

# Values and Peace Education: Need of the Hour in Higher Education Institutions

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**Abstract:** *The twenty-first century has brought many challenges to society such as violence, intolerance, misinformation, environmental problems, and ethical decline in professional life. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must expand their role beyond imparting academic knowledge. They are vital institutions where young people develop their character, attitudes, and sense of social responsibility. Hence, the inclusion of Values and Peace Education in higher education has become increasingly important. This theoretical paper examines the need for Values and Peace Education in higher education based on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi emphasized truth (Satya), non-violence (Ahimsa), self-discipline, and character formation as the core aims of education. According to him, real education should ensure the balanced development of the head (intellectual growth), heart (moral and emotional development), and hand (practical skills), leading to the formation of responsible and ethical individuals. It emphasizes that integrating Gandhian values into higher education can promote ethical leadership, democratic participation, and peaceful coexistence. It concludes that Gandhian philosophy provides a strong foundation for building value-based and peace-oriented higher education in the modern world.*

**Keywords:** Ethical decline, Higher Education institution, Value Education, Peace Education

## I. INTRODUCTION

The hope of the world as well as our country lies in value based education for the younger generation. The present generation has lost the meaning and purpose of life due to the western type of education in India as a legacy of the British. There is steady shifting of values not only in the field of education but in all spheres of activity. Education should help us to discover lasting values so that we do not merely cling to readymade formulas or repeat slogans. It should help us to break down the national and social barriers, instead of emphasizing them, for they breed antagonism between man and man. Unfortunately the present system of education is making us subservient, mechanical and deeply thoughtless; though it awakens us intellectually, inwardly it leaves us incomplete and uncreative.

The University Education Commission (1948–49) stated that qualities such as loyalty, courage, discipline, and self-sacrifice can be used for both good and bad purposes. Therefore, it suggested including moral and spiritual education so that students learn to use these virtues in a positive and responsible way. Hence the commission recommended certain practical measures at different levels of education stating that at school level, stories which illustrate great moral and religious principles are used, at college level, ideas, events and leading figures associated with religious monuments should be studied.

The Program of Action (POA) document, 1992 which has dealt with value education has widely interpreted. The value education as a broad cultural education leading to the removal of superstition, obscurantism, religious fatalism and all other narrow loyalties. It has stressed the importance of the positive approach in which the roots of the Indian culture have to be highlighted along with the development of scientific temper and unity and national integrity having a special focus. 'Values are to be caught and not taught' is a very old saying. It was perhaps true in days gone by when parents at home and leader in community in various walks of life were all value-based people. Therefore younger children and growing adolescents could catch values of elderly people either imitation or by special examples. There is a grave deterioration both among parents and community leaders in terms of being value models for the younger generation.



We cannot therefore expect values to be caught from undesirable situation and persons in society. In today's world therefore values have to be taught in addition to being caught from selected situations and personalities.

### **Conceptual Framework:**

The conceptual framework of this paper is based on the interconnected concepts of Values Education and Peace Education within the sphere of higher education. These two dimensions complement and reinforce one another, as both are directed toward the comprehensive development of individuals and the promotion of a just, peaceful, and sustainable society. In today's world- marked by moral uncertainty, social division, intolerance, and various forms of violence-the incorporation of these educational approaches into Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has become a pressing necessity. The philosophical foundation of this framework is deeply influenced by the educational thought of Mahatma Gandhi, whose vision of education centered on moral awakening, non-violence, self-discipline, and the balanced development of intellect, emotion, and action. Gandhi's perspective provides a normative base for conceptualizing education not merely as academic instruction but as a transformative process aimed at character formation and social reconstruction.

### **Values Education:**

Values Education can be understood as a deliberate and structured effort to cultivate moral principles, ethical judgment, empathy, responsibility, and integrity among learners. It focuses on nurturing qualities that guide individuals toward ethical conduct and socially responsible behavior. Fundamental values such as honesty, respect, tolerance, cooperation, justice, compassion, accountability, and dedication to the common good are central to this approach. Within higher education, Values Education extends beyond traditional moral instruction. It becomes a dynamic and reflective process that integrates ethical inquiry into academic and professional learning. Rather than simply prescribing moral norms, it encourages students to analyze and respond thoughtfully to ethical challenges encountered in various fields. For instance, medical professionals must address issues related to patient rights and ethical care; engineers must consider safety standards and environmental implications; business leaders must ensure transparency and fairness; and educators must uphold principles of inclusivity and integrity. Through Values Education, students develop the moral reasoning and ethical awareness necessary for responsible professional practice.

Furthermore, Values Education in HEIs is not confined to classroom teaching. It should be reflected in the overall institutional environment, including:

- The ethical climate and governance structure of the institution
- The quality and integrity of teacher-student interactions
- Fair and transparent systems of assessment and evaluation
- Co-curricular initiatives and community outreach programs

This broader institutional approach ensures that values are not merely taught but lived and practiced within the academic environment. Mahatma Gandhi consistently maintained that knowledge without character could result in exploitation and social injustice. He regarded character formation as the ultimate objective of education, emphasizing truthfulness, self-restraint, and service to humanity. Accordingly, Values Education in higher education must aim to cultivate integrity, moral courage, social commitment, and ethical leadership.

### **Peace Education:**

Peace Education is a transformative approach to learning that seeks to cultivate a culture of peace at individual, institutional, and societal levels. It aims to develop attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors that enable individuals to prevent conflict, resolve disputes through non-violent means, and contribute constructively to social harmony. In Higher Education Institutions, Peace Education encourages learners to critically examine issues such as discrimination, inequality, ecological degradation, and violence in its various forms. It promotes democratic values, respect for diversity, gender equality, and commitment to human rights. Through dialogue-based pedagogy, reflective exercises, collaborative learning, and community engagement, students acquire the capacity to address conflicts constructively



rather than destructively. The Gandhian concept of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) constitutes the ethical core of Peace Education. For Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence was not merely the absence of physical harm but a positive and active force rooted in compassion, love, and respect for all living beings. He believed that education should nurture courage, tolerance, and mutual understanding. In this regard, Peace Education becomes a powerful instrument for social transformation. In contemporary higher education settings characterized by cultural diversity and ideological plurality, Peace Education plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive campus climates. It prepares students to engage respectfully with differing viewpoints and to contribute to democratic discourse.

#### **Interrelationship between Values Education and Peace Education:**

Values Education and Peace Education are intrinsically connected. While Values Education focuses primarily on the internal development of moral character and ethical reasoning, Peace Education extends these internalized values into social interaction and conflict transformation. Values such as empathy, justice, tolerance, and responsibility for the ethical foundation upon which peaceful coexistence is built.

Within the higher education context:

- Values Education cultivates ethically grounded individuals.
- Peace Education develops socially responsible and globally conscious citizens.
- Together, they contribute to holistic development and the promotion of social harmony.

Therefore, this conceptual framework positions Values and Peace Education as interconnected pillars of a transformative higher education system inspired by Gandhian philosophy. By integrating these dimensions into curricula, pedagogy, and institutional culture, HEIs can nurture morally responsible, socially engaged, and peace-oriented individuals capable of addressing the complex challenges of the modern era.

#### **Gandhian Philosophy of Education:**

The educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, closely associated with the concept of *Nai Talim* (Basic Education), is fundamentally grounded in moral, spiritual, and ethical values. Gandhi perceived education not as a mere instrument for acquiring literacy, securing employment, or attaining economic prosperity, but as a transformative process aimed at the holistic development of the human personality. He strongly criticized colonial models of education that prioritized intellectual training detached from moral responsibility and productive work. For Gandhi, education was inseparable from life and social reality. It was a dynamic process that should cultivate self-reliance, character, social responsibility, and commitment to truth and non-violence. He believed that true education must prepare individuals to serve society and contribute to the welfare of humanity. Thus, the ultimate aim of education, according to Gandhi, was not individual success alone but moral awakening and social reconstruction.

#### **Education for Head, Heart, and Hand:**

One of the foundational principles of Gandhian education is the harmonious development of the *Head*, *Heart*, and *Hand*. This triadic model reflects a holistic understanding of human development and rejects fragmented or purely intellectual approaches to learning.

#### **Head (Intellectual Development):**

The “Head” represents cognitive growth, critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and the acquisition of knowledge. Gandhi did not dismiss intellectual education; rather, he emphasized that intellectual advancement must be grounded in ethical awareness. Knowledge should be used for constructive purposes and social betterment rather than exploitation or domination.

#### **Heart (Moral and Emotional Development):**

The “Heart” signifies the cultivation of moral values, emotional intelligence, empathy, compassion, and spiritual awareness. Gandhi believed that education must nurture sensitivity toward others and instill virtues such as honesty,



humility, patience, and self-discipline. Emotional refinement and moral strength were considered essential for responsible citizenship.

**Hand (Practical Skills and Productive Work):**

The “Hand” refers to manual work, skill development, and productive labor. Gandhi advocated for the dignity of labor and self-reliance through craft-centered education. He argued that productive work should not be viewed as inferior to intellectual pursuits. Instead, integrating manual skills into education promotes self-sufficiency, discipline, and respect for all forms of work.

This integrated approach prevents the alienation of knowledge from life and ensures balanced personality development. In contemporary higher education, the principle of Head, Heart, and Hand can be realized through interdisciplinary learning, service-learning programs, skill-based training, internships, community engagement initiatives, and socially responsible research. Such integration bridges the gap between theory and practice, intellect and ethics, knowledge and action.

**Truth (*Satya*):**

Truth (*Satya*) was the cornerstone of Gandhian philosophy. For Mahatma Gandhi, truth was not merely a moral principle but the ultimate reality that governs human existence. He equated truth with moral integrity and spiritual realization, asserting that all actions must align with truthfulness. In the educational context, Gandhi believed that institutions must cultivate honesty, transparency, authenticity, and moral courage among students. The pursuit of truth requires self-examination, critical inquiry, openness to dialogue, and willingness to accept one’s mistakes. It demands intellectual humility and ethical steadfastness.

Within higher education, the principle of *Satya* translates into:

- Academic integrity and avoidance of plagiarism
- Ethical research practices and responsible data reporting
- Transparency in evaluation and assessment
- Honest communication and accountability
- Commitment to social truth and justice

**Non-violence (*Ahimsa*):**

Non-violence (*Ahimsa*) constitutes the moral and practical foundation of Gandhian thought. For Gandhi, non-violence extended far beyond the absence of physical aggression. It encompassed attitudes of love, compassion, empathy, tolerance, and respect for all living beings. He regarded non-violence as an active force capable of transforming individuals and societies. In the educational sphere, *Ahimsa* implies cultivating peaceful attitudes, constructive dialogue, and respect for diversity. It encourages students to resolve conflicts through understanding rather than confrontation. Gandhi believed that fearlessness and moral courage were essential components of non-violence, as true non-violence requires strength of character.

In higher education, integrating *Ahimsa* can promote:

- Inclusive and respectful campus environments
- Intercultural understanding and dialogue
- Democratic participation and mutual respect
- Non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms
- Sensitivity toward marginalized and vulnerable groups

**Character Formation:**

For Mahatma Gandhi, character formation was the supreme objective of education. He repeatedly asserted that knowledge without character could become a destructive force. Intellectual brilliance devoid of ethical grounding could lead to corruption, injustice, and exploitation. Character formation involves cultivating virtues such as integrity, self-



control, humility, perseverance, courage, and service-mindedness. Gandhi emphasized that education should awaken the moral conscience and foster a sense of duty toward society. He believed that true education empowers individuals to distinguish between right and wrong and to act in accordance with ethical principles.

In the context of higher education, prioritizing character formation means:

- Integrating ethics across disciplines
- Encouraging reflective practices and moral dialogue
- Promoting community service and social engagement
- Recognizing and rewarding ethical leadership

### **Relevance to Contemporary Higher Education:**

The educational ideas of Mahatma Gandhi are still very relevant in today's world. The twenty-first century faces many problems such as violence, inequality, environmental damage, and moral confusion. At the same time, technology and globalization are growing very fast. In this situation, higher education should not focus only on giving degrees, jobs, and technical knowledge. It should also help students become good human beings with strong moral values and social responsibility. Gandhi believed that education should develop the **Head, Heart, and Hand** together. The Head represents intellectual growth and critical thinking. The Heart stands for moral values, compassion, and emotional development. The Hand refers to practical skills and respect for hard work. When these three are developed in balance, students grow into well-rounded and responsible individuals.

Gandhi also emphasized two important values: **Satya (truth)** and **Ahimsa (non-violence)**. Truth means honesty, transparency, and integrity in studies and research. Non-violence means not only avoiding physical harm but also showing kindness, respect, and understanding toward others. These values help create peaceful and inclusive educational environments. If higher education follows Gandhian principles, it can produce not only skilled professionals but also ethical leaders and caring citizens. Such education will help build a society based on justice, harmony, and peace. Therefore, Gandhian philosophy provides a strong and meaningful foundation for improving higher education in today's complex world.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

This paper highlights that higher education should not focus only on giving degrees, jobs, and technical knowledge. In today's world, many problems such as violence, corruption, selfishness, stress, intolerance, and environmental destruction are increasing. These problems are not only due to lack of knowledge but also due to lack of values. Therefore, colleges and universities must help students become not only intelligent but also honest, responsible, and caring human beings. The educational ideas of Mahatma Gandhi give a clear direction for this change. Gandhi believed that true education develops the **Head, Heart, and Hand** together. The Head means thinking power and knowledge. The Heart means good character, kindness, and moral values. The Hand means practical skills and respect for hard work. When these three develop in balance, a person becomes complete and responsible.

Gandhi also stressed the importance of **Truth (Satya)** and **Non-violence (Ahimsa)**. Truth teaches honesty and integrity in personal and professional life. Non-violence teaches respect, patience, and peaceful behavior toward others. If these values are practiced in educational institutions, campuses will become more peaceful, cooperative, and respectful places. In conclusion, integrating Values and Peace Education in higher education is the need of the hour. By following Gandhian principles, universities can contribute to building a society based on justice, harmony, cooperation, and mutual respect. Such education will shape not just successful individuals, but good human beings who are committed to truth, peace, and the well-being of all. In simple words, higher education must shape both the mind and the character of students. Gandhian philosophy provides a strong and practical foundation for building a peaceful, fair, and value-based society. Therefore, Values and Peace Education is not just important-it is necessary for the present and the future.



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