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42. Exploring Peace and Harmony through Indian Knowledge Systems: Reducing Aggressive Tendencies among Youth

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Abstract

This research focuses on one of the most pervasive and noticeable problems that is affecting global peace and harmony—youth aggression. It is impacting our youth and the world on broader levels, including personal, communal, societal, and national levels, and disturbing peace in various ways. The purpose of this research is to explore the principles of peace and harmony through the Indian knowledge system, particularly from Jainism and Buddhist philosophies, and to discuss how applying these philosophies as educational strategies can help in reducing aggressive tendencies among youth. This is a qualitative research that used an exploratory research design. Secondary data was collected by reviewing secondary sources that focus on the Indian knowledge systems and Indian philosophies like Jainism and Buddhism. The data gathering included scholarly articles, journals, academic literature, books, and various online websites. Data analysis involved thematic analysis. The patterns and themes that were related to peace and harmony within Jainism and Buddhist philosophies were excluded. After synthesizing them it was found that principles, knowledge, and the core teachings of Jainism and Buddhism within the Indian knowledge system, such as Ahimsa (non-violence), Karuna (compassion), Sahanubhuti (empathy), and Daya (kindness) can help in making strategies for peace education. The findings suggest that integrating these principles into traditional educational curricula could be beneficial in fighting and consequently reducing aggressive and violent tendencies among youth. It is concluded that the Indian Knowledge System has its own power and place despite rapid development. This research highlights the relevance of the Indian knowledge system in contemporary peace education and presents a pathway for making the world more peaceful and harmonious where people can feel safe and free from fear and aggression.

Keywords: *Youth aggression, peace education, Indian knowledge system, peace and harmony, Jainism and Buddhist philosophy*

I. Introduction

Problems can not be counted; they present difficulties but invite us to think critically and search for solutions. Among these challenges, one of the most pervasive and noticeable problems that is affecting global peace and harmony is youth aggression. It is gnawing away at our youth, much like termites weaken the foundations of a structure. As youth represents the backbone of a nation, any negative impact on their well-being, including aggression, can have far-reaching consequences for the future of a country. We can witness various forms of aggression and

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violence-like acts in our day-to-day lives. Such as physical aggression, verbal aggression, relational aggression, non-verbal relational aggression, cyber aggression, direct aggression, indirect aggression, passive aggression, traditional school bullying, cyberbullying, and overt aggression (Fite et al., 2023; Richardson, 2014; Chan and Wong, 2015). These forms of aggression can include various behaviors. For example, physical harm, damage to relationships or social standing, digital aggression, face-to-face confrontations involving harmful actions or words (e.g., yelling or hitting), property damage, spreading gossip, giving someone the silent treatment, name-calling, social exclusion, threatening messages, manipulation, and spreading harmful information online. More and more it has become a a critical issue. Whether it is at home or in the neighborhood, in the streets or a community, in schools or colleges, among social groups or religions, or even in a nation, aggression and violence are prevalent everywhere. It can be seen between brothers, within families, between fathers and sons, husbands and wives, friends and enemies—aggression manifests in various behaviors and forms in all these relationships. Among all these, youth are particularly at risk, as they are falling under its influence rapidly. Approximately 193,000 homicides occur among youth 15–29 years of age each year. Beyond fatalities, youth violence leads to numerous non-fatal injuries that impact young's physical, psychological, and social well-being throughout their lives (World Health Organization, 2024). Hatred and animosity based on caste and community, intolerance and rebellion related to religion, and feelings of in-group versus out-group dynamics related to community, class, society, and the nation are developing tendencies of aggression and violence among youth. We can observe many sources of this provocation in various forms, such as social media, sensational news, and many other influences from people around us which consequently impact personal, societal, and global peace. Youth aggression is a significant public health issue and its severe personal impact on individual well-being and peace can include mental health issues like depression, suicidal thoughts, and criminal behavior. On a societal level, youth aggression affects social relations. It often involves peer influences that contribute to aggressive behavior patterns. These behaviors can inhibit community safety and unity. Globally, youth aggression contributes to higher violence rates. This challenges peace efforts and increases the demand for effective preventative public health strategies (Kennedy, 2024).

Various research and data contribute to addressing the issue of aggression among youth. It is essential to consider the various forms of aggressive acts that together contribute to aggressive behaviors. Incidents of bullying, emotional distress, and a decline in moral values have become common in schools as highlighted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019). According to UNESCO (2019), almost one in three students globally has experienced bullying, with varying types depending on the region (p.7). Research indicates that a significant proportion of youth engage in aggressive behaviors, with studies showing that approximately 17.7% of youth have high aggression scores (Sharma & Marimuthu, 2014). A review of the literature on aggression among school-going adolescents in India found that the overall prevalence of aggression ranged from 17.7% to as high as 66.5%

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for physical aggression, with boys exhibiting more physical aggression compared to girls, who were found to be more verbally aggressive (Kumar et al., 2016). Furthermore, Malhi et al. (2014) examined the prevalence of school bullying among Indian adolescents and found that bullying behaviors were alarmingly widespread, with an overall prevalence rate of 53%. Additionally, a systematic review by Thakkar et al. (2021) highlights that bullying is prevalent among adolescents in India, with a variety of risk factors and adverse consequences affecting both aggressors and victims. These consequences can include mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression, academic difficulties due to increased absenteeism, and broader societal issues, including the normalization of violence and erosion of community trust. According to Sturmey (2022), aggression and violence are prevalent globally, with around half a million murders occurring annually, predominantly among young men. Furthermore, approximately one-third of women experience various forms of aggression, often in interpersonal relationships. Alarmingly, nearly half of all children worldwide encounter aggression and violence, frequently perpetrated by family members or within educational environments. Overall these statistics and studies highlight that this increasing issue of aggression and similar tendencies can not impact only individuals, communities, and societal harmony, but also the peace of a country and the whole world.

II. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore the principles of peace and harmony through the Indian knowledge system, particularly from Jainism and Buddhist philosophies, and to discuss how applying these philosophies to modern education as educational strategies can help in reducing aggressive tendencies among youth.

Before exploring the principles of peace and harmony from Jainism and Buddhist philosophies and discussing how applying these philosophies to modern peace education as educational strategies can help in reducing aggressive tendencies among youth, it is essential to understand peace education and the Indian knowledge system.

III. Peace Education

Simply peace education is a process that spreads peace and prevents conflict, aggression, and violent behavior through education or educational strategies. It empowers individuals by developing their critical thinking, logical reasoning, knowledge, skills, and attitudes which help in creating peaceful, and non-violent social conditions. Peace education aims to create a society that is free from violence, discrimination, and oppression, where people can live in harmony and respect each other's perspectives (Sheikh, 2023). According to Harris (2008), Peace education focuses on teaching about the dangers of violence and ways to promote peace (p.1). Kester (2010) describes peace education to be very clear and encompassing. According to him "In practice, peace education is problem-posing education that attempts to build in every person the universal values and behaviors on which a culture of peace is predicated, including the development of non-violent conflict resolution skills and a commitment to working together to realize a shared and preferred future." Kester also adds that "peace education includes the

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cultivation of peacebuilding skills (e.g., dialogue, mediation, artistic endeavors). Peace educators, then, teach the values of respect, understanding, and nonviolence, present skills for analyzing international conflict, educate for alternative security systems, and use a pedagogy that is democratic and participatory. Thus, peace education as a practice and philosophy refers to matching harmonizing elements between education and society, where the social purposes (i.e., why teach), content (i.e., what to teach), and pedagogy (i.e., how to teach) of the educative process are conducive to fostering peace" (Kester as cited in Frljak, 2023).

Peace Education as a Solution

Given the frightening prevalence of aggression and violence among youth, it is important to find effective solutions that address these issues at their roots. Among the various responses to the problem of aggression, one promising approach is peace education which aims to equip young people with the skills and understanding necessary to navigate conflicts peacefully and constructively. It can be one of the best solutions for declining aggressive tendencies among youth. Because It helps people remain calm and composed and provides individuals with constructive ways to manage their emotions and interactions which potentially reduce aggressive tendencies and promote a culture of peace.

In today's context, where traditional educational systems often neglect emotional and social learning, peace education provides an important alternative. It provides young people with important skills in conflict resolution, empathy, and emotional regulation—essential for reducing aggressive tendencies. Research indicates that youth actively seek the skills that peace education offers to resolve conflicts and positively contribute to their communities (Global Campaign for Peace Education, 2023). Further supporting the impact of peace education, data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicates a correlation between peace education and reduced violence and crime levels. By teaching peace and conflict resolution, educational institutions can prevent youth involvement in criminal activities, thereby reducing societal violence and promoting long-term behavioral change that strengthens cohesion (Self-Ypti-Mng, 2024). According to UNESCO (2008), peace education aims to instill values, knowledge, and skills beyond simply teaching the absence of conflict. Educating youth in these areas sets the groundwork for more peaceful and inclusive societies. Peace education, therefore, serves as a foundational approach to cultivating long-term behavioral change and reducing the aggressive tendencies that undermine harmony and social unity.

IV. Indian Knowledge System

Indian knowledge system (IKS) is not a tradition; rather it is a process of knowledge transfer from generation to generation. This transmission of knowledge is based on observation, reflection, and experience. According to Khan & Sharma (2024), it focuses on the traditional way of passing down knowledge in India from one generation to the next (p.42). Indian knowledge systems can not include just one perspective, approach, point of view, and philosophy. Rather it is vast and complex and encompasses an extensive and diverse body of

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knowledge. Such as Jnan (knowledge), Vignan (science), and Jeevan Darshan (philosophy of life). Jnan represents spiritual and philosophical wisdom, Vignan reflects scientific and empirical knowledge, and Jeevan Darshan focuses on life philosophies that guide daily living and ethical choices. Together, they have shaped Indian thought for millennia. According to Mandavkar (2023), the Indian knowledge system is a systematic, structured, and rich collection of ancient wisdom and practices that is rooted in Vedic literature and philosophies. Such as the Upanishads, the Vedas, and the Upvedas. It includes a wide range of fields, disciplines, and subjects, from Ayurveda (traditional Indian medicine) to Dhanurveda (martial arts), Gandharvaveda (music and arts), and Sthapatyaveda (architecture). Additionally, it includes philosophies that deal with metaphysical concepts, and practical sciences like mathematics, astronomy, and medicine (Timane & Wandhe, 2024). Many philosophical systems are part of the Indian knowledge system. Such as orthodox systems—Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta as well as unorthodox systems—Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivika, Ajnana, and Charvaka. This extensive body of knowledge and diverse areas of study offer insight into a traditional Indian lifestyle and emphasize the significance of peace, balance, harmony, and unity.

While the Indian knowledge system (IKS) is vast and comprehensive and holds a unique place in its own peace and harmony, it is not possible to cover every aspect. So this study specifically focuses on Jainism and Buddhist philosophies through the Indian knowledge system.

V. Methodology

This is a qualitative research that used an exploratory research design. Secondary data was collected by reviewing secondary sources that focus on the Indian knowledge systems, peace education, and Indian philosophies like Jainism and Buddhism. The data collection included scholarly articles, journals, academic literature, books, and various online websites. Data analysis involved thematic analysis. The patterns and themes that were related to peace and harmony within Jainism and Buddhist philosophies were excluded and after synthesizing them the results were concluded.

VI. Exploring Peace and Harmony from Jainism

"Ahimsā Paramō Dharmā (Non-violence is the Greatest Dharma)"

—Lord Mahāvīra (as cited in Jain, 2007, p.13)

Jainism is one of the oldest unorthodox philosophies whose core focus is ahimsa or non-violence. Further, it also focuses on peace, compassion, and humility, not just toward humans but all living beings. It has been presented in India for over 2500 years, according to historical records (Donaldson, 2022, p.2). It discusses *ahimsa* as not only a physical practice but a comprehensive mental and spiritual commitment to minimizing harm which is deeply rooted in Jain teachings. Jainism believes in harmony and love. Non-violence (*ahimsa*), non-absolutism (*anekantavada*), and non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*) are the central themes of the Jain way of life (Jain, 2007, p. 3). Jain philosophy centers on core values like Aparigraha (non-materialism), Asteya (non-stealing), Anekant (respect for multiple viewpoints), Brahmacharya (sensory restraint), Satya (truthfulness), Kshama (forgiveness), and Saiyam

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(self-discipline). Together, these values focus on the "three jewels" — right knowledge, right vision, and right conduct — which guide the soul toward liberation and enlightenment. These values empower individuals to reach this ultimate spiritual goal (Rankin & Shah, 2008, p.10). The Jain principle Parasparopagraho Jivanam emphasizes the interdependence of all living beings. It suggests we are interconnected rather than separate individuals. This interconnectedness means that our actions impact others, and failing to recognize this leads to irresponsibility.

To prevent conflicts, interpersonal offenses, and emotional hurt, to break the toxic cycle of anger, and revenge, Jainism and many other religions have prescribed and encouraged forgiveness for thousands of years as a more desirable positive and sublime response (McCullough and Worthington, 1999; Petersen, 2009). Jainism and Buddhism understand forgiveness from the nature of the soul (jiva/atman) and the virtue of compassion (loving-kindness or metta) respectively. According to Jain (2014), the primary focus on forgiveness in Jainism is for the spiritual progress and enlightenment of the individual. However, from a practical (vayavaharnaya) perspective, it also plays a key role in reducing aggression and violence, promoting good interpersonal relationships, and fostering social harmony (p. 243).

VII. Exploring Peace and Harmony from Buddhism

"Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without."

– Buddha (as cited in Ziqin, 2024)

Buddhism is also one of the oldest unorthodox philosophies within the Indian knowledge system which emerged approximately 100 years after Jainism. It has long been recognized as a non-violent and peaceful philosophy. Buddhism emphasizes Ahimsa as a fundamental principle which combined with the Five Precepts and the Noble Eightfold Path. Mindfulness, cultivated through practices like Vipassana, along with ethical living through right conduct and compassion is central to Buddhist teachings. It aims at reducing suffering and promoting inner peace (Salim, 2024). Buddha's teachings of the importance of Ahimsa are exemplified in the Dhammapada, where he states: *"That one I call a brahmin who has put aside weapons and renounced violence towards all creatures."* This illustrates the emphasis on compassion and non-hostility, even in challenging circumstances (Clarke, n.d.). Uttamasiri and Yeshpal (2023) further elaborate on the Buddhist notion of peace. They present it as a state of inner well-being that nurtures harmony. This is achieved through the cultivation of awareness, compassion, and insight. According to Bawa (2024) in Buddhist philosophy, peace is seen as a multifaceted concept that includes societal harmony, ecological balance, and psychological serenity (p.364). The Buddhist perspective on peace encompasses a comprehensive idea that includes developing inner serenity, moral behavior, compassion, non-violence, ecological awareness, and harmony within all aspects of society. Individuals and society can together strive towards a peaceful and harmonious existence by adhering to the Buddha's teachings.

Dependent Origination (Paticcasamuppada) is a key principle in Buddhism, which states that all beings and phenomena are interconnected, and everything arises due to specific conditions (Hakimifar, 2019). This principle plays a significant role in the promotion of peace.

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Understanding interdependence helps replace selfish behavior with virtues like metta (loving-kindness), karuna (compassion), mudita (sympathetic joy), and upekkha (equanimity). These virtues promote peace both within ourselves and in our relationships with others. Compassion, or mettā, covers all living beings. This encourages non-violence, which is central to Buddhist ethics. The concept of ahimsa (non-violence) is based on the awareness of interconnectedness and shared existence which leads to a peaceful society. Buddhist teachings stress that inner peace, guided by wisdom and compassion, helps cultivate empathy, altruism, and tolerance, contributing to social harmony. Additionally, Dependent Origination provides a framework for global peace, where recognizing the interconnectedness of all life can lead to meaningful dialogue and cooperation. Buddhism's approach to peace offers a path to lasting peace at both personal and global levels. It encourages mutual respect and collaboration across cultures and religions (Hakimifar, 2019).

VIII. Results

After reviewing extensive literature on Jainism and Buddhist philosophies, the analysis revealed that various principles and the teaching of peace and harmony are deeply embedded in these philosophies, such as Ahimsa (non-violence), Karuna (compassion), Sahanubhuti (empathy), and Daya (kindness). Integrating these principles into modern peace education and including them into traditional educational curricula as educational strategies could be beneficial in fighting and consequently reducing aggressive and violent tendencies among youth.

1. **Jainism and Peace Education:** Jainism places a deep emphasis on *Ahimsa* (non-violence), which serves as a foundation for ethical behavior and peaceful living. Through a careful review, Jain principles were identified that promote non-violence, empathy, and compassion. This philosophy promotes living in a way that minimizes harm to all beings. It promotes an approach of respect, tolerance, and understanding. The values of Sahanubhuti (empathy) and Daya (kindness) emerged as useful tools for managing aggression. These nurture a strong sense of connectedness and responsibility toward others. Integrating these principles into youth education can implant a mindset resistant to hostility and aggressive tendencies and promote a harmonious environment.
2. **Buddhist Teachings on Inner Peace and Social Harmony:** Buddhism enhances this framework by emphasizing inner transformation as the foundation for outward harmony. Its key concepts like the Noble Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts align with peace-promoting behaviors. Core to Buddhism is *Paticcasamuppada* (Dependent Origination), the principle of interdependence suggests that every individual's actions impact others which encourages a sense of shared existence. Virtues of *Metta* (loving-kindness), *Karuna* (compassion), and *Mudita* (sympathetic joy) emerged as essential qualities of Buddhism. When these virtues are nurtured in educational settings, it can reduce individual aggression and encourage social empathy and tolerance.
3. **Integrating the principles of peace and harmony into modern Peace Education:** Synthesizing these teachings suggests that if we apply the core principles of Jainism and

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Buddhism—derived from the study outcomes such as non-violence, compassion, interconnectedness, mindfulness, etc—into modern educational curricula, it could contribute significantly to reducing aggressive tendencies in youth. Because these principles encourage a broader understanding of peace, which involves individual, social, and environmental harmony. The findings indicate that incorporating these philosophies as educational strategies into peace education can address not only aggression but also nurture a culture of respect and empathy. This approach highlights the relevance of Indian knowledge systems in modern peace education and ultimately fighting youth aggression.

IX. Conclusion

This research concludes that the Indian Knowledge System has its own power and place despite various transformations and developments in the educational and technical world. The core principles of Jainism and Buddhism remain highly relevant and effective for addressing the concerning issues like youth aggression. This research highlights the relevance of the Indian knowledge system in modern peace education and presents a pathway for making the world more peaceful and harmonious where people can feel safe and free from fear and aggression.

Future Direction

This research invites future researchers to develop structured and more formal educational strategies based on the findings of this research for inclusion in peace education. It recommends empirical studies such as experimental or longitudinal studies to examine the practical impact of these teachings on youth aggression which can strengthen the reliability and validity of these findings.

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