

Unveiling the Teachings of Saint Bhima Bhoi: A Case Study on Peace Education

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Abstract

Saint Bhima Bhoi's poetry is marked by its deep empathy and concern for the suffering of all beings, reflecting his philosophy of nonviolence and compassion. His poems convey a message of peace, justice, and harmony, urging people to embrace a philosophy of selfless deeds for the betterment of the whole world. One of his most notable poems which is inscribed on the wall of the United Nations Organisation: "**Endless are the agonies and sorrows of the living. Who can bear to be a witness? Condemn my life to hell, but let the world be uplifted.**" expresses his philosophy of peace and nonviolence to the world. He believed that the true path to peace and harmony lies in recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and embracing a philosophy of selfless action.

Bhima Bhoi's teachings provide an insight of a more compassionate and inclusive society in a world where discrimination, social disputes, and injustice are pervasive. His ideology has the ability to make the world more peaceful and egalitarian by encouraging empathy and understanding among people and communities. Hence, this article aims to elucidate those poetic concepts by Bhima Bhoi that are crucial for fostering world peace.

Keywords: Bhima Bhoi, philosophy, peace, education, social justice, harmony

Introduction

Saint Bhima Bhoi was a notable figure in the 19th-century, known for his work as a poet, philosopher, and social reformer from the Indian state of Odisha. Despite facing discrimination and oppression as a result of his low-caste background, Bhima Bhoi dedicated his life to advocating for social justice and peace.

Saint Bhima Bhoi's enormous collection of works displays his devotion to spirituality and his pursuit of the truth. He filled his writings with intense emotion and a sense of purpose, including *Stutichintamani (The Gem of Hymns)*, *Bhajanamala (Garland of Devotional Songs)*, *Brahma Nirupana Gita*, *Chautisa-Madhuchakra*, *Padma Chalak*, *Adi-Anata Gita*, *Manu Mandala*, *Bangala Atha Bhajana*, *Mahima Vinoda*, *Astak Bihari Gita*, *Sruti Nishedha Gita*, *Brahma Chalak*, *Nirveda Sadhana* etc. Bhima Bhoi's literary contributions have great value for peace education as they express the importance of introspection and self-realization as a means of promoting peace within society. His writings also stress the need of nonviolence, empathy, and compassion in promoting social justice, peace and harmony.

Peace Education

Peace education is a dynamic and multi-faceted field that seeks to cultivate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that promote a culture of peace and non-violence. It is a field that draws from many other academic fields, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology etc. The fundamental goal of peace education is to develop the capacities of individuals to think critically, empathize with others, and engage in constructive dialogue and action to promote peace and justice.

To combat the causes of violence and create more equitable and peaceful communities, peace educators employ a wide range of formal and informal teaching strategies. Peace education encompasses various thematic areas, including social justice education, human rights education, conflict resolution, environmental education, global citizenship education etc. These subject areas emphasize the interconnection of social, economic, and environmental systems, are related to one another, and work well together as a whole to provide a comprehensive approach to peace education.

Peace education aims to minimize conflict and violence by highlighting concerns like poverty, injustice, discrimination, and environmental damage. It promotes an understanding of the complexities of conflict and the value of peaceful resolution techniques. It emphasizes the need for communication, empathy, and understanding in promoting social cohesiveness and creating links between various groups and communities.

Saint Bhima Bhoi and Peace education

The teachings of Saint Bhima Bhoi place a strong focus on the value of inner peace and self-realization as strategies for fostering world peace. His emphasis on love, nonviolence, and compassion as a means of societal reform is particularly pertinent to modern peace education. His teachings also stress the significance of correcting societal and structural injustices in order to advance sustainable peace and social harmony.

Social justice

Saint Bhima Bhoi used his poetry to discuss social justice concerns, notably those pertaining to the caste system and the treatment of Dalits. He strongly challenged the conventional Hindu caste hierarchy and fought for the equality of all people, regardless of caste or social standing. In his poetry, he stressed on the significance of individual freedom and personal responsibility. He strongly objected to the idea that social position should be determined by one's birth. He proposed the elimination of prejudice and the creation of a better society.

His work serves as a poignant reminder of the necessity to fight for a more equitable and just world and to speak out against the injustice. His message of social justice and equality continues to inspire individuals from all walks of life. To quote him:

*In the thirty-six royal lineages, the caste of boatmen cannot be named
It is wise to consider water as the only caste within.
In this universe, I only hope for one person and one caste;
It is the Creator who has made everyone from the same earth.
(Stutichintamani, 70. 12, 13)*

Non-violence

Saint Bhima Bhoi, a revered spiritual figure, fervently preached the virtue of non-violence as a means to enlightenment. His teachings exemplified kindness, tolerance, and regard for all living things. He promoted peace through his writings and speeches, stressing the efficacy of nonviolence in creating a more equal and just society.

His dedication to nonviolence is not limited to the absence of physical violence. He urged his disciples to develop attitudes of compassion, tolerance, and forgiving. He thought that we might help spread love and peace throughout the world by changing our own minds and emotions. In his words,

*In the Mahabharata war, five to ten heads
fall as one, from a single stroke of a sword.
As for me, if you kick my leg,
It is my other limb which suffers
(Bhima Bhoi, Verses from the Void, p.171)*

Peace

Saint Bhima Bhoi, an influential spiritual luminary, spent his life preaching peace through his profound teachings and writings. His insights continue to move people of different backgrounds toward greater harmony. He made it clear through his remarks that real peace comes from inside and is attained through self-realization and detachment from worldly desires.

According to Bhima Bhoi, peace is a transformational power that springs from inside each of us, allowing us to feel and express love, forgiveness, and unity with one another. His words serve as a reminder that we can all become powerful agents of change in the world just by working to find calm within ourselves. Bhima Bhoi's legacy is a constant call to remember that peace is not something to be attained from the outside, but rather something to be attained from within, by bringing our thoughts, words, and deeds into harmony with one another through love and tolerance.

His statements call for a worldwide culture of peace and mutual respect to be fostered by tearing down the walls that separate us and embracing the natural unity that ties us all. Saint Bhima Bhoi's teachings continue to have an impact today, encouraging people all over the world to find harmony within themselves and work toward making the world a more peaceful place. His advice encourages us to go on an introspective journey that will help us overcome our own personal obstacles and find true inner peace. He expressed it as,

*Non-violence, the guiding light,
peace and love, shining bright.
In words of sages, wisdom's sound,
compassion's echo, all around.
(Bhajanamala , dwiteeya shataka,169.1)*

Equality

Saint Bhima Bhoi, an eminent saint and social reformer, dedicated his life to advocating for equality in all aspects of society. He firmly believed in the inherent values and dignity of every individual, regardless of their caste, creed, or social standing. He challenged prevailing social norms, tirelessly working towards uplifting the marginalized and oppressed. His teachings emphasized that true equality can only be achieved when society breaks free from discrimination and embraces the principle of universal brotherhood.

Bhima Bhoi's philosophy extended beyond external factors, urging individuals to recognize the divine spark within every soul. He believed that true equality goes beyond surface-level differences and lies in treating every person with respect, dignity, and fairness. His teachings continue to inspire generations, encouraging them to champion equality and strive for a just and inclusive society. His life and actions serve as a timeless reminder that equality is not merely an abstract concept but a collective responsibility that requires unwavering commitment and compassion.

To Bhima Bhoi, everyone should be treated with respect and dignity no matter where they come from. The transforming power of equality is on full display in his teachings, which encourage us to unite and cherish our differences. His life and work inspire us to strive for a future in which social justice and equality for all are the norm. Bhima Bhoi's life and teachings continue to inspire individuals to stand up against discrimination and establish a more just and equitable society. To quote him:

*Be they wicked or saintly, servant or master
Insect or bird, you pervade all
I see you equally in all beings
Nowhere less than in another
(Bhima Bhoi, Verses from the void, p.167)*

Conclusion

The profound teachings and poetry of Saint Bhima Bhoi are priceless tools for advancing peace and equality. His teachings align closely with those of peace education, which stress nonviolence, inner calm, empathy, and fair treatment of all people. Bhima Bhoi's legacy serves as a timeless reminder of the need to address prejudice, cultivate inner peace, and building a more accepting and equitable society for all people. By embracing his teachings, individuals can contribute to the creation of a peaceful world where peace, compassion, justice, and equality prevail. In his words,

*Dharma pachhe nindaa heu, Dharani mandala rahu
Sunya dharati aakaasha, Aakaasha bhaasi na jaau
(Chautishaa-Madhuchakra, 18.19)*

(Let the religion be defamed but the earth should remain)

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