



When Games Teach Peace: The New Literacy for Young India

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In a world where headlines are dominated by war, displacement, climate-induced migration and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, education can no longer afford to treat peace as an optional extra or a sentimental ideal. "Peace studies is not a soft subject; it is a critical literacy for the twenty-first century. It equips young people with the analytical tools to understand the roots of violence, the imagination to envision alternatives and the practical skills to transform conflict in their families, schools, workplaces and communities," said Mr Sitaram Sharma, President of the Tagore Institute of Peace Studies (Tips).

For Tips, this is far from an abstract mission. It draws its inspiration from a founding vision: to shape "tomorrow's peacemakers" through curricula that blend storytelling and games, deliberately shedding the academic weight that many young learners find cumbersome. The aim is to inculcate peace thinking through experiential learning. Hence the Be the Game-Changer series, which features two flagship games—The Kurukshetra Konundrum and The Lanka Accord: Rama's Rubicon. Of course, Tips, which runs on twin tracks, engages in serious geopolitical discourse over roundtables and seminars, independently and in partnership with leading institutions.

At tips, which offers a one-month Foundation Course in Peace Studies, students take the storytelling route to understand what holds a society together, notwithstanding the many



empathy, perspective-taking, and collaborative problem-solving in a safe, low-stakes environment. These are not "ice-breaker" activities; they are rehearsals for life because Tips believes that Peace can be taught.

Aditi Roy Ghatak, the Dean of Studies at Tips explains the rationale behind this approach: "We started

engaged in Be the Game-Changer, Tips conflict-resolution game that required them to create a conflict and navigate competing interests, manage misinformation and find common ground under time pressure. What began as cautious role-play quickly evolved into intense, authentic dialogue. Teachers observed students who were

workshop. For an Institute rooted in Tagore's vision of education as liberation, this is the ultimate validation: young people not only grasping the importance of peace but embodying it in their interactions.

Why does this matter now, more than ever? Three reasons stand out.

First, the nature of conflict has changed. Today's violence is rarely confined to battlefields. It unfolds in online spaces through hate speech and algorithmic radicalisation, in homes through domestic abuse, and in institutions through structural discrimination. Peace studies gives students the vocabulary to name these forms of violence and the frameworks to analyse them critically. It also nurtures what might be called "conflict competence": the ability to engage disagreement without fear, to listen across difference, and to seek

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Sitaram Sharma

I think basically peace education matters for young people because they are inheriting a world shaped by conflicts, wars, polarisation, climate stress, and above all economic crisis and disparity and they do not know how to navigate any of it.

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humanities without a parallel grounding in peace and conflict literacy risks becoming technically proficient but morally adrift. We see the consequences in leaders who prioritise growth over equity, security over rights, and efficiency over empathy. Peace studies inserts an ethical compass into education,

social cohesion and democratic resilience. The Tagore Institute's work sits at the intersection of this evidence and this urgency. Tips offers a model that other institutions can learn from. The Dean's reflection on the games is instructive: "What excites us is not just that students enjoy the sessions but that they

The Tagore Institute of Peace Studies has already held three Kurukshetra Konundrum games in three different schools in Kolkata. Here are a few details:

HOST SCHOOLS

- Sushila Birla Girls' School
- St. Xavier's Collegiate School, Kolkata
- B.D.M. International, Kolkata

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

- Lakshmi Pat Singhania School
- St. Thomas' Boys School
- Birla High School
- Patha Bhavana, Santiniketan
- St. Lawrence High School
- Salt Lake School
- Birla High School, Mukundapur
- St. Sebastian School
- Jyotirmoy Public School
- Indus Valley World School
- South Point High School
- St. Montfort's Senior Secondary School
- Mahadevi Birla Shishu Vihar
- Army Public School
- Apeejay Park Street
- The BSS School
- Silver Point School
- Aditya Academy Secondary, Barasat

FUTURE PLANS

- Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar
- Techno India University, Kolkata
- Srihari Global School, Asansol

WINNING SCHOOLS

- Patha Bhavana, Santiniketan
- St. Xavier's Collegiate School, Kolkata
- Indus Valley World School



reminding students that progress without justice is fragile, and prosperity without inclusion is unsustainable. It also prepares them for careers in diplomacy, development, journalism, law, public health, and technology, where conflict-sensitive approaches are increasingly indispensable.

Third, young people are already peacemakers. They just need the tools and confidence to act. From climate activism to anti-bullying campaigns, from digital fact-checking to community mediation, students are demonstrating agency and moral courage. Tips games amplify this potential by giving them a structured way to practise skills that are often left to chance: active listening, nonviolent communication, consensus-building, and restorative justice. When schools adopt these methods, they send a powerful message: peace is not a distant ideal; it is a daily practice that begins in the classroom.

Critics sometimes dismiss peace studies as "idealistic" or "political". But the evidence suggests otherwise. Research in conflict resolution, social psychology, and education shows that students trained in peacebuilding exhibit higher levels of empathy, lower levels of aggression, and greater capacity for collaborative problem-solving. In diverse societies like India, where pluralism is both a strength and a source of tension, these skills are not optional; they are essential for

solutions that honour dignity and justice.

Second, the stakes of inaction are too high. A generation educated solely in STEM, business, or the

typically quiet in class stepping into leadership roles, mediating between peers, and proposing creative compromises. The energy in the room was palpable: laughter, frustration, breakthrough moments, and, ultimately, a shared sense of accomplishment. As one teacher remarked, "They didn't just play a game; they lived a lesson in peace."

The Statesman captured this momentum in a recent piece, noting how the game "has captured the imagination of schools" and sparked conversations among educators about integrating conflict-resolution training into regular curricula. The article highlighted how students, after the session, continued discussing strategies for de-escalation and the ethics of intervention—evidence that the learning had extended beyond the

the conflict resolution games because we saw that students could recite definitions of peace but froze when faced with actual disagreement. We wanted a pedagogy that moved from theory to practice, from knowing to doing. The games create a space where failure is safe, reflection is built in and every round ends with a debrief: What worked? Why is the solution that you offer a game-changer? This shift from passive learning to active experimentation has resonated powerfully with schools across the region.

The session held recently at B.D.M. International, Kolkata was a vivid illustration of this impact. Students from multiple schools



Judges of the Kurukshetra Konundrum game being felicitated

fractures in the societal fabric. It helps young people grasp the fundamental causes of disharmony; it explores why peace building structures fail and how innovative communication can contribute to ushering in harmony even in deeply fractured situations. Tips courses introduce these concepts through narratives that resonate with young learners, helping them connect global geopolitics to local realities.

Understanding is only the first step. Education for peace must also be experiential. This is where the Institute's innovation in gamified conflict resolution becomes transformative. Traditional classrooms often teach students what to think about peace; Tips games teach them how to create conflict and then resolve it by simulating real-world disputes, over resources, identities or values. Students practise negotiation,

