



PEACE EDUCATION: RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

Dr. GUDIPUDI ANJALIAH

Principal, Smt. Addepalli Mahalakshmi Devi College of Education for Women,
Rajahmundry

Introduction

Peace education is now officially accepted as an important aspect of social education. Over the past three decades, there has been a growing corpus of critical literature within this field, interestingly; the focus in the literature in recent years has tended to include personal as well as global aspects of peace education. There has also been an increasing emphasis on peace as a human right. However, one intriguing and lingering lacuna within the critical literature has been the failure to develop and expound systematically the philosophical foundations of peace education. This lacuna is also evident in the considerable international documentation dealing with the importance of peace education. The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations (1945), the Constitution of UNESCO (1945) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949) all contain statements undergirding the significance of peace education. Since their conception, such statements have become more explicit in international pronouncements and declarations. (Devi Prasad, 2005)

Peace and Contribution of Gandhi

The main concept of Non-Violence advocated by Gandhi is as follows.

Non-Violence

Total non-violence consists in not hurting some other one's intellect, speech or action per own thought, utterance or deeds and not to deprive some one of his life. In essence, abstinence in to from violence is non violence. In this context Gandhi clarified in an edition of young India.

“To hurt someone, to think of some evil unto someone or to snatch one's life under anger or selfishness, is violence. In contrast, purest non-violence is an epitome in having a tendency and presuming towards spiritual or physical benefit unto everyone without selfishness and with pure thought after cool and clear deliberations. The ultimate yardstick of violence or non-violence is the spirit behind the action”.

Non-Violence is perpetual

From beginning unto now man has been ultimately treading path of non-violence. It came into existence along with man. It is co-terminus with life. In case, it has not with man from the very beginning, there might have been self-doom by man. Besides there have been gradual enhancement in development and proximity in spite of presence of various obstacles and hurdles.



Non- violence and Truth both are complementary to each other

It is more appropriate to say Truth is God, rather than saying. God is Truth. He equated God with Absolute Truth as ultimate reality Soul is the spark of this God of Truth. It is the moral, the spiritual force, the divine spirit which regulates our body and mind. It is the voice of God, the voice of Truth within us.

Both are two sides of the same coin. Both have same value. Difference consists in approach only. The derivation is that Truth stays with permanence and that Truth is permanent. Non-violence on account of being permanently present stays to be true. Non-violence is both a means and an end in itself.

Non-Violence is the strongest weapon

It is not a weapon of the weak. It has no place for cowardice. It is an active force. Non-violence is impossible without bravery /courage/ fearlessness. Doing at any cost something that one ought to do. The courage of dying without killing having decided upon the rightness of a situation, Gandhi would not like one to be passive spectator to evil. This is the essence of Non-Alignment which is different from neutrality. When freedom is menaced or justice is threatened or where aggression takes place we cannot and shall not be neutral.

Non-Violence has individual and social aspects too

It fosters co-operation and cooperation progress. Progress is difficult to achieve without co-operation. Cooperation is possible only when there is no violence. To him, regulation of mutual relations in society is through non-violence to considerable extent. He wished it to be developed on large scale. He called upon the people to continue to develop it in practice throughout life as the basis of life.

Non- Violence is not utilitarianism

It is All - Timely and all welfaristic. A non-violent is always ready to face punishment for the maximum benefit of all whereas a utilitarian is not.

Complete unity and integrity of body, mind and soul in the individual human being

The body should be controlled by mind and the mind by the soul a harmony among three. But this control is not to be achieved by despising or neglecting either the body or mind or soul.

Means are at least as important as and often more important than ends

It is, of course, desirable that ends should be good and reasonable. They give direction to life while the means adopted constitute life itself. It the means confirm to the test of truth and no-violence, even mistakes, errors, and failures aid the growth of the individual. We cannot get a rose by planting a noxious weed. There is an inviolable connection between the means and end as there is between the seed and tree. The relationship between the two is organic. There must be purity of means. Those who grow out of violence, they will end in violence. This is what makes Gandhi

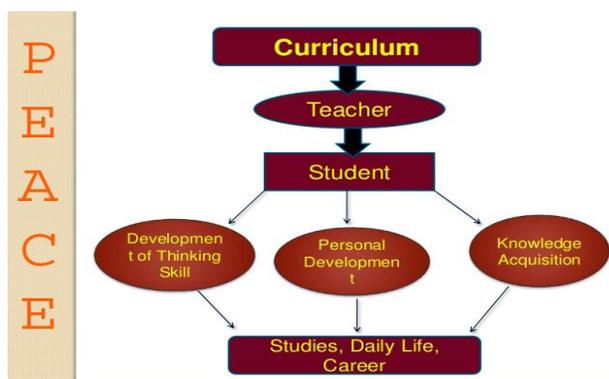


distinctly different from Kautilya, Machiavelli, Bentham, Karl Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and other.

Gandhi serves as a valuable catalyst, allowing us to rethink our positions on violence, nonviolence, and peace education. This is followed by consideration of Gandhi's valuable insights about peace education as long-term preventative education and socialization. Gandhi's approach to education is then seen to focus on character building and values and on the educational dangers of separating means from ends and becoming trapped in endless cycles of escalating violence. A brief formulation is given of Gandhi's key distinction between relative and absolute truth and how this shapes his approach to peace education.

Role of the Teacher in Peace Education

Speaking on teacher and teaching once Gandhi said, "Experience shows that student's interest in a subject is sustained by the subject-matter but by the teacher. My own experience has been that one teacher used to bore me to sleep while teaching chemistry, where another teacher kept me wide awake and interested in the same subject. The former, who talked and talked without clarifying the topic; was not liked while, as the other teacher elucidated the theme, one wished that his period should never end. The topic was the same as well as the students. The relation between teacher and taught are shown in the following figure:



According to Peace Education Working Group at UNICEF, peace education "refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence."

Instruction by one, however, was absorbing and by the other insipid". (NCTE, 1998) To strengthen the peace education the following strategies can be adapted in the pedagogy:

1. Each teaching unit is organized in one part for the work with children and one part for the work with parents



2. The first part underlines situations for playing and learning, the second part describes how parents can be motivated to collaborate.
3. The units offer opportunities for:
 - Educational institutions to create many faceted social and cultural environments.
 - Children (and grown-ups) to develop self-confidence, including a positive social and ethical identify.
 - Communication partners to develop a mutual understanding and empty.
 - Conflicts to be analyzed and judged, and so far as possible, solved non-violently by the participants on the life-style and educational practice, in order to realize “Cultural Democracy”.

Conclusion:

The present times crisis both at the levels of global and national once again has made our self aware of the immense importance and relevance of Gandhian philosophy. It is true that unlike other theoreticians, he did not theorized the social issues and presented them in a sound methodological framework. Yet, his ideas on education are very much in tune with the needs of the present generation. Peace today has become a rare and priced commodity. Mahatma Gandhi treated his individual life in accordance with his ideas. He said, “My life is my message”. Therefore Gandhism is a mixture of Gandhi’s concepts and practices. The basic ground ship happens to be Non-violence. He practiced and prescribed non-violence as a remedy against all social evils. It is the most ancient eternal values and culture of India. He said on this account. I have nothing new to teach you. Truth and non -violence are as old as hill. Nonviolence and Truth are two sides of a same coin.”

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