

## Environment, Education and Rabindranath Tagore

Ananda Paramanik

Guest lecturer of B. B college, Asansol (India)

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### ABSTRACT

Rabindranath Tagore realized the importance of 'free and open environment' for complete upliftment reflection and expression of any person's mind and soul. So the natural environment had great importance in Tagore's thoughts. Through his lyrical-poem 'a tame bird was in a cage,' Tagore brought out the plight of a tamed bird. One bird is in the cage and the other in the forest both of them met and fall in love.

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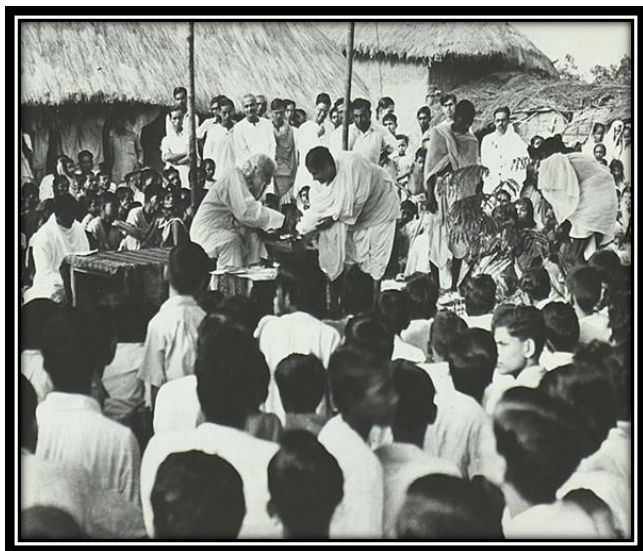
Tagore's is a mind extremely responsive and sensitive to nature. Throughout his poems, songs, dramas, we meet bright sunshine, mellow evening, calm night and many other aspects of nature which reflects the actual and pristine quality of nature. Tagore is not only concerned with the harmony of social relations. But also with people's harmony with nature (Sengupta, 2005). In Tagore's philosophy environmental ethics emerges from the aesthetic of environment (James, 1999). He wants to convey by his notion of surplus. This insistence on surplus gives us the clue as to why the environment matters to Rabindranath (Palmer, Cooper, Corcoran, 2001). The relation between aesthetic and literature could be intimate at the same time intricate (Ghosh, 2000). In present age, according to Tagore, is characterized by aesthetic reaction, evident in man's narrowness of perception which result in the division of his aesthetic awareness into beauty and ugliness (Sharma & Sharma, 1988). Human's aggressive science have invaded in the sky, not only land or soil or in water world. Man could kiss the sky with invention of Aeroplane though it wasn't equally eco-friendly as birds. This creates a sound & radio pollution in sky and that will be cause of disturbance for other avian society. If we search the geographical philosophy of Tagore, we get environmental deterministic philosophy. He wrote: 'In man, the mind, life impulse and the body system, all the three together help carry out all activities. Compromising these three factors our speed of action sets up a rhythm. 89 years from till from now Tagore depicted the great bitterness among the local people for putting up iron lock-gates and dykes stopping the natural flow of a hill-stream and eventually the people rebelled against the government, ultimately bringing about demolition of the dam. Tagore was awfully against putting up of big dams, huge reservoirs and large scale canal systems in the name of agricultural development. In 1907 he felt the natural instinct of be notorious and flow as it is. 'The River flows -all its water are not used up in our bathing, drinking & growing our autumnal rice. The largest part of its water is mean to keep the river flowing ever on. Even without carrying out any other task, there is great significance in maintaining its flow'. 'We do not honor the worth of nature until it's dry' (Pal, 2011). The researcher almost at each and every stage often forget the contribution of nature by exploiting its pristine quality. Our obnoxious footprints on the heart of the earth prove this through pollution, desertification, deforestation, waste dumping, biodiversity loss, industrialization, urbanization, concretization and so many

environmental problems. Nature, in turn, being compelled exerts adverse impact to us. Realizing the painful destiny of nature along with its inhabitant, the great noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore spread the awareness vista for geo-environmental concerns among people during 19<sup>th</sup> century. His geo-environmental visions were framed in aesthetic sense depicted in his all poems, lyrics, dramas, prose etc. which can demand distinct entity and may be applied at present perspectives by making people aware about the values of the environment. Authors have tried to establish here the aptness of the Tagore's literary works at present degrading scenario of environmental quality to extend his ever-lasting ideas of environmental conservation. She will also want to know the attitude of the present students of Visva-Bharati about the vision of Rabindranath Tagore on the said aspects. Tagore's worldly outlook springs from views embedded in the Upanishad. His philosophy is pillared by ancient Indian world outlook for sustainable development and eco-ethical human living.

The world is facing savior kinds of environment pollution now a day. The rapid spread of modernity is impinging the human society to the question of its survival. So, the researcher thinks that if we do not start the rethinking about the protection of our mother earth immediately, the future generation have to pay a great to maintain their livelihood. The great Poet Rabindranath Tagore thought about these in his time. So he introduced many functions like: *halakarshan*, *BarshaMangal in Santiniketan and Sriniketan*.

Not only this, Rabindranath also showed a great passion about the Cultural and aesthetic sense throughout his life. His writings always inspired the whole human society.

Keeping in mind these points the present researcher opined to conduct a study on Raabindranath vision on Environmental, cultural an aesthetic education and also study the attitude of the present students of Visva-Bharati on the said aspects so that the present education system may be benefited with the concept of Rabindranath Nath Tagore.



**Plate Explanation:** This is the tree plantation ceremony Briksharopan, performed along the lake at Bhubandanga at the southernmost end of Santiniketan. Record says that the date was 1936 and the tree planted was Krishna Chura (perhaps the appropriate name should be Gulmohor- already a debated topic in this site!). Source: <http://parthabhavanpraktioni.net/maiwp-content/uploads/2011/8/28>.

If we search the geographical philosophy of Tagore, we get environmental deterministic philosophy. He wrote: 'In man, the mind, life impulse and the body system, all the three together help carry out all activities. Compromising these three factors our speed of action sets up a rhythm. The body and the mind, both a just themselves according to the prevailing atmospheric condition. In cold countries the fire has to be roused up within the body, while in a hot country the same heat lies outside' (1925, Pashchim-yatrir Dairy, p.491). Tagore highlighted the view that if we have to sustain on earth for longer time then we have to nourish our fundamental elements of nature. So he presented the opinion:

*"batas, jala, akasha, alo,  
sabarekabebasibehalo,..."*

So these lines reveal that when will all be able to love the breeze ("*batas*"), water ("*jala*"), the sky ("*akasha*"), and the light ("*alo*"). Tagore believed five primordial elements arrange our nature and natural world.

1. "*Ksiti*" or Soil: Addressing the soil as the very first element of nature, the poet urges the young sapling which is being planted be held firmly into the soil. Tagore expressed his respect to earth through:

*"Matitomainomi..."* (Tagore, 1909. Gitanjali: poem no.48, p.39)

'my greetings to soil.'

The Poet hears the call of earth and which was elaborated in :

*"Chirodinmatiamaidekechhe..."*

(Tagore, 1936. Sesh Saptak: poem no. 44, p.109)

'earth has enchanted me...'

2. "*Ap*" or Water: The second primal element of our environment. According to the poet and traditional Indian concept, water represents a kinetic power in the form of motion, arising out of its fluidity. Tagore expressed that motion and sound (means life) was firstly generated and founded in water. He portrait the line:

*"Dhora tale chanchhsalata  
Saba age nemechhilojole  
Sabarprothomdhoniuthechhiloje..."*  
(Tagore, 1939, Akaskradip: Jol poem)

'Motion is beneath the earth  
Was down first in water  
Sound or life was awake first'

3. "*Tejas*" or Energy: Light is the source of energy. Tagore would like to move the way of "*gyotir*" or light (the consciousness of knowledge) from the darkness of ignorance (lack of knowledge). He has given the enlighten view:

*"Aloamaralooogalobhubanbhora  
Alonayan-dhoaamar, alohridaybhora..."*  
[Tagore, 1927. Geetabitan: song no.46 (bichitra) p.476]

Through the light is spreading in whole earth as well as in me and this light has refreshed my eyes which also touch my heart were the light is the knowledge and the knowledge is the light.

4. *Marutor* the Wind power: He sketched his view in the following lines:

*"Batastomaynami  
Amar  
ghuchukabosad....."* (Tagore, 1909. Gitanjali, poem no. 48, p.39)

'O wind, I bow down to you,  
may my tiredness be removed.'

From these lines it is cleared that Tagore gave his salutation to wind and he also expressed the application of the wind to reduce the fatigue condition of health. The poet invokes the soothing quality and the healing power of soft breeze. Poet accepted the blowing wind in its motion, as a very close friend. The ferrous wind wipes out everything that comes on its way. The poet expresses the fearful form of violent storm in many of his poetic works-

*"Jetejeteeklapathenibhechhemorbati  
Jhareseche, ore, ebarjharkepelemsathi..."*  
[Tagore, 1927. Geetabitan: song no.205, (puja parjal), p.128]

'on a walk with alone, the light is put out  
Storm is here and it is a companion me...'

5. "*Vyoma*" or cosmos: Tagore was conscious about the Space and its importance on the earth. He wrote:

*"Akash, tomarsahasudardristi  
Matirgabhirejagayrupersristi..."*

(Tagore, 1928. Banabani: poem Vyoma, p.115)

The meeting-ground of cultures, as Rabindranath envisioned it at Visva-Bharati, should be a learning centre where conflicting interests are minimized, where individuals work together in a common pursuit of truth and realise 'that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered secrets of the universe, philosophers solved the problems of existence, saints made the truth of the spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belonged, but for all mankind.' (Tagore 1922:171-2).

To shape the whole work we studied different poems, lyrics, articles and dramas of Rabindranath Tagore and also various books those have been published of several authors on environmental ideas through Tagore's geo-environmental awareness. The lists of Tagore's writing those have been reviewed here are: lyric no.94 (premparyay), song no.46 (Bichitra), song no.205 (puja parjal) and Lyric no.12 (AnusthanicParyay) of Geetabitan, poem no. VI of The Gardener, poem SabhyatarPratiChaitali (1895), poem Pakshi-Manav of Nava Jatak (1940), poem Proshno of Sanchayita (1931), poem no.48 of Gitanjali (1909), poem no. 44 of SeshSaptak of 1936, poem Vyoma of Banabani (1928), poem Durakanksha of Chitra (1896) and the essay AranyaDevata, the article Tapavana and BilaserPhans, PrakritiParyay, drama Muktheadhara (1922) and Raktakarabi (1925). The other documents or books are 'Rabindranath Tagore' of S.K.Ghosh in 2006, 'Ethical perspectives on environmental issues in India' of A. James in 1999, 'Fifty Thinkers on the environment' of J. Palmer, D.E.Cooper and P.B.Corcoran in 2001. To analyze the acceptance of Tagore's aesthetic thoughts in recent days different data has been collected from different newspaper like from 'AnandabazarPatrica', 'Telegraph' and 'Bartaman'. Also we collected relevant photographs of Tagore from Internet websites. To feel the Tagore's aesthetic visions about geo-environmental consciousness we observed different festivals like *briksharopan*, *halakarshan* and *barshamongoIn* recent Santiniketan and Sriniketan.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri described Tagore as, "Historically, the greatest product of the interaction in India in the nineteenth century between European and Hindu life and civilization... In

one sense he may be regarded as the victim of the interchange, and in another as its prophet. His own life was caught in the conflict which the interchange brought about, and his writings stand for its achievement." At the threshold of the 20th century in Bengal reeling under British rule and sectarian divisions, Tagore envisioned a place of learning unfettered by religious and regional barriers. From its very inception, Tagore modelled Santiniketan on principles of humanism, internationalism and a sustainable environment and the curriculum was developed to promote the free interchange of human values and cultures. Thus, over a hundred years ago, Santiniketan began in a majority Hindu region with 3 out of 5 teachers being Christian, encouraged women to join as both students and teachers, and promoted a unique blend of art and cultural interchange in its classrooms that were held in the open air, free from the confines of spatial or ideological boundaries. In developing his holistic educational paradigm, Rabindranath sought through various means to break down existing barriers and to foster interconnectivity between provincial and regional groups: between English-medium educated elites and the common people; between urban and rural economic groups...and to reduce the gender gap. Tagore's vision finds architectural expression in Santiniketan where the buildings of China Bhavan and Hindi Bhavan were specifically built to house institutes that explored linguistic linkages between eastern countries, as well as the eclectic architectural expression of structures such as Sinha Sadan, Udayan and PathoBhavan that merged various cultural vocabularies to create a unique architectural synthesis. In only the second year of its existence, Santiniketan had its first foreign student in Hori San from Japan. To cultivate this interchange in the students of Santiniketan, Tagore actively solicited the presence of visitors from all over the world, in addition to devising syllabi that promoted the understanding of different cultures: Vedic, Puranic, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian, and Sikh traditions; the 'precious and permanent contribution' of Islamic culture to Indian art and architecture; writings of 'our medieval saints'; special studies of China, Japan, and Tibet; as well as Western culture, for 'only then shall we able to assimilate this last contribution to our common stock'" (source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5495/>).

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