

## Communiqué on 8<sup>th</sup> International Montessori Congress on the theme “Man's Formation in World Reconstruction”

*Dr. Maria Montessori, the world-famous Educator, stated in a Press Conference:*

‘My life has been spent in the research of truth. I have scrutinised human nature at its origins, both in the East and in the West, through the study of the children and, though it is forty years now since I began my work, childhood seems to be an inexhaustible source of revelations and—let me say it—of hope. I have seen that as far as the child is concerned, all humanity is one. All children talk, no matter what their race or the circumstances of their family, more or less at the same age; they all walk, change their teeth etc. at certain determined periods of their life. In other areas too, especially in the psychic field, they are just as similar, just as susceptible. Children are the constructors of men whom they build, taking from the environment language, religious customs and the peculiarities, not only of the race, not only of the nation, but even of the special district in which they develop.

Childhood constructs from what it finds. If this is poor, the construction is also poor. As far as civilisation is concerned, the child is at the stage of the food-gatherers. In order to build himself, he has to take, by chance, whatever he finds in the environment. The child is the *forgotten citizen*.

And yet, if Statesmen and Educationists once came to realise the terrific force that there is in childhood for good or for evil, I feel that they would give this priority above everything else. All problems of humanity depend on Man himself and, if Man is disregarded in his construction, the problems will never be solved. No child is a Bolshevik or Fascist or a Democrat; they all become what circumstances of the environment make them.

In our days, in spite of the terrible lessons of two world wars, the times ahead loom as dark with threat as they never did in the past. I feel strongly that another tack has to be tried, besides the economical and the ideological ones. It is the study of Man. Not the adult man (...) Man must be cultivated from the beginning of his life when the great powers of nature are at work. Then there is (...) hope of a better construction, of a better understanding (...).

The strength of the ideas in the adult, even if this construction is unconscious, is due to the child and not to the adult. There are societies that promote peace; societies that promote a better understanding between the (...) races, Committees of Nations seeking to establish a charter acceptable to all and the adult is always the same. No matter how many treaties are signed, agreements reached, this disharmony bursts out

here and there and threatens the world with new catastrophes. I know, of course, there is the economic problem which has to be solved, both of the world as one unit as well as of your own country [India, ed.] which is just beginning to stand on its own feet. I know also of the UNESCO that is trying to re-establish the basis and is seeking the material means for installing a democratic type of education all over the world, but the ideological differences remain—differences of customs and so many other differences impossible to eliminate. I do not say that one should cease efforts which are all aiming at the same thing, but I feel that something else ought to be tried; that, instead of trying to eliminate differences, one should give greater attention to cultivate what is common. As I said previously, it is the child in its subconscious period who constructs the personalities that, once set, are very difficult to change, but if a scientific study of Man were made so as to take advantage of these forces, perhaps harmony could be reached more easily than by using only the means previously mentioned.

If a scientific study were made of the child, I feel certain that it would be possible to construct a type of humanity in which the differences would be much smaller. I refer not only to small children but to children during all the periods of growth. At different ages the child constructs different items of the human personality. Anthropological studies show that for the body there are set periods at which this or that part achieves completion, which, once set, remains unaltered. Psychically speaking the same thing is true(...).

In my new effort to illustrate the contribution of a better humanity or society, I have asked the Association Montessori Internationale to organise a Congress in San Remo, Italy. The congress will take place from the 7-14 November\* on the theme “Man's Formation in World Reconstruction” and I aim to invite all those interested in peace to take part in it. I feel the urgency that all forces should be united and used to avert from humanity the repetition of these catastrophes which become ever more terrible.

To this reconstruction of Man, of Humanity, vitally based on Childhood, I invite your cooperation, and I should be very grateful if you would send this communiqué to the Press of your country and cooperate with me in this effort.’

\*The 8<sup>th</sup> International Montessori Congress did not take place on the date mentioned, but was held from 22-29 August, 1949. The title of the Congress was *La Formazione dell' Uomo nella Ricostruzione Mondiale* [Man's Formation in World Reconstruction].

AMI is planning to publish the lectures delivered by Maria Montessori herself at that Congress in *Communications*, starting with the upcoming 2/3 issue.

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