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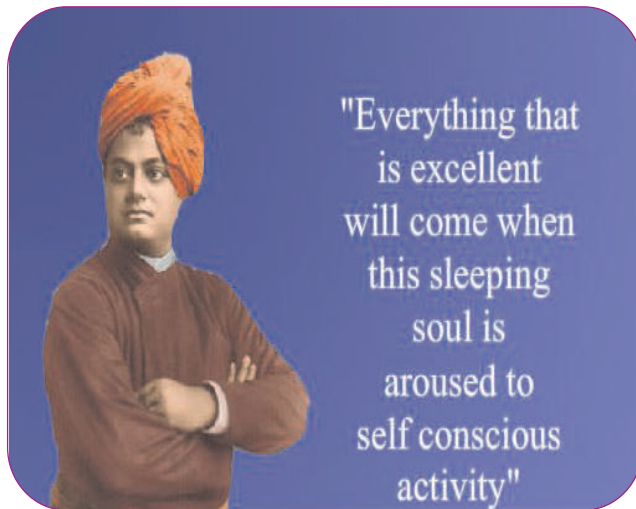
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## THE IMPORTANCE OF GURUGRIHABAS AND BRAHMACHARYA IN THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



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*the synthesis of the East and the West, Swamiji says: "What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also Shraddha and faith in one's own self." Practising Brahmacharya will lead to Shraddha. Shraddha develops humility, submission, and veneration for the teacher and at the same time faith in one's own self.*

### ABSTRACT:-

**R**abindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda are the two among the four greatest Indian thinkers on education, the other two being Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo. The educational philosophy of both of them laid emphasis on the overall development of humanity. In ancient India the system of Gurugrihabas was very common. Tagore in his essay 'Siksha Samasya' says that this Gurugrihabas instilled in the students a sense of morality. At the Gurugriha, the students also practised Brahmacharya. The aim of Brahmacharya was to teach the students to lead a disciplined life. Tagore clarifies that Brahmacharya actually provides strength to the character. We should strive to set up an atmosphere like the Tapovan of ancient India and that is exactly what Tagore has done at Santiniketan. Swami Vivekananda believed that the educational system in India to be fruitful should follow the Gurukul system, that is, the Gurugrihabas. He said: "My idea of education is personal contact with the teacher – Guru-griha-vasa. Without the personal life of a teacher there would be no education." A synthesis of the East and the West would be an ideal educational system. The schools, colleges, and even the only University of the Ramakrishna Mission follow this principle of Gurugrihabas and Brahmacharya. About

**KEY KEYWORDS :** Gurugrihabas, Gurukul, Brahmacharya, Shraddha, Nature.

### INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda are the two among the four greatest Indian thinkers on education, the other two being Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo. Tagore and Vivekananda are contemporaries. Tagore was born in 1861 and Vivekananda in 1863, though Tagore went on to live for almost 40 years after the death of Swamiji. Both of them were born in the nineteenth century undivided Bengal. The educational philosophy of both of them laid emphasis on the overall development of humanity.

Rabindranath Tagore was born in the famous Tagore family of Jorasanko which was a meeting place of the greatest intellectuals of the time. The Tagore family was also a place of exchange of the cultures between the East and the West. Tagore had amalgamated the cultures of the East and the West not only in his literary works but also in his dream educational project at Patha Bhavan and Visva-Bharati at Santiniketan.

In ancient India the system of Gurugrihabas was very common. The Guru and the Guru Ma (wife of

the Guru) lived far away from the courts in the midst of the jungles called the Tapovan. The students used to leave their family to live with the Guru in the Tapovan. The Guru and the Guru Ma used to be like their father and mother for the period of learning. The students were taught both Shaastra and Shastra, that is both the knowledge of the scriptures and the art of fighting. The Tapovan used to have an atmosphere of teaching-learning. The students led a very simple and austere life. Even the princes were accustomed to this austere life in the Gurugrihabas. Tagore in his essay 'Siksha Samasya' says that this Gurugrihabas instilled in the students a sense of morality because they could see their Guru himself practising the highest principles of morality throughout his life. Education was a part of life as it was not distracted by any sort of family problems, social problems, or luxury. At the Gurugriha, the students also practised Brahmacharya. In the essay Tagore clarifies the common misconception that Brahmacharya does not mean only to lead an austere life. The practise of Brahmacharya in the Gurugriha was an attempt to protect the tender minds from different types of distractions. The distractions would hamper the concentration of minds of the young boys and hence their latent qualities or virtues would not be manifested in full. The aim of Brahmacharya was to teach the students to lead a disciplined life. This teaching of discipline at the tender age would help them to enjoy freedom and liberty without hampering the freedom of others when they grow up. Tagore clarifies that Brahmacharya actually provides strength to the character and does not provide any moral lesson. It actually infuses discipline among the students which remain within them till the last day of their lives. Tagore says that the ancient system of Gurugrihabas should be revived in India. The educational institutes, and particularly the schools for the tender minds, should be established in the midst of Nature. He further believed that the students should be taught to practise Brahmacharya from the tender age as was the system in ancient India. Tagore was not only a preacher but he followed his principles in practice in his school at Santiniketan and Sriniketan. He also introduced the system of Gurugrihabas in his schools. The students and teachers lived in close proximity in his school. The Indian society has seen a lot of changes down the ages. Much water has flown down the Ganges, but the importance of Brahmacharya and Gurugrihabas still shine like the Pole Star in the sky of Indian educational system. Its importance will never diminish because it is based on the universal truth of human nature which has been envisioned by the Rishis.

Tagore believed that man lives most happily in the midst of Nature. Man also learns best from Nature and so Tagore believed Nature to be the best teacher. He also believed that children would learn spontaneously in the midst of trees under the open sky. Tagore wanted an educational system where learning would be pleasure. He wanted to set the example in modern India through his school. So in Patha Bhavan he introduced the system of classes in the open air. It might be mentioned that this practice is still followed at Patha Bhavan. Teaching-learning was very interesting. There were no strict rules for the learners. They were free to climb up the trees or move around and enjoy Nature in between the classes. There was also no fixed class routine as it depended upon the weather. Tagore believed that the imagination of the tender minds are stimulated by the sounds, smells, and colours of Nature. Nature "with its sounds, smells and colours stimulates" (Sen gupta, 34) and provides the tender minds with the "power of thinking, and combats the boredom of mechanical learning" (Sen Gupta, 34). Tagore further believed that it is Nature that makes man generous and broad-minded. Nature makes no discrimination and teaches the same to the students. So an ideal school should be established in the midst of nature, far away from the madding crowd. We should strive to set up an atmosphere like the Tapovan of ancient India and that is exactly what Tagore has done at Santiniketan.

Swami Vivekanada, the revolutionary Hindu monk, like Tagore, did not write a treatise on education. He had spoken at large throughout the world and in such lectures he had often expressed his views on education. He had also written about his educational philosophy in many of his letters, but in fragments. There are also records of his informal talks with his followers and devotees where he had also talked about education. These fragmented lectures and writings have collectively given birth to the educational philosophy of Swamiji which has placed him side by side with the greatest educational thinkers of the world.

Education must be in conformity with the national character of the nation – this was Swamiji's firm belief. Therefore, the educational system in India to be fruitful should follow the Gurukul system, that is, the Gurugrihabas. He said: "My idea of education is personal contact with the teacher – Guru-griha-vasa. Without the personal life of a teacher there would be no education" (Complete Works V, 224). At the same time Swamiji said that with the ancient Vedic system the knowledge of Western science and technology should be combined.

According to him the Universities were functioning like an examining body and were not interested in producing true men. But in ancient India more emphasis was laid on moral teaching and hence true men were formed. In the Gurukul, the students enjoyed the closeness of the Guru and the Gurus had sacrificed their all for the benefit of the students. At the same time emphasis should be on the assimilation of the ideas of the West. A synthesis of the East and the West would be an ideal educational system. The schools, colleges, and even the only University of the Ramakrishna Mission follow this principle of Gurugrihabas and Brahmacharya. About the synthesis of the East and the West, Swamiji says: "What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also Shradha and faith in one's own self" (Complete Works V, 366). Swami Vivekananda was also totally against corporal punishment. He was against that system "which aims at educating our boys in the same manner as that of the man who battered his ass, being advised that it could thereby be turned into a horse" (Complete Works V, 366). Like Tagore and Rousseau, Swamiji also believed that true education takes place in the midst of Nature. Man learns best under the influence of Nature. The learners from their boyhood days should live in the midst of nature with the teacher "whose character is like a blazing fire and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching" (Complete Works V, 369). Practising Brahmacharya will lead to Shradha. Shradha develops humility, submission, and veneration for the teacher and at the same time faith in one's own self. No real growth is possible without this Shradha. By practising Brahmacharya, that is continence, the powers of concentration of the students would increase and hence they would be able to learn more in a shorter period of time. In ancient India education was imparted by the Tyagis, that is by the men of renunciation. Swamiji wanted that the teachers of present day India should also sacrifice something for the development of the society.

Thus it can be seen that both Tagore and Swamiji believed that the ancient system of Gurugrihabas should be re-introduced in India. Along with the Gurukul system would revive the practice of Brahmacharya. Both of them dreamt of an educational system where Western science would be coupled with the ancient Indian system and India of today would thereby surpass the glorious India of the Vedic ages.

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