



## Review Article

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## Exploring the Reflection of Traditional Education in Rabindranath Tagore's Totakahini Through the Lens of Coding Analysis

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**Abstract:** This study explores the reflection of traditional education in Rabindranath Tagore's 'Totakahini' through a coding analysis framework. By examining this story through five researcher-generated codes; 'Pressurized Learning', 'Fixed Place of Learning', 'Fixed Salary Despite Teaching Unsuccessful', 'Traditional Learning Approach', and 'No Tolerance to New and Free Thinking'—this study highlights Tagore's critique of traditional education. This qualitative research study employs Open Coding Analysis method with the help of MS-Word tool to systematically analyze the textual data, ensuring methodological rigor through the subject and language expert validation and cross-referencing. Key findings reveal that Rabindranath Tagore's 'Totakahini' hiddenly criticise the traditional education system and it shows that Tagore's narrative subtly advocates for a flexible, supportive, and innovative educational system that fosters curiosity and supportive learning.

**Keywords:** Traditional education, Rabindranath Tagore, Totakahini, qualitative research, coding analysis, educational reform.

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## INTRODUCTION

*"Nationalism is a narrowing creed...It was Tagore's immense service to India...that he forced the people...out of their narrow grooves...Tagore was the great humanist of India."* – Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore's impact went far beyond just nationalism. Nehru praised Tagore for breaking down barriers and opening people's minds. He believed that Tagore's greatest contribution to India was his ability to inspire people to think beyond their limited perspectives. Nehru called Tagore the 'great humanist of India,' highlighting his deep concern for humanity and his belief in the power of education to transform society for the better. Nehru's words remind us of the profound influence Tagore had on not just India, but the world. Tagore's ideas about education, as seen in his story 'Totakahini,' continue to resonate with contemporary debates about schooling and

traditional education system. By exploring 'Totakahini,' we can better understand Tagore's vision for education and its relevance to our modern-day educational challenges. So, basically 'Totaakaahini' is a short story, which was written by Rabindranath Tagore and it was first published in the Bengali magazine 'Sabuj Patra' in *Magh, 1324* as per the Bengali Callender (January-February, 1918) in its Vol. 4 Issue 10, from Page no. 609 to 613 (divided into seven parts) and later collected in 'lipikaa' ('Brief Writings') in August 1922. It was also known as 'The Parrot's Tale' or 'The Parrot's Training.' Rabindranath Tagore was a regular contributor to 'Sabuj Patra'. Many of his early 20th century works including the 'Balaka' poems, two of his novels, 'Ghare Baire' and 'Chaturanga', a play titled 'Phalguni' and a considerable lot of short stories and essays were published in 'Sabuj Patra'. In 'Sabuj Patra', Tagore expressed his revolutionary view on society, education and political situations of contemporary times through his fiction and prose.

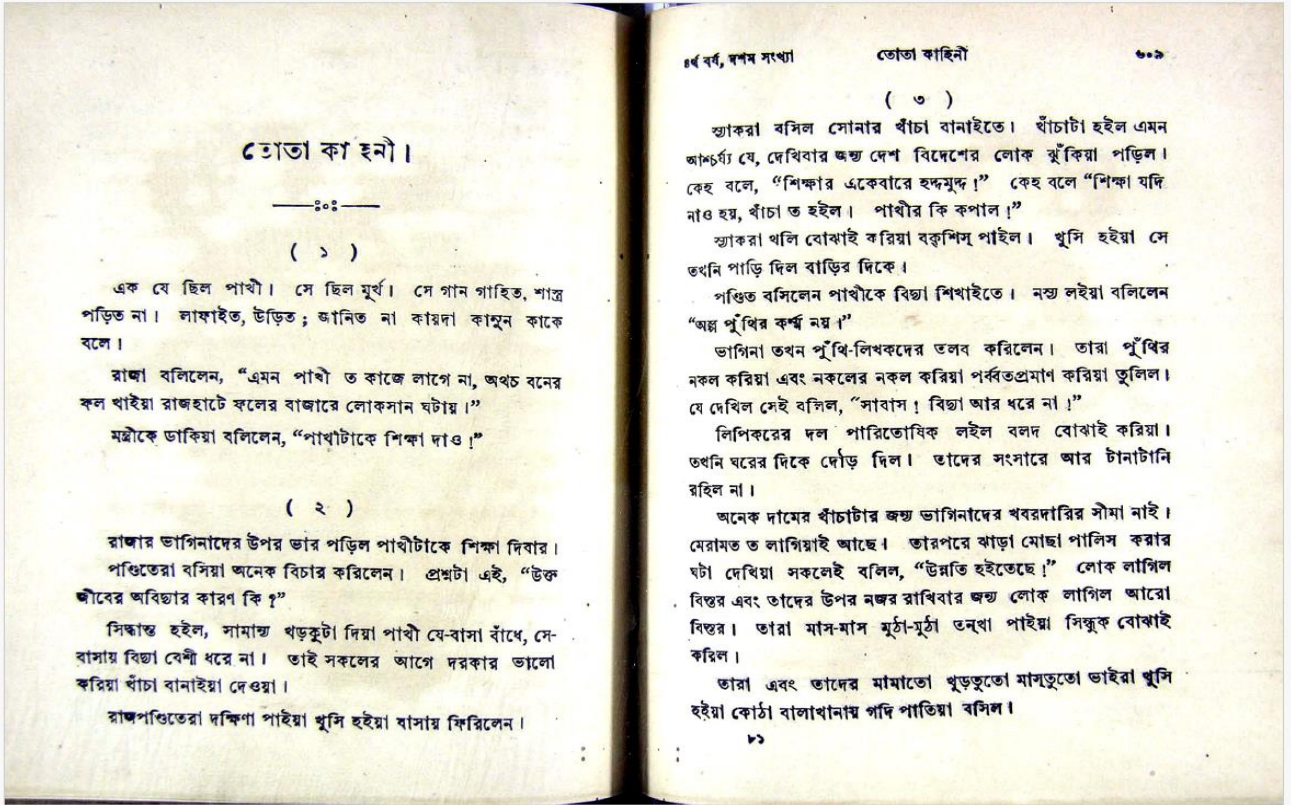


Figure 1. The Real Picture of Totakahini story published in Sabuj Patra, 1918 (Page 608 – 609, Part 1 – 3)  
Source: Sabuja Patra, Vol. 4, Issue No. 10 (1918)

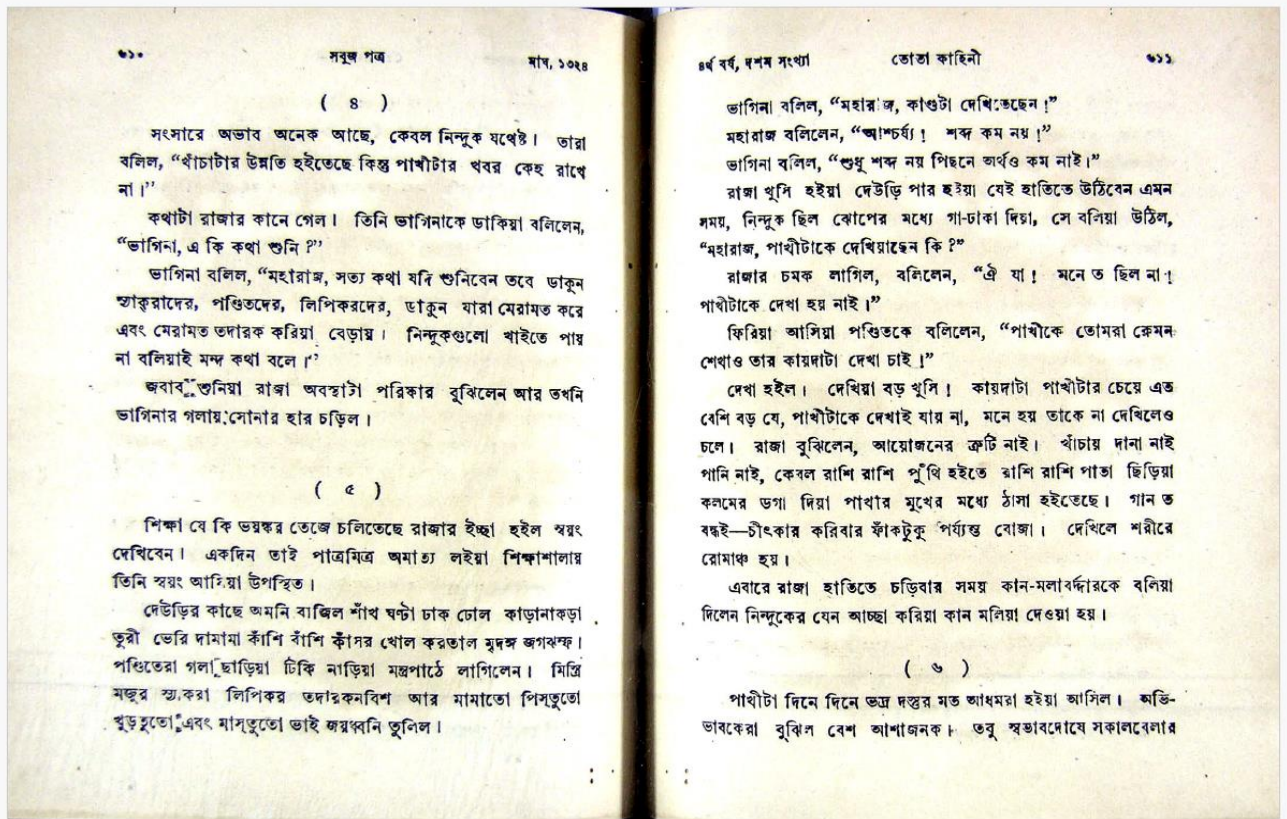
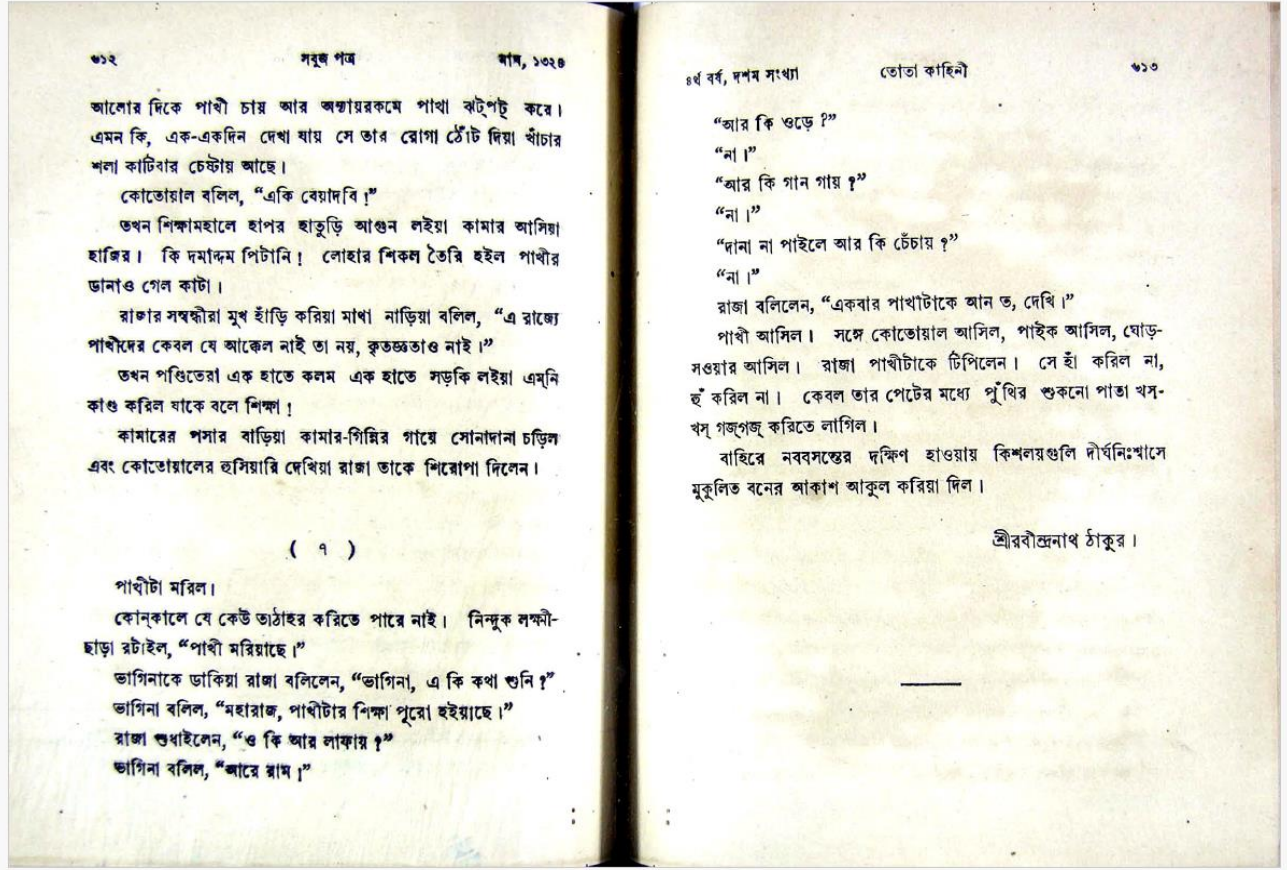


Figure 2. The Real Picture of Totakahini story published in Sabuj Patra, 1918 (Page 610 – 611, Part 4 – 6)  
Source: Sabuja Patra, Vol. 4, Issue No. 10 (1918)



**Figure 3.** The Real Picture of Totakahini story published in Sabuj Patra, 1918 (Page 612 – 613, Part 6 – 7)  
**Source:** Sabuja Patra, Vol. 4, Issue No. 10 (1918)

Tagore's Totakahini is a powerful satire on the traditional education system, where the story revolves around a king who imposes 'education' onto a parrot named Totapakhī (Parrot). The parrot, initially considered 'illiterate' and 'useless' by society, is forced into education by the king's nephews. And This story of Rabindranath Tagore highlights how traditional education, instead of nurturing a child's innate creativity, stifles their spirit and destroys their inner essence. In this story, parrot's journey begins with the realization that its small nest cannot accommodate education, leading to the creation of a golden cage. Despite the lack of genuine learning, people admire the grand cage, compare it with progress. As the education process progresses, individuals involved grow richer, drawing heavy salaries in the name of Totapakhī's education. However, in the front of progress, a critic voices concern about the neglect of the parrot's well-being. And the king, initially impressed by the demonstration of education, eventually realizes the tragedy unfolding within the cage. The parrot, confined to the cage without food or water, is bombarded with textbooks, suppress its ability to sing or express itself. As the parrot's condition declines, attempts to discipline it result in further suffering. The parrot, unable to fly or even cry out, symbolizes the death of its spirit under the weight of oppressive education. Despite its death, the king's nephew declares the parrot's

education complete, highlighting the stupidity of the system. In the end, when the king presses the lifeless parrot, only the rustling of dry pages from books is heard, emphasizing the hollowness of the education it received. Through Totakahini, Tagore delivers a scathing critique of an education system that prioritizes appearances over genuine learning, leaving learners devoid of their essence and potential. 'Tota Kahini' thus is not only a satire on a traditional-mechanical education system but it also demonstrates that instead of considering an individual as a unique being, the state often views individuals as mere members of communities, partially because such thinking facilitates governance by helping the state to frame policies.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to identify and explore the of traditional education reflection in the Rabindranath Tagore's 'Totakahini' story, and analyse these reflections through the lens of five researcher-generated codes. These codes, namely 'Pressurized Learning', 'Fixed Place of Learning', 'Fixed Salary Despite Teaching Unsuccessful', 'Traditional Learning Approach', and 'No Tolerance to New and Free Thinking', serve as the analytical framework for this study.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study followed a qualitative research approach focused on identifying and exploring the reflection of traditional education in Rabindranath Tagore's 'Totakahini' story. To full fill this purpose, here researcher used the 'Open Coding Analysis Method' and manually generated five codes, namely 'Pressurized Learning', 'Fixed Place of Learning', 'Fixed Salary Despite Teaching Unsuccessful', 'Traditional Learning Approach', and 'No Tolerance to New and Free Thinking', and serve as the primary analytical framework for this paper. And to analyze the textual data from the Rabindranath Tagore's Totakahini story,

researcher used the MS-Word and its Add-ins 'DocTools Extract Data' tool for Coding Analysis with the help of percentage methods and basic word counts (6 pages; 31 lines; 209 words). And throughout the coding process, researcher maintains methodological rigor by cross-referencing codes, engaging in discussions with language and subject experts to validate interpretations, and ensuring consistency in coding decisions. Ethical considerations are also carefully followed and observed by the researcher to respect Tagore's literary work and cultural legacy.

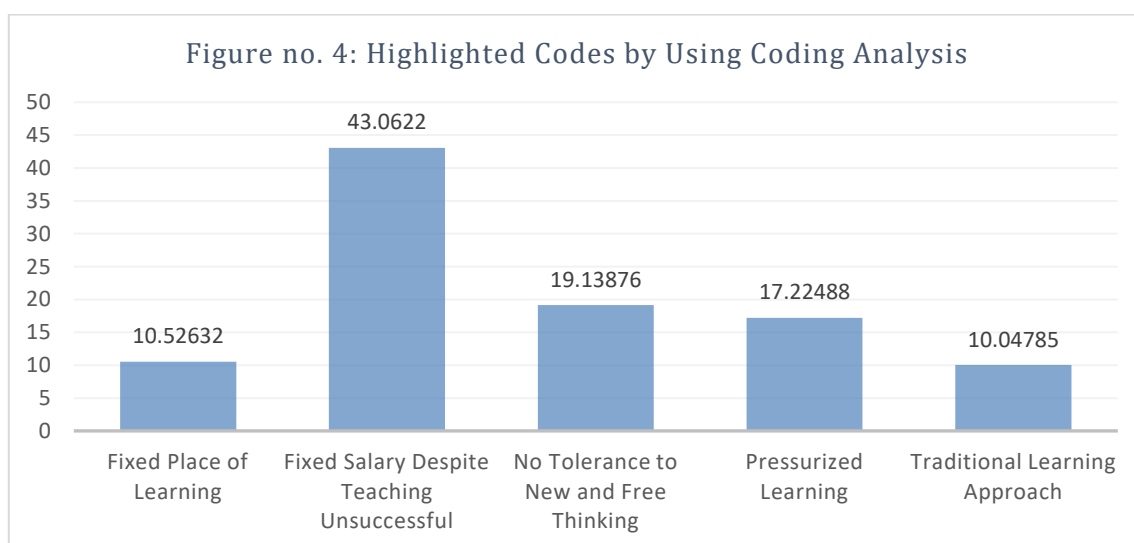
### Data Exploration

**Table 1.** Highlighted Codes by Using Coding Analysis

Page	Line & Part No.	Words	% of Code	Generated Code
608	10-12 (Part II)	22	10.52632	Fixed Place of Learning
608	13 (Part II)	8		
609	18 (Part III)	6	43.0622	Fixed Salary Despite Teaching Unsuccessful
609	25-27 (Part-III)	18		
609	30-33 (Part-III)	23		
610	45-46 (Part-IV)	13		
611	67-69 (Part-V)	22	19.13876	No Tolerance to New and Free Thinking
612	80-82 (Part-VI)	21		
612	94 (Part-VII)	6		
613	96 (Part-VII)	3		
613	98 (Part-VII)	4		
613	100 (Part-VII)	6	17.22488	Pressurized Learning
608	6 (Part I)	6		
608	7 (Part II)	8		
611	67-69 (Part-V)	22	10.04785	Traditional Learning Approach
609	22-24 (Part-III)	21		

In Rabindranath Tagore's story 'Totakahini', the character 'Totapakhi' represents students in traditional educational system. 'Totapakhi' faces challenges like many students do, feeling pressured to do well in school. This pressure makes it hard for the students to be creative and be themselves. Tagore criticizes this pressure and suggests that schools should

be more supportive. For example, when 'Totapakhi' pressurized by the other characters in the story to learn on Page no. 608 line no. 6 (Part I), Page no. 608 line no. 7 (Part II), Page no. 611 line no. 67-69 (Part-V) with the 17.22488% of code weightage, and through this, Tagore try to demonstrate that how stressful and forceful nature of the traditional education system is.



Schools often have fixed places where students must learn. Here, Totapakhi's story reflects this. 'Totapakhi' has to stick to one place to learn, which limits exploring and learning in different ways. Tagore thinks schools and education should be more flexible so students can learn in different places in different ways. When Totapakhi's learning space is fixed on Page no. 608 Line no. 10-12 (Part II) with the 10.52632% of code weightage, and through this, Tagore try to reveal that how traditional schools can limit learning opportunities for the students.

Tagore also talks indirectly about the teachers who get paid the same even if they don't teach well. This doesn't motivate teachers to do better. It affects students like 'Totapakhi', who may not get a good treatment. When other characters in this story are still get paid on Page no. 608 line no. 13 (Part II), Page no. 609 line no. 18 (Part III), Page no. 609 line no. 25-27 (Part-III), Page no. 609 line no. 30-33 (Part-III), Page no. 610 line no. 45-46 (Part-IV), Page no. 611 line no. 67-69, (Part-V) with the 43.0622% of code weightage, it shows how this system and its stake holders are benefited except the learners.

Totapakhi's experience also shows the reflection of rote memorization and textbook-based teaching of the traditional education system. Tagore hiddenly points out how these methods hinder critical thinking, creativity, and overall growth of the learner. The findings on Page 609, Lines 22-24 (Part-III) with 10.04785% of code weightage, emphasize the need for a shift away from these traditional approaches. Tagore talks about an education system that sparks curiosity, fosters problem-solving skills, and encourages lifelong learning, crucial for navigating a changing society.

Tagore shows us through 'Totapakhi', that students face problems when he or she tries to think differently. On Page 612 to 613, Lines 80-82, 94, 96, 98, and 100 (Part VI to VII), Totapakhi's story hiddenly talks about the No Tolerance to New and Free Thinking with 19.13876% of code weightage. Tagore wants us to think about what happens when people don't like new ideas. Through this, he shows that it is important for schools and society to welcome students' different ways of thinking and be open to trying new things of them.

Rabindranath Tagore's portrait of Totapakhi as a learner serves as a powerful critique of traditional education. Through Totapakhi's journey, Tagore motivates the readers to confront the societal impacts of rigid academic structures. He calls for reforms that prioritize student well-being, innovative teaching methods, and the development of critical thinking skills. Tagore's message urges us towards a more inclusive and progressive educational system, essential for building a fairer and more equitable society.

## CONCLUSION

Rabindranath Tagore's Totakahini is not just a story—it's a powerful critique of how schools and whole education system work. Through Totapakhi, Tagore shows us all the problems with traditional schooling. Totapakhi's journey shows us how these problems affect not just him, but all of society. Tagore wants us to think about how we can make schools better for everyone. In Totakahini, Tagore talks about issues like pressure to do well in school, having to learn in the same place all the time, teachers getting paid the same no matter how well they teach, and how schools stick to old-fashioned ways of teaching instead of trying new things. Totapakhi's story helps us understand why these things are a problem and why we need to change them. Tagore's ideas about education are still important today. He believed that education should make us better people, not just give us facts or provide information. He wanted schools to help us understand the world and be curious about it. Tagore's dream was to create a place called 'Shantiniketan,' where education would be about exploring, being creative, and thinking for ourselves. So, Totakahini is not just about one Totapakhi's journey—it's about all of us. Tagore wants us to think about how we can make education better for everyone. He believes that if we foster and spread the creativity, diversity, and respect for each other, we can create a world where everyone can learn and grow together.

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