



Gandhian philosophy in context to promoting peace education

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Abstract

Peace and harmony in education is an essential component of quality education. Education is supposed to promote universal human values, peace, harmony and co-existence. India has been a country of universal brotherhood. All over the world, a great deal of emphasis is currently being placed upon peace education. Our Indian ancient scriptures have been promoting the idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* that means the whole world is one single family. Mahatma Gandhi has been a source of inspiration, not only for the nation, but for the entire world. He inspired the world with his faith in truth and justice for all Mankind. He was a great soul who loved even those who fought against his ideals to bring about peace with non-violence. Gandhi advocated the process of patience, persuasion and perseverance for attainment of peace and love for harmony. Communal harmony had the pride of place in Gandhi's constructive programme. The Gandhian philosophy is the only solution to all problems, and for settling even sensitive issues amicably. It is not hard to find material on the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. The need for adopting Gandhian philosophy is being felt more eagerly everywhere. The main aim of the Gandhian philosophy is to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. At present, the need of education for peace is peace of mind, peace in the family, peace in society, peace between nations and peace in the universe. In this paper, an attempt has made to explore need, purpose and role of Gandhian philosophy in promoting peace and harmony in the society which may help to bring the global peace in world wide.

Keywords: Gandhian philosophy, education, peace, harmony

Introduction

Although it is true that India has been an integrated nation since olden times; it is also true that on the present context Gandhian values have special significance for national integration. Today communal amity has become essential for national integration and hence Gandhi gave it the highest priority. He believed that the universality of religion can best be realized through the universalization of education, and that such universalization was the spring board for national integration. Harmony is not brought about overnight. Basically, the role of education is to provide growth, peace, spiritualism and tolerance and acceptance of others point of view. Philosophy is a critical element of any educational process. Educational process seems to have lost track of the original purpose of bringing out the best in each individual. There is a general restlessness in the entire world which is leading to widespread violence. The goal of education is to nurture our awareness and enhance our competencies for building of long lasting global peace.

Need of Gandhian philosophy in promoting peace education

Global peace has become a major concern these days. Gandhi was an apostle of non-violence and preacher of truth. His entire life was devoted to service of people and dedicated for peace and harmony. Teachings and practices of peace and harmony are always relevant and significant for ensuring mutual cooperation, fundamental freedom, peace, humane conduct and co-existence. The educated human being is then a fundamental unit of analysis for the study of mankind, existence and its order for purposeful

Ends. The 9\11 terrorist attack on the United States of America changed the trend of the world politics. After 9/11, the then American president George W bush II did somewhat like that. Recently world has seen nuclear catastrophe during Tsunami in Japan and kedarnath, political Tsunami in Middle East and Africa; racial & ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka, east Asia and middle-east; terrorist and fundamentalist attacks in India, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries as well as Maoist Violence in south Asia. The present day cycle is known as cycle of violence where violence, war and poverty are cumulatively growing and the social order is known as "violent social order" humanity is facing a terrible challenge of its own existence.

Across the world, as well as in the Asian counties peace, values, morals, character and ethical education are gaining popularity, as nation-states, international organizations, global corporations and civil society organizations increasingly recognize the importance of such education. The most fundamental principle of his philosophy of peace is "Ahimsa" or non-violence which is law of love, life and creation as opposed to violence or Himsa, the cause of hatred, death and destruction. According to Gandhi the universal human value of Ahimsa ought to be cultivated not merely at personal level, but at social, national and international level too. It is a very powerful means to avoid conflict, since it springs from inner realisation of the equality of all human beings. The overall aim of education for peace is to help in building a peaceful world. So, there is a strong need to equip current and future generation, especially teachers, with an education which promotes the culture of peace and harmony.

Role of Gandhian Philosophy in Promoting Education for Peace and Harmony

Present time, schools, universities and existing educational institutions can undertake activities for developing and disseminating peace. There are many basic challenges before teacher education in the 21st Century to be addressed properly and the centuries to follow if it wants to give its true meaning and real purpose for bringing peace and harmony. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Nobel Peace Prize winner of U.S.A., came to India as a pilgrim in 1959. After a month's visit in the land of Gandhi, on the eve of his departure, he was asked a cynical question at a press conference in Delhi. Where is Gandhi today? He was asked: we see him nowhere. Dr. King's reply was that Gandhi was inevitable. If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of a humanity evolving towards a world of peace and harmony. Dr. Kothri says, "The destiny of a nation is shaped inside the four walls of the class room". The teacher has the greatest responsibility of building a nation. The Gandhian philosophy that includes ideas such as those above is certainly relevant today. It is 65 years since Gandhi was assassinated and there are all kinds of discussion in India and abroad on what Gandhi left for humanity and whether many of his teachings would survive the test of time. Gandhi believed that at the core of every religion was truth and love (compassion and non-violence).

It clearly reiterates the importance of peace in education and shows that peace is an integrative perspectives for the school and college curriculum as Mahatma Gandhi also says, "If we are to teach peace in the world we shall have to begin with children" and peace building could be excellent plan/strategy for educating present day society. It is education for life, live in harmony with others. Gandhi left many valuable sayings for the modern man to fight for goodness in society in a non-violent way. 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. If it is not accompanied by truthfulness, firmness, patience and other virtues, it remains sterile, and sometimes does harm instead of good.

Especially today when we are surrounded by the forces of darkness, we need a leader like Gandhi, a man of rare courage, character, and charisma, who dares to tell the truth, who can overcome violence with non-violence, and who shows us the way to light. Throughout his life, Mahatma Gandhi fought against the power of force during the heyday of British rein over the world. He transformed the minds of millions to fight against injustice with peaceful means and non-violence. His message was as transparent to his enemy as it was to his followers. 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.

Mahatma Gandhi rightly said that "If we wish to create lasting peace we must begin with the children", therefore we ought to promote a culture of peace in academic & social organizations and modify behavioral aspects of teachers, students and teacher educators. Peace can take place within the individual. In a number of countries, emphasis is placed on improving the school environment so that it becomes a model of the more peaceful and just society that is the objective of peace education. Training of teachers and administrators is critical to enabling teachers to examine these issues from the perspective of peace education.

Teachers are the role models for students and hence they can help their pupils handle the day-to-day situations in a non-violent way. There is no denying the fact that Gandhi was deep rooted in his cultural and religious traditions. The phenomenal success Gandhi registered in far away South Africa fighting for human rights and civil liberties and later the adoption of the Gandhian techniques by Nelson Mandela and the subsequent revelations made by the former South African president De Klerk that he was greatly influenced by Gandhi's principles. The power needed to accomplish a peaceful world is the unification of humankind. To this end, the teacher must use his or volition and will-power. In the words of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, we should "... will peace with our whole body and soul, our feelings and instincts, our flesh and its affections." Then we should act intelligently to reduce intercultural, interethnic, and inter-religious violence, bringing a greater degree of unity and harmony in society. To accomplish this, the teacher should develop qualities such as tolerance, 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 other words, the teacher must be sincerely attempting to be free of prejudice.

Asia and African Continent particularly has seen peaceful transition of power and social change, thanks to Gandhi's initiatives and teachings. He wanted to take the country from areas of hostility into areas of harmony of faiths through tolerance, so that we could work towards understanding each other. He stressed that the foundation of equality, the core of harmony will have to be laid here now and built up brick by brick through ethical and economic satisfaction of the masses. The foregoing outlines of Gandhi's Philosophy of peace endorses the truism 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 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. National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005) by NCERT asserts that education must be able to promote values that foster peace, humanness and tolerance in a multi-cultural society.

In fact, two out of the four pillars of education suggested by the Delor's report, namely learning to live together and learning to be, are related to peaceful living. So, it is essential to integrate peaceful attitudes, values, and skills into the teaching and learning process in educational institution and to make it a part of the total curriculum.

Gandhi pleaded 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 this 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 conflict resolution through dialogue and negotiation, through compromise and conciliation, through love and forgiveness rather than through hatred, revenge, violence, revenge, and physical retaliation.

We, as community of teachers, can play a major role in creating an environment where we teach our future generation the right things, specially peace and harmony. For world peace and harmony, we have to develop common culture and attitude among global people. Teachers' play a vital role in helping students' mental and cognitive development and maintain the abilities, skills and characteristics necessary for being a responsible and productive member of society.

Conclusion

At global level UNESCO, UNICEF and other international agencies and coalition of 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, NUEPA, NCTE, and various NGOs as Gandhi Peace Foundation are exploring the frontiers of, how to carry and implement the education for peace in the realm of Indian education. Communal harmony had the pride of place in Gandhi's constructive programme. Gandhi advocated the process of patience, persuasion and perseverance for attainment of peace and love for harmony and was firmly convinced of the worth of gentleness as panacea for all evils. He taught us the dignity of labour as a levelling social factor that contributed to a national outlook in keeping with the vision of new India. He always believed that a nation built on the foundation of non-violence would be able to withstand attacks on its-integrity from within and without. Mahatma Gandhi has proven that we can achieve the noble causes of liberty, justice and democracy for Mankind without killing anyone, without making a child an orphan, and without making anyone homeless with the damage caused by war. His life was a message — a message of peace over power, of finding ways to reconcile our differences, and of living in harmony with respect and love even for our enemy. A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems. Mahatma Gandhi taught us that we can bring harmony to our world by becoming champions of love and peace for all. The life of Gandhi inspires everybody for self-evolution. Therefore, Gandhian philosophy and thoughts are relevant in the changing world of today and can help in difficult time, and the philosophy is also important for 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.

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