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Communal Harmony and Peace-Building through Education

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Education is a panacea for all ills and evils of the society whether they are social, moral, ethical, cultural religious or political. If the real education be imparted properly then we will surely reach to the pinnacle of peace, progress, prosperity and communal harmony. The heart of education is the education of the heart and in my view this is the real education which should be imparted to the students by the government, teachers and parents. We are surrounded with plethora of problems and perils, moral and cultural confusions, communal tension and turmoil etc because our education is limited to the head and hands only.

This paper attempts to examine the ways and means in which education can bring peace and communal harmony in the globalized world. It focuses on the role and relevance of education in peace-building and bringing unity and fraternity communal harmony among us. What kind of education should be imparted to the youth so that we may have unity and harmony in the society in this turbulent time? How can education break the age-old barriers which are hostile to social, cultural and communal harmony? How can education root out the maladies and miseries of mankind which have become incurable and obstructive to the peace-building process? These are some pertinent questions which need to be answered and this paper attempts to answer.

Our history is an eyewitness of those people who got the education of the heart and they gave new direction and dimension to the whole world for example Buddha, Kabir, Vivekananda, Gandhi etc. We have value-less life, aimless education and character-less religion which are the root of all existing problems and perils. This paper focuses on the education of mind body and soul that can eradicate the most terrible problems such as terrorism, naxalism, racism, communal riots, crime and murder etc. which are creating horror and terror in the heart of humanity. And such type of education can help us to achieve our target that is universal peace and harmony.

**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”-
Nelson Mandela**

The destiny of a nation lies on the shoulder of the youth and the destiny is determined by the education they receive from families, schools, colleges and universities. Samskara from society, policy from politics, tolerance and morality from religion, ethics from work, joy from job, employment from education has disappeared. We have value less life, aimless religion and characterless education which are plaguing and corroding the nation and causing serious problems such as communal riot, racism, naxalism, terrorism, casteism, regionalism, etc. that are a grave threat to universal peace and harmony. Education is the only powerful panacea which will cure all these ills and evils of a nation, maladies and miseries of mankind. It is the only vehicle through which social, cultural, moral and ethical values, spiritual thoughts, dream and hope of a nation are disseminated from one generation to another. Education ignites our interests, empowers us mentally emotionally, financially and spiritually, makes us realize our powers and potentialities, awakens us from slumber and inertia, fuel of our energy and motivates us “Miles to go before we sleep, Miles to go before we sleep.” (Frost: *Stooping By Woods on a Snowy Evening* .Line 215-16).

Education is synonymous with change. History is a testimony to all the changes and revolutions which took place during the evolution of mankind which were due to education. We as a nation eradicated seemingly many incurable rooten systems and corrupt practices such as sati system, colonialism, untouchability, feudalism, zamindari system, etc. by dint of real education. So if we want to live a tension and problem free life, we need real education. Life is unconceivable without education. It begins with birth and ends when life ceases to exist. "Education is not preparation for life, education is life itself"-John Dewey.

Education can wipe out all the miseries of mankind and serious problems and perils of a nation from the face of the earth and bring communal harmony in society, establish amity and make progress and advancement. "Education is indeed the barometer of a society's advancement." (Ramchandran and Ram Kumar : 2005. P. vii).

1. Education in Present Scenario

"Now, what I want is facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but facts, facts alone are wanted in life plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon facts nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to facts, Sir! In this life, we want nothing but facts, Sir; nothing but facts." (Dickens: p.1).

This is the axis on which moves our present scenario education system. Fact and figures rule the contemporary system of education. This system focuses on collection of facts and not on cultivating noble conducts, forming proper hobbies and habits, developing values and virtues, building character and strengthening concentration and will. And the consequence is that we don't have "a brain well formed rather than a brain well filled." (Morin). We have become "mere thinkers" instead of becoming "Man Thinking" (Emerson). This system has made us money-producing machines, insensitive and inhuman. It has transformed human beings into mere consumers. "The education that you are receiving now in schools and colleges is only making you a race of dyspeptics. You are working like machines merely, and living a jelly-fish existence." (Vivekananda P.12).

The employment was another serious drawback of this system of education. More than 50% graduates are unemployable. The educational institutes have become the degree diploma and certificate sellers. They are mushrooming in our society. We Indians are suffering from degree and diploma disease and certification instead of cultivating concentration and character. We are accumulating certificates, degrees and diplomas. This whole civilisation is suffering from the crisis of character and the consequence is before us in the form of crime, corruption, killing, scam, loot and robbery etc. This education has failed to fill the yawning gap between the rich and the poor which causes major serious problem that is social and financial inequality or disparity, the root of all social miseries and maladies such as poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, naxalism, communal tension etc. "Our present education is geared to industrialisation and war, its principle aim being to develop efficiency; and we are caught in this machine of ruthless competition and mutual destruction. If education leads to war, if it teaches us to destroy or be destroyed, has it not utterly failed?" (Krishnamurti P4).

I had heard that life takes tests (zindagi imtihan leti hai) but now I see examination takes life (imtihan zindagi lene lagi hai). The examination pattern is such that causes tension and pressure in the mind of the students and finally they commit suicide. Many young intelligent boys and girls become terrorist and nexalite because they have to support their

starving family. Lack of employment forces the youth to join immoral and illegal profession which is rampant in our society.

The commercialization of education has derived away the poor students from schools, colleges and educational campuses. The poor, the downtrodden and the marginalized can't afford educational expenditure and therefore they can't send their children in good schools and colleges. While I was pursuing B.Ed, my principal asked me the full form of B.Ed. and I told him 'Bachelor of Education', he replied 'Business of education'. After sometime I realized my principal was in the right. Everybody is aware of the pathetic plight of government schools and colleges. These schools and colleges are not makers of the poor children's future but they are destroyers/killers of their future. "For us modern education is relevant only to turning out clerks, lawyers, doctors, magistrates, and policemen... This education has not reached the farmers, the oil grinder, nor the potter. No other society has been struck with such disaster... (Narmadeshwar P. 610).

The present scenario education system neither generates employment for living nor prepares us to face the challenges and difficulties of life and nor cultivates humanity and righteousness in the heart of human being. In this way the existing system neglects Gandhi's vision of education i.e. "By education I mean all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man-body, mind and spirit."

There is technological evolution in educational field which has brought knowledge at the door step of the rich. This instant knowledge is producing google and internet scholar. Morin puts question mark on this evolution of education and she says "we know the world more, but do we know it better?" (Morin : 2000). Our involvement in social networking sites and in internet has separated us from the family and society. We don't have time to talk to our elders, relatives and family members. "Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities. And as it turns out we are very vulnerable indeed. We are lonely but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections and the social robot may offer the illusion companionship without demands of friendship. Our network life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other... We would rather text than talk." (Turkle : 2011).

2. What is Real Education?

Etymologically the word education has been explained in three ways. The term education has been derived from the Latin Word '*Educare*' which means 'to nourish' or 'to bring up'. The second interpretation is that this term has been taken from the word '*Educere*' which means 'to lead out' or 'to draw out'. The third explanation is that this term has been extracted from '*Educatum*' which means the 'act of training or teaching'. These three interpretations help up to define education i.e. to provide a healthy ambience that would bring out and enhance the inherent power and potential of a child.

According to Vivekananda "Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there undigested, all your life we must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library... if education were identical with information the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopaedias the *rishis*." (Complete Work. vol.3 P. 302). This should be our school, college and university education where focus should be on "man-making" not on making man machines. Ideas and thoughts should rule our life and education. An idea can change our life and society e.g. Peace and Ahimsa. This is the heart of education.

The purpose of education is a education of purpose. Education liberates us from all shackles and bondages (“*Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye*”) and dispels the darkness of life (“*Tamso Ma Jyotirgamay*”) and leads us to self-realisation, self-awareness and self-reliance which help us to bring communal harmony and establishes peace. Vivekananda rightly said “Real education is that which enables one to stand on one’s own legs.” (Vivekananda p12). Education must generate employment to fulfil the necessities and enable us to meet the challenges of life. And the challenge of life is that “Life is not a brief candle. It is a splendid torch that must be made to burn as brightly as possible before it is handed on to the next generation.” (Shaw).

Education should impart virtues and values of life and cultivates humanity in the heart of human beings. We should have value education and humane education. In this way man will be a ‘complete man’ or perfect man. “Education to be, complete, must be humane, it must include not only the training of the intellect but the refinement of the spirit and discipline of the heart. No education can be regarded as complete if it neglects the heart and the spirit.” (Presidential Address : Radhakrishnan). This type of education will create integrated and all-round developed personality because it focuses on the nourishment of the hands, head and heart or body, mind and spirit. Education makes us realize the powers of hands, potentialities of the head and divinities of the heart and manifest them in order to create and construct a nation based on harmony and peace.

The function of education is to make human being a better and greater human being, cultivate love for humanity in the heart and root out all types of social inequalities. “Education is a liberating force and in our age it is also a democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.” (Indira Gandhi).

3. Communal Harmony, Peace and Education

Communal harmony is a state of society where people of diverse language, religion, race, caste, colour and creed live together, pay due respect to one another, understand one another and appreciate diversity and richness of Indian culture, tolerate as well as accept the differences of one another, celebrate all festivals whether Holi, Eid, Christmas or Baisakhi with equal zeal and zest.

People should live in a manner which should help us to realise “*Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam*” then heaven will be here on this unique planet earth. Where there is harmony there is heaven. We should not hurt anybody irrespective of religion, language, caste etc. through our thoughts, words and actions. Gandhi rightly said "Always aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed. Always aim at purifying your thoughts and everything will be well". Hindu should be a true Hindu, Muslim a true Muslim, Sikh a true Sikh, Christian a genuine Christian then there will be the state of global brotherhood. We don't need conversion to religion. We should tolerate and accept all religions with the same reverence as we treat ours. If there is no war or conflict that does not mean that there is harmony. And if there is a petty- confrontation that does not mean disharmony. Peaceful co-existence with fellow-feeling is communal harmony. Communal harmony is the result of the contribution of all for the welfare of whole humanity. Vivekanand also said “each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of life. Help and not Fight, Assimilation and not Destruction, Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.”

The solution of all prevalent problems of a nation is education. Lack of education and bad education are the root of all the existing evils which are destroying the very foundation of a nation such as unity, amity and harmony.

“Education, Education, Education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of ours and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got. Through education comes faith in one’s own self, and through faith in one’s self the inherent Brahman is waking up on them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant” (Vivekananda). Education makes us confident, courageous and powerful because education is power. It makes us realize our powers, potentialities and divinities and help us to manifest them for a peaceful and harmonious nation. So, education is a key to all locks and panacea for all problems and perils.

Everyday we read and watch the news of terrorist attack, nexalite and moaist attack, suicide and murder, communal and racial riot, political and cultural tension which threaten peace and harmony of life and society. The history of mankind has witnessed two world wars, many civil wars, several wars between various countries and these civil wars and attacks are still going on in many countries. India has witnessed the pangs of partition, 1962 war against China, 1971 war against Pakistan, 1984 Sikh riot, Kargil war, demolition of Babri Mosque in 1992, Godhra riot in 2002 and recently Muzaffar Nagar riot in Uttar Pradesh. War and riot are a colossal waste of life & wealth. “The Pity of war, the pity war distilled.” (Owen: Strange Meeting Line – 25). We are sitting and living on the heap of explosive where peace and harmony are inevitable otherwise a little lapse will destroy the whole world and even the existence of humanity will be wiped out. We have already lost our many great leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi in our country and in abroad Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Martin Loother King and many more great leaders of the world. And all these assassinations are a consequence of communal and racial riot and political tension. This shows the failure of the global education system which has enabled men to land on the moon and the mars, and taught people how to fly in the sky but failed to teach human beings how to walk on earth.

Communal riot or communal tension is a political and religious construct. It is prevalent in our society because the politicians want to take undue advantage by exciting the two groups two fight for their political gains. The people of our community are not so well-read to understand the ulterior motive of the political mafia. Education enables them to think deeply and discern between what is right or wrong? If all will be educated then the political mafia cannot misguide and mislead them. For that education should reach to all people. The education of heart can harmonise all the conflicts and confusions which may crop up due to mutual misunderstanding and misconception.

The second major cause of communal disharmony is the misinterpretation of religious texts or religious beliefs which cause serious destruction and colossal waste to life and wealth. Even a rumour causes grave fight between two groups or communities. Education should teach us to be tolerant and non-violent. The education of heart cultivates humanity in the heart which brings love and compassion among all people. It teaches us that all religious are one only paths are many and we are the sons and daughters of the one Almighty. According to a Muslim prophet the whole world is a guest of Allah and the true Muslims are those who treat this guest humbly and properly. The Hindu scripture says that “Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam” (the whole world is my family). The motto and philosophy of all religions are one. Humanity should be the one and only one religion. The essence of all religions is love,

peace, non-violence, tolerance and acceptance. India is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-religious country where we should not fight in the name of religion, language, culture and race and we should accept and tolerate one another. India has taught to the world universal tolerance and acceptance. According to the Geeta “Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him. All men are struggling through many paths which in the end lead to Me.” Despite this profound philosophy we have so much bloodshed in the name of religion so far not as much in the name of anything else.

“The demons of communal hatred are not out on the street ... they are lurking inside ourselves.” (Dattani). The seed of communal hatred is in the mind of man so only right education can change the mind of man and can wipe out prejudices and biases. The crux of the problem is that we don't understand and believe in one another. If we can accept and trust one another, there cannot be communal tension and the community will be flooded with peace and harmony. But it is not so easy because “one reality cannot accept another reality” (Dattani : Final Solutions). Education is the only final solution which can resolve this tension and hatred. No man is born good or evil, we become good or evil through the kind of education we receive. The family is the first school for children so parents have their pious duty to sow the seed of love, tolerance, acceptance and non-violence in the heart of innocent children. If parents fail in their duty then it is the duty of the teachers to do the rest. “The future destiny of the world rests entirely with the teachers and students. If the teachers train their students in the right direction, in the path of righteousness, the world will be filled with ideal citizens.” (Vivekananda). The recent riot in Muzaffarpur nagar indicate that majority of people don't have access to education and those who have access to it they don't get proper education. Without education there would be :

“Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain,
And we are here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.” (Arnold: Dover Beach, Line 34-37)

If we don't have harmony in the society we can't talk of world peace. Gandhi ji is regarded as the modern epitome of peace and non-violence. Had he been not at political platform during freedom movement and partition time we would have shed more blood and lost many lives. He proved that through peace-process a nation can achieve anything. Peace comes through understanding and love and understanding and love come through the education of the heart. So if we want peace, we need education for all. According to Attlee “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.” (Attlee, at Preparatory UNESCO Conference quoted by Saiyidain). The origin of the war is in the mind so through education we can overhaul and mould the mind in a proper direction. War is not the solution of any problem. It is a temporary solution to the permanent problem. In this 21st century almost all the countries spend much on defence sector than on education sector. “Education is a better safeguard of liberty than standing army: (Everett).

There is social disorder, disharmony and disturbance due to social inequalities in our country. There is huge gulf between the rich and the poor. Social inequalities cause dissatisfaction, hatred and jealousy which cause plethora of problems such as naxalism which is a serious threat to peace in India. This grave issue can also be resolved through peace-process and not through war or fight. Through education we can create employment opportunity and through employment there will be prosperity and through prosperity there will be peace all around. Education can bring them into the main stream of the society. Today

many educated but unemployed youths are forced to involve in anti-social activity because of suffering and starving family.

Poverty is the cause of many social, political and economic problems. Due to poverty human beings are forced to live animal like existence. For money people are ready to commit any crime and we everyday read the news of murder, smuggling, robbery, snatching etc. which create horror and terror in our life and society. Education can eradicate poverty and ameliorate the misery and suffering of humanity. Education create such a social and psychological condition

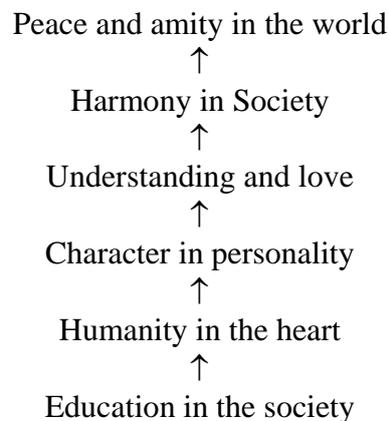
"Where mind is without fear and the head is held high,
Where knowledge is free,
Where the world has not broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls." (Tagore Line 1-4).

We have many premier universities and reputed educational institutions for economic and material progress but we don't have any system or institution to sow the seed of humanity and cultivate righteousness in human heart. After the study of 26 civilizations of the world Twine B. concluded that most of the world's greatest civilizations were demolished on the rocks of material advancement and development. We have plans and programmes for material progress but don't have any plan and system of education to make human being a better and nobler human being.

"Soon we shall breathe our last,
Meanwhile, while we live, while we are a many human beings,
Let us cultivate humanity." (Seneca quoted by Nussbaum in Cultivating Humanity).

There is no problem which is beyond man's comprehension. The problems are man-made so they will be root out by man's effort to legislate and implement effective education system.

Where there is education there is humanity in the heart, where there is humanity there is character in personality, where there is character in personality, there is understanding and love in the mind, where there is understanding and love, there is harmony in society, when harmony in society there will be peace and amity in the world.



4. Conclusion

Give us good education we will give you a great nation based on peace and communal harmony.

Education moulds the mind of man and changes the heart of a human being, strengthens spirit, forms proper hobbies and habits, builds character, cultivates noble conducts, develops concentration and will power, harmonise all communal tensions and turmoils and creates righteousness and humanity in the heart. “The key to survival of humanity lies on our ability to understand, appreciate and accept diversity in today’s multicultural world.” (Raghavan : 2013). We have been treating Indian education system as a holy cow so far. Until it is too late we don’t need evolution in education system but total revolution in this static system. We should live in peaceful co-existence with fellow-feeling. “Let us mobilize all our forces in the defence of peace, stretching our hands across to all those who wish to join in the greatest fellowship of faith in peace. Let us make public opinion so strong and vocal in favour of peace in all countries that no Government, however chauvinistic and aggressive, would dare to break down the defence of peace and precipitate the horrors of war.” (Saiyidain p. 273).

India is a land where diverse religions have flourished together. So if we can respect, understand, accept and appreciate one another, nothing can divide and destroy us and we can no longer fight in the name of language and religion.

“Ah, Love let us be true,
To one another! For the world, which seems?
To lie before us like a land of dreams.” (Arnold: Dover Beach, Line – 29-31)

We have many institutes for education, material progress and advancement. We have many religions and religious institutes/groups in the name of religion but we don’t have any religious or educational institution where a human being can be made a virtuous and nobler human being.

I would like to conclude with the poem of Gopal Das Neeraj

Ab to mazhab koi aisa bhi chalaya jaaye
Jisme insaan ko insaan banaya jaaye
...
Mere dukh-dard ka tujh par ho asar kuch aisa
Main rahun bhooka to tujhse bhi naa khaya jaaye
Jism do ho ke bhi dil ek ho apne aisa
Mera aasun teri palkon se uthaya jaaye
Ab to mazhab koi aisa bhi chalaya jaaye... .

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