

A REVIEW ON THE CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN KERALA AND THE ARISING NEED OF PEACE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The conflict has become a common phenomenon in our day-to-day life, and peace education has become a significant concern for scholars and teachers worldwide in recent years. Peace education has now been incorporated into various educational institutions worldwide, either as stand-alone programs or as part of a variety of these courses. While peace programs and peace education are being introduced in schools and colleges all over the world, it appears that efforts to incorporate them into India's education program, particularly in Kerala, are still limited. Why is peace education more critical now than ever before in Kerala? Kerala is one of the Indian union's smallest states. It covers less than 1% of India's entire land area, with a total area of 38,863 square kilometers. Kerala has a unique development model called "*Kerala Model development*" since it has accomplished extraordinary social growth in health, education, and economic development. Kerala has performed exceptionally well across the board regarding human development indicators, including a shallow infant mortality rate, high male and female longevity, below-replacement fertility, near-universal literacy rates (94 percent for males and 88 percent for females), etc. These incredible achievements termed the "Kerala model of development" has been investigated by several researchers and policymakers alike. (Lieten, 2002; Kannan, 1998; Heller, 1995).

KEY WORDS : Peace education, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, violence, peace building

INTRODUCTION

Despite these developments, particularly in literacy, Kerala is currently dealing with a slew of severe difficulties, including an increase in crime, violence, hostility, insurgencies, drug misuse, religious intolerances, suicides, and terrorism. Education is considered a process designed to bring about a desirable and genuine change in a person's lifestyle. It is indisputably true that education's aims and values are drawn from society's goals and values and that teaching technique is attained by merging the two in terms of objectives. But this has not become a reality yet in Kerala now. Educational Institutions in Kerala, which are supposed to lay the groundwork for peace and harmony, have become transmission hubs for violence and drugs. The fact that violence is showing itself in the actions and attitudes of the younger generations in Kerala is particularly frightening. By evaluating the current social-political conditions in Kerala, this paper aims to underline the necessity for peace studies in the education curriculum. Its goal is to explore the cause of Kerala's worrying rise in violence and

intolerance and to suggest peace education in conflict transformation tailored to the state's unique circumstances as a remedy.

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kerala is known for many good practices and appropriately dubbed as "God's Own Country" due to its natural beauty and ecological richness. Kerala leads the country in several areas, including literacy rate, travel, health, tourism, etc. With a literacy rate of 94%, Kerala possesses the highest literacy rate in India. (Literacy Rate of India 2022). However, at the same time, it is alarming that Kerala has the highest rate of violent crimes and conflicts in the country, at 92.5 percent, according to the most recent data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2020. Over 35,000 suicides reported in Kerala in the past four years; Kerala ranked one of the NCRB report's top five. Kerala also has the second-highest charge sheets rate under the Indian Penal Code with 94.90 percent. Thus, the problem raised here is, though Kerala is known for so many good practices, tradition and cultural heritage why so many people get involved in crimes and violent conflicts and here raises the need of a peace education formation in educational curriculum of Kerala.

2. PEACE EDUCATION

2.1 Meaning of peace

The 'Dictionary of Word Origins' states "peace is derived from the Latin term *pax*, which means pact, control, or agreement to end war or any dispute and conflict between two people, two nations, or two antagonistic groups of people". (Shipley, 2021) According to Mahatma Gandhi, "Nonviolence is a weapon of the powerful, whether we accept it or not, the law of love, like the rule of gravity, will operate. The more I work on this law, the more I enjoy life, and the more I enjoy the grand scheme of things. It brings me tranquillity and offers me a sense of the secrets of nature that I can't explain." (Webel & Galtung, 2007)

Galtung (1969a) in his article 'Violence, peace, and peace research': Peace, similar to a coin, has two sides negative peace & positive peace. Positive peace is the absence of structural violence or social justice, while negative peace is the absence of personal violence. (Grewal, 2003) Johan Galtung distinguished between negative and positive peace to describe peace more broadly and positively. Positive peace also indicates the absence of structural violence (e.g., dying due to poverty) and cultural violence. In contrast, negative peace is the lack of direct violence (e.g., people being killed). While "the negative peace of order and the absence of direct violence" may be incompatible with justice, "the positive peace of reconciliation and psycho/social healing" does. (Gawerc, 2006). Fountain in his article '*Peace education in UNICEF*' describes 'In the actual world, peace education Schooling as well as other academic experience that follow UNICEF's peace education approach should: function as 'spots of peace,' where students are safeguarded from communal strife; Create a climate in the school or other educational environment that supports peaceful and rights-respecting interactions among all members of the school community, including teachers, officials, other professionals, parents, and students. In administrative policies and actions, demonstrate the ideals of equality and non-discrimination; Make use of the community's peace-building expertise, including methods for dealing with terrorism, and so on. (Fountain, 1999)

In his article *Educating for Peace*, Almon (2008) discusses peace education for children. It is vital to stress the need of a peaceful environment for students in order to not only teach them in a healthy manner, but also to protect their future. Because violence harms their mind and physiology more than other sectors of society, children's views on peace and peace education must be taken seriously (Almon, 2008). "Peace education is not synonymous with pacifist education," writes Harris (2002:19). Its purpose is to educate people problem-solving strategies, not to make them tranquil, complacent, or content. Nonviolence was utilised by Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. to defeat the British Empire in India. (Harris, 2007)

2.2 Meaning of Conflict

Conflict is a continuous phenomenon since it entails a series of events. Individuals, persons in a group, or organizations all encounter conflicts at different levels. The conflict between two people suggests that they have different perceptions, attitudes, and goals, and it is a dynamic process because it indicates a succession of events. Each conflict is made up of a succession of conflict events that interconnect. (Conflict, 1976)(Deutsch et al., 2011)

2.3 Conflict resolution

It is the process of addressing and resolving the core causes of conflict. It comprises resolving a conflict through analytical techniques that get at the core of the issue. Conflict resolution aims to not only treat the current social, family, or ethnic issue, but also to provide insight into the broader nature of the problem, so assisting in the elimination of its sources and the prevention of future occurrences. In short, it's a method of problem-solving based on analysis. (1990, Burton) According to Jane Schukoske and Manjrika Sewak, "higher education in India has only recently turned a deliberate attention to peace studies. In India, there were no conflict resolution courses and just a few negotiation or alternative dispute resolution courses. (Tint & Prasad, 2007) Only three Indian programs are listed in the Global Directory of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programs: The University of Hyderabad's postgraduate diploma in Human Rights, the University of Calcutta's "coursework" in peace studies, and the Centre for Gandhian Studies' focus on Gandhian philosophy and nonviolence theories. The quantity and variety of certificate and degree programs have increased in response to war and violence. Over 450 bachelor's, master's, and PhDs and concentrations from over forty countries and thirty-eight American states are listed in the Global Directory of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programs. (Shuster, 2006) It might seem self-evident why academic establishments promote peace education programs in these trying times. However, it is less obvious why and how such programs and modules were formed in certain parts of the globe but not for others. Philosophies, structural and social difficulties, and academic legacies all factor into the equation. (Tint & Prasad, 2007)

2.4 Conflict Transformation

It entails a transformation of the parties, their relationships with one another, and the structural components that underpin the disputes, which goes beyond conflict resolution. (Mac Laren).

3. PEACE EDUCATION IN KERALA CONTEXT

Different people in different circumstances define peace education in different ways. According to some scholars, peace education is primarily concerned with changing mindsets to promote understanding, respect, and tolerance for adversaries. In countries and locations where persistent conflicts exist, a peace education program with this goal is necessary. Others see peace education as a tool for developing abilities, focusing on creating a nonviolent attitude and conflict-resolution skills. Specific programs such as school-based violence prevention, peer mediation, and conflict resolution would be included. (Deutsch, 1994) Peace education in some nations comprises promoting human rights, environmental protection, disarmament, and a culture of peace. (Harris, 2004)

In the context of this paper, peace education refers to the development of information, talents, perspectives, and values that will aid schoolchildren, youth, academicians, government officials, Volunteers and future generations in avoiding conflict and resolving disputes peacefully. It also strives to create a peaceful civilisation that includes intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, and international levels of human interaction and linkages.

4. NEED OF PEACE EDUCATION IN KERALA

In UN Sustainable Development Goals, the sustaining peace concept was inspired by the new Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (2015), reinforced by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The agenda 2030 acknowledges that "there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development." SDG16 is the primary target for "fostering peaceful, equitable and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence".(De Coning, 2018)

Kerala, with a population of more than 358 million people, is a culturally, politically and religiously diversified state. (*Kerala Population 2021/2022*,) As a result of this diversity, there are differences in ethics, beliefs, and ideologies. Kerala- "God's own country" is becoming the land of violence and intolerance in the recent years. This study will try to provide sufficient information, data, methods and techniques to governmental and non-governmental agencies, academic institutions and education board etc., to develop their policies and strategies to build substantiate peace education and peace building models at various levels to address the issues faced by the people of Kerala.

Some of the data that substantiate the fact are: - "The UN warns of substantial numbers of IS terrorists' presence in Kerala, and the al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) planning assaults in the region. This was stated in the 26th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning the IS, the al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities." The New Indian Express (2021)

Shri Loknath Behera, IPS retired on 30 June 2021, after serving as the Kerala State Police Chief for the longest time has openly confessed that Kerala is quickly becoming a perfect breeding ground for terrorist activity. During his interaction with the media on 28 June 2021 stated that "According to the inputs received, Kerala has become recruiting ground for terror outfits. Kerala is a recruiting ground because the people here are educated and the terrorist

require engineers and doctors.’’ (*The New Indian Express 28-06-2021*). Mr Behera warned of existence of a large number of “sleeper cells” in Kerala. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested numerous people from Kerala in connection with terror-related crimes, raising fears that the Islamic State (IS) may have sleeper cells operating in the state.(Govind, 2021)The Kerala Police Chief voiced alarm over the rise of fundamentalism among well-educated and professionally competent youths. He also hinted that Kerala's rapid transformation into another 'haven' for 'foreign funded-locally operated' terrorist operations are undoubtedly God's Own Country's most open secret. (Dinny, 2021)

It is also to be noted that, according to the most recent data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2020 Kerala has the highest charge sheets rate for violent crimes in the country, at 92.5 percent, Gujarat (88.6%), West Bengal (88.3%), and Tamil Nadu (86.5%) are the following most popular states in this category. Kerala has the second-highest charge-sheeting rate in total IPC cases, at 94.90 percent, behind Gujarat (97.10 percent). Kochi and Kozhikode, both in Kerala, are among the report's metropolitan cities, and their violent crime charge-sheeting rates are among the highest in India. Kochi has a 92.1 percent rate, whereas Kozhikode has a 94.1 percent rate in all IPC cases among metropolitan cities. At the same time, the rate of cases reported under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act in Kerala is extremely high. “Kerala's crime rate in this category, i.e., Crime Incidence per one lakh of population, is 23, which is much higher than the national average of 10.50. There were 2,736 victims in the state of 2,707 incidents in the category of women confronting mistreatment by their husbands or relatives. 165 women were victims of domestic violence. There were 647 rape victims in 637 occurrences around the state. Kerala is fourth in the number of NDPS Act cases with 4,968, trailing Uttar Pradesh (10,852), Punjab (6,909), and Tamil Nadu (5,403).”(Tom, 2021)

In terms of incidents recorded under various children-related Acts, Kerala had a higher rate of incidence of 26.60. There were 2,502 similar events in the state. There were 442 occurrences involving 454 victims of insulting women's modesty, with a rate of 2.40 greater than the national rate of 1.0. Women in the State continue to experience cruelty from husbands or relatives, with 2,736 victims, despite the fact that the rate of 14.7 was lower than the national rate of 17. There were 165 women had been victims of domestic violence, with a rate of 0.9, which was significantly higher than the national rate of 0.1. In Kerala, 647 people were raped in 637 occurrences. Although dowry-related occurrences continue to shake the state, the Dowry Prohibition Act has only been used to report three incidents in the state. “In the state, 2,416 women were assaulted in 2,353 instances, and 1,091 were sexually harassed in 1,078 occurrences, with rates of incidence of 12.80 and 5.90, respectively, far higher than the national rates of 7.1 and 2.6. Kerala was in fourth place for the number of cases filed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act”.(Praveen, 2021)

“According to rough estimates, over 200 persons belonging to different parties have become victims of killer politics in Kerala since 2000. Though the frequency of political murders has come down compared to previous years, these brutal killings after a lull often reminds one that the savagery has not ended yet”. (*Never Ending Saga of Political Murders in Kerala*, 2020)“According to figures available with the police, CPI(M) has lost 86 workers, BJP has lost 65, and Congress and Muslim League together have lost 11 activists etc.”(*Political Killings Continue in Kerala; 4 Killed in 45 Days - The Week*, 2021)According to the Kerala

police official list of road accidents, intolerance and failure to maintain safety measures on public roads resulted in 216740 traffic accidents, 23,149 deaths, and 241,647 injuries in the last six years.(*Road Accidents in Kerala*, 2021)

“Kerala is one among of the five states with high suicide rates in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Kerala is ranked fourth in 2018 (23.5%), fifth in 2019 (24.3%), and fourth in 2020 (24%)”. Intoxication was the cause of 6% of the suicides, and marital troubles were the cause of 5%. According to the report, 33.6 percent of the cases were related to family disagreements, while 18 percent were due to health difficulties. Between 2016 and 2020, a total of 21,750 women and 16,021 men committed suicide a result of marital issues. “According to the National Crime Records Bureau report, 8,500 persons committed suicide in Kerala in 2020 and Kollam has the highest suicide rate among cities in the country. With a suicide rate of 24, Kerala stood fifth in the country during the grim period marked by the COVID spread and lockdowns that threw businesses and livelihoods out of order.” (*NCRB Report,2020*)

Considering the facts, the significance of this paper was to find out the possible causes that distract the peace in the community and within the people and to provide appropriate measures to ensure a peaceful environment in the society as well as with the academic performance and to reduce the violence in schools and the society. The New National Education Policy 2020 strongly exhorts students to become “conscious of and understand global issues and to become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable societies” (National Education Policy 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

Peace education is much familiar to the world. It is a common term for educators and students in India, especially in the Northeastern and Northwestern parts. However, peace education is not a familiar concept in Kerala, known as “God’s Own Country” because of its ever-known serenity and tranquillity. The people of Kerala lived in harmony and peace for many decades. But, the situation of present Kerala is changing drastically. While analysing the recent socio and political issues in Kerala, we can understand that there were also crimes, Violence, and conflicts in Kerala. But since 2010, the tolerant levels of those crimes have crossed their limits and are now at their peak. So, it is time to instil peace education in the hearts of our children and youth in this particular context of Kerala. The current curriculum in Kerala's schools and universities does not place any emphasis on the necessity of transforming conflicts through peace education and peace building. Peace education and peace-building programs will reduce violence, drug usage, drugs, suicides in our society. Without a doubt, Peace education will contribute to the decrease in violence, use of drugs, suicides, etc.

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