

# Rabindranath Tagore's Education System and Environmental Sustainability: An Appraisal of Social Development

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## Abstract:

Everything is connected to everything else. It means human and other species are connected (dependent) in such a way that their survival depends on this connectivity. Environment is getting worst day by day. Environment related discussions are the very need of this hour. Environmental education plays an important role towards sustainability. It not only covers human issues, but also economic, social, and cultural issues. It also has an important impact to prepare the future generation for green planet. Demands are being increased every now and then and also urbanization, industrialization, non-renewable resources are accelerated more and more. The main purpose of education is to cater the knowledge among the people. But today it is not the only motto of education. Besides imparting knowledge, it will also develop a complete skill for the students to linger in this planet. Problem is everywhere and the purpose of education is to solve the problem around you. The aim of this study is to find out how much Rabindranath Tagore's education system is applicable for achieving sustainability today.

**Keywords:** Environment, Crisis, Education system, Sustainability

## I. Introduction:

Covid-19 pandemic has affected every sphere of life. Total societal connection has broken down. Different environmental factors affect the human mind differently in the age level[1]. Human life runs mainly by the information from various perspectives including psychology, biology, history, political, economic, social etc[2]. Social development refers to the well-being of every individual in the society so that they can reach their desired goals. All the citizens can move towards their dreams, confidence and dignity if social development

exists[3]. There are different hazards which can harm or damage to humans, property or the environment. Environmental degradations play an important role to change the existing social system or bondage to a great extent[4]. So, it is not good for the

prosperity of the society at all. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), a social activist gave his perception about the social hazards. His approaches of thinking and perception have been scientific and relevant for managing the social hazards. His education system was completely contrary to the prevailing educational system. His education system might be used as an approach for social sustainability and security.

## II. Significance of the study:

Natural disasters have no social or economic considerations[5]. They have no boundaries as they affect both developing and developed countries. They are also ruthless towards everything[6]. People love to live happily and peacefully. Environmental crisis is a new source of concern today. People know the urgent need of environmental education but only a few have clear concepts about the meaning, purpose and needs of it for them. The mental and physical development of people are accelerated by heredity and environment[7]. But this environment is degrading day by day through human activities knowingly or unknowingly. We ought to save this earth to leave peacefully and happily. So, through the present study the researcher tries to show how much Tagore's education system is applicable for today.

## III. Objectives:

- 1.To make a model of Tagore's education system.
- 2.To handle social development and palliate social hazards through Tagore's educational systems.
- 3.To find different types of social hazards which hinder the social sustainability.

## IV. Sources:

Information are mainly collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary information collected through interview from eminent scholars and personalities who have in depth knowledge about Tagore's education system

**V. Methodology:**

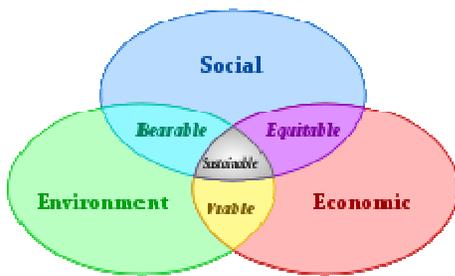
It is a qualitative research and in the pre-field session selection of topic, collection of secondary data as well as information etc. are done properly. Direct observation of the place where Tagore's education system was implemented has been done in the field session. In the post field session information as well as processing, representation and interpretation are also done.

**VI. Literature Review:**

Tagore's education system has been analysed, described and criticized by the eminent scholars from different perspectives. A book entitled "Tagore's thoughts on social problems" it is clearly stated that he was very concern of social problems in the near future[8].

**VII. Sustainable Development (Definition):**

According to World Commission on Environment and Development(WCED)-1987 Sustainable development is defined as meeting "The [human] needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"[9]. Therefore, it is quite difficult to implement the reality of sustainable development. But for the long run of world community sustainability should be needed. Sustainable development consists of three basic pillars- society, environment and economy[10] (Fig-1). In case of Eastern world society and society-based development is the basic key for sustainability. Social customs, social norms, social structures, social process etc. have accelerated the developmental process very rapidly.



Sustainable Development (Fig-1)  
(Source: Wikipedia)

**VIII. Need of sustainability today:**

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

- Palliation of social hazards.
- Direction of social hazards.

**IX. Present status of Social hazards:**

Social hazards block the population's access to health services, food, water and transportation. They often lead to a lack of safety and security and tend to come hand in hand with natural disasters such as floods. Besides these, there are also prevailing dis-integration of family structure, crisis of resource availability, social inequality, racial tension, communal disharmony, language bases regionalism etc.

**X. Adverse Effects of Environmental Degradation:**

According to World Meteorological Organization deaths from heat waves in big cities are expected to double worldwide over the next two decades, if no measures are taken to check the global warming[11]. It has been found that effect of aerosols in the atmosphere will magnify the warming over several developing countries. It results that precipitation might change over tropical regions due to aerosols[12]. The impact of global warming is far greater than just increasing temperature. Warming modifies rainfall patterns, amplifies coastal erosion, lengthens the growing season in some regions, melts ice caps and glaciers, and alters the ranges of some infectious diseases.

**XI. Tagore's education system as an approach for sustainable social development:**

Tagore was immensely influenced by the ancient literature In Vaidik literature, Upanishad, Ramayana etc. there was found spiritual relationship between men and nature. They lived jointly and co-operatively. He opposed British-introduced education system. He did not believe in the existing education system in his time[13]. So, he introduced a new education system in collaboration of ancient and modern education system. *In this regard, 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."*[14]. So, evolution of Tagore's education system has given emphasis on why such a 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.



Tagore's Education System (Fig-2)  
(Source: Wikipedia)

## XII. Tagore's philosophical aspects:

(1) Tagore's idea about education is to cultivate human being through 'Communion with nature mingled with freedom and Joy and Cultural Collaboration with other people'.

(2) Creative self-expression is one of the prominent educational philosophies of Tagore. He considered cultural practices as part and parcel of Curricula. To him dance, drama, recitation, singing and other performing arts are integral part of the education system.

(3) Tagore's concept of national integration, international understanding leading to a globalized world have been used in education as a tool for developing oneself.

(4) Tagore's emphasis on the development of socialization, social awareness, skillfulness, productive ability and social usefulness through education is relevant in the present day's context.

(5) The basic principle of Tagore's educational philosophy are freedom and harmony with natural mingling.

(6) The objective of education according to Tagore is to the all-round development of learners reflected through his words —

*"The ideal education must combine in himself the gifts of a philosopher, a poet, a mystic, a social reformer, a scientist and a veritable man action, he has to take into account all types of men and their aspiration, all facts of human personality, all levels of man's experiences, all fields of endeavor and achievement."*

## XIII. Tagore's infrastructural aspects:

(1) Classroom should be set under the sky. This setup is very much in line with the nature. It will help the students to observe closely natural activities.

(2) Educational institutions should not be walled on fencing.

(3) Students should stay separate and will study individually. In this process students can adopt their own thinking.

(4) Class schedule should be flexible in the changing of time of year to demonstrate natural phenomenon etc.

(5) Mother tongue should be used for instruction.

Through the discussion of above aspects of Tagore's education system, it is clearly stated that this system is unique as well as replica of sustainable society along with its simplicity and dynamic character.

## XIV. Tagore's education system (Significance):

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"[15]. So, we can not become a superior citizen to welfare activities.

## XV. Tagore's education system (AppliedAspects):

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 an education system as an approach and technique which are much compatible with the environment[16].

*"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, multilingual and multicultural situations, amidst conditions of acknowledged economic discrepancy and political imbalance"[17].*

Tagore believed in dynamic and activity methods of teaching. Teaching methods should be based on the interest, ability and experience of the child. The best method of teaching is teaching while walking. The static education within the class-room carries only a divorce between the body and the mind without integration. Lectures should be avoided. Democratic healthy atmosphere of the school determines its smooth working. Only original texts in languages are to be read. Learning should be a joyous adventure. Poetry should be taught from the emotional stand-point. In brief, all emphasis is on self-learning through healthy situations.

The concept of higher education is developed in his Visva Bharati. He established it for establishing inter-social amity and understanding and fulfil the highest mission of the present age, its implication of mankind. The following units are to be remembered Sishu Bhavan (Nursery school), Path Bhavan (Higher school), Shiksha bhavan (Higher Secondary School), Vidya Bhavan (college) Vinaya Bhavan (colleges of Education), Kala Bhavan (Arts school), Shri Niketan (Rural Institute), Sangeetha Bhavan (music college), Shilpa Bhavan (Industrial institute), China Bhavan (school of Language).

This education system of Rabindranath Tagore can eliminate several problems of society through following ways[18].

- **Cultural upliftment-** through assimilation of East-West and that smoothly carry out the development process of civilization, which should be at present in our daily life.
- **Rural reconstruction-** developing "Siksha-Satra" (another school established by Tagore in 1924) and Agricultural Farm House for the centre of rural society and improving their social and economic life. Preservation of culture- continuation of culture is healthy for society. Through his endeavour Santiniketan became a cultural hearth as well as cultural landscape.
- **Environmental balance-** due to afforestation programmes and protected the forest area. He had, first time, emphasized on social forestry to maintain quality of life.
- **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.
- **Simple and less-demanding life-style-** hermitage education system cultivates the child in the way they can live gleefully and that will be a proper way of mitigation and control of materialistic demand of human society.
- **Growing consciousness about the society-** developing mind's eye power, creative thinking and awareness of mind by own way of learning as a child with full freedom.

- **Manifestation of personality-** in connection to self-realization and spiritual knowledge of individuals for making the world without fear.
- **International understanding and universal brotherhood-** increasing social relationship, fellow-feelings, selfless activities and co-operation.

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

#### XVI. Findings:

- Tagore had tried to develop the society by various techniques (like simplicity, universal hood, rural reconstruction, cultural upliftment and preservation, a-forestation etc.) within the flowing channel of the education system.
- Education system of Brahmacharya-Vidyalaya made strong relationship between traditional past and modern Indian education.
- He had very strong and modern perceptions and extended it through introducing Brahmacharya Vidyalaya.
- Rabindranath Tagore is a pioneer of the intellectual union of the spiritual East and the materialistic West.

#### XVII. Conclusion:

The word visvabharati is composed of two words. In Sanskrit, the word Visva means 'world' and bharati means 'culture'. Thus, Visvabharati means world culture. The motto of this university is yatra visvambhavatiekamidam i.e., where the world meets at one place. Through the Visva Bharati as a whole, the poet sought to establish a relationship between East and West, to promote intercultural and inter-social amity and understanding and fulfil the highest mission of the present age, the unification of mankind.

Tagore's education system is developed in a particular situation to improve the quality of education as well as to solve the problems that were 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.

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