

Gandhian Philosophy and Peace Education in Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

Education undoubtedly is a means to all-round development of man and is supposed to promote and stimulate universal human values, peace, congruence, and co-existence. It is education, which can ascertain ultimate peace for a human being. Gandhi's philosophy and its importance in education are inevitable at all levels in all walks of life as it develops into the most stunning and cherished enrichment of human life. Education as expounded through Gandhi's imagination and explanation is a means to guide and lead a human being from his birth to death as it helps a man to accomplish his desired life goal. The need for adopting Gandhian philosophy is being felt more eagerly nowadays when violence prevails everywhere. The foremost aim of the Gandhian philosophy is to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. In contemporary time, the necessity of education for peace is peace of mind, peace in the family, peace in society, peace within the nation, peace between nations and ultimately peace in the world. In this paper, an attempt was made to explore the need, purpose, and role of Gandhian philosophy in promoting and upholding peace and harmony in the society which may help in bring global peace in the world wide through the peace of individual mind.

Introduction:

By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning.- Gandhi. (Harijan, 1937)

It is needless to mention the part and significance of education in the life of man. Education is the solitary means for the inclusive and all-round development of humans. The pathway to human prosperity and development in an inevitable state of peace and harmony follows the tracks of education with the condition that its direction should be true and established on values. Philosophers, thinkers, and social reformers, who were also the great teachers of their respective times, and guided humankind in the right path, Most of them gave exemplary suggestions on the basis of their thoughts, understandings, and experiences to make education a prime focus and significance of them cannot be diminished even today. This chain of thought emphasizes the desire of Mahatma Gandhi for the complete physical and intellectual, and spiritual development of a man through value education conveyed by well-trained teachers for his self-reliance and self-sustenance, and it could pave the way for his true development even in present perspective by ascertaining peace and harmony in the society.

Although it is true that India has been a unified nation since historic times but it is also true that on the present situation of unending violence, Gandhian ideas and values have extraordinary significance for national integration. Today collective amity has become indispensable for national integration as Gandhi gave it the highest priority in nation building and believed that the universality of faith can best be realized through the universalization of education and such universalization was the springboard for national integration. Peace or congruence is not brought about overnight basically,

the role of education is to deliver progress, spiritualism, peace and tolerance and acceptance of others point of view. There are a universal restlessness and impatience in the entire world leading to widespread violence. The goal of education is to nurture our awareness and enhance our competencies for the building of long-lasting global peace.

Education is the foundation of personality development of an individual in all spheres of life such as physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional. Therefore, we can say that in the long run education forms the grounds on which the castles of peace and prosperity can be built. The English word education is derived from the Latin word 'Educare' means the symbol of manifestation. Education means, 'To nourish'; 'To bring up'; and 'To raise'. This means educating a child, nourishing or bringing out a child in accordance with norms and also implies to lead out or to draw out. This means educating a child or drawing out what is ingrained in a child or to lead out of darkness into light. This definition reveals the inner competence of man that guides him continuously at various levels to act accordingly. It accords continuity to intellect, knowledge, and values, which provides the base and scope of education. Education not only moulds the new generation but reflects a society's fundamental conventions about itself and the individuals who compose it.

In the present time of intolerance, hatred, and violence, ascertaining peace has become a burning issue these days domestically as well as internationally. Gandhi was an apostle of Ahimsa or non-violence and preacher of truth and devoted his entire life for the service of people and for peace and harmony. He devoted his life for a great mission and worked for the upliftment of the poverty-stricken, down-trodden, half-naked and semi-starved masses of India. He was a man with a mission of freedom for an individual as well society especially freedom for India. His meaning of freedom include - political, social, economic, intellectual and spiritual freedom; freedom

from oppression, exploitation, wants, ignorance, hunger, poverty, evil-social practices, fatalism etc. and his all types of educational experiments, institutions, political and social activities were directed to this end. Teachings and practices of peace and harmony are always relevant and significant for ensuring mutual cooperation, fundamental rights, peace, humane conduct, and co-existence of all the living being including mankind. The educated person is then a fundamental unit of analysis for the study of mankind, its existence and for purposeful ends.

The present-day is becomingly known as the age of violence where intolerance, riot, violence, war, and poverty are continuously growing and the social order is known as 'violent social order' and the humanity as a whole is facing a terrible challenge of its own existence. The most fundamental principle of Gandhi's philosophy of peace is 'Ahimsa' or non-violence which is the law of love, life, and creation as opposed to violence or Himsa, the cause of hatred, intolerance, death, and destruction. According to Gandhi, the universal human value of Ahimsa ought to be cultivated not merely at a personal level, but at social, national and international level too as it is a very powerful means to avoid conflict and violence since its mechanisms works from the inner realization of the equality of all human beings. The inclusive aim of education for peace is to help in building a peaceful world. So, there is a robust need to equip modern and future generation, especially teachers, with an education which could promote the culture of peace and harmony regardless of their class, caste, culture, race, sex, religion, and region.

Present time, schools, universities and educational institutions can undertake activities for developing and disseminating peace as these are the formal agencies of education. There are many straightforward challenges before the teacher in the 21st Century to be addressed properly and the centuries to follow if it wants to give its true meaning and the real purpose for bringing peace and harmony. It clearly reiterates the importance of peace education and shows that it is an integrative outlook for the school and college curriculum as Mahatma Gandhi says, "If we are to teach peace in the world we shall have to begin with children" and peace-making could be an excellent plan/strategy for the present-day society through imparting Gandhian concept of peace among the students (Gandhi, 1931). Therefore we ought to promote a culture of peace in academic and social organizations and modify behavioural aspects of teachers, teacher educators, and students. Peace can take place within the individual anywhere in the society but it is the school, the prime agency of formal education which exerts maximum impact among the students after their parents.

One important feature of Gandhian philosophy is that the force of power never wins against the power of love; there can be no democracy where there is no harmony, no peace. Education is just a means, it is an education for life, lives in harmony with others. If it is not accompanied by ahimsa, truthfulness, loyalty, patience, firmness, and other virtues, it remains sterile and sometimes does harm instead of good. Especially today when we are encircled by the forces of darkness, we need a leader like Gandhi, a man of rare courage, thinking, charisma, and character, who dares to tell the truth, who can overcome violence with non-violence, and who shows us the way to accomplish our life goal. Mahatma

Gandhi fought against the power of force during the prime of British rein over the world throughout his entire life. He transformed the minds of millions to fight against injustice and prejudice with peaceful means and non-violence. He believed that, if we fight for the cause of humanity and greater justice, it should include even those who do not conform to our cause.

There is no denying fact that Gandhi was deep-rooted in his cultural and religious traditions. Gandhi was of the opinion that the power needed to accomplish a peaceful world is the unification of humankind. To this end, the teacher must use his or her volition and will-power. According to R.D. Laing,

Peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable future. (Laing, 1978)

Then we should act intelligently to reduce inter-ethnic, inter-cultural, and inter-religious violence, bringing a greater degree of unity to accomplish peace and harmony in the society by developing qualities such as tolerance, cooperation, mutual respect, and appreciation of others, being fair and open-minded, and being able and willing to consider other points of view looking beyond his or her own self-interest. In short, the teacher must sincerely attempt to be free of prejudice and inequality.

A continent like Asia and Africa particularly has seen a peaceful transition of power and social change, influenced by Gandhi's initiatives and teachings. He wanted to take the country from areas of hostility into areas of the harmony of faiths through tolerance and cooperation so that we could work towards understanding each other. He emphasized that the foundation of equality which is the core of peace and harmony will have to be laid here now and built up brick by brick through moral, ethical and economic satisfaction of the masses. The foregoing skeletons of Gandhi's Philosophy of peace endorse the saying that Gandhi is one of the very relevant precursors of conflict-resolution movement with his comprehensible philosophy of peace based on the psychology of human nature, awareness of social realities and knowledge of economic and political systems and situations. According to the UN, peace education must be the core objective of every member country so as to imbibe the social, cultural and traditional, and intellectual values among the students.

Gandhi begged for the humanization of knowledge for immunization against the ideas of distrust among the communities of the nations and the nationalities of the world. One of the significant reasons for the success of these principles is the fact that the movement was spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi himself. The absence on the international horizon of a personality of his caliber leads us to wonder if Ahimsa, Satyagraha or any other method would succeed in today's materialistic world. The only way to create a safer world for our children is to teach them the Gandhian methods of making peace and removal of conflict through dialogue and negotiation, compromise and conciliation, love and forgiveness rather than through hatred, violence, revenge, and physical retaliation. I think there is no need to mention anything more in this regard except quoting the following statement of Mahatma Gandhi:

A teacher is not only the nuclei of the education system but is also the backbone of the system and the success or failure of this system depends to a large extent on the community of teachers. A teacher, if works with sincerity, honesty and a sense of duty, raises students to their all-round development on the one hand and contribute unprecedentedly to harmony and peace in society and the nation on the other – Gandhi.

Further, as Mahatma Gandhi has rightly pointed out, education is an unending exercise till death. Only education can act as a means to a successful life. Likewise,

Education can help, mould and shape the human body, mind, and character in such a manner that they may act as the means to achieve joy and efficiency. (Kumar, 1999, p.10)

Categorically, education as expounded through Gandhi's imagination and explanation is a means to guide and lead a human-being from his birth to death and helps a man to achieve his goal. Furthermore, the thoughts and explanation of Mahatma Gandhi about education could be better comprehended by the following statement of Mashruwala-a Gandhian scholar and thinker,

...works for the all-round growth of man right from the beginning till the end. Its ultimate aim is to turn human knowledge into his ability. It is for the purpose of making his life worthy and meaningful, and it is not only for earning his livelihood. (qtd in Kumar, 1999, p.10)

Gandhi wrote many articles on education from time-to-time. On several occasions, while addressing students and teachers, he delivered worthy statements regarding the meaning, purpose, and importance of education in man's life. We can draw the following Gandhian viewpoint particularly for the purpose of this paper: Firstly, the primary aim of education is to make a man self-dependent; Secondly, to make an individual efficient and skillful; and, Lastly, to guide and lead him to the pathway to progress in the prevailing situation as per the demand of time so that he could ascertain his corporeal, psychological and emotional development to achieve his life goal for himself he could make equal contribution to the society, nation and the world as a whole.

While considering the role of a teacher Gandhi laid great stress on the following four points, which are the means of bringing harmony and peace in society, nation and the world and guidelines to make education true and worthy for the students. They are as: Firstly, a teacher after his own preparation must prepare a student right from his childhood to

pave the way to all-round development; secondly, basic education should be based on the demand of time and space. Moreover, in a country like India villages be the nuclei, the welfare and prosperity of rural people be on priority; Thirdly, the scope of education must be inclusive for all irrespective of sexual orientation without any discrimination against women and girls, they must indispensable part of the education system. Their self-sufficiency for discharging duties in a proper manner and their inevitable contribution in bringing peace is possible only through the education; and Lastly, the education system besides working for the well-being at local-regional and national levels must work with the sole spirit of cooperation and harmony go forward to the global level. These are the days of globalization, no nation of the world can think today of its being aloof from any of the events, big or small, that takes place in any part of the world participated by the whole world. Interdependence has increased to such a degree that no one of us can think of being unaffected of any of the events. For world peace and harmony, teachers have to develop a common thinking, collective culture, and attitude among global people irrespective of region, race, religion etc. Teachers play a pivotal role in helping student's intellectual and cognitive development and maintain the capacities, skills, and characteristics necessary for being an accountable and productive member of society.

At the global level UN, UNICEF, UNESCO, ICJ, and other international agencies and NGOs are engaged in developing a new perspective of education for peace. In India, various apex bodies of education meant for research, training, and planning as NCERT, NCTE, NUEPA, and various NGOs are exploring the frontiers of peace education, how to carry out education for peace in the realm of Indian education. Communal harmony had the place in Gandhi's constructive programme in Gandhi's plan of making peace and harmony in society. Therefore, Gandhian philosophy and thoughts are relevant in the changing world of today and can help in a difficult time for attaining global peace. A world of peace can be achieved if we learn the power of non-violence, as shown by the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Hence, the Gandhian concept of education, the role of teachers for bringing peace and harmony, in particular, is important and worth consideration. For self-dependency of man that is the vital for harmony and peace at all levels and in all spheres of life, Gandhi's suggestions are significant with their due modification in prevailing situations, space, and demand of time. It is 71 years since Gandhi was assassinated and there are all kinds of argument and discussion going on in India and abroad on what Gandhi left for humanity and whether many of his teachings would survive the test of the time.

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