Tagore’s Education System in Santiniketan: A Geographical Approach for Survival of Mankind

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Abstract: Sustainable social development is hindered by different types of social hazards. Social hazards imply activities within the society which are caused due to several human interferences that ultimately results in various societal changes and finally modifies the ecological principles of society. The present paper focuses on the management of social problems and its development through the approach of Tagore’s education system. In his education system, knowledge has been implemented for an all-round social development. Tagore had an in-depth knowledge for developing a sustainable society which can protect the society from several social problems. Present author has visualized that the education system based on the core philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore could develop the society up to an extended level. Finally, author has proclaimed the social well being stature through Tagore’s education system.

Keywords: Sustainable social development, Social hazards, Ecological principles, Tagore’s education system, Social well being.

1. Introduction

At the present time most relevant obscurity is contemporary societal hazards. Like other nature hazards, social hazards are also a great problem which can bring radical change within the system of the society. Thus, social hazards are the unhealthy for welfare of society. In this case it is quite important to use some modern approaches as well as techniques. There are several well-known personalities like Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) who thinks and contribute their perception about the social hazards. The approaches of thinking and perceptions of Rabindranath Tagore (a spokesman for compassionate humanism and culture) have being more scientific and modern for mitigation and management of such societal hazards. He introduced hermitage education system as opposed to colonized education for this purpose. It might be used as an approach for social sustainability. It is a very important aspect in the today’s world, because people need to adapt and live to the healthy society. In this view point, it is necessary to discuss that how much capacity is in Tagore’s education system which is applicable to this concerned phenomenon. This is the most validity of this chosen topic.

2. Objectives of the study

The main objectives for the aforesaid study are as follows-
   a) To identify different types of social hazards those impede the social sustainability.
   b) To make a framework of Tagore’s education system as an approach for social sustainability.
   c) To manage social development and mitigate social hazards through realistic essence of Tagore’s education system.

3. Sources of data

   a) Data mainly several books, maps and Reports are collected from secondary official sources.
   b) Primary information are collected through interact with eminent personalities of Santiniketan having knowledge about the history of this area.
   c) Some photographs are taken from the archival of Visva-Bharati.

4. Methodology

   a) In the pre-field session selection of topic, collections of secondary data as well as information etc. work are done significantly.
   b) Observation of the nature of vegetation distribution with study area, taking some meaningful photographs etc. has been completed in field session.
   c) In the session of post-field period, data processing, representation and interpretation are done.
   d) Basically the study being a qualitative research is confined within –
      [1] Literature survey related to Tagore’s education system, and
      [2] Perception study of people (ethnography) about Tagore’s
education system from viewpoint of social sustainability.

Santiniketan is situated in the southernmost part of Birbhum District (Fig.1). It is located in inter-riverine tract of river Ajay and Kopai, which is a segment of Rarh region of the Lower Ganga Plain.

5. The study area

of river Ajay and Kopai, which is a segment of Rarh region of the Lower Ganga Plain.

6. Literatures related to Tagore’s education system

During almost one century time, Tagore’s education system have analyzed, described and criticized by several eminent scholars from different perspectives. Uma Das Gupta & Anandarup Ray has described origin of Tagore’s education system and its significances in details in the book ‘Rabindranath Tagore and His Contemporary Relevance’ (2009). In the book ‘Tagore’s thoughts on social problems’ it is revealed that Tagore was very much concern of social problem at near future (Chawdhury, 2010). Impact of Tagore’s education system through its implementation critically elaborated by different scholars in a famous bengali ‘Rabindranath-er Santiniketan O Sriniketan’ (Som et. al. 2010). Even Rabindranath Tagore wrote several essays-‘Shiksha Sanskar’, ‘Shikshar Samasya’, ‘Jatiyo Vidyalaya’, ‘Tapovan’, ‘Shikshar Bahan’, ‘Shikshar Herfer’ etc. on existing education system of his time for growing awareness among the people of the society and healthy growth of the society.

7. Why sustainable social development is needed?

Sustainable social development is required to mitigate and management of upcoming environmental degradation, crisis and hazards. Day by day over-increasing demand of human being has been exploiting and using maximum resources without consideration of environmental & ecological setting and social atmosphere. Therefore sustainable social development would have essential for the following causes-

a) Mitigation of Social Hazards
b) Management of Social Hazards

8. Present status of social hazards and allied problems

Social Hazard is anything that degrades the ecological principles of a society or a part of society and get in the way to sustainable social
environment for human being (Mondal, 2014). Now a day, there are two major aspects of hazards in the society-

  a) Scarcity of our intellectual life.
  b) Scarcity of our material life.

These two events create several problems that are found in the society and make our life with too many complexities. Some of them-

1. Disintegration of family structure- makes individualised or self-seeking.
2. Crisis of resource availability
3. Social inequality
4. Racial tension
5. Ethnic peculiarity
6. Communal disharmony
7. Language-base Regionalism etc.

9. Tagore’s education system as an approach for sustainable social development

9.1 Evolution of Tagore’s education system in Santiniketan

Rabindranath Tagore was very much influenced by ancient literature. He had been seen in each and every case (Pauranik literature to Vaidik literature, Isha Upanishad to Ramayana epic) that there were spiritual relationship between man and nature and they lived cooperatively forgetting all rivalry (Bhattacharya, 2002).

Rabindranath Tagore was very much contrasting to British-introduced education system. He did not comfort with existing education system in his time (Tagore, 1358 B.S.). Thus, he felt about a new education system in collaboration of ancient and modern time education system (Fig. 2). Tagore’s education system have been evolved due to two concern manners-

a) Ancient vedanthic tradition from Indian scriptures like the Gita and the Upanishads
b) Western classical & modern educational thought and scientific attitude.

In this regards, Tagore said- “I am trying to start a school at Santiniketan. It will be conducted just on the lines of Residential institutions of ancient times. There shall not be the least trace of luxury.” (Rabindranath Tagore to Sir J.C.Bose) (Sabuj Patra, Vol.-2, Pp.30).

So, evolution of Tagore’s education system has given emphasis on why such kind education system is needed for society. Therefore, in 1901 A.D. Tagore established a school at Santiniketan Ashram which was known as Santiniketan Brahmacharya-Vidyalaya (now it is Path Bhavana). Later, in 1921 it became as Visva-Bharati and in 1951 as Visva-Bharati Central University.

![Figure 2: Education system after Tagore](image)

9.2 Different aspects of Tagore’s invented education system

9.2.1 Philosophy behind Tagore’s education system

a) All round development (physical, social, moral and spiritual development) of child along with covering all aspects and activities of life which would make the child to become self-reliant.
b) Manifestation of personality in connection to self-realization and spiritual knowledge of individual.

c) Improvement of mind’s eye power, creative thinking, curiosity and awareness of mind by own way learning of child with full of freedom.

d) Make international understanding and universal brotherhood.

e) Increasing social relationship, fellow-feelings, selfless activities and co-operation.

f) Provide importance to man-environment relationship.

g) Mother tongue as the medium of instruction etc.

Rabindranath Tagore says- “I tried my best to develop in the children of my school the freshness of their feelings for nature, a sensitiveness of soul in their relationship with their human understandings, with the help of literature, festive ceremonials and also the religious teaching which enjoins us to come to the nearer presence of the world though soul…..” (Tagore, ‘A Poet’s School’, 1926, Pp. 197).

9.2.2 Infrastructure of Tagore’s education system

a) Class-room should be held under the open sky beneath the trees in the lap of nature. It will help the observation of natural activities and learners will get this type of knowledge (Fig. 3).

b) Campus of vidyalaya should not be fencing with wall.

c) Resident of students should be separate and they will study individually. As a result, student can be perceived with their own unique thinking.

d) Program of study should turn organically around environment (Fig. 4).

e) Class schedule should be flexible in the changing of time of year to demonstrate natural phenomena etc. (Jalan, 1976).

Thus, through discussion of different aspects of Tagore’s education system, it is found that Tagore’s education system is the icon as well as miniature of sustainable society along with its simplicity and dynamic character.

9.3 Significance of Tagore’s Education System as Sustainable Approach

Tagore’s education system comes with an inner meaning. We could not apply his core philosophical thoughts about education. In contrary, we formulated a delight less education system only carrying tons of books. Tagore wrote- “From childhood to adolescence and again from adolescence to manhood, we are coolies of the goddess of learning, carrying loads of words on our folded backs” (Kabir, R.N. Tagore’s ‘Towards Universal Man’, 1961, Pp. 67). Thus we cannot become a superior citizen to welfare activities. In this concern, he says “From the very beginning such education should be imparted to them (Village folks) that they may know well what mass welfare means and may become practically efficient in all respects for earning their livelihood” (Chandra & Sharma, ‘Principles of Education’, 2004, Pp. 205).

Some of his students became teachers, national leaders and Nobel Laureates. Even Rabindranath Tagore (Pioneer of this education system) was awarded by ‘Nobel Prize’ without getting through a complete education process. Therefore it had immense relevance in his time and also in the present time.

10. Applied Aspects of Tagore’s Education System for Sustainable Social Development

Tagore felt that not only idealism, along with that technology also is needed for development of society and its sustainability. According to Rabindranath Tagore, technology is the function of
human-mind through transformation of itself along with its practicability. Therefore, mitigation & management of societal hazards and sustainable development of society, Tagore introduced such kind of education system as an approach and technique which are much compatible with environment (Chattopadhyay, 2003).

“As one of the earliest educators to think in terms of the global village, Rabindranath Tagore’s educational model has a unique sensitivity and aptness for education within multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural situations, amidst conditions of acknowledged economic discrepancy and political imbalance” (O’Connell, Rabindranath Tagore on education’, 2003).

This education system of Rabindranath Tagore can eliminate several problems of society through following ways (Das Gupta, 1977; Tripathi, 2011; Mondal, 2014)-

a) Simple and less-demanding life-style- hermitage education system cultivates the child how the way they can live gleefully and that will be proper way of mitigation and control of materialistic demand of human society.

b) Growing consciousness about the society-developing mind’s eye power, creative thinking and awareness of mind by own way learning of child with full of freedom.

c) All round development of child- physical, social, moral and spiritual development of child along with covering all aspects and activities of life which would make the child to become self-reliant.

d) Manifestation of personality- in connection to self-realization and spiritual knowledge of individual for making of the world without fear.

e) Environmental balance- due to aforestation programmes and protected the forest area. He had, first time, emphasised on social forestry for maintain quality of life.

f) International understanding and universal brotherhood- increasing social relationship, fellow-feelings, selfless activities and co-operation.

g) Rural reconstruction- developing ‘Siksha-Satra’ (another school established by Tagore in 1924) and Agricultural Farm House for the centre of rural society and improving of their social and economic life.

h) Preservation of culture- continuation of culture is healthy for society. Through his endeavour Santiniketan became cultural hearth as well as cultural landscape.

i) Cultural upliftment- through assimilation of East-West and that smoothly carry out development process of civilization, which should be at present of our daily day life.

All these issues that already incorporated within Tagore’s education system would be help to smooth growth and development of the contemporary society.

11. Major Findings

a) Tagore had very strong and modern perceptions and extended it through introducing Brahmacharya-Vidyalaya.

b) Rabindranath Tagore is a pioneer of the intellectual union of the spiritual East and the materialistic West.

c) Education system of Brahmacharya-Vidyalaya made strong relationship between traditional past and modern Indian education.

d) He had tried to develop the society by various techniques (like- simplicity, universal hood, rural reconstruction, cultural upliftment and preservation, aorestation etc.) within the flowing channel of education system.

12. Conclusion

Tagore’s education system is developed in a particular situation to improve the quality of education as well as to solve the problems that was seen in those days. A question is raised to the present economic man that whether Tagore education system is fitted or not in the present environment? With over-increasing demand of the society, the movement of economy has also changed. But according to Tagore, his invented education system is not rigid. Brahmacharya-Vidyalaya is the body of Tagore’s education system (soul). We can preserve Tagore education system through the conservation of Brahmacharya-Vidyalaya and its proper utilization. At the same time it has a flexible capacity to grow education process according to dynamic society’s demand. Therefore now it is the time to think about the implementation of Tagore’s education system at a large scale to mitigate the societal hazards and for actual sustainable social development.

13. References


