

## Peace Education: An Essential Element For Sustainable Development

Seema Dhawan\*

Syed Zulfiqar Ali Rizvi\*\*

*“If we are to reach real peace in this world we shall have to begin with the children.”*

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

*Peace education is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. It can be described as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an agent of peace, as informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice and the value of peaceful and just social structures, encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future and caring for others. It is learning to manage anger and improve communication. It is centered on democracy education focusing on the political processes associated with conflict and postulating that with an increase in democratic participation, the likelihood of societies resolving conflict through violence and war decreases. New approaches to peace education propose an Integrative Theory of Peace in which peace is understood as a psychosocial, political, moral and spiritual reality.*

*Sustainable Development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Aspects of Sustainable Development are economical, social, political, cultural and environmental. It can be understood through an appreciation of*

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\* Associate Professor,

\*\* Research Scholar, H.N.B.G. University Srinagar, Uttarakhand

*the dynamic, complex and systemic relationship between the planetary ecological substrate and human societies in their social, economic and cultural make-up. Sustainable human societies are characterized by social justice, economic equity and enhanced human capabilities. Without peace, development of any kind is very difficult. Further, for sustained development, peace is of the utmost importance. In the present paper, peace education as an essential element of sustainable development has been discussed.*

*Key words: Peace Education, Sustainable Development*

Peace is very important for an individual, a society, a nation and the world. It is a condition where individuals, institutions, regions, nations and the world move ahead without any threat. Peace is also a social and political condition that ensures development of individuals, society and the nation. It is a state of harmony characterized by the existence of healthy interpersonal or inter-group or inter-regional or inter-state or international relationships, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, the establishment of equality and a working political order that serves the true interests of all. In the context of intra-national and international relations, peace is not merely the absence of war or conflict, but also the presence of socio-cultural and economic understanding and unity.

Peace means, the state of inner harmony. It also means the enlightened condition, the state of inner peace, having successfully risen above the greed, hatred and ignorance. Each human being exists within the context of interrelationships that include other human beings, all living beings and the natural world. In other words, each person is sustained by the interdependent web of life. By awakening to this principle, we are able to expand instinctive self-love into a compassionate love for others, we are able to nurture the spirit of tolerance and empathy for others. The

principle of dependent origination also provides a theoretical foundation for peace. In terms of concrete action, it manifests itself as the practice of compassion. Compassion indicates the practical ethic of always maintaining an empathetic involvement with others. It means sharing their sufferings and unhappiness, working alongside them to overcome the mislead that are the root cause of suffering, transforming these into happiness, benefit and joy.

Today, the world is beset with enormous problems, though modern amenities prevail everywhere. Humankind has reached the highest peak of success, but humans are full of anxiety because of the tumultuous situation of the world. These problems include hunger, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, discrimination against women, moral degradation, lack of health care, environmental degradation and so on. India as a developing country is not immune to these problems. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and environmental degradation are the burning questions in our country that contribute to peace less situations in the family, in society as well as in the country.

Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests. It becomes violent when parties no longer seek to attain their goals peacefully, but resort instead to violence in one form or another. Violent conflicts are thus not inevitable, nor do they happen overnight. Conflict is a dynamic process, which may take differing forms and run through various stages of escalation and de-escalation, resulting from the complex combination and overlap of the various causes. Conflict can only continue to exacerbate the problems faced in the region, as it impacts directly on economic potential and human well-being, shattering the very foundations of society.

Conflict has multiple, long and short-term impacts on development, and on environmental and human well-being. Conflict undercuts or destroys environmental, physical, human and social capital, diminishing available opportunities for sustainable development. Conflict impacts on human well-being, reducing quality of life, the capabilities of people to live the kinds of lives they value. It results in the loss of lives, livelihoods and opportunity, as well as of human dignity and fundamental human rights. Livelihoods are directly affected through decreased access to and inadequate access to natural resources, as a result of exclusion, displacement and the loss of biodiversity. Conflict can set in motion a cycle of degradation and human vulnerability. Conflict contributes to the breakdown of social cohesion and the disruption of local governance system; this in turn may result in established safety nets becoming unavailable. The increase in social and economic vulnerability, as result of conflict, may in the face of environmental and land degradation, trigger new tensions and conflict over critical resources (Homer-Dixon and Blitt 1998). The incidence of poverty may increase, not only through the loss of livelihoods but also as a result of a growing inability of people to cope with change. This loss of resilience is also directly linked to diminished access to public services, resulting in, an increasing incidence of ill health, a contraction in formal employment opportunities, the destruction of subsistence livelihoods and other entitlements failures which affect consumption and nutrition, as well as the weakening of social cohesion and heightening insecurity (Luckham et. al., 2001). Children are a major target of conflict and violence.

The term 'peace' does not merely imply the absence of overt violence, sometimes referred to as 'negative peace'. It also encompasses the presence of social, economic and political justice which is essential to the notion of 'positive peace' (Hicks, 1985).

'Structural violence' is a term that is used to refer to injustices such as poverty, discrimination and unequal access to opportunities, which are at the root of much conflict. Structural violence is perhaps the most basic obstacle to peace, which by definition cannot exist in a society in which fundamental human rights are violated. Peace education must address the prevention and resolution of all forms of conflict and violence, whether overt or structural, from the interpersonal level to the societal and global level.

Jawaharlal Nehru said: "But I should like to make it clear that the policy India has sought to pursue is not a negative and neutral policy. It is a positive and vital policy that flows from our struggle for freedom and from the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. **Peace is not only an absolute necessity for us in India in order to progress and develop but also of paramount importance to the world.**"

We know that peace is not merely the absence of war, but a condition of living where everyone can enjoy tolerance and respect. Peace education creates a culture of peace, helping to build a non violent and just society and is essential for survival of human beings on this earth. Achieving a culture of peace requires developing peaceful people. Peaceful people can be developed through educating them a sense of tolerance in relations. Peace education, broadly defined, includes all efforts to facilitate development of peaceful people. Peace education often takes place in schools, churches, families, community learning centers, counseling centers, clinics, prisons, and the workplace. Of course, it may occur anywhere, and the learners may be anyone including young children, graduate students, United Nations peacekeepers and police officers. In today's situation, especially in India, humane police officers are required. Nurturing human values among them is of utmost importance.

Robert Aspesgh in his write up on Peace education stated that “Peace education is feasible in a violent world because there is a societal and educational necessity of Peace education. The societal necessity of Peace education focuses the need of insight to be given to Global issues and to bring changes accordingly and the people in general needs to be educated in order to be aware of the fact that the Global society should be made more peaceful. “Nonviolence education” is based on the ideas of Gandhi, King, and other great peacemakers.

Peace education in UNICEF 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.

Peace education is a broader discipline. Disbarment education, Environment education, Human right education, International education are associated with Peace education. Peace education deals with conflicts arising out of aggression or war situations and also arising out of injustice, exploitations and violation of Human rights.

The ultimate goal of education for peace, human rights and democracy is the development in every individual of a sense of universal values and types of behavior on which a culture of peace is predicated. It should therefore promote also the development of inner peace in the minds of students so that they can establish more firmly the qualities of tolerance, compassion, sharing and caring.

As a values-oriented field that aims to cultivate among learners, the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors upon which a culture of peace is predicated. It serves as a reflexive educational

and community approach to social change. As such, peace educators teach about contemporary social, political, economic, ecological and ethical problems, exploring the root causes of conflict and facilitating the exploration of nonviolent social strategies to manage social discord without resort to violence. Hence, educators for peace seek to nurture intercultural understanding and global citizenship through developing respect for oneself, others, and the larger environment of which we are all a part (Reardon, 2002; Earth Charter, 2000).

**Peace education is more effective and meaningful when adopted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. It should be enriched by its cultural and spiritual values together with the universal human values. It should also be globally relevant. In order for peace education to become a regular inclusion and curriculum expectation within schools, nations and worldwide, teachers must be prepared to teach issues that are often socially uncomfortable and conflicting in order to combat the stigma, conflict and inequality that peace education seeks to diminish.**

**Therefore, peace education is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. It can be described as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an agent of peace, as informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice and the value of peaceful and just social structures, encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future and caring for others. It is learning to manage anger and improve communication. It is centered on democracy education focusing on the political processes associated with conflict and postulating that with an increase in democratic participation,**

**the likelihood of societies resolving conflict through violence and war decreases. New approaches to peace education propose an Integrative Theory of Peace in which peace is understood as a psychosocial, political, moral and spiritual reality.**

As elaborated by Staub (2002), the aims of peace education are to develop caring and non aggressive individuals who relate peacefully to others in their own lives, who promote the welfare of others and who take action to prevent violence in their society and in the world. Perhaps the most important contribution of psychology for peace education is to identify those dispositions knowledge, competencies, attitudes, and values that most strongly influence individual's peaceful behavior.

Peace is an essential condition for democracy and development. There should be a sense of tolerance in relations for the realization of true peace. In fact, there is a mutual relationship between democracy, development and peace. In the absence of peace, democracy cannot function and development cannot take place. On the other hand, peace cannot be achieved in the absence of democracy and development. Peace is still more essential for development in various areas. Democracy is better placed for eliminating conditions that generate public dissatisfaction. Development also promotes peace. It is through development that nations can ensure social and economic progress for the people and improve their quality of life.

Development is a process of societal change. It can be defined in many ways but refers broadly to social, economic and political processes which unlock expanded human capabilities and reduce vulnerability in society. Peace building refers to policies, strategies and actions which aim to build the capacity within society to resolve and manage conflicts non-violently. At the heart

of both development and peace building processes is the need to strengthen resilience and the capacity within society to manage change and resolve differences. Meanwhile, much of what is traditionally seen as “development” work e.g. improvements in social and economic well-being is also needed in peace building.

Conflict not only generates threat and fear, but also hampers economic, social, or political advancement. The democratic institutions cannot function well, if there is no peace. Citizens can participate in the process of decision-making at different levels only when the peace prevails. Peace is still more essential for development in various areas. No development activity is possible, if there is disturbance, violence or war. Development also promotes peace. It is through development that nations can ensure social and economic progress for the people and improve their quality of life. Even, at the individual level, any person can act positively, when his/her mind is calm and cool. Development initiatives contribute to sustain peace, security and stability in the countries. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted by 189 Members of the United Nations on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2000, identified peace as key condition for successful development. The 2005 World Summit on MDGs universally recognized that “development, peace and security and Human Rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing”.

There is a strong negative correlation between conflict and human development, in 2005, most of the countries with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) rankings were also those immersed in conflict or had recently emerged from it (OSAA 2005). The resources available to people are diminished through the loss of access to land and other natural resources on which livelihoods are based, and the loss of access to education and health care and so is their freedom to “*Safeguarding the environment is a crosscutting United Nations' activity.*”

**"Nature has provided plenty of resources for mankind's need, but not to the greed"**

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948).

Today there is a general recognition of a need to modify our approach to development in the present, even without taking into consideration the more difficult question of how future generations will cope with our legacy of spiraling population growth, expanding energy consumption and the inevitable depletion of vital natural resources. Whether, confronting the challenges of the present or the future, a new approach to development is a necessity which requires a real revolution in our behavior. Unless our life-style is subjected to considerable revaluation, including the adoption of far-reaching self-control regarding the satisfaction not of real wants but of self-gratifying desires, the emphasis on ecology could become yet another intensifier of the conflict between the rich and the poor (Brzezinski, 1993). Sustainable development represents an opportunity to construct a new approach and the success of that effort has powerful implications for issues of peace.

*"Renewable resource scarcities of the next 50 years will probably occur with a speed, complexity and magnitude unprecedented in history...We have come to understand that scarcities of renewable resources often produce insidious and cumulative social effects, such as population displacement and economic disruption. These events can, in turn, lead to clashes between ethnic groups as well as to civil strife and insurgency (Homer-Dixon, 1993)."*

Sustainable development was first defined in 1987 by the Brundtland World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which argued for a development strategy that: "...meets the needs of the present without compromising the

ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p.43). The concept of sustainable development which strives to strike a balance between economic, environmental and social dimensions emerges as an important concept. Aspects of sustainable development have been incorporated into much legislation and have become a legal requirement for all major developmental activities. It is now widely recognized that humanity faces urgent problems affecting local, regional and global environments and social and economic development. The Earth's limited natural resources are being consumed more rapidly than they are being replaced and the effects of global warming upon ecological balance and bio-diversity are well known. The goals of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014, DESD), are therefore to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development (SD) into all aspects of education and learning. Education for Sustainable Development provides a vision of education that seeks to balance human and economic wellbeing with cultural traditions and respect for the environment.

Sustainability represents an approach to development which addresses the fundamental concerns of poverty, environment, equality, and democracy (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro, 1992). With the end of the Cold War, the pursuit of lasting peace and an end to conflict has become, together with sustainable development, a global imperative. The 1992 Rio Declaration, presented at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, asserted in Principle 25 that "Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible". In other words, the idea of peace forms an integral part of the idea of sustainable development. In the next century, these two concepts are likely to become inseparable.

To understand the events of the next fifty years, then, one must understand environmental scarcity, cultural and racial clash, geographic destiny, and the transformation of war (Kaplan, 1994). The relationship between development and world peace is compatible. The first is the self evident truth that sustained peace is a condition for development. It is obvious that no serious progress social, economical or environmental can occur in a situation where there is no peace, where there is civil war or internal disruption. The second postulate is that development is a condition for sustained peace. While accepting the varied perceptions of both the words, it is evident that peace and development are inseparable. Combined together, it is a condition where individuals, institutions, regions, nations and the world move ahead without any threat. In this condition, regions or nations are generally more stable domestically, likely to be democratically governed and respectful to human rights.

The current global trends, which present formidable challenges to the achievement of both peace and sustainability, include the problem of population growth above the carrying capacity, the destabilizing impact of widespread poverty and increasing social inequality, political, social, and economic breakdown. For the UN, environment is an important aspect of its peace-building goals. “Safeguarding the environment is a crosscutting United Nations activity. It is a guiding principle of all our work in support of sustainable development. It is an essential component of poverty eradication and one of the foundations of peace and security” (Annan 1997).

The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, adopted Agenda 21 – a blueprint for sustainable development which emphasises the value of cooperation. A decade later, the

World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg in 2002, further emphasized the centrality of peace and security to achieving environmental goals. Chapter 8 of the WSSD Johannesburg Plan of Implementation calls on the global community to:

“Create an enabling environment at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels in order to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development and support for peace, stability and security, the resolution and prevention of conflicts, democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development and gender equality” (UN 2002).

Peace and security are a precondition for good environmental quality and sustainable resource management. Given this close relationship between peace and environment, it was emphasized that management plans should include provisions which encourage equitable access to and sharing of benefits from natural resource use, so as to avoid competition for natural resource control. These plans should also identify and support opportunities through which environmental management can contribute to peace and peaceful coexistence.

Peace is essential for development, and vice versa: development is essential for lasting and sustainable peace. Without peace, we will not win the fight against poverty. Without peace, the Millennium Development Goals will be optimistic but unrealistic promises. Peace is a prerequisite for human development and effective environmental management, both of which are globally agreed objectives, including those of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Peace education focuses on promoting development with a view to eradicating poverty and placing countries, individually and collectively on a path of

sustainable growth and development, recognizes the importance of peace.

“The three pillars of sustainable development, however, cannot be achieved without peace. Peace is an essential condition for sustainable development, alongside democracy, good governance, human rights, social development and the protection of the environment and sound economic management” (NEPAD 2002).

Cooperation at different levels from local to national, to sub-regional, to regional, and to international is required for peace. Peace represents the key to unlock many opportunities for sustainable development. Through peace education, we can achieve our goal of sustainable development. Presently Peace Education is a very important issue all over the world for sustainable development and successful democracy.

Peace Education in terms of human rights education and environmental education are very essential in every stage of an education system for removing poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. In all of the previously-mentioned education systems of India, Peace Education and Sustainable Development Education should be incorporated in their curricula. This should be done through participatory peace education pedagogy such as sustainable development activities in the classroom. If it can be instilled in children at the primary level then it will continue for the rest of their lives. This will remove social differences, bring people closer and help to remove crime and conflict in society. In senior secondary level in general school system, peace education and sustainable development education exist to some extent. In the social science classes, there are topics on the environment; there is discussion about sustainable development. However, these issues are not practiced or taught in the classroom in a participatory way.

In secondary and higher secondary level of education there is peace, moral and human rights education but the problem is that there is a lack of trained teachers who can transform this content in knowledge in an effective way.

At the university level, there is more violence particularly in the public universities. After completing university education, students go for jobs in high levels of government and non government institutions. Every program at the university level should incorporate peace education, sustainable development education and human rights education in their regular syllabus, so that it can reflect practical life.

Our country's teaching systems follow the “banking system of education” which does not help students in their self-empowerment and is not rooted peace education pedagogy. All teachers should be trained in the values and skills of Peace Education, so that they can use them in the classroom.

In terms of implementing Peace Education and in order to make it effective, human rights, reflection of poverty, reflection of corruption, democracy, intercultural solidarity and sustainable development need to be incorporated in all levels and all systems of education curricula in India. We also need to conduct needs assessments on the basis of social crises and needs for developing educational curriculum.

Peace education has developed as a means to achieve certain goals such as reaffirmation of faith in the dignity and worth of the humanity. It can also help to promote sustainable development. Peace education is the method to work together for sustainable development. Most of the dispute related to sustainable development can be solved by proper inclusion of peace education in curriculum of every level of education. Peace education should be included in science and technological

education so that we can channelize the potential of young brains in a proper direction. Through peace education, we can minimize our defense expenses and use it in sustainable development policies of our country. India is using near about 10% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on its defense budget. If we try to establish peace in whole world through peace education, each and every country of the world could be developed properly.

Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible. There can be no peace without equitable development, and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space. In the word of Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore:

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high*

*Where knowledge is free;*

*Where the world has not been broke up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;*

*Where words come out from the depth of truth;*

*Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;*

*Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habits;*

*Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and actions;*

*Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

- Rabindra Nath Tagore

Nobel Laureate (Literature), 1913

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