

GANDHIJI'S VISION ON PEACE EDUCATION

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Peace is an active and dynamic state in which one gets the opportunity to move forward towards the development without confusion. Peace entails the absence of conflicts, disputes, dissensions, fight and struggle. Harmony, cooperation, love, integration are the chief characteristics of the state of peace. Peace is a dynamic state and not a situation of the status quo. In a state of peace, man aspects the reality of VasudhaivKutumbakam. Within a state of peace, efforts are made for healthy coexistence to extend the welfare of the people. Peace is an active and dynamic state in which there is call to go forward. It is the pathway to progress without any fear and confusion. Education, likewise is the process that helps in making one's life purposeful. All constructive and welfare conditions that may be required for the purpose are also inherent in this process. The ultimate goal of education according to many philosophies including Vedic-Hindu is the attainment of Mukti or Moksha or Nirvana, which is considered as the highest stage of peace. Therefore, we can say that education and peace are interlinked. They are inseparable from each other. From this emerges the concept of peace education.

Peace education involves encouraging a commitment to peace as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an agent of peace, as informing the individual on the consequences of war and social injustice, as informing the individual on the consequences of war and social injustice, as informing the individual on the peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structures, as encouraging the individual to love the world and imagine a peaceful future and as caring for the individual and encouraging him to care for others" (James Page)

Peace education in the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself, with others and with the natural environment.

Peace education is strengthened through the will power and efforts of those who actively promote it, for they are aware of the terrible consequences if they do not. In the promise of world peace, peace education is strengthened through the will power and efforts of those who actively promote it, for they are aware of the terrible consequences if they do not. In the promise of world peace, the universal house of justice declared, "Whether peace is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity's stubborn clinging to old patterns of behavior, or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth".

In other words, the horrors and suffering within our society and worldwide can be reduced if we have strong will to act. In the words of the Indian thinker and philosopher SarvepaliRahdakrishan, "We must will peace with our whole body and soul, or feelings and instincts, our flesh and its affections".

Such a goal can be achieved through peace education which can be regarded as the transmission of knowledge about the requirements of the obstacles to and the possibilities for achieving and maintaining peace, training in skills for interpreting the knowledge and the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying the knowledge to overcoming problems and achieving possibilities. (Reardon 2000)

Origin of Peace Education

In 1945, the United Nations was established to "save succeeding generation from the scourage of war, "to reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of human person and in the equal rights of men and women", "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other

sources of international law can be maintained” and “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”(Preamble to the UN Charter)

Peace education has developed as a means to achieve these goals. It is education that is directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom”. It promotes understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and further the activities of United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

For peace education, important works have been done by UNESCO, UNESCO’s 1994 action plan for education for peace, human rights and fundamental freedom. This action plan was signed by 144 countries of the world and led to the steady growth in the number of peace education courses offered by schools, colleges and universities. Delors Jacques in his report, *Learning: The Treasure within* (1996) pointed out 4 pillars of education; 1. Learning to Know 2. Learning to do. 3. Learning to live together 4. Learning to be

Out of these 4 pillars, learning to live together i.e. *Sehredya Sarvabhutanam* is concerned with peace education.

Cora Weiss, the President of Hague Appeal for Peace in her speech at the UN Headquarters in New York mentioned that all education, no matter the language, should be based on the knowledge of 3R’s reading, writing and arithmetic. But peace education of reconciliation should be 4th for the 21st century.

Gandhiji was a great revolutionary person. He had deeply thought over all the aspects (factors) relating to life. He has shown a new path for solution of problems of entire world by placing the Universal Human values at social and national levels. Gandhiji happened to read Ruskin’s “*Umo the last*” given by Polak during the train journey in South Africa. Its impact on Gandhiji was miraculous Gandhiji found three doctrines of Universal Welfare (*Sarvodaya*) from this book. They are as under:

- Welfare of all (Universal Welfare) is our welfare.
- The work of a barber and lawyer should be equally appraised because the right of livelihood is equal for all.
- Simple and laborious life of a farmer is the real life.

Gandhiji set up Phoenix Ashram (Hermitage) in South Africa to apply these doctrines in daily practice. He took up experiments of education, thus it can be said that seeds of educational thoughts were in Gandhiji in South Africa. He conducted educational experiment at Phoenix Ashram and Tolstoy Wadi (Garden) in South Africa. These include:

- Education for character building, education through mother-tongue.
- Place of manual work in education and co-education.
- Hostel residence and community life.
- Moral education through character and good conduct.
- Education of soul should be imparted through teacher’s (model) life rather than through books.
- Health education for physical fitness and health and insistence for simple life.
- Importance for self-help and self-reliance, education for thoroughness (strength), education for citizenship.
- Education for self-help and self-reliance, education for personality development.
- Education for avoiding caste and colour distinction, education for vocational use for life.
- Education for equality of all the religions, education based (founded) on truth, non-violence and justice.

Gandhiji held educational experiments at Shantiniketan, Kocharab Ashram, Sabarmati Ashram and Gujarat Vidhyapeeth after returning from South-Africa and gave a new vision (Philosophy) of education to educational world by placing "Vardha educational Scheme" before the nation in 1937.

The report of "Vardha Education Scheme" 1937 include (covered) only the primary stage of education. But in 1945, Gandhiji put the concept of "comprehensive basic education (SamagraNaiTalin) training before he nation".

The five national values presented under the title of national Panchsheel included in NPE 1986 Viz (1) Cleanliness (2) Truthfulness (3) Hardwork (3) Equality and (5) Co-operation are naturally developed in basic education.

In basic education system, it is recommended to impart education through mother tongue. Gandhiji too believed that the foundation of education should be laid through mother tongue. It helps in inculcating values like love towards mother tongue and swadeshi (native).

Education through industry is the basic principle of basic education, because it helps developing values like respect for manual labour, sense of co-operation and feeling of being mutually helpful through manual work, development of friendship feeling, economical self-reliance, team spirit and sincerity.

Gandhiji wanted to change the individual and through him to change the society. Individuals should imbibe new values for this purpose. They should know the purpose of life. They should strive to fulfill that purpose. Gandhiji held that the purpose of life is to realize truth. Means for this violence. All life should be organized accordingly. Senses should be controlled. Life should be considered as one. The eleven vows prescribed by Gandhiji were for this purpose. They also give guidelines for personal conduct.

Any of us who has attended a prayer meeting at a Gandhian institute is likely to remember a chant beginning: "Ahimsa SatyaAsteya-." The two verses beginning with these words enumerate the eleven vows that Gandhiji considered almost mandatory for the inmates of his Ashram, in Sabarmati as well as in Sevagram. The eleven vows are:

(1) Satya-Truth, (2) Ahimsa-Nonviolence, (3) Brahmacharya-Celibacy (4) Asteya-Non-stealing, (5) Aparigraha or Asangraha-Non-possession (6) Sharira-Sharma; physical labour or Bread Labour (7) Asvada-Control of Palate, (8) Abhaya-Fearlessness (9) Sarva-Dharma-Samanatva-Equal respect for all religious (10) Swadeshi-Duty towards Neighbour and (11) Asprishyatanivarana-Removal of Untouchability.

Of these eleven, the first five are found in most of the religions of the world and are called 'PanchaMahavratas' – the five great vows. The remaining six are somewhat new ideas that have been given the importance of vows of fulfill the need of the time.

The image of Gandhiji in the minds of his contemporary Indians was that of a political leader–of one who brought Swaraya. Essentially, however, Gandhi was a Sadhaka, one who was in search of God. His ultimate goal was Moksha or the realization of God. Since he believed that service of man was the best way to realize God, he lived and died in the service of India, which in a microcosm, was the service of Mankind. That was his pilgrimage towards realization. In this context, the eleven vows were very important to him. They were a part of 'Tapa' Austerity and Self-denial for purification. Tapa is considered necessary in all religious for elevating oneself spiritually, for control over desires, as a check upon an unruly mind and for paving the way to sacrifice for others- all these leading to Moksha. But Gandhiji was a 'Sadhaka' with a difference; has 'Sadhana' did not end with himself. He wanted to include society in his spiritual efforts and so he gave a new dimension to the five great vows and extended them into the remaining six.

The Five Principles of Peace Education in India

1. **Conscientisation and Critical Pedagogy:** Freedom from the colonial legacy and banking system of education. According to Freire, oppressed (excluded) people need to develop critical consciousness in order to challenge the ideas of dominant groups who are their oppressors. They need to be able to critically assess the kinds of ideas, contexts and relationships which are usually 'taken for granted' or accepted as inevitable, in order to question the root causes of their oppression. Through the process of conscientisation, or developing critical consciousness, excluded groups can learn to identify, interpret, criticize and finally transform the world about them. Crucial to this process is the notion of praxis by which Freire means being able to make the connection between experience, understanding and social action to bring about social change. It is a process which people must do for themselves because liberation or emancipation cannot be handed down from above. It must come from the bottom up. An example of work done in this direction can be seen in a movement called Jana Sanskriti or cultural movement in West Bengal India. It uses theatre of the oppressed in which the oppressed are not mute, passive observers expected to accept whatever solution is offered to them. The culture in our society is one of centralization and monologue where a few constitute a powerful force and the majority has no choice but to follow instructions blindly, even willingly. Jana Sanskriti wishes to break the culture of monologue. The success of Jan Sanskriti and the methods used offers a rich knowledge base for future educators looking for innovative and meaningful tool for their classroom. Jan Sanskriti is just one of the many groups working towards conscientisation and critical pedagogy.

2. **Systems Thinking:** Freedom from fragmentation and reactiveness in our education system increasingly has made us dependent on the scientific method or analytical thinking. Edward T Clark Jr. in his article "The Design Solution: System Thinking", puts forth "four methodological characteristics implicit in the scientific method: (a) It is reductionistic and atomistic; (b) it is rational, pragmatic and empirical; (c) it assumes objectivity; and (d) it assumes an either/or logic". These assumptions lead to fragmentation, competition and reactiveness in our education system. Moreover it creates a mind, which is disinclined to paradoxes and duality in beings.

3. **Compassion, Cooperation and Co-existence:** Challenging competition as a tool to motivate learners. These values also challenge biases, suspicion of the "other" and man's constant conquest over nature drawing deeply from the Buddhist principle of Universal Responsibility and the Gandhian principle of Sanmati. For too long, the fear of "communal" politics has led to an apprehension of using the existing cultural knowledge in this region which lends themselves to peace and social change. The rich wisdom of spiritual thinkers from the Buddha to Iqbal have been scarcely reflected upon or brought to light for the young to engage with. SPIC MACAY Gurukul Scholarship is a good example of how one can innovatively bridge this gap, exposing and engaging students to these ideas, looking beyond the current accepted system of education, and exploring ideas that are generally rejected by the dominant sensibilities.

4. **Curriculum, Context and Dialogical Learning:** Questions power, politics and pedagogy: What we teach is as important as how we teach. The content or the subject matter then becomes the lens from which you approach and view the given situation. Thus both the content and the method have to work hand in hand. Curriculum for pedagogy for peace has to be context sensitive and based on dialogical method of teaching which makes it dynamic and constantly being defined and redefined in the light of context. Curriculum has to free itself from prejudices at the same time not be apolitical and removed from reality.

5. **Contemplation and Self-knowledge** Questioning an Education System that Insists Humans are Nothing more than 'Human Capital': This aspect is normally missing or at best given lip service to at schools.

Education as viewed by Gandhi has to have all three components, that it for the mind, the body and the spirit. Therefore in his NaiTalim model for education, he has tried to break the hierarchy of knowledge, which puts mind above body and spirit. Self-knowledge is the fulcrum or anchor, which helps us build relationships in the world. Most educators and teachers in this region have emphasized its importance in the creative process and learning. It is the basis of action, which is based in thought and reflection rather than reaction. Thus from Krishnamurti to Aurobindo and Tagore, all have emphasized its importance, especially during the formative years of a child's learning process. However, this aspect is normally restricted to what is known as "holistic school". The Krishnamurti foundation India and the "new progressive schools" in the metros are examples of this model. The lack of encouragement to this aspect cannot be justified on the basis of lack of finances or infrastructure to do it. It is merely matter of priorities of the education system, which is geared towards building human capital. This needs to be challenged, for only a people anchored in themselves are capable of creating something new rather than just human being programmed to solve problems.

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