

PEACE EDUCATION: GLOBAL AND INDIAN CONTEXT

Dr. Vikas Mane

Indian Institute of Education, Pune-38

Abstract

Peace in the mind does not suffice. It is in the action. Actions include co-ordination and complementation between the socio-economic and educational diversity between the communities of the country. The differentiation in the educational fibre of the country is the indicator of peace-levels in the country. Peace is challenged by the race, caste, creed, class and dignity of man. Convergence of educational streams of the social mind and the skill-technology may help bridge the negative social and gender divide in the country. Globalization since the post-liberalization era presents a different challenge to the Indian culture and education system. It is not internationalization, and is seeking markets and in the process enculturating consumerism and this worldliness. This is contradictory to our ancient culture of 'samaadhan' and other-worldliness. So globalization presents a huge challenge to our education system. We are bound to change our education system for balanced growth, justice to socio-economic diversity and ultimate prevalence of all-round peace. So to pursue peace for our society we have to reconstruct our educational curriculum from the primary level to the higher and professional level. We have to come up with a learning which finds co-ordination between the minds and the limbs. Which also enriches outcomes by complementation between the brain and the hands.

An enriched holistic learning supplanted by enculturation of respect for socio-cultural diversity, upholding human dignity, gender parity, respect for living beings and ultimate agenda of sustainable development will lead to a peace education which will hold itself in times of globalization and turbulence.

Peace-education will essentially be driven by tolerance, growth-parity, sustainable development and all this on the basic platform of inter-disciplinarily.

Key Words – *Globalization, Peace Education, Non-violence, Inter-disciplinarity*

Background

It is said that peace is in the mind. But this applies to the enlightened and the detached. Not to the attached common man who wants to live life to the fulfilment of the mind and the body. Since ancient times and especially from the twentieth century social human life is embellished with competition, cooperation, peace and also strife. With social, political and economic diversity there has been competition and strife at the individual, community, national and international levels. With strife ingrained in the systems of development, expressed in capitalist consumerism, environmental degradation and also poverty, the need for peace at the individual, community, national and international levels, especially in an era of globalization, has become inevitable.

Education is the medium and carrier of information, knowledge, culture and skill for the individual and communities socio-economic progress. It nurtures minds and is the best medium to inculcate peace, both individual and social, into the minds of both the young and old alike. Then ultimately we derive at peace education, which given its significance in today's globalizing world, sadly has not developed as an independent branch of interdisciplinary social studies.

Peace education is a contested subject. Because of its differing cultural and political interpretations it is difficult to be treated in a scholarly manner. For political reasons to reach consensus on a definition of peace education to be used in the international community or in the official school curriculum guidelines the term is intentionally made to be open to various interpretations and to accommodate various viewpoints.

Betty Reardon, an expert on peace education, has, after writing extensively on this subject, come to the conclusion that as yet there was no clear and precise limits to, nor standards for, what was to be included in peace education. Through her analysis she identified nine topical areas that constituted the foci of contemporary peace education curricula in the United States. These areas include conflict resolution, cooperation, non-violence, multicultural understanding, human rights, social justice, world resources and global environment. All of these areas have a cognitive component as well as an attitudinal and behavioral one.

Betty Reardon defies the purpose of peace education in the following way:

'The general purpose of peace education, as I understand it, is to promote the development of authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it. Brock- Utne has defined peace education as' By peace education I mean the social process through which peace, as I have defined it, is achieved. This includes the practicing of equality of rights and equal power sharing for every member of a given community. It further includes the learning of skills of non-violent conflict resolution. It also includes respect for human rights.

Peace education in India is in a nascent stage. In Indian context it can be described as more in the context of humanizing and rationalizing relationships between communities leading to a just distribution of opportunities and resources. The whole of Mahatma Gandhi's life's thoughts and actions were based on truth and non-violence which virtually are the basic tenets of peace education. Peace education needs a holistic paradigm and has various strands of focus. Firstly, militarism is still a major threat to peace, led by nuclear powers and tyrant nation across the world. Various peace or disarmament movements across continents seek to build a world free from arms and where nations or groups can learn to live together in relationships and structures based on values and principles of non-violence. Secondly, human rights are a focus area of peace education, which faces continual elaboration, a significant theory - practice gap and frequent challenges to its validity. A third substantive inspiration for peace education has emerged from structural violence between the North and South. Unless the paradigm of development ensure that people's basic needs and quality of life are met under conditions of justice, equity, participation and sustainability, then a vast majority of human beings will live marginalized and hence non-peaceful existences.

Peace as is often said is not just the absence of war, although development educators clearly see the negative impact of militarization an authentic human development. A fourth general source for peace education is international education although a more focused term would be intercultural education. This could lead to eliminating racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination and intolerance and lay some essential bases for peaceful and harmonious relationships between people and nations. Lastly, the vigorous environment movement since

the 70's has challenged all of humanity to live more peacefully with our natural environment. Conflict arising out of the competitive control, use and distribution of environmental resources portend a new wave of peace lessons in the world today ruled by the logic of growth and globalized competition.

Each of these fields or movements dedicated to building more peaceful futures for humanity have dynamic dimensions including an educational dimension, which includes disarmament education, education for non-violence, human rights education, development education or education for social justice, education for international understanding, intercultural education, non-racist education, environmental education or education for sustainable development etc.

Recognizing the interrelatedness, interconnectedness and indivisibility of a multi-dimensional concept of peace, peace education seen through appropriate educational processes to - promote a critical understanding of the root causes of conflicts, violence and peacelessness in the world across the full diversity of issues and problems and from macro (national, regional, international, global) to micro (local, interpersonal, personal levels of life ; and simultaneously develop and empowered commitment to values, attitudes and skills for translating that understanding into individual and societal action to transform levels, families, communities, institutions, nations and world from culture of war, violence and peacelessness to a culture of peace and active non-voidance.

In India peace education is not widespread as a course in the formal school or college set-up. Peace education system and structure cannot be complete without the overwhelming thought- action contributions of Mahatma Gandhi and the Constitutional contribution as a road-map of peaceful co-existence by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Gandhi, by non-violent action, meant peaceful, constructive mass action. It is true that Gandhi did not write on peace education in any very specific way, but his whole philosophy and life have been, of course, important in peace studies and peace education not only for India but for other nations of the world as well.

At the primary level Gandhi promoted an education system called 'basic education', which focused on vocational education and the use of local vernacular as the medium of instruction. He emphasized manual labour and hands-on-training in addition to intellectual pursuits to provide holistic development as well as skills. According to him education should

be provided for free and special attention should be paid to character building. One of the main components of his educational philosophy was the importance of religious education (in students' own religions) which, according to Gandhi, was synonymous with the concepts of truth and non-violence. He promoted this form of education as a social good, emphasizing social responsibility, rather than having students view and use their educational qualifications solely for personal gains. Gandhi also advocated for a program of new education, which emphasized through practice the values of self - reliance, living within a community and oneness with nature.

Gandhi's educational ideas and programmes have been great but are hardly followed today. Through a convergence manual and intellectual labour he stressed on balance and thus on equality in ideas and actions and ultimately between men who pursue intellect and those who pursue manual endeavour. Gandhian studies departments have been created the focus of the courses of which ranges from Gandhian philosophy to development issues to environmental concerns to the economy, but all are rooted in Gandhi's life as an historical example of peace, non-violence and social justice.

Today in India Gandhian education models are followed less than the British Macaulian model which were devised to create babus who could be help administer and be carriers of British culture and superiority. At the degree level today we have an extremely rigid education system divided into social sciences, commerce and economics and the pure sciences. Apart from these largely theory based persuasions we have the professional courses in law, education and science and technology based courses such as engineering, medicine, pharmacy and biotechnology. The admission to these courses is based on the marks at the secondary and higher secondary levels. The lowest marks getting admission to social sciences, the middle level marks fetching admission to commerce and economics and higher marks fetching admission in pure and applied sciences, technology and other service based professional courses. The students with better background generally get admission into the job-fetching science and technology based courses. The others are condemned to lesser employment or unemployment. This is, even if unacknowledged and less understood, root of great stress, disaffection and unrest among majority of our youth, who remain prone to deviance because of denial.

This is the roots of unrest, imbalanced growth and ultimately backwardness of our country. All this results in peace being disturbed. The only solution to this Himalayan

structural fault is a complete overhaul and creation of educational courses that are a blend of the mind and body, of social values and technology and of dignity of labour in all youth. This will be the ultimate peace education that can be delivered in a very subtle but massive manner. A single peace education course has its usefulness but can never match the stable but Para dogmatic socio-educational changes that inter-disciplinarily between social and pure sciences can bring in the country. Peace education will be achieved and peace will prevail.

In the global content the western countries has a class dominance model while India has a caste dominance model. The first is amenable to social mobility, while the second is not fully amenable to social mobility. The first believes in destiny being in the hands and in hard work, the second believe in destiny being in the doings of the Karma of the last birth. This sheer rigid changelessness creates tensions in the youth and the society which feels suppressed. The youth and lower castes in India accepted this fait accompli over centuries, but with independence, social reform, before and after, and rationalizing education, have started thinking and questioning the rigid hierarchy model-based on socio-economic dominance. This has created strain and challenge to the alleged peaceful society, that we had. The educational transformation as described earlier and purposeful and well-structured peace education being made compulsory at all levels of education from school to higher degrees is extremely essential.

Globalization has given impetus to internationalization of all education, especially higher education. This international educational association should necessarily contain intercultural education. The level of international education is to create peace loving citizens capable of participating in building a peaceful and sustainable society. Integrated and systematic education to peace can achieve a shared culture of peace. International education for peace is largely responsible for saving subsequent generations from the scourge of war. Influenced by the consequences of positive and negative globalization, peace education for university students is highly significant. It allows them to commit themselves to building a sustainable and peaceful community.

Be it the class-model in the west or the primarily caste-model in India, any model of dominance is harmful for sustainable development which if not achieved is harmful to peace in any society. So peace education has to address such huge challenges which cannot possibly be delivered in one single course on peace education. It has to be a paradigmatic endeavour panning through out the education system from primary to higher education,

weaving interdisciplinary, relevance, utility and sense of dignity in all human beings of our country.

Peace education may involve the following -

1. Necessary knowledge -
 - a) Globalization: positive and negative effect and cultural identities.
 - b) North -South problems: global interdependence and poverty.
 - c) Direct violence like war, terrorism and structural violence, poverty and discrimination.
 - d) The understanding and ameliorating tendency regarding the social stratification System in India.
 - e) Environment, ecology and sustainable development
 - f) The understanding and acceptance and implementation of the Indian constitutional tenets.
2. Necessary skills for peace education:-
 - a) Communication skills with active learning.
 - b) Reconciliation by integrating opposed ideas and value system.
 - c) Balancing ethnic, cultural, religious, national and global identities.
3. Transformative Attitudes for peace education:-
 - a) Global village concern and neighbourhood concern for peaceful existence.
 - b) Ecological awareness for sustainable environment.
 - c) Reflective and transformative teaching and learning.
 - d) Non-violent attitude with tolerance and reconciliation.

Thus a course for peace education is extremely essential for all students, young and old but more important is the seeping of values of justice, equality, liberty, dignity of man and labour and concern for a sustainable environment into the whole system of education and all social realities at large.

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