

Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's Peace Education in the Modern Epoch

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Abstract

Looking at the world today any sensible person feels disheartened and even horrified to see the kind of violent acts being committed by man against man and nature. It is sad to realize that we live in an era of unprecedented violence in the forms of terrorism, war, crimes, injustices and oppression and exploitation amidst a seemingly outward development enjoyed by a few. The majority of mankind lives in stark poverty, barely struggling for survival. There is so much disorder and confusion in the society which man has built for him. The saddest part of the story is that this sorry state of the society is affecting the children's innocent minds. Children naturally absorb the spirit of violence in the atmosphere and will soon grow to be the next generation of perpetrators of violence. Whole education seems to have lost. Under the present predicament, there is a growing realization in the world education today that children should be educated in the art of peaceful learning, as a result, peace concepts, attitudes, values and behavioural skills need to be integrated into school curricula. There is a renewed need to develop peace-related disciplines like peace education, moral education and global education etc. With a mere mention of peace, values, non-violence, the picture of Mahatma Gandhi, a luminous star in the galaxy of peace education, an apostle of non-violence and truth draws in mind. In Gandhian notion of peace education we need to locate how peace education can be embedded in education for facilitating peace. The study highlights present nature and content of education, undermines the social goal and obligation of developing a balanced personality and how the concept of Peace Education can be fostered among the youth. For Gandhi value education is necessary for moral development of individual whereas peace education is vital for humankind as a whole. This paper highlight about Gandhian philosophy about how education will promote peace among the individual as well as nation.

KEYWORDS: Relevance, Peace, Gandhism, Modern Epoch.

INRODUCTION

"The world will live in peace, only when the individuals composing it make up their minds to do so".

-Mahatma Gandhi (Hindu Dharma, p. 70)

The above mentioned conviction of Gandhiji endorses the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed". Undoubtedly each and every person or we should say every citizen of the global family, ought to be committed to peace in today's human predicament, caused by conflicts due to Ideological Extremism, Religious Fundamentalism, Misguided Nationalism, Economic Injustice and Inequality. Violation of Human Rights, Suppression of Freedoms, Militarism of Power Politics, Population Explosion, Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, Egoism and uncontrolled human instincts etc.

Education certainly is backbone of society and is largely responsible for its upliftment. In other words, the pathway to human-development goes through the lanes of education. It is education, which can ascertain ultimate peace for a human being. Needless to say, the importance of education in man's life cannot be described in words. In addition, the essence of all the ancient scriptures, messages of scholars and thinkers of repute have always categorically expounded the significance of education in human life. By illustrating the mutual relationship between the education and peace, they have also declared education as the means and basis of peace. Furthermore, they enlighten people of the importance of education in all walks of life, in particular, its role in making life prosperous and peaceful under the prevailing circumstances. Further, the implications in the absence of true education, especially in creating an atmosphere of disharmony and conflict are examined. In this regard the following *Shloka* from an oldest Hindu scripture is worth quoting here:

“माता शत्रु पिता वैरी येन बालो न पाठितः न शोभते सभा मध्ये हंस मध्ये वाको यथा”

Mata Shatru Pita Vairi Yen Balo Na Pathitah, Na Shobhate Sabha Madhye Hans Madhye Vako
Yatha

[Meaning thereby: The parent who does not facilitate and guide their child for studies is like the greatest enemy of the child. The presence of an uneducated person in the company of educated people is like a goose in the company of swans.]

Evidently education is the basis for the all-round development of man; it is the means of developing his personality. Moreover, it is the process that helps in making one's life purposeful. All constructive and welfaristic conditions that may be required for the purpose are also inherent in this process. Similarly, peace, despite a state free from dispute, conflict and war, is also an active and dynamic state in which there is a call to go forward. New benefits are expected in a state of peace. It is the pathway to progress without any fear and confusion. Therefore, one can say that education and peace are linked to one-another. They supplement each other as both contribute to the development and welfare of each and every human being on this planet. Mahatma Gandhi's view of Peace education can play vital role in the establishment of peace not only on the national level but also at the international level as peace education offers very possibilities for dealing with short time violence but its greatest strength is its long term preventive education and socialization.

NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Mahatma Gandhi, a protagonist of peace has served as a catalyst in challenging us to rethink our views of violence and nonviolence. The great insights of Mahatma Gandhi are pertinent for reestablishing peace through education. Under the present predicament, there is a growing realization in the world education today that children should be educated in the art of peaceful learning, as a result, peace concepts, attitudes values and behavioural skills need to be integrated into school curricula. There is a renewed need to develop peace-related disciplines like peace education, moral education and global education etc. With a mere mention of peace, values, non-violence, the picture of Mahatma Gandhi, a luminous star in the galaxy of peace education, an apostle of non-violence and truth draws in mind. In Gandhian notion of peace education we need to locate how peace education broadly can be embedded within education for facilitating peace. Though much work has been done on the philosophy of different philosophers but idea of Mahatma Gandhi's peace education has not received due academic attention. Gandhi's view of education can play vital role in the establishment of peace not only at the national level but also at the international level. His peace education offers many possibilities for dealing with short term violence. The study will be a significant contribution to understand Mahatma Gandhi's concept of peace education and its relevance in the modern Epoch of conflicts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To identify the root causes of disharmony, unrest and conflict, according to Mahatma Gandhi.

To gain familiarity with Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Basic Education in relation to Peace.

To achieve new insights of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals in Present Epoch.

To examine the relevance of Gandhian philosophy in context of peace in modern Epoch.

To Know the acceptance of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of peace in India and internationally.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the root causes of disharmony, unrest and conflict according to Mahatma Gandhi?
2. What are basic ideals of scheme of education given by Mahatma Gandhi?
3. What are the new insights of Gandhi's ideals in modern Epoch?
4. How far is Gandhian philosophy relevant in modern Epoch?
5. What are the evidences in Indian and international scenario for the acceptance of Gandhian philosophy?

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF THE STUDY

Due to the philosophical nature of the study historical and philosophical methods will be employed. The references from various books, journals etc. will be used extensively.

RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN PEACE EDUCATION IN MODREN EPOCH

When deliberating at length Gandhian Peace education one question raises in mind how relevant are Gandhi's principles of 'Ahimsa and Satyagraha' in today's world? Can world terrorism be countered by Gandhian Methods? Can world peace be achieved through non-violence? In this era of military fire power, how relevant is non violence as a means to achieve peace? Is Satyagraha superior to the use of force? How can we use Gandhian methods to make this world a better place for our children?

Gandhiji in all his undertakings proved himself one of the greatest messengers of peace the world has witnessed and peace becomes the quintessence of his political philosophy. It is Gandhi's contributions to world peace that the world at large has aptly recognized in him. Gandhi showed the world not only the goal

of peace. George C. Mashall writes, "In his devotion to peace and tolerance of the brotherhood, the Mahatma was one of those rare spokesmen for the conscience of all mankind". Peace and tolerance, for Gandhi, were the supreme means for the realization of Truth and Love which are the supreme means for the realization of man. Gandhi's spiritual, political, and economic tenets were permeated by the principle of peace. In the light of peace alone could the human being witness truth.

Gandhi developed his world-view against the back ground of a world of violence and all evils are thus reducible to violence against the spirit of truth. Hence for him non-violence or ahimsa becomes the only path to truth and only solution to the problems of life-individual, social and national thoughts. Thus non-violence becomes the identified with peace. Peace becomes the true and positive way to the realization of truth.

Gandhian Peace is an individual value. Just as truth and ahimsa begins with the individual and get realized in the individual, peace is a great value that should begin with the individual and become the basis for the development other social and psychological attitudes. Edmond Taylor remarks, "This has produced the great Gandhian personality, a combination of inner peace arising from a more total integration of all the elements in the personality than most men achieve, we find this integration revealed in Gandhi's personality. Peace becomes not only a goal but also a condition for self-spiritual development of the individual. For this reason, the sages and rishis of ancient times desired total isolation in their encounter with God. Peace in the individual is identified with divine presence in the religions. For Gandhi peace becomes an individual value of great significance.

Peace and national integration are inherently correlated. So far as India is concerned national integration bears supreme importance because India's unity is a unity in diversity. Diversity in this country is indeed a great phenomenon. True peace in this diverse political, social, cultural, religious and geographical element is that divide the country far and wide .Peace through national integration was one of Gandhi's foremost aims. Edgar P. Snow writes, "Gandhi never ceased to try to unite his countrymen and indeed with the whole individual perfection, tolerance, humility, love of nature (God), equality, brotherhood and cooperation". Gandhi had one National flag not merely on the basis of political unity but the supreme directive of truth and ahimsa. Keeping his eyes fixed on ideal of peace and integration Gandhi said "Hinduism must purge itself of untouchability, remove all distinctions of inferiority and superiority, and shed a host of other evils and shame that have become rampant in it."

Gandhian spirituality is founded on peace. Gandhi says, "In violence we exhibit not the spirit but the brute in us". The spirit can be realized and nurtured only in a state of non-violence that is peace. All aspects of spirituality that can be practiced by the individual and can lead to God are based on peace in the individual and can lead to light. God's light in truth and love will shine on the individual only in a state of peace. Spirituality is the realization of truth and the vision of God through prayer, sacrifices and spiritual exercise that were so dear to Gandhi. Peace is a state of complete non-violence in the individual, society and nation.

Man's tolerance of one another's wrongs, tolerance and forbearance of social differences is fundamental to Gandhian thoughts. Tolerance is basis to the survival and progress of individuals, society and the nation. Dwight Macdonald says, "He practiced tolerance and love to such an extent that he seems to have regarded the capitalist and the garbage man as his social equal". Tolerance is fundamental Gandhian virtue that makes the Gandhi's ahimsa most potent. Tolerance becomes a refinement of the most powerful principle of ahimsa. In a country like India more than anywhere tolerance becomes central value for different reasons.

Tolerance and the fundamental rights are absolutely correlated. It requires tolerance on the part of one individual to recognize the democratic rights of another. Just like peace, tolerance becomes an individual value aimed at the development of the human individual. Relationship between individuals based on tolerance becomes fundamental to a spiritual society Gandhi envisaged. Differences in personal attitudes, aptitudes and endowments are basic to human life. Individual tolerance becomes important. Gandhi attached such a great importance to communal tolerance with reference to Hindu-Muslim rivalries and problems of interaction. Gandhi always went out of the way to convince the two. Ethnic and Gandhi gave the highest priority to the value of tolerance within the framework of ahimsa. If truth is the aim at the

individual, social and national level of life, then tolerance remains to be concurrent value along with peace for development at these different levels.

Peace and tolerance are fundamental goals of education. Education considered from whatever viewpoint ends up in a rediscovery of peace at the very root of all formations and development. Education aims primarily at helping the individual achieve a state of physical, psychological, social and spiritual balance or equilibrium. In other words, the individual discovers, in the process of education, a self-balanced in the right attitudes towards himself, society and God. This constitutes the state of peace in the individual. It is a process of developing the self in these attitudes. The individual becomes capable of comparing and contrasting his own potentials and achievements with those of others not in a spirit of negative and unhealthy competition but in truth and love. This amounts to the development of peace within oneself. Peace in the right sense is not a negative state of lack of conflicts and problems within one self. Peace is a positive and dynamic state of integrating in the right manner the diverse elements and conflicts. Education aims at promoting peace in the nation. On one hand, education ensures that the individual grows up in full awareness of the significance of peace at national level, and on the other hand education attempts to direct this individual awareness to actual peace at the national level. Through the right orientation of educational content and methods and through the provision of learning experiences the awareness and a feeling of urgency for peace at the national level can be developed. Peace and tolerance go hand in hand. Peace can be regarded as the end and tolerance as the means and the method. Education should help students to prize the value of peace and tolerance more than anything else.

Once Gandhiji was asked by a student “What can students do to create Hindu-Muslim unity?” Gandhiji answered, “The way is simple. Even if all the Hindus turn out to be hooligans and begin insulting you, you should not stop considering them your brothers in blood”. That shows the level of greatness and the depth of sincerity he attached to these principles. Gandhiji made it clear that education has vital role to play in development of peace and tolerance in all the affairs of the country, especially at all the levels of decision-making. Gandhiji saw the evil practice of untouchability as major obstacle to the practice and realization of peace and tolerance in the real sense of the words in several parts of India. He emphasized the role of education in creating the necessary wave against these evil practices: “National schools should be capable of spreading the message of charka, unite the Hindus and the Muslims, educate the untouchables and thus remove from schools the curse of untouchability”. The practice of untouchability grieved Gandhiji to the depth. Education aims further at international peace, and tolerance. The modern world has the ever growing feeling that humanity is moving towards a nuclear end. The nuclear holocaust has to be averted. Gandhi’s efforts for peace in the world can be regarded as the only solution to divert such a holocaust Gandhian education recognizes Gandhi’s role in developing international peace and attempts to include the value of international peace and tolerance as an internal component of education. The education of the individual for peace and the formation of character are essentially correlated. Peace becomes the content of Gandhi education more than any other aspect.

Gandhiji’s thoughts and personality become synonymous with the ideals of peace. Teaching Gandhi in one way or other, to develop Gandhian thought through educational experience would all amount to dealing with the concepts of peace and tolerance. If general education offers ample opportunities for dealing with the concept of peace then Gandhian education becomes a field almost specialized in peace education. Gandhian education and peace education would be knit into a harmonious whole. It is because non-violence penetrates and encompasses everything in Gandhism, and non-violence would necessarily mean peace. Peace in the individual is a concept co-existent with truth and love. Peace becomes an attitude in which the individual can be given the necessary training. Gandhi’s training and experiments in non-violence are the supreme concept of peace. Peace in Gandhism is a national concept because it is the only foundation of the nation to move to progress. In Gandhism, thus peace is everything, closely related to self-realization.

Methods of peace Education

The peace opportunities latent in the curriculum are maximized when the school atmosphere is imbued with the values and attitude of peace. Teacher student’s interaction, pedagogic approach and the total life of the school must all be oriented towards peace.

The United Nations today constitutes the most supreme institution that function at the very apex of all efforts for peace in the world. The UN has become the unique symbol of international peace and the hope of humanity especially on the face of an ever growing nuclear threat. Hence the very first method of peace education is to keep the students fully conversant with the aims, prospects and activities of UN. The UN has quite a number of members as well as associated agencies like the WHO and the UNICEF. Student can get to know the activities of these agencies in detail. Numerous activities related to the UN can be envisaged for school and colleges. The conspicuous celebration of all the UN days in education institutions will certainly help foster a love for international peace on the one hand and the activities and the spirit of UN on the other. The easiest that schools can organize will be study sessions, group discussions, talks by the staff or by guest speakers or other similar activities.

Education for peace basically requires a development of the peace consciousness as a necessary atmosphere in academic institutions. This requires a general pattern or framework of learning experiences, work experiences and co-curricular and extra-curricular involvements for providing an ever greater and well-organized awareness of peace. Efforts can be made to keep outside the scope of the institution violence of any form. Gandhi says, "We have to make this training school (the basic school) a school for winning freedom and for the solution of all our ills, of which the primary one is our communal troubles." And for this purpose we shall have to concentrate on non-violently. Violence in thought, speech or action will become a taboo against which every student will guard himself. All efforts must be directed to this end of developing, in the academic institution, a lasting awareness and love of peace.

The use of peace-based materials in the school can be a method of peace education. Instructional materials of different types can be coherently presented. The success of these materials depends considerably on the way they are introduced to students. Peace consciousness can be developed as part of peace education through the method of culture studies for tolerance. Considerable cultural interaction can be made possible at the level of education and promote better understanding between communities with diverse cultural experiences. A sense of acceptance and appreciation of the cultural values and practices of other communities will make peace education a fruitful Endeavour.

Inter-religious experiences will constitute another method of promoting peace education. Gandhi says, "The communal unity is not confined to the Hindus and Muslims only, it extends to all, including the Englishman... That is the message of non-violence." Peace education through knowledge of the Red-Cross Society, Peace Corps, the NSS are invaluable at the school and college level. The international involvements of the Red Cross society in times of war would constitute excellent background for students to imbibe concepts and values of peace. The involvements of the National Service Scheme (NSS) provide today considerable help in developing the students understanding of peace in the framework of social service. The NSS at the school level may be oriented to the same mode of work.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the root causes of disharmony, unrest and conflict according to Mahatma Gandhi?

Ans. Gandhi developed his world view against the background of a world of violence. According to him, man's intolerance of one another's wrongs, of social, individual differences, separatism is reflected in most of our Hindu-Muslim and other communal rivalries. The clashes between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Muzaffarnagar district Uttar Pradesh that resulted in death including 42 Muslims and 20 Hindus, injured 93 and left more than 50,000 displaced the worst violence in UP, another Godhara carnage in Gujrat, the birth place of Gandhi who was an epitome of love, truth and tolerance reflect the sense of anguish of communal disharmony. How ironical is this outrage in the homeland of Gandhi? 1984 anti sikh riots or Sikh Genocide were series of pogroms directed against Sikhs in India by anti sikh mobs in response to the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her sikh body guard resulting in about 28,00 deaths all over India. It is argued that Gujrat should be immune to violence since it's the land of Gandhi but let's not forget it's also the land of Jinnah. This sense of anguish was shared by all those who have been modicum of respect for basic human values. So, communal disharmony, intolerance, lack of love and truth are the factors of disharmony unrest and conflict

What are basic ideals of scheme of education given by Mahatma Gandhi?

Ans. Gandhian concept of education is based on all round development and human personality that includes physical, intellectual and spiritual development. According to Gandhi "By education I mean and

all round drawing out of the best in child and man, body , mind and spirit.” He believed that education is very broad concept and if it is implied in better way it can solve many problems of society and world. Buniyadi Shiksha (Basic education known as Nai Talim) by Gandhi in 1937 at Wardha which subsequent became as the Wardha scheme or basic national education. Gandhi wanted to develop qualities which were necessary for building non-violent society. Samuel Ravi, “The principle of non-violence is the basis of basic education.”It is against the exploitation and centralization. He elaborated his notion of Nai Talim as craft, art, health and education should all be integrated in one scheme. Nai Talim is beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education from the time of conception to the moment of death.

What are the new insights of Gandhi's ideals in present scenario?

Ans. The great insights of Mahatma Gandhi are pertinent for reestablishing peace through education. Viewing the ongoing disputes between Hindu and Muslim in his country he recognized there could be no harmony in India as long as each group try to separate form other groups. Considering the teaching of Gandhi we need to consider his contribution for the benefit of a better world with spirit of reverence and broad minded tolerance.

How far is Gandhian philosophy relevant in modern Epoch?

Ans. Especially today when we are surrounded by the forces of darkness ; We need a leader like Gandhiji , a man of rare courage and character ,who dares to tell the truth, who can overcome violence with non-violence and who shows us the way to light. Gandhiji and his twin principles of satya (truth) and ahimsa (non-violence) are more relevant today than any other time in history. The Gandhian style of Satyagraha seems to be the only potent and pragmatic, moral equivalent of war in these troubled times. Gandhiji not only said but showed us the way that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence” and the soul force is far more potent than the brute force. “Out of my ashes, many more Gandhiji will rise” said Mahatma Gandhi Today, his prophetic world have proven true. The idea of Sarvdharma Sambhav is equality of religions as espoused by Gandhi is an effective tool to counter the increasing tension among different religions. The study of other religions besides one’s own will give one a grasp of the rock bottom unity of all religions and afford glimpse of the universal and absolute truth which lies beyond the dust of creeds and faiths. The children should be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various religions of world with spirit of affection and broad minded tolerance.

What are the evidences in Indian and international scenario for the acceptance of Gandhian philosophy?

Ans. It is a fact that Gandhi and Gandhism still lives both in the hearts and minds of not only Indians but also on the global level. Many a leaders around the globe have successfully launched their satyagarha against tyrannical governments, against racial, religious, economic injustice and fought for human rights. The followers of Gandhi in 20th century were: Martin Luther King Jr. (America), Chief lithuli (Africa) Nelson Mandela (south Africa), Lach Welesa (poland), Adolf Perez Esquind (Argentina) Benigno Aquino and many more. Gandhi’s ideology is still relevant as it has been reflected that politician and social activists getting support when they adopt Gandhi’s tenets of peace and non-violence. The Anna Hazare’s crusade against corruption is an example to prove. The support to Anna Hazare is an indication of his national acceptance. The strong moves by our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan ,step towards demonetisation to eradicate corruption are few examples in the context. The only way to create a safer world for children is to teach them Gandhian philosophy and the Gandhian methods of conflict resolution through dialogue and negotiation through compromise and reconciliation, through love and forgiveness. Revenge, violence and communal relation in nuclear world will be successful if there had been a Gandhi to spearhead the movement. The absence on the international horizon of a personality of this caliber leads us to wonder if non violence, satyagraha or any other method would succeed in today’s materialistic world. Violence and terrorism are ideas understood even by a kindergarten child these days. Non-violence has become a term relegated to the history books. So this leads us to the question of how satyagraha can be considered superior to the use of force. Peace begets peace. To achieve world peace we have to employ peaceful methods. The effectiveness of these methods will depend on the extent to which the masses are taught these concepts and the awareness of teaching and consequences are publicized and the extent to which discipline and dedication are incorporated into practicing these techniques. Gandhian principles may not bring world peace today. But the world tomorrow can be a better place. Gandhi’s principle of Ahimsa and satyagraha are of everlasting value and significance. So they are

applicable all times and ever relevant. The fire of violence can be put out only by the cooling waters of non-violent solutions. I think the best way to educate our children on Gandhian methods would be to explain the reasons for violence in the world which is intolerance of people that speak and behave differently from us. Educating them about the oneness of all humans, regardless of race and religious diversity. Ahimsa and Satyagraha are eternal. The only way we can achieve this is by educating our children on Gandhian principles.

CONCLUSION

**“Future generation would wonder if such a person really walked on this earth in flesh and blood”
Albert Einstein**

After the assassination of Gandhiji many people felt that Gandhi would be forgotten soon and his ideologies of non-violence, truth, peace and peace education will be forgotten soon. But it is a fact that Gandhi and Gandhism still lives both in the hearts and minds of not only Indians but also across the globe globally. When leaders like Dalai lama, Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama and Aung San San Kyi follow the principles of Gandhi it is very clear that his ideologies have still have relevance even today.

Gandhi was a servant leader who spent his entire life serving people to bring freedom to India. Being an epitome of love, truth, simplicity and humanity, he was both a transformational leader and servant leader. Yes, there is no doubt, Gandhi's ideology is still relevant as it has been reflected that politician and social activists getting support when they adopt Gandhi's tenets of peace and non-violence. The Anna Hazare's crusade against corruption is an example to prove. The support to Anna Hazare is an indication of his national acceptance. Even internationally he influenced many including 5 Noble laureates for peace Martin Luther King, and many more. Education for peace and tolerance receives high priority. The world that is facing serious nuclear threat education and Gandhi becomes a harmonious whole at the level of peace.

From Gandhi's perspective “the peaceful seemingly nonviolent classroom can be a very violent place even where there are no actual outbursts of violence.” A Professor may use the grade as weapon to threaten, intimidate, terrorize and control students including those who raise legitimate concerns questioning the analysis of the teachers. Who has institutional power over their future? A teacher may use language or even facial expressions and other body language communication in a violent way as when ignoring, humiliating or ridiculing students who raise questions. Gandhi's peace education would analyze not seemingly but inherent violence.

His peace education teaches us how to empathize what other is feeling, how to change our language to stop practice non-violent interventions to break escalating causal cycle of violence. Mahatma Gandhi can serve as a valuable catalyst allowing us to see things our philosophical positions on violence, non-violence and the violence of the status quo. This peace education offers many ways for dealing with short-term violence. But its greatest strength is its long-term preventative education and socialization. Gandhian peace education is eternal and has everlasting value. Gandhian principles may not bring world peace today but the world can be a better peace tomorrow.

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