

PROMOTING CULTURE OF PEACE & UNIVERSAL VALUES

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Abstract:

One of the corner stones for the survival of human society is maintaining peace and harmony among the peoples of the world and between human society and the environment. Our survival depends upon our concern and respect that we give to "other". It cuts race, religion and region. For the larger good of this planet, we have to adopt a more balanced, more positive and more tolerant frame of mind that would encompass "peace for all" and "all for peace". This notion cannot be limited to students or teachers or to educational institutions. It has to be wider in scope, and take in its fold community, society, market place, nation and international community. As teachers shape the minds of young children and as children will shape the future world. It is necessary that teachers should be made aware fully about the dire necessity of internalizing values of peace. This article/Paper attempts to concentrate on this central point and outlines certain values that have universal application and are essential to make us the "complete man".

Key Words:- Culture, Peace, Values, Teacher, Society.

Introduction:

In present time the violence and social disparities are increasing, religious, cultural, and linguistic tensions feed and fuel tendencies of division and conflict. Greed, hatred and violence are increasing. In such a situation, the world looks for such lasting inputs that can make it a happier place, tolerance, understanding and goodwill. The world needs responsive human being who can build defences of peace in themselves, in their children and around the world.

Role of Education

Education is the important instrument of social re-engineering. India's National Policy of Education 1986 clearly mentions that the human being are "the positive asset and

precious national resource”, that education has an acculturating role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to the national cohesion, scientific temper and international cooperation. Although interdependence has become a global phenomenon one cannot ignore the need of many people who want to keep intact their roots, culture and uniqueness. If not properly handled this tension between global and the local may lead to distrust which may generate strifes and results into crisis of social cohesion. (UNESCO 1996 p. 54)

Happenings relating to violence clearly point out that there is a section of people who have little faith in, understanding tolerance, non-violence, cooperation and have propensities that promote violence, destruction, and disrespect to others. Crisis in human values is a worldwide phenomenon. The only place at which it can be tackled effectively is in the minds of younger children. As the well-known UNESCO constitution mentions, “the wars are fought in the minds of men, it is the minds of men that the defences of peace be built”. Primary education has a significant role in building a proper climate of peace, in the mind of children. It is here that seeds of universally shared values must be sown, and nurtured so they may sprout and grow into a big tree.

Need for Peace and Understanding

The journey towards agenda for peace is an old story. Both in the east as well in the west, all religious and social leaders have emphasised non-violence, tolerance and peace. Leaders in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism all have stressed it from time to time. Even in modern times, name of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther, Dalai Lama, have emphasised the value of tolerance, non-violence and peace. With respect to UNESCO it began with the declaration of year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1997. The Nobel Peace Prize laureates in the year 1998 developed a short document called the Manifesto 2000 calling for to practice a culture of peace in everyday life. This was circulated for signatures throughout the world. UNESCO was requested to serve as the nodal organization for the mobilization of this task. In September 1999, this Assembly adopted a remarkable document – a Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. In this declaration education is seen as an instrument to foster culture of peace. Education here refers not only to general education acquiring cognitive capital but the ability to live

together. Education for All (EFA) thus should keep this in view and inculcate a culture of peace through education.

Social cohesion as well as social isolation are multi-layered phenomena. They appear at international, national, regional and local levels. Coordinated efforts are needed to be put in place at various levels to promote peace tolerance, understanding and inclusion. Efforts should be made to eradicate violence, intolerance, hate and suspicion Yajur Veda(40.6) observes “a person who believes that all are his soul mates and loves them alike never feels lonely. They divine qualities of compassion, forgiveness, and service will make him lovable in the eyes of all. He will experience intense joy throughout his life”.

With respect to promoting a culture of peace various agencies should come together for the purpose. One can think of four points of action where special agencies can make special efforts. These can be at home level, school level, nation level and international level.

Mechanism: Home and Society

If universal values and culture of peace are to be promoted then one has to think of a mechanism that can be put in place. S. Rampal's (1990) advice is most pragmatic “**it is not enough to dream dreams, we should have instruments to shape it**”

Parents may also be properly oriented towards importance of peace, harmony non-violence and respect to others. If parents have faith in these eternal virtues then the students will indirectly absorb these qualities. In a way the true education of respect for differences must be given at home. Although parent education is not at the moment on the educational agenda of schools, however, during teacher parent meetings, this point may be properly explained to the parents so that they may impress upon their children the need of tolerance and showing respect to others.

Role of Schools

The strategy to develop universal value and climate for peace has to be comprehensive at all levels of education, primary secondary, tertiary. Some of the steps could be:- Building receptive climate in schools to stress the point that only through peace, a nation or an individual can gain scientific and technological advances and achieve economic prosperity. Warring tendency bring self destruction. Develop suitable audio video programmes that stress universal values. Some programmes may be prepared on life of great

people that highlight their stress on peace and non-violence like that on Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa etc.

All teachers need to be trained on the importance of tolerance, understanding and developing a climate of peace. Students having narrow views based on race, religion, and nationality should be properly instructed by teachers. Institutions may also prepare suitable learning materials that give stress to promotion of pluralism, and multi-culturalism. Somewhere this point should be brought out forcefully that truth depends on the way we look at it. People should develop catholicity of outlook so that different perceptions can be accommodated. Certainty and uncertainty, right and wrong, good and bad also depend upon the context in which situation is obtained and on the perception of the viewer. The way of looking at things promote and strengthen open mindedness. However, there are eternal truths which cannot be negated for example, respect to others, and reverence for life.

Teacher Education:

In developing these teachers will have to be trained and retrained. They have to work as agents of change promoting understanding and tolerance. Teacher will have to internalize need of social cohesion and respect for pluralism, UNESCO (1996 p. 57) stresses the need to establish intercultural education that genuinely contributes to social cohesion, peace and pluralism. If one thinks along these lines one will realize that education for pluralism is not only safeguard against violence but an active principal for enrichment of cultural and civic life. Elements of values and peace must find a place in pre-service as well as in in-service programmes.

It is often said that values are caught and not taught. Certainly giving lectures on peace and tolerance and harmony will not develop the required frame of mind. But it is equally true that unless individuals are made aware about these important issues which have a lasting influence on survival of the human race, values cannot be developed out the vacuum. Every teacher educator and trainer of teachers should make it a point to explain the importance of universal values, which will be discussed shortly .

The point that emerges is that teacher educators have to be the models that would reflect these values in their life style. Teacher educators should practice what they preach and thus become living examples. Another point to note is that should permeate teaching of all subjects.

If values are so important they must be properly evaluated, that is performance of teachers should not only be judged by their subject competence or transaction competence or their classroom management competence but must also be judged to the degree and extent teachers could internalize values. At some stage there would be a need to develop a comprehensive performance appraisal form that would include these aspects and teachers performance will be judged on those aspects also.

Value Education

Value Education is now a days gaining a lot of importance. Both on the national as well as on the international scene, value education is being emphasised. If we look at values, we can categorize them in various clusters such as social values, economic values, cultural values, technological values etc. from another angle values in the school education system can be seen falling under three groups, which are universal in scope, which are student based, and which are subject based.

Each subject that we teach has certain value system and through its hidden curriculum the subject must communicate those value. Let us take an example, teaching music or dance is largely a skill. It also has a knowledge part. But more important, it also has, a value pattern embedded in the subject. For example teaching and learning of music and dance must develop value of handwork, regularity of exercise, persistence, patience, and faith in the teacher. Similarly students have to have a value pattern. In olden times it was said that a student should have the persistence of a crow, attentiveness of swan, control over sleep like a dog, Values like diligence, self control, self confidence, self-discipline, modesty, simplicity are other values that student need to inculcate.

Zhou Manzhao (UNESCO 1996 P. 244) list a few desirable core of universal values, those values that need to be shared by one and all. These include awareness of human rights combined with a sense of social responsibilities. Care should be taken that with ethnocentric perspective of human rights is not imposed. Recently Indian Education System is emphasizing the role of fundamental duties because by performing one's duties one secures rights for himself as well as for others.

If students can combine qualities of sharing and caring with openness to change, they would develop a positive attitude towards "otherness" which will make them equipped, balanced and at peace with themselves and the world outside. It is the responsibility of every

parent and every teacher to see that students develop positive attitude, and overcome their negativity which is the real cause of tensions and violence. Students should extend their social concerns and develop healthy optimistic view on life. Through wise interactions and thoughtful discussions students should be exposed to merits of tolerance and non-violence. By proper counselling they should realise that it is harmful to leap into the fire of aggression as it is dangerous to sink into despondency, inaction and indifference.

Both students and teachers need to realize the importance of living together and should be asked to work for convergence and cooperation. There is no good in barking against the bad. Let each young man and woman of a country chant the beauty of the good and work for harmonious and good brother relationship. Religion and spirituality has a significant place in the programmes for youth. A.N. Whitehead has said the future of civilization depends upon the degree to which we can balance the forces of science and religion.

Education must develop in students, a climate of free enquiry, frank and vigorous discussion and willingness to work in teams. We should teach the youth not only to tolerate differences but to respect difference. Education should promote equanimity, contentment, compassion, forgiveness, tranquility and should reduce egoism, repulsion, despondency, hypocrisy, duplicacy, anger, greed.

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