



**APPROACHES OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS TOWARDS PEACE EDUCATION
 WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BUDDHISM, JAINISM, HINDUISM AND
 ISLAM**

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Abstract

In the humanizing Process of Man, mere mastering the realm of knowledge and devising ways of massive production and destruction might ultimately lead to all annihilation, as Man is capable of smashing the entire world including Human Civilization within no time by using the stock pile of Nuclear Weapons. There must be a restraint exercise to bring Peace and Harmony in the society and sustain it. Here arises the need to control the remnants of primordial savage still inherent in modern Man and exhibiting symptoms of savagery even in the 21st Century. This under pine great needs to sober the society and ensure Peace, Harmony and Progress of society and there arises a need for Approaches of different Religions to ensure Peace education. Perhaps we know that the earliest written records of guidelines and principles that teach us how to achieve peace comes through the world's great religions. These religions – following the teachings of such Prophet Mohammed, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mahavir Jain and others have specific scriptures that advance peace. Religions promote their own vision of peace but ironically some people in the name of religion create nuisance. Why can't human beings who know about peace figure out how to live in peace following approaches of different religions to ensure peace in society?

Keywords: *knowledge; religion; approaches; peace; harmony*



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INTRODUCTION:

Throughout history humans have taught each other conflict resolution techniques to avoid violence. Peace education is the process of teaching people about the threats of violence and strategies for peace. Peace education activities that attempt to end violence and hostilities can be carried out informally within communities or formally within institutional places of learning, like schools, colleges, universities and can bring maximum benefit. Peace does not come with our DNA. To reach peace we need to teach peace, a phrase well penned by, Prof. Betty Reardon. The methodology of peace education should include critical thinking, reflection and participation; they are elements that should be integrated into the pedagogy of

all teaching at all levels of education. Whether in formal or non formal settings, one has to understand that peace is a holistic concept and state of being and that it cannot be learned in the traditional lecture-note taking-testing framework. Indeed, peace education has to be integrated into many disciplines. The culture of peace must replace the culture of violence if we and our home, planet Earth, are to survive. Tolerance for violence has increased beyond tolerable levels.

preparing future generations to not only know how to read and write, but also to be thoughtful, responsible members of communities, who will graduate not to make money but to make a difference by contributing and creating a Culture of Peace. A close look at the original teachings of spiritual and faith traditions indicates that they are essentially wellsprings and resources for peace. We need to rediscover the principles and values that they uphold, to remind us of the essential mission of each faith tradition to seek peace. Cooperation and understanding among various spiritual and faith traditions have now become imperative. We now seek the common ground of shared values among the diverse faiths to show that despite the diversity, we are one as humanity, with the same fundamental aspirations for mutual respect and acceptance, and for living together in peace. We shall now focus on a few spiritual and faith traditions that have taken root in our nation. These are Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism etc.

RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS THAT PROMOTE PEACE:

Perhaps the earliest written records of guidelines that teach us about how to achieve peace comes through the world's great religions. These religions – following the teachings of such Prophet Mohammed, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mahavir Jain and others have specific scriptures that advance peace. Organized religions promote their own visions of peace but ironically some people in the name of religion create nuisance to destroy peace. Why can't human beings who know about peace figure out how to live in peace? Why do people need to be educated on how to be peaceful? Are human beings inherently violent and divisive? The challenge of peace is an ancient concern, one that has preoccupied religions across the world for millennia. The results of their efforts have been decidedly mixed.

The frustration of the youth today is aggravated by imaginations which feed on television programmes, radio programmes, Internet and cinema. The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin has become more important. Peace education, then, can be interpreted

not only as an essential component of a child's educational experience but an instrument for the promotion of peaceful, responsible, tolerant, equitable, friendly members of societies. The connection between teaching learners about peace and the cultivation of peaceful societies is one of the central considerations. It is quite possible that religion-based programmes and their messages will prove more influential. After all, children go to churches, temples or mosques, gurudwaras etc in addition to educational institutions. And when they do, they join a community of believers who frequently learn about peace in an environment that can powerfully influence their ideas and behavior.

In today's world, more so, a culture of peace should be seen as the essence of a new humanity, a new global civilization based on inner oneness and outer diversity. The flourishing of a culture of peace will generate the mindset that is a prerequisite for the transition from force to reason, from conflict and violence to dialogue and peace. Culture of peace will provide the bedrock of support to a stable, progressing and prospering world for all.

Cultural Traditions with a Broad Concept of Peace - The Greek concept of "irene" implies harmony and justice as well as the absence of physical violence. Similarly, the Arabic "sala'am" and the Hebrew "shalom" embrace not only the absence of war but also well-being, wholeness, and harmony with one's self and also between individuals, within a community, and among nations. "Shalom" also means love, full health, prosperity, redistribution of goods and reconciliation. The Sanskrit concept of "shanti" refers not only to spiritual contentment but also to peace of mind, peace of the earth, peace underneath the seas, and peace in outer space truly a cosmic view of peace. The Chinese "ping" implies harmony, achieving a unity out of diversity, comparable to the ancient Chinese concept of integrating seemingly opposed elements as represented in the principles of yin and yang (Barash, 1999).

It can be said that a holistic understanding of peace has been derived, on one hand, from a critical and practical analysis of what the yearning for a durable peace really demands (that is, it demands both the rejection of violence and the pursuit of certain positive conditions.). At the same time, the holistic view is also derived from certain ethical, cultural and historical roots that have influenced today's peace thinking.

A close look at the original teachings of spiritual and faith traditions indicates that they are essentially wellsprings and resources for peace. There is a need to rediscover the principles and values that uphold, remind us of the essential mission of each faith tradition to seek peace. Cooperation and understanding among various spiritual and faith traditions have now

become imperative. Now there is a need to seek the common ground of shared values among the diverse faiths to show that despite diversity, we are one i.e. one race of humanity, with the same fundamental aspirations for mutual respect and acceptance, and for living together in peace. It is essential to focus on the major spiritual and faith traditions that have taken root in our Nation. These are Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism etc.

ISLAM AND PEACE:

The root of the word Islam means peace – peace with God and other human beings. A Muslim is one who submits to God’s will. The objective of this submission is not so much with personal salvation of the individual believer, but the successful execution of The Divine Plan and the implementation of a just and harmonious social order.

Five obligations of a Muslim:

- A declaration and acceptance of the oneness of God (tawheed) and the prophethood of Mohammed. The great significance of the tawheed is that “if God is one, so is all of His creation...”
- Prayer five times a day
- Payment of zakah or obligatory charity, generally 2 ½ percent of one’s wealth annually. Zakah in Islam is a means to redistribute wealth and to show one’s concern for poor.
- Fasting in the month of Ramadhan. It is mainly a spiritual exercise but it also serves as a way for all Muslims to feel their solidarity.
- Pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) once in a lifetime, if one can afford to do so.

The following are several verses from Islam’s Holy book, the Qur’an, which expresses peace-related messages:

Whosoever kills a human being, except (as punishment) for murder or spreading corruption in the land, it shall be like killing all humanity; and whosoever saves a life, saves the entire human race. (Surah 5:32)

...It is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask; and for freeing captives; to be steadfast in prayers; and practice regular charity... (Surah 2:177)

...Be dutiful and good to parents, and to kindred, and to orphans and the poor, and speak good to people... (Surah 2:83)

O mankind! We have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes, that you may know one another (not despise on another). (Surah 49:13)

It is they who are the believers in truth. For them are grades of dignity with their Lord, and forgiveness and generous provision. (Surah 8:4)

Peace! Is A word of salutation from the Lord most merciful. (Surah 36:58)

From the Hadith (sayings of Prophet Mohammed) we find verses such as the following :

May I tell you what is even better than prayers and fasting and giving alms to the poor? It is reconciling differences and disputes among men. And sowing discord wipes off all virtues.

God fills the heart of him with faith and contentment who, having the power to avenge himself, exercises restraint and toleration.

And by God he is no believer...whose neighbor does not live in peace because of his mischief making.

Show compassion to those on earth, so that He who is in heaven may show His mercy on you.

HINDUISM AND PEACE:

The ultimate goal of Hindu spirituality is to gain a vision of unity which is non-discriminatory, where every kind of life form is important. This vision of interconnectedness fosters deep respect for one another and a positive relationship between human beings and the natural world.

There are verses from the Hindu texts that refer to unity and harmony -May all human beings look on me with the eye of a friend; may I look upon all beings with the eye of a friend, may we look on one another with the eye of a friend. (Yajurveda prayer)

Ranganathananda (1968) explains that love and respect for other beings are the fruits of the sense of oneness that Hindus believe in. He cites verses in which God speaks to human beings:

I am not pleased... if the worshippers insult the dignity of other beings... Therefore, worship me... by upholding their dignity, in an attitude of friendliness, and with the eye of non-separateness. (Srimad Bhagavatam)

Vaswani (2007) enumerates some of the important principles of Hinduism:

- Live a moral life with right thoughts and actions
- Control one's desires and anger
- Practice ahimsa (nonviolence or non-injury)

- Promote love and compassion as well as justice
- Recognize that each person reaps the fruit of his/her deeds (Karma)
- Recognize the importance of inner peace and inner transformation as the beginning of peace in the family, society and in the world.

Hindus end their prayers with the word “Shanti” (peace) repeated three times. Shanti, shanti, shanti – which means let there be peace within us, in our family and in the world.

BUDDHISM AND PEACE:

Buddhist teachings promote spiritual purification through the eradication of defilements until one attains nirvana, the final emancipation from suffering which is the end of one’s cycles of birth and death. Buddhist doctrine asserts that war, crime and suffering are mental defilements and that these need to be overcome by the practice of self-discipline, meditation, wisdom and enlightenment.

Buddhism teaches compassion and loving kindness. Buddhists believe in the Law of Karma, which reveals the truth of cause and effect: good deeds yield good effects, and vice versa. Human beings and animals, according to their Karma, have to go through an endless cycle of birth and death and may be reborn in the form of another. Their activities, good or bad, have an effect on themselves and on others (Sirikanchana, 2001).

Buddhism reveals that materialistic enslavement, selfishness and greed are the sources of all injustice and therefore teaches people to give more, take less, live a simple life and free themselves from attachments which are sources of suffering.

JAINISM AND PEACE:

Peace to all living beings is the credo of Jainism. According to Jainism, peace is a fundamental quality of the soul, essential for attaining infinite, Ananda. Eternal peace is the primary state as well as the ultimate goal of soul. Peace is an internal aspect of mind as well as external aspect of the individual, family, society, nation, the world and indeed the whole universe; the internal peace of mind and external peace in the world are two different things; in the absolute sense, they are independent of each other but in practice they are inter-related as well. One can attain internal peace even when the external conditions are adverse and persons may appear externally peaceful even though internal peace eludes them.

The Jain concept of peace is different from most other philosophies. The basic Jain approach to Peace is the welfare (mangala) of all living beings, from smallest insects to the

most evolved mammals. There are many aspects of peace in Jainism. Some of them are as follows:

- Peace (Shanti) is an eternal quality of the soul. One can attain eternal peace by conquering one self, making one free of all the vices (anger, jealousy, competition, attachment, hatred etc) which are then automatically eliminated. When one is peaceful with himself then the family becomes peaceful, then the society, then the nation, then the world and then the whole universe.
- Welfare of self depends on the welfare of others; hence the principle of nonviolence. Welfare of all living creatures constitutes the main thrust of Jain prayers.
- Peace entails respecting views of others even if they are contradictory; hence the principle of Anekantavada.
- Peace cannot be attained without sacrifice on part of the self. Hence the principles of Tapa, living frugally, Aparigraha and Steya etc.

Peace in some other thoughts, particularly in the western approach, implies safe conditions for one self without much concern about the safety of others. In contrast, Jainism believes that safe conditions for one self are only ensured when it is safe for everyone else in the world; hence there is more emphasis on the safety of others rather than oneself.

When one conquers one's own self, one attains internal peace but for external peace conquering the world is not essential. The Jainism has the same approach to peace: one need not be a super power with powerful weapons at its disposal to rule the earth. The real super power status is attained, not at the point of gun, but when others willingly share and follow your thought and philosophy.

Non-violence and forgiveness are the prime requirements for peace. Non violence should be practiced to the extent that you do not hurt any creatures in thought, words and deed and you seek forgiveness in case someone is hurt, knowingly or unknowingly. Jainism does not permit any form of violence in thought, action or consent and even support of violence for any reason whatsoever even at the cost of the physical safety of oneself or in self defense. Non violence must start at the lowest level of living species and should not be confined only to humans. There is detailed procedure for seeking forgiveness. The Jains have earmarked a day every year, called the universal day of forgiveness, for seeking forgiveness. This certainly brings peace and harmony in the family and society and in turn will lead to a peaceful nation and world as well and bring welfare to one and all.

CONCLUSION:

Formal school systems have largely ignored the educational insights provided by peace activist educators, mostly because of cultural and economic pressures to ramp up their curricula to include more math and science so that learners can compete in a high tech global economy. Peace education in most countries is seen as “soft” and not embraced by frightened citizens who fear imaginary or real enemies.

The foundation for a new discipline has been built, leaving future peace educators to figure out how to erect a mighty peace palace. Our vision is a more peaceful 21st century, a century that is good for all humans, Mother Earth and the whole cosmos. Although the challenges that we face are enormous, we have to learn to read the signs of the times correctly. We cannot read only the negative signs because that might lead us to despair. It is important that we also see the signs of hope such as the growth of social movements that work for the promotion of peace and justice in various ways and levels. This should increase our confidence and resolve to make our own contribution towards our positive vision.

It is to submit that building a culture of peace is among the essential goals for today and tomorrow. Human and ecological survival and well-being, now and in the future, depend on this. Therefore, it makes good sense for governments, regional and international institutions, and all people to work together towards this vision.

In turn, one of the necessary steps to build a culture of peace is to mobilize education which is at the heart of personal and social development of a people. We need to introduce peace education in a more intentional and systematic way in the formal education system and other learning environments.

Let us meet the future with hope, imagination and the willingness to forego our old thinking and ways which hinder the blossoming of a new culture that is more peaceable. Let us educate and act for peace so that our future will hold the promises that we seek.

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