



TEACH LITERATURE TO REACH WORLD PEACE

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One of the most burning dilemmas of our time is the issue of World Peace and the ways to achieve it. **“Peace does not come with our DNA. To reach peace we need to teach peace”**. It is perhaps because of the same reason that United Nations has declared the present decade to be the *‘Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World’*. As the Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE) puts it, **“A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human dignity and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, respect the Earth and each other.”**

The word *‘peace’* is itself very deep and *‘World Peace’* has further far broader meaning. It is like a vast umbrella that covers the whole earth and species. The world is at the edge of a new beginning; waiting to witness a century ahead, that is, peaceful to Mother Earth, whole human species and even the smallest object of this cosmos. The whole ecological survival and peaceful existence depends on building a culture of peace in the world. For this goal, governments, institutions especially educational institutes and teachers should work together. To create suitable environment for world peace, well-crafted education programme is the fundamental need. Then, a character building intervention based on humanistic grounds and values with emphasis on developing peaceful living conditions is required. As literature is essential part of all education systems and its reach to students is also very wide. Therefore, a peace education programme, based on humanistic approach can incorporate well to attain the goal. **“In order to make it a clear and unambiguous base for any educational purpose, it has to be interpreted as something that students can learn and change their ways of behaviour both as individuals and groups for a better future. The outcome of such learning should be observed and evaluated objectively. To live in the true sense we need peace in every way. It provides the atmosphere, space and nourishment essential to grow towards human perfection. However, we have to frankly accept the fact that we still lack a great deal of understanding of what peace really is. Hence there is considerable negligence and confusion in the field. Practically**





people tend to define peace according to their down preferred perspectives.” In fact all the perspectives of peace contain the seed of peace but effective approach for attaining world peace can be only through effective social and human perspectives. World peace is often misunderstood as absence of war while in true sense of the word, it means complete eradication of each form of violence, terror, threat to life and honour, social inequality, degradation, direct or indirect discrimination, exploitation at any level, hunger, poverty, corruption, injustice, insecurity, humiliation and so on. All this points out that peace is an external phenomenon but there is a quite opposite perspective of peace building that implies peace as an inner factor and *‘within you yourself’* in the form of satisfaction, happiness, sound earning, good health and in enjoying freedom for expression, creativity, justice, social recognition, pure environment, love and support for individual growth at all levels of life are basic elements of peace. In short, peace as a whole arises through all these resources together as has been said, **“Peace is the behaviour that encourages harmony in the way people talk, listen, and interact with each other and discourages actions to hurt, harm, or destroy each other.”**

Understanding world peace concept also includes the various steps beginning with different aspects of peace starting with peace for self and then reaching to wider circles of world peace. This cycle can be easily depicted as-1. Peace/harmony with

Self 2. Harmony with Nature 3. Harmony with Divine 4. Harmony with other Humans and Earthly Creatures. Personal Peace further leads to self-respect and internal characteristics like love, sympathy, hope, honesty, justice, sacrifice, tolerance, bravery, cooperation etc. On the other hand, interpersonal Peace encourages- Peace with the Environment Sustainable and Simple lifestyle of living and harmony with the Sacred Objects of Nature and then with whole Mankind and Universe.

In present complex times, Peace education should be accepted in all areas of the world, societies and countries as an essential element to create culture of peace. To face the global challenges threatening almost every culture and environment, the young minds of today deserve a radically different education to be provided to them through, **“one that does not glorify war but educates for peace, nonviolence and international cooperation.”** But Humanistic attitude for peace and values are not easy to teach. **“It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential and has little or no significant influence on behavior...Hence I have to feel that outcomes of teaching are either unimportant or hurting...”** Although it is believed that teacher-centred and approaches prove to be





ineffective in peace education, I claim for sure that it can be made effective through changing our approach and by inculcating humanistic features in teaching.

As Peace is said to be both the end and the process itself, humanistic approach develops interest to subject content and learning through literature becomes automatic and interesting. Thus learners will naturally develop a sensible worldview by absorbing the spirit of peace, and consequently, peace will be caught rather than be taught. Once there is active and participative learning through humanistic approach towards Peace and harmony, self-derived feelings will emerge among learners naturally, just as the expression of heart-felt feelings get expression through poetry. In UNICEF, peace education is defined as **“the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level”**. With the objective to broaden the vision of world peace, some relevant world issues of global awareness such as world poverty, worldwide terrorist attacks, increasing trade and communication among world countries, human relationships in different world cultures, wildlife protection, human rights' awareness, gender discrimination, lack of interest in literary activities, diversity of human cultures, ecosystem and global environmental anxieties etc. can be discussed by teachers with learners using humanistic approach of teaching. For instance, while teaching French Revolution in English Literature through humanistic approach, the socio-economic background to the revolution and how people experienced unrest, deprivation and poverty materially, socially and psychologically can be explained from a human perspective. How all led to pervasive and aggressive behavior in individuals? Also the humanistic approach will play a vital role in this process by introducing the importance of analyzing the issue with compassion and the way of non-violent ways to maintain justice, equality, liberty and human rights in any society or country. Similarly through creative, imaginative and humanistic methods of teaching Literature, ways of leading life happily, purposely and successfully to enjoy peace freely and openly at any time, at any step or level and anywhere in the world can also be taught. The humanistic approach will inspire the learners' wisdom and power of reasoning and judgement on the grounds of pure essence of sympathy. It will also generate space for divergent thinking, frank inquiry, creative outlook, alternative perspectives, and free flow of thought.

Literature being creative, stimulates imagination, therefore, stories serve as very effective tools in teaching Peace. If right narrative approach is implied, stories can convey deep human messages and their symbolic means can very effectively enter the core of learners' heart. Besides, activities like literature peace days can also be organized. For this, themes on topics





like environment, social justice, inner peace, non-violence, human rights and problems of globalization may be given to learners in which they can practically present concept of world peace through poetry recitation, skit, seminar, speech, group discussions, posters, art exhibitions, story narration, debates and drama presentation etc. with a view to raising awareness on peace. It is a bitter truth that despite scientific and technological advancements, we could not alleviate the human conditions. The present era of Globalization is still full of unprecedented violence in the forms of terrorism, war, crimes injustice, oppression, conflict, exploitation, corruption etc. Till now information and communication revolutions have failed to prevent the breakdowns in the social-moral order or to control the erosion of our human, ethical, cultural and spiritual values. Therefore, a re-education of humankind, behavioural revolution of the mind, heart and soul for real progress and development of human life as well as of the country is very much required.

The quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs, and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living. So, there is a drastic need of global '*Value Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy*'. According to Delor Commission Report, learning is based on the four pillars of education i. e. Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together and Learning to be. These four pillars are assumed as the master key to meet the challenges of present century. For this '*Culture of Peace*' defined as **"the set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reflect and inspire respect for life and all human rights,"** is the right way out. Therefore, in order to create the attitude as well as aptitude towards the culture of thinking and behaving in broader prospects of the whole world rather than narrow prejudices of province or country, we are very much in need of providing greater importance to an education system based on moral values, ethics, peace, tolerance etc. and this can effectively done through literature by applying humanistic approach in teaching, so that, not only the relationship between teacher and student, but even the inter-personal relations among students and teachers of different surroundings, backgrounds and notions may be improved. The practice of peace education in a more effective and systematic way embedded closely and naturally along with the strings of formal education system in each and every country with similar concerns is the need of the hour. All types of learning institutions world-wide should join hands to achieve the ultimate aim of all environments i. e. to lead peaceful lives. Building a World Peace Academy of teachers with hope, imagination and willingness to create and maintain peace all over the world from each corner of the world may be a great venture towards future peace. Let us now forego our old thinking of narrow nationalism and other ways of prejudiced thinking which hinder the blossoming of a new Peace culture which was described by Gurudev Ravindranath Tagore once as





VASUDHEVKUTUMBKAM. Besides, good attitudes, morals values, healthy emotional life, correct and effective living style, a feeling to preserve the rich heritage of our culture, self-discipline and spirituality, art of living together and creative tolerance etc. may be developed in our new generation pupils through such humanistic approach towards Literature. Let us educate and act for peace so that our future will hold the promises that we seek. To conclude, I would like to quote following lines of a Buddhist Hymn:

May the clouds give rain in proper time

And crops yield harvest

May the whole world be happy and hale

And rulers be righteous!

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