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POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, POSITIVE SCHOOLING AND RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S EDUCATIONAL IDEAS

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Positive Psychology is comparatively new in the realm of psychology. It is related to the happiness of an individual or a group. Happiness or the frequent positive affective state of mind also impacts mental well-being and, hence, an individual's mental health and development. The educational system developed by Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan dated back to 1901 in the form of a Brahmacharya Vidyalaya had the prime aim of "joy of mind" of the students. Closeness to nature, classes in the open air, multidimensional curriculum were some of the significant principles of the educational institution established by a Rabindranath Tagore. All these principles certainly aim to strengthen the students' happiness base. More than a century before, Tagore had applied these principles of positive psychology to his educational experiments. The present study is a humble effort to trace Tagore's educational efforts related to happiness, positive psychology, and positive schooling.

KEYWORDS: Positive Psychology, Positive Schooling, Rabindranath Tagore's educational Practices

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, education in almost all nations is developing based on the principles of educational psychology. Various psychological theories and principles are applied to make the educational system more effective and fruitful. At the same time, the student's achievement is also being focused on while using psychological approaches in education. Curriculum development, teaching methods, selection of books, evaluation process, grading system, remedial lessons, and other fields of education are developed based on the principles of educational psychology to make education joyful and effective. Mainly in the early days of learning, the principles of positive psychology are being emphasized for developing a positive attitude toward education.

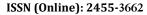
Followers of positive psychology generally advocate for three fundamental pillars of positive psychology: positive experience, individual traits, and positive institutions. (https://mu.ac.in/wpcontent/uploads/2022/05/Positive-Psychology-English-

Version.pdf). Positive schooling emerged based on these principles and pillars of positive psychology. Positive schooling is an applied part of positive psychology that focuses on the student's overall development rather than addressing their weaknesses. Positive schooling from childhood is also effective for developing trust, care, team effort, respect for other members of the group, respect for diversity, responsibility, creativity, courage, leadership qualities, work ethic, self-discipline, integrity, critical thinking ability, different skills, perseverance, honesty, kindness, modesty, humanity, passion, social intelligence, emotional control, diligence, self-monitoring, bravery and other vital traits of personality. So, positive schooling

is positively correlated with the student's cognitive, affective, and psycho-motoral development. At the same time, it must be mentioned that positive schooling directly affects the mental health and well-being of the students. Therefore, to strengthen the future generation of any society or Nation, positive social and educational institutions and positive schooling are of paramount importance.

In Santiniketan, which was established by Mahrshi Devendranath Tagore in 1863, Rabindranath Tagore, in 1901, established a Brahmacharya Vidyalaya in, the lab of the nature, which was probably his answer to his dissatisfaction about the educational system that he had to face during his childhood and the educational system that was in practice in the during Colonial India. However, the *Brahmacharya Vidyalaya*, as an Ashram, was a unique example of positive schooling. A multidimensional curriculum with a range of extra-curricular activities has been incorporated into the educational system to prioritize students' interest in learning. Teaching and learning in the open air added a new dimension to the educational system. The main aim of education in this educational institution, as set by Tagore, was the "joy of mind" of the students. Tagore adopted the principle of free discipline in educational institutions. The educational experiments by Tagore in Santiniketan were based on scientific approaches, while the principles of educational psychology, child psychology, and positive psychology were equally emphasized.

A blend of naturalism and pragmatism was perfectly planned and implemented to nurture, grow, and develop young minds from their childhood and ensure the overall development of the





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student's personalities. Tagore also followed the ancient Indian educational tradition in the educational practices at Santiniketan. So, at the beginning of the 20th century, the educational experimental executive and practiced by Tagore informed of a *Brahmacharya Vidyalaya* was a revolutionary and innovative educational effort which, over time, was acclaimed by the entire world.

Positive psychology is essential and related to the mental well-being of an individual by providing positive experiences. Positive schooling during the initial days of formal learning helps develop a positive attitude among the students toward the teaching and learning process. It strengthens the foundation of the Nation's future generations. Tagore's educational institution started as a *Brahmacharya Vidyalaya*, which today is popularly known as "*Patha Bhavana*," also practiced the same from its inception. On the other hand, positive psychology was come in to light as a formal discipline in 2000. This study attempts to study whether or how far a century back the educational system synchronizes with the concept of positive schooling or, in a broader sense, with positive psychology.

Aims of Education

Tagore defined education as "The highest education is that which does not merely gives information but brings our life in harmony with all existence." (Tagore.R,1917,p.116)

Through this definition, Tagore had fixed a very simple but high aim of education, which not only ensured individual development but also emphasized the symbiotic relationship of the students with nature as well as with society. According to Tagore, the main aim of education must be the "joy of mind," and he advocated for the spontaneous participation of the students in the educational system. From the inception of the Brahmacharya Vidyalaya or Patha-Bhavana, closeness to the natural environment had been one of the prime aims of the educational system. Closeness to nature ensures happiness and helps develop the students' freethinking ability. It also has a positive correlation with the mental well-being of the students. For this reason, Tagore believed in the burden-free learning of the students was mainly during the early days of their education. Developing creativity within the students through a well-planned positive schooling system was another aim of his educational practice. Accordingly, Tagore adopted a multidimensional curriculum in his educational system with many co-curricular subjects equally important to traditional school subjects. Another important aspect that needs to be mentioned in this context is the principle of choice and the demands of the students in the selection of subjects. Tagore adopted this practice almost a century before, and it is equivalent and pertinent in modern times too.

Tagore's educational philosophy also emphasizes the development of different social, cultural, moral, and environmental values through education. "Ashram Sammilini," a unique form of student self-governance, was introduced by takers in 1912 in his educational institution, which ultimately aimed to

develop the student's personalities. Different activities were arranged to involve the students in various social, cultural, and literary activities. Spontaneous engagement of the students in the different types of activities has added an extra dimension to Tagore's educational practices.

A range of co-curricular subjects was also incorporated into the school curriculum to orient students to different kinds of vocational skills and trades. "Ananda Mela" is an event where students can exhibit creativity and sell their products. "Ananda Mela," the fair of joy, from its name itself, can be realized how eager the student is for this day of the year.

Nurturing immature minds with freedom in a fearless natural environment with the prime objective of "joy of mind" was set as the main aim of education by Tagore in his educational institution. Positive psychology and positive schooling advocate for the mental well-being of the students during the early days of their learning by providing relevant real-life experience in a positive environment, which will ultimately motivate the students to acquire their life skills and overall personality development. In this context, it can be said that Tagore educational practice in Santiniketan is a living example of such positive schooling.

Developing responsible and sensitive future generations for the Nation was another important objective of Tagore's education. Orient in the young minds, with the different kinds of constructive, organized, valued, rich group efforts, etc., were planted by Tagore in his educational experiment to ensure the overall development of the students. *Ashram Sammiliani* was initiated by Tagore in 1912, and it was probably the first organized form of student self-governance. The students organize different kinds of activities like cultural, literary, social work, games, sports, health and hygiene, environmental awareness, and various occasions mainly initiated by Tagore, like *Anand Bazar, Sarad-Utsab*, etc. Organizing and participating in these activities around the year is a source that plays an essential role in the student's mental well-being and cognitive development.

So along with the regular school subjects, a range of co-curricular subjects, activities of *Ashram Sammilini*, different functions, and festivals around the year, admiring the various seasons and the changes in nature were the main four pillars of the curriculum of Rabindranath Tagore, which were developed and practice in his educational institution in Santiniketan.

In this context, two kindergarten schools of Visva Bharati must be mentioned, namely *Anand Pathshala* and *Santosh Pathshala*. Two schools are entirely in the lap of nature where, till today, the play-way method of education is being followed to transition the entire curriculum. Singing, dancing, clay modeling, nature study, acting, etc., have occupied a vital position in the curriculum, along with the contents of the early days.

It is evident enough that Tagore's educational practice indirectly strengthens the foundation of an ideal concept of positive schooling and positive psychology. Tagore fixed the child's



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harmonious development as the main aim of education in his educational practice.

Curriculum

The curriculum in any educational system is the most important part as it is the road map to reach or achieve the goals of education. Different principles are followed while framing the curriculum to ensure the physical, mental, social, cognitive, emotional, moral, or, better to say, the overall development of an individual or an entire generation. The curriculum is the tool that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience in a controlled environment with real-world situations and in the development of different life skills. The principles of positive psychology play an important role in curriculum design as they ensureburden-free learning for students and maintain their mental health and well-being. So, curriculum design is an essential area of positive schooling.

Rabindranath Tagore, in his educational experiments and later in practices from the very inception, had implemented a multidimensional curriculum. The important dimensions are as follows.

- The regular school subjects
- Compulsory co-curricular subjects with games and sports
- Ashram Sammiliani and its activities
- Functions and festivals

Alone with the regular conventional School subjects, activities of the other three parts of the curriculum are equally emphasized by Tagore in his educational practices after several experiments.

From Tagore's different writings, mainly about his childhood, it was clear enough how he was mentally disturbed by the educational pattern in practice during that time. *Brahmacharya Vidyalaya*, in the form of the *Tapovan Ashram*, was established by Tagore in 1901 in Santiniketan, which answered his childhood displeasure and dissatisfaction. This displeasure with the educational process is a potential factor for developing a negative attitude within the students toward their early childhood or the early days of learning. This part was possibly most meticulously taken by Tagore in his educational practices, and this is probably the reason behind determining "joy of mind" as the prime in education. To ensure the achievement of such an aim, Tagore designed and executed a multidimensional curriculum in his school.

Regular school subjects like Bengali, English, Mathematics, Life science, Physics, Chemistry, History, Geography, Hindi, Sanskrit, Economics, Home science etc. compose one part of the curriculum. These subjects strengthen the theoretical base of the students and provide them with essential knowledge of their lives. Contents are selected according to the age of the students, but at the same time, it must be mentioned that these conventional subjects formed only a part of the entire curriculum. The mother tongue, mainly Bengali, the regional language, was also adopted

with a particular focus on teaching these subjects, and the principle of burden-free learning was practiced from the beginning so as not to stress the students. Classes are organized in the open air, in the lab of nature, so that the students can visualize and connect their lessons with nature's happenings.

Another uniqueness of the schooling system is that despite sitting in a particular place or a particular classroom, the students have to go to different places to attend their classes. So the time to reach a class from another class is arranged carefully to refresh the students for their next class. The grading system was implemented in the evaluation process from the very early stage of its journey. Tagore followed a continuous and comprehensive evaluation process in his educational experiment, and most importantly, no detention policy was adopted up to a certain standard.

So, the entire formal educational system was designed and implemented according to the principles of education and Child Psychology. Every step in executing this part of the curriculum set almost a century ago was the best example and practice of positive schooling. Nurturing young minds in a burden-free, fearless natural environment to enable them to find absolute joy in their mind can be referred to as the best practice or the principle of positive schooling. All these practices of the century before are highly recommended and followed widely by almost all the conscious nations in the present era.

The second important part of Tagore's educational curriculum is the principle of a wide range of co-curricular subjects in the formal educational process. A wide range of co-curricular subjects of equal importance were incorporated into the curriculum. Painting, clay modeling, singing, dancing, origami, playing different Indian musical instruments, weaving, woodwork, leatherwork, etc., are some extra-curricular subjects almost compulsory for all students. So, a wide range of choices to date is being provided to the students to enable them to develop their inner potential according to their own choices, interests, and demands. Participation in all these-curricular activities ensures the development of various skills within the students and develops good habits for managing their free hours effectively. It refreshes the students' minds for their studies and helps them develop a positive attitude towards the different vocational activities. Co-curricular subjects are an essential part of the total educational system of Santiniketan, and this is the unique character of the educational experiment and practice of Tagore that made the difference and is widely admired. The National Education Policy-2020 mentions the importance of incorporating co-curricular subjects at the school level. Educational psychology also advocated incorporating co-curricular subjects along with conventional School subjects. Participation in such different activities reduces the negative emotions within the students. It accelerates the process of positive emotion, hence happiness and mental well-being, which are the main objectives of positive schooling and positive psychology. According to the concept of positive psychology, happiness, and mental well-being have a



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positive impact on the cognitive development of the students, which enhances their quality of life. It also is a significant source of motivation and self-expression for the students. It can be said that incorporating co-curricular subjects or activities in the educational system, mainly at the school level, has multiple benefits. Almost the century before, Tagore, in his educational system, had implemented this principle of incorporating a wide range of co-curricular activities, an example for the educational psychologist and the entire world.

The third important pillar of Tagore's educational curriculum for the school level was *Ashram Sammilani*, which has different activities. *Ashram Sammilani* was introduced by Tagore in 1912 in Patha Bhavan and later in Sikha Satra. *Ashram Sammilani* was possibly the pioneer form of student self-governance in the formal educational system. *Ashram Sammilani* has is a well-defined constitution with specific constitutional provisions and subsections explaining different rules and regulations related to the formation of different groups, different activities of this Vibhag, selection or election of the secretary or the *sampadak* for the different groups, provisions for General Meeting, Cabinet formation, revisions of rules, account rules and others. The different Vibhags of *Ashram Sammilani* are as follows:

- Sahitya Vibhag
- Seva Vibhag
- Swasthya Vibhag
- Aharjya Vibhag
- Krira Vibhag
- Bichar Vibhag
- Sakha Sangha
- Paribesh Vibhag

Each Vibhag has a male student representative as a *sampadak* and one female representative as a sampadika, except the Bichar-Vibhag, which has around eight members. All the representatives of the Ashram Sammilani form the Cabinet which is popularly known as Protinidhi Sabha. The other students select or elect the student representatives through a well-defined democratic voting system. All the Vibhags have a set of well-defined activities around the year. All the school's students are directly or indirectly involved or participate in these activities. The tenure for one cabinet is for one year. After that, the cabinet is reconstructed with new sets of student representatives. One term is divided into two sessions, and at the end of each session, all the representatives of different Vibhags have to present an account of the different activities they organize. These details are presented in a general meeting, which is presided over by an invited external member, and in the general meeting, all the students are allowed to raise any question. One school teacher is appointed as a Proctor or Chatra-Sanchalak of Ashram Sammilani and for each Vibhag or group. One teacher in charge, or Adhyapak, is appointed to advise the representatives of the concerned Vibhag. Adhyaksha, or the Principal of the school, will be the Hon'ble President of Ashram Sammilani by virtue of the chair.

Ashram Sammilani was a unique creation of Tagore with multiple goals: development of democratic awareness, responsibility, decision-making ability, administrative skill, leadership quality, development of team effort, organizing different events, respect for hard work and others, self-dependency, active agent of the society, disciplined behavior and most importantly harmonious development of the personality.

So, a significantly positive correlation exists between the philosophy of introducing *Ashram Sammilani* and the positive schooling practice. Instead, it would be more appropriate to say that the different activities of *Ashram Sammilani* provide ample practical opportunity to grow in a balanced, harmonious, and probably in the best possible way. *Ashram Sammilani* was an exemplary educational creation of Tagore. In the present-day context, in almost all societies and different schools, students' self-governance and youth parliament are being practiced to ensure the development of democratic awareness, dutifulness, responsibility, and sensitivity to future generations of the Nation. In this context, the role of *Ashram Sammilani*, initiated almost a century ago, must be mentioned with importance and respect.

The fourth important pillar of the curriculum developed by Tagore was introducing and incorporating different functions and festivals with education. Functions and festivals around the year in Santiniketan are like the heartbeat of the entire university campus and the community. Around twenty eight different festivals are celebrated in Visva-Bharati during the year. Students are the main participants in these functions and festivals. The students, even the school students, also lead in organizing of such functions. The functions and festivals related to the change in the seasons, remembering the different eminent personalities, celebrating the days with national and international importance, organizing different fairs, organizing dramas, exhibitions, and many more are the important functions of this university. Some of these festivals like Ananda mela, Basant-Utsav, Sarad utsav, Poush-Utsav, Gandhi Purnaho, Ritu-Utsav, Barsha Mangala, Briksha Ropan, Nanden Mela, Shilpo Utsav etc. are important.

Creativity, cooperation, leisure hour management, leadership quality, attitude towards social equilibrium and residence, aesthetic sense, management, ability exposure to the greater world, environmental sensitivity and awareness, cultural development, respect for cultural diversity, knowledge about the cultural heritage, attitude towards the social services, practical experience for organizing different events, development of social and model values, self-discipline, vocational attitude, etc. are some of the crucial traits that are targeted to develop in the personality of the students through these function and festivals. Apart from the functions and festivals of Santiniketan, they also play a significant role in mass education. Tagore consciously organized these functions and festivals and incorporated them with the formal educational system to achieve the educational goals he envisaged.



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Adopting this particular principle in formal education was a master stroke by Tagore for the effective development of the student's personality through education. Positive schooling nowadays is being practiced to ensure the happiness and mental well-being of the students on the school premises, mainly for their development. Different kinds of activities are also arranged and organized in this concern. Still, the creative and intellectual practice Tagore developed in this context was unparalleled and instant to society.

The four-fold curriculum of Tagore was based purely on the principles of educational psychology. Tagore's educational experiments and practices in Santiniketan strengthen the foundation, concept, and practice of positive schooling, especially in the context of Indian society. Keeping the importance of such educational planning, the National Education Policy 2020 also incorporated some of the principles from the Educational Philosophy of Tagore while paving the way for national development through education.

Teachers in Tagore Educational Practices

Teaching and learning are the main two activities in the educational process. Especially in formal educational systems, the conventional form of face-to-face classroom teaching and learning process is still widely practiced worldwide. Teachers and students are the main living components of this process in the classroom. In a conventional classroom, the active role of a teacher is more than that of the students. Classroom teaching requires an ideal situation for accessible communication between the teachers and the students. Any hurdle in this process can hamper the total teaching-learning environment. Therefore, it is essential to have a genuine teacher who can play an effective role in the child's learning process.

"Ashram-er-Rup-O-Bikas" (1416 Bengali Year) was an essay by Rabindranath Tagore in which he put his view forward about the quality of an ideal teacher. In his educational system, Tagore recommended an intimate relationship between the student and the teacher. According to him, this intimate relation in the natural environment will ultimately be the key to achieving the highest goal of education. To establish this bonding, the teacher has to take the leading role. For this reason, Tagore mentioned that the teacher must be a human being, not a machine, to deliver information only. He also noted that the teacher will be an energetic and active agent of nature and perform the teaching passionately. A teacher's vast knowledge and thinking ability can answer all the students' queries, satisfy the young inquisitive minds in the early days of life, and inspire them to think beyond boundaries. Tagore also mentioned that the teacher would be an active agent of nature, and all the happenings of nature would attract the teacher equally as they attract a child. The teacher will motivate the students to explore their immediate surroundings and gain theoretical knowledge. In his writing, Tagore explicitly mentions that a child's innocence must be there in a teacher, which will be the key factor in the intimate relationship between the teachers and the students.

Positive schooling has specific reservations about the quality and role of a teacher in school education. The teacher has to play the most vital role in inspiring the child to the education process and their mental well-being. Therefore, in positive schooling, the teacher is considered the most important biological factor of education as they are assigned to nurture young minds through direct contact. Even the lack of infrastructure can also be overcome with the help of an active, sensitive, inspiring motivator as a teacher.

In this context, it can be mentioned that Tagore, in his educational philosophy, perfectly drew the character of an ideal teacher. The characteristics of a teacher, highlighted by Tagore, are very significant psychologically and are according to the principles of positive psychology and positive schooling for ensuring the holistic development of the students.

Discipline

The approach to student discipline in any educational philosophy and practice is one of the important parameters for the analysis and evaluation of the educational system. In the present era, any punishment or harsh discipline is strictly prohibited and discouraged in the educational system as it is not psychologically accepted, mainly in the early days of learning. Equally, any physical and mental punishment stands in the way of a positive environment and schooling. A fearless environment is highly recommended for the mental well-being of the students in the school setup, as it will positively motivate the students.

Rabindranath Tagore had established his *Brahmacharya Vidyalaya* in the lab of nature where freedom was the central pillar of the entire educational practice. Tagore recommended self-discipline in his educational system, where discipline in an automated way will develop within the students according to the demands of the situation. Therefore, in view of Tagore, in a well-structured educational system, freedom and discipline complement each other, ultimately providing a fearless environment for the students in their schooling process.

CONCLUSION

The application of psychological principles in education, mainly in the school educational system, has brought radical changes in the present time. More significantly positive schooling, a major branch of positive psychology, emerged as the formal discipline in 2000 and has more intensely focused on making school education more effective for the holistic development of the student in the school premises by ensuring their mental well-being and mental health. A good state of mind all along is a significant factor in the development of a balanced personality. It is essential to have a positive environment as a part of positive schooling to develop a positive attitude towards education in the early days of life. Happiness is the prime objective of positive psychology. Positive schooling is also based on the principle of learning in a joyful environment that can create happiness within the students.



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Rabindranath Tagore, in 1901, had established *Brahmacharya Vidyalaya* under, the roof of the open sky in the lap of nature. "Joy of mind" was education's prime aim, as Tagore defined in his educational institution. Along with it, the harmonious development of the students' personality was also fixed as an objective of education. Accordingly, minor aims, four-fold curriculum, different activities of *Ashram Sammilani*, Cocurricular activities, functions and festivals, teachers student positive relation, freedom, self-discipline etc., were planned meticulously by Tagore to achieve the objective as framed by him at the early stage of this journey. The educational system in the schools of Visva-Bharati is widely appreciated by all the educated societies in the world. Its richness and fundamental principles followed in the educational system were a source of different educational research over the decades.

The multidimensional and multi-disciplinary education developed for school by Tagore was unique in many senses. The openness in the outer setup and the inner structure of the educational system is the most essential characteristic of Tagore's educational model. It significantly reduces the load of formal education and enables students to actively participate in learning according to their choices, demands, and interests. The concept of a choice-based learning system was implemented in Tagore-designed educational institution possibly for the first time. Therefore, it can be said that Tagore perfectly follows the spirit of burden-free learning in his educational system.

Burden-free learning. fearless environment. positive environment, freedom with self-discipline, choice-based educational system, positive teacher-student relationship, closeness to nature, participation in different kinds of cocurricular activities, functions, and festivals, participation in different social activities, respect for cultural diversity, etc. are the major principles of any form of positive schooling. Considering the uniqueness and relevance of Rabindranath Tagore's educational system, National Education Policy- 2020 in India also emphasized Tagore's Educational Philosophy while drafting the Educational policy for the Nation. Therefore, in the concluding remarks, the educational system developed by Tagore in 1901 was based on the principles of Sociology, Child Psychology, and Social Psychology. Moreover, it also merged with the basic principles of positive psychology. Hence, it can be concluded that a school in a rural setup, surrounded by the natural environment, away from the artificial urban environment established a century before, to find the "joy of mind" is a perfect and extraordinary example of positive schooling.

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