

# Editorial

## Peace Education: Concern for Mind Training and Tagore

Whenever any problem of great dimension befalls modern man since last century, there is a stock response by creation of a branch of studies in academics and research dedicated to the problem. As we are habituated over last two hundred years to consider every study area as separate, so we dub such new problem areas as interdisciplinary study. Take example of much hype about value education few decades back or peace and conflict studies for some time. Does such an approach in education ensure looking into a great problem like resolving conflict and ensuring peace for lasting solution?

In this context Rabindranath Tagore's inner call to establish Visva-bharati in 1922 seems to be unique response to the same cause. It resonated feeling of Gandhi too. Gandhi wrote: *I feel in the inmost recesses of my heart..... that this world is sick unto death of blood-spilling. The world is seeking a way out, and I flatter myself with the belief that perhaps it will be the privilege of the ancient land of India to show that way out to the hungering world.*

Tagore tried the same. The world was just emerging from the dread of the First World War. It was also amidst torture of humanity in colonies of Asia, Africa, Australasia and South America by the same people. Tagore, the first Noble-laureate from Asia put all his earnings from all sources and committed all future earnings to establish a nest in one corner of India where all the World would come together. Santiniketan, literally meaning abode of peace is the seat of Visva-bharati, the '*Centre of culture where research into and study of the religion, literature, history, science and art of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Sikh, Christian and other civilisations may be pursued along with the culture of the West*', founded by him.

Tagore was clear that holistic understanding of culture and conflict is the sine-qua-non to prescribe solution to self and others. There is no scope to divide such a cultural study into water-tight compartments of science, art, history, literature and religion. He actually understood that any human-driven phenomenon is manifestation of the complex nature of human mind and our 'languageing' activity. The condition of peace prevailing in mind could only be ensured by study, research and training the process termed mind.

Let us revisit his objects as the current issue of IJPED is throwing light on Peace Education by publishing research from different parts of the world. Tagore's ideas of education go deep into the mission of peace.

### Fundamental Conditions of Peace

Tagore sought to '*realise in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the establishment of free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres*'.

The meeting of two minds, be it of two individuals, two families, two groups, two communities, two countries, two religions or two civilisations demands free communication of ideas between the two. Each of them must recognise strength of conviction and character in other and that too from own view point. In 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have all means of fastest communication with us. Yet marriages are falling apart at all levels. Our own view points are never able to recognise something worthy in others'. Some how adamancy has crept in us. Tagore, in the context of the Earth offered solution in another object of founding Visva-bharati in Bengal.

## **Different Aspects of Truth**

Peace to be sustainable is to be based on truth. Tagore told to accept truth at ease. The first object for which Tagore founded the varsity is *'to study the mind of Man in its realisation of different aspects of truth from diverse points of view'*. Mind is the process of image making, breaking and re-making about our surroundings, near and far through exposure, experience and search in memory. Images we like, guide us towards cordial relations. Images of dislike in our memory moves us further from relations.

Sustainable relationship is key to peaceful existence. Peaceful existence is the existence that aspires for *'do not die, do not cause death, if possible abolish death'*, said Thakur Anukulchandra, a socio-spiritual thinker of 20<sup>th</sup> century. And such an existence has dynamism of inquisitive service to other lives and manifest in tenderness for so-called non-living. Existence is the reality. Consciousness of the reality and manifest existence or perceived reality together are truth to us.

Truth has several dimensions. Single sentient being, despite good effort can't possess complete view about any phenomenon. So our appreciation of a phenomenon and decision making with regard to our role on the basis of moral and ethical standard with regard to the phenomenon is bound to be constricted. This constriction breeds conflict with others at every level. However, by training our mind process for higher level of patient hearing and slow thinking for closure of vision is possible.

## **Peace follows slowing mind**

It requires stillness in our motor-sensory complex to realise that there is more than every 'I' perceive. Stillness is moral because it does not harm the other. Pursuit of stillness is ethical because it guides us not to afflict our existence with any harm from any other. Tagore's first object was the realisation of this foundational aspect.

Tagore founded such an education ecosystem where every student readies thy 'I' to have courage to get exposure to others' points of views. In such a system one also readies to present own view-point without malice towards none. Amartya Sen, another Noble Laureate from Santiniketan, ascribes this to the argumentative tradition of India which never killed any view, howsoever minority the view might be.

The ecosystem needs great minds to converge in a nest with minimum externalities of convenience and without ego of considering one self the best among all. Tagore offered this ecosystem to notable thinkers and statesmen during his time. He exposed inquisitive students to them in full freedom of mixing, which gradually inculcated in them the art of visualising and honourable distancing.

Education is unfulfilled in its mission if high level of acceptance to listen to emotionally intelligent humans is lost in the din and bustle of paraphernalia. More so, we need to listen to the nature in earnest.

Peace is the natural balance whether between married couples or warring countries. This precious balance is delicate and to be nurtured from both sides with a sense of strength in conviction and righteous conduct. The strength comes from knowing and practicing your own culture without deriding others. Contemplating on english-educated Indian's weaknesses and inferiority complex during the colonial era, Tagore wanted to mark a departure towards balanced persona through an open-academic intervention. The purpose was to bring back the vision that at every level, we are inter-connected. His object to found Visva-bharati reflects it vividly.

## **Relationship on equitable terms**

Tagore's second object stresses on intimate relation between two or more entities. *To bring into more intimate relations with one another, through patient study and research, the different cultures of the East on the basis of their underlying unity* was his prescription. This was the epoch making call for Asia, reeling under heavy burden of colonial exploitation of physical resources and mental slavery. That was despite great civilisations of the continent in India, China, Japan, Korean Peninsula, East Asia, Iran, Iraq and Arab Peninsula flourishing for

thousands of years. Wealth of Asian civilisations, which were still vibrating in culture of the lands, Tagore wanted to be excavated and put to good use. The reason, only people with self-respect would understand the value of others' on equitable term.

To develop intimate relationship between the East and the West, he wanted to discover *the stand-point of unity of the life and thought of Asia and apply that standpoint to approach the West*. This aspect of strength to assess the other on the basis of one's own standpoint is particularly crucial for peaceful co-existence.

## **Peace and peace education**

Peace Education or Education for Peace can not be an area of study only; in fact our education should be able to ensure developing peaceful minds for positive and productive activities. Peace is a condition whose reflection is seen in calm and contemplating campuses, communities, and states. However, such a socio-cultural condition arrives only through individual, couple and family mind-set.

Is this possible when education is inflicted with too much bipolarity between better and worse, excessive logic and too much emotion, high factuality and high fictionality, and high prestige and low esteem? Such bipolarity prepares us for a battlefield mindset where victor gets everything and vanquishes are shattered.

*Peace, which arrives in tandem with joy and lasting satisfaction, can't arise of such a constricted orientation which is unable to look in the joy of duty for inter-connected and inter-interested existence at all levels. It fails to decipher the linkage. Internalizing peace and progressing with peace - both are limited by chance of wisdom-knowledge-behavior linkage at every level* (IJPED Editorial, vol.8, no.1, June 2020).

## **Peace is intra-personal**

Internalizing peace and progressing with peace, be it for a statesman or a common man is an inherent cry. Sometimes we are able to listen to that cry and halt for the time to become quiet. Education that begins with parents and extended family during formative years of a child is important in this regard.

Observation power is normal in children; from immediate parental to environment in proximity, the child 'I' is awake, interested and relates to whole and parts. Mind, the process of making image frames in brain from happenings around and the mechanism of storage of such frames in visual and sound within is progressively active in child. Neuro science researches hint that between six to eight years from birth neuron activation through this process is accomplished largely. Though few recent findings confirm that neural activation is possible in adult too, that does not contradict earlier findings. Rather it raises hope that for children with fractured childhood, there is a leeway to liberate through this intrapersonal route in life-long learning. For educators and parents, these findings are important.

## **Parental Conflict Reflects**

If a child is brought up in parental environment of conflict, disrespect, bad word exchange, selfishness and break-up - unpleasant memories would replay in all future decision makings. Opposite is also equally true. It is not the reality of mutual relation between parents but how the child 'I' relates to parents in emotional space. Child's inherent hankering for comfort, security, joy and spontaneous response in relation to parental activities either retards or improves personality development.

Good experiences create images in brain which acts as reference in future for comparing and decision making. A child who observes repeatedly that parents solve every issue through discussion, develops a let-go attitude on many issues. If such a child observes one parent keeping mum during other's angry moments, has a better chance to gain ability to resolve conflict and be in peace within.

## **Then What**

It is scientific that a quiet mind can resolve many problems. So is true for peace making. A quiet mind creates ripple in a conflict situation in the mind of first-mover. This quality of mindfulness saves the situation and eases tension. Infact, almost all problems of agitation and aggression is a thought process. This can be addressed through education in two ways. Agitational and aggressive mindsets, through positive intervention could be mellowed down by exposure to right parenting and supportive schooling in participatory mode. Those, who are not in such mindset, may be cowardice or pacifist, through interventions of strength of moral and character, could be capacitated with techniques of slowing down the agitating minds.

For both to work together a robust mind training incorporating all learning and inculcative aspects of being and becoming through stories of culture and techniques of civilisationation sustenance is in order. We need Tagore's object of Visva-bharati to fully bloom in many centres.

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