PEACE EDUCATION CONTEXTUALIZED IN THE INDIAN CORPORATE SECTOR

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Abstract

This paper looks forward to introduce the concept of Peace Education in the corporate world. Peace Education has gained some recognition across the world, especially in the war torn areas and conflict ridden disturbed urban areas, where they have started gathering some hope from the potential curative anathema of Peace Education, due to the programme initiatives by the United Nations. The IndianIndustrial Sector have been witness to conflicts and disturbed industrial relations, and no amount of humanistic behavioral management policies have in any way led to major improvement of relationship between the workers and the management. There is consistent volatile tension in the industrial world behind the façade of superficial peace. This paper proposes Peace Education Training for the Corporate Sector, of essentially the management personnel, in selected areas of Peace Studies like structural violence, conflict resolution techniques, identity related issues, diversity management, gender roles, international understanding and sustainable development.

Keywords: Industrial Relations, Globalization, Human Resource Management, Peace Education, Peace Education Training

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INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this research paper had been to contextualize the concept of Peace Education in the Indian corporate sector. Apart from the direct strikes in war situations and its horrific impacts on the general masses, of the concerned regions, human suffering also continued to happen through exploitation in the societal and organizational structured frameworks, across all nations, ofwhich the corporate sector had been one of the representational samples. Since the 1970s, there had been a dramatic rise in the number of industrial conflicts (Turner et al. 115).

In India, industrial relations is taking a ghastly turn at the beginning of the present century. In September, 2008, the MD cum CEO of the Indian Unit of the Italian MNC GrazianoTransmissioni was bludgeoned to death by a 200 strong armed mob of dismissed workers, who went on a rampage in the premises of the company, destroying all the cars parked there, before they went for the kill. The violence left at least 50 executives and workers injured (Times of India). In the month of March, 2011, 20-25 permanent and contractual workers who were amongst the 59 who were suspended from Graphite India Ltd., a public limited company owned by the KK Bangur Group, situated in the Bolangir district of Orissa, torched and killed its 60 year old, Deputy General Manager (Operations) in an organized homicide. (The Indian Express). In July, 2012, the GM (HR) was burnt to death in Maruti'sManesar plant in Haryana, by the workers and an orchestrated mob, who conducted arson and violence in the factory premises (The Times). Sporadic clashes till continue to happen in front of the plant (The Hindu).

The Indian process of globalization had been no different from what the trend had been internationally leading to no actual economic development in terms of growth of jobs and equitable distribution of wealth amongst all rank and files. This disparity in the economic conditions of the various strata of society along with the constantly reducing size of the job market had only fuelled the volatile labor market and created situations for predictable clashes. The recent development of crisis situations in industrial relations in India have been caused by regular disagreements on an array of issues between the management and workers.

There was an immediate concern and need to find a solution which would be mutually acceptable and beneficial to the management and the workers. This research would propose Peace Education as the solution to mitigate the problems of industrial relations. There had been ongoing experimentations with Peace Education in countering the negative impacts of ruinous wars all across the world. Results had never been instantaneous and prompt, rather the process of Peace Education had always been slow and arduous and although there had been no spectacular success, yet sparks of hope had definitely been captured (Johnson and Johnson 275-279).

CONTEMPORARY CONDITIONS INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AFTER GLOBALIZATION

Industrial revolution had undoubtedly had major impacts on societies at large, and the march of globalization continued to bring further changes in the societies across the world. The increase in industrialization and globalization led to burgeoning industrial establishments, proliferation of trade activity and engagement of thousands of workers. A major fallout of this had been the disturbances in the industrial relations between the workers and the management. And disturbances in the industrial relations in any country had a direct impact on the citizens of the country(ILO).

It had been increasingly recognized that the enterprise's productivity, quality of goods and services, labor costs, quality of workforce and its motivation, all were dependent on the way people were managed in the enterprise. The industrializing Asian countries were also learning to give lesser value to hierarchical and paternalistic approaches to managing people, and were becoming more acceptable to concepts such as pluralism and agitation. But while the policy

makers were considering labor laws, and unions were contemplating more equity in terms of workers' rights, both were addressing the issue of Industrial Relations (IR) in the context of competitiveness. If they did not, they would compel the employers to resort to Human Resource Management (HRM)as the more relevant means for achieving corporate objectives. Everyone needed to realize that Industrial Relations(IR) did not grow out of a need to develop competitive strategies for the globalized world, while HRM had been developed precisely for that purpose, even though the proper practice of HRM still remained islands of excellence. With the declining importance of collective IR and the weakening of unions in the realm of globalized competitive world, and the increase in the interest of workplace relations in many industrialized countries, IR would have to accommodate employment relations within the common framework of the non-union sector and the individual employment relationship (ILO).The economies in transition, and that included India, were attempting to bring around appropriate IR and labor laws. There was a keen interest displayed in using Western market economy concepts, as a result of which The International Labor Organization was regularly receiving requests for information and assistance regarding programmes of tripartism, training resources for collective bargaining and negotiation skills, and resources for dispute prevention of settlement mechanisms both at the workplace and national levels (ILO). It was happening more with the industrializing Asian economies because a degree of unrest had been observed in the activities of the trade unions of such countries. And labor unrest was an obvious consequence in those countries where industrialization, followed by economic growth, had led to widening income disparities. Moreover, the phenomenon of highly politicized trade unions had done too little to improve any available mechanisms for improving the workplace cooperation (ILO).

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND THE PEACE FACTOR

The problem of industrial relations involved both domestic security and general welfare of any nation. Each and every individual got affected by the kind of industrial and labor relations that existed in the country and their social lives became more complex under the impact. The emphasis on training the laborers in knowledge and skills was contemplated to be mandatory to continue with the smooth productivity of the organization. But what was more important was the nurturing of the human relations in the organization by better trained administrative and

supervisory individuals whose training should continue periodically in this area throughout his entire life (Watters 453-464).

A discussion on peaceful industrial relations in the Indian context, required a contextual reference be made to Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, who not only participated actively in resolving industrial disputes, but whose thoughts and opinions regarding maintaining peaceful industrial relations, mattered a lot while laws were being made in relation to labour and industrial relationship (Anjaneyulu 123-146).

Gandhi never considered industrial relations to be something different from human relations and he believed the relationship between the workers and the management should be governed by norms of behaviour, the strict observance of which would ensure problem free industrial relations and growth of production. Gandhi's emphasis was more on the moral development of the workers. He believed that they should unite by following a truth and non-violence based strategy, which would make them a much stronger force in any collective bargaining process. Strikes should be the last resort to any kind of negotiation process, and can be indulged after all other peaceful processes of arbitration had been thoroughly exhausted by the capitalist owners. Since he considered the workers as co-proprietors of the business, he felt they should feel equally responsible to keep the production process going continuously, without obstruction (Anjaneyulu 123-146).Gandhi's main intention was to make the trade unions shed their syndicalist approach like violent class struggles, continuous strikes or cases of sabotage and rather make them more conducive to settling disputes with their owners through processes of arbitration and negotiation (Anjaneyulu 123-146).

Gandhi's idea of creating peaceful industrial relations had been idealistic no doubt, but there were possibilities of implementing his ideas till globalization and liberalization had not taken over and competition in the market in every industry had not peeked. Along with industrial expansion, the population size of industrial laborers increased exponentially, wherein training of all became a challenging proposition from the infrastructural point of view (Anjaneyulu 123-146).

Although, there had been some discussions at different forums regarding training of laborers which had been followed up with laws and establishment of institutions, no such attempt had been made in matters of training the people in the management who were interacting on a daily basis or at critical times in the organization with the workforce.The training and

development of the human resources department for prevention and settling of disputes had not been taken seriously by the industry.Many workplace problems were results of ill-trained supervisors who failed to maintain the relationship with workers for various reasons like being unware of the rules, regulations and the ways of working in the organization. So, along with the Human Resource personnel, the supervisors too, because of their strategic positions, in terms of having direct interface with the workers, needed to undergo rigorous training for the wellbeing of the industrial relations of the organization. (ILO). At the same time, the workers should be trained to visualize, with sharing of macro-economic and micro-economic knowledge, viable expectations rather than hanker for abnormal ones in the given macro-economic scenario of the country. Moreover, the workers should not ever feel that the profit being made by the company was not trickling down to the lower levels of the company (Altman 143).

According to Morris Altman (143), the capitalist market criteria were not conducive for a socially beneficial high- yield work culture to be chosen. On the basis of the empirical research that he had done, he argues that there was

rapidly amassing evidence that a certain set of work practices yield relatively large
permanent increases in labor productivity, yet these work practices are simply not adopted and
more often than not resisted by management. (Altman 143)

Some such practices that had been suggested by Altman are 'employee participation, cooperative employment relationships associated with a minimally hierarchical management system, a relationship between wages and productivity, and employment security.'(143) But Altman was suspicious regarding the employers' attitude in bringing around the academically vouchsafed 'high-yield' culture in the organization as it would mean the managers would have to compromise with their decision-making rights which was more focused towards short-term gains, rather than long-term sustainable maintenance and well-being of society which would be connected to the high-yield culture, partly controlled by the decisions made by the workers themselves.

The agenda for reform of the existing Industrial Relations pertained to the creation of a viable action plan that would be implementable in the coming decade. It entailed giving due recognition to 'freedom of association, right to collective bargaining, access to information and

communication at all levels.'(Venkataratnam). It was almost essential to build on the trust factor by creating a rapport through a two-way communication system and maintaining transparency by sharing information at all levels. But to create this kind of a congenial environment, an efficient mechanism of repeated training, of the management and the supervisory personnel, was requiredto be developed to create a 'creative, adaptive and willing workforce.' (Venkataratnam). In this context, Peace Education as a training tool could attempt to bring peace in Industrial Relations.Peace research had always sought to analyze conflict situations and discover the various available options for mitigating and/or eradicating violence emanating from such situations. It hadalways sought to deal with the roots of direct violence and also those of structural inequalities. The aim of such research had always been to promote cooperative relationships by peaceful means, be it global or multi-cultural (Rogers and Ramsbotham 740-754).

PEACE EDUCATION TRAINING

Since the19th century Peace Education was neglected, as it was thought to be the solution to the scourge of war. Peace related education concentrated on defining and conceptualizing concepts of war and national security alone. The 1980s was a decade when teachers taught peace education but yet again the focus area was the fear of nuclear holocaust. In a post-modern world, the violences that worry peace educators are 'sexual assaults, ethnic and regional wars, human rights, domestic violence, refugees, street crime, handgun violence, problems of underdevelopment, ecology and nuclear issues.' School reforms based on the principles of non-violence helped students identify the sources of violence in their lives, inspired them to lead peaceful lives and taught them skills to resolve conflicts. (Harris 1-11)

In the post-modern world, education was dedicated to motivate modern paradigms of growth, celebrating Industrial Revolution whose mantra was material well-being and technological control of nature. Peace Educators were grappling with the fact that education was being portrayed to be ideally self-centered, focused on money-making and wealth creation for the self. So, the Peace Educators of the post-modern world tried to teach concepts of ecological security on the basis of respectful relationship with the natural environment, created social consciousness regarding sexism and racism, which were the roots of violence in many societies,

taught conflict resolution techniques and tried to make the students aware of the deeply embedded structure based enmity, identity related issues with the enormity of diversifications in the societies and the gender related affiliations and hatreds that existed in the students' minds that contributed to violence(Harris 1-11). What was emphasized in Peace Education teaching were the core values of humanity, like having respect for each other, being open-minded, being empathetic towards own fellow beings, being cooperative and willing to be involved in others' distresses, commitment to human rights and environmental sensitivity. Post-modern peace educators were concerned with bringing peace within families, communities and various ethnic groups and living life on this planet in a sustainable way.

CONCLUSION

There is an imperative need in theenhancement of Industrial Relations for smooth functioning of all industrial production facilities withclose collaboration between workers and management. Following which, possibilities arise of future prospects for more peaceful societies. Peace is difficult to maintain in the industrial world because of a trade environment with huge income differences. Peace could only be expected when more of justice and understanding is induced in the industrial environment, which is difficult to bring about without rigorous training in Peace Education.Peace Education Training for the Corporate Sector, of essentially the management personnel, in selected areas of Peace Studies like structural violence, conflict resolution techniques, identity related issues, diversity management, gender roles, international understanding and sustainable development can try and create more peaceful industrial environments.

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