



ENSEMBLE

TOGETHER

CONCORDES

BOGOTÁ D.C. DECEMBER 2002

THE WORLD UNION OF JESUIT ALUMNI/AE EXTENDS A WARM WELCOME TO MEMBERS TO ATTEND THE WORLD CONGRESS OF JESUIT ALUMNI/AE IN KOLKATA, INDIA, JANUARY 21-24, 2003 WHEN ITS NEXT MEETING AND ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS WILL BE HELD.

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THE EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL OF THE WORLD UNION OF JESUIT ALUMNI/AE APPOINTED AT THE WORLD CONGRESS HELD IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA IN JULY 1997.

The Executive and Council is made up of: Four ex officio: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer and 13 elected on the basis of two each for Africa, Latin America, North America, Europe and South Asia and of one each for the Middle East (vacant), East Asia and Oceania.

Also closely associated with the WUJA are: Two Vice Presidents of the Pedro Arrupe Association and the Webmaster of the WUJA Website.

*Sadly Pedro Reis Lima Neto the member for Brazil died on May 25, 2002. May he rest in peace.

Taken from the AJAA, Australia, by permission of Robyn Treseder, council member.

**WORLD CONGRESS OF JESUIT ALUMNI/AE
KOLKATA INDIA JANUARY 21 -24, 2003
The Summit of Joy**

Congress Theme: THE QUEST FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

The theme of the Congress is well illustrated by these opening words of a poem by world famous Indian Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore

'Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high ...'

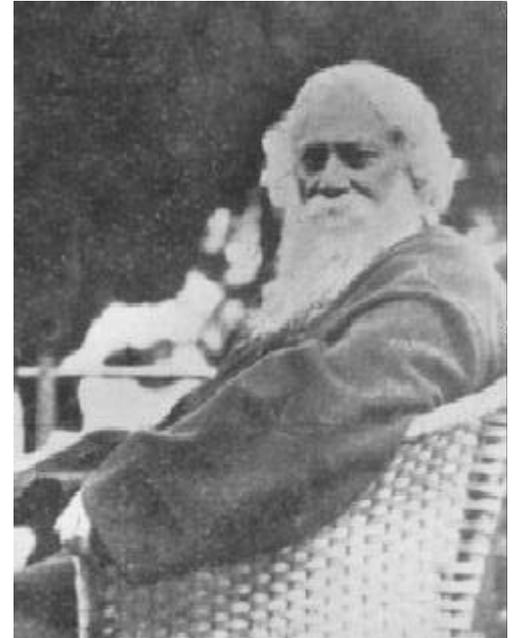
Rabindranath Tagore (1861 - 1941) attended St Xavier's College, Kolkata in 1875 - 1876 and was a part the Old Boys' Association in the 1930s, so it is fitting that his words are used to enrich the Congress.

Religion for Rabindranath Tagore was a matter of personal conviction. He had greater faith in the individuals "all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly and act rightly, thus becoming channels of moral truth".

②

Tagore considered himself a solitary pilgrim in the eternal quest for boundless bliss that is perhaps beyond the realm of human experience. His life was a sustained search for a universal form of religious expression, rooted in the spirit of Indian tradition.

Following is Rabindranath Tagore's most famous and memorable invocation to the Divinity for his country's redemption. (Published 1910 in Gitanjali.)



*Rabindranath Tagore at the formation of the
St Xavier's College Old Boys' Association
in 1932.*

*(From St Xavier's - The Making of a Calcutta Institution
by Udayan Nambodiry)*

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action;

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Our World Congress

This issue is the last one we will send out before our VI Jesuit Alumni/ae Congress that will be held in Kolkatta (Calcutta) India on January 21 - 24 2003. I would like to re-iterate the invitation to all our Jesuit alumni and alumnae from all over the world to come and join us. The Kolkatta Congress will be a unique one as we have stated many times. It will be the first one held in Asia, in a country where the large majority of inhabitants are not catholic but where spirituality is a very important part of their lives.

The Indian Federation of Jesuit Alumni/ae have been working very hard along with a designated organizing committee to have everything ready for us. The program is a very special one, with lots of time for small groups break out discussions and where we can gain a lot of knowledge and experience from other alumni associations worldwide.

Any Congress is as good as their participants. That is why it is so important to have a massive participation of delegates from all over the world. Our force as an organization comes from the diversity that we get having alumni/ae from the five continents and from more than 55 countries where the Jesuit have educational institutions. In our worldwide congress we expect to come to recommendations that will give direction to our movement in the years to come.

I believe that one of the most important aspects of our worldwide congresses is to meet people from so many different cultures and to see that we are all united by one Ignatian spiritualism, that we share the same Jesuit educational background and that when we meet a Jesuit alumni, we meet a friend. I hope that you will be able to make it to India and gain this very rich experience.

The Congress will elect the new Council and the different governing officials that will carry on the work of our World Union and will lead us until 2009 when we will meet again in the VII WUJA Congress, that will be held in Africa.

Besides being an invitation to our world congress, this editorial is my farewell to all our alumni and alumnae as the President of our WUJA. I have had the honor to lead the Union during six years, since our Congress in Sydney in 1997. I have had the opportunity to travel extensible and to meet a lot of Jesuit friends. It has been a very rewarding time for me. I want to thanks all my fellow alumni/ae and I hope to see you all in Kolkatta to have the pleasure to shake your hands and thank you for your continuous support.

God bless you all

Fabio Tobón
President WUJA

Spiritual Insight in Tagore's Works

One of Rabindranath Tagore's most memorable poems begins with the line: "The world is Insane with violence, every day there emerges a new kind of cruel conflict". He goes on to pray to the Almighty to Instill love and wisdom into a world afflicted with myriad ills. This reflects the core of Tagore's spiritual humanism.

Stressing the need for spiritual freedom, he referred to the uncontrolled excesses of passion that upset our balance and obscure the underlying harmony between the individual and universal spirit. This malady, which he called 'sin', distorts our freedom in the realms of matter, mind and spirit.

'The Religion of Man', as enunciated by Tagore, is an appeal for faith in man's sublimity, for nothing is greater than the Divine in man. In his own words: "When I was 18, a sudden spring breeze of religious experience for the first time came to my life and passed away leaving in my memory a direct message of spiritual reality.... That which was memorable in this experience was its human message, the sudden expansion of my consciousness in the super-personal world of man..... suddenly I became conscious of a stirring of soul within me. My world of experience in a moment seemed to become lighted, and facts that were detached and dim found a great unity of meaning... I felt that I had found my religion at last, the religion of Man, in which the infinite became defined in humanity..." This idea found expression in his poems addressed to what he called Jivan Devata, the Lord of Life.

Tagore's father, Debendranath, propagated a monotheistic religion based on the Upanishads and Rabindranath too was inspired by Advaita Vedanta. But he was too independent to adhere to the rigidity of any institutional creed or dogma. Religion for Tagore was a matter of personal conviction. He had greater faith in the individuals "all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly and act rightly, thus becoming channels of moral truth." ③

Tagore never wanted to be labeled a theologian or a philosopher. He was happier to be known as a poet. "Ami Kobi" (I am a poet), he would say. He felt himself one with nature and derived inspiration from it. He saw it as the physical manifestation of the Universal Spirit and expressed this experience through his poetry. His meditations on God, man and nature, especially in the Gitanjali - offerings of songs to the Infinite - not only echo the Vendantic perception of the Absolute but also convey the ardor of a Vaishnavaita bhakta's love for God.

Through the eyes of a humanist, Tagore perceived a symbolic relationship between different world religions and tried project their quintessential meaning through his writings. The eternal values of Buddhism, for instance, appealed to him as being no less significant than the Upanishadic idea of a Supreme Being. With the human spirit afflicted by greed, hatred and violence, the poet's anguished soul cried out for the healing touch of the Buddha. "O Serence, O Free / in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness / wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth."

Tagore renounced the knighthood conferred upon him by the British in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. While he stood by his country against all odds, he was wary of chauvinistic excesses in the name of patriotism. This is echoed by Atin, the

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protagonist of Tagore's short novel *Char Adhay* (Four Chapters), when he says: "that the life of the country can be saved by killing its soul, is the most monstrously false doctrine that nationalists all over the world are bellowing forth stridently". This spirit of humanism finds expression in some of his other works too, like *Ghare Baire* and *Kabuliwallah*.

The poet's invocation to the Divinity for his country's redemption in *Gitanjali* is one of his most memorable poems: "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;/ where knowledge is free;/ where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;/ where words come out from the depth of truth;/ where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;/ where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;/ where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action;/ into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake".

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IGNATIUS AND TAGORE ON THE GOAL OF EDUCATION

Interesting to Indians should be a comparison between the Ignatian ideal of education and that of Rabindranath Tagore. St. Xavier's College is proud of the great Poet's connection with it for some fourteen months; the Poet on his side carried away a tender memory of a teacher, Fr. de Peneranda, of whom he says: "Even today the recollection of it seems to give me a passport into the silent's seclusion of the temple of God". But of Jesuit education, he says in the same context: "As it is, the educational engine is remorselessly powerful; when to it is coupled the millstone of the outward forms of religion the heart of youth is crushed dry indeed. This power-propelled grindstone type we had at St. Xavier's".

Not all Jesuit alumni would endorse this opinion of Tagore. Another great poet, Lamartine, wrote this about the Jesuit institution where he was educated: "I was a bitter and obstinate boy and I was softened and won over, so that I willingly subjected myself to a yoke that skilful teachers made light and pleasant for us...Our souls had found their wings and together soared upwards towards the good and beautiful... I there learned what can be made of human beings, not by compulsion but by encouragement. The made religion attractive and inspired us with the love of God". And Voltaire, already an enemy of the Church, wrote in 1746: "What did I observe during the seven years I spent under the Jesuit roof? A life full of moderation, diligence and order. They devoted every hour of the day to our education or the fulfillment of their strict vows. As like myself, were educated by them". (*Oeuvres* edit 1817, Vol. 8.118). Near home, a profusion of similar testimonies have come from men educated by Jesuits in India.

The point wish to make, however, is this. Few among modern educationists envisage the ultimate goal of life as the ultimate aim of education, as Tagore did, and in this to a very great extent lay an affinity between him and the founder of the Society of Jesus. Strange as it might seem, the broad humanity of Rabindranath Tagore had its counterpart in Ignatius of Loyola who, in spite of the military aspect of his Society, left his followers a legacy of spirituality and educational principles at once heaven-aspiring and earth-embracing and whose approach to the souls of men, particularly the young, would have rejoiced, had he given a serious attention to it, the heart of India's apostle of joy and beauty.

The first and the most important thing to consider in education is the central point, the ultimate aim, for it is to that end that the means and methods must be adapted.

The true centre must be one that harmonizes the various faculties without minimizing any. It must be deep enough and high enough to integrate and energize the deepest and highest in man; it must be broad enough to embrace all humanity and all creation. For Tagore, the centre is "Life", life at its purest, life at its highest, life at the Infinite Source and life in its myriad manifestations - life in the teacher and in the pupil, in our fellow-beings and the entire universe around. Education for Tagore is a process through which the mind can grow and reach out of itself and establish a community of spirit with men and nature and the very Source of Life.

This ideal of Tagore can be of great help in understanding that of Ignatius of Loyola, for whatever difference there may be in their conception of the Infinite Source of Life, the reaching out of the soul towards that Spirit is for both the goal of life and the goal of education. Couched in language somewhat cold and rigid the following comprehensive definition of Jesuit education reveals the Ignatian mind: "Education means the full and harmonious development and artistically effective expression of all the seven faculties of powers of man (senses, imagination, mechanical and intellectual, memory, intellect, emotion, will), to be achieved by the pupil's own personal practice or conscious exercise of each specific power, under the guidance of teachers and the help of Divine Grace, in preparation for the highest and happiest life, here and hereafter." (Farrell: *The Jesuit Code of Liberal Education*, P. 421).

"The highest and happiest life, here and hereafter"! That is, education must be God-centred, life-centred; highest and happiest life centred in God, through the "harmonious development and artistically effective expression" of all man's powers and faculties. The field for the exercise of these powers is, as Ignatius tells us, "all things on the face of the earth." The mental, moral and physical resources of man are to be developed in and through the universe of which he himself is a part; through nature man has to reach out to nature's God. This it is which gives full scope to that integral humanism which is the primary aim of Jesuit education. This, the Society of Jesus, tries to instill into all under its charge, particularly into those of its own young members.

Leaving the teacher sufficient initiative to advance with the advance of educational psychology, the Ratio sets forth some noteworthy guidance for activating and canalizing the inborn powers and tendencies of youth, for the training of the sentiment, imagination, thinking and judgment, for the practice of writing and exercise of style, the art of public speaking and other hundred problems. The historical sense was fostered by presenting treasures old and new -poetry, drama, poetry, history, etc., - through the medium of two ancient languages: Greek and Latin and the mother tongue and one other modern language, which for Paul Turmes were the two official languages of his own country, French and German. For the short period of two years, the course was sufficiently extensive and the method effective.

