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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Author	Title of the Paper	Download
1	Dr. Sherin Shervani	Analyses of the Identity of Muslim Women in Modern Non-native English Fiction	2401.PDF
2	Dr. B.V. Rama Prasad	Realization of the Distance between the Writer and the Focal Character in Vasudendra's Short Story "First Time at the Pinnacle"	2402.PDF
3	Jaisingh K.	Innovative Techniques in Language Teaching: An Analysis of the Computer Assisted English Language Learning Software used in most of the Engineering Colleges in India	2403.PDF
4	Mohammed Najmuddin Khan	Superheavy Elements: Its Annals	2404.PDF
5	B. Moses	Problems of equivalents and morphology in translating the Tamil novel "Helicoptergal Keezhe Iragi Vittana" into English	2405.PDF
6	Shram Mustafa Hama-Salih & Dr. Muktaja Mathkari	Women in Chinua Achebe's <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (1958)	2406.PDF
7	Shivani Jha	<i>The Hungry Tide</i> : A Discourse of Dispossessions	2407.PDF
8	Prin. Dr. D.M. Muley	Political Impact of Reservation Policy on Scheduled Castes	2408.PDF
9	Dr. Smriti Singh	Identity and Ethnicity in Kiran Desai's 'The Inheritance of Loss'	2409.PDF
10	Dr. Muktaja Mathkari & Shram Mustafa Hama-Salih	Women in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's <i>The River Between</i> (1965)	2410.PDF
11	Nisha. K. P.	Reflections on Research Studies in Stress and School Environment	2411.PDF
12	Dr. K. A. Attar	Displacement and Search for Home in Jean Rhys's <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i>	2412.PDF
13	Dr. Ashok Wagh & Dr. S.T. Gadade	Activity and Periodicity in Financial Planning and Performance in Colleges	2413.PDF
14	Dr. Muktaja Vikas	Pronouncing and Denouncing Motherhood: Rama Mehta's	2414.PDF

	Mathkari	<i>Inside the Haveli</i> and Margaret Laurence's <i>A Jest of God</i>	
15	Dr. Archana Durgesh, Md. Osama, Md. Ashraf, Md. Faiz, Md. Md. Kashif, Md. Ammaar	Revolution 2020 - Battle for a Perfect Life	2415.PDF
16	Mrs. Mishra Santwana Gopalchandra & Dr. K. L. Chincholikar	A Study of Correlation of Academic Achievement with Aptitude, Attitude and Anxiety	2416.PDF
17	Dr. Manju Lalwani Pathak	Economic Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore	2417.PDF
18	Solanki Milind Kantilal	The Effect of History and Post-Modernism in Today's Indian English Literature	2418.PDF
19	Dr. Archana Durgesh & Dr. Pooja Singh	Communicating Across With a Touch & a Glance	2419.PDF
20	Anil Kumar Singh	Motifs of History in the Novels of Amitav Ghosh	2420.PDF
21	Dr. Franz Josef Gellert & Professor Dr. Hugo Velthuijsen	Gradual Retirement Schemes and Older Workers Social Inclusion and Employability in The Netherlands	2421.PDF
22	Dr. Raji Ramesh	Negotiating the Patriarchal Authority: The Magic Toyshop	2422.PDF
23	Jayasimha P.	Transmutation of Confession as Devotion: Cognitive Modeling of Saint Augustine's <i>Confessions of a Sinner - Book One</i>	2423.PDF
24	Bijayata Pradhan	Voices from the Margins: A Study on the Texts Based on the Life of The Tea Workers in the Tea Estates of Darjeeling	2424.PDF
25	Nivedita Ghosh	The Emerging Marital Trends in Indian Scenario	2425.PDF
26	S.N. Sithi Shamila	Redefining 'Quality' through Student Participation: A Holistic Perspective	2426.PDF
27	Isha Dhar & Zia Afroz	Bitcoin-A Historical Perspective of the Effects of the New Currency on the Global Economy with the Future Speculated	2427.PDF
28	Dr. Santosh J. Mishra	Painful Journey of Self Discovery through Different Cultural Spaces in <i>Desirable Daughters</i> by Bharati Mukherjee	2428.PDF
29	J. Kirubakaran & Dr. M. Dharmalingam	A Study on Impact of Financial Sector Reforms in India with Reference to Indian Capital Market	2429.PDF
30	Mr. Kailas B. Aute	Contesting and Voicing non-normative sexual Identity: A Critical Study of Shyam Selvadurai's <i>Funny Boy</i>	2430.PDF
31	Zia Afroz & Sumbul Fatima	Need of Entrepreneurship Development in Rural Sector in India	2431.PDF

Economic Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore**Dr. Manju Lalwani Pathak***Smt. C.H.M. College, Ulhasnagar, Mumbai, (M.S.) India***Abstract**

Economics thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore are a less familiar aspect ever explored of this Nobel-Laureate. A renowned Bengali poet himself, author, song writer, philosopher, artist and educator, very few know the economics understanding of Rabindranath Tagore. This paper attempts to unearth scattered economics ideas in his literature like Swadeshi Swaraj, Crisis in Civilization, Cult of Charkha, Samabaya Niti, Atmashakti, Bilases Fans and so on.

The proposed paper is based on secondary data published in heterogeneous sources. It is also proposed and established the Indian economics scenario of Rabindranath Tagore, a perspective hardly even thought of, considering Tagore being a multifaceted literary figure. Further, this paper will highlight the economics sensibility of Tagore – an approach to economic development. This paper will also try to illustrate the argument that although he has not given an economic model for India, his economic insights cannot be overlooked. In this regard, it is felt that in his economic development, he would have felt a commitment and urgency to renew India's economics poverty especially in villages.

Key Words: economics, Rabindranath Tagore, Indian economic scenario

Rabindranath Tagore is a great testimony of his understanding of Indian economy. He has not given any particular economic system for India so this paper aims to establish the Indian economic scenario of Rabindranath Tagore. He holds the view that majority of the population of India reside in villages. In these villages illiteracy and poverty is rooted and villagers are not able to express themselves. He stated in *Swadeshi Samaj* that to spread awareness among villagers, the root of the improvement of India should be liberation of the villages from the "shackles of helplessness and ignorance." His essay "*Swadeshi Samaj*" suggests holding "*Swadeshi melas*", melas or fairs where most of the people of the villages congregate without any doubt and suspicion, where the poor villagers would be able to express their real needs and

wants, as well as they will get a platform to discuss their economic activities.

Tagore's vision of economic development explains that India is rooted deep in rural regeneration as majority of the population of India reside in villages. It has two major planks: cooperatives and Panchayats. In both the cases, Tagore calls for revival of the spirit of the rural masses so that they could be self-sufficient and free from dependence on outside assistance of authorities for their economic and social upliftment and empowerment.

Tagore explains that the members of the panchayats would be interested in serving more than the government officials than their rural brethren. They would virtually become instruments at the hands of the government to repress rural people. Panchayat system, a real source of power of the rural people of India in earlier times,

shall now become a cause of disunity and weakness of the rural masses. He advocated that cooperatives and panchayats should be free from the government, political parties or vested interest groups while they work their own efforts for rural masses.

He mentioned in Swadeshi Samaj that the structure of Indian villages has its own characteristics, which is fundamentally different from the West. Thus India should not blindly replicate the thoughts of western societies because the western conditions are not comfortable to Indian societal conditions. He stressed that the path of socio-economic development for India, which must be chosen by India alone as the country is made truly from our own inertia and indifference.

He however believed that there should not be wholesale rejection of the west, as the West had much to contribute; hence Indians should try to synthesize the good points of the West with the better points of Indian society, without either blindly accepting or rejecting the West. As he believed in Swadeshi Samaj, he was in favor of cottage industry especially in spinning by charkha which he quoted in essay "The Cult of the Charkha". But he did not find much economic benefit through Charkha and spinning. That is the reason; his literature never shows anywhere that he boycotts foreign goods. From that angle, he should be considered a visionary economist as per today's present scenario. But Tagore wanted that people should be organized for the purpose of Swaraj through charkha.

Tagore emphasized to adopt a framework of the combination of growth of agricultural productivity and use of modern technology and mechanization for

production of goods and services as compulsory solution for problems of rural poverty and unemployment. Earlier, he saw great poverty among villagers in his family's agricultural estates. For agricultural development he suggests some solutions like rotation of crops which will help the growth of agricultural productivity and spiritual capital as an important factor of production in economics.

Rabindranath Tagore was follower of Swadeshi but he would not resent the development of modern industries in India, or the acceleration of technical progress, since he did not want India to be shackled to the turning of "the wheel of an antiquated invention." Tagore always encourages the application of modern technologies for rejuvenation of rural India, but all these should be within the framework of a regenerated rural society based on self-help and freedom from outside interference. Tagore was concerned that people not be dominated by machines, but he was in favour to making good use of modern technology. He has the opinion that machines are made for man; he wanted "The Mastery over the Machine," as he wrote in *Crisis in Civilization*.

Besides, his approach to dealing with poverty was through education. To this, Gurudev therefore suggested the means of education especially childhood education rather than University Education. He admits that education is a source to improve social backwardness in villages.

The impact of a poet can be clearly seen on the idea of economic prosperity in his writings which is far from being mere monetary benefits. Tagore opines about western lifestyle that consumerism, which

has been eating into the vitals of western societies, is now making inroads into Indian lifestyles vitiating all spheres of Indian life. Personal consumption has developed philanthropic attitude and has made most of them mean and self-centered.

An innocent heart of the poet investigates that there is the perverse impact of the unbridled competition on the mass. The motive of competition, which forcing one into a mad race for outclassing all other persons around him only leads one to an endless struggle for supremacy. It makes one's mind ever restless and bereft of stability and peace.

Tagore expresses pity for those who consider this mad race as prosperity. Tagore holds that Indian society is based on universal welfare and symbiosis between man and man, and it had never encouraged this self-destructive competition leading to infighting within human society for individual supremacy. Being a sensitive poet, he investigates this race develop greed, jealousy, pride, lust among people sheltered in the dark grooves of human mind. The riches in some parts of the country are making a false impression signifying economic prosperity thorough their richness. Unfortunately, this is not due to prosperity, but due to centralization of wealth in the hands of a few.

In Tagore's judgment of economics prosperity, happiness in less growth economy is compared to unhappiness in supper normal growth economy. For this prosperity, Tagore admits that the motive of self-advancement and competition, within some limit, are necessary for the material progress of human society. He has

the opinion that happiness of the people is real prosperity.

At the same time, Tagore also lives in the age of Internationalism. Today what we call globalization, is that ideal of global sustainability that Tagore spoke in his writing where regional cooperation across territorial boundaries was useful for economic development of any country. He always stressed on liberal policy for trade between two regions. This is a concept of contemporary foreign trade under liberalization and globalization. Rabindranath Tagore would have not liked the era of 1961 to 1981 in India post Independence during planning sessions because government adopted an insular policy and implemented Tariffs and Quotas. But after 1991, the concept LPG programs adopted as economic reforms for Indian Economy today matches with the Tagore's idea of economics. Besides, Tagore suggests balanced development of sufficient in concordance of environment to achieve sustainable development.

Conclusion: Rabindranath Tagore's thoughts on economics give different insights of economic system for Indian Economy those are based on socio-economic conditions of India. He envisioned spread of basic education with the goal of self-reliance, the application of science and technology to agriculture, the provision of cooperative credit, and the setting up of cottage industries for the purpose of upliftment of the masses in India. In today's great constraints that restrict, he suggests rational and ethical way of development process in which people must analyze their limits which is why he strongly felt the need for a greater commitment—and a greater sense of urgency— by the mass and govt.

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