

Training Children and Youths in Nonviolence:

A Long-Term Strategy to Prevent Terrorism and War

Global Scenario

The world today is mired in violence, hatred, corruption, ethnic, racial and religious fanaticism and political killings. What fills my heart with sadness and grief is that it is mostly youths and children around the world who are in the forefront of the campaigns that kill and divide people in the name of religion, nationalism, racism and political rivalries. My sadness increases manifold when I see that these youths with deluded beliefs not only kill innocent people gruesomely but also lose their own lives for an imaginary cause. These highly motivated and misled youths are present in almost all countries and are causing untold suffering to people who do not belong to their race, religion, ethnic or political group. The catastrophes of 9/11 and 7/7 owe their origins to these deluded beliefs in which these youths are being systematically indoctrinated and trained in thousands of hate factories that have mushroomed in all parts of the world. If this trend is not stopped, it will soon engulf the entire humanity and I visualize a dismal global scenario.

Need for nonviolence Education and Training

The only way to prevent children from becoming future terrorists and warmongers is to introduce a global programme of training in nonviolence as an integral indirectly part of school curricula right from the primary level. The primary school teachers need to be trained so that they may impart this training indirectly to young minds while presenting the course content to in their classes. Teacher can shape and mould the lives of children in the right direction. They have tremendous formative influence on them. It is not at all necessary to impart this training in nonviolence at primary level in a formal way. The teachers have an important role to play and they also shoulder a great responsibility to set the students good example, It is therefore imperative that a teacher's lifestyle serves as a role model or as an eternal object lesson for kids. They need to create an environment rooted in ahimsa and let children imbibe the values naturally. At our Peace Palace Rajsamand Anuvibha is making a humble endeavor to expose groups of children to a specially designed environment and bring about a transformation in their lives. We believe that values or ethical principles cannot be imposed on children. We have to be very careful and cautious and have to evolve a system in which children grow naturally as responsible and morally elevated future citizens. The Balodaya Model of Education developed at our Peace Palace Rajsamand has in it a big potential for training children at primary level in a natural manner. As the children grow in this environment they will develop reverential feelings and positive attitudes towards other forms of life. I am of the view that the Balodaya Model of Education being organized by Anuvibha which aims at eliciting the best in the child and at inculcating in them the basic values naturally can transform young people and children into peace loving responsible future citizens.

For the past many years, humankind has evolved and invented numerous methods of training in violence and war. We have been spending enormous material and human resources on them at the cost of mass hunger, illiteracy and environmental damage. Besides, violence has been growing menacingly in different forms. The complexity of the situation that the world faces today makes it mandatory for us to move further from the principle of peaceful co-existence towards a more active principle of cooperation for peace and develop the requisite instruments for such cooperation. Hence, training in nonviolence is imperative in modern times. If we fail to evolve a viable scientific system to train and orient people in ahimsa, we shall be failing in our most important duty towards humanity and society.

Roots of Violence

I do not subscribe to the view the present phenomenon of violence in the world today is a symptom of a clash of civilizations. It is absolutely clear that no amount of military might can extirpate terrorism root and branch. The military might can silence guns for a limited period and the monster can raise its head again with greater vengeance and ferocity. We can kill or disarm the enemy but unless the cause of enmity is rooted out the cycle of revenge will go on for hundreds of years making innocent people vulnerable in the form of 'collateral damage'. We have to go deeper into the roots of violence or terrorism. An eminent peace researcher of the modern world Johan Galtung says that *'there is something ecological to peace. Nature's balance is rooted in diversity (of biota and abiota) and symbiosis between the components of an ecosystem. I would say that peace is also rooted in diversity meaning the functional interdependence not only of diverse 'actors' like countries but also of municipalities, international organizations, transnational corporations and so on, not to mention non-human life and non-living resources'* Harmony among the diverse components of the ecosystem - be they humans or other forms of life - depends on three principles: diversity, symbiosis and equity. Even true love lies embedded in these very components of a sustainable culture. Lord Mahavira, a contemporary of Lord Buddha, known as the 24th Tirthankar of the nonviolent Jain tradition, made an ecologically significant statement 2,600 years ago in the aphorism *'Parasparopgraho jivanam'* (All life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence) which is refreshingly contemporary in its premise and perspective. It defines the scope of modern ecology and extends it further to the fact that not only human beings but also animals, birds, plants, and even microbes belong together and are bound in a physical as well a metaphysical relationship. Life is viewed as a gift of togetherness, accommodation and assistance in a universe teeming with independent constituents. Mahavira proclaimed a profound truth for all times to come when he said:

'one who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them.'

If the children imbibe the spirit of this message from the very beginning it will be imprinted in their minds and they will behave responsibly.

When the prerequisites for sustainable peace are not fulfilled, a society is unstable

and prone to violence - either civil conflict or external wars. These underlying causes are aggravated by establishment control of the way in which we view the outsiders and by our tendency to blame the external agency for the problems that beset our own society. Broadly speaking we can say that the roots of war or violence may lie in the following conditions:

- (i) lack of consensus,
- (ii) unsustainable ecology,
- (iii) injustice,
- (iv) poverty,
- (v) distorted consensus,
- (vi) distorted human nature,
- (vii) militarism
- (viii) political elite

These conditions are likely to disappear if most youths and children of the world are trained in nonviolence. A person with a commitment to nonviolence will respect disagreement in views, refrain from destroying ecological harmony and will never do injustice to anyone. Moreover he will refrain from indulging in excess of everything. As a result poverty will be reduced, human nature will be protected and militarism and elitism which generate war will be eliminated. It is beyond doubt that educating and training youth at global level mean rooting out sprouts of terrorism and war.

Strategies, tools and Organization of Training in Nonviolence

We seek participation of concerned young people from all over the world. Training in nonviolence has both its individual and social dimensions. It should employ such methods as meditation to bring about a change of heart and attitude in the individuals, persuasion, personal example, willingness to suffer rather than injure another, moral uprightness, practice of sharing one's resources with the other, faith in the essential goodness of all humans and regard for the basic human rights of all. The other tools of training may include regular classes, lectures, self-study, workshops, panel discussions, community living, games and sanitation. Training should encourage constructive programmes and social service. It should also take special care of developing the ability among the trainees to understand the pulse of the people, public opinion, training in communications and in audio visual programmes. Equally essential is the training in the organization and leadership of nonviolent action. It involves investigation of the problem, the organization and leadership of nonviolent action, negotiation, conciliation, arbitration and other norms of conflict resolution such as mobilization of opinion, planning, preparation, use of different forms of nonviolent direct action including non-cooperation, civil disobedience and fasting etc. His Holiness Acharya Mahapragya, an eminent Jain Acharya and the spiritual head of Anuvart Movements has laid down a four point formula for training in nonviolence.

1. Controlling and refining emotions (Change of heart)
2. bringing about a change in outlook and building style of thinking

3. nonviolent lifestyle
4. Training in right means of livelihood.

TRAINING IN NONVIOLENCE: THE BASIC ELEMENT

The basic element of training in nonviolence is change of heart or mental training. The following specific principled formulas are required to be part of the training for bringing about a change of heart.

Factors causing violence effects

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| 1. Greed | Tendency to acquire |
| 2. Fear | Manufacture and use of armaments |
| 3. Hostility | Tendency to take revenge |
| 4. Anger | Internecine quarrels |
| 5. Egoism | Hatred and discrimination based on considerations of caste and colour |
| 6. Cruelty | Exploitation and killing |
| 7. Intolerance | Sectarian Strife |
| 8. Absolute
(as opposed to
the relative thinking) | Obduracy and the tendency to disregard the views of others. |
| 9. Absolute behaviour | Tendency to practise non-cooperation in communal life |

These instincts turn people violent. Change of heart means overcoming these instincts and cultivating new refined habits instead.

Formulas of mental training

The antidote to greed

Training in freeing oneself from the infatuation for material objects and the body.

The antidote to fear

Training in cultivating fearlessness and in strengthening the will not to manufacture or trade in armaments.

The antidote to hostility

Training in cultivating friendship and in eschewing the tendency to take revenge.

The antidote to anger

Training in learning to forgive.

The antidote to egoism

Training in practicing humility, nonviolent opposition and non-cooperation with injustice.

The antidote to cruelty

Training in cultivating goodwill for other sects and the ability to put up with diverse views.

The last two factors causing violence can be countered by training people in relativism of thinking and behaviour. Negative feelings are to be countered by training in feelings positively.

Stopping nonessential violence

Training in nonviolence will have as one of its constituents making the people aware of the need to give up nonessential violence. Wastage of water, overmining, killing innocent creatures and people are examples of nonessential violence. It has made man cruel and has disturbed the balance of nature.

Physical health and nonviolence

There is an intrinsic relation between physical health and nonviolence. Ill-health generates violence. One of the factors responsible for people committing suicide is inadequate sugar in the blood. Likewise, disorders of liver and spleen also contribute to violent thoughts. Therefore, training in differential dietetics and Science of Healthy Living is a vital component of training in nonviolence.

Economic health and nonviolence

Training in the following subjects is necessary for the economic health of an individual as well as society:

- Voluntary parting with wealth
- Nonacquisition of the economy
- Decentralization of the economy
- Economics and World Peace
- Economics and a Healthy Society
- Legitimate Means of Making Money
- Just Distribution of Wealth
- Restraint in consumerism and limitation of wants

It need not be emphasized that physical, mental, emotional and economic health have all to contribute to the creation of a non-violent society. They have, therefore, to be the bases of training in nonviolence.

The base and field of experimentation in training in nonviolence

The success of the methodology of training in nonviolence depends on the development of an individual mentality irrevocably committed to nonviolence.

This has to be practiced in the following areas:

- Individual as a member of the family
- Individual as a social being
- Individual as a citizen of a nation
- Individual as a citizen of the world.

Today people are divided ideologically and regionally. But nonviolence requires a unified and integrated personality. In order to develop it, a multipronged programme of training is necessary. The thought of a nonviolent society disregarding the individual is as illusory as that of a nonviolence individual without a nonviolence society. The two are relative to each other. This basic fact should not be ignored while thinking of training in nonviolence.