

An Introspective Study on School Education System of *Patha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati* with Special Reference to Guiding Principles of National Curriculum Framework (NCF)-2005

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Abstract:

This paper explores the school education system of *Visva-Bharati* University's *Patha Bhavana* with special emphasis on the guiding principles of National Curriculum Framework 2005. Established by *Rabindranath Tagore* in 1901, *Patha Bhavana* represents an alternative model of schooling rooted in nature, creativity, and holistic development. The study analyses how Tagore's educational philosophy aligns with NCF-2005 principles such as child-centered learning, learning without burden, knowledge construction and integration of art and life. The findings reveal that *Patha Bhavana* anticipated many progressive reforms later formalized in NCF-2005, making it a living example of innovative pedagogy of teaching in India.

Key-Words: Patha Bhavana, Holistic Learning, Child Centered Pedagogy.

Introduction:

Our present school education system followed the 10+2+3 structure of education which is recommended by the Kothari Commission in 1964-1966. But 10+2 structure of education system is considered as the present day school education system. Since we all know that formal education system is done within the four walls which is follows in all over India. But the school education system of Tagore's institute i.e. *Patha Bhavana* is totally different from other formal school education.

Patha Bhavana is a unique man-making institution, formally primary and secondary education in Santiniketan, which started functioning as *Brahmacharyasrama* formally from December 22, 1901 with only five students. This school is characterized by its philosophy of learning with the heart in closeness to nature without any superficial barriers between teachers and students, as opposed to the strict, repetitive and the rote learning system that was mainstream during Tagore's childhood. From 1925 this school came to be known as *Patha-Bhavana*.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of this study are as follow-

- ☐ To know the unique aspects of the school education system of Patha Bhavana, founded by India's Nobel Laureate poet, writer and philosopher *Rabindranath Tagore*.
- ☐ To examine the guiding principles of NCF-2005 which are followed in this institution.
- ☐ To compare and interpret the alignment between Patha Bhavana practices and NCF-2005.

Methodology: Researcher followed the Descriptive survey method for the present study.

Population: All the students and Teaching staffs of *Patha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati* have been considered as population in this present study.

Sample: In this present study, 50 students from class VI to XII and 10 Teachers of *Patha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati* have been selected as sample.

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling technique is used for data collection.

Tool Used: For data collection of this study, researcher used self made standardized tools i.e Questionnaire, Interview schedule and self observation schedule.

Discussion and Analysis:

Objective-1: The school education system of Patha Bhavana is unique and more psychological in nature. It is very important to note that during the formation of National Curriculum Framework-2005 followed the school education system of Patha Bhavana. From this point of views Patha Bhavana occupies a pivot position which followed the guiding principle of NCF-2005 before formulation of this framework.

Medium of Instruction: The medium of instruction is Bengali and English but equal importance is given to subject Hindi and other subjects.

Session and School Time: The session starts in the month of June. The school is open for all. School starts at 6:30 a.m. for all, Kindergarten to Class VIII. Up to Class IV children stay at school till 10:30 a.m. and learn Maths, Bengali, Music, Dance and Drawing and listen stories in KG and class-I. Standard IX and X, students study 8 periods in each working day. They stay at school from 1st period (6:30 a.m.) till the last period (12:30 p.m.) Different subjects like Bengali, English, Maths, Science, History and Geography are taught with other activities i.e. singing, dancing, handicraft, modelling, wood work, metal work, weaving, instruments playing.

Weekly Holidays: At the early time On Tuesdays higher class students go for social work in nearby areas and villages. On Wednesdays all students take part in Upasana (prayer) in the temple (Kachermandir). This day is celebrated as the foundation and holy day for the believers of the Bramha Samaj and holiday for the school. Now two full day i.e. Wednesday and Sunday are the weekly holiday of this institution.

Curriculum: The curriculum is totally different from any other institution. Although the curriculum of this institution is very rich through which student learn from nature following the constructivist approach. But, the curriculum is different according to the standard of students.

For class KG and I :- Maths, Bengali, Music, Dance and Drawing and listen stories subject are selected.

For the class II to IV, Maths and Bengali and do a number of activities such as nature study, painting and modeling, music, dance, craft and listen stories are incorporated in the curriculum.

For the V to XII children Maths, Science, Bengali, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, History and Geography, Tagore studies, Craft and Modeling etc subjects are taught to such standard of student as a part of their curriculum.

Co-Curricular Activities: Co-Curricular activities involves games, sports, scouting, hiking, debates, essay writing, workshops, symposiums, neat competitions, role playing, discussion, seminars which play their important role for comprehensive development of the personality of the child. Some co-curricular activities are-

- ✓ Readings of creative writing in the school's literary forum - the weekly (*Sahitya Sabha*).
- ✓ Visits to the neighbouring village only one village or villages.
- ✓ Collection of funds for village development and distribution of such funds, part of which is raised from the annual crafts and food bazar managed by the students.
- ✓ Managing the reading room of the *Sakha Sangha* library.
- ✓ Attending weekly prayer meetings and participating in the ceremonies and festivals of the University.



Photo Plate: Students Participation on different Co-Curricular Activities.

Examination System: Weekly tests i.e. unit tests are taken. There is no formal examination system or failure in examination till class VIII. Only weekly test with regular class assessment is done with the students. Examinations start from standard IX. In Santiniketan teaching and examination is not based on syllabus or textbooks. It goes beyond this. Development of creativity in child is in built in teaching and examination.

Sahitya Sabha: Teachers provide them opportunity to express more and more in oral and written form. Sahitya-Sabha or literary discussions are held in schools regularly in 3 groups i.e. Std. II – IV, Std. V to VII and Std. VIII to X. Each student can participate by giving writings, poems, music and dance. Students committee with a teacher as a guide, looks into the matter of arrangements. There is also a magazine committee, which invites writings, poems drawings, etc. from students and include in the magazine.

Student Association: From Std. IX Ashram Sammalani i.e. Self-government is formed from the students through election. The main aim to form such association is make students learn to carry out responsibilities in various matters of the school administration and thus be self-dependent and make their life in the ashram happy and well disciplined. This was established by Tagore in 1912 with an objective to develop holistic personality of students. The Ashram Sammalani or the development of self-governance is an important component in Tagore's total education of students. There are seven departments or *Vibhagha* under this association to look into different matters. They are *sahitya Vibhagha*, *Sasta Vibhagha*, i.e. health, *Parivesh Vibhagha* or environment, *Kidra* or Games *Vibhagha*, *Seba* or Service *Vibhagha*, *Ashaarjo* or Kitchen *Vibhagha* and *Sakha* or library *Sangha*.

(1) The Sahitya Bibhagh – conducts the Sahitya Sabha / literary discussion. The group has to conduct the Sabha and make proper arrangements with prior notice.

(2) *Sebha Vibhagh*– Conducts the collection of money for donations. Visit nearby villages to donate this money to the unprivileged. This department also make arrangements for providing facilities such as deep tube-well, bathrooms etc. in the nearby Santhal (Adivasi) gram.

- (3) *Kidra Vibhagh*– It looks after sports and other events. Every evening this department monitors games played by the students.
- (4) *Sasta Vibhagh*– It looks after the health of students. It makes students aware and conscious about their health.
- (5) *Parivesh Vibhagh*– Monitors the cleanliness in ashram area. It takes care of trees and other plants and also protects them from being destroyed by outsiders.
- (6) Library / *Sakha-Sangha*– It manages Library or student's collection of books. Each student gets to read the book of his choice.
- (7) *Aaharjho bibhagha*– Std. IX students monitor the matter related to Kitchen of the hostel.

Thus, in this way all the programmes of the Ashram School are looked after. These collaborative efforts help in developing decision-making, self-discipline and self-respect in children. They learn from their mistakes without developing ego. Students from themselves select secretary and assistant secretary for the association. A teacher as a guide is always there to help and guide them.

Class Room and Teacher: In Patha Bhavan teachers can teach in their own innovative way. Teacher provides the opportunities to the students to write by themselves in the classroom. They need to do and express with their own way of thinking. Teachers give themes and topics for writing as per children's needs and contexts. There are no prescribed notes for this. Teachers have autonomy to develop their own curriculum for children. Creativity of children is given importance from Std. II to X. Text books are also followed but with teachers' choices and selections for the content. Teachers select prose and poetry even for Std. IX and X. Library facilities are good. Students have access to any teacher for clarity of doubts whenever they require. Subjects, such as arts, crafts, health, etc., are given equal importance with regular subjects.

Teaching Learning Environment: Another important feature that makes the school different from others is its *open air classes with nature as surroundings*. The school premises are surrounded by a plenty of trees and beautiful plants and flowers. Close to nature the surrounding makes the place



enjoyable that students love to go to school every day. Student's learning moving beyond textbooks. Students mingle with nature and learn about various plants and trees from their surroundings. Students are free to take any subject such as music, dance, painting, sculpture and many other vocational courses as core subject and continue his/her higher studies in the concerned departments of the University. They relate themes to the contexts of children share their experiences and give them opportunity to further enquire and question experience school is

going to provide them.

To train students in democratic citizenship Tagore attributed significant power, rights and responsibilities to the students under the programme of 'self-government', which contributed to the

pupils' growth in mutual understanding, co-operation, and sense of responsibility, self-respect and respects for other rights. Over and above these, Tagore introduced in his school a vitality of work. Joyful exercise of inventive and constructive energies intended to build character and personality.

Discipline, Rules and Regulations : Students must maintain discipline in the class and outside the class. No student is allowed to meet his/her guardian or relatives without prior permission from the Adhyaksha (Principal), Upadhyaksha (vice Principal), Grihadhyaksha (Warden) or Paridarshika (Matron). Frequent meetings of students and guardians are discouraged by the school. Students are not permitted to keep money and/or valuable items in the hostel. Guardians are requested to make sure that their wards do not come to the hostel with valuable items/money. Guardians must equip their wards with clothing mentioned in the list provided to them.

Teacher-Students Relation: In this institution, the role of teacher is crucial important. Here, Teacher is the guru. He/She is the guide of students. He/She is to keep them on the right track. He/She is also to keep in contact with them. Teacher is also to remain learner throughout his life. He/she who fails as a learner, fails as a teacher. According to Rabindranath Tagore, teacher coincide more closely to what Tagore visualized as the ideal teacher and students relationship. Rabindranath Tagore said teacher-students relation was friendship and teachers personality influence of students life. Here the role of teacher as the facilitator in the learning of their pupils. Above all in this institution teacher is the "friend, philosopher and guide" of each student.

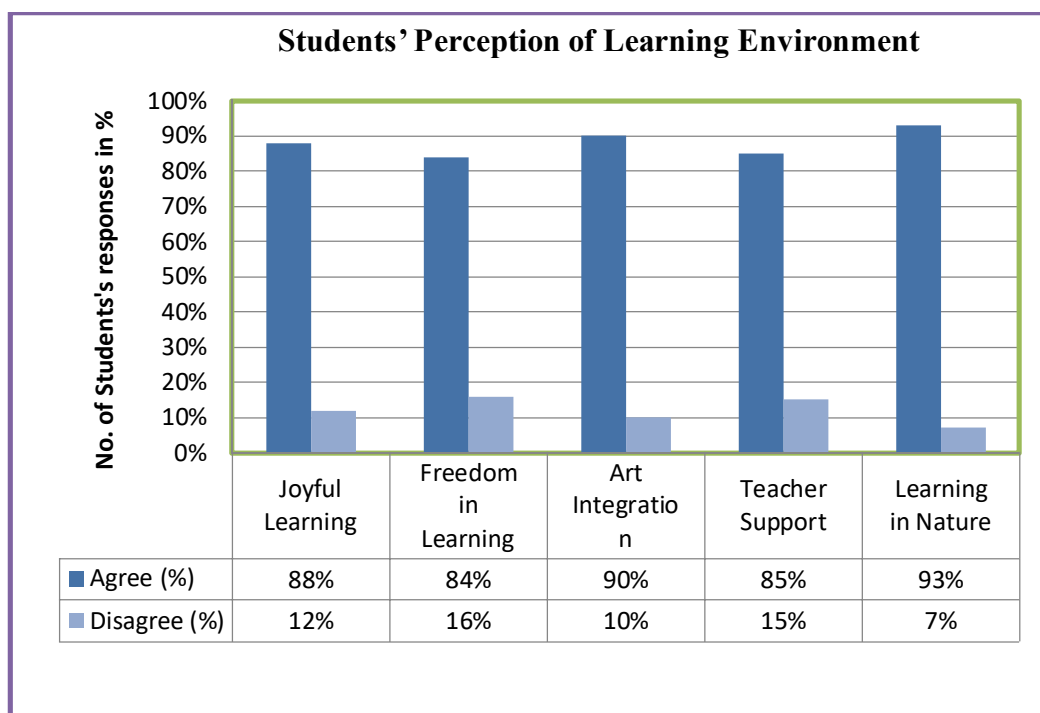
Objective-2: Since the early stage this institution follows the following principles which are recommended in the National Curriculum Framework-2005 in later. These principles are as follows-

- Connecting knowledge to life outside the school.
- Ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote method.
- Enriching the curriculum to provide for overall development of children rather than remain textbook centric.
- Making examination more flexible and integrated into classroom life and,
- Nurturing an over-riding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic policy of the country.

➤ Students' Responses:

Table 1: Students' Perception of Learning Environment

Parameters	Joyful Learning	Freedom in learning	Art Integration	Teacher Support	Learning in Nature
Agree (in %)	88	84	90	85	93
Disagree (in %)	12	16	10	15	7



Interpretation: From the above table and diagram it is clear that highest agreement indicates on **learning in nature** and highest disagreement indicates in **freedom in learning** and vice-versa among the five parameters of learning environment of this institution. But in case of all parameters of learning environment, the no of students who agreed is more than disagreed. It is noticeable that more than 80% students are agree in all parameters of learning environment as per principle of NCF-2005 which indicates that this institution strictly followed principles of NCF-2005 and students are highly benefited.

➤ **Teachers' Responses:**

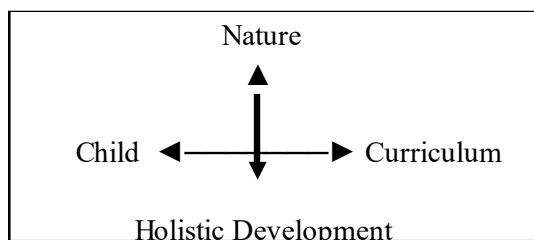
Table 2: Teachers' Perception on NCF-2005 Principles

Parameters	Joyful Learning	Environmental Integration	Flexible Assessment	Holistic Development	Constructivist Approach
Yes (in %)	90	100	90	80	90
NO (in %)	10	00	10	20	10

Interpretation: From the above table and pie diagram it is found that all the teacher are agree with the environmental integration on the teaching learning of this institution. From observation, it also found that student are learn so many thing like- nature of various seasons and their characteristics, the colour of leaves or nature of cloud and so on in open air classroom where have no visible boundary. Maximum teacher are showing their positive response on others parameters. But comparative the positive response is lowest in case of holistic development of students. It may be due to of individual differences, socio-economic and domestic causes. From the responses of teachers it can be stated that Constructivist approach is actively practiced in this institution.

Objective-3: Present study tries to draw **alignment between education system of Patha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati and guiding principle of NCF-2005 on the basis of following way-**

- **Learning without Burden:** Patha Bhavana discourages rote learning and emphasizes joyful education which directly aligning with NCF-2005.
- **Child-Centered Education:** Tagore's philosophy places the child at the center of the learning process, similar to NCF-2005.
- **Constructivist Learning:** Students learn through activities, observation, and experience rather than textbooks alone.
- **Knowledge and Life Connection:** Activities like village visits, festivals, and environmental engagement link learning with real life.
- **Holistic Development:** Equal importance is given to arts, culture, and academics, fulfilling NCF's holistic vision.
- **Art Integration:** Music, dance, drama, and crafts are integral part of education system of *Patha Bhavana* and these art integration is an important principle of NCF-2005.



Flow Chart: Integration of Tagore's Philosophy with Principles of NCF-2005

From the above discussion we can explain the integration of the guiding principle of NCF-2005 and education system of Patha Bhavana through the above diagram where child is the central focus of curriculum and holistic development of child occurred through the experimental or constructivist learning through Nature which is the important part of Tagore's Philosophy.

Interpretation:

Patha Bhavana stands as a living model of progressive education in India. Its philosophy closely mirrors the guiding principles of NCF-2005, demonstrating that meaningful educational reform must focus on the child, creativity, and connection with life. Integrating such models into mainstream education can significantly improve the quality and relevance of schooling in India.

The analysis reveals that Patha Bhavana is not merely aligned with NCF-2005 but actually prefigures it. Tagore's educational experiment:

- Rejects colonial rote-based systems.
- Encourages experiential and environmental learning.
- Promotes democratic and participatory schooling.
- Integrates aesthetic and intellectual development

NCF-2005 institutionalizes these ideas at the national level, suggesting that Tagore's model was visionary and ahead of its time.

Educational Implications of this study: **Educational implication of this present study as follow-**

1. Schools should adopt open and flexible learning environments.
2. Curriculum should integrate arts and life experiences.
3. Emphasis on emotional and social development must increase.

4. In teacher training should include Tagorean pedagogy.
5. Assessment should move beyond rote memorization.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell, Patha Bhavana of *Visva-Bharati* thus provides its students an all-encompassing education that is rich in its cultural heritage, profoundly humanistic in its approach, adequately advanced in higher science, superbly aesthetic in fine arts and visual arts and profoundly universalistic in its attitude towards the global scenario which is manifest in its motto: “*Yatra Vishvam Bhvati Eka Needam*”— where the world meets in one nest. Patha Bhavana is not only degree awarding institution, rather than it is man-making institution where the principles of NCF-2005 were followed from its early stage before so many years of NCF-2005 formulation. So, from the above discussion it can be stated that education system of Patha Bhavana, *Visva-Bharati* is a unique, not possible to draw any comparison from any angle with any other institution of this globe.

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