

Global Peace: Myth or Reality?

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Abstract

The call for peace is universal and timeless, since conflict is always with us. Its shadow is found in all cultures in all times, beckoning for response. When constructive it leads to better understanding and deeper relationships. When destructive, it tends towards confusion and separation.

There is no iota of doubt that there cannot be a world without peace. The ultimate goal of a righteous war is peace. However, can this goal ever be achieved? Since wars continue without stopping, one cannot admit the possibility of an all time global peace. What is peace? Is it a myth or is it a reality?

My main focus is to nurture awareness and enhance capabilities for the building of lasting peace and foster a holistic understanding of the interconnected impact of the family, school and society on our perspectives of peace by emphasizing on the following points.

1. The need for an understanding on urgent peace issues facing humanity
2. Reflections on the roots of violence, war, revolution and terrorism
3. Measures to quell violence and sustain peace for ever
4. How education can be transformed to bring true peace to the World?

Introduction

Currently we are living in a critical juncture in human history. We have built up all means, weapons to fully destroy humanity. Global terrorism since September 11 shocked the entire world and forces us to undergo a great awakening and transform our consciousness and education to attain real world peace. Fostering a culture of peace is a most urgent task in today's world of violence and intolerance. The forces that threaten peace are:

- ➔ Racism
- ➔ Xenophobia

- ➔ Religious intolerance
- ➔ Economic disparities
- ➔ Poverty
- ➔ Drugs
- ➔ Terrorism
- ➔ Militarism
- ➔ Arms dealing

However, in the face of this overwhelming darkness, there is a courageous and powerful light; the millions of individuals across this planet who firmly believe that our culture of violence and terrorism can and will be transformed into a lasting and holistic peace of reality by adopting possible means of living together.

Education for global peace

In order to make global peace a reality the citizens of the World should understand global problems, have the skill to resolve conflict constructively, know and live by international standards of human rights, gender and racial equality, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the integrity of the earth. Such an environment cannot be attained with out intentional, sustained and systematic education for global peace.

The contents of education for a culture of peace and non-violence should promote the knowledge, skills and values attitudes and behaviors:

- That reflects and inspires social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, human rights and social justice, tolerance and solidarity;
- That reject violence and endeavor to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation;
- That guarantees the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society.

To set up such a scenario we need to start with education at home. Do we practice democracy in the home? Do the women in our home share equal status? Do we treat men and women equally at home? Are they given equal opportunities? Can they both

exercise choices in their lives? If we wish to generate a culture of peace, let us stop violating the rights of our World family members. Preserving a culture that denies certain sections of it their basic rights as human being is not to be appreciated at all. So educationists all over the world must reconsider the aims and ideals of education relevant to the global context with emphasis on the following:

- Revision of curriculum materials and particularly of history text books to promote mutual respect and understanding and strengthen social cohesion and to remove prejudices among groups and individuals;
- Creation of new curriculum materials addressing peace, non-violence and human rights appropriate to the culture and the learning environment;
- Production and dissemination of educational materials and textbooks on education for a culture of peace;
- Provide opportunities for all members of the school community or other context for equal involvement in decision-making;
- Development of methods of peaceful conflict resolution and non-violence in formal and non-formal educational contexts as well as in the wider community;
- Strengthening the active role of the family and the local community in a participatory approach to determining what a culture of peace means and how it has to be promoted in the local context;
- Special educational programs for children who are the victims of violent conflicts, such as orphans, refugees, displaced persons, and even AIDS which is endemic in many parts of the world, even in developed countries.

The role of the universities in promoting peace worldwide through higher education institutions cannot be ruled out. Peace Education Needs Human Rights Education. Peace education, a worldwide movement, is a diverse and continually changing field, responding to developments in world society and, to some extent, to the advancing knowledge and insights of peace research done by higher learning institutions.

The conceptual core of peace education is violence; its control, reduction, and elimination. The conceptual core of human rights education is human dignity, its recognition, fulfillment, and universalization. As I have stated, human rights are most readily adaptable to the study of positive peace, the social, political and economic conditions most likely to

provide the environment and process for social cohesion and non-violent conflict resolution. What I would like to emphasize is that education for peace should be primarily prescriptive, and human rights should offer the most appropriate route through which to move from problem to prescription in all the various approaches to peace education. Thus the creation of an "educational climate" which enables students to learn from experience, by living in a peaceful and non-violent learning environment should be the yardstick of the promoters of peace to make peace a reality

Global demilitarization for promoting peace (Disarmament)

Any war, just like a sharp surgical knife, will split the skin of the society in half. Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, people find themselves divided in two major groups. When some nations are using their power and military might to achieve destructive ends, how can the many who seek peace, justice and a sustainable future through understanding and good will come together and promote peace.

Many countries in the World devote most of their wealth to military programs. They spend billions for bombs and pennies for peace. Were the money spent on weapons to kill people spent on promoting global understanding, peaceful resolution of conflict and on eliminating the causes of violence and hate, there would be no more wars?

So the key question to be handled wisely and judiciously is how the democratic-minded people around the world can expose these lies and defuse the campaign of bloody war.

With high levels of poverty, illness and illiteracy, who can deny disarmament would be an investment in humanity? Both individual nations and the international community must take concrete steps toward demilitarization to free resources for development and make global peace a reality by adopting the following steps.

- World's arm manufacturers should exercise restraint in their sales, especially to the developing world.
- Should advocate preventive diplomacy among arms-purchasing nations through regional disarmament talks in order to gradually reduce defense spending and thus prevent regional arms races.
- The scientists and technocrats should be reminded their obligation to the humanity to choose peaceful means, as Albert Camus wrote on 6th August, the day Hiroshima was bombed by US. "Technological civilization has just reached its

final degree of savagery, we will have to choose, in a relatively near future, between collective suicide and the intelligent use of scientific conquests".(philosophy today,spring,1988, vol.32, No.1/4 p.77).

Nevertheless most of the scientists and technocrats are still ignoring Camus warning due to their divorce from global responsibilities and their exclusive concentration on research and discoveries. The invention of biological, chemical, nuclear and sophisticated Laser Weapons and its massive use are evidence of their reluctance to perform their duty to end arms race. So Violence and war have been all too common place in this century and the victims of this violence are mostly civilians.

India Pakistan war

The fighting between Pakistan and India from 1947 shows that nuclear deterrence is unstable between India and Pakistan, if it exists at all. The economic costs of this conflict also suggest the serious damage to both economies of a general war. The large military spending increases that a broader war would cause would trigger higher interest rates and inflation, and the war-time destruction of industrial and infrastructure facilities would reduce productivity and drain already limited foreign exchange reserves. The threat of follow-on hostilities or the breakdown of domestic order in parts of India or Pakistan would discourage foreign investment and financial assistance that is crucial for the long-range economic growth and development in each country. In short, a conventional war could ruin India and Pakistan. The human and economic costs of a nuclear war are beyond calculation

Security and Prosperity without Nuclear Weapons is a must to make global peace a reality. As U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott has stated, "India and Pakistan need security, deserve security, and have a right to determine what is necessary to attain security." Are there ways for India and Pakistan to enhance their security without deploying nuclear weapons and missiles? Considering the dangerous and expensive record of the Soviet-American arms race, the enormous political and economic costs of Indian and Pakistani deterrent programs, and the growing risk of nuclear war in South Asia, India and Pakistan should make every effort to pursue non-nuclear sources of security. And, all concerned states should help them to achieve that security.

The leaders of the millennium would have to understand that humanity can't survive if it follows the ethics of the 20th C: We can no longer support arrogant and unscrupulous leaders who isolate themselves from the world around them and confuse force with

virtue. True valor is not found in responding to a crisis or declaring war, true valor is rising up to the circumstances around us and recognizing that no problem is too big to be tackled or too small to concern us.

Media and Peace

The UNESCO conference on media and disarmament frequently emphasized the role and responsibility of mass media in strengthening peace and international understanding. Though there is no magic lamp in its hand, it has been promoting changes performing some responsibilities through informing, educating, persuading and entertaining the mass to a variety of issues.

Media can sensitize opinion to major global problem confronting the world. Along with truthful reporting, the media must remind the readers of the possibility-indeed, the necessity-of peaceful solutions to disputes. Scattered around the world are wonderful programs for peaceful resolutions of conflict.(Franciscans, churches, service clubs, Fellowship of Reconciliation, world Neighbors etc) But most people do not appreciate this because mass media does not feature actions for peaceful progress. Media is the source of most public opinion and they make more money by features and headlines for violence and conflict. Public opinion is media made actions good or bad begin in the mind. Whether intentional or not, the fact is that media accents the negative and gives more attention to hate, fear, greed and lust than to the many actions of understanding and good will. As a result major nations are addicted to war.

So to make global peace a reality:

- Exert pressure on media to deliver accurate, timely news and information in a non-polemical manner that can counter the distortions broadcasted by others
- Provide training in political reporting and investigative journalism, reducing bias, and other steps to enhance media professional' capabilities, including peace training.
- Promote laws that monitor and ensure that media are not used to undermine democracy and individual freedom, violate human rights, or incite violent conflict.
- Develop independent organizations to keep track of rumors circulating in the country that might incite conflict, and use media to refute them and disseminate the truth as widely as possible.

- Distribute radios, televisions especially in rural areas, to give recipients access to accurate news and more balanced reporting.
- Encourage international sanctions against hate media

Role of IT in making peace a reality

For peace and non-violence to happen in this current era, we need modern communications to support traditional, face-to-face communication. At present we live in a world that is connected by an infrastructure of telecommunications networks, fast and affordable computers and digital system. In this digital epoch, the Internet is paramount and no one can underestimate the contribution that something as simple and universal as e-mail has made to this process of allowing people to be in virtual, almost instantaneous communication with each other. In his Millennium Report, U.N Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote, "The Internet is the fastest-growing instrument of communication in the history of civilization, and it may be the most rapidly disseminating tool of any kind ever" (Kofi Annan, April 2000)

The modern media has effectively flattened the more traditional organizational hierarchies and their control of the flow of information, at least for stories deemed newsworthy. Leaders involved in Peace Work have to find effective ways of coordinating with the cable and international news channels and they must also be able to quickly counter the effects of disturbing rumors and media treatment. Rapid communication between and amongst peace workers as a community is also needed and here the Internet and Email in particular can have a large impact. Most modern military commanders also realize that they must be up to date and up to speed in their ability to communicate with global audiences in real time. The US Pentagon, for example, has plans to provide its public affairs officers with two way satellite video transmitters that can provide on-the-spot visual information from combat zones, giving them the capability to counteract what they perceive as hostile propaganda. They have contracted for the Austrian based Scotty Tele-Transport Corporation's briefcase-sized laptop computer, which comes complete with video editing and recording capabilities, built-in digital camera, keyboard and external collapsible satellite dish antenna. These systems are already extensively used by the international media, for example by news correspondents in Afghanistan and in the build up to the Iraqi conflict.

In fact, Information Technology can take care of three areas namely peacekeeping,

peacemaking and peace building. Defense technology has probably played the primary role in driving forward information technology during the past 100 years. From Radio, Radar and Sonar to the ARPANET developed by the US Defense Advanced Research Project Agency and was the basic backbone that the Internet was built on. We also have humanitarian agencies, cell phones, AM, FM and short wave radio communications, satellite uplinks and downlinks, Internet web sites, e-mail and instant messaging facilities with live video cams. While all these systems can act as self monitoring and self-regulating systems, providing many cross checks and valuable feedback on what is really happening at the source of a conflict, there is also the problem of getting clean and reliable information and many opportunities to spread dis-information. The ability to access information technology, therefore, can both help and hinder the peace process and systems specifically designed for the process itself are in need of creation and development. In a culture of trans-border communication and management of the media, the problem of monitoring agreements, threats, resolutions and rumors, is one of the biggest challenges peacekeeping faces. The development of a shared system of information exchange, verification and normalization is a direction that the United Nations and its member states want to pursue, to enhance their conventional people-based monitoring methods.

With all due respect to Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther king Jr, Nelson Mandela and many others, a fairly new term came into popular use after 1992, 'Agenda for Peace,' which refers to activities that attempt to go beyond crisis intervention and towards long term development. It is about structural transformation, which means understanding the roots of conflicts and problems in order to be able to resolve them.

Human rights and peace

Human Rights is becoming a global educational phenomenon. The foundation of human rights is essentially constructed around the core principals of human dignity, human values, and the fulfillment of human needs. Related to peace education, the human rights movement responds to violence with an emphasis on its control, reduction, and elimination. But like the study of positive peace, human rights also embraces issues that concern justice, gender equity, poverty, freedom, civil rights, and social change.

In the 21st century all should not forget the fact that protecting women from violence and oppression must remain a priority in the agenda to promote peace. What I would like to emphasize is that women should be given equal place in peace negotiations and decision-making instead of treating them as property confined to a narrow sphere of

activity and deprived of a voice in public life. Violence against women takes a dismaying variety of forms from domestic abuse and rape to child marriages, dowry related violence and female circumcision. All violate the most fundamental human rights.

Women make up more than half of the human race. Civilization has suffered for more than 4,000 years under the aggressive oppression of male dominance and authoritarian patriarchy. Great promoters of peace like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. have seen hope for a peaceful world in the softening of masculine force by the feminine qualities of love, service, intuition and moral power. "If non-violence is the law of our being", Gandhi said, the future is with women" So we need to strive for a greater balance in society between feminine and masculine influences to create a world of peace and unity. I strongly believe women have the power to provide a uniquely humanitarian role in fostering a culture of peace.

Women also will need to make this change to happen for them. They need to formulate new rules, new standards, that must in turn implement, enforce and uphold. The new standards must include the premise that sexual differences must be accepted as merely physical and not permitted to preempt woman's ability to excel in the work place.

This is my appeal to all women. All women should try and aim at excellence in education, experience and leadership, so that men will see your true value and be eager to follow you. I urge all women to reach for these higher standards and teach men what good really means.

National Federations and Associations should promote the participation of women in the peacemaking process and conflict resolutions by:

- A** Monitoring the application of domestic legislation in cases of domestic violence and provocation, in particular any differences in the treatment of men and women by the judicial system and making representation to their governments if necessary.
- B** Encouraging and supporting women to specialize in the professional areas of conflict resolution and the politics of peacemaking;
- C** Urging governments to ensure that, especially in countries where hitherto women have been without a political voice because of particular interpretations of religion which have become customary practice, they include women in diplomatic and multilateral missions concerned with peacemaking, conflict resolution, disarmament and in international tribunals and organizations as part of a regular career pattern.

Poverty and Peace

When we look into the biggest problems that countries face today, economic issues top the list of concerns in East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa and the rich countries. In Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa economic problems and social problems vie for top place and in South Asia, social problems are more disturbing elements than economic ones.

Fighting poverty is key to achieving world peace and lowering global tensions. This sentiment is very strong in sub-Saharan Africa (91%) and South Asia (87%) and the Middle East and North Africa (79%). Support is also very high in rich countries, where seven in ten opinion leaders strongly believe that fighting poverty is the path to peace.

Most world leaders expressed concern about the possibility of meeting the millennium Development goal of halving global poverty by 2015 because of

- A The amount of aid provided for developing countries is too little.
- B Foreign assistance is wasted because of corruption
- C Dark aspects of globalization

Still many leaders in developing countries has a positive feeling that the World Bank's influence on their country is generally positive and has become more useful, relevant, transparent, responsive, visible and better at communicating in all parts of the World.

More over the World Bank has done a better job in the past few years in key areas as widely varied as poverty, health, education, environment, growth and the economy, infrastructure and governance.

But at the same time criticisms cannot be ruled out as many complain that the institution remains too bureaucratic and arrogant. The bank also gets lower evaluations for its efforts to help developing countries reduce corruption.

Although the World Bank says its goal is to increase growth and reduce poverty, its recommended economic reforms hurt more people than they help is the opinion shared by Latin America, Middle-East and North Africa. Solid majorities in China, Vietnam and Cambodia Europe and Central Asia disagree to this view.

The governments of developing countries have an important role to play in spurring the attainment of knowledge and sparking technological transformation to eradicate poverty. They need new, technology-driven, pro-poverty growth policies. This requires massive investment in people, and in national technological capacity, so they can develop human resources and compete on world markets, while eliminating poverty and improving human rights to attain global peace.

As world leaders are concerned with avoiding the acute consequences of WMD, the equivalent of silent weapons of mass destruction are exploding every day as a result of widespread poverty, lack of medical care, lack of clean water (5,000 children die needlessly every day from water born illnesses), lack of cheap and available medicines, global climate change and the inequitable world economic system. All of these factors conspire to cause the widespread and lifelong suffering of many millions of people, who must endure hunger, disease and abject poverty.

Therefore the real requirement now is to recognise the need for a society based on cooperation rather than competition. As part of this transformation experts suggest that greater long-term security could be created by spending a proportion — even a small fraction — of military budgets on critical world problems, such as debt relief, water supplies or the reconstruction of war-torn countries.

For example: \$100 billion dollars (i.e. 30% of the annual US military budget or roughly twice the cost of this current conflict) would: provide \$20 per annum for 5 billion of the world's poorest people; dwarf current aid programmes; go more than half way towards giving the world clean water; or provide the first of five instalments to reduce world poverty by half.

Far preferable for energy security, meanwhile, would be to pursue policies aimed at reducing the oil dependence of the Western world (thereby simultaneously undermining the power held by unsavoury dictators) and at the same time pursuing consistent foreign policies that support human rights and ban weapons sales.

In order to have peace on earth, WAR must stop. War should not be a legal option for nations to settle their disputes. International law and diplomacy will be much more effective after the Peace On Earth Movement has convinced all nations to work together to create a more fair, just and sustainable world. Force should always be the last resort and should only be waged by a joint body of all nations, such as the UN Peacekeepers. The War Industry must dismantle forever. The trafficking of weapons to the highest bidder must not be allowed. As long as war is profitable, there will continue to be wars

between nations and violence in our neighborhoods. The goal of the PEACE ON Earth Movement is to convince nations to abolish war and work together to create a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. This is exactly the goal of the United Nations! All that is missing is the will of the governments and the peoples of the world to allow the United Nations to be what it was envisioned to be. United Nations should create a separate body, a more secure military body that not only can use for peace-keeping missions, but for offensive, defensive, humanitarian and finally collective security of all in this planet.

Together we can make global peace a reality. The solution to our various problems is within the problems themselves (which is us) and only those of us who love mankind, who are compassionate, and who are seriously concerned can solve these human problems.

We must act now. We must accept that today's problems were created by our thoughts and actions. The world cannot change without a transformation in human consciousness, and that transformation can only happen if we each assume certain obligations:

- If we seek peace with our fellow humans, then we must start by developing inner peace: honesty, solidarity, generosity, fairness, and compassion. We must begin by being honest with ourselves, acknowledging our faults, but also learning to forgive ourselves.
- If we want sustainable development, we must be prepared to adapt our lifestyles to sustainable patterns of living. We must seek peace with our bodies by realizing what our real physical needs are and discarding patterns of over consumption or abusive indulgence.
- If we want emotional security, we must remember that people should be valued based on who they are, not what they have. By resting our sense of emotional security in material possession, we condemn ourselves to insecurity because material possessions can always be lost, destroyed, or taken away. Real security depends on our ability to give and receive love, a psychological disposition that will foster human relations based on compassion, generosity, and solidarity.

If everyone would treat each other equally and live in harmony, we wouldn't have any wars or fights. All you have to do is to treat people around you the way you want to be treated and you will make a big difference. All human beings in this planet should carry

the message of wisdom and take action to realize the dream of a truly peaceful World and spread the philosophy” Peace is in our hands”; Action speak louder than words”

I should like to conclude by adding that we must not be afraid of dreaming the seemingly impossible, if we want the impossible to become a reality.

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