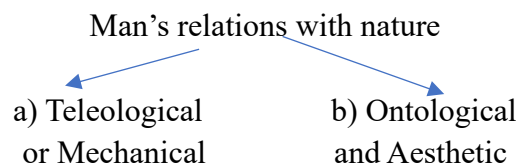
personalized, experimental learning experiences. His belief in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and curiosity reflects contemporary efforts to cultivate 21st-century skills in students.

Pedagogically, Tagore’s educational practices emphasize active participation, inquiry-based learning, and collaboration, mirroring modern educational theories such as constructivism and socio-cultural perspectives. Tagore’s advocacy for student-centered, experiential learning environments underpins the shift towards more learner-driven approaches in education Today. From a socioeconomic standpoint, Tagore’s educational vision extends beyond the confines of traditional schooling to encompass broader societal aspirations. His (Tagore’s) commitment to rural uplift, community engagement, and social responsibility reflects contemporary calls for education to address pressing social issues and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

So, Tagore put education between two concepts of man, like the following:



However, the question arises: how did Tagore view man’s relationship with nature in his educational thought? It is also evident from the discussion that Tagore conceived it basically in the following two ways:



In conclusion, a comprehensive examination of Rabindranath Tagore’s educational ideas reveals their relevance and resonance with contemporary educational discourse and the needs of our time. His holistic approach, personalized learning strategies, experiential pedagogy, and socio-cultural perspective offer valuable insights and lessons for educators, policymakers, and practitioners striving to create meaningful and impactful learning experiences in the 21st century. By critically engaging with Tagore’s educational philosophy, we can draw valuable lessons and inspiration to inform and enrich our current educational practices and aspirations for the future, in line with the Societal, Economic, and Sustainable development goals commonly known as the 2030 agenda. Therefore, reflecting Tagorian educational ideas and practices within the National Education Policy 2020 is natural and very common. Therefore, Tagore's visionary endeavors and insights are deeply aligned with the spirit of NEP 2020.

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