



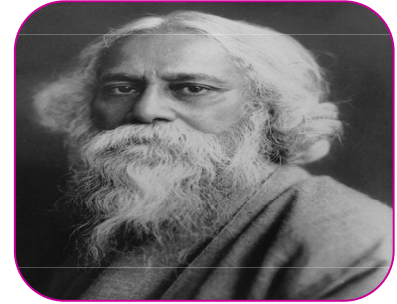
COCURRICULUM ACTIVITY IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S EARLY LIFE

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ABSTRACT

According to Tagore, That education is highest which not only imparts information and knowledge to us, but also promotes love and follow feeling between us and the living beings of the world. To develop this Co-curricular activity parallel with syllabus curriculum has vital importance. Co-curricular activities are non-academic activities that all students of Visva-Bharati must participate in. This policy was introduced by Rabindranath Tagore as a means to enhance social interaction, leadership, healthy recreation, self-discipline and self-confidence, development of various domains of mind and personality such as intellectual development, emotional development, social development, moral development and aesthetic development. Tagore emphasized on co-curricular activities for all-round development of the child, there is a need of emotional, physical, spiritual and moral development that is complemented and supplemented by Co-curricular Activities. Tagore defined as the activities that enable to supplement and complement the curricular or main syllabi activities. These are the very important part and parcel of educational institutions to develop the students' personality as well as to strengthen the classroom learning. These activities are organized after the school hours, so known as extra-curricular activities. Co-curricular activities are the true and practical experiences received by students.



KEYWORDS: *co-curricular activities, classroom learning.*

INTRODUCTION

After the creation of human being, struggling of life is continuously going on to protect their existence on demand. They have created lots of learning for fighting against nature and environment to live on and to increase in this world. According to the needs of years, men have created many ways as learning or education to learn them and have invented curriculum for learning. In this way, curriculum becomes the main objectives of learning in all institutions and essential part as heart and soul of learning. Then it becomes what types of objectives will be learnt and what types of features will grow up in these institutions. About these matters many wise, learnt, talented persons or philosophers have given many opinions and they have guided all types of guidance to construct these. To provide all types of development of people, many philosophers, idealists, naturalists, pragmatists, etc have given lots of ways and instructions to fulfill the work of education. World poet Rabindranath Tagore is one of them. He has said to array feelings of curriculum's knowledge and centre's works based on he's child mind's luster, interest, tendencies etc. He has included even such all experiences and subject matters as curriculums which help to develop all types of child's physical, mental, moral, social and spiritual growth. He has advised to formulate co-curricular activity beside the customary curriculum. According to Tagore, That education is highest which not only imparts information and knowledge to us, but also promotes love and follow feeling between us and the living beings of the world. To develop this Co-curricular activity parallel with syllabus curriculum has vital importance. Co-curricular activities are non-academic activities that all students of Visva-Bharati must

participate in. This policy was introduced by Rabindranath Tagore as a means to enhance social interaction, leadership, healthy recreation, self-discipline and self-confidence, development of various domains of mind and personality such as intellectual development, emotional development, social development, moral development and aesthetic development. Tagore emphasized on co-curricular activities for all-round development of the child, there is a need of emotional, physical, spiritual and moral development that is complemented and supplemented by Co-curricular Activities.

A few Social educationists (**Pal, 1982**) have studied Tagore's childhood co-curricular activities in *Jorasanko* were stated in form of extra-curricular activities like: dawn-class of *kusti* under the supervision of Hira Singh, bath in ice water under the instruction of Debendranath etc. Pal (1982)'s writing in his book "*Rabijibani*" pointed out lot of information related to co-curricular activities in Visva-Bharati that in 1901 he wrote a letter to Tripura Maharaja about the establishment of Santiniketan Ashrama and mentioned about the co-curricular like gymnastic parallel with ashram education. At the initiation of the development of Santiniketan there are many examples of co-curricular activities were found here for example: presence of wrestling teacher *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, cricket teacher *Rebachand*, carpenter teacher Japanese *Kusumoto*, Judo teacher *Nekujo Takagagi* (1929) dance teacher *Buddhimantra Singh* (joined in 1919), booming in *ashrama* at 5-o'clock by students after walk-up, *dhyana/upasana* after bath at morning, after that they took foods and start learning before soil digging, gym in evening etc. **Mitra (2010)**'s study focuses on the co-curriculum view of Tagore in "*Game in relevance of Rabindranath philosophy*" like Tagore probably the first person who engaged the Judo in education sphere being a part of co-curricular and *Sasoyan* was came at Santiniketan on 1905 to teach it and as a result in 1910 mass drill gym as stated. **Mandal (2010)** in his recent study "*Gymnastics and game in Rabindranath's Santiniketan and Sriniketan*" highlighted some deep information like During the establishment of Visva-Bharati on 1921 play & gym were more emphasized in *PathaBhavana* and *VidyaBhavana*. On 1922 Tagore extended his co-curricular thought being a part of total education system in Visva-Bharat and established *Sriniketan* to connect the neighbor rural reconstruction. With the ticking of time *Sriniketan* was developed as a co-curricular center for : fire control training, nourishing of music & songs, *BratiBalaka* & *BratiBalika* troops, social service based on medical hospitality, labour-giving by the rural-folk, training of women self-protection game like *chorakhela*, *lathikhala*, *grihadip/Sahayika*/girl-guide (1923). About the importance of play as a part of co-curricular activities in general education Tagore implied his view on 1938 during the conference on 'Basic National Education' syllabus publication –'the place of play is high in education'. **Pal, Rath & Roy (2014)**'s exclusive studies on "*Yoga Education at a glance*" outlines the Tagore's *Ashramic* activities (like digging the soil, horticulture, gym, music, art, craft), *upasana* as a part of yoga education and parallel of formal curriculum. **Kaibarta and Pal (2014)** in their article "*Yoga, Maharshi and Gurudeva*" framed the historical list of *upasana* which is also the part of co-curricular activities in Tagore's Visva-Bharati. **Bhattacharjee (Sep.2014)** in her article "Relevance of Tagore's philosophy of education in postmodern era-a conceptual analysis" described the postmodern curriculum and responsibilities vis-a-vis participate of students for social reconstruction.

Rabindranath Tagore noticed that in ancient India it was considered essential for the people who should live at his teacher's home where he should practice brahmacharya. He felt that in a formative stage of students, they should not be aroused false stimuli and they should not bound to do waste of physical and mental powers. Students are happy to live with discipline of nature which helps to develop fully and to taste the pleasure of real freedom. Rabindranath realized the importance of co-curricular activities in education in his childhood and boyhood days. The bitter experience that he gathered in his very restricted domestic as well as in school life acted as the main driving force behind the development philosophy on education in his mind. However, the cultural environment of Tagore family and the role of Hindu Mela also made certain contributions in it. In this regard Sri Manoranjan Bandyopadhyay stated in his book "*Rabindranather Visva-Bharati – SeiSomay EiSomay*" as: 'The bitter experience of Rabindranath in his school life acted as the main driving force in setting up *Brahmacharyashram* or *Brahma Vidyalaya* in Santiniketan. On the other hand the main ideology in setting up of Visva-Bharati was to assemble 'numerous in one' and thus endeavor to organize their resources of morals."¹ Here we can able to find out the bitter experiences of Tagore's school

life and the influences of ancient school's system. He realized how much freedom was needful for student's life.

It can be seen through the different writings of Tagore. The greater part of Rabindranath's *Jeevansmriti* is occupied with the accounts of bitter experiences of his student life in childhood days. His childhood days were spent under the grinder of roller of so-called education, which put his life in the trough of utter sadness and turned it unbearable. Through discuss from the above book, we can see that he felt the lack of freedom and bounding of education system. Tagore legalized the real rules and system of that contemporary time of education. Education life of Rabindranath started at the age of three years. In his early education life he had two mates – his elder brother Somendranath and nephew Satyaprasad. Both of them were two years senior to him by age. The mode of co-curricular activity, that we know about today, started in the life of Rabindranath as extra-curricular as because the school life could not confine his mind within the four walls of the class room. He was admitted in different schools at different times but he did not continue anywhere for any length of time. He remembered those school days as the periods of punishments. As for instance the pupils, who failed to submit their lessons properly, were given punishment to stand erect against the wall with a bundle of slates on the hands to hold. He expressed the extent to which such punishment could make impact in the mind of a pupil in the story of 'Normal School' in his book *JeevanSmriti* in the following manner: "While studying in Oriental Seminary I found out a way to escape from the mental degradation I suffered from being a student there. I opened a mock class in a corner of the portico of our house. The railings were my pupils. I used to do my teaching on sitting on a stool with a cane in my hand. The good and bad students among the railings were pre-decided. I could even clearly distinguish between the railings of quiet and restless or intelligent and stupid. My bashing by canes upon the naughty railings was such an extent that had any sensation of life they would have rested in peace of death. As they became disfigured due to my continuous bashing I continued to be angrier. I could not understand how to punish them adequately. There is no witness left today to give evidence of how seriously I punished that speechless class with my utmost cruelty. My wooden students of those days have now been converted to the iron-body students. None of our predecessors has yet taken any responsibility to teach them anymore. Had there been any person to take over the charge in the present day, the mode of teaching I maintained in those days would have been successful. It has been seen that the students took longer time to grasp the teaching of the teachers but they did not suffer at all to learn their mode of teaching practices. I managed to imitate more easily all the vile acts of misjudgment, intolerance, anger and biasness from the system of education than the other important aspects of learning. It is a matter of relief that I did not find any other alternative at that very tender age when I was not strong enough to exercise that ruthless physical power to anybody else other than those wooden railings. Although there was a distinct difference between the wooden railings and the human students I don't accept the fact that I did have any difference in psychology between me and those narrow-minded so called teachers."²

Tagore realized that punishment is the revenge of the wronged on the wrong-doer, which becomes later as expiation. He also felt that punishment is a humiliating for a man to be punished by another man. He always hated the traditional rules and regulation of teachers which gave punishment to students'. He tried to drive out this traditions, but he was unable to do for his little age .He thought about the real solution of this problem and which was happened practically by founding of Viswa-Bharati. Tagore tried to drive out these problems with the playing of childhood as he formed environment of schools with teacher and students. To signify the different punished students, he caught them in different ways as walls, railings, wooden railings etc., but he became failed. Though, he tried to relief these different educational problem by acting himself and by understanding to others the importance of education. This clearly reveals that the apathy of Rabindranath towards the education in his school life created substantial impact on his philosophy of education in his mature age. The bad impact of school on the life of Rabindranath at his childhood has been reflected in his game of impersonation of a teacher as has been depicted in his essay of *Chelebela*. "In everyday life I had some days of my own when I took the railings as my students. They remained silent in fear. Some of them were very naughty, not having any attention for studies. I threatened them that if they

did not mind their lesson they would have to take profession as a porter in their future life. Having physical punishment they had developed scars on the body but still they did not stop their restlessness, because stopping would make my game over”³ Tagore had not success in his aims to motivate the others students who had punished by teachers for their any wrong work. So, He identified as the causes of the misjudgments of teachers as the vile act and the educational system. He had strong objections against the existing education system. He was against giving any excessive pressure. “The noisy grinding wheels of learning continued from morning through to the night. The responsibility to wind up this machine was in the hands of *Hemendranath*, the second eldest brother of mine. He was a very tough administrator. The string of a *Tanpura* (the stringed musical instrument) can be dislodged on excessive tension. The greater part of the load he gave upon us was drowned in deep water as could happen when a loaded boat gets capsized. This fact cannot be kept secret now. So the education given to me was in fact a lost property”⁴ Here, we can see that how excessive pressures were given to the learners of that time, which were felt by the deep insight of Tagore. He also felt how student’s learning depends on the regulation of superior or teachers who maintained their rules and regulation as their wishes. Tagore strictly opposed against the education system like a machine. Tagore was also not far from these types of rules and regulations. He also bounded with these and he had to do all these things. In his childhood he was taught a number of tales; he grasped some of them and discarded others as well. He mentioned a few of them in his *Chelebela*. A description can be given from the instance of the land on which the soil surface was furrowed by toiling. “I had to get up from bed early, before dawn, when it still remained dark; got dressed for practice of wrestling. In the winter time my body shivered in cold. A strong wrestler lived in the town, whose name was *Kana Paloan*. He used to train us in wrestling. There was an open ground to the north of the main building. It was called *Golabari* (the granary). The name indicates that the township did not extend over the rural area abruptly at that time and there were some open spaces. Before encroachment of urbanization the paddy crops, produced through cultivation, used to be stored there; cultivators of the vested land used to give their share of crops. Closed to its boundary wall was the thatched hut for practice of wrestling. The ground was prepared by toiling the soil to a depth of a foot and a half and then mixing a mond of mustered oil in it. Training with muscle men there, using the art of twisting body, was just a boy’s game for me. In this process after having some coating of mud on the body, I used to come back home. My mother did not like to see me having such coating of mud over the body every day; she apprehended if my complexion would become darker. The result was that, in the holidays she got herself engaged in washing and cleaning me. Now a day the ladies often fetch pot full emulsions from shops for cleaning their body; but in those days they themselves prepared necessary emulsions at home. This contained pasted nuts, coating of milk, peel of orange and such others. Had I learnt the technique and remembered it till now I would have earned money not less than those of the sweet shops by making business of this item with the given brand as *Begam Bilas*. In the Sunday mornings massaging used to be done on making me seated on the *varanda* floor; my mind would become restless to get away with it. There was a rumor in our class that the babies in our house were dipped into alcohol immediately after birth, and this was the reason for having such glaze in the complexion of body. On return from the wrestling centre we observed that a student from Medical College was waiting to teach us orthopedics of the human body. A large human skeleton was hanging on the wall. This was hanged on the wall of our bed room at night. With the touch of wind its bones used to dangle. By regular handling we managed to learn the tough terminologies of its bones, and by doing so we got rid of any fear psychosis. At the entrance to the main building the bell rang for seven in the morning. Teacher Nilkamal was very punctual in maintaining time. He was never late even for one minute. He was indeed a man of very thin structure but his health was in semblance with his students. He did not allow any excuse of headache even for a single day. I used to go to him in front of the table with books and slate. The symbols of mathematics went on being drawn on the black board by the chalk: Arithmetic, Algebra, and Geometry – all in Bengali. In literature we were forced to climb from *Sitar Banabas* right up to *Meghnadbadh Kabya* in one move. With this, was the Natural Science? Sitanath Dutta turned up at times. Through experiments on known aspects some knowledge was gathered in the subject of science. During this course of time in one occasion

HerambaTattwaratna came. We became engaged to commit to the memory the subject, *Mugdhabodh*. In this manner as the pressure of studies grew all through the morning my mind desperately searched for some breathing space by removing obstacles. The art of learning through committing to the memory advanced through the open spaces of this net and we attempted to follow our teacher NilkamalMitra whatever he tried for us with his art of cultivation.”⁵With the proper references, it can be seen the life of Tagore was scheduled with punctuality of time table and tough daily routine. Student life of Tagore was too regulated with different types of teachers and guiders. He used to practice different types of extra- curricular activities like practice of wrestling, using the art of twisting body with mud and proper cleaning of body. In the contemporary time of Tagore, children are habituated with different types of games and sports. Though all are not reads any educational institutions, but they are must acquainted with these sports like marbles, bat-ball, cricket, spinning of top, flying of kite, football ,playing with sticks etc. These types of games are also present in the life of Tagore. The types of games that Gurudev Rabindranath played in his childhood days have been described in his article *Chhelebel*. “We had a very few types of games to play. We had marbles; we had also bat-ball, which was rather a distant relative of the game of cricket. Also we had games of spinning of top and flying of kite. Also we had games of spinning of top and flying of kite. In the town all the games that the boys played in those days were of such very ordinary in type. The heroic game of football, covering the entire ground, was then yet to come from the other side of the sea. Thus my days used to be passed out by pitching mere sticks on the dry ground surface”⁶

The effects of these types of games are played a major role which in the mind of Tagore. He thought about the results of games and sports in human life which should be essential part of life. So, he never neglected the importance of games and sports . Though he felt the necessary of games and sports, so, he always tried to find out these types of symbols in everything; in everywhere within the surroundings of him and his environment. Even when he had become bore in reading, he was habituated to play with reading which was seen in his poetry *chhuti* (Leave). Although Rabindranath gathered a bitter experience about his school life the cultural atmosphere of the Tagore family of that time rendered him ingredients for extra-curricular activities. *Chaitra fair* started in 1867 on the closing day of Chaita month. Then Rabindranath was six years in age. Afterwards this fair became known as ‘National Gathering’. The impact of this National Fair on the life of Rabindranath was remarkable. This National Fair was the occasion to observe the practice of co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. In this regard the account presented by Prasanta Kumar Pal is stated below. “In Hindu Mela there was a selected place for gymnastics. Apart from this the endeavors of *NabagopalMitra* for setting up of a health club has been mentioned in national papers and others. *Hemendranadhad* particular interest in wrestling. As such in order to inspire the boys in building up of health this education was initiated. In the list of expenditure of 9th *Aswin* (24th September, Friday) it can be seen that, for the preparation of wooden clubs to be used by the boys in their gymnastics, a sum Rupees Three and Two *Annashas* been spent. Again on the 12th *Agrahayan* (26th November, Friday) the account was written as – ‘BabuNeelkamalMukhopadhyay for gymnastic training for their boys, money is hereby given to pay the dues to the trainer within two months of *Ashwin* and *Kartik*. This means that - for payment of salary to NeelkamalMukhopadhyay, the brother-in-law of Ganendranath, a sum of twelve rupees in cash had been paid to Nabin Chandra Chakraborty (an employee of the office) towards the payment of salary to the gymnastic teacher. Here we can observe the practice games by Tagore himself and others. This practice was done in the fairs and in the different gymnastic clubs in that time.

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