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Peace Education: It's Necessity in the Context of Assam and North-East India

Ms. Piku Doley

Dept. of Education, Kamargaon College, Golaghat, Assam, India

Abstract

Peace is an essential requirement of human being for living happily. If people live happily development occur in their own ways. But if we look upon the present condition of the different countries we will find that many developmental programmes create violence or disturbances in the peace process. Peace education is the main instrument in promoting peace, reducing violence, create conducive environment for livelihood. In this paper it is tried to draw out the necessities of peace process and need of peace education in keeping our society violence free.

Key Words: Peace, Ethnicity, North-east India and Peace education.

Introduction: Peace is an essential requirement of human being for living happily. If people live happily development occur in their own ways. But if we look upon the present condition of the different countries we will find that many developmental programmes create violence or disturbances in the peace process. Violence is occurred due to human being itself. Therefore human should know development is needed for benefit of their wellbeing. Education is a tool which helps in promoting peace, social equity, justice, human rights, democratic values, cultural diversity, environmental awareness and combating poverty. It can be said that education is associated with peace.

Concept of Peace

Ian M. Harris (1988) explains "Peace is a concept which motivates the imagination, connotes more than the cessation of war, implies human beings working together to resolve conflicts, respect standards of justice, satisfy basic needs and honor human rights".

Federico Mayor explains that Peace is possible for life at all stages and it is up to man choose his destiny or suffer from the harrow of war. Today mankind is at the cross road where it has to choose between these two with courage determination and imagination. When we talk about peace in individual context or in personal it will be a subjective term.

According to **J. Krishnamoorthy**, "Man himself is world. He is the only source of peace in the world. He describes that the peace as a freedom from violence. He wrote that if we know how to look at violence, not only outwardly in society, the wars the riots the national antagonism and class conflicts but also in ourselves then perhaps we shall be able to go beyond it. That means peace is an experience of inner calmness by and individual himself by practice."

Peace Education: Peace education is a process which helps in acquiring skills and building attitudes that change the mind set of people. Peace education promotes the sensitivity of diversity

and values of inclusion among children. The aim of peace education is to educate learner in culture of peaceful co-existence in larger issues. Peace education is often described as a valuable tool for resolving issues and repairing the damage done to a society torn by war or strife.

How Peace Education Is Defined:

“In a period of transition and accelerated change marked by the expression of intolerance, manifestations of racial and ethnic hatred, the upsurge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, discrimination, war and violence towards those regarded as 'other' and the growing disparities between rich and poor, at international and national levels alike, action strategies must aim both at ensuring fundamental freedoms, peace, human rights, and democracy and at promoting sustainable and equitable economic and social development all of which have an essential part to play in building a culture of peace. This calls for a transformation of the traditional styles of educational action.”

~ From the UNESCO Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy.

According to **UNICEF**, “Peace education refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.”

Koichiro Matura, the Ex Director General of UNESCO has stated by recognizing Peace education as being of fundamental importance to the mission of UNESCO and the United Nations. He also defines the peace education as training for conflict resolution, such as learning to manage anger improve communication skill, and resolve interpersonal disputes.

According to **R. D. Laing** (1978) a peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures.

Most simply, peace education can be understood as education for the elimination of direct and indirect forms of violence. (Harris and Morrison, 2002).

Ethnic Identity, Violence and North-East India: The north-eastern region of India has long been projected as one of the trouble hot spots in the South-Asia and India's insurgency stricken corner. The region is already sensitive and vulnerable both from the military and economic angle connected with the mainland through the corridor of Siliguri and lack of infrastructures. Characterized by extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, north-eastern India consisting the eight states: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura & Sikkim is a compact region sub-national states attributing to high level ethnic violence. Ethnic, Linguistic and the cultural diversity of the region are tremendous with green hills, meandering rivers, and lush valleys. Ethnically it is diverse and heterogeneous alike the rest of the country. The primary habitats of the region are tribal ethnic groups with 213 tribes and 400 dialects spoken. According to the Anthropological survey of India in 1990s, 5633 communities listed by the people of India of where 635 categories as tribes of which 213 was found to be living in north-east India. The people of the region are Mongoloid and resemble more with those of East- Asia who are different from Aryan Dravidian people of the heartland of India. It is the meeting place of many communities, faiths and cultures. Renowned for its magical beauty and bewildering diversity, the

region is home for various tribes speaking wide range of languages. Though the unrest in the region has a history of political causes, the regional conflict is much related to multi-ethnicity. These conflicts are social, political and economic conflicts between groups who identify themselves and others in ethnic terms. They are distinguished as they tend to be asymmetrical ambiguous and tough to differentiate between associates and opponent, fought unconventionally using political and psychological means and methods and these conflicts often develop into protracted war of attribution. According to Dr. Clemens Spicess, "the politics of identity lie at the heart of the bigger part of the current conflict constellation in the north-east". Among the north eastern states Assam is worst effected state followed by Tripura, Nagaland and Manipur in ethnic conflict. The rest of the states witnessing ethnic violence in lower intensity which could be worst if not addressed by the authorities in time.

Assam: In Assam the consent for ethnic violence got nourished in 1979 primarily when the middle class people headed by the All Assam Students Union (AASU). Started protesting against the illegal migration from Bangladesh and later joined by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), attacking the Bangladeshis settling in the state. During the last two decades, Assam has witnessed five ethnic conflict; thrice between the Bodos and the Santhals in 1993, 1996 and 1998; between Karbis and Kukis in 2003, and between the Karbis and the Dimasas in 2005. The Southern part of Assam mainly the Karbi Anglong and the Cacher region has always remain high ethnic-conflict zone in the north-east. Karbi Anglong is the composition of ethnic diversity. The cacher and the north cacher Hills district witnessed the worst ethnic turmoil between the Dimasa and the Hmar tribes. On 4th October, 2009 Bhimajuli village in Sonitpur district was near to the ethnic clashes between the Bodos and the Non-Bodos when the banned NDFB killed 14 non-Bodos in their attempt to reactive their demands. In ethnic conflict of Assam the insurgent groups were directly or indirectly involved. It can also be said that the age of majority of the insurgent groups ranges from 16 to 30 years. According to the report of NIA, NDFB(S) was the main culprit of May, 2014th ethnic clashes between Bodos and non-Bodos (Bengali Speaking Minorities) (2nd Nov, 2014, *Amarasom*).

A process of selective engagement with inscribed rules for articulating dissidence emerges as models to be emulated in future deliberations and other recalcitrant communities. Economic packages have been the preferred issue in the course of deliberations between the government and the ethnic groups. This causes conflicts to reemerge later. This is typified in the conflict in western Assam where ethnic Bodo people have waged a two-pronged struggle against the Indian state, which is seen as an external colonial entity responsible for the loss of resources and culture of the Bodo people. The other strand of the armed struggle sees the state as a logical arbiter in the contest for an ethnic homeland. In 1993, the Central government herded the Bodo leaders who had sent friendly and frequent feelers for an honorable resolution of the conflict as well as the government of Assam to sign on to what came to be known as the Bodo accord in Kokrajhar. Conflicts surrounding the identity of a group get violent, which may not be visible but also expressed through spaces, institutions, public space and family (Datta, 2012).

The Bodo tribe comprises of many other sub-tribes and is the original inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam. Like many other ethnic groups, Bodo lost their identity in colonial and post colonial Assam mainly because their indigenous ways and expertise served no good for the British. The political movement in the late 20th century from eighties was the greatest human struggle and it ran into the 21st century. This struggle is known as the Bodoland Movement (Brahma et al., 2001). In North-East India peace education is very necessary to maintain peace among the various ethnic groups who has been fighting to establish themselves.

Why Peace Education is Important?

Moral education has always been viewed as an important subject to be included in the curriculum, to help children make the right choices. The NCF takes this a step further; the goal is now to consciously give the child an environment that builds sensitivity to others' cultures, perspectives and rights. The NCF speaks of the compelling need for peace education, clearly stating that education must be oriented towards values associated with "peaceful and harmonious coexistence." (NCF 2005: 9).

According to the NCF, only education has the capacity for building long-term peace through inter-cultural conversations. School-aged children are endowed with a special sensitivity to constructing their moral character. The NCF echoes this thought and describes the various stages of ethical development and how they occur. According to the NCF, at the primary stage, children become conscious of both themselves and their immediate environment and begin to form notions of right and wrong. At the next stage, they develop reasoning abilities and learn to question, discuss and reflect upon ethical dilemmas. The result, an independent individual who can make well-reasoned judgments. It is through this complex process —dialogue, sensitization to issues, learning skills for resolution and imitating good role models — that children will learn to construct their value systems, and proactively choose peace over violence. Peace education is, thus, a teaching of skills and values that supports respect for all humans and calls for a change in attitudes.

How Peace Education Can Be Imparted?

Peace education can be imparted through the following ways-

Gandhian Thought and Peace Education:

Truth and Non-violence: Gandhi was a philosopher, a seeker after truth, a believer in certain values which give content and significance to life. He was a philosopher in the sense that he has certain beliefs, a certain systematic and reasoned-out view of life-views on reality on the world, on life, on the individual, on society and on individual-society inter-relationship (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2009).

Gandhi believes in the absolute oneness of God and therefore, of humanity. He says, "What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source." He had a profound believe in God and believed in the unity of man. According to Gandhiji, "indefinable, mysterious power that pervades everything. His (God's) presence is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within."

Until 1931 he said, "God is truth". But later he said, "Truth is God." (Taneja, 1975). Gandhi said, "Observation of the law of truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the truth but we... should understood the word 'Satya' or 'Truth' in a much wider sense. There should be truth in thought, truth in speech and truth in action." The means to seeking as well as attain the goal of Truth, suggested by Mahatma Gandhi is *Ahimsa* or Non-violence. To him "both are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are the two sides of a same coin or rather a smooth metallic disc". Gandhi's Non-violence was not a weapon of the weak and cowardly. It was meant for the fearless and the brave (Desai). It was advised that "Truth being our goal, Ahimsa should be our supreme duty to achieve the goal. Ahimsa enjoins first of all, charity towards those who consider themselves our enemies. A person believing in *Ahimsa* or love must rise above attachment and hatred fear and vanity. Patience, forbearance, humility, charity and readiness

for compromise are also covered by the term non-violence. All evils will be overcome through non-violence. Gandhiji declared this *Ahimsa* "should be practiced by individuals, groups, communities and nations. This is great power which must be accepted as the law of life, must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts."

Gandhi's Idea of Education as Peace Education: Many of educationists try to notify that Gandhiji's education system can be mentioned as Peace education. Before going to discuss about that we should know the concept of peace education. Peace education can be understood as education for facilitating peace. "A fundamental concern of peace education is education to prevent the suffering and wastage of warfare within the modern era"- according to Page, (2008). Horis and Morrison (2003:25-26) argue that "peace education refers to teaching about peace-what is, why it doesn't exist and how to achieve it". According to Peace Education Working group at UNICEF, Peace education, "refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values...to prevent conflict and violence." Hague Appeal for Peace defines peace education as a participatory holistic process that includes teaching for and about democracy and human rights among other issues.

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 (Prasad, 1998,4). Non-violence education or Gandhian studies emphasizes positive concepts of peace (rather than peace as absence of strife) the power of non-violence, the discovery of one's own and others' truths, empathy, forgiveness, community and proactive peacemaking. For Gandhi, a spiritual emphasis grounds the acceptance and reconciliation of ideological differences. Gandhi's thought and example offer moral and spiritual imperatives for application of our efforts to understanding and achieving peace in its various manifestations (Fields, 2006, 229-30).

For a 'Half Naked Fakir' in the famous words of Winston Churchill, Gandhi offered sophisticated and productive interpretations of religious belief, discrimination and avenues for peace (as cited in Younge, 2007, 1). Gandhi, in his writings and public statements also insisted upon broad constructive engagement and pluralist, tolerance in a society marked by religious or communal violence. In simple terms Gandhi stated that students should learn about all faiths to promote respect for difference, tolerance and non-violence (Kumar n.d), all of which broadly parallel the values and ideals of peace education (Monisha Bajaj 2010, 47-63). The Education system propounded by Mahatma Gandhi is named as 'Basic Education.' It is essentially an education for life and an education through life. It aims at creating a social order free from exploitation and violence. That is why productive, creative and socially useful work in which all boys and girls may participate, irrespective of any distinction of caste, creed or class, is placed at the very centre of Basic Education. The basic scheme envisages a close integration between the schools and the community. So as to make education as well as the children more social minded and co-operative. It endeavors to achieve this- Firstly, by organizing the school itself as a living and functioning community with its social and cultural programmes and other activities. Secondly, by encouraging students to participate in life around the school and in ongoing various types of social service to the local community. Student self-government is another important feature in basic education which should be envisaged as a continuous programme of training in responsibility and in the democratic way of living. In this way, the basic school not only helps in cultivating qualities of self-reliance, co-operation and respect for dignity of labour, but also becomes a vital factor in the creation of dynamic social order.

- Peace study Centre: - Peace study centre should be established in educational institutions.
- Women Studies: - Women can play a vital role in promoting peace and reducing violence among people. For that women should get education and help in maintaining peace in society.
- Social Sciences: - The section on social science education in the NCF also refers to similar values and skills. The true aim of social science education is to make children more aware of their social responsibilities and “to provide the social, cultural and analytical skills required to adjust to an increasingly interdependent world, and to deal with political and economic realities.” (NCF 2005: 50) Social science has always been the subject of choice for educating individuals about the core human values of freedom, trust and mutual respect. So far social science has focused on issues of regional and national importance. However, the NCF recommends that it also integrate issues of global significance including universal human rights (NCF 2005: 9, 51).
- Cultural Studies: - Student should get opportunities in gaining knowledge about various cultures, rituals, mores etc. Then only they will learn to respect others cultures.
- Folk Stories or Peace tales: - Many generations have relied on the simple wisdom and enchanting lure of stories from their own cultures to showcase the inherent values of compassion, honesty, cooperation and acceptance, to name just a few. Traditionally these stories spell out the key aspect in a section called ‘moral’ at the very end. However they also offer an opportunity to engage children and adults in a variety of meaningful discussions and projects and make this learning experiential and relevant to them. This is the potential we need to tap into to take these classic tools to the next level (Rajagopalan).
- Short term workshops for teachers, students and administrators.
- Awareness camp, seminar and conferences can be arranged among indigenous people of the region to maintain unity, solidarity and brotherhood.

In peace education need to focus on transforming relationships and structures that perpetuate differentials in power, access, and meaningful participation in decision making, not simply basic skills for nonviolent conflict resolution-though these peacemaking skills are vital (Brantmeier, 2007; 2008).

The Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign for Peace Education has set two goals:

- a) To build public awareness and political support for the introduction of peace education into all spheres of education, including non-formal education in all schools throughout the world.
- b) To promote the education of all teachers to teach for peace.

Conclusion: In conclusion the author concludes by saying that education is the only essential means which helps in promoting peace, social equity, justice, human rights, democratic values, cultural diversity, environmental awareness and combating poverty. It can be said that education is associated with peace. Peace education promotes the sensitivity of diversity and values of inclusion among children. The aim of peace education is to educate learner in culture of peaceful co-existence in larger issues.

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