

## EDUCATION FOR PEACE - A DIRE NECESSITY

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### Abstract:

*In a country like India, peace education becomes a pivotal area of research for Sociologists and Moral Philosophers. The whole realm is so fragile that it has to be very clear and transparent –first to Educationists and then to people who implement it.*

*The first part of the paper offers to deal with the challenges keeping the post-modern milieu of Indian Society where history and anthropology run in the blood veins of people.*

*The second part of the paper deals with the ‘ethos’ of the society in India, those who can be given this delicate job. The ‘secular people’ – this term itself stands on a double-edged sword.*

*So, who can contribute in structuring the curriculum?*

*And the concluding part of the paper will deal with what ideal curriculum can be incorporated if we have to survive as a single (and part of global) unit. The conclusion obviously makes us ponder as we as educationist stand on a see-saw – going up and down; and the task to introduce multicultural ideology in our education system – be at school or college level, to bring forth ‘utopia’ seems to be a mirage. Is it impossible? Being optimist and one who aspires to have positive change for the best, I feel it is not impossible but little remote as time consumption is unpredictable. The paper intends to end with a positive note that though education in the field of Linguistic Analysis (at its basics) can offer a potent solution as peace education in our multicultural and multiethnic society, that is, India.*

**Keywords:** *Peace, Education, Multiculturalism, Intentional Ethics, Preferential Treatment, Ethos of the Society, Values.*

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### Paper:

‘Education for Peace’ is the theme that can very well be contemplated under Moral Philosophy or Ethics. And, probably, only under Moral Philosophy justice can be done to the theme. So, it sounds too obvious that in a country like India, peace education becomes a pivotal area of research for Educational Sociologists and Moral Philosophers. The whole realm is so fragile that it has to be very clear and transparent – first to Educationists and then to people who implement it. So, the question that needs immediate answer (though its possibility is rare) that is ethics relative or objective (absolute/universal)?

### Introduction:

This query can be covered up in dealing with the challenges keeping the post-modern milieu of Indian Society where history, tradition, with its anthropology and religion runs in the blood veins of her people. No doubt ‘values’ by themselves are universal, a-priori and analytical in nature keeping its objectivity in mind. The paradigm set by *Immanuel*

Kant (1724-1804) of Categorical Imperative is its best example. No matter what, where and when – values are absolute. Their objectivity cannot be denied – be in synthetic or analytic. The problem erupts – when in ‘given situation’ (which is unique and by itself – individual) are we to apply these values blind-folded? In contemporary times this is what is needed to be researched about. Why now? The reason behind this is – technological advancement has been undisputed aid to all of us; but its repercussions or so to be very blunt, its aftermath (we have witnessed in past as well as in present times) has been devastating. Moral philosophers, those who gave lot of importance to values, considering them as paradigm, have transformed them always, placing them into new garb, and that is ‘norm’. If ‘values’ are deduced from civilization, ‘norms’ are related to culture. If the past culture in India was so called ‘moderate’, today’s culture is so called ‘cool’; or as youngsters witnessing violent riots will address, ‘Take a chill pill man!’ So asks *Peter Singer*, “Why should I act morally?” or relevant to our topic, “Why should I treat people of different ethnic groups equally... It is not a question within ethics, but a question about ethics.”<sup>1</sup> So, this question does not back the universal application of ethical values – as it is the ‘individual’ asking this question. Are we then to deny values like peace, love, compassion, honesty etc. as practically applicable values?

No doubt, we do not deny its universal praxis; in fact, we shouldn’t. But then individual persons, places and times are different and universalization of values (though solves all ethical issues at hand) does not practically suffice the purpose. For example – In Continent of Africa, where ethnic-tribal groups have been emphasizing their ethnic rights and importance from the time of making of African countries on the basis of three or four ethnic groups making up one country. They may not have enough food to eat, the life-span of average Ethiopian is really low, children (and even adults) dying of mal-nutrition. But arms, ammunition and weapons are something they are most familiar with. So, ‘peace’ is just an illusion.

In India too we have completely diversified culture with racial, religious, caste, class and languages (with thousands of dialects) distinctions. After independence, States were created on the basis of languages. Though civilizations have been talking, teaching and preaching implementation of values, cultures ask for something else. Neither (as an Indian) am I ready to throw away my tradition and history that which is part and parcel of my existence; nor am I to remain stagnant in this superfast jet age to thwart my existence. (I won’t say ‘progress’, as the term itself being highly relative!) So, can ethical values and self-interest be reconciled? According to *Peter Singer*, “One theory is that we all have benevolent or sympathetic inclinations that make us concerned about the welfare of others... Benevolence and sympathy ... are tied up with the capacity to take part in friendly or loving relations with others, and there can be no real happiness without such relationships. For the same reason it is necessary to take at least some ethical standards seriously, and to be open and honest in living by them – for a life of deception and dishonesty is a furtive life, in which the possibility of discovery always clouds the horizon.”<sup>2</sup> This obviously encourages us to think that self-interest (resulting in happiness) and altruism are not incompatible. In fact, they very well go together. Therefore, though Indian Society, that is quite influenced by post-modern culture and at the same time traditional having typical historical base behind its ‘cool culture’, can face the challenges that the contemporary society poses.

#### **Further Inquiry:**

So, the next question is – how to bring about this reconciliation pragmatically? After introspection, we arrive at the conclusion that the ‘ethos’ of the society can do this. The ‘secular people’, the selected distinct members of the society can contribute in making Indian society peaceful. The only option that is available is ‘Education’. Why ‘Education’ the

only option? As for other means there can be discrepancies as every state is so distinct from the other state. If there has to be uniformity to bring about reform in the society, it can be done only through education. “More recently, the Right to Education Act 2009 has been passed to universalize education for children in the age-group of 6 -14, and makes it mandatory for private schools to reserve 25 percent of their total seats as government seats for poor children coming from the neighbourhood. This is expected to make it for the deficiencies in the government schools.”<sup>3</sup> But is it successful? According to *M. V. Nadkarni*, “This Act is hardly ambitious though it comes belatedly...the above measures, well mentioned surely, have shown some weaknesses in implementation...”<sup>4</sup> Why? Since, certain terms like ‘secularism’, ‘democracy’, ‘liberty’, ‘equality’ etc. are not clearly defined in the minds of Indians. The same terms have completely different meaning in countries other than India. But Indian diversity makes these terms not only ambiguous but also contradictory. *M. V. Nadkarni* has suggested certain points where ‘so-called secular treatment’ can be given in India. They are as follows –

1. Education at primary and secondary level should be uniformly subsidized to a large extent and especially for the financially marginalized it has to be free.
2. Never give ‘preferential treatment’ to upper castes or upper classes in the field of education; if done should be sternly dealt with.
3. Framing a time-table for implementation of anti-poverty programmes to make education effective.
4. Historically disadvantaged group, given *preferential treatment* initially, as time passes should be taken out of preferential treatment. For instance, “There has been a demand since long in India to keep the creamy layers among the historically disadvantaged out of the scope of the preferential treatment, since they do not at present have to face such disadvantages. For example, the children of highly placed government officials, successful professionals, and political leaders cannot be said to face the traditional social disadvantage even if their ancestors may have faced them. This will bring great pride and self-confidence among them, and remove the undesirable effects of ‘preferential treatment’ on the beneficiaries...A bitter fact of Indian society is that even the social groups broadly characterized as Scheduled Caste or backward are hierarchical, and within them there are even more backward sub-castes. As long as these lower sub-castes have to compete with higher sub-castes, they will be subject to the same injustice and disadvantage which prevailed between broader groups of upper castes and lower castes in the absence of preferential treatment. Having benefited from preferential treatment, now it would be the turn of elites among these social groups to renounce further such benefits for their children and leave the field open to the less fortunate sub-castes.”<sup>5</sup>

This may sound very wise approach. But still the question remains, how do we know that the suppressed class has benefited completely? How do we know that this is the right time to erase ‘preferential treatment’? *M. V. Nadkarni* has suggested a measuring scale through which we may continue or discontinue the preferential treatment. He says, “However, subject disadvantaged social group approach may have to continue, as long as the proportion of their representation in higher education and jobs continues to be significantly lower than the proportion of their population in overall economy or society.”<sup>6</sup>

These points and examples make ethics a pragmatic subject, and not just theoretical or ideological. The holistic approach is of tremendous help in arriving at clear and balanced decisions.

So, education do wonders if the ‘intentional ethics’ and ‘ethos’ combine. But what can education do or what is ‘education’? According to *Anil Kumar Thakur and Mohan Patel*, “Education is a mechanism which creates inbuilt

quality, capacity in man to come over and dominate in adverse life's circumstances... Education as such evolved becomes an instrument to condition the adverse externalities of life. It is thus biased towards scientific knowledge of the universe and enquires about its movement and the forces that circumscribe that movement."<sup>7</sup> So, to maintain peace or instill peace in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society like India, education is very important. It defines the term 'secular' in Indian context. As such 'secularism' defined in *Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary* is, "The belief that considerations of the present well-being of mankind should take precedence over religious considerations in civil affairs or public education." And 'secular' is explained as,"1. Worldly rather than spiritual. 2. Not relating directly to religion or to a religious body. 3. Relating to or advocating secularism. 4. Not living in a religious community or bound by monastic restrictions. Etc.

Obviously in a multi-cultural society like in India these definitions are far-fetched or not plausible. So how 'we' in Indian context have taken 'secularism'? Well, there are various interpretations. But one is giving equal importance to all religions 'everywhere'. In India we cannot think of implementing secularism as in Western context. We need to declare bank-holidays for all religious festivals. So, we come back again to the same point as to how to bring forth peace in India?

### Conclusion:

In India education or to be more precise, 'higher education' stands on a double-edged sword. Are we to throw away with the diversified religious values from our education system and be secular in Western context? Or, are we to understand different religions existing in India – from historical and philosophical perspective, incorporate these values without any prejudice in our curriculum? No doubt, in Indian context the second option seems to be more appropriate. Unfortunately, after British rule, the concept of Liberal Education was never accepted in its proper perspective. Subjects like Languages, Literature or Philosophy took a back-bench. Vocational courses were given absolute importance. Again, this also was necessary. Employment opportunities were to be created and the marginalized too were to be included. But so much so that subjects under Humanities remained under the veil and some elite group, well-settled, would study in their leisure time. The result was "peace" was completely disturbed. Therefore, it is very important that along with vocational courses (of Commerce and Science faculties) we incorporate subjects like Comparative Religion, History of Indian Civilization and Culture (in comparison to World Civilizations), Languages, Logic, Literature and Philosophy. Value based subjects have to take a front position in primary to higher education. And this is because we want to survive as a single (and part of global) family.

Our times have seen unimaginable violence in name of religion. The knowledge gained from the subjects under Humanities has to have a prominent place in our education system. As *Aroon Tikekar* says, "The liberal education was chiefly education in classical languages, classical literature and the humanities which exposed to students the importance of the moral virtues and the human values in addition to one's chosen area of study. The intention was that students should imbibe freedom of mind, body and spirit; freedom from dogmas; freedom from superstitions and taboos; and also, freedom to raise problematic and critical questions; freedom to disagree and freedom to choose vocation. Apart from these basic freedoms the other liberal values were supposed to be an unshakable belief in equality i.e., the conviction that all human beings are born equal and should be treated as equal; individual dignity i.e., the Right to respect and the Right to get ethical treatment; as also two more categorical imperatives, tolerance and non-violence. These 'liberal values' taught students the basic principles in corporate living with a firm belief in 'live and let live'."<sup>8</sup>

Though the last part of the paper still seems to be sugar coated, a mirage of a Utopian Island, it is not impossible or implausible either. As educationists, we stand on a see-saw, going up and down, as the task to introduce multi-cultural ideology in our education system – be at school or college level – has to be rethought and redefined every now and then keeping pace with this fast-changing times. Therefore, it needs lot of ‘intentional ethics’, effort and good-will on the part of educationists. Then we can say “Aab Delhi dur nahi hai!!”

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