

Editorial

Missing Education's Search for Knowhow to Peace Through an Old Paradigm

Prolific writer H.G. Wells observed: **Civilisation is a race between education and catastrophe.** To defeat catastrophe, education must be of very high quality so that it protects our attainments in spiritual, mental and material world not for today but for tomorrows. While devastation caused by catastrophe proves our inappropriate preparation for better tomorrow, it sharply points towards missing education.

Despite hefty increase in percentage of educated worldwide over last few decades, man-made catastrophes are in increase in threatening proportion, raising question about the need of such education which compels people to hate each other, break families and nations, and destroy the nature.

Marilyn Wilhelm, founder of Wilhelm School International (1972) wrote: The necessity and urgency of global education reform is evidenced in the epidemic of violence and irrational, the proliferation of hate and intolerance, the lack of respect, the lack of understanding that is seriously threatening the well-being of citizens everywhere.

Missing Education

'Missing education' haunted our great minds in torment for long during last two hundred years resulting into setting up alternate schools, special schools and experimental schools all over the world. Such schools offered great education but remained restricted within close quarters based on ideology or economic capability of the education seeker. Some of these remained aloof from broader society where many had to surrender to ineffectual mainstream education system for state patronisation or lack of proper heir. None of these could actually take mainstream education away from its infatuation of manpower planning, pass and fail system, bookish knowledge, certification centricity and inability to develop future citizens' belief in capacity, inter-connect and enterprising spirit.

Contrary to this trend, hundred years back (1923), a commoner's school grew out of gradual need of people in a village in eastern part of Bengal (now Bangladesh) identified by its founder Thakur Anukul Chandra. If correction identified by Marilyn Wilhelm is to be done and 'race' identified by Wells is to be won, nine principles identified in pedagogy and knowledge content of the Bengal commoner's school may be adopted in mainstream education.

Commoners' School

Village named Himayatpur in Pabna district had all vices of pettiness, identity divide and ego of the wealthy. The observation of Marilyn was equally true for the place. Communalism was on growth in Bengal then. The school took this as challenge of human limitation, dissolved limitation through community-school linkage and ensured that peace prevailed in the community. It is not that conflicting thoughts did not appear in some, but were resolved. It was not that students were not taught to be strong in physique and mind to decide how to protect self and others. However, their circle of 'others' gradually grew in circumference in feelings of harmony ; so grew the state of peaceful co-existence amidst diversity follow 'six principals'.

The school was a closely knit community of the founder-mentor, teachers, students and neighbourhood. It was not closing with theory sessions; rather spreading to laboratory-field-hospital- workshops-play fields-villagers' homes and in normal company of the teacher even in holidays. *Every group of few students were with only one teacher for several months because the Man behind the school was creating a model of a student whose personality, in tender years was not to be torn between conflicting personalities of different teachers.* Every teacher with high education and mentoring was capable of offering general education till tenth standard. The mentor ensured that only persons having thorough knowledge and practice of general education who are thrilled to educate should come to teaching.

Ensuring No-split in Student Personality

The observations were unique: If teachers are in conflict, personality growth of a student would be harmed. If a student's upbringing inculcates indiscipline and conflicting attitude, he or she would never be loving peaceful existence of self and others. Cooperation and compassion would be the casualties.

Mainstream education should have such institutional, managerial and psychological framework so as to develop students for a cooperative, conflict resolving, protective and peaceful co-existence. How do we ensure the peaceful globe, if the microcosm or individual is not at peace within and in harmony with?

The mentor cautioned all teachers of Tapoban School at Himayatpur on another aspect of personality development. *Teacher must not tell in-front of students such matters which sows disrespect about parents; rather should praise even the smallest of their contributions to their wards. Attachment to mother and respect to father should be enhanced for inner balance in a student.*

So the school believed that no parent is uneducated despite even if not introduced to letters. Tapoban ensured that students learn as much as possible from home environment by serving parents practically. Teachers were visiting home of day scholars and communicating with boarders' parents regularly to know more about instinct and tendency of students alongside paternal vocations.

Sublimation of Teacher's Ego

Thus teacher's ego got sublimated facing the challenge of real education. By discovering the appropriate call in life of the student, teachers were mostly able to streamline his or her journey towards ideal-centric life of serving people and nature in chosen vocation. Such a student, with satisfaction of pursuing own calling would remain un-agitated and can accept others with all normalcy, the surer way to be in peace and offer peace to the unrestful.

There a son was clear. *Family-school continuum must be maintained so that children's respect for parents and their attachment for family enhances. Such children would be able to respect teachers improving student-teacher bonding. Thus students would realise continuity and practice in earnest and become constructive in mindset and choice of work. So, anger and hate, reasons of destruction won't sway over the student.* Much of our conflicts -whether in family, polity or society arises out of anger and hate. Respect, love and attachment from the early years are the surer antidotes to violence and morbidity which only appropriate education offers.

Family-school Continuum & Principle of Attachment

Few years later, Father of Ethology and Noble laureate Konrad Lorenz, in 1930s described that imprinting in human occurs when the new born sees mother, the first person after birth. To her the child would be having first attachment, proved the principle of attachment. This attachment is extremely important in phase-sensitive learning, especially till eight to ten years. Such learning ingrains calmness and mental strength to overcome situations of aggression and conflict. Schools are failing mostly despite snatching away playful, impressionistic years from children due to attachment deficit.

Mainstream education has to innovate but not mimic to accommodate family-school continuum. To practice non-obtrusive family-school continuum in a family-centric approach is the shift we require to ensure developing citizens with calmness of mind and respectful learning attitude.

The way we teach history makes us believe that success is more about aggression, war, enemy mentality, armaments, quarrels over territory, lineage, claims and counterclaims of superiority. Following this line, our hero worship chapters in childhood are filled up with stories of great warriors, political leaders and scientists with aggression and ruthlessness. Very few peace heroes are in our childhood books; rather our mass media and mass-self media are having contents which condition us with the enemy mentality, sadistic pleasure seeking, killing games and ruthless competitiveness.

This goes contrary to the fact that biological evolution offered human species higher level of brain development than muscle development. There is nature's special purpose. We are the only creature who can realise that air we inhale is gift of atmosphere and each one of us can be a giver like the nature.

Elevated Intellectualism

Tapoban School took this route from foundation in 1923. Teachers became accustomed in natural teaching ways remaining with the mentor where '*elevated intellectualism*' was normalised at family and school level. *Anecdotes from life of great leaders and warriors were included, but more than that great personalities with balanced life who worked for social reform, peace, protest against oppression, literature, arts, science and religion were chosen. Their development, attachment to parents and ideal, approach to solving problems, ideas and the benefit they brought for the humanity were discussed.* Effort was to provide inspiration for harmonious life and living, and to offer sustainable normal growth. Service to humanity aspect was always inspiringly presented from every great life. Effort was to demonstrate sublimation of ego and selfishness, acceptance of diversity of people but harmony in feeling to serve everyone.

Interestingly great lives from surroundings - the village Hemayatapur, Union Board comprising few villages and Pabna district were also featured. Communal harmony, greatness of prophets and social reformers, and contribution of common men and women for betterment of environment- all were included. Thus students would normally be tuned to harmony in individual, community and higher levels gradually. These were part of the content input in curriculum devised.

Community-School Compact for Care & Knowledge

Every Tapoban student served the surroundings better by knowing people and nature in feeling of inter-connect. *Their response was also observed for different types of situations- would they act with hatred and aggression, or in logical manner with consideration of all aspects among themselves. They were subjected to situations to develop response ability gradually.* They had to visit various places to search out information about great persons, and celebrate special occasions by enacting plays and rendering songs and poems

Mainstream education, from the lower school level should develop this spirit of harmony, balance and peaceful co-existence by resorting to elevated intellectualism and improved situation response capacity.

Since foundation of the school, stress was on motor and sensory nerve coordination practices for several purposes. One was ability to take prompt decision or to delay for complete set of relevant data.

Ways were varied. Teachers practiced and offered students practice in love to ideal and parents demonstrated through understanding their liking and working. This practice to develop inquisitiveness starting from the closest people created habit of discovery and service through neural reception and motor action.

Motor-Sensory Co-Ordination

Teachers believed that love for one is to maintain the loved one in happiness through action without pampering him or her. This emotion offered them intelligence. Many years later Daniel Goleman put the term emotional- intelligence into use to identify this as the most important quality of balanced leadership.

To make learning through physical and intellectual activities interesting while gradually improving motor-sensory coordination, games were collected from tradition and developed in classes too which could enhance right and left cerebral coordination. From 1967 to 1975, we find in R.W. Sperry's work how important was this for complete development of personality as creative and routine together makes a human being interesting.

Core of Spirituality

Tapoban School practiced core of spirituality following mentor's realisation 'to be spiritual is to know the reason'. This principle of Tapoban school system encouraged parents of all religious denominations to admit their wards to the school. There were Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Buddhists and Confucian among students. Every student, after completion of education returned to parents with the conviction that a real practitioner of any religion is actually following core tenets of every religion. Such students would never turn communal or try to convert others. How did it happen in the school?

It took two paths: every teacher was trained to believe in greatness of all religions while practising own and facilitating everyone to practice the core of their own religion so that on returning home they won't turn strangers at home. Discourse and understanding commonness of prayer centering life-ideal was the way one, eclectic in nature.

Second path was neural one. Simple *meditation around a purpose with ideal's advise as input, and attention and interest based concentration practice.* Development of higher self and attachment to great ideal- either guru, acharya or parent took care of balance in behaving and responding to situations. Tapoban students were guided to develop strong free will and desire to achieve the same qualities of the ideal. This image of a self which begins upliftment was created in them. The teachers became the preceptors gradually travelling the path ordained by the mentor.

Developing Higher Self

In 2005, Global Union of Scientists for Peace started a campaign for brain-based approach to peace through developing Higher self. Based on discoveries in neuroscience, GUSP prescribes meditation as part of education for normalising higher self to control impulsive, violent behaviour through development of the prefrontal cortex or 'higher brain' which Tapoban School system followed a century back. This 'higher brain' governs higher executive functioning, such as impulse control, judgment, decision-making, and moral reasoning.

GUSP ascribes 'underdevelopment and/or underutilization of the prefrontal cortex' as the 'fundamental cause of the pervasive violence in society today' and hyper excitation of Amygdala, the fear centre in brain for stress arising in different situations. If a student is trained in situation-response mechanism through editing experience and systematising habit during school years, would definitely enhance capacity of self-control in adverse situation and be saved from post-traumatic disorders in this complex world.

Mainstream education has to integrate the science of left-right brain balancing and motor-sensory coordination through appropriate stage-specific knowledge input, methods and learning objectives. What then is the use of scientific discoveries if these are not shaping personalities for solving conflicts and problems with composure?

Tapoban School system integrated 'six principles' following a unique learning programme which incurs the least cost and offers great value addition to the student's personality by way of ingraining concepts through

practical imprinting and experience editing. *'Learn All - around Phenomenon' or LAAP may be an appropriate term to describe the programme.*

Pedagogy of LAAP

An example in LAAP may be created with every student taking responsibility to grow plant from sapling, observing the process and outcomes in continuity, and finding out how every branch of knowledge is derived from the growth phenomenon.

LAAP is all about the joyful experience of going deeper into witnessing every existence unfurling through stages. By caring, feeling attachment and discovering needs of the sapling a student becomes participant observer in nature's way of development. Every student can help one sapling to grow. The student records every aspect he or she feels important, every question that rises in mind in the process of observation, every problem solved by him or her to make the sapling grow, every book consulted to solve any issue and every discovery that the student makes in the process which offers feeling of worth. By the process, under active observation of the teacher, individual and group of students- both inculcate the spirit of unison with nature, bonhomie in group and emotional attachment to the teacher and ideal with satisfaction.

LAAP offers study in science, arts, language, literature, society and nature around one phenomenon. The fear of mathematics, science, geography or history does not arise as the experiential and explanatorily learning makes knowledge realised one. More a teacher is able to identify aspects of every domain within a phenomenon, better the learning outcome and holistic vision development in students.

Developing Holistic Vision & Competence at School Level

Thus progress in holistic vision in an action-experience gradient of learning makes students conscious and conscientious about integral existence of all beings. *This starts the departure from reductionist education in school to avoid ingraining segmental approach in perceiving people, nature and phenomenon.*

Reductionist methods are good for deep learning but context and reality of being an integral part of the whole is lost. As a result, response to situations tend to be one-sided or incomplete. In social life, it brings unrest through impulsive behaviour. Reductionist approach at school level weakens a student's ability of holistic vision of any situation where as on a sound holistic base, reductionist higher education and research help them to be positive contributors in national life and ecologically sustainable trans generational progress.

General school education organised in LAAP would ensure students' attaining holistic vision in graduated manner. This vision would certainly help judging any incident, phenomenon or conflict from an integrated understanding and help dousing the flame of conflict, discord and fire of ego much before it destroys.

Naturalising Peace in Students

Tapoban school's knowhow to shape young citizens with increasing endowment of calmness and compassion in serving people and nature with protection and improvement is supported by later findings of science. The leader and the common man must come out from same school. The science of peace must prevail in holism of family-school continuum of education.

Mainstream school education, by inculcating progressively transformational integrationist ethos in students from all sections of the society, would be able to plug loopholes of breeding hatred and violence through content, reductionist treatment and anti-science methods. Peace with development has no better recipe than this and we need to seek multiple paradigms of this scientific-ethical-cultural perspective to suit different countries' differing uniquenesses.

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