

# LEGACY OF TAGORE IN THE FIELD OF ART AND EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

Rabindranath Tagore was a prolific writer. He does not belong only to his own age. The appeal of his literary works is eternal and universal. Tagore was the living ‘Upanishada’. The Vedantic philosophy of ancient India has been reflected in the writings of Tagore. He implemented the ‘Gurukul’ system of education of Vedic age at the advent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is the high time to accept Tagore’s ideas and concept of education in this 21<sup>st</sup> century also because those ideas and concepts are still relevant today. Tagore is for readers of all ages. His writings or literary works have the acceptability irrespective of ages and countries. Year 2011 was significant in the sense that the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Tagore had widely been solemnized in not only India but also almost all over the world. So, this is really a great opportunity to grasp Tagore with his versatility and it will be the right and respectful tribute to this immortal bard of India and this will be the proper homage to Indian culture also.

## 1. SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A quick over view of Tagore’s life is presented in the following Table.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Event in short</b>
1861	Born on May 7, 1861
1865	Admitted to Calcutta Training Academy
1868	Admitted to Oriental Seminary and later to Normal School
1871	Admitted to Bengal Academy
1877	Started to publish poems and articles regularly in his family's monthly journal: 'Bharati'
1878	Went to England with brother, Satyendranath Tagore
1881	Composed his first set of devotional songs for anniversary of Brahma Samaj: 'Maghotsav' First musical play: 'Valmiki-Pratibha' staged at Jorasanko
1883	Married to Mrinalini devi
1890	Severely attacked the anti-Indian policy of Lord Cross, then Secretary of State for India Took charge of the management of the Tagore Estates with Selaidah as his headquarters
1891	Wrote his first six short stories including 'Post Master'
1899	At the anniversary of 7 <sup>th</sup> Poush (Bengali 9 <sup>th</sup> month), lead the prayer and delivered his sermon on 'Brahmoponishad' in the Mandir at Santiniketan
1901	Established school at Santiniketan Revived Bangadarshan, edited that for five years Came into contact with Brahmabandhab Upadhyay
1905	Agitation against Lord Curzon's proposal to partition Bengal Advocated policy of constructive non-cooperation against the British Initiated the Rakhi-bandhan ceremony on October 16, the day partition became a settled fact, as a symbol of unity in Bengal Lead a huge procession through the streets of Calcutta singing 'Banglar Mati, Banglar Jal'
1913	English versions of 'Gitanjali', 'The Crescent Moon', 'The Gardener' and 'Chitra' were published by McMillan

	On November 13, he was awarded the ‘NOBLE’ prize for Literature
1915	Received ‘Knighthood’ Met Gandhi for the first time
1916	Travelled to Japan and USA for lectures on Nationalism and Personality
1918	Formal foundation stone of Visva-Bharati was laid
1919	Cautioned Gandhi against misuse of passive resistance Renounced Knighthood in protest against Jalianwallah Bagh massacre
1920	Left for England on a lecture tour to raise funds for Visva-Bharati Travelled to France, Holland and USA
1928	Started painting regularly
1930	Paintings were exhibited at the Gallerie Pigalle in Paris Other exhibitions followed in Birmingham, in several European capitals and in USA Delivered Hibbert lectures in Oxford (published as ‘The Religion of Man’) Wrote ‘The Child’, his one and only original English poem
1940	Oxford University organized special Convocation at Santiniketan to confer ‘Doctorate’ to him
1941	His final lecture, ‘Crisis in Civilization’, was read on his 80 <sup>th</sup> birthday Died on August 7, 1941

## 2. TAGORE AS A PAINTER

At the age of sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; successful exhibitions of his many works – which made a debut appearance in Paris upon encouragement by artists he met in the south of France – were held throughout Europe. Tagore, who likely exhibited protanopia (color blindness), or partial lack of red-green (in Tagore’s case) color discernment, painted in a style characterized by peculiarities in aesthetics and coloring schemes. Tagore emulated numerous styles, including craftwork from northern New Ireland, Haida carvings from the west coast of Canada (British Columbia), and woodcuts by Max Pechstein. Tagore also had an artist’s eye for his own handwriting, embellishing

the scribbles, cross-out, and word layouts in his manuscripts with simple artistic leitmotifs, including simple rhythmic designs.

### **3. TAGORE'S CONTRIBUTION IN LITERATURE**

#### **3.1 NOVEL**

Tagore wrote eight novels and four novellas, among them 'Chaturanga', 'Shesher Kobita', 'Char Odhay' and 'Noukadubi'. 'Ghare Baire (The Home and the World)' is one of the greatest novels. Though his novels remain among the least-appreciated of his works, they have been renewed attention via film adaptations by Satyajit Ray and others: 'Chokher Bali' and 'Ghare Baire' are exemplary.

#### **3.2 SHORT STORIES**

Tagore wrote many stories which remain perfect examples of short story. The 'Sadhana' period (1891-1895) was among Tagore's most fecund, yielding more than half the stories contained in the three-volume 'Galpaguchchha', itself a group of eighty-four stories. They reflect upon Tagore's surroundings, on modern and fashionable ideas, and on mind puzzles. He associated his earliest stories, such as those of the 'Sadhana' period, with an exuberance of vitality and spontaneity. His 'Galpaguchchha' remains among Bengali literature's most popular fictional works, providing subject matter for many successful films and theatrical plays. Satyajit Ray's film 'Charulata' was based upon Tagore's controversial novella, 'Nastanirh (The Broken Nest)'.

#### **3.3 POETRY**

Bauls in Santiniketan during Holi Tagore's poetry – which varied in style from classical formalism to the comic, visionary, and ecstatic – proceeds from a lineage established by 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Vaishnava poets. He was awed by the mysticism of the Rishi-authors who – including Vyasa – wrote the Upanishads, the Bhakti-Sufi mystic Kabir,

and Ramprasad Sen. Yet Tagore's poetry became most innovative and mature after his exposure to rural Bengal's folk music, which included Baul ballads – especially those of bard Lalou.

### **3.4 SONGS**

Tagore composed roughly 2230 songs. His songs popularly known as 'Rabindra Sangeet' (Tagore Song) are an integral part of Bengali culture. Tagore's music is inseparable from his literature, most of which – poems or parts of novels, stories, or plays alike – became lyrics for his songs. Influenced by the 'thumri' style of Hindustani music, they ran the entire gamut of human emotion, ranging from his early dirge-like Brahmo devotional hymns to quasi erotic compositions. They emulated the tonal color of classical ragas to varying extents. Though at times his songs mimicked a given raga melody and rhythm faithfully, he also blended elements of different ragas to create innovative works. They are immensely popular and form a foundation for the Bengali ethos that is comparable to, perhaps even greater than, that which Shakespeare has on the English-speaking world. It is said that his songs are the outcome of 500 years of literary churning that the Bengali community has gone through.

### **3.5 OTHERS**

Tagore wrote many non-fiction books, writing on topics ranging from Indian history to linguistics to spirituality. Aside from autobiographical works, his travelogues, essays, letters and lectures were compiled into several volumes, including 'Europe Jatir Patro' (Letters from Europe) and 'Manusher Dhormo' (The Religion of Man).

## **4. TAGORE AS AN EDUCATIONIST**

### **4.1 TAGORE'S CONCEPT ON EDUCATION AND HIS INNOVATIVE APPROACH**

Tagore's role in the innovation of educational ideas has been eclipsed by his fame as a poet. He was a pioneer in the field of education. For the last forty years of his life he was content to be a school master in humble rural surroundings, even when he had achieved fame such as no Indian had known before. He was one of the first, in India, to think out for himself and put in practice principles of education which have now become common place of educational theory, if not yet of practice. Today we all know that what the child imbibes at home and in school is far more important than what he studies in college, that the teaching is more easily and naturally communicated through the child's mother-tongue than through an alien medium, that learning through the written word, that wholesome education consists in training of all the senses along with the mind instead of cramming the brain with memorized knowledge, that culture is something much more than academic knowledge. But few of Tagore's countrymen took notice of him when he made his first experiments in education in 1901 with less than half a dozen pupils. A poet's whim, thought most of them. Even today few of his countrymen understand the significance of these principles in their national life. The school master is still the most neglected member of our community, despite the fact that Tagore attached more merit to what he taught to children in his school than to the Hibbert lectures he delivered before the distinguished audience at Oxford. Mahatma Gandhi adopted the scheme of teaching through crafts many years after Tagore had worked it out at Santiniketan.

#### **4.2 SANTINIKETAN AT BOLPUR – A BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

Santiniketan is a place which is situated in the district of Birbhum. It is hundred miles north-west of Kolkata in rural southern Bengal. This is a place where Tagore's father Maharshi Debendranath had purchased a totally uninhabited land in 1863.

#### **4.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL AT SANTINIKETAN**

Rabindranath dedicated himself to develop an experimental school for urban boys at Santiniketan. Maharshi Debendranath established a 'Trust' to provide householders with a temporary retreat for prayer and meditation. This was the 'Santiniketan Trust' which

gave its name to the place. There was provision for a school under the Trust's guidelines, which became Tagore's Santiniketan School as we know it today. Tagore wrote, *"Fortunately for me I had a place ready to my hand where I could begin my work. My father, in one of his numerous travels, had selected this lonely spot as the one suitable for his life of communion with God. This place, with a permanent endowment, he dedicated to the use of those who seek peace and seclusion for their meditation and prayer. I had about ten boys with me when I came here and started my new life with no previous experience whatever."*

#### **4.4 DREAM OF A UNIVERSITY**

Mahatma imported his first teachers for his basic school from Santiniketan. If Tagore had done nothing else, what he did at Santiniketan and Santiniketan would be sufficient to rank him as one of the India's greatest nation-builders. With the years, Tagore had won the world and the world in turn had won him. He sought his home everywhere in the world and would bring the world to his home. And so the little school for children at Santiniketan became a world University, 'Visva-Bharati', a centre for Indian culture, a seminary for Eastern Studies and a meeting place of the East and West. The poet selected for its motto an ancient Sanskrit verse, *"Yatra visvam bhavatieka nidam"*, which means, *"Where the whole world meets in a single nest."*

'Visva-Bharati', he declared, "represents India where she has her wealth of mind which is for all. Visva-Bharati acknowledges India's obligation to offer to others the hospitality of her best culture and India's right to accept from others their best." In 1940 a year before he died, he put a letter in Gandhi's hand, "Visva-Bharati is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life's best treasure, and I hope it may claim special care from my countrymen for its preservation."

#### **5. TAGORE'S VERSATILITY**

Basically, Tagore was a poet, rather we should say that he was the poet of poets. But, Tagore did not restrict himself only in the realm of poetry. He was born with the incredible genius to step into other fields of literature. We find his unrestricted loitering in the field of prose, novel, essays, songs, criticism and so on and so forth. It is worth mentioning that in every field of literature we noticed Tagore's mastery. Here in lies the versatility of Tagore. As far as Bengali literature is concerned, we find authentic novelists like Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and so many, an authentic story-teller like Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay, authentic poets like Jibanananda Das, Satyendranath Dutta and so many, but when we think of an all-round literary contribution, Tagore eclipses all of them. As far as English literature is concerned, Shakespeare has always been regarded as a versatile genius but when we study the works of Shakespeare, we notice his literary journey confined in the field of drama and poetry. When we read short-stories like 'Dena Paona', 'Kabuliwala', 'Shasti', we remain absorbed in them; 'Gitanjali', 'Balaka', 'Sonar Tori' make us realize that poetry is really spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

## **6. AWARDS & HONOUR RECEIVED**

- Nobel prize on November 13, 1913
- Knighthood in 1915
- Doctorate by Oxford University in 1940

## **7. CONCLUSION**

It is not easy to speak of Tagore and his legacy in a few words. Tagore had oceanic vastness and unfathomable depth. Nearly one hundred and fifty years had passed since Tagore was born. But such is the universality of Tagore that he is still relevant today. When we turn over the pages of 'Gitanjali', 'Shesher Kobita', 'Fruit Gathering', we remain so much absorbed in them that we almost lose our existence for the time being. Such is the captivating effect of art on man. When we penetrate into the inner part of Tagore's writing we become spellbound to realize the depth of his thought and wisdom.

The attempt made by us is nothing but a respectful tribute on the holy feet of Tagore who had been aptly entitled as “The Living Upanishada.” He had profound respect for the rich and hoary heritage and culture of India and this has been widely depicted in his writings. Tagore had the flexibility to accept the new concepts of Western civilization. According to eminent English poet Milton, “Old order changeth yielding place to new.” Tagore was willing to ‘give and take’ and he thought of a proper synthesis of the new and the old. He implemented the ‘Gurukul’ system of education in his Santiniketan but at the same time he wished that education should be nourished by the light of the Renaissance. Herein lies the novelty or originality of Tagore.

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