

Agricultural Thought and Humanism of Rabindranath

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Keywords

Rabindranath Tagore
Agriculture
Humanism
Philosophic Mind
Village People
Farming

ABSTRACT

This article describes Rabindranath Tagore's profound insights on rural development and agricultural reform, highlighting his vision for uplifting village communities through modern science and technology. Tagore's humanistic perspective emphasized the pivotal role of agriculture in societal progress, advocating for the adoption of innovative farming techniques to alleviate rural poverty and empower farmers. Through his observations and initiatives, Rabindranath sought to transform the traditional farming landscape, promoting education, economic independence, and sustainable development in rural Bengal. His writings reflect a deep understanding of the challenges faced by rural communities and underscore the urgent need for holistic approaches to village revitalization.

1 Introduction

Rabindranath viewed the village as the foundation of our identity. Like a tree needs strong roots to thrive, our prosperity depends on supporting rural areas. Biswokobi realized that traditional farming could not be the only way to overcome agricultural poverty. We have to adopt the path of modern science and technology. The idea of agricultural development of Rabindranath Tagore is one of the major aspects of his humanism. Above all, he was a humanitarian person in nature. The agricultural thought of Rabindranath Tagore and his nature of humanism are discussed periodically.

Rabindranath accomplished plenty of work for education by bringing people aggregately at Shilaidha, Kaligram and later at Sriniketan. His initiative has been very successful in every area. Countless children from farming families in the village have found brighter futures through education. The farmer also learned a lot as part of his development activities. Many educational institutions have been built and conducted with the money of the landlord.

Again, many educational institutions have been established through the collective efforts of farmers. The landlord used their people to establish an environment through which the objectives could be achieved. The institutional foundation of education that he built in his zamindari areas has been very helpful in creating a favorable environment for education in those areas. The poet has done various experiments on agriculture. But not alone. He sent his eldest son, son's friend and son-in-law to America so that they could be trained up in agriculture. They would help the farmers after returning from America. It also aimed to educate farmers on modern farming techniques and mechanized agriculture.

The way of viewing things of Rabindranath Tagore was significantly different from others. He had an amazing power of deep observation. It is surprising to think how many profound things were captured through his eyes while passing through the villages of East Bengal. Those attachments are spread in many of his literature. The overall condition and identity of the village and the people of the village have appeared in many of his literature. These letters are traced as evidence of how deeply he tried to know the poor people of the village which can be

observed easily. That is why such a description can be found in several of his letters. In one of them, he wrote:

“When the jungles around the village are floating in water, with leaves, creepers, and bushes rotting, it stinks everywhere, from the cattle shed to the local market, as the wind carries the smell of soaked bamboo and rotten leaves, the air was heavy, filled with mosquitoes, buzzing, and stomachs growling, thin and chubby boys and girls wade through the water wherever they can find, swirling around in the flooded streets, the village girls, with drenched sarees clinging to their bodies, stuck themselves in the rain, lifting their clothes above their ankles, carrying water pots one by one, like patient human, but the scene does not please her in any way. Inside every house, illness prevails, feet swell, colds catch, fever grips, and the sick children cry relentlessly, but no one can afford to save them. With so much neglect, ill health, and ugliness, can the homes of the poor endure even for a moment.”¹

The fragile infrastructure of the village, the apathy among the people, mutual disputes, the traditional farming system of the old period and the negative effects of illiteracy, nothing escaped the poet's attention. He was able to understand that these problems were increasing day by day because the landlords or upper class did not take any measures for the improvement of the village. Rabindranath keenly observed that poverty engulfed the village people in many ways due to the negligence view towards the village. That word has become vivid with the testimony of Rabindranath-

“There is no sign of effort in the village. The pond used to be there before, but today it has dried up because normal activities of the country have stopped. There is

no way to protect the grazing field that was there; the temple, which was a place of worship, lacks any power of renovation; the scholars who were the bonds of society, their foolish sons, are engaged in the business of perjury in court; those who were the defender of the weak, the shelter of the refugee and the punisher of the wrongdoers, now it is obvious to everyone how their place today is being filled by the police sergeants in a corrupt manner.

There are no vivid examples of self-sacrifice for the sake of the welfare in the heart of the people of the village anymore; the power of prohibition is not working from the inner side, only there is an existence of artificial restrictions of the law exists. In the false lawsuits against each other, the village is tearing itself apart like madness, and there is no one to restore it to its natural state. The jungle is expanding, malaria is becoming severe, famine is returning, and there is no assurance that hunger will be alleviated until the next harvest, whether it's robbers or the police entering your home for theft or investigation, there is no collective courage to protect your home from harm and humiliation. After that, in a state where the body can barely sustain itself with what they eat and can barely keep diseases. what condition are they in? ... There is no food, no health, no joy, no mutual cooperation, and if a calamity strikes, they bow their heads in defeat; if death comes, they die silently; if injustice prevails, they submit to the burden of fate. What is the reason for this? The reason is that all the oppression that this country has endured has attacked by worms, the soil from which it could have gained sustenance has become as hard as stone. Now it stands like a tree stripped of its roots, facing the ruthless wilderness of the modern era.”¹

The link between Rabindranath Tagore and the village was established during the landlord period of

rural Bengal. The villagers remained poor not only by adopting old traditional farming methods, but he saw the cases of their devastation in the grips of the hand of moneylenders. He came to Sriniketan in 1938 and presented those words in a meeting-

“During a visit related to work, I had the opportunity to get acquainted with a Bengali village. I witnessed the scarcity of drinkable water in the villagers' homes, the effects of disease and the lack of adequate food were visible in their bodies. I repeatedly saw evidence of how they struggled and suffered due to their lack of education. While the urban English-educated community was focused on their efforts to advance the nation, they failed to consider that the cumulative helplessness of the people made progress more likely to lead to decline than advancement.”³

Village is treated as the heart of our country. The village lost its distinctive features during the British tenure. Rabindranath clearly brought out in his writings how the wrong policies of the British tenure made our village isolated.

“Just as the machine has ruined the weaver, British rule has also destroyed the simple system of our rural society universally and everywhere. The rural system we had, though small in structurally, was our own. British rule, however big it may be, is not ours. Therefore, it has not only caused inertia in our power, but it is also unable to properly fulfill all our needs. By blinding own eyes and Working with the eyes of others can never be right.”⁴

The poet is not interested in those who think of the development of the country by neglecting the village. The poet never believed that formal speech alone would do everything. There was no chance for the improvement of the village if no one did not come forward and extended their hand towards the poor people. He thought that it was never possible to achieve the interests of the people of the

country only by abusing the British on that time. He expressed his attitude towards these leaders in his letter to Russia-

“At the time of the Pabna Conference, I told a very prominent statesman of the time that if we want to truly achieve the national development of our country, we must first humanize the people of this base. He dismissed my words so casually that

I could clearly understand that our patriots had collected a theory called "country" from a foreign school and did not perceive the people of the country in their hearts. at the Pabna Conference, I have heard the echo of what I said about the village many times - not just words. Money has also been collected for the welfare of the village - but the money has also been circulated and disappeared in the upper state of the country where words are repeated. Nothing of it reached the deep bottom of society where the village is buried.”⁵

It seems that no Bengali could have realized as deeply as Rabindranath that the pulse of our economy lay in the village. Rabindranath was deeply touched by the fragile condition of the village people, though he was born in the city area. He was able to understand that there was a need to know the people of the village in order to know one's country. Village is the core of the Indian Subcontinent. The majority of the people lived there. If they were in trouble then how could peace exist inside of the country. He came to know that feeling by blending with the innocent children of village nature. A deep impression was worked inside of his mind by experiencing the sorrows and sufferings of those people. He has captured a lot of that bruise in the words of his literature. He was able to see the nature of the motherland through this. In 1928, Rabindranath said by addressing the workers of the Visva Bharati Central Committee-

“The true essence of the motherland lies in the village, for here

is the place of the soul. Lakshmi takes her seat here. That
seat
has not been prepared for a long time. The people of the
land of the god of wealth,
have been drawn to the city of Yakshapuri. We have
long forgotten to invite Lakshmi to her granary. Along
with her, health has gone from the country, knowledge
has gone, joy has gone,
only a very little life remains. Today, the village ponds
are dry, the air
is polluted, the granaries are empty, the social bonds are
loose, and envy-immorality is constantly worsening the
decay of the village.”⁶

Rabindranath viewed the village with a philosophical
feeling, as he had met with the village people face to face.
The deep compassionate heart of the poet can be
witnessed through his view of the people. Rabindranath
said-

“The villagers would come to me with their
sorrow, complaints, and requests.
Through their words, I could see a picture of
village life. On one hand,
there was the external world they depicted – the
river, the open fields, the rice paddies, and their
huts under the shade of trees.,
on the other hand, there was the inner world of
their thoughts and emotions. Their burdens
became an integral part of my own work.”⁷

These hungry, helpless people of the village are not
isolated communities of the society. They are children of
this country. They are one of the largest parts of the
population of this country. If you can't accept them, what
will the country do? Rabindranath wrote about them in
one of his letters-

“.....They are like a member of my country's
vast family.
Considering all the helpless, dependent, and
simple farming folks
as your own people bring immense joy. Hearing
their
language feels sweet to me- within it, there's a
blend of constant compassion.
When they speak of any injustice, my eyes tear
up—like many other sons, I have to
handle myself. They've endured much sorrow

and patience,
yet their love never faded.”⁸

He had not only thought that farmers and hardworking
people were the main strength of India as well as they
were the most charming people, but also he brought it out
clearly in his poem. He did not believe that worship at
home would lead to the discovery of God who hid in the
darkness. The God is not confined to the house, rather he
reveals where he had gone, thus-

“He's gone where soil is being tilled,
Seeds are being sown—
Where stones are being crushed for roads,
work twelve months in a row.
He stands with everyone in the storm,
Dust has settled on his two hands;
Like him, leaving behind cleaning clothes
come with the dust.”⁹

Rabindranath recognized farmers as our protectors.
Forever they have worked for us. Rabindranath brought
that feeling in his poem-

“Forever they,
hold their ploughs with determination,
They work hard
In the outskirts and corners of the city.”¹⁰

His heart became moist after observing the poor form of
the farmer. His minds were filled with their happiness and
sorrow. The suffering of their lives would become his
suffering. Then he expressed his pains thus-

“When I see these poor farmers, I feel a sense of
affection. They
seem like the helpless children of God. If God
does not offer something to them,
they have no future. When the chest of the world
dries up,
they only know how to cry-as soon as a little
hunger breaks,
all mistakes are forgotten instantly....There is
sorrow in the world,
that's true, but there should be a little gap, a little
possibility, so that human
can make continuous efforts to get rid of that
sorrow; nourish
a hope. Those who claim to distribute all the
essential things of life to all the people of the
world
take an impossible and invaluable decision, it's

just a fantasy,
not everyone can eat or live, most of the people
on earth will always struggle,
there is no easy way for them, they say it's very
difficult.”¹¹

Witnessing the suffering of the farmers, the resonance of that suffering resonated in the poet's heart. When the farmer's budding paddy fields were submerged in floodwaters, the devastation was profound which was portrayed in the poet's writing-

“When the paddy would have ripened in a few
more days, it is quite
understandable how dangerous it is for the
farmers to cut the raw paddy.
.....The complaints of these thousands of
innocent unfortunate are not
reaching anywhere, the rain is falling as it likes
to be, the river is rising
as it likes to be. No one in the world can have a
place
for this. The mind has to be convinced, who
does not want to understand,
that it is absolutely necessary to understand
kindness and justice
that exists in the world.”¹²

Rabindranath had always tried to work according to not only the idea of how to provide welfare for the subjects even within the landlord system. He expressed his position in favor of that effort in his letter to Russia:

“It was my intention to make the cultivator strong
in self-reliance. Two things have always stirred
in my mind - the ownership of land does not belong to
the landlord - it belongs to the cultivator. Secondly, there
can be no development of agriculture unless
collective farming is carried out according to the
cooperative principle.
It is the same thing to grow crops on barren land with a
plow
in the traditional period and fetching water in a leaky
jug.”¹³

The agricultural system of the village is very old-fashioned. Farming the field with cows. Only one form of crop of rice is grown at many places in the year. The yield of rice is very low. After paying the revenue to the landlord, it is difficult for the cultivator to continue his family. Rabindranath thought of bringing high-yielding rice varieties from other areas and cultivating those. He

also thought of the possibility of getting more returns if the varieties of Ikkhu were blended with the ongoing species of Ikkhu. The farmer thought about fertilizing the land, he also thought about irrigation. We need to pay attention to the soil. Earth is our mother, in her lap we are born. If you want to get benefits from this soil, you have to pay attention to soil cultivation and improve the condition of the soil. Soil cannot become productive if educated people are not focused on it and education is not linked with agriculture. Rabindranath wrote about these-

“And then there's the aspect of the soil - the soil
where we were born.
This is the soil of the village, which is our
mother, our nurturer, whose
lap our country flies far and wide in the sky of
dreams-our union with this soil will only be
meaningful through
the connection with rain. If all the arrangements
revolve around air and vapor alone,
then the new year of the new era has come in
vain.
It's not that there is no rain, but the land has not
been cultivated.
By keeping the impact of thought which can
cultivate crops,
no one's attention is yet on there. The gray soil
of the whole country,
which is dry, hot soil, cracked with thirst and
crying,
looking up to the sky, says, "All of your stored
knowledge
is for me - give it to me. Prepare me
to take everything. You will get a handful in
return for what you give me."
The heated long sigh of our soil has reached the
sky today,
saying that the time for good rains has come but
with it
I want a system of cultivation.”¹⁴

Farmers incur losses when they only cultivate one kind of paddy in one crop field. Rabindranath thought about cultivating other crops. There was no alternative way to make farming profitable. He thought of increasing the farmer's income by planting pineapples, bananas, date palm trees, etc. He felt that these new crop varieties or planting of new crops were necessary to establish the rights of the farmers. He advised the principals to establish the economic rights of the farmers-

“Encourage the people to plant fruit trees like
pineapple,
banana, date palm etc. on the aisle of the
farming field near their house.
A very strong thread comes out of the pineapple
leaves,
the fruit is also salable. It is also necessary to
teach
the people what kind of food can come out of
the roots
of the vine-grape tree by using it as a fence etc.
There will be special benefits if potato
cultivation
can be made common. An attempt should be
made to replant
the American corn seed that is in the chamber.”¹⁵

It seems that the thoughts of a poet! It seems that the thoughts of a landlord! As if an agronomist, agriculturist or a skilled farmer is thinking of experimenting with these. These plans, for cultivating various crops, were born in his head from the observation of the farmers with deep insight and the desire to do their welfare. This was not just public charity. In real terms, the idea was for farmers to become financially self-sufficient by growing a variety of alternative crops in place of one kind of crop.

We must try to adopt the path of modern agriculture. The proof of this can be found in his following statement-

“The day has come for the light of all the world's
knowledge to shine upon
the cultivated fields of our country. Today is not
the day for a single farmer
to cultivate, today scholars and scientists will
have to join with him.
Today, the connection of our soil with the fruits
of the farmer's plow
is not enough, it should be connected with the
intelligence and perseverance of the country.”¹⁶

The importance of soil was not obscure to Rabindranath. He realized that the productive power of the soil was involved in growing our crops. It is not possible to meet the need for food of the country's people by traditionally cultivating soil and sowing crop seeds. For this, one needs to know the science and ensure the application of advanced technology. Then it is possible to get more outcomes from this soil. That's what he said-

“If you spend your mind and intellect on this
soil,
there are many examples of how much more can
be obtained from this soil
than the total cultivated crops of our country.
Nowadays, farming is referred
as the work of the illiterate. The study of
farming has become a field of study.”¹⁷

The scientific thinking of Rabindranath is extraordinary. He said-

“Accepting modern technology only based on its power
is not a human duty. Rather, it is necessary to redefine
the tools and technology
with the compatibility of ideal humanity.”¹⁸

Not only the cultivation of various crops but also the agricultural professionals did not think as much as he did in India at that time. Deeper plowing and cultivating more land in a shorter time to produce more crops and more turnout was the source of this idea. The dream of changing the condition of the villages of the entire India was peeping into the poet's mind. Village is the life of the Indian Subcontinent. He realized that the condition of the country would change if he could change the condition of the village. That was why he wanted to make one or two villages economically independent. Rabindranath thought that one or two villages, ideal in all aspects, could be a model for the development of all villages. He frankly expressed it in a meeting while building Sriniketan-

“I cannot take the responsibility of all of India
alone. I can
only conquer one or two small villages. To get
their minds
yes, we must save energy to work together with
them.
It's not easy, it's a very difficult practice. If I can
only free two,
three villages from the chain of ignorance and
incapability
then there will be a small ideal model of the
whole India - this
I remembered it then, I still remember it.”¹⁹

2 Conclusion:

Rabindranath is an eminently humanistic philosopher. His philosophic mind reminds us of his philanthropic mind. He believed that economic independence was necessary for the emancipation of the people of the Indian

Subcontinent. Economic liberation is lied in village development. He believed that rebirth was possible by making the village self-reliant or uplifted. At present, the Development of agriculture is considered an important philosophic thought of development in Bangladesh as well. If we take effective initiatives by researching and discussing his agricultural ideas in more detail, it is strongly believed that the overall development picture of Bangladesh will improve aggregately.

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