Olympic truce as a tool for peace

Sukanta Saha

Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education, Memari College, Memari, Burdwan, West Bengal, India; E-mail; sahasukanta1980@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT
This article examines the historical and contemporary links between Olympic truce and peacemaking. It traces the development of thought and praxis in relation to the Olympic movement’s aim and capacity to promote peaceful coexistence and intercultural understanding from the ancient Olympic Truce to the revival of the modern Olympic Games by Baron Pierre de Coubertin. One of the fundamental principles of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world through sport, practised without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit. The article highlights the ancient Greek tradition of “Ekecheiria”, the Olympic truce using sport as an instrument to foster dialogue for reconciliation and peace.

Keywords: Olympic Movement, Ekecheiria, Sports.

1. INTRODUCTION
The Olympic Games are still the biggest festival of culture and sport in modern society. The institution is ancient one, two and a half thousand years old, but it has always fascinated people and taught them a lesson via its sporting and educational values. One of the fundamental principles of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world through sport. Of course, sport cannot impose peace, but it can contribute to inspiring it! Sport has the power to reach many people across the globe and, in essence, is a language understood by everyone. Sport also fosters understanding between individuals, facilitates dialogue between divergent communities and can contribute to breeding tolerance between nations. Taking part in the Olympic Games, with all that it stands for noble strife, fair play, the Torch Relay, the accommodation of all the National Olympic Committees and all the races of the world in one single Olympic Village is a source of inspiration for the Olympic Movement. It forms part of
humankind’s long march in search of a culture of peace. The symbolism which it emits is the transmitter of social, peace-loving messages. Such is the way in which the Olympic Games and all the other Olympic events contribute to making public opinion more aware of issues of international understanding, harmony and friendship. The concept of the Olympic Truce derives from a deep belief that sport and the Olympic Ideals can make their contribution to creating a better and peaceful world. The fundamental aim of these efforts is to take initiatives promoting dialogue, reconciliation, mutual understanding, mutual solidarity, and peace. The goal of the Olympic Truce as a tool for peace is to underline the significance of respect for peaceful coexistence.

2. MYTHS & LEGENDS OF OLYMPIC TRUCE
The exact circumstances surrounding the birth of the ancient Olympics truce are shrouded in mystery. What little information we have has been pieced together from archeological and literary sources. Historical figures were often elevated to the status of demigods and legendary achievements were posthumously imputed to them. The many myths and legends associated with the origins of the ancient Olympic truce are a reflection of the mythic-religious nature of the ancient Greek civilization. The tradition of the "Olympic Truce", or "Ekecheiria", was established in ancient Greece in the 5th century BC through the signing of a treaty by three kings: Iphitos of Elis, Cleostrones of Pisa and Lycurgus of Sparta (Gardiner, 1925). During this Truce period, the athletes, artists and their families, as well as the ordinary pilgrims, were able to travel in complete safety to participate in or attend the ancient Olympic Games, before returning to their respective countries. Messengers (spondophores) went from city to city to announce the date of the competitions. They demanded a halt to fighting before, during and after the Games (Syrigos, 2009).

There are numerous examples of the observance of the Truce during these Games. The importance of the ancient Olympic Games came to the fore during the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC. In one of the great trials of strength between the Greek World and the Persian Empire, while the 300 soldiers of Sparta were resisting the Persian army against heavy odds, the rest of the Greeks were assembled in Ancient Olympia to celebrate the 75th Olympiad (Syrigos, 2009). The Olympic Games were so intertwined with the idea of peace that the major treaties between the city-states were actually on public display in the area of the sacred Altis. Of course, not everyone welcomed the Truce. It was therefore strictly enforced by Olympic officials, who levied fines on anyone who broke the peace during the Games and the period allowed for safe passage. According to Thucydides, the Spartans were barred from the Games in 420 BC, after launching an attack at the time of the Truce. In spite of these expected violations, the observance of Olympic Truce for 1200 years makes it the most important instance in the ancient world of customary law for the safeguarding of peace.

3. A WELCOME RETURN TO THE PAST
To refresh our memories, the exhibition takes us on a recreational journey back to the Ancient Olympic Games, with texts and images highlighting the symbols and the Olympic Truce. The Games were revived in 1896, but the Truce remained dormant for almost a century. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) reinstated the Truce in 1992, and it has been invoked at every Olympic Games since. In 1993, the IOC launched an appeal for an Olympic Truce at the 1994 Games, which was endorsed by 184 National Olympic Committees and presented to the Secretary-General of the UN. The UN then passed its own resolution, which supports the appeal for an Olympic Truce, recognising the contribution that this could make towards “advancing the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations”. President Samaranch wrote to the head of state in 1994 to encourage the observance of the Olympic Truce during the XVII winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway. Today, the IOC calls on the host nation to declare the Truce. From 1992 onwards, the Truce has had formal endorsement from the UN, in the shape of a number of Resolutions. Every two years, before each summer or winter Games, the UN has passed a resolution to reaffirm its commitment to the ideal of the Olympic Truce. At this point, it should be noted that Olympic truce resolutions are the most widely supported resolutions in the history of the United Nations. In 2000 the Olympic truce concept was included in the UN’s Millennium Declaration, and in the same year, the IOC, in partnership with the Greek government, established the International Olympic Truce Centre (IOTC) in Athens, to work for the advancement of the Truce’s message of peace. Today the Olympic truce is a United Nations resolution, “a tool for promoting peace and understanding between nations.” Other Olympic symbols that can inspire us beyond sport include the rings which, combining the colours, represent the union of the five continents, and the flame with its mythical origins, as the embodiment of reason, freedom and creative spirit. By passing their hand over the cauldrons along the way, visitors symbolically light the flame and help to spread the message of the relay and of brotherhood.
4. OLYMPIC SPIRIT AND PEACE
The pursuit of peace is part of the fundamental principles of Olympism as defined in the Olympic Charter. The Olympic Charter exalts a philosophy of life that seeks to use sport to communicate positive values of peace, understanding, fair play and other moral and ethical principles. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind (The Olympic Museum, 2007). Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity (Olympic Charter, 2007). A key statement in the Olympic Charter states that sport is a human right. The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play. The Charter goes on to state that: Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.

5. THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC TRUCE FOUNDATION
In the framework of promoting peace through sport and the Olympic ideal, the IOC established an International Olympic Truce Foundation (IOTF) in July 2000. The IOTF is administered by a Foundation Board composed of eminent personalities from the world of sports and politics, and meets once a year (under the chairmanship of IOC & IOTF President). Its headquarters are in Lausanne, and it has a symbolic office in Olympia. The IOTF defines its actions around the following objectives:
• To promote the Olympic ideals to serve peace, friendship and understanding in the world, and in particular, to promote the ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic Truce;
• To initiate conflict prevention and resolution through sport, culture and the Olympic ideals, particularly by cooperating with all inter- and non-governmental organisations specialised in this field, by developing educational and research programmes, and by launching communications campaigns to promote the Olympic Truce.
To meet its objectives, the IOTF has established an International Olympic Truce Centre (IOTC), which is responsible for implementing projects related to the worldwide promotion of a culture of peace through sport and the Olympic ideal, in accordance with the principles and policies established by the Foundation. The Centre’s main headquarters is in Athens, Greece.

6. OFFICIAL LOGO OF OLYMPIC TRUCE
The official Olympic Truce logo is a graphic with three elements: a dove, flames, and the Olympic rings. The Olympic Truce is symbolized by the dove of peace with the traditional Olympic flame in the background. In a world that is plagued by wars and animosity, the peace-dove symbol represents one of the IOC’s ideals to build a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal. The Olympic flame has brought warm friendship to all the people of the world through sharing and global togetherness. In the symbol, the flame is made up of colourful effervescent elements, reminiscent of festivities experienced in the celebration of the human spirit. These elements represent people of all races coming together for the observance of the Truce.

7. OLYMPIC VALUES
Olympism was created according to the following Olympic values of Pierre de Coubertin: religious commitment, harmony of body and mind, elitism and equality of chances, "Citius- Altius-Fortius", sportsmanship, equality, peace, internationalism, unity of different sports, amateurism, a modern and ancient ingredients synthesis (Georgiadis, 2011). The Olympic values are different from the values in Ancient times and even differ from the revival of the Games, just over a hundred years ago. De Coubertin’s value “amateurism” is not even relevant anymore because (almost) all the athletes at the Olympic Games nowadays are professionals. The International Olympic Committee, which is charged with the promotion of the Olympic values, recently placed the values in a modern concept of three values: respect, friendship and excellence. Respect stands for fair play, the fight against doping or other unethical behaviour. One of the goals of the Olympic Games is to inspire people to make friends and to look further than their racial, gender, cultural or religious differences. Excellence is behaviour and a state of mind for a healthy combination of a strong body, will and mind. It is about making personal progress
instead of just winning (Salaheldeen, 2009). The International Olympic Committee’s Olympic Education toolkit has defined five educational values (International Olympic Committee, 2007):

- Joy of effort
- Fair Play
- Respect for others
- Pursuit of excellence
- Balance between body, will and mind

These values come from the fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter and have been defined for educational purposes.

8. CONCLUSION

Olympic game can teach us three lessons about peace: first, that we must deliberately set aside a time and place for it; second, that we must recognize others’ equality; and third, that we must respect one another’s differences within the larger world community. The Truce that was bound up with the ancient Olympic Games is Greece’s and the whole civilized world’s heritage in our own time. Today its role is not much like what it was in antiquity. Indeed, it could hardly be so, since societies alter and transform themselves. It is because of this that we all need to bend our efforts to putting it into practice, at least at Games-time. We realize that for this to work is not easy - is perhaps utopian. But even if we cannot succeed in putting the Truce into practice, we shall at least have managed by our efforts to transmit to coming generations one of the most insistent messages of the Reviver of the Olympic Games that “sport is peace”. The implication is that periods of sport meetings between nations are periods of peace and mutual respect.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

1. This study, within the limit of available resource, has provided useful information on ancient and modern Olympic Truce; and how sports can provide peaceful society.
2. Reflect on the ways in which the association between sport and peacemaking is being played out at global, national and local levels, with a particular focus on Olympism, the Olympic movement and the Olympic Truce.

FUTURE ISSUES

The present study leads to the direction of more and more finding about Olympic Truce and the significance (if any) of the ancient Olympic Truce to the modern Olympic Games and their ability to contribute to a more peaceful world.

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