

THE VOICE OF ‘THE OTHER’: RABINDRANATH TAGORE’S INSIGHTS ON CREATIVE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of all pervasive globalization and the triumph of capitalism and consumerism, education and especially dominant mainstream management education in its structured and conventional form, has responded by churning out ‘products’ equipped to combat the aggressive competition under the demands of the forces of the market. Creativity and joy in the learning experience has been sacrificed at the altar of this fossilized system just to ensure the ‘rigour’ of the pedagogical methods and processes. The present paper is an attempt to raise the voice of the ‘Other’ to offer alternative sources and methods of learning in the light of valuable insights from the life and work of Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate poet from India who was not only a literary genius but a musician, philosopher, artist and a pioneer in experiments on alternative education. The paper also connects the relevance of Tagore’s wisdom today in view of the shifting paradigm in modern management thinking and practice by conscientious thinkers and academics in the West. Finally the paper outlines the salient learning points from Tagore for enrichment of the present ossified education system to bring in fresh air and new light for all round humanistic development of the individuals and creation of a joyful and creative learning environment.

Keywords: Holistic management. Man-making education, Alternative Learning, Voice of ‘The Other’, Creativity

Prologue

The year was 1961, the birth centenary of the Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate poet of India and a multi-dimensional genius who was sage, philosopher, lyricist, novelist, playwright, painter and also a pioneer in education – all in one. Though anchored strongly in Indian culture and heritage, his appeal was irresistibly and palpably felt in different parts of the globe in the East and the West alike. The Ministry of Culture, Government of India decided to pay homage to this great seer-poet by creating a documentary on Tagore. The person who was entrusted with this challenging assignment was none else than another multi-faceted genius Satyajit Ray who was the only Indian film maker to receive the prestigious Oscar Award for Lifetime Achievement towards his lifelong contribution to world cinema. What finally transpired and crystallized out of the virtual confluence of these two great minds was a masterpiece – the documentary titled ‘Rabindranath Tagore’ under the banner of National Film Development Corporation (NFDC).

As the screen opens one sees a cortege with hundreds of men carrying the body of a bearded old man draped all in white proceeding to the burning ghat for the last rites to be administered on his funeral pyre. In the background rang the baritone voice of Satyajit Ray resonating with the creative spirit of life even in that hour of remorse.

“On the 7th of August 1941, in the city of Calcutta, a man died. His mortal remains perished but he left behind him a heritage that no fire can consume. It was a heritage of words and music and poetry, of ideas and of ideals. And it has the power to move us, to inspire us today and in the days to come. We, who owe him so much, salute his memory.”

Introduction

Till date there had been many documentaries made on different aspects of Rabindranath Tagore – his life, his arts and creative journey, his other works, his mission of a novel and futuristic education and so on. But this one has a

lasting impact on our minds as it is the portrayal of one genius by another and that is what makes a world of difference.

Tagore, the proponent of a new education system based on the classical Indian model of learning in the ambience of nature was comprehensively portrayed in this documentary with details of his unique and novel experiments on education that are extremely relevant to us even today. In order to find the source of this effulgence one has to go back to his childhood days. Here one is greeted with the mastery of Satyajit Ray in his depiction of a classroom situation in a school where Rabi, the young Rabindranath, was admitted and where he would feel utter disenchantment with the rote learning exercise. In the scene we find some nameless students and a faceless teacher whose presence is not visible to the viewer. But we can hear a hackneyed and mechanical voice speaking to the students in a manner that can at best be called a sordid example of mindless learning. There was actually an exchange of words or sounds but no meaningful conversation.

In a typically loud and monotonous voice the teacher asks, “Can you see a box?”

The response of the students was like a clattering cacophony: “Yes, I can see a box.”

The camera then pans on the young Rabindranath. Was he also part of this loud and mad exercise in the class? Certainly not! One could see his curious eyes looking out of the window in quest of ‘the other’ in the world beyond the classroom as he was thoroughly disappointed with what was going on inside in the name of education. Nothing seemed more fascinating to the boy than the world outside - the gushing stream, the swaying breeze and the birds singing. All this imbibed in him the mood and the spirit to tune up his senses and perception with the rhythm, colours and flavour of nature. What was young Rabi doing that time when this lifeless teaching was going on? The shot portrays Rabi looking out of the window of the classroom. He was simply casting his wide and curious eyes out of the window and was sipping in the nectar of life from nature least interested in the apology of a learning process going on inside the classroom. When the air inside the class room was heavy and stagnant and the light of knowledge groping in the darkness of such a mindless drudgery, this young yet future harbinger of alternative education was looking out of window for fresh air and new light.

The Call of the ‘Other’

It is this burning quest for the ever anew, ‘the other and the beyond’ that was always the driving force, the primal energy of Tagore’s lifelong creative effulgence that would find expression in myriad forms of literary, artistic and even educational breakthroughs throughout his life. Thus from the day of this nightmarish experience in a school this sense of ‘the other’ kept on haunting while also compelling Tagore to explore new and alternative sources and methods of learning leaving the beaten track far behind. This will come as a hard blow to shake the very roots of the diehard proponents of professional education who confidently champion the cause of ‘the one and the only way’ to excellence, rather success in life by pursuing higher education as in engineering or management. Tagore went to several schools and hated them all. Finally he received his education in an informal ambience – in his own household. At the age of eighteen Tagore was sent to England in Brighton to study Law. But what did he learn there? He came back without completing his studies but thoroughly enriched with a comprehensive knowledge of western classical music that would find many creative adaptations in his experiments with music in future. Later he was sent by his father to manage their ancestral property in Silaidaha on the bank of the river Padma (presently in Bangladesh). Beyond the time needed to discharge his responsibilities he would often spend time sitting in his boat and watching the myriad moods of nature, serene as well as exultant, and the simple yet vibrant life of people in the rural milieu. The raging waters of the turbulent river and the vast open sky above expanded the mental horizons of the poet and kindled his creative spirit. All this would later find expression in all his future endeavour to create ‘not this’ but ‘the other’ either in content or in form of his future creative pursuits including education all emanating and evolving from his mind that he would keep wide open to give and receive in abundance.

Now perhaps the most remarkable achievement of Tagore in this tryst with ‘openness’ and ‘otherness’ was the creation of his beloved Institute of Higher Learning – VisvaBharati at Santiniketan in the district of Birbhum in West Bengal. This was to mark the beginning of his novel experiment in the lap of nature amidst open fields and under the vast blue sky far from the madding crowd of the metropolis of Calcutta. In his Inaugural Address he made it clear to the students that they will have to learn from their teachers in person as well as from the trees around. He modelled his institution with inspiration from the ‘tapovan’ or forest schools of ancient India where classes would be

held in the open fields under the trees. Keen observation and constant living contact with nature were to be integral parts of the learning process. Intimate daily relationship of love, care and respect between the students and the teachers in an 'Ashram' environment was considered essential for holistic development of the inmates. Both teachers and students joyfully participated in this novel venture and they came not just from India but from different parts of the world. Thus a century ago we have a classic example of a global mind with local roots in Indian culture and ethos but appealing to one and all the world over with a clarion call to live, love and learn with joy. Tagore's education was an authentic synthesis of the East and the West, a strong bridge between the ancient and the modern culture, and also between the rural and the urban milieu. His lifelong striving was to remain out of the rut of the banal practices right from his school days. He had built five houses in Santiniketan but never lived in one of them for long. Come to think of it, even in one house he would keep on changing the room where he would be staying time and again. Who could imagine at the ripe age of seventy his creative spirit ever alive was to find a completely new expression – painting! All this was driven by his eternal quest for 'the new', the different', 'the other' throughout his life.

Objectives of the Paper

The present paper is a qualitative study based on Tagore's life and his communication and correspondences with the world. One of the main objectives of this paper is to champion the cause of raising the voice of humanism from Asia on the basis of Tagore's contribution towards an alternative man-making education in order to counter the overriding forces of aggression of capitalism, mostly originating from the western hemisphere of the globe, and the resulting dominant paradigm of modern management education that churns out 'products' fit and ready to fight in the prevailing market economy with a mental frame suitable to combat the forces of competition and win the race. It will then draw out lessons from Tagore's insights and experiences in education that will offer an alternative paradigm to modern management to transform its contents and pedagogy with for the sustenance of individuals, organizations and the planet at large.

Awakening of the Asian Voice – 'The Other'

The Asian voice may draw inspiration from Tagore's ideas and ideals of alternative education based on contact and consonance with the human being and the natural environment. Management education may well unlearn and humanize in the days to come in the light of Tagore's pillars of alternative education with its unique characteristics: intimate contact with nature and teachers as role models; emphasis on character rather than behavior; fostering community living and practices; development of aesthetic quality beyond rational faculties; liberating work from monotony towards expression of joy and freedom; enhancing multiple levels of human competencies and awakening grass-root sensitivity as well as global concerns.

Though essentially a poet, Tagore had his mooring from childhood in the wisdom of the celebrated body of ancient Indian Literature – the Upanishads. The messages of the Upanishads were not born out of intellectual discourse and argumentation only but also out of direct realization of the Self and Truth by the sages and seers of India. They were anchored in the essence of Indian ethos and culture but the light of their wisdom radiated worldwide with equal impact and relevance. One of the cardinal messages of the Upanishad begins thus – *Srinvantuvisweamritasysputah* (Listen! O children of immortality world over!) The sages were addressing not just the people of India but the global audience. Rooted in the Upanishads Tagore evolved his thoughts on education and human development with a universal appeal and christened his university *Visva-Bharati* where *Visva* reaches out to the world while *Bharati* preserves the Indian uniqueness. "*Visva-Bharati* founded a unique approach to international fellowship, based on a humanism that flowed out of man's longing and capacity to live in harmony." (Das Gupta 2011:71)

Challenge to the 'Wild West'

The Nobel Laureate Economist and philosopher Amartya Sen points out, the poet was convinced that "... there was something deeply incomplete in the priorities the Western world, a gap in the closing of which eastern thought, from India and china, had something constructive to offer." (Sen 2011: 4) Tagore was always a champion for the cause of raising the Asian voice on the basis of his principles and philosophy of humanism to combat the forces of materials and aggression from the west. In this regard he made a powerful statement in his lecture at the Tokyo Imperial University in 1916 that challenged the roots of Western culture and civilization. "The lamp of ancient Greece is

extinct in the land where it was first lighted, the power of Rome lies buried under the ruins of its vast empire. But the civilization whose basis is society and spiritual ideal of man, is still a living thing in India and China.” (Das Gupta 2009: 246) During his lectures in China this critique became sharp and specific. “I cannot, however, bring myself to believe that any nation in this world can be great and yet be materialistic...Materialism is exclusive, and those who are materialistic claim their individual rights of enjoyment, of storing and possessing.” (Tagore 2009: 77) His alternative Asian voice subsequent to this critique had a bold alternative to offer: “All our true enjoyment is in the realization of perfection. This can be reached not through augmentation but through renunciation of the material for the sake of the ideal.” (Tagore 2009: 151) All throughout his lectures in China he was launching as if a crusade in the world of thoughts and ideas to garner our strength in Asia and build our unity. “In Asia we must seek our strength in union, in an unwavering faith in righteousness and never in the egoistic spirit of separateness and self-assertion... In Asia we must unite, not through some mechanical power of organization, but through a spirit of true sympathy. The organized power of machine is ready to smite and devour us, from which we must be rescued by the living power of spirit which grows into strength, not through mere addition, but through organic assimilation.” (Tagore 2009: 51) He had unflinching faith in the humanizing potential of the voice from the East. “Let the awakening of the east impel us consciously to discover the essential and universal meaning of our own civilization, to remove the debris from its path, to rescue it from the bondage of stagnation that produces impurities, to make it a great channel of communication between all human races.” (Das 1999: 99)

In the twentieth century Tagore was a strong and living proponent of holistic education for overall human development. He translated his vision into reality by founding his university in the lap of Nature far from the humdrum of the metropolis of Calcutta where he himself had nightmarish experiences of attending schools in his childhood. He ran away from all the schools he tried as he could not survive and withstand the drudgery of rote learning devoid of meaning and touch of life. Here are some of those painful reminiscences and realizations of his lifeless experiences in conventional learning that packs the brain with abundance of information only for utilitarian gains. “...the child’s life is brought into the education factory, - lifeless, colourless, dissociated from the context of the universe, within bare white walls staring like eyeballs of the dead. “We are born with that God-given gift of taking delight in the world, but such delightful activity is fettered and imprisoned, stilled by a force called discipline which kills the sensitiveness of the child mind, he mind which is always on the alert, restless and eager to receive firsthand knowledge from Mother Nature. We sit inert, like dead specimens of some museum, whilst lessons are pelted at us...our mind misses the perpetual stream of ideas which come from the heart of nature...” (Tagore 2009: 87-88)

Now if we take a deep look at the recent developments in management education, one of the striking resemblances with Tagore is the shift from the conventional teaching towards a lively learning process where the faculty is compelled to be a learner too in every interaction with the students. Secondly the lashing effect of crony, cowboy capitalism on management education has been instrumental in perpetuating an education system which only churns out number crunching machines, advocates of careerism, materialism and consumerism. This has led to a search for alternative paradigm in management thinking and practice among conscientious academics, business leaders and consultants worldwide. Quest for meaning of work, purpose of life, spirit-based leadership, social responsibility of business, concern for Nature and environment, engagement in ethics and values are increasingly finding space in the discourse of management teaching and practice. Thought leaders are trying to explore alternative sources and methods of learning from disciplines like history, literature, biographies, ancient wisdom of the East, etc. that are beyond the corridors of structured management literature and curriculum. The life, insights and works of Tagore and his experiments on education become immensely relevant in this regard for management education to come out of dehumanizing capitalistic influence towards a vibrant and joyful endeavour with a human face.

Shifting Paradigm in Management Thinking and Education

In the last few decades there has been a strong and growing critique of mainstream management education and its dominant paradigm based on capitalism and industrial mono-culture. It will be useful here to share some of these alternative initiatives. In 2004 Ian Mitroff, Professor Emeritus, USC Marshall School of Business sent an open letter to the Deans and faculty of business schools in USA where he came down bold and sharp of our existing management education where he identified five areas of failure that resulted in the following aberrations among the students and faculty:

“1. A mean-spirited and distorted view of human nature;

2. A narrow, outdated, and repudiated notion of ethics;
3. A narrow and highly limited definition of, and the role of, management in human affairs;
4. A overly reified conception of the “sub-disciplines” of the field of management; and
5. A sense of learned helplessness and hopelessness among faculties, students, and workers regarding control of their careers and lives.” (Marshall: 2004)

All this points towards some glaring pitfalls in both the process as well as the outcome of mainstream management education – dominance of our techno-economic identity over deeper and nobler aspects of human nature; failure to impart ethics education in manner that is vibrant, engaging and relevant to the students; sharpening of instrumental reason at the cost of critical rational faculties; denigrating the power of lofty emotions in personal and organizational transformation; splitting the holistic conception of management into disconnected pigeon holes of areas and sub-disciplines; loss of meaning in work and purpose in life.

In modern academia there has been emergence of rising critique of our prevalent methods of learning among the academic circles in business and management from conscious and conscientious thinkers in search of ‘the other’ models of knowledge creation and dissemination. This powerful critical voice has been raised by eminent stalwarts in this field (Ghoshal 2005; Bennis and O’Toole 2005). There is also a search for an alternative holistic paradigm of organic connectivity so that “...our heart and head does not split knowledge into dualities of thought and being, mind and body, emotion and intellect, but resonates with a wholeness and fullness that engages every part of one’s being.” (Kind et al 2005) To usher in fresh air and new light into an otherwise structured and fossilized conventional management education, illumined thinkers and wisdom leaders are seeking insights from disciplines humanities (literature, arts, films, music, theatre etc.), sports, spirituality and others to establish the missing connect between learning and life. Otherwise we keep on ‘solving the wrong problem precisely’ using methods that are primarily techno-economic in nature whereas the systemic and spiritual perspectives are ruthlessly pushed out of our vista of vision and concern (Mitroff 1998). The serious implications of attempting pseudo-solutions to the problems of our economy and society have been aptly depicted by Ims and Zsolnai (2006) in the opening chapter “Shallow Success and Deep Failure” of their edited book “Business within Limits”. In this book they presented an alternative holistic and humanistic world-view rooted on Deep Ecology and Buddhist Economics. Michael Ray (1992) proposed a similar paradigm in which he advocated that vision must replace profit as the key aim of business. Chakraborty (1995), the pioneer of value education in management in India, identified the main pillars of wholesome business transformation in his concept of ‘Business Ashram’ on the founding principles of Indian philosophy, culture and ethos. This finds resonance in Stephen Covey’s (1995) emphasis on character beyond professional competence in his proposed shift in management metaphor from stomach to spirit.

The urgent need to explore certain non-conventional sources and alternative methods of learning has been highlighted by Mukherjee (2007) for a comprehensive and integral development of the individual in organization. The aim is to develop a ‘quality mind’ (Chakraborty 1998) or ‘quality consciousness’ (Chatterjee 1998). This search for alternative sources of management learning prompted Michael Gelb (1998) to draw our attention to the principles of learning and creativity laid down by Leonardo da Vinci, the stellar figure of Italian Renaissance. Weick (2006) propounded a new approach to learning through ‘heedful relating’ by cultivating the art of ‘mindfulness’, active and non-judgmental listening. There has been a growing interest in Spirituality at Work (SAW) as evident from the rising number of publications on Spirituality and Holistic Management (Biberman, Whitty and Robbin 1999; Bell and Taylor 2004; Cash and Grey 2000; Fischer 1999); Mitroff and Denton 1999, Pruzan et al 2007 etc.). The concepts of Synchronicity (Jarowski 1998) and Spiritual Quotient or SQ (Zohar and Marshal 2000) are also significant developments in this direction.

It may be worthwhile now to shift attention to Tagore and his experiments in alternative education to draw out pertinent lessons for transforming ourselves and our organizations for a better tomorrow for the individual, the society and the planet at large.

Tagore’s Insights on Creative Learning

What then are the lessons from Tagore and his experiments for the modern education, management or otherwise?

Holistic Paradigm for Management Education: In recent times there has been a discernible thrust on evolving a holistic philosophy education in management. But this implies bringing in a radical change in the contents, pedagogy and delivery of management education and corporate training. Otherwise the ever calculating mind driven by the logic of economic rationality will never reach anywhere near holistic perception. Tagore was bold and sharp in his strong critique of over quantification. "Numbers add but do not connect." (Tagore 2009: 147) He was also powerful in his comment on the techno-economic model of progress that has been the major driving force of the sweeping industrial civilization and mono-culture and the needs of which are successfully catered by mainstream management education. "Progress towards what and for whom?" he raised such critical questions hundred years back. (Tagore 1937:5) Tagore's insights on imparting knowledge in consonance with nature are of cardinal importance when it comes to developing curriculum that promotes holistic learning. It helps in enlivening our sensory faculties that receive signals and vibrations from the surroundings and lead to knowledge creation. In his Talks in China he said, "I believe that children should be surrounded with the things of Nature which have their own educational value." (Tagore 2009: 89) At the time of creation of his university he made it clear to the students that they would be given two sets of teachers – the teachers as human beings and the teachers as the trees all around in nature. We understand the relevance of these messages of Tagore today when we find corporate executives and business school students are being sent for mountaineering adventures and retreats in the heart of nature for revitalization, renewal and re-establishing the organic connect with life. The wisdom and sagacity of Tagore thus transcends the limits of time and space.

Enrichment of Emotional and Aesthetic Faculties: Since the beginning of management education till today there has been dominant emphasis on cultivating left-brain thinking and sharpening instrumental rationality whereas many of the problems in our life, work, and even in educational institutions are rooted in the emotional domain of the individuals. It is true that there has been acceptance of the importance of Emotional Quotient these days, but there is still a lot of gap in the learning methods that need to be adopted for cultivating Emotional intelligence. Modern education equips a student with his capacity of thinking but at the dire expense of capacity of 'feeling'. Tagore's experiments and insights on education can go a long way to provide directions for reviewing and revamping our business school curriculum. Beyond Marketing, Finance, Systems, Operations and HR, the conventional inputs on the usual disciplines of management, it is time for academics to consider introduction of modules or even full courses on arts and literature, field work on community development, observation and exploration of Nature, sharpening of our sensory faculties and cultivation of emotional intelligence, aesthetic excellence, stimulation of right brain thinking all leading to holistic human development.

Transcending the Techno-Economic Model of Man: Tagore's golden words on education may be worth remembering here: "The education of a complete life involves trying to recognize through a correct reading of history, of science, of the arts, in the light of man's spiritual truth." (Das Gupta 2011: 71) His ideal of education is founded on an exalted model of man as a spiritual being which is rooted in ancient Indian wisdom that portrayed the human being as children of immortality (*Amritasyaputrah*). This has transformative implications for management education and organizational learning. Unless we accept such a notion of infinite human possibility, most of the inputs on learning and motivation get limited to the initial levels of Maslow's Need Hierarchy model and the motivational strategy in organizations also get aligned and designed accordingly. Vital issues like meaning of work or purpose of life are pushed beyond the margins, off the immediate domains of concern.

Management and Liberal Arts: A serious problem faced by modern management is the display of misplaced over-confidence bordering on arrogance among the students and executives that there must be a single techno-economic answer to a problem which they know and no 'grey areas' are ever admitted or even explored. This leads to a cocksure attitude of knowing the one and the only right answer which is an outcome of linear and binary thinking where the search for alternative answers is given a mortal blow that leads to a serious malady-remedy mismatch. Insights from humanities (Arts, Literature, Music etc.) can help break these hard shells and cocoons of the quantitative paradigm and open the horizons of the mind to multiple alternatives in a pluralistic world where the colour of the reality is grey and its shape amorphous. Tagore's learning philosophy and methodology can help enhance our capacity of 'thinking out of the box' and generate multiple alternatives and solutions to a single problem as we all observe the world from our own unique and respective positions at a time where uncertainty and change constitute the fabric of reality. It may be mentioned here that even in such citadels of management education like Harvard and Stanford academic stalwarts like Joseph L. Badaracco Jr. and Jim Maarch are using the literary works of Shakespeare and many others to help the students have a clear and multi-layered understanding of the reality of the complex business scenario that reveals to us in myriad dimensions.

Tryst with Silence: In recent years, one finds the introduction of some of such transformational processes like meditation, mindfulness exercise etc. in self and organizational development workshops business schools and corporate houses. This plays a positive role in evolving a self-culture that enables us to be in touch with our inner space, feel the harmony within and harness our infinite potential that gets translated into effectiveness in leadership roles, fostering team spirit, decision making, problem solving, and conflict management. But all this is yet to find spontaneous acceptance from the mainstream academics as they look at these initiatives with suspicion and equate them as religious practices and rituals. It may not be out of context to mention here that a century ago, Tagore had introduced collective prayers and meditation as part of the daily activities of the inmates of the university. He had earmarked a particular place, a room, for the practice of the meditation and worship of the Formless Divinity to make the appeal of this initiative universal. This was because he had placed his abiding trust and confidence on the efficacy of these self-development processes recommended by the sages and seers of India millennia ago. As a worthy inheritor of that pristine legacy, the sage-poet Tagore only continued this tradition leaving a positive example for posterity in any field of education to imbibe, practice and enjoy the fruits of the same.

Concluding Reflections

Conventional management education system especially its dominant mainstream is founded on the pillars of predictability, measurability and objectivity. It owes its origin to the western capitalistic hegemony, exploitation of the workers for the accumulation of profits to the owner-entrepreneur and its natural offshoot ‘Scientific Management’ of Frederick Winslow Taylor. Anything that is not predictable or measurable did not find space within the discourse or practice of management. All this has created an aggressive mindset among both the faculty and the students and a misplaced confidence that there is one and only single solution to any problem. Moreover the validity of the solution would have to stand the test of techno-economic rationality. Viktor Frankl in his insightful book ‘Man’s Search for Meaning’ had diagnosed this problem of modernity as an obsession not with nothingness but ‘nothing-but-ness’. This aptly captured the dead sure attitude of the techno-managerial machismos that there can be no space for ‘the other’ or alternative solutions to any particular problem. Sadly enough this reflects the complete ignorance or oblivion of the reality that there are deeper and intricate social, psychological, cultural and human dimensions to any problem – technical, managerial or otherwise. While it is also true that courses on these dimensions have been introduced in the structured academic curriculum, the stalwarts of the mainstream management and consequently their counterparts in student community treat these with disdain as ‘soft’ or irrelevant courses that hardly deserve any worthwhile attention as they have no ultimate value in the job market. Thus organizational cultures are created to devote solely their energy and initiatives towards the pursuit of profits, turnover and economic growth. These organizations later shape up into colossal engines of manipulation and exploitation that tend to disregard the finer qualities and sensibilities of man and the higher human aspirations beyond money, power and fame.

The homogenizing influence of western capitalism has not only posed serious threat to eliminate cultural diversity that characterize different other parts of the world but also shaped the philosophy and practices of education, especially mainstream management education. To cater to the demands of a global industrial mono-culture, the scope of flourishing one’s critical and creative potential has become so limited that this education system is rolling out ‘products’ with two characteristics – binary logic and linear thinking. On one hand, Tagore’s voice of humanism was a formidable challenge to the foundations of aggrandizing corporate capitalism, endless material pursuit and rampant consumerism. On the other hand the new and innovative education system propagated by him and institutionalized in his university was aimed at holistic human development and natural expression of our full creative potential. This was his bold and authentic response to question the very premise of a robotized education system that reduces human beings to money earning machines.

The location and architecture of modern organizations and educational institutions make them completely divorced from Nature. Now Tagore’s experiment on holistic and humanistic education based on learning in natural surroundings comes as a bold and powerful challenge to such gigantic behemoths that keep on churning out millions of mindless ‘One Dimensional Man’ (title of book by Herbert Marcuse) devoid of heart and soul. Who would care to remember that many of the management theories and practices that we have learnt from the West evolved out of dire crisis and compelling necessity in the background of a violent spectre of human destruction and genocide – the Second World War.

Epilogue

Those were indeed the worst of times. The whole world was witnessing the haunting spell of the apocalypse all over. The earth and the sky was filled with billowing smokes, flashes of missiles, deafening sounds of bombs, cries of suffering millions. The Second World War was in full blast in Europe and world over.

May 7, 1941 was the 80th and the last birthday of the sage poet Rabindranath Tagore being celebrated at his own 'abode of peace' – *Santiiniketan*. The poet was now a broken man with all his hope lost in the spirit of humanism and glory of western culture and civilization. Groping for light in the darkness of anguish and disillusionment and yet groping for the last ray of hope, the poet wrote 'Crisis of Civilization' – his last testament for humanity. Thus he had concluded his powerful masterpiece:

"I had once believed that the springs of civilization will issue from the heart of Europe. But today, when I am about to leave the world, that faith has deserted me. I look around and see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility. And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in man. I shall wait for the new dawn, a new chapter in history when the holocaust will end and the air will be rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon, from the east where the sun rises."

Are we listening, all veteran thought leaders in management academia and business community? When shall we rise to the occasion and discharge our responsibility towards humanizing the disciplines of knowledge including management that will offer alternative sources and methods of learning to the West and the world at large? That day will herald a new dawn and the world will be waiting eagerly to greet the new sun rising from the far horizon in the East.

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