

Mahatma Gandhi's views on peace education

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Abstract: 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 groundship 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." Non-violence and Truth are two sides of a same coin. The ultimate ideal of 'Non-violence and Truth' is unrealized and unrealizable; its value consists in pointing out the direction, not in their realization. Striving after the ideal is the very essence of practicing Gandhi's philosophy. This consciousness should make one strive to overcome the imperfection. Mahatma Gandhi did not have a shadow of doubt that the world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Peace, Non-Violence, Gandhism, Truth

1. Introduction

"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/precedes 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.

Mahatma Gandhi recognized the potentiality of these various kinds of conflict as occasions to contemplate over the confirmed problems and also as opportunity to search peaceful means to resolve them, because of his positive attitude. He knew very well that the process of conflict resolution involved painstaking task of restructuring the present world by liberating human mind from dogmatism of various kinds such as economic and political barbarism, religious bigotry etc. To achieve simultaneously the negative

aim of conflict - resolution and the positive aim of establishing peace, Gandhi propounded his philosophy of peace. The need of ours is to proclaim again and again the significance of Gandhian pacifism to solve crucial problems of conflicts and violence.

To prevent structural violence, Gandhi proposed the theories with ideals of Satyagraha, Sarvodaya, Swaraj, Swadeshi, Buniyadi Talim, Decentralization of Power, and wealth, Trusteeship, social Harmony & communal unity, Economic equality, Sarva Dharma Sambhava, Democracy of Enlightened Majority etc.

2. Gandhiji's Philosophy of Peace

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 if we wish to avoid personal, social, national and international conflicts. It is a very powerful means to avoid conflict, since it springs from inner realization of the equality of all human beings. Negatively it is absence of mental intention of injuring, harming, disturbing and agonizing opponent, and positively it is good will towards all human beings. Nonviolence at interpersonal and International levels

can be defined as Altruistic approach. As a peaceful technique to resist injustice, it includes a concrete programme and leads to self-suffering and sacrifice. For Gandhi "Fasting unto death" is the last step to oppose injustice.

Gandhi's approach is ethical, as he believes, that moral degeneration is the root cause of all evils including conflicts. So he recommends acquisition of moral value such as truthfulness, non-violence or love, self-control, forgiveness, non-enmity or friendliness, compassion, mercy etc. In fact values are the best equipments discovered by human being to escape various types of conflict. Researches also show that root of all problems invariably lies in the infringement of values- moral, religious, spiritual, economic and political -and moral principles. Undoubtedly conflicts are nothing but the illustration of the violation of moral laws, non performance of duties, negligence of human values, enjoyment of freedom without caring for responsibility etc. Hence Gandhi appreciates moral solution, which is inexpensive, and single person can initiate and undertake the task of conflict resolution by attracting world wide attention. Gandhi, a great political thinker, therefore, recommends that politics should be a branch of ethics. Moral principles must be adhered to by politicians, ideologues, social activists as well as ordinary citizen of the world as there is no dividing line between private and public life.

3. Assimilation of Values

Assimilation of values in one's character and their expression in conduct is required to avoid conflict and this in turn is possible through awakening of "Conscience" at personal, social, national and global levels. Public awareness of those values which are conducive to peace building must be evoked through exhibition, education, public lectures, dialogues and mass communication- T.V., Radio, Newspapers etc.

4. Mahatma Gandhi and Satyagraha

Gandhi proposed and adopted "Satyagraha" as an moral equivalent to war and conflict. As we all know the successful conduct of war involves two things. On the one hand, suppression of the virtues of kindness, friendliness, forgiveness and consideration for the sufferings of fellow human beings, and on the other, encouragement of the feelings of unqualified hatred, anger and hostility towards so called enemies. Thus war leads to total violation of the liberal democratic principles of respect for persons and dignity of the individual. On the contrary, satyagrahi while resisting injustice, shows respect for his opponent by making moral appeals to him and expecting him to be responsive. Satyagrahi aims at conversion of the opponent's heart by making him aware of his ill will or inhuman behaviour through self-suffering. Satyagraha aims at winning over opponent by love and gentle persuading and by arousing in

him a sense of justice rather than forcing him to surrender out of fear.

The method of Satyagraha is purely moral and humanistic as it involves faith in the inherent goodness and good sense of the opponent coupled with goodwill towards him and readiness to come to an understanding and compromise. In fact Satyagraha aims at settlement of issue or issues with the opponent without causing him even psychological injury but it implies soul - force, courage and determination.

A well-conducted Campaign of Satyagraha absolutely untouched by violence in word and deed, made the hypocritical opponent suffer from split personality as his own moral consciousness getting alarmed by the exposure of the immorality of his action. Gandhi believed in the technique of Satyagraha, because he had faith in the goodness of human nature.

5. Satyagraha as Method of Resolving Conflict

The moral and humanistic grandeur of satyagraha as method of resolving conflict and securing justice has been appreciated by several thinkers, politicians and social workers. Conflict cannot take place if we behave on Gandhian maxim that humanity (rational beings) should always be treated as an end-in-itself. If we wish to keep peace, we ought to follow the UN charter of human rights, according to which dignity of human life must be honoured and maintained without reference to caste, colour, creed etc. We have to redefine the concept of Development and Progress as Human Welfare and well-being by replacing the prevalent misleading concept of development and progress in terms of Economic Development and material progress. If we want peace, we have to replace the humanity negating industrial consumerist culture by idealistic humanism. Belief in the spiritual constitution of man led Gandhi to affirm equality of all human beings and to declare innate goodness of men. Humanism as the philosophy of Globalism or Global philosophy implies non-discrimination with regard to race, sex language, region, religion, political ideology, social and economic status, international status of the country etc. ,since the basic structure and nature of human beings all over the world is same. We must rationalise our ways of thinking and to think of the world in terms of maps and markets, we should think of it in terms of men, women and children i.e. in terms of mankind.

6. Sarva Dharma Sambhav

To prevent conflicts caused by religious bigotry, Gandhi suggested "Sarva Dharma Sambhav". According to him all religions are true and man cannot live without religion so he recommends attitude of respect and tolerance towards all religions. Since the scientific and technological researches aimed at material comforts are ruining human sensitivity and sentiments i.e. human feelings and relations, so scientists and

technocrats must be reminded of their moral obligation to choose peaceful means and so to perform their first and prior duty towards humanity. They should not invent biological, chemical, nuclear, laser and other kinds of sophisticated weapons, which verifies the assumption that science and technology are frequently used as instruments of exploitation, domination and destruction rather than as means in the service of mankind and peace. Ideological extremism is also a cause of violent confrontation, as it makes the ideologues incapable of dialogue and negotiation while confrontational determination to counter force by force must be replaced by a policy of dialogues and negotiations. Democracy facilitates such policy, so Gandhi approved the democratic way of governance and life. We can say that Gandhi has been the champion not only of political democracy but also of economic and spiritual democracy as he committed to the vedantic view of Unity-in-multiplicity and was a supporter of economic equality. Mutual trust and bilateral negotiations, preparedness to discuss the problem collectively with open mindedness, tendency to examine and change (if necessary) our own belief i.e. flexibility is also required to escape conflict.

7. Peace Education in Action

Total disarmament is the need of the hour but it cannot take place unless and until the hearts and minds of persons who manufacture, sell and purchase weapons are changed. Public pressure could play an important role. Organisations, in addition to individual pacifists must pressurise the governments or the policy makers to adopt peaceful means to resolve the problems.

It is very shocking to note that no serious and sustained consideration is given to human search for peace or peace studies in academic institution and syllabi, while ours is a world of nuclear giants and moral infants. Each and every citizen of the world must be educated to escape conflict, as ultimately person himself is the insurmountable barrier in conflict resolution. Every educated person should be made aware of the fact that the issues relating to peaceful co-existence basically belong to each citizen. So every person must be trained to rise above communal pressures, religious loyalties, regional and other interests etc. Harmonious interpersonal relationship must be developed through formal and informal education i.e. through audio-visual media. Hence reconstitution of present education system by re-considering its goal is a very urgent task.

Awareness and awakening of creative qualities must be a part of education policy and curriculum. Instead of over-emphasizing destructive instincts, we must try to make a person cultured by encouraging to cultivate constructive aspects of his personality, because constructive aspect is related to human values and virtues as well as their incorporation in cognitive, conative and affective dimension of our personality. 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.

8. Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi can serve as a valuable catalyst allowing us to rethink our philosophical positions on violence, nonviolence, and education. Especially insightful are Gandhi's formulations of the multidimensionality of violence, including educational violence, and the violence of the status quo. His peace education offers many possibilities for dealing with short-term violence, but its greatest strength is its long-term preventative education and socialization. Key to Gandhi's peace education are his ethical and ontological formulations of means-ends relations; the need to uncover root causes and causal determinants and to free oneself from entrapment in escalating cycles of violence; and the dynamic complex relation between relative and absolute truth that includes analysis of situated embodied consciousness, tolerant diversity and inclusiveness, and an approach to unavoidable violence.

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