

INDIVIDUAL VOICES : GLOBAL MISSION



BRAJ KISHOR GUPTA
Senior Columnist

It was a privilege to represent The Education Post, the fast emerging voice of the National Media in India at an International Conference in Bangalore. The Event, which was organized by the Global Challenges Forum (GCF) in association with ACTS Group of Institutions at Alliance Francaise from 13 – 15 Sep, 2012, witnessed the surge of intellectuals, think tanks, radical thinkers and Experimentalists across the globe. It was a joy to listen to and interact with host of people coming from various socio, cultural, economic and educational milieu. It was a confluence of world's diverse cultures and religions where participants were found debating, discussing and sharing their candid views and perspectives on the theme of *Transformative Education for Sustainable development*.

It was an opportunity for everyone to think beyond the narrow domestic walls. We had both the chance and choice to hobnob with delegates with repertoire of experiences and expertise; they had come all the way from their countries just to share their story with us. It was a befitting occasion to develop a new outlook and grow global in the company of global minds. I was quick to seize the opportunity. I met a couple of lovely people who touched my heart and mind with their profound conviction of their mission in life. They had the clarity of their vision on the one hand and on the other passion in their hearts to impact many lives. They were all initially angry and upset about the systemic failure to uplift the large chunks of society, who are forced to live sordid life, bereft of bare basic amenities and sunshine of life. But unlike the sophisticated majority, this small group was completely inspired lot, doing something tangible to better the lives of the less fortunate. They are determined to make a difference despite the nonchalant attitude of the respective Governments and Authorities concerned. What set these people apart from all others is their sense of commitment to their cause. It is such people I call individual voices with global mission. It was nothing short of a privilege for me to be interacting with such passion driven people

ple during the Conference. I take this opportunity to share with the esteemed readers of The Education Post my personal experiences and insight. I sincerely hope sooner than later each of us will rise to the occasion and respond to the clarion call of a great humanist- Swami Vivekananda:

"As long as the millions remain in hunger and ignorance, I hold ever one of you a traitor, who having been educated on their expense pays not the least heed to them!"

These words, though spoken in the Indian context, have a global connotation. All cultures and communities seem to be insensitive to the needs of the poor. I got convinced of this fact more as I interacted with PEARL KUPE. She was in the Conference as an important representative from Africa.



Pearl Kupe.

She is a proud mother and is passionately involved in bringing about change in society. She is no ordinary lady given her extraordinary roles and responsibilities; the most important among them being Attorney General, Botswana, Registrar Labor Court, Social Dialogue Specialist for the International Labor Organization of the U N, Founding President of Kingdom Chamber of Commerce in Africa (KCCA), to name only a few. Ms Pearl is presently an International Consultant on issues like labor, education, communication, media and legal issues both for Government and non government bodies. She is vocal about the need to educate the masses. According to her, education holds the key. Today, the whole world is grappling with issues like health, sanitation and poverty and these issues can be addressed in a definite manner only by ensuring proper education for the common people. However, Ms Pearl is quite emphatic about the need for redefining Education. She gives an interesting example. She says my grandmother Mokgadi Selelo does not know how to read and write. In a conventional sense, our society would call her illiterate. But if we leave her in a desert or any hostile terrain along with a PhD from any



Group photograph of distinguished speakers and delegates of TEF-2012

elite Universities like Oxford and Cambridge there will be every chance of my granny surviving unlike the scholar. Her ability to survive is a great life skill. But this does not form the curriculum of our studies. The point is valid and only underlines the need for connecting education with life and day to day issues and problems. Unless we do this, no amount of deliberations on transformative education for sustainable development will yield any fruits.

Moreover, Ms Pearl shares deep concern over the decay of values in African society as much as in any other society in the world. She reiterates the need for accepting and promoting the principle of Ubuntu, which forms the bedrock of the African culture. The term Ubuntu is beautifully explained in the following words of Nelson Mandela:

"In Africa there is a concept known as Ubuntu- the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievements of others."

This unique African philosophy of life assumes much greater significance today as intolerance is on the rise. We all need an ubuntu way of thinking for it helps in finding the common thread that connects two human beings. Ubuntu is all about accepting every human being as an indispensable member of society. It celebrates human goodness by acknowledging the contribution made by every other individual of the team. Further, we are taught to respect each person's humanity regardless of our individual differences. It is this spirit of human kindness that allows us to empathize with one another, making our society a value driven place to live in.

The second person I interacted with in the Global



Dr. Kathaleen Reid-Martinez

Conference was Dr. KATHALEEN REID-MARTINEZ. She is the Academic Vice President and Provost of a reputed Mid American Christian University, besides being the Dean, Geneva Institute for Leadership and Public Policy. Dr Kathaleen is a revered voice on leadership and developmental issues including online blended learning, international curriculum for students coming from varied cultural backgrounds, designing and developing education especially for the marginalized sections of society. Her inspiration to reach out to the poor and needy comes from her family where there was hardly any education but there were values such as integrity, catholicity and hard work. She considers herself fortunate enough to have inherited some of those values from her parents.

She is quite articulate about the need for transformative education for the purpose of ensuring sustainable development in the world. Education must help our students reflect and understand how they can integrate their head-knowledge, heart-values, attitude, passion, vision and their hands that reflect their behavior. All these need to align to bring forth a change in the community and society. This change or transformation must be for good purpose-celebration of human goodness.

Prof Kathaleen was excited about the fact that the Conference was being held in India. I found her strongly of

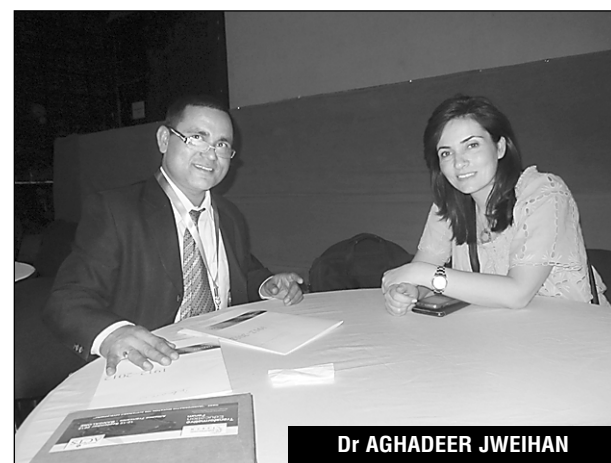
the view that India has a role in the comity of nations in the 21st century. India is in the process of experiencing various dimensions of democracy. Every single critical issue is being debated here. To her India is a beautiful necklace with many precious stones studded on it. How India is able to manage her plurality is incredible and a great gift. Does any gift come without challenges? She asks, making us all ponder over her billion dollar question.

It was a humbling experience to meet Dr AGHADEER JWEIHAN, General Director, Princess Taghrid Institute. She was representing one of the most progressive Middle East countries- Jordan. She is the proud mother of three children and extremely passionate about change in her lovely country. She is a sought after Consultant on issues like parenting, gender conflict, child abuse, and women empowerment. She can be seen often on National Jordan TV and Royaa TV. She is also the author of five books written in

her education is an interactive process that brings forth excellence as also creativity. Besides interaction, she is an advocate for giving all children much exposure to the outside world that includes inter cultural as well as intra cultural activities. This would help the children to understand the value of giving respect to others as also accepting others as they are. True empowerment is possible only by enhancing high self esteem particularly among women.

Dr Aghadeer got enamored of the amazing cultural diversity of India. She found the Indian people as not only hospitable but exceedingly kind. I was moved by her generosity and attitude of gratitude. This was also evident from her fulsome praise for her Royal Highness Princess Taghrid Mohammad, who was instrumental for her becoming an agent of change.

To sum up, I must say that the Conference on Transformative Education for Sustainable Development was



Dr AGHADEER JWEIHAN

Arabic, one of them being the first Encyclopedia on educational science and Psychology.

The topic of her discussion in the Conference was Women, Children & Education in the Middle East/Jordan. She was assertive about the need to equip the children with requisite skills and knowledge. To

a grand success and there were many more individual voices there with global mission. But you, my esteemed reader would do well to see a World in a grain of sand...

The author is a columnist and motivational speaker of international repute. He can be contacted at motivationguru@hotmail.com