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Relation between Gandhi and Tagore

Published On: 18-03-2024

Why is in news? When Gandhi first met Tagore: The story of their friendship, despite disagreements

Meeting of two of India's greatest:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore **shared an enduring friendship** that lasted from 1914-15 till the latter's demise in 1941.

They **met for the first time** in West Bengal's Shantiniketan, on **March 6, 1915** - merely months after Gandhi's return from South Africa.

In 1915, Tagore was already world-famous. He had won the **Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913** and was all the rage in the West. Gandhi, however, was still to become the leader he would eventually be.

But it is not as if Tagore did not know about Gandhi at all. His elder brother Jyotirindranath met Gandhi in 1901, and an article written by Gandhi was also published in the Tagore family journal **Bharati** after the meeting.

Tagore was apprised of **Gandhi's work in South Africa by C F Andrews**, a British social reformer and a common friend. It was Andrews who arranged for the meeting in Shantiniketan after Gandhi's return in 1915, the first of many stays at the school.

Gandhi spent nearly a month in Shantiniketan and left a profound impact on Tagore's idyllic school.

After the first encounter, the Gandhi-Tagore friendship blossomed. They became close pen pals and would meet multiple times over the years.

To date, Shantiniketan celebrates '**Gandhi Punyaha Din**' on **March 10** every year to commemorate the meeting.

On this day, the school's working staff (janitors, gardeners, cooks, etc.) get a day off, while students and teachers carry out the chores — an ode to Gandhi's teachings on self-reliance.

However, this was not a friendship of exactly like minds. The **duo disagreed with each other on all kinds of things**.

About Shantiniketan:

Founded in 1901, Shantiniketan was established by Tagore as a **residential school and centre for art**.

It was "based on ancient Indian traditions and on a vision of the unity of humanity transcending religious and cultural boundaries," according to its description on **UNESCO's World Heritage List**.

Differential approach towards Education & Nationalism:

Approach towards Education:

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Mahatma Gandhi:

Education should be **practical and focused on holistic development**, emphasizing moral values.

Gandhi focused on **use of Vernacular language** for education in early stage.

Gandhi advocated and **emphasised the idea of basic education**, emphasising skills that would be directly useful to the masses, such as farming and handicrafts.

Established basic education institutions grounded on the **philosophy of 'Nai Talim'**.

He advocated for an education system that **drew from Indian cultural and moral values**, seeking to reconnect Indians with their rich heritage.

Gandhi advocated for education as a means to **make people self-reliant and self-sufficient**.

He was **less concerned** with aligning the education system with global trends. He was critical of machines and technology, advocating a simpler way of life.

Rabindranath Tagore:

Tagore's perspective on education was **cosmopolitan and focused on nurturing a global outlook**.

He founded **Visva-Bharati University** to combine Indian traditions with international values.

Tagore encouraged **self-expression, creativity, and individualism**, fostering an environment that celebrated freedom of thought and expression.

He envisioned an education system that fosters **creativity through art, music, and dance**.

He founded **schools and a university in Shantiniketan**, which aimed to focus on **holistic educational development and intercultural understanding**.

His focus was on nurturing universal human values and fostering a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of all beings.

His focus was on **use of English Language** as global movement.

He supported the **inclusion of modern science** in education alongside traditional knowledge.

Approach towards Nationalism:

Mahatma Gandhi:

Gandhi's nationalism was **centred on non-violence and satyagraha**, advocating for India's independence without resorting to violence.

He led several mass movements **against the British**, including the Non-Cooperation movement and the Quit India Movement.

Gandhi emphasised the **inclusion of all sections of society**, including the marginalised, in the nationalist movement. For greater mass participation, he promoted Hindu-Muslim unity and upliftment of Dalits through his constructive programme.

He often **critical of western civilization**, emphasizing on Swaraj or self-rule.

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Rabindranath Tagore:

Tagore's approach to nationalism was more **cosmopolitan and humanistic**.

He **criticised narrow nationalism**, which he believed could lead to intolerance and chauvinism.

His contribution to nationalism is reflected in his **composition of national anthems for both India and Bangladesh**.

He believed that nationalism should be inclusive and should respect the diversity of cultures and religions. Tagore's internationalist perspective advocated global cooperation and understanding.

Tagore took issue with **narrow, self-centred, and exclusionary forms of nationalism**, characterizing them as dangerous and a potential source of power-driven conflicts.

Some other similarities and disagreements between Gandhi and Tagore:

Similarities:

Tagore and Gandhi both prophesied the **humanism and the love of nature** based on non-violence and tolerance to each other.

Both of them were in **favour of self-sustenance** to alleviate the problems of poor India.

Both of them had **love and sympathy for villages** and people who live in **poverty and destitution** and worked actively for the cause.

Both of them were in agreement on the **pride for ancient culture of India** and its spiritual history in which tolerance to every ethnicity and thoughts was the key principle.

Whatever, it was god or truth, both of them have same source of inspiration.

Gandhiji believed that the **god is in 'Truth'** but Tagore found his **godhead in 'Love'**, but their paths were different.

Gandhi tried to achieve the 'Truth' through the **path of Non-violence** but Tagore tried to achieve his God/love **through co-operation, mutual respect and tolerance**.

Disagreements:

Tagore heavily **criticized Gandhiji's Non-cooperation Movement**.

Because he believed that the right of non-cooperation should not be given to public without any restraint from self-willed march.

He further said that idea of Non-cooperation is negative nature which cannot abstain from violence instead violence was inherent in non-Cooperation.

Tagore's second major disagreement was on **burning of foreign clothes for Swadeshi Movement**.

But Gandhi did not accept his interpretations because he believed that by burning foreign clothes, a person was burning his 'shame'.

In other words people were obliterating the foreign domination over the country by burning their foreign clothes.

Tagore's third major criticism to Gandhi was his **idea of Charkha** for sustainable life to downtrodden and poor people who were living in hunger and destitution and neglected modern factories and machines.

Tagore on Charkha, believed that it would lead India back into medieval age.

He further said instead of Charkha, India should move forward and adopt the spirit of inquiry and innovation, which is only possible through scientific temperament.

He believed that science is necessary to achieve prosperity and removing the country from poverty.

Conclusion:

Though Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore had different perspectives on education and nationalism, both were united in their commitment to India's progress and betterment. Their differences in approach enrich our understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the Indian national movement and the diverse thought processes that shaped modern India.